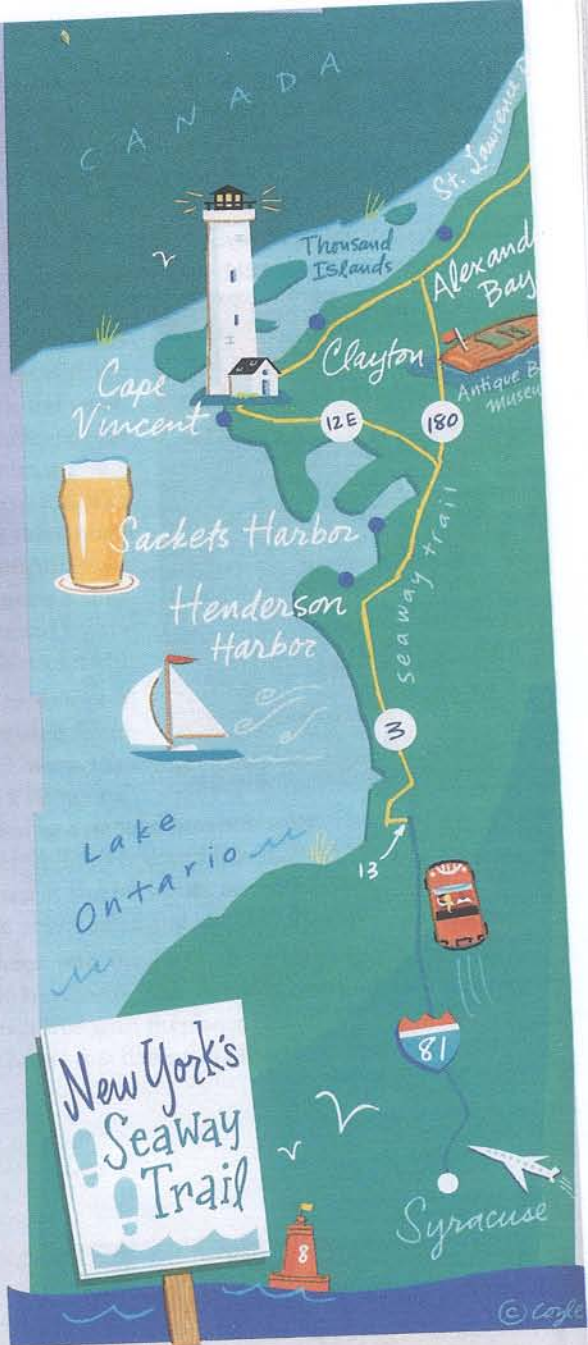


NEW YORK'S seaway trail

BEST FOR: Boating and history buffs, and island romantics

ALLURE: The route from the Great Lakes up the St. Lawrence Seaway to the northern Atlantic was America's first superhighway, navigated by native Iroquois paddlers and early French explorers. Today, you'll see mammoth international-bound freighters and graceful sailboats. To move you deeper into the waterway's history, New York State designated a signposted series of secondary roads that follow its coastline for 454 miles (and another 64 in neighboring Pennsylvania). The Seaway Trail became New York's first federally designated National Scenic Byway in 1996 and is a National Recreation Trail. "The romance of lighthouses and open vistas is irresistible to people who like being on the water and in small towns rather than big cities," says Teresa Mitchell, president and CEO of Seaway Trail Inc. and a lifelong coastal resident. The entire route would take a week by auto, but in a weekend you can hit the highlights of the untrammled shore and pick up a bit of its strong seafaring history along the way.

