

CRUISE TRAVEL

PORT GUIDE

ST. LAWRENCE TOP STOPS

Quebec province rolls out the welcome mat for cruise travelers in summer as well as fall foliage season

By Anne Kalosh

For decades cruise ships have visited Canada and New England in the autumn, and with good reason. The changing leaves are breathtaking, more brilliant than practically anywhere else in the world. But in recent years the cruise lines have stretched their deployments into the summer while increasing the number of ports visited along Quebec's St. Lawrence River. After all, there's much more to do in the region than just leaf-peeping.

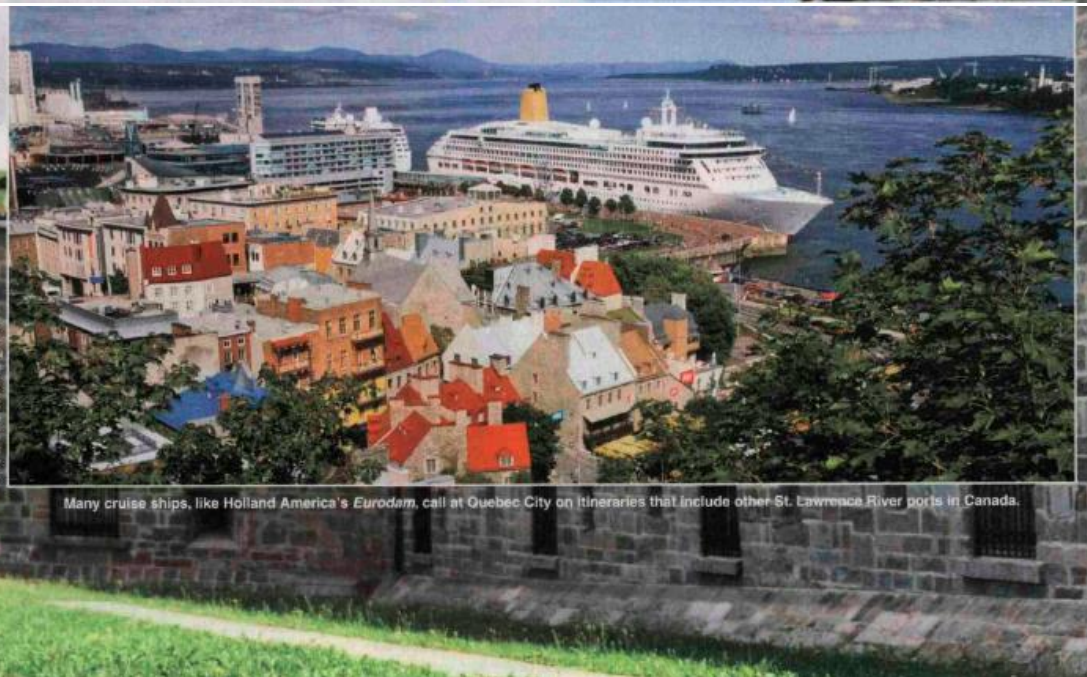
Summer cruises draw families, and the St. Lawrence offers kids and multigenerational groups plenty of activities, including hiking, biking, kayaking, zip lining, climbing and jet boating. Other exciting draws include seeing black bears in the wild and spotting whales. Visitors can learn about the native Innu culture and savor French *joie de vivre*. There are cooking classes focused on local products, foodie tours by bike or on foot, gourmet restaurants, casual bistros, micro-

breweries and rooftop bars. Summer also is festival time.

"Summer is fantastic here," says Yves Lalumiere, president and CEO, *Tourisme Montreal*. He may be biased, but Lalumiere is an avid cruiser who's sailed all over and is keen to show off his fabulous corner of the world to other travelers.

"We have a lot to offer in July and August," agreed Mario Girard, president and CEO, *Port of Quebec*. "The experience in October is great, but July and August are even better."

