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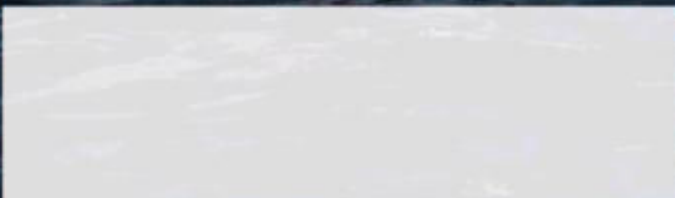


Amazing Grace

Luxury on the
Lake of the Woods

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Luxury yacht the Queen of Kenora

BY MICHAEL BAGINSKI

Since 1931, the Grace Anne II has been trolling the pristine waters of Northern Ontario's Lake of the Woods, entertaining executives and corporate VIPs of companies like 3M (which owned the vessel for 50 years).

Now, Canadian travel agents have the opportunity to send their groups on the amazing excursion, which sets sail from Kenora, Ont., and marries the region's remote wilderness with five-star luxury and service on the 85-foot Ditchburn mahogany heritage cruiser owned by Winnipeg businessman Morris Chia, who operators it, and its companion lodge, Turtle Bay, under his Independent Agency Services (IAS) Corp. banner. Notably, another division of IAS is Travel Professionals International (TPI), though travel agents of all stripes are welcome to book the vessel.

And at 10% commission on the \$25,000 charter price (three-days/two nights), that's a hefty chunk of commission available when every penny earned is precious.

To be sure, the Grace Anne II will appeal to "discerning travellers," says IAS president Phil Sproul, who notes that the "very unique product" accommodates up to eight passengers, which brings the average per person cost down to a level more comparable to other high-end retreats.

And for the money, groups/guests receive all meals, prepared by an onboard French chef; wine and drinks; white-glove service (at a ratio of one staff to two guests); and fishing excursions with the cruiser's long-time expert guides.

Oddly enough, despite the truly sensational food served by "Chef Nicky," the culinary highlight of the journey is a shore lunch of pickerel caught in the morning by guests and prepared by the guides.

Indeed, fishing is king on the lake, which is known for



Two faces of dining: five-star and shore lunch

its pickerel (which is impossible not to catch), northern pike, and the ultimate prize, muskie.

Non-anglers also have the option of wildlife/photo safaris, where bald eagles and bears are the highlights.

Anchoring in a secluded bay on the first night (under a magnificent array of stars, if lucky), the Grace Anne II moors dockside at the Turtle Bay Lodge the second night, where guests can shoot skeet, hit golf balls, relax in a hot tub and sauna, and even watch a little (plasma) TV if the urge dictates.

TURTLE BAY

The slightly less luxurious lodge – the only private one

on the lake – is now available on an independent basis for guests, separate from the yacht. Priced from \$400 p.p., per night, guests receive most of the aforementioned amenities minus the five-star service. Group sizes can range for four to 10.

INFO

- The Grace Anne II runs from May 15 to the end of September, but the lodge remains open until mid-November for hunting trips.
- Transportation into Kenora for Grace Anne II packages includes transfer from Winnipeg on a private Empress coach (two to three hours).

▶ www.graceanne.com