

Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Dubai #1

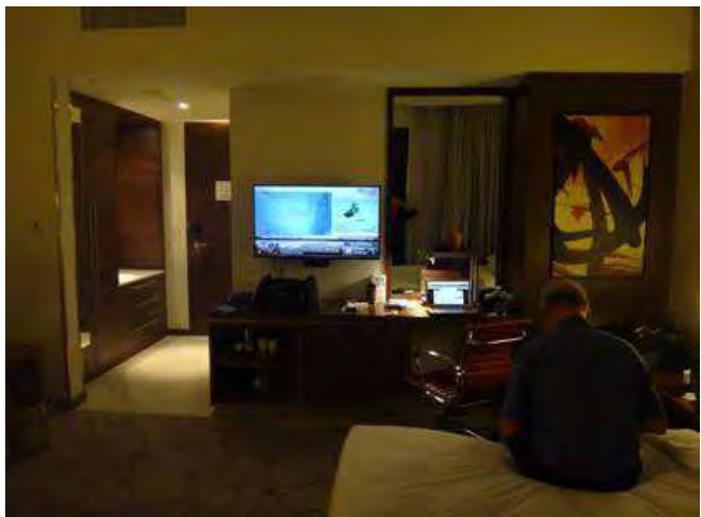
Royal Caribbean Cruise on Splendour of the Seas - Apr 1, 2016 left Mesa for Dubai, Apr 4 boarded ship & cruised around Arabian Peninsula and up Red Sea through Suez Canal, then through Mediterranean to Israel, Greece and on to Venice on 21 Apr 2016 - see itinerary at the end. Last Sail of Splendour - she was being sold to Thomsom Cruises

Hi Everyone! Hope this epilogue find you all happy & healthy! We had greatly anticipated this trip - stopping at some unusual places!

First a bit of background - We are traveling with John & Kay Toth. First time for us to travel together & looing forward to it! We've worked together for the past year in pre planning what we'll do for excursions both in Dubai & on the cruise. We've got our fingers crossed that the ship will stop in Israel. Due to security concerns, it will sometimes just sail on by.

As usual, we were dancing right up until we left! We had our Farewell for the Season dance on Thursday night. It was grand with quite a large attendance, especially for the last dance of the season! Although lots of folks had left Mesa already, it was lovely & we even had a huge after party to say bye to everyone! Forgot to take any pictures! Too distracted about the trip!

Luckily the flight was not early as we had to have a maintenance guy come to RV to replace our Driver's side window in the RV before we left! Long story, but we've been trying for several weeks to get it done and it was finally completed as we were enroute to the airport! Jim Shideler had been kind enough to come & oversee their final installation!!! Tom & Marge took us to the airport & sent us off with smiles & good wishes! Check in & security were a breeze & John & Kay were already waiting at the Gate. Our flight left Phoenix a few minutes late at 4:30pm. We had a really short connection in Minneapolis & had a head wind, so didn't make up anytime enroute! Landed & the flight attendants held folks in their seats to allow several of us to run off the plane to our short connections. They were holding our flight to Amsterdam for us & we were barely seated when they pulled away from the gate! Flight was uneventful (just long long long!!). Then only an hour & 20 minutes between our arrival & boarding for Dubai! But easy onto it - luckily we didn't have to go through security or anything, just a long walk between terminals, but felt great to stretch our legs! Finally made it to Dubai & we were 30 minutes late arriving! So by the time we deboarded & went through Customs/Immigration, it was 12:30am!!!



But Dubai Private Tours representative was there to meet us as we came out of the baggage area & he whisked us to the Hyatt Place Dubai Al Rigga hotel. Check in to our 6th Floor King rooms was easy & within a few minutes, John & Kay were in our room for our welcome to Dubai toast (we'd brought Black Box wine with us!!!).



First thing we noticed was that Dubai was a city that never sleeps! The streets were crowded with people!!!! But we were in bed by 3am!!!



Early start on Sunday morning. Looked out at 6:30am - streets were already alive & folks at work!



Noticed the apartment building across the street where lots of clothes were hanging in an indentation! Guess each floor has it's own dryer space!



Down to the the main floor for our included breakfast buffet - had some of everything. Getting us ready for our cruise!



Our guide, Chandni Hanj (Indian that relocated here - she had lived in South Africa too) was right on time & our driver, Nissam had the vehicle cooled down & ready for us out front. We took off through so called "old town" past the American Embassy.

Nothing in Dubai was actually old, a development boom since the 1990's has capitalized on massive tourism. It is the capital of Dubai which is the second largest of the 7 Sheikdoms which make up the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



It is clean, organized & reeks of money.



Our first stop was Dubai Museum. It is housed in an old fort & has lots of outside exhibits, including an example of the local fishing boats & the traditional homes built of date palm thatch. Don't guess the electric fan was used much in ancient times! Ha! The bright colored traditional garb was made from silk fabrics traded from India & Pakistan. They did lots of hand embroidery work to decorate the material.



Inside, well constructed life size dioramas depicted not only the ancient fishing, trading, & weaving, but also showed some of the common desert wildlife.



There was an entire room devoted to pearl diving. Until the Japanese introduced artificial pearls into the world market, this entire region made most of their money trading & selling pearls. The divers were suited up with garments tightly woven to help with protect them from jellyfish stings. They used ropes tied to their ankles to help pull them back to the surface. They practiced to hold their breath for up to 2 minutes to be able to search for & collect the biggest pearls.



Next we took a ride on an abra (water taxi) across Khor Dubai or "the Creek", as the locals call it. It's an inexpensive & fun way to get across, but made George & I hungry, so we had to try Gelato made with Camel milk!! It was yummy! Supposedly camel milk is 25% creamier? Whatever, it was good. We were told later that most folks get diarrhea from their first time trying it - luckily George & I didn't have a problem!!!!





Next stop was wandering around the Spice souk (market). Proud that our guide was there, because she gave us an explanation about the different spices - first off Frankensense comes in 3 grades (recognizable by the colors - white is the best quality, green or yellow is next & black is the lowest grade. We didn't buy any.



But we were given sniffs of lots of types & found that some of the things that looked like rocks were actually a chocolate!





Rather than the small stalls we had expected, it was actually rows of small shops. As we continued through, more & more of the shops changed to different products, touristy stuff, shoes, clothes, etc We walked out onto a street corner & turned to our left & suddenly we were in the Gold Souk!



I have never ever ever seen soooooo much gold! Row upon row of shops filled with gold jewelry. None of us were particularly interested in spending a lot of money. I went in one store & asked about a gold anklet, the guy acted rather offended & said no - they didn't have any. Our guide said that the locals didn't wear gold on their ankles usually. Oh well. Didn't ask about anything else.



Continued the walk. Our guide was explaining that all shops were required to price their items by weight & the price was set by the government each day. There were shops that mostly sold 18, 20, 22, & 24 karat gold. She said the locals preferred the 22 Karat, mostly because of the color.

I'm going to close this travelogue now, we're on the ship & the internet is supposed to be very slow. It's really expensive, but we get 2 free 24 hour periods, so I'm going to try & send some from here. We are currently cruising through the Red Sea towards the Suez Canal.

Sure hope everyone is doing well Miss everyone & looking forward to seeing you all soon somewhere!

Hang on for the rest of the day in Dubai!!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

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Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Dubai #2

Hello Again Friends & Family,

Sure hope I am able to send these! Trying to get several written so that I can send them during our 24 hours of internet!!! So let's get to it!



Our driver was "Johnny on the spot" as we came to the end of the Gold Souk, we climbed aboard & drove across the creek again towards "New" Dubai. The entire city is soooooo clean & neat. The architecture is amazing. Apparently since the 1990's getting permission to build something new & different here in Dubai is the norm. The buildings are all innovative & beautiful. Even the gold roofed Metro Center is gorgeous!



This huge metal scaffolding is the start of a "window" which will represent a division between the "old" & "new" Dubai cities. It is to actually be the biggest window in the world! They are big on setting Guinness World records for biggest, best, etc!



These are hundreds of mosques of course. This one is quite close to the Royal Palace & is beautiful with the gold & white structure & flowers everywhere. Right now is the end of Winter/beginning of Spring so there are flowers everywhere. In just a month or so with temperatures soaring over 120F, it will be too hot for flowers. Non-Muslims are not allowed in the majority of mosques. There are only a few that allow visitors.





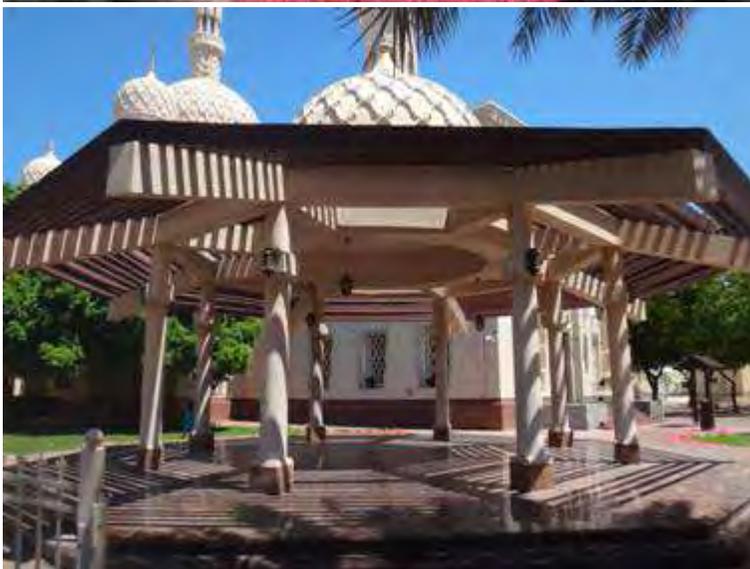
Just one example of the unbelievable Dubai skyline. More later.



We made a quick stop to walk around the Zabeel Palace - home of the Dubai Royal Family. It faces the home of the Financial Minister.



The entire area looks like a park - only because it is! We could here Peacocks calling from some of the massive gardens all around us. But we didn't have time to do much investigation - too many other places to go!



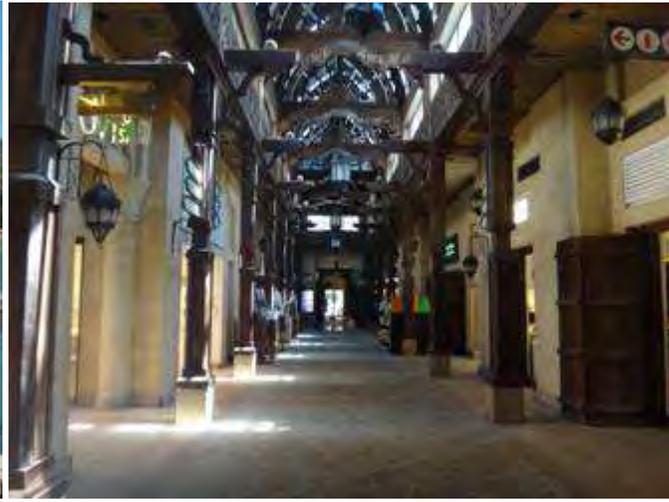
Next stop was the Jumeriah Mosque. This one does allow tours, but we didn't have time. This particular mosque is considered a historic symbol of the ancient heritage of the UAE. Men and women do not worship in the same rooms in the mosque. This covered area outside the mosque is a meeting area where men & women can meet in public to visit.



Next was a short stop at the beach to see the famous Burj al Arab - the world's only 7 starred hotel, built to represent a sail. It is considered a primary landmark of the Middle East.



On to Souk Madinat Jumeirah. It is another shopping mall, but built on man made canals - called Dubai's Little Venice. There are hotels, shops, & private residences all along this waterfront. Water taxis ply the canal delivering folks to their destination. I shudder to think what it would cost to stay in one of these hotel rooms!!!!



