

## Sept. 15-25, 2015 - Sailing, Sailing... the Ocean Blue - New England & Canada Cruise

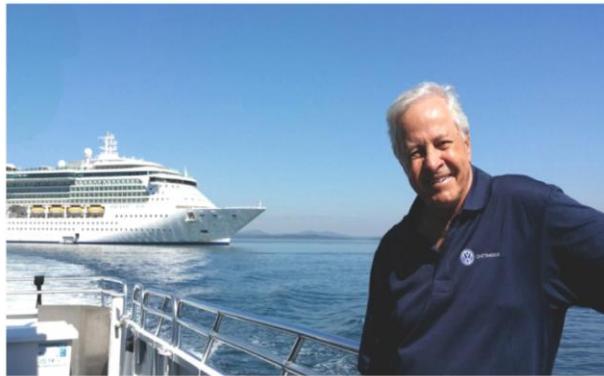
When we lived in the northeast, and I flew out of Teterboro Airport in NJ, trips to see the fall color change in the New England states and Canada were an autumn tradition for us. In those days I owned a single engine Piper Comanche, with a optimal cruise speed of 175 MPH, in which we literally did a dozen or more trips up to "north country". Even Montreal Canada, some 325 miles from our Bergen County home, was less than a two hour flight away, and we loved going over to the Grey Rocks Inn, located in the Laurentian Mountain ski area, for a long weekend of French culture and cuisine. Now that I live some 1000 miles further to the south and fly a 100 MPH light sport two seater, that trip by private airplane is a distant dream. However, it is said, "There is more than one way to skin a cat". Before my two Comanche's (a single and then a twin), I had put over 600 hours flying a 1964 Cessna 172 Skyhawk, a high wing, fixed gear 4 place single engine airplane. A couple of those trips were also into Canada, but many more were to various venues up in the New England states. A Cessna 172 was certainly a plane which I was familiar with, and this is an airplane that is readily available at pretty much every flight training facility.

We decided that a ocean cruise along the New England coast with a turn, around Nova Scotia and towards Quebec City, where we could rent a car for the drive up north of Montreal would give us the opportunity to see the brilliance of the changing leaves, along with a nice quiet vacation "on the seas". Our boat ride on Royal Caribbean's *Serenade of the Seas*, began in the Port of Bayone, NJ, just a short cab ride from Newark International Airport and right across from mid-town Manhattan. Our first stop was Portland Maine, with a shore excursion over to nearby Kennebunkport for a small sightseeing boat ride astride the beautiful Maine coastline, and a chance to see how they bring up lobsters from beneath the sea, along with a view of the President George Herbert Walker Bush compound located on beautiful Walker Point. Even though the Bushes were in residence, as indicated by both the Texas and Maine state flags flying atop the outside flagpole, our tour boat had no difficulty in closing to within a hundred yards of the rocky shoreline and with no sighting of the Secret Service anywhere in evidence... but I am sure that they knew that we were there.

The view of NYC as our ship leaves Bayone's harbor



Then it was onto stop #2, Bar Harbor, Maine, where I was going to exercise my plan to obtain some logged flight time.



I had pre-arranged for the rental of a Cessna 172 "Skyhawk" from Scenic Flights of Acadia, and it turned out to be an absolutely marvelous day for an airplane ride. After departing the ship, via its tender, and grabbing a taxi for the local airport, Miriam and I toolled around the various harbors, coves and lighthouses for an hour before having to return my craft to KBHB (Bar Harbor Airport), never getting above 1,500 feet, (so as to be careful to stay out of the way of the helicopter, bi-plane and another light aircraft giving sightseeing rides at 1200 feet). It was an exhilarating adventure and brought back memories of those bygone days when I would do this trip from the pilot's seat of my very own airplane.



