

travelclinic

Gary Wright,
general
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Travel, on theme park
and attraction breaks.



Theme park and attraction breaks are an easy way to create a fun-filled short break for all the family. I have been researching the options available, in a bid to provide some inspiration to families for the remainder of the summer school holidays.

Whether a capital visit to London combined with a theatre break to see Shrek the Musical, or a tour of a chocolate factory, it would seem the possibilities really are endless.

Over the last couple of weeks I have been approached by many customers to look at packaging together their chosen attraction with spending a few days in nearby accommodation.

Of course, our own beautiful county is blessed with an abundance of fabulous family attractions which, together with my family, I am slowly working my way through this summer. However there is also a wide and varied range of family attractions across the length and breadth of the UK.

Some of UK's top attractions however, such as Alton Towers, Thorpe Park, Drayton Manor and Blackpool Pleasure Beach, are several hours' drive away. For these and other attractions further afield it makes more sense to make this part of a short break, or even a longer holiday. This allows all the family to benefit by not feeling the pressures of time-constraints, as you try and cram everything in to one day.

Equally with the thrill-seekers' thirst quenched the next day could be spent at a more sedentary pace, perhaps visiting a nearby stately home or historic castle, or just enjoying a day at the beach.

If the white-knuckle thrills of theme park breaks are not your thing, then how about considering some more relaxed alternatives? One of my favorite trips as a child was when I visited the safari parks at Longleat and Woburn. There are the historic castles of Warwick and Windsor, and interactive museums such as the Jorvik Viking Centre in York. For younger children, Legoland theme park near Windsor would be an ideal choice. Budding Willy Wonkers and Violet Beauregardes might also appreciate a visit to Cadbury World. All these attractions would provide a fun learning environment for children and adults alike, and offer a haven for those with a thirst for knowledge.

While some of the country's theme park attractions offer themed hotels within the resort, these hotels can be expensive. It is always worth looking at accommodation a few miles away to keep costs down. The main benefit with staying within the confines of the theme park is that you can walk from your hotel. The other privilege guests enjoy is early admission, usually allowing an extra hour of ride time before the gates open to the public. Theme park and attraction breaks combine convenience and value for money, and are the perfect way to keep the whole family entertained. ■

Destinations Travel, an independent travel agent based in Norwich, has been dealing in business and leisure travel for 20 years. Business travel telephone 01603 630333; leisure travel 01603 666339; e-mail info@destinations.co.uk; website www.destinations.co.uk

Three thousand miles from Yarmouth in Norfolk lies its namesake – the municipality and town of Yarmouth on the eastern shores of Canada. Are there connections to our seaside town? **Marie Kreft** flew to Nova Scotia to find out.

IT'S NOT OFTEN THAT I TRAVEL ACROSS THE world looking for a piece of home. But in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, where the salted harbour air carries cawing seagulls and the faint smell of herring, it's hard not to think of Great Yarmouth in Norfolk and draw imaginary spot-the-difference circles on either side of the Atlantic.

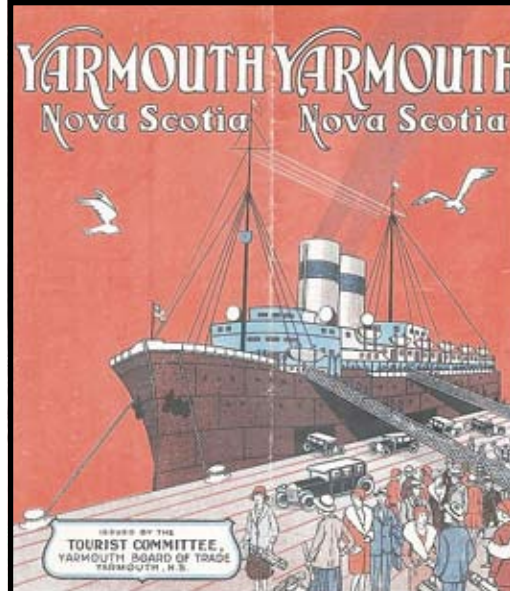
At first it's hard. The language is the same. The climate feels temperate like ours. The Sweeney Fisheries Museum, celebrating the men and women who left an indelible mark on Canada's maritime heritage, could be twinned with the Norfolk town's Time and Tide. Another east coast, another town shaped by the sea.

But I also found many circles, many differences. Even by name, these two Yarmouths are distant cousins. Yarmouth in Nova Scotia did inherit its name from our Norfolk coastal town (meaning 'at the mouth of the Yare'), but indirectly, via Cape Cod planters who probably had Yarmouth, Massachusetts, on their minds when they dropped their shallop's anchor in Canada in 1761. Or perhaps they were thinking of the 'very agreeable' Countess of Yarmouth, a mistress of King George II.

By the mid-1800s, wealthy Americans were sailing to Nova Scotia for summer-long vacations, via steamships into Yarmouth from the eastern seaboard. They endured the bumpy crossing in order to escape the sticky heat of Boston, New York and Philadelphia, so advertisers of the time extolled the health benefits of Yarmouth's fresh sea air. A 1920s tourism pamphlet claimed 'visitors are immune from hay fever' while another proposed marketing campaign – eventually rejected – would have flaunted the region's notorious fog as being good for one's complexion.

