

# Nova Scotia – Northern Mainland

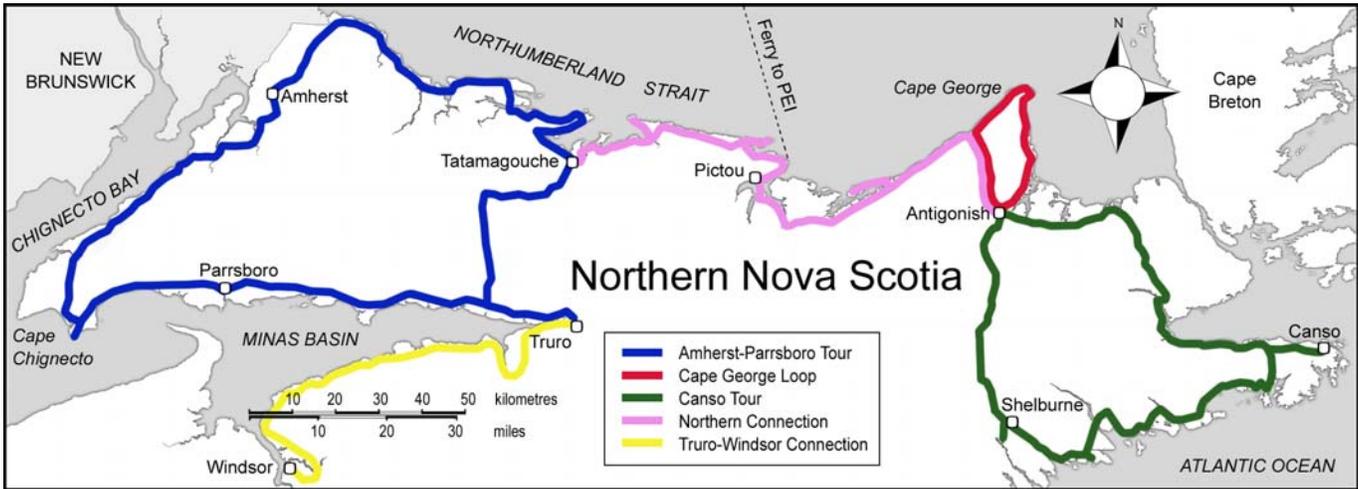
## Northern Mainland of Nova Scotia

Most visitors pass through this part of Nova Scotia on their way to better-known tourist destinations – north to Cape Breton or south to the Lighthouse Route – leaving quieter roads for the cyclist. But northern mainland Nova Scotia has spectacular scenery and extraordinary variety, from gentle countryside reminiscent of Prince Edward Island, to coastal mountains and bluffs that are often compared to Cape Breton. The warm waters of Northumberland Strait lap inviting beaches on the northern shore, while just 60 kilometres to the south, the giant, cold tides of Fundy have created a rugged coastline that is ideal for shorebirds, hikers, beachcombers, and photographers – but not for swimmers! The eastern Atlantic coast, like the better known Lighthouse Route, has rocks, lighthouses, fishing villages, and fog, but with far fewer people. In fact, northern Nova Scotia has less tourist traffic than any other part of the province.



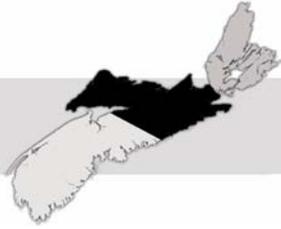
Near Cap D'Or

Maritimers are known for friendliness, but in this quiet part of Nova Scotia, where cycle tourists are still something of a novelty, you will receive welcomes that are even warmer and more genuine than usual. When we cycled here, we were struck by the pride residents feel in their corner of the province. When they learned we were writing a guidebook, they often said something like, “You be sure to tell people what a grand place this is!”



We describe three wonderful loop rides in Northern Nova Scotia. The **Amherst-Chignecto Tour**, in blue, is the longest. It begins and ends near the New Brunswick border and could take a week or more. The one-day **Cape George Loop**, in red, begins and ends at Antigonish. So does the four-day **Canso Tour**, in green. A superb linear route from **Truro to Windsor**, in orange, can be used to connect to the **Ocean and Valley Tour** in southern Nova Scotia. Finally, we describe a useful **North Shore Connection**, in violet, to the PEI ferry and to Antigonish.





