Eastern Canada – Great Whales & the Fall Migration

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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Departs
September.

Focus
Birds, mammals and the spectacular colours of the Canadian fall.

Grading
Grade A – Easy.

Dates and Prices
Visit: www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code CAN06).

Highlights:
- Enjoy the spectacular colours of the Canadian ‘fall’
- Whale-watching trips into the Bay of Fundy & St Lawrence River
- Fin, Humpback, Minke, Beluga & Northern Right Whale all possible
- Look for migrating passerines, waders & raptors
- Other likely mammals include Moose, Beaver & Black Bear
- Explore Québec City, a ‘World Heritage Treasure’
- Led by expert local naturalist guides

From top: Fall Colours, Fin Whale & Northern Saw-whet Owl.
Introduction

This tour combines the best of Canada’s eastern provinces of Québec and New Brunswick. The scenery will be outstanding and during the ‘Fall’ the breathtaking myriad of autumn colours is a sight never to be forgotten. We will journey on and alongside one of the greatest rivers in the world and inland, pass by small lakes, their glass-like surfaces acting as a mirror for the dazzling array of autumn colours muted to a warm glow by the setting sun. We have tried to time this tour to coincide with the peak fall colours but it should be noted that this does, of course, vary from year to year and is dependent on the weather conditions experienced over the previous few months.

Since this is also a bird and mammal watching tour, we have tried to balance the timing of the holiday to include both the fall colours and fall migration. In Eastern Canada, passerine and wader migration peaks a couple of weeks earlier than our tour but there should still be plenty of warblers and other species passing during the latter weeks of September, especially if the wind is in the north-west. One advantage of a mid-September start is that, contrary to the waders and passerines, waterfowl migration tends to peak later and so will be in full swing when we set off. In addition, a few of the more northern boreal species, such as owls, Boreal Chickadee and Black-backed Woodpecker should be on the move and we have a better chance of finding such birds during our stay. September is also one of the best months to look for some of the rarer mammal species found in Canada and an excellent time to go in search of Beluga, Fin, Humpback and Northern Right Whales.

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise the best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

We will depart from London Heathrow on a scheduled Air Canada or British Airways flight to Saint John in New Brunswick via a change of aircraft in Toronto. Here we will be met by our tour leaders and transferred to a comfortable hotel, approximately 30 minutes from the airport.
Day 2

Grand Manan Island

Today we will first drive south for approximately one hour – stopping for some birdwatching en route – before making our way by ferry to Grand Manan Island, frequented by John James Audubon, the most famous of North American birdwatchers. Birdwatchers from all over North America come here and for good reason. This jewel in the Fundy Isle network is like stepping back into the past – picturesque fishing villages, spectacular scenery and some of the most exciting birds and animals on Earth. For those birds migrating south, this is a welcome resting and feeding spot but perhaps the most spectacular visitors are the whales, in particular Fin Whale, Humpback Whale and seriously endangered Northern Right Whale.

We should see our first pelagic birds, and perhaps a few cetaceans, from the ferry which takes approximately one and a half hours. These may include Great and Sooty Shearwaters, Atlantic Puffin, Black Guillemot, Razorbill, Common Guillemot, Northern Gannet, Kittiwake, Pomarine and Arctic Skuas, Great Northern Diver (Common Loon) and Red-throated Diver. This is also a good area for Bald Eagle and we may be fortunate enough to see this spectacular bird of prey as we near the ferry docks. It is also not unusual to spot Minke and Fin Whales and Harbour Porpoise from the ferry.

On Grand Manan itself, basalt columns rise dramatically from the sea. These were formed by the rapid cooling and shrinking of lava flows, the result of ancient volcanic activity along the Fundy rift. The island has an extensive system of hiking trails from which one can explore some of the rocky coasts, marshes, hidden coves, sandy beaches, harbours and cool spruce forests. We will stay at either the Marathon Inn or the Inn at Whale Cove during our stay on Grand Manan Island. Once we have checked in, there should be the chance of a few hours birdwatching and our first opportunity to catch up with some of the commoner and with luck, more unusual species, that frequent Grand Manan.

