

DESTINATION *Sept-Îles* NAKAUINANU

International Cruises

For immediate publication

PRESS RELEASE

DESTINATION SEPT-ÎLES NAKAUINANU

Overview of a productive season!

Sept-Îles, 26 November 2009 – After two years of negotiations, meetings, grant searches, resource recruiting, organization, drafting of business plans... in short, two years of hard work, our inaugural international cruise season has come and gone with a total of three port visits and an unparalleled sense of satisfaction by the entire team at Destination Sept-Îles Nakauinanu.

On 19 May, the Port of Sept-Îles welcomed its first ever international cruise ship and helped transform a dream into reality for many among us. The Maasdam, with nine decks, 1211 passengers and 546 crew members made a memorable and stately entrance into the bay. Mother Nature having graced the region with exceptional weather, many passengers seized the occasion to disembark and almost as many locals turned out to greet them. Based on feedback received from passengers who did choose to disembark, we can say for certain that the welcome they received doubtless made a difference and contributed handsomely to the impressive passenger satisfaction level of 85%.

This grand premiere also provided an opportunity for two government ministers, namely Denis Lebel, Minister of State for Québec Region with Economic Development Agency of Canada, and Nicole Ménard, Québec Minister of Tourism, to announce investment grants totalling \$28 million for the construction of a cruise ship dock facility, the development of temporary infrastructure, and the purchase and restoration of passenger rail cars for our principal traffic builder, which is to say the tourist train to an Innu village. Thus began our great adventure ripe with potential!

And the adventure continued with two visits by the Norwegian Spirit on 4 and 18 October. Two port visits, two completely different sets of circumstances! The first visit was unfortunately met with a mix of rain, wind and cold. This having been said, no fewer than 75% of the 1889 passengers and 929 crew members braved the elements and came ashore to avail themselves of local excursions—some 500 excursion packages were sold in all—or to check out and explore our city streets, museums and businesses. An excellent result considering the less than excellent weather!

Conditions proved considerably more favourable on 18 October when the Norwegian Spirit entered the bay under a radiant sun. The bright, clear day inspired an impressive 80% of the 1956 passengers and 934 crew members to disembark. Some chose to explore at leisure while others took advantage of the tourist shuttle to tour the city and do a little shopping. This time round, a total of 560 passengers booked shore-based excursions.

Hence, we can proudly state that our inaugural season proved a genuine success. Next year, the same ships have scheduled return visits on essentially the same dates for a total of three visits. In the interim, trade missions will be organized with a view to enhancing the number of visits in coming years by current cruise operators and others who might be convinced to discover the beauty of the region we call home.

Additionally, our cruise ship docking facility, which has been under construction for several months now, is expected to be ready by the fall of 2010. We are indeed hoping to inaugurate the facility on 4 October 2010 with the arrival into port of the Norwegian Spirit.

Between then and now, the teams at Destination Sept-Îles Nakauinanu and Tourism Sept-Îles will continue to work together to develop new traffic builders and provide for new activities designed to enhance the experience of future cruise ship passengers. In conclusion, we wish to thank, yet again, the entire population of Sept-Îles and environs for their exceptional support and cooperation, and Cruise the Saint Lawrence Association, without which none of this would have been possible. We are counting on you all to ensure that our second and subsequent seasons are as successful as our 2009 inaugural season.

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Source: Mario Sévigny
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