

**2017  
Transatlantic Cruise  
Holland America Westerdam  
Fort Lauderdale to Rome  
March 31 - April 13, 2017**

**Tuesday, March 28.**

Kathleen picked us up and drove us to the Twin Falls airport. Saw us off on the evening flight. Flew to Salt Lake where we had a four hour layover.

Then caught a four hour red eye to JFK arriving at 6am. Another four hour layover. Then a three hour flight to Fort Lauderdale. Wheel chair assistance for Larue worked well. We were met at the plane door JFK, and off we went on a long journey. I limped along as I did something to the inside of my right knee just before we left. Had this happen 5 or 6 years ago, and it returned to normal after a few days of rest.

After a long walk we got on a shuttle bus (called jitneys) to go to another terminal. The bus traveled on the tarmac passing underneath the tails of the big jets. I tended to duck my head as we passed under.

Got to our gate and decided to get some breakfast at a sit-down place. There were about four places with exotic names. Decided to play it safe at the Brooklyn Bistro. Had to figure out the electronic tablet to order, and pay in advance. Most entree's were \$15-\$20. Went cheap with 2 eggs, a biscuit, and lousy potatoes at \$10 each. Coffee \$3.75 per cup, and no refills. Afterwards we discovered every restaurant had identical items, and prices, on their menu. It all comes from a common kitchen.

**March 29 - 30.**

On arrival at Fort Lauderdale the attendant whisked us to baggage claim. Our bags were both together, and right in front of us. Then on to the hotel shuttle pick up area. Our hotel shuttle was sitting right in front of us. We hadn't even had time to call them. No waiting

anywhere. This all seemed unreal, and a minor miracle. The very nice polite lady driver was from Columbia, and wouldn't let us do anything. She even loaded our bags on a cart at the hotel, and wheeled it in for us.

Then the drama began. I stood in line to check in, and Larue was busy conversing with two ladies. After a while I looked around and our luggage cart, and luggage, was nowhere to be seen. The shuttle driver was still in the lobby, and she had no idea where it was. She checked the van, and the luggage storage area to no avail. By then panic was pretty much evident. About 20 minutes went by, and here comes a guy leisurely pushing our cart and luggage into the lobby. He had grabbed ours instead of his. It took him all that time to realize his mistake. What an idiot.

The hotel was moderately priced, and an excellent choice for catching a cruise. It was between the airport and cruise terminal. The room was clean, comfortable, and large. Had pub grub in their excellent sports bar.

Went to bed early after traveling all night. The 80 degree weather was sure nice.

### **Friday, March 31.**

The hotel provided free shuttle service to the cruise port if you check out by 10:30 am. A great perk. However, there were 150 people catching five different cruise ships that morning, and we were the last in line! A taxi pulled in, He was for hire. The fare would be \$15, depending upon traffic. That was a no brain decision, and off we went. It was \$20 including tip, and a great decision that negated a long wait in line. with the possibility of our luggage ending up at the wrong ship.

Check in was fast and orderly. We were directed to a small waiting area reserved for wheel chair assisted passengers. Had to wait about an hour before boarding began. We were #3 for the wheel chair guy. He came, and took us directly to our cabin. The wheel chair I rented from the Special Needs company for the cruise had already been delivered to the cabin. We were in our cabin by noon

and thinking about lunch.

This was our second time on the Westerdam, so we were familiar with the ship.

Went to the Lido buffet and got a nice quiet table in a small out of the way area. It was mostly empty. The Captain, and some officers, were eating about 4 tables away. An attendant brought us iced tea and water. He said he would hold our table while we went and got food. It was good food, and a nice civil beginning for a cruise. Probably helped that the Captain was eating at the nearby table.

Our cabin is well forward which means a long walk aft to get the main dining room three times per day. We heard that the ship is sailing with about 400 people shy of a total capacity of 1900. We didn't unpack and went to the guest desk to see if a cabin might be available. We wanted aft to minimize walking. Olga, said she would work it personally, and would get back to us later.

The emergency drill was scheduled for 5pm. It is mandatory, and requires using the stairwells. We decided to use the rented wheelchair, since it would allow us to use the elevators. It was a struggle to get on an elevator, but we made it.