Thriving along with the growth of the two homeports (Quebec City and Montreal) are other St. Lawrence destinations that offer a surprisingly varied selection of experiences, particularly in the summer months. Here are some highlights:



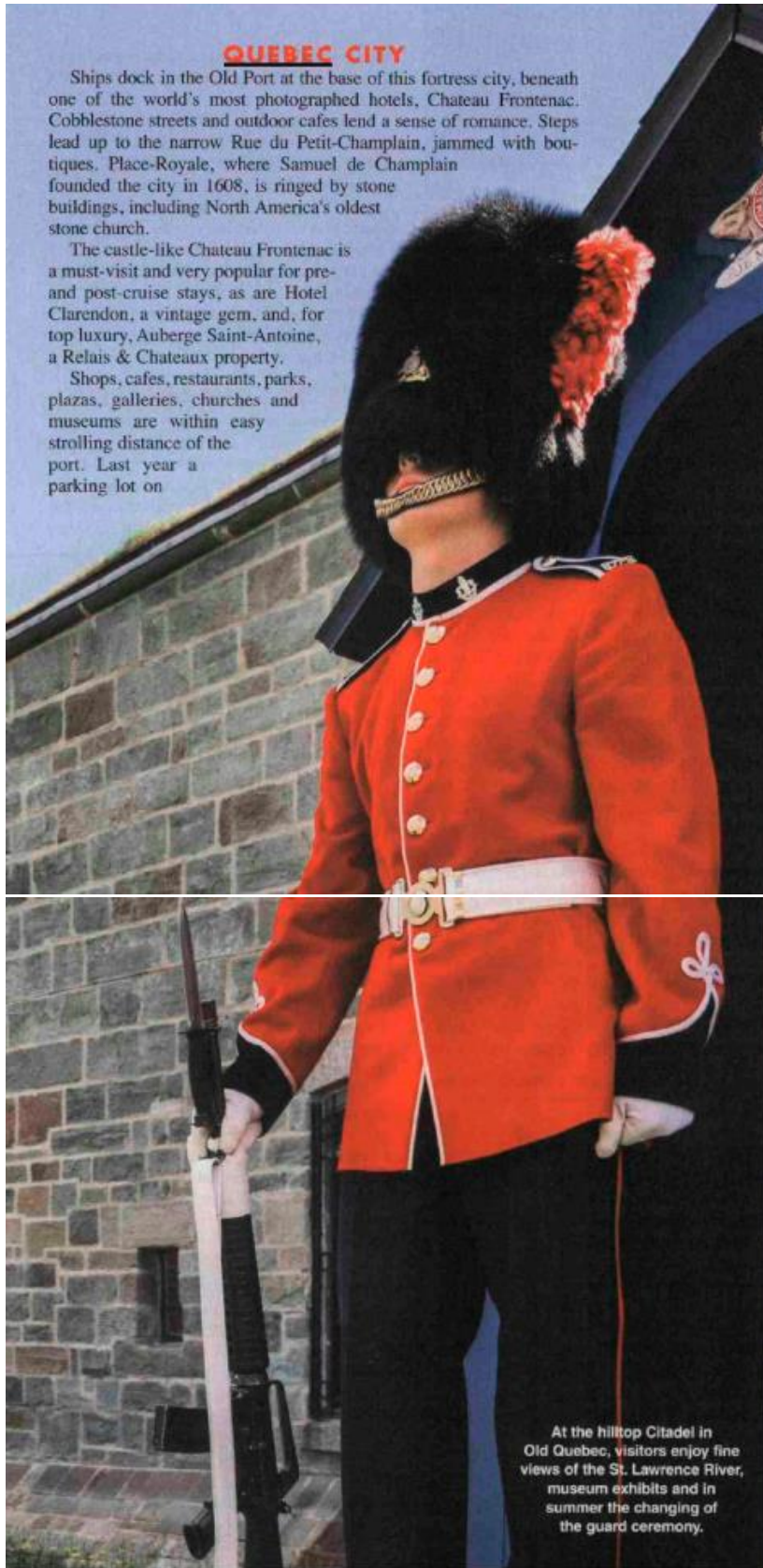
Many cruise ships, like Holland America's *Eurodam*, call at Quebec City on itineraries that include other St. Lawrence River ports in Canada.

QUEBEC CITY

Ships dock in the Old Port at the base of this fortress city, beneath one of the world's most photographed hotels, Chateau Frontenac. Cobblestone streets and outdoor cafes lend a sense of romance. Steps lead up to the narrow Rue du Petit-Champlain, jammed with boutiques. Place-Royale, where Samuel de Champlain founded the city in 1608, is ringed by stone buildings, including North America's oldest stone church.

The castle-like Chateau Frontenac is a must-visit and very popular for pre- and post-cruise stays, as are Hotel Clarendon, a vintage gem, and, for top luxury, Auberge Saint-Antoine, a Relais & Chateaux property.

Shops, cafes, restaurants, parks, plazas, galleries, churches and museums are within easy strolling distance of the port. Last year a parking lot on



At the hilltop Citadel in Old Quebec, visitors enjoy fine views of the St. Lawrence River, museum exhibits and in summer the changing of the guard ceremony.