If the winds are from the north-west, the best direction for migrants, the woodlands and scrub-lined fields can be full of birds. Flocks of Blue Jays are a common sight as they migrate south overhead, as are American Robins and the occasional Northern Flicker. We will be on the look-out for warbler flocks which should contain a variety of species. By far the commonest of these will be the Yellow-rumped Warblers, but amongst the flocks of ‘Yellow-rumps’ we may find Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Palm and Magnolia Warblers along with the occasional Yellow Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler and Red-eyed Vireo. Grand Manan is also a rarity hotspot and noted amongst Canadian birdwatchers for its vagrants, indeed a past Naturetrek group found a Lark Bunting, a western American species well outside of its normal range!
Day 3

Today we will spend most of the day on the water in search of whales. A complex of tidal currents deflected upwards by islands and submerged ledges brings nutrient-laden water to the surface creating one of the richest marine ecosystems in the world. The cold water nurtures vast numbers of tiny plants, animals and schools of small fish. We will visit the feeding grounds of Minke, Humpback and Fin Whales along with Harbour Porpoise and, if we are fortunate, perhaps we will see Atlantic White-sided Dolphin or the critically endangered Northern Right Whale. Sightings of Right Whales in the Bay of Fundy have declined in recent years as the animals have shifted their summer feeding grounds to the north, but September is one of the best months to encounter one of these magnificent mammals and, since there may be fewer than 450 left in the world, if we are lucky enough to see one it will truly be a memorable experience.

One of the commonest pelagic birds that summer in the Bay of Fundy is the Great Shearwater and it is not unusual to have hundreds of these beautiful birds skimming past the boat and squabbling for food in the water. Other species we should see include Sooty and Manx Shearwaters, both Arctic and Pomarine Skuas, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Common Guillemot and Puffin, Gannet, Kittiwake, Common Eider, Surf Scoter, Red-necked Grebe and Great Northern Diver. We will return to our inn for a second night on Grand Manan.

Day 4

Today we will concentrate our efforts on the terrestrial birdlife of Grand Manan. We will explore the extensive system of hiking trails that crisscross the island in search of both resident and migrant species. First thing in the morning we will venture the short distance to the northern tip of the island. This is the first point of landfall for migrating passeresines and as such is at its best in the early morning, when it provides a welcome rest-stop for those migrants moving down the coast overnight. If the winds are in the north-west this area can be alive with birds including various warblers, Red-eyed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Flicker, Buff-bellied Pipit, Eastern Peewee, White-crowned, White-throated, Savannah, Lincoln's and Swamp Sparrows, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets.

A small marsh on the western side of the island is another site sure to find its way onto the day’s itinerary. Here we should be able to catch up with a few species of wader which may include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Sanderling, Semi-palmated Plover, Pectoral Sandpiper and Least Sandpiper. As the day moves on we will make our way to the southernmost end of the island. Birds arriving on the northern tip in the early morning travel south and are concentrated at the island’s southern extremity in the afternoon. A couple of hours
here are sure to reap rewards and may include such species as Tennessee, Parula, Blackpoll, Chestnut-sided and Wilson’s Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Baltimore Oriole, Indigo Bunting, Dark-eyed Junco or maybe even a more unusual find such as a Black-backed Woodpecker. Once again we will return to our inn for the evening.

Day 5

Grand Manan Island

We have scheduled a second half day whale/birdwatching pelagic cruise for the morning in order to catch up with any species we missed on our previous outing. A past group were extremely fortunate to see a breaching Basking Shark during this cruise, so we hope we will be as lucky this year! We will get another opportunity to look for all of the species outlined for Day 3, before arriving back on the island early in the afternoon.

The rest of the day we will spend further exploring the many birdwatching sites on Grand Manan itself in search of some of the species we missed yesterday. Other birds we may find include Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Grey Catbird, Rusty Blackbird, Red-tailed or Broad-winged Hawks, American Kestrel or perhaps another Bald Eagle. We will return our inn once again for our final night on Grand Manan.

