

Are we there yet?

2007 Grand World Voyage (Jan. 15 – April 30, 2007)

**Journal of Orlin and Barbara Stansfield -
"Getting Ready" - January 2006 through "Back Home" - 9 May 2007**

Getting Ready

Tuesday, January 9th, 2007

World Cruise with Holland America - 2007

Introduction:

This is a log of events put together by Orlin and Barbara Stansfield to record their experiences in getting ready and taking a cruise around the world. The writings will be posted on a personal website that can be accessed on the Internet. We have recently learned that such a "weB LOG" goes by a short name of "blog" so that is what we call it. In fairness we should forewarn you that blogs generally represent the personality and handicaps of the authors. This journal was done primarily to preserve our memories (senior-moment protection) but also with some hope that others might enjoy going through the journey with us. The computer/Internet procedures employed are new for us but with the help of our son, Steve, we think it can be done with minimal pain. We start with the initial steps in getting ready for the cruise and follow that with a chronological description of what happens as we proceed through the cruise.

Getting Ready for the 2007 World Cruise:

Signing up: In January 2006 an innocent looking brochure showed up on our coffee table announcing a Holland America Line, 105 day world cruise in 2007. Like most brochures we ignored it initially but one day in a weak moment we took a look inside. The itinerary of the world cruise immediately appealed to us and we decided to go. The selling feature was that the cruise started in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and passed through the Panama Canal on the way to rather remote places we might find too difficult to visit on individual trips. Some key destinations that fueled our imagination were Easter Island, Pitcairn Island (Mutiny on the Bounty), Bora Bora, Sydney & Darwin Australia, Singapore & Hong Kong (Orlin's Navy days), Dubai (U.A.E.), and Egyptian pyramids. Here is a map showing the ports of call. The complete itinerary can be viewed by clicking "Blogroll" in the right hand column of this page under Holland America GWV.



We contacted our friend, Wanda Moretz at the AAA of East Tennessee Travel Department and discussed our big decision. We booked an SB class of cabin (556 sq. ft. including veranda) which we knew well from a prior cruise on the Amsterdam to Alaska in 2005. We will be in cabin 7054, one of the aft cabins. Wanda informed us that if we paid the whole bill by May 31 we would get a 3% discount. We thought the discount was worth going for and, to boot, we would put the whole thing on our credit cards to reap the airline ticket perks that the credit card companies offered. With Wanda's help we were able to carry out these transactions over several months.



Later in January, we went to the East Tennessee Cruise Travel Show a Holland America Lines presentation by Alan Baker at Knoxville Convention Center. It was organized by the AAA of East Tennessee Travel Department. Alan Baker, the Holland America Lines regional representative, gave a good description of Holland America ships and services. He describes Holland America as a cruise line that is somewhere between Princess and Crystal in terms of luxury and level of service. Our friends at AAA of East Tennessee had made Alan aware of our decision to take the World Cruise in 2007. After his presentation we met with him and he gave us Holland America white bathrobes with company logo. We have made good use of the bathrobes ever since, pumping up the excitement in preparation for the cruise.

Cruise Critic Contacts: Early in 2006 Barbara discovered the Cruise Critic website on the Internet. That website can be accessed by clicking on "Cruise Critic Boards" under "Blogroll in the right hand column of this page. She found a chat room type of message board focused on our around the world cruise. In October 2005 an energetic lady with the user name of "Blue Whale" had initiated a message board "thread" for the 2007 Amsterdam World Cruise. This message board contains input from people who want to contribute and/or read questions, answers, and

