



ST. LAWRENCE RIVER CRUISE TO QUÉBEC

August 28, 2023 – 11 Days

*6 days from Kingston to Québec City
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 tributaries to Lake Superior, the largest freshwater lake on the globe (measured by surface area), and flows through 3 other Great Lakes. 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 Québec City on the St. Lawrence River. The 6-day voyage passes through 7 locks of the Seaway. Experience the cities of Kingston, Montréal and Québec, and lots of Canadian history during this fascinating cruise.

Activity Level: 2



23 Meals Included:

8 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 8 dinners

Fares per person double or twin:

St. Lawrence cabin (2 single beds) – \$6,515

Ottawa cabin (2 single beds) – \$6,945

Sterling cabin (2 single beds) – \$7,115

Premier cabin (1 double bed) – \$7,475

St. Lawrence cabin single fare (4 available) – \$8,755

Please add 5% GST.

Early Bookers:

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

Experience Points:

Earn 110 points on this tour.

Redeem 110 points if you book by May 24, 2023.

Departure from: Lower Mainland



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. 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."



First night anchored in 1000 Islands

ITINERARY

Day 1: Monday, August 28

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

Accommodation: Sheraton Gateway Hotel

Day 2: Tuesday, August 29

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 Queen's University, City Hall, the Martello Towers, Royal Military College, and infamous Kingston Penitentiary. We stay one night at the Holiday Inn on the picturesque Lake Ontario waterfront.

Option: Tonight, there is an option available to take the Haunted Walk where a guide tells ghostly tales and you learn the oddball histories of some downtown buildings. Cost is \$30 per person; please book no later than final payment.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Holiday Inn Kingston

Day 3: Wednesday, August 30

We tour John A. Macdonald's **Bellevue House**, now a National Historic Site. 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. The gun salute is scheduled for 4 pm. 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 Québec City, but neither was ever attacked. At 4:30 pm, **Canadian Empress** is ready for boarding in downtown Kingston. After the Captain's welcome reception, we depart Kingston's harbour at 7 pm and anchor for the night in the midst of the 1000 Islands.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*



Near Prescott

Day 4: Thursday, August 31

The ship weaves among the **1000 Islands** and we dock at **Gananoque** for a visit to the Heritage Museum or the Boat Museum. Our route follows Wanderer's Channel past the Admiralty Islands and along Millionaires' Row where palatial mansions overlook the St. Lawrence River. The amazing **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. We continue down the river and dock overnight in Brockville. We take a tour through the splendid **Fulford Mansion**, built in 1901 by Senator George Fulford who made a fortune selling a cure-all medicine known as Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*

Day 5: Friday, September 1

In Brockville, we explore the Aquatarium which showcases the natural wonders of the St. Lawrence eco-system. After cruising downstream for 2½ hours to Prescott, we visit 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 seven on this voyage, and docks for the night in Morrisburg.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*

Day 6: Saturday, September 2

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 cast off from Morrisburg at 12:30 and, near Cornwall, enter the **Wiley-Dondero Canal** for 15 km where 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 7: Sunday, September 3

This morning, we cruise through Lake St. Francis and enter the 21-km long **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 dock in **Montréal** by 3 pm. 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 8: Monday, September 4

We leave the skyscrapers of Montréal 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. Instead of the Basilica, you can choose to visit the Borealis Industrial Museum. Tonight is the ship's celebration dinner followed by local entertainment.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: *Canadian Empress*

Day 9: Tuesday, September 5

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 Château 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 Hilton which has a great location near the National Assembly and the walls of Old Québec.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hilton Québec Hotel

Day 10: Wednesday, September 6

The morning is free time. An afternoon sightseeing tour of Québec City takes us past the National Assembly, 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**. Tonight is a special treat with dinner and entertainment at the **Sugar Shack**. The

traditional sugar bush meal is served (pea soup, omelet, maple ham, meat pie, and pancakes with maple syrup), accompanied by folk music and dancing, and finishing with maple taffy.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Hilton Québec Hotel

Day 11: Thursday, September 7

We fly from Québec City 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 62 passengers in 31 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. All cabins have two single beds (2 cabins in Premier category 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 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. Wine and beer is complimentary at lunch and dinner, and other choices are available from the well-stocked bar. Coffee and tea are available 24 hours a day.

