



Cycling Through Paradise: ATLANTIC CANADA CYCLING

Atlantic Canada conjures to mind images of rugged seacoasts, small family farms, orchards, vineyards, forests, and welcoming towns and villages. For 26 years, Gary Conrod and the team at Atlantic Canada Cycling have offered their expertise in sharing the region's best cycling. They've led the way down hundreds of roads and paths, allowing riders to get fantastic exercise while making lifelong memories — and countless friends.

In the summer of 2014, Gary and his crew will offer six events. One adventure will take riders through Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland. From there, cyclists usually enjoy tailwinds, riding together as far as Labrador. Along the way, they may see moose, caribou, seals, whales and perhaps even icebergs.

Upon reaching Labrador, the team will take all the tour's riders safely back to where they started.

Another excursion will complete a circle around Cape Breton Island (considered one of the world's best spots to tour by bike). Gary encourages experienced riders to embark on this tour, noting that the group will occasionally challenge steep hills.

In addition, Atlantic Canada Cycling has tours planned for east and west Prince Edward Island — both will include evenings on the beach, trails to explore, campfires, and the freshest oysters around. Gary will also lead a week-long tour closer to home, in mainland Nova Scotia. Riders on that adventure will visit vineyards, sample local seafood, and

take in the province's "hidden corners" for cycling.

What might be next year's most anticipated bicycle tour (it's certainly expecting the most participants) will take place further away, in Quebec's Saguenay and Lac-Saint-Jean regions. This group will enjoy hundreds of kilometres of paved cycling paths. (Since his last visit to the region, Gary has discovered 92 additional kilometres of car-free trail.) Along the way, riders will visit fromageries, linger at trailside cafes, plus enjoy evening outings to restaurants and brewpubs.

Atlantic Canada Cycling frequently inspires guest loyalty. Up to 70 per cent of any tour, says Gary, consists of riders returning after one or more previous



events. Every trip is accompanied by a support vehicle to give assistance and offer tired participants a lift; another vehicle carries their gear. At night, riders may choose between camping in the great outdoors and staying at motels and bed-and-breakfasts.

Gary is happy to provide anyone with bicycle touring advice. After a lifetime of cycling, he knows all the roads in the region, and the best ones for exploring by bike. Likewise, he understands — and can provide reassurance to — first-time tour riders. He can also offer advice on which type of bike is best-suited for a given activity.

Leading hundreds of cycling tours over many years, Gary has learned what people want and need on cycling

adventures. He and his team keep an eye open for solo participants, especially those who are also first-timers. Tour leaders make them feel comfortable and bolster their confidence on the road. Atlantic Canada Cycling's team also ensures that plenty of socializing takes place along the journey, and that everyone 'fits in' with the group. "A lot of friendships have been made and couples have met participating on my tours."

Atlantic Canada Cycling's website is filled with participants' photos and testimonials — and, of course, with information about 2014's tours. ■

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