Olga had told us they would send a porter to move our luggage. Then the drama begins. We met a porter with his cart coming our way. We asked him if he was picking up bags in cabin 4020, and going to 4172. He seemed puzzled, and kept asking us about the cabin numbers. Finally, he said he would go with us to make sure of the cabin number. We got there, and the cabin was locked instead of open. He got his pass key out, went in, and started removing three big bags that he had just deposited there. They were from cabin 4070. He had gotten the wrong bags. He said he would go get ours, but never came back. We waited and waited. We notified our new cabin attendant named Heri (he pronounced it Harry). He said he would take care of it, but nothing happened. Called the guest desk, and was assured we would get our bags. Another hour went by. We had to leave for dinner with Larue having no makeup. The last call to the front desk got rather curt.

At least dinner was fairly good. I had French onion soup, peppered strip steak, and a lemon tart. Larue had salad, red snapper, and crème brulee. Our dinner companions were an interesting Russian lady, now living in Las Vegas, and a couple from Ontario, Canada.

Good thing our bags were in our cabin when we got back, as we were prepared for war.

### **Friday, March 31.**

I started feeling squeemish before lunch. Took a seasick pill and we headed to lunch. We shared a table with a couple that splits their time between Pennsylvania and Florida. Also, a couple that splits their time between Florida, and a small island in Greece. They can spend only three months at the small island, and have to leave for a while, then return due to immigration policy. They often use cruise ships to go back and forth. In Greece they live on a 50 foot trawler that they added on 10 more feet.

The table talk was all about selling their properties for x million dollars and hitting the road. All of the people we meet are much more traveled than we are. From the way they talk, very wealthy. But, I noticed they complained about having to pay \$300 each for a balcony cabin.

Food did not appeal to me at all. Thought some soup would help. Had the only option, which was pumpkin soup with cinnamon and ginger. It was awful and two tastes were enough. Thought about leaving the table, but did not want to appear to be a wimp. Tried some pasta and mushroom sauce, but no dice there either. A little vanilla ice cream helped. Larue had a salad, lamb chops, and sorbet.

We returned to the cabin, and I had a nice long nap. Woke up feeling good and hungry. We buzzed up to the Lido Buffet. Had a couple slices of pizza, and then one scoop of chocolate ice cream on a cone.

We decided on a table for 2 for dinner in the main dining room. Very peaceful and nice with a lot of empty tables. We both went with a green salad and the prime rib, which was quite good. The baked potato was zilch in my opinion, but Larue thought it was good. I had

a mango and blueberry crisp for dessert. Larue had a chocolate mousse in a dark chocolate cup, which she said was delightful. A nice bottle of red Chateau des Trois Tours Bordeaux, France from our wine package helped the attitude a lot.

The late show did not look appealing, so we went to bed as we lose an hour during the night.

### **Saturday, April 1.**

We left the motel 15 years ago on this date. Wow, the time went fast.

Beautiful sunny day with the temperature 68 degrees this morning. However, the wind is blowing from the starboard up to 40mph, and we have slowed to 17 knots. Big white caps, and the ship is moving around. Captain announced we are veering south to miss a big storm ahead. The voyage status screen on our television shows it clearly. We have traveled 900 nautical miles. The ocean depth is 17,000 feet. I am not getting any early morning walks outside, as I do not want to stress my knee any more than I have to. Larue is getting around good with her fold up cane. The wheelchair is stored folded up against the patio door. We are kind of the walking wounded. The passengers around us are mostly the same way. The demographic is older people probably averaging 65-70 or more. Have only seen one small child and no kids of any age.

Breakfast was at a table for two in the main dining room. I had Texas French toast. Larue had Swedish pancakes with berry sauce, and turkey bacon cooked to a crisp.

After breakfast we attended a lecture on lost treasures in the world. and Larue went to the Americas Test Kitchen demonstration. I returned to the cabin for a nap, as the ships action was starting to get to me. Took another seasick pill, and woke up feeling fine, and ready for lunch.

We shared a table for lunch with a couple from Boston, but originally from New York City. I had a citrus delight appetizer, swiss steak, and rainbow sherbet. Larue had a green salad, tilapia, and vanilla ice

cream. All in all not too bad.

