



Spring 2007

VIA's Easterly Class

A vision for passenger rail in Eastern Canada

VIA Rail introduced a new level of service, *Easterly Class*, in 2005. Designed for tourists traveling on the *Ocean* between Montreal and Halifax during the summer months, the new service received enthusiastic reviews from travel writers and high ratings from customers in its first seasons of operation.

Easterly Class provides what one would expect in a tourism rail experience— a higher quality of onboard accommodations, meals and service than a basic transportation service provides. But *Easterly Class* is more than just another tourism product, and it offers more. It is a different way of building on the strengths of passenger rail, and on the strengths and needs of the communities it serves. The result is a new synergy that benefits not only tourists to Eastern Canada, but the regional tourism economy and the communities that depend on passenger rail for basic transportation.

A Maritime learning experience

Easterly Class combines the comfort of train travel with a wide range of activities that introduce travellers to the heritage and flavour of the country they are travelling through. Organized by an onboard Learning Coordinator, a series of planned vignettes, and impromptu presentations initiate passengers to the history and culture of the Maritimes, with activities linked to the sights and scenery passing by.

Coordinators are well-versed not only in the history of the Maritimes, but in lore and knowledge – from the types of regional wines produced in the region, to techniques for trapping lobster.

VIA's famous Park cars, with glass-domed observation deck and comfortable lounges, are available for the exclusive use of *Easterly Class* customers, and are the main focus for presentations and activities. The Maritime theme is carried throughout the *Easterly Class* experience – in the décor of the private bedrooms in the sleeping cars, the dining car, where menus feature regional specialties, and in the lounges.

An exceptional travel experience

VIA has paid particular attention to ensuring that everything about the journey – from the time the traveller first boards the train, until they reach their final destination – combines to create a unique and rewarding travel experience. The Learning Coordinator welcomes customers before departure from Montreal and Halifax, and ensures the delivery of the experience throughout the trip.

Easterly Class, offered from June to October, includes the superior level of accommodations, meals and personal service travellers expect in a premium service. VIA's objective is to ensure that each customer leaves the train delighted with the experience, intrigued by the culture of Eastern Canada, eager to explore and learn more about the region.

A foundation for the future

VIA's success with the *Easterly Class* will also help the Corporation to continue improving its basic transportation services for Eastern Canadians. VIA's mandate is to provide Canadians in the region with safe, affordable, year-round transportation. Revenues from high-yield tourism services such as *Easterly Class* will help to cover the costs of providing, and improving, Eastern Canada's intercity passenger rail services for the future.

VIA Rail Canada's Eastern Transcontinental, ***The Ocean*** provides safe and reliable transportation six times a week, 12 months a year between Halifax and Montreal. VIA offers direct access to 13 communities throughout New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and intermodal connections from Moncton, Truro and Halifax to communities within the two provinces as well as PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador. During peak summer months, ***Easterly class*** on board ***The Ocean***, caters to discriminating leisure travelers by delivering *A Maritime Learning Experience* that unveils the culture, economy and people that make up Eastern Canada.