

# SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE JUNE 2, 2019 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/TRAVEL

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## CANADA BY CARGO SHIP

PHOTOS BY HILARY NANGLE FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Discovering Quebec's remote Lower North Shore aboard a cruise-supply vessel

By Hilary Nangle  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**M**y eyes Ping-Pong between Kegaska's port and the sea, from watching the ship's crane hoist containers on deck to scanning the Gulf of St. Lawrence waters hoping to spy any of the 13 whales known to frolic here. I've been eyeballing both since boarding the combo cruise-and-cargo ship *Bella Desgagnés* two days ago.

Kegaska might not be the end of the world, but it's the end of the road. Route 138 stops here and doesn't pick up again for more than 200

miles. Locals call this isolated region *Territoire de la Basse-Côte-Nord* or the Lower North Shore. In winter, the *Route Blanche*, a 325-mile snowmobile trail, connects the villages, but when the ice and snow melt, they rely on the *Bella Desgagnés*. From April through mid-January, it connects the Lower North Shore villages not only to each other but also to the rest of Quebec and the world.

During its weekly round trips between Rimouski, roughly 200 miles east of Quebec City on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, and Blanc Sablon, on the Labrador border, *Bella* visits 10 ports twice: three with road access, five isolated villages along the Lower North Shore, and Anticosti Island. It's a cross-cultural journey that includes Innu First Nations and Acadian villages as well as English and francophone ones. Roughly 5,000 people live along the Lower North Shore, nearly 1,000 in Blanc Sablon alone. The rest are scattered in 13 compact villages, some with populations numbering fewer than 100.

*Bella Desgagnés'* primary mission is transporting cargo for these communities and providing passenger service for residents. It also bridges the gap for travelers looping through Labrador or ferrying to Newfoundland; their cars, motorcycles, RVs, and bicycles are carried in containers. Increasingly it's carrying round-trip cruisers, passengers like my husband and me, who've come for a glimpse into the people, wildlife, geology, and geography that define this sparsely populated region.

When viewed from the front, *Bella* resembles



a typical cruise ship. It offers comfortable and efficient, but not fancy, guest cabins and port excursions, but that's where the similarity stops. There isn't a casino, nor are there boutiques, nightlife venues, a pool, or a spa, and the deck seats are molded plastic, not cushy chaises. Amenities include a lounge with limited bar service, a cafeteria, a laundry, a kennel, and a small fitness room.

Onboard activities include documentary films and presentations about the ship and communities visited, as well as about seabirds,

**FROM TOP**  
The view of Harrington Harbour from the *Bella Desgagnés*, which works round the clock and offers efficient, but not fancy, guest cabins.

CANADA, Page M4



## How to survive a road trip with kids

By Elle Caruso  
GLOBE STAFF

Nearly 100 million Americans are planning to take a family vacation in 2019, and 53 percent of them will be road trips, according to a recent AAA travel survey. Road trips offer families the ability to be more spontaneous, to set the rules, and to be flexible on time. But they can be stressful to take with children, who aren't typically known for enjoying being confined for long stretches. We asked the experts how to make sure this summer's road trip is as peaceful and fun as possible.

### Reduce car sickness

Few things are less enjoyable than getting your sick while stuck in a cramped car. According to the US Cen-

ters for Disease Control and Prevention, "motion sickness results when the movement you see is different from what your inner ear senses."

"We know through other scientific research that, even if our eyes are focused on a fixed point, if we can see the outside passing by in the window, our brain is telling us that we are moving," explains Don Shreves, head of General Motors human factors engineering group. "But if our eyes are at a downward angle (such as when reading a book) and do not see the view outside the vehicle, our bodies become sensitive to motion and increase the chance of sickness." Anyone burdened with car sickness

is encouraged to look outside the car through the front windshield instead of the side windows. Focusing on a distant point on the horizon is suggested by experts for minimizing car sickness. Listen to gentle music or play car games together; staying distracted can help overcome car sickness.

There are some ways to avoid car sickness. Mary Jarvis, a mother of five from Harvard, said her tips include "making sure that the kids did not eat within one or two hours of hopping in the car. . . . I always had saltines and peppermint hard candies in the car for long car rides. . . . A cool towel on the head once the nausea develops may help, as will



HELP DESK, Page M4

### Inside NEW ENGLAND YORK YOUR WAY

There is a lot to keep the whole family happy in this Maine attraction.

M5







## Cruise-cargo ship visits Quebec's remote villages

►CANADA  
Continued from Page M1

whales, flora, and fauna by a naturalist. Live entertainment means scanning surrounding waters for whales, porpoise, and seabirds; watching crew load and unload containers; and enjoying port approaches and departures from the observation decks.

Our cruise package included three meals daily in the dining room. Two sittings are offered, and while there are a few tables for two, we often were paired with other guests at larger ones. The daily-changing, classic French menu lists at least three choices, and always includes local seafood. Although most passengers spoke French, we managed to converse using my limited French, their limited English, and a Franglais version of charades. Wine helped. As a Francophone tablemate quipped: "A glass, understand a little; a bottle, fluent."

