

Cruise 2010 Panama Canal
NCL Pearl
Miami – San Pedro
April 8 – April 24, 2010

Thursday, Apr 8. Long flight of 5 ½ hours from SLC to Atlanta. Spent over an hour circling until the Atlanta airport reopened after severe storms. Still made our connection to Miami because that flight was delayed also. On the 2 hour flight from Atlanta to Miami LaRue was told that it was just a “single bag of peanut flight”. She reluctantly got it.

Friday, Apr 9. Nice warm day in Miami. Went to Bayside downtown along the pier and enjoyed shopping, and tourist watching. Had a nice lunch of spicy peel and eat shrimp, dolphin fingers, and cerveza that we enjoyed so much on the last trip to Miami. We decided we are creatures of habit. Met two nice couples from Maryland (he was a little obnoxious) and Ottawa, Canada while eating dinner at the hotel. The Canadian couple are booked on the same cruise as us. The Maryland couple were booked on Royal Caribbean on Sunday.

Saturday, Apr 10. Shared a cab with the Canadian couple to the ship rather than wait for the hotel van which was overloaded. Total fare to the ship was only \$13.90 plus tip. Check in at the ship was easy but security tight (mostly looking for booze, as Norwegian is very strict). I had two mini bottles of vodka in my shaving kit that went right through. So, we had a starter for our first night. Also, bought an assorted 12 bottle wine package on the ship to get a 20% discount. At dinner you hand a ticket to the waiter and they bring the wine. Got two different wines from Mendoza, Argentina where Jake is. He would be proud. of grandma and grandpa. Evening show was a preview of the shows of the upcoming nights.

Sunday, Apr 11. The Norwegian Pearl is a nice ship and the right size at 2300 passengers, maximum. It doesn't seem crowded. I wonder if it is under booked. So far the food seems good. Dinner last night was just ok, but then we over indulged earlier at 5pm.

At breakfast we thought of our breakfast dining companion on the Carnival Pride, Summer, who turned 8 today. Best eggs benedict this morning that I have had on a cruise ship. Met the most interesting older couple from Mojave Lake, Arizona at breakfast. He agreed to share a table with us ‘if we were nice’. Turns out he is a retired RV dealer from southern California and she is a pretty noted (famous?) pilot that holds a lot of records in women's air races and still instructs and is a flight examiner at age 75. Her name and face is familiar to me and have seen her written up in aviation magazines. He is a pilot also and he said they have put a million miles and 5 engines in their trusty old Cessna 172. We could have talked all morning and hope to see them again.

Our cabin (referred to as a mini suite) is really nice. It is a little larger with a big bathroom, and a large patio. We are on deck 11 and right behind the Bridge with just 10

cabins and the officers cabins between us and the Bridge. At the end there are two big observation windows looking into the Bridge area. So neat to see the officer sitting in a big chair with his control wheel and lots of other stuff. Another officer is usually scanning ahead with binoculars. Comforting to see there is an actual wheel directly behind the main consoles (I guess in case of computer failure). Saw the Captain this morning looking over charts (probably studying for the Panama Canal). I'll visit the window often since it is close.

Spent the afternoon reading, napping, and watching Mickelson win the Masters (or Tiger not winning the Masters), whatever you prefer.

Cruising just off Cuba on the right this morning and we see a large Carnival ship off to our left. Late evening we passed through the Windward Passage with the south end of Cuba on the right and could see the lights of Haiti on the left. Had dinner with a couple from Ontario, Canada, and a lady from North of London. Evening show was a ventriloquist.

Monday, April 12. Rain squalls all around with moderate seas of 5-7.5 ft so sort of rocking and rolling along. Really hot sitting on the patio at 8am with sun shining on us. Had breakfast with a couple from a "small town" of 150,000 people close to Toronto.

Cruising all day long across the Caribbean Sea toward Cartagena, Columbia.

Pre dinner was drinks in the Martini Bar. Nice dinner (dress up night) in the Summer Palace Dining room which is very elegant in early Russian décor and a violin, oboe, guitar trio playing background music. Nice table for two by a big window watching the sea go by and candle glowing (light bulb faking it). LaRue had rack of lamb medium rare that she said was very good. I had sea scallops on cheesy grits with a spicy salsa (different and tasty). The evening show was a big singing and dancing revue that sort of dragged on for me.

