



Groups

Saint-Pierre et Miquelon can be discovered in lots of way: alone, as a family, or with your significant other.

You can also visit the islands in a group, thanks to the services of a tour operator.

More and more tour operators are offering all-inclusive tours of the islands. What a simple way to go! The agent has tested all the details of the trip and negotiated the best prices possible. The net result for the traveler? Total confidence and zero worries.

Several tour operators have been going to Saint-Pierre et Miquelon for many years, among them Atlantic Tours, from Nova-Scotia. Their tours leave from the Halifax international airport.

For Gary Bidle, tour coordinator, *“going to Saint-Pierre et Miquelon is a no brainer! Imagine, having a bit of France on your doorstep. When I offer this tour to clients, I ask: “Do you want to come to France with me for the weekend? Of course, everyone answers Yes!”*

When France is only one-and-a-half-hour plane ride away, who would not be interested?

So, what happens during such a tour? We followed Gary's group of around 20 guests, mostly Nova-Scotians. Their tour was short, 3 nights, Friday to Monday, an ideal time frame to get a taste of the destination.

For Tamara, this trip is *“... a way to test the waters and maybe come back at a later date with my family, to do some trekking and camping.”*

A test run of the islands of sorts.

The group arrived in late afternoon and headed straight for a bus tour of the island; later, they went to the restaurant, as a group. A tour is a wonderful opportunity to meet people and make new friends.

Travelling as part of a tour makes everything run smoother: during the summer months, in such a small place as Saint-Pierre, it can be hard to secure reservations for dinner. Thanks to Vanina Merkle of the local Tourism Office the reservations were made ahead of time, so at the Crêperie du Vieux-Port, Sandrine was on hand and welcomed them warmly.

“My reservations are already made for next summer, seriously!” said Gary.

Next morning, Éric welcomed the group at L'Arche Museum and gave a very upbeat tour of the various exhibits. *“I really like him,”* remarked Gary, *“he is an excellent guide! I asked for him specifically and he will accompany us to Île-aux-Marins this afternoon as well.”*

The Nova-Scotians visitors were very interested in the maritime history of the islands; they found so many links to their own history that they had the sentiment of being in familiar territory.

After some shopping and lunch, the group met on the wharf at 2 PM to board Le Petit Gravier, the ferry that runs from Saint-Pierre to Île aux Martins. The group took almost all the available seats on the tiny boat. Obviously, this trip was also scheduled well in advance!

For Gary the Île aux Marins visit is the highlight of any trip. The island is a vast open air museum that touches every single visitor. The fact that the island is quite easily accessible is a bonus.

Eric started the visit pointing out the old houses, the small gardens, the cemetery... He explained it all, throwing in a few amusing anecdotes. The sun was shining, making the moment even more enjoyable.

"It's great, absolutely marvelous. I love being so close to the sea, and the islands make me think of the Magdalen Island, I love it!" said Jo-Ann from Bridgewater.

No doubt she will have the same reaction when she discovers Langlade and Miquelon! The group is heading to the other island tomorrow bright and early, for the whole day. The Acadians in the group eagerly await the moment when they set foot in Miquelon, the land that welcomed so many of their deported ancestors.

They will sail to Langlade and make their way by bus to Miquelon. Once they have seen the horses roaming the dunes and discovered the village of Miquelon, there is no doubt that all of them will become ardent ambassadors of the unique beauty of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon.