

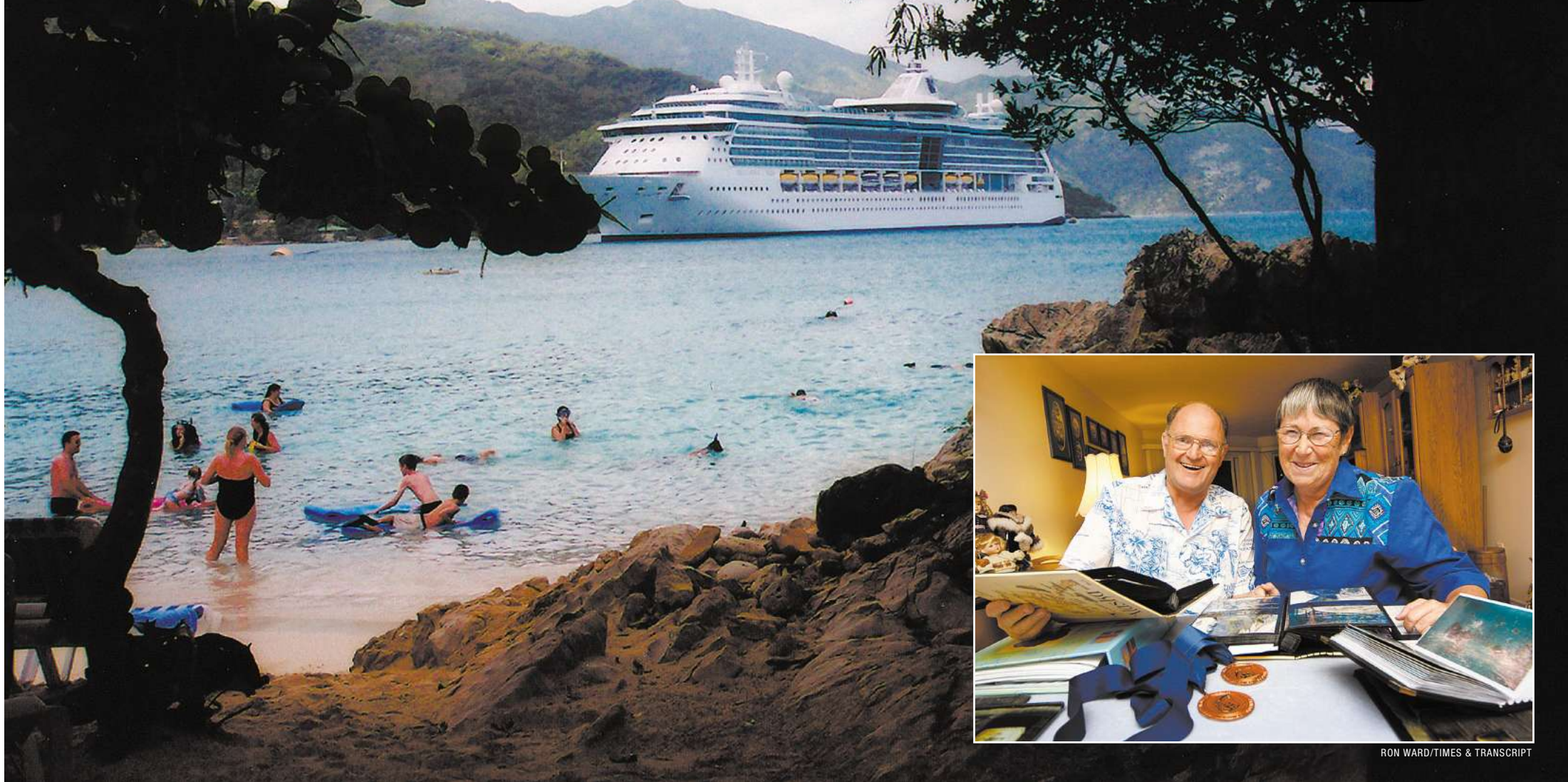
TRAVEL & LEISURE

EDITOR: Heather Fiske, 859-4974

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E-MAIL: life@timestranscript.com FAX: 859-4904

Cruise Crazy!



RON WARD/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The Stanleys have been on more than 30 cruises since 1995. A trip to this private island in Labadee was made during a cruise in 2005. Inset photo: George and Lynn Stanley look through some of their photos from the 30+ cruises they have taken around the globe. The Stanley's are taking two more this fall.

George and Lynn Stanley's love affair with cruises began modestly enough 17 years ago ...