Tuesday, April 13. Approached Cartagena at 6am. Watched the bridge for a while thru the observation window as we came in. The pilot was talking to the Captain in the right seat with another officer in the left seat. Went for a walk topside and came back down for the final docking phase and nobody was at the controls! The Captain and pilot were on the side overhang watching and talking. A couple other officers were standing around looking at monitors and the ship was still easing up to the dock. Guess it docks itself.

Just came back from a city tour. It was hot and humid, but overcast as this is the rainy month here. Decided to eat lunch in the cafeteria and just have a nice salad. That led to a lot more since it all looked so good. Back in the cabin and try to figure out the internet. Now kicking ourselves for not seeing if we could set something up with Mark Hathorn while we are here.

Wednesday, April 14. Had dinner last night with a couple from Beaverton, Oregon. When I told them I had worked for Floating Point Systems, she asked me if I knew a Bob

Lind there. I am sure that it was the Bob Lind I knew for a number of years at Control Data in Portland, Seattle, and Richland. I recall that he had gone to Floating Point Systems after I left there. Need to run into them again. Some people you never see again ,but the Canadian couple we met at the hotel, we run into every day.

Picked up the pilot for the Panama Canal at 6:30am and slowly started heading for the 1st set of locks at Gatun. Then picked up two more pilots and a narrator that provided history and information on the crossing. The Gatun lock has 2 parallel locks with 3 chambers each. The Island Princess took the right and we followed in the left lock. The Island Princess was an in and back out cruise. It turned around and went back out.

Beautiful cruising through Lake Gatun for 3 or 4 hours. We then entered the narrow one lane channel at Gamboa and hit a terrific lightning and heavy torrential rain storm that lasted about 1 hour. We were sitting on our covered patio and the lightning was hitting just off the ship. One time 4 bolts hit at once about a quarter mile away and the thunder was deafening. I went to the observation window looking into the Bridge and there was a little consternation up there as you could not see a thing forward.. We had a tug on each side to keep us from getting too close to the bank.. Water falls sprouted up all over shooting down and over the cliffs. Saw some banks sliding away and a lot of muddy water gushing into the canal.

My video camera decided to quit when the storm hit. Believe that it was due to the high heat and humidity. The temp was about 95 and the humidity about 85 and I was going in and out of the air conditioned cabin. Then again maybe lightning fried it.

The storm let up as we approached the 2nd set of Pedro Miguel Locks. It is two lanes of one chamber each. Then it was on to the 3rd and last Miraflores locks near Panama City. They are 2 lanes with 3 chambers each. The total transit was from about 7am to 5pm by the time we cleared Panama City and was 80km (under 50 miles) as you move slow. It was a very nice trip and the storm added something special. We spent some time wondering if lightning would hit a ship. We went to the evening 7pm show which was a hypnotist and then went to the dining room at 8:30 which was the time of our late dinner seating on our Med. Cruise. Clocks go back one hour tonight.

Thursday, April 15. Today is a day at sea. Gained an extra hour of sleep last night and now are on MDT, same as home. Breakfast in the dining room and LaRue went to a 9am presentation by last nights hypnotist. I am going to a presentation at 10am by the Captain and the Chief Engineer. I feel like I am an authority now on the Bridge as I check it out a lot.

Found out at the Captains presentation that the passage through the canal cost \$350,000 and yes, lightning can strike a ship. The Chief Engineer had been on a ship that lightning knocked out all of the radio gear. It was a great presentation.

Friday, April 16. Arrived in Puntarenas, Costa Rica at 7am. We signed up for the Picturesque Sarchi tour that departed at 8am. We traveled up the Pan American highway into the mountains and saw coffee beans being grown at all levels of elevation. However,

only those grown above 1000 meters (3000 ft) are the world's best. They can be designated as "mountain grown". Very steep terrain and bad narrow highway with heavy truck traffic. We passed a truck on a blind curve but somehow survived. On the downhill return trip the trucks passed us on the blind curves. The town of Sarchi is very unique and known for building miniature ox carts that they decorate lavishly and sell all sizes to tourists. Area is also known for very fine wood furniture and there were furniture stores everywhere. Enjoyed the Costa Rican Imperial brand beer in Sarchi. Also visited the world's only steel Catholic cathedral in another town.

