

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT



2024-2025



CRUISE  
THE SAINT  
LAWRENCE

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# 1. Messages from the President and Executive Director

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## Message from the President

The 2024-2025 financial year marked an important turning point for Cruise the Saint Lawrence. More than ever before, our commitment to sustainable development translated into tangible, measurable and meaningful action for our host communities, our partners and our industry. Across each of our nine member ports of call, we witnessed the emergence of a renewed collaborative dynamic around shared values: respect for the land, inclusion, innovation and responsibility.

This report speaks not only to our collective mobilization but also to our steadfast resolve to render cruise-based tourism more people-oriented, more firmly anchored in local realities and more mindful of the industry's multiple impacts. Each initiative – whether it be promoting a ship supply strategy focused on local provisioning, laying the groundwork for the advent of winter cruises, or fostering the creation of a social acceptability framework – represents another building block on the path to a more resilient, more sustainable destination.

I wish to thank the members of the board of directors, the team at Cruise the Saint Lawrence, and all of our partners and member ports of call most sincerely for their commitment and their vision. Together, we are laying the foundations of a more equitable, more respectful industry better poised for the future.

I further wish to thank our government partners – Québec Action Fund for Sustainable Development (FAQDD), Québec Ministry of Tourism, and Economic Development Canada for Québec Regions (EDC) – for the financial support critical to the planning and roll-out of our strategy.



Marie-Andrée Blanchet  
President | Cruise the Saint Lawrence

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## Message from the Executive Director

This report for the 2024-2025 financial year illustrates the determination of Cruise the Saint Lawrence to position itself as a leader in sustainable tourism in North America. Throughout the year, we multiplied initiatives to situate sustainable development at the strategic heart of our planning, our governance and our passenger experience.

Our actions speak for themselves: 1 million Québec eggs served cruise passengers, ecoresponsible assessment tools developed, direct financial support provided member ports of call, and training sessions organized focusing on diversity and emotional intelligence. All of the foregoing represent concrete efforts spearheaded by a committed team and visionary partners.

One of the leading achievements of the year was the inauguration of international winter season cruises on the Saint Lawrence, a major advance from the dual standpoint of sustainability and tourism development. This novel initiative, developed in partnership with Ponant Explorations, made it possible to combine Nordic adventure with environmental responsibility. The *Commandant Charcot*, the first ever hybrid electric polar expedition vessel powered by liquid natural gas, indeed provided for a one-of-a-kind winter experience while minimizing the overall environmental footprint, reducing

reliance on single-use plastics, favouring the use of electrical power to navigate silently in protected areas, and imagining excursions respectful of local ecosystems. This winter premiere illustrates to perfection our ambition to transform the Saint Lawrence into an exemplary, sustainable, four-season cruise destination.

That said, we are fully aware that the road to a fully sustainable destination remains a long term undertaking, which explains why we look to the 2025-2026 season with a mix of ambition and humility, determined to pursue our efforts, broaden our transparency and remain attentive to the needs and aspirations of the communities that we serve.


I wish to congratulate the members of my team, especially Valérie Patry, our sustainable development adviser who skilfully injected palpable momentum into our community, and Xavier Lecorgne our external adviser with Ellio, a sustainability consultancy.

In closing, I wish to thank all the individuals who, day in day out, play a part in ensuring that the Saint Lawrence remains a destination resolutely focused on the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "René Trépanier". The signature is stylized, with a large, looped initial "R" and a distinct "T" for the last name.

René Trépanier  
Executive Director – Cruise the Saint Lawrence



An aerial photograph showing a group of kayakers on a river. The kayakers are in various colored kayaks (red, blue, yellow) and are positioned in a line, moving towards the right. The river is dark blue, and the surrounding area is a dense forest of green trees. The kayakers are on the left side of the river, and the forest is on the right side.

## 2. Sustainable tourism vision, convictions and objectives

Cruise the Saint Lawrence adopted a sustainable development strategy for the five-year period extending from 2021 to 2026. The unveiling of this strategy sent a powerful message and underscored our ambition to render the Saint Lawrence not only a sustainable waterway but also a cruise destination with a clearly stated vision and convictions in matters of sustainable development.

### **Vision**

The cruise industry contributes to socio-economic vitality in the regions of Québec served and actively participates in the preservation and regeneration of local ecosystems. Destination Saint Lawrence provides a positive, sustainable, people-based experience through the bridges we build between visitors and our host communities, as well as maritime, tourism and scientific players.

