

Charles Summer 25 #11:

The Cabot Trail. Always Worth the Trip.



If you're going to the Maritimes, inevitably people will ask: Are you doing the Cabot Trail? And invariably we will answer: Of course!

Even though we've done it a few times, it never disappoints.



By the time we got to the Cabot Trail, the reality of wildfires had reached the region. In an effort to reduce the possibility of fires set either intentionally or accidentally, the Nova Scotia government closed all trails in the province.

You can imagine how devastated Jim and I were that we wouldn't be able to hike all those trails!



Somehow, we managed to find some joy in our Cabot Trail adventure anyway. Just by looking out our window.



Along with all the stunning views, there are also amusing signs and establishments you'll only find on the Cabot Trail.

When I saw this place, "Sew Inclined", Jim and I agreed that our friend Alan would've loved it!

The state of the establishment made the photo op that much more enticing. So Jim actually turned back so I could get this shot.



Then, not too far along the road, we saw this sign, and realized they'd opened a new shop. It was hard to resist a place with a name like that and the promise of "funky" stuff. So Jim agreed to stop again.



As advertised, the shop was filled with all kinds of "funky" hats, tops and shawls, made by the woman who owned it. But unfortunately, when it came to purchasing ... I didn't feel sew inclined.

We stopped at the Clucking Hen Café and Bakery, which offered more than just yummy baked goods. This set of moose antlers was very popular. There was a lineup after Jim.



They also had this helpful weather guide, written with typical Cape Breton humour:

And of course, the Scottish heritage is evident everywhere.



There were a series of signs like this:



It turned out they were promoting the opportunity to ride in a gondola down Cape Smokey mountain. We wanted to see the spectacular views along the Cabot Trail, but we were happy to see them from the height of Charles' front seat. So, we passed. Our moms didn't mind.

The views really started to get interesting around the time we saw this sign:



That's when you start to see sights like this:







At Neil's Harbour, we saw a beautiful beach just off the road. So, I went to get a closer look ...



There weren't too many people there.



But the ones who were in the water looked like they were having a great time.



Sadly, I hadn't worn my bathing suit, so I could only wade and enjoy the views.



Just a bit further along,
we found a pull-out with
plenty of space for
several vehicles.

When we looked one
way, we saw this.



When we looked the
other way, we saw
this.

We decided to stay.

We weren't the only
ones.



By the time the sun set, there were about 6 vehicles parked in that pull out.



The one right beside us was quite an interesting trailer which, I believe, was a homemade project. I said to Jim it looked like he was hauling his own mancave.



The white motorhome on the right of the above photo was from the Netherlands. We met the couple, Hanna and Jan, and they told us of their incredible journey. Ten months ago, they shipped their RV from the Netherlands to Buenos Aeries! From there they went south to Patagonia, and then drove north - all the way to Alaska! Now THAT's intrepid! We had a lovely chat with them, and I forgive them for assuring Jim we'd have no trouble driving Charles in Europe.

That night, we got a beautiful moonrise...



And in the morning, a lovely sunrise, although you can see that there were signs of smoke in the air.



We drove around a little, appreciating the community.

Neil's Harbour

With its close proximity to abundant fishing grounds, sheltered cove and excellent fish-drying conditions, Neil's Harbour was a popular fishing base for both French and Scottish settlers in the 1700's.

Neil MacLennan, an enterprising merchant from Westmont, saw a growing opportunity with the increase of fishermen in the isolated cove and would sail his vessel laden with dry goods to trade with the fisherman. He became such a regular part of life there that the fisherman began calling it "Neil's Cove" which eventually became "Neil's Harbour"

Between 1871 and 1891, an influx of Newfoundland/ West Country English fishermen swelled the population of Neil's Harbour and New Haven - the neighbouring community - to 430, attributable mainly to declining fish catches on Newfoundland's south coast, the prospect of a better economy, and kinship.



Neil's Harbour, ca. 1960 (Courtesy Nova Scotia Information Services)

There's always colour along the Cabot Trail.