But the mall itself had reasonable prices & we ended up grabbing a sandwich & coffee at Jamba Juice (yep the same as in the US at all our shopping malls!!!). All the stores we had so far encountered would accept US dollars, or charge cards. And with the charge cards you could request charging in US dollars or in the UAE currency.



One other thing in this mall. If you hadn't been able to get your gold fix at the souk, you could buy gold from this ATM!!!! Yep, plug in your charge card & order as many ounces as you'd like! We didn't buy any!!!!

So this completes our first MORNING in Dubai! Still lots to come, but want to see if we can send it!!!

Wishing you all lots of love,

George & Pamela

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Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Dubai #3

Good Morning All! Hope you are all safe, happy, & healthy!!!

Before I continue, I'll share with you our current situation!!! George woke up about 6:15am to make one of his nearly hourly "pee" visits! As he came around the end of the bed - squish squish! No...the ship wasn't sinking, but our hallway & all up along my side of the bed the carpet was soaked!!!!!!! He turned on all the lights - water was not coming from the bathroom (thank goodness!), but real problem anyway! Long story short - or at least to this point! Maintenance came & a maintenance box outside our door had a water leak. Now we're sitting here at 7am with a huge noisy fan trying to dry out our carpet! Oh well. Guess it could be worse!

So on with Dubai!!!



After our lunch, we hopped back in private SUV to head to Jumeirah Palm Island. This is a manmade archipeligo for the rich & famous! Or the wanna be rich & famous! When completed, the resort will sport 2000 villas, 40 luxury hotels, shopping centers, cinemas, & other facilities. It is expected to support a population of approximately 500,000 people & is visible from the moon. We took the monorail right through the center to reach Atlantis, a huge resort built at the top of the circle. There is already another one under construction - think I have a picture of it for later!!

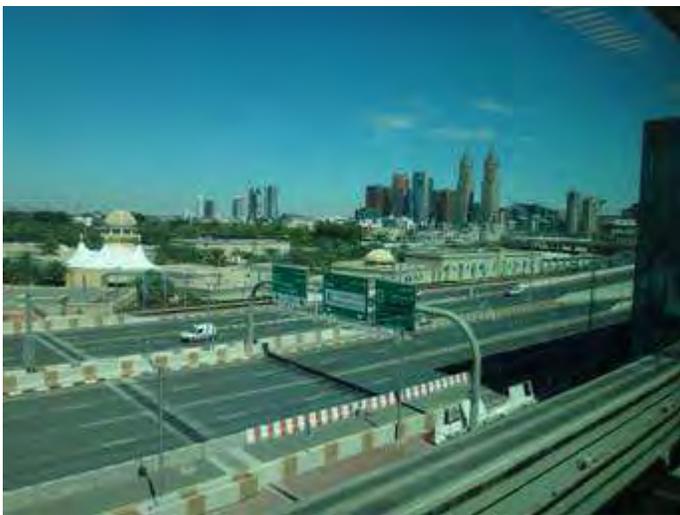


So there are townhouses & homes built on each of the arms that curve out from the middle. The homes start at \$5 million! START! The townhouses are only a couple of million! And the "family resort" at the end have small hotel rooms that are about \$500 per night during high season! Come down to \$350 or so during the monsoons!





We stepped off the monorail at the end & wandered around Atlantis a bit. Beautiful resort, but don't think we'd pay \$500 a night! Lots & lots of families there. Check out the full body swim suit worn by one of the Muslim Mom's. Sure doesn't look very comfortable, huh?



On the way back to meet our guide, we spotted some folks on paddle boards. And could see the Burj al Arab (that famous hotel built like a sail!) in the distance. And more of the skyscrapers. And construction, construction, construction. Even more than in Mesa!



Made a quick stop for pictures in the Dubai Marina - known as Little Manhattan. Wonder why? This is the area for our dinner cruise in just a few hours. Can you believe we're still only on the first afternoon!!!!!!





Then a quick stop at Mall of the Emirates (this is supposed to be the 5th largest mall in the World!!) to gaze through the windows to see Ski Dubai - the indoor ski resort!!!! Then had a chair lift, a rope lift, toboggan run, inner tubes for the kids, & even penquins (we didn't see them). Totally amazing! Your days rental includes all the ski equipment AND warm clothes - they keep it just below freezing inside. Spoke to a man on the ship that skied there. He said it was about 6" of quite real fluffy snow & even the material was slicky, so you could ski easily. So this is what money can do!



Enroute to the Dubai Mall, we passed this signboard along the highway. This is the Financial/Political guru that is in charge of Dubai at present. Our guide absolutely idolized him. Said that he was responsible for all the good things about Dubai - he is easily accessible for anyone that has a proposal for something new in Dubai - buildings, resorts, ideas of any kind. He makes all the decisions and provides the financial advances to get it done. She says you can run into him anywhere in the city, that he is always out & about looking for better ways to do things. Must be doing something right - things are certainly going well there! Surprisingly enough she says that the money does not really come from oil here, it's trade & tourism. Whatever it is, it is working. The city is sparkling clean & bustling all the time. Folks are employed & seem very happy. We were definitely impressed.



Next stop, and the last for our day's guided tour was the Dubai Mall - largest mall in the World. If you tried to just run in each store for 2 minutes, it would take you more than a week to get through it!!!!!! Our guide took us first to look at the aquarium. It's big enough that folks can pay to scuba dive inside!!!!!! We saw several enormous sharks, & this one thing that was a mix of a shark & a manta ray! Looked up what it was called, but I've already forgotten!!!



Check it out Canadian Friends! It's a Tim Horton's in Dubai!!!!!! How cool is that????



Then outside to take a look at where to go after we finished our guided tour of the Burj Khalifa (tallest building in the World!!). Enroute was this - it is the hotel that burned a couple of months back? Remember? They are working on it. Apparently no one was killed, but they are totally renovating it. Our guide said it had been her favorite hotel. I believe they said the fire was caused by an electrical malfunction. Should be open again in a couple of months.



And there it is the Burj Khalifa! Our guide said goodbye. We'll be joining the tour for this on our own. I'll save it for the last Dubai Travelogue!!

Stay tuned & we'll be with you again!!!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

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Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Dubai #4

Hi Guys,

Lets soar up Burj Khalifa!!!



Here's a reminder of what we were going up in! I believe our destination was the 4th small indentation from the top spire.



The Burj Khalifa originally had only an observation center at floor 124. This is an outdoor wrap around balcony at 452 meters. Then the Chinese built the Shanghai tower that we were up in April 2010. It had an observation center that was higher. Soooooo the United Arab Emirates went back to work and opened up floors 125 & 148. If you pay extra (which we did), they invite you in & serve you dates (the UAE is the largest exporter of dates in the world!!!) and what they called coffee? (You see the color, right) and allow you to take the elevator straight up to the 148th floor. You stroll right past all the folks that merely paid for the 124th floor!!!



The 148th Floor is at 555 meters! And they meet you at the elevator with an orange drink & more dates! Then you are allowed to wander around this floor for pictures at the maximum height! There are actually living quarters up above this floor. We took a selfie using the mirrored walls around the viewing platform. The intertwined highway system was where we've been driving back & forth.



Lots of desert beyond the high rise buildings!! And looking straight down at the Largest Fountain display in the World (of course it is!!!). If you've seen the You Tube of the Hawk flying from the top spire of the Tower, I believe that green island is the small park where his handler was standing. And then looking up to the top from one of the outside viewing areas & another selfie!!!



And there's the Guinness World Record certificate for the 148th Floor - 1823.1' high! Yee Haw!!!

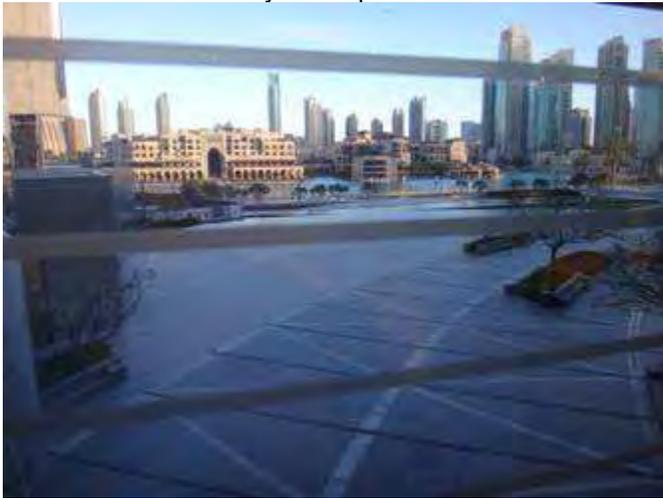


We moved down to the 125th Floor. Different views - There is the Burj al Arab Hotel in the distance & the Jumeirah Palm Island beyond that. And then some Boat shaped hotel? below us. And this level also had a continuously running big screen video in the center, historical info & about the building of the tower.





And on down to the 124th floor - reached with a beautiful circular stairway. And one more view down to the fountains. And a distance view. I believe that's back towards the airport, but not positive. Burj Khalifa is about halfway between the airport & the marina. Our hotel is by the airport.

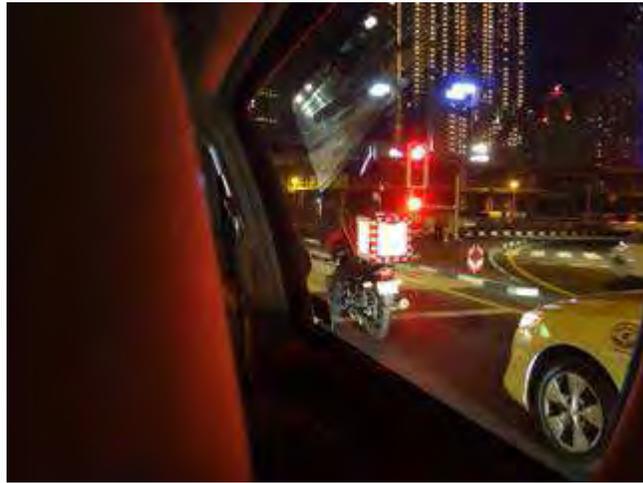


Even the views from the hallway leaving the tower were beautiful. There was a poster showing the fireworks display from New Year's Eve. Wow! That would have been something to see!!!





We ran outside to see the Fountains. Thought we were going to have to hurry to meet our guide/pick up for the dinner cruise. We ended up getting to our pick up point & waiting for an hour & a half, so couldn't have seen the fountain in the evening lights, Oh well!



We sat outside our hotel meeting point (a hotel attached to the mall - called The Address) and got a lovely skylight picture as evening set. Just a note, we started getting panicky that our pickup was not coming & I asked for help from the concierge of this hotel. Of course we weren't staying there & I told him that, but he still went out of his way to make several phone calls for us & finally talked to the driver who confirmed that he was on his way. And he did show up, then it was about a half hour drive to the Marina for our dinner cruise. Started seeing lots of these little motorcycles with food boxes. Apparently it is really really common to have delivery service - saw everything from McDonalds to some fancy restaurants delivering!





Closing our full day in Dubai with some lovely pictures from our evening dinner cruise (all the lights reminded us of Hong Kong!). The food was good, but the food was cold, the temperature was cold, & we were fighting to stay awake!! Been more than 40 hours & we'd all had about 4 hours sleep!!! But it was lovely & we got to see a lot! Check out that beautiful twisted building - remember from Little Manhattan? They got us safely back to our hotel about 11:30pm & George & I still stayed up another couple of hours (think John & Kay hit the hay!). We even made a Skype call to say Bye to Mom before we got on the ship the next day. Of course we still had a 4 hour tour in the morning!! So stay tuned!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Dubai #5

Good Afternoon Everyone! Still plugging along on my travelogue! So many things happened in Dubai, it's hard to cover it all!!!! But here goes, let's finish up our morning before we boarded the Splendour of the Seas!



