

# Travel with the Society to Chautauqua Lake – July 18, 2019

Join us for a relaxing 1 ½ hour steamboat ride on the Chautauqua Belle as we learn about the history of the Chautauqua Lake area and enjoy a chicken barbeque. We spend the afternoon at the popular new National Comedy Museum in Jamestown. We leave Nunda at 8 am and return by 6:30 pm.



## *The Story of Captain Mat and the Chautauqua Belle*

Mathew Stage grew up on Chautauqua Lake but, for many years, his family vacation was a cruise in the Caribbean. Young Mat spent most of his nights on the bridge of the cruise ship with the officers, learning all he could. All too frequently an officer could be overheard saying... “does that kid always ask that many questions.”

With a PASSION for boats, Mat started working at the age of 8 or 9 on Chautauqua Lake public vessels, such as the Celebration, Miss Rose, the Summer Wind and Frolic. With a jet ski as a primary means of transportation, he was able to get to work daily, in an effort to further his goal in life... to be the Captain of a cruise ship.

In 2007, at age 18 and with 10 years of experience in the tour boat industry, Mat formed the US Steam Lines Ltd to purchase the steamer Chautauqua Belle from the failing Sea Lion Project Ltd that had put her up for scrap auction. Beginning on a multi-year restoration project, Mat attempted to keep every part of the Chautauqua Belle original to builder James Webster’s design.

Graduating from SUNY Maritime College with an Unlimited 3rd mate license, Mat continued to follow his passion. Today he sails with Oceania Cruise Lines on their flagship Riviera, a luxury Cruise Line operating into and out of, ports all over the world. With an “unlimited” license (officer of the watch, any vessel, any ocean in the world) Mat is now a second officer with day-to-day responsibilities, as the officer on the bridge. While he continues to work towards his goal of being a Captain on a cruise ship, his first love is still Chautauqua Lake and the Chautauqua Belle where he is known as Captain Mat.



In time-honored tradition of the original steamboats that once plied the waters of Chautauqua Lake, the Chautauqua Belle arrives at the world-famous Chautauqua Institution on a daily basis during the season to pick up and drop off passengers who wish to visit the institution. A daily history tour features the late 1800s history of the Chautauqua Lake area. According to local historian Helen Ebersole, “The Running Commentary by the personnel is an accurate, worthwhile and colorful review of lake history!”

In addition to the History Tours, the Chautauqua Belle caters dozens of parties, receptions, or weddings, each year, running almost daily throughout the summer. 1 of 5 operating steamboats left in North America, the Belle is one of the most photographed and well-known icons in Western New York. Her classic Steamboat lines, tall stacks and gingerbread lattice have been seen in photos all over the world. [www.269belle.com](http://www.269belle.com)



At about 12:30 pm we leave Chautauqua Lake and Mayville for Jamestown and the National Comedy Museum. [www.comedycenter.org](http://www.comedycenter.org)



The National Comedy Center is the first state-of-the-art museum dedicated to telling the vital story of comedy in America. As a nonprofit cultural institution, the museum celebrates comedy's great minds and unique voices, from Charlie Chaplin to Dave Chappelle. Exclusive collections and world-class exhibits give comedy fans

an unprecedented behind-the-scenes look at the time-honed creative processes that have elevated entertainment to an art.

More than 50 immersive exhibits take visitors on an interactive journey through comedy history, from early vaudeville acts to the latest viral memes. Cutting-edge personalization technology makes the entire experience unique: After creating a humor profile, visitors can explore content tailored to their individual tastes, from broad slapstick to edgy satire.

Along with educational games and fun competitions, guests can step into the shoes of comedy pros, trying their hand at cartooning, comedy writing, live stand-up, and faux pie fights—or simply cheer on their friends.



Visitors will leave the museum with a profound appreciation for comedy icons and innovators, as well as the tremendous influence of humor on how we think, live, and laugh.



Visitors will leave the museum with a profound appreciation for comedy icons and innovators, as well as the tremendous influence of humor on how we think, live, and laugh.

The Comedy Center, opened in August 2018, has close to 100 reviews on Trip Advisor, consistently receiving 5 stars. Here are a few recent reviews:



*“What a blast! Wish we had more hours to stay!”*

*“What a great way to spend a day! The museum is state of the art, high tech, but totally user friendly. The whole visit is personalized, informative, and just plain fun!”*

*“Three hours is not enough time to see it all. We are expecting to go back often as we didn't put a dent in all there is to see and do. The technology is amazing. A lot of hands on interactive experiences. There is both history and entertainment. There are a lot of places to sit throughout the center to enjoy the entertainment. We are locals and can't wait to bring out of town guests.”*

*“What you're going to experience is an explanation and descriptions of a broad range of comedy styles, comedy techniques and in many cases personal explanations from the performers of how and why they do what they do and their evolution in the business. That said, there are hundreds of skits and clips to watch from almost every style of comedy you can imagine and the technology behind displaying and tailoring your personal experience here is all in your hands. It's truly fascinating.”*