

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2017 12:29 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise - #1 - Pre to Leaving San Juan

Viking Sea Cruise - Leaving San Juan

Oceans and Seas » Caribbean » Gulf of Venezuela

18th December 2017

Hello Everyone! I tried out a new way to send out my travelogue, but it didn't work, so back to my previous method. Takes longer, but this way I can place the photo's in the text. And don't have to worry about whether it is available to view!! So here we go!!!





We had our Annual Holiday dance on Thursday, 14 Dec. (see pictures!). It was well attended & great fun.



This year we also allowed folks to BYOB & we enjoyed a lovely social visit after dancing. We had saved back some of the finger foods for more eating afterwards!!



Friday I spent packing all day! Hadn't had time to do anything before, so really did take me all day! Luckily I had my lists, so knew what I needed. Not too complicated this time since we were heading on a cruise & didn't have a single night to spend other than on the boat. Also all warm (read probably HOT) weather, so didn't need to pack for another climate! It was a disappointing day because Dan & Sandi confirmed that they were canceling out due to illness! Too too sad!! Our cruise will start in San Juan, go south to Barbados & on around the eastern coast of Brazil, into the Amazon River & back to San Juan.



Jim & Mozelle were gracious enough to volunteer to provide our airport delivery early on Saturday morning & we flew out of Phoenix to Dallas & straight on to San Juan, Puerto Rico - arriving at the Airport in San Juan at 9:15pm. The airport was pretty much empty at that time - all the shops/food venues were closed & shuttered! But the airport itself looked in fine shape - either it had not suffered hurricane damage or it had all been repaired. The Viking folks were in the baggage area to meet us (no customs required) & after what seemed like an interminable wait (they had to send for a bigger bus - had they not realized that about 50 of us were arriving at the same time???), we were loaded on 2 buses & took the short drive through town to our ship at the port in Old San Juan. Enroute, our 3rd party hired young guide pointed out that we were crossing a bridge to get to Old San Juan because it is on a separate island. She also pointed out that there were lots of areas without power - mostly recognizable because the signal lights were not working. Only about a 15 minute bus ride & the ship's staff were waiting for us at the port & made short work of getting us checked in & on our way to our cabin. Our Cabin Stewardess met us at the staircase, (calling us by name no less) & letting us into our cabin to show us how everything was set up. She asked us how many bags we were waiting for & took off to go find them. She was back with them in about 15 minutes. Amazing! George & I were both pretty wired & even though it was 11pm Puerto Rican time, our body clocks still thought it was only 8pm, so we got everything all unpacked & organized while we enjoyed the Black Box wine we had smartly packed in our luggage! Finally to bed about 3am Puerto Rican time! Took a few pictures of the night sky from our balcony cabin.



We enjoyed a lovely night's rest, barely getting up in time to have lunch up in the World Cafe (Viking's buffet) before heading to our included Old San Juan walking tour. For those that don't know about Viking Ocean, they are trying to do an Ocean going cruise that is treated more like a river cruise. Therefore there is an excursion on every port day that is free (well, the price is included in the overall cost of the trip). There are other excursions offered that are an additional charge too, of course! So, this was the included tour for this port. I think I overheard someone say that due to all the hurricane damage to the roads, etc, they were not offering any of their other excursions at this port. I had never even looked, figured we would still be too tired to do anything else!



Anyway, just walked from the Port along the water's edge (got a shot of our Viking Sea & for the first time realized how much smaller it is compared to the usual Ocean going cruise ships - the Costa makes it look tiny!!) & up to Castillo San Felipe del Morro (a US National Park & World Heritage area). Our guide seemed to be pretty honest about how things were going at this point. Apparently things were not too good financially before Hurricane Maria, but now, it's a real mess. He was basically a historian, but had lost his full time positions & was now doing as many odd jobs as possible to keep up his financial status (tour guide occasionally & part time with FEMA). His home outside the municipality did not have electricity restored yet, but he had purchased a small generator that was helping. He seemed pretty upset with his own Puerto Rican government rather than the US. Seemed to feel that the Mayor was begging for help rather than trying to use all the in house available resources to make things work. He was very happy with Viking for being the first cruise line that had brought tourists back to Puerto Rico. Costa was there too, but still missing most of the others. And apparently this week was the first time anyone had come to visit. He pointed out that this weekend was the first time that any of the street vendors had set up for sales and that they had just opened up the bridge to allow vehicular traffic onto Old San Juan.



The blue cobblestone streets were still there (from Spanish Colonial days). Apparently, the blue slate material was used as ballast in the Spanish ships.



Our guide said that most of the monuments along the waterfront were put up to acknowledge the 500 years of Puerto Rico (confused on exactly when that was - 1992 was one celebration - 2013 was another - I believe there were several more!!). There was a couple swimming just over the wall from the Governor's Mansion & he mentioned that previously there had been signs prohibiting swimmers from that area – The hurricane had taken them out & they hadn't been replaced yet. Not only due to security for the Governor's Mansion, but because of the open sewer pipes that went out into that particular bay!!! Yuck!!



He also pointed to a sign prohibiting the use of "drones." Too funny, but seriously, there had been a security issue due to drones being available to anyone & the Governor's Mansion was a security risk! Apparently this is the oldest continually occupied Governor's Mansion in the America's!



We didn't see much hurricane damage in particular - although there was a huge tree that had toppled & the root system had been painted in the Puerto Rican flag.



After the stop to look over the famous Citadel (last visit we walked all around it!), we went almost directly back down to the ship, with just a short stop to see the oldest Cathedral in Old San Juan. Not incredibly impressive, but one beautiful stained glass window that had survived this hurricane.



The most interesting thing to me was the unbelievable traffic, bumper to bumper on every tiny little street. The guide said it was all locals who were thrilled to be allowed back over the bridge!



There was a rainbow across the bow of our ship as we headed up the dock to get back on board! Had worried that we'd get drenched, but only had a couple of sprinkles.



After watching us leave the port of Old San Juan, we made it to our first official dinner meal & immediately fell in love with our head waiter (Olexai from Odessa in the Ukraine) & his 2 assistants (Betty from Indonesia & Vicki from the Philippines). Tables are not assigned here on the Viking Sea, but discovered that we could request this table for 2 next to a window, so that's our plan!



We took a short tour of the ship (how's that for a ginger bread house village??), including the fancy spa & fitness center (with fire places – there have been 2 notices so far that they are not “real!!” Guess the guests are worried about live flames on the ship – too funny!!!). There is even a Snow Grotto so that you can do a true Nordic experience of hot to cold. Not sure that we'll do that, but interesting to know it's there!



All day at sea today. Fairly calm seas with mostly sun throughout the day & a beautiful sunset for the evening. George's knee popped when we were dancing our one & only dance last night & he's been icing it all day. Very irritating. We'll see how things progress. So..... so long for now & I'll continue with our tour of Bridgetown, Barbados tomorrow!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George

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From: Pamela Hurd <pam@gphurd.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2018 7:56 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #10 - St Lucia

Hi Guys,

Still having fun while watching the days/hours count down. Let's not waste any time!



Arrival around 7am in St Lucia. Looks like it will be a beautiful day. Took a couple of pictures through the balcony door, then stepped outside & my camera immediately fogged up! This cruise has taken us through some pretty heavy humidity! I'll never complain about Texas again! We were here once before, but our snorkeling cruise was canceled for bad weather & we had spent the day in port at the dock's shopping center! BORING!



We have 2 excursions scheduled for today. The first is an included excursion to give us a overview of the island. Only 3 ships docked this morning. The drive along the water shows us some gorgeous well maintained homes. We are not in a 3rd World Country anymore!



We stopped at a gorgeous overlook & someone pointed out the arrival of Christopher Columbus! It was a very timely comment as the Guide was mentioning that he is credited with the discovery of the island, but it's believed that he never really came here. Just saw it in the distance. In the center picture, it's really obvious how much smaller our Viking ship (the center one) is compared to most of the Ocean cruisers (a Costa & a Royal Caribbean viewed here). This huge

mansion with beautifully manicured grounds belongs to the Governor of the island, currently Dame Calliopa Pearlette Louisy (well, was until she turned in her resignation on Dec 31, 2017 – she has been the Governor General since Dec 1997!) Our guide was happy to tell us that St Lucia had the world record for the number of Nobel Laureates per capita (2). There is a Nobel Laureate Festival that celebrates the achievements and successes of the two Nobel laureates of Saint Lucia - **Sir William Arthur Lewis** (January 23, 1915 – June 15, 1991) who won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics in 1979; and **Sir Derek Walcott** who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992.



This is by far the prettiest island we have visited. The views are amazing & it's green green green! The banana trees are doing very well. Our guide went on & on about how important bananas were to the island & how there were NO MONKEYS!



Our major stop on this excursion was Stony Hill, a private Estate that had 3 acres of manicured gardens. Unfortunately they only gave us about 20 minutes here. Could have spent hours. It was gorgeous!



The gardens were divided into sections with beautiful walkways. The above left picture is not very good, I know, but it reminds me of this adorable little hovering bee that kept following us around – it was like “take my picture!!” Too cute. This was a perfect place for hummingbirds, & the owner told me he had tons of them around. Only 3 species of the hummers exist on the island. I asked if he had any feeders up & he said he couldn’t, “they would eat me out of

house & home!" We saw a few buzzing around, but could never get close enough to actually get a picture. George snapped a picture of me in their Orchid Garden. The views they had from everywhere in their gardens was unbelievable!!!



They had a huge deck & they had sat up some tables to serve us homemade cake (we had dilly dallied, so only one tiny piece of cake left – less than a half inch square – George let me take it!) & some punch (non-alcoholic). I chose the punch made from Star fruit. It was delicious. Our guide had told us that they made tons of stuff from bananas on the island & these bottles were a small proof – Banana Catsup & Banana Hot Sauce!!!! Didn't get to taste it – the guests before us had scarfed it all up! While we were checking out everything on the deck, a small bird (& his wife) were checking us out! The owner said they would eat from his hands. He called them a "Bull Finch." I found a listing for a Black Finch which is endemic to the island, but no pictures, and another listing for a Lesser Antillian Bullfinch. Assume that's the one!



They had all sorts of examples of different fruits growing on their acreage. Many were totally foreign to us. They had suggestions for medical uses for most of it. We saw the ackee several times. It's similar to the lychee. Apparently it is used a lot in Jamaican dishes. Never tried it. Read it is toxic if eaten before it ripens & several times the canned version

has been banned from the US because it included some. Humm? Causes what is called Jamaican vomiting sickness. Okay fine. I don't think I need to look for that!



Took the bus directly back to the ship. You can't see it well, but we were interested to see that the main cemetery for the island was adjacent to the airport. Does that have a hidden meaning? Also noticed that it is right on the

beach. Enjoyed watching the Tenders practicing some safety maneuvers from our balcony & had a lovely lunch with awesome views of the harbor. This is really a beautiful island. Glad we got to see more of it this trip!



The afternoon was what became the highlight of our entire cruise. We were heading higher into the central island & the drive took us by lots of agricultural areas. Both the guide & the bus driver got into the job of pointing things out to us. First, the guide had our bus driver stop in the middle of the street (cars backed up behind us honking!), while he jumped out & cracked a shell to show us an Almond!! Then the bus driver jumped out a bit later to point out the huge bud that grows on the banana plant that becomes the fruit. Only one bunch of bananas grows on each plant, but small shoots come up, so you cut the main stalk & the next one grows up. They cover the banana bunches to protect them from insects & birds (NO MONKEYS!!!).



Next stop was Rainforest Adventures – a global conglomerate of Eco Tourism. They are currently for profit, but establishing a not for profit to raise money to protect World Rainforests. They started in Costa Rica & the “visionary Nature Lover” (a must have been multi billionaire!) that thought of the Aerial Tram idea had one major requirement. No tree could be sacrificed to install the tram. WOW! They also have Ziplines (Viking didn’t even offer that – surprise Surprise!). While we were waiting for our tram – only 9 person’s per car – 8 passengers & a guide, we spotted our first close ups of several hummingbirds. Not a good picture, but I was SOOOOOO excited. Appeared to be the Purple Throated Caribbean. Another one buzzed really close, but no picture. It was totally different – assume that it was the Anttleian Crested because it was much much smaller.



I will restrict myself on the Tram photos because there is absolutely no way to explain even with photos how magnificent it was. There are 4 of them in the world now – 2 Costa Rica, 1 in St Lucia, & the last in Jamaica. Sure there will be more in the future. If you are ever anywhere near one, DO IT! Our young female guide was wonderful (heard that we got lucky – our new friend, Elaine from Asheville did not have a very good guide). She had been with the

company for a month and had had extensive training & was amazingly knowledgeable. I had not realized that there were strict guidelines on what was considered a Rainforest – how much rain must fall, what altitude, annual temperature changes, number of species of flora & fauna within a square acre, it just went on & on. There are designations on whether it is a “rainforest” or a “tropical rainforest” too! The Amazon is a “tropical Rainforest”. This was a “rainforest.” The park had a walk that you could do also- again not offered by Viking – average time required about 3 hours & quite a large elevation gain. We could see the path off & on below us. Wish we had had time for that! The “tropical rainforest” is considered the “Lungs” of the earth because of their absorption of carbon monoxide through photosynthesis. Also 28% of all naturally occurring medications come from “rainforests.”



It is generally agreed that there are 4 levels to a “rainforest.” There is Forest floor (bottom most layer – generally relatively clear because of lack of sunlight), Understory layer (only 5% of the sunlight reaches this level), the Canopy Layer where the majority of the flora & fauna are visible, & the Emergent layer (the small number of trees that grow above the general canopy). They developed the Tram so that we were able to experience all of it. Our guide gave us a

lot of information, then fell quiet. We were lucky enough that the other 4 folks on our tram were as impressed with the experience as we were & we spent at least half of the 1 hour ride totally quiet. At one point our guide asked why we were whispering. We told her that it was almost like a religious experience.



About midway, we experienced the most exciting sights. First, I managed to actually capture one of the many hummingbirds that we saw buzzing near us. Next was the most exciting – but I have no picture! The other couple with us got a picture and was supposed to share it, but so far I haven't received it. There is a St Lucia parrot – Jacquout?, our guide kept pointing out the noise to us. Just as we cleared the canopy for our view of the Caribbean Sea on one side & Atlantic Ocean on the other, 2 of the parrots did a huge half circular flight ahead of us – squawking the entire way. We thought our cute young guide was going to turn our tram over, she was SOOOOO EXCITED. Said she had never seen them before! Made the trip for us all because she was so excited (included a googled picture of what it really looks like!). A bit later, she pointed out this Lady bug type insect on George's shirt. Said she had heard it was good luck (brings money!!) if they touched you, so I allowed it to crawl around on my finger tip for a while.



One other thing that I have to mention was these amazing vines. There were literally hundreds of different kinds of vines, but this one looked like it was drawn on the trunks of the trees.

Our guide called it a Tatto Vine! We also saw a Bananaquit (this is not my picture! I downloaded it!) – fairly common bird there, in the Tanager family.

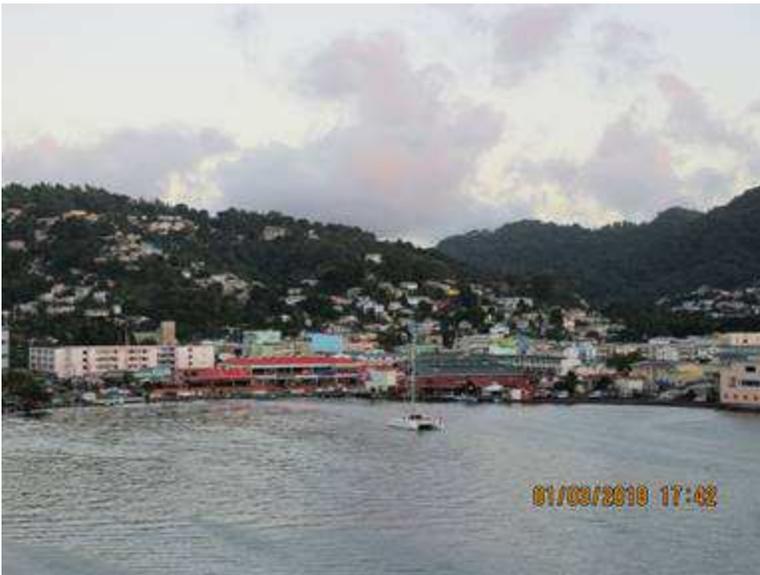
On the return sweep (you come back higher than the way in), we passed an interesting waterfall – our guide called it a rock cascade, & some imported Norfolk Pines.



After our tram ride, our adorable guide led us on a way too short walk through the rainforest gardens. Almost immediately we saw the St Lucia Pewee, another endemic species that our guide was really really excited about! Then this really unusual tree growth! How the heck? Tons of beautiful tropic flowers – one tiny example – this Bird of Paradise.



Caught a picture of the tram (empty – I think we might have been the last group of the day) & the sign with information about the Dedication of this area as a National Forest Reserve in 1916. And asked our guide to pose for us. This is one place that I wouldn't mind coming back to visit. I think there are some all inclusive resorts here on the island that would be worth checking out!



So ended our full day on St Lucia. Beautiful island. Great memories. Pulled away during a nice sunset & had another lovely dinner (interesting dessert – Viking’s version of Crème Brule’). The evening entertainment was the ship’s 3

young men performing the Beatles. They did quite a nice job & it was done on the top deck around the swimming pool. It was interesting having it projected up on the screen – definitely helped with being able to see, since the seating around the pool was multi layers in lounge chairs.

So George & I are back in Mesa now. Hit the ground running – arrived on Saturday night – started our regular weekly program on Sunday & then enjoyed dancing at the Blackford's annual weekend event of Black Tie (Randy & Marie Preskitt were the visiting leaders). Have not had a minute to work on the travelogue, so way behind! Still have 2 islands left. Will try to get them covered in the next couple of days.

Hope everyone is happy & healthy & enjoying life!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George
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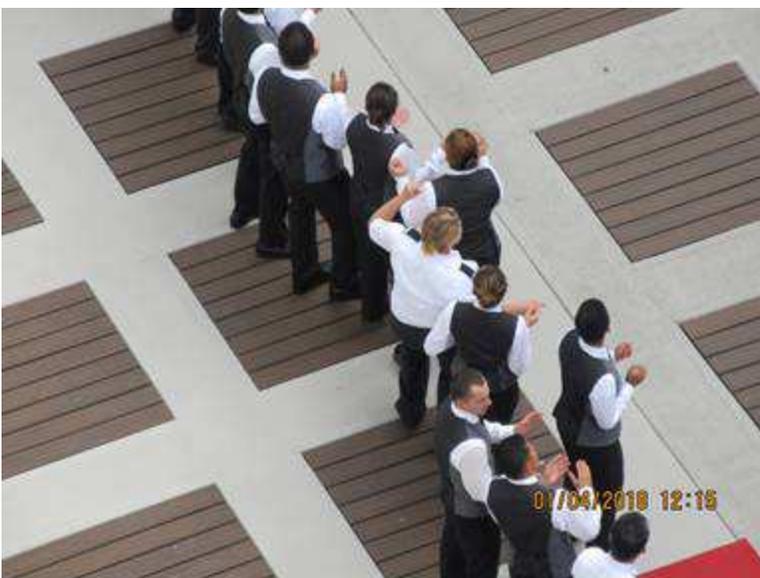
From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Friday, February 2, 2018 10:31 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #11 - Antigua

Good Afternoon Everyone,

I'm going to try this one more time. A week ago Saturday I had the entire travelogue finished, just decided to hold it for a little while to let it sit for a little bit and work on a friend's Nook. After piddling with it for a few minutes, the computer froze. Uh Oh. Well, that was the end of that. It never came back up again. George wasted hours trying to get it back up to no avail. He ended up taking it in to the Geek Squad on Sunday. To make a long story short, I spent the week trying to accomplish everything required for work on my little laptop! Yipes!! Anyway, finally got my computer back on Thursday evening. It was stripped clean (they had never managed to make the touch screen work) and George started getting all my software loaded on it. At least I had backed it up about 5 days before, so I didn't lose as much as I could have!! Sooooo, enough whining, let's get to the fun stuff!



That morning, we arrived at the harbor of St John's, the capital city of the island country of Antigua & Barbuda in the West Indies. We had been there before in Dec 2013 on a Celebrity cruise & did some kayaking & snorkeling. This morning, we slept in & went upstairs for a nice leisurely lunch & walk around the decks to enjoy the views.