We took off north from Dubai. Our plan was to see 2 more of the 7 United Arab Emirates - Sharjah & Ajman. Would have liked to see Abu Dhabi, but it was too far away to see in just the 4 hours we had for the morning before heading to the cruise ship. Have to make another trip here someday! If we can stand that long flight! Anyway, it was a rather overcast day & quite a bit cooler. Sure glad we had such a clear day to go up in the Tower - would have been disappointing today! Guess we got lucky! Anyway, took about a half hour to get to Sharjah - watching lots of traffic coming into Dubai. We were lucky enough to have the same guide! We were thrilled to have her! She said lots of folks lived in Sharjah or Ajman, but worked in Dubai. She said it was much quieter & cheaper to live in them, but she couldn't stand the long commute through lots & lots of traffic.





First stop was to see the Koran. This is in the political center - Royal Palace & Financial building. Chandni said that it was a real book with paper pages & ink writing!!! Just covered in plastic for protection. It was certainly in a beautiful setting. Sharjah is a much more conservative Emirate. Each of the Emirates had their own leader & could set their own rules. Alcohol is not allowed at all in Sharjah.



Just got a nice panoramic shot of the entire area.



Drove past some of the beautiful white sand beaches of Sharjah. No one on them - Chandni said that going to the beach was not much of a priority here! Surprised that the tourist haven't found them, but I guess because it's sooooo conservative, it's just not too much of a tourist stop!



On to Ajman to take in the museum, as in Dubai, this was in a fort type building. It was in the center of town & was very clean & neat AND EMPTY! Practically no one around. They let Chandni guide us through it. The museum in Dubai had a rule that the guides couldn't come in with their clients. We were happy that she was there to give us some explanations.





She explained that even her grandmother had used a cooking pot very similar to this one with the top cover used for heating the bread. And like the Dubai Museum, there were very good life size diaramas. Both fishing & pearl diving were important throughout the UAE. And look!! Here's the Guitarfish that I was trying to remember when we were at the Aquarium!!!



There was a storage room full of bags of dates. She said they stacked them around a hole in the floor & allowed all the juices to leak through the bags & down the hole where they were captured underneath in a jar. That way the dates dried for storage, but they didn't lose the juice from them. And it's hard to tell much about it, but the richer homes had these wind towers attached to them. It allowed air to circulate & help a little with the cooling. When temperatures soar to 150 F, you have to have something to help!!!!



Made another stop just to take a look at one of the Arman beaches. There were a few folks there (Ajman allows alcohol!), but note the guy out on the beach in his white robe! Funny beach attire, huh?



We drove past the Ajman port & got tickled at the hundreds of old boats that ply the waters as cargo vessels. Apparently they run up & down the coast line delivering goods. Amazed that they don't run into each other!



We made one stop for toilet & Chandni bought us a special tea & a breakfast sandwich that was sort of a UAE version of a breakfast burrito!!! Both were yummy!



Then more gold! Stopped to visit the Sharjah Gold Souk. This one was "palace style." It was a huge huge huge indoor shopping mall with nothing but gold shops! This time Kay & I went inside one to ask about cost of a bracelet! It was almost \$1500!!! After I restarted my heart, we headed back to our bus!!!!



Our only other stop was across the street to view another beautiful mosque with a pearl tower. In the first picture, you can see the Pearl Tower & in the background is Gold Souk. You can get an idea of how huge it is & it's all just gold shops! How many folks can afford to buy those \$1200 bracelets? Enough to keep that entire shopping mall of gold in business????? Amazing! And look at that gorgeous blue building. Wish more of our buildings were gorgeous like that!



Our little bus had to stop at the Port Entrance for them to get permission to take us in, but it was easily granted & we slid on through. Somehow our guide had found his way past lots & lots of traffic to get us right on in. And how about there adorable storage tanks? Never seen storage tanks painted so prettily!! And labeled for their wares - Oats, Flour, & other grains! There's our ship just on the other side of the parking lot!



They dropped us off at the terminal building & we cruised right through. Practically no line at all. It was one of the easiest boardings we've ever had!



We had a nice view of the city from on board. Check out how the Burj Khalifa stands out!!!! More than twice as tall as all those other skyscrapers!!!!



Our luggage got delivered, we got settled in our cabins, had our Muster drill (safety station drill), & headed downstairs to see our dance floor for the next 16 days! Even got pictures of John & Kay making use of it!!!!

Guess that will do it for this issue! I'll get the trip to Oman written up in the next few days! Tomorrow (Wed, Apr 13) & Thur, Apr 14, we get to visit Israel!!!! Yippee!

Take care everyone & stay healthy & happy!!!

More later!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Oman #6

Good Afternoon Everyone! Hope things are going well!!! We're doing great, just spending a lot of time relaxing or something! Time is flying by way way too fast! Anyway, lets get to Oman!



First a map to let you know where we are & where we're going! We boarded the Splendour of the Seas in Dubai & we're taking 2 days to cruise north & around the northern tip of the Arabian Peninsula (to within 100 miles of the southern border of Iran) & then south & east still around the Arabian Peninsula, then changing direction to south & west to reach Salalah, Oman.



We had 2 days at sea enroute from Dubai. On the first afternoon, we stopped for a couple of hours with a port in view. There was actually a cruise ship in a sheltered area in the port. They didn't tell us what was going on, but later we decided we were at Mascot - the capital of Oman. We had a small boat approach & someone got one. The Reception desk said it was a pilot for the Suez Canal, but since that is still 4 days away, we didn't believe it. Others that had been on the Splendour last fall when it repositioned from Venice to Dubai told us that they had stopped there on the way to Dubai. Apparently it is a very large city, not as progressive as Dubai, but several million people.



We started to establish a daily routine for the days at sea. We went to bed fairly early (about 11pm), so we woke about 8:15am. I went to sit out on the balcony & George ran upstairs & got us coffee! We enjoyed a cup of Joe sitting on the balcony & watching

the waves! I could definitely get used to this! Both George getting the coffee & the balcony!!! Then we'd run upstairs for breakfast & I'd go on to a 11am exercise class. Talita is on the Office staff & she did various classes - zumba, line dancing, merengue. Always fun & always sweaty!! Then we'd meet John & Kay for lunch & laze away the afternoon. Sometimes a wine tasting, sometimes looking in on a couple that was teaching low level dance classes. After dressing for dinner, we'd head to the Centrum where there would either be dancing or sometimes a professional dance couple - Sasha & Kate would teach a class. Shasha (he's the young man - just turned 24, from Kiev & cute as a button!!!!), did the talking & other than always starting with his right foot, pretty easy to understand. Have no idea why he starts with his right foot, but we're learning to deal with it!!! Then on to dinner at 6pm and ending with a special liquor for dessert. Then back to dance a little & on to a show in the 42nd Street



At the end of the 1st day at sea, there was an added Captain's Welcome & introduction of Staff in the Centrum & an aerial performance on the Chandolier!!! Wow! As this is the last voyage of the Splendour of the Seas with Royal Caribbean (it has been sold to Thompson's Cruise Line & is going in for refitting), all the staff are taking turns telling of their favorite moments on board, best memories, etc. Makes is kinda special!!



Anyway, the next sea days was relaxing & fun! And we opened our eyes on Thurs, 7 Apr as we cruised in to the Port of Salalah, Oman. We had breakfast delivered to our room to make it easier to get ready! Must admit that Oman has never been anywhere near my bucket list, but since it was a port destination on this cruise, we chose the longest excursion offered! We had to be downstairs in the Theater to meet our group, even though we were just docking at the same time. It was a mess down there, first time to dock usually is, but they had everyone meet at the same time & there were folks everywhere.



But everything was soon sorted out & our group was off the boat & into our bus & on the road. Salalah had a population of about 200,000 (4.2 million for all of Oman) and has a rather tropical climate with a monsoon season from July to September which supposedly transforms all this desert into a green tropical paradise (humm???) and also allows it to grow everything from coconuts to melons, to spices.



We were issued a Tourist Entry Permit (visa) by the Excursions folks on board. Originally told that they would have to process a Visa for us with a \$15 per person charge, but apparently they have renegotiated that, because we got these generic cards & there was not a charge.





First stop was to Al Husn Souk (market of course) where we were given about a half hour to shop. Mostly sold Frankincense, but we bought post cards & got some Omani coins! The shop owners didn't speak much English & they did take US dollars or credit cards. Finding a post card that said Salalah on it was a challenge, but once we finally got one of the shop keepers to understand, he told us "wait" and disappeared. He soon returned with a stack of cards & started rummaging through them with me to sort out the ones that said Salalah. Then I let him know that I wanted just coins - not a packaged set, but ones that were used. He had some in his box, but then soon disappeared again to bring me the one that was missing! Sure a lot of work for him for the \$6 we spent!!! But he was very cheerful about it all!



On to the Al Baleed Archeological Site & World of Frankincense Museum. They are both on the World Heritage list. Didn't actually walk around the Archeological site (it is currently still actively being researched) & we couldn't take pictures inside the Museum (it was set up quite well, with both Marine & Natural history displays). But our guide did give us an interesting talk about the Frankincense tree. It only grows in a couple of places in the world (some place in Africa) & in Oman. Marco Polo originally had Oman on his orient route specifically for the frankincense! Only the female tree can be used for collection of the sap & it can be recognized by the multiple trunks growing from the base. The sap is collected & dried to be used mostly as incense.



Next stop was Taqah Castle. It was built during the 19th century as a residence for one of the high ranking Sheiks, then turned over to the government in 1947 & has since been used as administrative offices and/or residences for assorted Government officials. One thing interesting to note is that we use 1947 (AD), they put up dates like 1366 AH. We asked what that meant & discovered they count time in Arabian History, hence AH. This castle was restored to it's original design & opened as a museum in 1994 (AD!!), 1414AH!



Probably the most interesting stop of the day was the Sumhuram Ancient Fortified Ruins. This was a wealthy port used back in the 1st Century AD (mind boggling to think of things that OLD!!). There are lots of restored walls & wells, homes & shops. It was quite hot out in this barren area, but there was a breeze from the shore.





One we got to the back of the site, the views were wonderful! Especially when we noticed the camels in the water! That made us feel like we were definitely in a foreign country!!!



We headed immediately to our lunch location. It was the Crown Plaza Hotel. Beautiful hotel & they served us a buffet set up in the Ballroom! Unfortunately we were the next to the last bus to arrive & by the time we got through the buffet line, they were out of almost everything except salads & dessert! Not a real issue since we've already been eating way too much & they didn't take us to lunch about 1:30pm, so we knew we were going to eat dinner in a few hours anyway. But definitely deserves a complaint when we do our survey!



After eating, we walked around the Crown Plaza grounds! Wow oh WOW! They are a full fledged resort (even sold alcohol in this very conservative Islamic region!!). Their private beach was GORGEOUS!!!



After lunch, we were back on the bus for the last bit of our excursion. It was a rather long drive south (almost to the Yemen border) to see a beach with caves & blowholes. But enroute, the guide was pointing out some cliffs with deep cut holes in them. He explained that many of the Bedoins that still traveled with their camels preferred to live in them than in the homes near civilization! They were on the opposite side of the bus, so I didn't get any decent pictures of them.



And then here come the herds of camels!!! Even babies!!!! They were on the opposite side of the bus, but I tried really hard for the pictures! Fun to see camels!!