Jean-François Frenette/Quartier Quebec

the waterfront was replaced with Place Des Canotiers, which offers green spaces, benches, fountains and art.

In the Upper Town, the Morrin Centre houses Quebec's old jail and an English-language library that looks like something out of Harry Potter. Le Monastere des Augustines, where the cloistered Augustinian nuns pioneered healthcare in the New World four centuries ago, has a fascinating medical history museum and provides holistic wellness experiences incorporating meditation, yoga, music and aromatherapy.

City tours take in the Plains of Abraham, a battleground that changed Canada's future. Outlying attractions include Montmorency Falls, reached by cable car or motorcoach, where activities range from sedate (afternoon tea) to spine-tingling (zip lining or cliff climbing).

At Wendake, a self-governing territory of the Huron-Wendat nation, visitors are welcomed by drum and can explore a traditional longhouse. Families enjoy the Quebec Aquarium with its polar bears, walruses, stingray petting tank and displays of ethereally beautiful jellyfish.

Ile d'Orleans, a pastoral island in the St. Lawrence River, is famous for artisanal products. L'En-Tailleur is a charming "sugar shack" featuring maple goodies. Black currants star at Cassis Monna et Fille, in everything from liqueur, jams and gelato to mustard and soap. Vignoble Ste-Petronille produces wines from the vineyards all around and offers tastings for groups. The tastings at Confiturerie Tigidou are of jams freshly made from the fruits and herbs in the garden outside.

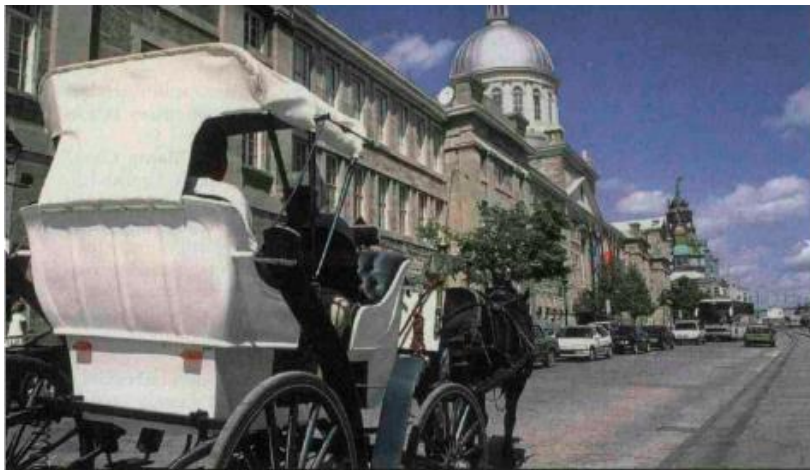
MONTREAL

The cruise terminal puts passengers in the heart of Old Montreal, the historic district. Traces of the city's settlement dating back centuries are steps away at the Pointe-a-Calliere national historic site with its multimedia installation that brings the museum's archaeological crypt to life. Walking and biking trails, parks, a zip line and Canada's largest Ferris wheel are right on the riverfront.

Old Montreal beckons with pedestrian streets, horse-drawn carriages, a market selling all kinds of Canadian products, hundreds of restaurants and rooftop bars. After dark, Cite Memoire tableaux projected on walls, alleys and even trees share snippets of history. If you see people dancing over colored lights in an alley or transfixed by a movie showing on a wall, you'll know what's happening. Download a mobile app in advance to get the full experience with sound, via Montreal's free Wi-Fi network.

At Notre-Dame Basilica, where singer Celine Dion was married, a spectacular light show, AURA, is accompanied by orchestral music. Check show times (usually 4 p.m., 6 p.m. and later) and buy tickets online in advance for this popular attraction.

Farther afield, one of the trendiest neigh-



Horse-drawn carriages offer clip-clopping rides through the charming streets of Old Montreal.

Stéphane Proulx/Thinkstock Montreal

borhoods is Mile End, home to artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers. It's best explored on walking or biking tours, especially those that are food-oriented. Lines form outside bagel shops like St. Viateur and Fairmount Bagel, Boulangerie Guillaume (an incredible bakery) and Kem CoBa (ice cream in funky flavors).

In Little Italy, Marche (Market) Jean-Talon bursts with flowers, Technicolor fruits and vegetables, cheeses, fish, meats, a creperie, an oyster bar, a spice shop and much more. Go hungry or simply feast your eyes on the beautiful bounty.

