

Hikes, Sites and Sights

WCC Visits Newfoundland's East Coast Trail

June 20 to 27, 2017

Bert and Judy drove to Newfoundland with hiking and camping gear for several others. Pascal and Di, Rick and Sue, James and Olwen, and Ed and Linda, all being more sensible, flew. Bert and Judy, Pascal and Di, and Rick and Sue camped at Pippy Park in St John's. James and Olwen and Ed and Linda came earlier, stayed longer and lodged in a bed and breakfast on Doran's Lane in Middle Cove or Outer Cove or Logy Bay (depending on your GPS), a few kilometers north of St. Johns.



On June 20, Bert and Judy arrived on the Rock, claimed a camping site in Pippy Park, pitched tents, picked up Rick, Sue, Di and Pascal at the airport, then went into St. John's where James had arranged a meeting of the minds and fine dining in a private room in the old Merchants Bank building restaurant. It appears that parking downtown St. John's is always a nightmare, but especially on a fine evening during tourist season. Meter parking on the street is limited, there are several large parkades downtown but they close at 6 PM and street parking on the fringe of downtown is by permit only. After hunting for a parking spot for ages, Bert dropped his carload of passengers in front of the restaurant and headed for the suburbs, eventually finding a spot about 2 km from the restaurant. The streets in St. John's are a maze, so Bert drew a map as he walked from his parking spot back to the restaurant. When he got there, food had already been ordered. Judy had ordered chicken for Bert. We drove for five days, over four thousand kilometers to the Atlantic Ocean, went to a high end restaurant and she ordered chicken for me! As chicken goes, it was excellent, but it was still chicken.

We had two vehicles. We drove to the trail heads then shuttled vehicles to each other end of the trail for each hike. There was a lot of local driving (about 1000 km over the week). Even though we never saw a moose in Newfoundland, apparently they are a significant traffic hazard. Coming off the ferry in Argentina, a road sign noted there were 880 car/moose collisions reported last year; locals drove about 60 kph on the highways after dark and; rather than saying goodbye when you left a place, locals said “watch out for moose”.



The Rock was in full bloom when we were there. The whales were feeding and we saw whales from shore on every hike. Long term weather stats indicate that it rains almost half the days in July and August in the area of our hikes, but we only got wet one day.



Friday June 21 – **Sugarloaf** from Logy Bay to Quidi Vidi

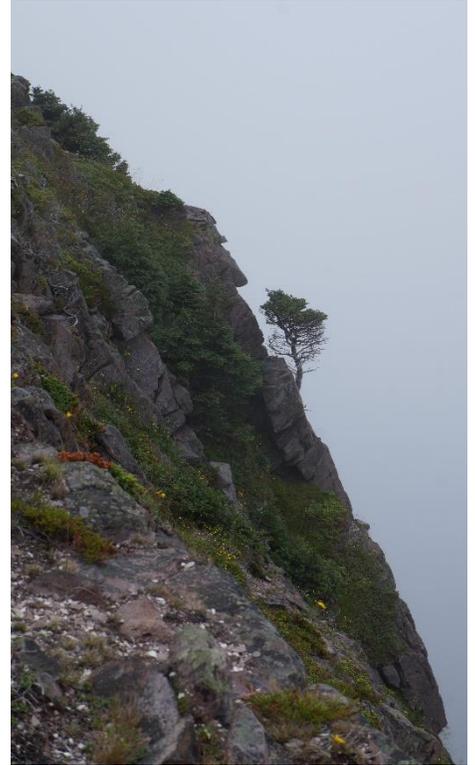
Mostly this was a beautiful ocean side hike, but fog obscured views – not a great day for photography. I say mostly beautiful because part of the hike was along a landfill and there were lots of plastic bags and other trash hanging in trees and on the ground.



At our lunch stop, Sue said “Rick, you look tired, why don’t you lie down for a rest”. Rick looked around at the other hikers and said “Are you kidding? I wouldn’t lie down with all this trash around me.” We were taken aback because Rick is usually polite to us, but now we know what he really thinks of us.

