



Louisbourg
LIGHTHOUSE
TRAIL

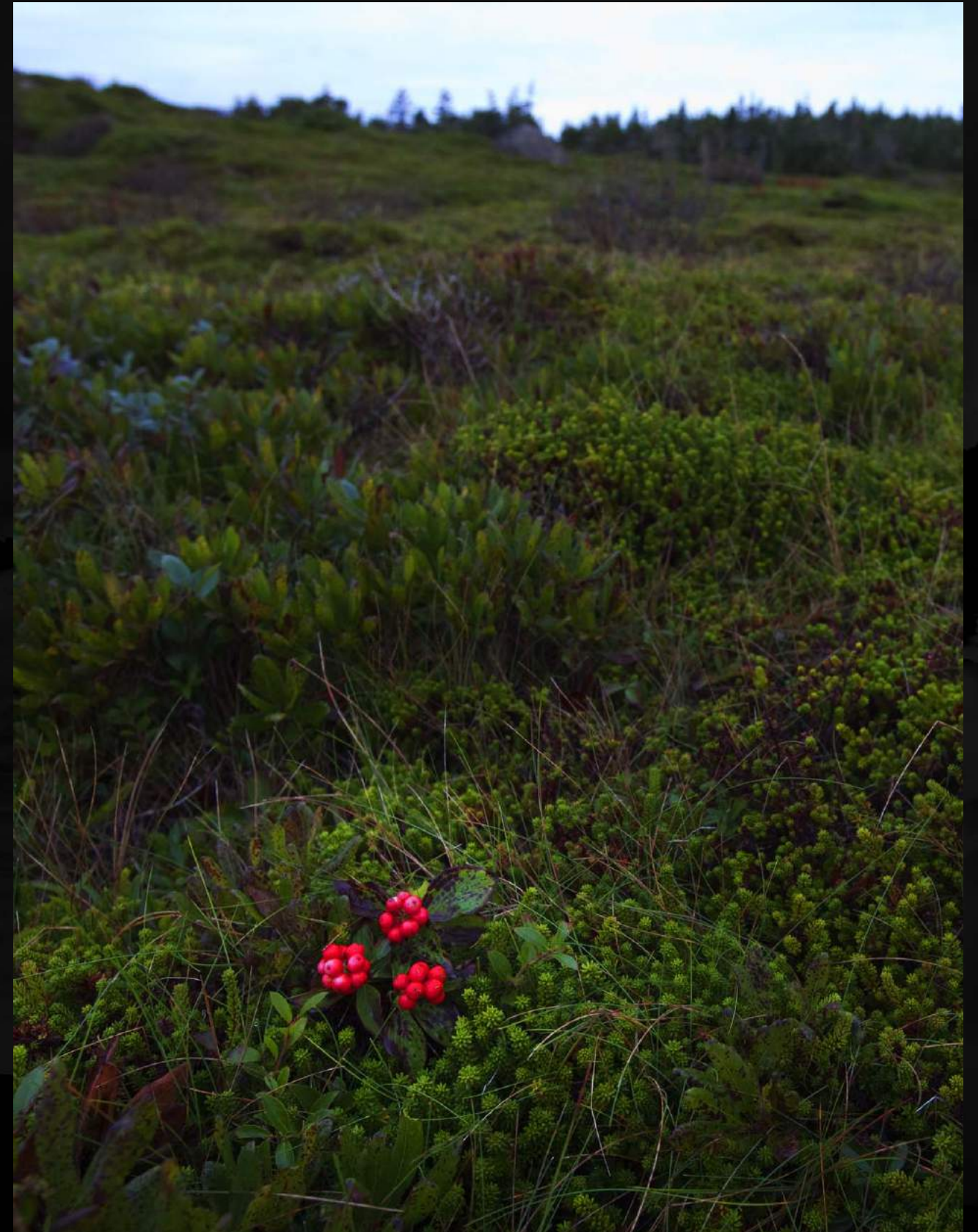
Story and Photos by **WALTER HODGES**



WE DROVE THE WORLD FAMOUS Cabot Trail around the island. It's one of the most amazing roads I've ever seen. You don't want to miss this if you come to Cape Breton. It's one of the baselines for fantastic drives in North America. Our destination was Louisbourg.

