

Ver 4/4/24 edited 4/12/25

**South Pacific Cruise
February 27 – April 3, 2022
Holland America Line Zuiderdam**

Saturday, February 26

After weeks of anxiously waiting to see if the cruise would be cancelled due to Covid, then sweating out our Covid test, we are on our way. Kathleen took us to the Twin Falls airport at 11am for our flight.

Good thing our flight wasn't the day before as the plane made an emergency landing due to a malfunctioning landing gear warning light. The plane was still sitting on the tarmac.

Security was a pain as usual. They hand searched our carryon bags and went through everything. I guess they have nothing else to do with only one flight a day.

Skywest in Salt Lake must be having labor issues. We deplaned and there were no ground people visible and no wheelchairs and no attendants. We got on the bus and he drove like a maniac lurching around and braking hard. When we got to the drop off there were still no ground people or wheelchairs. Nothing to do but march towards Terminal B from ground level. It is a long walk and then up a steep ramp one level to gate 26 in Terminal B. LaRue and two other people barely made it up the ramp. The lady at gate B26 put in a call for wheelchairs and it took 15 minutes before one arrived. Our connecting flight was in Terminal A.

The wheelchair lady pointed across the tarmac (it looked like a mile or so) and asked if I could make it. She then pushed Larue and another lady down Terminal B. Then down to the tunnel and up a steep incline to the elevator to Terminal A. Then it was nearly to the end of Terminal A. Good thing she was a big strong lady and could handle a wheelchair in each hand. We would not have made a one hour connection. I registered 3000 steps on my Fitbit.

Every seat on the San Diego flight was full. It was two hours total on the plane. I found my new N95 mask was stifling. At times I fought claustrophobia. There is no way I could handle a long cross country or overseas flight with that mask.

At least the San Diego terminal is nice and rather relaxing. The weather was sunshine and in the high 70's (We will move to San Diego after we win the lottery).

It was a short taxi ride to our hotel in downtown San Diego. Saw a huge crowd on Harbor Drive protesting the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Went next door for dinner at the Italian restaurant, Buca di Beppo. It looked like a small hole in the wall place, but it went forever with small rooms elaborately decorated with old Italian stuff. The menu prices were SCARY. We were told that the small size entrée fed three. They also had medium and large size options. We settled on the small size Shrimp fra Diavolo. It was garlic shrimp and crushed red peppers with penne pasta in spicy rosa sauce for \$47. Our entrée came in a huge bowl family style and was the best Italian food we have had (even in Italy). We ate twice as much as we normally eat, and the bowl was still half full. There was enough left for two or more people, so the \$47 price was a bargain. Hated to leave the leftover. Didn't leave any shrimp though.

Sunday, February 27. Cruise Day 1 - Embarkation

Went for a short walk this morning and saw a huge homeless camp on the sidewalk in front of what looked like a large government building. Sure a blight in the middle of the downtown area (guess we won't move to San Diego).

Ordered an Uber ride at 12:30 and she pulled up a few minutes later. It was a short 5 minute ride for \$8 to the cruise terminal. It was somewhat confusing as two Holland America ships were docked and using the same hall for checking in.

We were greeted by what looked like a hospital ward with all the gloved, masked, and gowned up Covid testing people.

We were told there will be three more Covid tests early in the cruise and then the mask mandate may be relaxed. For now masks are required except when eating, outdoors, and in state rooms. It was a quick nose swab and then it was an orderly march through security and the check in process.

Had trouble getting a wheelchair. LaRue saw a wheelchair guy coming from the ship and flagged him down. Then we saw the old wheelchair guy that we had the

last two cruises and talked to him for the fun of it. LaRue can walk ok but not for distance. So, we get wheelchair assistance.

We were on board in about an hour and our bags arrived shortly thereafter. Very impressed with the ship. It has only been back in service about a month after almost two years out of service. Everything is new and clean.

Had lunch in the Lido deck buffet. Very good selection and was not busy. We liked that the staff does the serving. No more handling of serving utensils by the guests. I had a made to order salad and got two selections at the oriental station. LaRue went through the American station and the oriental station. The food was very good. We finished off with two scoops of chocolate ice cream. Then it was back to the cabin to unpack and watch the emergency drill on TV.

We were required to find our muster station at our leisure and have our key card scanned. Our lifeboat is #13 (just our luck).

We sailed at 6pm just as the sun was going down. The sun reflecting off the buildings in San Diego was a beautiful sight. I sat on the patio to see if I could spot the nuclear submarines in the submarine pen as we sailed out. It was too dark, but I did see one in a brightly lighted dry dock, which was quite a sight.

We went to dinner in the main dining room at 7pm and shared a table with an older guy from California. Turns out we have about the same background in computers. I had an excellent chorizo soup, flat iron steak, and a pear strudel for dessert. LaRue had a farm salad, beef stroganoff, and pear strudel. It was a nice dinner in a very nice dining room.

Monday, February 28. Cruise Day 2 – Catalina Island

Cruised slowly at 8 knots to Catalina Island and arrived at 4am. Tenders started running at 7:30am, but we will stay aboard.

I wore a light jacket out walking at 6:30am and got too warm. Hardly anybody out. Deck 10 is a perfect deck for walking, and I can duck into the forward

Observation Lounge to check the displays with the ship's status. Not much status this morning since we are at anchor.

Very familiar with the layout of the ship. It is the same as the Eurodam, the Oosterdam, and Westerdam that we have cruised on. To us these are the perfect size ships for cruising.

Impressed with the décor of the ship. The furnishings are new and nicely done. The exterior is newly painted, and I can't see a speck of rust anywhere. It is like a new ship even though it was built in 2002. Capacity is 2364 passengers, and I am sure we are well under that number. A crew member would only say we have more people than the last cruise (Fort Lauderdale through the Panama Canal to San Diego).

We had breakfast in the main dining room and our waiter was Herry, who we had last night at dinner. We get a laugh over the similarity of our names. I had v8 juice with tabasco and eggs benedict, which I usually have on the first breakfast to see if they are worth having again. On my cruise ship scale it ranked in the middle. Probably won't have it again. LaRue had stewed prunes, a bran muffin, and the English breakfast, which is beans, banger, fried eggs, tomato, hash browns, and toast. Very British and a huge breakfast.

Relaxing day anchored in the bay of Catalina Island. The dining room is not open for lunch on port days, so it was the Lido buffet. We both had made to order salads. I went to the pool side grill and got a hotdog and naked fries. LaRue opted for ice cream, and they were featuring Rocky Road today. Therefore, I had a couple of scoops. Really good ice cream.

Went back to the room and relaxed on the patio reading and taking in the sunshine. Got in a nice nap in the late afternoon. The anchor came up at 3:30 and we departed for Hawaii with nothing but open ocean ahead for the next five days. A dolphin swam by as we headed out.

Got a notice that everyone will be tested for Covid tomorrow. It starts at 12:30pm and goes all afternoon. The testing proceeds by deck and cabin #. Also, the clocks go back one hour tonight.

Went to the dining room at 7pm and had to wait about 20 minutes for a table for two. I had French onion soup, pasta ala vodka, and a sunday for dessert. LaRue had eggplant something for an appetizer, calf's liver, and the sunday. She said to report the calf's liver was excellent. Talked to a guy from Florida at the next table and he said that Guest Relations told him the ship was at 50% capacity. I think there is more people than that. We would be happy if that is the case.

Tuesday, March 1. Cruise day 3 – At Sea

Clocks went back an hour last night, so I was up and ready to go at 6 am. Nobody out. Sat on the aft deck for a while with my coffee and enjoyed the 180 degree view of the ocean. Nothing but water which disappears with the curvature of the earth. The water was sloshing about in the aft pool. Clear day and 62 degrees this morning, Strong head wind with a moderate sea and small whitecaps, and the ship is moving a bit. It was only me walking on deck 10.

The status display shows we are doing a mere 12 knots (14mph) with a water depth of 5400ft. The azipods are turning props at 77rpm.

We went to the main dining room for breakfast at 8am. Not many people there. I had orange juice, coffee, fruit plate, Texas French toast, and 2 eggs. LaRue had coffee, blueberry muffin, fruit plate, and made to order omelet. The fruit plate was huge and had sliced banana, watermelon, cantaloupe, pineapple, apple, blueberries, and a dab of cottage cheese. It was almost enough breakfast.

We retired to the cabin to read and before long I was conked out. The nice thing about a long cruise like this is that you don't have to rush around and try all the dining venues or do everything to get it all done. Therefore, you relax and get nothing done.

We went to the dining room for lunch, and it was mostly deserted. The waiters had time to be mischievous and it was fun to banter with them. I had a 1/3 pound cheeseburger that was very good. LaRue had street tacos with chicken that she liked. For dessert we both had a chocolate tart that was dark decadent chocolate.

The lunch menu on this trip is a lot different. They have a small plate section with about 8 selections, and a large plate section with about 8 selections. Then there is a section of extra charge selections. Seems there is something to appeal to everybody. There are plenty of good choices without paying extra.

After lunch we proceeded forward to be near the covid testing station to await the call for our group, which was group 6. We sat where we could observe the casino across from us. I only saw one old gal playing a slot machine. The four dealers at the 21 tables and the roulette people had nothing to do but stand around. Makes for a long day for them. We got our call in a few minutes, and we expected a long line to get tested. We walked straight in, checked in, were given a sticky numbered label, and were directed to a testing station of which there were six. Swabbed our noses and gave them our label and were out the door. Really well organized and efficient process. We were told to return to our cabin. If we didn't get a phone call within 30 minutes we were good to go. Our phone didn't ring.

Finished the afternoon reading and fell asleep. We went to dinner at 7pm and got right in. Ended up at a table that we have had on the Eurodam and Oosterdam cruises, and really like. It is on the outer perimeter of the raised center section of the dining room, and has lots of space around it. It is a table for 4 but we ended up alone (with covid we don't like to share). We had a great head waiter, Suparman, and assistant, Lambok. They took great care of us, and we hit it off. Later, I got a tap on the shoulder, and it was our lunch waiter, Agus. He came from the other end of the dining room to say hello.

We got well acquainted with the wine somolier, Evelyn, and she hung around to visit towards the end. There are only two on the ship, and we met the other one, Michele, on the first night. There are only two wine somoliers because everyone is going all-inclusive with the booze package. With the booze package you can only order wine by the glass, which is handled by the waiters. We notice people waiting impatiently to order another glass of wine, as the waiters are extremely busy.

People think they are getting the booze package free as a perk. When you know how it works it is just added into the fare.

Our dinner was fantastic. It was an eclectic menu of Mexican, Italian, Creole, and American with about 9 appetizers, 9 entrée's, and several extra cost selections. I had the Baja seafood cocktail for the appetizer, which was small shrimp, a jumbo shrimp, lump crab, and mussels in a superb sauce. I am not a fan of strip loin steaks, but took a chance. It was an excellent tender 10oz steak perfectly medium rare with a light sauce and herb butter. I devoured it. LaRue had a caprese salad and roast chicken that she liked, since it was mostly dark meat and lots of veggies. She even requested and got more veggies. For dessert we both had a very good lemon tart. All in all it was a superb dinner with great ambience and atmosphere. Will try to get that table again, or with Agus on the other end of the dining room.

Wednesday, March 2. Cruise Day 4 – At Sea

Up early at 6am. People were already in the Lido Buffet, and it doesn't open until 7am. Got coffee and went out on the aft deck. Overcast sky and the decks are wet, so we passed through a storm earlier.

The Captain announced yesterday that we would have storms today. Moderate rolling sea and a little pitch forward and aft. Doing 16 knots this morning and it is 62 degrees. A light jacket feels good outside.

Saw a white tanker ship going by towards California.

We attended a Q&A session with the naturalist at 11am. He said we won't see whales on the way to Hawaii. It is a dead zone between California and Hawaii due to the deep water and lack of food. We will see them in Hawaii as they migrate north and south, to and from Alaska. Last year the whale population was down 50% and had everyone worried. This year it is booming. It is calving season and the moms and calves are putting on a show. The calves mimic everything mom does. The hotspot is Maui. He will be giving a talk on whales tomorrow at 10am in the Mainstage theater.

Had lunch in the dining room. The menu was the same as yesterday. We both had the croque monsieur half sandwich and tomato bisque soup. There was also an option with an egg on top that makes it a croque madam. The sandwich, which is ham and cheese, was nothing like we expected. LaRue also had spring

rolls for an appetizer which were good. She had a Sunday and I had chocolate ice cream for dessert.

I was off my feed a little. Starting to feel the effects of the ship rolling through big swells. Got back to the room and took half a sea sickness pill and read a while, which led to a nap. Going through light rain all afternoon.

Gala splendor (formal) night tonight, and a meet the Captain function at 7:30, but will skip it.

