



St. Lawrence & Ottawa Rivers Cruise

September 15, 2021 – 10 Days

5 days from Kingston to Ottawa on Canadian Empress

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 *Canadian Empress* cruises between Kingston and Ottawa on the St. Lawrence River and the Ottawa River. The 5-day voyage passes through 9 locks. Experience the cities of Kingston, Montreal and Ottawa, and lots of Canadian history during this fascinating cruise.

Activity Level: 1



21 Meals Included:

8 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 7 dinners

Fares per person double or twin:

\$5,245 St. Lawrence cabin; \$5,570 Ottawa cabin;
\$5,690 Sterling cabin; \$5,955 Premier cabin
Single fare St. Lawrence cabin: \$6,930 (4 available)
Please add 5% GST.

Early Bookers:

\$100 discount on first 15 seats; \$50 on next 10

Experience Points:

Earn 93 points on this tour

Redeem 93 points if you book by June 10, 2021.



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 Thousand 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."

ITINERARY

Day 1: Wednesday, September 15

We fly on WestJet from Vancouver to **Toronto** and stay overnight at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel, conveniently located inside Terminal 3 where WestJet lands.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Sheraton Gateway Hotel

Day 2: Thursday, September 16

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. Lunch is included in a unique restaurant inside the stone walls of **Old Fort Henry**. Afterwards, we take a guided walk through the fort 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. We stay overnight at the Delta Hotel on the picturesque Lake Ontario waterfront.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Delta Kingston Hotel

Day 3: Friday, September 17

The morning is free time. A local guide conducts a drive past landmarks such as Queens University, City Hall, the Martello Towers, Royal Military College, and infamous Kingston Penitentiary, and we tour John A. Macdonald's **Bellevue House**. 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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*

Day 4: Saturday, September 18

The ship weaves among the **1000 Islands** 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 take a short bus ride across half of the Thousand Islands Bridge to the 40-storey **Thousand Islands Tower** and enjoy a panoramic view. We continue

down the river to the **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 **Iroquois Lock**, first of nine on this voyage, and we dock overnight at a nearby marina.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*

Day 5: Sunday, September 19

The morning is devoted 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. We ride a miniature train to the village and back to the ship, then cast off about noon. Near Cornwall, we enter the **Wiley-Dondero Canal** for 15 km and the ship is lowered through Eisenhower and Snell Locks. We dock overnight at Coteau Landing in Quebec.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*

Day 6: Monday, September 20

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 **Lachine Rapids** with the Ste. Catherine and St. Lambert Locks. We arrive in **Montreal** by 2 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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*

Day 7: Tuesday, September 21

We leave the skyscrapers of Montreal behind as we make the turn from the St. Lawrence River into the **Ottawa River**, heading upstream. The ship is

lifted through Ste. Anne de Bellevue Lock, then **Carillon Lock** which has an impressive 20-metre lift. We arrive at the riverside town of Montebello at 3 pm and buses meet us for the short trip to **Omega Animal Wilderness Park**. The park is a preserve for North American animals in five different ecological zones. During the 15-km drive through the park, we see dozens of animals roaming freely and surrounding the bus.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*

Day 8: Wednesday, September 22

We cruise up the Ottawa River to the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum which showcases life in the 1920s and 1930s with dozens of heritage buildings. Soon we are cruising past the landmarks of **Ottawa** such as 24 Sussex Drive, some foreign embassies, Rideau Falls, Rideau Canal, and Chateau Laurier. The ship circles below the Parliament Buildings, then we dock at 2 pm and say goodbye to the *Canadian Empress*. We explore the amazing collection and architecture of the **Canadian Museum of History**. We stay two nights at the Lord Elgin Hotel which has an excellent location near Parliament Hill and downtown shops.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Lord Elgin Hotel

Day 9: Thursday, September 23

This is a free day to enjoy Ottawa as you wish. You may want to visit the National Gallery and Byward Market, and stroll the Rideau Canal or Sparks Street. Parts of the Parliament Buildings are open, but the Centre Block is closed for renovations in 2021. A farewell dinner is arranged tonight.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Lord Elgin Hotel

Day 10: Friday, September 24

A transfer is provided to Ottawa airport, then we fly with WestJet to Vancouver.

CANADIAN EMPRESS

The *M/V 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 could not 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 vessels that were common 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 (4 have a double bed), toilet, shower, sink, and window(s). Cabins are compact compared to an ocean cruise ship, typically about 8 square metres. There is daily housekeeping 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 town along the St. Lawrence or Ottawa Rivers, 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 September 2016 and loved the whole trip. We have since offered four cruises with excellent reviews. Come and experience a different kind of river cruising on an intimate ship.

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.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- WestJet flight from Vancouver to Toronto
- Current air transport taxes and security fees
- Airline luggage fees for 1 suitcase
- 4 nights of hotel accommodation & taxes
- Coach transportation from Toronto to Kingston
- 5 days/5 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
- Transfers from ship to attractions and return
- Old Fort Henry with guided tour
- Locally-guided tour of Kingston
- Bellevue House National Historic Site
- 1000 Islands Tower
- 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
- Omega Animal Wilderness Park
- Cumberland Heritage Village Museum
- Coach transportation in Ottawa
- Canadian Museum of History
- Gratuities to guides and drivers on city tours
- Transfer from hotel to Ottawa Airport
- WestJet flight from Ottawa to Vancouver
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Luggage handling at hotels and ship
- **21 meals:** 8 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 7 dinners

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. Sometimes a museum is right beside the dock. 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 50 people.

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

Activity Level 1: Light activity including short distances to walk and stairs 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. The coaches and ship cannot carry a scooter. If you are not able to participate 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.



TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$600 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due June 10, 2021. 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 June 10.

Cancellation Policy: Up to April 9, 2021, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From April 10 to June 10, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From June 11 to July 9, the cancellation charge is 50% of tour fare. From July 10 to August 10, the cancellation charge is 80% of tour fare. After August 10, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to taxes and surcharges from airlines, the 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.

Photo Credit: Roland Neave, St. Lawrence Cruise Lines

Experience Points: This tour earns 93 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 June 10.

Consumer Protection BC licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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