Costa Rica is known for ecology but the litter and garbage along the streets and roads was terrible. In places it was as bad as Egypt. So much for their bragging on the ecology effort. They also brag about not having an army but the tour guide said that for all the money they save it has not helped build better roads. They have a Coast Guard consisting of a very small 20 ft or so boat and 2 crew members. I saw them while we were docking.

We had a late dinner in the fancy dining room with a table on the rear windows. There were only about 8 diners still there when we left. Looked in on the entertainment, which was comedy acts, so we did not stay long. Went out on the balcony when we returned to our cabin and the heat and humidity felt like a sauna.

Saturday, April 17. Cruising north off the coast of Nicaragua then the Honduras on a day at sea. Only traveling at 13 knots (the ship will do 26 knots), as we do not have a large distance to get to Guatemala tomorrow. It is very peaceful. We are invited, as past Norwegian Cruise Line guests (probably includes most of the ship) to the Captain's cocktail reception at 1:30 this afternoon. Got our picture taken with the Captain, a rather likeable Norwegian. Told him I really like the observation window looking into the bridge. The couple sitting next to us won a bottle of champagne for the most Norwegian cruises, which was 21. We are only on our 3rd cruise with them. She was signing up for their next one right there, and gets \$100 credit off of their current cruise account. I told her that wouldn't even make a dent in our bill.

Sitting on the patio this morning I remarked that we have not seen any dolphins or any sign of sea life except birds. Then within a couple of minutes a whole school of dolphins started jumping right off our balcony. Rather amazing what I can order up. Then later in the day I saw a sea turtle getting turned end over end from our bow wake. It was about 18 inches across.

Sunday, April 18. Arrived at Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala at 7am. Port area is quite small with a floating pier that accommodates 1 ship. Our tour guide said they get about 70 cruise ships a year. We are the last cruise ship until September because the rainy season is starting. Lots of vendors set up shop and pushing their stuff. We took a tour to two small towns rich in the history of the Mayans and the Olmec Indians, and visited a museum in another area full of Mayan artifacts. Highly developed sugar cane growing and sugar cane processing plant here and everything is lush and green leading up to very high mountains, and a volcano. Guatemala has two volcano's so don't know if this is the

one Garry climbed when they lived in Guatemala City. Very poor people living in shacks and outside. Very hot and humid at 90 degrees and 85% humidity. This place is about 50 miles west of Guatemala City. Very interesting tour and would sure like to spend more time in Guatemala.

This morning when we docked I noticed a small oil slick forming just below our cabin. When we got back from the tour the oil was black goo and 2 divers were in the water and collars were floating around the mess. Swimmers were cleaning the water line of the ship with rags. Looks to me like fuel lines run from the shore underwater to the floating dock and they had a leak. Pretty good crew with 5 boats and a lot of people working on it now. Just looked over the side and the Guatemalan Navy or Coast Guard is on the scene and two officers were walking onto the ship. Wonder if we will be able to leave at 5pm as it is 4:40pm now.

The Captain announced the oil spill was the fault of the fuel pipeline at the floating pier and not our fault so we are free to sail. However, he would let the wind blow us away from the pier so as not to spread the oil spill with the engines. He also announced that the President of Guatemala visited the ship and he was pretty excited about it.

Monday, April 19. At breakfast we shared a table with a couple from Mojave, California. They ran into the Guatemala secret service and the President coming aboard yesterday and she spoke to him in Spanish. He stopped and visited, and they got a picture with the president, and the Captain. This took place around 2pm yesterday so we just missed him as we came back aboard about 2:30. She said he was very nice and cordial. The other couple at breakfast was from Switzerland up by Lichenstein and very interesting also. They are staying with the ship for another week from San Pedro to Vancouver then another week from Vancouver to Alaska for a total of a month. This was their 3rd cruise through the Panama Canal and the Mojave couple their 2nd time through. We just keep getting upstaged.

An interesting tidbit that I just remembered. Our tour guide in Guatemala told us that 1 in 3000 households in Guatemala has a washing machine, but there are 2 cell phones per household. We saw women washing clothes in the river while the kids swam. There were public wash tub areas in the small towns.