## Nova Scotia – Northern Mainland

### Amherst – Chignecto Tour

Six Days – 400 kilometres / 250 miles

This tour is remarkable for its variety as well as its beauty. The ride begins at Amherst and follows Northumberland Strait as far as Tatamagouche, passing through gentle countryside with warm-water beaches along the way. Then the route cuts southwest to Masstown near Truro, through the Cobequid Hills. It follows the shores of Cobequid Bay and the Minas Basin west to Cape Chignecto, with rugged bluffs characteristic of the Fundy Coast. Finally the route returns to Amherst along Chignecto Bay.

We describe this 400-kilometre loop as a six-day tour. Many cyclists could do it in less, but that would be a mistake. There are so many worthwhile side trips, beaches, and possibilities for hiking and sightseeing that an entire two-week vacation could easily be devoted to exploring this beautiful corner of Nova Scotia by bicycle.



*On the Malagash Peninsula, Day Two of the Tour*

### Day One – Amherst to Pugwash

63 kilometres / 39 miles

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Amherst was a busy, important town. When the centre of Canadian industry and commerce gradually shifted to Quebec and Ontario, Amherst became a much quieter place. Still, there are streets lined with beautiful Victorian homes and some impressive public buildings.

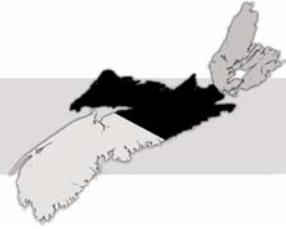
From Amherst you will cycle north, beside marshes and through woods, to Northumberland Strait. Along the Sunrise Trail, cultivated fields roll down to the sea. This gentle coastline is remarkably unspoiled, especially considering the number of warm-water beaches and parks along the way.

Pugwash, where the day ends, is a small village with a strong Scottish heritage. It has been a popular summer resort for well over a century, and it is famous as the original home of the Pugwash Movement. (See page 23.)

#### Food and Lodging

Amherst has plenty of restaurants and grocery stores. Once you leave town, however, it is 25 kilometres to the next food store, in Tidnish. There is another grocery in Northport, 15 kilometres farther. There are two restaurants in Port Phillip, 6 kilometres before the end of the ride, and a supermarket and a few restaurants in and near Pugwash.





## Nova Scotia – Northern Mainland

There is a good selection of accommodations in Amherst including the Victorian Motel, Brown's Guest Home, the Regent B&B and the Treen Mansion B&B. We stayed at Treen Mansion; it was comfortable and reasonably priced. There are a few more B&Bs, inns and motels scattered along Northumberland Strait and in Pugwash.

Near Amherst, campers could stay at Loch Lomond Tent and Trailer Park. Amherst Shore Provincial Park, 37 kilometres long the route, has a campground. Gulf Shore Campground is about 11 kilometres past the village of Pugwash. (*See Day Two.*) Locations of campgrounds and B&Bs are noted in the directions.

### Terrain

The terrain is flat to gently rolling, with no challenging hills at all.

### Directions

The ride starts at the corner of Church Street and Victoria Street, in the centre of Amherst.

**0.0**  **Ride East on Victoria Street**, which is Route 6. The large, sandstone Baptist Church should be on your left when you set out. Continue straight through the lights at LaPlanche Street. (The Amherst VIC is 2 kilometres out LaPlanche Street at the Trans-Canada entrance.)

**0.3**  Pass the Victorian Motel on the left, followed by an area of large old homes and stately trees. Brown's Guest Home is on the left. The Regent B&B is a couple of blocks farther on the right. (If you turn right onto Regent Street and left at the T onto Spring Street, the Treen Mansion B&B will be ahead on your right.)

Continue out of town on Route 6, with glimpses of the Amherst Marsh – part of the Tantramar Marsh – to the left.

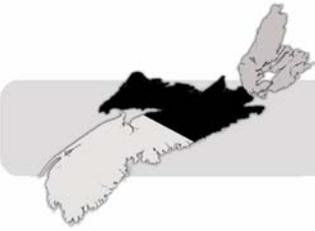
**← 3.8 Turn left** onto Route 366 toward Tidnish and Amherst Shore. Ride at first through open, gently rolling countryside, then a long stretch through wooded areas where bears are sometimes seen in the road.

**↖ 18.3 Bear left** to stay on Route 366. (The road to the right is a jughandle that rejoins Route 366 about 4 kilometres ahead.)