Just down the street from the cruise terminal, Ca Roule Montreal on Wheels takes cyclists along the scenic Lachine Canal to Atwater Market, where families eat ice cream and watch street performers. Rides can be customized for special interests. A company located in Mile End, Spade & Palacio, with its pink bikes and youthful vibe, takes cyclists to murals, green alleys, rooftop gardens and favorite food haunts. Jewish heritage tours are available, too.

For lunch with a commanding view, try

Les Enfants Terribles on the 44th floor of Place Ville Marie. Some of Montreal's many other draws include the wonderful Museum of Fine Arts, Canada's most visited art museum, and the cutting-edge Museum of Contemporary Art, where a recent exhibition was dedicated to native son and singer/songwriter Leonard Cohen, who died in 2016.

Also worth a visit is Parc Jean-Drapeau. There, traces of Expo 67, which drew global attention to Montreal, include the Biosphere, a geodesic dome created by the futurist Buckminster Fuller, and the multi-story Casino de Montreal, open 24/7 with free cabaret shows and multiple restaurants.

SAGUENAY

Cruising along the scenic Saguenay Fjord is a highlight, with the chance to see whales, rolling meadows and picturesque farms. What also stands out is the amazing welcome for every ship when costumed actors from the long-running community musical *La Fabuleuse* greet passengers, rain or shine. The show itself chronicles the area's history and features a cast of more than 100 all-vol-

unteer actors, including children and even animals. An English matinee is presented on cruise days.

Excursions often visit The Little White House, which survived a massive 1996 flood and is now perched atop a waterfall, and a home covered in paintings by the naive artist Arthur Villeneuve. Nouvelle-France recreates the life of a French colony in the 17th century.

Saguenay National Park can be explored on tours that incorporate hiking, kayaking, climbing or helicopter rides. Okwari Adventures' exciting new forest discovery tour gives the chance to observe black bears in their natural habitat.

ILES DE LA MADELEINE

This beautiful archipelago is fringed with red sandstone cliffs and dotted with colorful houses. At Le-Pied-de-Vent cheese factory, the cows roam free in windswept pastures, and Fumoir d'Antan is a smokehouse that revives the once important herring industry.



Homeports Montreal and Quebec City, along with small

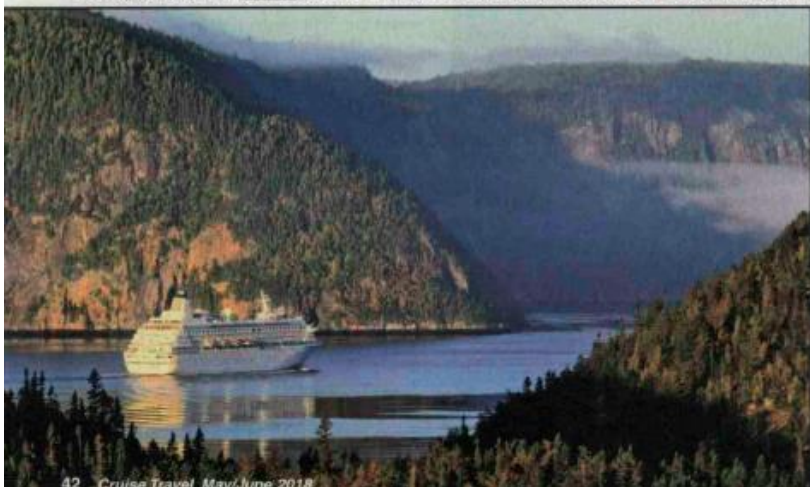
A microbrewery, l'Abri de la Tempête, uses locally malted barley, fresh flowers, marine algae and herbs to flavor its beers.

At Artisans du Sable, sand is sculpted into artworks (and castles), while Gourmande de Nature purveys gourmet goodies and wonderful box lunches, and cooking classes use local products. Boutiques in tiny La Grave sell chocolates, artwork, jewelry, clothing, and handicrafts.

HAVRE-SAINT-PIERRE

This town is the gateway to Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve, with its incredible stacked rock monoliths. On boat excursions to the islands, you'll have the chance to spot right, blue, humpback, fin and minke whales. Visitors can hike scenic trails, and Parks Canada interpreters share information about the birds, plants and marine life. Special small group tours can be arranged with lunch at a former lighthouse keeper's home.

Back on the mainland, visitors can learn about the native Innu people at the Ekuanitshit



Mary Lambert/Thinkstock Quebec

village. There, women offer samples of bannock bread and explain the use of plants in traditional medicine. A church is decorated with stunning Innu art.

