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Sailing the heights is well worth the trip

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WHEN I told people I was going to Canada the reaction was always the same: "You'll love it, it's a fantastic place."

When I added that the trip was for just four days, their expressions changed to the sort normally reserved for someone who has taken leave of their senses.

And I must admit when I received the itinerary which spelled out a journey including three flights in each direction (including a return route from Montreal via Toronto, Chicago and Heathrow), I had second, third and even fourth thoughts about the wisdom of devoting so much of a week's holiday at airline check-in desks.

To call my accomodation a cabin is a bit like calling a Rolls Royce a family runabout

But in the end, the chance to spend even a relatively short time cruising the Gulf of St Lawrence was too good to turn down. Especially as the cruise was aboard the *Seabourn Pride*, regularly named among the world's top-rated cruise ships.

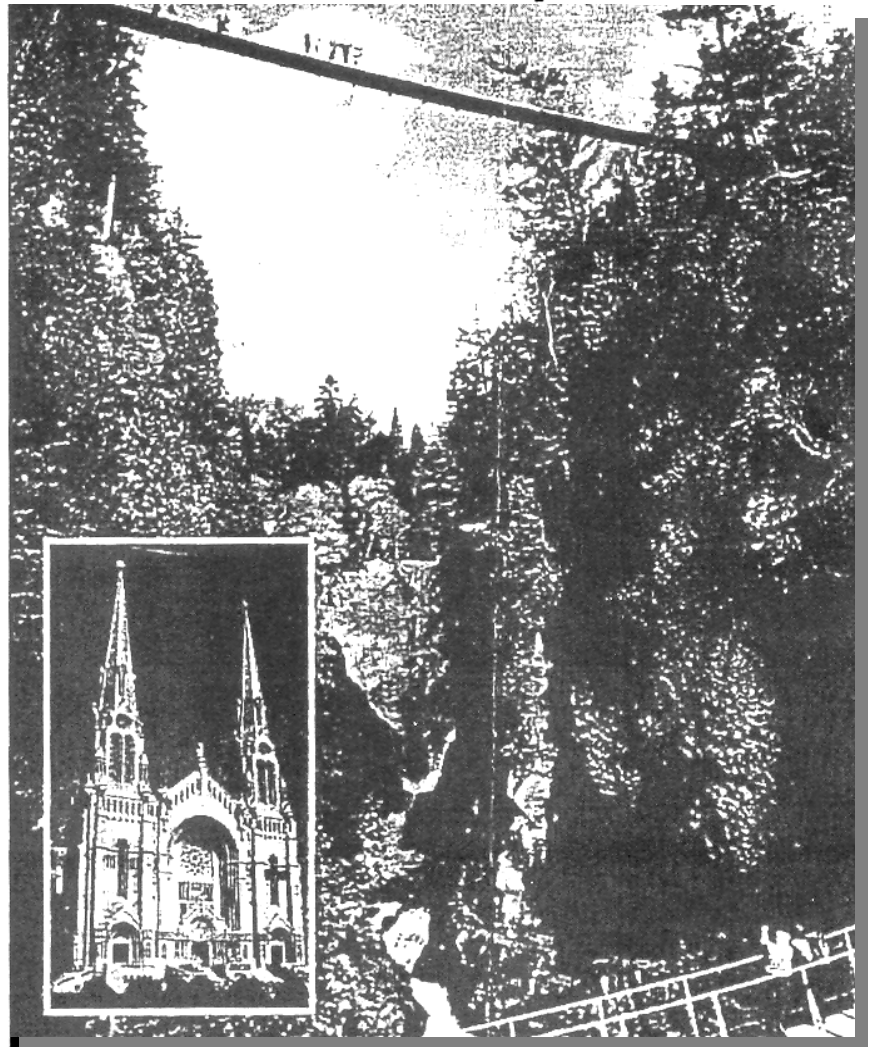
I was glad I made the right choice.

We caught up with the *Pride* in Charlottetown on Prince Edward Island, a place famous for being the birthplace of Canada and the setting for the Anne of Green Gables stories.

It was a fleeting glimpse of a place clearly steeped in history but as the ship sailed on a grey, cold and wet afternoon, it felt as though the journey proper had begun.

That first day and the following one were spent at sea, giving plenty of time to find your bearings in what is basically a beautifully-appointed five-star floating hotel.

Not that the exploration takes too long. This is not one of the new generation of super cruise ships, with miles of corridors to get lost in. With a full passenger complement of just 204, small but perfectly-formed is the phrase which springs most readily to mind.



Glorious: Scenery in Quebec at the Grand Canyon des Chutes Ste-Anne and (inset) the Roman Catholic shrine of St Anne de Beaupre

And the size in no way diminishes the level of facilities aboard. The first thing I did was to drop in at the business centre and send a quick e-mail home to let everyone know I had arrived safely.

Then it was back to the cabin for room service (we had missed lunch, as if that

matters aboard a *Seabourn* ship) and a glass of two of the champagne which had been put on ice to welcome me and every other passenger aboard.

But to call my accommodation a cabin is a bit like calling a top-of-the-range Rolls Royce a family runabout.