

# Hornblower 'inclined' to showcase new ride

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By [James Fink](#) – Reporter, Buffalo Business First

When Hornblower Niagara Cruises begins the 2019 season, the Niagara Falls, Ontario tour operator will make a nod to the past.

After an absence that dates more than 30 years, Hornblower is returning a pair of weather-protected cabs that will transport passengers down the incline to Riverside Patio area where they can board one of the tour boats.

Hornblower invested \$12 million (Canadian) on the project that also included upgrades to utilities servicing its operations.

“It should be a great addition,” said [Mory DiMaurizio](#), Hornblower Niagara Cruises vice president and general manager.

For generations, then-Maid of the Mist riders had the option of riding what was called the “Clifton Incline Railroad” from the top of the Table Rock area down to the tour boats. A combination of factors, including rising costs, ended the incline ride in the early 1980s.

“People remember it and have asked about it since we took over,” DiMaurizio said. “On many levels, we thought this is a nice touch.”

Hornblower spent more than two years on the “Funicular” project.

A pair of 50-passenger cars were developed and new rail beds were installed down the 300-foot incline.

The ride, which is expected to debut when Hornblower Niagara begins its season in late April, will last 2.5 minutes, more than enough time to give riders a dramatic view of the gorge and, of course, Niagara Falls.

“We want it to be a ride, not just a form of transportation,” DiMaurizio said. “We want people to get the full ‘Niagara’ experience.”

From a logistics standpoint, the two Funicular cars will also take some of the pressure off of Hornblower's four elevators and help eliminate some of the wait time of getting down to the Riverside Patio area and, ultimately, the boats.

This year marks the fifth season that Hornblower Niagara has operated its three boats from the Canadian side of the Falls while the Maid of the Mist continues to operate from the U.S. side.

Last year, Hornblower carried a record 2.4 million passengers — and that was with starting the season 35 days late because ice back-ups in Lake Erie.

“Mother Nature is always the wildcard,” DiMaurizio said.