GASPE

National Geographic has singled out the Gaspé Peninsula (officially named Gaspésie) as a "must see." From tiny Percé, tour boats go to the magnificent offshore Percé Rock (one of the largest natural arches in the world) and Bonaventure Island, the summer nesting home for hundreds of thousands of northern gannets. Whales and seals are often seen along the way. On Bonaventure you walk over meadows and through evergreen forests and visit a cluster of homes that show the way people lived a century ago.

Excursions to Forillon National Park reveal gorgeous vistas of sea cliffs, forests



Exploring the Mingan Archipelago's rock monoliths highlights an excursion from Havre-Saint-Pierre.

and wildflowers. Trails lead to lookout points, beaches, an old farmstead and a general store.



Locations on the St. Lawrence, are indicated by the red dots.

SEPT-ÎLES

This city offers insights into traditional Innu life through the four seasons in a multimedia presentation at the Shaputuan Museum, while the Agara Complex mingles a boutique and art gallery of aboriginal handicrafts like intricately beaded, fur-lined boots.

The Old Trading Post presents the life of a 19th-century fur trading post on the site where Innu hunters used to trade with French and English companies. An interactive presentation, fun for kids, gives the chance to touch beaver skins, furs and other trade goods.

Small boat and Zodiac adventures leave from the port for Grande Basque Island, frequented by Basque whalers centuries ago. Today it's crisscrossed by trails and dotted with picnic sites. An exhibit near the cruise terminal shows off *Hermel*, the boat Mylene Paquette rowed solo across the Atlantic in 2013. Mid-ocean, she received emergency supplies from Cunard's *Queen Mary 2*.

BAIE-COMEAU

Chicago Tribune publisher Robert McCormick established a paper mill in the wilderness of this northern bay in 1936 and built a town for the workers. Though its base is industrial, it's a pretty place of parks and steeples.

There are lots of kid-friendly activities. Franquelin Lumberjack Village re-enacts a lumberjack's life in times past, accompanied by folksy music, tastes of lumberjack food, a humorous visit to the bunkhouse, and displays of tree-cutting tools and native animals.

At the Garden of the Glaciers, visitors can learn how the massive Laurentide Ice Sheet shaped most of Canada and the northern United States in a dynamic, multimedia experience. You'll feel the chill, then the salty spray when the ice melts and the sea level rises. In the Seashell Valley, a shell deposit in the forest left by the retreating sea 8,000 years ago, children enjoy digging and sifting for shells.

characters, enrich the experience. The Museum of the Ursulines housed the first school for girls in New France, while *Borealis* gives a lively recounting of the pulp and paper industry, with activities for kids. The Old Prison, now a museum, reveals dark secrets about the penal system's not too distant past. Some of the guides are former prisoners.

For a more upbeat interlude, the micro-brewery *Le Temps d'Une Pinte* (Time for a Pint) taps creative beers like key lime pie. And at Sugar Shack *Chez Dany*, rollicking meals are served family-style with folksy entertainment.

For more information, visit *Cruise the Saint Lawrence Association* at www.cruise-saintlawrence.com or *Tourisme Quebec* at www.quebecoriginal.com/en-ca.

