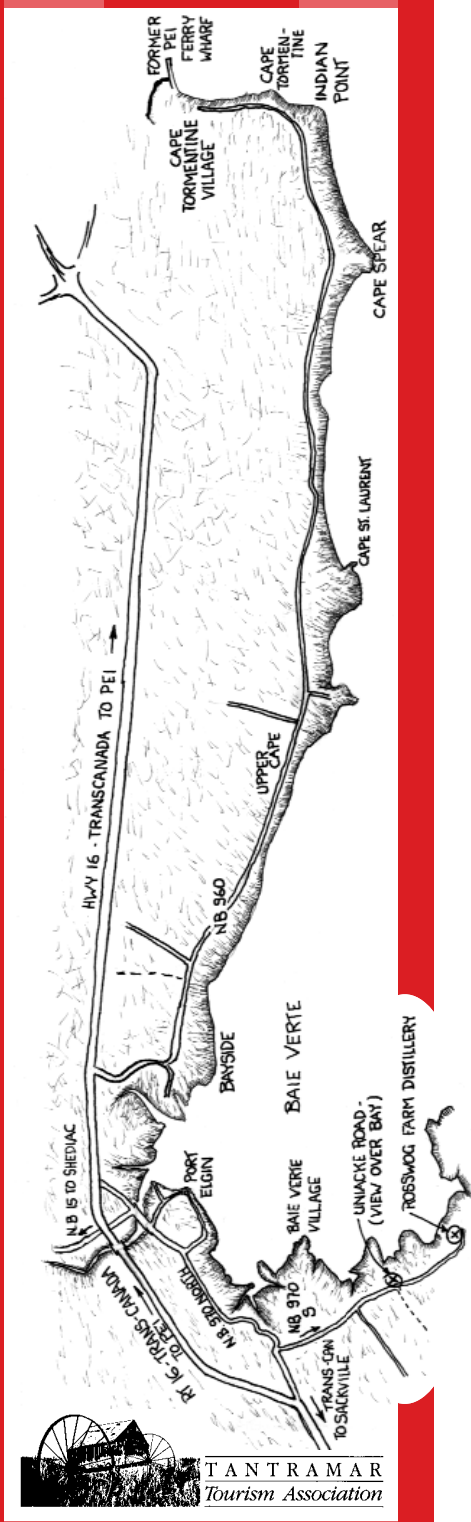




Touring Tantramar series

no. 8

www.tantramar.com/tourism



hans durstling's off-roading in tantramar

Cape Tormentine part 1

This tour also takes you around a cape; but it is a larger cape, and intriguingly different in character from Dorchester Cape on the Bay of Fundy. The cape in question is Cape Tormentine (using this designation loosely and generically), on the Northumberland Strait, the closest point of land in New Brunswick to Prince Edward Island.

The difference is largely due to heat. Dorchester Cape juts into the Bay of Fundy, flushed by 100 cubic kilometers of water on every tide — more than the combined daily discharge of all the rivers in the world. But Cape Tormentine extends into the Northumberland Strait, which is shallower, with much less tidal action. Here, the water has time to warm up, and gives back its summer warmth well into autumn.

That lends the Cape Tormentine area an aura of gentleness, almost opulence which is quite missing from the Bay of Fundy. Early settled by French Acadians, this is a land of sandy beaches, cottages, and farmland, whose focus lies along the coast, from which a multitude of side roads lead inland.

There's a lot of ground to cover. So let's start on the TransCanada Highway at Sackville, heading east to Nova Scotia. Take exit 550 B to Prince Edward Island, and at the bottom of the exit, as soon as you're on Highway 16 to PEI, set your km counter to zero.

At 4.0 km, a left turn off the highway takes you onto the Pointe de Bute road, from which you can get onto the High Marsh Road from the East side.

At 12.3 km, on the left, the Jolicure Road takes you to the upper regions of the Tantramar Marsh and will lead you eventually to the High Marsh. On the right side of the highway the chain of bogs in the lowland gives you an idea of the terrain the Tantramar Ship Railway Canal was up against in its passage across the Isthmus.

At 20 km, turn right onto NB 970, the "old road" to Baie Verte and Port Elgin. Here, immediately in the turn, you'll see Hans

Esser's European bakery, the first indication of another intriguing pattern of this cape and that is, its concentration of recent German emigrants. How this came about is too long to tell here; save to say that it all began with a chance meeting, in 1956, in the harbour of Windhoek, in what is now Namibia. Here, a German sailor who had been a professional boxer met another German who owned land in the Port Elgin area. From him, the boxer bought a farm, sight unseen. Arriving in Port Elgin, he bought a handsaw, intending to make a living cutting wood. That innocence was quickly dispelled. But now what? For sheer survival, the boxer bought properties and sold them to former associates in Germany. And so, over half a century, one connection led to another; many of the German families came to farm, only to find farming a marginal pursuit, and turned to other occupations.

At 21.8 km turn right onto NB 970 South, then at 24.8 km take the Uniacke Road uphill 2 km for a delightful view over Baie Verte Bay.

Back on 970, continue on another 2 km to Werner Rosswog's farm distillery. Rosswog, a former bank manager from Baden, is one of those German emigrants who originally intended to farm. When this turned out unpromising, Rosswog began what in ten years has become a thriving artisanal distillery and farm wine shop. The shop is open at regular hours; the whole process can be seen in Sunday afternoon tours at 2 pm.

Back on 970, continue to the delightful little country store at 28.3 km. Immediately after this, cross the main highway to view the stone arch bridge from the Ship Railway Canal. You can walk right to the bridge; note how wide it is. That's because the ship railway was to tow its ships along a double line of track. Turning left onto the main highway and following the signs to Jackson's Point immediately left again takes you to the Nova Scotia Provincial park at the Tidnish docks of the Ship Railway. These are best seen at low tide. See Cape Tormentine Part 2.



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