

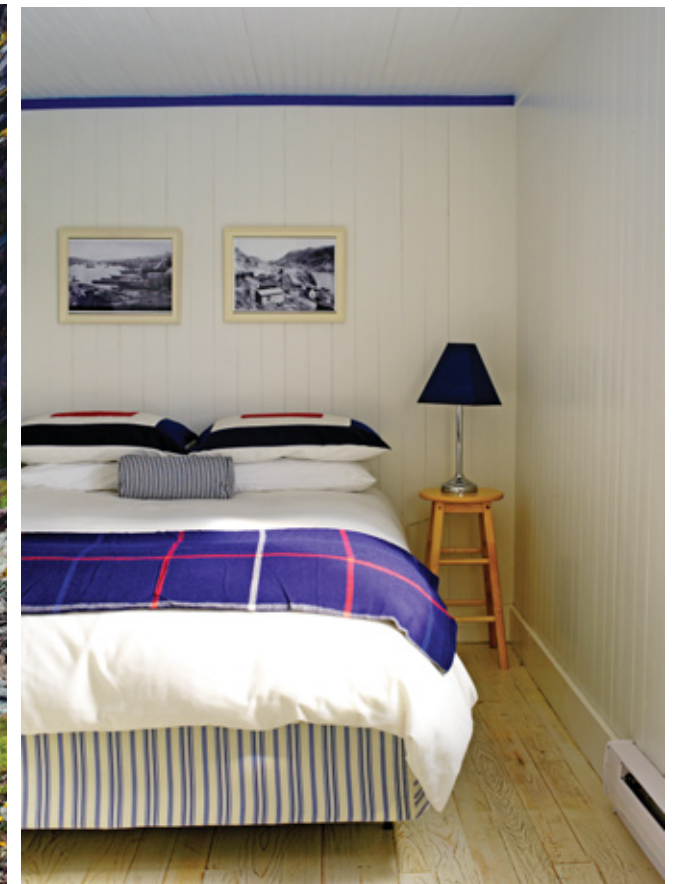
TRAVEL *Back*

If you want to experience Newfoundland the way it is, and was, take a self-guided tour with CapeRace Cultural Adventures.

By Jacqueline deMontravel

Travel is more than ordering room service in a bathrobe and picking at your continental breakfast in bed. If you really want to engage with the community and become accepted as a local, sign up for a CapeRace experience in Newfoundland, Canada. The team at CapeRace doesn't want you to just be a camera-snapping tourist; they want to help you build a lifelong connection with your destination, whether that means bringing you to witness a puffin snatching a fish out of the water or helping you to absorb the region's brand of life.





There are a variety of tours to choose from, all of which are equipped with a car, personalized tour book and homes in different locales. The residences are handsomely appointed but not in the Grand Hyatt style; they're more reminiscent of that beach cottage your cool friend let you stay in for the weekend. Decked out in seaside colors and equipped with shelves of books, clotheslines for the laundry, vintage bicycles and fishing rods, it's like a visit to Grandma's place on the water but updated by a hot designer.

Ken Sooley founded the operation, which he runs with his sister Sharon. They renovated and designed the homes, some of which have been in their family, with the help of other family members and locals. Hipditch House, St. John's + Anchor House, El-liston, Bonavista Peninsula, for exam-

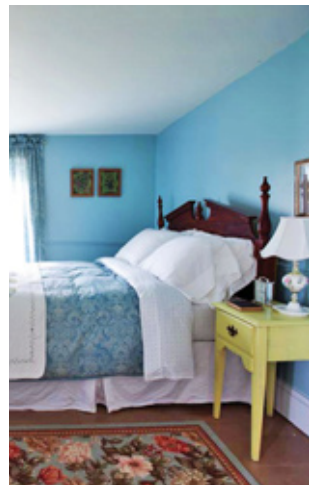
ple, showcase their attention to genuine regional detailing. Fishermen's families lived in these coastal Newfoundland homes in the early part of the 20th century. "Ken and I specifically and determinedly set out to create a sense of history and authenticity, in a comfortable yet simple way, so that a stay in any one of the houses sets our guests not only in the middle of a real community, but also gives them a sense of history and place," says Sharon. "We try to 'restore' rather than 'renovate,' and where we cannot restore, we use labor, materials and designs that reflect the history of the house itself."

The homes' prime value is the wonderful view they afford of the harbor and city, which influenced the style and use of windows. Ken wanted to capture the original cobbling of room additions that took place over the homes' 100-year history, which resulted in multiple ceiling heights. There is a feeling of being in an old ship with the different levels and beadboard ceilings. "It ties in well with the neighborhood's fishing heritage. The neighborhood is one of the oldest in the city, and St. John's is the oldest city in North America and is steeped in history, romance and adventure," Sharon says.

TAKE IT HOME

Ken's tips on getting the look

- **An eclectic mix of furnishings that are not too trendy adds to the timeless atmosphere.** When time period is important, we use locally sourced accessories such as glassware, pictures and vintage appliances that are representative of the time and place.
- **I avoid a number of great new furnishing designs** because they are too visible in today's media and would take away from the atmosphere we're trying to create.
- **We also have to use furnishings that are affordably replaceable** because of the wear resulting from frequent tourist stays. It's important to keep everything fresh, so items with slipcovers or replaceable seats, such as director's chairs, are important. We look for items that are widely available.
- **There is also the aspect of "previously owned" items.** We try to avoid reproduction items where possible. If the used item is in good condition and clean, it's acceptable to guests and adds a higher level of authenticity.
- **I am always on the lookout for furniture that will fit into our cottages.** Most of them have evolved over the last five years. We move pieces around from one house to the next until they find their proper home. We have a garage full of items with no destination that will eventually fit a requirement.
- **I like bright colors that create contrast.**



KEN'S ST. JOHN'S HISTORY LESSON

St. John's is sometimes called the place where Dublin meets San Francisco. The province's capital and largest center is a big city that manages to feel like a small town. It's a modern city with its fishing roots showing. St. John's, with its tumultuous romantic history, makes it one of the best tourist destinations in Canada. The oldest city in North America and Britain's first overseas colony, St. John's has been called the birthplace of the British Empire. It's also a place of comedy and Celtic music. It is where visiting businessmen rub shoulders with actors, musicians, crafts people, writers and filmmakers. The Battery neighborhood is located at the base of Signal Hill, right in the city of St. John's. With fantastic hiking and walking, delicious restaurants and an ecosystem that attracts rare and unique birds, St. John's has a lot to offer.

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LOCAL ATMOSPHERE

Treatments that reflect the region

- **We use pine clapboard and place the rough side out.** When painted, it has a very rough feel, which accomplishes both a great textured look and longevity in the paint adhesion, which is important in the rough ocean climate.
- **We use bold colors. According to locals, St. John's houses are traditionally colorful** because the residents used leftover paint from the fishing boats. True or false, the result is a fantastic multicolored city.
- **We adhere to historical architectural standards whenever we can.** While it's not always possible because of the many restorations and alterations these old houses see, we do manage to capture the look and feel of the street.
- **Garage sales and secondhand stores are ideal venues for special pieces,** which can be painted, upholstered or refurbished for an easy and affordable update.
- **When you acquire your property, don't throw out items you deem to be trinkets and trash until the project has been completed.** Some of these items may be unrecognized gems that can link your newly restored house with the past. For example, old and dated pictures of the Queen are found in many Newfoundland cottages. They look amazing and reinforce the perception of the time period we try to recreate. They also act as a reminder of Newfoundland's history and are a wonderful conversation piece for the curious traveler.

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