We decided we'd just stay another night. Because why not?
(And we had the place practically to ourselves!)



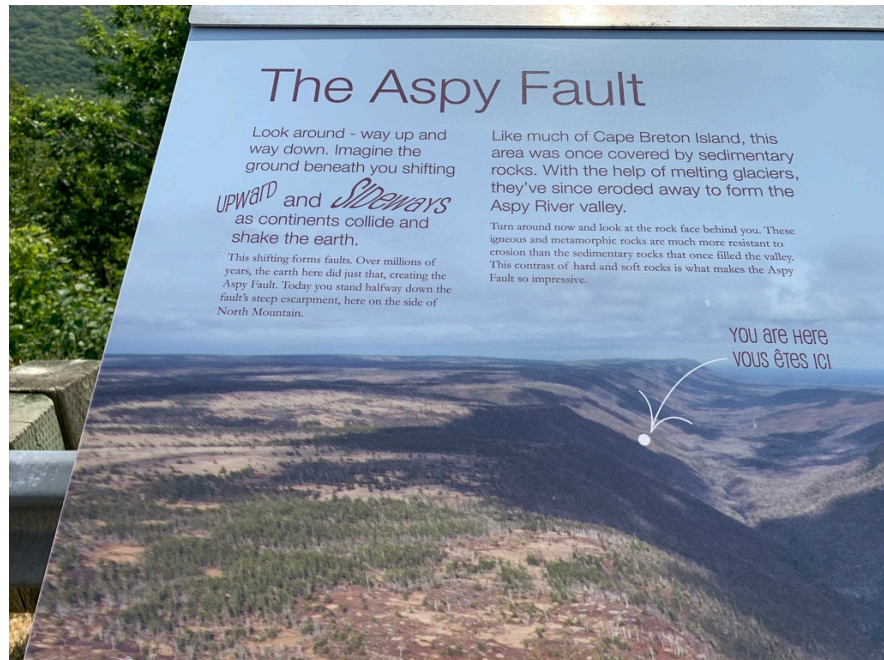
The next day, we did the rest of the famous drive. And as always, it was spectacular.





We stopped every so often to really appreciate a view. Once we got around the northern tip and started down the west side of Cape Breton, the views became quite different.

At this pullout, we discovered (probably not for the first time) that we were on the Aspey Fault, which was probably created when two continental plates collided and pushed the seafloor upwards, also creating the Appalachian Mountains.



Here's what it looks like now:



Still great seascapes.



But much more forested.



And despite all the signs – here, and throughout the Maritimes - never did we see a single live moose. (There was one by the side of the road who had unfortunately not made it to the other side.)



Neither did we didn't see any bears - of either size.



People were often surprised that we would drive the Cabot Trail in Charles. But he was a trooper, and never seemed daunted by the road ahead. Which could have been daunting!



Jim was quite sure that this was the beach where he lost his Bluenose hat a few visits ago. But there was no sign of it.





Just to be safe, he chose to be hatless when he took his sea videos.



Two hours after we started out, with only a few short stops, we still seemed to be a long way from “civilization”.



But soon after this shot was taken, we saw signs that we were approaching it.







Finally, we reached Port Hood, which was famous for a few reasons.



(For those who don't know, he was a hockey player.)

More importantly to us, it is the “Beach Capital of Cape Breton”.



And they loved to brag about it.



The great app, iOverlander, told us there was a spot we could boondock in right by the water. And it was right. Weirdly, we were right across the street from an RV Campground. And we had a much better view of the beach – for free!



The beach was beautiful and very popular. And it was warm enough that I actually went in for a swim.



And on top of all that, we got this:



A perfect close to our Cabot Trail adventure.

The next day we crossed the Canso Causeway, leaving Cape Breton behind. Not long afterward, we received a text from our next door neighbours, Clem, Aaron and Jasper, asking if we were in Cape Breton. They had just arrived. We literally crossed paths with them. A while later, they sent us a photo. The background looked familiar!



Although we were sad our Cabot Trail adventure was over, we had another one ahead of us. We had a ferry to catch!