Day 6

Fundy National Park

We will leave Grand Manan this morning and return by ferry to the mainland, where we will drive north along the Bay of Fundy to Fundy National Park. The trees within the park’s mixed Acadian forests should be starting to turn into their autumnal colours and during the 2-hour drive we should have our first sight of the reds, oranges and golds of the Canadian fall.

The Acadian forests of the Fundy National Park are formed by the blending together of the northern boreal forests with the southern deciduous forests. They are very rich in animal and birdlife including Moose, Beaver, Raccoon, Black-backed Woodpecker, Spruce Grouse and Great-horned Owl. We will stop several times as we drive north through the park and may have time to walk out into the woodlands and bogs around an area known as Caribou Plain.

The evening will find us back in Fundy National Park in search of the Beaver, the world’s second largest rodent and Canada’s national symbol. Beavers become active at dusk and as the light falls leave their lodge to feed and repair their dams. We too will be present at this time and with a bit of patience we have a good chance of seeing this industrious and talented mammal. You should be prepared for a late night tonight, but hopefully sightings of Beaver will more than make up for any lack of sleep! We will be spending the night at a comfortable inn close to Fundy National Park.
Day 7

Lamèque, Isle Miscou

This morning we will visit the stacks, arches and rocky coastline encompassed by the Rocks Provincial Park. Within this are contained the Hopewell Rocks, one of the Bay of Fundy’s most well-known sights. The Hopewell Rocks are made of a soft conglomerate formed around 330 million years ago. Over thousands of years this has been sculpted by the highest tides in the world into a series of caves, arches and curious flowerpot-shaped stacks so called because of the trees which adorn their tops. We will take time to pay a short visit the rocks and (depending on the tide) will either walk the exposed beach or gaze upon the water which surrounds them, turning the stacks into islands.

Our destination today is the town of Lamèque tucked into the far north-eastern corner of New Brunswick. This is a long drive that is liable to take up a good proportion of the day but we should still have time for a spot of birding in the vicinity of our hotel before we leave. The Daley Creek Marsh is well worth a visit and often holds waders, both Blue-winged Teal and the beautiful Wood Duck, along with Pied-billed Grebe and occasionally American Bittern.

As we head north-east we will travel into a landscape shaped by the huge tides of the Bay of Fundy. Here the tides reach their maximum height of 15 plus metres. As the tide ebbs it leaves behind a vast expanse of intertidal mud which in turn blends into extensive saltmarshes and wet meadows. The bay was formed after the melting of the last Ice Age, the rise in sea level allowing ocean tides to flood the banks at the mouth of the bay, setting in motion today’s huge tides, which have increased in height by 15 centimetres each century. Before European settlement, the marshes around the Bay of Fundy were some of the most extensive in the world. What now remains is only a taste of what must have greeted the first Acadian settlers nearly 400 years ago. As well as emptying and filling with the tides, the salt marshes change with the seasons and at the time of our visit, the grasses take on a beautiful reddish brown colour as winter approaches.

Our route eventually takes us out of the influence of the Bay of Fundy and on to the edge of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Depending on the time and distance covered we may have time for several birding stops as we continue north along New Brunswick’s eastern coast. We aim to arrive at the Auberge de Compagnons in the late afternoon to early evening, our base for the next two nights as we explore the Ile Miscou area.

Day 8

Lamèque, Isle Miscou

We will be spending the day on a wonderful and little-known island called Ile Miscou. Jutting out into the Baie des Chaleurs (named by Jacques Cartier and meaning ‘Bay of Warmth’), the island acts as a migrant trap and in the past has caught a wide variety of rare and irregular species such as Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Black-billed Cuckoo and King Eider. Indeed, a previous Naturetrek group found their own selection of unusual birds here including Black Vulture, Franklin’s and Laughing Gulls and Prairie Warbler. During the day we will hope to find Spotted,
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White-rumped, Semi-palmated, Least and Stilt Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitcher, Hudsonian Godwit, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and perhaps Wilson’s Phalarope or Willet. On the Baie des Chaleurs there should be large rafts of Surf Scoter along with smaller numbers of their White-winged and Black cousins. Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes, Goldeneye and Long-tailed Duck are also possible.