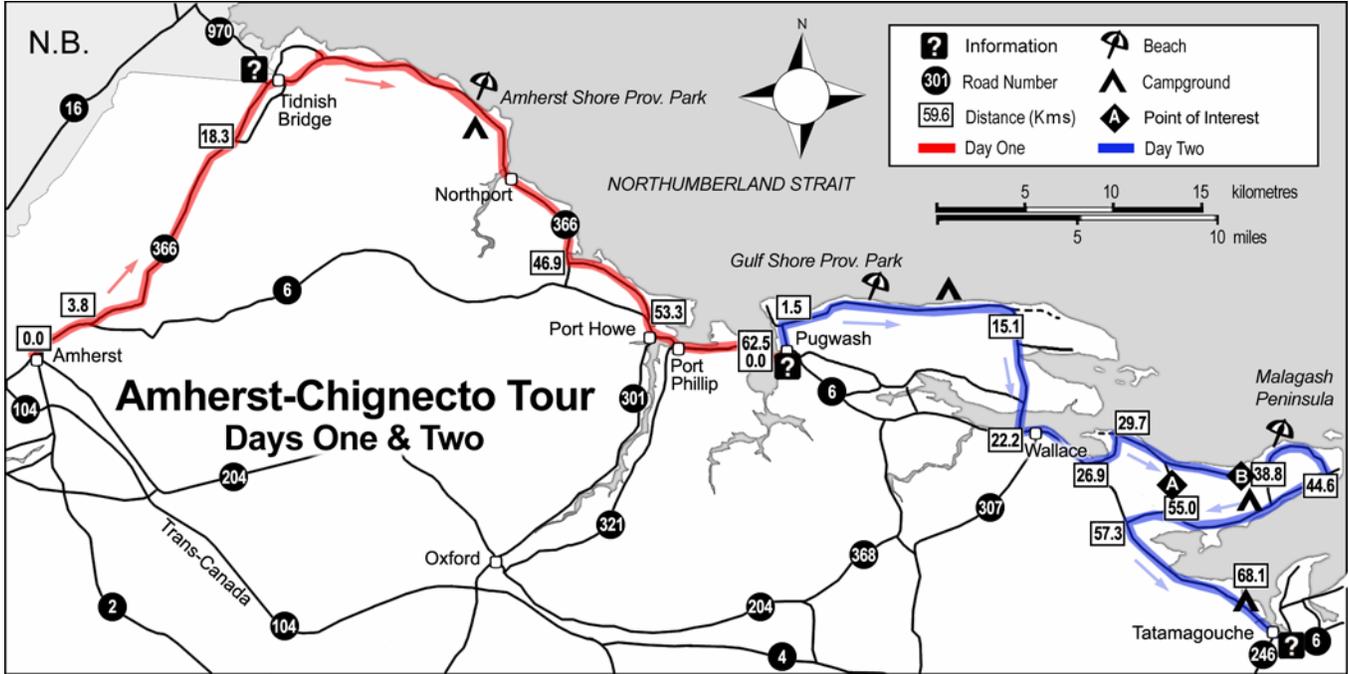
**21.9**  Pass Route 970 on to the left, to Baie Verte and Port Elgin in New Brunswick. There is a seasonal VIC here.



*Outside the village of Pugwash*



# Nova Scotia – Northern Mainland



### Cues – Day One

- 0.0 East on Victoria St
- 3.8 Left onto Rte 366
- 18.3 Bear left on Rte 366
- 46.9 Left to stay on Rte 366
- 53.3 Left onto Rte 6
- 62.5 Right to Pugwash VIC

### Cues – Day Two

- 0.0 Right onto Rte 6 and left onto Church St
- 1.5 Bear right
- 15.1 Bear right

- 22.2 Left onto Rte 6
- 26.9 Left onto North Shore Rd
- 29.7 Bear right on North Shore Rd
- 38.8 Left onto Blue Sea Rd
- 44.6 Right onto South Shore Rd
- 55.0 Left toward Wallace
- 57.3 Left onto Rte 6
- 68.1 Bear left into Tatamagouche

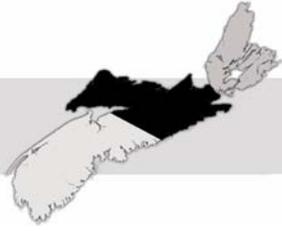
◆ A Jost Winery

◆ B Malagash Miners Museum

### A Grand and Costly Failure

At the Tidnish VIC, kilometre 21.9, there is a plaque explaining the Chignecto Marine Transport Railway. It was a grand scheme to lift ocean-going ships out of the water, place them on a specially designed cradle, and pull them with two large locomotives along a double railroad track across the isthmus of Chignecto – 28 kilometres. Ships traveling between the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of St. Lawrence would have saved an 800-kilometre voyage around the mainland of Nova Scotia. Work began in 1888, but problems developed with finance and with construction in boggy areas. It was a huge and costly project for its day, but it was abandoned in 1891 when it was three-quarters completed.