The beer drinkers were motivated to keep moving because the end of the hike was near Quidi Vidi

Brewing which has live music and a barbeque on the dock on Friday evenings—the “kitchen party” we’d been told about at our



campground. There seemed to be lots of confusion about how this kitchen party really worked, and the barbecue seemed unrelated to the kitchen party. We stood in a long line waiting until the doors opened at 5:30 and observed that we were old enough to be

young grandparents or old parents to almost everyone in the line. In line, we visited Sphe and June, a couple on a motorcycle that were staying in our campground. When the doors opened and we got inside, there were no tables left open and none of the ignorant young bastards offered up their seats for senior citizens, so we left, bought fish and chips at the kiosk behind Quidi Vidi Brewing and went to the B&B on Doran’s Lane for supper and checked out business magnate and former premier Danny William’s shack along the way. It is bigger than my house.



Saturday, June 22 – **Cape Spear** (most easterly point in North America) to Maddock Cove

This was an easier hike, we had sunny weather and there was lots of whale viewing. At the end of the hike, James said he was going to look for Olwen, but instead met and chatted up a colorful local woman. She gave instructions to the “corner store” just up the road that sold beer and said we should be



able to buy fresh fish from fishermen on the wharf. She sloughed him off when it appeared he was getting a bit too friendly, after which he referred to her as “the old woman” (she was at least sixty years old). Bert, Judy and

James headed down the road to get beer and fish. Stopped in traffic, James asked another “old woman” beside his car window where the corner store was and she said down the road 7 km, and there was no fresh catch available at the harbour—the fishing



season only allowed catching for personal use. Down the road we went with the van’s GPS and two phones mapping our way on what became a wild goose chase, which was abandoned when both phone maps and the GPS lead us in a circle around a small lake. We headed back to where the others were waiting, and there, across the road from where James asked the second “old lady” for directions was a store which sold beer. I think she sensed James’ disrespect for mature women but James claims she was chairwoman of the local temperance movement. The women in our crew bit their lower lips and shared shocked glances every time James disparagingly spoke of those “old women”.



Our supper plan was for the campers to cook for the whole crew. Back at the muster point, while having beer, Di, being more than somewhat pissed at James for his negative attitudes about mature women, suggested that the campers un-invite the B&B crew for supper, ostensibly because there was no fish. Ed said he was stung by the prospect of being stood up by the campers. He said he felt doubly insulted because of the low esteem with which he held the campers in the first place. The renegers quickly back-pedalled and reissued the invitation. After all they needed the B&B crew to help with vehicle exchanges for a few more days. Pascal said he had talked to someone earlier that said we could get fish, moose and cod tongues at a place called Bidgoods down the road. Turns out it was on our route home, just up the street from a store called "The Corner Store", the one to which the second "old lady" had given us directions. Bidgoods had fish, cod tongues and moose and more. We got cod.

Back at camp, Bert invited Sphene and June to join us for supper, in hopes that having strangers in our midst would improve the civility within our crew. Sphene and June,

from Colorado, have been together of 34 years, recently got married, retired, sold their house and business and last fall started an extended honeymoon. Their presence seemed to have the hoped for the calming effect; there were no other insults or slights for the rest of the evening.

Sphene is his nickname. Sphene, also known as "titanite", is a semi-precious yellow, orange, brown or green gem.



July 23 Sunday – **Deadmans Bay** from Blackhead to Fort Amherst

Some members said they wanted to do longer hikes than were planned and this hike provided that opportunity. The trail ran from Fort Amherst, to Blackhead then on to Cape Spear. Our plan was to start at Blackhead. James tried to explain to a group of supposedly educated people that if we started in the middle of a linear hiking trail (i.e., at Blackhead) and hike to one end (i.e., Fort Amherst), then the hikers could not continue on with the other half of the hike (i.e., Blackhead to Cape Spear) without backtracking. *Is dementia becoming a problem for the aging WWC crew?* Along the hike, Ed discovered a wasp nest. The supper un-invite wasn't the only thing that stung him on this trip.

It turned out the hike was rigorous enough that those that thought they wanted more, didn't



when they got to the end, or at least when they reached the end they didn't ask for more..... perhaps they forgot. I know that happens a lot with dementia.

