

The Lure of the East Coast Trail

— First Place 2007 Amory Adventure Winners

BY THE OAKRIDGE 148th VENTURERS, CALGARY, AB

Every year, hopeful Venturer companies send in a log containing their Amory Adventure trips to the national office competition. Some hike, some canoe, some travel far and others climb to new heights. Each trip challenges the Venturers to plan, prepare and achieve their dream. When you read of their adventures, what is so impressive is that these trips are organized by youth aged 14 – 17, with only minimal assistance from their advisors. This is such a story — a story that took eight Venturers and four advisors halfway across Canada to achieve.

From Calgary to Newfoundland

When it came to a vote, the East Coast Trail was selected for many reasons: an opportunity to explore a part of the country never before seen, a chance to fly in an airplane, a challenge to test our wilderness skills and knowledge and most important of all, it sounded like fun! We immediately assigned the necessary roles for such a large undertaking; food, trip organization, gear and clothing and photography.

When you are planning to fly such a far distance, you need a lot of money, so we started fundraising immediately. A ski trip to Bryant creek, a Moose Mountain pre-hike and a five day hike on the Rockwall Trail prepared us for the challenging terrain to come. Busy with completing our tasks and getting organized, before we knew it, it was time to leave.

St. John's, NL, July 13, 2007

It was Friday the 13th, not a good omen. To our pleasure, the trip from Calgary to St. John's was a smooth one and we arrived with plenty of time to find the University campus we were staying at for the next two nights. After dinner, we walked down to the harbour, where we experienced night life in Newfoundland. Walking down George Street was a riot — music and lights surrounded us and everyone was happy.

St. John's, NL, July 14, 2007

Today we planned to explore St. John's, purchase last minute items and find Signal Hill. The views from Signal Hill were breathtaking. The first thing you saw was the sun glinting off the glassy surface of the ocean which seemed to melt into the sky. St. John's, in all its colourful entirety was spread below. It really was spectacular and we couldn't imagine being here with any other group of people.



HITTING THE TRAIL

Day One — Fort Amherst to Blackhead town

Our beginning point was directly across from Signal Hill. A steep climb in extremely hot temperatures did not put us in the greatest of moods. Discovering that our water filter was dysfunctional, reducing the amount of water we had available to drink, didn't help our mood either. We decided to camp near the town of Blackhead, only 10.7 km from where we had started. On the plus side, our campsite had an amazing view of the ocean, St. John's and Signal Hill, reminding us of how little distance we had actually covered. The sight of our first whale in the small bay below us was a good omen for better things to come.

Day Two — Blackhead to Maddox Cove

Hiking was much easier today, with relatively flat land and interesting stops along the way. Just before lunch, we visited Cape Spear, with a really old, 1800s lighthouse. It was a foggy/misty sort of day, and didn't start to rain until after we reached our campsite. The rain cleared up by evening so we were able to enjoy climbing on rocks, exploring tidal pools and just relaxing.

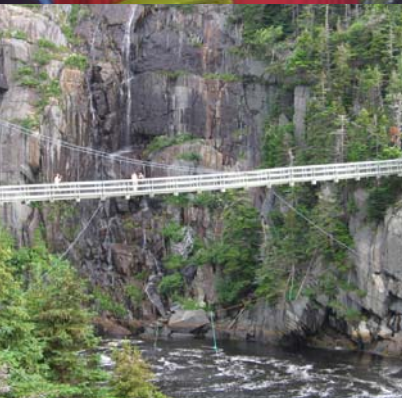
Day Three — Maddox Cove to Little Bald Head

Today was a tough day. Twenty-one kilometres of hiking through small towns, climbing headlands and along cliffs. There were fantastic views off the cliffs, although posted signs warned not to get too close. Today's campsite was a wilderness one, just .5 km from the "Spout" (a geyser shoots out of the sea rock, caused by the waves). Very cool sight. Several of us had sore feet, but it was masked by our satisfaction of achieving today's incredible mileage.

Day Four — Little Bald Head to Bay Bulls

It was a "lounging around in the sun" kind of day, but we laced up our boots and hiked instead. The group broke into its usual three smaller groups, with Phil and Andrew M. at the front, the girls in the middle and Peter, Ian and Coryn bringing up the rear. Lunch was near another lighthouse, which must have been visited often as it had an outhouse. It's the little things like that which you appreciate after being on the trail for so long! Another thing you appreciate is the opportunity to enjoy a much needed "dip" in a fresh water pool. Lots of screaming and splashing in the frigid water, but it felt great to be rinsed off. Andrew Waddington joined us today, so the group was now complete.





Day Five — Bay Bulls to Witless Bay

Rousing early, courtesy of a pair of crows and Teresa trying to scare them off with a monkey call, we headed down through the rain to the post office in Bay Bulls. We didn't go to mail letters but to pick up the dehydrated food and supplies we had mailed earlier for the second half of the trip. After a delicious meal in a restaurant (yum, yum – something not dehydrated), we boarded a large tour boat. The tour was fantastic; we saw entire islands covered in puffins, and got really close to the whales.

However, it was soon time to start hiking, so off we went. When the rain started up again, we decided to improvise a campsite a few kilometres out of Witless Bay. Luckily the huge thunderstorm hit after we were all in bed, with bright flashes of light and thunder loud enough to shake the ground.

Day Six — Witless Bay to Tors Cove

We woke to find that the rain the night before had created raging rivers out of streams and streams out of hiking trails. Puddles were knee high, causing several of us to stumble and fall. Poor Sara had quite a day. She fell twice and was rescued both times by Andrew M. Her hero! The rest of the day passed slowly, as we avoided puddles and tried to stay dry.

Day Seven — Tors Cove to Bauline

It's our last day of hiking and the weather is finally getting better. Not having far to go, we took our time as we meandered through several small towns along the coast. Tonight we camped at a Scout cabin, with walls and a roof! Luxury! Quite a few people had a quick swim in the lake by the cabin. What a great way to end the day!

Day Eight — Bauline to La Manche

The time had come to lace up our boots one more time and walk the last 3.5 km to our final stop. Out of nowhere, we heard an awe inspiring rumble, announcing the most beautiful waterfall we had ever seen. A suspension bridge spanned the gorge, on which we stood and stared as the water poured under us. Finally, our feet left the dirt of the trail and trod upon cement. Our trip was over, but the memories will be with us until the end of time. X

Venturers:

Phil Schuman
Christina Goulet
Courtney Wilson
Andrew Mathers
Coryn Hemming
Keeley MacInnes
Sara Sinclair
Ali Grey-Noble

Advisors:

Andrew
Waddington
Teresa
Waddington
Peter Hemming
Ian Mathers

Spectacular Pics

For more beautiful images of the East Coast Trail, visit this link:

<http://s49.photobucket.com/albums/f255/ventures148/East%20Coast%20Trail/?albumview=slideshow>