

TRAVEL

Canadians enjoy late summer travel

In late summer, as the days gradually become shorter, we're reminded that fall is only weeks away - the best time of all to travel, many Canadians are convinced.

"October is the loveliest Canadian month," wrote Malcolm MacDonald, who served as British High Commissioner in Ottawa during the Second World War.

"Gradually, the dark solitary green of the summer foliage is changed into many lighter, gayer, more vivid hues," MacDonald observed.

"Each day the wonder grows until in the first half of October it

reaches its climax."

The beauty of the changing season in Canada and parts of the northeastern U.S. is the same today as it was during those war years.

What is different is that there are so many more of us who are eager to seek out the most scenic spots, and who have the time to travel there - usually between late September and Thanksgiving weekend (Oct. 6-8 this year).

During those two or three weeks, if the rainfall is adequate, if the days are mostly sunny and if the nights are cool but not frosty, then

the spectacle should be at its best.

But if you plan to be there at the peak, now is the time to prepare: If you will be driving the family car, book your accommodation; if not, reserve your space on a sightseeing bus tour.

Should you prefer to postpone your decision until this year's weather pattern becomes clearer, at least write away now for travel literature pertaining to the areas you might want to visit. Some addresses and phone numbers are given below.

In Ontario, the fall display usually peaks early in Agawa Canyon,

accessible by daily excursion trains from Sault Ste. Marie, with a lunch stop. Reservations: 705-254-4331.

Next, the "show" visits Algonquin Park, followed by Muskoka and Haliburton. Smoke Lake is a favorite viewpoint in Algonquin Park, made famous by the paintings of the Group of Seven.

Closer to Ontario's big population centres, the most popular foliage-viewing areas include the Rideau Lakes north of Kingston; the Haliburton Lakes region and the Ganaraska Forest, both accessible from Peterborough; Glen Haffy and the Hockley Valley, both in Toronto's hinterland. Ontario's Tourism Ministry distributes brochures of fall auto tours and fall events. Call 800-668-2746.

CANADA-WIDE

Some other autumn beauty spots across Canada include Newfoundland's west coast, Nova Scotia's Cabot Trail, Quebec's Laurentian Mountains and Gatineau Hills, Manitoba's Whiteshell Provincial Park, Saskatchewan's Fort Qu'Appelle Valley; Alberta's Crimson Lake and British Columbia's Fraser and Okanagan valleys.

In New England, the pressure of tourists is heaviest in the state of Vermont, which attracts some 800,000 visitors during the busy weeks of its foliage season, extending into late October in the southern regions of the state.

The Vermont Travel Division (134 State St., Montpelier, Vt., 05602) advises "leaf-peepers" to come before the last weekend in September, and midweek rather

than on weekends, to be better able to find accommodation. Some establishments require a minimum two-night stay during the height of the foliage season, and most increase their prices. Example: The Golden Eagle at Stowe (800-626-1010) charges \$75 to \$110 U.S. for its motor-inn rooms during the foliage season, compared with regular rates of \$70 to \$100.

IN PENNSYLVANIA

Still another popular fall destination is the Pennsylvania Dutch Country, including the town of Lancaster and the many well tended farms and neat towns of Lancaster County to the east of it.

One of the predominant colors there during the crisp autumn days is the brilliant orange of the ripening pumpkin and squash in the fields of the Mennonite and Amish farms.

Special fall activities begin Saturday, Sept. 8, with the annual craft fair at the Plain and Fancy Farm and Dining Room in the town of Bird-in-Hand. The neighboring village of Intercourse is the site of the annual Harvest Festival on Friday, Sept. 21; be sure to try the local specialty, snickerdoodle cookies.

From Sept. 24 to 29, the town of Ephrata (noted for its medieval-style cloister, built in the 18th century) stages what is described as the largest street fair in the U.S.

For details of this and other fall events, or for a map and visitors' guide, write to the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors' Bureau, 501 Greenfield Rd., Lancaster, Pa., 17601.