BY CATHY DONALDSON
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT STAFF

George and Lynn Stanley of Moncton are more than just cruise fans.

With 30 cruises under their belts since 1995 — and one in progress as this story goes to print — they're likely one of the most experienced cruising couples in the region.

The retired duo began their love affair with the increasingly popular form of travel with a seven-day visit to the Western Caribbean. Since then, they have voyaged on five different cruise lines (Royal Caribbean, Norwegian, Holland America, Celebrity and Princess) and are definitely hooked for life.

"We've never, ever had a bad experience," says George. "From service to food to our flights getting there, it's all been fantastic."

Well, almost all.

After three consecutive March Break trips to the Western Caribbean while George was still working as a math teacher at Riverview High School, the Stanleys branched out with a 14-day cruise from Harwich, England to Boston in 1997.

It turns out that their inaugural transatlantic adventure would be their roughest trip to date.

"We had a cabin in the bow of the Enchantment of the Seas," says George. "There was a storm and we hit some 50-foot waves. When the bow went up, the ship would shake and shudder, like you were hitting a cement wall. My wife said, 'What are we doing here?'"

Luckily, both George and Lynn have strong stomachs.

"There were a lot of people sick," recalls Lynn, a retired nurse who worked for many years at the Spencer Nursing Home on the Salisbury Road. "The captain kept saying that the ship could handle much worse."

In addition to that experience, the couple has also been aboard ships during two helicopter rescues of heart attack victims — and even a murder:

"We were cruising between Harwick and Scotland when a boyfriend apparently murdered his girlfriend," says George. "We never really knew what happened there."

Despite the incidents, the Stanleys say they've had smooth sailing on their other journeys and are



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

During a cruise on Holland America in 2005, George and Lynn made a stop at a private island called Half Moon Cay.



The Stanleys went white water rafting in Alaska during a cruise in 2001. They love the Alaska cruises so much that they've gone four times.

firm believers that everyone should try at least one cruise in their lives.

"It's a wonderful, safe way to see the world," says Lynn.

For the past decade, the couple has racked up an impressive array of cruise itineraries: Fort Lauderdale-Eastern Caribbean, New

York-Fort Lauderdale (1998); San Juan-Los Angeles, Los Angeles-Vancouver, New York-Fort Lauderdale (1999); Fort Lauderdale-Los Angeles, Honolulu-Vancouver, Vancouver-Fort Lauderdale, Fort Lauderdale-Western Caribbean (2000); Vancouver-Alaska-Vancou-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

During a 2000 cruise, the Stanleys took time to soak up Oahu in Hawaii.

ver, Vancouver-Honolulu, Honolulu-Ensenada (2001); Fort Lauderdale-Eastern Caribbean (Lynn, 2002); Fort Lauderdale-Southern Caribbean (2003); Fort Lauderdale-

Cruise tips

Cruise ships are among the safest forms of transportation. But Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada recommends that you take certain precautions to ensure your well-being during a cruise:

- Purchase travel and health insurance, including coverage for accidental injury and medical evacuation. Your provincial health plan may not cover anything or only a portion of medical expenses.
- Carry a valid Canadian passport when transiting through another country to join a cruise. Be prepared to hand over your passport to ship authorities, in accordance with administrative regulations. Keep a photocopy of your passport's identification page.
- Leave a copy of your itinerary, passport identification page, and travel and health insurance policy with family or friends in Canada.
- Keep cash and valuables in the ship's safe rather than in your cabin. Minimize signs of affluence, including conspicuous clothing and expensive jewelry to avoid becoming a target.
- Always check the ship's departure time before going ashore. Protect your safety during shore excursions by confirming that tour guides are reputable and insured.
- Contact a travel medicine clinic well before departure to determine your need for immunizations and preventive medication as well as measures to avoid disease.
- Watch what you eat and drink: alert the cruise line of special dietary needs in advance and insist on bottled water while ashore.
- If you are handicapped or chronically ill, inquire before booking whether your needs will be met aboard the ship.
- Remember to bring an extra pair of eyeglasses in case of breakage or loss.
- Stay safe by participating in lifeboat drills, ensuring that there are enough life jackets in your cabin, and becoming familiar with evacuation procedures.
- Familiarize yourself with the local laws and customs of the countries you will visit.

(Source: Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada)

Copenhagen, Fort Lauderdale-Eastern Caribbean (2004); Miami-Exotic Caribbean, Fort Lauderdale-Eastern Caribbean, Venice-Rome, Rome-Galveston (2005), Fort Lauderdale-Southern Caribbean, Harwich-Russia, Harwich-Boston

When's a kilogram not a kilogram?