On a high rock near Fort Amherst we found a small painted rock, a memorial to a young woman, a victim of cyber bullying.

Monday July 24 – **Whale and Puffin Boat Tour** then shopping or hiking.

We had glorious weather for the whale and puffin boat tour. The boat crew does four tours per day, all crew members have been doing this for several years and say there is no life like it. That's what I thought... the same corny jokes four times a day, every day for several years, thank cod my life is not like it. With a job like that, dementia would be a welcome blessing.



Someone had told Bert that if he wanted, they would saddle up a whale and he could go for a ride. We got close to some whales, but there weren't whale rides. Turns out the objective of whale watching is the same as bar flying – it's to get tail. Two or three times a whale close to the boat brought its tail out of the water, and if you were lucky, you might

get a picture as proof. But no damn whale rides. A close look at the whale tail shows that they have barnacles on them. The barnacles make the tail an abrasive/dangerous weapon.

After following whales for a while, the boat cruised by Guano Island, a rock outcrop a couple of miles offshore and home to half a million puffins and several million other birds. Hundreds of birds flew overhead and showered the area with bird crap. At least one person on the boat (not from WWC) took a direct hit. The man on the loudspeaker said that having a bird crap on your head is good luck. Maybe, I thought, as long as you weren't looking up with your mouth open. The air around Guano Island is kept naturally fresh by the addition of a million pounds a day of bird crap. All part of nature's beauty.



Our guide was very excited when an iceberg sailed into the horizon--whales, puffins, and ice-bergs makes a whale-cruise a "trifecta". Icebergs are not common this late in the year, but this year has been an exception, and we saw a couple more on our hikes.

After the cruise, the WWC crew went to lunch at the Captain's Rest in Bay Bull. When Bert found out puffin wasn't on the lunch menu, his second major disappointment of the day, he was totally pissed, refused to eat with the others and went off by himself and sulked. The others enjoyed oversized fishy meals at the Captain's Rest.

After lunch, Judy, Bert, Pascal and Di hiked Mickleen's Path; Olwen, Linda, Rick and Sue went shopping in St. John's and James and Ed hiked Signal Hill. There was lots of whale viewing along Mickleen's Path, a great view of Guano Island and distant views of an iceberg. *Has anyone ever run camping expeditions on icebergs?*

Tuesday, June 25 **Father Troy's Trail** from Torbay to Flatrock



Hike plans were changed to a shorter hike because the forecast called for rain, beginning late morning. So after several mornings of early starts to our hikes, we decided to start this one late in the morning, about the time the rain was forecast to start. Did I mention a concern about dementia?

Somewhere along this trail, there was a Y in the path, with one branch being classified as difficult and the other as not difficult. Five went for difficult and four took the easy way out. Difficult had stairs wherever it was steep, so the easy way out must have been like mall walking.



While drivers recovered the vehicle at our starting trailhead, Judy led the women hikers on a walk to a house that Judy identified from a photo as the abode of the mother of a friend, but no one was home and another look at the picture told her it was the wrong house anyway, so they went to the community center next door to get out of the rain. There they enjoyed Newfie hospitality as a group of locals cooking cinnamon buns let them enjoy the aromas of their culinary skills.

The B&B crew went home to dry out and rest while the camping crew went to town to shop and get out of the rain. We all got together for supper at Mill Street Brewing, where the fries were better than those from the kiosk behind Quidi Vidi Brewing but the cod was not as nice. Di had a cinnamon bun that had been calling her name since her visit to the community center in Flatrock.

