Whenever I meet someone who has never been to my fair province, first I encourage them to come see us and second, I tell them that I think there’s one time of year that’s better than others to visit Newfoundland for the first time. And that time, my friends, is upon us right now. While there are cool things to do here at any time of the year, the best time to visit Newfoundland is from early-July to mid-August, when it feels like the province is full of colour and the people most lively. The temperatures finally warm up and we all come out of hibernation. The streets are full of people, the whales come out to play, and every weekend there’s a festival on the go somewhere.

JULY – SEPTEMBER

BETTER WEATHER
Weather here is always unpredictable but you’re most likely to get some sunshine and warmer temperatures once summer finally arrives. It rarely gets above 30C/86F here so if you’re currently melting in southern heat, we’re a great respite. On a sunny, warm day there is no place prettier than Newfoundland, but it helps to remember that here, June is not a summer month. Watching sunsets over the water and bonfires on the beach are some of my favourite summer activities.
The best time to see whales in Newfoundland is in the summer. Witless Bay has a longer peak season that runs from mid-June until mid-August. **Twillingle** really kicks into high gear in mid-August. When the capelin are rolling you can easily whale watch from the shore, otherwise you can take one of the many boat tours available to get your fill of whales and sea birds. If you really want an up close and personal whale watching experience in Newfoundland, book yourself a zodiac tour with **Trinity Eco-Tours**. They regularly have humpbacks and orcas come up to say hello.
Puffins, the clowns of the sea, are some of my favourite birds to see – they’re just too adorable. I joke that they look like flying baked potatoes. Their nesting season runs from April until the end of August. If you wait until Labour Day, they may be gone out to sea so book your boat tour in late spring/early summer.

CAPELIN ROLLING

Photo: Bradley Anderson

Capelin are small fish from the smelt family that roll up onto our beaches every year. They’re a favourite meal for whales, sea birds and humans alike – bbq-ing being a favourite way to prepare them. The timeframe to gather them is short and not very predictable but if you happen to find yourself in Newfoundland during the time when the capelin are rolling (ask the locals or
listen to the radio to see if you’re in luck) you owe it to yourself to get to a beach. You’ve never seen anything like it. To get the full effect, check out this video by Bradley Anderson:

BERRY PICKING

Photo: Heather Sunderland

Bakeapples and blueberries will be in season and at their best. You can buy them from roadside stands, grocery stores or you can pick them yourself. Blueberries are especially plentiful on some of the East Coast Trail paths in August. You could ask a local about the best spots to go berry picking but they’re coveted areas and people may not give up the info so easily. Bakeapples (aka cloudberrries) are like gold and not like apples in the least. They look like golden raspberries and have a tart taste. I like them best as jam or a cheesecake topping.
We love our festivals here. Any opportunity to meet up with friends, listen to some tunes, have a few drinks and scarf down a couple moose burgers is a good time. If you’re going to spend your visit in St. John’s there are three big festivals you need to know about and they’re all clumped together into a two week span. Sometimes there’s a bit of overlap.

- **Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival** – the first full weekend in August.
- **Royal St. John’s Regatta** – the first Wednesday of August, weather depending.
● **George Street Festival** – the week leading up to the Regatta.

Other major festivals happening around the province include the Seasons in the Bight Theatre Festival in **Trinity**, the Gros Morne Theatre Festival and **countless others**. Seriously, too many to name so check out that link.

**OCTOBER – DECEMBER**

If summer isn’t your thing, the fall is actually a lovely time to visit Newfoundland. A lot of the summer tourist attractions, accommodations, and restaurants may be closed for the season but there is still plenty to do.

**HIKING**

The temperatures in October are getting brisk but the scenery on the **East Coast Trail**, Gros Morne, or any of the countless other hiking trails on the island, is still spectacular. You’ll have the added bonus of having trails be less crowded.

**MARI GRAS ON GEORGE STREET**

Yes, we know Mardi Gras is before Easter. No, we don’t care. Mardi Gras on George Street is the province’s biggest costume party. Visit all the bars on George Street with one cover and take in the elaborate costumes.
CHRISTMAS

Christmas in Newfoundland is a pretty special time. Between mummers, Tibb’s Eve, everyone coming home, and the plethora of concerts you can’t be bored.

