

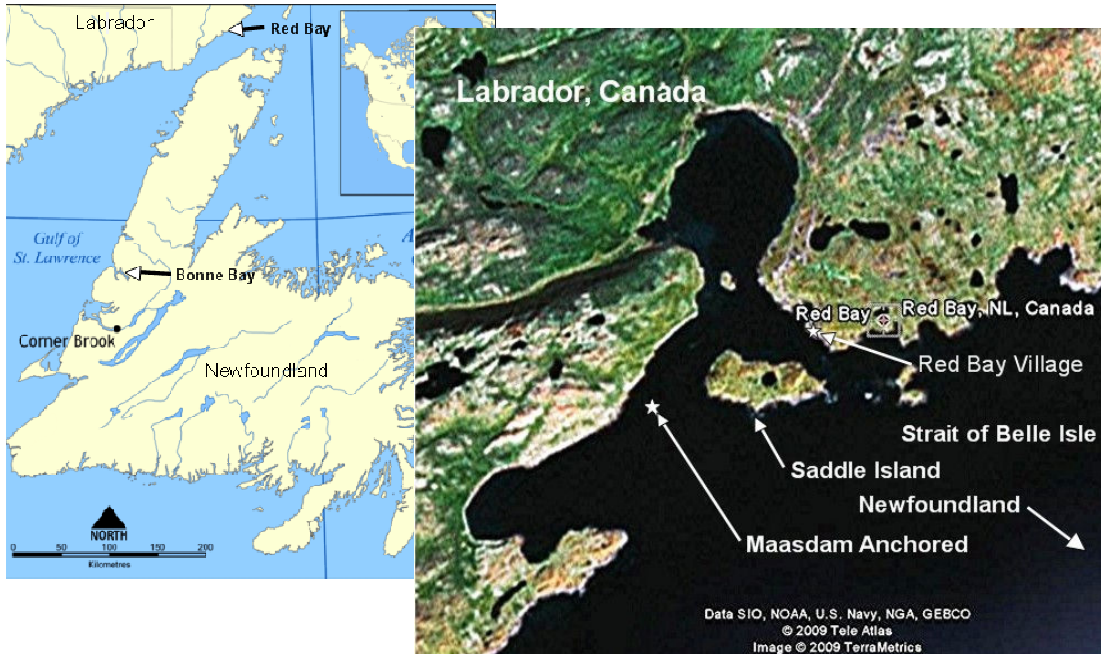
142-Day 5, July 29, Red Bay Labrador, Iceberg

Iceberg Sighted: About 7am this morning the Maasdam was cruising slowly in the Strait of Belle Isle between Labrador and Newfoundland. We looked out our window and saw the iceberg for the first time in our lives. We grabbed our camera and rushed up on deck to capture a picture as shown on the right. This specimen had the cold glacier blue color of icebergs that we had heard about.



We were thrilled to see an iceberg so early in the cruise and we are looking forward to seeing many more. Later in the day the captain came on the intercom and explained that the maritime service tracks icebergs in order to warn ships of the hazard. He said there were five icebergs currently in the waters between Newfoundland and Labrador where we would be cruising but they will be passed safely by the Maasdam.

Red Bay, Labrador: About 7:30 the Maasdam dropped anchor in the entrance to the harbor at Red Bay, Labrador. The maps below show the location of Red Bay on the globe and where the Maasdam was anchored today in the harbor.



The village of Red Bay and the surrounding harbor area is a Canadian National Historic Site because of the whaling history and artifacts left by the Basque sailors who first entered the area while hunting whales in 1517. By the beginning of the 1600s Red Bay was the world's largest whaling center where oil was extracted from the whale blubber and shipped back to Europe in barrels. Whaling was a dangerous but lucrative business where a fifty gallon barrel of whale oil was worth the equivalent of about \$7000 (US) in today's money. The archeological records suggest that as many as 2500 Basque sailors crossed the north Atlantic to Red Bay on whaling ventures each spring and returned to Europe with a cargo of whale oil before ice closed the harbor in the fall. Now about 80 families occupy the neat white buildings in the village and the population is less than 280 people.

The photo below shows how the Red Bay village looked this morning as the Maasdam approached the harbor.



In the foreground is the low laying Saddle Island where there was intense activity in extracting oil from whales in the 1500 and 1600s. Later in the day we took a two hour hike around Saddle Island where the archeological sites are well marked along the trail. In the background is the charming village made up of a few stores and many small homes painted a brilliant white color.