comments from other “chatters” participating in the 2007 World Cruise or just interested in the cruising experience. To check out this message board go to <http://boards.cruisecritic.com/showthread.php?t=242074> or just click on “Message Board for Amsterdam 2007 GWV” under “Blogroll” in the right hand column of this page. You first get a view of page one of thirty-three pages (as of 5 January, 2007). Just click on “Last >>” to see the current comments. We go by the user name of TENNCruisers on the board. It has been enjoyable and informative to read and interact with the board participants. After a while a comradeship has developed. Blue Whale has even volunteered to organize a “Meet and Greet” get-together of message board friends on the Amsterdam the day after we get underway (01/16/2007). That should be fun! **Inoculations:** On the Cruise Critic message board (www.cruisecritic.com) there was discussion of the inoculations we would need. We found the Knoxville Public Health Department had a travel office and in September we made an appointment for our first series of shots. The public health nurse consulted Center for Disease Control and other documents in her office and came up with the recommended inoculations we needed. The Public Health Department staff was very friendly and helpful through the whole process. The potential exposure to malaria bearing mosquitoes on the cruise is a real downer but chemicals exist to provide protection. We got lots of insect repellent containing 50% Deet to ward off the mosquitoes. In addition, our family doctor and a neighbor pharmacist recommended the antibiotic called Doxycycline (dox-i-SYE-kleen) to prevent infection with the malaria parasite. First we got a prescription for 20 tablets and took them for a few days to see if we had any of the unpleasant side effects that are possible. Luckily both of us were free of side effects so we got one 90day prescription of Doxycycline that miraculously was covered by our health insurance. The visit to India was our primary concern with regard to malaria infection. We will split the 90 capsules between us working on the assumption that 45 days coverage of the most risky ports with regard to malaria will be adequate. We decided against trying other antibiotics targeting malaria because of potential side effects or high cost.

As an additional precaution to fight infections that might lay us low on the cruise our family doctor prescribed Ciprofloxacin antibiotic capsules. This is the famous “Cipro” that was used to fight anthrax in the Washington DC biological attacks by terrorists in 2001. It is a broad spectrum antibiotic good for fighting earaches, sore throat, and other bacterial infections.

Visas: In October we received word from Holland America that except for India we could obtain a visa on the ship for each of the ports we would visit. We had to apply for and obtain our India visas prior to starting the cruise. They recommended we submit an application and request

the visa through Zierer Visa Service (ZVS, Inc. 1625 K Street NW, Suite 102, Washington, DC 20006, ph 866 788-1100 email info@zvs.com). We collected our passports and two photos for each of us and filled out the visa forms on the kitchen table. We then made a visit to Wanda at AAA and she sent the application to ZVS for us. The next day a lady from ZVS called us and asked that we FAX a copy of our Tennessee driver's license in to ZVS as an additional confirmation of our address. It seemed like overkill since she had our passports but we FAXED in copies of our driver's licenses. About a week later ZVS returned our passports to Wanda with the official India visa printed on one of the passport pages. Total cost of this exercise for the two visas was \$229.



Australia also requires a tourist visa. We understand that they will be available on board the Amsterdam. However, Wanda, at the AAA Travel Office, was able to use the magic of the Internet to obtain Australian tourist visas for us in about 5 minutes at no charge.

The Blog: It was a real challenge getting ourselves educated so that we could publish a blog as we traveled. Luckily our son, Steve, has an interest in this sort of thing and also a lot of patience with slow learners. Here is a picture of Steve with an apprehensive student in tow. He used a company called WordPress (<http://wordpress.org>) that assists in setting up blogs. He was able to obtain an Internet "Domain" name of <http://www.cruisingstansfields.com/> at a nominal charge of \$2 per month and that will be our blog address for travel. He then set about making the blog work and also the painful process of dragging his parents into the blogging world. Currently (5 January, 2007) we are still practicing and hopefully improving our ability to write and post articles to our blog. It's a good thing we started early.



Land Tours: Holland America Line (HAL) sent us a book containing a description of all the land tours from the ship that they would sponsor in the ports of call. We sorted through the list and made our selections. We didn't sign up for any tours that required an overnight off the ship.

We stuck with the ship for the evenings because we enjoy the shipboard life and risk of picking up mosquito borne diseases in some ports increases onshore at night.

