

FRANCE

Savoring elegant yet relaxed Bordeaux

By Joe Ray

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

LE PORGE — The stereotype for the countryside around Bordeaux as a stuffy spot with cufflinks and expensive wines goes down the drain in a whirl.

Wiped out and wanting to set up camp in the light after a day of driving, I pull off the highway an hour west of the city and find a tiny campground on a canal running through the French farm country town of Lagrère.

The restaurant that doubles as the campground office is empty, but the door is open.

"Anybody home?" I holler.

"Just a minute!" comes a faraway response.

A minute passes. Maybe two.

"Bonjour!"

Out waddles the smiling André Maille, 48, a bus driver in Montpellier who, along with the rest of his extended family, comes back to his native region every year. He's got a happy-go-lucky, joking personality that draws people to him in a heartbeat, including me when he mentions he's been spit-roasting lamb for that night's town festival.

"All day," he says. "Over oak."

We walk up to the function room of the tiny Town Hall and here, in a town of 50, are 100 people, elbow to elbow, eating lamb and ratatouille while a band plays Bad Company's "Feel Like Makin' Love."

"My sister made the ratatouille," says Maille before whistling to a brother-in-law at the grill to bring a plate for the late arrival.

I wonder aloud how many relatives he has in the room.

He looks left, right, and over his shoulder while counting on his fingers.

"Fifteen," he says. "I think. We live all over the place in France, but come back here and get together like this every year."

Sure enough, just about everybody working the event is related to him by blood or marriage and, though they make a bit of pocket change from the fête, there's more than that. "It's

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PHOTOS BY JOE RAY/ FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

In the Médoc, vineyards of the Saint-Estèphe appellation; Jean-Marie Amat in the kitchen of his restaurant in Lormont.



KING OF TIDES

Beyond the Bay of Fundy lie vistas and variety

BY JAMES F. SMITH | GLOBE STAFF

BURNCOAT HEAD, Nova Scotia — For a family on vacation in this maritime province, where enticing sites always await you just up the road, the question each day is not whether to drive but how far.

We made our first trip to the province in July with our son, Daniel, 12, and his best friend, Nick. Every morn-

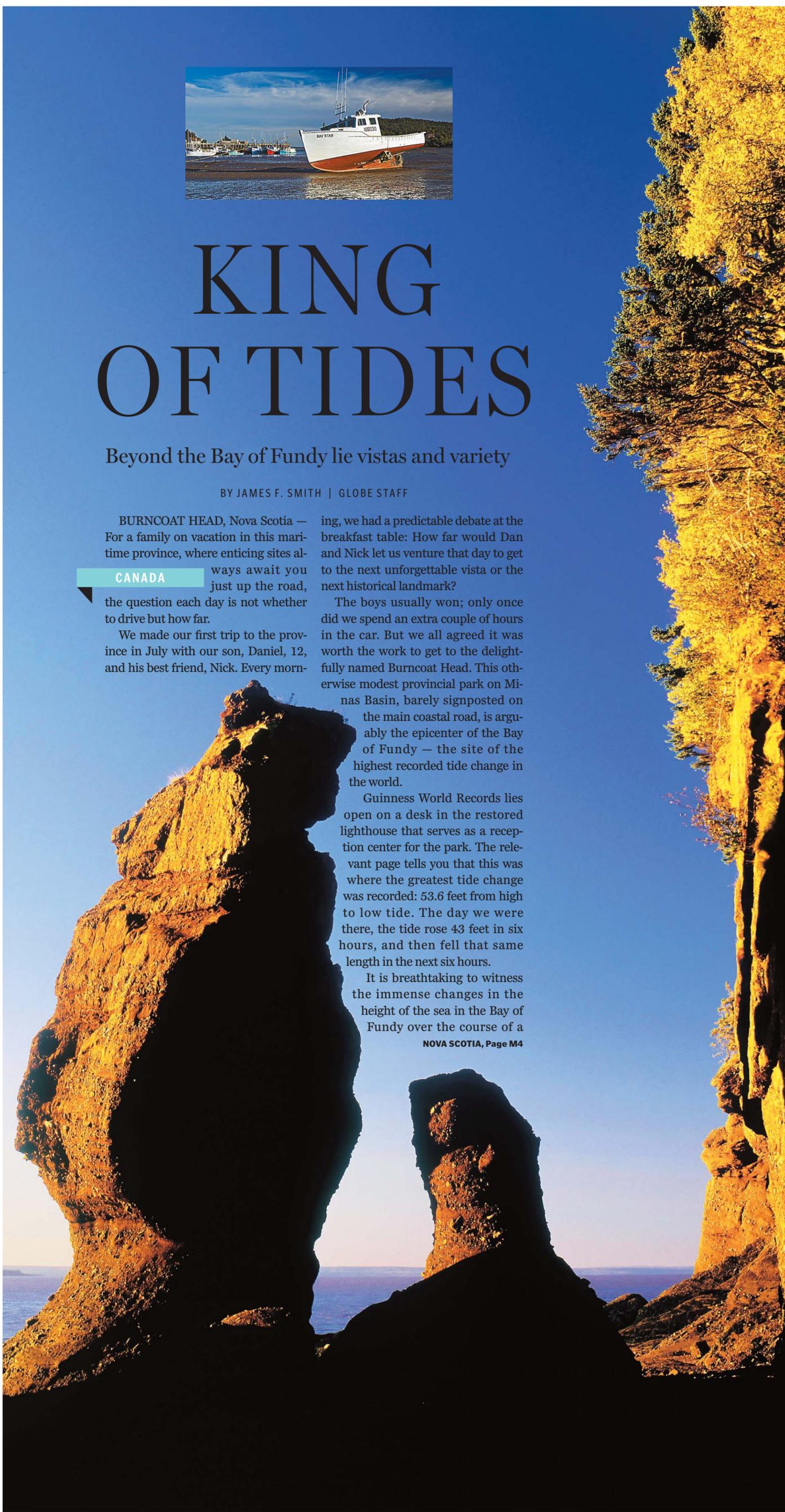
ing, we had a predictable debate at the breakfast table: How far would Dan and Nick let us venture that day to get to the next unforgettable vista or the next historical landmark?

The boys usually won; once did we spend an extra couple of hours in the car. But we all agreed it was worth the work to get to the delightfully named Burncoat Head. This otherwise modest provincial park on Minas Basin, barely signposted on the main coastal road, is arguably the epicenter of the Bay of Fundy — the site of the highest recorded tide change in the world.

Guinness World Records lies open on a desk in the restored lighthouse that serves as a reception center for the park. The relevant page tells you that this was where the greatest tide change was recorded: 53.6 feet from high to low tide. The day we were there, the tide rose 43 feet in six hours, and then fell that same length in the next six hours.

It is breathtaking to witness the immense changes in the height of the sea in the Bay of Fundy over the course of a

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The Hopewell Rocks, across the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick, are symbols of the tides' extremes. Along Digby Neck, Nova Scotia, a beached boat at low tide.

GETTY IMAGES: DARWIN WIGGETT/ALL CANADA PHOTOS (ABOVE); THOMAS KITCHIN & VICTORIA HURST/FIRST LIGHT (TOP)

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