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PORT OF THE MONTH

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Maritime lore in Atlantic Canada

PORT OF THE MONTH

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

*Explore three centuries of maritime history in this scenic,
fun-filled and friendly Canadian city*

By Glen Petrie



Passengers entering Halifax harbor on a Cunard liner are re-enacting history in a way. The first Cunard trans-Atlantic voyage docked in the city 177 years ago.

The line's founder, Samuel Cunard, was born in Halifax in 1787—with salt in his veins, you might say—in a humble cottage a stone's throw from the water. As a young man, he was an investor in the *Royal William*, the first ship to cross the Atlantic using steam for most of the distance, in 1833. It took almost a month.

By the age of 50, a millionaire with a fleet of 40 coastal vessels, Cunard convinced the British Admiralty that he was the man to start regular mail runs using steam between Britain and Halifax. On July 4, 1840, his newly built steamship *Britannia* carried him into Halifax ahead of schedule, in the middle of the night. Rather than wait for the city to wake up and welcome him, he proceeded to Boston and a grand reception. Cunard Line was launched, and the era of Atlantic greyhounds had begun.

Nothing remains of Samuel Cunard's cottage now, or the grander house he later built beside it. The busy Cunard pier has long been subsumed by a naval base, though the Cunard name ceremoniously shines on a convention facility at the Halifax Seaport. A statue of Sir Samuel stands nearby, erected in 2006 and



Glen Petric

The nautically flavored Halifax Harbourwalk abounds with places to explore, eat, shop and play.

inaugurated by then president of Cunard, Carol Marlow.

More than 238,000 cruise passengers arrived in Halifax on 136 cruise ship visits during the 2016 cruise season (May to October). Most of the activity is in September and October, when “fall foliage” cruises operate between New York or Boston and Quebec. Visit in 2017 and you'll partake in festivities marking the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of

Canada, a national year-long party. (Cunard Line, older than Canada itself, turned 175 in 2015.)

Anyone with an interest in things nautical will love Halifax. The sea and ships still define the city's identity, a place rich in maritime history.

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Cruise ships in Halifax, like Royal Caribbean International's *Serenade of the Seas*, deposit passengers within minutes of downtown shopping and top tourist attractions.



A statue of Halifax's Samuel Cunard honors the founder of Cunard Line.



The Maritime Museum of the Atlantic has some rare Cunard memorabilia.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Continued

One of the beauties of the compact Nova Scotia capital is that many areas of interest are within walking distance. The extensive waterfront has been lovingly developed as a place for people to gather and enjoy good times, and exploring it on foot can easily fill a full day ashore.

The seaport complex itself offers a lot. On weekends there's a farmers market where you can sample local artisanal foods and crafts, from fresh baked goods and cheeses, to hand-knitted woolens and one-of-a-kind jewelry. Go the roof and have a coffee with a view of the big cruise ships berthed alongside. Don't miss the proud centerpiece, the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.

Canada's Ellis Island, Pier 21 was the gateway for more than a million arriving immigrants from 1928 to 1971, and like Ellis

Island recounts the dreams and fears of newcomers arriving in a world they knew little about. Walls of photos depict some of the ships that arrived at the berth outside: the *Aquitania*, *Franconia*, *Ile de France*, *Cristoforo Colombo* (sister to the ill-fated *Andrea Doria*), *Stockholm* (the ship that holed and sank the *Andrea Doria*), the original *Queen Mary* and dozens of others from the golden trans-Atlantic age.

"I stood on the deck and saw the lights, and I tell you, it was heaven. And I made a vow that this would be my country," a young Polish immigrant is recorded saying as she arrived in 1950.

I stood on the deck in glorious October sunshine and agree the view is beautiful. Summer in Halifax can often be foggy and wet, but fall months offer more sunshine, with temperatures just right for touring in a light jacket. From the museum at Pier 21, I set out on a wide, handsome boardwalk of hefty wooden beams.

The Harbourwalk, as the splendid boardwalk is known, begins at the cruise port and follows the undulating harbor shore for over two miles, connecting cafes, restaurants, marinas, museums and museum ships, shops and parks. The length of it can be walked in both directions in just under an hour if you go non-stop, but by taking in the sights along the way, you'll easily kill several hours.

If you're cruising with the kids, they'll love Halifax, in part because so many of the attractions are climbable. The *Sackville*, a fully restored corvette class ship that escorted World War II convoys to Europe, is a prime example. Berthed next door is *Theodore Too*, a replica of the famous tugboat character featured in the children's television series (created in Halifax), waiting to take families on kid-oriented sightseeing cruises. Rising out of the boardwalk is a 12-foot-tall sculpture of a wave—or is it a whale's giant tongue?—that children happily climb and slide down.