Official prototype of kilogram located outside Paris mysteriously losing weight

BY JAMEY KEATEN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS — A kilogram just isn't what it used to be.

A 118-year-old cylinder that has been the international prototype for the metric mass, and kept tightly under lock and key outside Paris, is mysteriously losing its weight — if ever so slightly.

Physicist Richard Davis of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures in Sevres, southwest of Paris, says the reference kilo appears to have lost 50 micrograms compared with the average of dozens of copies.

"The mystery is that they were all made of the same material, and many were made at the same time and kept under the same conditions, and yet the masses among them are slowly drifting apart," he said.

"We don't really have a good hypothesis for it," Davis said in a

phone interview Wednesday.

But only the one in Sevres really counts. It is kept in a triple-locked safe at a chateau and only rarely sees the light of day — mostly for comparison with other cylinders shipped in periodically from around the world.

"It's not clear whether the original has become lighter, or the national prototypes have become heavier," said Michael Borys, a senior researcher with Germany's national measures institute in Braunschweig. "But by definition, only the original represents exactly a kilogram."

The kilogram's inconstancy illustrates how technological progress is leaving science's most basic measurements in its dust. The cylinder was high-tech for its day in 1889 when cast from a platinum and iridium alloy, measuring 3.9 centimetres in diameter and height.

At a November meeting of scientists in Paris, an advisory panel on measurements will present possible steps toward basing the kilogram and other measures — like Kelvin for temperature, and the mole for amount — on more precise calcula-

tions. Ultimately, policy-makers from around the world would have to agree to any change.

Even countries that don't use the metric system could be affected by the kilogram's uncertainty: the kilogram is also the ultimate weight standard for the U.S. customary system, where it equals 2.2 pounds.

But don't expect the questions about the kilo to lead to public campaigns to lower the price of bread, or cause wary waistline-watchers to re-examine their weights: 50 micrograms is roughly equivalent to the weight of a fingerprint.

"For the lay person, it won't mean anything," said Davis. "The kilogram will stay the kilogram, and the weights you have in a weight set will all still be correct."

But for scientists who rely on the official kilogram for minute measurements every day, the inconstant metric constant is a nuisance — threatening calculation of things like electricity generation.

"They depend on a mass measurement and it's inconvenient for them to have a definition of the kilogram which is based on some artifact," said Davis.

30+ cruises to date

► Continued From G1

(2006) and Fort Lauderdale-Panama Canal (2007).

Some of their adventures have been solo though several have been made with friends, including Gwen and Larry MacDonnell, and Barb and Bill Jennings, all from Riverview.

In total, Lynn and George have logged 333 days on cruise ships and are today arriving in Vancouver at the end of their 31st adventure, their fourth Alaskan cruise.

"Alaska has such spectacular scenery," George says in an interview just a few days before their departure. "We've never gone in the fall before, usually May or June, so we're pretty excited."

The Stanleys had done some travelling prior to falling in love with cruising, including a bus tour in 1992 in Spain, Portugal and Monaco to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

"If we'd known about cruises, we'd have done it then," says Lynn with a laugh. "Cruises are great because you can unpack and stay unpacked for the trip, unlike buses where you have to be up and packed just about every morning. And if for some reason you're not feeling well one day, you can just stay in bed. There's no pressure to go anywhere."

That said, the couple does love to explore and often enjoys off-ship excursions.

"When we visited Italy and the Greek Isles, we did excursions at almost every port," says Lynn.

(While most excursions range from about two to four hours, the side-trips in the Greek Isles took nine to 11 hours, says George.)

"That cruise, which started in Venice and ended in Rome, was our favourite," says Lynn. "We visited Croatia, Turkey, Greece and the Greek Isles, Naples and Florence. When we got to Rome after 12 days, we got on another cruise from Rome to Galveston, Texas, with stops in Monaco, Barcelona, Lisbon, the Azores and Bermuda, 28 days in total. We saw so many things along the way — Pompei, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Ephesus. It was amazing."

Prior to that trek, Hawaii was the couple's destination fave and enjoyed it so much that they visited 'the Aloha State' three times.

"A lot of people don't like all the sea days that it takes to get to Hawaii," says George. "But we have fun playing bridge on those days. We've met lots of people doing that during our trips."

To make their cruise holidays more affordable, the Stanleys have discovered several ways to save money in their travel planning, such as by making use of a variety of websites to check for discounted cruises, flights and hotels, like www.expedia.ca and www.onlinevacationcentre.com. (They also have a good travel agent who keeps them posted on deals.)

