

# Country Roads: Hop-on, hop-off shuttle links Saguenay towns

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE AUGUST 13, 2012



The new Navette Maritime du Fjord is a hop-on, hop-off shuttle along the Saguenay.

**Photograph by:** Croisières du Fjord

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Today, Country Roads turns to Country Rivers. We have heard about driving, cycling or even skiing from inn to inn.

Now, Croisières du fjord, an established cruise line along the Saguenay fjord, has created a new shuttle service, La Navette maritime du fjord, a hop-on and hop-off boat service that enables travellers to visit different towns for as long as they want to stay.

La Navette departs from the La Baie sector of the city of Saguenay at the western tip of the fjord and uses two different boats, a 125-passenger “bateau-mouche” and another, smaller one that carries 70 people. With a transfer in l’Anse St. Jean, La Navette travels the 100 kilometres east to where the Saguenay meets the St. Lawrence River at Tadoussac. It’s a region of great natural beauty and grandeur, particularly famous for the fjord – both the waterway and the steep cliffs, Les Caps, that rise more than 300 metres above it.

La Navette has a narrator who highlights the history and the landmarks, including the statue of the Virgin Mary in Notre Dame du Saguenay. If you choose to cruise all the way to Tadoussac, you might

spot belugas, but you can board a different boat specialized in whale-watching on the St. Lawrence River.

With the various stops in villages along the way, there are lots of opportunities for outdoor action with sea-kayaking, sailing, rock-climbing or hiking.

Let's say you start your Navette fjord trip in La Baie with a restful night at Auberge des 21, a wonderful inn with excellent cuisine, contemporary rooms and a spa. The Sunday brunch buffet is the time and place to sample authentic Lac Saint-Jean tourtière, a lumberjack-worthy pie of elk, boar and diced potatoes, baked for eight hours for maximum flavour.

As La Navette's glass-enclosed bateau mouche pulls away from La Baie, the next port of call is the picturesque town of Ste. Rose du Nord, only a 40-minute cruise. Nestled along the north shore of the Saguenay, Ste. Rose du Nord is a cluster of tiny houses built up a steep hill from the marina.

It's a two-minute walk to Auberge du Café de la Poste, a house custom-built as a B&B, with five country-style guest rooms, each with their own private entrance and bathroom. Here, Linda Girard's cooking is the highlight. Her four-course breakfasts feature thin crepes with fruit, goat cheese and homemade bread and jams.

At night, she goes "terroir" with fiddleheads, tourtière and sugar pie or blueberry pie. You'll be without a car, but Girard can arrange transport to the nearby adventure park, Cap Jaseux, for hiking, rock climbing or a thrilling aerial ropes course high over the fjord.

After a night, or two or three, in Ste. Rose du Nord, your next stop using La Navette might be l'Anse St. Jean, another postcard-pretty town on the Saguenay with a lot to do. You can rent bicycles for the 28-kilometre route that wanders along the waterfront, through the woods of Le parc national du Fjord-du-Saguenay and winds up at Mont-Saint-Édouard, a ski mountain with a swish new Nordic spa, Édouard-les-bains.

On the water, Voile Mercator organizes sailing excursions and Fjord-en-Kayak offers sea-kayaking.

Les Gîtes du fjord is a small resort complex of 24 condos and 10 cottages with kitchens, all built around gardens, a heated swimming pool and a hot tub, and all with wonderful views of the Saguenay. Children have their own pool and playground, and there is a picnic area where groups can barbecue and dine.

You can stock the fridge in l'Anse St. Jean, where grocery stores sell homemade products – pâtés, bread and pastry, ham, jams made of local berries and organic vegetables. A handy alternative is Les Gîtes du fjord's restaurant, l'Islet, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily with signature dishes of venison and smoked trout.

Along with several venues in town, Les Gîtes du fjord exhibits the work of local artists who will hold their annual show, Marché des Artistes et Artisans, July 28-29.

La Navette's terminus is Tadoussac, where the landmark Hôtel Tadoussac is marking its 70th year (800-561-0718, [hoteltadoussac.com](http://hoteltadoussac.com)).

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## If You Go

You can start your Saguenay journey at either end of the Croisières du fjord navette route. For La Baie, take Highway 40 east to Route 175 north (about a five-hour drive from Montreal.) For Tadoussac, take Highway 40 past Quebec City, Route 138 to Baie Ste. Catherine and a 10-minute ferry across the Saguenay (free). (About a six-hour drive from Montreal.)

Croisières du fjord: 800-363-7248, [croisieresdufjord.com](http://croisieresdufjord.com). Sample prices for La Navette Maritime du Fjord (until Sept. 2): La Baie to Ste. Rose du Nord, \$30 p.p. return; La Baie to l'Anse St. Jean, \$67 p.p. return; La Baie to Tadoussac, \$130 p.p, return.

Auberge du café de la poste: 418-675-1053, [cafedelaposte.ca](http://cafedelaposte.ca); 310 rue du Quai, Ste. Rose du Nord: \$95 for two, with private bathroom, private entrance and breakfast. With dinner, \$155 for two. Sofa-beds available for children and extra guests, with a supplement.

Les Gîtes du fjord: 800-561-8060, [lesgitesdufjord.com](http://lesgitesdufjord.com); 354 rue Saint-Jean-Baptiste, L'Anse St. Jean: \$128 for two in a studio; \$206 for four in a two-bedroom chalet. Packages available with fjord cruises, kayaking, sailing, horseback riding.

More information: Tourism Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean: 877-253-8387, [saguenaylacsaintjean.ca](http://saguenaylacsaintjean.ca). Le parc national du Fjord-du-Saguenay: 800-665-6527, [www.sepaq.com/pq/sag](http://www.sepaq.com/pq/sag).

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