- Thomson News Service

Cruise vacations available to all types of vacationers

No longer are cruise vacations exclusively for the terminally wealthy and boring-if, in fact, that image ever was valid.

These days, the cruise lines have shaped and broadened their appeal to include just about every type of vacationer, at almost every level of income.

Even wheelchair users can be fairly sure of finding suitably equipped cabins on most modern cruise ships. On a recent Vancouver-to-Anchorage voyage of Cunard's Sagafjord, one of the most active couples was a husband and his handicapped wife, whose mobility was made easier by several elevators on board, and by plenty of helping hands among the crew when the couple boarded tenders to go ashore at ports of call.

Speaking of Alaska, it has been the fastest growing summer market of recent years, in terms of cruising. The scenery-towing mountains, glaciers, icebergs-is breathtaking, and the summer weather (with a bit of luck) can be ideal.

Incidentally, Alaska's new popularity as a cruise destination has been an enormous boon to the port of Vancouver. The century-old U.S. Coastwise Passenger Service Act prevents passengers on foreign-flag ships from embarking in the port of Seattle and disembarking in, say, Anchorage-both U.S. ports.

CHOOSING A CRUISE

The variety of cruise itineraries, the range of ships, the prices and the discounts-all of these can make the choice seem next to impossible.

To begin, you must make a geographical choice. The Caribbean has cruise service year-round, although the winter months are of course the most popular with Canadians. Alaska, as noted above is a summertime favorite, and many ships sailing that coastal route are fully booked throughout July and August each year.

Once the general geographical area has been decided upon, the more important choice isn't the specific itinerary but rather the ship itself. Broadly speaking, there isn't a great deal of difference among the various ships, in terms of the quality of construction, the attitude of the staff and the general upkeep of the vessel.

The fare structure is sometimes, but not always, a good guide to the suitability of a ship. In rating the cruise ships that are in Alaskan service, Fodor's Alaska guidebook (revised annually) seems to me to be perceptive and reliable.

Study the deck plan of any ship you may be considering (always found in the cruise brochure). Note where the elevators are located, for example, and whether you will have enough space for jogging or walking on the open deck if that's your hobby choice.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

It's often said, in support of cruising, that you pay up front, and that's that. Well, as you will find, that certainly isn't that.

Count on spending at least \$8 a day per person in tips to waiters and chambermaids, whatever you might lose at the shipboard casino; three-figure amounts for some of the shore excursions sold aboard the ship (although, once ashore, you will almost always be able to find lower-priced alternatives); wine with dinner, and cocktails, both at prices comparable to those at home; souvenir photos ranging from \$5 to \$7 each.

Shopping is also a feature on most ships, and a highlight of all the newest vessels. The gift shop can compensate for the stores you missed on your shore excursions (and with much less sales pressure), and the shop will usually offer some bargains in clearance-priced items at some point during the cruise.

The most extensive of the sea-going shopping malls is said to be the one that takes up a third of the boat deck on Queen Elizabeth 2, with outlets of many of the biggest

names in British retailing, including Harrod's and Aquascutum.

THE BASICS

The shops, of course, also fill the more prosaic function of providing passengers with the items they forgot to pack. On an Alaskan cruise, that's likely to mean warm outerwear; hardly any first-time passengers bring clothes that are warm enough for the days they will spend on the open deck, cruising close to glaciers.

On the last day of a cruise-but not before-duty-free liquor will frequently be offered for sale.

After the cruise is finished, however, the most important thing you bring home with you won't be the duty-free merchandise, nor your complete collection of daily menus. Assuming that you chose a good ship and put your time aboard to good use, you will relish priceless memories of bracing days with blue skies and endless horizons, of tropical evenings or midnight sunsets, of flying fish or seals at rest on ice floes.

In short, you will have gone to sea.