Got back to the room, and the toilet was full of black sludge, and not working. I am thinking it may not work the rest of the trip, but a few minutes ago it flushed itself, and all is well. Life is good when the toilet works.

Signed up for internet for the voyage, so will get this sent before we go to dinner.

Cannot figure out what happened, but everything I wrote after I sent the first update was lost. So, we pick up on April 3. Lost some good stuff though.

### **Day 5 Monday, April 3**

Fairly good weather early, and the seas a little calmer. We lost an hour again last night for the 3<sup>rd</sup> night in a row. It was difficult getting up. We are invited to a special lunch at 11:30 today, so ordered room service. The tins of jam and croissants reminded us of when we arrived in Geneva and were staying in the hotel.

Seas are a little better today with some sunshine and around 65 degrees F.

The Captain spoke for about 2 minutes at lunch. He is not the typical full of himself windbag Captain you see so often get. A special menu was Mexican which seemed strange in these waters. The ship has been doing the Mexican Riviera for a long time, so maybe they had to use up the stuff. Shared the table with a nice couple from Madison, Wisconsin, and discovered his brother is retired and living in Twin Falls. The lunch was good but not great. We did get two glasses of complimentary wine, and a couple Dutch souvenir ceramic tiles that we have no use for.

Lectures were not interesting, so elected to read. Larue went to the Americas Test Kitchen demonstrations.

Dinner with a nice couple from Ontario, Canada. He was a school principal, and just nice ordinary people. We both had red bean and

chorizo soup, then a green salad. I had tortellini with tomato basil sauce which was good. Larue had fried chicken with mashed potatoes and gravy which was good. I had a blueberry and vanilla ice cream Sunday, and Larue had watermelon sorbet. I think the best dinner we have had so far was a couple of nights ago when we had a roast turkey dinner, just like Thanksgiving. Skipped the late show in favor of sleep.

## **Day 6 Tuesday, April 4**

Seas are fairly good this morning. Overcast and gray, and passing through rain. Temperatures stays around 65F most of the time. Still have two more days after today, but do not mind it at all.

Breakfast in the main dining room, and said we would share a table. Ended up at a table for 2 by the window watching the water rushing by. I decided to try the corned beef hash and eggs, and the hash was terrible. It satisfied that curiosity. Larue had the traditional English breakfast with beans, tomato, etc. The banger type sausage had no flavor, but looked beautiful.

Got done in time to make the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of a lecture on King Tut. It was hard for me to get the British accent of the lecturer.

Started raining hard, and all soaked in outside. Kind of a nice change of pace. The Captain, in his noon announcement, said, that tomorrow will be the same more or less. Getting some loud thunder and lightning flashes. Noticed on the route map that we will be passing by the island of Punta Delgordo. Also shows us passing over what looks like a canyon or mountain range that runs north and south.

The main dining room is closed for lunch today. Went up to the Lido buffet about 1:30. This late they call it the Lido Restaurant. The tables are all set up with wine glasses, water glasses, cloth napkins, and silverware. Attendants will also get your beverage for you. We hit the salad bar first, and servers build your salad for you. It can be a themed salad such as asian, or pick and choose what you want. They use salad bowls the size of our serving bowls at home. By the time you get through the line you have enough for four people. I believe that the use of servers is not for portion control, but for

sanitation. My salad was twice as big as I would have made. After the salad we headed to the asian line. They also use a bowl, and everything goes in it. We chose about four items that made quite a mix. Finished off with two scoops of chocolate cream, and headed back to the cabin.

Whoa, as I sit here writing we just hit a big bump and the whole ship shook and shuddered. Sure starts you thinking. This storm may get interesting. Must have been a rogue wave.

Will send this short update off in case we start taking on water and sink after that big hit we took.

Very nice dinner in the main dining room with a couple originally from Michigan, but retired in Florida, and Dave from Houston. We have had Dave two times at dinner, and once for lunch. We are old buddies now. He is 73 and travels alone as his wife is young, still working, and doesn't like to travel. His goal is to visit all of the continents four times, and is well on his way. He is on his 45<sup>th</sup> cruise. Had his own engineering consulting company, and has worked on major buildings around the world. Has a Ferrari for a show car, and the latest Corvette for a driver. He belongs to the Houston Ferrari Club and he said, "now those are some rich people"!