From the ship's anchorage it was about a 20 minute ride in the tender boats to the passenger pier in Red Bay. As with the first two small towns that we have visited on this cruise, the local people were dedicated to making our visit as enjoyable as possible. Although the accommodations were simple they served the Maasdam passengers very well and everyone we talked to seemed to be having a grand time. The tender boats arrived and deposited their passengers at a tidy landing as shown on the right.



It seemed like a large portion of the population was clad in bright orange vests and put to work in assisting the Maasdam passengers. They got us oriented and dispersed to local sites of interest. The informal Information Centre located next to the passenger landing is an example of their simple but effective help.

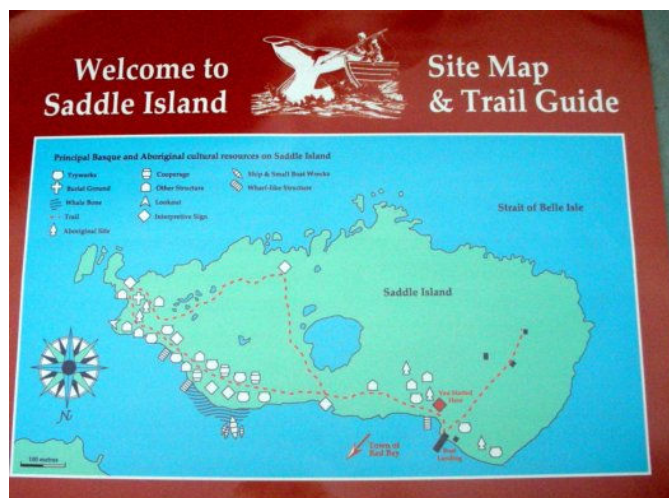


After talking with some of the local guides we directed our steps to the Canadian National Park Visitor's Center, shown on the left, not far from the passenger landing. For a total charge of \$17 Canadian we bought passes for the two Visitor's Center Museums in town plus the "Cultural Resource" trail on Saddle Island across the small

bay from the Visitor's Center. The attendants at the Center helped us peruse the museum exhibits explaining how whaling was carried out in this area 300 years ago. Then they put us on a small boat with another family of Maasdam people and we were quickly taken to Saddle Island.

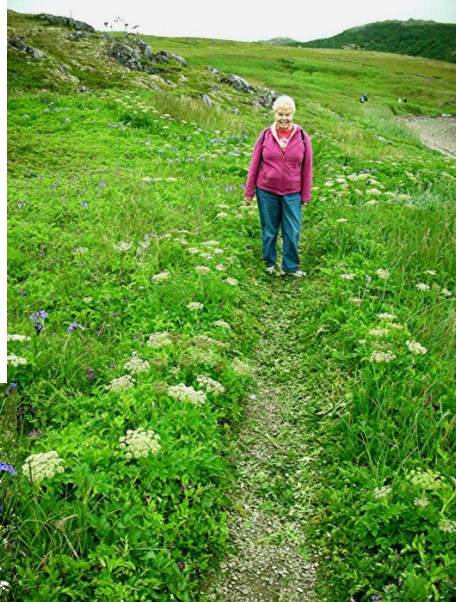
On Saddle Island we used a Site Map & Trail Guide, like the one on the right, to understand what we were seeing as we walked about a mile on the easy path around the island. This turned out to be the most enjoyable part of the day.

The following collection of photos gives some notion of what we saw along the trail.





We walked along graveled paths or on boardwalks over the tundra. There was intermittent sunshine that enhanced the color of the wild flowers blooming along the trail.



We were curious about the large number of sea urchin shells that littered the grass.



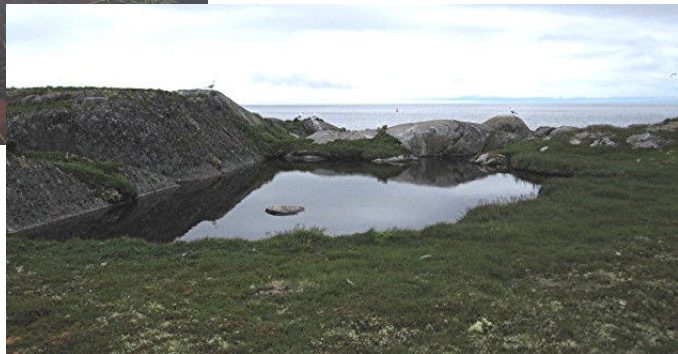
It turns out that the many seagulls on the island pluck plentiful sea urchins from the waters of the bay and, like some modern humans, just drop the food wrappings when they finish eating.