Thanks to the affluence of its heyday – the county once had more millionaires per capita than anywhere else in Canada, as well as more divorces – Canada's Yarmouth possesses a genteel quality that feels worlds away from our Golden Mile. In the P-shaped area downtown, now designated the Collins Heritage Conservation District, you can wander along streets flanked by horse chestnut trees and creamy popcorn flowers, admiring the gingerbread charm of former sea captains' homes. They have painted clapboard fronts, spindlework verandas and 'widows' walk' cupolas from which it is said lonely mariners' wives would stare out to sea. Nearby in Parade Street, the Lovitt House has two small round windows above its wood and glass tower which look spookily like eyes.

These buildings are reminders of Yarmouth's eminence during Canada's great age of sail, many of them lovingly restored by their present owners. Around the corner in Willow Street, you can stay in a once-condemned Victorian mansion, fully revived by property developer Michael Tavares and hotelier Neil Hisgen. While the grand parlours of the Mackinnon-Cann Inn are now decorated in authentic Victoriana, each of the seven guest rooms commemorates a different decade, from the 1900s to the 1960s. I slept soundly in the 1950s room, the walls painted Robin's Egg Blue in homage to I Love Lucy.



Above, a Yarmouth tourism brochure, circa 1925 (picture Yarmouth 250); below, a street scene near the harbour in Yarmouth town (picture Marie Kreft); bottom, a typical Nova Scotia seafood dinner of lobster and crab (picture Nova Scotia Tourism).



Across the Atlant

Remaining in the Collins district, a former church built in the gothic revival style houses Yarmouth County Museum with treasures including ship paintings and a runic stone thought to have been engraved by Vikings. The museum holds information on Yarmouth's role in the rum-running activities of Canada's Prohibition years, an intriguing piece of history in which many local people are, even now, ashamed to admit their families were involved. Despite this, the town's annual SeaFest, a celebration of life by the ocean, includes rum-running races in dory boats, plus ghost walks, a chowder cook-off, fireworks and a parade.

Throughout 2011 Yarmouth is marking its 250-year anniversary with live music, reunions, parties and contests. While I was there, in mid-July, the lawns of many Yarmouth buildings were playing host to silent and sometimes lopsided visitors, in the form of mops dressed up as people. Even these 'moppies' hinted at the region's nautical history as mops were essential for swabbing the decks of boats.

The end of the festival on New Year's Eve will see the unveiling of the 'Lost to the Sea' memorial, commemorating the many sons and daughters of Yarmouth County who have died in the ocean.

The people of Yarmouth's palpable pride in their heritage makes what happened two years ago seem all the more crushing. In 2009, the ferry service from the US was cut due to changes in government priorities. Unsurprisingly, restaurants went out of business, a motel owner was forced to tear down half her property and another hotel was converted into retirement apartments. Hundreds of people lost their jobs. But rather than succumb to life as a ghost town, Yarmouth is using this lull as an opportunity for renewal.

Bruce Bishop, destination marketing co-ordinator for Yarmouth's 250th anniversary, is optimistic.

"Losing the service has been devastating in some ways, but in other ways it has made Yarmouth people stand up and think maybe we're more than just a ferry terminal," he said. "Often Americans would come over and simply travel on to Halifax or Cape Breton, ignoring this region. So, after our 250th birthday has finished, we'll be marketing Yarmouth as a place for people to specifically come to. We don't have the big casinos, we don't have the hugest shopping centre or the biggest aquarium, but our little B&Bs and inns are all part of the charm. People can have beach parties here with fresh lobsters and clams, and at sunset with a



Left, the lake at White Point Beach Resort is perfect for kayaking (picture Marie Krefit); above, lighthouse station at Cape Forch; below, a house in Yarmouth's Collins Heritage Conservation District, built circa 1904; bottom, Yarmouth County Museum (pictures Nova Scotia Tourism); and, inset, 'moppies' are part of Yarmouth's 250th anniversary celebrations (picture Marie Krefit).



traveldeals

◆ There are some good deals for couples and families in Kenya. For example Kenya Beach Retreat is offering seven nights half-board at the four-star Galu Beach retreat from £999 per person, saving up to £200 each. Book by August 15 for selected departures between September 1 and November 30. The price includes flights from Heathrow, transfers and accommodation in a sea view luxury suite in this adult-only boutique retreat. Visit www.africasky.co.uk/kenya-holidays/galu-beach-retreat/ or telephone 0844 332 9349.



◆ Explore the maritime town of Esbjerg and soak up the laid-back Danish culture on a DFDS summer getaway from Harwich with reduced prices. Cruise overnight on the Dana Sirena, enjoying the entertainment and wake up to the delights of historic Esbjerg with a host of attractions to enjoy before returning to the ship. The price is £80 per person, from £99, based on two people sharing a standard en suite cabin. Various dates in August are available. Visit www.dfds.co.uk or telephone 0871 882 0885.