Although the ship docks in other ports, Kegaska marks the beginning of the Lower North Shore, 233 coastal miles first charted by explorer Jacques Cartier, but home to First Nations peoples for millennia. In this staggeringly beautiful, glacial-sculpted region, free-flowing salmon-rich rivers and inland boreal forests cede to rugged coastline seasoned with squishy peat bogs, rocky outcrops, deserted beaches, and smatterings of islands. The subarctic climate attracts Atlantic puffins, guillemots, and razorbills. Icebergs often linger into summer.

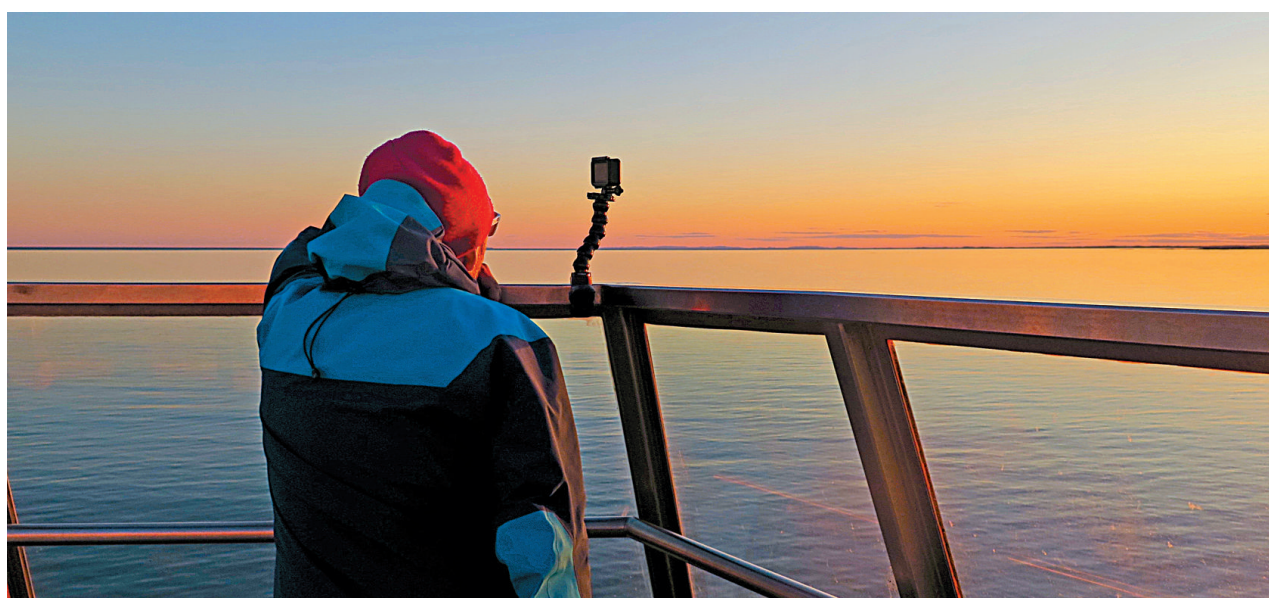
As the ship hopscotched the coast and islands, we disembarked for self-guided walkabouts as well as guided excursions, some professional, most homespun, almost all including the local school, health center, church, and ice hockey rink. Jobs may be few, ages increasing, and populations declining, but those remaining value their rugged independence and the safety of their communities and think nothing of snowmobiling a couple of hundred miles for weekend hockey tournaments or festivals. "You'll see 300 Ski-Dos for a hockey game," one guide told me, as she pointed out the local arena.

Early on the third morning, the ship squeezed between Entry and Renfall Islands to enter Harrington Harbour, where "Le Grand Séduction" was filmed. The previous night, we'd watched this English-subtitled comedy in our cabin. I still chuckle when remembering the scene with locals playing cricket in white longjohns atop Entry Island — and that was before local guide Keith Rowsell revealed that he was one of those cricket players.

"At the end of the shooting, the film



PHOTOS BY HILARY NANGLE FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE



### If you go . . .

Weather is always a factor. Gusting winds can prevent docking in some ports and make access to others, such as the narrow channel into Harrington Harbour, tricky. Although the *Bella Desgagnés* has ice-breaking capability, it sometimes gets caught in late and early season and must wait for a Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker to clear the way, which might take several days.

**Relais Nordik** operates the *Bella Desgagnés* (800-463-0680; [relainordik.com/en](http://relainordik.com/en)). Round-trip fares (ages 16-64) for the seven-night cruise begin at \$1,318 Canadian per person, quad occupancy or \$1,502 Canadian, double occupancy, April 1-May 19 and Sept. 30 to the end of season;

\$1,420 Canadian per person quad, \$1,689 double May 20-June 23 and Sept. 2-29; and \$1,689 Canadian quad and \$1,877 double, June 24-Sept. 1. Price includes maritime passage, cabin, and meals; taxes are extra. Shorter options are available.