While we waited for our 1pm Panoramic island tour, we heard a commotion down below. The staff was down below greeting the passengers returning from the morning's tours. That was one thing I really did like about Viking

Ocean. They go the extra mile to make you feel special and to make it feel like you are a part of a much smaller ship's organization!



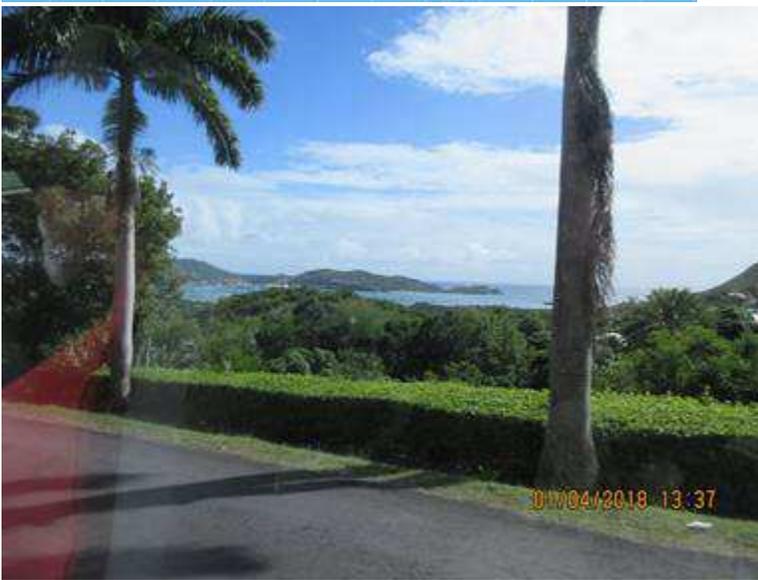
We headed out for our tour in the beautiful sunshine of a perfect Caribbean day! The drive through the city itself could have been on any island – colorful buildings – tons of stuff on the sidewalks for sale – lots of school children out & about (yep, the Holidays are over!).



The most exciting thing of the day's trip for me was the sighting of a hummingbird! The guide was excited too. It's not that they are rare, but seeing one in a tree from a bus traveling on the street is pretty amazing. Assuming that it was an Antillean Crested Hummingbird which is the most common on the island. I downloaded this picture of it!



The remainder of our drive southeast across the island was really GREEN! We passed by the HUGE soccer stadium which was generously donated by the government of China. Hummmm????? The rest of the island was rolling hills, fields of small homes & gardens. Quite lovely.



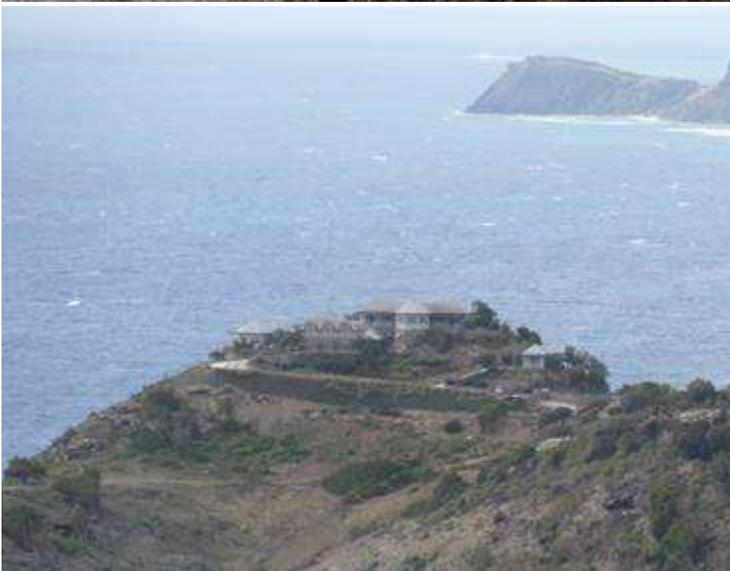
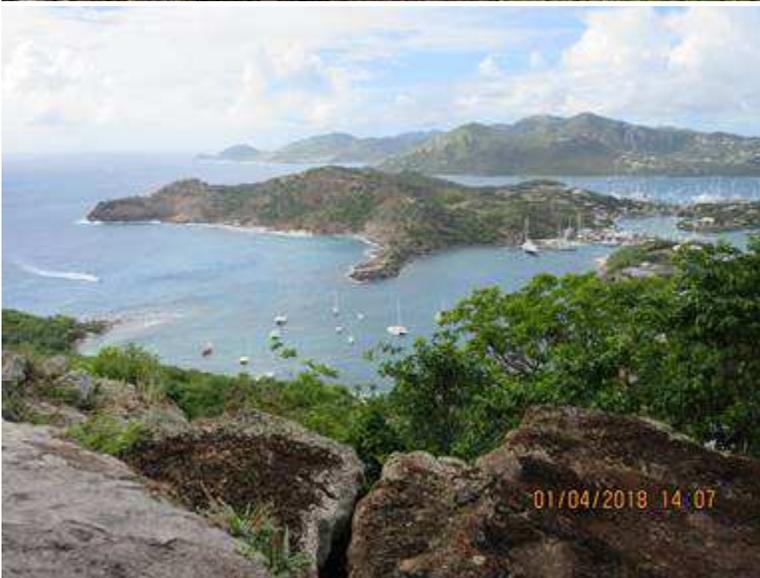
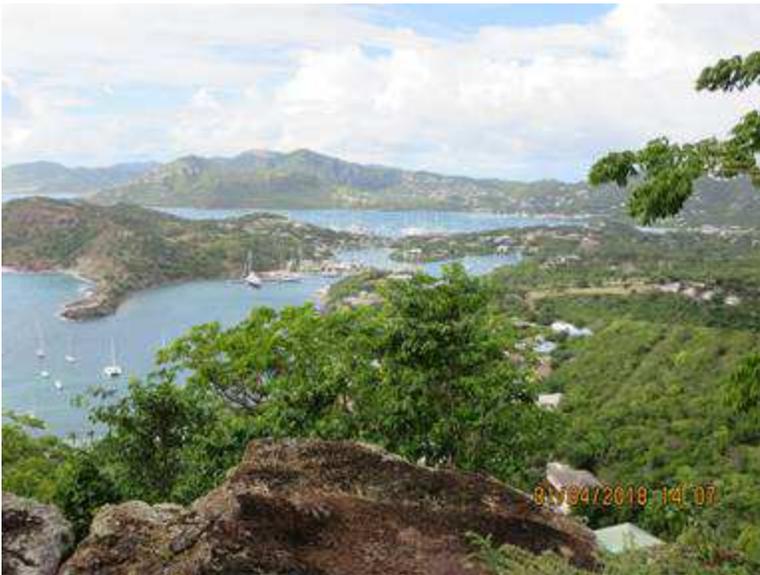
We drove from the harbor in St John's (upper left corner), southeast across the island to reach some fort ruins on the Caribbean side of the island (lower right side). As soon as we started getting sneak peeks of the water, we could tell it was going to be beautiful. Apparently the Caribbean Ocean is much prettier than the Atlantic! Enroute, the guide handed around some pictures of the Eastern Caribbean currency. It is used by the so called Eastern Caribbean Currency Union

and includes 7 independent island countries & 2 British territories. Kinda like the Euro I suppose. It is worth about \$2.70 to a US Dollar.



Our first stop was one of the many fort ruins on the island. This island was a British stronghold from 1632 to 1981 with one brief period of French rule in 1666. Not being a major (or even minor history buff), I was mostly interesting

in the incredible views over St James Bay. Especially the ground rainbow. I have never seen a rainbow on the ground before. Our guide was very excited about it too. It was fabulous. One funny thing of note – while I was goggling for information, I came upon a note that someone had made off with one of the historic canons & the Historic Society on the island was begging for it's return. Stealing a canon? Really? Would have liked to see the getaway vehicle!



Our next stop was for the views from Shirley Heights – at 490' above sea level, these views over English & Falmouth Harbors are the most famous of the island. And understandably – they are incredibly beautiful. Lots of rich & famous live in the area. The huge complex at the end of the peninsula was either Opra Winfrey's or Eric Clapton's. Can't remember which. Can you imagine? And this is just a "vacation home!!!" Of course during a hurricane, it wouldn't be quite the heavenly abode it is in clear beautiful sunshine!!! By the way, "Shirley" was not the name of someone's girlfriend, it was

named after Sir Thomas Shirley, the governor of the Leeward Islands in 1781. Antigua was the last remaining West Indian colony owned by Britain & they were loath to lose it!! Consequently, it had lots of forts & military strongholds along with the dockyard that we were to visit next.



My least favorite part of the tour was the sales pitch to purchase one of the supposed “hand made” dolls – handily convertible from everyday to fancy dress – representative of the historical costumes of the Native Antiguans. We didn’t buy one – I suspect they were part of the “Chinese” influence! I was, however; very impressed with the underground cistern (I think I overheard that it was about 10,000 gallons???) that was built in the early 1600’s & is still in use today!!! There was a gift shop & restaurant at the site & they apparently have a sunset party every day with live music & drinking!! We were long gone by then, unfortunately. They perform weddings there – idyllic setting for romance!!!!



Our main stop of the tour was the Nelson's Dockyard – a National Park & UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Our guide for the dockyard had a very formal British accent. The entire site was totally renovated for tourists. There were gift shops in most of the buildings & the “barracks” were now hotel rooms. It was manicured within an inch of it’s life! Hard to imagine what the real existence was like during it’s operational period in the 1600 – 1800’s.



From a historical perspective, the most interesting thing in the dockyard was the Capstans. The indentured servants (extremely mistreated & starved I might add) would use these capstans to turn the ships onto their side to expose the hull & allow them to be scraped of barnacles & repainted. I can't imagine which was worse, the physical strength required to tilt & hold the humongous battleships, or the poor guys that had to spend 18 hours a day in the water trying to scrape & paint. Of course they did receive their daily rations of rum & beer! Now the harbor is full of yachts & expensive fishing boats. & good looking tourists!





We were given a sweet rum drink (what else???) and spent an interesting few minutes watching fishermen clean/gut their catches. George was impressed with the Dorado (also called a Mahi Mahi – has a funny head & really scissored tail). Watched several different guys come & go – they all ignored the barracuda laying on the ground! They tossed the guts in the water to the extreme enjoyment of the schools of Tarpin.



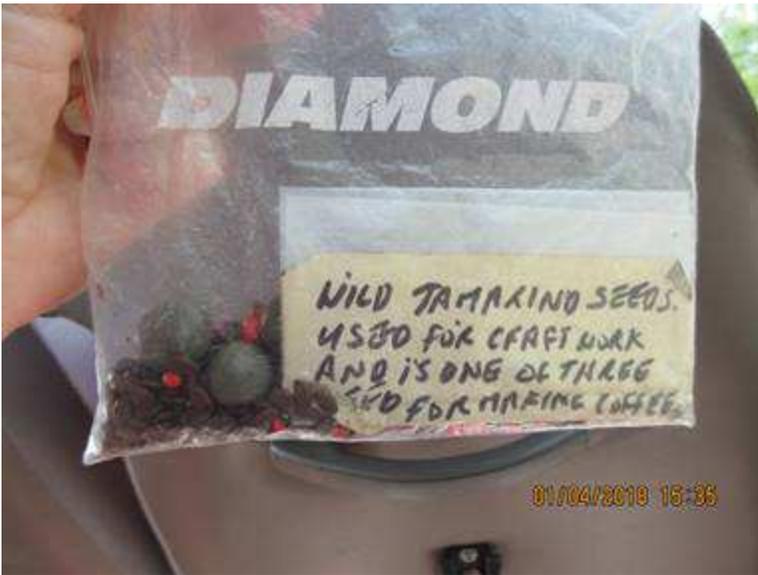
A Cure Worse than the Disease

Yellow fever killed in three days. Few survived. On admission to the hospital patients were relieved of "all their clothes and necessaries" then received the following treatment:

- Bleeding of 20 to 30 ounces of blood
- Repeated doses of tartar emetic to induce vomiting
- Purge with mercuric chloride
- Frequent doses of antimony powder
- Blistering of the skin
- Further bleeding
- If the case is desperate, give a large glass of gin containing Hartshorn bark, snakeroot, and opium every two hours.

In 1804, the 70th Regiment lost 32 officers and 154 men to yellow fever.

For the remainder of our time at the dockyards, we wandered into the museum. It was quite clean & the exhibits they had were quite well done. I was hoping for a picture of the slaves pulling the battleships on their side, but couldn't locate one. That has got to be an incredibly difficult task. Just can't imagine it. Came up this sign about the treatment for Yellow Fever – yipes! Horrifying. Glad we got our yellow fever shots!



On the drive back to the ship, our guide continued with her show & tell. She first gave us some fresh so called black pineapple. It's a different species of pineapple from the common Dole from Hawaii. It's still dark green when it's ripe. It is the National Fruit of Antiqua. It was very sweet. She kept passing the container back saying "I am not taking any of this home!!!!" She sang us their National Anthem too. Lovely. She showed us some of the local products bottled & sold here,

even though they don't have their own sugar cane any more, it's imported for fermenting their local rum! Their flag is very pretty & has an very understandable meaning – black for the people, sun, sea & sand, with red for hope & a V for Victory.



The bus let us off outside the ever present tourist trap shopping mall entrance to the port! We never stopped once, although they were haranguing us from all the shop entrance ways with samples & sales! We headed out of the cabin

before the ship left port, so didn't get a good sunset goodbye picture. But did notice that the German ship docked next to us had hammocks on all their balconies! Lots of folks were enjoying them. Never have seen that before (except on those Brazilian ferries – remember!!), & made me envision what it would be like to be in one as you cruised. Humm? I can definitely see myself all wrapped up in a cocoon & shouting for help.



Even though we had a full day at port in the Virgin Islands the following day, the ship's staff had scheduled our formal "goodbye (& good riddance – ha!) celebration" for that evening. They really went all out. It was held in the Atrium & we got kinda stuck in a corner by the offices & under the stairs, but we could still hear well & see pretty good. It was definitely packed – EVERYONE on board had come out (free champagne & snacks of course). They put on an amazing variety show – all the staff entertainment came & did one last hoorah. Even the Cruise Manager sang again. He's amazing!



Of course the grand finale was to troop everyone out that could be pulled away from their on board duties. They always looks so happy, I wonder if they really enjoy that or if it's a total chore. Anyway, the passengers certainly like to raise the roof with their clapping, whistling & cat calling.

We cruised on through the night to our last port – St John's island in the Virgin Islands.

Hopefully I can finish this long vacation monolog in the next week! Hope you're still enjoying our virtual trip with us.

More soon!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George

Check out our web site! [Hurd's Round Dance Home Page](http://www.gphurd.net/index.html)

& new site!!! <http://www.gphurd.net/index.html>

Check out our dance demo videos www.DanceRounds.info

Look at pictures, videos, & Photo books on Shutterfly <http://pamspicts.shutterfly.com>

pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Friday, July 6, 2018 9:43 AM
To: 'pam@gphurd.com'
Subject: Viking Amazon Cruise, Travelogue #12

Good Morning Everyone,

Never got this last travelogue done & wanted to finish the Amazon's report, so finally doing it from faint memory (this is July!), my journal, & the pictures! Let's get this done!



Up at 7:45am. View from the balcony was not all that exciting. Bit overcast & sooo humid. Had to be downstairs for an Immigration check by USVI. Really fast, but irritating because if forced us to get up! On the good side, we had our first real breakfast! Had omelets & they were very good! Back up at the room, we found that Fury's had called & canceled

our snorkeling trip. Said it was due to weather. I suspect he couldn't fill his boat. Most annoying. Called & got on standby for the Included Scenic Island Tour & Mountain Top at 10:45am.



Basically an open bus. Hoping that it doesn't rain! You can see that most of the palm trees had lost their tops from the hurricane. Looks pretty bare through the downtown streets. At least the roads are passable.



St Thomas has the most incredible views of any Caribbean island. Even with the clouds, the view was amazing as we climbed the hill over Megan's bay.



Our first Viewpoint stop. Wow! It is truly amazing. Gives a little perspective to see the seaplane over the water. There's our ship! It's a beauty.



Henry met us at the next viewpoint with champagne! How about that? Guess that's one of the nice things about Viking Ocean. Certainly never had any other cruise ship do that! But it's starting to get soaked in! Here's the panoramic tour group before us!



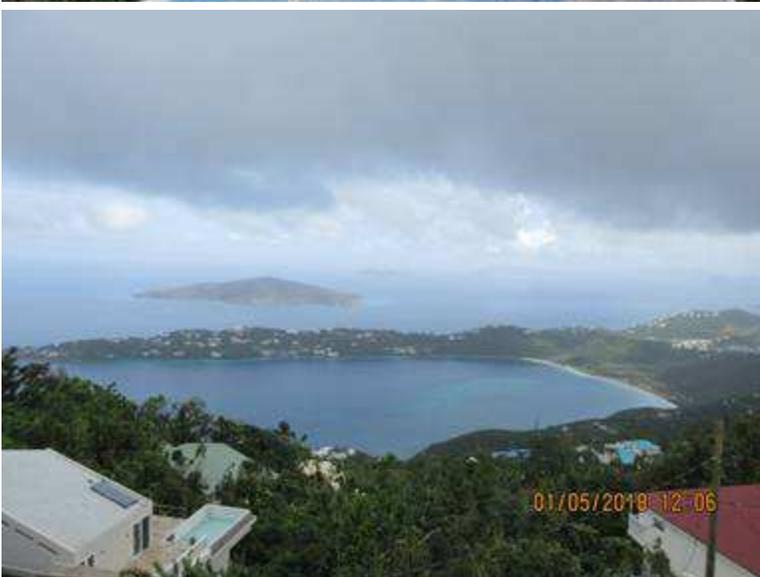
As we continued to the top of the mountain, it got foggier & foggier. No actual rain, but we were in heavy clouds. Saw lots more evidence of the hurricane's damage. Was much worse up here – or they haven't gotten this far up with repairs.



Made it to the top – 2100’ about sea level. Hadn’t realized the “Mountain Top” was actually a tourist shop!!! Crap! Made it through the huge souvenir shop to the outside balcony & found the clouds had totally moved in & we couldn’t see ANYTHING! Well, we could see the viewpoint map showing us what we were supposed to see!



Back inside to wander the shop. Realized that we were stuck there for 45 minutes! Inside a stinking souvenir shop for 45 minutes! They were trying to sell alcohol – both to take with you & in over the counter drinks. Supposed to be the home of the Banana Daqairi. Humm? Didn't appeal to us. We did buy a few small bottles for Dan & Sandi. Probably at least a quarter of the shop had signs up saying "not for sale." Hope they recover okay!



The only good thing about staying for such a long time is that it gave the clouds time to lift, so we got a fair view of Megans bay & beach. Also found pretty big iguana on a nearby tree. This has got to be amazing without clouds!! Sure wish we had been out on the water snorkeling!



Finally headed out to go back to the ship. Made one bird sighting – have to look it up! Looks like the clouds are coming back down again!



The views on the way down were really fabulous. Can you imagine having a home with those kind of views?



Of course, if you have the view, you have the worry always hanging over your head about the danger!! Not sure if this is a replacement home or brought up for trash? Anyway, sure not pretty. And still trash everywhere. Is that normal or leftover from clean up from the hurricane?



Circled around the main downtown area. Pretty Veteran's Memorial Park & they've got that cleaned up.



The harbor area is rather bare now – I seem to remember this being a lot prettier many years ago – assume they haven't had a chance to fix this back up from the Hurricane, just cleaned up the mess. Got some tent shopping areas set up. The buildings must have been destroyed.



Back on the ship – we just spent the afternoon packing & relaxing – already thinking about how to hit the ground running to start the Spring Season in Mesa. Weather continued to get better all afternoon. Wish we had been snorkeling!!! Phooey!



Leaving port was eneventful. When the hurricane was so destructive last fall, we all wondered if we'd be able to maintain this itinerary. Glad things worked out the way they did. I'm sure this island will be back to it's glorious self very soon now! A beautiful end to our cruise.



Our last dinner on board ship was lovely. They have certainly done well with the service & food on this ship! Enjoyed our last dinner with new friends Tom & Elaine. Even got to have our favorite table. George felt good enough to even dance one long rumba in the Promenade area. Have sure missed dancing on board ship. Wish George's back had been better. Maybe next time!