## Nova Scotia – Northern Mainland



*Northport resident staring at cyclists*

22.3 Pass a left to Jackson Point. (This road is a jughandle that rejoins Route 366 at kilometre 25.6.)

25.6 📍📍 A store with take out meals is on the left at this intersection, just after the Tidnish Community Centre. Turn left here to visit Tidnish Dock Provincial Park, a waterfront picnic site, in 300 metres. Then continue east on Route 366.

25.9 📍 Seven Gables B&B is on the right.

29.3 📍 Amherst Shore Country Inn is on the left, with a great water view.

31.2 📍 Goodwin's Chat and Chew B&B, a big, white farm home, is on the right. Ride through peaceful countryside, similar in many ways to PEI across the strait. Dairy and beef cattle graze in pastures sloping to the shore.

36.8 ▲ Amherst Shore Provincial Park is on the right, with camping.

40.0 Cross Shinimicas River into Northport, a pretty town along the river shore.

42.3 Northport Provincial Park, a beach with picnicking, is on the left.

← **46.9 Turn left** to stay on Route 366 East. Along the next section of Route 366, you will pass left turns to Heather Beach and Cameron Beach.

← **53.3 Turn left** at a stop sign and T intersection onto Route 6 East toward Pugwash. Route 366 ends here.

54.5 📍📍 An old grocery on the right has been remodel and reopened, with guest rooms upstairs, as the Sunrise Country Market and Inn.

55.3 Stay on Route 6, passing a right on Route 301 to Oxford. Cross a causeway and bridge over the River Philip to Port Philip.

On the far shore, continue straight on Route 6, passing another right to Oxford on Route 321. (Routes 301 and 321, on opposite sides of the River Philip, make a pleasant, 37-kilometre loop through Oxford, Nova Scotia's blueberry capital.)

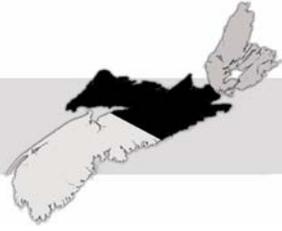
📍📍 On Route 6 just ahead on the right is the Sandy Shores Motel. Though generic in appearance, it has very large, clean rooms. There is a restaurant at the motel and another just beyond it.

### The Pugwash Movement

In the summer of 1957, American philanthropist Cyrus Eaton invited eminent scientists and intellectuals from around the world to attend a meeting at his summer home here in Pugwash. Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell were among the participants. Their purpose: To promote arms control and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

It was the beginning of an annual series of private conferences, held in different locales since then but still officially called The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs – or simply The Pugwash Movement. The stature of the participants is such that governments sometimes listen, and the Pugwash Movement has played a major role in several important weapons treaties. In 1995, the Pugwash Movement was honored with a Nobel Peace Prize.





## Nova Scotia – Northern Mainland

59.8 Pugwash has two welcome signs, one saying it is the home of Seagull Pewter and Windsor Salt, a second claiming the village is “World Famous for Peace.”

61.8 The outlet store of Seagull Pewter is on the right.

62.3 Cross a bridge over the Pugwash River.

→ **62.5**  **Turn right** at stop sign and T intersection, following Route 6. Just after this turn, the Pugwash VIC is on the right behind the Library and Historical Society in what used to be the old railroad station.

### END OF RIDE

#### Explore Downtown Pugwash – It doesn’t take long!

If you turn left instead of right at the T after the bridge (62.5), you will pass a gallery, café, gift shop, and hardware store. Turn right at the next T intersection to visit Cyrus Eaton Park on the water, a pretty spot with picnic tables. Notice that street signs are in Gaelic as well as English. There is a grid of residential streets in Pugwash with attractive old homes.

   To the right at the T, beyond the VIC, there is a convenience store with fast food, followed by a Co-op Grocery. After the Co-op, Church Street goes left, and on the right is Shillelagh Sheila’s Country Inn. Hillcrest Motel and Restaurant is two kilometres east of the village on Route 6, on the right.

Close by the village is Canada’s largest underground salt mine, shipping something like a million tons of salt each year.