The northern tip of the island is the best place for migrants and a site where almost anything could turn up. There are sure to be plenty of Yellow-rumped Warblers around and amongst those there should be a variety of other species such as Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Blackpoll, Yellow, Tennessee and Wilson’s Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos and perhaps Black and White Warbler, American Redstart or Cape May Warbler. Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows are also common in this area, whilst other less regular species include Evening and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanager and Blue-grey Gnatcatcher. After a full day exploring this wonderful island we will return to our auberge in Lamèque for our second night in the area.

Day 9

Carleton

We should have time this morning for a couple of hours birdwatching in the vicinity of our hotel before we pack to begin the first part of our journey to the Parc de la Gaspésie. Our drive today will take approximately three and a half hours and will take us out of New Brunswick and into our second Canadian Province, French speaking Québec. This will also take us into the Gaspésie region, whose history began with the First Nations people. The Micmacs (people of the sea) have lived on the peninsula for over 2,500 years and they were joined by settlers from many different backgrounds, giving the region its unique quality.

We will spend the night in the town of Carleton which overlooks the beautiful Baie des Chaleurs. If time permits we may visit some of the local marshes or woodlands in search of a few waders, waterfowl and other birds.

Day 10

Parc de la Gaspésie

This morning we will complete our drive to the spectacular Parc de la Gaspésie. As we journey north we will pass through a beautiful landscape of rising forested hills bisected by fast flowing rivers. The drive should take us approximately two hours and will take us along a scenic road closely following the Cascapédia River. The Parc de la Gaspésie encompasses part of the mighty Appalachian range of mountains and contains vast tracts of true boreal forests. With the change in habitat comes a corresponding change in animal and birdlife and during our time in the park we will attempt to find some of the characteristic species that inhabit this wilderness such as Pine Grosbeak, Ruffed and Spruce Grouse, Gray (Canada) Jay, Boreal Chickadee and Black-backed Woodpecker.

After checking in to our comfortable hotel in the small town of Sainte-Anne-des-Monts – which sits on the edge of the St Lawrence River and offers easy access to the surrounding forests and hills – we will head out to begin our exploration of this spectacular area.
Day 11

Parc de la Gaspésie

Today we will have a full day of bird and mammal-watching in the Parc de la Gaspésie. Located in the heart of the Gaspé Peninsula, between the St. Lawrence Estuary and the Baie des Chaleurs, this magnificent provincial park, created in 1937, covers 802 square kilometres of mountainous terrain. Two large mountain massifs lie within the park, the Chic-Chocs and the McGerrigle. The Chic-Chocs form the northern end of the Appalachian chain and within them is found Mont Jacques-Cartier, at 1,268 metres the highest peak in Québec. The view from the top of this mountain is quite superb; the vegetation is similar to that found in far north Québec and the region is inhabited by herds of Caribou. The park is the only place in Québec where Caribou, Moose and White-tailed Deer co-exist.

At the lower levels in the park we will explore the coniferous and deciduous trees of the boreal forest, dominated by fir, spruce and birch. Gradually the deciduous trees entirely disappear from the forest and towards the summits, windswept sub-alpine forest takes over. On the peaks, this gives way to meagre tundra vegetation, small arctic bushes, mosses and lichens, including Cladonia, a favourite food of the resident Caribou. The park does not contain many bodies of water; the largest lake, Cascapédia, covers about 145 hectares and the canyoned rivers are fast flowing and cold. Four species of salmonids live in park waters: Brook Trout, Arctic Char, Lake Trout and Atlantic Salmon.

We will particularly be on the lookout for Moose today. The park claims to hold one of the world’s largest populations of Moose and by exploring their favourite areas we will hope to see one, or more. We will spend a second night in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

Day 12

Rivière-du-Loup

Leaving the boreal forests of the Appalachians, we head south-west towards the deciduous woodlands of the mighty St. Lawrence River, one of Canada’s most important migration ‘flyways’. Huge numbers of waterfowl, birds of prey and passerines are funnelled down the St. Lawrence every fall as they head south to their wintering grounds.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the land bordering this huge river contains some of the best birdwatching sites in all of Canada.