Wednesday 26 July **Bear Cove** from Kingsman Cove to Renew's

This was the hike originally planned for Tuesday. This was a nice hike, which passed an iceberg a few meters off shore. Bert and Ed took lots of photos of the iceberg and decided they must get some real iceberg ice, even if it required getting wet. They managed to collect about twenty pounds of ice. When they caught up

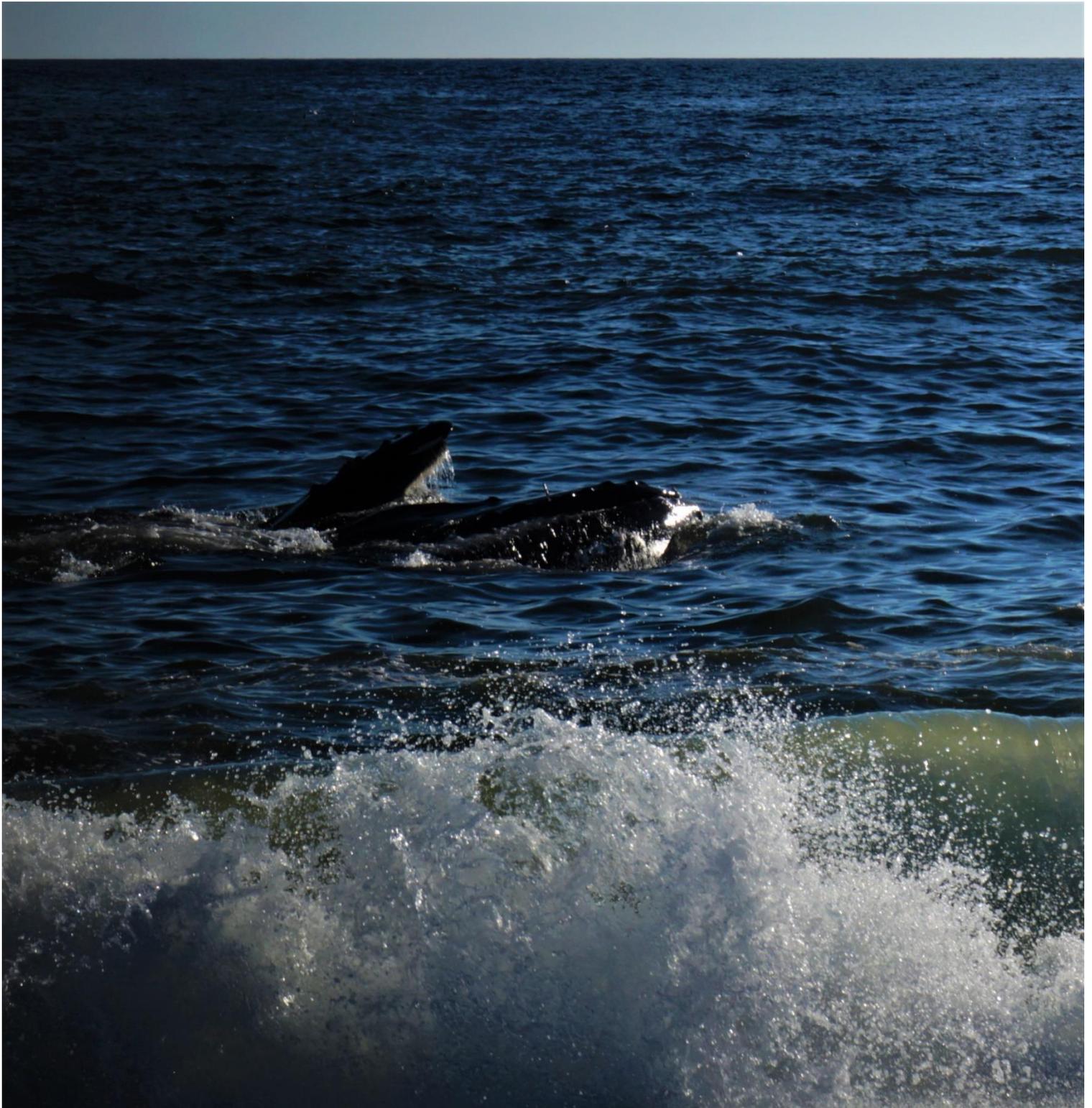
with the others, they let them taste the ice, and were accused of having bought the ice from a store. Ed and Bert told a tale of Bert going into the cold waters to recover the ice. They asked if the water was cold, and Bert assured them that it was cold enough that any man that went into that water would not be up to auditioning for an xxx movie for a while, to which

Judy muttered "He would be wasting his time, even on a hot day" and then issued some other complaints about his shortcomings.



