

Around the World in 38 Days

April 7 - May 16, 2012

April 7, 2012 | LAX

This is a trip that has been a long time in the making. I have spent years day dreaming about a trip like this and at times I have even gotten so involved that I planned routes, stopovers and all of the associated parts of a trip. I had rough plans to fly to Amsterdam, rail to St. Petersburg, and then train 6000 miles more to Beijing. Then I would fly back to Arizona. This would have been a great trip. Another plan had me flying 39,000 miles with up to 15 stopovers. This is a standard RTW ('round the world) trip. You can stop anywhere as long as you keep progressing in the same direction and finish the trip within 12 months. This trip also did not happen.

When Kathy and I got home from our trip to Brazil and Argentina last spring, the cruise company, Oceania, began sending literature about their sailings. Better than a West Marine catalog! This trip fit my bill for adventure and circling the globe. We are flying to Hong Kong, get aboard the ship *Nautica*, and sail around the bottom of Asia, through the Suez Canal and Athens, Greece via Haifa, Israel. From Athens we fly back to Tucson via Philadelphia.

This morning we left our beautiful home at the foot of Mount Lemmon and drove our rental car to the Phoenix airport. We had to turn the car in before 4 and our plane to Los Angeles departed at 5:40, no sweat. The flight was 1 hour and we find ourselves in an airport full of Asians. When we were checking in at Phoenix Sky Harbor, the people before us and the two after us were also going to the same cruise. We have now identified 6 couples from central Arizona who will be sailing together. In about 1 hour we will board and begin the long 14-1/2-hour flight to Hong Kong. The flight goes NW up the coast of California, follows the Aleutian Island chain, down over Korea, a corner of Japan across the easternmost part of China and finds a place to land in Hong Kong. That all happens while we are sleeping tonight. We really aren't sleeping, it is just dark and seems like it's the time to sleep.

We have spent Easter in many different places, [Syracuse](#) on the island of Sicily, in the Aegean Islands of Greece on Patmos, on the coast of Turkey at a small village of [Palamut](#), but this time it is at 38,000 feet above the Pacific Ocean above the westernmost part of the state of Alaska. This flight is such that it takes half of the flight time just to get out of the USA. Eight hours flying NW and finally arcing towards the SW once we are over the Aleutian Islands. This is a 16-hour flight, due to adverse wind conditions so after 8 hours of napping, after departing LAX at midnight, we are still in complete darkness. It feels like it is time for a snack and sure enough the attendants come through the cabin with hot noodle soup. It smells great and in fact does taste good. However, there is one problem to solve, how do you eat soup with chopsticks? It is true, the soup was served with chopsticks, and no spoon was offered. With the cup pressed in the space between your chin and your lower lip, you pull food into your mouth, and drink the liquid. I just had a great idea: why not make the chopsticks hollow and suck the cup dry? Then again, their method of slurp and sip works.

We got to the Hong Kong airport in good, but not rested, condition. It was a very long flight. The seats on Cathay Pacific are tied with Ryan Air as the worst seats available. The airline is excellent otherwise, but horrible seats. They know it also. We completed our journey to the boat by taking the local train, metro, from the airport. This is a new and fabulous train, not highly used and therefore not crowded or dirty. We arrive at the Kowloon metro station in 20 minutes and a Metro shuttle takes us the remainder of the way to the ship. Total time from airport to boat is less than 30 minutes, cost about \$10. We had the option of scheduling our transfer via Oceania, for \$95 each. Self-directed works better if you can do it.

We then strolled around Kowloon for a couple of hours waiting to get aboard the ship and into our room. Kowloon is a major town associated with Hong Kong and an island. Sort of like San Diego and Coronado Island. We enjoyed an evening together with our friends Pete and Maryann and saw the great city of Hong Kong light up at night. Wow what a light show. Pete took some

pictures and we will share them later.

We were gifted with two bottles of wine, a bottle of champagne, a fruit basket and a pound or so of Godiva chocolates. All because of a neighbor in Tucson. A nice evening that ended early so we could catch up on sleep. Good night.

Tuesday | April 10, 2012

We departed Hong Kong last night and are now at sea on our way to Da Nang, Vietnam. This is a day of sailing and getting our bearings on the boat. Where is the dining room, the head, the lounge, the elevator and so on. It all works out well and we enjoy a day with our friends. Breakfast is wonderful as expected. As usual I am awake first and early so I leave the room at about 6; oh oh, we have changed time zones and it is only 5. The coffee is not ready on the Horizons Lounge and I am displeased. Horizons is like riding in the bow of a 747 with windows all around. It is a spectacular view of where we are going. I do find a coffee machine in the stern and am somewhat satisfied. The next hour passes as I look out to sea and recall all of the time Kathy and I have spent doing just that, waking to a calm sea and moving toward our chosen destination. That is a very strong recall. We pass the day visiting and planning our dinner meal and the morrow. All is well.

Wednesday | April 11, 2012

We have had a pleasant evening, night time and morning. Again, no coffee ready when I awake, but I manage. We are to arrive in Da Nang, Vietnam and be tied to the dock at 8 AM, and we do. Pete, Maryann and I get a cab and go to town. Kathy is not feeling well today, so she is left behind to mind the ship. A nice cab driver takes us through Da Nang and on to a small town, Hoi An. We piddle around, see [China Beach](#), the Marble Mountain gift shops, the [giant lady Buddha](#) and so on. Finally we stop for lunch and get to select which clams, tiger



[Giant Lady Buddha](#)



[China Beach](#)

shrimp or fish we want to have prepared. It is a roadside restaurant with a shady place for the car. I eat a large clam that has been grilled on the open barbecue and have one of the Johnson's tiger prawns. We also have some rice and a bowl of soup. The soup is a clear broth with some kind of leafy green vegetable. No one knows what it is but the soup is fine. Pete says we may each spend tomorrow in our room without being able to be very far from a throne.

Now I want to describe the traffic, it will be as complete as I am able but not as clear as it should be. First I say I would never drive a car or ride a motorbike here, I would walk first. It is really simple, always drive in the fast lane, never pass on the right, don't go fast, yield as much right-of-way as required to anyone who needs it. Simple but there is a catch, always pass on the left and this will always require you to go against opposing traffic in their fast lane. Never mind the double white stripe you must also cross.

Intersections are another thing altogether: no honking, no right-of-way, no observing lanes, just keep up your speed, moderately slow, and continue through or turn left or right. No signals are

needed because your direction can change at any time. We stopped to go to a pharmacy and when we re-entered the traffic we did a U-turn on the busiest street in town without a fuss. He just slowly made his intentions clear; I am turning around, and slowly turned while the traffic, moving in both directions, just wound their way around. It was nothing special.

Thursday | April 12, 2012

We left Hoi An and on a heading of 223 with a speed of 17 kts. Then we sailed some more at the same speed and direction. We sailed day and night for a long time. Besides sailing we ate and slept, then napped and ate. Then we sailed all night.

Friday | April 13, 2012 | Saigon or Ho Chi Minh City

We were told that it would be a 75-mile trip up a busy river to get from the sea to Saigon, and there would be sharp turns. These turns would be made at the cruising speed of 15 kts. This may not sound unusual, but this ship which is very large would lean towards the outside of the turn about 15-20°. We were speeding through turns, sometimes as much as a 90° turn.



[Bridge entry to Saigon](#)



[Public square in Saigon](#)

The water in the ship's swimming pool would overflow toward the outside of the turn. Your coffee would begin to slide from your table. What a ride. We docked in downtown Saigon and went ashore for a look-see. This is a very busy river, most likely as important to Vietnam as the Mississippi River is to the USA. There are a lot of small craft barges and they are loaded so heavy that some of them have less than 6 inches of freeboard.

A shuttle took us downtown and from there we wandered. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic obey the same polite rules described for Hoi An. It is a great chance you take to cross the street. There are literally a hundred scooters in bunches, accompanied by cars and you step from the curb and cross the street. You get there and no one honks or stops. I asked Kathy to do it while I took a video and she refused. The situation is sort of like westbound Ina coming to a dead end and T junction on Oracle. All thru traffic on Oracle would move with caution and all west bound traffic on Ina would turn left or right. You would have to slow the traffic down, but you would add perhaps 70 scooters per block.



[Non-OSHA electrical](#)



[Saigon traffic](#)

We were directed to a rather nice and busy restaurant where we enjoyed two different kinds of soup. We did have spoons. Their red flag with a red star in the center is somewhat disturbing, it is not a pleasant looking national flag. It is somewhat foreboding as a matter of fact. The night display of lights is somewhat similar to Hong Kong, just much smaller. It is colorful and the cruise boats are lit up for the party goers.