Our last stop of the day was Mughsail Beach & the Blow Holes. Unfortunately it was low tide so the blow holes were not active, but the scenery was still beautiful. It was a lovely location & we were thrilled to get a chance to see it. It had been hot all day (probably high 80's/low 90's & very high humidity), but the breeze here made it very comfortable.



There were lovely boardwalks built to walk along the beach. We didn't have a lot of time, would have loved to wander further! The middle picture shows quite a lot of folks gathered around the screen where one blow hole was splashing. You can just make out some spray. They were taking turns standing on the screen. Figure they would be soaked during high tide! You could really hear the water roaring in the tubes!



It was definitely a gorgeous location. Guess we're in a minority to have seen the beauties of Oman!!!!



Soon we were back to the Port Salalah & we found this adorable creature on our bed to greet us that evening!!!

Enough for now! Several days at sea & then passing through the Suez Canal!!!!!!

Hope you are enjoying our adventure & it's making you want to viist on your own!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

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Check out our dance demo videos www.DanceRounds.info

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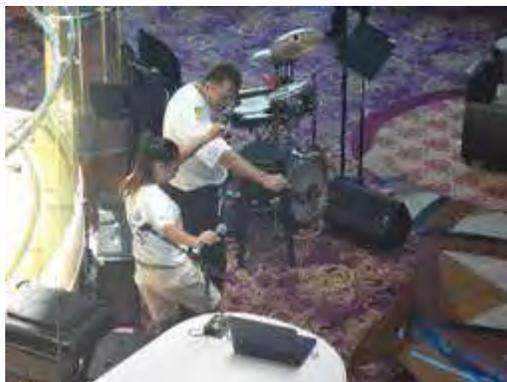
Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Suez Canal #7

Good Afternoon Everyone,

You should be very jealous of us right this minute. I am enjoying working at my computer while I feast my eyes on the gorgeous cliffs of Santorini - one of the most beautiful of the Greek Isles! But I'll not get too far ahead of myself - you still need to know about the main focus of this trip - the opportunity to cruise the Suez Canal!!!! So come along - lets look at the Suez Canal!!!



So here's another map. We left Salalah, Oman & cruised southwest along the coast of Yemen & into the Gulf of Aden. You might remember Captain Phillip's story about the pirates? Yes, that was in the Gulf of Aden & yes that's where we were sailing, just north of Somalia. Now there have not been any incident's in years and the Splendour would not be a regular target anyway because we are big & fast, but our ship took lots of precautions just to be safe. First I just found out that the main reason for our stop in Mascat was to get a security update on any activity in the area (none) and secondly, after dark, all external lights were extinguished. We were not to go out on our balcony's after dark for the day & a half that we were cruising that area and all of the ships outside deck were closed during that time after dark. Also the crew had been drilled on emergency actions if someone tried to board us. It was quite interesting to hear of all these precautions, but we were totally safe & never had any issues. The only problem for George & me was that it meant that we couldn't do our regular 2 mile walk on Deck 10 after the evening show. Phooey! We then turned into the Red Sea & it took a total of 4 days of cruising to get us up to the Suez Canal



So the 4 sea days flew past as we enjoyed a special luncheon with the staff (for being loyal Royal Caribbean customers), lots of dance & exercise classes (the Captain even showed up to dance once with Talita!!!) & calm blue seas.



We occasionally got close enough to a coast to see some settlements, but even the ship's navigation channel was not expanded enough to let us know exactly what city it was! And we had a different staff member do some fast & furious latin dance exercise classes. Of course we also continued with our lovely after dinner liquors!! And every night was some form of entertainment - including a wonderful pianist, Brooks Aehron. He said one of his first performances at sea was on the Splendour when it was a new ship. I couldn't find his age listed on line, but I figure he's pushing 80 & still performs 100 - 150 concerts a year! Amazing!



We actually officially entered the Suez Canal at 11:30pm on Mon, April 11th at 11:30pm. It was dark of course, so we couldn't see anything. The first picture is probably Saudi Arabia just before the split up the Isthmus of Egypt. I woke up about 6am on the 12th & forced myself to poke my camera through the curtains to snap a picture. Not much to see at that point anyway, just lots of desert & some tiny buildings. Here's some facts about it:

Suez Canal

Construction started: April 25, 1859

Officially opened: November 17, 1869

New Part opened: 2015

Major Advantage: The canal reduces sea voyage distance by about 7000K (4300 mi) by allowing ships to travel between Europe & South Asia without navigating around Africa.

Length: 193.30 K(120.11 mi) from the northern terminus of Port Said to the southern terminus of Port Tewfik at the city of Suez.

Ships served annually: In 2012, 17,225 vessels traversed the canal.

Expansion: In August 2014, construction was launched to expand and widen the Ballah Bypass for 35kn (22 mi) to speed the canal's transit time. The expansion is expected to double the capacity of the Suez Canal from 49 to 97 ships a day.

Points:

- One of the most important waterways in the world
- A single-lane artificial sea-level waterway
- Runs north to south across the Isthmus of Suez in Egypt to connect the Mediterranean sea and the Red Sea
- The canal separates the African continent from Asia
- Provides the shortest maritime route between Europe and the lands around the Indian & western Pacific Oceans
- Unlike Panama Canal, Suez Canal does not have a locks system
- Owned & maintained by the Egyptian owned Suez Canal Authority



Here's a satellite photo of the canal that I found on line. There is evidence that canals have been built in this area even by Pharaoh Ramses II !!



After I really woke up, I started taking pictures from the balcony. Of course since our balcony is on the starboard side of the ship, I was only getting the East side of the canal, heard later that in the beginning there were more populated areas on the West side of the canal.



We soon came to Great Bitter Lake where the canal is really through a huge lake. There were lots of big cargo ships anchored along the edges - I guess they are waiting for their line up or they have already come from the north & just waiting before heading on south. As we turned into the lake, I could see the line of ships in single file behind us! Just like we were pulling a train! Couldn't see anyone in front of us, but I know we were following someone!



Evidence of all the massive construction going on to widen the canal was everywhere! At several locations, there were ferries that obviously shuttle people & vehicles back & forth across the canal. They must coordinate so that the canal traffic does not have to slow down for the ferries. And we thought it cool that our passage was interesting to them also - not the guy leaning against the workman's building that is video taping us! And most all folks were looking our way. Assume there are way way more cargo vessels than cruise ships!



You can see by the toy truck size of the vehicles what a truly massive project this is! Read that they keep the vessels speed down to 8 knots to limit the erosion caused from wake. Gotta be a constant battle!



We eventually got dressed & went up to the Windjammer for a late breakfast. Sat on the port side of the ship & noticed this jeep that was tracking us. We were traveling very slow, so it was obviously some sort of security (for us or them????) because it maintained our exact speed. Couldn't see any weapons, but felt sure they were there. Never asked anyone, but wondering if they were watching to make sure that no one got off the ship? You can see a major city in the background.



Noticed a small boat along side and someone got off & came on board. Assume that it was a pilot for the specific portion of the canal.





We passed a huge memorial area with lots of fancy monuments, a new mosque, & huge apartment buildings. I couldn't zoom in enough on the signs, but it was to commemorate the opening of the new section of the canal on August 6, 2015. We turned into the new section - it was made to allow north & south passage at this busy point.



We finally made our way to the front of the ship & got a view of both sides, but again, this is now a division of the canal. In the 2nd photo, you can just see the top of a cargo ship going the opposite direction. Hooked up with John & Kay to enjoy the passage for a while. A historical guide was talking from the bridge & he reminded everyone that the canal was actually an arbitrary line

dividing Africa from Asia, so technically walking from port to starboard we can claim to have walked from the Continent of Africa over to the Continent of Asia!! How special is that?????



We soon completed our cruising through the new canal & hooked back into the main one. Then we started seeing the Mubarak Peace Bridge in front of us. It was completed in 2001 as a joint project between Japan & Egypt, also called the Egyptian/Japanese Friendship bridge. It has a 230' clearance over the canal & is 2.4 miles long. It is a physical link between Africa & Asia. There were people up on it waving & hollering at us as we passed underneath.



I took a few minutes off from Suez viewing to take a Belly Dancing class from Talita. That girl is amazing!!! Would love to bring her home with me!!



We started to see Port Said in the distance about 4:30pm. We started hearing a horn honking beside the boat. Apparently someone that was supposed to be brought on board, but took about 10 minutes of maneuvering before the bridge noticed him. Must not have had a radio. He honked & honked & finally pulled away a little & 2 guys were outside waving. Finally someone acknowledged him & they pulled along side & someone got on board. Again, assume it was a pilot for getting us into Port Said. Just think it was weird that it was so difficult to get their attention. Not sure why he didn't have a radio!



As we got closer, there was more & more traffic. The folks on the ferries were all waving & taking pictures. Seemed very happy to see us. Pass this HUGE mosque. It was beautiful.

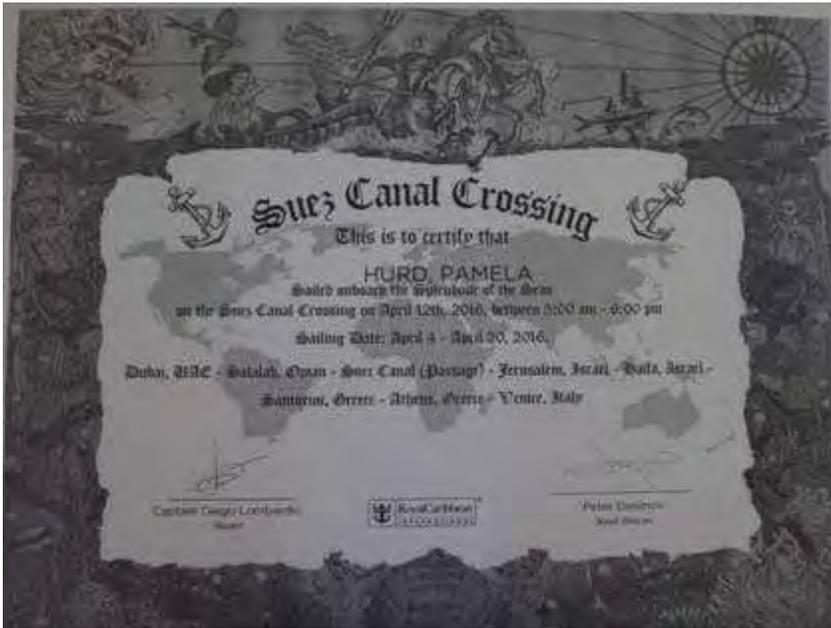


The port area was humongous, with a population of over 600,000, it is a thriving & metropolitan city. Found this quote on line from Rudyard Kipling: "If you truly wish to find someone you have known and who travels, there are two points on the globe you have but to sit and wait, sooner or later your man will come there: the docks of London and Port Said" Well guess we've been to them both now!!!



We docked about 5pm & stayed there at anchor for about 4 hours. I only took the one picture of the city side on our way to dinner. And so it goes! We've cruised through the entire length of the Suez Canal.

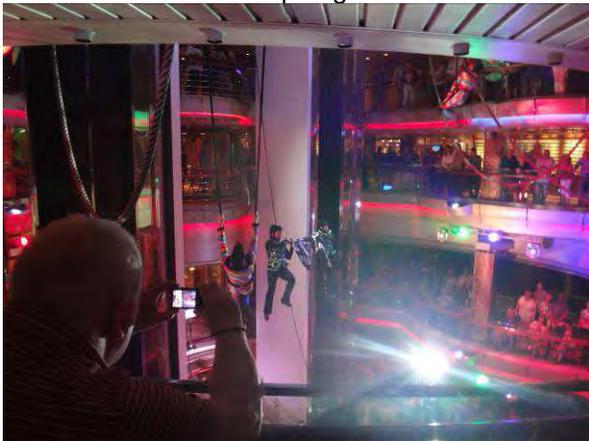




We were even awarded official certificates to prove it!!!! Yee HAW!!



