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Guysborough discovered

A bit off the beaten track, the village has much more offer than you might think

By [BILL SPURR](#) / Features Writer

FOR SUCH a tiny community, Guysborough sure is full of surprises.

It's not just that pedestrians and drivers wave to you as if they know you and like you, but there are amenities you'd normally look for in larger centres.

For example, who knew you could eat this well in Guysborough?

At DesBarres Manor, where chef Shaun Zwuran presides, my dinner started with chilled melon bisque with honey and chocolate mint, followed by pheasant supreme on a chile ginger garlic potato mash with warm vegetable slaw and thyme pesto reduction, and concluded with lemon cheesecake with blueberry coulis.

Although it was a difficult choice over the pan-seared North Atlantic halibut on wild mushroom risotto with cranberry pickled ginger maple glaze and asparagus, the pheasant was one of the most delicious things I've ever eaten.

Zwuran, a native of Glace Bay, tends herb and vegetable gardens on the manor's grounds and haunts local docks so he can create dishes like caramelized scallops with a Screech truffle sauce.



S. DUNLOP / Staff

St. Ann's Roman Catholic church in Guysborough is one of the village's many 19th century buildings. Several homes and businesses have signs affixed, giving the date of construction.



SCOTT DUNLOP / Staff

Chef Shaun Zwaran, a native of Glace Bay, removes a fresh-baked loaf of bread from the hearth oven at DesBarres Manor.



SCOTT DUNLOP / Staff

He and his sous-chef are also in charge of the kitchen at the Rare Bird Pub, located on Guysborough's waterfront, where boaters can dock at the marina and walk just a few steps to the Rare Bird's beautiful patio.

This is surely one of the nicest patios in Nova Scotia. The aroma from planters full of pink and white annuals mingles with the salt air of the harbour.

There's a large menu of items that are a notch above standard pub fare, with lots of seafood, but young people tend to gravitate toward the nachos and gourmet pizzas baked in the pub's wood-fired oven.

An Acadian by the name of Nicholas Denys is believed to have established North America's first commercial brewery in Guysborough in the mid-1600s. Today, inside the Rare Bird, craft brewing continues as the Chedabucto Bay Brewing Co. uses deep well water in the manufacture of three unique beers.

DesBarres Manor was built in 1837 for a Supreme Court justice.

At that time, the third floor of the stately home was where the servants lived, in Spartan fashion.

Things are much more comfortable today.

Each of 10 large, luxurious guest rooms is furnished with its own unique set of antiques.

The beds are covered with 600-thread-count sheets, and guests can choose from rooms with twin, queen or king-sized beds.

DesBarres Manor, a four and a half star inn in Guysborough, was originally built in 1837 as a residence for a Supreme Court justice. Today, there are 10 guest rooms, a large deck and expansive grounds.



SCOTT DUNLOP / Staff

The honeymoon suite at DesBarres Manor has a fireplace and two-person tub.

If You Go

Getting there: Guysborough is 25 minutes off Highway 104, exiting at Monastery and is just less than three hours from downtown Halifax.

DesBarres Manor: 902-533-2099, www.desbarresmanor.com

Rare Bird Pub: 902-3533-2078, www.rarebirdpub.com

Skipping Stone Crafts and Gallery: 902-533-2460, www.skippingstonegallery.com

Belmont Golf Course:

1-800-909-3904, www.belmontgolfcourse.com

The honeymoon suite has an electric fireplace, an ornate four-poster bed and a two-person soaker tub.

Stairways and banisters are original, and a gleaming upright piano sits in the dining room, which can seat as many as 40.

In the fireplace room, the original hearth oven used by the DesBarre family is still in place.

Bright yellow Adirondack chairs invite guests to a large deck, with a gazebo, and three more chairs sit under a wide apple tree.

Many of the homes in Guysborough have a sign posted on them, signifying the year the building was erected.

Outside a house built in 1800, a woman watered flowers in the window boxes that ran the length of the house.

"It used to be a tavern, back in the town's shipbuilding days," she said of her home. "We found a liquor receipt from 1801, and that was one of the ways we dated the house."

Skipping Stone Crafts and Gallery downtown is open every day from 10 to 5, but a sign in the window says if you want to enter outside business hours, just go next door to the pub and someone will let you in.

The gallery, upstairs, is this summer home to exhibits by a group of artists from Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia, including Alice Reed of Antigonish.

Along with Reed's watercolours, there are works in oil, etchings, photography, pastels and raku pottery, as well as a collection of Mennonite quilts from Ontario.

Guysborough is also home to Belmont Golf Course, a nine-hole track.

Nova Scotia has a dearth of good nine-hole courses and Belmont, with views to rival those at Chester or Northumberland, offers a pleasant couple of hours for the average golfer and is easy enough for a beginner to get around without too much suffering.

Rental clubs are offered, but take your own.

The area also offers whale watching, fly fishing and bird watching.

"The Stan Rogers festival up the road in Canso is helping, but the challenge is to get people off the highway to make their first visit here," said Paul Long, chairman of the Guysborough Waterfront Development Society.

Getting them back for their second visit is much easier.

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