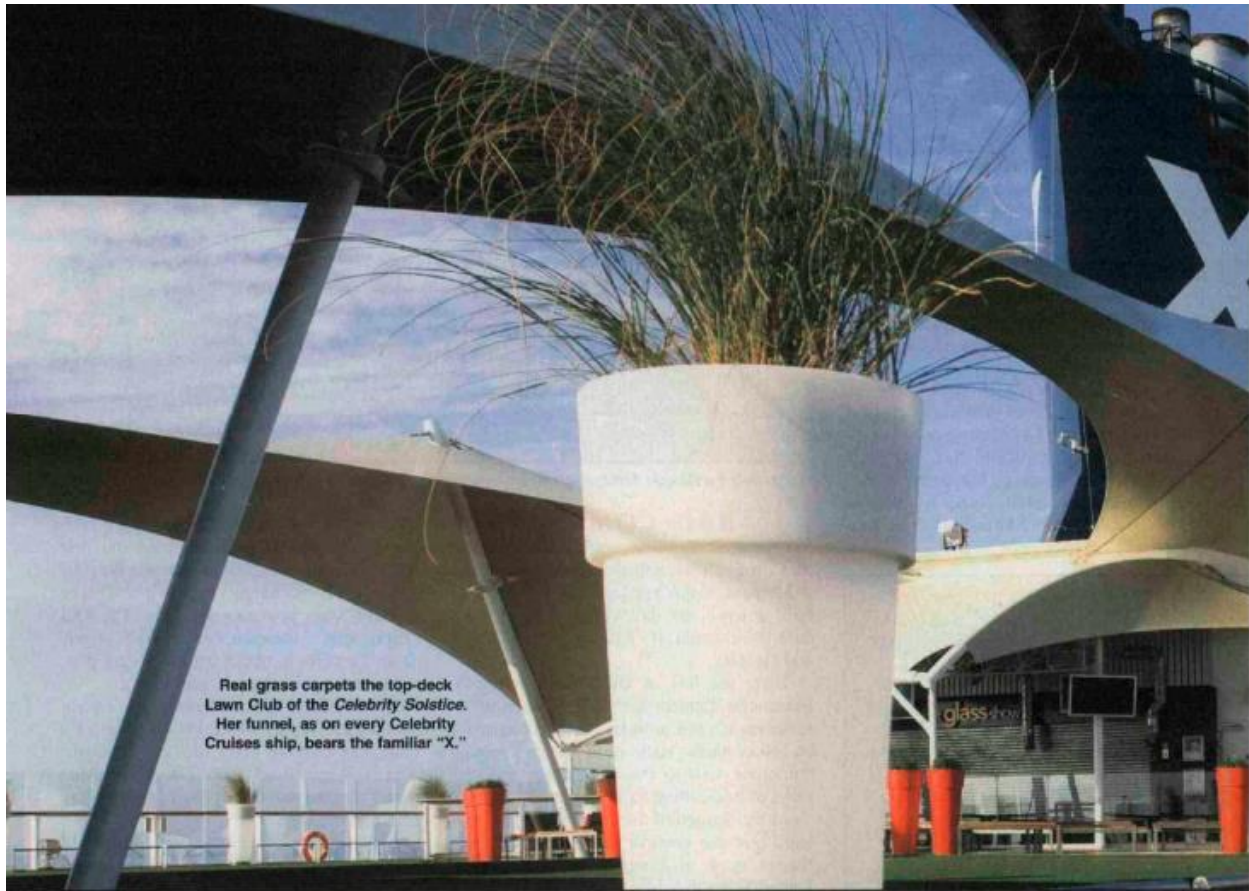
Among the many cruise lines with ships that call at St. Lawrence ports are AIDA, Blount, Celebrity, Crystal, Disney, Fred. Olsen, Holland America, Hurtigruten, Norwegian, Oceania, Pearl Seas, Princess, Regent Seven Seas, Royal Caribbean, St. Lawrence, Seabourn, Silversea, Viking and Windstar. **CT**

TROIS-RIVIERES

Ships dock alongside the historic district, where walking tours, some led by costumed

Pastoral landscapes reward visitors to Forillon National Park on the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula.





Real grass carpets the top-deck Lawn Club of the *Celebrity Solstice*. Her funnel, as on every Celebrity Cruises ship, bears the familiar "X."

Although there were more than a few jokes over the years about "brand X" due to its ships' funnel markings, Chandris emerged from humble roots to earn a loyal following. Like its peers, the line traced its roots back to the immigrant trade after World War II, but unlike so many others of the era, elements of Chandris' legacy remain a vital part of the cruise industry. Evolving from years of affordably priced party cruises, the "X" today has become the iconic symbol distinguishing the ships of Celebrity Cruises.

This year, 2018, marks 70 years since Greek brothers Anthony and Dimitri Chandris entered the passenger trade with a pair of 6,900-gross-ton Canadian coastal steamers rebuilt with austerity accommodations for 750 passengers. They had learned the shipping business from their father, John



Allen E. Jordan Collection



Allen E. Jordan

The *Amerikanis*, meaning 'American lady' in Greek, operated Caribbean cruises but was best known for her shorter sailings to Bermuda. She is shown here docked in San Juan.

D. Chandris, who had purchased his first ship in 1911 and built a successful cargo ship operation. The brothers, like the entrepreneurs who started Costa, Sitmar and Home Lines, hoped to use their newly acquired passenger ships as part of post-World War II efforts to resettle the dis-

placed population of Europe, but they would have a much less successful entry into the business. Their first ship set sail from Germany in May 1948 but broke down en route to South America and never sailed again. The sister ship was also plagued with mechanical problems but completed seven refugee trips before she too was removed from service.