10 Places to Visit in Newfoundland

This list aims to provide students of Memorial University with suggestions of places to visit throughout the Island of Newfoundland. For accessibility purposes, this list includes locations within St. John’s and surrounding areas, along with places outside of the city. From historic sites to scenic views, these places will have students learn and admire what Newfoundland has to offer. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, restrictions may be put in place at these locations in an attempt to ensure the safety of all tourists.

1. Colony of Avalon, Ferryland

Located on the Southern Shore of the Island, an hour drive from Memorial’s main campus, the Colony of Avalon has a lot to offer tourists looking to learn more about Newfoundland’s early settlement period in the 17th century. Once a four-acre settlement started by Sir David Kirke, this site has undergone multiple stages of habitation, as
shown through the archaeological remains uncovered at the site. Some original structures include the Mansion House, Brewery, and Forge.

At the Visitation Centre, you will choose either the guided or self-guided tour, which will take you through the Exhibit, Archaeology Lab, the Archaeological Site, the recreated 17th Century Kitchen, and the Gardens. End your day off with lunch at the Ferryland Lighthouse Picnic or the Tetley Tea Room by The Sea. Now under the direction of Memorial University’s Barry Gaulton, the site is the perfect place for those interested in the Island’s rich history. For more information, visit http://colonyofavalon.ca.

2. MUN Botanical Garden

Memorial University’s Botanical Garden is spread across a 100-acre nature reserve, making it the province’s premier botanical garden. It is located within Pippy Park at 306 Mount Scio Road, ten minutes from the University Centre. This is an excellent place for those who are interested in plant life and nature, and is easily accessible by bus, walking, or driving.

Here, you will find natural trails leading you through the boreal forest, a large cultivated garden with native and exotic plants, vegetable gardens, and a greenhouse. If you are looking for an afternoon outing, The Field Centre contains a gift shop full of local crafts and gardening giftware, as well as the Garden Café serving lunches and treats with art shows throughout the seasons. For more information, visit https://www.mun.ca/botgarden/visit/.
3. Cape Spear

Shortly located outside of the city, this National Historic Site is a geographical landmark for being the most easterly point in North America. “If you stand here, your back to the sea, the entire population of North America stretches out in front of you. And there’s nothing behind you until Ireland” (NewfoundlandLabrador.com).

This is the location of the province’s oldest surviving lighthouse built in 1836, which was replaced by the new lighthouse tower in 1955 that was constructed nearby. Below the 19th century lighthouse are the remnants of Fort Cape Spear – the World War II coastal defence battery operated by Canadian and American soldiers guarding St. John’s from German U-Boats. As well, the East Coast Trail system offers a moderate hiking trail stretching from Cape Spear to Maddox Cove, although a closer destination is found at North Head to be the perfect picnic location. For more information, visit https://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/top-destinations/cape-spear.

4. The Rooms

Built on top of the pre-existing historical site of an 18th century military fort, Fort Townshend, The Rooms became Newfoundland’s premier cultural facility after opening to the public in 2005. It houses the province’s most extensive art gallery, archives, and museum that expands four
floors with a total of thirteen exhibitions to bring history, heritage, and artistic expression to those looking to immerse themselves in all things Newfoundland.

For students with a valid student ID, the admission fee is $6.50 and includes access to the Galleries, Exhibitions, and Tours. However, The Rooms offers ‘Free Student Friday’ to all post-secondary students with a valid ID for admission to all exhibition galleries! Feeling hungry? The Red Oak Café, on level four, offers traditional Newfoundland food with an exciting twist for no admission fee required. For more information on planning a trip to The Rooms, visit https://www.therooms.ca.

5. Northern Bay Sands

In the mood for a relaxing day dedicated to the sounds of the ocean, the warmth of the sun, and fun for family and friends? Northern Bay Sands, a popular beach and camping grounds, is one hour and a half drive from the University. Once declared a provincial park, this privately-owned beach is kept clean thanks to the staff who own and operate the land.

In addition to the ocean, the beach has two freshwater pools (pictured above) and close to 50 campsites for those interested in spending the night. In walking distance of the beach is ‘Hogan’s,’ a staple of the surrounding community with a liquor store, take-out, restaurant, and post office. For those interested in an extended stay, there are cottages, a laundromat, and a bar close to the beach as well. For more information, visit https://www.northernbaysands.ca.
6. Fogo Island

This island off the rock is one of immense popularity to tourists all over the world who wish to enjoy great food, views, history, and hospitality. The Island of Fogo, a five-hour drive and ferry ride away from St. John’s, is the largest offshore island of Newfoundland.

Fogo is popular for being one of four corners of the world (Brimstone Head), being home to the world-famous Fogo Inn, and the strategically placed Marconi Wireless Station in 1911. Eat breakfast, dinner, or lunch at any of the local restaurants, including Bang Belly, Scoffs, Tilting Cup, and Vanessa’s. Although the Inn is a little on the pricey side, stay at one of the many affordable vacation rentals that are available while you enjoy everything that the island has to offer. For more information, visit https://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/top-destinations/fogo-and-change-islands.

7. Admiralty House

Located within the City of Mount Pearl, the Admiralty House Communications Museum was originally constructed in 1915 as a top-secret H.M. Wireless Station for the British Royal Navy. Fascinatingly, this is the final of 11 identical stations around the world that is still standing.

Students will learn about the role that the station played during the First World War, the tragedy of the S.S. Florizel, and the history of Mount Pearl. As well, the gardens that surround
the museum is home to many species of flowers and plants; a great place for photos and pictures.
Although not all of the artifacts are authentic to the location, every piece has been collected and is representative of the same period. For more information, visit
http://admiraltymuseum.ca/admission/.

8. Bell Island

Once known for its iron ore mine that closed in 1966, Bell Island lies just off the shore of Conception Bay South in Conception Bay. A quick drive and ferry ride will have students beginning their trip near the popular Dick’s Seaview Lounge and Restaurant that has a big menu and excellent food.

The drive around the island only takes 20 minutes, allowing plenty of time for exploring. Stop by a well-preserved 200-year-old graveyard that overlooks the sea, take a tour of the mines, hike to “The Bell,” and visit the Lightkeeper’s Café. As well, residents of the island offer tourists the chance to experience a haunted walking tour that showcases Bell Island’s folklore. For more information, visit http://www.tourismbellisland.com/index.html#a.

9. La Manche

Translated to “the sleeve,” La Manche was named for the shape of the harbour in which a small community of fishermen had settled in the 19th century on the southern shore of the island. Only an hour south of St. John’s, the hike to the La Manche Village is rated as easy with only 1 hour
of walking there and another back. The easy walk allows hikers to enjoy nature and the destination even better. At the old village is a small freshwater hole, perfect for swimming in, a 50m wooden suspension bridge (pictured) that crosses the river leading into the harbour, and foundational remains of the buildings from the settlement period that lasted until 1966. This is a great place for family and friends to enjoy an afternoon of hiking, swimming, and a picnic. For more information, visit https://www.gov.nl.ca/tcij/parks/p-lm/.

10. Gros Morne

 Probably the most visited place in the summer of 2020 by residents of the province and those included in the Atlantic bubble, Gros Morne National Park offers breathtaking views and geology that can be found nowhere else. Eroded remnants of the west coast’s mountain range were formed 1.2 billion years ago and is now the second-largest Atlantic Canadian national park.

Gros Morne has a variety of places to stay and things to do for tourists who are interested in experiencing this amazing place. Although it is mostly known for its abundance of hiking trails, people can also head to the Wildlife Museum (Rocky Harbour) and the Marine Station (Norris Point). For more information, visit http://www.grosmorne.com.