That night, our After Dinner Liquors were really beautiful!!!! (and tasty too) Served in souvenir glasses! Oh boy - just what we need - more souvenir liquor glasses!!!



That night there were supposed to be 2 aerial performances by the RCL Singers/Dancers. The first one was really for the Second seating guests (we always take the first seating at 6pm), but we ran outside & caught the end of the performance. Just as well, because as soon as we started into the Mediterranean, it got really really windy & they had to cancel the second performance since we were rocking & rolling a bit. We did our outside walk but it was really rough. Got lots of stairs from Fit Bit because when we're walking against the wind, it thinks we are going up hill!!! Too funny! Nearly 100 stairs that night! Worried that it might be rough for sleeping, but it wasn't - it was really pretty smooth. You could hear the wind whistling though! Tried to get in bed fairly early because Guess What? Tomorrow we get to stop in Israel!!!!!!!!!! Very early excursion so, slept quickly!!!

Can't wait to describe Israel! Very exciting to finally get to see it!

Chow for now! Lots of love & wishes for Good Health to you all!!!

George & Pamela

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Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Jerusalem #8

Good Morning All! Wow, it's been a lovely cruise. Hope you can all experience one like it soon!!! We were told when we booked that sometimes due to security issues, the ship will just sail on past Israel. We were afraid that we wouldn't get to stop, but we got lucky! Strangely enough the weather was overcast. There was actually lightening in the eastern sky when we headed out on our excursion. Lucky for us it cleared up & we never really got rained on! Turned out that it kept it a wonderful temperature & we were able to see everything! So let's get on with it!!!



Our tour show time was 7am in the theater! Ick! We got there a few minutes early with John & Kay & we were assigned the first bus for our excursion. We were called & headed downstairs to disembark the ship & go through Israeli Customs & Immigration. John, Kay & I made it through & got in the next line to go outside - but no George! I kept letting others go in front of me & looking around for him! Finally walked back to the booth & he was still there with the lady asking him questions like "What do you do for a living?" "Have you been here before" She even called over a different agent & they talked for several minutes! We never found out what the problem was, but she finally let him go through - they both of us were pulled out of line to have our bodies scanned!! Really strange! No matter, John & Kay had saved us a seat & we were still the first bus out of the parking lot! Our port was actually Ashdod - you see in on the west coast of Israel. We basically headed as directly east as possible to get to Jerusalem.



We took a selfie on the bus to remind us that we'd been to Israel (don't quite have the hang of it, our selfies usually look goofy!!!). The original scenery was quite flat & just farm land. Nola, our guide who was originally from Cape Town, South Africa, said that temperatures had been creeping up to the 80's & everyone had put away their coats & they weren't expecting any rain until August. Then here comes this weird weather cell & it had rained all day yesterday & was supposed to do the same today!!! The good thing was that most everything was still green & it was only in the 60's. We all voted, when offered the choice, to stop at a roadside fuel station for a toilet stop enroute. It was to be an hour plus ride to Jerusalem & there was not a toilet at our first planned stop. The little exit station was much like what we'd see anywhere - including a Mickey D's!! She said they were extremely expensive in Israel & she didn't recommend them (as if we'd go there anyway!!!). The most interesting thing about the stop was the trashed burned out car in the parking lot!!!



Our bus driver had 2 little stuffed camels on his dash! Too cute! As we continued east, we started climbing the foothills leading up to Jerusalem. Unfortunately the clouds were quite low, so we couldn't see much scenery.



Our first stop was the Mount of Olives. Far down below you can just see some of the Walls around the old City of Jerusalem. They are near that Gold dome to the right of the tall green tree.



So the Gold Domed building is the Church of All Nations. We would not get to go inside it. But in this close up, you can see the wall in front of it.



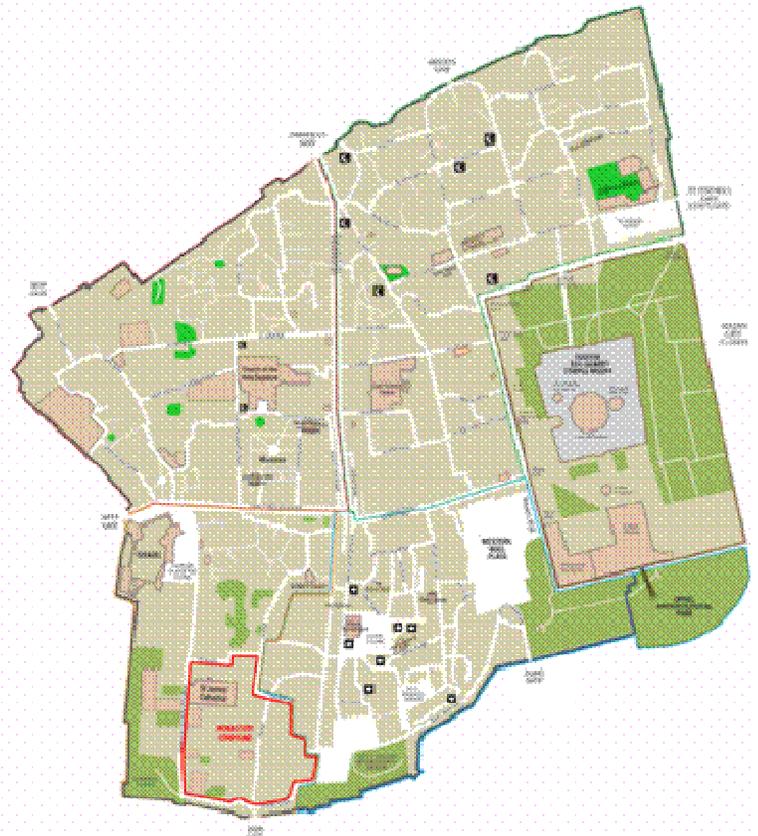


George got pictures of us. Notice the guy with the pink scarf eyeballing Kay! Our guide had warned us not to have anything to do with them – suggested that we'll stop at an "officially" sanctioned gift shop a bit later in the day.





George got a pretty good shot of the Russian Orthodox Church dedicated to Mary Magdelene that is in the Garden of Gethsemane at the base of the Mount of Olives. We didn't get to stop there. Reading about it, they have done tests on the Olive trees there & they are some of the oldest known to science. There are 3 churches built there. Amazing how the different branches of Christianity are trying to work together to maintain these holy places.





We drove around the old walled city and entered the Jewish Quarter through the Dung Gate in the lower right side going into the Western Wall Plaza – the big white rectangle. The 4 quarters are very loosely divided & not symmetric at all. We got to visit the Jewish Quarter (smallish lower center), the Muslim Quarter (most of the right side, including the huge Temple Mount), the Christian Quarter (upper left side). We left through the Jaffa Gate on the middle left side & above the Armenian Quarter on the lower left – didn't enter the Armenian Quarter.



We entered through security. There were 2 lines – divided up between men & women! But not really an issue – just had us put our bags, including purses through an x ray machine. We made our way on into the Plaza. First thing we noticed was the water fountain where folks were washing their hands before making their way to the wall.





First stop was to see the Western Wall or “Wailing” Wall. This wall is representative of access to the “Holy of Holies.” There was a Temple built on this stone platform (totally destroyed & rebuilt many times over thousands of year). This stone wall is the closest to the Temple Mount that Jews are allowed to pray. This gets very confusing for me, but apparently there is something called “status quo policy” which does not allow Jews or Christians to pray on the Temple Mount. The second picture is a sign describing the Wall & how the Divine Presence is always there. Again there was a division with men on one side and women on the other. When we went in, I got tickled at the women up on chairs to see over into the men’s section.



George got a picture of the men’s side. The wooden ramp is for non-Muslims to access the Temple Mount through the Mughrabi Gate. Apparently it is very controversial & keeps being opened & closed. What a mess! Another example of the unrest in the area is the stone/net covered fence running across the Western Wall Plaza. It was placed there to protect those praying at the wall from folks standing & throwing rocks! Too too sad!



Next was a walk through the tunnels turned market (souks) into the Muslim Quarter.





Lots of buying/selling going on. Everybody needs a Dentist, right? And lots & lots of people! Yep, lots of people!! And this is off season! Just a quick comment – this flat bread is apparently a staple throughout the region (Middle East?) because it was even available at every meal in the Cruise Ship Buffet! And it was pretty good too! They always had it and at least 2 types of dip – hummus, salsa, avocado dip, white bean dip, etc, etc. (and yes I loved it!!!)



Continuing through the Muslim Quarter into the Christian Quarter, we came to Via Dolorosa (in Latin “way of Sorrows”, “way of Grief”, “way of Suffering”, or simply “Painful way”) – the street that is held since the 18th Century to be the street where Jesus walked with his cross. Along the way, there are 9 “Stations of the Cross,” specific events that are believed to have occurred like falling 3 times, being helped to carry the cross, having his face wiped, etc.



We continued along the stations until we arrived at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (last 5 Stations are inside). So this church is built on the site of both Christ's crucifixion and his tomb of burial & resurrection.





Before we get into the inside of the church, I have to talk about some of the funny politics. 6 different religious sects claim ownership to parts of this church (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Egyptian Copts, Syriacs), Apparently they try really really hard, but there are strange quirky things that have to be pointed out. When you look at the outside of the church, you might notice this ladder up on the upper floor. A wooden ladder was placed there at some time before 1852, when the *status quo* defined both the doors and the window ledges as common ground. This ladder, the "Immovable Ladder", remains to this day, in almost exactly the same position it occupied in century-old photographs and engravings. Is that hilarious or what? But then not so funny, George & John noticed this strange cartoon looking metal container in the square in front of the church. Haven't confirmed, but this appears to be a bomb disposal container! How scary is that?

I'm going to stop here for this report & then I'll finish Jerusalem/Bethlehem in a separate report. This one seems to be a bit too big!!!

Still planning to finish this trip up! Have lots of good things left to share with you!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Jerusalem-Bethlehem #9

Good Afternoon Everyone,

Hope everyone is having a lovely day! We've arrived in Rosewood & things are going well here! Weather is saying that we'll soon see storms, but so far it's sunny & mid 80's! Maybe the storms will pass us by!! Let's get to it!



After viewing the outside of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, we made our way inside! Although the main sanctuary was not very elaborate, it was very interesting. According to ancient history, Roman Emperor Hadrian originally built a temple to the Goddess Aphrodite on the site of the cave of the tomb to hide it. Then in 325/6 Constantine the Great had the temple destroyed & built a church on the site. Since then the building has been destroyed by war and/or earthquakes & always rebuilt. The current building has been here since 1555, although it has been damaged by fire & renovated several times. You climb steep stairs with a narrow entrance to the chapel that is built on Calvary/Golgotha. It is the most elaborately decorated in the church & is maintained by the Greek Orthodox, although the Roman Catholics have an alter inside.



The Rock of Calvary can be seen through glass on both sides of the altar & underneath is a hole where the cross was placed. Folks were crawling under the altar to put their hands inside the hole. Some were spending quite a long time praying there & there was a long line to get there. We went around.