The dining room was not very busy tonight. Probably due to the Captain's function at 7:30. We got a table in Superman's section that we enjoyed last night. Ordered a nice bottle of Malbec from Mendoza, Argentina and our wine somelier, Evelyn, took great care of us. The label on the wine said it was organic. I guess that means it came from free range grass-fed grapes. LaRue had escargot and rack of lamb. I had deviled eggs with king crab (very little), and filet mignon Oscar. My filet was a bit suspect, but ok. Her lamb was good. We both had strawberry romanoff for dessert, which was great. We had enough for the day after dinner and called it quits.

Got back to our cabin and had a note that the mask rule has been eased to recommended but required in the casino and the Mainstage theater.

Thursday, March 3. Cruise Day 5 – At Sea

Smoother sea today with 6 foot waves and not as much pitch and roll as yesterday. Walking was easier. In the mid 60's, overcast, and we are doing 17 knots.

We had breakfast in the dining room and talked to a nice couple from Alabama that was at a table for two next to us. I had corned beef hash and eggs. LaRue had an egg, potato, ham, and cheese skillet. The guy next to us had a Japanese breakfast of miso soup, rice, salmon, and a couple of things I could not identify. It was a huge breakfast.

Attended the presentation at 10am on humpback whales and their annual migration to and from Alaska and Hawaii. Ross, the naturalist, is young and a

very good speaker and presenter. He has spent a lot of time in Hawaii studying whales. Learned a lot of interesting stuff. Following that presentation there was another presentation, the Deep Blue, so we stayed for it. It was by the cruise director and was about ocean life in the Caribbean, which didn't seem too pertinent for this cruise.

Had lunch in the dining room and I had Seattle Market macaroni and cheese. We shared a small plate of spring rolls and LaRue had the fish of the day (not catch of the day) which was mahi mahi. I had a small Sunday for dessert and LaRue had a strawberry cheesecake like thing. The lunch menu has been the same three days in a row. A waiter says it stays the same on short cruises. Who knows what they will do on a 35 day cruise.

The Captain in his noon announcement said, "we are in one of the most remote areas of the world". In thinking about it there are no islands between California and Hawaii. There are no birds, whales, or anything out here. It's just us dummies cruising along in our own little world. It makes me appreciate my Idaho Falls coworker, Bob Kinsey. He retired from the Air Force in Hawaii and sailed solo to California with very little sailing experience. He said it took 8 weeks with a lot of dead air, meaning no wind. The worst part was running out of beer.

About 4 o'clock I went up and got a hotdog to tide me over until our usual dinner time at 7pm. It was a good hotdog. Everything else was shut down until dinner time, so there was no ice cream.

Went to the main dining room for dinner at 7pm. Asked for a table in Superman's area (he and his assistant have 8 tables) and were told they needed a few minutes to set up a table for us. It was only a couple of minutes, and our table was ready. It was a small one, but we were in his area. Superman was extremely busy but Evelyn, the wine sommelier, came by and took our wine order for a bottle of Meiomi Pinot Noir from California. We both had the Hawaiian Macadamia and Pineapple salad that was different and good. I had Spicy Vegetarian Chow Mein (Thai). and LaRue had Broasted Berkshire Pork Baby Back Ribs. We were both happy with our entrees. For dessert we both had Zuppa Inglese, having no idea what it might be. It was a light chocolate pudding, whipped cream, chocolate sauce, and some other unidentified crunchies. It was good and somewhat decadent. "Superman's" tables began clearing out, so he

had time to visit. He volunteered to reserve our favorite table for us from here on, and we agreed to it.

The head dining room guy came by, and we had a good visit. LaRue told him the story about our 50th anniversary cruise, and grandson Nick asking the head dining room guy to get him a Coke. He enjoyed the story. All of a sudden we were the only one in that area of the dining room. Good dinner with good staff. Happy campers.

Clocks go back an hour tonight.

Friday, March 4. Cruise Day 6 – At Sea

With an extra hour sleep I stayed in bed as long as I could, and got up at 6am ready to go. Decks all wet this morning from rain. It has stopped but looks like we are heading into more. The sea is rated “Heavy” this morning. Strong wind, and 69 degrees. Doing 16.2 knots and 15,500 ft of water under us.

After a gust nearly knocked me over I bagged walking. The nice thing about these decks in wet weather is they are not slick. They are made of a composite that looks like teak. I don’t slip even if I try. Had another half cup of coffee and took a cup down to LaRue. We haven’t ordered room service in the morning yet. I have been bringing a cup for her when I come down from walking.

Our cabin #6119 is very convenient. We are two doors to the elevators. It is three floors up to the Lido deck buffet or four floors down to the dining room.

Last night I read my blog from our Hawaii cruise in March 2020. We are just a day off from where we were on that cruise. The seas were really bad on that trip. The outside decks were closed the first two days.

So far no covid issues. We wear masks even though the mask mandate has been relaxed to “masks advised”. Still mandatory in the theater and the casino.

Nice having full time internet, and it is working very well compared to past cruises. Received 3 foreign language messages this morning from Costco,

Medical, and Ace Hardware. The message looks to be Russian and identical in all 3 emails.

TV is fairly good with BBC, NBC, and Fox news along with some channels we watch at home, and movies. Reception was bad during State of the Union but that was ok.

Breakfast in the dining room and I had awful tomato juice, fruit plate, bacon, and a waffle. LaRue had a bran muffin which we shared, berries, lox, and bagel. Agus, our waiter on the first day, came across the dining room to say hello. These guys are amazing.

At 10am it got dark and soaked in. The rain came down hard with thunder and lightning. It was quite a show for over an hour.

For lunch I had Mexican street tacos with chicken (tasty but small) and vanilla ice cream. We shared spring rolls and LaRue had half a club sandwich, tomato bisque soup, and lemon sorbet.

Went to a talk on the Migration of the Hawaiian's at 2pm. It could have been interesting, but I only understood half of what he said, plus he rambled around. We got up and left after 30 minutes.

Went to dinner and one of our two favorite tables was ready for us in Superman's area. Nothing really fancy on the menu, but good selections. I had a very good red bean soup and pasta carbonara. LaRue had a caesar's salad with anchovies on the side and oxtail braised stew with chorizo and beans. She couldn't find the chorizo, but she liked the oxtail. My carbonara was good. For dessert I had Hazelnut Paris Bert with no idea what it might be. It was like a cream puff with a hazelnut flavored filling, and good. LaRue had lemon sorbet that she had for lunch. Our wine was Puerto Viejo Carmenere from Chile. It was a bit young and needed some aging.

Saturday, March 5. Cruise Day 7 - At Sea

The sun was not up at 6am as it has been. I saw the sunrise later with the sun peeking through big cumulus clouds in the east. The sea looks glassy smooth

today with small rolling swells. It was more difficult walking than it was with the larger swells on previous days. It was 70 degrees, and we are doing 17.2 knots, which is just shy of 20 mph. The azipods are turning the props at 100rpm and we have 17,800 ft of water below us.

This is the first day that I have had other people walking seriously on deck 10. A couple came out and must have been British as they were walking clockwise.

An announcement this morning informed us that we had crossed the Tropic of Cancer early in the morning. We are now in the tropics!

I had sliced bananas and a made to order omelet for breakfast and Larue had sliced bananas and yogurt with stuff in it.

Seems like every cruise has a standout personality on it. We had a wild Asian lady near us this morning. She is alone, dresses wildly, and enjoys the heck out of life. The first time we saw her she had on a crazy outfit and hat. She was having breakfast with plates of food all around her. Every once in a while she would break out in wild laughter. This morning she was wandering around flipping through her notebook and talking to waiters. She returned to her table and ordered a Blue Moon Beer and a pot of tea, which mixed in a big glass. Then she jumped up with her stuff and departed. Will be on the lookout for her. She is worth watching.

At 10am we went to a lecture by "Naturalist Ross" on Hawaiian Wildlife. He is one of the best presenters we have ever had. He gave us a lesson on how to pronounce the Hawaiian name for one of the exotic fish. It was about 25 characters long and you had to get into a chant to pronounce it.

Lunch time rolled around all too soon. We got to our table, and it was like old home week. Several waiters came by to say hello and visit. Could hardly get our order in for all the activity. We both had a special for the day which was asparagus soup. LaRue had half a club sandwich, and I went with mac and cheese again. A couple on the way out stopped and said they heard "Idaho" when LaRue was talking to the lady at the next table. They were from Nampa.

Went to dinner and our table was waiting for us in Superman's section. We are the last to arrive, and it is the same people every night at the other tables. For anytime dining that is unusual. We all like the area in the dining room and the service. The tables are far enough apart that you don't feel obligated to visit, but we acknowledge each other. I had grilled asparagus and artichoke hearts for an appetizer and chicken marsala over fettucine. LaRue had scallop and parmesan panko gratin for an appetizer, and braised short ribs. We both had a banana tatin for dessert. Our wine was the very good Mendoza, Argentina Malbec. As usual we were the last to leave.

Sunday, March 6. Cruise Day 8 – Honolulu

Last night's announcement said that the outside deck lights would be turned off as we approach Hawaii so as not to disturb the birds. It was light enough at 6am though. Got a good photo of the sunrise. Cruised by the island of Molokai on the left, and then saw Oahu forward on the right. Smooth sea of 2-3 ft with clear skies and sunshine and 72 degrees. It was 77 degrees by the time I finished walking.

Slow approach and will be docked at 10am. Beautiful view sailing slowly by Diamond Head and Waikiki Beach. Spotted the Royal Hawaiian and the Outrigger next to it where we stayed 36 years ago. All is dwarfed now by high rise buildings.

We got a brief glimpse of a whale. LaRue saw the spout and we saw its back and a bit of the tail. Must have been sleeping as we didn't see it again. We have no plans to tour or do anything in Honolulu as we have done it in the past. Also, don't need unnecessary exposure to a lot of people in close quarters. No problem yet with Covid, but we will see what happens after Hawaii.

Hardly anyone in the dining room this morning as everyone is getting ready to get off and tour. As for tours I saw a luau for \$189 per person or \$259 per person for the VIP option. Great deal for roast pig and poi. There is also an evening at the Polynesian Cultural Center at \$279 per person, and whale watching at \$199 per person.

We are docked with our cabin on the starboard looking towards Waikiki Beach. The port side looks up Battleship Row. We overnight here and leave at 10:30pm tomorrow for Maui.

For lunch we grazed through the lido deck buffet, and kept it light. Quite a few people staying on the ship. Temperature at noon is up to 80 degrees. Will sit on the deck and read. Started a new book, "The Wrong Stuff" by Truman Smith, which is a true story of a B-17 co-pilot in WW2. His narrative is something else. He writes with a humorous slant on the deadly serious business of flying 25 missions with fighter attacks and flack bursting all over.

We watched the refueling process taking place all afternoon. Three big fuel trucks lined up and we saw at least three more back in. Another two white tanker trucks also pumped something in, which looked like water or maybe oil? We counted 9 fuel trucks as of 5pm. They were just finishing up when we came back from dinner at 8:30pm. That is a lot of fuel.

Great dinner tonight in Superman's section. We both had prime rib that was about 10-12 ounces. Perfect rare side of medium rare, baked potato, and veggies. I had a salad of lettuce with crumbled gorgonzola, and a dessert of raspberry mousse torte. LaRue had a prawn mango salad and mango sorbet for dessert. You might know that Hawaiian Huli Huli chicken would be on the menu. Our wine was a California Merlot. A very nice dinner. Our wine sommelier, Evelyn, spent time at our table visiting. We saw her earlier in the afternoon working on the aft Lido deck and visited with her. She seems to like us.

Monday, March 7. Cruise Day 9 – Honolulu

Nice morning at 69 degrees, 74% humidity, and good to walk on a non-moving deck. Looked for whale spouts out in the bay, but did not see any. I think I spotted the Arizona Memorial at the far end of Battleship Row.

Had breakfast in the main dining room with Agus. He is pleased when we end up in his section and greets us by name. He even broke out in a John Denver song. LaRue had a fruit plate and lox and bagel again. I had a skillet of potatoes, diced ham, cheese, onion, bell pepper, and two poached eggs. I asked for Tabasco and Agus brought a small container with a couple tablespoons of Tabasco.

Jokingly I said, "is that enough?" He was going to get more. Yesterday I thought I was ordering this skillet, but I got one with scrambled eggs and sauteed veggies on top of rice. Not my idea of an American skillet. Picked through it and left the rice.

Sitting on our patio about noon and saw two whale spouts out in the bay. They were swimming slowly along and breaching every now and then.

Dining room was closed for lunch since it is a port day. Grazed through the Lido Buffet and returned to our patio to read. The trouble with the Lido Buffet is there are too many good things to choose from. I settled on a made to order salad and a Dive Burger. LaRue had a made to order salad and a tuna salad sandwich. Then we had to have ice cream.

Dinner tonight in Superman's section. We have been rotating through three different tables, but locked in our most favorite table #183 for the rest of the cruise. Thought we had better lock it in as the front desk was taking us to another section when we came in. Their priority is to spread people out. The Matre'd saw it and says "No, they belong over there", and took us to table #183. I had Crispy Thai Vegetable Spring Rolls for an appetizer and then Pasta Amatriciana. LaRue had Marinated Maui Golden Pineapple Spears, then Garlic Herb Roasted Chicken. We both had Butterscotch Panna Cotta with Chocolate Sauce for dessert. Our wine was a Malbec from Argentina that we have not had before. All was good.

