

Start of the 2007 Grand World Voyage:

1/15/07 We checked out of the Hilton Garden Inn about 12:30 and took the hotel shuttle to Port Everglades where the MS Amsterdam was moored. When we got there the line of people waiting to register for the cruise extended out to the street sidewalk. This is an irritating but necessary part of every cruise that we have been on. Today the pain was eased by special treatment because we had reserved one of the Veranda Suites. As a result, we were checked in and arrived at our cabin (7054) in about 30 minutes.

We were overjoyed to see that all of the luggage shipped from home on January third was stacked neatly in our room. We also found that our East Tennessee AAA Travel friends had generously gifted us with shipboard credits and Internet time which will be most helpful in defraying the cost of tours and tending to email and the Internet blog journaling of the cruise. We met our room steward by the name of Bayu. He was very pleasant and said he would be our steward for the entire 105 days. He also said



his wife was in Indonesia on Bali where we are scheduled to visit on this cruise. His wife gave birth to their daughter at Christmas time and he had not yet seen their child. He was looking forward to taking a couple days leave and visiting his wife when we stop at Bali. We got busy opening our luggage and storing the clothes and other items in the drawers and closets. The empty suitcases were stored under the bed.

We met the concierge in the Neptune Lounge on our deck. His name is Rollie and his assistant is Maurene. The servers in the lounge are August, Derby and Danny.

About 4pm we had a practice drill where we put on the life jackets in the cabin and went to our lifeboat stations. The passengers and crew were all in a jovial mood at the start of a cruise so even this bothersome exercise was accomplished in good spirits. In fact, standing next to us was a charming couple from Toronto, Canada, shown next to Barbara in this picture. The conversation was cut short by the end of the drill but a nice feature of such a long cruise is that you can count on meeting up again with interesting folks as we travel on. At 5:45 we went down for dinner in the lower dining



room on deck 4. We got table 119 which seats 6 and with a large window giving us a view directly aft of the ship. Our four table mates (Roy and Gayle Brown from Cincinnati OH, Bob and Esther Robbins from Rancho Mirage CA) are very experienced travelers. They have cruised extensively so the dinner conversation centered primarily on the many places and experiences they have had. Bob and Esther have been on five around the world cruises prior to this one. The ship got underway about 6:30pm. After dinner we walked around the ship and noted the changes that had been made since we sailed on the Amsterdam in 2002 cruise to Alaska. It's a beautiful ship and we are really looking forward to the journey.

1/16/07 After yesterday's action packed agenda, we celebrated this second day of the cruise by sleeping in. The seas were calm and the air balmy so when we did start moving it couldn't have been much better. At 10am the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) travel representatives on board (Marvin and Marilyn Onstott) held a welcome-aboard meeting for people who had booked their cruise through AAA or CAA. It was a nice gesture on their part to let us know they were there to help out if travel problems develop. The main event of the morning for us was the 11am Cruise Critic meet-and-greet gathering organized by Dorothy Hennings. About 35 energetic travelers showed up in the Crow's Nest Lounge. These were the people who for the past year have been posting or just reading about the Grand World Cruise and other cruising activities on the Cruise Critic website (www.cruise critic.com). It was nice to meet Dorothy (aka – Blue whale) who seemed

like a long time friend after reading her many posts to the Cruise Critic. Dorothy had arranged for the ship's beverage officer (Murat Kaya) to speak to the group and welcome us aboard. Here is a picture of the famous Blue whale and Murat Kaya. Dorothy then got each of us to introduce ourselves. We sat next to a family from Madrid, Spain known on the Cruise Critic as "Cruise pang from Spain". They were concerned about their lack of fluent English. As Don Bell said so well, "Their English is a heck of lot better than our Spanish". Refreshments were available but after introductions the Cruise Critic addicts were more interested in getting acquainted and trading cruise stories than taking on calories.



The following is a gallery of photos taken at Dorothy's Cruise Critic meeting.



Peggy (Sailing4fun) and Barbara (TENNcruisers)



Jack and Evelyn Colwell from MA (travel2much)



The Oregonians, Orlin (TENNcruiser) with Darrel and Karen (Cruisertwo)

The morning was finished off with the Captain's reception which was highlighted by a receiving line and formal introduction to Captain Edward van Zaane in the Crow's Nest Lounge. Introduction to the captain was followed by cocktail, hors d'oeuvres (courtesy of the executive chef), and conversations with fellow passengers and senior officers of the Amsterdam.

Here is a photo of Executive Chef, Ed Sayomac with Barbara.



Here we see Second Officer, Martin Forde, with Dick and Anne Salberg, and us. By this time Barbara and I were starting to recognize familiar faces and feeling very comfortable in our new home on the high seas.

1/17/07 Day 3 - This was another day at sea proceeding south at about 21 knots. The weather was balmy and the seas calm. We spent the day in casual conversations with fellow passengers and in general, kicking back. A statistic we heard was that there were about 1200 passengers on board (1380 is capacity) and over 1000 have booked the entire 105 around the world cruise. One surprising thing was the number of people who have been on more than one around-the-world cruise. Several people we met had been on 5 or 6 of these epic journeys and most had firm loyalty to the Holland America Line. In addition to around-the-world themes were 50 or 60 day voyages like the Pacific Rim Cruise so it was not uncommon to meet people with more than 200 days of cruising experience. This is the crowd you want to consult about cruising and touring in general. We attended a lecture about construction of the Panama Canal and another one about things to see and do in Manta, Ecuador. The dress for dinner was formal. Everyone showed up in their finery for a receiving line where we met Captain van Zaane again just before dinner. After dinner we went to the Internet Cafe and hassled the manager about the fact that we could not access our blog at www.cruisingstansfields.com because the filter on the Amsterdam computer system was suspicious that our website might contain sexual content. He said that it could be fixed so we may eventually be able to see and edit what we are sending in to the website.