



An artist's rendering of the Ocean Resort Residences at Conrad Fort Lauderdale Beach. OCEAN RESORT RESIDENCES/CONRAD FORT LAUDERDALE BEACH

Quebecers export Estérel formula

New Conrad resort in Fort Lauderdale designed to be cool and contemporary

ROCHELLE LASH
SPECIAL TO MONTREAL GAZETTE

Quebec hoteliers and resort developers Shawn Zarbatany and Luc Desmarteau are exporting their winning hotel-condo formula from the Laurentians to the new Conrad resort.

Fort Lauderdale is the No. 1 winter destination for Canadians, and it is experiencing a boom in luxury hotels and condos, with several brands including Ritz-Carlton, WHotels, Westin and Hilton operating, and Four Seasons, Conrad, Paramount and Auberge Resorts scheduled to open between 2015 and 2017.

In December, the Wall Street Journal reported that there is an

economic surge in Fort Lauderdale. And the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau reported a record 14 million visitors in 2014 with an economic impact of \$11 billion US.

A popular resort for more than 100 years, and a former spring-break party town, Fort Lauderdale has blossomed because of its sunny climate and magnificent 40-kilometre stretch of Atlantic beach. Now the trend is upscale and sophisticated.

Greater Fort Lauderdale incorporates 31 communities from Hallandale Beach in the south to Deerfield Beach in the north; it offers more than 500 hotels, 4,000 restaurants, 120 nightclubs, power shopping, a wildlife sanctuary

and is the home ice of the NHL's Florida Panthers.

And it's cruise territory, par excellence. Port Everglades is the world's second-largest cruise-ship terminal after Miami and about 40 grand ocean liners take to the high seas every week between October and April.

As well, Fort Lauderdale is known as the Venice of America and the Yachting Capital of the World because it is home to 100 marinas and 500 kilometres of inland waterways filled with as many as 50,000 sailing and power boats, large and small.

Fort Lauderdale will be the site of the first resort-style Conrad in North America, although there are urban Conrads in Chicago, Miami,

New York and in several world capitals.

The brand, part of the Hilton stable, is a luxury line specifically designed to be a cool, contemporary offshoot of the huge hotel conglomerate.

Zarbatany and his father, Don, have owned the posh lakeside Estérel resort near Ste-Adèle since the 1960s.

Two years ago, working with Desmarteau, they transformed it into a modern condo-hotel. The applied their exceptional Estérel Ownership Income Generating Formula, in which condo owners can rent out their units. The Ocean Resort Residences at Conrad Fort Lauderdale Beach is being developed using Estérel's

formula.

As an added bonus for Canadians, The Ocean Resort Residences is offering a four per cent discount to help offset the disparity between the lower Canadian dollar against the higher U.S. dollar. With that offer, 50 per cent of the prospective buyers so far are from Montreal.

Hotel guests and condo owners can choose from studios or one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and will have access to restaurants, lounges, a deluxe spa, a fitness centre, beach facilities and a terrace pool with a pink sand beach.

For information: 844-623-2635, owndifferent.com, conradhotels3.hilton.com.

From Shanghai to Squamish – sights to see in 2015



PHIL REIMER
Ports + Bows

Obviously, cruising is No. 1 on my travel hit parade. However, there remains a passion from my pre-teen years for trains in particular and travel in general. So my curiosity was piqued by a New York Times travel story published in January entitled: 52 Places to go in 2015. It was filled with familiar places as well as up-and-coming areas.

No reader's surveys here. The editors poll their contributing writers and wind up with a couple of hundred suggestions. Then they narrow it down to 52, using various criteria that covers cities, countries and things to do.

Firstly, I looked for places from Canada, finding only two.

Quebec City — no surprise — was one. Whether you arrive by train, plane, car or ship, the provincial capital smells of history and good food, especially inside the wall that surrounds most of Old Quebec. Cruise people confirm that Quebec is the favourite city on New England-Canada cruises.

The second Canadian pick may surprise you: Squamish, B.C.!

Years ago, when I was part of the Friday-night traffic jam heading to Whistler, Squamish was a

place to stop for gas and fast-food on the way to the ski slopes. Not today. The Times raved about the Sea to Sky Gondola that has taken a half-million people, so far, from sea level to over 885 metres. Add accessible wilderness, hundreds of trails, glacial lakes, the annual eagle count and if you're a climber — world-class rock climbing at Stawamus Chief Mountain.

Since Squamish is an hour's drive from Vancouver, if you're cruising to Alaska you have time to "do" Squamish and still be back at your ship by mid-afternoon.

Do you sense the pattern? Many of the Times' 52 picks have a cruise connection. Some are home ports, ports of call or places available on a day trip while in port.

The majority of the top 52 are familiar to cruisers worldwide: Singapore, Lower Manhattan, New York, Orland (Port Canaveral), Miami, New Orleans, Adelaide, Greenland, Durban, Shanghai, Sri Lanka, Rome (Civitavecchia), Oman, and winter favourites St. Kitts, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Others on the list — such as Rabat, Morocco — are a day trip away from ports. I made this side trip to Morocco's capital after porting in Casablanca. Like Squamish, it's a short drive or quick train trip. The capital sits at the mouth of the River Bou Regreg, on the Atlantic. Here in the Kasbah of the Oudaïas, I drank mint tea, ate sweets and enjoyed the view.

The palace was off limits but the king seems to live well, as



The snow-capped mountains are a scenic backdrop as visitors take in the views from platforms atop the newly built Sea to Sky Gondola near Squamish, B.C. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS



The new Sea to Sky Gondola earned raves from the New York Times. Over a half-million people have gone from sea level to over 855 metres on the spectacular ride. GORD KURENOFF/VANCOUVER SUN

kings do. Most embassies are here, including Canada's. If you go, make sure to see the spectacular mausoleum of Mohammed V of Morocco and his two sons.

Having been to St. Vincent before, upon disembarking a group of us rented a speedboat and headed to Bequia. It's how the Caribbean must have looked

decades ago. Tranquil Princess Margaret Beach sits at Port Elizabeth, a quiet seaside village — I plan to spend a month there one winter.

More places on the list require day trips from cruise ports. Google 52 Places to Go in 2015 so you can map interesting side trips.

PHIL'S PICK OF THE WEEK

A Transatlantic cruise on the newest Princess ship, Regal Princess, taking the northern route.

Departure: Sept. 11, Copenhagen to New York

Duration: 15 days

Ports: Kristiansand, Bergen, Glasgow, Belfast, Cork, (Cobh for Blarney Castle), St. John's, and Halifax.

Starting price: \$2,088

See a cruise agent or Princess.com.

Why so many at or near the water? Possibly it's the beauty the cities and towns provide as the backdrop to the ocean's stage.

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