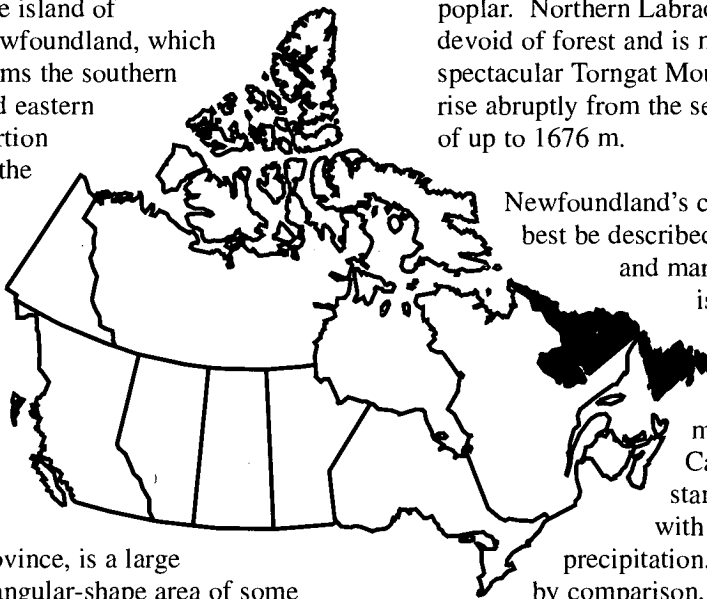


# Newfoundland and Labrador

## The Land

Nestled into the northeast corner of North America, facing the North Atlantic, is Newfoundland, Canada's most easterly province. Lying between the 46th and 61st parallels, the province consists of two distinct geographical entities: Newfoundland and Labrador.

The island of Newfoundland, which forms the southern and eastern portion of the



province, is a large triangular-shape area of some 112 000 km<sup>2</sup>, while the province's total area is 405 720 km<sup>2</sup>. Located at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, the island is about halfway between the centre of North America and the coast of western Europe. The island of Newfoundland is separated from the Canadian mainland by the Strait of Belle Isle in the north and by the wider Cabot Strait in the south. The mainland, Labrador, is bordered by northeastern Quebec. Approximately two and a half times as large as the island, it remains a vast, pristine wilderness, where the northern lights, or *aurora borealis*, flicker over the largest caribou herd in the world.

The province's coastline, stretching over more than 17 000 km, is varied and scenic with its bold headlands,

deep fiords and countless small coves and offshore islands. The interiors of both Labrador and Newfoundland have a rolling, rugged topography, deeply etched by glacial activity and broken by lakes and swift-flowing rivers. Much of the island and southern and central Labrador is covered by a thick boreal forest of black spruce and balsam fir mixed with birch, tamarack and balsam poplar. Northern Labrador is largely devoid of forest and is marked by the spectacular Torngat Mountains, which rise abruptly from the sea to heights of up to 1676 m.

Newfoundland's climate can best be described as moderate and maritime. The island enjoys winters that are surprisingly mild by Canadian standards, though with a high rate of precipitation. Labrador, by comparison, has the cold winters and brief summers characteristic of the Canadian mid-North.

## The History

The central region of the island of Newfoundland was once the home of the now extinct Beothuk Indians. The first Europeans to visit Newfoundland were Norsemen, who arrived in the late 10th century. (The Norse settlement at l'Anse aux Meadows was the world's first cultural discovery location to receive recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.) Other early visitors, the Basques, Portuguese, Spanish, British and French, staged fishing expeditions in the 16th century and probably even earlier.

In 1497, the Italian seafarer Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) went to investigate what lay in the northern section of the western Atlantic. John Cabot landed on the island on June 24, 1497, on the feast of St. John the Baptist. Cabot called the new land "St. John's Isle" in honour of the saint, and claimed it for Henry VII of England, his patron and employer.

Anglo-French colonial warfare shaped the history of Newfoundland during the 1600s and 1700s. France, already well-established on the mainland of Eastern Canada, began to make claims to parts of Newfoundland. In 1662, France established a fort and colony at Placentia, despite protests from British merchants and fishermen. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 ended a long period of raids and skirmishes by both nations, and reconfirmed British sovereignty over Newfoundland and the fishing banks.

The people of Newfoundland were granted the right to vote for an elected assembly in 1832 and, after much debate, Newfoundland was given responsible government in 1855. In 1865, Newfoundland postponed the decision on whether to join the Dominion of Canada. Following World War II, the question of Newfoundland's future status became an issue once again. It was decided to hold a public referendum on the subject and, in 1948, Newfoundlanders voted in favour of joining the Canadian Confederation. Newfoundland became Canada's newest province on March 31, 1949.

## The People

The province's present population of 570 000 is largely descended from settlers from southwestern England and southern Ireland, who immigrated