◆ Ryanair has announced a new route from Stansted to Leipzig. Starting from November the airline operates five times a week to the German airport. Fares start from £27.99 until mid-December. To book visit www.ryanair.com

◆ Norwich-based escorted tours specialist Grand UK Holidays, which has pick-up points across Norfolk, has added 19 new holidays for August, autumn and Christmas. The extra coach trips to popular destinations are featured on the new offers section of its website at www.grandukholidays.com or telephone 01603 619933.

localoffers

Late holiday offers with flights from Norwich. Telephone Travel Norwich Airport on 01603 428700, e-mail enquiries@travelnorwichairport.co.uk to check availability or visit the website at www.travelnorwich.com

- ◆ **Jersey** – August 24, two-star named in St Helier, seven nights, half-board, £489 per person, saving £106 per couple.
 - ◆ **Guernsey** – August 27, three-star Duke of Normandie, seven nights, half-board, £529 per person, saving £320 per couple.
 - ◆ **Turkey** – September 1, three-star named in Alanya, seven nights, half-board, £399 per person.
 - ◆ **Bulgaria** – September 18, four-star named in Sunny Beach, seven nights, half-board, £359 per person.
 - ◆ **Madeira** – September 19 September, five-star named in Funchal, seven nights, half-board, £659 per person, saving more than £750 per couple.
 - ◆ **Corfu** – September 23, 3T named in Roda, seven nights, bed and breakfast, £369 per person, saving £158 per couple.
 - ◆ **Menorca** – October 10, 4T named Gold hotel in Arenal Castell, seven nights, half-board, £419 per person, saving £240 per couple.
 - ◆ **Tenerife** – December 13, 3T named in Playa Paraiso, seven nights, all-inclusive, £369 per person.
- Prices correct at time of sending – all are subject to continuing availability and based on maximum occupancy.*

ic to another Yarmouth



glass of wine you won't find anything more beautiful. And if the fog rolls in? Well that just cools everything off."

Still hoping to unearth an East Anglian connection, I asked Bruce whether he knew of any official links between his Yarmouth and ours. One of his colleagues thought Nova Scotia may have hosted a 'Yarmouth International' dinner in the 1980s, but no one I spoke to could remember exact details. Bruce said they hoped one day to forge relationships between all the world's Yarmouths.

"I wish we'd had time to bring Yarmouth, England, and Yarmouth, Maine, and Yarmouth, Massachusetts, into our 250th celebrations. We certainly wish them all well and in the future we hope there will be a tie-in." Just as you probably wouldn't holiday in Great Yarmouth without visiting the Norfolk Broads or exploring Norwich, there is too much to see nearby to remain in Yarmouth for your entire Nova Scotia trip. Follow the Evangeline Trail round the Fundy coast and you'll find French-speaking villages where

wooden clapboard houses proudly fly the Acadia flag (like France's with the addition of a yellow Stella Maris to represent the Virgin Mary, the patron saint of mariners).

In Kejimikujik National Park, a place of spiritual and ancestral importance to the native Mi'kmaq people, you can camp, hike, fish and canoe or, along the coastal edges, watch harbour and grey seals basking on rocks. Families with children may enjoy staying in a cabin at White Point Beach Resort, taking time to kayak on the lake, toast marshmallows over a campfire and feed the resident bunnies.

I loved Cape Forchu Lightstation, 10 minutes' drive from Yarmouth town. Decommissioned due to advances in satellite technology, the applecore-shaped lighthouse stands today as a 75ft symbol of Nova Scotia's cultural and economic bonds to the sea. Tales abound of shipwrecks, storms and former lightkeepers' struggles with kerosene in the days before electricity. You can't climb the tower for safety reasons, but your visit can be amply rewarded with cold lobster sandwiches in the Mug Up Tea Room, which uses produce from Cape Forchu's community garden. If you're lucky, the museum attendant may let you sound the foghorn...

Nova Scotia offers an easier holiday than you

might think. Halifax airport is only a six-hour flight from Gatwick and the mere four-hour time difference keeps jet-lag to a minimum. And while you won't find too many reminders of Great Yarmouth in Yarmouth County, you're sure to refresh your senses and strengthen your ties to the ocean. ■

Between May and October Canadian Affair flies weekly from Gatwick non-stop to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Return economy class fares start from £328 next month. Yarmouth town is a three-hour drive from Halifax, with helpful signposting and relatively little traffic on the wide roads. Log on to canadianaffair.com Choose your decade by staying at Mackinnon-Cann Inn (27 Willow Street, Yarmouth B5A 1V2). Summer 2011 room rates range from \$138-185 Canadian dollars (about £90-120), excluding of 13pc tax – mackinnoncanninn.com or innmanager@eastlink.ca Rudder's Seafood Restaurant & Brew Pub (96 Water Street, Yarmouth B5A 4PG) specialises in local seafood and has its own micro-brewery. Visit ruddersbrewpub.com or rudders@eastlink.ca Useful links – novascotia.com; uk.canada.travel; capeforchulight.com; whitepoint.com; yarmouth250.com