### **Convictions**

- The success of the cruise industry lies in the creation of lasting collective value and benefits intended to ensure the sustained wellbeing of our host communities.
- Through powerful social and environmental leadership, it is possible to bring positive pressure to bear on the cruise industry.

- When all players work hand in hand with one another, we can collectively shape the Saint Lawrence into an attractive, welcoming and sustainable destination.
- For the team at Cruise the Saint Lawrence, active listening, transparency and honesty form the basis of constructive, respectful dialogue.

### **Thrusts and objectives**

#### ▪ Thrust #1

#### **Create shared value with local communities and industry players**

##### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Inspire cruise lines and passengers to 'buy local'.
2. Promote ecoresponsible local tourist attractions and organizations with passengers.
3. Enhance local community visibility and culture through activities on offer.
4. Maximize the economic impact of cruise-based tourism.

#### ▪ Thrust #2

#### **Combat climate change and protect biodiversity**

##### **OBJECTIVES:**

5. Initiate tangible action intended to combat climate change.
6. Protect and help restore the biodiversity upon which the tourism industry depends.
7. Reward ecoresponsible behaviour by key destination players.



- Thrust #3

**Situate the passenger at the heart of responsible, people-based experiences**

**OBJECTIVES:**

8. Use destination greeting procedures as a lever for fostering responsible passenger behaviour.
9. Place the different Destination Saint Lawrence cultures at the heart of the passenger experience.

- Thrust #4

**Be an actively involved player, foster dialogue and create strategic alliances**

**OBJECTIVES:**

10. Help make sustainable development an element of central importance for cruise sector events and position stakeholders as contributors to our strategy.
11. Engage fully with all Saint Lawrence players within the cruise sector and beyond.
12. Communicate regularly on sustainable development challenges.







### 3. Overview of our achievements

#### Recapping our objectives

1. Inspire cruise lines and passengers to 'buy local'.
2. Promote responsible tourist attractions and organizations with passengers.
3. Enhance local community visibility and culture through activities on offer.
4. Maximize the economic impact of cruise-based tourism.
5. Initiate tangible action to minimize destination/sector impact on climate change.
6. Protect and help restore the ecosystems upon which the tourism industry depends.
7. Reward ecoresponsible behaviour by key destination players (cruise lines and shore-based providers).
8. Use destination greeting procedures as a lever for fostering responsible passenger behaviour.
9. Place the different Destination Saint Lawrence cultures at the heart of the passenger experience.
10. Help make sustainable development an element of central importance for the cruise sector and position stakeholders as contributors to our strategy.
11. Engage fully with all Saint Lawrence players within the cruise sector and beyond.
12. Communicate regularly and transparently about our sustainable development challenges and achievements.

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## Achievements

### 1. DEPLOYMENT OF LOCAL PROCUREMENT STRATEGY WITH CRUISE LINES AND PRINCIPAL PARTNERS

In 2024, 100% Québec products were featured onboard cruise ships. Items included: One million eggs, over 410 000 kg (900 000 lb) of fresh fruits and vegetables, some 8000 kg (18 000 lb) of local cheeses and over 3000 kg (6200 lb) of locally sourced fresh seafood.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 1

### 2. DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE GUIDED TOURS

An assessment framework was drawn up in cooperation with a tour operator, the dual aim being to obtain a clear picture of existing offerings and promote ecoresponsible tourism activities. This framework will be used to identify and develop sustainable offerings.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 2

### 3. INTRODUCTION OF FIRST STAGES OF COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY TO RAISE CRUISE PASSENGER AWARENESS OF THE DESTINATION SAINT LAWRENCE SUSTAINABLE EXPERIENCE

Deployment of this strategy will make it possible to align communications across all nine member ports of call, promote ecoresponsible cruise passenger behaviour, showcase First Nations communities present in our ports of call, share information on river biodiversity and ecosystems, place the emphasis on local culture, and much more.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12



#### 4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN MARINE INDUSTRY DECARBONIZATION WORKING GROUP

René Trépanier, Executive Director of Cruise the Saint Lawrence, co-chaired this working group as part of the Marine Industry Forum. The group supported the development of tools for achieving the decarbonization objectives of this sector of industry. A report was produced and tabled in the autumn of 2024.

**Objective(s) achieved: 5**

#### 5. INCORPORATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA INTO THE 2024 VERSION OF THE SUSTAINABLE GREETING POLICY OF CRUISE THE SAINT LAWRENCE

The greeting policy was amended to include sustainable development objectives across the board, the object being to have the policy serve as a reference for the cruise sector.