When you go to the Reunification Museum, or the war museum there are stories and pictures depicting the Americans as the evil ones and the Vietnam war is referred to as the American War. These museums are staffed, supported and directed by the communist government of North Vietnam which is proud to be the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Nuff said about that. However the people speak in guarded terms of wanting to come to America and how much they remember the good that America brought. Quite the opposite of what the government wants to be heard. They do not understand that our president would really like for the USA to be more like the present day Vietnam. A government-ruled socialist government. Peter and I explain, as clear as we can, the current administration policy and how it is like the one they have. They are totally surprised.

Tonight we are eating in the fine dining restaurant, Toscana, where we are to have Italian food. We did and it was. Topped off with tiramisu and New York crusted cheesecake. This meal is allowed because this morning we had Latin dance exercise, read mini zumba. There is a ping pong table on deck and Kathy, a ping pong champion in her high school days, gives us a lesson.

Saturday | April 14, 2012 | Gulf of Siam

Today we have a short opportunity to revisit Saigon. We are active on the ship with Zumba and other exercises then prepare for a final fling at Saigon. We just wandered around in the area adjacent to the place where the shuttle drops you off. There is upscale shopping and nice places to have coffee and a Wi-Fi experience, which have not turned out well. Later we mosey back to the boat through the heavily congested scooter traffic. On board we feel safe and free from being in an accident. It is lunch in the Grand Dining Room (GDR) and watch the town as we depart at 2 PM. Now we are just doing ship life with a floor show this evening.

Sunday | April, 15, 2012 | Gulf of Siam or Gulf of Thailand

Thailand was Siam, Siam is a great name for a country. We left Saigon yesterday at 6 PM and have been moving towards Bangkok all night. We will arrive tomorrow morning at 10 AM. So today will be a mixture of coffee, eating, church, walking the deck, eating, listening to a jazz band, eating, watching other people walk the deck for exercise, taking the elevator to the proper floor to eat, napping and then do it all again. The seas have been calm every day we have been here, perhaps a max of 10 kts on one windy afternoon. It is beautiful sailing here.

Monday | April 16, 2012 | Bangkok, Thailand (Siam)

We have rested well and think we are ready to go ashore and visit the "City Of Angels," Bangkok. It is 10 AM before we are allowed to go ashore. There are many ship-organized tours but we 4 have invited another couple to join us. Dale and Melanie from northern Nevada join us in a 6-passenger van for a tour of Bangkok. Our driver/guide is Chai and he readily accepts our input of what to see, he just puts them in a sequence that will be efficient. We are in a town of 7 million, perhaps 13 million if one counts the adjoining villages. It is big but today is a holiday from work so it is not so busy traffic-wise. It is Songkran, their traditional New Year's Day. The first visit is to the [Golden Buddha](#); about 98% of Thais are Buddhists. The temple is grand and you wouldn't think there would be a more grand sight: wrong. Pete Johnson summarized this



[Golden Buddha](#)



[Bangkok Palace grounds](#)

trip ashore by the simple statement, "It is rare for one's expectations to be exceeded by reality." The sights of this town do just that. It really doesn't take long to visit the temple and take the requisite pictures. There are rules of dress and decorum to be followed while in a temple. No shoes, no bare legs, no bare shoulders and do not point your toes towards Buddha. Pretty easy to do.

We have decided to visit the Royal Grand Palace before lunch. We have allowed two hours to see and record in pictures what is clearly the most magnificent palace I have ever seen. The grounds are crowded and many are here for religious purposes in that this is the resting place for the Emerald Buddha, not really emerald, just emerald in color. It is jade. The Buddha is small, less than 3 feet but it is atop a 50-foot pyramid of gold staircases and shelves. The [palace grounds](#) and associated buildings are the main attraction for us. The buildings are large with what appears to be porcelain tiles for roofing. It is very colorful. There are large human-shaped statues with arms outright and then turned upwards as to receive an award. They appear clown-like to me and are very colorful. The porcelain tile mosaics which cover every square inch of every statue and building are of colored stones, very small fancy cut mirrors, and some bright paint. It is a grand place to visit.



We now go to lunch at a riverside restaurant where they have cold beer. We are hot, it is about

94°F with 90% humidity. The shade and cold beer are most welcome. The menu is large but we each, each of the 6, order as though we were ordering a meal for ourselves. I thought it was strange because the waitress did not ask Kathy and me what we wanted. We told Chai that she forgot us and asked that she return to our table. She did and there ensued a very long discussion as to what did we all want. Maryann and I had ordered hot and spicy soup, Kathy ordered hot and sour soup. Well as it turned out each order was sufficient for 2 or 3 people, much like a Chinese restaurant. But the hot and spicy soup was delicious and somewhat spicy. The hot and sour soup that Kathy ordered was but 4 cups of soup but enough for the whole table, it was so hot and spicy that I could barely eat it. I have never tasted a more spicy hot food ever. We also had a plate of fried rice, one of curried chicken which was also very good. The meal was a success and we are ready to attack Bangkok again.



This is a big [Buddha](#), perhaps 150 feet long, covered in gold leaf. It is difficult to take a picture of this Buddha because you are always at floor level, there is no upper floor. We pass thru the party tables where they are selling all kinds of food and many demonstrations. Our driver takes us to a wine shop and then to the *Nautica*. We are tired and recovering from being hot. A light supper in the GDR followed with a super Thai folkloric dance group. At supper we were at a table of 3 couples we had never met. This was by request. The couples were from Salt Lake, Atlanta and Richmond, Virginia. There was a lot of good conversation seeking to know the new acquaintances. One lady, from Atlanta, was such that you absolutely know she did not converse with anyone, she held "Court." She was fun to listen to. Once a year she takes her daughters and their daughters to the Miraval Spa near our home. The discussion changed to the subject of days at sea before we got to Singapore. I responded that we would be at sea for two days and arrive on Thursday morning. She disputed me and said it was one day at sea. Then I explained that the distance was such that a one day passage was not possible. She then said, "Are you saying that I am wrong?" What a challenge for me. "Yes ma'am," was my response which shocked her. I am sure she is not familiar with conversations or statements that disagree with her. This morning at coffee, her friend said that the couples had retired to their rooms and checked the travel time, "you were right."

There are so many people in the theater that we end up in an area far from the stage and cannot see the dancer's feet. The show is narrated by a local and the dances are by 4 young lithe Thais. The dance was slow and somewhat as I remember being in the Yul Brenner movie *The King and I*. The ladies moved about on stage as though they were on rollers, no movement of the torso at all.

Tuesday | April, 17 2012 | Gulf of Siam

All is well. Today is a day for writing and reading and of course the obligatory eating of fine food. We will be traveling south from Bangkok at latitude of 13+° to Singapore at 1.5° latitude. Thus we travel 11.5° and that is 690 miles. This will take two days at sea. This is a day for reading, eating, walking about and so on. This evening we had a table for 6, PJ/MJ, us and a gentleman and his wife. He has been giving the shipboard lectures about the places we visit. He is a former ambassador for New Zealand and knows the South Pacific area plus all of the area that comprises SE Asia. He and his wife Jill talk of their 40 plus years in the diplomatic

corps, where they have served and when asked give pointed responses regarding the current politics of the region. It is always interesting to converse with such intelligent and well travelled people. Ask him a question regarding politics, economy or social problems within this area and he will respond nonstop. It would be like asking me to talk about our trips in the Med. Even on a good day like this one, one must ultimately give in to sleep. Good night.

Wednesday | April 18, 2012 | Gulf of Siam in the South China Sea

We have had to sail toward the east to get to the tip of the Malaysian peninsula and this has caused us to lose an hour of time zone in the direction from which we came. So when I woke it wasn't 6 AM it was 7 AM, and I was late to get on the bridge to check our progress. We piddled around coffee, breakfast, etc. and then to the lounge where our dinner guest, Paul Cotton, is to speak. We listened to this New Zealand Ambassador tell of the politics and economic turmoil's of the area for the most recent 40 years.

Thursday | April 19, 2012

Wow we are in Singapore and is it a beautiful city. The first sight you see as you enter the inner harbor are the [stainless steel buildings](#) on the left. Each of the 4 buildings is very modern in that each of them is built to lean a bit, by a bit I mean that the top floor, approximately 50 floors, would be out of plumb by maybe 20 feet. Picture 4 drunks leaning and about to fall, each in a different direction, with a pointed top and you will have an approximation. There is



another set of [three buildings](#) where the top floors, approximately 70 floors, acts as a pedestal in supporting a giant flat-bottom barge. So the buildings are straight up and down, 70 floors with flat roofs. Then they built a barge-like topping which spread the length of the 3 buildings, with overhang, and the width of the 3 buildings, with overhang. It looks like a Cleopatra-type barge, approximately 3 acres of barge, and will accommodate 3900 people as party goers. It has an open top, the barge itself looks as though it was floated on top in a high-water incident. Crazy.

