

Fin Perry, the editor of *The Cruising Guide to The Labrador*, provides this synopsis of the Labrador coast; cruising from Greenland south.

We made the passage from Isafjordur in Iceland to East Greenland in late July 2004, and couldn't get within thirty miles of the coast, nor could we find a way into Prinz Christian Sund. We spent a night hove to off Kap Farvel before happily finding our way into Nanortalik. From there we reached across the Labrador Sea to Cartwright encountering no sea ice and no bergs (again—late July). In mid-July 2006 we did another cruise from Cape Breton up to the west coast of Greenland making landfall at Paamiut. From there we made our way north to Nuuk, thence through much fog and various remote anchorages up to Disko Bay, around the Nussuaq Peninsula and into Uummannaq Fjord, before turning around, and heading for Baffin around the 5th or 6th of August.

The presence of sea ice and bergs are ever varying factors in route selection. In early August 2006, we found no sea ice in Davis Strait with a few remnants just retreating off Cape Dyer on Baffin. From there south, only big bergs were present. Shortly after landfall at Baffin, we lost all wind there, and took the opportunity to look around, finding several anchorages in Hare Bay north of the Cumberland Peninsula. It was a good adventure as Baffin seems even more forbiddingly remote and uncharted than East Greenland.

As we made our way south the wind picked up to a small gale as we crossed the mouth of Hudson Strait. We rounded the west side of the Button Islands and Killinik Island to make our way into the very snug refuge of Mission Cove at Port Burwell at the far northern end of Labrador. Port Burwell is also at the western end of McLellan Strait a narrow passage through which passes twice daily the twenty foot tidal difference between Ungava Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Timing is critical to making this passage, but well worth the calculus, and apparently easy even for a yahoo amateur like me. The Cruising Guide to the Labrador has two pages of intelligence on making this passage, all of which is worth following.

From McLellan Strait, one can visit the remote basin of Bowdoin Harbour on the east side of Killinik Island just below Cape Chidley. There are various harbours and remote refuges heading south from here along a sheltered inside passage, the charting for which all seems very good, until one is back out to sea at Cape White Handkerchief. Two spots worth mentioning are Martin Bay on the easterly peninsula of which the crew of a German U boat set up an automated weather reporting station in 1943 (one can google it), and Sea Plane Cove, a broad and sublime basin from which Dr. Alexander Forbes of Boston explored and mapped the Torngat Mountains by air in 1936 and 37.

There ensue multiple fjords and anchorages going south, all of which invite exploration and are well covered in the Guide – Razorback Fjord, Eclipse Sound, Nachvak Fjord, Ramah, and Saglek. Saglek, in particular, is not to be missed, but does take some time. Saint Johns Bay here is the summer HQ of the Torngat Mountains National Park

occupied by scientists, rangers, students, and tourists. One can get a meal ashore here and fuel – all at understandably exorbitant prices. One can also register as a visitor to the Park here, a requirement which should be done on-line in advance.

Continuing south, one next might visit the partially restored Moravian Mission settlement at Hebron, interesting on a number of levels for the Inuit-led restoration, the Moravian – Inuit relationship, and for the hard-learned lessons of federal and provincial government efforts to manage society.

Mugford Tickle begins a relatively sheltered inside route into Port Manvers Run down to the first town one will encounter – Nain. Nain is a marvelous kind of frontier community containing a potent mix of scoundrels, profiteers, losers, winners, peace keepers, trouble-makers, artists, tourists, and government officials – all mostly just trying to make their way in a very remote location. Nain is not to be missed, if only because you might be desperate for fuel by then.

From Nain, one will pass through a series of archipelagoes and anchorages until reaching Cape Harrigan, then another series of archipelagoes until Makkovik. Given your timing in early to mid-July, Makkovik may well be the most northerly landfall you will be able to make. This is not bad (unless the weather is – a northeasterly can make the wharf there untenable) because the Makkovik fish plant is as close to a yacht club one will find in north Labrador. Water, fuel, showers, laundry, and wi-fi are all available in this friendly place. The weather for flying also tends to be better here than at Nain, so crew changes can be a bit more predictable.

Leaving Makkovik, one can choose inside or outside depending on wind and schedule. Once past Quaker Hat one leaves the Inuit part of Labrador in favor of the Newfie Coast below Hamilton Inlet. Here one finds more greenery, more anchorages, a plethora of abandoned fishing communities, and a couple of interesting old whaling stations burned and rusted into astonishing architectural wonders. (Keep in mind that “abandoned” is a relative term. Lots of former residents come out to these communities in the summer so picking up artifacts may be more like carrying off some one’s actual utensils). Cartwright is useful for provisioning (including liquor which is more or less unattainable to the north of there). The Guide is good on describing the multiple other opportunities for anchoring.

A last stop might be at Battle Harbour, a lovely island at the tip of southeast Labrador, and a good jumping off spot to head across the Strait of Belle Isle for Saint Anthony, NL. Battle is a restored historic community of private and museum structures serving a tourist trade of those intrepid enough to find their way there. It is pretty, remote, and friendly. Unfortunately, there is a big new wharf building project there scheduled for summer 2018, so it is not clear wharfage will be available at all times. Anchoring is not realistic. Best to google Battle Harbour and connect with Peter Bull who runs the place for more guidance.

Sea ice should be gone south of Cape Harrigan by mid-July, but you never know. There will definitely be a lot of bergs for all of July. They make their way down the Labrador shore all month until fetching up in Notre Dame Bay in Newfoundland.

Making a point to visit a least one Inuit community seems important. The cultural experience of this ancient civilization has always been my favorite part of visiting Nunatsiavut. Comparisons with the Greenlandic people are interesting, as are the variations in government policy between Nunatsiavut, Newfoundland, and Canada, and *Kalaallit Nunaat and Denmark*.

If one is lucky enough to cruise the coast north of Nain, it is most likely a polar bear or two will be sighted. There is much discussion amongst yachtsmen about carrying firearms for protection. I have never had one in three different cruises up and back. We've gone ashore, looked around, and been careful to pay attention to our surroundings. We've always seen bears from the boat which to me is the way to see them. As a matter of law, firearms are forbidden on shore in Torngat National Park. If expecting to be in a place to encounter bears, one would do well to google the pamphlet put out by Parks Canada on dealing with bear encounters.

On clearing into Canada, I'm not sure what to say. In 2004 coming from Greenland, we made a landfall at Cartwright. The Mounties there tried to persuade us to go all the way to Goose Bay to clear in. Ultimately they relented and called in our information. In 2006, the same Mountie had been transferred to our "landfall" that year at Nain. He had no trouble clearing us in then. In 2012, again coming from southwest Greenland, we cleared in with the Mounties in Makkovik. I'm never sure how legitimate these events are. We received no formal cruising permit such as one would in a true port of entry. As in many countries (other than the US), these formalities are observed in more or less rigor depending on place, time, and I suppose, experience with various actors in yachts. In each case mentioned, we did get formal permits from Sydney, NS once tied up down in Baddeck in the Bras D'Or Lakes.

Lastly, there is a brand new edition of *the Cruising Guide to the Labrador* out this year. Please plan to pick up a copy.