Covid testing again tomorrow afternoon. It will be a PCR test this time. It takes longer for the results to come back than the Antigen test, so we don't have to return to our cabin and wait for the phone call.
The island of Maui tomorrow.

Tuesday, March 8. Cruise Day 10 – Kahului, on the island of Maui

Cloudy day and 73 degrees at 6am. Saw a lot of whale activity while sailing slowly into port. Mostly spouts and the backs of the whales. A small one which was probably a calf about 15 ft long put on a good show coming entirely out of the water and twisting around.

This is the only Maui deep water port and is across the island from popular Lahaina. It is an industrial port with a lot of container activity and not close to town.

A nice tour would be the Road Adventure to Hana, but at a cost of \$379 per person it is not even thinkable. We will enjoy our nice scenic view from the ship and the warm weather. From our patio we look across the lagoon, the beach, and the downtown area. There are no high rises, and downtown is small. The tallest building is four stories. There is a huge canyon flanked by steep mountains that must be around 3,000 ft high with the tops in white clouds. I could live here.

Had breakfast in the dining room with a nice table by the aft windows. Didn't get our waiter's name. He took good care of us. I had orange juice, fruit plate, buckwheat pancakes with blueberries, and two eggs. LaRue had the fruit plate and the huge English breakfast. Didn't eat all her beans, which look and taste like pork and beans.

Lunch was in the Lido Buffet. I had a ham, turkey, and cheese sandwich and a cup of shrimp and calamari chowder that was good. Had to have a slice of pepperoni pizza just out of the oven and a slice of vegetarian that had been sitting around. Not too good. Pizza is not a big item on this ship. It is served in the Italian section, and it seems to sit a while. Saw a lot of whale activity while we were eating. A lot of spouts, but not much coming up out of the water.

The COVID testing started at 4pm and goes by deck and cabin #. Our schedule was 5:15. We went 30 minutes early to see how it was going. We walked straight in, checked in, swabbed, and out the door. Since it is a PCR test the results take longer, but we don't know how long.

We sat on our patio for sail away at 6pm to whale watch. Never saw a whale, and it is where we saw them all day long. Guess they retire early. Looks like we are headed into a storm ahead.

For dinner we both had Pacific Style Shrimp for an appetizer. I had noodle soup with pork, and Kona Chicken. LaRue had Roasted Beet and Blue Cheese Salad, and Korean Kalbi Short Ribs. My Kona Chicken was really strange on mashed potato's instead of rice. On top was a sauteed mixture of zucchini and onions. I asked Suparman about it, and he said It was the Blue Marlin entree. No wonder it was strange. He brought the Kona Chicken, and it was marginal. The grilled pineapple was great. LaRue's short ribs were strange, and she didn't like them, but declined another entree. She had coconut sorbet and I had an apple tart for dessert. Our wine was a good California Hangtime Pinot Noir. Everything was good except for our entrée's. No big deal as we had plenty to eat. A chef came to our table and LaRue gave him our (her) opinion. We agreed to disagree.

Wednesday, March 9. Cruise Day 11 – Hilo on the big island of Hawaii

Beautiful sailing into Hilo this morning. We passed by about 20 miles of coastline. Nice homes with acreages and lush green landscape stretching up towards a mountain a ways. Then it gets barren. The temperature was 73 degrees and humidity 84%.

Saw one whale just cruising along. The decks were wet from last night's storm. LaRue said lightning at 2am was lighting up the whole ocean.

Our onboard Hawaiian Ambassador gave a running commentary that I could hear as I went by the speakers on deck 10. He said the very early Parker Ranch was the largest privately owned ranch in America. It is now a co-op owned by the employees. He said to expect thunderstorms in the afternoon if you are out and about. Don't think we will be.

Breakfast in the dining room and I had an egg benedict with Dungeness crab and asparagus. Rather smelly, but good, and more than I could eat. Had a blueberry muffin with it. Tried the tomato juice to see if they had a new supply, but it was the same blah stuff. It is like we get when we are Mexico. They must have got a good buy on it when they came through to San Diego. LaRue had a fruit plate, bran muffin, and yogurt with a bunch of stuff in it. She ordered sliced bananas, but the waiter said they were too green to serve.

While sitting on the patio this morning I noticed an absence of birds. Not a bird of any kind.

Watched a man overboard drill. A life-ring was thrown overboard, a rescue boat was lowered, and a three person crew retrieved it. They were efficient and fast. Then they threw a dummy person in the water. The rescue boat has a rollup mat they unroll over the side. and they maneuver the body to the mat. They pull the ropes attached to the end of the mat and the body is rolled up in the mat and up into the rescue boat. Pretty slick operation. Don't know what the dummy thought of it, but better than being snagged with hooks and wrestled into the boat, which is nearly impossible. After they got the dummy aboard they sped around the lagoon having fun. It was a speedy little craft and could make very tight turns.

Lunch was in the Lido Buffet. I had a Parisian Jambon (ham) sandwich and penne pasta with tomato sauce. LaRue had pork roast, veggies, and hot and sour soup. We finished off with ice cream. Lounged around and read the rest of the day.

The Captain announced that the results are back from yesterday's Covid tests and, "we are a healthy ship". WHOOPEE!

Sail away was at 6pm. It was 80 degrees and we sat on our patio with our toddies and watched Hilo disappear. Looked for whales, but did not see any. We swing around the island and arrive in Kona in the morning. We cruise by the Kilahua volcano 11 to 12pm. If there is any red showing we will slow down. If not we will keep going. It is on our side of the ship so we can watch from our patio (if we are awake).

It was raining and no activity visible as we passed the volcano, so we kept going.

The dining room was less than half full tonight. The Lido Buffet was having a big Hawaiian night and probably a lot of people went up there. We will take the dining room any time it is open. We both had prosciutto and cantalope for an appetizer. I had beef stroganoff and LaRue had lamb cutlet with mango-chili sauce and quinoa. I was giving my green beans to LaRue and Superman saw it and brought her a platter of them. She had peach sorbet for dessert and I had a

mango tort. Our wine was 7 Moon Red Blend from California. It was a blend of 7 red varieties and good.

Suparman had time to visit, and we asked him about his family. He whipped out his phone and he had quite a gallery. He was really proud of his two boys. It was a nice evening.

Thursday, March 10. Cruise Day 12 – Kona on the big island of Hawaii.

Sailed into the bay at Kona and anchored at 8am. Didn't see whales. Saw the sunrise over the mountain behind Kona. Currently 77 degrees and is supposed to hit 90 degrees. Humidity will be in the 80's. It gets hotter and more humid as Kona does not get the trade winds, according to our on-board Hawaiian.

This is a tender port and was warned that it is treacherous due to the choppy water. The tenders were rocking up and down about 2 feet. You have to step over when the tender comes somewhat level with the ship. If your timing is off it is not good. It is not for us old people. Our on-board Hawaiian said when you get off the tender at the pier it will be just like Ketchikan and Juneau with shop after shop. Don't know if he meant it as good or bad, but probably a warning. It is a small town and there is not much in it. Kona has the world's best coffee according to our on-board Hawaiian.

Had breakfast in the dining room and talked to a couple from Pittsburg at the next table, and they were enjoyable. We both had Texas French toast. LaRue ordered one egg but got two. It is always that way. Seems like eggs come in pairs on cruise ships. I had two with a sausage patty.

Agus came by our table and told us there is a Hawaiian special for breakfast which is a bed of rice with a hamburger patty on top and a fried egg. Not appealing to us. I'll bet the Hawaiian's use spam instead of hamburger.

We are fortunate that our cabin is starboard which is parallel to the coast, so there is a lot to take in. Was sitting on the patio watching the tendering activity below us. The ships lifeboats are utilized and easy to tell the experienced crews from the inexperienced crews with all the jockeying about.

A white vessel popped up a 100 yards out. Looks like a tourist submersible for viewing sea life. It submerges completely with a load of tourists and pops up later. Looks like a must do in the future.

Had lunch in the Lido Buffet. Too many choices, and I settled on a small helping of bolognese spaghetti. LaRue had a Chinese noodle salad and then brisket and veggies. I needed something more so went to the midship pool area grill and got an excellent bratwurst on an excellent bun. This ship has a great bakery. The breads and pastries are as good as you can find anywhere. Not good for us though.

I looked at our home motion detector doorbell video's that were recorded two days ago. The snow was swirling in on the porch, and set it off about 10 times. Then I saw on the news that the freeway was closed. Glad to be in warm Hawaii.

At 4:30pm the Captain announced that we would have two days of rough seas ahead, and then it will get better. I didn't understand much of what he said, and LaRue had a hard time also.

Sail away was at 5:30pm. We sat on our deck and watched for whales. We saw a few spouts, but they were not showing anything else.

Dining room was fairly busy tonight. I had Baby Gem and White Radish Salad, With a lot of unknowns on the menu had Strip Loin Steak. LaRue had French Onion Soup and Jamaican Braised Ox Tail. We both had the chocolate Sunday for dessert. Our wine was a Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile. It was a good dinner.

Friday, March 11. Cruise Day 13 – At Sea

Cruising along at 12 knots this morning in a rough 7-9 ft sea. We are headed due South with 15,647 ft of water under us. The temperature is 76 degrees, overcast, and a strong wind blowing.

The ship is moving around and making walking difficult, so cut it short after about a mile. Got back to the cabin and took half a seasick pill just in case. I should have my sea legs by now, but not taking any chances.

Breakfast in the dining room and I had buttermilk pancakes. LaRue had passion fruit yogurt.

A presentation on whales by Naturalist Ross was at 10am, so we went to it after breakfast. It was an adventure walking from the aft of the ship to the theater all the way forward. We staggered along and made it. The presentation was basically the same one he gave earlier in the cruise, but still very entertaining and informative. A take away is the newborn calf puts on 7 pounds an hour just from its mother's milk. They spend about a month in Hawaii before heading back 3,500 miles to Alaska. It takes about 2 months. Due to the lack of food in warm waters the mother fasts the entire migration and loses a third of her body weight.

We won't see whales south of the equator as they are in the Antarctic.

A few of the morning things on the schedule for today is 7am Sunrise Stretch, 8am Mass, Crosswords and Puzzles, Total Body Conditioning, 8:30am Bible Study, 9am Tai Chi, 9:30 Beginner Bridge, 10am Whale Presentation, 1:30 Pickleball Tournament. There is something scheduled every half hour all day long.

Lunch special in the dining room was potato soup and steak sandwich that LaRue had along with an appetizer of crispy roasted cauliflower. I had potato soup and half a club sandwich. The potato soup was orange in color and rather sweet. We questioned the waiter, and it turns out it was sweet potato soup. That explained it. LaRue had lemon sorbet for dessert, and I had a double chocolate tart.

It was a special menu tonight in the dining room featuring the Culinary Council Chefs. We both had Coconut Crusted Shrimp with beets, salad with palm hearts, and chive vinaigrette, by Rudi Sodamin, and was excellent. LaRue had roasted spice-crusted prime rib with wild mushrooms by David Burke. I went for an unknown to me entrée, Mafaldini, which turned out to be a corkscrew pasta,

champignon sauce, pearl onions, and parmesan by Kristen Kish. Mine was tasty, but probably would not have it again. Superman said it is the first time he has seen it on the menu. LaRue's prime rib was nice, but not as good as the one earlier in the cruise. For dessert we had two different things that I can't remember the name, and not sure we got what we ordered. They were nothing to brag about. Our wine was Boom Boom Syrah from Washington State. It had a garish label with a bomb on it, Turned it so people could not see it.

We lose a day tonight. The instructions are to set our clocks forward 24 hours. The time stays the same, but a day goes away. The time zone will be Kiritimati, Kiribati Standard Time GMT/UT +14.

We surrender our passports tomorrow to the French Polynesian authorities. We will get them back on March 27. I guess they are concerned that someone will jump ship out here in the middle of nowhere.

Saturday, March 12 – Cruise Day 14 – At Sea

It is Saturday back home, so I will continue logging it that way. However, it is Sunday here. Missed my Saturday toddy.

The sea is slightly better today and is probably 3-5 ft with whitecaps. I get a feeling of how it is the first thing in the morning as I sit on the aft deck with my half cup of coffee. If the aft pool is sloshing badly it is rough. Wasn't as bad this morning. The next check is the aft rail that is about 40 inches high. There are 4 rails below it spaced 8" apart. In a smooth sea the top rail is level with the horizon. If the ship is pitching fore and aft I see how far it goes up into the blue sky and back down below the horizon. The top rail and the rail below rising above the horizon is not too bad and somewhat normal. When all the rails and the aft deck are in the sky on the upswing, it is really bad.