En route to Rivière-du-Loup we will visit the Parc du Bic. This beautiful area is located in the heart of a transition zone between the deciduous and boreal forests and so contains a wide variety of bird and plant life. Some rare plants can be found primarily along the rocky capes where the maritime climate encourages their existence. Grey Seals and Harbour
Seals are often observed from the shore and in the sheltered bays it is not unusual to find small flocks of Hooded Merganser, Goldeneye and Goosander. The Bic terrain is interesting because of its alternating capes, rocky headlands, bays and coves and its particular flora. Covering 33 square kilometres, the park is part of the Appalachian region, with the rock formations consisting mainly of clay-slate and limestone conglomerates.

Later, we will explore the extensive salt marshes of Parc Côtière Kiskotuk, including the famed Gros Cacouna Marsh. This marsh is one of the largest cordgrass marshes in southern Québec and is recognised as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. We will take advantage of the two observation towers here and a photography hide to see a mix of migrant waterfowl and waders, perhaps including Red-necked Phalarope, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Stilt, Pectoral, Least and Semi-Palmated Sandpipers.

We will overnight at the Hotel Lavesque situated on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence River and a short distance from downtown Rivière-du-Loup.

**Day 13**

**Tadoussac**

Our destination today is Tadoussac, a small town at the mouth of the Saguenay Fjord. Before we can start the 2-hour drive to Tadoussac, however, we must first cross the St. Lawrence by ferry. The ferry leaves Rivière-du-Loup in the morning and the one and a quarter hour crossing should introduce us to many of the birds and mammals of this area. Birds we may see include our first Snow Geese of the tour, Pomarine and Arctic Skuas, Red-throated and Great Northern Divers and Common Eider. We will especially be on the lookout for the ghostly white Beluga Whales which are occasionally seen from the ferry. Belugas are the only species of cetacean to stay in the St. Lawrence for the whole year, the most southerly point they can be found. Unfortunately, this isolated population has suffered considerably over the past decades, especially from pollution, and is still declining in the St. Lawrence. Even so, we have a very good chance of seeing these beautiful animals both today and during this afternoon’s whale-watch.

The Saguenay Fjord area is spectacular. Here the St. Lawrence and the Saguenay Rivers meet, creating quite a stir and in turn an extremely rich marine ecosystem, one that has been designated as a federal marine park. The fjord of the Saguenay River begins in Saint-Fulgence. Approximately two kilometres wide, it reaches a depth of 270 metres in some places. One hundred kilometres further up the river at Tadoussac, a narrowing of the glacier marks the fjord’s mouth, only allowing a flow of water about 20 metres deep. The relatively warm surface water of the Saguenay River is fresh water which ‘glides’ over a layer of very cold, arctic-like salt water. These unique conditions create a very food-rich environment attracting a wide variety of marine life. The fjord is fed by fresh water from
Lac Saint-Jean and its tributaries; the cold waters are brought by the Labrador Current. Both whales and sea birds are attracted this area to feed. In addition to the Belugas, it is also possible to sight Fin and Minke Whales and occasionally Humpback Whales. Although Blue Whales, thought to be the largest animal to have ever inhabited the Earth, are often found in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and very occasionally venture down to the Tadoussac area; it would be a very fortunate group indeed to sight one of these magnificent creatures.

After lunch we will board our whale-watching boat. During the trip we will go in search of Fin Whales, the second largest animal on the planet and its smaller cousin the Minke Whale. Belugas are also regularly sighted but Humpbacks and especially Blue Whales require a great deal of luck! There should also be plenty of birds to keep us entertained including skuas, Kittiwake, divers, grebes and all three species of scoter. When we arrive back in Tadoussac there should be time to visit the excellent Marine Mammal Interpretation Centre near the marina.

Tadoussac itself has a population of approximately 850 people and is also home to the oldest small wood chapel in North America. We will stay for two nights at the Hotel Beluga, a small hotel on the edge of town.