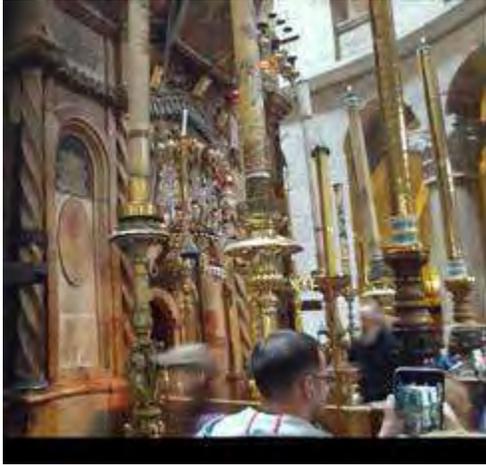




Back downstairs, we were told about the Stone of the Anointing – traditionally believed to be the actual stone where Jesus body was laid to prepare for burial by Joseph of Arimathea. Just across from it is a huge mosaic depicting the anointing.



Continuing through the church, we came to this chapel that is built over Christ's tomb. This second picture is one I downloaded from the internet for you could see how it really looked. All 3 of the major sects hold mass in this chapel. It is directly under the larger of the 2 domes in the church.



Lots of different religious sects have candles outside the tomb. They are all different shapes & sizes – some very very ornate. There is one candle that burns at all times. You can buy small candles & have them lit by that flame to represent your prayer. Our last stop in the church was to see the Chapel of Helena, the Mother of Emperor Constantine. There is a chair inside where she supposedly sat when searching for the "True Cross."



We exited the old Walled city of Jerusalem via the Jaffa Gate & tried to get some last pictures from the outside!





With the panorama pictures you can get a small idea of how large the city is & how it's hill top position dominates the overall area.



Next stop was lunch at the Ramat Rachel Hotel – connected to a Kibbutz (collective farm) by the same name. It had gorgeous grounds. It was a lovely buffet lunch.



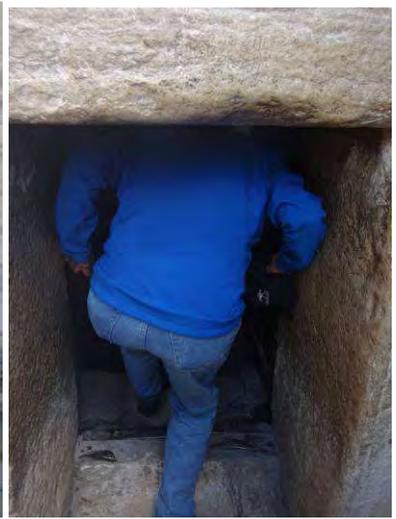
From lunch we drove into the West Bank to visit Bethlehem. There was a large security area & they did come on the bus, but questions were very lackadaisical – like where are you from? We hadn't even realized that Bethlehem was in the West Bank! Guess we didn't give much foresight to our tour choices, huh? But we would have chosen Bethlehem anyway.



Our bus let us out & we walked in a group through the crowded streets. Although it's population is officially only 25,000, it is funded principally by tourism & there were lots of tourists even in this off season time period! Peak season is Christmas when many Christians make a pilgrimage to the Church of the Nativity.



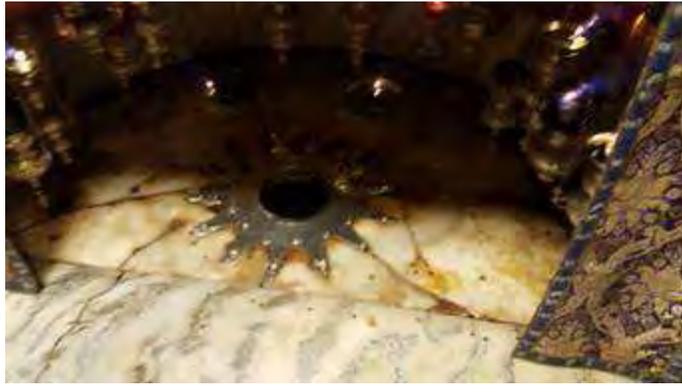
Our destination in Bethlehem is the Church of the Nativity; however, the Mosque of Omar is what catches your eye first. It is the only mosque in Bethlehem. The we crossed the street to head toward the Church of the Nativity.



The church is not very impressive from the outside. And besides being under restoration, the most memorable aspect is the tiny entrance door – called the “door of humility.”



In 2012, the church was listed as the first Palestinian World Heritage Site – I suspect that’s what is driving all the restoration. Hopefully it will look much better in future years (assuming it isn’t destroyed by all the terrorist activity!). There were a couple of places that they had built trap doors to show you the original mosaics under the raised floors. These mosaics are from the 4th Century.



The main objective in the church was to go downstairs to the Grotto of the Nativity. The 14 Point Star marks where Jesus was born & the candles mark where Mary placed him in the manger. The main difference in my opinion is that these 2 points were not in a lean to barn as we always see it portrayed, but in a cave! We were very lucky to see the specific locations. The morning group was not allowed access as there was one of the hourly processions going on by one of the many religious sects allowed to practice in the church.





There were some beautiful areas in the church, but I can't really tell you what they were representing.



There was a beautifully maintained courtyard with lovely manicured trees & rose bushes. Even a beautiful statue of King George fighting the dragon?????



Our guide pointed out that these white license plates with green lettering are only allowed to drive in the West Bank!!! They cannot leave Palestine!



Our guide had told us that Starbucks had tried to make a go of it in Israel & had given up. For whatever reason, it just couldn't make it. But apparently some folks thought it was worthwhile to make a play on the name for their coffee business!!!





Too soon we were back on the bus & leaving Bethlehem. We were really rather disappointed – the city itself was very “slummy.” But it was interesting & we’re happy to have seen it. They warned us that leaving the West End was sometimes more difficult than coming in, but the security guard didn’t even step on the bus. Noted the wall here – Should we send The Donald over to take a look at it?????



Our guide had the bus driver take a scenic route back to the port of Ashdod. By the afternoon the clouds had mostly lifted & it was very lovely views of the rolling hills & farmland. Had expected Israel to be all desert, so it was nice to see all the fertile agricultural fields. Of course we were there at the end of winter when they get all their rain. Normally it quits raining in March & they don’t have rain until August. That’s why we mostly see pictures of Israel as brown. We were lucky enough that it had actually rained for a couple of days before we arrived & everything was green again for a few days!



Our guide (who was from Cape Town, South Africa by the way) told us that it was becoming quite common to cover crops with screens to help preserve even the tiny bits of water from humidity! We saw some military helicopters as we approached Ashdod. Just standard maneuvers apparently – nothing serious! And finally just a view of the white stone facings on all the architecture. That is required for any buildings in Israel!



Soon we were back on board ship! Dressed & down to dinner of course! Our after dinner liquors were definitely desserts tonight! And when we got back to our cabin, we saw that our menagerie is really growing!!!



The lights of the Port of Ashdod were beautiful as we pulled out to head for our next destination – the port of Haifa!

Good night for now & I'll continue tomorrow with our visit to the Sea of Galilee!! It was the highlight of the entire trip!!!

Stay happy & healthy!!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

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Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Galilee #10

Good Morning Everyone! Hope you are all doing well. We are back in Texas and were supposed to have had storms last night, but they seem to have passed us by. Mom & I heard 2 claps of thunder, but they were not right over us. Didn't hear it rain, but it must have because the soil was damp on the driveway when I walked up to the trash container & then back over to the RV. But the skies are bright blue this morning & the birds are happily singing! Anyway, let's get back to the highlight of our trip (at least for me).



Our ship pulled into the Port of Haifa about 6am – just sunrise. You know how George & I love getting up early (cough cough!), so I'd already been up about an hour!!!! But the sunrise was beautiful & room service came & delivered breakfast for us too! Soon John & Kay were at the door & we all went down to join the tour.



Easy exit today (guess we'd already gone through security, so nothing today). You always worry about being able to understand the guide, well today we really lucked out – the guide was Zack from New York City!! He has lived in Haifa for 20 some odd years,

and he had worked at it, so had practically no accent at all. His sense of humor was hilarious & he talked non-stop! Said he got really tickled at the Israelis because they pronounced his name as Jacque as if he was French! The scenery leaving the beautiful port of Haifa was very agricultural. Another advantage of the previous day's rain was the clear skies. Zack said it had cleared much of the ever present dust out of the air for us.



First thing he did was hand out maps (my kind of guide!) & describe our route for the day. We were leaving Haifa (mid left on the map – Jerusalem is about 70 miles south of the Sea of Galilee) & heading as straight as possible towards the Sea of Galilee. We left Haifa on 4, meandering around & eventually hitting 77 that took us straight east to Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee.



As we climbed a bit, we did have some fog, but it didn't last long & the views were spectacular.



We had seen this stop sign several times, but this was the first time I managed to get a clear shot of it. Pretty clear of the meaning, but definitely not the international symbol!!!



We soon reached our first stop – the Roman Catholic Church of Mount of the Beatitudes – where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. Although the exact location is really not certain, this has been celebrated as representative of it for 1600 years. The Nun outside the chapel was not pleased with the noisy tourist. She was repeating a litany of “don’ts” and reminding everyone that this was holy place, not an amusement park! Not that it made much difference – the tour guides (including ours) continued their descriptions of the area – at least ours lowered his voice.



The chapel on the top of the hill was just beautiful. The building was built between 1936 & 38, but it was built on Byzantine Ruins & some of the original mosaics were mostly recovered & are on display in a museum in Capernaum. The stained glass windows in the top of the chapel are all the beatitudes and the lower windows all look out on the beautiful scenery of the Sea of Galilee & the gardens.



We spent almost an hour walking around the grounds. Being over 1000' above the Sea of Galilee & with the clear skies – it was a wonderful hour!!



What a wonderful memory of Israel. The Franciscan Monks that maintain this property do a great job.



A short drive north around the Sea of Galilee we came to our second stop – Tabgha. This is the site believed to be where Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves & fishes.



Before we got into the chapel, our guide stopped us to look at this huge stone. This is an olive press dating from Roman times. Must not have been a traveling one!! Ha! We continued on into the walled courtyard for more explanation about the site & chapel. Last year this church was attacked & had lots of damage by fire & vandalism. They had even sprayed graffiti all over the walls.



The simple Byzantine style church still has replicas of the original mosaics. One side shows local flora & fauna & a likeness of the Egyptian lighthouse at Alexandria, while the other side of the altar had a rock covered in glass this is believed to be where Jesus stood while performing the miracle. The mosaics there show a basket with a fish on one side & a bread loaf on the other.



Zack pointed out that the windows were not the more common stained glass, but thinly sliced stones (agate???).



We continued our drive around the Sea of Galilee. There is a walkway around much of the sea. Passed a large group walking – probably a religious pilgrimage tour. Zack pointed out the city of Capernaum along the shore.



We crossed a bridge over the Jordan River as it enters the Sea of Galilee from the north. Not too impressive, huh? Our guide said – “don’t blink!!” Apparently there is disagreement on whether Jesus was baptized at the Northern or the Southern end.



We continued driving south on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Saw lots of agricultural activity. More of the net covered plants too. There were several areas that were landscaped & looked lovely!



We stopped at Yardenit Baptismal Site. Apparently this site was officially established for Pilgrims to us in 1981. It became the first regulated baptismal site on the Israeli side of the river. It can baptize up to 1000 folks at one time!!!



It was quite a nice area, although looking at the water, I don't think I'd care to be baptized in it!



There was a group of folks that were changing into white baptismal robes & a couple of guys were playing guitars. We never saw them getting into the water. There didn't seem to be anything formal about it. There was lots of fish of all kinds – catfish, trout, perch, etc. And this beaver rat creature – called a coypu, nutria, or River Rat!!!



We found a wine tasting inside the gift shop! How cool is that. We didn't buy any, but it was fun to taste some Israeli wine. And George is enjoying the camera on his new phone! I feel like the paparazzi is following me!!! He caught me buying post cards!!!



From there we back tracked a bit north past Tiberias for another lovely buffet lunch at NOF Ginosa. It was a resort type Kibbutz. The grounds were beautiful, but we weren't given much time to look around.