Next is the wind check as I start walking on Deck 10. If I have to grab my cap once in a while the wind is gusting fairly strong. If I have to walk with cap in hand to keep from losing it overboard the wind is really strong. That was the case this morning.

This is the first morning I have seen someone swimming in the aft pool. I saw an older guy in the middle of the pool swimming hard. Every time I checked he was in the same spot in the middle of the pool. He was swimming in place, and how could that be? Then I saw a yellow cord attached to his waist and the handrail behind him. He was tethered to the handrail and swimming strongly. I observed him for about an hour. First time I have seen such a thing.

The sun is shining brightly this morning, but there are rain clouds around on the horizon. It is 79 degrees, 81% humidity, and we are cruising along at 14.6 knots. Only 146 ft of water below us!

Went light at breakfast as there is a Sunday brunch later. I had the fruit plate and an English Muffin. LaRue had bread pudding which seems strange on a breakfast menu. It is a specialty item that people like.

Went to a presentation on Kiribati (the time zone that we are now in) at 10am in the theater. Had no idea what it was about. It was interesting and informative. Kiribati (pronounced Kiribass) is an independent republic consisting of the Gilbert Islands, the Phoenix Islands, and the Line Islands. There is a total of 32 atolls and 1 islet. The area is situated on the international dateline and the equator, so it falls in 4 hemispheres. The total population is 119,000, covers an area as large as the United States, and only shows up as dots on the world globe.

The Gilbert islands run north and south and are the eastern most islands. It consists of 16 atolls, including Tarawa Atoll that the Japanese occupied in WW2. It is the most populated with half the population of Kiribati. It is on the island of Nomo (something). Female bones and an aircraft remnant have been found, and believed to be Amelia Earheart. The Phoenix Islands consist of 8 atolls and 3 coral islands of which only one is inhabited. The Line Islands are a string of north south running atolls located to the west. This is where Easter Island is located. It was on our itinerary, but was removed for a reason that nobody knows.

The buffet menu in the dining room was rather long with both breakfast and lunch items. I had Burrata and Tomato Salad for a starter and LaRue had the Fresh

Fruit Plate with goat's cheese. Didn't know what Burrata is until we looked it up and it is Italian cheese. We both had fish and Chips which I thought was excellent. I had four pieces of fish in a nicely done light batter. LaRue had just three pieces, and one was not quite done. So, she was not entirely happy. We both had Apple Crisp with a small scoop of vanilla ice cream for dessert.

The sea started picking up around 10am and rated heavy at 9 ft. The Captain said tomorrow appears to be the same. Not a problem, but makes walking a little unsteady. His accent is heavy, and I don't get much of what he says.

Lounged, read, and napped all afternoon. Sat on our patio. When the sun hits it gets really warm. Finished my paper book, Wrong Stuff, and charged up my e-reader for my next read. Hated for the end to come with the book, as it was so good.

Dinner was good in the dining room. For starters we both had an excellent crab and shrimp louis. I also had black bean soup. LaRue had roast turkey and I took a gamble on the chile relleno that turned out good. We both had a lemon torte for dessert. No complaints. For wine we went back to the 7 Moon blend. A lot of empty tables in our area tonight. Visited a while with Suparman about working on a cruise ship, and how scary and difficult it was to leave life in Bali, and adapt to this life. We cannot imagine how difficult it is for these people. Like they all say, "there are no jobs at home".

Sunday, March 13. Cruise Day 14 – At Sea

It is Monday here, and we continue as usual. All my indicators this morning show it is rough. We also have side to side roll added in. I walked with some difficulty with hat in hand. While sitting on the aft deck I saw two sea birds checking us out. They were slim white birds, with long slender wings trimmed with black. We have seen them before in the southern hemisphere, and if I recall correctly they are Petrels. They cruise around on the air currents, barely flap their wings, and don't land on water. They gave us a good look and disappeared.

Big clouds around us on the horizon and pockets of heavy rain storms off in the distance. The temperature is 79 degrees this morning and the humidity is 87%. We are doing 14.6 knots and there is 254 ft of water underneath us.

The position display shows we are latitude 5 degrees North above the equator. This part of the Pacific is a dead zone and remote area.

Breakfast in the dining room and I had Swedish pancakes. LaRue had wild rice and quinoa bowl which was baby veggies, miso, poached egg, and quinoa. That one is not for me. My Swedish pancakes were rolled up with a very sweet filling inside, and covered with sweet blueberry compote. Overwhelmed me with sweetness.

At 10am we went to Naturalist Ross's presentation on the "Culture of Humpback Whales". Very interesting. It was on their singing and behavior. He also touched on killer whales and dolphins who have sharp teeth and are killers. Whales have no teeth and use their baleen (net like screen) to filter krill and swarms of very small fish.

Lunch rolled around quickly, and it was to the dining room. Dutch split pea soup was a special and we both had it. LaRue had a Dutch veal kroket sandwich that she didn't care for. It looked like a corn dog in a bun. It was a mushy veal inside. I had the small cheeseburger. We both had vanilla ice cream for dessert that seemed extra good.

Formal gala night tonight. We got all gussied up and went to the Pinnacle Bar for Martini's before dinner and it was thoroughly enjoyable. Nice menu tonight but no doubt what we wanted. Started with the jumbo shrimp cocktail, and LaRue ordered escargot for a 2nd appetizer. Then it was tenderloin of beef and lobster tail. She had her favorite dessert crême brulee. I had a Linzer torte that I can't describe but was good. Very nice dinner. Our wine was a Spanish red wine.

We got back to our cabin and had a note from the Captain that I will duplicate below –

Dear Guest of the Zuiderdam,
At 4:30am we will cross the Equator for the first time this cruise to bring us into the Southern Hemisphere. Our crossing back into the Northern Hemisphere is not until later this cruise on the final stretch of days at sea.
While King Neptune keeps his fishy eyes on Zuiderdam's "Landlubbers", he has gracefully pardoned one-and-all until that time, and will be back for the time-honored King Neptune Ceremony.
So, enjoy it while you can, arrrr!

These ceremonys get pretty wild and are a lot of fun. This will be our 5th and 6th crossing of the equator.

Monday, March 14 – Cruise Day 16 – At Sea

Tuesday in our part of the world and in the Southern Hemisphere this morning. Temperature is 78 degrees and humidity 90%. Overcast with rain around us and deck very wet this morning. Sea is rated moderate with 6 ft waves. Much better than it has been. We are doing 14 knots and 254 ft of water under us.

Saw a different sea bird trailing us for a while this morning. It was a mottled black/brown with a little white. It soared behind for a while then swooped down low over the ocean and disappeared. I thought it dived into the water, but it never reappeared.

The tethered swimmer was out this morning and swam nonstop for 45 minutes. He is older and fairly heavy. Don't see how he can do it. He put on a T-shirt and on it was "Master's Swimming". Swimming must be his thing.

Breakfast in the dining room and I had tomato juice (to see if it had changed for the better, and it had). Ordered scrambled eggs, a sausage patty, and toast. LaRue ordered passion fruit yogurt and a bran muffin. Agus dropped a blueberry muffin on me when he brought LaRue's bran muffin. Then he came with my order on a huge plate with scrambled eggs, hash browns, 2 sausage patties, 2 link sausage, 2 slices of bacon, and toast on the side. Said he wanted me to have enough to eat! After I saw all of that I wasn't hungry.

Went to the presentation at 10am on Kiribati installment 2. It focused on the Line Islands and the islands Kiritimati (Christmas Island) and Fanning Island where most of the population is. Christmas Island is where we were supposed to stop but was cancelled. I was mixed up on my last update and called it Easter Island (I was off by one holiday and maybe thousands of miles). His slide today showed the population of the Gilbert Islands at 68,000 people, the Phoenix Islands at 18 people, and the Line Islands at 42,000 people. In the very early 1900's a cable was laid from Canada through Fanning Island to Australia. The Germans later cut the cable at Fanning Island.

Funny story walking through the ship to and from the theater. LaRue is slow and I walk ahead then stop and wait for her. Coming back from the theater we passed by the shops rather slowly and I stopped to wait. I looked over my left shoulder and couldn't see her. I figured she stopped in the shops. I go back and

look in the shops and don't see her. Then a lady taps me on the shoulder and points to LaRue standing where I turned around. She was on my right shoulder when I turned the other way and went back to look for her.

Had some specials along with the regular menu for lunch in the dining room. We both had vegetable soup, half a Reuben sandwich, and vanilla ice cream. All was good. Quiet afternoon relaxing.

Tuesday, March 15 – Cruise Day 17 – At Sea

Wednesday here, and also tomorrow. We have been cruising South and slightly East towards the dateline, and cross back over today. So, tomorrow will be tomorrow, and Wednesday again. That's the date situation in a nutshell.

Much better sea this morning and fairly clear sunny sky. Doing 14.6 knots, heading SSE, in 256 ft of water. Temperature 80 degrees and humidity 78%. On the route map I see the Cook Islands and Samoa to the East, and then Australia.

Working our way through the breakfast menu in the dining room. I had traditional oatmeal and LaRue had steel cut oatmeal. We also had milk, chopped walnuts, brown sugar, and raisins. They don't use salt. I knew it would be bland, and it was. I saw a lady a while back hitting it hard with the salt grinder that puts out good sized chunks. Did not resort to salt, but it sure could have used some.

Got word that my brother, Garry, is in bad condition in the Caldwell hospital. Gladys called looking for assistance. Since they are not married she cannot visit him or get anything on his condition from the hospital. Brian checked it out and emailed that Garry has two major medical issues. A social worker is assisting with getting him on Medicaid and into a nursing home. A big issue is Garry does not have a power of attorney agreement. Brian will step in if Garry will agree to proceed. This is what he has needed for some time, and hope that it works out. Nothing we can do from here.

At 11am we went to a presentation on French Polynesia and the ports we will be visiting. We have 7 stops and 5 of them require tendering as they are small islands with limited resources. The temperature will be around 100 degrees! They put up a big map showing where we are. We are about halfway between Peru and Australia with nothing but ocean and small islands.

The Captain, in his noon announcement, said if your birthday is today you get to celebrate again tomorrow as the day stays the same. He also said the ship is

extremely healthy and to keep up the good work. Also, the French Polynesian authorities will only require a small sample of passengers for covid testing.

The dining room had some specials for lunch along with the standard menu. We both had Pacific grilled shrimp for a starter. LaRue had two more starters, asparagus soup, and roasted cauliflower. I had spaghetti Bolognese and we both had pistachio ice cream for dessert. Agus came from his tables halfway across the dining room to visit. We know him well enough now to ask how many passengers are on this cruise. It is something cruise lines don't really want you to know. He didn't know but said he would find out. He came back and said 1,254. That is right at 50% capacity and well below what I was thinking. We like it this way.

We pass by the shops to and from the theater and the expensive jewelry shop was advertising 50% off today. It is high end stuff, so 50% off would still be out of sight. They always have cheap watches out in front marked 75% off. I looked at one and it was \$125 after the discount. My Fitbit will suffice.

Very nice dinner in the dining room tonight. We walked in and the front desk waived us to our table. Day 17 and all new selections on the menu which is unusual. We started with both having Ensalada de Palmitos de Primavera salad which was tossed greens, hearts of palm, egg, red beets, tomato, red bell pepper, celery, and an excellent balsamic dressing. I had Shrimp Diablo that was four jumbo grilled shrimp, cilantro rice, guajillo chilies, and chipotle tomato. LaRue had Sweet and Sour Pork with egg fried rice, snow peas, and carrots. We were more than pleased with both. LaRue had Baked Alaska for dessert and I had a chocolate Sunday. Our wine was one we like which was a Malbec from Mendoza, Argentina. The dinner exceeded expectations.

Holland America is doing a great job with the dining room décor, ambience, and service. So nice with white tablecloth, nice glassware, and silver. They still bring new silverware with each course where other cruise lines do not.

We go back one day tonight.

Wednesday, March 16 – Cruise Day 18 – At Sea

It is Wednesday for the 2nd day in a row. We are now back in sync. Smoother sea this morning. The aft rail was barely above and below the horizon in its swing up and down. Strong wind though which made it a cap in hand walk. The

display shows it is 83 degrees with 78% humidity. The sun came up a brilliant white ball with a few clouds around. We are doing 15 knots in 274 ft of water. The sea is rated moderate at 3-5 ft.

I saw the crazy Asian lady this morning while I was walking. She was coming down a ladder marked "Crew Only". It went up to where the radar and communication domes are on top of the ship. Don't think she was a repair person as she was wearing a dress. She hit the deck beside me and started dancing, singing, and waving her arms in the air as she went on her way.

We received a nice certificate this morning for crossing the date line. It is signed by the Captain. It is the first time we have seen his entire name, which is Nicolaas Kramer gezegd Freher. The gezegd is not a typo. He is tall and slender and doesn't look old enough to be a Captain. We've seen him a couple of times and thought he was a junior officer, but there were too many gold stripes.