The other couple were into elite sports cars also. I didn't mention my Kaiser, but said my daily driver is a Dodge diesel truck. We all had the appetizer shrimp and crab Louis cocktail that was really excellent. Dave, being from Texas had two, which he usually does. Larue had a nice soup that I skipped. We both had weinersnitzel (spelling) which was ok. We both had rhubarb crisp for dessert. It was a nice evening with nice people. Dave is going on to Malta where he has never been. We finally got a chance to pass on some knowledge. Got to tell him about the most economical way to get from the cruise port to the Rome airport by using the shuttle service that we have booked, and used once before.

The clock is going forward an hour again tonight ,so we skipped the late show. This makes four times, on the time change.

## Day 7 Wednesday, April 5

Rain stopped by morning. The ship is rocking around, but the sea does not look bad. It must be the wind as it is at 35mph from the starboard. The temp is 66F, and the sea depth is 14,160 ft. The map shows we are about two thirds across the Atlantic. Starting to see Spain and Africa on the route map.

Had breakfast with a couple now retired in Florida, and a couple living in Nashville, and originally from Germany. The husband never said a word the whole time, and appeared totally disinterested. I had swedish pancakes. Larue had an egg skillet thing. I also have tomato juice and ask for Tobasco with it. They do not bring the bottle, but a small cup with about a teaspoon or more Tabasco in it. One morning the waiter pointed to the cup with Tabasco and said "tomato juice". He then pointed to the tomato juice and said , "Tabasco". They enjoy joking around.

After breakfast we went to an interesting presentation on our second port stop in Cadiz, Spain. This is the port Columbus made his journeys from. Then Cadiz became the center for trade with the New World. Hard to imagine those little wooden ships making this journey. Especially Columbus, when he did not know what he would find, or when. He got to the Bahamas and thought it was Japan.

The lady in front of me kept staring at her smart phone and the light above her reflected right into my eyes. Should have rapped her on the head. Afterwards went to the Americas Test Kitchen presentation. I left and went back to the cabin to get on the internet. It was so slow and unresponsive that I finally gave up. Here I am writing.

Lunch in the main dining room is only from 12-1pm, and is too early for us today. Went to the Lido instead. I went on to the aft grill for a burger and fries. Larue went through the american food line. The burger was not that tasty, so got a slice of pizza.

Went to dinner and said we would share a table of six, and ended up with a table for two. It was gala night (dress up) and most people were appropriate. A special menu, and we both had a shrimp cocktail with pineapple, shredded lettuce, and some sort of white sauce.

Wasn't too bad as the shrimp were nice and large. We both had thai chicken soup with mystery rice. It was a broth with a few slivers of carrot, and some black things that looked like mice droppings. Guess that was black rice. I never saw any chicken, but Larue got one little sliver. It was good though. Larue had Alaska crab legs. I had filet mignon, with boiled potatoes, veggies, and cheese ravioli. One cheese ravioli was on top of the filet. Was pretty good, however.

Since we ate earlier than usual we went to the last half of the first sitting of the evening show. Three tenors got a standing ovation at the end, but I didn't get it.

Clocks go back an hour again tonight. That makes 5 out of the 7 nights including tonight. System is kind of confused. Go to bed and sleep an hour or two then wide awake. Then in the middle of the day you can't stay awake.

### **Day 8 Thursday, April 6**

Still churning across the Atlantic and have traveled 2900nm as of this morning. Sunshine with a rolling sea, but fairly smooth ride. Temperature is 64F and hardly varies from that. Breakfast in the main dining room. I had a southwestern omelette that was good, and Larue had steel cut oatmeal. Not many people dining.

Afterwards we went to a lecture titled "Life On Board". It started with life aboard an 1840 sailing ship between Boston/Halifax and Liverpool. That was a tough life. For sea sickness, which was rampant, they had tins of opium lozenges that was the cure for everything. No refrigeration, so they had a cow aboard for fresh milk. He put up a photo of the cow in a pen on the forward deck. It must have been a rough voyage for the cow, as well as the passengers. We heard that the guy that gave the lecture spends about 280 days a year moving from ship to ship giving his lecture. What a concept and easy way of life.

