

ABOUT FOG

article by Melissa Wheatley

It's hauntingly romantic. It's mysterious, comforting, and it's unique to coastal cities. It's fog--and Saint John is famous for it! According to international travel expert, Walter H. Johnson, Jr., fog is a rare sighting for most inland visitors. "Recent research shows that tourists travel to experience what's different. Fog is an interesting difference in Saint John and can be a major attraction."

Although many visitors say that fog has mystical qualities when it hovers over Saint John, there's nothing mystical about what it actually is. It's been said that fog is nothing more than a cloud that touches the ground. The fog in Saint John is caused mostly by the Bay of Fundy. When the cold air from the Bay of Fundy mixes with the hot summer temperatures, the air becomes saturated and the water condenses--forming fog. Saint John has an average of about 70 fog days a year. The weather office classifies a fog day as a day when visibility is reduced to under a kilometre by these low-lying clouds. The fog may not have to last a whole day for it to be considered a fog day. Other cities that have more fog days than Saint John include Halifax, Nova Scotia and London, England, but as one local resident says, "We have just enough to keep tourists happy and let them know they're in a coastal city."

Some of the fun fog activities for visitors, according to Johnson, include a relaxed, romantic stroll along the City's waterfront when you can just see the hazy glow of the street lamps. "Some tourists think the fog is sensual and comforting and makes your skin feel good." Another way to spend a foggy day is on the waters of Saint John Harbour. "It's almost ethereal," says Saint Johner Bridget McGale, "When I'm out on a boat and hear the sound of fog horns in the distance and smell the clean sea air, it's as if I'm sailing through a cloud." If you go for a romantic evening fog cruise, it is suggested that you wear a light nylon jacket with a sweater underneath. Comfortable clothing helps you enjoy sailing in the fog.

Although most people like to go out and walk about in the fog, there are those who say curling up by the fireplace in one of the City's bed and breakfasts and watching the fog roll in is as warm and inviting as the fog itself.

Other Saint John natives appreciate the practical benefits of living in a coastal city. "I credit the fog with reducing the size of our snow banks during the winter months. I can wear a pair of shoes to work in the winter here but in other inland cities like Moncton or Fredericton, I have to wear a pair of boots," notes Paulette Cook. "It's great having a milder climate. You won't catch me complaining about fog."

During the summer, the combination of sea breezes and occasional fog make for a refreshing change of climate for hot and weary travellers from the United States. However, local historian Harold Wright has a little-known fog fact. He says you can get a sunburn in the fog. "I call fog *liquid sunshine*, and just because you can't see the sun, doesn't mean you can't feel its effects."

Tourism Saint John receives hundreds of comments complimenting the city on its cool, summertime climate. When the heat and humidity rises in neighbouring American States and in Central Canada, Saint John and other Maritime cities report an increase in visitors looking to escape the heat. "It's one of nature's gifts to coastal cities," says Johnson. "As Maritimers, we're used to fog, but if somebody has lived inland all their life, fog is an unusual and unforgettable experience."