Day 14

Weather permitting, we will begin today with an early morning visit to a local bird ringing station. Here we can watch the ‘banders’ ring a variety of passerines and explore the surrounding woodland and scrub. Flocks of Shorelarks and Buff-bellied Pipits are a common sight on the beach and if the winds are from the north-west the area can be full of migrants. As well as a wide variety of warblers such as Cape May, Black-throated Green and Parula, we also have a chance of finding Swainson’s, or Grey-cheeked Thrushes, White-crowned, White-throated and Fox Sparrows, Boreal Chickadee, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker or perhaps a roosting Saw-Whet Owl.

The ringing station also monitors migration of Boreal and Northern Saw-whet Owls, and if conditions allow we could choose to return to attend a night banding session where we will learn about owl migration and may be lucky enough to see these, Québec’s smallest owls, in the hand.

As the day starts to heat up we will move to a high vantage spot to watch for migrating birds of prey. Thousands of Broad-winged, Red-tailed and Sharp-shinned Hawks migrate through Tadoussac in the fall along with smaller numbers of other species such as Bald Eagles, Goshawks, Cooper’s Hawks and Peregrines. On days when the wind is in the north-west the Saguenay rivals any spot for hawk migration in North America and we will be sure to spend time watching them pass overhead. We will spend the rest of the day exploring the woodland and scrub along the St.
Lawrence in search of migrant passerines and birds of prey. Other species to look out for include Black-backed Woodpecker, Osprey, Dark-eyed Junco, Hermit Thrush, Grey Jay and parties of migrating Snow Geese.

Late afternoon we will visit the Fjord-du-Saguenay National Park to the west of Tadoussac for an evening excursion to a forest watchtower to view Black Bears. At this time of year, bears are preparing for hibernation and are very active, so our chances of seeing them as they emerge from the forest to feed on berries below the watchtower are excellent!

Day 15

Today we travel south-west along the shores of the St. Lawrence to the Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area. Cap Tourmente was acquired by the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1969 to protect one of the main ‘refuelling stops’ for migrating Snow Geese and was recognised as a wetland of international importance (a Ramsar site) in 1981. This is one of the finest areas in the province for birdwatching and attracts a wide variety of migrating songbirds. We will be a little early for the main movement of Snow Geese, but during our time at the reserve, we will hope to see hundreds, maybe thousands, of these beautiful birds congregating on the fields and marshes to rest and feed before moving on to their wintering ground in the United States.

For those in our party interested in the flora, an outstanding feature of Cap Tourmente is the huge variety of vegetation found in a relatively limited area. The main species of the lowlands are Sugar Maple, Beech, White Birch, Eastern Hemlock, Eastern White Cedar, Balsam Poplar, Red Ash, White Ash, Trembling Aspen, Large-tooth Aspen, White Elm and Red Oak. Towards the summit of Cap Tourmente, Black Spruce, Balsam Fir, Red Spruce and Jack Pine appear. Vegetation on the inter-tidal marsh is primarily American Bulrush, Wild Rice and Arrowhead. The bulrush rhizome makes up an important part of the Snow Goose diet. The coastal marsh is dominated by goldenrods, Shore Horsetail, Purple Loosestrife, Spotted Jewelweed and Cow Vetch. Very dense growth of Sweet Gale is found in some areas of the marsh. On the coastal plain the fields are sown with grain and at the edges of the fields shrubs such as willows, Speckled Alder and cherries grow.

Mammals most commonly seen in the area include the Red Squirrel, Eastern Chipmunk, and Woodchuck. Other species include Beaver, Black Bear, White-tailed Deer, Raccoon, Long-tailed Weasel and Striped Skunk although most of these are highly secretive and unlikely to be observed. Frogs and toads are among the most numerous amphibian residents. Spring Peeper, Wood Frog and American Toad live in the woods, whilst Bullfrog, Green Frog, Mink Frog and Northern Leopard Frog inhabit streams and ponds. The Blue-spotted Salamander and
Eastern Redback Salamander live under rocks and fallen logs. The Common Garter Snake is the only reptile identified to date within the area.

From Cap Tourmente we will complete our journey to Québec City. En route we will pass the amazing Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, with its eye-catching silver coloured roof and spire, so typical of the province. The present Basilica dates from 1923 and was built after fire destroyed the original. The first chapel was built on this site in 1658 and the Basilica now attracts pilgrims from all over the world. We will also pass the impressive waterfall at Parc de la Chute-Montmorency, which is found surprisingly close to the city. Higher than Niagara Falls, in winter it provides a true challenge to those seeking adventure as they attempt to scale the wall of ice it becomes.

