

ST. LAWRENCE RIVER CRUISE

7 days on *Canadian Empress* from Kingston to Quebec City
September 11, 2019 - 10 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person: based on double/twin

\$5375 St. Lawrence Category

\$5730 Ottawa Category

\$5870 Sterling Category



> Please add 5% GST.

> Single fare in St. Lawrence Category is \$6995 (5 available).

> **Early Bookers:** \$100 discount on first 15 seats; \$50 next 10

> **Experience Points:** Earn 94 points from this tour.

Redeem **94 points** if you book by **May 29**.

Includes

- Transfers to/from Victoria Airport
- Westjet flight from Victoria to Toronto
- Current air transport taxes, fees & fuel surcharges
- One piece of checked luggage on airline
- 3 nights of hotel accommodation & taxes
- Coach transportation from Toronto to Kingston
- 7 days/6 nights on board *Canadian Empress*
- Cruise gratuities
- Port charges and cruise taxes
- St. Lawrence Seaway ship transit fees
- Entertainment and other services on the ship
- Transportation from ship to attractions and return
- Locally-guided tour of Kingston
- Old Fort Henry
- Heritage Museum of the 1000 Islands
- 1000 Islands Tower
- Fulford Place Mansion
- Fort Wellington National Historic Site
- Upper Canada Village
- Miniature train from dock to Upper Canada Village and return
- Horse-drawn wagon ride around Upper Canada Village
- Locally-guided tour of Montreal
- Locally-guided tour of Trois-Rivières
- Basilica of Notre Dame du Cap
- Coach transportation in Quebec City for 2 days
- Montmorency Falls with cable car
- Locally-guided tour of Quebec City
- Transfer from hotel to Quebec City Airport
- Westjet flight from Quebec City to Victoria
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers in Ontario and Quebec
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Luggage handling at hotels and ship
- **23 meals:** 9 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 8 dinners

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MV Canadian Empress

The *Canadian Empress* was the result of some fanciful thinking on the part of Bob Clark in 1979. Having lived on the St. Lawrence River for years and being familiar with its many attractions and scenic beauty, Bob couldn't understand why there wasn't an overnight cruise ship providing excursions up and down the river. He was active in the architecture, real estate and housing industries, so Bob's entrepreneurial spirit wouldn't allow him to let go of this idea and soon the keel for the ship was being laid. The *Canadian Empress* was launched in 1981. The year 1908 was chosen as a design and decor theme because Bob wanted a vessel that would integrate well with the history of the St. Lawrence River. The ship is not a replica of any specific vessel, but is a composite of many in the St. Lawrence region during the last century.

The *Canadian Empress* is 33 metres long with a 9-metre beam and a draft of just 1.5 metres. She carries only 66 passengers in 32 cabins. There are three decks. St. Lawrence Deck is the lowest and has most of the cabins and the gift shop. Ottawa Deck has 8 cabins, the Grand Saloon Lounge and Dining Room, and forward and aft outdoor sitting areas. The Sun Deck has lots of outdoor seating. Most cabins have two single beds (four have a double bed), toilet, shower, sink, and window(s). Cabins are very compact compared to an ocean cruise ship, typically about 8 square metres. There is daily maid service. You will likely spend most daylight time away from your cabin in the Grand Saloon or on deck enjoying the scenery. Nightly entertainment is provided, usually by a local group or person, and can include music, singing or magic.

The ship docks most nights in a community along the St. Lawrence River, so you can go ashore at your leisure and explore the area. Although the ship enters the USA several times, it does not dock there, so no passport is needed for the whole trip.

Three meals a day plus afternoon tea and in-between treats are served in the Grand Saloon. There are usually two entrees offered with dinner. The menus utilize fresh in-season locally-produced fruits and vegetables, and bread may come from the pioneer ovens at Upper Canada Village. The bar is well-stocked with wine, beer and liquor at reasonable prices. Coffee and tea are available 24 hours a day.

Roland and Anne Neave, owners of Wells Gray Tours, cruised on the *Canadian Empress* in 2016 and 2017, and loved both trips. We have since offered two cruises with excellent reviews. Come and experience a different kind of river cruising on board an intimate ship.

Cruise & Tour Notes

All shore excursions included. On many cruises, shore excursions are a significant additional expense. On this cruise, all shore excursions are included. Usually a bus picks you up beside the ship and takes you to a local attraction. To reach Upper Canada Village, you ride on a miniature train.