After lunch, we drove about 45 minutes south west to the city of Nazareth. The home of Mary & Joseph & of course Jesus, there are several very important religious locations there. The city now has a population of about 75,000 & appears quite progressive. It is considered the largest Arab city in Israel.



We were a bit confused & disappointed to discover that we never stopped to get off the bus at all in Nazareth. Not sure if the tour was really designed that way or if our time escaped or if our guide just didn't want to stop, but whatever the reason, we drove about 45 minutes to get there & then just drove around about an hour. He pointed out Mary's Well – the recently renovated area that is believed to be where Gabriel met & told Mary that she would conceive & the child would be the Son of God. Then the church of Annunciation that is dedicated to that episode (our friends on another tour got to go in & said it was amazing!!!! – I downloaded this picture of a mass taking place in the Grotto of the church). I was totally blown away by all the shops with fancy dresses. I didn't think to get pictures at first, so by the time I thought of it, we were in the bridal gown area & those were not as amazing. Some of the first ones were really risqué & totally blingy!!! Extremely non-Muslim!!!!!!



Soon we were on our way back to the port of Haifa. Again, we passed so many agricultural fields. This has totally changed my idea of the landscape of Israel!!! Oh yes, another thing amazing that I have no picture to document – Israel is one of the World's major Diamond cutting centers!!! The diamonds are imported from Africa, but cut in Israel!!!! Who'd a thunk it?



Now for the highlight stop of the highlight day!!! We drove to the top of Mt Carmel overlooking the port of Haifa. Our guide got permission for us to enter the top portion of the garden of Baha'i. They are also called the Hanging Garden's of Haifa. The architect is from Iran.



It certainly helped that the air quality was absolutely amazing! We could see all the way to the hills over Lebanon. Our ship was visible down in the port. What a glorious stop!



One final beautiful picture!!!!



Back in our cabin, we still had an awesome view from our balcony.



We changed clothes & ran to dinner. We all adored our asst waiter, Li. She dropped the utensils & George snapped a picture of her & threatened to post it on Facebook! She was just too cute!!!



Our evening dinner ended with another yummy After Dinner Liquor!!!! We had lucked out & gotten a great cocktail waitress that was having fun coming up with new things each night! This one had Jager Meister in it!!!

And so ended our last night in Israel!!!!!! Wonderful port stop!!! One more major stop in Santorini for this cruise. Don't go away! Still a fun stop to tell you about!

Have a great night & stay tuned!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

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Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Santorini #11

Good Evening All!

Things are going well here – had a rude Texas welcome last night – spent an anxious hour listening & watching the local weather tracking a tornado heading straight towards us. It turned and ended up 5 miles west of us. We lost power a couple of times, but never for very long. And the huge hail that hammered a town just south of us never came our way. We definitely dodged a bullet! But today dawned sunny & bright & the hay just keeps growing & the frogs are just happy as can be! So enough about Texas, lets continue on our cruise!



The day after we left Israel was a Sea Day. We crossed Northwest across the Mediterranean towards Greece. The oceans looks like glass. I don't know that we've ever been on calmer oceans. It was amazing! That night was a formal night & we got a picture of our dinner table mates. We had all gotten along just fine & none of us ever missed an evening meal together. We remembered to get a picture of our evening wait staff. He was from India & she was from China. We found out about halfway through the cruise that they were an item! They were fantastic! Never had better more attentive service. That evening after dinner was a party in the Solarium for returning guests. It was a nice location for the party. Surprisingly enough, the Captain wandered around on his own & for whatever reason stopped & spent about 10 minutes chatting with John & Kay and George & me. He was very casual & just chatty. The first Captain we've ever run across that was so personable. We got tickled because one of the other couples at our table was quite into the importance of being with a celebrity on the ship (they won lots of awards for different contests aboard) & they had paid several times to have pictures with the Captain. It happened that they were not with us when we chatted with the Captain, so we really kidded them that he liked us better than he did them!! Wish I had had the nerve to send him over to them & say we had sent him!!!! Sometimes I do just have a mean streak!



Several times the performers from the theater would do a special in a day or two in the Centrum & on this night our favorites did a special. They were called Classic Graffiti and they were a comedy String Quartet. They claimed to take the class out of Classical!!! They were just hilarious. Excellent musicians, but made light of themselves & were just this side of slap stick! We loved them. Then there was a special performance in the theater & some of the staff said goodbye to our activity director. Because this was the last voyage of the Splendour, there were special events going on all the time. That night when we got to our room, we found that our adorable cabin attendant had left us something really funny!! Our overall menagerie had gotten huge!!!



The next morning we awoke to a lovely view of Santorini floating in the beautiful Adriatic Sea ahead of us. Our excursion show time was not quite so early, but still up about 6am!



We had our breakfast delivered to our room & just watched the island get closer & closer. Amazing beauty.



Soon we could see the white buildings shining on the tops of the cliffs. Before we headed downstairs to wait for our tender to the island, we changed the shoes of our bed legs & gave it High heels!!! Paparazzi was still after me!!! Gotta take that phone away from him!!! He's worse than Linda Sparks!!



Here's a couple of views of Santorini that I downloaded from the internet. Our boat was docked a little above the i in Nea Kameni & we tendered to the Fria dock which is about the center of the white mass in the center left on the island of Santorini. Our excursion would take us to a small dock on Nea Kameni to let us hike to the top of that volcano. Then we would sail all the way around Nea Kameni to see Palea Kameni & then back to the Fria dock. Most of the inhabitants live on the cliffs around the center of the caldera – at the tip is Oia and Fria is the biggest city. There are about 300 folks that live on Therasia. No one lives on Nea Kameni (New Burnt Island). Our guide said that 1 old man lives on Palea Kameni (Old Burnt Island) with his dog & goat.



The tender to the Fria port was uneventful & easy & we got our first view of the Splendour in the caldron of Santorini. Gorgeous!!! Our excursion stated that we'd take a "kaiki" (traditional fishing boat) over to Nea Kameni (the Volcanic Island in the center of the caldron of Santorini). We pulled right out from the dock as soon as we'd all boarded.





The cruise over was short but very pretty. The water was totally smooth & the temperature was in the mid 60's. It felt wonderful!



This was a pretty darn fancy fishing boat! It was clean & beautifully maintained. Can't imagine how much time they have to spend polishing all this teak!





Soon we were climbing the ground lava trail up through the National Geological Park of Nea Kameni (New Burnt). Our guide kept everyone moving at a pretty good clip. We were lucky that it was in the low 70's as we trudged up the slope. By the way FitBit challengers we did over 20,000 steps & 80 floors that day (seems to me it should have been more – but Fit Bit doesn't lie – right?).



Kay was trying to keep up, but her knee was definitely protesting & with the trail being loose gravel, she finally decided to stop & John came on up with us. Our guide stopped once at a level area & gave us some advertisements on things to do on Santorini when we got back to the dock. They were definitely pushing the tourism on the island! We were way more interested in taking in the phenomenal views!



As we climbed higher, the views of the caldera got more & more impressive. We got to where we could see our cruise ship looking like a little toy boat in the waters below.





Near the top, we made a stop to investigate a huge depression that smelled of sulfur & had steam rising from white encrusted soil. There was lots of scientific equipment set up there to monitor for volcanic activity. This volcano hasn't erupted since 1950, but it's considered a dormant, but active volcano. Thank goodness it didn't do anything while we were there!!! Our guide dug in the soil just a little & showed us that it was extremely warm right under the surface.



At the top we celebrated that we had made it to the rim of the volcano – approximately 400'. With 360 degree views of the caldera.



This is the view of Palea Kameni, Therasia, & Oia on the tip of Santorini.



To give you an idea of the size of the top of this volcano – without any zoom – that is George looking out over the rim.



It was a very easy hike back down & the views were consistently gorgeous! Finally saw our first creature – a cute little lizard! He certainly didn't want to sit still!



On the way up I hadn't noticed all the flora. Amazing all the things that manage to grow in the stark lava soil! When you looked closely, there were lots of wild flowers, & several types of trees! Nature is determined to exist! Nothing to do with this trip, but did you guys see the special about Chernobyl recently? George & I visited the museum about that disaster when we visited Kiev several years ago, so the recent show caught our attention. It's amazing how much is growing in the area 30 years after the most horrific nuclear disaster ever. Admittedly some of the life is flawed, but life there is! Unbelievable! Like watching how fast things grow after a disastrous fire. God is good.



We were pleased to see John with Kay happily sitting on our “traditional fishing boat!!” (that still cracks me up!). John had made it to the top with us, but headed back down before the group to check on Kay. She had already made it back to the boat & found a comfortable seat & was enjoying the lovely weather!



We took a lovely sail over to Palea Kameni to see the Thermal Springs. Interesting note that these are not “HOT” springs, but “thermal” springs. Meaning the temperature is not as high and that they are open to the ocean, so you have to swim in to the warm unimproved area. Apparently the catamaran’s come to the site & you are allowed to swim from the boat to the warmer waters for your “medicinal bath!” We looked for the old man & his animals, but didn’t get to see him.





Cruised on around that island & back around Nea Kameni. Such a lovely day out on the water. Enjoyed seeing our ship in the caldera.



Continued on back to the Fria Dock. Loved the entire time. Not much else to say about it, but this is BEAUTIFUL!



The last time we were here, there were 8 other cruise ships here & it was over 100 degrees. Santorini has this situation where you have 3 ways to get off the island – either walk, take the donkeys, or take the cable car. When we were here before, it was over 100 degrees & there were 8 other cruise ships anchored in the caldera, so there were hundreds of people on the island. It was a 3 hour wait for a cable car with no shade or seats. We had all elected to walk down the stairs where the donkeys travel down the cliffs & it was a horrible experience. John & Kay had had the same problem. That's one of the reason's we had chosen this excursion for this stop, not only to see the incredible views, but to avoid the problems on the main island. But then we realized that we were the ONLY cruise ship at Santorini. AND our excursion had included tickets on the cable car. And it was only in the low 70's! So we decided to head up to Fria!

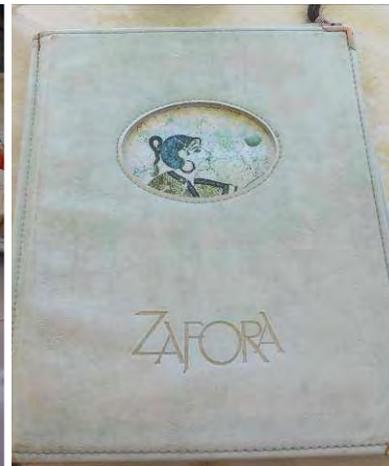


There was no line at all for the cable car – we walked straight in, got in a car & headed up. We walked around a little & enjoyed the tiny little alley streets & all the sights. Amazing to see it soooooo empty! If we were ever going to come here to stay, we'd definitely come this time of year! Temperature was perfect & it's awesome without crowds. They told us we were the first cruise ship of the season!





The clear blue sky & the fabulous blue Aegean Sea make for an unbelievable back drop for the white buildings dotted along the cliff edges. Magical.



After a short walk around, we settled on Zafora – the closest restaurant to the cable car. Ordered warm bread & an cold mixed appetizer plate with ice cold Mythos beer. “Heaven, we’re in Heaven and my heart beats so that I can hardly speak.” Well maybe that’s over the top a little, but it will certainly be up there in unforgettable lovely moments!



We were the only ones on the top level of the restaurant, so they let us wander around & take pictures from all the angles.



Got one nice photo of John & Kay before we headed back to the ship.



Had to share the adorable little toilet door identifiers. Too too cute!