**Objective(s) achieved: 8**

#### 6. TOUR OF DESTINATION SAINT LAWRENCE PORTS OF CALL BY CSL'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ADVISER AND EXTERNAL CONSULTANT FROM ELLIO

Meetings with stakeholders made it possible to assess the state of advancement of sustainable development initiatives in each location; findings were later detailed in a situation analysis report.

**Objective(s) achieved: 8**





## 7. SIGNING OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS WITH THE NINE MEMBER SAINT LAWRENCE MEMBER PORTS OF CALL

Financial support was provided each port of call to assist in implementing tangible sustainable development action, provide for ecofriendly greeting operations and fund consultations with local stakeholders.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 8

## 8. CREATION OF SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY FRAMEWORK AND DEPLOYMENT OF INITIAL MEASURES

The framework comprises four facets: cruise forums, strategic watch bulletin, population study and field observations. Findings from each of these facets will be compiled, making it possible to monitor the development of the social acceptability of international cruises in Québec.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 8, 10, 12

## 9. CREATION OF A COMMUNITY OF DEDICATED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES: *LES COURANTS DURABLES DU SAINT-LAURENT*

Since February 2025, monthly meetings enable Cruise the Saint Lawrence members to share information on sustainable development practices and challenges. Themes touched upon include social acceptability and consultations with stakeholders. Experts have also been invited to speak.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 10

## 10. CREATION OF A SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

A monitoring tool has been developed to align social, economic, environmental and governance indicators with the principles of sustainable development. This tool will be employed destination-wide.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 10, 12

## 11. CSL PARTICIPATION IN VARIOUS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GROUPS, EVENTS AND TRAINING SESSIONS

Cruise the Saint Lawrence completed the *Cohorte d'adaptation en changements climatiques* directed by Ouranos, as well as the *Parcours DD en tourisme* by Alliance touristique. Cruise the Saint Lawrence is also a member of the Sustainable Development Roundtable of Alliance touristique and takes part in key sustainable development events in regions across Québec.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 10, 11

## 12. DEPLOYMENT OF MONTHLY STRATEGIC WATCH BULLETIN INTENDED TO TOOL CRUISE THE SAINT LAWRENCE MEMBERS AND STAFF

Each month, members receive a strategic watch bulletin focusing upon sustainable development and the cruise industry. Bulletins cover three separate thrusts: best practices and regulations; innovations and concepts; and, measurement data and tools.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 10

## 13. CONDUCT OF STUDY INTO ECONOMIC IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL CRUISES

Economic data relating to the impact of international cruises in Québec has been updated by a Québec-based firm to more properly reflect the overall benefits for the provincial and local economies.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 4

## 14. INCORPORATION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODULE INTO *BEST BIENVENUE* TRAINING VIDEO

Available in English and French, this training video assists port of call partners in becoming ambassadors of ecoresponsible greetings operations.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 8, 10, 12

## 15. DEVELOPMENT OF WINTER CRUISE OFFERINGS

The first ever winter cruises took place in early 2025 in five Saint Lawrence ports of call, the goal being to support local economies during the off-peak season.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 4

## 16. NEW STRATEGIC PLANNING MATERIAL INCORPORATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Cruise the Saint Lawrence strategy, adopted in 2024, incorporates sustainable development as a cross-functional pillar. Two committees were struck: governance and human resources

**Objective(s) achieved:** 10

## 17. TRAINING SESSION IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, DIVERSITY AND IMPACT COMMUNICATIONS OFFERED MEMBERS

Moderated by an HR professional, this training session aimed to enhance inclusive communications and diversity awareness among members.

**Objective(s) achieved:** 8, 10







## 4. Port of call successes

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### **Montréal**

At Montréal, 12 cruise ships connected to electrical shore power, resulting in a 570.4 tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for the 2024 operating season. A total of 33 ships also made use of the shore-based wastewater collection system, representing an increase of 136% over 2023. Additionally, the taxi management system used by Cruise Montréal enabled cruise passengers to use electric (33%) and hybrid (37%) taxis on a total of 2400 rides.

### **Trois-Rivières**

At Trois-Rivières, port of call authorities introduced a free pedicab service for several ships during the months of September and October 2024. A boutique featuring creations by local artisans was also set up in the cruise terminal each day that a ship was in port, the aim being to showcase local artisanry and craftwork from the greater Trois-Rivières area. A sorting station for recyclables, a filling station for water bottles and sustainability visuals were also installed in the cruise passenger greeting area to raise visitor awareness of the importance of sustainable development. Local staff received sustainable development training specific to the cruise sector.

