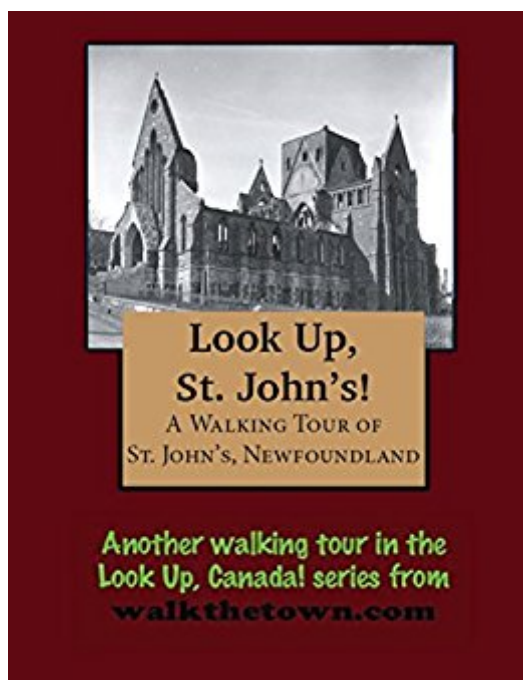


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A Walking Tour Of St. John's, Newfoundland



Synopsis

There is no better way to see Canada than on foot. And there is no better way to appreciate what you are looking at than with a walking tour. Whether you are preparing for a road trip or just out to look at your own town in a new way, a downloadable walking tour from walkthetown.com is ready to explore when you are. Each walking tour describes historical and architectural landmarks and provides pictures to help out when those pesky street addresses are missing. Every tour also includes a quick primer on identifying architectural styles seen on North American streets.

St. John's is old. By the time Sir Humphrey Gilbert sailed through the Narrows to claim St. John's for England in 1583 it had been marked on Portuguese maps for the better part of the century. The harbour was a regular stopping point for European ships. In the 1600s St. John's was firmly established as the supply centre for the rich Newfoundland fishing industry. It was mostly a transient population, however. Fishermen would arrive in the summer to pursue their catch and return to England with the end of fishing season. Local administration was left to fishing admirals. The Newfoundland colony finally got an appointed governor in 1729 but the men in charge would still high-tail it back across the Atlantic when the cold weather arrived, leaving the permanent residents to govern themselves. Most of the land was in the hands of absentee landlords back in the Mother Country and, ever respectful of the private ownership, it was difficult for the local government to buy up land for development. So St. John's grew in a patchwork of narrow, curving streets up the hillsides. Not that it was growing much until after the English difficulties with Napoleon sorted themselves out in 1815. This sparked a growth spurt in the British Empire that saw St. John's boom from 1,000 to 10,000 year-round residents. In 1832 Newfoundland was awarded a colonial legislature. Through it all the economy was driven by the rich fishing grounds of the Grand Banks. The shallow waters of the underwater plateau teemed with cod, swordfish, and haddock; lobster was so plentiful it was a junk catch. As early as 1620 some 300 fishing boats were already working one of the planet's best fisheries. St. John's was the primary station for all things fishing related and by the end of the 19th century the population had doubled to almost 30,000. The North Atlantic cod fishery collapsed in the 1990s but St. John's had been diversifying since Newfoundland's entry into the Confederation in 1949. Oil exploration and tourism proved so profitable that the city was forced to enact restrictions on building height in the downtown core to hang on to its long-earned heritage as a fishing-first outpost. Fire was always a regular visitor to early St. John's. The worst of the conflagrations occurred in 1816, 1846 and 1892, clearing the downtown streets of most of its buildings each time. The result is that most of what we will see on our walking tour is of post-1893 vintage and we will begin near the spot where

Britain's overseas empire began...

Book Information

File Size: 8200 KB

Print Length: 35 pages

Publication Date: January 12, 2017

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01N6QJKIM

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #442,769 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #13

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Canada > Atlantic Provinces #16

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