Flight home was uneventful. Soon we had traded the lush green tropical scenery for our winter desert! Now it's back to work in the Dance Scene! Yea! Great vacation! We've been to the Amazon & back!

Thanks for joining us! Next trip report will be from Africa!!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

Check out our web site! [Hurd's Round Dance Home Page](#)

Check out our dance demo videos www.DanceRounds.info

Look at pictures, videos, & Photo books on Shutterfly <http://pampicts.shutterfly.com>

pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Saturday, December 23, 2017 4:21 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise - #2 - Barbados & Sea Days

Viking Sea Cruise – Barbados & beyond

21 December 2017

Hello Everyone,

We're enjoying a lot of time to relax! There are good & bad aspects to that. We wish the ship had a few more options for daily activities, but since George's knee is acting up, it's just as well that we don't have too much to encourage us to over do things! Anyway on to our day in Barbados!



We woke up about 9am & we were already docked in Bridgetown, Barbados. Our excursion was at 12:30pm, so we headed up to eat at the buffet as soon as it opened at 11:30am & then straight off the ship to find our bus excursion.

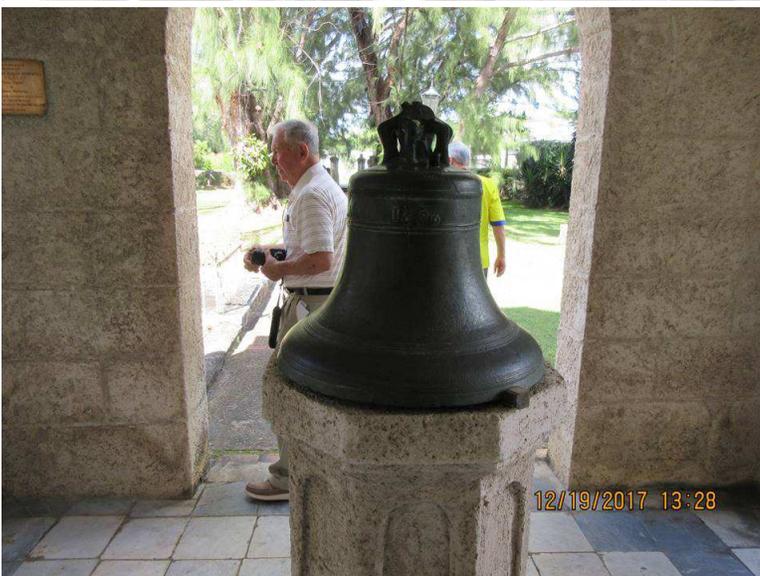
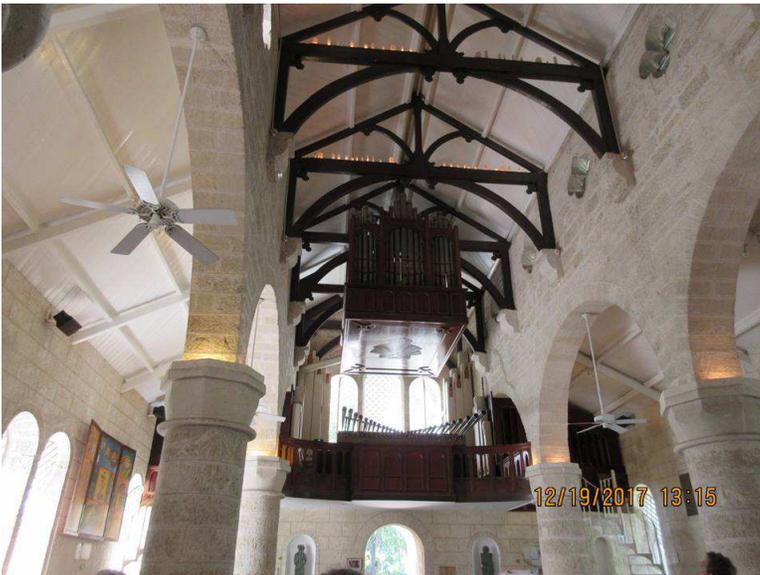


Had quite a ways to walk from the ship's gangway to the terminal along a very old decrepit dock! The old granary loading towers were rusty & falling apart – quite an accident waiting to happen! Once we got to the terminal, it looked the same as most island terminal's – bright, cheery, with lots of junky souvenirs to sell. Several shops selling the “famous” Barbados rum – Mount Gay.

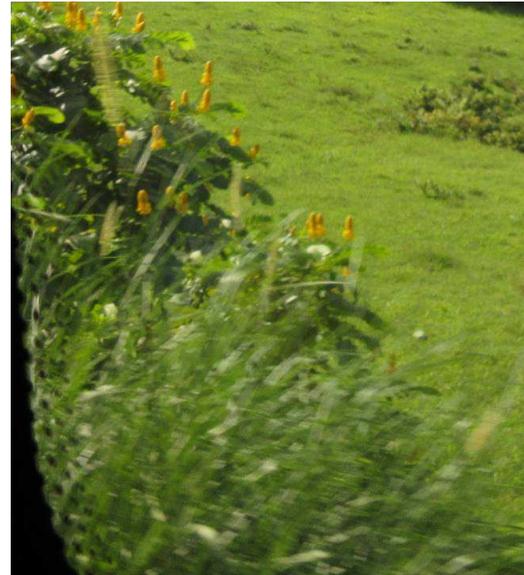


Our bus left the terminal area & headed along the beach towards the western corner. Saw several variation of beaches, sand & rocks. The St Lucy Parish is where all the rich & famous have their vacation homes. Lots of resorts there too. The guide said that the famous folks just act like regular people when they are visiting the island. Didn't see any

anywhere though. Not a lot of people although the guide reminded us that the kids were all out of school. Speaking of school – she mentioned about 3 times during the course of the day that Barbados is extremely proud of their educational system – 98% literacy rate.



First stop was the St James Parish Church. There are 11 parishes on Barbados & each of them has its own church. The St James Parish church is the oldest. Their main boast is their huge pipe organ – we didn't get to hear it though. Their bell is older than the Liberty Bell in the US!



We took off across the top of the island to the high point. There are 2 parishes in the center of the island that are land locked, St Thomas & St George. St Thomas has the highest point of approximately 1000'. Had some nice views. Guide pointed out a really cool bush – Christmas Candle. Had big orange/yellow blooms that looked like candles. Only saw it from the bus. Also lots of fields of Sugar Cane. It was the “gold” of the island that made it important to the British & the main reason it was colonized. Not so important now, but they still have lots of it.





Next stop was the Barbados Adventure Park. Not sure where the adventure was, but we did get to see one of the Green Monkey's that are resident on the island & the views of the Atlantic ocean were beautiful. Some beautiful vegetation, a cute little gecko, a glass of rum punch & we were out of there.



The drive back across the island showed us some spectacular wild poinsettias, more sugar cane fields, & then back to the ship. There were several cruise ships in port, but all were European – MSC, Mein Shieff, & Costa. Have idea where the US ones are hiding!



We were supposed to be on our way right at sunset.....but, there was an announcement that a food delivery truck was running "a little" late, so we were delaying our departure. Enjoyed the gorgeous sunset & off to dinner. By the way, we've found a favorite table & so far have managed to get it several times & have also found a couple to eat with. They are from Asheville, NC & we just chat nonstop throughout our evening meal!



We enjoyed listening to the classic trio & then the Lady Singers & the dancing Couple put on a lovely show. The theater is gorgeous, however; it seats less than half of the 900+ passengers on the ship, so it's rather difficult to assure you have a decent seat. The seats are very comfortable – alternating between a couch type row & single standing chairs with a table between them. Like I said, comfy, but not very functional. If you arrive less than a half hour before the show, you

are out of luck!! So far, they haven't figured it out & only doing 1 show per evening. Hopefully they will get with the program & schedule 2 shows! The screen on stage is a technical marvel & the singers & dancers are interactive with the screen – they scatter roses & make rainbows with their arm sweeps – it is really really cool. We made it back to the room to find that the food truck had still not arrived. We had front row seating to watch the staff officers pace up & down the pier & make cell calls. They were obviously really upset. Heard later that our food was supposed to arrive on a container ship that was held off shore for some reason. It finally arrived about midnight! At one time, we counted 10 Viking crew offering management suggestions to the 1 poor folk lift drive & couple of strong backs doing the heavy lifting. Then after we watched them only manage to get 2 pallets out of the truck & onto the ship in a half hour, we left them to it & went to bed!!



The next day at sea was spent trying to make up the 10 hour delay we had experienced. Didn't make much difference to us – we enjoyed the beautiful water & our meals!





The only disappointment so far on board was that we couldn't make up the time & had to sail right past our stop at Iles du Salut (island belonging to French Guiana. It was to be a stop to visit the prison complex made famous by Steve McQueen in Papillon. Our excursion officer said this was the 5th time she had tried to stop at that island. Just wasn't meant to be. We kept ourselves busy with walking around the deck, investigating the Explorer's Lounge (absolutely gorgeous!!!), playing bocce ball with the officers (very disconcerting to have the bocce ball court tilt on you!! Hard on the aim!), more eating & drinking, & a show by the 3 male singers (Rat Pack Revisited – pretty good singers & enjoyable to look at it!).



Next stop is the Amazon!!!!

Stay tuned!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George

Website: www.gphard.net

pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Tuesday, December 26, 2017 8:19 AM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise - #3 - Into the Amazon & Santarem

Viking Sea Cruise - Into the Amazon

24 December 2017

Merry Christmas Everyone!

Our adventure continues into the Amazon!

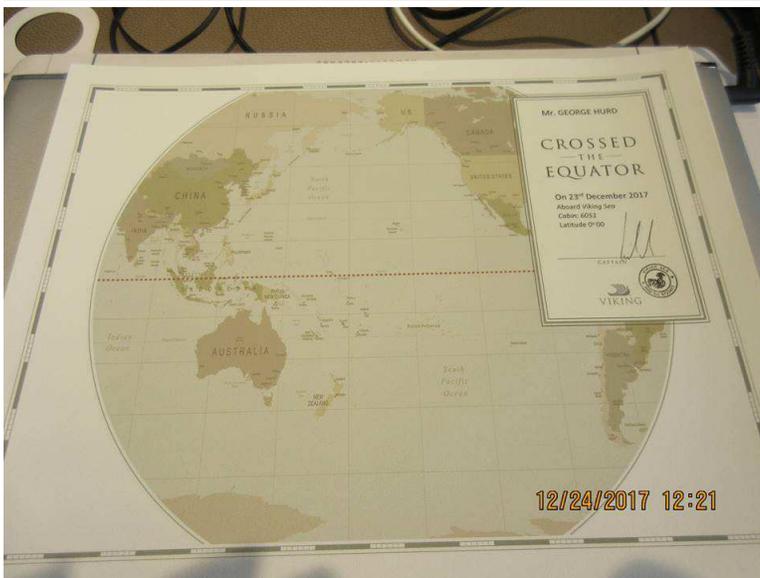
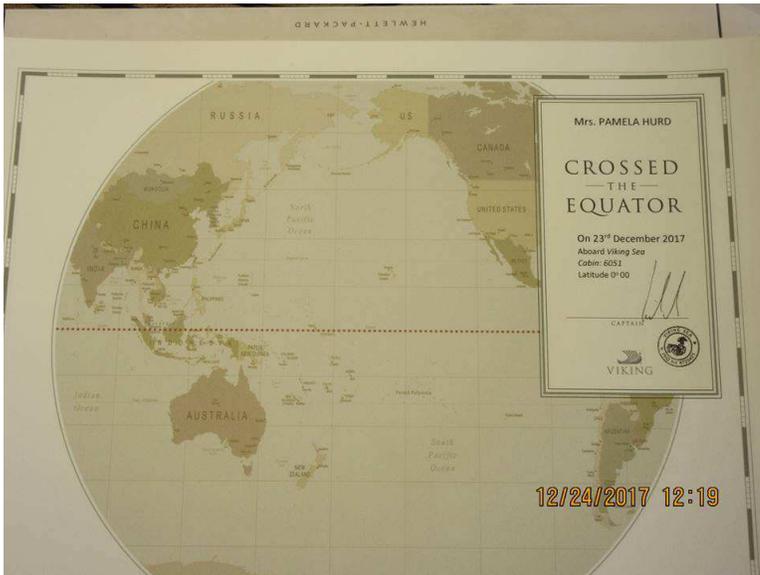


According to one of the lectures about the Amazon – the water courses out in currents up to 125 from the mouth allowing the sailors in ancient days to actually recognize that they could collect fresh water off the coast of Brazil when in it's area! To put it into perspective about how much water pours out of the Amazon river – our speaker said that EACH day enough water flows out that could keep the City of New York in water for 9 years!!! Apparently there is a age

long battle on which is the longest river in the world – the Nile or the Amazon. Experts on each side claim one or the other is longer, but none come even close to the amount of water churned out of it's banks. There is a major dispute about how wide the mouth is also, but most say it is about 300 miles wide! We were actually getting permission to enter from the city of Macapa – no actually docking there – a pilot came on board. I got up about 8am & the city was not visible on our side. By the time I was downstairs (heading to a Zumba class), we were already cruising into the river.



The Equator passes through the middle of Macapa, so there was a “celebration” ritual for some of the ship’s staff who were crossing the equator for the first time. The crazy Activity Director dressed up as a British Magistrate in a black robe & white wig, while 2 other staff members were King Neptune & his mermaid wife. Different groups of staff members were positioned in front of the group of Senior officers & “forced” to kiss a fish, get doused with ice water, & then were thrown into the pool.



We got certificates with no fish kissing required, thank goodness!!!! I think this is the 3rd or 4th time we've crossed the equator by ship, but would have to research that. We stood straddling it Christmas before last in Ecuador!



The rest of the day passed with views of rainforest on both sides of the ship. The shores were sometimes close – sometimes just a green line in the distance. Saw a few boats, small & large along the way. I couldn't see anything other than easily recognizable vultures (was told they were Masked Vultures), but spoke to a guy on the deck with a huge telescope type binocular on tripod that said he had seen lots of birds, monkeys, & even an otter.



I joined a Soft Shoe class for some exercise (George didn't even stay to watch!!) and got to dance to In the Mood with the Amazon as a backdrop. Can't beat that! Then we toasted our trip over dinner at our favorite table, before enjoying a comedy/magician for entertainment that evening.



A lot of the staff were waiting dressed in Christmas finery to send us to our excursions in Santarem, Brazil on Christmas Eve! I spotted a little spider monkey enroute to our Nature Walk. Hard to get a picture, but you can use your imagination to see the limbs dancing as he jumped from branch to branch!! After about a 15 minute drive along the one & only north/south highway that stretches 350+ KM (mostly paved, so they say!), we arrived at Bosque Saint Lucia's Park.



The walk inside this park was great fun, but we were disappointed that we didn't see more critters or birdlife. We did see several Baby Toucans (the guide had pointed out their calls long before we finally got to see them). We had 2 guides

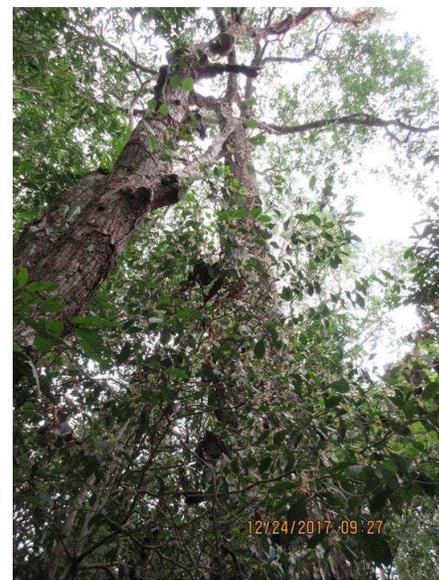
– one that spoke excellent English (we later met the man that had taught him) & a Brazilian who never tried to speak English, but had a lovely smile & was quite quick with a machete!



One of the main goals was to see the famous rubber tree. They showed us how they sliced the bark to get the sap to run. They shared the story of how Henry Ford had invested millions trying to establish communities of Americans to harvest enough rubber from these trees to make tires for his cars. Never worked & he didn't actually ever visit Brazil. But he changed the entire focus of Brazil & many examples of his changes exist today. Our Brazilian guide shimmied up some ropey twisted vines to show us that natives had learned from watching monkeys that they could use these vines to make overnight shelters with fairly comfortable & safe sleeping quarters.



Our Brazilian guide also used his machete to tap on the bottom of this tree until scores of Bullet ants came out to investigate. Luckily for us, they stayed on the tree trunk. He held a couple out for us to look at, but I couldn't get a good picture. I downloaded this one from the internet to give you an idea of size & features. We were told some pretty interesting stories about different ceremonies that the ants are used in – their sting is supposed to be in the top 4 most painful of any insect in the world. Lovely, huh? And they were used by several native tribes to prove the young men were ready for war by making a glove of them & forcing the young men to put on the glove & keep it on for 5 minutes. They said that sometimes the pain was so severe that the men would pass out and/or develop shakes or paralysis that lasted for days. And they would have to do it up to 20 times!!!! He also said that it had aphrodisiac effects (like Viagra), but I never found anything on the internet about that!!! Maybe he was assuming there would have to be something good to account for them subjecting themselves to that much pain 20 times!!



They mainly focused on facts & figures about the trees that I must admit went in one ear & out the other. The biggest tree he showed us was estimated at over 400 years old, but they are quite slow growing. Hence the problems with the slash & burn techniques being employed throughout the rainforest. Not only is the soil lacking in the nutrients to grow crops, but what it does have does not have any sustainability. Hard to blame the farmers, they are just looking for a way to make some money to support their families. Much of life in the rainforest is totally dependent on each other. If one thing dies, it has a chain reaction that kills off something else, etc.



Our walk ended at a small house. It was only 3 rooms, with a bathroom in the living room & another in the small bedroom. I know that because they left us que up to use them! Someone obviously lived there, I didn't get any worthwhile pictures inside, it had running water & electricity. Our guide offered us a taste of the Brazilian 51. It is a brand name for Cachaca – a liquor made from Sugar Cane. There are 2 types – aged & unaged. Unaged (the cheaper

variety that they gave us a taste of is generally used in mixed tropical drinks) has a strong astringent taste, while the aged one is generally drunk straight up the way they gave it to us. About the only difference between this & rum that I could find when reading about it, is that rum is made from molasses & cachaça is made from raw sugar cane juice. Anyway, our guide then showed us several skulls (dolphin, caiman, monkey, & fully dried Piranha (more about them later). Our Brazilian used his machete to crack open a Brazil tree seed pod & cleaned us up some brazil nuts! As I said, he was handy with that machete!!!



Our guide then turned the floor over to the gentleman in the white t-shirt & he spoke a bit. I'm thinking he might be the one that lives there. I looked him up & he's a self-named photographer that seems to have been there 30+ years & is helping to identify the flora & fauna on the acreage. He's said there's over 400 types of trees & they are finding more all the time. He's helping in the local area conservation/education of the region. He's also the teacher of our guide's

English. Seemed to do a good job in that category for sure! The best part of the stop for me was that we saw a hummer – admittedly it just buzzed past our noses with no chance for a picture, but we all saw it. I saw something in the distance that seemed to be a hummer with a huge long tail, but couldn't get close to it. Heard parakeets in the trees, but couldn't spot them (I definitely needed you Michele!!!). On our way back to the bus, everyone was carefully stepping around this little bug on the road in front of our bus. It tickled me – at home someone would have gone out of their way to step on it, but here, it was treated with respect & care!



On the drive back to the ship, there were several things I noted of interest. First – in the center of the above left photo, there is a metal box on a pole – most houses & businesses had something very similar. It appears to be a trash receptacle. Lots of places had several plastic wrapped bags of trash stacked in them. In the afternoon’s excursion, we saw a trash truck picking up trash along the street (this is Sun on Christmas Eve mind you!), & our guide said the mayor

wanted to make sure things were cleaned up for Christmas! Then I spotted this big bird – some sort of parrot? My new camera is only a 12X zoom (better than previous, but still not great!). About the only thing I saw other than tons of vultures! But this guy was as big as the vultures! Also started spotting lots of small stands selling watermelons. They were huge melons & looked really good!



We were soon back at our ship for a quick lunch & then off on another excursion. I'm going to stop this report now & try to get it sent. We've been warned that we'll lose internet for a couple of days.