We took the subway to the botanical gardens and wandered about. They are very large in area and green. This is a very wet area and anything will grow. We wandered for an hour and it started to sprinkle, so Kathy with the only umbrella and the rest of us head for cover. We found it in the visitor center where the entrance to the Orchid garden was on display. We sat in the gift shop while PJ/MJ wandered about the orchids. Then we, all 4, stepped into a slight sprinkle to get to the bus stop. When we got a block from the cover it started to pour, all but Kath got soaked.

We walked around town with PJ/MJ and ended up in Chinatown. Here MJ found a proper place for dim sum. It was like tapas in Spain, many small dishes of food with rice, vegetables, and an assortment of seafood. It was really good. We didn't want to eat too much as we were going to high tea.



Raffles was a major item remaining on MJ's bucket list, [High Tea at Raffles](#). This is supposed to be the ultimate place to have high tea. It was just my style, NOT. But it was really good, lots of tea sandwiches, macaroon cookies, chocolate cupcakes, scones with strawberry jam and clotted cream. This hotel has an extraordinary history. You must read about it or take my word for it, this is a snooty place. Nothing wrong with snootiness, but you must act proper, and sometimes that is a chore for me but when enabled by Pete it is easier. While MJ and Kathy were in the ladies room, prior to going back on the streets, I told Pete that I was going to tell MJ and Kathy that we had asked for a doggie bag. Sure enough they got back to the table and said they were ready to go, what were we still sitting for. I explained that we had told the waitress that we wanted a small bag so that we could take the remaining items with us. Maryann believed us and was so embarrassed she left the area. Kathy and I had enough tea cakes to eat, so we skipped supper, first time for that. We are untied from the dock and away for Phuket. The ph is pronounced p as in put. We will be at sea until 8 AM Saturday.

Friday | April 20, 2012

We are at sea rounding the Malaysia Peninsula and passing through the Straits of Malacca. We will get to within 68 miles of the equator, latitude 1° 8'. At the tip we turn northwest and go for a long way to Phuket, Thailand. This day is consumed by trivia and the founding meeting of a new organization. You might be familiar with "the friends of Bill W" group. They have a meeting every afternoon on the boat and it is noted in the shipboard news. This is a group of AA members. It is a nice thing to do and it gave me an idea. I asked the cruise director, yesterday, if he would put an announcement regarding the founding meeting of "friends of Rush." He asked upwards and we were turned down, but we started a meeting without announcements. The first bar I went into at 5:15 was loaded at happy hour. I asked the lady next to me at the bar what she thought of it, she was very supportive and pointed me to a table of three other ladies. I got my glass of wine and sat down at the table and said what I was doing, there was wholehearted support and one lady wants to be the recording secretary. She will notify Rush of our existence. The group will meet tomorrow at the Horizons Bar at 5:15. Wish all of my conservative friends were here. We have a handshake, motto and a sense of purpose, all is well. All are welcome, but some don't stay.

This is Maryann's birthday so we have our supper in the Polo Dining Room.

Saturday | April 21, 2012 | Phuket, Thailand

We arrived on time at 8 AM and went ashore to go shopping and check our e-mail. I have noticed something rather strange. Remember what I said about the cars and traffic in Vietnam, the traffic is normal and you should stay on the right side of the lanes. They wander about and drive a whole lot on the left of the center line. Well it seems that between Vietnam and here a complete changeover or transformation has occurred. Here they drive on the left. Well most of the time they still crowd the center line, but mainly the traffic has changed format. On Wednesday we had a note on our bed when we got to the room in the evening. We were to respond to an invitation to a special dinner with the executive chef on Saturday at 7 PM in the main dining room. We didn't know why but accepted. This morning I asked the concierge if he

knew about it and he told me about tonight's event.

We went to the GDR and were asked to wait until the complete party of 6 guests showed up. When we were all there, we were escorted to a table where the host, Mr. Bert Goebel, Director of Food and Beverages, was waiting. The other two couples were the most frequent travelers with Oceania, something like 30 trips each. One couple only takes trips of 30 days or more. Bert ordered a fine white wine for our pre-meal beverage and followed by ordering a great red wine for the meal. The conversation centered around Bert and his experiences. He was born in East Germany in 1972 and when he turned 19 he was able to travel anywhere because the wall came down. He has been to more than 200 countries and is still excited about travel. It was a two-hour session of posing questions and hearing complete answers. Like how do you keep the blueberries and blackberries so fresh after several days at sea. The answer to that is the berries are stored in a highly regulated atmosphere, only a controlled small amount of oxygen is present. More tidbits about waste handling, HR functions, scheduling food delivery and so on. It was an good experience.

The video regarding the ships news states that it is 1526 nautical miles to Cochin, India, our next stop. My goodness that is a long ways, this leg is twice as long as the complete trip of any previous voyage. We have 4 days at sea!!

Sunday | April 22, 2012 | At sea in the Bay of Bengal

This morning as we were sitting having breakfast a familiar passenger, Park, stopped by the table and asked if I was the one associated with the Friends of Rush meeting. I was pleased to see the word is getting around and said yes, why don't you and your wife join us for breakfast. We had a very low tone logical discussion regarding our current child president. Park and his wife will dine with PJ/MJ, Kathy and me this evening in the Toscana Restaurant.

Now it is time for church and our scheduled speaker is unable to have services so they solicited and encouraged a passenger to take the pulpit. He was very good and the service was long enough that I didn't have to take a break between church and the next scheduled meeting in the Nautica Lounge. We were front and center for church and now we are front and center for a discussion by the ship's captain. The program is "Modern Day Pirates"; sounds interesting as we are headed for the place referred to as "Pirate's alley." As a matter of fact this ship was pursued by Somali pirates in November of 2008. Our current captain was the captain then as well as now. He was able to thwart their intent. During his talk you could just see the cowboy oozing out, he had faced them down and would be able to do it again! It is justifiable for him to have these feelings. He discussed the types of pirates, their modus operandi, frequency, the most likely time of attack, naval presence, length of pursuit, length of time for a naval deterrent force to arrive and what we were to do if directed to do anything. He said they never attack at night, are unable to successfully board a ship going faster than 16 kts, we will be going 18, and our 8-meter freeboard would also be discouraging. He also has a series of high-pressure water jets which can be remotely directed to blast them, and a mention that there were additional security forces especially on board for this part of our trip. Also there is an acoustical defense mechanism of some kind, he said it would be loud. He said there were codes, familiar to crew only, which would be broadcast if the situation were to arise and then joked that we would probably be able to interpret the codes. We were told to stay away from windows, ports and so forth and go to the center of the ship. This way we would avoid being struck by gunfire or RPGs. He also said that on the previous event there were lots of passengers who went for their cameras and opened the doors to get good photos. He said that the officers would be taking pictures from the bridge and they would share them with us. It would be real hard not to get a small peek at the activity and perhaps a quick picture. I imagine you might be able to go to Google and find something for Nautica, Gulf of Aden, pirates, Nov 2008. The lady seated behind Kathy and me said she was on the ship at that time and pictures were on YouTube by the next day.

Monday | April 23, 2012 | Bay of Bengal

This morning we will pass around the southern tip of the Indian peninsula. The course takes us

within 15 miles of Sri Lanka, supposedly a very nice spot. It is an island south of the tip of India; formerly called Ceylon.

It seems that we are to be in the Bay of Bengal for ever, we still have 2 days to go. This trip is really consuming in that they schedule events all day long. There is an ambassador aboard who has been everywhere and is familiar with each place so as to be able to recommend places to have dinner and where the news stands are. He also introduces each place by claiming that this place is one of the most (fill in the blank) places he has ever been and also one of the most (fill in the blank) places on planet earth. He then sets about to disclose why it is so friendly, beautiful, clean, hospitable and so forth. He is an excellent speaker and you do not want to miss the one-hour meeting he has every afternoon. John will speak about the next port or perhaps about the country of the next port. He knows of the politics and social history, he knows of the founding and who of importance operated from there or who died there. He is truly a person that I would seek out and take courses from if he taught in my Tucson.

So it's get up, go to the Horizons room on deck 10 for morning coffee with a group of new friends and watch the day come alive. There are about 5 of us who arrive in this bow lounge that stretches from one side of the ship to the other and is furnished for lounging and observing the approaching territory. This is a favorite for early risers.

This day passes with the early morning look-see in Horizons, breakfast, then reading. Soon it is lunch then rest before the group game of trivia. More reading, afternoon presentation by John and happy hour. Then prepare for supper. The difficult part is deciding where to eat, most of the time it is the GDR and we sit at the stern to view the lighted wake of the boat and what is left of the evening light.