Sunrise on the siege of Louisbourg 1758. The French had built and maintained the now famous Louisbourg Fort on the southern coast of Cape Breton. Across the bay from the fort they lit the first lighthouse in Canada in 1734. It ran on cod liver oil and could be seen for 18 miles. In 1758, the British, under the command of Brigadier General James Wolfe, manned batteries near the lighthouse and lay siege to the fort ultimately resulting in the British taking Louisbourg from the French.

(Previous page) The Louisbourg Lighthouse was originally lit by the French in 1738. It was the first lighthouse in Canada. Lit by cod-liver oil, it could be seen for 18 miles. This view of the much newer version on the same site is from The Lighthouse Trail about thirty minutes before sunrise. (Above) The Lighthouse Trail runs for about five miles along the rugged coastline of Cape Breton Island. The first couple miles are completely accessible by wheelchair. (Facing page) Black crowberry is a moss like plant that covers much of the coastal barrens. It hugs tight to the areas above the cliffs on the Lighthouse trail. Walking on it feels much the same as tundra in the north country.





THE RECONSTRUCTED FORTRESS of Louisbourg gets most of the tourist attention these days, but the Lighthouse Trail, now that's something altogether different and more than worth the side trip. I learned about the trail from Linda Kennedy at Point of View Suites. Linda runs a great hotel and can wax on through dinner about the history and traditions of the area (check out the Beggar's Banquet at Point of View. There's nothing quite like it). After an incredible lobster dinner and two hot buttered rums, Linda talked about the trail along the coastline from the lighthouse and suggested I get up early to take a look. Boy, was that an understatement.

In 2000, the Coastal Connections Trail Association was formed to promote trail development along Cape Breton's southern coastline. The efforts paid off and today the Lighthouse Trail stretches for about five miles, and an incredible mile of it is accessible by wheelchair.

If you fish Cape Breton's Atlantic salmon streams, allow some time to do one of the best and easy day hikes in the world and take the Louisbourg Lighthouse Trail at sunrise. I parked at the base of the lighthouse before it got light. When it was just barely light enough to see I grabbed the camera and tripod and walked out to the cliffs and the trail along the ocean. There had been a storm the night before and there was a heavy cloud cover as well as a high tide, but a narrow slit of clear sky on the horizon

allowed the sun to explode under the clouds right at sunrise. To say this was one of the best sunrises I've ever seen is true, but to simply say it doesn't even come close to matching the power of this place. The cliffs, the thrashing waves, the expanse and the close-up details in the surrounding landscapes make this a one-of-a-kind spot. Go see it. If you Google it, you won't truly see much other than a few Rand McNally type photos taken at noon on a sunny day so at best it appears pedestrian. You just need to trust me on this one. Get out of bed early at Point of View Suites. Go see the Louisbourg Lighthouse Trail at sunrise. You'll tell stories about it to your friends.



Lighthouse Trail

<http://www.novascotia.com/en/home/thingstoseeanddo/outdooractivities/listingdetails.aspx/louisbourgighthouse-trail/o3077?out=Y3JpdGVyaWE9bG91aXNib3VyZw>

Cabot Trail

http://www.novascotia.com/en/home/ourregions/scenic_travelways/cabot_trail/default.aspx

Fortress of Louisbourg

<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/ns/louisbourg/index.aspx>

Point of View Suites

<http://www.louisbourgpoinofview.com>

(Previous page) The Cabot Trail surrounds the Cape Breton Highlands National Park on the northeast tip of Cape Breton Island. Our journey on the Cabot Trail took us in the direction of Louisbourg and The Lighthouse Trail. (Facing page) The Lighthouse trail is filled with expansive views as well as close up details like the smallest wild mushrooms in the wooded areas near the coastline.





(Clockwise from top left) Along the wooded parts of the trail there are large quantities of cinnamon ferns. This close up is from a leaf in the process of dying back for the winter months. Witherod berries are found growing wild all over Nova Scotia, and they are plentiful in the areas surrounding The Lighthouse Trail. A natural pond is formed from recent rains in the black crowberry that carpets the open trail along the coastline.



At sunrise, the ragged Nova Scotia coastline of The Lighthouse Trail appears spectacularly as a sheet of paper torn against the grain.



High tide and a hole in the clouds at sunrise make for a spectacular scene. The rocks that line the coastline were here before life began. The base structure is black Precambrian rock about 570 million years old.