

A novel holiday

Cruise Canada

by Krystyna Pottler

Cruises in Canada are different. Here there are no tropical islands, no coral reefs, or palm-shaded lagoons. Instead there are the Mackenzie River, in the Northwest Territories; Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba, and the fjords of the British Columbia coast, three waterways for three unusual Canadian cruises.

The Mackenzie River, lifeline to the western Arctic, was discovered by Sir Alexander Mackenzie who, in 1789, explored it to its mouth on the Arctic Ocean. Modern-day explorers can take a week-long package vacation and retrace this 1,100 mile route on the cruise ship M.S. Norweta.

The package actually begins in Edmonton, Alberta, with a jet flight to Hay River, Northwest Territories. Here a bus meets you at the airport, and you are taken on a tour of this community of 3,000, one of the largest in the Territories.

This is where the Mackenzie River starts its journey to the Arctic Ocean, providing a route for the transportation of goods to communities along its shores.

In Hay River there is an unusual secondary school designed by an Indian architect. Its exterior is composed entirely of curves; there are no straight lines or corners. It is painted in such a way that the color changes from a warm red to a bluish tint depending on the intensity of the sunlight. The school has a central concourse and the various facilities are contained in blocks divided by transparent walls which radiate from the centre.

From Hay River, the bus takes you along the Mackenzie Highway to Fort Providence. There, you board the 103-foot M.S. Norweta for the trip down the Mackenzie River. The ship sleeps 20 guests in 10 double cabins.

Captain Don Tetrault, who has lived in the north and plied the river for over 12 years, says it's pretty well up to the passengers to decide what kind of cruise they will have. There is no set itinerary, although stops are planned for all the settlements along the river.

Unscheduled stops are easily arranged. If, for example, he happens to have bird-watching enthusiasts aboard, Capt. Tetrault is more than willing to pull in along some of the marshes to let them watch to their hearts' content.

He will even stop the ship so passengers can have a barbecue on the shore or wander off to collect rocks.

At Fort Simpson the Laird River flows from the Mountains of British Columbia to join the Mackenzie, bringing with it a load of glacial silt, turning the broad Mackenzie to a sandy brown.

This was the site of the Fort of the Forks built in 1804 by the North West Company of fur traders. In 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company built a fort here and named it after the company's governor, Sir George Simpson.

From Fort Simpson the Norweta continues to sail down the slow, broad Mackenzie which drops only 500 feet in its long journey to the Arctic.

Indian legend has it that a giant's campfire once went out of control and ignited a bed of low-grade coal near what is now Fort Norman. Indeed, the coal was burning when Alexander Mackenzie reached this spot in 1789, possibly ignited by a flash of lightning.

Fort Good Hope is the oldest community on the lower Mackenzie River, the first fort having been built about 100 miles downstream in 1804. In 1836, the community moved to its present site at the north end of the seven-mile-long Ramparts Canyon.

Religion quickly followed the trappers and settlers to the north, and in 1865 the Church of Our Lady of Good Hope was started by an Oblate lay brother Patrick Kearney. The small white church still stands, and inside it are a number of murals depicting biblical scenes and Indian life.

As the Norweta sails on to the town of Inuvik, you see families living in fishing camps along the river's banks as they did hundreds of years ago, seemingly unaware of the encroachment of the 20th century.

Before reaching Inuvik, the Norweta crosses the Arctic Circle, latitude 66 degrees, 33 minutes north. Like crossing the equator, this is an occasion which merits the breaking out of bottles of champagne and going ashore to "walk" across the circle.

Inuvik is a town built on stilts. The buildings are all constructed on pilings sunk into the permafrost below the tundra. If construction is carried on directly on the tundra, the permafrost melts and the ground becomes marshy. To avoid this, holes are steamed into the permafrost, the pilings are driven in and the permafrost is allowed to re-freeze. Only then is construction begun. Sewer and water lines are carried in above-ground conduits.

Inuvik, located on the Mackenzie River Delta, is the federal government's western Arctic administrative center. One of the main industries is muskrat trapping. The town was built in 1954; its name is Eskimo for Place of Man.

The heritage of Canada's Eskimos is evident in the architecture of Our Lady of Victory Church which is shaped like an igloo. It is built of wooden blocks and painted white. The dome is made of bronze.

Inuvik is a thriving community with hotels, cocktail bars and satellite television.

If weather and ice conditions permit, the Norweta will sail even further north to the town of Tuktoyaktuk. Along the way, pingos—100-foot frost bolls can be seen on the shore.

Tuktoyaktuk means "it looks like a caribou". According to legend an Eskimo woman was once forbidden to look at the caribou.

She disobeyed and looked at a herd wading in the shallow water at the mouth of the Mackenzie. The caribou turned to stone. When the tide is low at this point, the reef resembles a herd of caribou.

