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CRUISE REVIEW



WARNING

**Emission
Control Area
ahead**

Sign of the times
Environmental compliance
gets more costly and complex

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Stand number 407

Cruise ships dock beneath Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City

High hopes

Québec has big plans for the St. Lawrence region. Hosting a recent cruise symposium exposed the province's attractions and challenges. Anne Kalosh reports.

The government of Québec aims to make the St. Lawrence River 'a major cruise destination in North America,' Tourism Minister Nicole Menard told the 11th annual Canada/New England Cruise Symposium, hosted by Cruise the Saint Lawrence in Saguenay. Québec is contributing \$52.5m within a total budget of \$156m, including federal, local and private money, to foster cruise tourism.

The goals are quadrupling the 2008 passenger count to 400,000 by 2014, doubling cruise-related revenues to \$71m and extending the season beyond the fall foliage months of September-October.

'This is a way to put Québec on the world map,' said Marie-Line Sauve, director of Tourisme Trois-Rivieres, who described the government's involvement as of major importance.

Doug Prothero, president of Canadian Sailing Expeditions, agreed, terming the Québec minister's mandate 'amazing . . . unheard of in tourism anywhere.' Prothero said the investment will 'most definitely' affect his company's deployment plans.

'It's not just infrastructure; it's marketing,' he explained. 'When a destination spends that kind of money, it benefits everyone in Canada/New England.'

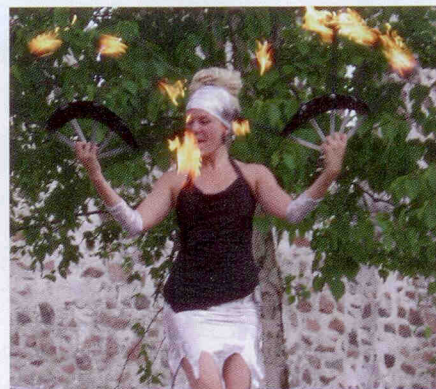
If the St. Lawrence thrives according to Menard's vision, Québec's nine emerging cruise ports will join neighboring Atlantic Canada and New England in seeing strong growth.

'Québec is a remarkable tourism destination with the potential to spark the

Hosting the Canada/New England Cruise Symposium in June went a long way towards raising awareness.

interests of international clientele,' the minister said. Indeed, this region of history, glacier-shaped landscapes, national parks, notable cities, Francophone and aboriginal cultures, festivals, fabulous food, scenery and ecotourism possibilities seems ripe for cruise ships.

But the challenges include infrastructure development, customer awareness, skyrocketing fuel costs for operators due to the pending North American Emission



A welcoming reception for delegates at the historic Pulperie de Chicoutimi, enlivened with fire-twirling Cirque du Soleil-style performers.

Control Area (ECA) and, as the minister indicated, the need to extend the season beyond the current short autumn spike.

Hosting the Canada/New England Cruise Symposium in June went a long way towards raising awareness. Delegates included cruise line itinerary, tour, operations and marketing executives plus the biggest media contingent the symposium has ever drawn.

Some attendees took a pre-tour of Montréal, Trois-Rivieres and Québec City. Others joined a whirlwind post-symposium visit to Baie-Comeau, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Sept-Iles, the Gaspé region and Iles de la Madeleine to see what Cruise the Saint Lawrence executive director René Trépanier (right) called 'the future of cruise in the St. Lawrence.' And everyone tasted the hospitality of Saguenay.

The city welcomed symposium delegates with a reception at the historic Pulperie de Chicoutimi, a former pulp mill enlivened with fire-twirling Cirque du Soleil-style performers. Priscilla Nemy (right), president of Cruise the Saint Lawrence and director of tourism and





Symposium delegates nibbled Fromagerie Boivin's Abysse cheddar, aged in the depths of the fjord where the high pressure and low temperatures accelerate the aging process.

communications for Promotion Saguenay, led a contingent of officials who greeted the approximately 200 delegates.

Saguenay Fjord, and the new cruise pavilion, were highlighted during an evening sailing trip. The \$28m Bagotville Wharf opened last year, and the \$6m pavilion was due to be inaugurated on Sept. 4 with a call by Holland America Line's Eurodam. The 12,000sq ft pavilion is shaped like a whale and built from local wood, stone and aluminum. Cedar shingles, pine columns, granite floors and aluminum trim from the local Alcan Co. are elements of the striking structure.