Tuesday | April 24, 2012 | Bay of Bengal

This day is just like yesterday but not like tomorrow is promised to be. We had rain most of the day.

Wednesday | April 25, 2012 | Cochin, India

We have found land! Dale, Melanie, Kathy and I leave the ship and get into a small vehicle called Pedicab or tuk-tuk, a 3-wheeled open-air carriage with bicycle-type steering and Briggs & Stratton type four-stroke engine. In these small vehicles we are to see the area. Our driver, Salim, tells us that his tuk-tuk is really a Ferrari and he drives in a like manner to show us his and his vehicle's ability to come upon a sure crash but at the last possible moment, just slip through the opening. It is difficult to see a city when your eyes are closed in fear, or for any other reason. He has an itinerary that he has repeated many times for all guests that preceded us. The first place we visit, and it is made to seem as though it is the very first place we pass, is a gift or souvenir store. Really it is a very upscale store with textiles, furniture, wooden carvings and decorator pieces made of marble. What a nice introduction to articles of Indian artisans.

The women are so finely dressed in their saris which are long flowing gowns. The fabrics are very pretty. The men on the other hand wrap the dining table cover around their waist and when walking they take the back hem of the garment and pull it up between their legs and tuck it into the waist band. It looks like a diaper of grand proportions. We also see a lot of goats in the streets but on our way back to the ship we see our first cattle in the street. They are as gaunt as the men. We also visited a laundry, at least what passes for a laundry over here. The soiled articles are delivered to this location where men stomp around on them and then scrub them with vigor and a small brush until they decide that the article is clean then they beat the hell out of the articles until they think they are clean. The articles are then rinsed time and again in a



basin where the laundress (but he is a man and I don't know the male name for laundress) decides the laundry is rinsed. He then rinses them with the same vigor, stomping them with his feet in the tub and slaps them against a wall to remove excess water. Finally they are put to dry on lines made of hemp or laid upon the ground. While we were there we saw blue bed covers from the local hospital spread across the grass. The drying area is perhaps 400 feet by 500 feet. All is exposed to the atmosphere for drying. When the dried articles are sufficiently dry, the ones which need ironing are passed to the ironing station. Here men are ironing shirts and all that need the service. There are two kinds of irons, one is electric and the iron weighs 10 pounds. The other is with a [chamber](#) for hot charcoal for heating and it weighs 15 pounds.



[Charcoal heated iron](#)



[Fishing nets](#)

Either way, the ironer must be strong. Kathy lifted each type and was surprised at the strength it took. The final product of the ironed article is magnificent. They do a splendid job.

We leave here for our first prolonged ride through the traffic. This guy is crazy. He seems to challenge all oncoming traffic to a game of chicken, as they all do. When you are in a 3-wheeled scooter, Pedicab, it seems to be unwise to challenge a bus! While passing a scooter, with us in the other lane of traffic, he slows to speak with the rider. He wants to discuss problems with the carburetor. It appears that the business and residential parts of town are indistinguishable. The streets are narrow and crowded. No one can move real fast, but Salim tries so as to impress us with his skills. He takes us to see the Catholic church where Vasco de Gama was first buried. He was later removed and shipped to Portugal where he continues to lie in residence. Later in the morning we stop at a Hindu temple where they keep three elephants.



These are of the sacred elephant species. The elephants are receiving their daily rubdown bath combo. There are 4 or 5 young men washing these big dudes. One elephant is laying down and a young man is walking about on the side with a scrub brush in hand, they really scrub the animals roughly, to us it would be very rough but to the elephant it is probably gentle. They use a great deal of water and wash behind each ear. The one laying down appears to be dazed by the attention, his tongue is hanging out and trunk curled up. While at this part of the temple grounds we see a family of females, there are mothers, daughters, granddaughters and assorted ages. One of the younger ones, perhaps 5 years old, has eyes that I tried to capture with a photo. I don't believe any photo will show the depth and openness of her eyes. Then several of the family wanted their picture taken also, so I obliged.

Now time for lunch and we are close to a riverfront restaurant which looks very inviting. We are seated, initially, on the patio near the river. There are 6 Indian authorities also on the patio. They are members of the service which patrol the coastal waters and perform shipboard inspections of passing boats, at random. They said they were all coming to New York in a month for an additional month of training in the manner of the US service. It was a bit windy so we moved inside. Dale asked to see the seafood selection, and they brought a tray with 3 fish on it. There were two 8- to 10-pound tunas and a 6-pound red snapper. He had the snapper prepared and we each had a bit of it. Kathy and I ate chicken curry with cashew rice. Superb! The Kingfisher beer is one big beer. One would suffice 4 people, but we didn't know that when three of us ordered one each.

We leave here and go to the river shore where there are Chinese fishing nets and people operating them. They are rather homemade looking and somewhat labor intensive fishing devices. I had my picture made with one of the men, he said he was 72, looks good but he needs to eat more. There are large nets, 30 feet on the side, which are levered into the water by telephone poles strapped together to make them long enough. The counter weights, required for moving them, are a selection of attached large rocks, perhaps 30-40 pounds each. You will have to Google this to see the real picture. Also while at the riverbank, we are in the midst of a fish auction. It seems that a lucky fisherman has caught many, perhaps 30 or more, tuna. They unload 4 or 5 at a time and place the fish on a tarp. The fish are sold in these small lots by auction. The auctioneer is no professional, as we would define him, but he slowly gets the two bidders to decide who gets the fish. There are at least 30 people watching the action.

After lunch we again visit parks, cemeteries, cricket fields, churches, shopping centers and such. I remember, on the way to the boat, that we hadn't bought any wine so it is an about-turn to the government liquor store. Wine from India is really pretty good as we later found out. Finally after a 7-hour immersion in Indian sight-seeing we have returned to the ship. A shower can't be quick enough. At supper we find ourselves visiting PJ/MJ and hearing of their birding excursion. We return to our room and sleep well. Tonight we sail for Bombay. It will be Friday morning when we arrive.

Thursday | April 26, 2012 | Arabian Sea

This morning Kathy notes that we are halfway between Hong Kong and Athens. We are also on

the 18th day so we are halfway in the duration of our trip. We have been to 6 cities along the way and have 6 to go, 7 if you count Athens. This is a very slow morning as there are many less passengers on board. There were around 60-80 passengers who got off in Cochin and flew to Delhi, thence to Agra where the Taj Majal is located. Rather peaceful in Horizons and later in the Terrace dining area where we get a better description of the travels of PJ/MJ.

An announcement just came over the ship communications system, "Good morning ladies and gentlemen, in 15 minutes we will be having our Anti-piracy drill, thank you." Nice to hear in the AM. We sat in the hall, away from our stateroom windows, and chatted while a small amount of time passed. We just read and cruised all day. We went to an afternoon presentation about our stop in Port Said. That is a ways down the line.

Friday | April 27, 2012 | Arriving on Mumbai, the ancient Bombay

It is an early arrival and I am in the forward lounge by 6 AM. PJ/MJ come forward and soon thereafter Kathy joins us. The early tour-bound cruisers are off first and about 9 AM we are off to see Bombay. What a hagggle with drivers about whose cab to ride in and what we were going to pay. It got a little physical with push and pull toward certain cabs. We selected a 6-passenger van and rode away to a tour of Bombay. Our first surprise is when I asked him his name and he said Farrakhan, I choked to think I was being driven by a man who had a name common to a really disliked activist in the USA. Come to find out his name is Farouk Khan. In the process of the day I learned a bit more about the Indian driving methodology. First I have a pacemaker and it will not let my heart beat less than 60 bps, it can beat more but no less. They have a like device in the steering column, the horn will honk once every 30 seconds, but you can honk it more if you desire. Second, if the oncoming traffic is such that there is enough space between two cars going the same direction, you can go from a dead stop to entering the traffic in the said space. They are wild, slow but wild. We visited the home site of Gandhi and several temples. We were not interested in the temples or cricket fields, but the gardens were nice. We went to the massive Gateway to India monument, which is across the street from the Taj Majal Hotel.



[Gateway to India](#)



[Kids on holiday](#)

This is the one which was attacked by the Taliban about two years ago. It is the primo building in Mumbai, also air conditioned which we needed. We made a trip to the Leopold's restaurant for a pure local meal. It is of some fame and crowded. The restaurant seems to be popular with locals and tourists alike. The chicken curry is fantastic. We also make a trip to Crawford's market, the site of the central fruit and vegetable market. Mangoes seem to be in season. The streets are horribly packed but there are men pulling carts loaded with this fruit and many other items seen in the market. This town is bedlam with respect to the traffic. There are no tuk-tuks and few scooters. A little more shopping and home to the boat.