On the seventh day of the cruise

you board a jet in Tuktoyaktuk for the return flight to Edmonton. A southbound cruise including the same main stops is also available. In 1976, the Norweta will begin cruising the Mackenzie northbound on June 9, and will make its last

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In 1976, the Norweta will begin cruising the Mackenzie northbound on June 9, and will make its last

trip southbound on October 5. Cost, including air fare from Edmonton and return is \$1,395. Cost of the cruise alone, is \$1,160.

Reservations should be made well in advance.



For fanciers of saltwater cruising, there is something slightly different on Canada's west coast.

The 3,800 ton, 329-foot Northland Prince sales out of Vancouver, British Columbia every Tuesday, returning the following Monday. Besides taking freight and supplies to communities along the coast of B.C., it carries passengers through spectacular scenery reminiscent of the fjords of Norway.

First stop after leaving Vancouver is Ocean Falls. From there it's on to Masset in the Queen Charlotte Islands, a group of 150 islands shrouded in mists, low clouds and Haida Indian legends.

The Indian village of Haida, near Masset, is the site of new totem poles carved by the Haida Indians, also known for their carvings in argillite, a black hardened mud stone. The Deikathah Wildlife Sanctuary located here is home to geese, swans and ducks.

From Masset, the Northland Prince steams on to the ports of Port Simpson, Stewart, located on the border with Alaska, Alice Arm, at the end of Observatory Inlet, Kincolith, and Prince Rupert, 30 miles south of the Alaska panhandle.

Prince Rupert has a natural ice-free harbor and calls itself the halibut capital of the world. Average annual catch is 16,000,000 pounds. It also provides a western port for prairie wheat and is the northern-most British Columbia Ferries stop.

Here you can visit the Museum of Northern British Columbia and see examples of totem poles carved by Haida Indians from the Queen Charlotte Islands. The museum houses a collection of Indian art and artifacts including a Chilkat Indian blanket made of mountain goat wool. There are fine examples of Haida and Tsimshian totem poles in several of the city's parks.

The west coast version of the Reversing Falls is located in Prince Rupert harbor. It is a reversing tidal stream between the Wainwright and Morse basins.

From Prince Rupert, the ship continues on to Butedale, back to Ocean Falls and on to Bella Coola.

It was near present-day Bella Coola that Alexander Mackenzie became the first white man to see the Pacific Ocean after crossing North America by land. The words "Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three" are imbedded in a rock in Sir Alexander Mackenzie Provincial Park.

At one time, the Bella Coola Indians numbered about 5,000, most of them living along the Bella Coola River. Their numbers have been diminished by disease and only about 600 are left; all of them live in the town which bears their name.

As in many towns in British Columbia, Bella Coola has a number of

good examples of totem poles.

The Northland Prince leaves Bella Coola to return to Vancouver.

This trip along the B.C. coast is similar to the cruise on the Norweta in that there is no planned itinerary for day by day passenger activities. When the Northland Prince stops at a port, you have a chance to explore the town on your own.

A round-trip deluxe ticket, including four meals a day, costs \$346. The semi-deluxe fare, which also includes four meals a day, is \$316. If you wish, you can take your car aboard the ship. It will cost you \$75 to take it as far as Prince Rupert, and \$97 if you wish to take it to a port beyond Prince Rupert.

The Northland Prince accommodates 120 passengers.

For vacationers who prefer a luxury ship, there's the M.S. Lord Selkirk II, sailing Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Lord Selkirk II offers a wide choice of cruises to suit just about any holiday timetable. These range from seven-day cruises which start at \$246 per person, to the two-day weekenders which start at \$88.

You board the ship in Selkirk, Manitoba, and the first stop is Grand Rapids, where the Saskatchewan River flows into Lake Winnipeg. Grand Rapids is the site of a 600,000 horsepower Manitoba Hydro generating station.

Western Canada's first tramway was built in 1877 as a means of portaging the Grand Rapids. The flatcars were drawn by horses. A flatcar and section of track are preserved here as a monument.

On the shore of Lake Winnipeg at Gimli there stands a 20-foot statue of a Viking warrior symbolizing the Icelandic heritage of this community. Although Gimli is now home to Canadians of a number of extractions, it is still the largest Icelandic community outside Iceland. Each summer there is an Icelandic Festival with residents dressing in traditional costumes and taking part in two days of singing, dancing and merrymaking.

Manitoba's largest Cree Indian reserve is located at Berens Rapids, which is also a port-of-call for the Lord Selkirk II. Here visitors can sample bannock, pioneer bread baked over an open fire.

Aboard the Lord Selkirk II there are a number of activities to keep passengers busy. You can try shuffleboard or skeet shooting. There's music for dancing or listening in the York Boat Lounge; there are scrumptious meals in the Company of Adventurers Dining Room, and excellent facilities for just relaxing in the Lady Selkirk Lounge.

The Lord Selkirk II, which has a capacity of 130, will start its first cruise June 13, 1976, and its final cruise of the season will begin October 13, 1976.

For further information, please contact the Canadian Government Office of Tourism, 150 Kent Street, Ottawa, K1A 0H6.