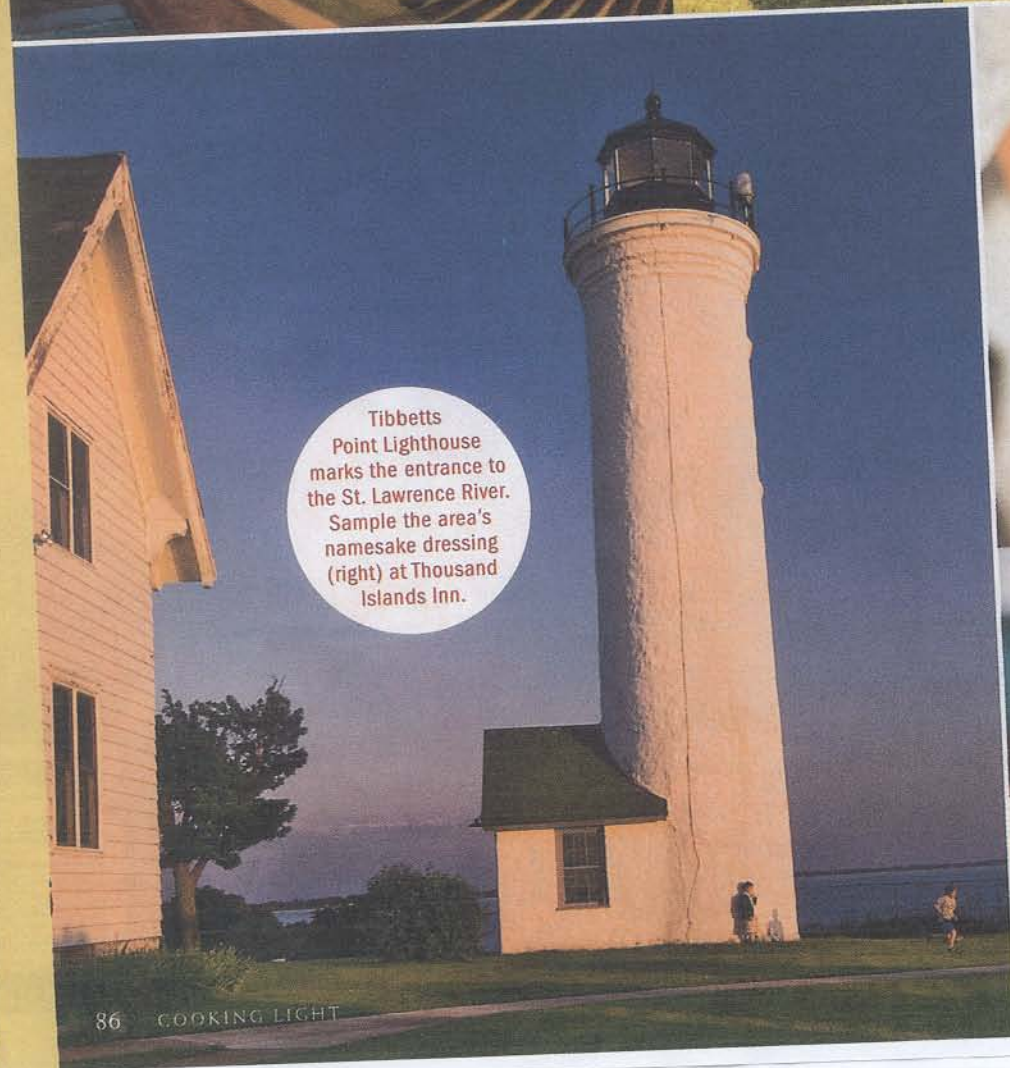


Leaving Alex Bay in the morning, head 10 miles up the river, hugging the coast via Route 12 to Clayton, home to the unique Antique Boat Museum (315-686-4104, www.abm.org). Celebrating the nautical culture of the region, the museum exhibits all kinds of watercraft, from early Native American dugout canoes to famous hydroplane racers to elegant, gleaming mahogany Chris-Craft and Gar Wood runabouts and cruisers, the likes of which still cruise the islands. You can try rowing a St. Lawrence skiff on the river if you visit the museum before Labor Day.

LOCAL FARE: You shouldn't leave the area without sampling the Thousand Island dressing—that classic mix of mayonnaise, ketchup, and relish—born at the 1897-vintage Thousand Islands Inn (315-686-3030, www.1000-islands.com) in Clayton. Buy a bottle to go or stick around for the haddock fish fry or fried Thousand Islands perch, which is as close to a shore lunch—the kind caught by and served to fishermen—as you'll get without spending a whole day trolling.

Stay on the shore-side road 30 miles to reach Cape Vincent, home to the Tibbetts Point Lighthouse, built in 1827 to mark where the St. Lawrence River meets Lake Ontario. The 69-foot spire contains the only operational Fresnel lens on Lake Ontario. It's an ideal spot for a shot of the seaway.

MORE INFO: 315-646-1000, www.seawaytrail.com



Tibbetts Point Lighthouse marks the entrance to the St. Lawrence River. Sample the area's namesake dressing (right) at Thousand Islands Inn.