This is the second time I have been afforded the opportunity to enlighten an Asia taxi driver about our child president. I don't remember the first but this time was easy, he didn't speak much English. I assumed he was learning so I helped as a tutor. He knows the name of our pres. But, that is all that he knows about him, or was all that he knew; he is smarter now. I told

him our president was a black Muslim communist Pakistani. I selected Pakistani because they are the mortal enemy of India and I hope it helped shape his feelings toward big O.

The people are beautiful, their dress is very colorful and these colors are worn by females from 6 years old on up. Honesty showed its face today at the train station. We were waiting for an event and seeking someone who could speak English. We were in the main train station, think big and busy, when I approached a finely dressed young man and asked if he spoke English. He said yes and began to help us but had other more urgent items on his mind. He apologized for not helping more, he had left his backpack on the train. While we were there his backpack was returned to him, incredible. He acted as if this was expected and not so special. The event is the daily distribution of lunches. Every day when the outlying people come to the city to work, the trains are so crowded that they cannot carry their lunch. That is crowded! So the wives prepare a lunch sometime after the man has left for work. She takes it to the train station where a designated person takes charge of it. They arrive in the main station, about 300,000 lunches arrive at various times from different tracks. These lunches are taken outside where they are sorted and put in a carrier rack where a local puts the rack on his head and departs on foot to deliver the lunch to the specified worker. It is said that there are no errors in this archaic system. After lunch the process is reversed and the lunch wrappings are returned to the housewife at home, before the worker gets home.



[Lunches being allocated to proper destination](#)



[Leaving staging area with lunches](#)

There are 20,000,000 people in Mumbai, and we saw most of them today. It is very colorful and most of the people are pleasant; the beaches and vegetation and buildings are beautiful.

Supper on board was nice and we will sign off at that.

Saturday | April, 28 2012 | Mumbai, India

We are tied up at the downtown dock. There are duty free shops ashore and taxis galore to take you anywhere you want to go. We didn't plan to go ashore again but Pete called and said they weren't going birding but just to town, would we like to go. Yes in 10 minutes at the embarkation door on deck 4. Again there were strong and loud discussions regarding which taxi we would use. The obnoxious fart from yesterday was there again and I pointed at him and said I didn't trust him, I told him to get away from me and Kathy and not speak to us. We settled on a very nice polite and quiet driver. He took us to a place we requested. We shouldn't have and neither should he. It is clearly the stinkiest place I have ever been. It is the dock area where all fresh fish is brought to sell. There are two large sheds and under each are perhaps 200 women shelling shrimp. Each is sitting on her heels and peeling shrimp which are brought to them in buckets. The buyers of the shrimp then contract with the women to shell them. It is awful. The ladies range in age from 5 or 6 to old women. In their sitting position for 5 minutes I would not be able to straighten up the same day. There are also women cleaning squid, small fish, blue crabs, larger fish and some snappers. But it stinks. If one were to pump sewage into this part of the bay, it would freshen the odor. Photographs are not allowed, I think the odor would cast a shadow, but I think we have a couple of pics. Later Kathy had a bowl of miso soup with a small shrimp in it, as soon as she saw the shrimp she pushed the remainder of the miso away.

We are then driven to an internet cafe where we check e-mail. The speed is such that we do not send or download anything. I have also discovered another thing about the traffic, there



must be a sound deflector on the rear of each vehicle, because no one takes any action when they are honked at. Another item: signal lights, red lights, are to be obeyed if it is convenient. They are suggestions only. This evening is well spent in a review of all that we and our friends have done while in India. But India comes to an end at 5 PM. We are sailing for Salalah, Oman and will be doing so for three days.

Sunday | April 29, 2012 | Arabian Sea in the Indian Ocean

This is a day of remembrance, our good friend Leroy Kochert and his wife Sharon died 5 years ago today. We, PJ/MJ, Kathy and I will be specifically recalling the many years of sailing, flying and traveling with Leroy. I actually put on long pants so we could eat in the main dining room on a Sunday and talk of remembrances of Leroy. We, each of the 4 of us, remembered specific instances in our past activities with Leroy, but the main focus on describing him, he was sincere, Kathy said he was full of kindness, I remember him as being full of exuberance for life. Whatever he was he was a great friend who impacted the way each of us look at life and live it.

We have a distance of 1200 miles before we get to Salalah, Oman. We have another early morning meeting in the bow of the ship prior to breakfast and church. This is the day to work on photographs and prepare them for inclusion in the log when we get home.

Tonight we are invited to a cocktail party presented by the captain for "Oceania Club Members," and we didn't even know we were members. Then to dinner in the Toscana restaurant. This is to be nice but we will miss a special Indian curry meal in the Terrace dining area. We are going to try and eat light at the captain's gig, the Toscana, and perhaps have a bite of curry before falling in bed.

Monday | April 30, 2012 | Arabian Sea

This is a day to go to seminars regarding Arab lifestyles and their history. We have two new speakers on board. This is sort of unique in itself. The previous two were past ambassadors for their countries. Being retired, they were employable as speakers. Each of them sail as experts on various cruise lines. They stay fully employed and get transportation, food and lodging while traveling around. But, they have traveled these waters so many times it is not new anymore. Our two new speakers are a bit different. One is a Muslim scholar. He is very interesting and in his talks weaves the importance and logical being of Islam. He doesn't ignore the belief systems of the Jewish nor the Christians. He explains the natural evolution of Islam. The other speaker bills himself as a troubadour. He has entertaining stories and songs which are comical. He packs the room when he speaks.

Later in the day we enjoy trivia, reading and eating. We also find a way to use the shipboard internet system. It costs 95 cents a minute to use it, so we don't use it much.

Tuesday | May 1, 2012 | Arabian Sea and Salalah, Oman

This is the day we arrive in Salalah, Oman. This is one of the most stark places I have seen. It looks like Rocky Point 40 years ago. However, all of the workers are imported from neighboring countries. No Omani works! The current head of state shares the wealth as do the Alaskans, only more. The private homes are large and we were in a place where the main business was tailoring. Of 100 shops on the streets, 90 of them were tailors. The fabric is very nice, but it is basically black or white. There is added embroidery to class it up a bit. The cab drivers attack us as we depart the port enclosure. This is not a frequently visited port so the arrival of a cruise ship is an opportunity to get good fares. They have no idea what \$100 is but that is what they want for a trip of 12 miles to town. Many people return immediately to the ship rather than start bargaining for a taxi rate at such a silly starting place. We did bargain and got one for \$30. We went to town with a couple from Calgary, Canada. Jim is 6'9" tall and dwarfs me. He draws attention wherever he goes. He also gets the front seat of the cab, so as to have leg room. He and Linda are sailors with a Hunter 45 in Victoria on Vancouver Island. He is a retired building contractor who has been an investment adviser for 15 years. A lot in common, plus he loves to travel, just about anywhere, game on.

After dinner it is a floor show and to rest.

Wednesday | May 2, 2012 | Gulf of Aden

We are officially in the pirate zone. We do have several Israeli security people on board and they are busy about the boat 24/7. We have had our morning get together, coffee and breakfast. Still no pirates!

It is not so hot so there are a lot of people who get their exercise by walking around the upper deck. I tried it out and it didn't hurt a bit, I don't like to walk unless there is something or someplace that needs walking to. We had a small lunch and then looked for pirates, still empty of threat. Then I wander to the bow, Horizons, and join a group of people who are earnest in their observing traffic. We spot a ship and then everyone uses their optical device, camera and long lens or binoculars. Still we can't conjure up a mother ship and associates! We did pass two military vessels in a stationary position with helicopter landing platforms on them. We didn't see any helicopters either; perhaps they were chasing some bad guys. Pete said there were 30 some pirate incidents in the Gulf of Aden in April. We hear a "ding ding ding," several more "ding ding," and then a "Code Z." Our first thought is yea we have a pirate attack and this is the secret code. We will find out later.

We just returned from happy hour in the Horizons Lounge, where we saw a military ship change directions and accompany us for awhile. He finally turned around and faded in the rear view mirror. Thanks for that, now we are alone and may be attacked by pirates. Well, during happy hour there was the ship's dance band playing for our entertainment. One piece was outstanding, not necessarily in quality, but in uniqueness. They played Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock." Now recall the last time you called your credit card service department and were answered by an operator in Mumbai India. Sort of hard to understand, right? Now playback what it must sound like for him to sing, Rock Rock rock around the clock tonight etc. Something to be heard to be believed.