We both had the fruit plate for a starter in the dining room this morning. LaRue had Swedish pancakes with bacon. I had buckwheat pancakes with two link sausages. LaRue thought the Swedish pancakes were too sweet also.

At 10am we went to the theater for a presentation on the history of French Polynesia. There are 118 islands of which 50 some are flat atolls, and 30 some are high volcanic mountainous islands. They are considered the most beautiful islands in the world. We have been to Bora Bora before and agree with the assessment. Life on Bora Bora under a palapa on a sandy beach looking at the blue lagoon, the towering peaks, an occasional cruise ship, and sipping a libation from a coconut is really inviting. However, they have our passports locked up.

To keep our public exposure minimal we have been dining at tables for two. Today for lunch we decided to share as we miss meeting and talking to nice people as well as a few obnoxious people. We got to our table and the only one seated was a little old lady, Marci, from Laguna Beach who is a world traveler. She was interesting, but began to do much name dropping. Her husband was off doing something else, and she was finishing off the wine bottle. Then, Ron, who we met and saw everyday on the way to Hawaii arrived. We hadn't seen him since Hawaii and were wondering what happened to him. We both had the special of the day cream of celery soup. LaRue had another special of the day, pulled pork sandwich. I had a menu item, Agnolotti al Formaggio, which was

ricotta filled pasta, tomato sauce, basil, and parmesan. I was dubious about my selection, but it was good. We both had chocolate ice cream for dessert.

Spent the afternoon relaxing, reading, and watching the ocean go by. It is a lighter shade of blue down here.

Went to dinner at 7pm and the dining room was very quiet. Two ladies were dallying over dessert at our table, so took another table nearby. We both had a shrimp mango cocktail for the starter. LaRue had lamb chops and I had English roast beef. Both selections were good. LaRue had strawberry sorbet for dessert (didn't care for it), and I had a berry something. We were eating our dessert when a tall slender officer with a lot of gold braid, and other officers went by to a big table on the other end of our section. We asked Superman if that was the Captain, and he said it was. I should have asked him to get me a Coke when he passed by our table.

Thursday, March 17. Cruise Day 19 – Raiatea, Society Islands, French Polynesia

After 6 days at sea we arrived at the island of Raiatea.

At 6am we were passing through a very narrow opening in the reef, then cruised slowly between Raiatea, and another small island. I believe I could see Bora Bora in the distance behind us. Anyway, it had high volcanic spires sticking up like Bora Bora. It was a beautiful approach taking about an hour and half before docking at a very small pier in the downtown area of Uturoa. This is a mountain island with the tallest looking to be about 1,000ft. It is covered with big canopy trees and palm trees. Beautiful and peaceful here, and this early the natives are barely stirring. Our onboard commentator said, "this is your National Geographic Moment". We heard that we are the first cruise ship to stop here since the pandemic started two years ago. It will be cruise ship pricing in town.

At breakfast In the dining room I had soaked apricots and the European Cold Breakfast plate. It had a baguette, thin sliced ham, gouda cheese, boiled egg, tomatoes, lettuce, beets, onion, pickles, cucumbers, and herring in sour cream. Left the lettuce, cucumbers, and the herring in sour cream. A tomato slice barely touched the herring in sour cream. The taste was awful and lingered for a while. LaRue had Passion Fruit Yogurt that she likes, pastry, and a croissant. We were at one of Agus's evening tables on the very aft. He was working breakfast in another area, but he dropped by to visit. He always seeks us out. The waiters

always have a mask and it is often difficult to recognize them. Not so with Agus. His eyes, forehead, and hair look just like the Mexican owner of the La Fiesta in Twin Falls. Suparman is easily recognized since he is skinny as a rail, weighing about 110 pounds.

It is a hot humid day. Approaching 90 degrees before noon with about the same humidity, and bright sunshine. We will not walk far when we get off the ship.

Had a light lunch in the Lido buffet and got off the ship. The gangplank was steep, and it was a struggle for the mobility challenged people. Ship's crew were there to help. We haven't walked on the ground since San Diego, and it was difficult. I staggered a bit as the ground seemed to be moving. There were shops shipside, and the main street was less than a block away. After the street beyond main street it was a jungle covered mountain.

It was hot and LaRue didn't want to proceed further, so she found a place to sit while I explored. It is French speaking here, and everything is in French. I went in some shops, and nobody tried to sell me anything. I looked and didn't see anything I wanted. I found LaRue and we had a beer on the veranda of an open air cafe. We both had a 10oz draft Tahitian Hinano beer for \$9 total. It is a lager type and strong like a German beer. It was cold and good. We were approaching the gangplank to reboard and our dining room friend, Agus, came rushing from the refreshments table to help Larue up the gangplank.

The air conditioned ship sure felt good. We overnight here, so will go to town when it is cooler in the morning.

Sat on our patio and took in the scene the rest of the afternoon. Enjoyed watching long slender outrigger canoes going by. We saw 1, 2, 4, and 6 person models, with each person paddling in unison and flying along. The shoreline curves around us and it looks like people travel across the lagoon by canoe as well as on the road.

At 5pm the locals put on a show on the pavilion beside the ship. They had a few of the ship's officers on stage teaching them their dance. We watched from deck 3 port side as our cabin faces out to sea.

The sun went down. A big full moon came up and is shining across the lagoon. A nice South Pacific scene.

Dinner was St. Patricks Day theme. We wore necklaces of green beads that we brought with us. We got them on a cruise some time back. LaRue had St. Patricks Smoked Trout Bay Shrimp Salad and I had St. Patricks Pea Potato Soup. We both had Braised Corned Brisket of Beef with potato cabbage cake, horseradish chive cream, and roasted root vegetables (parsnips). LaRue had Bailey's Double Cream Cheesecake and I had Black Forrest Cake for dessert. Sounds pretty fancy, but all in all it was just ok. Our wine was an Italian Chianti. Nice evening in the dining room.

Friday, March 18. Cruise Day 20 – Raiatea, Society Islands, French Polynesia

Woke up around 1am and thought we were cruising on the ocean. I could feel the ship moving. Got up to check and we were where we were supposed to be, which is tied up to the dock. The mind and body keeps sailing even if you are not.

Warm this morning at 6am. The temperature was 80 degrees and the humidity 80%. Thought about getting off the ship to walk but after thinking about it decided to stay onboard. The town is about four blocks long. Then it is narrow roads, and I don't suppose the drivers are too good. Anyway, it is a beautiful view going around Deck 10, and much safer.

Very relaxing breakfast in the dining room as they were not busy. Our waiter only had two tables. I had orange juice, orange slices, and a Belgian waffle, with two slices of bacon. LaRue had pastry, grapefruit, and steel cut oatmeal with all the additives (except salt).

Funny thing about the town. The main street is about 4 blocks long and there is a bypass road behind it next to the mountain. There is a gas station on each end of main street. Our onboard commentator said you use the gas station that is in the direction you are going to go around the island. I think it was a joke. There is a small airport with a runway constructed on landfill. It is about 4000 feet long (which is very short) with ocean at each end. If you don't get stopped you end up in the ocean.

The public transportation is third world. The vehicles are a 10-ton truck body with a flat nose cab and what resembles an old trolley car behind the cab. Passengers use a door in the middle to board and exit. The rear of the truck has two ladders to the top. There is a railing around the top for hauling cargo and a spare tire. They are rugged and utility oriented. The cost to ride is \$5 per person.

We got off the ship at 11am. The gangplank was steep again due the tide being in, and the ship riding high. A lot of these people shouldn't be doing this. Walked a short distance and a lady was down and getting assistance.

We walked around the area through shops, an outdoor vegetable market, and a supermarket. The supermarket had narrow aisles and was packed to the gills to about 8 feet high. I didn't think the prices were too bad. Small frozen pizzas were \$4-5, and the meat looked nice, but expensive. Wine was not bad but hard liquor was about three times higher than home. An interesting frozen food case had nothing but escargot from just plain snails to snails fixed various ways. A package was around \$9. We stopped where we had a beer the day before and had another. We contemplated having lunch, but they were just too busy and rather expensive. I saw two people having calamari and it looked really good. We decided to go back aboard and hit the Lido Buffet. We both had green salads and LaRue had roast turkey with the fixings. I had turkey, ham, and cheese on a nice bun. Ice cream finished us off.

We've had no flies onboard until we got here. Now there a lot and they are determined. I was at the asian line in the buffet looking at the offerings. The server was busy swatting flies and ignoring me. I decided to move on. We will be transporting flies to Bora Bora where they can crossbreed.

Our departure was delayed a bit this evening as there was a medical emergency and a passenger had to be taken off the ship.

The sail away was interesting and beautiful. We had over an hour viewing the shoreline of the neighboring island just off our balcony. A few houses built on the shoreline with dense palm trees at least 100 ft tall right to the water's edge. Then the mountain rising up and densely covered with 100-150ft tall trees with a huge canopy. We have never seen such dense vegetation. We could hear roosters crowing and people would come out and watch us go by.

These people are remote, and look fairly prosperous.

The ships horn blew a few times that signaled we would be turning left to cross the reef and into open water. We then had a beautiful view of Bora Bora with its volcanic peaks in the distance. We cruise very slowly tonight and arrive on the other side of Bora Bora in the morning.

The dining room was busy, but our table was ready for us. I had Dos Frijoles soup and LaRue had Seafood Ceviche for starters. We both had Sweet and Sour Shrimp with jasmine rice for our entrée. Having a lot of shrimp on this cruise. LaRue had coffee flavored ice cream for dessert, and I had a lemon torte. They have tarts, torte's, tats, and I don't know the difference. The torte was like a lemon pie. It was not an exciting menu, but was ok. Our wine was a California merlot labeled "The Crusher".

Saturday, March 19. Cruise Day 21 – Bora Bora (two day's)

Approached Bora Bora about 6am and was anchored by 7:15am. Nice scenic view coming in with the big volcanic spire sticking up in front of us. The way we are anchored we don't have a view of the shoreline, so that is a bit of a bummer. Still scenic with a good view of the island next to Bora Bora. We are about halfway between the two islands.

Another small cruise ship, the Paul Gauguin, already here. It is half our length with a capacity of 350 passengers and is high end luxury. I'll bet they are saying, "there goes the neighborhood" when we arrived. The ship only cruises in French Polynesia.

Hardly anyone in the dining room for breakfast as tendering has started and people are anxious to get off. We will wait until later when things slow down. We both had orange slices for a starter. I had the American breakfast and LaRue had a frittata. Had a nice table by the rear window looking down on the water. Talked to a couple from San Diego at the next table and they said their stop here was cancelled two years ago. They were cruising from New Zealand to San Diego with Bora Bora on the itinerary when all stops were cancelled due to Covid. Then they had 17 consecutive cruise days to San Diego. We were here in 2015 on March 25 and today is March 19. That was our 48 day South Pacific cruise on the Queen Victoria. I remember when we sailed away wondering if we would ever come back.

The day began with sunshine and a few clouds. Now, at 11am, a storm has rolled in. It is windy, raining, and white caps in the bay. The tenders that we see below us are struggling.

Nothing in the way of nice beaches in this area, as well as most of the islands. Islands are the tops of mountains that rise straight out of the water and up. Luckily there are coral reefs that make a breakwater and form tranquil lagoons.

The storm passed in an hour and we got on a tender to the dock area. It was hot and humid after the rain. This is a primitive place compared to the last stop. There is no town or city where we are. There is a dock for small craft, then small shops strung along the road that follows the shoreline. It is sand, Bermuda grass, uneven terrain, and tough walking for old people as there are no sidewalks. Shopping is mostly trinkets, t-shirts, black pearls, and natives selling bananas and coconuts. LaRue bought a black pearl the last time we were here, so she was not interested in those shops. She had enough after about a 100 yards and went back to the dock area where the ship had shade, chairs, and refreshments. I went a little further and found the little Café Aloe where last time we had one of the best pizzas we have ever had. I didn't go in but glad I found it. Maybe tomorrow. Went back to the dock area, found LaRue, and we hopped on the next tender. The tendering went well with no problems. Agus helped her on and off the tender at the ship and Suparman helped her at the dock.

Slow night in the dining room. LaRue had calamari and I had a plate of prosciutto, salami, figs, olives, and melon for starters. LaRue had beef tenderloin with creamed greens and bacon, and I had pasta a la vodka (not great and should have remembered it from early in the cruise). For dessert we both had a whiskey chocolate torte. Suparman said he had a fall on shore and banged his leg up. LaRue gave him advice on how to take care of his wounds.

Sunday, March 20. Cruise Day 22 – Bora Bora 2nd day

The Lido Buffet was humming at 6am. People ready to go. It is Sunday and local custom is that everything closes. However, we are told that some shops will be open, since we are here. It 83 degrees and 78% humidity this morning.

Went to the dining room for breakfast and the guy taking us to the table says, "white wine"? I hadn't noticed that he was Lomboc, our assistant evening waiter. We were visiting with him last night after dinner and he asked if we always drink red wine. I said "no, she drinks white wine for breakfast, and pink wine for unch". He was ready for us. I had orange slices, Texas French toast, and a side of ham. LaRue had a fruit plate, and lox and bagel.