Fairview Lawn Cemetery counts more than 100 victims of the 1912 *Titanic* sinking, a tragedy chronicled at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.



Along the way you'll find shops renting bicycles or offering Segway tours, and if you need a break, flop into one of the water-side hammocks thoughtfully installed by the city. Then reconstitute yourself with a snack, such as a beavertail (a flat pastry with sweet toppings), poutine (fries topped with cheese curds and gravy) or locally renowned, hand-made ice cream from Cow's takeout.

You'll find no shortage of shops. Souvenir emporiums crop up here and there along the boardwalk, with Murphy's being the biggest. Nova Scotia Crystal makes exquisite glassware, and you can watch the glass being blown and turned by hand.

The boardwalk will take you to my favorite spot in Halifax, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, a vast collection of ship memorabilia on two floors. A glass wall looks out on the waterfront and the museum's largest artifact, the CSS *Acadia*, open to visitors. Her designation stands for Canadian Survey Ship and she was a pioneer of hydro-

graphic research in Canada's Arctic waters.

Inside the museum are life-size examples of sailing and fishing craft native to the area. On the second floor, ship buffs will think they've gone to heaven amongst the collection of ship models: *Mauretania*, *Titanic*, *Carinthia*, *Britannia* and countless others (Cunard features large). There are naval displays, war artifacts, lighthouse beacons and myriad other relics of Nova Scotia's long relationship with the sea. There's even a deck chair from the *Titanic*.

A section of the museum is devoted to the *Titanic*, since Halifax is closely connected with the famous tragedy. Many bodies were taken here by the Mackay-Bennett, a cable repair ship that recovered the majority of *Titanic*'s victims. The class system was maintained even in death. First-class passengers were disembarked in coffins, second and third class in canvas bags, and crew in open stretchers.

One of the most popular places to visit for

cruise passengers is the suburban graveyard where many *Titanic* passengers were laid to rest. To get there, you'll need a taxi or a tour. It's a sobering experience to walk among the rows of gravestones, many simply marked "Unknown."

Back at the museum is a pair of baby shoes belonging to an infant buried under the lonely sobriquet "Unknown Child." But in 2010, scientific study revealed the identity of the youngster as Sidney Leslie Goodwin of Wilshire, England. Sidney was the youngest of a family of eight, all of whom perished. His was the only body known to be recovered.

Leaving the waterfront and climbing up steep streets (or use the hop-on, hop-off Big Pink Bus, a good way to get around to some 17 sites), you'll come to the Town Clock, a wooden clock tower that has become a symbol of the city. It's perched on a hillside below the ramparts of the Halifax Citadel, a sprawling military garrison with views in all directions and cannons at the ready. From

The picturesque fishing village of Peggy's Cove, 28 miles from Halifax, appears on many shore excursions (and calendars).



Wally Hayes/Destination Halifax



The Town Clock, a landmark dating from 1803, overlooks Brunswick Street in downtown Halifax.

Wally Hayes/Destination Halifax



Take in the floral beauty on a leisurely stroll through Halifax Public Garden or treat yourself to a typical Nova Scotian dinner of lobster and crab.



HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Continued

above, it looks like a giant star stamped onto the highest hill, taking up a massive area of the city's core. Some version of the citadel has stood there since 1749, at the ready during the Seven Years War, the American Revolution, Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812, but it was never attacked.

Now a National Historic Site, the museum recreates the year 1869, when Queen Victoria reigned and British North America had become the new nation of Canada just two years prior. Cannon are fired every day at noon. Sentry changes are ceremoniously played out every hour. Bagpipers and drummers of the 78th Highlanders perform regimental tunes throughout the day. If your timing is right, you can even take a turn firing an

original Snider-Enfield rifle. There are innumerable rooms and bastions to explore, but the most impressive sights are the views from the rampart walls of Halifax and its harbor.