From time to time, they also cash in reward points with various loyalty programs such as Air Miles and Aeroplan, which helps with their travel costs.

"You have to be frugal in your planning," says George.

For additional savings, they sometimes depart a bit early from their cruise itineraries, opting to leave in ports like Halifax or Saint John when the cruise is ending in Boston, eliminating the need for a flight from Boston.

"We also avoid the casinos on board," notes Lynn. "Even bingo is expensive, about \$20 or so per game. We tend to take books, do Sudoku or do other activities available for free, like line dancing lessons, galley tours and outdoor movies. We also try to have a good walk every day."

Exercise is crucial for cruise travellers since there are so many opportunities to eat, including 24-hour room service, the couple says.

"The food is just as amazing as people say it is," says George, adding that many cruise lines now have both set dining schedules as well as 'anytime dining', allowing guests more freedom with their time.

"It's less formal now," adds Lynn. "Men still need a suit or tux for formal nights but women can wear a dress or pantsuit instead of a gown, although there are still some who wear the really fancy gowns."

First-time cruisers should note that once on their ship, passengers receive a special card that can be used for everything from gift shop purchases to specialty restaurant meals.

"It's a cashless society on board," says George.

Also good to know is that phone calls are pricey at sea, about \$8 per minute, he says.

Another tip the couple offers is to stick to off-ship excursions organized by the cruise line rather than booking on your own.

"If you're on an independent excursion and your bus breaks down, the ship can leave without you," warns George. "That won't happen if it's been organized by the cruise line. There is an advantage there. You've got that safety built in."

The more you cruise, the more perks you can garner for future adventures, he says.

"Every ship has a program for return cruisers," says George. "It can be everything from free drinks or free laundry to free excursions. There are some pretty good deals."

With all it has to offer, it's not surprising that cruising has become the fastest-growing segment of the travel industry, achieving more than 2,100 per cent growth since 1970.

According to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), North America's largest cruise industry organization, more than 12 million people took a cruise vacation in 2006, with 12.5 million expected to cruise in 2007.

The cruise industry's growth is also reflected in its expanding guest capacity. Almost 40 new ships were built in the 1980s and nearly 80 more debuted in the '90s. By the end of this year, 88 new ships will have been introduced since 2000.

In recent years, cruise lines have expanded itineraries to include more diverse ports of call and convenient ports to embark. They've also introduced innovative onboard amenities and facilities, including cell phone access, Internet cafes and wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) zones, rock-climbing walls, surfing pools, bowling, themed restaurants and spas.

Cruise lines cater to a diverse demographic mix, with cruisers averaging 50 years of age.

Ninety per cent of all cruise vacations are booked through travel agents, with cruise sales accounting for more than half of all vacation sales among travel agents, according to CLIA.

Karen Irvine, cruise program manager at Carlson Wagonlit Travel in Vancouver, says the Caribbean, Europe and Alaska continue to be the top three destinations for Canadian cruisers.

A one-week cruise in the Caribbean can range in price from \$700 to \$7,000, depending on where you want to go and which ship you choose, says Karen.

"For sure, you can get a cruise for \$700 in the Caribbean though," she notes.

As they head back to Moncton this week after their Alaskan cruise holiday, the Stanleys won't be home long before they're off on another cruise adventure, this time a very special one.

"It's our 40th wedding anniversary so we're going to Venice in October for a few days and then doing a Mediterranean-transatlantic cruise, 17 days in total," says Lynn. "We can't wait."

Deer Valley tops mag's list of best ski resorts

NEW YORK (AP) — Autumn leaves are just starting to turn colour in most parts of the country. But if you love to ski, you're already looking ahead to the arrival of winter, planning your visits to snowy slopes and shopping around for pre-season offers.

Ski Magazine is just out with its annual "Top 50 Resort Guide," which names Deer Valley, Utah, as the No. 1 ski resort in North America. Deer Valley was No. 2 in last year's survey, and has won first place three times in the survey's 20-year history.

Deer Valley also received top honours from Ski readers in the categories of service, grooming and dining. Other Utah resorts that were No. 1 in various categories included Snowbird, voted "Best Skier's Mountain," and Alta, voted top "Weekend Escape."

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Cedar Point wins best amusement park for 10th year

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — The Cedar Point amusement park in Sandusky, Ohio, has been named best amusement park in the annual Golden Ticket Awards competition. Cedar Point also won the award for best new ride of 2007 for its Maverick coaster.