

# TRAVEL

## Canada's first Legoland opens

VAUGHAN Canada's first Legoland attraction is officially open.

Parents and children explored the Legoland Discovery Centre Friday in Vaughan, just north of Toronto.

The 34,000-square-foot facility is entirely devoted to the toy building blocks — and it's meant to be experienced hands-on.

Friday's young visitors flocked to

a racetrack where they built Legocars and slid them down a ramp.

Their parents seemed more impressed with Miniland, an interactive replica of the Greater Toronto Area.

The display includes model versions of several major landmarks, including the CN Tower and Toronto city hall.

The Canadian Press



Catamaran is a great way to see the Abaco islands in the Bahamas.

## Cays to paradise

On your 'floating villa' you can hop from one tiny island to the next, or not

STEVE MACNAULL

It's day two aboard the Believe, the sails are at full mast and she's starting to giggle.

It's the term given to that blissful state when a catamaran hits cruising speed and the boat "giggles" in a trifecta of wind, wavy and sail vibration.

"See, I told you sailing forces you to relax," Captain Greg Marlo reiterates to us.

We don't even have to answer.

Our contented lounging on the foredeck is responsible enough.

The champagne that was popped for the sail-away party is still partially sloshing in the glass and we are soaking up the sun en route from Man-O-War Cay to Great Guana Cay in the Bahamas' Abaco Sea.

This experience is the farthest thing from traversing the water in one of those mega cruise ships.

The Believe is a 39-foot catamaran and we're already likening it to our own private three-bedroom, two-bathroom floating villa.

On board there's only my wife and I, another couple and Captain Greg, who's also doing double duty as chef on this vacation dubbed Cays to Paradise.

While it sounds expensive, elitist and exclusive, this holiday is actually affordable and accessible.

Later that night over barbecued strip loin and Shiraz at the Believe's aft-deck dining table, the captain tells us more and more people are choosing this bespoke way of seeing the world.

"It's a step up from the regular all-inclusive resort vacation most Canadians go on," he says. "It's unique and customized and personalized."

No kidding.

We're on an itinerary that takes us to small islands accessible only by small boat and the mode of transportation we're using is as much an attraction and novelty as the places we'll visit and explore.

This week of specially cruising starts at \$800 per person based on a group sharing a three- or four-bedroom catamaran.

Flights, food and booze are extra.

We flew down to Nassau from Toronto on WestJet (Air Canada does it too) and caught the island hopper Sky Bahamas flight to Marsh Harbour on Grand Abaco.



Writer Steve MacNaull shows off the starfish he found snorkelling off the catamaran at Elbow Cay.

cos Island to begin our adventure at Moorings headquarters in the Bahamas.

Marlo has a Toronto-based business called Yacht Solutions that hooks people up with customized catamaran and sailboat vacations using the internationally renowned Moorings and its sister company Sunsail.

If you're an experienced sailor or motor boater you can skipper your own boat or you can abdicate all responsibility and book your ride complete with captain and chef.

We, of course, chose the latter and took full advantage of the situation. We put in a lot of hours lolling on deck being whisked over turquoise seas while the sails billowed above us.

And we discovered little cays with quaint villages, deserted swaths of beach and one-of-a-kind restaurants and bars.

The best discovery was Nipper's, a cliff-top bar overlooking a spectacular beach on Great Guana Cay.

Johnny Roberts, the great grandson of the first white man to step foot on the island in 1773, is the proprietor and he makes a mean Nipper's Tripper.

The drink comes in an innocuous plastic cup and is a pretty pink colour, but its secret frozen blend of four types of rum and various fruit juices is lethal.

Of course, we swam in the ocean off the beach below after consuming our Nipper's Trippers under umbrellas at the bar's multicoloured picnic tables.

Man-O-War Cay, population 350, is a small boat-building and maintenance port where the Albany ferry service that operates between the Abaco islands is based.

There we wandered the town where there's only a few streets, marvelled at the empty beach and ate blackened fish for lunch at Dock N Dine on pilings over the water.

Note: Man-O-War is a dry island, meaning no liquor is sold there. Luckily, we'd stocked up at Tupp's Liquor Store in Marsh Harbour and Dock N Dine was happy to open our Sauvignon Blanc for us to enjoy with lunch.

Elbow Cay is home to cute little Hope Town, its candy cane striped lighthouse and Tahiti Beach at the southern tip of the island, which is considered the best strip of sand in the Abacos.