Please book early. *Canadian Empress* has confirmed a block of cabins for this tour, mostly on the St. Lawrence Deck. These are normally held until 60 days before sailing. However, any unsold cabins can be taken away from us at any time if the ship fills. This tour is limited to 48 people.

Singles: Five ship cabins are designated for singles with a lower single supplement. Book early for these!

Activity Level: Light activity including short distances to walk during the shore excursions. There is no elevator on the ship. No matter which deck you are on, expect to use some stairs such as up to the dining room from St. Lawrence Deck or down to the dock from Ottawa Deck, or up from both those decks to the Sun Deck. This tour is not suitable for people who depend on walkers or have mobility challenges with a flight of stairs. There can be longer walks in the airports; request a cart or wheelchair at check-in if this could be an issue for you. The coaches and ship cannot carry a scooter. If you think you may have difficulty participating in Activity Level 1, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, local guides and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

The St. Lawrence River

The St. Lawrence River begins at the foot of Lake Ontario near Kingston, and flows generally in a north-easterly direction about 1,300 kilometres to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Beyond the Gulf lies the vast Atlantic Ocean. The St. Lawrence waters originate in Lake Superior, the largest freshwater lake on the globe (measured by surface area) and, among all the big rivers of the world, it is the only one whose volume is not greatly affected by the elements. This mighty river which Sir J.M. LeMoine called "The noblest, the purest, most enchanting river on all God's beautiful earth" acts as a natural boundary for many kilometres between Canada and the USA.

The 1000 Islands

With each nautical mile, nature's northern masterpiece unfolds. Within one 80-kilometre stretch of the mighty St. Lawrence River, there are no less than 1,870 islands. In these "1000 Islands", birthplace of the famous 1000 Islands Dressing, we explore intricate river channels, sumptuous greenery, mysterious coves, and nooks and crannies veiled in folklore. We sail past summer cottages, opulent mansions, and even two castles, Boldt and Singer. These islands have been the summer homes of the rich and famous: the Astors, the Pullmans, the McNallys, Helena Rubenstein, Irving Berlin, Mary Pickford, and a host of others. We cruise under several bridges including the multiple spans of the Thousand Islands Bridge and ride the fast elevator to the fabulous view atop the 40-storey high 1000 Islands Tower. The *New York Times* wrote, "When the time comes for sleep, sleep comes easily on a ship surrounded by a thousand islands and a million stars."

The St. Lawrence Seaway

The St. Lawrence Seaway was one of the most ambitious engineering feats of the last century. The objectives were to increase the size of the St. Lawrence River shipping channel and generate hydro-electric power for Ontario, Quebec, and New York State. Entire villages were relocated to higher ground, utilizing the largest moving and construction equipment in the world. As the temporary coffer dams were blown on July 1st, 1958, people watched with mixed emotions. Slowly rising water covered familiar land forever. It was sad for some to know they could never go home again. Others were excited to think of the new conveniences and services, modern schools, and ocean ships being able to access the Great Lakes. A highlight of our cruise on the *Canadian Empress* is the opportunity to pass through seven locks between Kingston and Montreal, experiencing an overall change in water level of 75 metres. All locks on the Seaway are similar in size — 233 metres long, 24½ metres wide, and 9 metres deep over the sill. A lock fills with about 91 million litres of water in just 7 to 10 minutes. The ship takes about 45 minutes to go through a lock.

Itinerary

Wednesday, September 11:

Meals: D

A transfer is provided to Victoria airport. We fly on Westjet to **Toronto** and stay overnight at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel, conveniently located inside Terminal 3 where Westjet lands.

Thursday, September 12:

Meals: B,D

We drive to **Kingston** which played a vital role in Canada's birth. It was always a military fort, first as a French stronghold against both British and Iroquois enemies and then as a British fort defending against American invaders. After the Rideau Canal was built in 1832, Kingston became the primary economic centre for Upper Canada and was briefly the capital of the Province of Canada. A local guide conducts a drive past landmarks such as Queens University, City Hall, the Martello Towers, Royal Military College, infamous Kingston Penitentiary, and John A. Macdonald's Bellevue House. We take a guided walk through **Old Fort Henry** which has loomed over Kingston since the War of 1812. A much larger fort was constructed between 1832 and 1836 to defend Lake Ontario, the entrance to the Rideau Canal, and the harbour. These were the strongest defences in Canada west of Quebec City, but

neither was ever attacked. At 5:30 pm, **Canadian Empress** is ready for boarding in downtown Kingston. The Captain's welcome reception is followed by dinner. We cruise out of Kingston's harbour at 7 pm and anchor for the night in the midst of the 1000 Islands.