Port excursions are extra; most are booked through **Voyages Coste** (877-573-2678 or 418-465-2002; [voyages-coste.ca/en](http://voyages-coste.ca/en)), both Harrington Harbour (\$21.74 Cdn) and La Tabatière (\$33.20 Cdn) are in English.

Both **Cote-Nord Tourism** (888-463-5319; [tourisme-cote-nord.com](http://tourisme-cote-nord.com)) and **Quebec Maritime** ([quebecmaritime.ca/en](http://quebecmaritime.ca/en)) offer information about the region.

HILARY NANGLE

company made beer and food available on the island; not the brightest move. By the time we left, everyone was staggering," he recalls. "Our boat of drunks dressed in white underwear arrived at the dock just as tourists were getting

off the *Bella*. They detoured as far away from us on the dock as they could."

This isolated village, with boardwalks instead of streets, enjoys a relatively stable population hovering

around 300. "People think we suffer out here, but we have a restaurant, bar, and radio station. I have high-speed Internet. I don't have or need a car, but I do have three generators, four ATVs, two boats, and five snowmobiles.

From top: Harrington Harbour, an English-speaking village where boardwalks replace streets; cargo containers on the *Bella Desgagnés*; the shore dinner is a highlight of the cruise; Krystal Chandler, a naturalist aboard the ship, offered a presentation on whales; a passenger took photos of the setting sun from the vessel's observation deck.

These aren't toys, they're essentials. I'm not struggling," Rowsell says, patting his ample belly.

Other villages aren't so stable. We toured La Tabatière by schoolbus, with Tony Gallichon driving and 17-year-old Amy Willcott, one of five in the school's largest class, pointing out local sights. "I love walking out the door knowing nothing bad will happen," she says. "If I ever need help, I know someone will." But jobs are scarce, and once she leaves to become a veterinary technician, she doubts she'll come back.

We return to the ship as the crane is being stowed. First Officer Mathieu Roi choreographs the loading and unloading at each port. The local crew alerts him to what's coming aboard — vehicles, frozen lobster or crab, appliances, etc., and he plans and charts unloading and loading in advance. "People say it's the same trip every week, but it's never the same," he says. "With 22 stops in seven days, there's always something to keep you on your toes."

And passengers eyeballing the action.

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## Preparation can make family road trip fun, enjoyable

►HELP DESK  
Continued from Page M1

opening a window and limiting noxious smells and loud music."

Jarvis is one smart mom. The Mayo Clinic lists many of those ideas and other ways of avoiding or treating car sickness on its website.

There are many fads that claim to help with motion sickness: bracelets, glasses, aromatherapy. Most of these options are inexpensive and have minimal side effects, so it can't hurt to try them. Motion-sickness bands are also Flexible Spending Account eligible.

### Entertainment: the quiet kind

Decide judiciously if you're going to want to play "I spy" or Mad Libs for the duration of the car ride. Plan ahead to leave the noisy toys at home so the time may be spent relaxing and recharging.

The best road trip entertainment is multifaceted: It keeps the kids distracted and content, takes motion sickness precautions, and doesn't annoy

everyone else in the vehicle. Audiobooks are a great compromise, but make sure to pack headphones and the charger for the device. Audiobooks keep kids entertained and looking forward out the window — a double win if car sickness is also a concern. In a 2016 article about road trips with kids, the *Globe* suggested "Peter Pan" by J.M. Barrie, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll, "The Jungle Book" by Rudyard Kipling, and others, to help pass the time.

### Snacks to pack

Make space in the cabin of the car for a cooler that is large enough to store food and drinks for the entire family.

Sandra Sullivan, a registered dietitian who is also the food and nutrition services director at New Milford Public Schools in Connecticut, emphasizes food safety. Although a cooler can be used mindlessly for storing drinks and fruit/vegetables, you need to be careful when traveling with food that is at risk



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of spoiling. Healthy, shelf-stable snacks are a low-maintenance choice for road trips. Sullivan recommends making homemade trail mix with a

dry cereal. "You want to pack food with 10 or less grams per serving of sugar. For the cereal, the lowest [sugar] one that comes to mind is plain

Anyone burdened with car sickness is discouraged from looking outside through the side window.

Cheerios." When buying any grain snacks, limit the search to whole grain options. Nuts, dried fruits, and other healthy add-ins provide protein and sustainable energy.

Other recommendations for homemade shelf stable snacks include kale chips and healthy baked goods. Any type of fresh fruit or vegetables (raw or lightly cooked for smaller children) is safe to keep in a cooler.

To keep sugar levels in check, dilute 100 percent juice (not from concentrate) with water. And don't forget to bring a refillable water bottle for each family member.

By spending just a little more time preparing, family road trips can be a low-stress and fun vacation for everyone.

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