However, in the case of sea urchin shells this waste product added a pleasant form of decoration to the scene.

In the 1970s submarine archeology along the shore of Saddle Island uncovered the well preserved remains of the Spanish galleon, San Juan that was probably wrecked in a storm about 1565. The results of that work, revealing 16th century ship building techniques, are now displayed in the Visitor Center Museum. History repeated itself a couple decades ago when a coal ship ran aground in the harbor during a storm and the abandoned hulk now adds character to the shoreline of Saddle Island. Today the weather was tranquil and pleasant but the local people assured us that a winter storm passing through the area is frightening to behold.



Proceeding on the Saddle Island trail we encountered numerous beautiful little ponds of clear water.



The Maasdam was nearby and visible as we hiked around the Island.



Returning to the passenger pier on the island we found this huge chunk of whale bone on display. Our delightful walk was brought to an end as our shuttle boat captain returned us to the village of Red Bay.

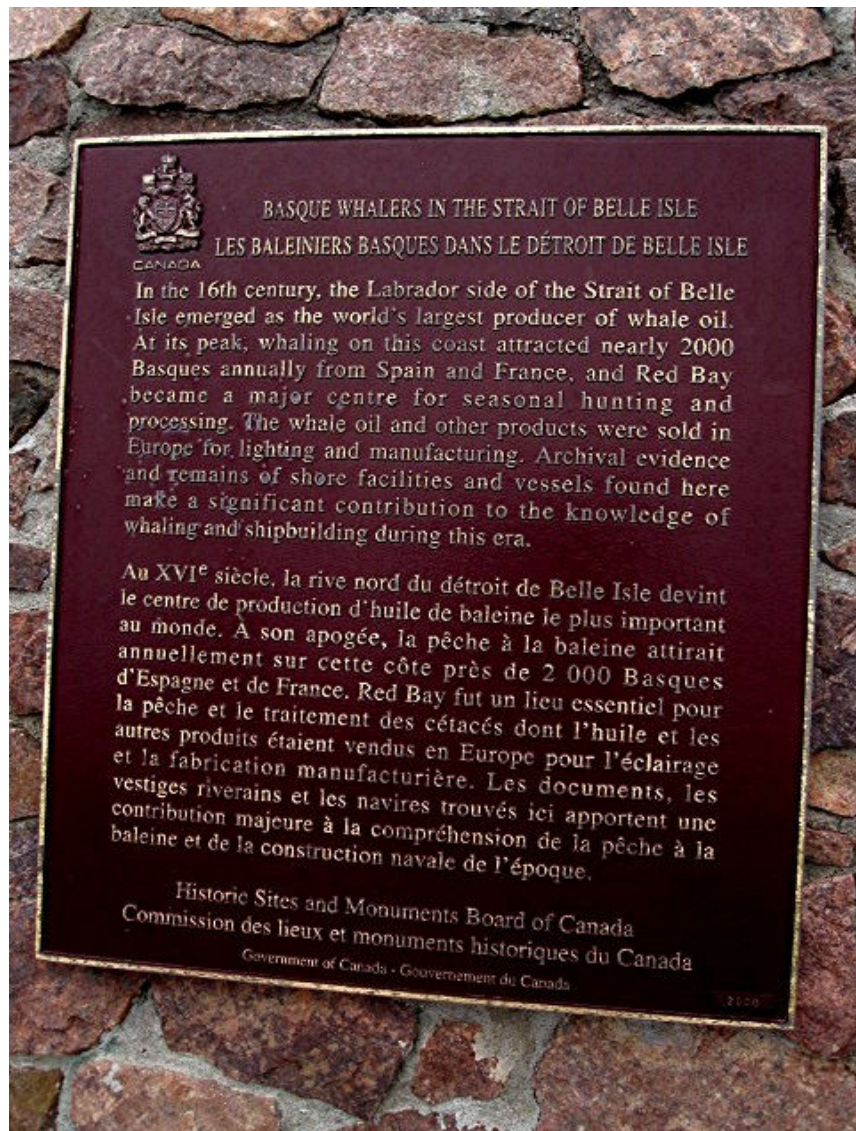


The next item on today's tour was a short walk along the main street to a second Visitor's Center operated by the Canadian Park Service. As shown in this photo on the left, Maasdam passengers were abundant in Red Bay today.

Along the way we noticed two structures made of poles arranged in the shape of an Indian teepee, as shown on the right. One of the local guides told us that these were logs stacked in this manner so they will dry and be used as firewood next winter.



At the second Visitor's Center there was a plaque that gave some information about the early days of Red Bay.