You lose all concept of what day of the week it is with all of these days at sea. Holland America has a unique idea in that they put a rug in the elevators with the day of week on it.

Lunch again today in the Lido. Big old salad and Nathan's hotdog for me, and Larue had the salad, and the american selection. You feel like an idiot eating out of a salad bowl as big as your head, and about 8 inches deep. Afterwards we got an ice cream cone, and sat out on the rear open deck for a while. Very quiet around.

An interesting dinner with a younger couple from Atlanta, Georgia. Very enthusiastic about everything with a bunch of adopted kids at home. Finally figured out they were evangelists and have had a TV show. It is on youtube. He invited us to bring our 5<sup>th</sup> wheel down and park on their property. We declined. I had a pineapple coconut something appetizer, a chicken broth soup, and Thai shrimp, mussels, rockfish with green and red peppers, and rice. Larue had an appetizer of smoked trout, the same soup. and Caribbean lamp chops that she liked. I had an apple tart, and Larue had hokey pokey Sunday for dessert. The Atlanta guy had two entrée's.

Decided to skip the late show as it didn't look like much, and we would have had to kill an hour before it started.

During the night the ship was throbbing, rattling, and vibrating. Being on the aft, we probably get it the most. Must have had the throttles to the firewall, and rough sea. Felt to me like we had a bad bearing or something. It would go away and start up again later. Made it hard to get back to sleep.

### **Day 9 Friday, April 7**

Cooler outside this morning at 61F and overcast. we have traveled 3400nm. We arrive at the Portugese island of Funchal about noon today. This morning at 9:30 (weather permitting) the Captain is opening the bow on deck 4 for a traditional Holland America Line Dutch pea soup, as we approach scenic Funchal. I think we will be going from breakfast to the lecture in the theater about that time. We don't plan a tour. Will get off and see what happens. Our friend Dave says the island is very scenic, but if it is bad weather you don't see much.

Had breakfast in the main dining room. I had buckwheat pancakes, blueberries, 2 raspberries, and 1 blackberry. Larue had lox and a

bagel, and a poached egg. Nice change of pace.

Went to the lecture on the pirate, Captain Kidd, on his life and times. He ended up getting hung for his crimes.

Approaching the dock in Funchal, which is on a small island rising up out of the sea to over 3000 feet. No flat land that we can see. Just white houses with brownish red roofs all over the mountain side. It looks sort of like Monte Carlo. Cannot imagine what people do here besides sail, and fish. Lots of people out watching us coming in, so they must not have much to do.

Had a light lunch on the lido deck before getting off. I had the Dutch pea soup so thick you could walk on it, and the taco bar. Larue had a big asian salad, and the american cuisine.

Got off the ship, and it was too far to walk for the walking wounded to get to the major shopping, or to taxis. Saw some electric rental cars that were for one person. Sort of useless. Bought a souvenir and had a beer, which is cervajo in Poturgese. The label was Coral, a local Madera brew that was strong, but not bad.

That is about it for Funchal on the island of Madeira. Our cabin faces out onto the city, and mountain. We have a great view.

Will get this sent as the internet has been slow and tedious.

Nice congenial dinner with two ladies, and a couple from southern California. It turned into a 2 hour dinner. One lady introduced herself as Anita that we could not quite hear, so she pronounced it again as "ah nita nap", and we got it. She was taking notes for writing later in her diary. I had a crostini, a broth chicken soup, prime rib, and a carmel pannacotta desert. Larue had a shrimp something, the same soup, pork loin, and lemon sherbert. A lot of people in the dining room even though we are in port until 11pm.

The clocks move 1 hour forward again tonight. We were told this is the last time change.

**Day 9 Friday, April 7**

Still dark at 7:30 this morning. Temperature outside is 61F and the deckhands had their coats on for the first time this trip. Our heading has changed from East to Northeast towards the southern tip of Spain. Another day at sea and then Cadiz, Spain. Doing 18.3 knots. Have traveled 3497nm. Sea depth is around 14,000 ft. The waves look to be 5-10 ft, and the ship is rocking and vibrating a little.

Breakfast in the main dining room and I had banana oatmeal crusted french toast, and Larue had steel cut oatmeal. Table companions were from Houston and Ft. Lauderdale. We had a good chat.