At 10am we were sitting outside on the aft Lido deck and the sun was shining with big clouds around. All of a sudden it started pouring down rain. It did it yesterday at 11am and again about 6pm. It pours for a while and quits. Just part of life in the tropics.

Decided to stay aboard today. Tendering looked difficult with choppy water and nothing beckoning us on land. Grazed the Lido Buffet for lunch. Sat on the patio, finished a book on the e-reader, and had a nap. Another tough day cruising.

The dining room was sparse tonight. I started with caesar salad without anchovies. LaRue had chilled green asparagus with oven roasted tomatoes. I had chateau briand medium rare with goat cheese panisse, artichoke, and spinach. LaRue had thyme roasted lamb of rack (printed that way) with mashed, red onion raisin compote, and poached figs (I get the description of what we had from the menu on my cell phone). I had bossche bol for dessert and LaRue had kiwi and passion fruit pavlova. Our wine was an excellent California zinfandel.

Tomorrow is the island of Moorea.

Monday, March 21. Cruise Day 23 – Bahia D' Opunoha, Moorea, French Polynesia

Stunningly beautiful here. We entered through a gap in the coral reef, and into a bay about a mile wide, and maybe 2 miles long. We anchored in the middle with high mountains on each side. Kind of like being in a fjord. Ahead are steep volcanic spires probably up to 2,000 ft high. A rock climbers paradise. The vegetation is thick in spite of the volcanic rock.

Cloudy day and temperature of 80 degrees and 76% humidity and a chance of thunderstorms. Don't see many houses from the ship, and mainly only along the shoreline. There is very little room to build as the mountains go up from the shoreline. Across the bay from us we see a road up to a lone house. It goes straight up about 100 yards, and must be at least a 45-60 degree grade. Cannot see any town and the tenders are going around the point of the mountain to dock, so we can't see what is there. The population of the island is 14,000. Moorea is widely considered the most beautiful island in French Polynesia. Much of the movie Mutiny on the Bounty was filmed here.

Going into the dining room this morning waiters that we don't know acknowledged us by name. Kind of amazing. We both had orange slices that we both like. LaRue had the English breakfast and I had the vegetable frittata with a side of sausage.

Caught a tender at 10:30. It was a bumpy ride as we had to venture into open water to get around the point. Not much when we got there. A lot of artisan booths selling pearls and crafts. That was about it. Town was beyond walking distance. In fact, there was no evidence of a town. Could have hired a ride for a tour, but elected not to. We were back on the ship at 12:30.

It was the Lido buffet (they call it the Marketplace) for lunch. I had a little Asian bowl, and fish and chips that were excellent. LaRue had fish and chips then a small egg salad sandwich. Wasn't planning on ice cream, but it is too good to pass up. I had a scoop of vanilla and a scoop of chocolate. LaRue had almond something ice cream.

The sail away at 4:30pm was spectacular and one of the most scenic sail aways ever. We went out about 2 miles, turned right, and followed the coast for about an hour. Our balcony was on the side facing the coast. We had a fantastic view of the big volcanic spires and the 10,000 ft mountain in the center of the island. From sea level to 10,000 ft is a lot of elevation. We saw something big swimming along with about 3 feet of its back and upright fin showing. Don't know what it was.

Dinner menu tonight was not all that great. We both had the jumbo shrimp cocktail with cocktail sauce, and I had BBQ pork ribs. LaRue had the NY strip steak. My ribs were lacking, but LaRue liked her steak. She had a hot fudge Sunday and I had the Hazelnut Paris Brest for dessert. It was a pastry thing with a hazelnut flavor filling. Our wine was Malbec from Argentina.

We were still at our table when we pulled into Papeete, Tahiti at 8:30pm. Our shortest cruise between stops. Papeete is a fairly big city and we are docked downtown parallel with the main street. Looking out tonight from our balcony reminds us of Monaco. If you didn't know better you would think you were there. We were here in 2015 and it is very French.

Tuesday, March 22. Cruise Day 24 – Papeete, Tahiti

Everybody up early today and ready to go touring.

We did a tour here in 2015, so no need to see it again. On that tour we were returning to the ship around 4pm and it was total gridlock for over an hour.

About 80 degrees this morning. Lots of big sailboats and a few yachts. An interesting ship, the Arctic, is tied up on the other side of the pier. It is all black and white, and probably 400 ft long and narrow. It has 8 Seadoo's on the forward deck, and 4 sleek fast boats on the side decks. One has 3 big outboard motors. They all look like highspeed craft and expensive. Everything has a black cover over it – even the lounge chairs on the aft open deck. It has class and looks like an expedition ship for a small number of people.

We are on the aft end of the ship where the pier ends and this morning a diver is in the water below us doing something. I saw the Captain walk out and talk to the diver and the dive tender. Maybe we have a leak. Another ships officer came out later and retrieved a radio from the dive tender after the diver came out of the water. Must have been some kind of routine inspection.

The Captain made an announcement at 4:30pm about the diver that was in the water. When we arrived last night a mooring line got wrapped around a propeller. Quick action shut the power off. The diver cleared the propeller this morning and no damage was done. We dodged a bullet on that one. Our cruise could have ended here, or we limp slowly back to San Diego on one prop.

We were watching unusual activity out there last night, after we returned to the cabin. A boat with a spotlight kept shining it around the end of the ship, but we never thought anything of it.

A beehive of activity on the pier this morning. Refueling going on, pallets of trash coming off, and trucks with fruit, vegetables, and supplies unloading. Just in time as there were no oranges this morning at breakfast. We have been out of bananas since Hawaii. I had peach slices in place of orange slices and LaRue had prunes. We asked our waiter if we would run out of food going home and he said, "no, we have lots of rice." I had buckwheat pancakes and a side of bacon and LaRue had Passion Fruit Yogurt. My pancakes were slow coming out. The waiter said he would go see if they ran out of buckwheat. I got them and they were good.

We got off the ship at 10am. Very hot and humid and a long walk down the pier and over to the main street. It was 4 lanes of bumper to bumper traffic to get across the street, so we sat on a bench in the shade for a while in a little grassy area. Here we are in the middle of a busy city and a rooster and a hen was walking around. I walked on to look around and saw nothing but expensive

shops. No need to proceed any further, so went back to where LaRue was sitting.

A native lady sat down near us, and knew some English, so we had a nice visit. She lives on a small island nearby and only comes to Papeete when she has to. Too busy and hot for her. We told her our next stop was Fakarova, and she lit up as that is where she grew up. She says it is the most beautiful and best island.

We could see a storm brewing, so headed back to the ship. We were greeted at the gang plank with a cold wash cloth, and a cold lemonade or water, and a chance to sit in the shade before going up the gangplank. Marci from Laguna beach was sitting there, and was broadcasting to all that would listen. We had lunch with her once and she talked nonstop. She knew all about the mysterious ship, Arctic, docked across the pier. She named some guy in New Zealand as the owner. He takes movie stars and the rich and famous on expeditions, and it is headed to the Antarctic. Like I said, Marci knows everybody and everything.

We went up the gangplank and on up to the aft Lido deck and ordered a couple of cold Amstel Lites to cool off. Lucky we were under an overhang as the rain came in a downpour. Looks like the rain is going to hang around for a while. Had lunch in the Lido buffet. I had a cheeseburger and LaRue had meatloaf. Had an ice cream I couldn't eat. It was featured today and was pecan crunch. It was grainy like sand. Sat that aside and got some chocolate.

The crew was busy today doing emergency drills, which is taken very seriously. We even had to report to our muster station and have our key cards scanned between 3 and 4pm to prove that we were there. Then we were required to listen to the Captain on TV about emergency procedures. He ended with telling us the crew was tested for covid today and we are a healthy ship.

Dinner tonight was not too exciting. I had Carnitas Quesadilla and LaRue had Citrus Delight with Amaretto for starters. I had Pasta Arrabiatta and LaRue had Yankee Beef Shortribs for the entrée. For dessert she had the Chocolate Caramel Tart and I had the Mango Mousse Éclair. It was all OK. Our wine was the very good California Zinfandel again.

Wednesday, March 23. Cruise Day 25 – Fakarova, Tuamotu, French Polynesia

Cruising this morning was a whole new experience. We passed by many small atolls maybe 100 yards across. The ships display shows water only 56 feet deep. Fakarova is a long skinny atoll that curves around us ahead. It is 37 miles long and they say it is 13 miles wide. I only see about ¼ mile wide. Population is 837.

It is 80 degrees and 80% humidity with towering cumulus clouds around us. Some extend from the water, where it is pouring rain, up to twenty thousand feet or so. One of those clouds is dead ahead, but beyond Fakarova.

Yea, we have bananas and oranges today. For breakfast I had sliced oranges and the ham, cheese, poached egg, and potato skillet. LaRue had the fruit plate (with sliced banana) and steel cut oatmeal. All was good with croissants, pastries, and toast.

Went down to catch the tender at 10am. There are 20 stairs to go down to the tender, and there is an elevator for the mobility challenged. The elevator was temporarily out of service, so LaRue stepped aside to wait. I went on down and got on the tender, but she didn't show. Waited on shore for the next tender and she wasn't on that one either, so I figured she bagged it.

This is a place that gets very few tourists or cruise ships, so there is not much to do. There were a few artisan tables and that was about it.

I saw a very small market and gas station that pumped gas for boats and cars from 50 gallon barrels. I didn't go into the small market since I didn't want to take up valuable space just looking.

Old bicycles were available for rent at \$8 per hour, and in hindsight I should have rented one. There was also a one hour tour of the island for \$40 in the back of an old truck. I didn't see anyone sign up for it. Instead, I walked about a mile up the road next to the lagoon. The lagoon was easily accessible, and a few people were wading out. The water was a clear aqua color and got more blue the deeper the water.

The ship anchored out in the lagoon was travel poster perfect. Only passed by a few houses and each had a large boat in the front yard. Mostly empty space covered with palm trees. There were coconuts on the ground about every square foot. Only three cars went by me on my walk, and they were very small

cars. I got back to the dock area and spotted a shack selling drinks and snacks, but no beer.

Marci was hanging out under the ships hospitality canopy where the tenders dock. That seems to be her mode of operation. Her husband showed up with his fishing pole and is another story.

I had some cold water and caught the next tender. While there was not much to do it was great to experience what it is like on a small atoll in the Pacific. The perfect place for peace and tranquility.

LaRue hit the American station for lunch in the Lido buffet. I had a made to order salad and a bratwurst from the grill. It is one of my favorites for lunch. The featured ice cream was neapoliton that we partook of.

Sailed at 4:30pm passing many small atolls with no inhabitants. We went by a long narrow one maybe 5 miles long with no sign of life. When we got to the end of it we saw a little white SUV parked by the waters edge. No roads, no structures, nobody around, and there is a vehicle.

Dinner in the dining room was quiet with many tables empty. Guess we are getting picky as the menu options seemed rather uninviting. We both had Bay Shrimp Cobb and Celery Slaw for a starter. I had Beef Bourguignon (menu spelling) and LaRue had Three Peppercorn Crusted NY Striploin Steak for our entrees. Mine was an unusual version of a French classic that I did not care for. LaRue's steak was ok but the peppercorn sauce was lacking peppercorn. For dessert LaRue had a Sasher Torte and I had Strawberry Mousse Torte. Our wine was from a new wine package and was a Pinot Noir from France.

This is hard to believe. Our clocks go forward 30 minutes tonight. Never heard of such a thing. The time zone is Marquesas Standard Time GMT/UTC -9:30.

Thursday, March 24. Cruise Day 26 – At Sea

First news this morning is that Sarah and Taylor have a son, Parks Keith Redd, and we have our second great grandson. Congrats to all.

Cruising along at 14 knots this morning and our heading is Northeast towards California. On the position map I see Samoa to our west and Peru to our east with hundreds of miles of nothing between us.

Big clouds all around and looks like storms ahead. The temperature is 80 degrees, and the sea is good at 3-5 feet. A strong head wind kept me alert while walking on the top deck.

The aft pool is empty this morning and don't know if that means severe weather ahead or just routine cleaning. The tethered swimming guy was standing there looking forlorn with his rope in hand.

Breakfast in the dining room with Agus. LaRue told him about our new grandson and the people at the next table said congratulations. Later Agus got out his cell phone and showed us his two daughters age 4 and 5. I had sliced banana, made to order omelet, and a muffin. LaRue had sliced oranges, croissant, and the skillet with poached eggs, and stuff. Better than usual skillet this morning.

At 10am we went to the theater for a presentation on the history of the Marquesa Islands of which there are 13. They are the most volcanic, high, and solid basalt rock islands in French Polynesia. It was an information overload. Our next two stops are there.

Lunch in the dining room today since it is a sea day. Nothing to brag about. We shared spring rolls and LaRue had squash and leek soup and half a club sandwich. I had a nondescript beef dip sandwich and we both had a chocolate Sunday.

