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5 things to do in the Torngat Mountains

Wildlife, scenic vistas, island excursions and lessons in Inuit culture round out a trip to this region of Newfoundland and Labrador.



Joy emanates from Joannie Lafreniere while passing a massive iceberg. (JENN SMITH NELSON)

By **JENN SMITH NELSON** Special to the Star
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TORNGAT MOUNTAINS, N.L.-Visitors from around the world are drawn to the [Torngat Mountains Base Camp and Research Station](#) for the remoteness of the location, adventure, and the opportunity to connect with nature, wildlife, and elders and youth from Nunatsiavut and Nunavik.

Parks Canada staff plans daily [itineraries](#) and if the weather is favourable (the Labrador belt is a notoriously rough region), excursions to nearby islands are on the agenda. Customized options are available and visitors have the ability to go off on their own (to hike, for example), as long as a bear guard is available. Staff and elders are more than willing to share their knowledge and cultural traditions.

Iceberg and wildlife watching:

Being out on boats nearly every day (zodiacs, speedboats and passenger boats are used) provides numerous opportunities to look for wildlife, such as polar bears, wolves, caribou, minke whales, seals and if you can believe it, even black bears (this is the only place in the world they exist north of the tree line). During the summer months, it's easy to see icebergs — some even come in close to the bay. To get a better look, guides will take you up close to the impressive turquoise-outlined ice blocks.

Island excursions:



Parks Canada Supt. Gary Baikie prepares char sashimi.

Each morning, the lunchroom's whiteboard details the day's outings. Standout daytrips include boating to glorious Silluak (North Arm) where the beauty of the Saglek Fjord astounds visitors. There, they can hike to a waterfall, pick fresh sub-Arctic berries, fish for abundant char and enjoy a beach fish fry complete with bannock made on the spot. Visits to other incredibly scenic spots like Sallikuluk (Rose Island); a historically important archaeological site with more than 600 Inuit graves, or Ramah, where you can scour the ground for churt (stone made for creating tools) are also usually included.

Take in the views:



Visitors hike their way across scenic Sallikuluk, a.k.a., Rose Island.

The fact is no matter where you are in this part of the country, striking views exist and hiking can be done most anywhere. Even at base camp, there are hikes to a nearby waterfall, a hilltop inukshuk and Torr Bay that provide the opportunity to get up a little higher and take in the view from above. Visitors can also rent an onsite helicopter (at additional cost) to fly up and around the magnificent region to take in the beauty of the Torngats peaks, valleys and waterways.

Cultural learnings:



Canadian musicians Mike Stevens, Elisapie Issac and Joe Grass put on an impromptu performance in a natural rock amphitheatre.

Watching Inuit guides catch char and fillet it in seconds is nothing short of impressive. Take in demonstrations on how to make pitsik (dried/smoked char) or traditional dishes, such as suvalik — a desert made from crushing fresh char eggs and adding locally found berries, water and oil (seal or beluga oils taste best). Spending time with staff or elders learning how to throat sing or practise the Inuktitut language are also fun ways to pass the time. Performers are often invited to base camp, oftentimes providing cultural entertainment around the campfire or in a natural rock amphitheatre.

Traditional Inuit games:



Parks Canada Supt. Gary Baikie and Steve Henderson battle during the leg wrestle, one of the challenging Inuit games.

Strength, agility and friendly competition are par for the course with Inuit games. Visitors can see how they fare against their campmates and staff in physical battles pitting women against women and men against men. Laughter and cheers ensue as challenging games like the one leg hop, monkey dance, leg wrestling, musk ox push and high kick, have visitors providing high entertainment value, while getting the workout of a lifetime.

Jenn Smith Nelson was a guest of Torngat Base Camp, Destination Labrador and Parks Canada, who neither reviewed nor approved this story.

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