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QUEEN

for a Day, or 8



COURTESY OF QUEBEC CITY

QUEEN MARY 2 IN QUEBEC

Setting Sail on the Queen Mary 2

BY MARY ANN TREGER

While

I wait for my martini (shaken, never stirred) in the tony Chart Room Bar, I am lulled into a contemplative state, as I glance out the window and watch our departure from Quebec City, the beginning of an eight-day adventure on the legendary Queen Mary 2 luxury ocean liner.

Truth is, this trip isn't just about sightseeing. My husband and I needed a digital detox—time together to slow down and recharge, to escape the busyness of life and get back to the soul of our relationship. We were forgetting who we are, what we mean to each other.



COURTESY OF CUNARD

THE SHIP'S BREATHTAKING ATRIUM

(You may have noticed that can happen after several years of marriage.) When he suggested this itinerary—Quebec City, Nova Scotia and New York—I was all in. The idea of traveling slowly, savoring our journey as well as our destinations, was compelling.

Pre-boarding, we spend a few days at Quebec City's iconic Le Château Frontenac, the castle-like hotel that dominates the skyline high above the St. Lawrence River and Dufferin Terrace. Rich in history, this Canadian version of Hogwarts with a myriad of towers and turrets has welcomed countless celebs from Queen Elizabeth

to Celine Dion. It is said to be the most photographed hotel in the world.

Even after 400 years, Old Quebec (a UNESCO heritage site) is amazingly well-preserved and ideal for wandering. We meander along cobblestone streets lined with shops and cafes *à la* a romantic European town, only this one is easily accessible from the Northeast without enduring a long flight or jet lag.

There are an astonishing number of historic sites and world-class museums devoted to every taste, but being a foodie, I gravitate to the "tasty" Érico Chocolaterie Pâtisserie Museum and learn the history of my indulgence.



LE MONASTÈRE DES AUGUSTINES

A trip to rediscover yourself

COURTESY OF QUEBEC CITY (2)

My husband's curiosity is peaked at Le Monastère Des Augustines' fascinating medical museum housing thousands of artifacts. This former convent and hospital, built in 1639, is now a beautifully restored and redesigned health and wellness retreat.

Each day we roam, we sightsee, we talk, we flirt, and we drink more glasses of Cabernet than we should before dining at epicurean restaurants. Champlain sates us with scallops from the St. Lawrence, caribou from Lapland and Icelandic cod. A short ride down the funicular, the elegant-yet-rustic Auberge Saint-Antoine's Chez Muffy offers farmhouse-inspired choices. Do not leave without indulging in the chef's chocolate souffle with fresh mint ice cream.



MUSÉE DU CHOCOLAT

COURTESY OF CUNARD (3)



While we are excited about several Nova Scotia port stops, we are equally excited about exploring the Queen Mary 2, long heralded as the grandest liner ever built.

Our days on board are long and languorous. I spend a day at the Canyon Ranch SpaClub and indulge in a deep-tissue massage while my husband does laps around the ship. No need to miss my regular Pilates class, there's one at 8 a.m. The ship boasts a planetarium; a 9,000-volume library, the largest of any at sea; a Laurent-Perrier Champagne Bar; a two-level grand staircase ideal for photo ops; the world's largest ballroom at sea; and several well-edited shops. And with one staff member for every two guests, we receive authentically warm service.



to disconnect and
reconnect

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP: THE IMPECCABLE QUEEN MARY 2; INSIDE THE COMMODORE CLUB; A QUEEN GRILL SUITE



STROLLING ON THE DECK

Accommodations range from a two-level 9,000-square-foot suite for those with serious money to cost-efficient inside cabins. We opt for a Princess Grill Suite with a large balcony, a walk-in closet and a spacious bathroom. The best thing about a Grill Suite is access to a classy private dining room, where we have our own table for two for the entire trip. If we decide to dine at 7 or 8 or whatever time we choose during serving hours, no problem. Our table is waiting.

The ship's size is a paradox. Even though it's carrying more than 2,600 passengers, it feels intimate. Most nights we dine in the Grill Restaurant and savor world-class cuisine—lobster, Dover sole or rack of lamb, for example—but occasionally we eat casually at King's Court for Pan-Asian, Indian or Italian fare before taking in a show.

Fellow travelers name drop that Meryl Streep was on board a few weeks earlier filming a Steven Soderbergh film, but the Queen Mary 2 isn't about ogling celebs. It is about the rest of us experiencing the same lifestyle.



THE CANYON RANCH

experience the
extravagant lifestyle



COURTESY OF CUNARD (2)

PLACE-ROYALE



COURTESY OF QUEBEC CITY (2)

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

While the ship is a destination unto itself, we relish new sights during shore excursions at each port stop—glass blowers working in Saguenay, a walking tour of Sidney and a charming fishing village near Halifax.

Crazy as it sounds, a highpoint of the trip is the end—our early morning arrival into New York. We giggle like teenagers at 4 a.m. as we wrap ourselves in thick bathrobes and wind our way to the top of the ship, gladly trading a few

hours' sleep for the exhilaration of seeing the first glimmer of the city against a pitch-black horizon. We remain silent and snuggle in the cold, dark morning as the ship slowly glides under the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge. Soon after, the Statue of Liberty, ablaze in light appears, welcoming us just as she did my grandparents. Straight ahead, New York is waking up. No words are necessary. The moment is sublime. □

WHAT TO DO

In Quebec City

Visit the Citadelle de Québec, the largest active fortress in Canada, for impressive architecture and spectacular views; ride the Funiculaire du Vieux-Québec, and travel at a 45-degree angle from the upper to lower part of town; stroll Quartier du Petit Champlain, once a portside village featuring fur traders and trading posts, now beautifully restored with updated shops along narrow cobblestone streets; visit Place-Royale, where architecture reflects four centuries of history; tour the Musée de la Civilisation for unique exhibits about everything from high fashion to poison.

On the Queen Mary 2

Choose from a full menu of services at the Canyon Ranch SpaClub. Take a Pilates, yoga or indoor cycling class, or chill out in the jacuzzi. The ship's daily activities guide details options that include lectures, movies, music, ballroom dancing and social hours. And being a British ship, afternoon tea is served daily to perfection.

Travel Tips

Pre-boarding, spend a day or two at your departure city. This eliminates the stress of flight delays causing you to "miss the boat," and you'll arrive on the ship relaxed and ready for your adventure.