The rest of the day is reading, relaxing, and a nap. Cruising is tough.

Formal gala night tonight, making it our third. We dressed up in our finest and went down to the Pinnacle Bar for pre-dinner Martinis, which is our custom on formal night. The waiter recognized us. I ordered two Absolute vodka martinis up, very dry, and with one olive in each. He repeats the very dry and we "say very, very, very dry". He brought them and said, "Absolute martinis, absolutely dry". They were perfect.

For those that wonder about prices on cruise ships they were a total of \$25.72 including 18% gratuity. Not that out of line compared to Jaker's in Twin Falls.

Good choices on the menu. LaRue had Escargot Bourguignon and I had the Orange Jumbo Shrimp Cocktail for starters. We both had the Filet Mignon with Jumbo Shrimp for our entrees. LaRue had Crème Brulee and I had Vanilla Souffle for dessert. Nice dinner but the filet mignon was not up to par.

People were not dressed quite as elegant tonight. Didn't see any tux's. Several guys with just nice shirts. For our wine we ordered the French Pinot Noir from our wine package that we had the night before, but they were out. We were upgraded a level to a California Pinot Noir that was very good. No complaints.

Friday, March 25. Cruise Day 27 – Hapatoni, Tahuata Island, Marquesa.

Overcast this morning and 80 degrees with a strong wind during our approach. We are told tendering could be difficult as we are barely off the open ocean. Only 3 lifeboats will be utilized as there is limited docking with only room for one lifeboat at a time onshore.

These islands rise straight up out of the sea to a height of 4,000ft in places. Quite a sight pulling in. It is volcanic rock, but covered with dense green vegetation that goes straight up about 1,000 feet. We pulled into a little cove and stopped. The ships propulsion held our position. Anchors could not be used because the sea floor is solid rock.

A road is carved out of the rock higher up and follows the contour up and down and around. It looks treacherous. I spotted a small car, and it was barely moving. From our balcony, I only see one house near the road and a little shack on a small flat spot near the waters edge. There are 8 sailboats tied to the shore. The dock and a few buildings can be seen from the other side of the ship. This is the smallest island in the Marquesa's with a population of 653.

Off in the distance to the Northeast I can see a huge island, Hiva Oa. Looking at the map it is about 5 times the size of this island. Those mountains look higher.

The dining room was busy this morning for being in port. The front desk hostess was directing us to a large shared table, and the other hostess told her, "they prefer not to share". She took us to a table for two. I had orange slices, and Texas French Toast. LaRue had the fruit plate and raisin bran cereal.

The recommendation was that people with mobility problems should consider not going ashore, so LaRue decided not to go. At 10:30 after the rush I went down

and was one of the first aboard the lifeboat. Not many people were boarding, so sat a long time bouncing about. I was afraid I might get seasick, but didn't.

It was very primitive ashore and no artisan's selling stuff. An old guy sitting on a rock wall selling coconuts and a couple of people selling snacks. I started up the only road I could see, and it was too steep to proceed.

I went back and saw people walking along the shore on a rocky uneven path/frontage road. It was like walking on a bad trail at the Craters of the Moon. I was surprised to meet the Captain coming towards me and headed back to the dock.

There was a small cemetery, a church, a few houses, and a pavilion with native entertainment. It was too crowded with people in close quarters for me, so went on. There was a phone booth in front that I took a picture of. Didn't look like anything inside, so think it was there as an attraction.

I was hoping for a place to have a beer, but there wasn't any, so got on the tender and returned to the ship. Really glad I went as it was a totally different experience. This is the village of Hapatoni, but there are no services of any kind. I was told the village at the other end of road has a small market and post office. That is all there is. I read on the internet that this island, Tahuata, and Nuku Hiva tomorrow are among the most remote places in the world.

We grazed the Lido Buffet for lunch. Wish I liked sushi as the sushi station always has some great looking stuff. I don't see many people getting it. Settled on a little Asian and Italian. One thing I notice about Asian food is that you don't get lamb. They must know something.

The Captain announced a while ago when we would be leaving and commented on the challenge of stopping here. He couldn't put the anchor down and had to maintain position all day with the azipods. He said without that we would have become permanent residents. The sail away was straight out into open water, so not much to look at. The island was in the rearview mirror.

Tonight's dining room menu was eclectic. There was duck, chicken, tuna, pork, steak, salmon, and two Mexican entrees. We both had Apple Salad with Candied Walnuts for the starter. LaRue had Tuna Steak and I had Carne Asada. Her tuna came with mashed potatoes that didn't seem to fit. My Carne Asada

was very different but was good. We both had carrot cake for dessert. Our wine was Deakins Estate Shiraz from Australia that we liked.

Saturday, March 26. Cruise Day 28 – Taiohoe, Nuka Hiva Island, Marquesa

Cruised straight in from the ocean into a big bay ringed by high mountains. The mountains start up gradually, so there are structures and houses around the bay. Then the mountain goes up to 2,000 ft or so. Heavy growth but a lot of bare rock showing and a little more of an arid look. This is the largest island in the Marquesa's at 131 sq miles and a population of 3,120. The highest elevation is a 4,016 ft mountain.

Spectacular view and this could be my favorite island. I don't see a defined downtown area. The temperature is 80 degrees and it is somewhat overcast. Have not seen what the humidity is, but very high. This is a tender port and the Captain recommends that "challenged" people should consider not going ashore, as there are stairs and a steep ramp. About half the people are "challenged", but it does not seem to deter them.

When I was walking this morning there was a dead fish about 5 inches long laying on deck 10. A bird must have dropped it. I have never seen that before.

Breakfast in the dining room. We both had V-8 juice and I had sliced banana, and the ham and cheese skillet. LaRue had orange slices and the veggie frittata.

LaRue stayed aboard and I headed to the tender at 10am. I stepped out onto the boarding platform and saw the lifeboat swinging a foot above and then a foot below the platform and wondered why I was doing this. Made it ok but it is not fun. Was on early again so got to sit bouncing around. I got my favorite seat in the bow and have had that seat on every tender. Plenty of leg room, nobody face to face, and a bulkhead to lean back on. The other seats face towards each other with your knees overlapping and someone three feet away face to face. Getting off required stepping onto an 18 inch wide plank, then a big step to the dock.

The dock area was nice with artisan shops, natives blowing conch shells, and beating on big drums. There was a counter to leave your dirty laundry and have it done for 1500 francs or \$15. First time I have seen that.

I walked through shops and a veggie stand then went for a walk around the end of the bay. The area is civilized with sidewalks, and nicely paved streets. No sandy beach. It is small black rocks. I would like to have gotten one but there was a 3 foot drop off a rock wall to get down to get one.

It was really hot, so turned around and went back. There was a pavilion where I could get a cold beer, but it was packed with people. Gave up on that. I was headed back to catch the tender and saw a lady at a table selling jewelry. She had a pair of black pearl earrings that looked like they would match LaRue's black pearl she got in 2015 in Bora Bora. The price was good, so I bought them. I made it back onto the lifeboat and got my favorite seat. It was a rough ride back.

The earrings turned out to be a perfect match, and just what she had been wanting. I lucked out on that one.

It was the lido for lunch. I had spicy hot Thai shrimp and then a bratwurst. LaRue had a salad and roast lamb and stuff. Then it was ice cream. Everybody has ice cream and I wonder how much they go through. LaRue watched the couple next to us order half and half and make their own milkshakes. Never seen that before.

We sailed at 4:30pm straight out into the ocean and headed for San Diego seven days away. Dinner in the dining room was very quiet tonight. People were shot after a hot day in port. I had Garden Bounty Salad, and Rustic Homemade Lasagna. LaRue had Avocado and Shrimp Plantain for a starter and Fresh Market Swordfish Chermoula (no idea what Chermoula is, but she liked the swordfish). We both had Raspberry Mousse Torte for dessert. Our wine was the very good California Pinot Noir that we had a couple nights ago. No complaints.

The ships clock will move forward 30 minutes tonight. The time zone will be Gambier Standard Time GMT/UTC -9:00.

Sunday, March 27. Cruise Day 29 – At Sea

Cruising along at 16 knots in fairly good seas with sunshine this morning. The ships status displays have not been working for several days, so no information from there.

Breakfast in the dining room as usual. Hardly anyone there so guess people are sleeping in on Sunday morning, and the half hour loss of sleep due to the time change. I had orange slices and buckwheat pancakes. LaRue had the fruit plate and veggie frittata again.

Went to a presentation on the equator at 10am. Interesting and a lot of technical data. The Captain says we will cross at 10am tomorrow as that is when the party is scheduled. The presenter says we will cross around 8am.

The biggest takeaway from the presentation is that we experience all the seasons on this cruise. We started in the winter season, crossed the equator into the summer season, went further south into the fall season, and we cross back over the equator into spring. That is a big accomplishment over a span of five weeks.

We were told yesterday that satellite coverage is poor in this part of the world and to expect Internet, TV, and phone outages. I see that the Internet is not working this morning.

Being Sunday it was brunch (for lunch) in the dining room. We both had Bloody Mary Shrimp Ceviche with a dried plantain slice, Fish and Chips, and Strawberry Crunch with Vanilla Ice Cream. Spent the afternoon reading and a nap.

Got our passports back at 4:30pm.

Dinner in the dining room and we both had Island Salad, Prime Rib, and Butterscotch Panna Cotta with chocolate sauce. Superman brought a additional appetizer of Spring Rolls that we didn't need. Our wine was Moon Red Blend from California. All was good. You might wonder about our waiter's name. It really is Superman.

I checked out the late show that was an instrumentalist from Australia and did not stay long.

Monday, March 28. Cruise Day 30 - At Sea

Overcast this morning with rain around us on the horizon. Temperature is 76 degrees and 84% humidity. We are cruising at 16 knots with a fairly smooth ocean.

I had eggs benedict for breakfast and LaRue had eggs and corned beef hash. Neither one was too great. There are three eggs benedict on the menu, and to make sure that I got the classic version, told the waiter, "the one with ham". My plate had the standard classic benedict with a big side of ham.

I went to the equator crossing party at 10am at the midship pool area. So crowded I couldn't see much over the tops of people. King Neptune and the Captain presided over the initiation of first timers who were getting slathered with garbage and thrown in the pool. I think the first timers were all young crew members. Stayed about 15 minutes and departed.

The Captain in his noon announcement passed on that a Holland America Captain retired recently and he had only crossed the equator one time. Kind of hard to believe. This was our sixth crossing.

All new menu in the dining room for lunch. I made a bad pick with a jalapeno burger on a sourdough bun that could have been a hockey puck. Deconstructed it in order to eat the contents. Had a green salad for a starter and a banana caramel something for dessert. LaRue had an orange and avocado thing for a starter, a NY strip steak, and a peach Sunday.

A quiet afternoon cruising along, reading, and a nap.

Went to dinner at 7pm at our usual table with Superman. I went all Italian with Pasta Fagioli Soup, then Spaghetti with Meatballs, and vanilla ice cream for dessert. LaRue had Crunchy Turnips and Mango Salad, then Garlic Herb Roasted Chicken, and Apple Crumble Tart with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Our wine was Frescobaldi Remole from Tuscany, Italy.

The time goes forward one hour tonight.

Tuesday, March 29. Cruise Day 31 – At Sea (Day 3 of 7 days to San Diego)

Still dark at 6am and I got some good pictures of sunrise over the big cumulus clouds to the East. Temperature is 79 degrees and humidity 85%. We are doing 16.5 knots in good seas with a strong wind.

Have only seen one ship at sea since we started and that was a tanker between California and Hawaii. Also, no contrails in the sky from high flying jets. Just us out here chugging along.

We have brunch with the Captain at 11:30am, so will skip breakfast in the dining room. Something light on the Lido deck will do until then. We have not been utilizing room service in the mornings on this cruise, LaRue still has stacks of tipping money.

Now to shed some light on the mystery yacht, "Arctic" we saw back in Papeete, Tahiti. Granddaughter Caitlin emailed a photo she found of the "Arctic P". The black and white paint scheme in the photo was a little different. However, it was the same yacht with the same high super structure with the radar and communication domes in black. It was built in Germany in 1969 for a wealthy Australian, Kerry Packer, who died some time ago. It is 285 ft long and was first named the "Arctic Explorer" and built to break ice. It was renamed "Arctic P" and now only shows "Arctic" on the bow. It has a fulltime crew of 25 and accommodates 12 guests in luxury. The annual operating cost is \$8 million per year. It resembles a Coast Guard cutter rather than the sleek new yachts. Caitlin discovered it now belongs to the fiancé of Mariah Carey, and she loves to use it.

LaRue overheard the conversation at the dock that the yacht was picking up a famous singer and friends for an Antarctic expedition. Among super yachts of the world it is ranked #187.