So Merry Christmas & we send love & wishes for good health to you all!!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George

pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Friday, December 29, 2017 10:03 AM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise - #4 - Continuing Santarem

Good Afternoon Everyone! We've had a fabulous time in the Amazon so far! Let's continue!



After our morning tour, we had a quick lunch up in the buffet, then when we were back in our room, we realized that we could see Santarem's Meeting of the Waters from our balcony. I'll write more about that later, but it is an interesting phenomenon & we were pleased that we could see it from our balcony.



Our afternoon tour was an included tour by Viking and just a Panoramic of the city. Midway between Belem at the mouth of the Amazon (still to come) and Manaus (at the ending point of cruise ship navigation), about 500 miles from each. It was established by the Portuguese in 1661, so is one of the oldest cities of the Amazonian basin, with a population of about 300,000. Besides the public docks where our ship was anchored, there is a private dock belonging

to Cargill that specifically ships soy beans. That's a controversial issue as the environmentalist believe it is encouraging the stripping of the rain forest for growing fields. So far capitalism has won out. There were huge areas along the shore line for collection of the soy beans & for different vegetable markets that were closed for the afternoon – a little early due to the Holidays.



First stop was the Church of our Lady of Conception. There was a thriving crafts market in front of the Cathedral. I believe our guide said it was one of the oldest buildings in Santarem, but couldn't confirm that on line. It's main claim to fame is a beautiful Mother Mary statute that is used during an annual ceremony where it leads a procession to the other cathedral in town, the San Salvadore (we didn't go there).

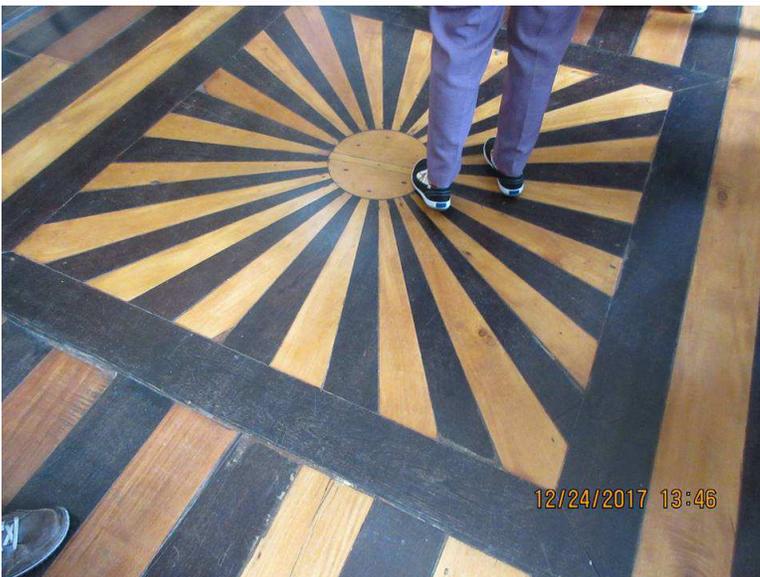


Next stop was about a 5 minute drive along the shoreline to a Tourist Information Center to view the Meeting of the Waters of Tapajos River & the Amazon. This one is not as well known as the one we'll see in Manaus, but still important to Santarem. The strange phenomenon with the waters staying separate is to do with both temperature, PH, & sediment in the rivers.



Next we stopped at the City Museum & Municipal Building, a historic building from 1853. The entry room had photos of all the previous mayors. We went straight to “the Mayor’s office,” no longer used as such, but luckily for us – it was air conditioned!!!! Now is a good time to mention that it was HOT HOT HOT & most buildings or buses were not air

conditioned. It was actually only in the 80's, but the humidity is so very high, we were melting. The air conditioning in this room was awesome. Our guide showed us all the flags & noted that the current Mayor looks a bit like George H.W. Bush! We were looking for anything to ask her about to let us stay in the room to cool off!

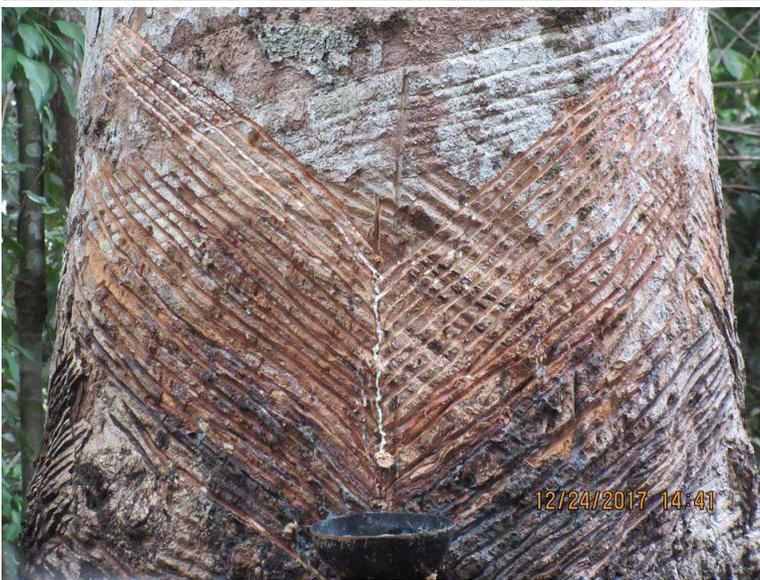


We continued on through the building to see prehistoric relics from local excavations & made note of the gorgeous floor that is from the original building construction. The last stop in the museum was the Court room. Originally, the jail was in this building also, so the folks were tried & either allowed to leave or were taken across the hall & thrown in jail! Even the paintings on the wall are original. Pretty impressive for things to have survived in this heat & humidity for almost 175 years!



We continued our drive along the river bank for a while – the city is known for it's miles of white sand beaches. Amazing to me, I never once thought of white sand beaches along the Amazon! Must admit we didn't see many folks on the beach or in the water. Swimming/playing in the Amazon still seems rather an odd activity to me! Then we turned onto BR163 – didn't confirm this, but understood it to be a 800 mile long road constructed to connect Santarem to parts of

southern Brazil. Unfortunately according to both our day's guides, it is virtually un navigable in the wet season & if you elected to drive it, you couldn't be on any type of time constraint. At least half of it is totally unpaved. And what is called paved was not up to any passable standard. On our drive, we passed this government built housing area for the "poorer" residents. Tiny little prefab homes (they did have running water & electricity), most had 1 or 2 bedrooms for the standard size families of 2 adults & 8 children!!!! Pretty tough living!



After about 45 minutes down BR163, we arrived at our last stop for the day, Casa de Farinha, an agricultural flour mill that has been developed for tourism to include Cashew trees, Rubber trees with an explanation about removal of the latex (this one was a bit more complete than this mornings show), & a tasting table for many of the local fruits. Piecing together some of the many stories about the rubber tree, it seems that the initial riches from the discovery of the

rubber trees was a short lived “gold” rush when an English officer managed to “steal” 72,000 seeds & transport them back to England & successfully plant them in Malaysian farms. After that, it was much cheaper to harvest the rubber trees over there, than the wild ones grown here in Brazil. And then of course, the industrial synthetic latex was developed.



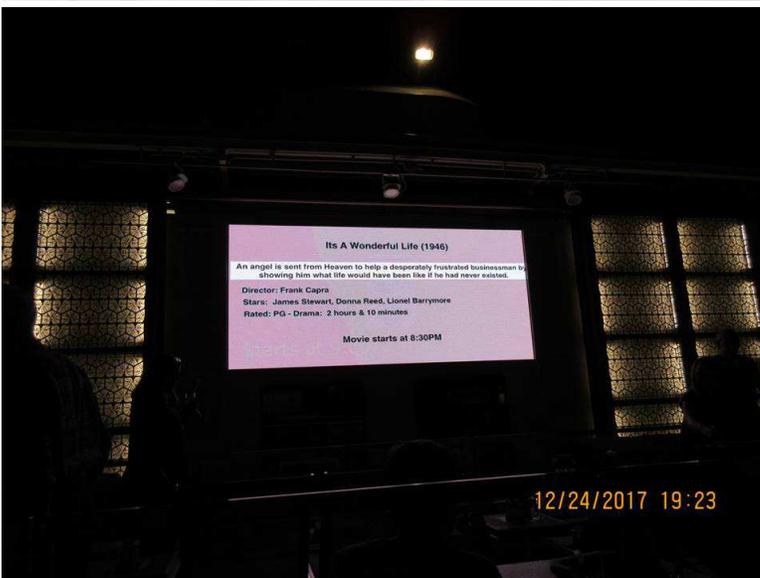
Next was a really interesting demonstration of the production of tapioca – starting with the collection & peeling of the cassava root, the crushing of the root, & then the squeezing of the pulp in this huge Chinese finger wrap to extract the poisonous liquid.



The production continues with drying the pulp, tossing it to force it into those tiny little pearls we are familiar with, & then we were offered tastings of several products locally made from tapioca. Tapioca was sent to Europe from Brazil & is still a common export. Not much nutritional value, but useful for a thickening agent. I only tried the “tapioca cake” and was not too impressed. The Brazilian coffee, however; was yummy!



I couldn't resist a photo of one of the zillions of chickens running around the farm – they were the oddest, scrawniest chickens I have ever seen. On the ride back to the ship, I got tickled at the things I spotted for sale in the little local stores – a column of Rubber Ducky floats for example!! For bathtubs? Swimming pools? In the Amazon?????? As we passed the Government housing on the way back, there were tons of folks that I assume were waiting at the bus stop? Interestingly enough, they were all waving & smiling at us!



Back on board, we enjoyed Christmas Eve dinner with our ship board friends, Tom & Elaine Bonner from Asheville, NC. Then we watched the original 1946 production of It's a Wonderful Life up on the pool deck. One for the record books – watching Clarence get his wings on Christmas Eve, cruising the Amazon! During the movie, we saw what we

thought was a bat fly in & around the screen. After the movie, when we were heading back to our cabin, we found this HUGE moth on the floor. I should have put my finger up to it for size relationship – it was easily 4” across!

So that’s the end of our second full day in/on the Amazon! I’ll continue tomorrow!

Merry Christmas again & Lots of love,

Pamela & George

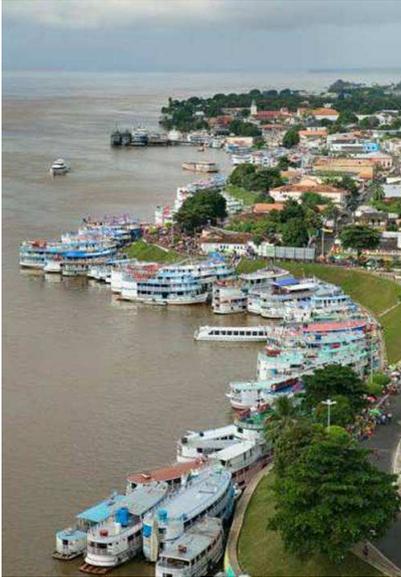
www.gphurd.net

pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Friday, December 29, 2017 7:58 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #5 - Parintins, Brazil

Good Afternoon Everyone,

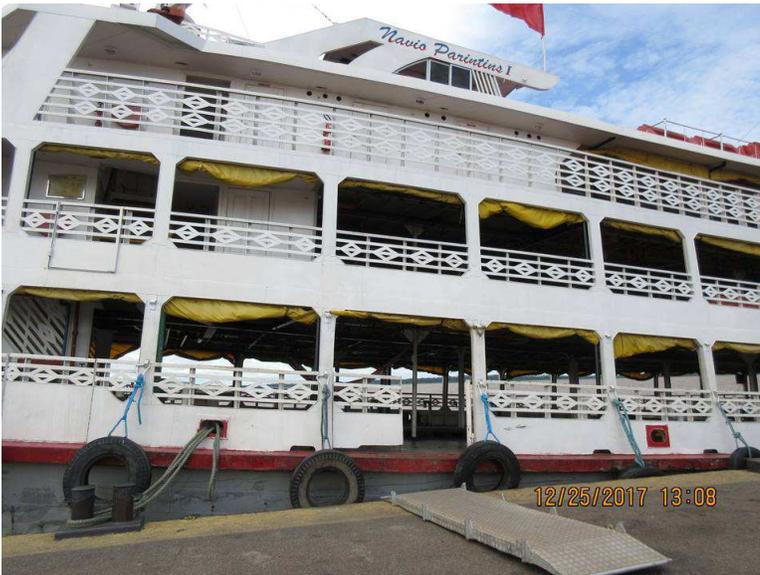
Hope today's travelogue finds you happy & healthy! Today we continue our Amazon adventure with a visit to Parintins, Brazil. Time's awasting! Let's get to it!



We anchored early morning, but George & I had asked for the afternoon show. The only thing offered today was a Viking Included Tour of a Brazilian Carnivale type show in the little city of Parintins, Brazil. I assume this show was the only reason we stopped here at all. I downloaded the above pictures of the little city – population of the entire region is a little over 100,000. The port terminal is just a little to the lower right of the church in the center.



We couldn't dock at the port this time (don't know if we're too big or if it was just too busy because it was Christmas Day?), so we had to tender. Wasn't too bad, main problem is that it's really hot on the tenders – practically no air circulation! But it was short, only about a 15 minutes ride.



One of the first things I noticed when we got out of our tender was one of the Amazon River “taxi’s.” They are constantly shuttling up & down the Amazon mostly taking locals between Manaus & Belem. In the second picture, it is a blow up to show you the hammock. I’ll try to get a better shot later, but the interesting thing is that folks bring on their own hammocks, sometimes waiting at the dock for hours to board first so that they can string up their own hammock for the 3 – 5 day trip. One guide said that you have to make sure & take everything you own with you if you go to the toilet, because theft on board is pretty common. There are only 1 or 2 cabins, folks string their hammocks, up to 300 in a row. One of our guides said “you don’t want to plan this as a honeymoon trip – you’ll be sleeping side by side with all the locals – absolutely no privacy! The last picture is just to show you how far out the ship was from the dock.



We walked across a short bridge to a terminal building with the now common “native” artifacts & some local artistry on the walls.



We had arrived about an hour before time for the show, so we took a bicycle taxi tour. Only \$10 each, it was fun 45 minute trip around the town. We passed by the church from the overhead view & on down the main street to pass a local market (pretty much closed on Christmas afternoon).



There were cute colorful statues depicting much of the local flora & fauna. Took pictures just in case we never see the real thing!!! The streets were almost totally deserted except for the other cruise ship passengers being chauffeured around. We kept passing each other – the drivers seemed to be playing their own games & we'd turn down different

streets, only to show up ahead or behind the same folks! At one point, we were lined up 3 abreast & racing down the street. The drivers were paying no attention to stop signs or signal lights. No incidents with accidents that I heard of!



Other than the pretty local cemetery with all the hungry looking vultures hanging around....,



the most interesting thing was the huge parking lot. We're thinking, what the heck? In the sleepy little town – what's the purpose of this. It's got really amazing decorations all around



it!



When we got to the other side, our taxi “driver” handed us a flyer to read about this building. Apparently this city is known throughout Brazil (world?) wide for an annual festival called Boi-Bumba. It is a carnival style 3 day festival that takes place in this stadium that seats 35,000!!! It is a competition involving 2 teams that tell the folk lore story of a bull that was killed for it’s tongue & then is brought back to life by a Shaman. The audience votes for the winner after they have both told the story with costumes, floats, & dance. That’s what we were there to see, but on a small scale.



Our only other major stop was to see what I understand to be a practice arena for the Blue team of Boi Bumba. What is rather interesting about this small stadium is that Coca Cola, as a supporter of the team uses a blue label since red is not allowed there!



Back at the Convention Center, we said goodbye to our Bicycle power & wandered around the market for a few minutes. The dried piranha were quite interesting & there was a guy hand painting pictures with spray paint & fingers. Didn't buy anything, but sure interesting to look at!!!!



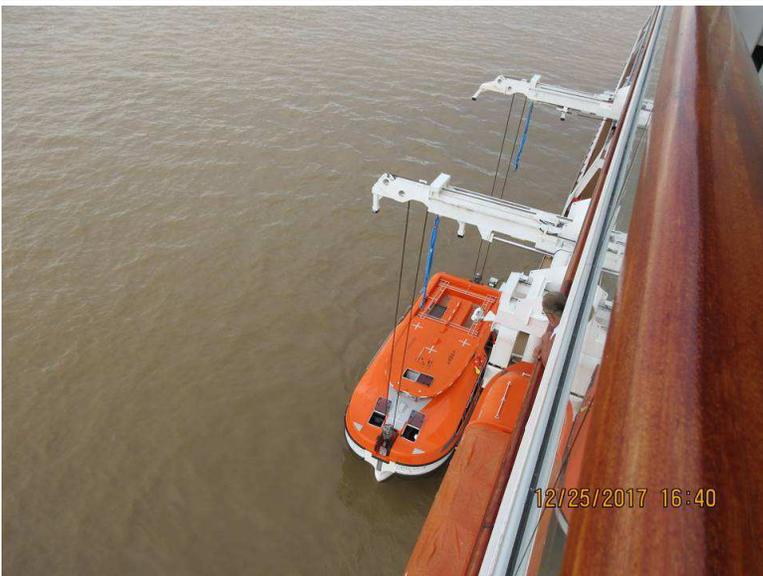
The performance was AMAZING!!!! We had dilly dallied so long that we were at the back of the theater & it didn't have elevated seats, so our view was not perfect, but even so, it was an incredible production. Can't imagine what the annual real thing is like. The band played at high energy for the entire hour with not a single break. The huge floats were brought out & pulled from side to side. There were 4 girls that had the huge headdresses. Incredible.



George's pictures on his cell phone were better than mine with my camera, but regardless, it is impossible to let you know how awesome the performance was. Wish there had been a narration in English to understand exactly what things meant – there were zillions of costume changes, at least 10 humongous floats & the singers were going full bore.



The grand finale was amazing. They invited folks up to dance with them, but we didn't bother to try & fight the crowds. It was enough to see it!



It was a quick & easy tender ride back to the ship & we watched them bring up the tenders to store them for next time! There was a funny situation. Supposed to be the 3 girl singers perform tonight, but one apparently was sick, so

instead, our Cruise Activity Manager announced that he had been assigned to give his life story in the entertainment world. We went because there wasn't anything else to do, right? Turns out that he is AMAZING! He had a wonderful story about how his father kept insisting that he should be a singer, but the voice teachers kept turning him down. His father worked in the Pentagon & knew Neil Armstrong & apparently Neil used his influence to encourage the 10th voice teacher to take him on & he became an amazing singer!!! He started out in Gospel singing & then went on to other venues. He was in Kenny Loggins band & also sang on Broadway for 10 years. Just incredible. I venture to say it was the best entertainment we'll experience on this ship for sure & maybe on any ship! Made for a very very special Christmas Day.

Enough for now! I'll continue with our full day in Manaus tomorrow!

Sending love & hugs!

Pamela & George

www.gphurd.net

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Saturday, December 30, 2017 8:11 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #6 - Manaus, Brazil, 1st day

Good Morning Everyone!



Our Amazon Adventure just keeps getting better & better! Today, we reached Manaus – the end of the Cruise Ship Navigable river. We'll over night here, allowing us 3 separate excursions for check out the area! Many folks that experience the Amazon come from the opposite direction – Rio Negro & Rio Solimoes from Columbia & Peru, rivers that are still included in the overall name of the Amazon River.



On our cruise into Manaus, we crossed over the Meeting of the Waters. This area in Manaus is a UNESCO World Heritage Area, not only because of the phenomenon that can even be seen from space, but because almost all the Amazonian critters can be found in this area. We picked our excursions for this stop specifically to try to see some of them.

