

## CAF's Architecture River Cruise Turns 25

2008-08-18

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The official Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) architecture river cruise season is in its 25th season. Although the architecture river cruise has come a long way since it began in 1983, it continues to be the vital experience that looks at Chicago's changing architecture along the river.

'Our river cruise history is really a matter of form following function. The interest and need was there so we created a tour to satisfy both-and it has grown and grown.' said Lynn Osmond, Chicago Architecture Foundation President and CEO. 'Guests from all over the world consider the Chicago Architecture Foundation river cruise to be the must-do tour when visiting our beautiful city - and local Chicagoan's voted the river cruise the best tour in Chicago. Our incredible volunteer docents are highly trained and passionate about providing their own commentary on the view from the river.'

The architecture river cruise was born in 1983 when a rug company chartered a boat and asked CAF to provide the commentary for visiting clients. CAF had already been offering an architecture river walk, so CAF docent Bob Irving adapted the content for the cruise. That first cruise was 'one way.' The boat required the bridges be opened and arrangements had only been made to open each bridge once. The passengers had to be bussed back to the dock, according to Irving. Nevertheless, the cruise was such a success that CAF secured a 50 foot boat, 'Betty Jane' for a weekly architecture cruise in 1984. The 'Betty Jane' was docked near the Equitable Building and drew Chicagoans as well as out of town visitors.

The CAF architecture river cruise moved to North Pier a few years later, and grew to multiple departures a week. The CAF river cruise docents continued to update the commentary as the architecture along the river evolved, especially with warehouses being turned into luxury housing along the north branch.

In 1993, CAF partnered with Chicago's First Lady docked at Michigan and Wacker with an increasing number of departure days and times. 'It was a perfect partnership from the start with CAF providing the docents and commentary while Chicago's First Lady provided a first rate vessel,' said Holly Agra, President of Chicago's First Lady.

By 2000, a second vessel, Chicago's Little Lady was added, and in 2006, Chicago's Fair Lady, the third vessel came into service. Nearly 175,000 people took the tour in 2007! In 2008 CAF cruises from May through November with more than 100 specially trained architecture river cruise docents and 71 scheduled departures a week during July and August. Chicago's First Lady vessels are all 1920s-style cruising yachts, with open-air decks as well as air conditioned main deck seating.

The 2008 cruise highlights 53 historic and architecturally significant sites including: the Trump Tower, Merchandise Mart, 333 W. Wacker, the Wrigley Building, the Tribune Tower, the Sears Tower, River City, Marina City and the site of the Spire. The cruise also includes significant buildings, sites and developments along the North Branch of the Chicago River such as The Montgomery, formerly the world headquarters for Montgomery Ward, the Chicago Tribune printing press plant, Goose Island, Kinzie Park development, Riverbend and the clustered glass River Cottages.

All CAF cruises are aboard Chicago's First Lady vessels and depart from the lower level and southeast corner of the Michigan Avenue Bridge at Wacker Drive.

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