

## Lake Merced

### San Francisco's Jewel

by Patricia M. Lee

Lake Merced, once described by author Miles Overholt as 'a jewel that gleams like a star,' is located in the southwestern corner of San Francisco county, about 20 minutes from downtown San Francisco. The lake provides a natural outdoor recreational setting for the visitor who wants to combine an urban stay with a pastoral site.



*Juan Bautista de Anza Graces Lake Merced*

Chester McIntyre photo

Beauty abounds in the region. Eucalyptus and cypress trees border the shores. Fanned by pacific ocean breezes, sailboats float leisurely through the southern part of the lake; fishermen, poles propped, waiting for the trout to bite, dot the northern banks; rowboats settle close to the marshy land.

---

*We were lucky to spot  
a mama duck followed  
by a single file of ducklings.*

---

Walkers hike across the wooden bridge and watch the mallards float by. We were lucky to spot a mama duck followed by a single file of ducklings. Bird watchers flock to the nearest hillside with binoculars aloft, observing the movements of the varied bird species. The 4.4-mile trail around the lake beckons hikers and runners to test their endurance and strengthen their muscles.

History buffs can imagine the discovery of this enchanting region when Father Francisco Palou, standing atop the nearby cliff, gazed with wonder over the sparkling waters.

Continued on page 5

## Travels on Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula

by Donna Peck

Geological and archeological wonders draw tourists each summer to Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula. Red boulders from the earth's mantle lay strewn across a vast plateau. Ancient cliffs rise 2,000 feet above a landlocked fjord. At the peninsula's tip, Leif Ericson's settlement was brought to light by chance. On a scenic 7-day adventure, my boyfriend and I discover a landscape that shares its stories with rare generosity.

After landing in Deer Lake, we head off to Gros Morne National Park. The lodging inside the park puts visitors in sync with the landscape. Red Mantle Lodge, a hillside aerie faces the bay and has a spacious deck. During our stay, it's our favorite perch to watch clouds and relax after a full day of hiking.

### Gros Morne National Park Hikes

Morning light falls on a barren wasteland of red boulders at the start of the Green Gardens hike. After a mile it abruptly descends through a coastal forest and out onto a wide meadow. Wild sheep graze above a rocky cove in the bucolic scene. The afternoon walk on the Tablelands trail gives me goosebumps. The ceaseless shaping of continents and oceans created a barren plateau of otherworldly beauty. In the absence of plants or animals, it exudes an eery presence.

---

*We ooh and aah at  
the hanging valleys, waterfalls  
and 2,000-foot-high cliffs.*

---

Our exertions over for the day, the dinner bell draws us to Trout River. People from all over the peninsula (and tourists in the know) come to the Seaside Restaurant to eat mussels, fresh-cracked crab and one-pound lobster. It is the prettiest pastel-

colored village in the park. Flower pots brim with pink geraniums and craft shops display quilts and mittens in all colors of the rainbow.

### Gros Morne National Park Sights

Our escalating interest in Gros Morne's geologic wonders brings us north to Green Point. Huddled around a park ranger, we learn that the shale on the beach came from the bottom of the Iapetus Ocean. At Western Brook Pond—the park's celebrated icon and Ice Age attraction—we cross a peat bog with insects buzzing in the scintillating afternoon sun. The lakeshore appears and we board an open-deck boat. Cruising slowly, the boat slipped through a notch in the rock wall and enters a landlocked fjord. We ooh and aah at the hanging valleys, waterfalls and 2,000-foot-high cliffs.



*Quirpon Island Lighthouse*

Donna Peck photo

### North Coast

At the tip of the peninsula, Vikings landed 1,000 years ago, thrown off course by a fierce storm. According to an Icelandic saga, Leif Ericson drank the dew from the grass and declared it the sweetest he ever tasted. Inside a recreated turf house, a young self-styled Freya weaves cloth with a twig shuttle. In the dining hall, Bjorn, the navigator, strikes a flint box to kindle a fire and boasts of his heroic seamanship.

If you have Viking blood in your veins, you may welcome a few days cut off from civilization. On Quirpon Island, guests at the light keeper's restored home frolic within sight and sound of the pounding North Atlantic.

Back on the mainland, our last stop is St. Lunaire-Griquet. At the Dark Tickle Company store, I purchase a miniature Inushuk, like the stone figures the Inuits erected to mark the way for fellow travelers. I treasure it as much as the stories of Newfoundland's long, eventful past.

[www.newfoundlandlabrador.com](http://www.newfoundlandlabrador.com)

*Donna Peck is a San Francisco-based writer.*