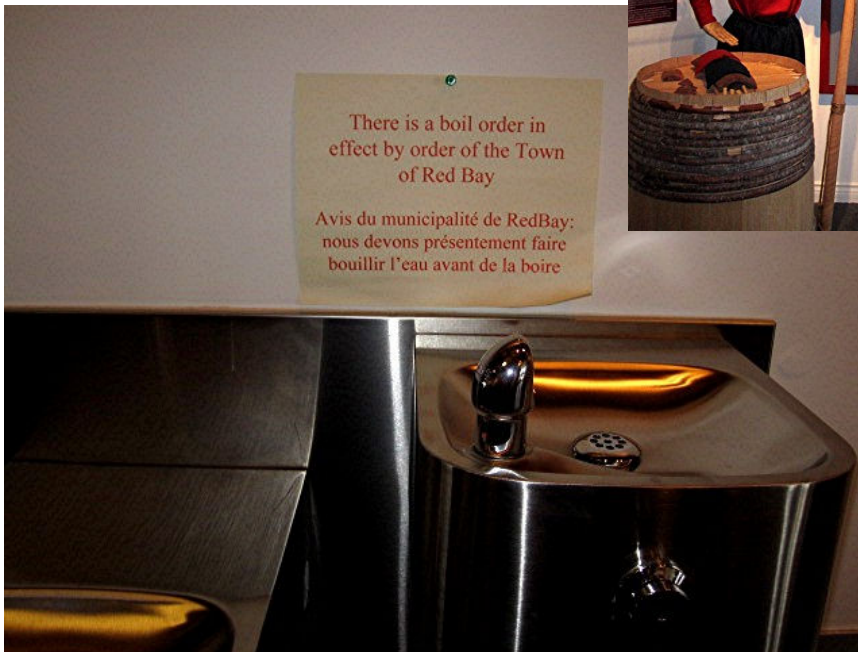
In the Visitor's Center we saw a nice video show explaining the history of Red Bay. Meticulous research at University Libraries in Spain in the last few decades has revealed



previously unknown facts about how the Basque whalers made their annual voyages to the whaling waters of Red Bay in the 1500 and 1600s. There was also a whaling boat display that was constructed based on information gathered from archeological work carried out in the area.

There was also a display showing the large the large bones of a whale's flukes.

Outside the men's room Orlin found that the drinking fountain didn't work. The sign above the fountain explained that it was necessary to boil the city water so apparently the fountain water supply was shut off. Fortunately, we had brought our own bottled water.



There is a boil order in effect by order of the Town of Red Bay

Avis du municipalité de RedBay: nous devons présentement faire bouillir l'eau avant de la boire

Outside the Center we stopped to record that Barbara's library card had visited Red Bay, Labrador.



There was also a classic small church building at the top of the hill near the Visitor's Center.



Our walking tour of Red Bay was nearing an end. As we approached the passenger pier for our return trip to the Maasdam, several yellow school buses arrived with the people who had taken the 25 mile trip out to see the Point Amour, Labrador lighthouse. The lighthouse is the highest in the Atlantic Provinces of Canada. We didn't take that tour, but since we are slightly nutty about lighthouses we obtained a photograph of the fine structure which is shown on the right.



Our visit to the streets of Red Bay was complete so we returned to the Maasdam. In the evening, after dinner, there was a show in the Rembrandt Lounge where Phillip Huber gave a marionette show that was so good we had to keep reminding ourselves that the marionettes were not alive. Other entertainers on the cruise have been Bob Brinzendime, a comic magician, Amy Abler who is a piano virtuoso and Peter Mezoian who gave the best display of banjo playing that we have seen or heard. The quality of the entertainment so far on the cruise has been a notch or two better than we have had on previous Holland American cruises. Perhaps that can be attributed, at least in part, to the efforts of cruise director Susan Wood.

Speaking of Susan, on the second night of the cruise she had announced that the evening's entertainment was the gala singers and dancers of the Maasdam putting on the Las Vegas style show called Showtime Gold. A short time later she had to announce that the show was delayed because the "computer driven light board" had developed a fatal malfunction. A new light board was on the way to the Maasdam but meanwhile the entertainers already on board had to be reshuffled to account for the cancelled Showtime Gold hour of entertainment. While we were in Red Bay they managed to have the light board transported to the ship which had to delay sailing for a couple of hours in order to make the connection. After all this build-up we are really looking forward to the show.

Tomorrow is a day at sea on our way to Nanortalik, Greenland. If we can successfully dodge the icebergs it should be a nice kickback day.