## **Québec**

At Québec, the Port of Québec and Destination Québec Cité, the two partners responsible for port of call operations, engaged in multiple activities in 2024. The Port of Québec renewed Biosphere certification through various initiatives, including a Citizen Initiative Fund intended to support local projects and the provision of an electric-powered shuttle vehicle for cruise passengers. In February 2025, Destination Québec Cité organized the inaugural edition of *Les Grands Remous*, the largest innovation and sustainable tourism event in Canada.

## **Saguenay**

In August 2024, Saguenay port of call announced receipt of internationally acclaimed Biosphere accreditation awarded to destinations and organizations demonstrating exemplary sustainable development management and compliance with the 17 sustainable development goals of the United Nations. Action spearheaded during the 2024 season included an exhibition on plastic pollution in the welcome pavilion, inception of a partnership with Expédition Bleue, shore cleanup and awareness activities, as well as a \$50 000 reinvestment in positive impact initiatives.

## **Baie-Comeau**

In March 2025, the Port of Baie-Comeau took delivery of a small electric-powered vehicle to transport dockside staff during cruise season. This new ecofriendly vehicle, which will also be used for general shore-based operations, will help reduce the port's carbon footprint while providing for optimum efficiency. Additionally, in June 2024, Baie-Comeau port of call organized the region's first ever strategic roundtable of cruise industry stakeholders. The event underscored the importance of consulting with all parties involved to ensure optimal, across-the-board development.

## **Sept-Îles, Gaspé and Îles-de-la-Madeleine**

During the first ever winter cruises, the five ports of call that welcomed the *Commandant Charcot* – Sept-Îles, Gaspé and Îles-de-la-Madeleine among them – proudly promoted sustainable tourism. Offerings included e-bike adventures, hikes along the coastal cliffs in the vicinity of the village of Fatima on Îles-de-la-Madeleine, snowshoeing in Forillon National Park, discovery of Mi'kmaq culture at Gaspé and an introduction to Inuit traditions at Sept-Îles. In short, the destination's inaugural winter cruises placed the emphasis squarely on low impact tourism as well as Québec and First Nations culture.



Efforts by Saint Lawrence member ports of call to provide ecoresponsible passenger greeting operations and sustainable excursions proved a tremendous source of inspiration for the years ahead.

### **Havre-Saint-Pierre**

Havre-Saint-Pierre port of call joined the Saint Lawrence Challenge in 2024, achieving the level of ambassador. Authorities also organized an inaugural shore cleanup operation in the early summer of 2024, resulting in the retrieval and removal of some 115 kg (250 lb) of waste. In late summer, officials welcomed the team of Expédition Saint-Laurent for an action and awareness day that included a collective waste removal operation and a mini public conference.





An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely Saint-John's, New Brunswick. A large cruise ship, the 'Nieuw Holland', is docked at a pier. The town features a mix of residential houses, some with red roofs, and commercial buildings. The waterfront is lined with trees, and the water is calm. The text '5. Looking ahead to 2025-2026' is overlaid in white on the lower part of the image.

## 5. Looking ahead to 2025-2026

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As the new season dawns before us, Cruise the Saint Lawrence aims to consolidate and enhance our sustainable development commitments. In the wake of a year brimming with achievements, we will strive to further our commitment and dialogue with sector stakeholders in 2025-2026.

Our central focus will be the **full deployment of our social acceptability framework**. Developed over the course of recent months, this framework aims to tune into, comprehend and incorporate the concerns shared by the residents of our host communities. By means of a strategic watch, population study, participatory forums and active listening initiatives in host communities, Destination Saint Lawrence will seek to enhance the social legitimacy of cruise industry operations and build lasting relationships of trust with the people of the communities that we serve.

In parallel, **our screen-based communications project will be launched across all nine member ports of call**. This unified system of relaying information will make it possible for us to share with passengers content featuring the **wealth of First Nations cultures in Québec** as well as the **exceptional biodiversity of the Saint Lawrence River**. This project will not only inform but also raise awareness, inspire responsible behaviour and enhance the identities of our host communities.

Lastly, Cruise the Saint Lawrence will assume an active role in the proceedings of the **working group on climate change, an initiative of the Québec Ministry of Tourism**. By bringing our sector's voice to the table, we hope to contribute to the development of tangible, shared solutions to help our industry adapt to new climate realities, while pursuing decarbonization and environmental innovation efforts.

The 2025-2026 season will therefore herald a new stage in our collective journey towards a sustainable and inclusive Destination Saint Lawrence fully aligned with the aspirations of our host communities.



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## Contact

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