-Thomson News Service

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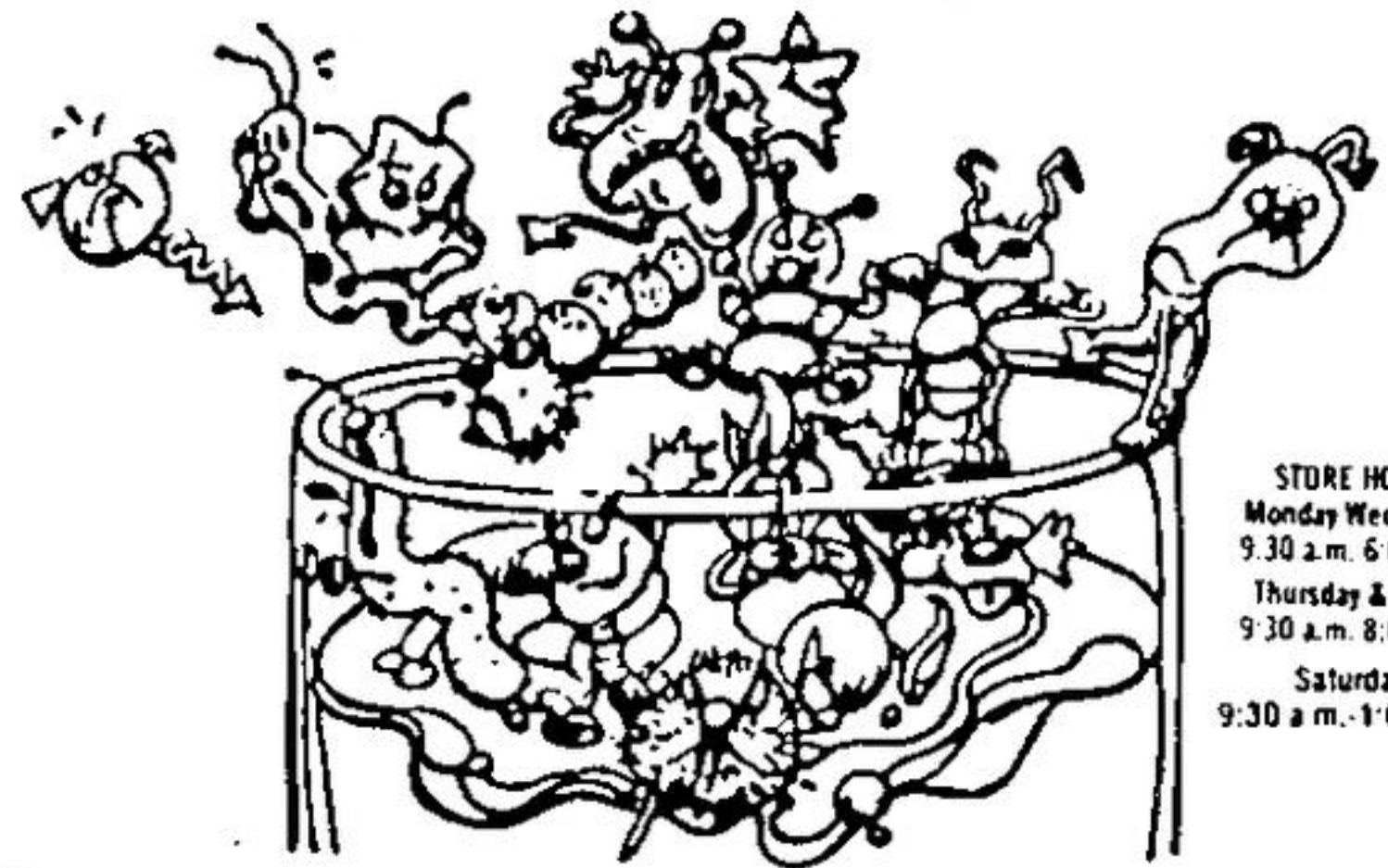
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