Thursday | May 3, 2012 | Gulf of Aden

I looked at the TV this morning and noticed that we have gained another hour. That is a total of 5 time changes, this is an easy way to travel from east to west and avoid the shock of jet-lag. This is our third day away from Salalah and we have come 720 miles and we have 1200 to go to Aqaba. That is 1900 miles plus, which is approximately the distance from the UK to New York. This is a very long time to be on board.

When I went to coffee this morning I noticed that there were two new faces and they looked strangely out of place. They were two of the Israeli security people. I went to their table and asked if they would be able to discuss Israel with us. They said that was no problem. Ben and Daniel were born in Connecticut but moved to Israel when they were 4 years old. The conversation was about sights to see, travel time, traffic and items in general. They suggested we leave Haifa and drive to Hula Valley, Nazareth and thence down the road between Jordan and Israel but through the West Bank. We had been told that we couldn't travel in the West Bank. We would travel on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and to the south shores of the Dead Sea. There we could find good lodging and see the day end and the next start with the Dead Sea as background. The next morning cross the West Bank to Bethlehem and be in Jerusalem by noon. This day to see Jerusalem and perhaps spend the night in Jerusalem or go back to the ship in Haifa. This is what we have to plan with. Still no pirates!

Hassan, our new speaker, was in the lounge and I asked him a question that I have only recently cared about. He is a very well educated and well spoken Muslim. Thus I consider his input to have validity. The question was, "what is the source of the selective eating rituals of the various religious sects." He said Christians would eat or drink anything, the Jews would not eat pork or crustaceans, and the Muslims would not eat pork or drink alcohol. The Bible was the source of the Jewish traditions and the Muslim traditions were based on them having Jews for neighbors and doing somewhat like them in their eating beliefs. He did not mention that the Muslim restrictions were based on an independent reading and instructions from any holy scripture. I'll bet there are people who disagree with that.

This afternoon we passed through the narrows that separate Yemen from Ethiopia. This is where you also change from being in the Gulf of Aden to being in the Red Sea. There are numerous small islands on the starboard side immediately preceding this change of bodies of water. There has been recent, in the past few years, volcanic activity and in the process there are new outcrops of lava which are forming islands. We were told they might be visible and they were.

Kathy and I went to the Terrace lounge for supper and I found the stir fry seafood. It really isn't fried and I don't know why they call it that. But it is calamari, shrimp, scallops and fish lightly cooked in a light oil then coconut milk is added for a final heating. Add rice, and it is super. While I was waiting and watching the cook prepare the food I commented to the lady next to me that it would be impossible to get food this good and fresh in my hometown. She said it would also be impossible for her. ME, I am from the desert, HER So am I, Me where are you from, HER Tucson, ME I am also from Tucson, what part of the valley do you live in, HER Prince and Mountain! I didn't believe her but how could she know that my office was at Prince and Mountain. Me That is where my office is, HER I used to own a restaurant "Mountain View" at that location. ME my office was next door between your restaurant and Electric Outlet. We had a good laugh and had a meal together. She also knows our neighbors and we know hers. So for those of you who know Lattie and Hana, we had a nice evening.

We took our computer outside in a clear warm night to observe the stars and planets prior to going to bed. There is an app which has a GPS component. The app finds where you are and then displays the sky above with the function of identifying and correctly locating all of the objects which are visible. These include, stars, planets, sun, moon and stars of the constellations.

Friday | May 4, 2012 | Red Sea

Today we are still sailing trying to get to Aqaba. This is a long way, and we are sailing right straight up the Red Sea. It would be way too far for Moses to cross here! He was surely north of here. The activity of the day is to try to find a way to engage yourself in something. That is the problem, what and where is something. We are now in a position to have Saudi Arabia on the right side of the boat and Sudan on the left side. Both are so far away that you can't see shore. There is little to no shipping traffic now. Kathy and I take the new Samsung tablet to the top deck way after dark and do some night viewing alone on the deck in very comfortable

lounge chairs. It is warm and tranquil.

Saturday | May 5, 2012 | Red Sea

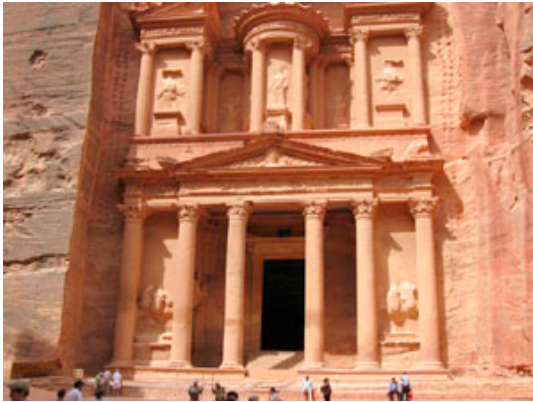
We are still in the Red Sea, but getting closer to Aqaba, at the speed of 18 kts. Today they have a pre-announced ship building contest. You are to construct a boat from anything you can find on the ship. All personnel have been instructed to provide materials that we might ask for and don't destroy something else. Pete and I are teamed with a catamaran *Nauticat*. I could carry this story on for some time and would if we had won, but we did not win so this is the end of the tale. Kathy said I must expand the story. We, all 4 of us, spent several hours and a great deal of imagination to construct a proper vessel. Our cat had halyards, sheets, cleats, anchor, radar tower, furling main, all sheets lead through fair leads, dinghy with painter, fishing pole with feather lure deployed in dinghy, burgee at mast top, rudders, trampoline, name on the side and the dinghy is also named. We won an environmental award. Big deal, we wanted to win the whole banana, some somewhat dubious sailors from the San Diego Yacht Club won.

We will enter the Gulf of Aqaba at 5 PM today.

It is 5 PM and we just entered the Gulf of Aqaba. The narrows are about 1 mile and from the small boat traffic between Saudi Arabia and the Sinai Peninsula there must not be any immigration office or there is a lot of smuggling. The sun is still about 1 hour from setting and the sky is clear. It is a memorable entry into new territory. We will have supper in a restaurant where we will have an outside view and see the sun go down or whatever. We have 90 miles to go and are scheduled to arrive in Aqaba at 5 AM. We will have to slow down to stretch 90 miles into 10 hours. Our usual cruising speed has been about 18-20 kts. Damn this is great!

May 6, 2012 | Aqaba, Jordan

We arrived at 3 AM and were not waked. We got up at 5 AM so as to eat and be ready to attack Petra at 6 AM. All is on schedule and we are driven to Petra with a stop at a tourist stop, the usual junk for sale. Petra is one of those places that would surely take books to describe. It is old, was constructed more than 2000 years ago and was rediscovered in the 19th century.



Someone found a canyon of sandstone, it has a very narrow canyon entering it. This canyon was made by eons of water eroding the sandstone. Then they walked down the canyon and saw a continuation of the slot canyon broadening out to as much as a half-mile. This presented



tall walls of sandstone which could be easily carved away and made into buildings, somewhat as was done in Cappadocia, Turkey. The buildings are facades. It is a rather large city area which was carved from sandstone. The facades of the buildings are several stories high and up to 100 feet wide. The relief is astounding. It was the featured location in the movie of Lawrence of Arabia. It is apparent that no one could live in the buildings, so it must have been a blank palette for the pleasure of art and architecture.



[Variegated rock inside cave](#)



[Boat crew, KR, and FB enjoying Petra](#)

We walked the mile from the parking lot to the Treasury as opposed to riding a donkey or being carried in a donkey-pulled cart. Either would have been welcome on our return trip out in 3 hours. We walked through the Siq, which is somewhat like the narrow slot canyons in the bottom of Grand Canyon. The walls were separated by no more than 10 feet in some places and up to 20 feet in others. The canyon walls which arose were several hundred feet tall. Once we arrived at the opening to the Treasury a real object of beauty was before us. I will include pictures. After 5 hours we are driven to Wadi Rum for a 2-hour visit. This is an area of tall sandstone monoliths surrounded by sand. It is also a beautiful sight, but not as grand as Petra.

Monday | May 7, 2012 | Safaga, Egypt

We have sailed south from Aqaba, Jordan down the Gulf of Aqaba and across the small distance in the Red Sea to Safaga, Egypt. It appears to be very barren. The initial sight is the terminal where the wheat import goes on. There are two large silos and assorted docking spaces.

