

Magdalen Islands seals



TJ.NEWS/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL





Witnessing the magical Magdalen Islands seals

A remote archipelago in the Gulf of St. Lawrence offers an adventure you can't find anywhere else.

TIFFANY THORNTON TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

The Magdalen Islands, or Îles-de la-Madeleine as they are known in French, is a place of raw natural beauty.

of eight small islands, sits in middle stone cliffs, outstretched sand dunes, lives in the water, with the breeding and miles of pristine beaches. The season being an exception. wind always seems to bellow across the Islands evoking a long history of seafarers and shipwrecks.

The Magdalen Islands are the per- There is no shortage fect destination for an intrepid traveler to explore any time of year, yet it is in the dead of winter that an unexpect- and scenery for any ed anticipation starts to build. From shutterbug to capture, late February to early March, just off the rugged coast on vast ice floes you can come face to face with newborn amateur photographer harp seal pups, known as white coats. or a highly-skilled one.

There is no shortage of fantastic images and scenery for any shutterbug to capture, whether you are an amateur photographer or a highly-skilled one. The Magdalen Islands is the only place in the world where you can embark on such an incredible adventure and have the opportunity to observe

harp seals "whelping" in the wild. Chateau Madelinot has been providing unique seal watching tours by heli- seals as they waddle across the ice. copter since the late 1980s; no one else Fully-grown adults can weigh up to Edward Island to the small archipel- the islands also offer a wide range of *er based out* on the Islands offers this "truly one of 300 pounds. a kind" experience. Guests gear up at They are pregnant for approximately ervations for the five-hour cross- the year. the hotel in red survival suits before 240 days and only have one pup. These ing can be made through Traversier, In summer, it is known for its beachheading out toward the water to board the nearby helicopters.

to the ice floes per day.

The three-hour adventure takes you couple of days out on the ice.

water as thousands of harp seals converge on the ice to give birth. The helicopter lands on the packed ice just yards away from the seal pups. You can almost instantly hear a cacophony of newborn seals crying across the barren terrain. No need to fret -This remote archipelago, made up the mothers are always nearby, usually emerging from a water hole and reof the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The top- turning to the wee pup to feed them ography is a magical mix of red sand- milk. Harp seals spend most of their

> of fantastic images whether you are an

sheer enormity of the female harp tively easy and affordable.

fluffy cuties weigh around 25 pounds which is also highlighted on the Tour- es. There are also numerous trails and at birth. The amniotic fluid makes isme Îles-de-la-Madeleine website. Al- visitors can embark on any num-There are only three small trips out their fur yellow, but it will become though geographically closer to Prince ber of adventures, from a brilliant shade of white after just a Edward Island, the islands are part of hiking, cycling, and

high above the snow-covered land- There is truly no other place in the Tourisme Îles de la Madeleine also to canoeing, scape along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. world where the wildlife enthusiast advertises a coach to the island, which kayak-Looking down as you begin to ap- can observe harp seals being born departs in Quebec City every Thursday proach the surface, you will notice in the middle of nowhere. Getting evening, from mid-June to mid-Sepdark spots moving along the frozen close to these brand new, beautiful tember, with stops at Edmundston,



like no other. It will leave an indelible impression on your heart. At less than 400 kilometres from

There is a ferry service from Prince to bear their young each March, ago in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Res- attractions and activities throughout Quebec.

with modified schedules.

In addition to the natural beauty What may come as a surprise is the Moncton, getting to the islands is rela- brought by hundreds of thousands of seals who migrate to the ice fields

horseback riding,

creatures of the sea is an experience Fredericton and Moncton. The ser- ing and boating. It is also renowned vice is also available in April and May for sliding sports and wind sports, including kite surfing, paddle boarding and wind surfing. Tiffany Thornton is a freelance trav-

el writer and wildlife photographof Hali

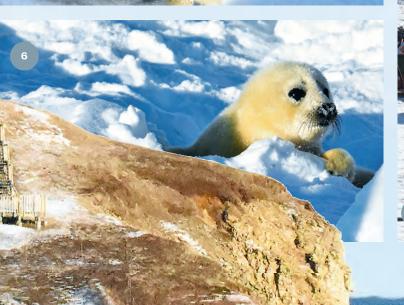


salonfocus

Seal pups on The Magdalen Islands









1. The seal pups are known for their adorable faces and big dark eyes. 2. A harp seal getting some rest after giving birth. Females are pregnant for approximately 243 days and only have one pup. 3. One of the seal pups on the Îlesde-la-Madeleine plays shy for the camera. Hundreds of thousands of seals each year migrate to the islands to bear their young. 4. A harp seal shows some love to a seal pup. Every year thousands of seals migrate to the islands to give birth. 5. This seal whelps for the camera. 6. A baby seal. 7. Participants get ready to deploy for their seal

adventure helicopter tour from Chateau Madelinot. 8. A view of the Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TIFFANY THORNTON