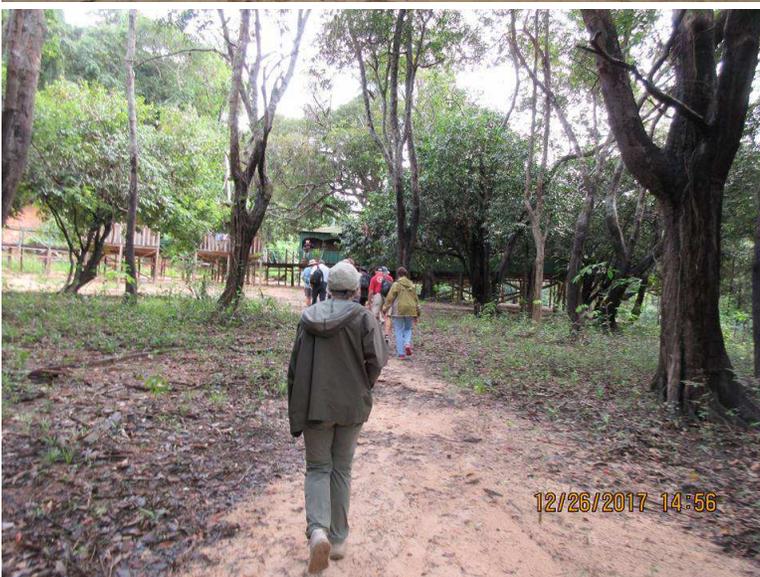


We were having lunch as we pulled up to the Public dock in Manaus (a city of about 2 million & established in 1669 in the state of Amazonas). The dock is floating as the river can rise up to 100' from the dry season to the wet. I think I've mentioned before that we are just at the beginning of the wet, so the river is still quite low. Both the dock & the road across to the dock can change to match the river. Quite impressive. There were dancers there to greet our boat & the excursion busses were there waiting for us also.



We boarded a boat for our first excursion & headed out west on the Rio Negro towards the Rio Negro bridge. Almost immediately we saw the famous pink dolphins, but they were too fast for me & I couldn't get any pictures. The bridge, according to several different guides we had here, is quite controversial for the local people. We couldn't even confirm if it's a free bridge or if there is a toll to use it. We never saw much traffic on it. One guide said it cost over 1 Billion

dollars & just crossed from Manuas into the jungle! One guide said it was a wonderful advantage for many people, cutting down their time to get to Manuas by a day or more. Interesting. All that mentioned it were extremely upset with the cost. Apparently the same company had built one in Belem that was 10 times as long, for a third of the cost. Didn't spend much time researching it on the internet. I do believe it is the only bridge across the Amazon.



After about a 30 minute boat ride, we hopped off on a white sandy beach. I must admit I was flabbergasted at the number of white sandy beaches along the Amazon. I just never imagined that. I think when envisioning a rain forest, I was thinking dark muddy slimy ground. It was a marvelous eye opener! We walked about 5 minutes through an open forested area to several quaint cottages. Turns out that they are cabins that you can rent for a night or longer. Didn't check on costs or get to look inside any of them, but they had electricity & running water.



The had a beautiful Macaw & a Amazon Green Parrot for us to photograph, Wish we could have stayed there longer, I suspect there were lots of birds in the area.



But we had things to do & places to go!! So off we went into the jungle. First up the stairs. It was pretty funny, we had gotten a letter warning of the “severe” physical requirements for this excursion, called Jungle Survival. We were expecting it to be quite extreme. Well, the stairs were the extent of the exercise – otherwise, there was less than a half mile total walking & that was quite slow on a fairly level easy walking track.



The main goal of the excursion was to point out things you could do & plants to use for survival if you were lost in the rain forest. They said you could drink the water from the river (although they didn't recommend it) and let us try some that had been treated & had been made into a tea using a local plant that would protect you from malaria. As they

warned, it was extremely bitter, but what the heck, I'd do that rather than take pills if I lived here. They also showed us how to shake out new palms leaves to make a shelter & how to weave the leaves into little crowns. Not really sure how the crowns would help our survival but they were cute! Then he showed us a plant that had a sap that burned with an intense incense smell that would help keep away insects. They used batteries (from the guides cell phone!) to make a fire. Speaking of insects, now would be a good time to mention that I never used insect spray at all. George sprayed some before our walk in Santarem, but since then, neither of us used it. Not sure if there are fewer bugs at this time of year? Or if they had sprayed the areas for the tourists? Whatever, there were not many bugs. Minnesota had by far more bugs than we have experienced here in the Amazon!!! Amazing!!

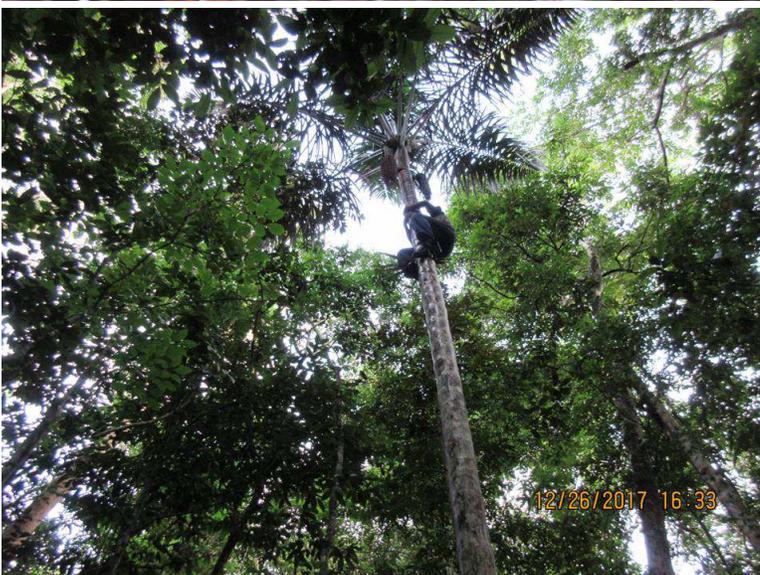


One of the neatest things they showed us was a "water vine." It was a vine easily recognized because of its really strange flaky bark. He said others would work too, but this one was easy to spot. Anyway, you cut it on the bottom & then on the top & tilt it. A length of about 5' would provide about a cup of water!!!! Several folks allowed him to dribble it into their mouths. We did not! Ha! Maybe if I was desperate, but not when I had a bottle of water in my pocket! Those that did said it was good tasting water. I'll take their word for it! Then he found another palm tree to shake the leaves out. That was cool! They built a couple of animal traps. The first one was a bow & arrow type thing – pretty darn lame – the arrow might have scared a rabbit, but certainly couldn't have killed an armadillo which was what

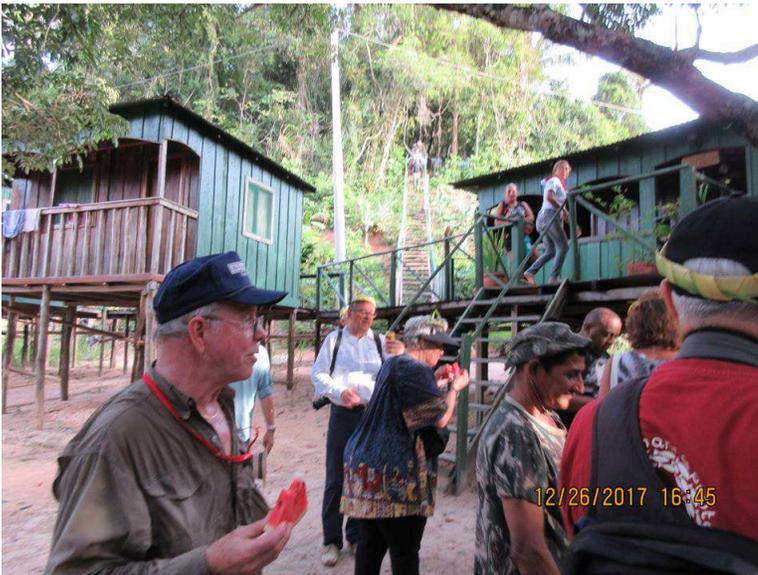
they said they were targeting! Then also set a trap that would drop a noose around an unsuspecting animal. That one looked possible, but my picture was not so good!



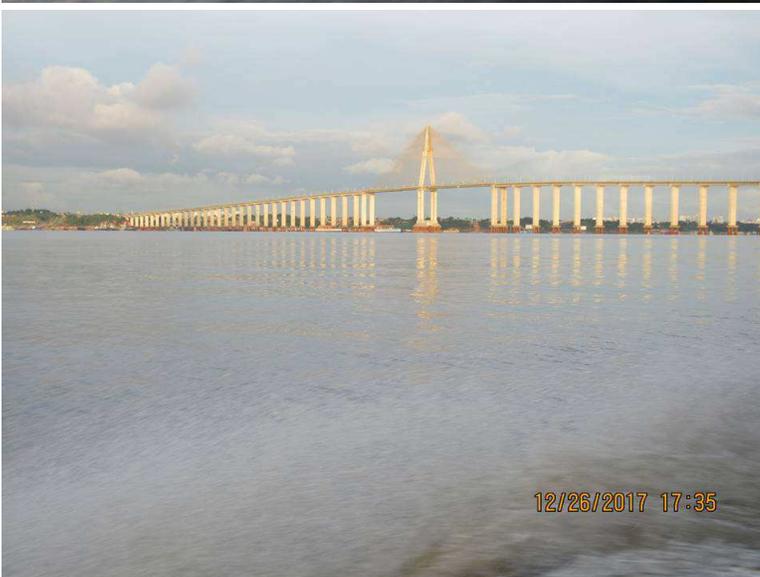
We got to see the Bullet Ant again. This time, the ants literally came boiling out from the base of the tree when he tapped on it with his machete. Still makes my skin crawl. There were hundreds of them. Looked like a sci fi horror movie! Those things are wicked!



While our lead guide made some cute little creatures out of palm fronds, our asst guide put together some loops for his ankle & scaled a tall straight Palm. He went up the tree like a monkey! Don't try this at home kids!!



The excursion ended with a taste of local beer, the sugar cane liquor, & some fresh fruit. Then a slow walk across the wide sandy beach. The one other interesting fact was the actual color of the water. This is called the Rio Negro (Negro being black in Spanish & Portuguese), but the color was really reddish – almost like a dark red tea. There were lots of tiny little minnows in the water, but they didn't come out in the picture.



The cruise back to the Viking Sea was lovely. It was that perfect light – before sunset, but everything has that beautiful glow. It was like we were gliding across glass. Didn't see any more dolphins, but tons of birds – Cormorants (the everywhere in the world bird), Egrets, other water birds that I'm not sure of. The bridge looked really pretty (still no traffic on it!).



Back on board & cooled down from the heat/humidity, we had dinner in one of the specialty restaurants – Manfredi’s (Italian). The service was wonderful, but we’re partial to our meals in The Restaurant where we join our new friends Elaine & Tom & have our favorite wait staff! The evening entertainment was a local youth group that performed lots of dances from the different Brazilian regions. It was another perfect day! We even escaped the rain again!!!

I’ll continue tomorrow! We’re counting down to our anniversary on New Year’s Eve!

Love you all & sending hugs!

Pamela & George

pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Monday, January 1, 2018 8:49 AM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #7 - Manaus, Brazil, 2nd Day

Hello Everyone! Hope you're getting a nice break for the Holiday Season & putting it to good use somehow! We have 2 excursions today & there was much to see & do! Let's go!

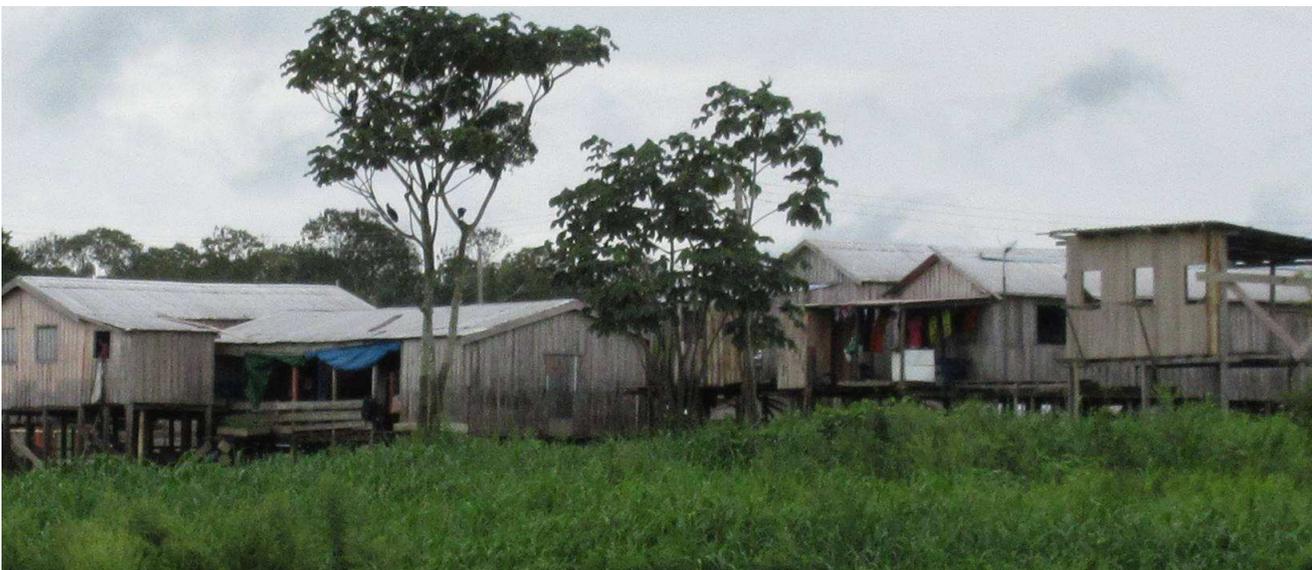


We walked off the Viking Sea & straight onto one of the small river taxi's for our morning excursion. It's main description was about getting close to the official Meeting of the Waters, but our guide said that first we would go to Lake Januari for a motorized canoe ride. This time we turned left out of the dock area (I think that was east?). We could see the Rio Negro bridge in the distance. The town of Manuas looked much larger going this direction. We soon came

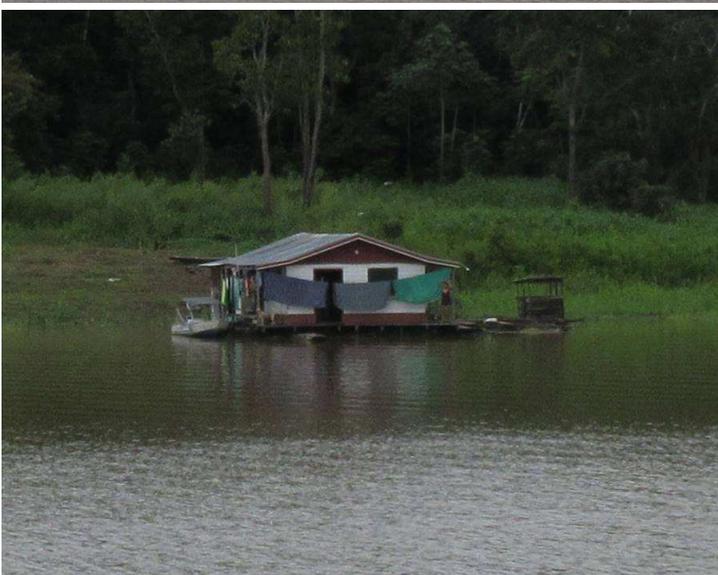
to a color change in the water, but our guide called this the “fake” Meeting of the Waters. He said some of the unscrupulous tour boats would bring folks here & tell them it was the “Official” Meeting of the Waters, but this was just the waters coming from Lake Januari & was caused from the boat traffic stirring up the bottom of the tributaries that were shallower.



We met another water taxi with hammocks strung up. He said it could have been coming from as far away as Columbia – they were constantly coming & going. As we turned off the Rio Negro into the smaller tributaries connecting the river to the lake, we saw tiny little houseboat looking things floating in the tall grasses. He said they were fishing. He said just last week they had not been able to navigate this particular channel – the water was too low. We had to just creep along. He said last week, the motorized canoes had to come to the Rio Negro & pick folks up, which had taken a lot longer. As the wet season progresses, the water will be higher & higher. We saw dolphins jumping all over, but I couldn't catch a photo and couldn't tell if they were grey or pink. There really are 2 specific species. The pink ones are born greyish & get pinker as they get older. They told us that much of the sea life here in the Amazon basin is truly salt water creatures from when the Amazon connected with the Pacific ocean millions of years ago. But the Andes pushed up between & the Amazon's flow changed directions to flow to the Atlantic.



We started passing some homes. He said these were stationery homes & when the water rose above the first level (see the water marks?), they would normally just build a higher level floor to sleep on. Talk about mold????? And he said you would often times find yourself sleeping with all sorts of critters...snakes, caiman, frogs, etc. These are definitely considered lower class housing!



As we got into the lake, we started seeing the “ritzier” neighborhoods. These were floating homes! As the water rose, so did the homes. He said the main disadvantage of these homes would be if you hadn’t securely fastened them somewhere, as the current changed or if there was a storm with winds, you could wake up in a different place! He said

if you didn't like your neighbor, you could dislodge him & let him float away! There are no government restrictions on these homes & you can tie up anywhere you can stake a spot, preferably where there is some shelter from the weather & where you can fish off your porch. There were actually floating school houses, but I didn't spot one. And floating school busses to pick kids up for school!



We arrived at the restaurant where we transferred to our motorized canoes for a little more up close & personal views of the waterway.



Almost immediately after setting out, our young boat driver spotted this beautiful hawk. Then a couple of young boys pulled alongside, trying to get on board. One had a small sloth & one had a small caiman. Our driver bumped them off immediately, while they managed to climb on board one of our neighboring boats. We were pleased with the quick reactions of our driver, but we did enjoy seeing the sloth!



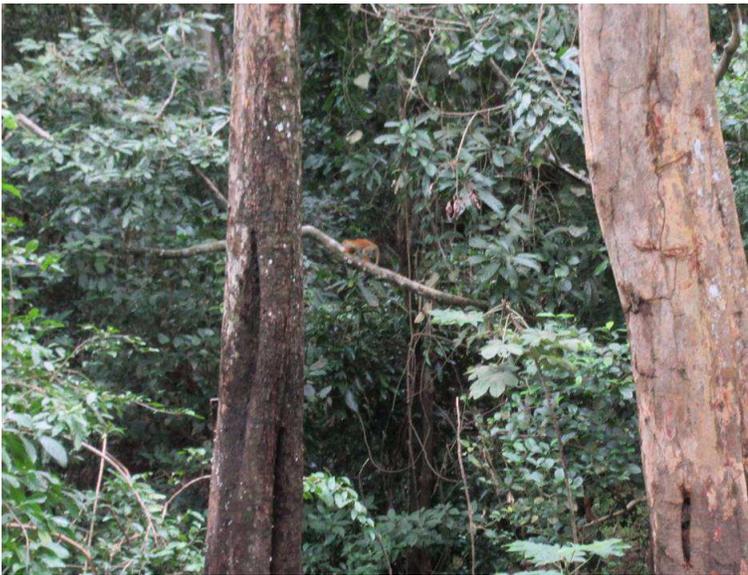
We saw lots more of the floating buildings (a restaurant???). Another would be boarder was holding up a HUGE snake!! Anaconda???? Glad he didn't try to board us! The kids were all friendly & waved & smiled.



We continued to spot lots of birds – a few we could identify – White Heron, Jacana (similar to the African one!), something on a highline wire!, & a gorgeous kingfisher.



We were told to get out of the canoes & walk through a small crafts shopping area to a boardwalk to go to a pond where there were Victoria Lily pads. We were pleasantly surprised to find the walk to the pond was on a raised boardwalk through more rain forest. We started seeing lots of butterflies.



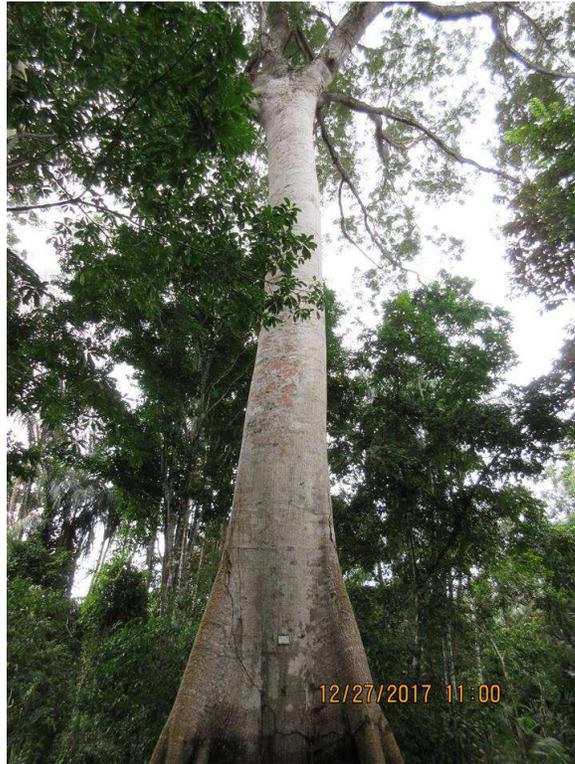
There monkeys playing in the trees. This area of rain forest was really lovely. Our boardwalk was probably 2 stories off the ground. Assume this area would be flooded later in the wet season.