Treasure Cay was perfect for another swim stop at Coco Beach and dinner at a restaurant on Treasure Cay. Ba-

**ALL-IN PRICING** DIRECT FLIGHTS FROM TORONTO TO THE UK & IRELAND

<p><b>London</b> Roundtrip Dep Mar 11, 14, 15   Ret Mar 22, 25 INCLUDES ALL TAXES &amp; FEES</p> <p><b>\$749</b></p>	<p><b>Manchester</b> Roundtrip Dep Mar 17   Ret Apr 8 INCLUDES ALL TAXES &amp; FEES</p> <p><b>\$779</b></p>	<p><b>Dublin</b> Roundtrip Dep Apr 1   Ret Apr 9 INCLUDES ALL TAXES &amp; FEES</p> <p><b>\$779</b></p>
<p><b>Glasgow</b> Roundtrip Dep May 10   Ret May 21 INCLUDES ALL TAXES &amp; FEES</p> <p><b>\$799</b></p>	<p><b>Birmingham</b> Roundtrip Dep May 14   Ret May 27 INCLUDES ALL TAXES &amp; FEES</p> <p><b>\$799</b></p>	<p><b>Shannon</b> Roundtrip Dep May 15   Ret May 21 INCLUDES ALL TAXES &amp; FEES</p> <p><b>\$879</b></p>

LEATHER SEATS • GENEROUS ECONOMY LEG ROOMS • CHILD DISCOUNTS • CLUB CLASS UPGRADES

For details visit [canadianaffair.ca](http://canadianaffair.ca) or call 1-866-815-5049

**SPECTREKRS**

Specializing in River and Small Ship Cruising

**The Complete South Pacific- Escorted Tour**  
October 31st - November 26th, 2013

Highlights: Cairns, Great Barrier Reef, Ayers Rock, Alice Springs, Darwin, Kakadu National Park, Melbourne, Tasmania, Sydney, Queenstown, Milford Sound, Mt Cook, Hammer Springs, Wellington, Rotorua, Auckland

Package includes round trip home to airport sedan service in Toronto, International and domestic flights, 27-day touring Australia and New Zealand staying in first class accommodations, full coast 37 meals and more. Single rate is available!

For complete details and booking please contact:  
Erika Gal @ maritimetravel.ca  
905-639-4575

**Cruise The French Riviera**  
Receive up to \$2000 Air Credit

7 night French Riviera cruise from Barcelona to Monte Carlo with overnight stays in Monaco, Nice and 2 nights in Martinique

Bahamian shore excursions from \$2,867.00 + \$52 near p.p. \$111

Includes return airfare from Toronto, destination transfers, 1 extra night in Monte Carlo, complimentary evening at the Palais du Pharo, all meals on an elegantly appointed ship with luxurious amenities, complimentary selected drinks on-board, gratuities, self serve laundry, concierge service and more...

Offer is subject to availability of how booking limited space

Book now and receive \$800 per person

For complete details and booking please contact:  
Erika Gal @ maritimetravel.ca  
905-639-4575

**Last minute River Cruise deals**  
Tulip Time

Amsterdam to Amsterdam 8 days 12 May 2013  
FROM \$3297.00 PER PERSON TAXES INCLUDED

**Blue Danube to the Black Sea**  
Vienna to Bucharest 14 days

From \$5174.00 per person taxes included based on July 2 & Oct 15, 2013

\*Single supplement waived on advance departures, cruise only\*

Sign up to receive our email newsletter or you don't miss out in future offers.  
Email us at [info@canadiancruises.com](mailto:info@canadiancruises.com) Ask us how you can redeem your BCC rewards!

Contact Carlson Creative Travel & Tours 905-643-4848

**7 DAY CANADA /NEW ENGLAND CRUISE ON NCL DAWN**  
Starting in Boston finishing in Quebec City

Departing Sept 12th, 2013 this cruise includes:

Roundtrip by coach: Hamilton, Boston, Sept 12th, return from Quebec Sept 20th

7 Day cruise on the NCL Dawn Sept 13-20th, 2013

All port charges and taxes

Inland Car (R) • \$1819.00 p.p. \$111 net

Outside Car (R) • \$1792.00 p.p. \$111 occupancy

Battery Car (R) • \$1599.00 p.p. \$111 occupancy

Beginning in Boston ports: Portland, Maine, Charleston, RI, Newport, La Rive (Saguenay River) Quebec, Quebec City

Pricing in Canadian Dollars 1 Night hotel in Boston, not included in price.

For more info call Cathy Roberts at 905-448-1881 or 1-888-259-3239

**9 DAY'S IN FRANCE with Battlefield Travel "LOIRE VALLEY GARDEN TOUR"**

Escorted by Rob Howard of the Hamilton Spectator September 9th to 19th, 2013

Come with Rob Howard to the Loire Valley garden region of France for a relaxing 9 day holiday visiting well maintained and manicured outdoor spaces inspired by generations of talented gardeners. Visit Chateau de Chenonceau, Clos Lucé - Leonardo de Vinci's house, Chateau du Rivau, Chateau de Chenonceau & Chateau de Villandry and much, much more!

**COME TO OUR SEMINAR to learn more!**  
Tuesday March 19th at 1:30PM  
At the Royal Botanical Gardens - Cafe Annex

**FABULOUS ITALIAN TOURS**  
AMAZING PRICES

11 DAYS/9 NIGHTS  
Guaranteed Departures

headset included

**\$1,998** + taxes  
\$484 Cad.

Rome (3 nights) • Sorrento (2 nights)  
Calabria region (1 night) • Taormina (2 nights)  
Agrigento (1 night) • Monreale & Palermo  
• (Optional - Racalmuto)