It was a nice lunch with the Captain with a special menu. There were two options in each category and champagne was included. It was good champagne and they poured freely. I had Polynesian Coconut Soup, Polynesian Beef, and Coconut Pie. LaRue had a shrimp thing, shrimp and salmon, and a fruit plate. We shared a table with a couple, Jacque and Mary, from Ontario, Canada that we enjoyed. They related a wild tale of getting stranded in the Canary Islands, when covid hit and their cruise was cancelled. They finally got to Madrid, Spain airport and two hours later he woke up to the fact he had left his backpack on the shuttle. It had their passports, their credit cards, and their money in it. He was directed back to the shuttle area and happened to see the driver. He had his backpack, and all was intact. Then the airline they were booked on quit flying, However, \$10,000 later they got home. Surprised they would cruise again.

We had a good dinner in the dining room. I had Grandma's Chicken Noodle Soup, Sweet and Sour Shrimp, and Strawberry Mousse. LaRue had Mixed Seasonal Greens, Grilled Molasses Lamb Chop, and Sacher Tort with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Our wine was Torro de Piedra Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile. We were happy.

Wednesday, March 30. Cruise Day 32 – At Sea

We were jolted awake about 2am with an announcement over the loudspeakers for emergency responders to proceed to a cabin on deck 7. First time we have had an announcement like that during the night. Don't understand why they need to wake up the whole ship.

Rough this morning. Clouds all around, strong wind, and seas up to 10ft. Temperature is 77 degrees and humidity 89%. Doing 15 knots and just 95 ft of water under us. Looking at the 24 hour profile I see as little as 60 feet at times.

Too tough walking on the top deck, so after one lap went down to the Promenade Deck #3 under the lifeboats, and it was better. I saw bits of seaweed on the aft starboard deck. There were five or six people out. Two old nearlydeads, that were probably newlyweds, holding hands and taking up the whole deck.

Breakfast in the dining room and had Happy for our waiter, and he was happy. LaRue had Sliced Bananas and Passion Fruit Yogurt and croissants. I had the Fruit Plate and the European Cold Plate for a change of pace. So far have passed up cold cereal as there is enough of that at home.

At the Captain's brunch yesterday, Jacque from Ontario, Canada said he reads two newspapers a day. We asked him how he gets them. He showed us on the ship's app a connection to all the world's major newspapers and magazines. All right there on our smart phones and you don't need the internet to access them.

We went to a presentation at 10am, "Longitude – Lost at Sea, by Jim". It was about the early sailing days, and the problem of navigating before accurate time pieces and reading the planets. It was a new presentation and the first time Jim has given it. He is an ex teacher and has found a niche that allows him to travel the world on cruise ships and give presentations. All you have to do is find a relevant subject and sell yourself. Too late now.

The dining room was closed today for lunch, so it was the Lido Buffet. I sampled aisian and Italian, but the best was a Nathans hot dog. There was even an Arab

section today. LaRue had a salad and a tuna sandwich. Then it was ice cream. A scoop of chocolate and a scoop of vanilla. The little gal works nonstop scooping ice cream out of those deep containers. She works harder than any of the servers.

Quiet afternoon relaxing. Too windy and cool to sit on the verandah reading. Sea was also rough. Gala dress tonight in the dining room. We had our absolutely dry Absolute vodka martini in the Pinnacle Bar before dinner. The waiter remembers us. For dinner I had the Jumbo Shrimp Cocktail and LaRue had Escargot for our starter. We both had Surf and Turf which was a filet mignon and lobster for our entrees. LaRue had Passion Fruit Cheesecake and I had Flourless Chocolate Cake for dessert. Our wine was Chateau des Trois Tours, Bordeaux, France. Superman was not on point tonight as far as service. LaRue let him know about it before we left, and it all got aired out. I kept quiet.

Thursday, March 31. Cruise Day 33 – At Sea – Two more sea days ahead.

Cooler this morning at 71 degrees and 69% humidity. Strong wind and choppy sea. Waves don't look big, but ship jerks all directions and keeps you off balance. Doing 15 knots with 152 ft of water under us. Solid gray overcast sky. The position map shows us East of Puerto Vallarta and angling towards San Diego. My guess is we are about a 1,000 miles east of Mexico and about 1,000 miles from San Diego.

Very quiet in the dining room for breakfast. We were the only people in our section of about 10 tables. We both had sliced oranges to start. Must be a new batch as they were not as sweet as before. I had banana bread French toast that I have not had, and can't say I would have again. LaRue went back to the ham, cheese, poached egg skillet. Sort of a ho hum breakfast.

At 10am we went to the theater for an "Ask the Captain" question and answer session. However, his accent is so thick I don't get much, and LaRue only does a little better. The funniest part is a guy said he met an older gentleman the other day that said, "the Captain is my son". The Captain replied, "guests will say anything". Then laughed and said, "yes, my father is on board".

A take away is that the ship can cruise about three weeks without refueling. Neither of us could understand what he said about fuel capacity or usage, and he

talks in tons of fuel. The ship makes 500 tons of fresh water a day from sea water. His most favorite cruise is to Antarctica.

The Captain also passed on that the French Polynesian authorities backed off on requiring our third covid test.

It was lunch in the Lido Buffet as the dining room was closed. I had a cup of potato soup, a ham and cheese sandwich, and ice cream. LaRue had carved turkey with stuff and a soft ice cream cone.

Superman was on point in the dining room tonight and was all over us with service. We both had Tiger shrimp for a starter, Wiener Schnitzel, and Chocolate Tres Leches Cake for dessert. The dessert was terrible, and two tastes were enough. It was like a chocolate cake soaked in water. Our wine was Deakin Estates Shiraz from Australia.

Have had a lot of shrimp on this cruise as well as a lot of lamb for LaRue. I was concerned as the small shrimp cocktail that has always been on the menu every evening was no longer offered. However, they more than made up for it with frequent jumbo shrimp cocktails and many shrimp entrees. Anyway, I am shrimped out. LaRue has had lots of lamb.

Clocks go forward one hour tonight to California time.

Friday, April 1. Cruise Day 34 – At Sea

Cooler at 64 degrees this morning. Cruising at 17 knots on fairly good sea and overcast sky.

April Fools prank as soon as I got on the elevator. Holland America has a unique practice of changing the floor mats in the elevators to the day of the week. This morning it showed Sunday and it never dawned on me until I got my coffee that today is Friday. I checked all four aft elevators, and each had a different day.

One of the questions the Captain was asked yesterday was if the person that changes the mats in the elevators got the day off when we had two consecutive Wednesdays (after crossing back over the international date line). No days off on cruise ships.

In the dining room our waiter had his name tag upside down and the front desk people said goodnight when we left. I had a Belgian waffle and pork sausage links. LaRue had the fruit plate and steel cut oatmeal.

A big milestone for us as we departed the DK motel for good 20 years ago on April Fools. It doesn't seem possible that we have logged 35 cruises since then.

A new menu in the dining room for lunch today. We both had the same selections. A good navy bean soup, panko crusted mahi mahi with potato salad, and berry peach pie with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. While eating I looked out the starboard window and saw the tail end of a ship in the distance. Appeared to be a big container ship headed towards Mexico. We crossed behind it. By the time we got back to the cabin and looked in the binoculars it was gone or lost in the haze. Only the 2nd ship we have seen at sea in 34 days.

The dining room was only about 30% of capacity tonight. Some wild sounding options on the menu. One appetizer was watermelon and cheese. I had Shrimp, Grapefruit, Citrus Aioli for my appetizer and the Vegetarian Bean Taco for my entree. Both were good and the shrimp was jumbo size. LaRue had Sunset Salad and Beef Tenderloin with Mushroom Sauce. Then it was Raspberry Mousse Tort and LaRue had Chocolate Fudge Brownie Cheesecake for dessert. Our wine was Puerto Viejo Carmenier from Chili. We were happy with our selections.

Saturday, April 2. Cruise Day 35 – At Sea

Getting colder and 59 degrees this morning with grey overcast sky. The sea looks smooth but there are big swells rocking us. Last day at sea and San Diego in the morning. Two other cruise ships will be in, so the pier area will be busy. The ships are the Disney Wonder and the Holland America Koningsdam. We will be off the ship rather early and will have to wait a while before we can check into our hotel which is in the area.

Breakfast in the dining room and I had orange juice and Texas French toast with a side of ham. LaRue had sliced bananas and the American breakfast. Things on the breakfast menu that I never got around to are Wild Rice Quinoa Bowl, Bread Pudding, Kipperd Herring, Asian Congee, Pan Asian Breakfast, English Breakfast, Aloo Masala and Egg Bhurji, Swiss Style Muesli, Passion Fruit Yogurt, Smoked Salmon Omelette, Forest Mushroom Benedict, dry cereals, and Bagel and Lox. I don't regret missing them.

It is pack up and get ready to go today. After 35 days we are ready to debark. It was a great cruise to remote and fascinating islands that you would never think of visiting. The crew did a wonderful job keeping us healthy with people constantly cleaning, providing N95 masks, and serving food. Holland America still delivers the older style of cruising with small ships, which is very much to our liking. Hope we can squeeze in another cruise or two.

Lunch in the dining room today. We both had a garden salad and I had baked macaroni and cheese. LaRue had fettucine with pork and veal meatballs and we both had a butterscotch Sunday. Our waiter was Superman, and our table was by a window looking out on 10 ft ocean swells. Good we have our sea legs. It looks cold and dreary out there.

The Captain in his noon announcement said he would be getting off in San Diego also. He is going home for his three month break. I guess that is why his father is on this cruise. Spent the afternoon packing up.

The menu in the dining room tonight was upscale. We both started with the Jumbo Shrimp Cocktail with American cocktail brandy sauce. LaRue had Lamb Chops and I had Prime Rib with a baked potato (by request instead of mashed). For dessert LaRue had the Double Chocolate Tart and I had the Hot Fudge Sunday. Our wine was a nice Argentina Decero Malbec. All was excellent and a fitting finale.

Sunday, April 3. End of Cruise in San Diego

We are in San Diego and it is cool and overcast.

Breakfast was in the dining room. Waiting for our debarkation group to be called for immigration check. Before we can leave the ship we have to file through the dining room upstairs and present our passports. The passport photo was checked against our face to verify that we are the same person. We have never had to do that on the ship except when we started cruising. We deliberately selected one of the last groups to debark, so it took a while. When that was done we collected our carryon bags in our cabin and went to the Pinnacle Lounge to wait for wheelchair assistance for LaRue.

We were sitting there waiting and the Captain came in with his father, who needed wheelchair assistance also, and they sat down across from us. The Captain was in uniform and later said goodbye to his father and got up to leave.

He nodded at us and I said, "I thought you were getting off here". He replied, "I am not sure, as the relief Captain's flight was cancelled, and he is not here. He is on a flight to Los Angeles and will be driven to San Diego, and I hope he makes it before departure time. If he doesn't make it, I stay with the ship". Later, I talked to the father and he was flying home to Amsterdam and he told me his son now lives in New Jersey. You could tell they were father and son, except the Captain is skinny and about 6' 4" and his father is much shorter. A personal conversation with the Captain and his father was a fitting end to our journey.

We were all alone leaving the ship and no more than 10 bags were still in the baggage area. There was no customs check. The wheelchair guy and the gal porter took us to a taxi and we were on our way to the hotel at 10:30. Too early to check in so sat in the lobby of the hotel. Had a good chat with a couple that got off the Koningsdam after a Pacific Coast cruise, and a couple from Wisconsin that were boarding our ship for a Mexico cruise. Told them that if they see Superman in the dining room to say hello for us.

About 12:30 went to find some lunch. The two nearby places were standing room only and a Brazilian Steakhouse lowest price was \$49, so didn't go in. Ended up at the Italian place we liked when we came down. Had a small pizza for \$24 that was great. Didn't really want to have lunch there as we planned on it for dinner. Will still go for dinner as it is too good to pass up. Our room was ready when we got back. It was a nice big corner room.

We had dinner in the Italian restaurant, Buca di Bepo, and had the Shrimp Fra Diavolo again. It is so good you can't stop eating, and there is still enough left for two people. Not that we needed more shrimp after the cruise.

Now all we have to do is be out of here by 4:30am for our 6:15am flight.

Monday, April 4.

The San Diego airport was a zoo at 5:00 in the morning. A wheelchair assistant got us through the maze and security without waiting in long lines. The flight was full and we were upgraded to comfort seats. Didn't do any good as no service was provided in coach.

We were in the row behind first class and they were eating and drinking the entire flight. We were about 30 minutes from Salt Lake and I got the attention of a flight attendant in first class. I Asked her why I don't even get a cup of coffee. She looked back into coach where no lights were on and said they must have

missed me. Yeah sure lady. She got me coffee and a couple of snacks for LaRue and a juice for the guy in the window seat. I was plenty ticked off.

We landed hard in Salt Lake. It ranks among the top five hard landings I have experienced. The flight crew didn't open the flight deck door and smile as we exited, You know they didn't want to face us. Then it was the two mile rat race in the new Salt Lake airport. We had another hard landing in Twin Falls. I guess it just wasn't our day for flying. We made it home after Gary picked us up.

So, that's a wrap on a great cruise.

The end.