Shortly after getting our berth and tied to shore the passengers begin to flow from the ship. We will be tied up for 29 hours, 9 AM today until 2 PM tomorrow. We will be on buses for about 4 hours each way to the temples at Luxor. The driver is very cautious and slow. There are speed bumps quite often and in addition they block your lane with steel obstacles to cause you to slow down and drive in the other lane, then 50 feet later you are again obstructed by the same type of blockade and return to your lane. You must slow down to navigate this obstacle. Our driver drives on the wrong side of the road as a habit, both going to Luxor and coming back to

the ship. He also has another neat trick, where there is a solid white line in the middle, you know - "don't cross"- he goes to the other lane before the white line appears and doesn't cross it back to our lane. I guess technically he is in compliance. We got tied up in a major traffic jam, everyone wanted to get into the intersection to prevent anyone from getting in front of them, incredible. We needed to turn left across traffic and it was bad. The jam was still there today when we passed through this village, but we were turning right so the delay was minimal.

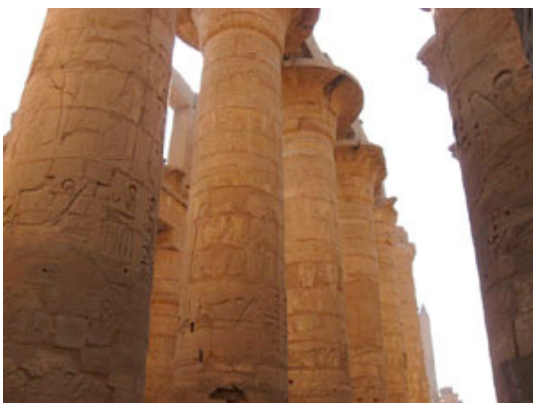


We did get to Luxor and were driven to the Sonesta St. George Hotel. Just a lunch stop and then to the Valley of the Kings. To return to this valley was part of the reason for the trip. The last time we were here our camera and all of the pictures of the area were stolen. This time no pictures are allowed and they have installed plexiglas walls to protect the inscriptions from touch. The tombs are the same and we were not as awed this time, I believe we went through completely different tombs on our previous visit. The colors were not as vivid, but still pretty grand. After 3 tombs and a zillion young people selling souvenirs we escaped to another tomb and temple. Then back to the hotel for a short freshen-up. We then went to the Sound and Light show at the Luxor Temple. This was a music-aided guided trip through the Temple at Luxor. The history of the Temple, Pharaohs, and writings. It was all done well.

Back to the hotel and a very late meal. In our room we had a view of the Nile and many of the boats. The shower was more complicated than any I have ever seen, I left water in the tub, after a shower, because I couldn't find the control button that would operate the drain cover. I have taken a picture of the toilet controls, there are about 6 settings for comfort, heat, moisture and so on for each sitting.

Thursday | May 8, 2012 | Luxor, Egypt

This morning we are up early and look out towards the Nile to watch PJ/MJ as they participate in a hot air balloon ride. The reports are that it was the defining moment of the trip for Pete, the photographer, and for Maryann the birder. After breakfast we all returned to the Temple at Luxor

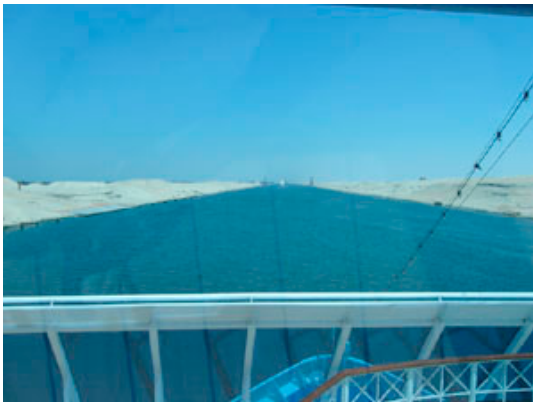


and saw in the daylight what had been described to us last evening. It is an awesome place. Our guide is an Egyptologist who is associated with the national division of Egyptology. About an hour later we are taken to the temple at Karnak. This is not the one of Johnny Carson fame, it is the real thing. It is also very impressive and we took a lot of pictures. There are men in the temple area with brooms, clearly not for use as they are flimsy and of few straws, however they will pose as staff of the temple, then they want a dollar for their effort. This is a country where the primary way to make a living seems to be asking any and everyone for a handout. The laziness is most obvious. However, there are no jobs to be had. Last night one of the drivers was overheard saying something positive about Obama; I answered that we Americans also liked Mubarak. This was contrary to his and other Egyptians feeling about Mubarak. I told them that we Americans got our approval notions regarding Mubarak from the same source they got their glowing reports of Obama. Neither of the reports has any validity. He asked is that so and I said yes. Informing one person at a time!

We are back on board now and on our way up the Red Sea to Port Said and the Suez Canal.

Wednesday | May 9, 2012 | Suez Canal, Egypt

I guess it is the anticipation of transiting the Suez, but whatever the reason I am up at 4:30 AM. Kathy says she wants to sleep a bit longer. On deck the wind is about 20 kts and the absolute temp is 65°F. I don't know the wind chill factored temp, but it is cold. I was hoping winter was over. The sun is not up yet and the sky is clear. We are anchored in a holding area about 5-8



miles from the entry to the canal. The canal is one way in shifts, with the holding area for those waiting for the direction of travel to be in their favor. There are 20-30 ships waiting to transit northwards. We have a really large container ship on our starboard hip, they are positioned no more than 100 yards away. The water is 60 feet deep and I would imagine they have at least 4:1 scope so their rode is 240 feet more or less. That would put their anchor as close as 60 feet aft of us. Closer than we anchor our much smaller boat to others. We are the third boat to enter the canal going north. Separation is at least a half mile, perhaps as much as a mile. Thus if a ship has a problem and is stopped all following boats have time to do the same.

It is a rather slow and uncomplicated passing, there is little activity along the western shore of the canal, very few residences and no roads. The eastern shore of the canal is barren, all there is is sand from here to Dallas or Iran whichever comes first. There is an occasional grouping of 12-15 flat-bottomed barge looking things. They could be for unloading from passing barges to transfer to town or whatever. Each is pulled so that it overhangs the bank and protrudes into the canal, about 3' above the water level. The barges are about 20 feet wide and look to be 60-80 feet in length. There is a lattice framework beneath a smoother surface. But what are these green things? Our shipboard commentator just announced that these barges are actually barges that will be joined together and form a bridge when the need arises to cross the canal with motorized vehicles. There are also accompanying 4'x8'x20' welded steel boxes to be used as floats beneath the barges. They will support a lot of weight.

This passage will take 10 hours. The canal is about 100 miles and we travel near 10 kts. It is a somewhat slow tedious travel. It is 3:15 PM and we just passed the last buoy to signal the exit from the Red Sea. We are in the Mediterranean, it is a good feeling to be in waters where we have sailed, even though we never sailed this far east in the Med. It is time to finalize the touring plans for Israel. The familiarity and/or the return of special memories is likened to when we go to Iowa for a vacation, there is a special feeling when we cross the Missouri River in Omaha and enter Iowa.

Thursday | May 10, 2012 | Jerusalem

We arrived in the Haifa port about 30 minutes prior to sunrise. It is a really spectacular arrival, with the hills and larger mountains as a backdrop. Getting off of the boat is normal, the haggling with the taxi drivers is normal, the stomping off at such a high price is normal and the agreement to a more reasonable price is also normal. We are taken to the Sixt car rental depot to get our car for the trip ashore. It is beyond normal to face such obstacles as a car rental agent here. It took at least 45 minutes for the lady to accomplish the agreement. We were the first ones there, it almost took so long that our rental could be changed to one day instead of two with regard to the time we are planning to return the car. I did not bring my drivers license so I was navigator for the first 10 minutes. Dale's wife (our companions for a road trip) was helping me navigate and helping Dale drive, from the back seat. We switched places and I was out of the loop.



[Damascus Gate to Old Jerusalem](#)



[Western Wall](#)

We wandered around Jerusalem for awhile and located our hotel. Shortly after that we were walking to the Old City and enter through the Damascus Gate. I was shocked. I expected something in line with it being a world heritage site. I guess I didn't read enough. It is a messy crowded walled village full of merchants selling everything. It is alive as a small village with full-time residents and squalor. I was ready to return to the hotel room. We visited many of the famous places within the walled city. Clearly we went to the Western Wall where everyone eventually goes. There are many people in the area and for as many reasons. The males go to one side of the enclosed area and there is a fence separating the area where the women can go.



[Garden Of Gethsemane](#)



[Mount of Olives](#)

The area is no more than 1/4 as large as the male area. I wandered into the covered room off to the left that is designated for Jews only. I did not know it was a restricted area, but there sure was a high concentration of fellows in long black coats with hats that were too small sitting on top of their heads. After this we wanted to go to the Dome of the Rock, but it is not a day when Christians can go there, so we are given a pass. We exited the walled city via the Dung Gate and walked around the perimeter towards the Lions Gate. Across the road and valley and up a hill, we saw the Garden of Gethsemane but did not walk over there. In this area is also the tomb of Jeremiah. Again we are walking up a hill toward the Lions Gate where we re-enter the walled city, a more pleasant entry than our original one. This is the eastern end of Via Dolorosa which we now follow to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher where the trial, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus occurred.

