

Why Nova Scotia Should Be on Every Traveler's Radar in 2025

by [Sarah Milner](#) July 17, 2025



Peggy's Cove lighthouse. Photo: Sarah Milner

Sitting unassumingly on Canada’s east coast, just a two-hour flight away from Toronto, Boston, and New York City (three hours from Chicago), Nova Scotia offers a remarkably high-value vacation for travelers seeking adventure, culture, and friendly hospitality.

Tourism Nova Scotia invited *Travel Market Report* to spend a week in the province to learn more about the travel experiences on offer and the opportunities for travel advisors to sell the destination. Over seven days, we drove nearly the entire province, hitting all the main attractions from Lunenburg to Pleasant Bay.

“When people come to Nova Scotia, they are pleasantly surprised,” Peter Johnson, manager of market development at Tourism Nova Scotia, told *TMR*. “There’s so much to do and so much diversity in our province in terms of the landscape, the history, and the culture.”

Nova Scotia Presents Historic Small Town Charm



St. John's Anglican Church in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. Photo: Sarah Milner

Nova Scotia has a rich history that dates back hundreds of years. The province's capital, Halifax, was founded in 1749, and Lunenburg in 1753. The popular Peggy's Cove was founded in 1811, and Annapolis Royal dates back to 1605—making it one of the oldest settlements in North America, preceding both Plymouth, MA and Jamestown, VA.

For a truly immersive historical experience, travelers can visit the Fortress of Louisbourg, located approximately a half-hour drive Southeast of Sydney (Nova Scotia's secondary airport hub). As North America's largest historical reconstruction, Louisbourg captures the feel of a French settlement from the mid-18th century, right down to minute details: thanks to the French's penchant for meticulous documentation, the [Government of Canada was able to accurately rebuild Louisbourg](#). The engineers even contracted the same French glass manufacturer to produce glass using the era's technique.

Lunenburg: A UNESCO World Heritage Site



Lunenburg, Nova Scotia is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Old Town is considered the best surviving example of a planned British colonial settlement in North America. Photo: Sarah Milner

Lunenburg is another great attraction for history buffs. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is considered the best surviving example of a planned British colonial settlement in North America, thanks to its grid layout and strictly maintained homes. Painted in cheerful hues, the buildings in Lunenburg are gorgeous examples of 18th- and 19th-century architecture, but with a compelling twist: designed by shipbuilders, these homes feature unique ornamentation not found anywhere else in the world, like the “Lunenburg bump” dormers.

Nova Scotia features several guided tour operators that skillfully combine history and entertainment. Lunenburg Walking Tours was a standout experience for *TMR*, and with 30 years of experience in the industry (and working relationships with the cruise lines), these guides are accustomed to working with U.S. travelers and know how to engage with their shared history.

Mahone Bay: Home of Nova Scotia’s Iconic Church Trio



Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. Photo: Sarah Milner

Mahone Bay is another popular tourist destination in the summer months. The picturesque town is a vibrant community with artisan shops, colorful heritage buildings, and maritime charm. Founded in 1754, the town has a population of just about 1,000 today, and is known for its three iconic (and often photographed) churches—St James’ Anglican, St John’s Evangelical Lutheran, and Trinity United.

As an added bonus, these smaller towns don’t get as busy as typical tourist attractions. During *TMR*’s visit in late June, the only real crowds we encountered were at Peggy’s Cove when the tour buses arrived in the afternoon.

“Nova Scotia is a little lesser-known... I think that’s appealing to certain travelers, to come to destinations that aren’t so highly visited. We have lots of capacity here, so we’re not overcrowded,” Johnson told *TMR*.

Lobsters & Lighthouses



Peggy's Cove. Photo: Sarah Milner

Nova Scotia has a rich maritime history. From its famous Bluenose schooner (commemorated on the Canadian dime) to the province's role in responding to the Titanic disaster, the province's proximity to the sea has shaped the local culture and identity.

Nova Scotia's Nautical History

In Halifax, guests can learn more about the province's naval history at [The Maritime Museum of the Atlantic](#), the country's oldest and largest maritime museum. The museum includes exhibits on sail ships, the Halifax Explosion of 1917, the Titanic, and more. Guests can even see two relics from a bygone era, lovingly restored for a truly immersive storytelling experience: the CSS Acadia, the only ship to have survived the Halifax Explosion and both World Wars, and Robertson's Store, a traditional hardware, ship chandlers and fishing supplies store.



Halifax Harbour Tours operates on a fully electric ship. Photo: Sarah Milner

TMR learned more about the local history with [Halifax Harbour Tours](#) (pictured above). A relatively new tour operator in the area, Halifax Harbour Tours offers small tours (maximum eight guests) on a fully electric boat. The Violet Mac itself is admittedly old, but it's charming and comfortable nonetheless, and the whisper-quiet engine means the captain and tour guide don't need amplification to be heard.



Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. Photo: Sarah Milner

For real ship lovers, there are plenty of opportunities to experience the local culture. Johnson, whose father was a lobster fisherman, told *TMR* that many travelers are drawn to Nova Scotia for its lobster fishing. This includes unique experiences, such as the [“Lobster Fisherman for a Day”](#) tour.

“I find with our further away travelers, they’re very interested in [experiences] like getting out on a lobster fishing boat,” said Johnson.

Seafood, Glorious Seafood



Scallop gnocchi, from the Oak & Oar in Oak Island Resort & Conference Centre. Photo: Sarah Milner

Of course, there's plenty of lobster and other seafood for those looking for culinary experiences. The Oak & Oar, [Oak Island Resort & Conference Centre](#)'s main restaurant, boasts one of the best shrimp cocktails around, and the scallop gnocchi was hands-down the best meal of the week. Generally speaking, lobster is available year-round in Nova Scotia, and most menus will feature the crustacean in some shape or form.

Nova Scotia Is a Playground for Adventure Travel



The Cabot Trail coastline. Photo: Sarah Milner

With plenty of trails, forests, and parks, Nova Scotia is an ideal destination for active travelers.

[TMR's recent Outlook on Global Travel Trends](#) found that most advisors (67%) cited adventure as a key experience clients look for from their vacations. In Nova Scotia, adventure can be found in many forms: whale watching in Pleasant Bay, kayaking with [Cabot Trail Adventures](#), or walking the trail at [Two Rivers Wildlife Park](#).

The Cabot Trail Lives Up to the Hype



Cabot Trail cliffs and road. Photo: Sarah Milner

TMR opted for a scenic drive of the famous Cabot Trail. This 185-mile loop of Cape Breton Island is famous for its views, but be warned: with multiple points of construction delays, this “four-hour” drive easily stretches into five or more hours of driving. This region can be done in one day, but most travelers would likely prefer to split it over two (or opt for a guided tour so they don’t have to drive).

While the Cabot Trail is the most well-known outdoor experience in Nova Scotia, it’s just the beginning. Cabot Cape Breton boasts two of the world’s best golf courses (according to *Golf Digest*). Longtime Glenora Inn & Distillery manager Donnie Campbell told *TMR* that the property is popular with groups drawn to the region by the nearby golf courses.

Marc Telio, a *Travel + Leisure* A-List advisor and founder of boutique luxury tour operator Entree Destinations, told *Travel Market Report* that the Cabot Cape Breton golf courses are some of the best he’s ever visited.

“It’s all about the golf,” said Telio. “Cabot Links and Cabot Cliffs make up some of the most stunning golf real estate I’ve ever seen, and this resort remains my favorite place to golf on earth ... Every shot is exciting, every hole an adventure, and each brings its own challenges.”

Scenic Trails for Walking, Hiking, & Cycling



One of the many walking trails in Cape Breton Island. Photo: Sarah Milner

Annapolis Valley, the province’s wine region, is another popular spot for outdoor activities. Erika Banting, owner of Tattingstone Inn in Wolfville, told *TMR* that she often gets bookings for active affinity groups. During our visit, her bed and breakfast was hosting a group on a cycling tour of the region.

Finally, Nova Scotia offers multiple resorts that feature on-site water sports and other recreational activities. [Inverary Resort](#) embodies the spirit of old-school resort vibes with a contemporary look and amenities. The property has been a part of the Baddeck community for 70 years, and was renovated in 2021. (Book clients in the main building if possible because it has the newest rooms.)

Whiskey & Wine from the Maritimes



Glenora Inn & Distillery is Canada's first single malt whiskey distiller. Photo: Sarah Milner

In more recent years, Nova Scotia has gained attention for its alcohol industry. The province even has its own signature wine: Tiday Bay, which most of the province's wineries produce. In many cases, these wineries, breweries, and distilleries have been expanded into tourist attractions with full restaurants, guided tours, and in some cases, on-site lodgings.

In Mabou, on Cape Breton's western coast, travelers can visit [Glenora Inn & Distillery](#), Canada's first single malt whiskey distillery. The property was also recently renovated, and the rooms were some of the most comfortable we stayed in during our trip. (TMR toured the property and viewed a room from each building; although there are subtle differences, all of the buildings were in good repair.) With beautifully kept grounds steeped in nature, delicious pub food, and live music twice a day, Glenora Inn & Distillery is an excellent choice for travelers looking to stay in a unique accommodation.



Grand Pré Wines. Photo: Sarah Milner

There are several wineries in Annapolis Valley, on Nova Scotia's western shore. Wolfville, in particular, is a popular spot for winetasting groups. We visited [Grand Pré Wines](#): located adjacent to the Grand-Pré National Historic Site (another UNESCO World Heritage Site), the gorgeous winery offers tastings and tours, and has a restaurant and Inn.

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