**The town of Bar Harbor as seen from 1000 feet while viewing out of the pilot's seat of my rental Cessna Skyhawk**

**Views from our plane, including the Maine coastline, our ship, seen from above and a lighthouse on a desolate island**



Next were stops in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Charlottetown, on Prince Edward Island. Shortly after I began seeing Miriam I took her on a week trip with the Twin Comanche, which included 3 nights in Sidney, on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton, which was once home to Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison. This is the first place that the sun rise can be seen on mainland Canada and I remember getting up at about 5 AM (the province is on Atlantic Time, which is one hour earlier than our Eastern Time) so that we could log that momentous event in our memory bank. These days I am far less a romantic and I do not easily give up my morning sleep for anything so mundane as a sunrise.

Well, so far no yellow, orange or red leaves, but plenty of calm blue/green ocean. As a little girl, Miriam was read the novel, "Anne of Green Gables" and she really, really wanted to take the shore excursion that brought us to that house. PEI is a relatively small province within Canada. About 40 years ago this was one of the places that I made a stopover to while visiting Canada and, other than a harness horse race and a petting zoo for my 5 year old son, I remember little else about the Island.



**The Anne of Green Gables "secret garden"**

In Prince Edward there here are plenty of farms, rolling hills and each house is as neat as a pin with close cropped green grass and beautiful floral arrangements out front. The rolling emerald green lawns and fields, contrasted with the red sand beaches (caused by its high iron content) and the blue of the water, made for a colorful landscape pallet. By now weather had begun to cool down and our afternoon temperatures barely reached 70 degrees in bright blue cloudless skies.

We had a total of 3 "sea days" on this 10 day cruise which gave us a nice break between port stops and shore excursions. Entertainment and activities on cruise ships are almost non-stop. Should one wish to take advantage of all of the things that there are to do it would be a continuous round of "busy time", with only brief respites for eating and drinking. We have done enough of these water borne journeys to realize that we don't have to do much of **anything** in order to get our money's worth. I enjoyed reading a book about the development of the Cirrus GA airplane as well as the Eclipse personal jet while at sea.



**Enjoying dinner in the ships opulent dining room**

Shore excursions on cruise ships tend to be on the expensive side, and these generally range between \$50 and \$100 per person, so we try to book only exceptional tours. One such was available while on our next to last stop in the small port of Saguenay, Quebec province. It was a Broadway show like cultural extravaganza called *LaFabuleuse* held on a gigantic stage and featuring over a hundred actors & performers, complete with animals, audio/video spectacles, explosions, "fireworks" and even a spectacular flood, all with stirring music accompaniment. It chronicled the early development of Canada's French speaking populace from the days of its discovery by Jacques Cartier in the 1600's through the great fire of 1870 (vividly portrayed on the stage) and onto modern times. It was certainly a stirring history lesson.



Throughout our entire cruise weather was extraordinary with daytime temperatures, under clear to partly cloudy skies, in the mid 60 to mid 70 degree range. Such was the case when we arrived at Quebec City, our terminus point for two days. We had been to this French speaking, looking and feeling locale many times in the past, but always enjoy its "Old World" charm. However, it was soon time to pick-up our rental vehicle for the 200 mile drive over to the capital city of Montreal and thence north into the Laurentian mountains where we were going to spend another 3 days savoring the flavor and sights of our northern neighbor, and where we finally did get to see the beginnings of the "Fall Foliage" color that our cruise was named for. Here we stayed at the very European like Mt. Tremblant which featured a pedestrian village at the base of the dozens of ski-runs which will make this venue a winter wonderland in just another 3 months.

The cruise portion of our trip finished up in Quebec City, Canada where we had a chance to visit the very old and very historic ***Le Château Frontenac***. On this page are photos of us, in front of that impressive hotel as well as at our Mont Tremblant hotel's 3rd floor balcony enjoying the view of the main square plaza just below our room. This was our first hint of the fall color change, now that were in the higher elevation of the Laurentian Mountains. There is also a photo of our view from the enclosed gondola ski car that we took over to the Casino where Miriam turned out to be the "big winner" by turning her complimentary \$5 gambling chit into a \$2.50 "profit" at the end of some very "intense" pulling of the 25 cent slot machine handle. In the lower right photo she is proudly showing off her winnings.