JANUARY – MARCH

A typical St. John’s winter isn’t much fun due to our freeze-thaw cycles but if you head further west you’ll get some great winter activities in central and western Newfoundland. While we’re a rock in the North Atlantic, winters in Newfoundland aren’t as cold as you might think. Temperatures are typically between 0C and -10C though it can be windy so be sure to pack a warm, windbreak layer. The snow and rain can be unpredictable so give yourself some leeway when booking your flights to allow for delays.

SKIING

There are two ski resorts on the island of Newfoundland: White Hills near Clarenville and the larger Marble Mountain near Corner Brook. Snow in January isn’t always guaranteed with warming temperatures but both are quick to get back to business after a thaw and have some great runs.
SNOWMOBILING
There is one thing many Newfoundlanders love in winter and that’s getting out on their snowmobile. There are over 5,000km of trail on the island so there’s plenty to keep you busy.

APRIL – JUNE
This is a time of year that frustrates a lot of Newfoundlanders. Often grey and wet, spring is when we start expecting warmer weather any day now but don’t be surprised to find a dusting of snow in May. I always tell people that, “in Newfoundland, June is not a summer month”. Tourist attractions, accommodations, and restaurants start opening in May but you’ll still need to pack that extra layers. A pair of light gloves and hat doesn’t go astray.

ICEBERGS
This is also a great time to explore Iceberg Alley as late spring and early summer is when the bergs start showing their faces around Newfoundland. The best place to see icebergs in Newfoundland is along the northwest coast of the island, as that’s where they first reach the province and are their biggest. Many have shrunk, broke up, or become grounded before they reach the Avalon peninsula.
If you’ve been considering a visit to Newfoundland but weren’t quite sure when to go, know that there’s really no bad time (but summer is my favourite) so get your butt over here.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

NEWFOUNDLAND TIME

If it’s noon you’re in Toronto or New York and you ask the question, “What time is it in Newfoundland?” 1:30pm probably isn’t the answer you were expecting. Yes, Newfoundland has its own special time zone. Yes, it’s on the half-hour. Our location in the North Atlantic gives us one more claim to fame than just having the easternmost point in North America.

Newfoundland Standard Time (NST) is UTC-3:30 while Newfoundland Daylight Time (NDT) is UTC-2:30.

So if it’s 2pm in New York, it’s 3:30pm in Newfoundland. If it’s 8pm in Vancouver, it’s 12:30am in Newfoundland. If it’s 7am in Rome, it’s 3:30am in Newfoundland…aka when people are trying to hail cabs on George Street.;)

Daylight savings time is observed from the 2nd Sunday in March until the 1st Sunday in November. It’s my favourite time because it means more daylight in the evenings, which is important if you’re driving on the highways. With moose accidents always a concern, it’s best not to drive on the highways after dark so during DST you’ve got some extra wiggle room.
Special note: the Newfoundland Time Zone is only observed on the island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador. With the exception of the town of Black Tickle, Labrador uses the Atlantic Time Zone.

We love having our own special half hour time zone. It means that hour long tv shows always start on the half-hour. It also means that we’re closer, time-wise to Dublin than we are to Regina.

NEWFOUNDLAND WEATHER

If you’ve ever heard the phrase, “If you don’t like the weather, wait five minutes,” you’ll know what to expect from Newfoundland weather. Our seasons don’t quite work like other places in Canada. Winter in St. John’s can be windy and damp. Spring is that period where the snowstorms have stopped but the temperatures have yet to rise. Summer is glorious but short. Autumn is usually lovely and not too rainy.

If you’re looking for a place to spend a few weeks in summer where you won’t be hot and sticky from humidity, Newfoundland is the spot. Temperatures in St. John’s rarely get above 25C in the summer.

One thing to be prepared for: bring a raincoat because umbrellas don’t work in our windy climate. Also, bring a sweater. Even on hot days, the heat dissipates quickly once the sun goes down.

RENTING A CAR IN NEWFOUNDLAND

It’s very difficult to see much of Newfoundland without a vehicle. There’s public transportation in St. John’s and there’s one cross-island bus and a few
regular shuttle vans to smaller communities but that’s about it. So if you’re not arriving by ferry in either Port-aux-Basques or Argentina with your own vehicle, you’ll most likely want to rent one at the airport in St. John’s.

Being an island, we don’t always have a lot of rental inventory, especially in summer. I’ve heard more than one horror story of tourists showing up without a reservation and being stuck. If you need to rent a car in Newfoundland, be sure to book it as far ahead as possible.

WILL WE BE SEEING YOU THIS YEAR? WHEN’S YOUR FAVOURITE TIME TO VISIT NEWFOUNDLAND?