Afterwards went to a lecture "From Gloom to Glamour - 1930's". Tony, the British guy gave it. Larue then did Americas Test Kitchen on "We Love Chocolate". I went back to the cabin and read until I fell asleep.

Lunch was in the main dining room. I had chicken broth soup with swiss chard, a rubeen sandwich, then apple pie. Larue had a salad with salmon, crusted tilapia with warm slaw, and a lycee Sunday. Interesting couple from Florida. He did all the talking about his metals manufacturing company. He was right proud of his accomplishments.

Finally got up to the Observation Lounge this afternoon. It is above the bridge and looks out over the sea. You can see all of the way around 270 degrees. Also a nice little library in the back corner, and a nice place to hang out. My editor got out a geography book and corrected me on our last stop. It was the city and port of Funchal on the island of Madeira. I had it turned around.

Gala and dress up night tonight with a special menu. Lobster for the first time paired with a filet mignon. So, we both had to have it. Fair size lobster tail and a very small filet. We both had a shrimp cocktail for a starter. Nice size shrimp, but they never have the traditional cocktail sauce. It is always a mayonnaise based sauce to everyone's dissatisfaction. Larue had turnip soup, and I had a frisee salad. Dessert was a chocolate cupcake thing for me that was very good. Larue had tiramasu that was different and good. Table mates were two ladies from Montreal. One lady read the menu with a large

magnifying glass.

Went to the late show that was a singing and dancing love story thing. Larue liked it.

### **Day 10 Sunday, April 9**

Hit a few bumps during the night. and rocked around with high winds, that the Captain warned us about. Coming into Cadiz, Spain when I got up. Cadiz is close to the Rock of Gibraltar, and the narrow strait that we pass through tonight going into the Mediterranean. I went through this place while on leave 60 years ago as we traveled through and went across to Tangiers in Morocco. Windy and cooler at 59F, but we have sunshine. The wind blew the cushion on our deck chair away during the night. Breakfast in the Lido.

Will wait for the early birds, and tours to debark then we will get off. About a block from downtown, so things are close. However, being Sunday a lot of things will be closed. Caught the Hop on Hop off Bus at 18 euros (aprox \$20) each in front of the terminal. Rode the circuit a couple of times enjoying the scenery. Wind was blowing hard but lots of sunshine. Beautiful wide beaches, and bluish green water, but not many people out. Hard to believe we are at the spot Columbus departed from. All kinds of outdoor café's, and tavernas.

The ship is going to drydock for a complete refit after it drops us off at the Rome cruise port. We were told all new furnishings, and everything. The crew stays and become laborers during the refit. All of this is probably why we got such a low fare. The ship does not look worn and shabby. Only our couch looks a little tired. Old furniture is being offloaded to dumpsters..

Trucks with provisions alongside. A little later more trucks pull up with furniture and mattresses. Even saw some bathtub enclosures. Looks like we will be late in departing.

Dinner in the main dining room with an interesting couple that live on some bay in Canada. Later a lady arrived and said she was from Louisiana. Didn't look too sharp. Turned out to be the star of the evening. Lives in New Iberia and was a pecan farmer until her

husband died. Sold the farm and now buys pecans and flavors them with Tabasco, and markets them. Told her we had toured Tabasco and asked her if she knew the owners, and she knew the whole family. Travels the world, and has been on some of the most elite ships. Did a Russian ice breaker to Anarctica. She said the ship, crew, food, and Anarctica was fabulous.

The Canadian couple has been everywhere also, including a luxury sailing ship across the Atlantic. These people weren't bragging, but just talking. I was kind of spellbound. The Canadian guy and I had the same interest in WW2 aviation stuff, and had just finished a book that I have read.. He immigrated from Holland when he was 8, and told of the suffering his parents went through during the war. His wife was a nurse.. Thinking back on our travels it seems that nearly all Canadian women travelers we have met have been nurses. Our waiter highly recommended the potato soup with lobster. We all had it , and was excellent. I had Caribbean chicken with rice that was nothing to rave about. Larue had salmon that was good. Nothing special about dessert.

Captain announced it was going to be very windy, and rough tonight, so be careful moving about the ship.