Friday, September 13:

Meals: B,L,D

The ship weaves among the **1000 Islands** and docks at Gananoque to visit the Heritage Museum. We continue via Wanderer's Channel, the Admiralty Islands, and Millionaires' Row where palatial mansions overlook the river. **Boldt Castle** was built in 1900 by George Boldt who owned the Waldorf Astoria in New York. The castle was meant to be a gift for his wife with 120 rooms, 6 storeys, indoor pool, powerhouse, ballrooms, and gardens. In 1904, Mrs. Boldt suddenly died and work stopped on the castle, never to be completed. We sail around the castle, but do not land because it is in the USA. Nearby is the 42-room **Singer Castle**, built in 1896 by the owner of Singer Sewing Machines. Our next stop is at Ivy Lea where we drive across half of the 1000 Islands Bridge to the 40-storey **1000 Islands Tower** and enjoy a panoramic view. We continue down the river and dock at **Brockville** for the night.

Saturday, September 14:*Meals: B,L,D*

We tour the splendid **Fulford Place Mansion**, built in 1901 by Senator George Fulford who made a fortune selling a cure-all medicine known as Dr. William's Pink Pills for Pale People. It is a three-hour cruise to Prescott. We visit **Fort Wellington National Historic Site** which defended the St. Lawrence during the War of 1812 and the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837. In late afternoon, the *Canadian Empress* passes through the **Iroquois Lock**, first of seven on this voyage.

Sunday, September 15:*Meals: B,L,D*

We ride a miniature train from our overnight dock to **Upper Canada Village**, an elaborate living history museum. A horse-drawn wagon ride provides an orientation. Step back 150 years and stroll the streets, visiting restored buildings and chatting to costumed actors about their work and life. Back on board, we cast off about noon. Near Cornwall, we enter the **Wiley-Dondero Canal** for 15 km and the ship is lowered through the Eisenhower and Snell Locks. We dock for the night at Coteau Landing in Quebec.

Monday, September 16:*Meals: B,L,D*

This morning, we cruise through Lake St. Francis and enter the 21-km **Beauharnois Canal** which has two locks. Next is Lake St. Louis, followed by the South Shore Canal which is 26 km long and bypasses the **Lachine Rapids** with the Ste. Catherine and St. Lambert Locks. We arrive in **Montreal** about 3 pm and dock overnight. A locally-guided tour explores this vibrant centre of French Canadian traditions including Mount Royal, Île Sainte-Hélène, downtown landmarks, and the imposing Notre Dame Basilica.

Tuesday, September 17:*Meals: B,L,D*

We leave the skyscrapers of Montreal behind as we continue downstream on the ever-widening St. Lawrence River. We arrive in **Trois Rivières** about 2:30 pm and take a tour to the impressive **Basilica of Notre Dame du Cap**. The first church was built here in 1720, the first pilgrimage arrived in 1883, and the present basilica was inaugurated in 1964. There is free time for a self-guided walking tour of the Old City. Tonight is the ship's farewell dinner followed by Big Band music and dancing with a local group.

Wednesday, September 18:*Meals: B,L*

It is a seven-hour cruise down the St. Lawrence to **Québec City**. Enjoy the dramatic approach as we sail under two lofty bridges, then past the ramparts of Old Québec and the landmark of the Chateau Frontenac. We arrive at 2 pm and say goodbye to the *Canadian Empress*. We take a drive to 83-metre high **Montmorency Falls** and admire stunning views from the cable car and the bridge across the brink. Our last two nights are at the Delta Hotel which has a great location near the National Assembly and the walls of Old Québec.

Thursday, September 19:*Meals: B,D*

A morning sightseeing tour of Québec City takes us past the Legislative Buildings, the St. Louis Gate into this walled city, the Citadelle, and the Plains of Abraham. We take a walk along quaint narrow cobbled streets past the centuries-old buildings of Place Royale. The afternoon is leisure time.

Friday, September 20:*Meals: B*

We fly on Westjet via Toronto to Victoria, and a transfer is provided to your pickup point.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$600 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due May 29, 2019. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$100 discount on first 15 seats and \$50 on next 10 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after May 29.

Cancellation Policy: Up to March 29, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From March 30 to May 29, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From May 30 to June 28, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From June 29 to July 29, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After July 29, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to taxes and surcharges from airline, cruise ship and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Home pickups may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and coach size. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

Photo Credit: St. Lawrence Cruise Lines

☺-points: This tour earns 94 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until May 29.

Consumer Protection BC licence: #65842