Once we reached the pond, we were enthralled. Could have stayed here for at least an hour. The more we looked, the more we saw. There were birds perched on every stump & caimans were everywhere. Unfortunately, this was considered a very minor part of the day's excursion (not even mentioned in the description!). We only got to spend about 10 minutes here before we had to head back to the boat.



One last shot of the birds & we had to run back down the boardwalk.



We took a short side trip to see a huge tree! We had seen one of these in Santarem & it was half this size & they told us it was 400 years old. If size is relative, this thing must have been 800 years old! It was huge! There was a sign, but we couldn't read it. Had a boardwalk circling it. I believe it's a type of Strangler Fig (we saw a huge one in Australia too!). This one was unbelievable.



The walk out was even better! We got some really close up encounters with the adorable monkeys – I think they were squirrel monkeys & then spotted another really pretty beautiful butterfly!

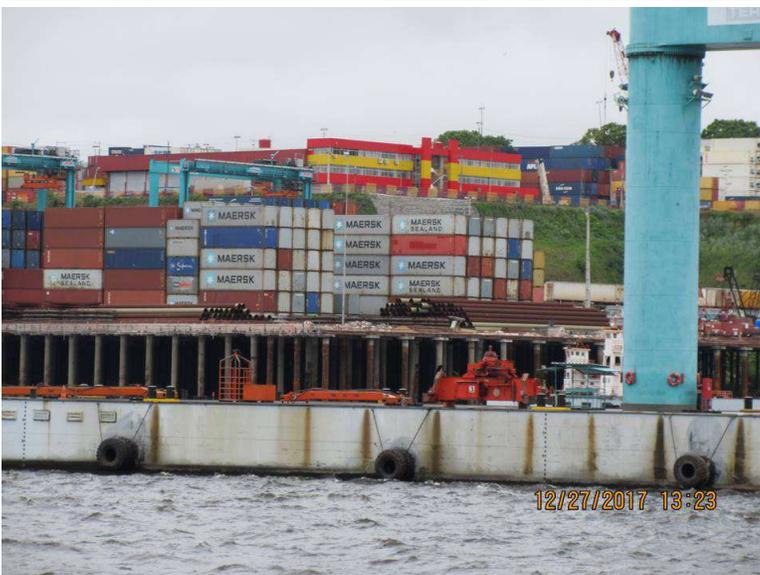


We rushed back to our ship & found a spot on top for our cruise to the Meeting of the Waters. Although it was overcast, we were happy – the sun was a killer when it was out! Spotted a very happy cormorant with a happy catch for lunch. Where are the Chinese fishermen to use it for their own catch?? We spotted this boat like ours with a smaller power boat alongside that looked like it was pushing it. Found out later that it was the Viking Sea group that had left

about 10 minutes before us. Among all kinds of other issues, they had lost their rudder & had to be pushed to where they could meet up with a speed boat to bring them back to the ship! They were also boarded by the police who held them up for an hour doing some kind of search & were also caught in a soaking rain! We were obviously very lucky!!



Long ride out to the real Meeting of the Waters & we cruised up & down along the color division for quite a while. Have to admit that we were ready to head back to the ship at any time! However, this was supposedly the highlight of the tour – after all this is a UNESCO World Heritage site!! Okay, so we've been there done that! Didn't buy a T-Shirt though – I'm sure they are available!



Although the ride back to our ship was rather long, it was interesting & we were still lucky! We could see rain all around us, but we never got any! Once, it looked like it was imminent & everyone moved their chairs under the shelters, but it never got us! We passed a huge ship anchored in the bay. One of the guides told us it had been there 5 years! It was confiscated with drugs – it was from Columbia. And has been anchored there ever since. Just deteriorating! Then another ship that looked like it was a part of the shore! It had grounded many years ago & they could never get it out – so now it is it's own junkyard. Folks come there to cannibalize any ships parts that they might be able to salvage! We also passed the private port (used by lots of Cell phone manufacturers: Nokia, Motorola, etc) – it was busy busy busy! Just in the short time it took us to pass by, we saw the cranes load 3 trucks with containers & saw them drive off! It was amazing how fast the cranes picked up the containers & dropped them onto the trucks!



We passed the Welcome to Manaus sign just before we arrived back at our ship! We were 45 minutes late so, we weren't sure we'd make our next excursion. Apparently the low water had slowed us down considerably! Stay tuned for our afternoon adventure!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George

www.gphurd.net

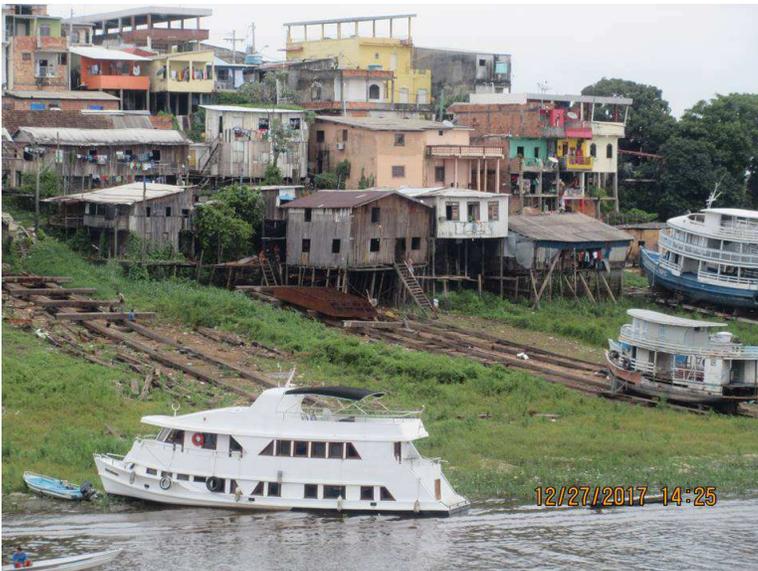
pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Monday, January 1, 2018 5:42 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #8 - Manaus, Brazil, Afternoon & onwards to Belem

Happy New Year Friends & Family! Hope your celebration last night was great fun!! We're on the downhill side of our vacation, but there are still lots more adventures to follow! Let's get to it!



When we got back from our morning excursion, the entire ship's staff was waiting to greet us. Unsure why, but they had champagne to offer us also! Good news, they had held the last excursion bus for us! We had to skip lunch, but since we've been over eating anyway, it didn't hurt us to miss a meal! The ship that had had all the problems came in a few minutes after we did & most of them joined us for the afternoon tour. We took off up the ramp & turned right into the city. There were folks in the street everywhere enjoying the holidays.



There was a huge market place, the Adolpho Lisboa Market Place, just as you left the dock. The fish market was already closed & most of the other stalls were closing. The most interesting thing about it, was that since it was built during the Rubber Boom, they had brought the Eiffel Tower architect over to design it. I was on the wrong side of the bus to get a good picture, but you can get an idea of how beautiful it was. Unfortunately our guide said that it was considered a

really dangerous place by the locals. She said you should never visit there after about 3:30pm. Later during the cruise, we ran into a couple that had gotten mugged that day, about 1:30pm. She had forgotten about a thin gold chain around her neck. They noticed a suspicious looking man looking at it & at first they were keeping an eye on him, but he turned away & started going away from them across the street, so they turned their backs on him. She heard a noise & turned back around to find him rushing her & grabbing for her neck. She fought with him & her husband hit him over the head with his Viking umbrella (broke the umbrella!! Wonder if Viking will charge him?), but 2 other guys came out of nowhere, grabbed the husband & threw him on the ground. Then they all ran. They said there were folks all around, but no one helped or even said a word. Must have been scared of the robbers. She managed to keep her necklace, but the husband was all bruised up. And with a bitter taste in their mouth about this stop! On with the excursion, we stopped at the corner of a bridge to look at a section of the port. Interesting the way they can pull the ships up the embankments when the river is low.

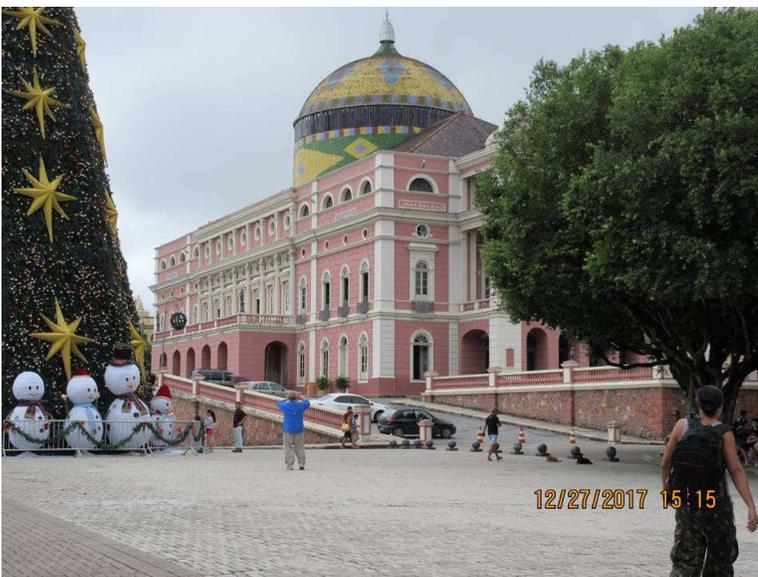


We continued the drive around the city. Seemed to be quite an economic disparity. Individual street vendors were everywhere selling everything. Lots of totally abandoned buildings from the Rubber Baron days, slums mixed in with fancy tiled apartments.



We got out at San Salvadore Square to take a look at the famous Manaus Opera House & the San Salvadore Cathedral. The square itself was fairly clean. Our guide said they used to have beautiful fountain with copper cannons instead of the statute, but the homeless had taken over the fountain to use as their laundry & even set up a clothes line

to hang the clothes to dry! When someone stole the copper off the cannons, they tore it all down & replaced it with the statute.



We continued our walk around the square. The Opera House was gorgeous. Our guide said that all the roads surrounding the Opera House used to be covered in rubber so that the carriages wouldn't make any noise as they

approached. Everything for construction was shipped over from Europe & it was actually built overseas, & shipped in sections to just be assembled here on site. The Opera season only runs for about 3 months & the events held there are free. But she says the locals have no interest in attending, although they are proud of the fact the building is there, they have no interest in the shows, themselves – considering them an interest of the nobility that are no longer here. The beautiful stone walls around the opera house are built from a local stone that is quarried nearby. It was really pretty.



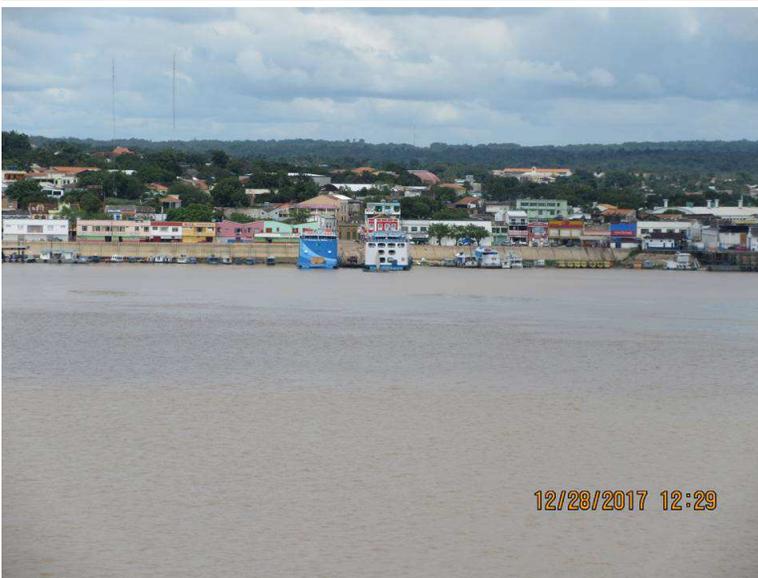
Back on the bus, we drove a little out of town to see the Olympic Soccer stadium built for the Olympics. Unfortunately it sits empty – only used for that event! Such a HUGE waste of money. They have gotten permission to use it again for an upcoming World Cup event. The Water Arena is still used, so that's a plus.



I downloaded this aerial photo of the city. Pretty impressive from the air. Looks a lot dingier from the streets in a bus!



On the drive back towards the Viking Sea, we continued noting the strange disparity – this beautiful clean square separated by lines of shopping stalls from the deserted dilapidated buildings. Certainly wouldn't want to live here!



We said Goodbye to Manaus about 6pm & had 2 days to cruise the river back to its mouth on the Atlantic. We recognized a few things, like when we passed Santarem, but this time we noticed quite a few more little home settlements on the islands in the middle of the river. Apparently most of them will be totally underwater during the height of the wet season. Wonder what happens to all the cattle then?



Enjoyed seeing locals on the river around us as we sail out & still getting to see more of the beautiful butterflies & moths on our walks around the promenade deck!



One of our nights gave us a fabulous sunset on the Amazon. We almost couldn't finish our meal because Elaine & I kept getting up to run to the back & take another picture. Not sure why this one evening was so beautiful. We hadn't had any other colorful sunset since we've been on the Amazon! Well, at least we got this one!



They kept us pretty busy on board for the 2 days. The singing girls & the dancing couple gave us a fun French Bohemian show, Viking sponsored an evening in the Atrium for previous Viking sailors (didn't check anyone's status, so all were invited) & the same 5 Staff Officers entertained us with lies in a game of Balderdash. Laughed a lot & slept late!



Our last stop in/on the Amazon was Belem. It is on the southern mouth of the Amazon. We came out by Macapa the same way we went in, but then sailed south a couple of hundred miles to Belem for a day stop. The best thing about it was that we didn't get rained on. We had to anchor out & use the tenders. Puzzling, since it is such a big city, I'm sure there must have been a dock that was big enough for us & there was not anyone else there, but didn't ask anyone &

they never volunteered any reason why. We were told it had about the same population as Manaus (2+ million) & also like Manaus, it was built during the rubber boom.



We were about 3 hours late getting anchored & set up with the tenders. There had been a medical emergency of some sort & we had had to back track a bit to let someone off to go ashore. But no matter, we got over to the city & met our

guide. To our surprise, it was a walking tour – basically just along the outer edge of the dock area in the market. There was everything you can possibly imagine for sale (even Brazil nuts – imagine that?) & tons & tons of people. It was really hot & humid. We started out with about 30 in our group & were quickly whittled down to 14 & then to about 8 as folks complained of the heat & dropped out.



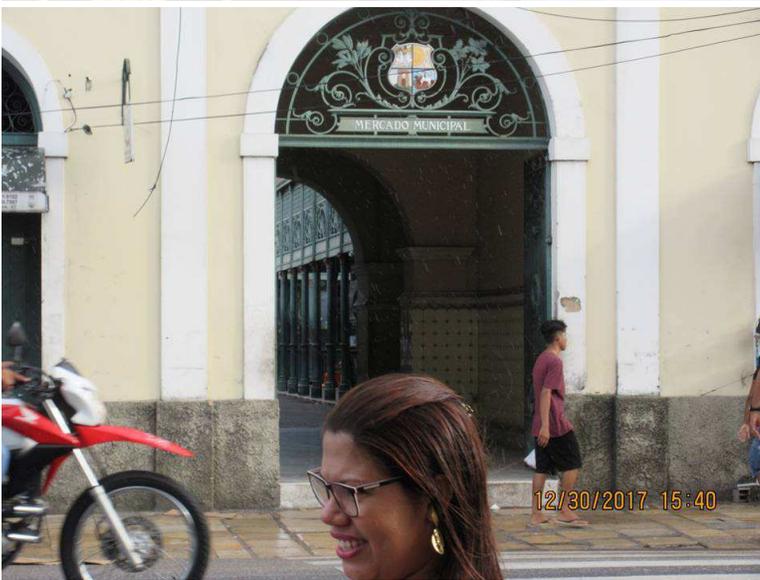
After making our way past the market, we wandered around the fortress (it was closed, so we couldn't go in!), saw the oldest cathedral (locked, so we couldn't see the inside), & were offered to take some pictures of the square across the street – guide said it was full of druggies, so didn't want us to go over there.



Passing by another square – this one right on the harbor, our guide got started on how corrupt their government & judicial system is. I tried to take a few pictures to make the city look presentable.

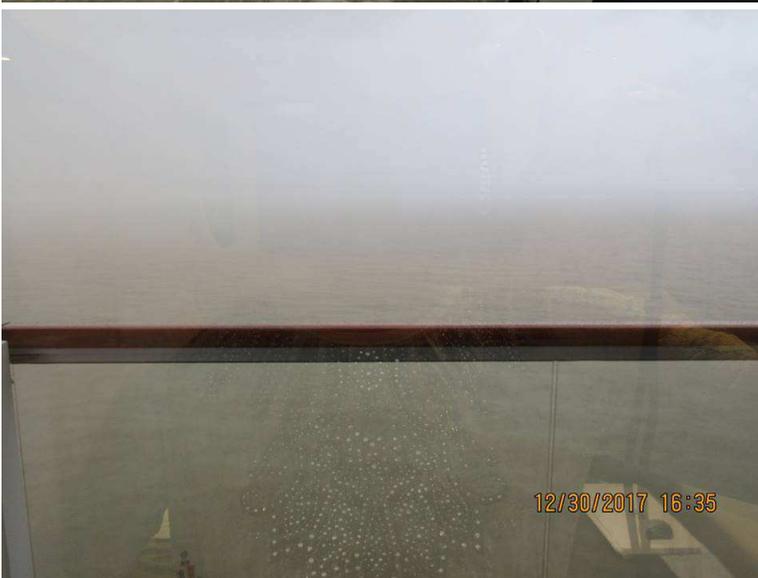


Apparently the cruise line had asked for extra security to try & keep us safe. Still had 2 passengers attacked & robbed. I had to ask our guide to do his talking away from the edge of the square which smelled awful & had vultures tearing into trash all around us. There was a harbor side walk from the fortress, but the Viking excursion girl that was following along with us told the guide he was not to take it because the extra security personnel had left already. It was really pretty depressing.



We walked back through the market to get back to the ship, saw some really interesting things for sale that we didn't recognize. Our guide pointed out another area across the street that he said had the meat market, but we said we would rather not go there! Got really tickled about the phones that were up & down the street! Made us want to call someone/anyone! Haven't seen anything that old in a while! Wonder if they work? By the way, almost everyone would

smile if you smiled at them first. They would be looking at you very solemn, but if you smiled, they gave you a big beautiful smile back!



It was looking pretty rainy as we took the tender back across to the ship, but other than being hot, it was fine. By the time we got up to our cabin & looked out of the balcony, it was pouring! Just missed getting totally soaked! Yippee!!



The weather cleared up & by the time we pulled anchor & cruised away, the city was looking pretty nice! Can't say I ever feel the need to come back here! Could have skipped this port, but the rest of the Amazon was a wonderful experience! That night we were treated to a really fun, action packed ABBA show! Our evening entertainment has been much better than I expected! Now we have our last 2 days at sea, then 4 more ports before it's time to fly back to Mesa

& all our dancing friends!! Starting to get anxious! Next stop is back in the Caribbean! And tomorrow is New Year's Eve!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George

www.gphard.net

pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Friday, January 5, 2018 5:44 AM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #9 - New Year's Eve to Scarborough, Trinidad-Tobago

Good Evening Everyone! Hope 2018 is shaping up nicely for you all! We've got 5 more days' vacation! Let's continue!



We had a wonderful New Year's Eve celebration on board our ship! Dinner was great & they brought us an Anniversary cake!



The ship's celebration was great fun (not as fun as with our Dance friends!). The crazy Cruise Manager showed up as Father Time & brought around our youngest Ship's worker as the New Year's Baby & we all rang the ship's bell & kiss the New Year's Baby (he told us later that he had gone to the cruise staff party – young kids from countries all over and they didn't get it at all – thought he was nuts!!). Then the huge screen in the Atrium counted down to Midnight & had

fireworks. Folks couldn't stay with the time on screen & Gene had to keep getting folks back on time! It was really funny! Balloons fell & the crowd danced in the New Year. There were security guys at each end of the balloon ties – were told that on a ship last year, a passenger cut the ties an hour early, apparently just for menace! Then there was a hour's time change back, so George & I celebrated again in our room alone! Perfect!