Friday | May 11, 2012 | Jerusalem, Israel

We have a humdinger of a day planned and to start it Kathy and I are first in the dining room at 6:25. We are ready to go, yesterday was less than expected so today we must try harder. Dale, Melanie, Kathy and I get started at 7:30 by heading out to Bethlehem. The first thing I notice is that this is a two word named town, there is Bayt Lahm, looks strange but that is the way it is posted on the highway signs. So we get there early enough to find street parking near the Church of the Nativity. There was no line but there was a single group of Christians from India and they were pleasant to be near. We pass down some stairs and at the bottom there immediately to the right was the claimed exact spot, marked by a hole in a bronze plate, where Jesus is suspected to have been born. All of the Indians wanted to touch the spot, wipe their shawl across it, kiss it and so on, it was a major job of the attendant to keep the people moving. The whole event took 10 minutes, standing in line and all. Later today it will take hours. We were pleased to be so early and see Bethlehem from this spot in such pleasant early morning cool. This is a very hilly place. The distance from the Shepherd's field to the SPOT is less than a mile. I always thought it was a long way away. Both places are within 6 miles of Jerusalem. It is compact. Today we saw the place where Jesus was born, yesterday we were in the place where his body was laid to rest after the crucifixion. This is compact.



[Jesus birthplace](#)



[Dead Sea](#)

After we visited this church we headed for the Dead Sea. It is a bit further SE of here. I did not bring a bathing suit but I wanted to go into the water, so I took everything from my pockets and shoes and shirt off and took a dip. Kathy is ashore holding all and taking pictures, I believe. This is a crazy piece of water. You cannot dive under the water! After walking in the mud for a few feet you find that you are no longer touching bottom and your feet rise to the surface. You may not want them to but they will be right up. You are sitting in the water with your knees bent, feet on the surface, and your shoulders are above the water. If you struggle in a swimming-like exercise you can get your feet to point down, but you must keep on paddling your feet and legs. Stop paddling and up come the feet. In a vertical position I am out of the water just above my elbows as they are straight down by my side. If one is built in a manner where an excessive part of your body is concentrated in one area, that area will stay on top of the water. This would pose no problem for Dolly Parton, but Michelle Obama would drown. Soon you have been thrilled with the activity; it wasn't on my bucket list but I added it and crossed it off.

I took a fresh water shower and rinsed my pants out. We stood under an Israeli palapa and allowed them to dry while drinking a coke. Soon we are all in the car and on our way to the Sea of Galilee. I am sitting in somewhat damp pants and they need to dry, so I took them off and put them outside of the car with the window up tight holding on to them. They flogged the car for about 15 minutes and were dry. So I pulled them in and was going through the contortions of putting on my long pants in the back seat of a small car. The joke was that they were going to come alongside a tour bus and honk for attention. They didn't and I did get my pants on. Melanie stated that she was impressed that I was able to contort myself in such a small area. I told her it was no problem and asked, "didn't you find a way to take off your pants and put them on again in the back seat of a car?" From the sights and sound in the front seat I think both Dale and Melanie had done this in times long past. Dale said, "not since high school." Back in their high school days they didn't know each other, so it was independent recollections that caused their laughter.

We got to Tiberias on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and had lunch. There was nothing on our list of things to see so we departed towards Nazareth. Kathy has been able to comment, spontaneously, about places of importance and just plain questions regarding what happened here and there. She is such a pleasure and very knowledgeable lady. When we got to Nazareth we had a very hard time locating the Basilica of the Annunciation. It was easy to see the church from one of the hills, but difficult to find. We finally get to the Basilica and there was a great wedding going on along with other worshipers and the tourists; so much for a private ceremony. Inside, the church is one of the most beautiful I have seen, not the largest but most beautiful. There are paintings around the walls with each depicting something from all different countries. In the basement there was the supposed house of Mary where she was visited by the Angel Gabriel.



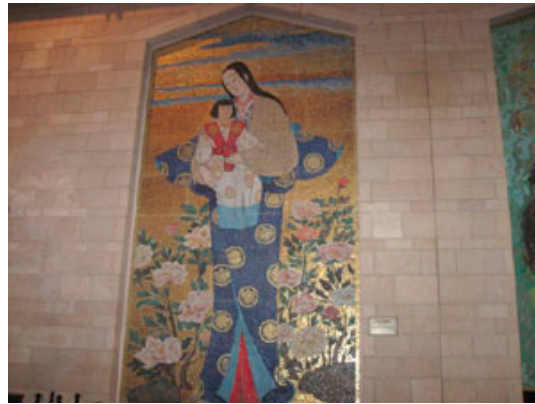
[Basilica of Annunciation](#)



[Mary's home](#)



[Art from Mexico](#)



[Art from Japan](#)

We now leave for the airport in Tel Aviv where we leave our rental car and take a cab to Haifa. Our Terrace cafe closes at 9 PM and we got there at 8:57. All is well.

Saturday | May 12, 2012 | Haifa, Israel

This is our last port before we depart for the environs of the Catalina Mountains and home. We are going to downtown Haifa and see what can be bought. It is Saturday, so the Jewish part of town is closed for Sabbath. However we do wander about in the Muslim section and walk around without finding a thing to buy. Our walk up the main street in Haifa is such that your view is up the side of a large hill, Mt. Carmel. The passage way up the hill is wide, green, beautiful white marble steps and a lot of decorative flower gardens. The center for the Baha'i is located in a gold-domed circular building as you climb the stairs of Mt. Carmel. We have returned to our home afloat and face the task of packing for a long flight home in two days.



Tonight we, 6 of us, have a final fling in the GDR where we have eaten more than any place else. Our table is in the corner and our wait staff is Maria from the Ukraine. She has been a delight and converses with us very readily. Then there is a farewell presentation, by the staff, and a grand parade of all of the shipboard staff of room service and dining service with the officers and all. It is a grand show where there is a medley of songs for many different towns in the USA. Good night!

Sunday | May 13, 2012 | Mediterranean Sea

Happy Mothers Day to all mothers and to the mothers of those who aren't mothers. We are less than 24 hours from Athens and the completion of our fabulous journey. The Med is calm and the wind light, perfect for sailing. We have a Sunday service each week, directed by the assistant cruise director. One Sunday the director was sick so we had a Southern Baptist passenger do the service and today we had another substitute. This speaker was clearly a pastor, and he was from the Philippines. We have had good fortune in having good worship leaders.

The order of the day is pack for the trek home. Not more than 50 pounds per bag and find a place for everything. Yesterday the cruise director facilitated a white elephant sale in the lounge. It was for everyone to bring things that they thought they needed and later figured out that these new things weren't necessary, buyer's remorse. There were some doozies.

We six had a final supper in Toscana remembering the high and low lights of the trip. We had a table in the stern of the restaurant with a great view of our path through the water. The meal was the best I have had in any of the specialty restaurants. We are also passing through the southern portion of the Aegean Islands and, by the chart, we can figure out one we have visited in the past. This passage is through waters that are not familiar to us regarding the wind and seas. In our days of cruising here it seemed like the wind was always at 25-30 kts and it was going to be a wet passage. For the past 5 weeks, and especially today, we have had ideal sailing weather, wish we were in a sail boat. However to cover the 9000 miles plus that we have covered it would take months and months. We are able to identify several before we get into the dining room and then others became visible to others and we wanted so much to see them, but we were on the wrong side of the table. We did have a good evening and then to rest. 5 AM will come early.

Monday | May. 14, 2012 | Athens, Greece

We have had our breakfast and found local transportation to the airport. While waiting in line at the check-in, boarding and looking across the seats in front of me on the plane I have noticed a strange phenomenon. In the time on the ship we passed through an area which is dangerous due to pirates. We had anti-pirate drills, heard lectures, and even had specially trained Israeli soldiers on board for security. This apparently had an unwanted effect on many of the women on the ship. Whereas they had brown, black, brown and blond hair when we started the cruise, many of them were so frightened that they had a spurt of gray hair growth. The hair nearest their scalp for as much as 3/4 of an inch has turned gray!

All is well. We are in our home. The End

These are the primary characters of the log.



[Frank, Dale, Pete, Kath, Melanie and Maryann](#)

The following are pictures of the ship *Nautica* which was our home for 35 days.



[Welcome to our cabin](#)



[Ship Library](#)



[Overview of the Grand Dining Room](#)



[Looking out from our cabin](#)



[10th deck view of 9th deck](#)



[Outside dining on the Terrace](#)

Frank



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