Luggage Shipment: One of the nice perks offered by HAL was shipping of our luggage to and from the ship. For the SB class of cabin, which we reserved, there was no extra cost for the shipment. Barbara called and arranged for pickup of our luggage on 3 January, 2007. We tried to send as much as possible so we wouldn't have to carry much with us down to Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Well here it is, 3 January, 2007 and the friendly driver from International Port Services has just loaded up our three suitcases, one garment bag and a cardboard box (non-clothing items) for the trip to Fort Lauderdale and the Amsterdam. The bags are packed fairly lightly so that there will be room for things we may purchase along the way around the world. On the 1/14/07 flight from Knoxville to Fort Lauderdale we plan to take a couple carry-ons and check one bag.



Phoning Home: We checked out the possibility of using our cell phone to call friends and relatives in the US while we are on the cruise. It turned out that our Samsung Model SPH-A660, Dual Band/Tri Mode cell phone would be capable of calling back to the US from many of the countries we will visit. We called the Sprint PCS International Support office and had them authorize international access at no charge. The charges come when a person makes a call at \$3 to \$5 per minute depending on location. There is no calling capability with the Sprint system while we are in the Mediterranean countries. We had some information from our travel agent that the MS Amsterdam may have satellite contact allowing use of a cell phone but the Sprint system only shows the Holland America Lines MS Volendam as having wireless service. A check of the www.hollandamerica.com website revealed that the MS Amsterdam is scheduled to have 'SeaMobile' phone service starting December 22, 2006 so we should be operational. An option may be the use of the phone in our stateroom which can be used to call back to the US from any place on the planet. Phone cards can be purchased on board and the charge is on the order of \$25 for 12 minutes. Just in case the use of a personal cell phone may be more convenient and economical than using the ship's phone system and because Sprint doesn't have coverage in the Mediterranean countries we abandoned our Sprint cell phone and subscribed to the Cingular worldwide wireless service. We obtained a new Motorola V190 cell phone that has a Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card installed. The SIM card provides an electronic identification of our phone in foreign countries so a wireless hookup can be made. We

subscribed to the Cingular World Traveler program which costs \$5.99 per month and has coverage in 18 of the countries we will be visiting, including the Mediterranean countries. The per minute charge rate varies from \$0.99 to \$2.29 depending on the country we will be visiting. The World Traveler program gives you a 10 to 20 percent reduction in the per minute charge compared to the standard Cingular international roaming charges that are available with no monthly fee. In our previous international travels we have not used a cell phone. We are flying by the seat of our pants in this international wireless communication arena so we may need to make some adjustments as we learn.

Precruise Shopping: Barbara's philosophy is that you can never start shopping too early. In the week before departure she used the Internet to discover virtual shopping sites on Easter Island and Pitcairn Island. Resourceful islanders have websites and, of course, eBay had plenty of relevant tourist goods to offer (see www.lareau.org and www.virtualtourist.com). The websites showed various tourist items and the cost which gave her some idea of what to expect. There was discussion on some of the Cruise Critic postings that Easter Island is infamous for choppy seas that prevent cruise ships from entering the harbor. Consequently, scheduled stops at Easter Island are often cancelled. With this possibility in mind, the Internet shopping sites were filed away for reference in case the scheduled visits don't go as planned.

1/14/06 We finished shutting down the house and getting ready to be gone for 3 ½ months. Steve came by about 10am and took us to the Knoxville airport. We caught a Delta plane to Atlanta and then on to Ft. Lauderdale. We arrived about 15:15 with no problems. We caught a Hilton Garden Inn shuttle van to the hotel where we stayed the night. Wanda at AAA had arranged for payment of the \$238.77 hotel charge. Barbara called Steve and Becky and Elsie and Dave and we all said good-bye. We had a complimentary Internet connection in the room and we learned how to use Outlook to read our email using the hotel Internet connection. Barbara is still fighting a head cold. She took decongestants but had severe coughing when she went to bed. She took some Musinex and that stopped the coughing. Her voice was hoarse but improved during the day.