The entertainment last night was a pianist, Juan Pablo Subirana who was really good. He is Cuban and just became a US citizen and at the end played a rousing medley of patriotic music that got a standing ovation. Even from the foreigners. Went to dinner after the show, but dinner was only so-so. Settled for Caribbean red snapper that was too dry with not enough spicy mango salsa.

We are about 2 more hours to Hualtaco, Mexico for a noon arrival and a nice day so far. Nothing planned there, so will just play it by ear. A Mexican Navy patrol boat just came out to meet us, and is cruising just off our patio. About 10 Navy guys on a small boat with guns.

Hot day in Hualtaco at 100 degrees. We hired a taxi to take us around the area which only took an hour. Very scenic, but an all new resort area that has sprung up in the last 20 years. Mountains come down with high cliffs overlooking the ocean. Area consists of 9 small bays where the beaches are, so most homes and resorts are not on the beach. Do not believe we would want to come back for an extended stay, but it is hard to say for sure. We came back to the pier and had a Pacifico beer and ran into our Canadian friends and shared a table with them until we boarded the ship for a 6pm departure.

Had a nice dinner of beef tenderloin au poivre and attended the late show which was a lady singer and comedienne. One of the better shows.

Tuesday, April 20. In sunny Acapulco this morning. Last night they announced we would be tendered in this morning. The regularly scheduled Norwegian Star comes in at noon and gets the dock. We have decided to stay aboard and enjoy the day as we have seen Acapulco a couple of times. Nice day to read and get some sun. Saw a T shirt this morning that said "I only get up in the afternoon for happy hour". We are starting to think about only today and 4 more days left. Hate for it to end.

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

As we left Acapulco last night a school of dolphins escorted us out of the harbor putting on a show.

Had a nice late dinner last night at a table for 2 beside a big side window. Wanted to share a table but nobody was coming in at that time. LaRue had leg of lamb and I had chicken, parmeson cheese, red sauce and fettuccini that was very good. Had a Malbec wine from Mendoza, Argentina. Decided to skip the comedy show after looking in on it.

At breakfast yesterday we got a table for 6 and waited and waited but nobody showed up. You never know with this freestyle cruising. Freestyle means you can eat in the main dining room whenever you choose, and can share a table with others, or request a table for two. We prefer the traditional cruise style of an early sitting and a late sitting with the same people every evening. Then breakfast and lunch is open seating at any time the dining room is open. We notice with freestyle cruising people badly abuse the dress standard. Shorts and short pants are not allowed in the dining room in the evening, but a lot of people wear them anyway. Sunday night was dress up night, which we did. There were people in shorts and ball caps. The maitre'd commented that we looked nice and we ended up with a very nice table by the window.

Clocks went back 1 hour last night so got more sleep, and today is a day at sea. A little cooler this morning as we continue north. Sailing along at 20 knots (about 22 mph) this morning passing by Ixtapa. Can see some high mountains. Will pass by Puerto Vallarta in the early evening, but probably will be too far out to see it. Oh well, we just might be there in another month. The depth gauge chart shows about 70 ft of water, but some really deep channels that go clear off the chart.

Had coffee and danish delivered to the cabin this morning and will just lounge around on the balcony, and go up to the cafeteria later as the main dining room closes at 9am. The cabin also has a mini coffee brewer which we use also. The only trouble with the cafeteria is there are so many good looking things that you eat to much.

The Norwegian Pearl staff are friendly and happy people, and like to visit if they are not really busy. On our early cruises the staff was heavy with eastern Europeans but in these later cruises they are mostly from the Philippines (had to ask one of them to get the spelling right) and other pacific islands. We do have 2 Romanian gals in the dining room that we have visited with. It is interesting to watch the interaction among the staff. We talk to a young guy from Bali quite a lot since on the 1st or 2nd day of the cruise he made a mouse out of a napkin and made it jump towards LaRue. He laughs when we remind him of it,, and trys to pretend it was not him. He calls me Mr. arrrry (rolling the r's). He brought two of his Bali buddies around the other night and said "we are the Bali guys". I am waiting for him to come around again so I can tell him, "but I want to see the Bali girls". I got tickled when he apologized for not understanding something LaRue was telling him. Then he said, "sorry only 1 gigabyte up here" pointing to his brain. We have a big old boy on board that pesters everyone with unwanted conversation, so we never let him make eye contact. He is in the 1 kilobyte category.

