

SUN TRAVEL

DEAL OF THE WEEK: More flights with Cathay

Cathay Pacific is celebrating the addition of three more Vancouver-Hong Kong flights per week with a nice sale. Round-trip economy flights between the two cities are as little as \$874. For details and bookings, see cathaypacific.com/ca.

— Jim Byers

Hooked by the Miramichi

Six great things to do in outdoorsy New Brunswick region

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Special to the Toronto Sun

When I told folks I was heading to the Miramichi in New Brunswick for a few days, there were a few raised eyebrows. Really? Is there much to do there other than fish for salmon was the general response.

To be honest, I didn't know. But, always game for a challenge, off I went.

Of course it turns out there's plenty to do in this eastern region of the province, about a 90-minute drive from Moncton. Steeped in Acadian, forestry and shipbuilding history, it is indeed renowned as a world-class outdoors destination given its settlement along the Miramichi River.

A river truly does run through it. Just a note: The Miramichi is both an intricate river system as well as a municipality made up of amalgamated towns Chatham, Newcastle, and others, and you will see them referenced in your travels.

You can certainly still fly fish if you so choose — and many do — with the area chock full of lodges and woodsy getaways for just such an endeavour. But there's plenty more than that as well. Here are six suggestions:

1. FLY FISHING

Of course fishing is still a huge draw for anglers from around the world, from novices like me to those who have tied and cast many a fly in their day. The main attractions are the region's famous Atlantic salmon or bass. For conservation reasons, salmon is catch and release at all times, as is bass at certain times of the year.

If you don't live in New Brunswick, you must hire



The deck at 1809 Restaurant at the newly renovated Rodd Miramichi River is the perfect spot to score some great fish and chips and admire the sights of the river.

a local guide to fish for salmon, but that's half the fun. We had a wonderful morning on the river with Brett Siliker of Upper Oxbow Outdoor Adventures, who told great fish tales while patiently teaching me how to gracefully skip a hand tied, featherweight fly over the water with the hope a salmon would consider it breakfast.

Standing in the river in hip waders on a beautiful morning is not to be missed.

2. BOAT TOUR

Perhaps one of the best deals in the area is the wonderful tour offered by Miramichi River Boat Tours. The two-deck Max Aitken holds 50 passengers and takes you on a 90-minute trip along the river, with Capt. Azade Hachie providing entertaining and informative local history and lore.

He also takes the time to let youngsters "drive" the boat, when he deputizes them as riverboat captains as the trip winds down.

The boat leaves a few times a day from Ritchie Wharf Park, where you can get a snack or shop for souvenirs. At \$15 a head for adults (\$10



PHOTOS BY PAT LEE/SPECIAL TO THE TORONTO SUN



Hostess Sara McInnis, right, of the King George B&B in Miramichi, N.B., gives cooking advice. The lovely piece of steak was procured at a local farm as part of the inn's Mystery Food Adventure. Miramichi River Boat Tours offers a 90-minute tour on the Max Aitken, top, a few times a day.

for kids) it's a deal that really can't be beat.

3. BEAUBEARIS ISLAND

Along with its natural beauty, the region is steeped in Acadian and shipbuilding history, which literally comes alive on Beaubears Island. A seasonal park with an interpretive centre, its Tour through Time includes a short boat ride to the island (or you can canoe), where colourful costumed "locals" greet you

along the trail to reenact the Beaubears story. The island was once a disastrous refuge for fleeing Acadians

MORE INFO

Go to: discovermiramichi.com, upperoxbow.com, miramichiriverboat.com, beaubearisland.com, kinggeorgebandb.com, governorsmansion.ca and roddvacations.com/rodd-miramichi-river.

during the expulsion and more successfully a thriving shipbuilding centre. It's also a popular hiking and picnic park as groomed trails wind their way through the many old growth pine trees.

4. GOVERNOR'S MANSION

Just a cross from Beaubears Island is this historic inn, once the official residence of New Brunswick Lt.-Gov. J. Leonard O'Brien, also a former owner of the island.

O'Brien was said to be rather officious and would spy on those who ventured onto his island. Michael Mersereau, the current owner of the hotel, who inherited it from an uncle, has it chock full of antiques and can provide lots of history both on the area and the inn. If you time it right, you can also have an amazing three-course dinner there as well, which is offered a couple of times a week.

5. FOOD SCAVENGE

We were guests at the elegant King George B&B in

downtown Miramichi and well looked after by gracious host Sara McInnis, a self-taught gourmet cook, who loves to teach others.

If you're keen, she'll set you off to scavenge for your dinner, plotting the coordinates of various local purveyors of produce and protein on a GPS.

Once back with your goodies, she'll then instruct you on making a meal, if you so choose, or sit back and let her do the honours.

We had a beautiful piece of steak, which we found at Earl Sutherland's farm in Sunny Corner, and she guided us on the proper cooking of such a fine piece of meat.

6. RODD MIRAMICHI

Another wonderful place to stay is the newly renovated Rodd Miramichi River, part of a Maritime-owned chain of hotels. We had a magnificent lunch on their riverside patio at 1809 Restaurant, which included the best fish and chips I've had in ages. It's a lovely view and a great way to wrap up a fantastic visit to the Miramichi.