On arriving in the beautiful city of Québec we will drive the short distance to our hotel located near the heart of the old walled city.

Day 16

We will have the morning to explore the city before we transfer to Montréal for our flight home. Founded as a fur trading post in 1608, Québec City, the cradle of French civilisation in North America, is today a busy seaport, cultural centre and provincial capital. It must surely rank as one of the most beautiful cities in the world with its uninterrupted views of the St. Lawrence River and its narrow streets rising steeply from the port to form a winding maze inside the city walls, bordered by brightly painted houses, museums and boutiques. In the autumn, the city is a riot of colour with vivid baskets of flowers hanging from the buildings. There is much of historical interest to attract the visitor and the city gives the feeling of having stepped back in time, as one wanders the narrow alleys which echo to the sound of horse-drawn calèches.

Québec City (meaning ‘where the river narrow’ in the Algonquin language) is the only fortified city in North America and is perched atop Cap Diamant, a massive headland dominating the majestic waters of the St. Lawrence River. In recognition of its invaluable historic wealth, UNESCO proclaimed Old Québec City a World Heritage Treasure in 1985 – the only North American city to be so honoured. Filled with vast green parks, the cradle of New France proudly displays its age-old buildings, testimonial to its French and English origins. The Plains of Abraham (Battlefields Park) also lie within the city limits and mark the spot where, on 13th September 1759, Wolfe (British) defeated Montcalm’s French troops. This battle was the most famous battle in Canadian history and resulted in France losing control of the New World.

After lunch we will have to bid farewell to Québec City and drive for three hours south-west to Montréal’s Dorval airport to connect with our Air Canada or British Airways flight back to London.
Day 17

Our overnight transatlantic flight is due to land at London’s Heathrow Airport early to mid-morning.

Grading

Grade A - Easy to moderately strenuous. We will be viewing wildlife from vehicles and on foot. Most of the trails are well maintained on relatively easy terrain, but some can be rough and steep in places. As such this tour is most suitable for those with an average level of fitness who enjoy walking. Early starts will be encouraged and there will be several late nights.

Weather

The weather in New Brunswick and Quebec is normally pleasant at this time of the year, with average temperatures in the mid to high teens Centigrade. It can get quite chilly in the evenings, however, and early morning frost is a possibility, especially in the hills. As with the UK, however, periods of rain and wind are always possible in the autumn and should be expected and prepared for!

Food & accommodation included in the price

We use a mix of comfortable hotels, auberges and motels, all rooms having private facilities. Single occupancy can be secured for the supplement cost outlined on our website and in our brochure. Breakfasts are included in the tour cost, lunches, dinners and drinks are not included (see below).

Please note that the accommodation outlined above may - very occasionally - need to be amended. Replacement hotels will always be of the same standard as the ones outlined in the itinerary and will in no way affect your holiday. Should we have to implement any changes to the above we will notify you as soon as possible.

Extra Expenses

You will need to budget for just the following additional expenses on this tour:

- We have chosen to include breakfasts only; lunches and dinners will be payable locally. This allows each group member to order according to their own appetite each day, rather than taking on three course set menus with transatlantic-sized portions for every meal! We suggest budgeting for around C$20 per day for lunch and C$40 per day for dinner; approximately C$60 in total per person per day would be sensible. Drinks will be extra.

- Souvenirs, tips, any necessary visas and all items of a personal nature are also at your own expense.
Tour focus

This is a general natural history holiday focusing on the birds, mammals and other wildlife of eastern Canada. The tour is also timed (weather permitting) for the autumn colours.

Guiding

This tour will be guided by expert local naturalist guides (Adam Dudley and Jane Dixon) who will meet the group on arrival into Saint John and leave at Montreal Airport at the end of the tour. This holiday will not be accompanied by a Naturetrek tour leader from the UK.

Your safety & security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/canada or telephone 0870 6060290 prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

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