While Rick, Sue, Di, Pascal and Judy had been waiting at the end of the trail for the geocachers and photographers, they met a man from Toronto who told them the capelin were rolling and whale viewing was awesome 35 minutes south at St. Vincent's Beach and along the way there was a beached whale. The group was keen to see this. We had heard about the phenomenon called "capelin rolling" from the information center at the camp site. Every summer, capelin roll in on the waves on one beach or several, on an unpredictable schedule. The females lay their eggs and head back to sea where those who survive the nets of humans or the stomachs of whales live to spawn another year. The males fertilize the eggs and end their lives on the shore. Meanwhile, whales, returning with empty stomachs from southern waters, lunge in, capturing mouthfuls of capelin heading in to spawn or females returning

to sea. It's fiesta time, Newfoundland style, as locals and tourists rush in to scoop up the capelin and watch the whale show.



Three whale surface together

The camping crew headed south to see the whales, while the B&B crowd went home to drink beer and play with genuine iceberg ice. Bert wanted to get pictures of club members huddling in the beached whale's mouth, but they vetoed that "once in a lifetime" opportunity. Not a fun or adventurous crew.

Turned out St. Vincent's Beach was 90 km and well over an hour south. We followed two motorcycles into the viewing area parking lot - Sphene and June who, in commemoration of supper with us hadn't had a shower since, but had decided that this very evening was time to wash away the stench and memories of us. Then we reappeared in their lives. In the waning light, we didn't see many capelin rolling in, or people with buckets scooping them up, but dead capelin littered the beach. The whales seemed to have better eyesight, as they patrolled a few meters from shore, every-so-often surfacing for a mouthful of capelin. The whale watching from the shore was phenomenal - an old timer said it was the first time in his life that he saw four whales surface close together at once.



We stopped at The Edge Restaurant for supper. Bert ordered cod tongues and shared them around. They were cooked with salt pork, the way some local fishermen told us was the only way to prepare cod tongue. Turns out, the B&B crew bought cod tongue and salt pork and prepared it the same way for supper that night. All eight of us who sampled it agreed that cod tongue is unlikely to become their preferred kind of tongue, regardless of how it is prepared.

Thursday July 27 – **Cobbler Path** from Red Cliff Road to Doran Lane

Rick, Sue, Pascal and Di packed up camp in the morning as they would spend their last night at the B&B, then the camping crew went for a walkabout at Signal Hill where some locals in old style military dress put on a bit of a show. You could pay \$10 to sit in a plastic lawn chair to see it up close or you could watch it from just outside the fence for free. During lunch at the Chocolate Café, Di had the best brownie of her life.



Then off to hike Cobbler Path from Red Cliff Road to where the B&B was located on Doran Lane. Along the way we passed some WWII bunkers with graffiti and the site of a 5-5 geocache (toughest location to reach, toughest to find once on site). We did not reach the geocache.



The B&Bers hosted a burger supper during which they discussed their plans for their remaining week on the Rock; Rick, Sue, Pascal and Di determined what time they wanted to get up in the morning to catch their 5 AM flight home, and Judy figured out how to get Bert and the van back to Nova Scotia for the homeward journey.



Bert and Judy said goodbye to all the others and went back to camp at Pippy Park where their neighbours (a loving couple) were enjoying some very loud music and cooing endearments to each other. After some particularly loud cooing, he called the police to report her for abuse, the police came and shooed him from the premises (the site was in her name) and the loud music stopped. I guess the ghetto blaster was his. Shortly later, another man driving a taxi arrived, and she and the taxi driver disappeared, into the tent. When we got up about 6 am, her tent was gone and the site was vacant except for a floor mat, a pillow (his?) and a dress hanging in a tree. Thus ended another romantic getaway.

It was another good week of hiking.

Watch out for moose.

P.S.: Judy has suggested that this report may not be completely accurate; that some poetic license has been taken and some hike participants may deny having made comments attributed them. I disagree. There are after all, alternative facts. I may or may not have recordings of these conversations, but trust me, these are the facts. At any rate, the trip was fantastic and my trip planners did an absolutely fantastic job pulling this event together.