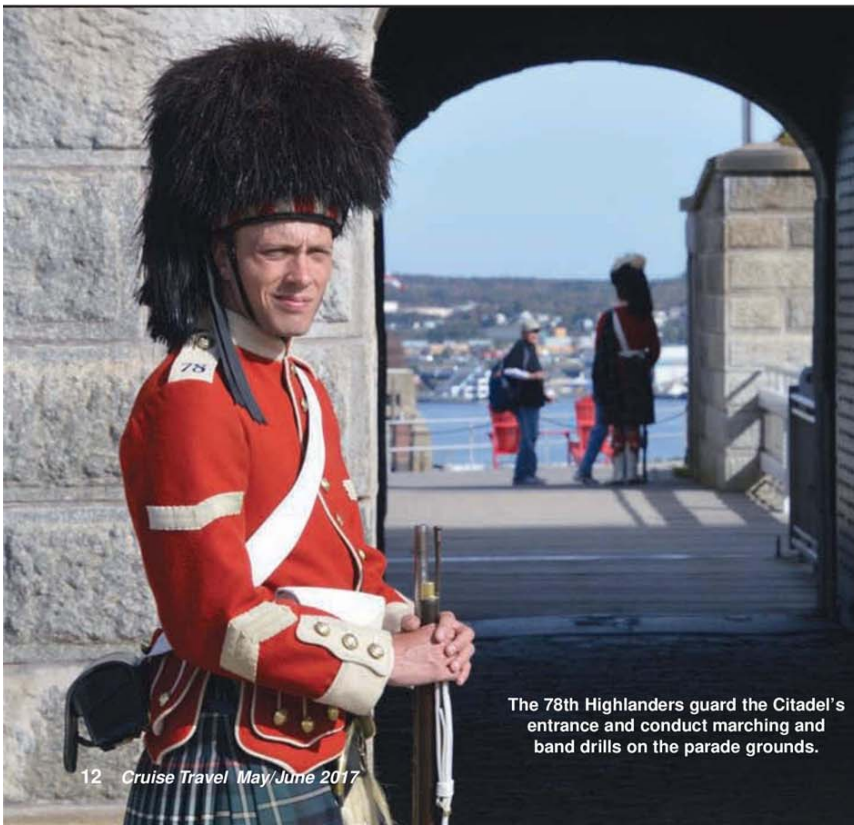
Before going downhill to the waterfront again, you might want to wander north to Spring Garden Road, the city's main shopping thoroughfare. You'll notice an eye-popping building that is one large glass box balanced atop another—the new library. Ride the elevator to the top to see the stunning glass-walled reading areas and an outdoor cafe with panoramic views. There's free Wi-Fi. Then, as you make your way back to the ship, cut through the beautifully cultivated Halifax Public Gardens.

Halifax offers a lot to see, but it would be a shame to leave Nova Scotia without taking in some of its famously beautiful coastal scenery. You don't have to travel far to visit real working fishing villages, and the most

famous of all, Peggy's Cove, is just 28 miles away. There is no shortage of bus tours to this charming hamlet, but I had booked a car in advance with Dollar Rent a Car, located in the Westin Hotel just two blocks from Pier 21.

The drive to Peggy's Cove took me past birch and maple forests bursting with the oranges, yellows and reds of fall, and then emerged at a treeless shore of sweeping boulders, polished smooth by the sea. The colorful wooden fishermen's houses of Peggy's Cove perch on rocks and their equally colorful fishing boats bob at docks. Presiding over the village is Canada's most photographed lighthouse. Waves crash and seagulls careen and cry overhead. I stopped in at the Sou'Wester Restaurant and enjoyed fresh Atlantic lobster while admiring the view.

Historic Halifax, it seems to me, makes a great cruise stop, but it's also a place worth coming back to. **CT**



The 78th Highlanders guard the Citadel's entrance and conduct marching and band drills on the parade grounds.

Know Before You Go

Ships That Call: Carnival, Celebrity, Cruise & Maritime Voyages, Crystal, Cunard, Disney, Fred. Olsen, Hapag-Lloyd, Holland America, Norwegian, Oceania, One Ocean Expeditions, Pearl Seas, P&O, Princess, Royal Caribbean, Regent Seven Seas, Seabourn, Silversea and others.

Weather: Nova Scotia temperatures are moderated by the sea; it rarely gets extremely hot or extremely cold. Atlantic storms can appear at any time. Fog is common in spring and summer, with more sunny days in the fall. Summer daily highs are typically 70-80 degrees, lowering to 50-70 in September and October. Having a fleece or knit sweater on hand, or a fold-up rain jacket, is recommended.

Money Matters: The Canadian dollar is commonly known as the loonie for the bird that adorns the \$1 coin. The U.S. greenback carries about a 30 percent premium. Bank machines are ubiquitous. Major credit cards are accepted everywhere, with the exception of Discover, which is not widely known in Canada.

For More Information: Contact Tourism Nova Scotia (Cruise Travel Magazine) P.O. Box 667, 8 Water St., Windsor, Nova Scotia, Canada B0N 2T0; call 800-565-0000; or log on to www.novascotia.com.

Glen Perrie