On the fjord sail, symposium delegates took in views of sparkling waters and soaring, tree-lined cliffs. They also nibbled Fromagerie Boivin's Abysse cheddar, aged in the depths of the fjord where the high pressure and low temperatures accelerate the aging process.

The cruise ended with a shoreside feast and dancing.

During the symposium presentations, a somber note was sounded by Rich Pruitt (right), director of environmental programs for Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., who alerted ports that their business may be hurt by the North American ECA. Ringing Canada and the US coastline, the ECA will sharply limit the allowable



Trépanier described the ECA as a 'worrying issue' for the entire Canada/New England region. As for Québec, 'We want to develop a sustainable cruise industry in the St. Lawrence,' he said. '2012 is close and [the ECA] could slow down our growth . . . We need some time to react and find alternative solutions, such as providing hydroelectric power when ships are docked.'

Meanwhile, across the province work continues on infrastructure, marketing and development. Québec City is already breaking out with solid growth at its sleek new terminal in the shadow of the imposing Fairmont Chateau Frontenac in the Old City. Nearly 100,000 passengers are expected this season, almost 40,000 on eight turn-arounds, double last year's figure.

The airport, which has installed an advanced \$10m automated baggage screening system, the first of its kind in North America, is ready to implement pier check-in for luggage once regulations allow and is keen to work with cruise operators on upgrading aircraft to facilitate homeporting.



Port of Montreal's Steve Masters, operations coordinator, left, and Tony Boemi, vp growth and development, show a model of the city to cruise line visitors at the Montreal Port Authority

Montréal, the second busiest port, has the strength of its name although growth is limited by the air draught restriction of the Québec Bridge. Still, there is potential to draw more small- and medium-sized ships, particularly those of high-end operators, said Tony Boemi, vp growth and development, Montréal Port Authority.

With good airlift, diverse tours such as the customised cooking classes arranged by Intercruises as well as the interest of hotels like the classic Fairmont Queen Elizabeth in pre- and post-cruise business, Montréal also hopes to develop homeporting. And, by 2015, the port plans to spruce up its cruise facilities with a new terminal on the existing jetty.

for concerts. Opening in 2010 in a former mill is the \$7m Borealis center, tracing the history of pulp and paper production.

Meanwhile, visitors can have a 'go to jail' experience at the Old Prison of Trois-Rivieres, or get back to nature by visiting the lakes and forested hills of the surrounding Mauricie region.

Baie-Comeau has just opened Garden of the Glaciers, a major attraction that includes a multimedia show in the Glacier Exploration Station and a Maritime Adventure Park offering a trolley ride through the Seashell Valley or ziplining and other active pursuits. Among the free-exploration circuits are the forest trails and falls of scenic Baie-Saint-Pancrace.

At Sept-Iles, a \$20m pier expansion will be finished next autumn, enabling ships up to 315mtrs alongside. Further investment will extend to the pier the railway that skirts the wild Moisie River, taking passengers to an Innu camp where they learn about aboriginal traditions. A cruise terminal may follow, said harbour master Shawn Grant.

Other Sept-Iles attractions include the Shaputuan Museum of Innu culture, the Old Trading Post, the North Shore Regional Museum and Grande Basque Island with its beaches and nature trails.

Havre-Saint-Pierre is the gateway to the Mingan Archipelago, a national park with limestone monoliths, unusual flora and abundant bird and whale-watching opportunities. Passengers can visit a church richly decorated in Innu art and images, and learn about blue, finback, minke and humpback whales from researchers at the interpretation center of the Mingan Island Cetacean Study.

Among the Gaspé peninsula's offerings are the monumental rock formations at Percé and the world's largest Northern gannet colony on Bonaventure Island, both reached by tour boat.

In the windswept Iles de la Madeleine are red sandstone cliffs, dunes, wildlife sanctuaries, houses painted whimsical colours, artisanal cheeses, a herring smokehouse, a brewery and lobster boats. A former convent has been converted into a stylish boutique hotel with a gourmet restaurant. ●

