

5/9/07 Final Blog Entry - Oak Ridge, TN - Wed. 9 May 2007; The 10 pieces of luggage we checked in with IPS in Fort Lauderdale on 30 April arrived at our house today ---- Hurray! Two IPS gentlemen brought the luggage that had been bundled with shrink wrap plastic and put onto a wooden pallet.

We were so thankful that all 10 pieces of luggage made it home.



Here is what they looked like after taking off the shrink wrap.

We were able to unpack the suitcases and boxes fairly quickly. Except for a couple of glass cups everything came through without damage. We count ourselves very lucky. Of course we should give credit to the International Port Services (IPS) which is part of the Lynden International Company. We are happy with the way the luggage was handled.

As part of this final blog entry we wanted to make a few summarizing statements in case anyone might be interested.

1. Friends have asked us which place we visited was most memorable. We loved them all but Easter Island stands above the rest for the excitement we felt as we first saw the Moai. The

people of Easter Island did a great job of handling the large number of tourists from the Amsterdam. Hopefully they will be able to keep the island relatively unspoiled by over development.

The port with the most publicity prior to our visit and unbelievable construction activity was Dubai. The economic growth of Dubai seemed unreal. We loved visiting there but doubt that we will ever return.

The port we are most likely to revisit is Sydney, Australia. We spent two days in Sydney on the cruise but the people and the city left us craving for more.

2. Next time we are on a long trip to unfamiliar places we will take more US cash or traveler's checks that can be cashed on the ship. We didn't find acceptance of our credit card as frequently as we had anticipated so we had to use cash. It was always possible to draw cash from our credit card on the ship but the 3% up-front fee was painful. Traveler's checks are frequently available without a fee (for example AAA). We may load up on Travelers Checks for the next cruise. Most seasoned travelers we talked to said they take twice as much cash as they think they will need.

3. We bonded with our dinner table mates and that really added to the enjoyment of the cruise. As dinner time approached we looked forward to chatting around the table and sharing the day's experiences. It was an unspoken agreement that we never discussed politics or religion. Positions on those two subjects are usually hard wired into a person's DNA and discussions can get emotional real fast. Several friends that we developed on the cruise complained of their dinner table mates. Some were so incompatible that they avoided going to dinner in the dining room and ate in the LIDO Restaurant instead. The LIDO is a good restaurant but they missed some of the fun of cruising and regular interaction with friends at the dinner hour. We have vowed that on future cruises if our companions during the dinner hour seem incompatible with our personalities then we will not hesitate to ask for a different table assignment within the first few days of the cruise. We have not yet ever asked for a change in table assignments but on a long cruise the early decision to make a dinner table change would be worth the temporary social pain.

4. For protection from malaria we took Doxycycline 1 week before and 4 weeks after we were in India. Having to remember to take the pill every day for 4 weeks after leaving India was annoying. We would seriously consider using Malarone on future trips into regions with risk of malaria. Malarone only requires taking pills a few days before entering the malaria risk region and 1 week after departing.

5. We would take half as many clothes as we took on this 104 day trip. Being seen in the same outfit from time to time is not a problem. Most of the places that we visited we bought tee shirts so probably taking fewer tee shirts than you would normally wear would be a good idea.

6. The first \$800 per person (\$1600 per couple) purchased goods is tax exempt by US Customs when you return to the US. Many people, like us, made more than the \$800 per person purchase of goods. We knew there were certain countries where purchased goods were not taxed by the

US and didn't count against our \$800 exemption. However, we had no hard information about which countries might have tax exempt status. Therefore, we had some anxiety about how much tax we would pay when passing through US Customs upon return to the US. When we were interviewed by US Customs we found them very helpful in explaining the basis of taxes imposed. We ended up paying only \$30. However, for anyone contemplating a trip where they make major purchases some prior research into potential US duty might be helpful. The US Customs regulations can be found on the website www.cbp.gov, where the cbp in the URL address stands for Customs and Border Protection. After returning home we spent a little time surfing around in that website. The most useful US Customs website we found with minimal effort was the following:

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/duty_free_reduced_rates.xml .

Here is some info from that US Customs website:

Duty-Free or Reduced Rates Items from Certain Countries

The United States gives duty preferences—that is, free or reduced rates—to **certain developing countries** under a trade program called the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Some products that would otherwise be dutiable are not when they come from a GSP country. (For details on this program, as well as the complete list of GSP countries, please look for it on our website.)

Similarly:

- Many products of **Caribbean and Andean countries** are exempt from duty under the Caribbean Basin Initiative, Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, Andean Trade Preference Act and the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act.
- Many products of certain **sub-Saharan African countries** are exempt from duty under the African Growth and Opportunity Act.
- Most products off **Israel, Jordan, Chile and Singapore** may also enter the United States either free of duty or at a reduced rate under the U.S. free trade agreements with those countries. Check with cbp.gov for details on these programs.
- The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect in 1994. If you are returning from Canada or Mexico, your goods are eligible for free or reduced duty rates if they were grown, manufactured, or produced in **Canada or Mexico**, as defined by the Act.

Access the CBP Website for further details.

Household Effects

Household effects are duty-free. These include such items as furniture, carpets, paintings, tableware, stereos, linens, and similar household furnishings; tools of the trade, professional books, implements, and instruments.

You may import household effects you acquired abroad duty-free if:

- You used them for at least one year while you were abroad.
- They are not intended for anyone else or for sale.

Clothing, jewelry, photography equipment, portable radios, and vehicles are considered personal effects and cannot be brought in duty-free as household effects. However, duty is usually waived on personal effects over 1 year of age.

All vehicles are dutiable.

7. Finally, we would like to thank all the people who have commented on the blog. We are sorry we couldn't respond to everyone who may have had input. The Internet service on the Amsterdam was adequate but it was slow and we didn't always take the time needed to check out the comments. We wanted to document what we experienced and if other people got some enjoyment out of the write-up that just added to our sense of accomplishment. Our plan is to maintain the website www.cruisingstansfields.com for the next 12 months and then let it expire. If we decide that we will do a blog of our next cruise or trip we will extend the website for a longer period of time. If anyone would care to communicate you may contact us by email at **orlinbarbara@bellsouth.net**

In these few days we have been back home we frequently reflect on the fun we had with the people we met and the places we visited on the 2007 Grand World Voyage. It was a trip of a lifetime that we will never forget.

Goodbye for now.

Orlin and Barbara Stansfield
9 May 2007