Down we went – again no line at all! Definitely the time of year to visit! Got some shots of the stairs with folks walking & then some mules & donkeys coming up. Brings back bad memories from our last time here! But bet even that would have been enjoyable this year!



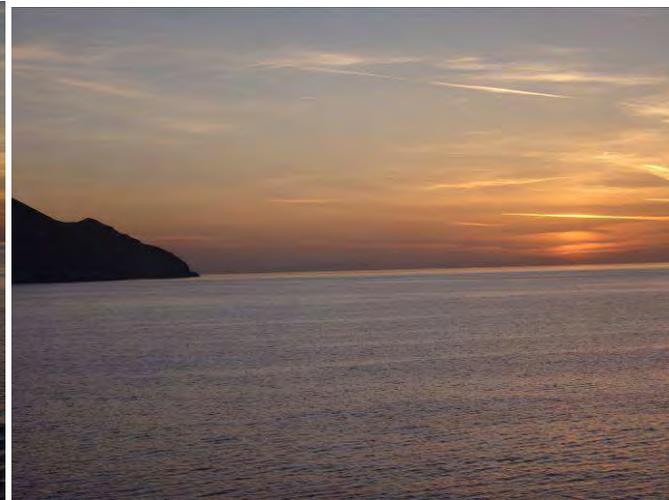
Back in our cabin, we spent the rest of an enjoyable afternoon relaxing with the doors open to the sights & sounds of this beautiful island.



We couldn't quit snapping pictures. Good thing we don't have to pay for developing anymore!



The show that evening was Inna Tolstova. She was a Russian violist – her music was sort of an electric screeching rock – we didn't enjoy it much. But what was memorable was her costume changes. The first outfit was that long brown dress – rather staid & didn't really go with the loud hard rock music. Suddenly while we were trying to decide whether to leave – she whipped off that skirt & had this little checkerboard cocktail table cloth on. Now she had our attention for a couple of songs & then her grand finale was stripping that off & she's finishes with this 2 piece swim suit with gauze netting over it!!! Wild! Some of the older folks on the front row left when she stripped off the first skirt – guess their hearts couldn't take it! Ha Ha! Quite an odd show!



I'll finish up this episode of Santorini with some sunset photos of our departure. Really really glad that we had this second visit. Gave us much more appreciation for this highly recommended Greek island! I believe we can understand the hype now. If you haven't been there yet – plan a trip off season of the stinking cruise ships!!! All those tourists & the extreme heat will definitely effect your memories of it!

Should be able to finish up this vacation edition with one more! I'll hope to finish it soon!

Thank you for traveling with us – makes it much nicer to travel with friends – both in person & virtually! By the way, if anyone wants to see the original photos in full size, they are almost all posted on my <http://pampicts.shutterfly.com> now

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

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Dubai-Suez Canal Cruise Adventure – Piraeus to Texas #12

Hello Friends & Family,

I'm coming to the end of another glorious vacation! We still enjoyed several more days at sea & one port day that we elected no excursion. Anyway things here in Texas are moving along, but now George has the flu!!! Let's get to the final report!



We didn't plan on an early morning since we had decided we weren't going on an excursion from Piraeus. This is considered the jumping off port for Athens. George & I and John & Kay have all been to Athens several times & had no desire to fight the heat & the crowds to go to Athens again. We had originally booked a National Park hike, but it was canceled – no explanation, but assuming not enough had signed up for it. We talked it over & decided just to meet for lunch on the ship & then just walk off the ship & wander around on our own.





We had not really done any research on the port, so we just walked out & picked up a map of the port area. Thought it was funny that this big dog was totally relaxed & didn't even feel it necessary to move for us to peruse the map stand! I didn't think to get a picture of it, but there was this pretty cool interactive computer station that allowed you to touch your interest areas around the port. There was a plan for walking about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way around the port (water way didn't allow you to make the circumference) & listed all the local churches. Kind of amazed at the size of them in such a small area! But we didn't really pay much attention to them, just looked at the architecture.



Sadly, I can't even tell you what I was snapping pictures of – just pretty architecture!! Falling down on my job obviously! Small farmers market had some beautiful fruits & vegetables, assume there was probably more local sales since it was a Sunday. Definitely looked like really good stuff!!! We came upon a “flea market.” It was pretty darn pathetic & we didn't take any pictures. No booths – looked like homeless folks that were selling their stuff! There were individuals with a couple pair of boots in front of them for sale. Everything just laying in the blocked off pedestrian streets. Saw a fight break out & a local beat cop came in to

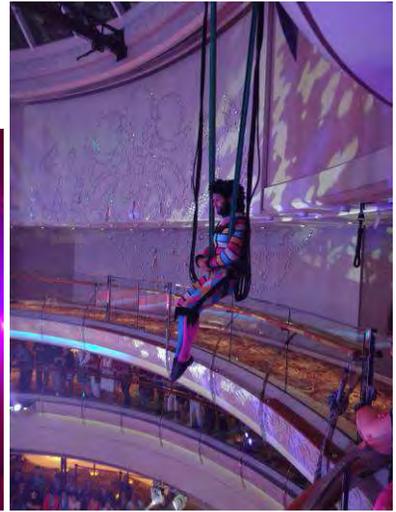
settle it. We decided we were not in a really good part of town & headed back to the ship! Found a nice local restaurant with some outside seating & enjoyed a drink out in the beautiful sunny weather. A nice relaxing day!



Only other picture from our walk around the port. Spotted this interesting contraption lifting what appeared to be a huge heavy box up to a the top of a high rise apartment building. The 3 moving men were down at street level just pushing levers. Looked pretty functional!



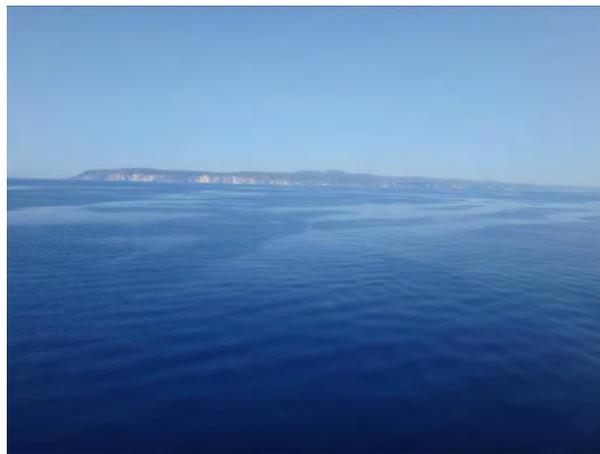
The sunset as we floated away from our last port of call was lovely! We were soooooo lucky with such beautiful weather on this entire trip!



The RCL singers/dancers put on an explosive aerial show. It had been delayed due to the winds a few days back. This time it went without a hitch. Pretty fun.



That night we had these fancy certificates on our bed! They were certifying that we were on the last cruise of the Splendour of the Seas before she was sold to Thompson Cruises.





The next morning was another beautiful day to sail! We were sailing up Isthmus between Croatia & Italy.



The day was filled with exercise classes, the Dancing with the Stripes grand finale (great fun!!), & good bye celebrations throughout the ship – even the dining room!



That night we got a couple of pictures of our favorite little Li – assistant of our dining room wait staff.



That night there was a huge celebration when the our Captain handed a key to the new Splendour owners from Thomson Cruise Lines. They will deliver it to Germany where it will be renovated before being put back into use. It was great fun to watch, but George & I just went on for our walk! Lovely hike around Deck 10! 8 laps was 2 miles! And against the wind gave credit for stair climbing! Lovely!



We had a few white caps the next day – great – made it feel like a real cruise! The water was soooooo beautiful!



One final day at sea: 2 exercise classes with Talita – her fiancé came & joined us & she danced with me to show folks that the Brazilian dance she was showing us could be a couple dance – I was honored! She told me I probably had Brazilian blood! Yep for sure! The last night in the dining room the wait staff did a parade & said thank you & we got a joyful shot of Li & Jose. Sure wish them luck – RCL is sending them to different ships! Oh well – they are young, they have plenty of time to work things out!



We got one more chance for dancing in the Centrum! It hasn't been a perfect dance floor, but it was functional – bands were danceable & usually room to move a little bit.



The last show in the theatre was really good. Usually it's just a nothing review, but this one even had a couple doing acrobatics before our Activity Director called folks from all departments on board to the stage! One final grand finale goodbye! And we thought we would take one more walk – but as we headed up to our cabin, we realized that the wind was really whipping & it was rough outside, so got our last bedtime wines & headed to the cabin to put out our luggage.



Our status with RCL gave us 2 free pictures, so we picked a couple out. Good memories!



They had mentioned that we would be cruising past the Saint Mark's Square in Venice about 5am. I forced myself out of bed & watched as we came into the Grand Canal. We thought they didn't allow that anymore, so I was happy to get to experience it, even if it was dark & quiet! Gave me goose bumps!



So now I have to let you know what I did! We were scheduled to disembark the ship at 9:15am and could have breakfast at our lounge anytime after 8:30am. I went back to bed after watching us cruise the canal & slept until 7am. I got up – took my shower & made the horrible discovery that I had sent my pants down with the luggage last night! Remember I said we were going to take a walk? Well, I had clothes laid out for that. When we got to the cabin after deciding it was too windy to walk, we finished up the final packing to leave our luggage out for pick up. And yes, I slipped on a robe & packed up my pants & sent them down with the luggage! Felt like I was a part of one of the standard jokes about cruise life! I called John & Kay, but nope, they didn't have any extra pants! I asked my little cabin attendant, but she was about a size double 00 and 4'11"! Finally called down to guest services and after the laughter died down, they let George off the ship to get to our luggage & bring me some pants! Sigh! Sometimes I am just too much like Carol Burnett!!!! Yes, go ahead – laugh away! But made it to our lounge on time & all was well!!!! While I was waiting, I got one more picture of Venice from our Balcony!!!!



Our flight back to Mesa was totally uneventful – love the Global Pass for skipping the lines at Customs! It was great great great. Flight from New York we had a young family with pre school kids that screamed & kicked the chairs for 5 hours, but other than that – it was an easy flight back! Tom & Marge were there to greet us after we said bye to John & Kay! They gave us a last farewell party on Thursday night & Friday morning we took the RV over for an oil change & then hit the road to Texas. Our cow pond is HUGE from all the Spring rains, but we got parked without incident & we are settled in for a month before heading out on the Summer travels!

So ends another adventure with the Dancing GyPsies!!! Hope you enjoyed it! We'll be back with you later this summer when we take another cruise!!! Stay tuned & stay healthy!!!!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela

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Day	Date	Port of Call	Arrive	Depart
Mon	04/04/2016	Dubai, UAE		6:00 pm
Tue	04/05/2016	At Sea		
Wed	04/06/2016	At Sea		
Thu	04/07/2016	Salalah, Oman	8:00 am	8:00 pm
Fri	04/08/2016	At Sea		
Sat	04/09/2016	At Sea		
Sun	04/10/2016	At Sea		
Mon	04/11/2016	Suez Canal, Egypt	11:00 pm	
Tue	04/12/2016	Suez Canal, Egypt		1:00 pm
Tue	04/12/2016	Port Said, Egypt	5:00 pm	9:00 pm
Wed	04/13/2016	Ashdod (Jerusalem), Israel	8:00 am	8:00 pm
Thu	04/14/2016	Haifa, Israel	8:00 am	5:00 pm
Fri	04/15/2016	At Sea		
Sat	04/16/2016	Santorini, Greece	8:00 am	6:00 pm
Sun	04/17/2016	Piraeus (Athens), Greece	6:00 am	8:00 pm
Mon	04/18/2016	At Sea		
Tue	04/19/2016	At Sea		
Wed	04/20/2016	Venice, Italy	6:15 am	