Wells Gray Tours has offered seven cruises on the *Canadian Empress* since 2016 with excellent reviews. Come and experience a different kind of river cruising on an intimate ship.



At Singer Castle



Grand Saloon

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 7 locks between Kingston and Montréal, 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

- Flight from Vancouver to Toronto
 - Current air transport taxes and security fees
 - 4 nights of hotel accommodation & taxes
 - Coach transportation from Toronto to Kingston
 - Locally-guided tour of Kingston
 - Bellevue House National Historic Site
 - Old Fort Henry with guided tour
 - 6 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
 - Wine and beer at lunch and dinner on ship
 - Transfers from ship to attractions and return
 - Heritage Museum or Boat Museum
 - Aquatarium with guided tour
 - Fort Wellington National Historic Site
 - Upper Canada Village
 - Horse-drawn wagon ride around Upper Canada Village
 - Locally-guided tour of Montréal
 - Choice of Shrine at Cap de la Madeleine or Borealis Industrial Museum
 - Montmorency Falls with cablecar ride
 - Locally-guided tour of Québec City
 - Dinner and entertainment at Sugar Shack
 - Transfer from hotel to Québec Airport
 - Flight from Québec to Vancouver
 - Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
 - Gratuities to guides and drivers on city tours
 - Luggage handling at hotels and ship
 - **23 meals:** 8 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 8 dinners
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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.

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 46 people.

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

Doubles (one bed): There are only 2 cabins on the ship with a double bed and both are in the Premier category. These cabins also have a small settee. Book early for these! All other cabins have 2 single beds.

Flight seating: We are unable to take requests for window or aisle seating on the planes. The airline will not accept them, as group seating is assigned as a block. If this is important to you, we suggest you take the "No Flight" option with a fare reduction of \$950 and book your own flight which allows seat selection.



Activity Level 2: Moderate 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 or any type of wheelchair. If Activity Level 2 could be challenging, you must bring a companion who is able to assist you. The tour director, ship crew, 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 May 24, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined. Payments can be made by online banking, cheque, Visa or Mastercard (\$5,000 limit per person per booking on credit cards).

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 24, 2023.

Cancellation Policy: Up to April 24, 2023, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From April 25 to May 24, the cancellation charge is \$300 per person. From May 25 to June 23, the cancellation charge is 50% of tour fare. From June 24 to July 24, the cancellation charge is 80% of tour fare. After July 24, there is no refund.

Itinerary and Fare Changes: As the world emerges from the pandemic, many of our suppliers such as hotels, restaurants, attractions, and transportation providers are struggling with shortage of staff, inflated costs, and supply line challenges. Sometimes we are notified about changes to the itinerary prior to departure and sometimes during the tour. We do our best to substitute a similar service if something cancels, but occasionally the only alternative is to provide a refund for the missed activity. Please note that if we are forced to cancel a tour component due to an issue beyond our control, the current penalties still apply if you choose to cancel the entire tour. Fuel surcharges and changes to taxes or other tour costs can occur at any time, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up to departure.

Food Allergies: You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. The *Canadian Empress* is limited on the food allergies it can handle due to the small galley. This tour may not be suitable if you have certain food allergies. As restaurants away from the ship recover from two years of pandemic restrictions, many facing severe labour shortages, we have been informed that food allergies should be honoured, but it is impossible to handle everybody's requests for food preferences. (An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not.) For some allergies, please consider bringing your own snacks or food items so you are not dependent on what restaurants are able to serve.

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 are available within Greater Vancouver for an additional charge of \$75 per person round trip. Transfer is to and from YVR. Please request no later than at final payment.

Photo Credit: Roland Neave (page 1 left, page 2 bottom), St. Lawrence Cruise Lines (page 1 right, page 2 top, page 4 top), Jill Hilderman (page 4 bottom)

Experience Points: This tour earns 110 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 24, 2023.

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

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