

A Flight to Newfoundland, Canada and St. Pierre, France

In the year 1987, Joanne and I lived in Rhinebeck, New York. I was working at IBM in Kingston, New York and Joanne had a position at Marist College in Poughkeepsie.. My Mooney M20 aircraft was based at Sky Park airport near Rhinebeck. For some time, I had wanted to take a trip into Northern Canada, especially Newfoundland. I knew that the Vikings had landed at a place called L'Anse aux Meadows, so that place was of special interest. A colleague of mine at IBM, Steve Kellogg, had expressed an interest in making the trip. His wife Becky and Joanne would be along as well. We made plans to fly to Quebec City and then on to northern Newfoundland.

On July 31, we departed Sky Park airport with a small amount of luggage. After a two hour flight, we landed at the Quebec City Airport, rented a car and went to our hotel. For the next two days we enjoyed the French culture that surrounded us. There were actors who performed on the street. French was the spoken language, and we did our best to communicate. We enjoyed superb French cooking and took in the sights of that historic city.

Two days later, on August 2, we departed for Saint Anthony, Newfoundland. A five hour flight took us over Anticosti Island and then along the west coast of Newfoundland, finally landing at Saint Anthony. An interesting thing happened at the end of the flight. Just before we arrived, a new airport began operations and the old one closed. When we checked in with the tower by radio expecting to land, we were directed to the new airport where we landed. We were all very excited because we were now at the spot where Vikings had landed and established a colony in the New World . Since it was late, we went to our hotel. The next day we visited the Viking site L'Anse aux Meadows. We enjoyed a museum containing original items that were found during excavations. I remember a gold cloak pin that was quite beautiful. Archaeologists had rebuilt some of the Viking longhouses so visitors could get an idea what it was like to live there. Some of the original ruins were left untouched.

After two days in Saint Anthony, we wanted to see a small village and decided to fly to an interior town by the name of Buchans.. We landed on a small dirt runway, and, after using our sleeping bags for the night, we walked into town and asked people we met who would be a good person to take us fishing. It was a lot of argument because each person thought they best recommendation. We finally settled on a local man named Albert Buel, who took us in his truck to a remote cabin. There we did some fishing and spent the night in the cabin. We then returned to the airplane where I took Albert up for a short flight

Next we made a very interesting decision -- that we would fly to the nearby Islands of Saint Pierre et Miquelon, a self-governing part of France. It is the last remaining vestige of France's once vast North American colony. Flying directly to Saint Pierre., I radioed ahead and told them in French that we had four American citizens. Interestingly, although Joanne and I had passports with us, Steve and Becky did not (no passport was required for Canada in those days). I was a bit worried, but decided that if they wouldn't let us in without passports, we would just depart for Sidney ,Nova Scotia, our next stop. Well, when we landed they were ready for us in their spiffy uniforms. They stamped the two passports with visas and then, for Steve and Becky, they just stamped visas on pieces of blank paper. That would almost certainly not happen today. We then walked into town, found a hotel and enjoyed French cuisine at a local restaurant.

The next morning, August 8, we departed for Sidney, Nova Scotia where we rented a car and went to our hotel. There was no need to clear customs because we didn't tell them we were coming in from French territory. The next day we visited Fortress Louisbourg., an 18th century French Colonial Town.

It has been partially reconstructed, and it is manned by people in period costumes doing the daily activities of that time. We went through the village, and enjoyed seeing things as they existed there during the 18th century.

At that point, our trip was coming to an end. On August the 8th, we departed Sydney and landed in Courtland, Maine where we cleared customs and immigration. We then flew on to the airport of our original departure, Sky Park, New York. Thinking back over that trip now, it brings back many memories. I am quite certain I will never again be in Saint Pierre, France!