The ship is very strict on hand sanitizing. When you enter the cafeteria a staff member with a spray bottle sprays your hands and there are hand sanitizer stations all over. Wonder what all that alcohol does to you? One little gal gets everyone's attention as she sings "washy washy, happy, happy" as she sprays your hands. It is now a much repeated ditty around the ship, and in at least one comedy show routine.

Have not heard of any Norovirus or sickness. However, an ambulance has met us at every port to haul somebody off. Not surprising since there are a lot of old people on board. It is really surprising to see the number of people in wheelchairs (both paralyzed and old people) and also a lot of people with walkers and power scooters. Saw one lady with a walker that walked down the stairs to the dining room better than us. Even have a guy with a white cane by himself and usually in the lobby bar. Saw him headed to the men's room last night without the white can. He was doing quite well.

The 1st morning I was up on the sports track doing my morning walking. The track narrows to a one person lane around the aft end of the ship due a large basketball court, bleachers, and rock climbing wall above. I got to it and here was a little old lady bent over her walker chugging along. She would not move over, and got rather annoyed if you tried to get around her. I cut through the basketball court if I saw her ahead of me in that area again. Have not seen her since and funny how as the days go by fewer and fewer joggers and walkers show up in the morning. I have a few observations about these people but that may come another time or maybe in my potential book "Mr arrry's Cruise Tips and Observations". Some topics to be covered in the Sports Deck Chapter will be:

Old Men and Old Women On the Track (with and Without Canes)

Nearly Dead/Newly Wed Slow Walking Hand Holders, i.e: Blocking all Traffic
Old Ladies with Walkers, i.e. Blocking all Traffic
Overweight and Wide Body Walkers (or on the Track) of All Sexes, and Persuasions
Power Walking Females, Hip Throwers, Arm Throwers, All Three Combined, and
Spandex
Observations of One Being Passed and View of the Rear of the Above Category
Serious Runners with ipods and Other Neat Gear
Tippy Toe Male Runners
Grossly Pale and Overweight, With All New Gear, and “Gonna Get in Shape on this
Cruise”

Went to the early 7pm show that was a singing tribute to Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons and was pretty good. Finally discovered a neat bar, the Star Bar on deck 13 looking out over everything. The sports deck goes around it so don't know why I did not notice it before. It doesn't open until 4pm with 2 for 1 Martini's at \$8.75 from 6-7pm so will be there tonight. Had a late dinner that was just ok. Didn't care for the starters or entrée's on the evening's menu so went to page 2 that they offer every evening.

Thursday, April 22, 2010. Arrived in Cabo San Lucas at 6am. Cold here at 64 degrees at 7am before the sun is up, and it is 20-30 degrees lower than what we are used to. Since we have been here many times and they tender you in using the ship's lifeboats I think we will stay on the ship. Have to be back on board by 1:30pm for a departure at 2pm. The Princess Sapphire and the Holland America Oosterdam is in port also, and tendering people in, so it will be crowded around the waterfront area.

Departed at 2pm on schedule. The Captain announced a whale is waving its tail at us. LaRue was out on the balcony and saw it. We thought the whales would have all headed North by now. Two for Martini's in the Star Bar, watching an incredible sunset was really great. The sun was a huge orange ball slowly sinking. Had a nice dinner with two couples from Michigan and Australia. Got so engrossed in dinner conversation that we missed the late show. In fact, we were the only people left in the dining room when we departed.

Friday, April 23, 2010. Woke up around 4am really rocking around. Went up for my walk at 6:30am and was the only person on the sports deck. The sea category is Rough with up to 12 ft waves and the wind is 30mph, the temperature at 60 degrees, and we doing 23 knots to make it in at 8am in the morning. So, it looks like a rough day at sea for the last day cruising. We started out to go to breakfast and it was too hard navigating so we returned to the cabin. The idea of food didn't sound so great either. I took a dramamine and LaRue did later. Food sounded better around 10:30am and we made our way up there.

Down to my last minutes that I purchased for the internet. So will wrap this up, and send it.

The end