New Year's Day was at sea thank goodness! We slept late as usual (we are getting very very spoiled) & after a leisurely morning, we went up to check out the special brunch! As it was mostly seafood, we headed on to the Pool Grill and indulged in a really really good burger! Can't beat that for a New Year's first meal! No Black Eyed peas were evident anywhere!



Our afternoon walk was disturbed by maintenance on both ends of our Promenade deck walk! Darned guys were washing the deck! We just went back & forth & still got in our 2 miles. Not much – but better than nothing! Way behind on my walking! Need to get back to Mesa!! The evening entertainment was an adorable production by all the entertainment staff about traveling. Really cute & the interactive screen is cool! It took place at an airport gate & the flight was delayed. Hope that is not a prediction for our flight home!



Thought I'd bring up the map again to give you an idea of where we are now. Back into the Caribbean & quickly making our way north towards Puerto Rico & our final stop!



Our entry into the harbor of Scarborough, Tobago of the little Republic Trinidad-Tobago was very pretty. Haven't stopped here before. We arrived about noon.



Our excursion today was to walk in another rainforest (the Amazon continues? Apparently there is a theme here?). The Tobago Forest Preserve is the oldest protected rainforest in the Western Hemisphere. It was designated a protected preserve in 1776 by Britain. This was our first excursion to tie up with Ted & Nancy (long time Mesa dance friends!). Have met with them several times to exchange stories, but mostly focusing on different activities. Anyway,

Phillip, our guide was of India Indian descent & had a really fun sense of humor. He was full of information & just talked non-stop. He was determined to give us a complete history of the islands & their final historic claim to independence (after 33 different national takeovers!), but we kept interrupting him with questions on local information & animals & birds & food, etc. He would answer the questions, then would start in again on another political battle. Looking out the windows as we drove, we were impressed that it was much cleaner than places we had seen in Brazil; however, the state of the electrical wires showed that it is still an undeveloped country!



It was about a 45 minute drive along the Atlantic side to a little community called Roxborough before we cut across the center of the island towards the Rainforest. Lovely beaches, but not much white sand – more the dull volcanic coast line. But definitely a beautiful green! It seemed we were to get lucky again with a beautiful mostly sunny day. Temps were in the low 80's.



After a short potty stop at the Visitor's Center, we arrived at the Rain Forest. There was a pickup truck full of galoshes for us to rent at \$4 per person. At Phillip's insistence, we all rented them – they were a bit chunky, but once we got on the trail, we were very very Happy that we had listened to his advice! Nancy shows off her fancy hat – gift from Linda Sparks! Way to go Linda! Nancy was fighting off robbers left & right that wanted that hat!



It was interesting that this was our 3rd Rainforest hike (other 2 in the Amazon) & this was the first one that it was actually WET in the RAINforest!!! And it was really really wet! But again, we were very lucky because it never actually rained on during our tour! As we had driven up the mountain, it had looked more & more threatening, but never did anything! It

did get really dark for a while, but that seemed to just be the canopy of the forest. This walk was through a mountainous ravine area & we have a creek down below & rather steep banks beside us.



Phillip immediately started pointing out holes in the bank along our walk. First he pointed out some rather large (2 – 3' diameter) holes that he said was made by an indigenous bird of Tobago – a Blue Crowned Mot Mot. They dig tunnels –

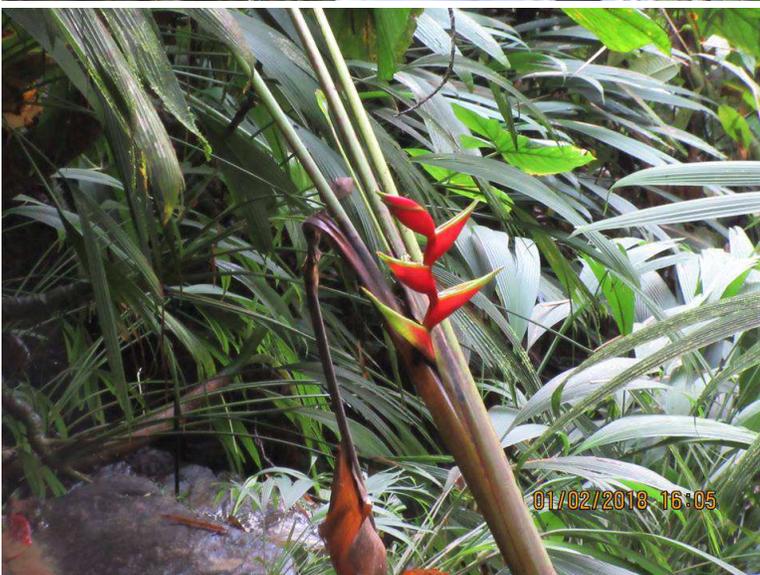
up to a meter in length, into the banks & lay their eggs at the end of the tunnel. The other thing he was looking for was the smaller holes of the Trapdoor Spider. Then he started pointing out the different hanging vines & many of the trees that make up the high canopy of the forest. He had tons of info & it went in one ear & out the other.



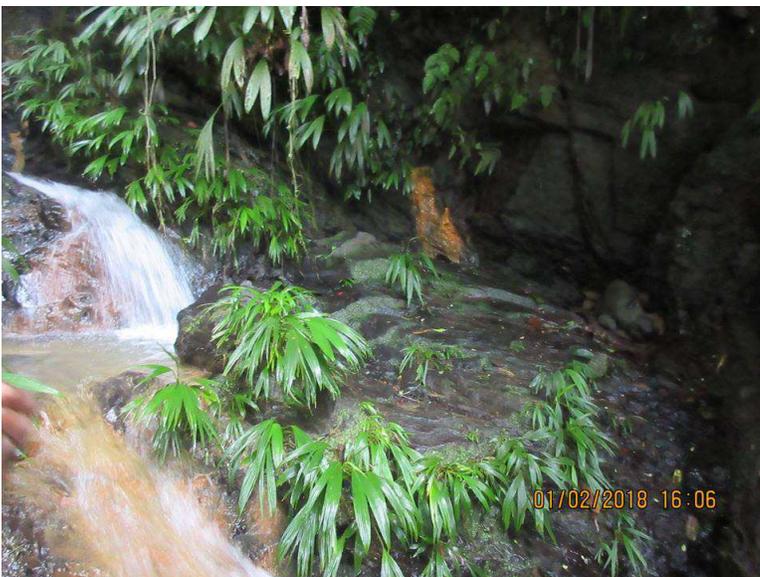
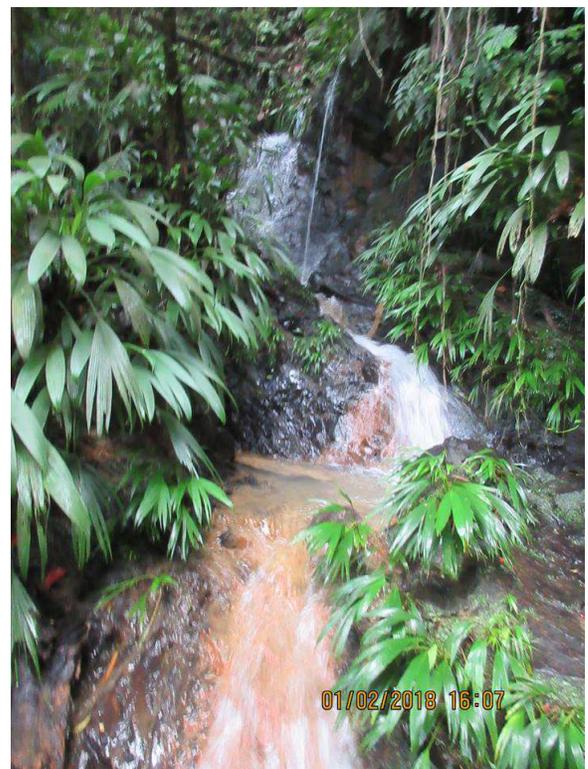
After continuing along the muddy path a bit (ducking under fallen trees) & slipping & sliding up & down rocky sections, we came to a pretty large stream. He pulled out some pellets & sprinkled them into the water to show us these 4 to 5' long fishes that darted out to eat. You can just barely see them in the photo, they were sort of like minnows, but had a bulbous head. He found a Trapdoor spider hole, but I couldn't get a picture of it. He lifted the door & I was relieved that the spider didn't pop out. You can google it & see a video of one popping out of it's hole. They are quite small, but would still have been startling!



We were thrilled to see the Blue Crowned Mot Mot (specifically the Trinidad Mot Mot) posing for us. He was not really that far away & was sitting as still as could be, but I still downloaded a good picture so you could see what he looked like. Seemed quite large to be burrowing in a tunnel in the bank! Especially with the long tail!! And he didn't look muddy at all! Got to hear his little oot-doot call also! Interestingly enough, our guide was not the spotter, I happened to be standing next to the man that saw him & we were both amazed that he was just sitting so still on the vine. Now I've read that that is quite common!



Other than some bright spots of colorful flowering plants & some interesting stands of Bamboo, we didn't spot anything interesting.



We had started out moving very slowly, but after some of the groups that had passed us starting coming back heading to the bus, our guide decided that we needed to move out. The main trail ended at a small waterfall, so about half our group made it there, but only at the expense of hurrying there & back to the bus. Personally I was glad that we had gone slowly at first – I believe we saw much more.



The drive back to the ship was uneventful, other than seeing the Trinidad-Tobago currency (called TT). Tried to get some coins for my brother, but neither guide had any & we never went to a gift shop. It was pretty & the exchange rate was about 7 TT's to a US Dollar. One funny thing...Phillip continued trying to finish up the history of Tobago. We all

continually interrupted. Just after he finally finished (we were all yawning by this time), he mentioned that he had a survey from his government that he'd like us to fill out, commenting on his day's guidance. I spoke up & said – "We just all wish you had talked a bit about Tobago's history!!" That got a few laughs. Luckily he had a sense of humor! Noticed a huge Welcome to Scarborough sign painted on a roof at the harbor. That was nice. The city was already lit up beautifully as we left the dock. Goodbye Tobago!



I haven't taken a lot of food pictures on this cruise – not that it hasn't been good, just not particularly pretty, but I thought this evening's lamb chops looked scrumptious. Tasted good too! Then the evening's show was Lee Bradley, a European Tenor. I was laughingly taking bets on how old he would be compared to his photo! Not too bad – probably 20 years since he's changed his picture! But he was quite good & did a mix of opera & pop done in opera style. He even

had a sense of humor!! And that ended the day! Tomorrow will be another port! Only 3 more stops before it's time to fly back to dance again!!

More soon!

Sending love & hugs!

Pamela & George

pam@gphurd.com

From: Pamela Hurd <pam@gphurd.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2018 7:56 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #10 - St Lucia

Hi Guys,

Still having fun while watching the days/hours count down. Let's not waste any time!



Arrival around 7am in St Lucia. Looks like it will be a beautiful day. Took a couple of pictures through the balcony door, then stepped outside & my camera immediately fogged up! This cruise has taken us through some pretty heavy humidity! I'll never complain about Texas again! We were here once before, but our snorkeling cruise was canceled for bad weather & we had spent the day in port at the dock's shopping center! BORING!



We have 2 excursions scheduled for today. The first is an included excursion to give us a overview of the island. Only 3 ships docked this morning. The drive along the water shows us some gorgeous well maintained homes. We are not in a 3rd World Country anymore!



We stopped at a gorgeous overlook & someone pointed out the arrival of Christopher Columbus! It was a very timely comment as the Guide was mentioning that he is credited with the discovery of the island, but it's believed that he never really came here. Just saw it in the distance. In the center picture, it's really obvious how much smaller our Viking ship (the center one) is compared to most of the Ocean cruisers (a Costa & a Royal Caribbean viewed here). This huge

mansion with beautifully manicured grounds belongs to the Governor of the island, currently Dame Calliopa Pearlette Louisy (well, was until she turned in her resignation on Dec 31, 2017 – she has been the Governor General since Dec 1997!) Our guide was happy to tell us that St Lucia had the world record for the number of Nobel Laureates per capita (2). There is a Nobel Laureate Festival that celebrates the achievements and successes of the two Nobel laureates of Saint Lucia - **Sir William Arthur Lewis** (January 23, 1915 – June 15, 1991) who won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics in 1979; and **Sir Derek Walcott** who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992.



This is by far the prettiest island we have visited. The views are amazing & it's green green green! The banana trees are doing very well. Our guide went on & on about how important bananas were to the island & how there were NO MONKEYS!



Our major stop on this excursion was Stony Hill, a private Estate that had 3 acres of manicured gardens. Unfortunately they only gave us about 20 minutes here. Could have spent hours. It was gorgeous!



The gardens were divided into sections with beautiful walkways. The above left picture is not very good, I know, but it reminds me of this adorable little hovering bee that kept following us around – it was like “take my picture!!” Too cute. This was a perfect place for hummingbirds, & the owner told me he had tons of them around. Only 3 species of the hummers exist on the island. I asked if he had any feeders up & he said he couldn’t, “they would eat me out of

house & home!" We saw a few buzzing around, but could never get close enough to actually get a picture. George snapped a picture of me in their Orchid Garden. The views they had from everywhere in their gardens was unbelievable!!!



They had a huge deck & they had sat up some tables to serve us homemade cake (we had dilly dallied, so only one tiny piece of cake left – less than a half inch square – George let me take it!) & some punch (non-alcoholic). I chose the punch made from Star fruit. It was delicious. Our guide had told us that they made tons of stuff from bananas on the island & these bottles were a small proof – Banana Catsup & Banana Hot Sauce!!!! Didn't get to taste it – the guests before us had scarfed it all up! While we were checking out everything on the deck, a small bird (& his wife) were checking us out! The owner said they would eat from his hands. He called them a "Bull Finch." I found a listing for a Black Finch which is endemic to the island, but no pictures, and another listing for a Lesser Antillian Bullfinch. Assume that's the one!



They had all sorts of examples of different fruits growing on their acreage. Many were totally foreign to us. They had suggestions for medical uses for most of it. We saw the ackee several times. It's similar to the lychee. Apparently it is used a lot in Jamaican dishes. Never tried it. Read it is toxic if eaten before it ripens & several times the canned version

has been banned from the US because it included some. Humm? Causes what is called Jamaican vomiting sickness. Okay fine. I don't think I need to look for that!



Took the bus directly back to the ship. You can't see it well, but we were interested to see that the main cemetery for the island was adjacent to the airport. Does that have a hidden meaning? Also noticed that it is right on the

beach. Enjoyed watching the Tenders practicing some safety maneuvers from our balcony & had a lovely lunch with awesome views of the harbor. This is really a beautiful island. Glad we got to see more of it this trip!



The afternoon was what became the highlight of our entire cruise. We were heading higher into the central island & the drive took us by lots of agricultural areas. Both the guide & the bus driver got into the job of pointing things out to us. First, the guide had our bus driver stop in the middle of the street (cars backed up behind us honking!), while he jumped out & cracked a shell to show us an Almond!! Then the bus driver jumped out a bit later to point out the huge bud that grows on the banana plant that becomes the fruit. Only one bunch of bananas grows on each plant, but small shoots come up, so you cut the main stalk & the next one grows up. They cover the banana bunches to protect them from insects & birds (NO MONKEYS!!!).



Next stop was Rainforest Adventures – a global conglomerate of Eco Tourism. They are currently for profit, but establishing a not for profit to raise money to protect World Rainforests. They started in Costa Rica & the “visionary Nature Lover” (a must have been multi billionaire!) that thought of the Aerial Tram idea had one major requirement. No tree could be sacrificed to install the tram. WOW! They also have Ziplines (Viking didn’t even offer that – surprise Surprise!). While we were waiting for our tram – only 9 person’s per car – 8 passengers & a guide, we spotted our first close ups of several hummingbirds. Not a good picture, but I was SOOOOOO excited. Appeared to be the Purple Throated Caribbean. Another one buzzed really close, but no picture. It was totally different – assume that it was the Anttlean Crested because it was much much smaller.



I will restrict myself on the Tram photos because there is absolutely no way to explain even with photos how magnificent it was. There are 4 of them in the world now – 2 Costa Rica, 1 in St Lucia, & the last in Jamaica. Sure there will be more in the future. If you are ever anywhere near one, DO IT! Our young female guide was wonderful (heard that we got lucky – our new friend, Elaine from Asheville did not have a very good guide). She had been with the

company for a month and had had extensive training & was amazingly knowledgeable. I had not realized that there were strict guidelines on what was considered a Rainforest – how much rain must fall, what altitude, annual temperature changes, number of species of flora & fauna within a square acre, it just went on & on. There are designations on whether it is a “rainforest” or a “tropical rainforest” too! The Amazon is a “tropical Rainforest”. This was a “rainforest.” The park had a walk that you could do also- again not offered by Viking – average time required about 3 hours & quite a large elevation gain. We could see the path off & on below us. Wish we had had time for that! The “tropical rainforest” is considered the “Lungs” of the earth because of their absorption of carbon monoxide through photosynthesis. Also 28% of all naturally occurring medications come from “rainforests.”



It is generally agreed that there are 4 levels to a “rainforest.” There is Forest floor (bottom most layer – generally relatively clear because of lack of sunlight), Understory layer (only 5% of the sunlight reaches this level), the Canopy Layer where the majority of the flora & fauna are visible, & the Emergent layer (the small number of trees that grow above the general canopy). They developed the Tram so that we were able to experience all of it. Our guide gave us a

lot of information, then fell quiet. We were lucky enough that the other 4 folks on our tram were as impressed with the experience as we were & we spent at least half of the 1 hour ride totally quiet. At one point our guide asked why we were whispering. We told her that it was almost like a religious experience.



About midway, we experienced the most exciting sights. First, I managed to actually capture one of the many hummingbirds that we saw buzzing near us. Next was the most exciting – but I have no picture! The other couple with us got a picture and was supposed to share it, but so far I haven't received it. There is a St Lucia parrot – Jacquout?, our guide kept pointing out the noise to us. Just as we cleared the canopy for our view of the Caribbean Sea on one side & Atlantic Ocean on the other, 2 of the parrots did a huge half circular flight ahead of us – squawking the entire way. We thought our cute young guide was going to turn our tram over, she was SOOOOO EXCITED. Said she had never seen them before! Made the trip for us all because she was so excited (included a googled picture of what it really looks like!). A bit later, she pointed out this Lady bug type insect on George's shirt. Said she had heard it was good luck (brings money!!) if they touched you, so I allowed it to crawl around on my finger tip for a while.



One other thing that I have to mention was these amazing vines. There were literally hundreds of different kinds of vines, but this one looked like it was drawn on the trunks of the trees.

Our guide called it a Tattoo Vine! We also saw a Bananaquit (this is not my picture! I downloaded it!) – fairly common bird there, in the Tanager family.

On the return sweep (you come back higher than the way in), we passed an interesting waterfall – our guide called it a rock cascade, & some imported Norfolk Pines.



After our tram ride, our adorable guide led us on a way too short walk through the rainforest gardens. Almost immediately we saw the St Lucia Pewee, another endemic species that our guide was really really excited about! Then this really unusual tree growth! How the heck? Tons of beautiful tropic flowers – one tiny example – this Bird of Paradise.



Caught a picture of the tram (empty – I think we might have been the last group of the day) & the sign with information about the Dedication of this area as a National Forest Reserve in 1916. And asked our guide to pose for us. This is one place that I wouldn't mind coming back to visit. I think there are some all inclusive resorts here on the island that would be worth checking out!



So ended our full day on St Lucia. Beautiful island. Great memories. Pulled away during a nice sunset & had another lovely dinner (interesting dessert – Viking’s version of Crème Brûlée). The evening entertainment was the ship’s 3

young men performing the Beatles. They did quite a nice job & it was done on the top deck around the swimming pool. It was interesting having it projected up on the screen – definitely helped with being able to see, since the seating around the pool was multi layers in lounge chairs.

So George & I are back in Mesa now. Hit the ground running – arrived on Saturday night – started our regular weekly program on Sunday & then enjoyed dancing at the Blackford's annual weekend event of Black Tie (Randy & Marie Preskitt were the visiting leaders). Have not had a minute to work on the travelogue, so way behind! Still have 2 islands left. Will try to get them covered in the next couple of days.

