



Queen of the Lakes

Passengers aboard one of several distinct themed cruises on the Isle Royale Queen III take in Round Island sights.

Eight themed cruises offer an entertaining way to relax and savor the Straits of Mackinac

By Dianna Stampfler | Photos By Jeff Garland

In 2021, nearly 4.4 million vehicles (and even more individual passengers) crossed the five-mile-long Mackinac Bridge, but only a select number of people had enjoyed the pleasure of motoring under this modern marvel during one of the popular Mackinac Island-based Sip n' Sail Cruises.

Eight distinct 90- to 120-minute themed trips are being offered this season (through early October) aboard the 81-foot Isle Royale Queen III, owned by Veronica Dobrowolski, co-owner and CEO of Arnold Freight Co., and Andrew and Nicole Doud, owners of Doud's Market, The Mackinac House, and the Little Luxuries retail shop.

Running from morning through sunset, these excursions around the Straits of Mackinac, which depart from Mackinac Island, are ideal for small groups, couples,

and families looking to get out on the water beyond just the quick round-trip ferry rides to and from the mainland.

Two of the most popular outings are the It's 5 O'Clock Somewhere and the Sip n' Sail Sunset cruises (the start time for the latter fluctuates, based on the actual time of the sunset).

These voyages also showcase the musical talents of several regional entertainers, who add to the festival environment of the trip. Among those returning this year are veteran singers/songwriters Michelle Chenard and Pete Kehoe, who co-founded the Mackinac Island Songwriters Workshop; Paul BeDourt; the Myk Rise Band; Chris Calleja; and Mike Ridley, among others.

A History Cruise was added to the lineup last year, featuring local author and historian Phil Porter, retired director of the Mackinac

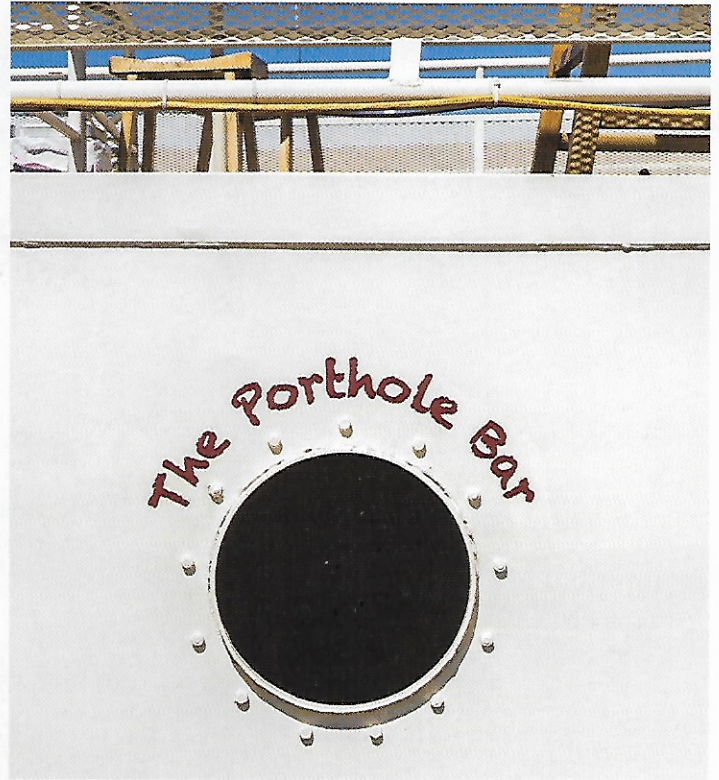
Island State Parks. Passengers aboard these outings learn about the area's rich history, from the early Native American settlements to military forts and previous foreign occupations, commercial fishing operations, and today's thriving tourism industry. Only four of the History trips are scheduled this summer, with upcoming 4 p.m. departures on July 19, July 26, and Aug. 9.

The Easy Like Sunday Mornin' cruise heads out most weeks, traveling past noted landmarks such as Arch Rock, the British Landing, and the West Bluff, where the Grand Hotel has stood proudly since 1887. Other cruises, including the Bloody Mary & Mimosa Bridge Tour, Bourbon Under the Bridge, the Michigan Craft Beer Cruise, and the Great Turtle Voyage run on select dates.

"We've enjoyed the Sip n' Sail cruises occasionally since they started," says Kem



Clockwise, from left: The Isle Royale Queen III awaits its next cruise. The Porthole Bar graphic indicates what's to come for cocktail-time cruisers. Co-owners Andrew Doud and Veronica Dobrowolski flank Captain Preston Allers and prepare to greet mateys.



Green, of Des Moines, Iowa, who ventured out most recently in July 2021. “We noticed an expanded beverage menu. We learned new details about the bridge and just generally had a great time. Veronica and her crew have made several upgrades from when this started, and we’d highly recommend this experience for anyone.”

Every cruise features a fully stocked cash bar, onboard restrooms, a state-of-the-art sound system, and plenty of opportunities for making memories and taking photographs. All excursions depart from the Arnold

Freight/Coal Dock on Mackinac Island.

Passengers can settle in the heated indoor cabins or gather on one of the outdoor deck areas. Given that the temperature and wind can be significantly cooler on the water than on land, it’s recommended that guests bring along a light jacket, wrap, or lap blanket.

In addition to the themed cruises, the Isle Royale Queen III can be chartered for private events such as birthdays or anniversaries, wedding parties, retirement celebrations, and company outings, including reception-style or sit-down catered events.

Prices for the public cruises start at \$49 per person, plus tax (passengers under age 4 are free). Space is limited to about 70 guests per trip, to allow more room and comfort for all. Reservations are required; call 844-906-9006 or visit the website below. ≈

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