Hope everyone is happy & healthy & enjoying life!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George
www.gphurd.net

pam@gphurd.com

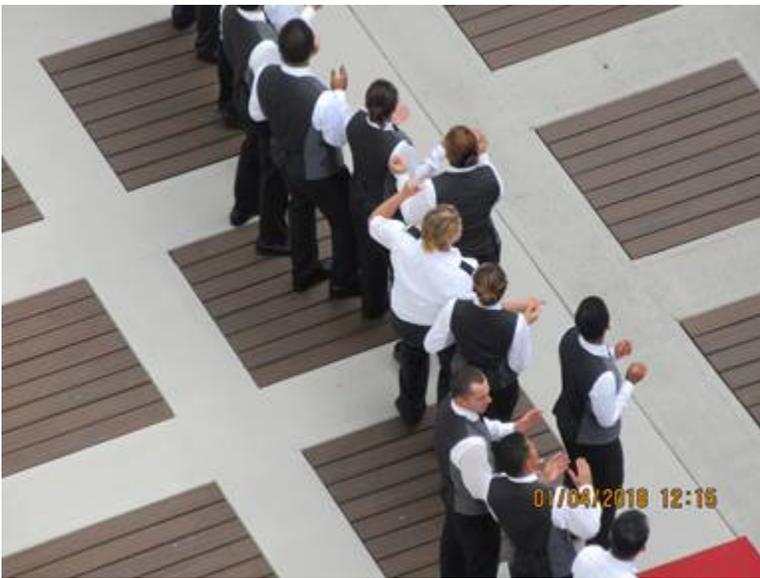
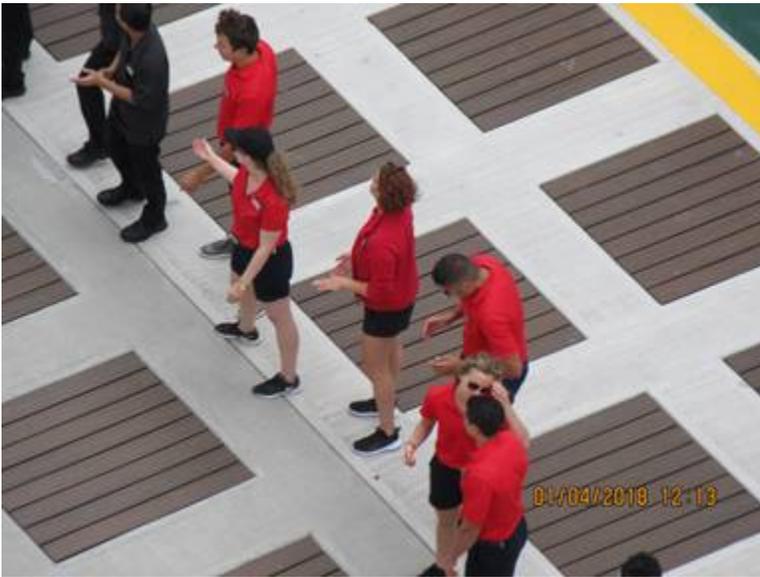
From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Friday, February 2, 2018 10:31 PM
To: 'Pamela Hurd'
Subject: Viking Sea Amazon Cruise #11 - Antigua

Good Afternoon Everyone,

I'm going to try this one more time. A week ago Saturday I had the entire travelogue finished, just decided to hold it for a little while to let it sit for a little bit and work on a friend's Nook. After piddling with it for a few minutes, the computer froze. Uh Oh. Well, that was the end of that. It never came back up again. George wasted hours trying to get it back up to no avail. He ended up taking it in to the Geek Squad on Sunday. To make a long story short, I spent the week trying to accomplish everything required for work on my little laptop! Yipes!! Anyway, finally got my computer back on Thursday evening. It was stripped clean (they had never managed to make the touch screen work) and George started getting all my software loaded on it. At least I had backed it up about 5 days before, so I didn't lose as much as I could have!! Sooooo, enough whining, let's get to the fun stuff!



That morning, we arrived at the harbor of St John's, the capital city of the island country of Antigua & Barbuda in the West Indies. We had been there before in Dec 2013 on a Celebrity cruise & did some kayaking & snorkeling. This morning, we slept in & went upstairs for a nice leisurely lunch & walk around the decks to enjoy the views.



While we waited for our 1pm Panoramic island tour, we heard a commotion down below. The staff was down below greeting the passengers returning from the morning's tours. That was one thing I really did like about Viking

Ocean. They go the extra mile to make you feel special and to make it feel like you are a part of a much smaller ship's organization!



We headed out for our tour in the beautiful sunshine of a perfect Caribbean day! The drive through the city itself could have been on any island – colorful buildings – tons of stuff on the sidewalks for sale – lots of school children out & about (yep, the Holidays are over!).



The most exciting thing of the day's trip for me was the sighting of a hummingbird! The guide was excited too. It's not that they are rare, but seeing one in a tree from a bus traveling on the street is pretty amazing. Assuming that it was an Antillean Crested Hummingbird which is the most common on the island. I downloaded this picture of it!



The remainder of our drive southeast across the island was really GREEN! We passed by the HUGE soccer stadium which was generously donated by the government of China. Hummmm????? The rest of the island was rolling hills, fields of small homes & gardens. Quite lovely.



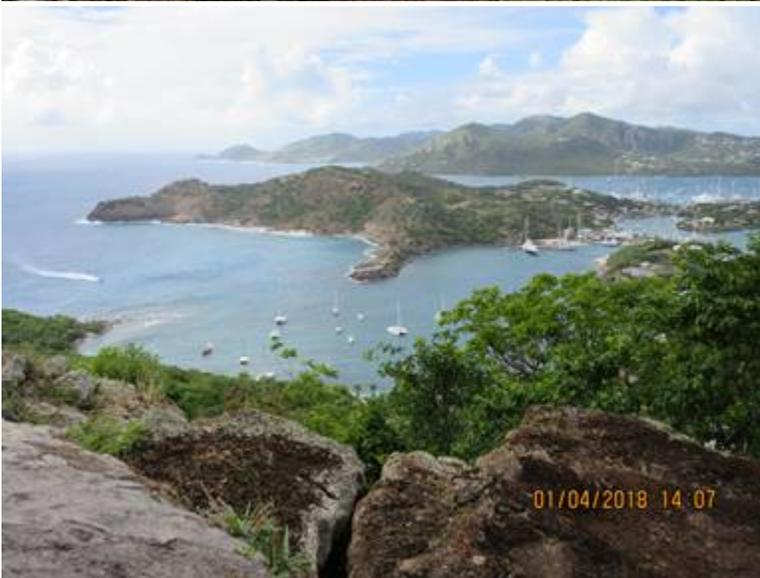
We drove from the harbor in St John's (upper left corner), southeast across the island to reach some fort ruins on the Caribbean side of the island (lower right side). As soon as we started getting sneak peeks of the water, we could tell it was going to be beautiful. Apparently the Caribbean Ocean is much prettier than the Atlantic! Enroute, the guide handed around some pictures of the Eastern Caribbean currency. It is used by the so called Eastern Caribbean Currency Union

and includes 7 independent island countries & 2 British territories. Kinda like the Euro I suppose. It is worth about \$2.70 to a US Dollar.



Our first stop was one of the many fort ruins on the island. This island was a British stronghold from 1632 to 1981 with one brief period of French rule in 1666. Not being a major (or even minor history buff), I was mostly interesting

in the incredible views over St James Bay. Especially the ground rainbow. I have never seen a rainbow on the ground before. Our guide was very excited about it too. It was fabulous. One funny thing of note – while I was goggling for information, I came upon a note that someone had made off with one of the historic canons & the Historic Society on the island was begging for it's return. Stealing a canon? Really? Would have liked to see the getaway vehicle!



Our next stop was for the views from Shirley Heights – at 490' above sea level, these views over English & Falmouth Harbors are the most famous of the island. And understandably – they are incredibly beautiful. Lots of rich & famous live in the area. The huge complex at the end of the peninsula was either Opry Winfrey's or Eric Clapton's. Can't remember which. Can you imagine? And this is just a "vacation home!!!" Of course during a hurricane, it wouldn't be quite the heavenly abode it is in clear beautiful sunshine!!! By the way, "Shirley" was not the name of someone's girlfriend, it was

named after Sir Thomas Shirley, the governor of the Leeward Islands in 1781. Antigua was the last remaining West Indian colony owned by Britain & they were loath to lose it!! Consequently, it had lots of forts & military strongholds along with the dockyard that we were to visit next.



My least favorite part of the tour was the sales pitch to purchase one of the supposed "hand made" dolls – handily convertible from everyday to fancy dress – representative of the historical costumes of the Native Antiguans. We didn't buy one – I suspect they were part of the "Chinese" influence! I was, however; very impressed with the underground cistern (I think I overheard that it was about 10,000 gallons???) that was built in the early 1600's & is still in use today!!! There was a gift shop & restaurant at the site & they apparently have a sunset party every day with live music & drinking!! We were long gone by then, unfortunately. They perform weddings there – idyllic setting for romance!!!!



Our main stop of the tour was the Nelson's Dockyard – a National Park & UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Our guide for the dockyard had a very formal British accent. The entire site was totally renovated for tourists. There were gift shops in most of the buildings & the “barracks” were now hotel rooms. It was manicured within an inch of it’s life! Hard to imagine what the real existence was like during it’s operational period in the 1600 – 1800’s.



From a historical perspective, the most interesting thing in the dockyard was the Capstans. The indentured servants (extremely mistreated & starved I might add) would use these capstans to turn the ships onto their side to expose the hull & allow them to be scraped of barnacles & repainted. I can't imagine which was worse, the physical strength required to tilt & hold the humongous battleships, or the poor guys that had to spend 18 hours a day in the water trying to scrape & paint. Of course they did receive their daily rations of rum & beer! Now the harbor is full of yachts & expensive fishing boats. & good looking tourists!





We were given a sweet rum drink (what else???) and spent an interesting few minutes watching fishermen clean/gut their catches. George was impressed with the Dorado (also called a Mahi Mahi – has a funny head & really scissored tail). Watched several different guys come & go – they all ignored the barracuda laying on the ground! They tossed the guts in the water to the extreme enjoyment of the schools of Tarpin.



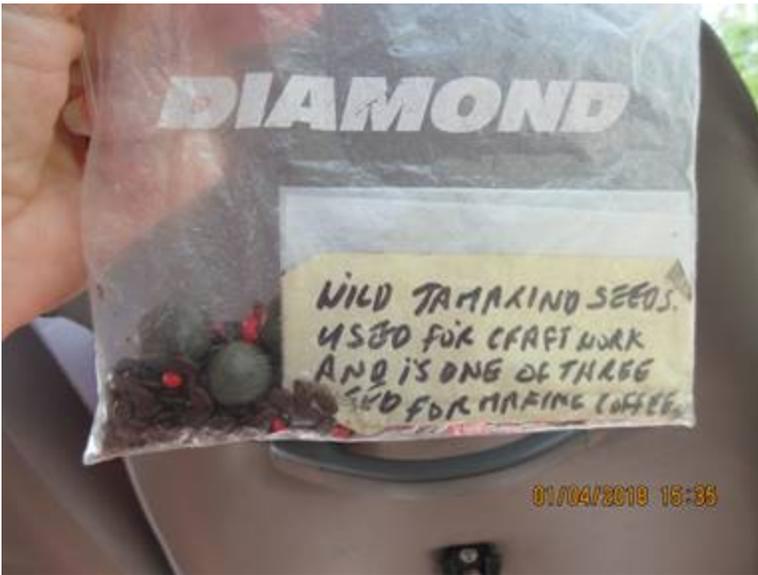
A Cure Worse than the Disease

Yellow fever killed in three days. Few survived. On admission to the hospital patients were relieved of "all their clothes and necessaries" then received the following treatment:

- Bleeding of 20 to 30 ounces of blood
- Repeated doses of tartar emetic to induce vomiting
- Purge with mercuric chloride
- Frequent doses of antimony powder
- Blistering of the skin
- Further bleeding
- If the case is desperate, give a large glass of gin containing Hartshorn bark, snakeroot, and opium every two hours.

In 1804, the 70th Regiment lost 12 officers and 154 men to yellow fever.

For the remainder of our time at the dockyards, we wandered into the museum. It was quite clean & the exhibits they had were quite well done. I was hoping for a picture of the slaves pulling the battleships on their side, but couldn't locate one. That has got to be an incredibly difficult task. Just can't imagine it. Came up this sign about the treatment for Yellow Fever – yipes! Horrifying. Glad we got our yellow fever shots!



On the drive back to the ship, our guide continued with her show & tell. She first gave us some fresh so called black pineapple. It's a different species of pineapple from the common Dole from Hawaii. It's still dark green when it's ripe. It is the National Fruit of Antiqua. It was very sweet. She kept passing the container back saying "I am not taking any of this home!!!!" She sang us their National Anthem too. Lovely. She showed us some of the local products bottled & sold here,

even though they don't have their own sugar cane any more, it's imported for fermenting their local rum! Their flag is very pretty & has an very understandable meaning – black for the people, sun, sea & sand, with red for hope & a V for Victory.



The bus let us off outside the ever present tourist trap shopping mall entrance to the port! We never stopped once, although they were haranguing us from all the shop entrance ways with samples & sales! We headed out of the cabin

before the ship left port, so didn't get a good sunset goodbye picture. But did notice that the German ship docked next to us had hammocks on all their balconies! Lots of folks were enjoying them. Never have seen that before (except on those Brazilian ferries – remember!!), & made me envision what it would be like to be in one as you cruised. Humm? I can definitely see myself all wrapped up in a cocoon & shouting for help.



Even though we had a full day at port in the Virgin Islands the following day, the ship's staff had scheduled our formal "goodbye (& good riddance – ha!) celebration" for that evening. They really went all out. It was held in the Atrium & we got kinda stuck in a corner by the offices & under the stairs, but we could still hear well & see pretty good. It was definitely packed – EVERYONE on board had come out (free champagne & snacks of course). They put on an amazing variety show – all the staff entertainment came & did one last hoorah. Even the Cruise Manager sang again. He's amazing!



Of course the grand finale was to troop everyone out that could be pulled away from their on board duties. They always looks so happy, I wonder if they really enjoy that or if it's a total chore. Anyway, the passengers certainly like to raise the roof with their clapping, whistling & cat calling.

We cruised on through the night to our last port – St John's island in the Virgin Islands.

Hopefully I can finish this long vacation monolog in the next week! Hope you're still enjoying our virtual trip with us.

More soon!

Lots of love,

Pamela & George

Check out our web site! [Hurd's Round Dance Home Page](http://www.gphurd.net/index.html)

& new site!!! <http://www.gphurd.net/index.html>

Check out our dance demo videos www.DanceRounds.info

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pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Friday, July 6, 2018 9:43 AM
To: 'pam@gphurd.com'
Subject: Viking Amazon Cruise, Travelogue #12

Good Morning Everyone,

Never got this last travelogue done & wanted to finish the Amazon's report, so finally doing it from faint memory (this is July!), my journal, & the pictures! Let's get this done!



Up at 7:45am. View from the balcony was not all that exciting. Bit overcast & sooo humid. Had to be downstairs for an Immigration check by USVI. Really fast, but irritating because if forced us to get up! On the good side, we had our first real breakfast! Had omelets & they were very good! Back up at the room, we found that Fury's had called & canceled

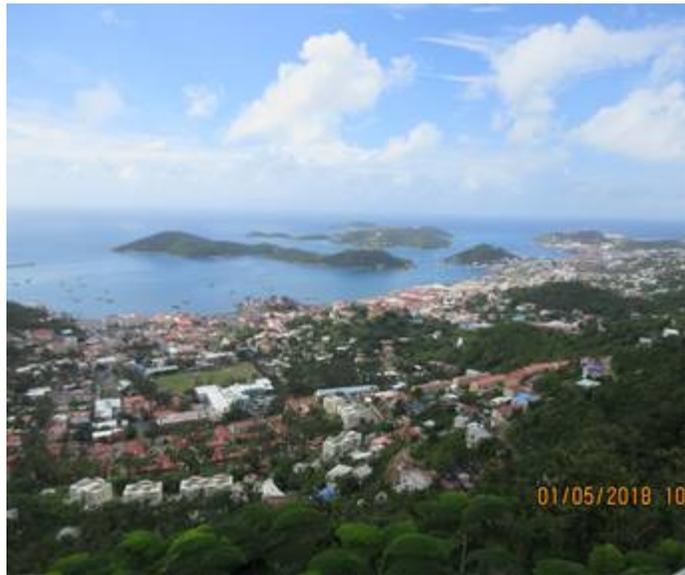
our snorkeling trip. Said it was due to weather. I suspect he couldn't fill his boat. Most annoying. Called & got on standby for the Included Scenic Island Tour & Mountain Top at 10:45am.



Basically an open bus. Hoping that it doesn't rain! You can see that most of the palm trees had lost their tops from the hurricane. Looks pretty bare through the downtown streets. At least the roads are passable.



St Thomas has the most incredible views of any Caribbean island. Even with the clouds, the view was amazing as we climbed the hill over Megan's bay.



Our first Viewpoint stop. Wow! It is truly amazing. Gives a little perspective to see the seaplane over the water. There's our ship! It's a beauty.



Henry met us at the next viewpoint with champagne! How about that? Guess that's one of the nice things about Viking Ocean. Certainly never had any other cruise ship do that! But it's starting to get soaked in! Here's the panoramic tour group before us!



As we continued to the top of the mountain, it got foggier & foggier. No actual rain, but we were in heavy clouds. Saw lots more evidence of the hurricane's damage. Was much worse up here – or they haven't gotten this far up with repairs.



Made it to the top – 2100’ about sea level. Hadn’t realized the “Mountain Top” was actually a tourist shop!!! Crap! Made it through the huge souvenir shop to the outside balcony & found the clouds had totally moved in & we couldn’t see ANYTHING! Well, we could see the viewpoint map showing us what we were supposed to see!



Back inside to wander the shop. Realized that we were stuck there for 45 minutes! Inside a stinking souvenir shop for 45 minutes! They were trying to sell alcohol – both to take with you & in over the counter drinks. Supposed to be the home of the Banana Daqairi. Humm? Didn't appeal to us. We did buy a few small bottles for Dan & Sandi. Probably at least a quarter of the shop had signs up saying "not for sale." Hope they recover okay!



The only good thing about staying for such a long time is that it gave the clouds time to lift, so we got a fair view of Megans bay & beach. Also found pretty big iguana on a nearby tree. This has got to be amazing without clouds!! Sure wish we had been out on the water snorkeling!



Finally headed out to go back to the ship. Made one bird sighting – have to look it up! Looks like the clouds are coming back down again!



The views on the way down were really fabulous. Can you imagine having a home with those kind of views?



Of course, if you have the view, you have the worry always hanging over your head about the danger!! Not sure if this is a replacement home or brought up for trash? Anyway, sure not pretty. And still trash everywhere. Is that normal or leftover from clean up from the hurricane?



Circled around the main downtown area. Pretty Veteran's Memorial Park & they've got that cleaned up.



The harbor area is rather bare now – I seem to remember this being a lot prettier many years ago – assume they haven't had a chance to fix this back up from the Hurricane, just cleaned up the mess. Got some tent shopping areas set up. The buildings must have been destroyed.



Back on the ship – we just spent the afternoon packing & relaxing – already thinking about how to hit the ground running to start the Spring Season in Mesa. Weather continued to get better all afternoon. Wish we had been snorkeling!!! Phooey!



Leaving port was eneventful. When the hurricane was so destructive last fall, we all wondered if we'd be able to maintain this itinerary. Glad things worked out the way they did. I'm sure this island will be back to it's glorious self very soon now! A beautiful end to our cruise.



Our last dinner on board ship was lovely. They have certainly done well with the service & food on this ship! Enjoyed our last dinner with new friends Tom & Elaine. Even got to have our favorite table. George felt good enough to even dance one long rumba in the Promenade area. Have sure missed dancing on board ship. Wish George's back had been better. Maybe next time!



Flight home was uneventful. Soon we had traded the lush green tropical scenery for our winter desert! Now it's back to work in the Dance Scene! Yea! Great vacation! We've been to the Amazon & back!

Thanks for joining us! Next trip report will be from Africa!!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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