### **Day 11 Monday, April 10**

The Captain was right. The wind blew our deck chairs around last night. We had a different chair pad laying on the deck this morning. Ours blew away the night before. Hoped to see the Rock of Gibraltar during the night. I got up at 1am, but the only thing I saw was a bright light. It was blowing hard, and was rough.

This morning we are in the West Mediteranean and Malaga, Spain. We have traveled 4065nm. Watched us come in. The port area is quite small, and I thought we stopped to wait for something. Took me an hour to realize we were docked at a pier extending out into the bay.

I was sitting on the aft Lido deck enjoying my coffee when 6 big goons dressed in black swept through looking around. Guess they were the local gendarmes looking for terrorists. Dining room was

closed, so went to the Lido Buffet. Larue found a station that we didn't know existed doing poached eggs to order, and had an excellent florentine eggs benedict. I went to the omelette station and got an omelette made to order. It was enough for two.

Malaga is a smallish city with low mountains behind it. The tours offered were not much, so we did not book anything. Do not think we will do anything as the debarking and return requires a very long walk on a skyway. It zigzags down to a shuttle bus that takes you to where there are taxis and such. We will decide later. A tanker has pulled up beside us, and we are getting refueled today.

Since it was a long night last night we decided to stay aboard. Went up to the observation lounge, and sat in the nice chairs, and looked out on the city and mountains. Only a few people sitting reading and relaxing. Cooled it for a while and went down and grazed through the Lido Buffet.

Ended up with just us two at dinner after we said we would share. We both had the shrimp cocktail in a mustard sauce that seemed rather strange. Larue also had a mussel appetizer. Then we both had green salads. Larue had a strip steak. I ventured out with shrimp andouille in a red sauce over polenta and chopped poblano pepper. It was very cajun like, and good, but only 1 small piece of sausage. I had apple strudel for dessert and Larue had lemon cake.

Skipped the violinist in the late show since we would have had to kill an hour before the show started. Enjoyed watching the Masters on TV, and the Spaniard winning.

## **Day 12 Tuesday, April 11**

Pulled into Cartagena, Spain at 7am. Back on board time is 2:30pm. Still in the narrow part of the Mediterranean. Algiers in North Africa is just across from us. Temperature rather cool at 54F, but clear skies. Have traveled 4272nm. A small narrow entry into the port and we are encircled by low mountains. The city (what we can see of it) looks small by European standards and scenic. This is the kind of place I like.

The tours are very limited and expensive, so did not book one. Got off the ship and walked a ways. Saw a tourist bus that we got on for 12 euros total. Tour of the city took 40 minutes. Very clean, and the traffic was very civil. Nice bike lanes on wide sidewalks. A lot of graffiti though.

Got back to the pier area and spotted the "Coyote" with foods (their word) and drinks. Sat outdoors looking out on the marina, and enjoyed a glass of beer. Decided to have fish and chips, since we are on the Mediterranean. The fish (they called bacalao) was encased in a very hard crusty batter. In my estimation not too good - but the fries were tasty. Served with one packet of "ketchup" and one packet of "mayonesa". No such thing as tartar sauce available. Two fish and chips and three glasses of beer total was 20 euros which is not bad at all. Larue dropped something as we were getting up to leave. A Spanish lady retrieved it for her. I said, "Gracias", and she really smiled. Went inside to use the restrooms. The bar was a really waterfront dive, with old wood floors, and rustic wood bar and back bar. My kind of place.

Lots of nice sailboats parked in the marina. Saw one with the name "Snow Goose".

Larue talked to a lady on the bus that said her husband went to guest services on the ship to get a map of Cartagena. He got back to their cabin, and the map was of Cartagena, Columbia!

Back on the ship at 1:30 a little worse for the wear. Sea day tomorrow then the end of the cruise the next day.

Departed Cartagena a little after 3pm getting a good view of the mountains and surroundings. The mountains are barren like Nevada. There are old rock fortifications, ruins, and walls all over.

Did not take long, and I see we are clipping along at 20 knots. We were sitting out on the back deck enjoying an ice cream cone, and the scenery. Two staff members came zipping by with a long black bag on a low dolly. After they went by it registered on me that it looked like a body bag, and jiggled like a body. Larue said they stood it up in a corner out of my line of sight, so guess it was not a

body..

The dinner menu was unexciting. Got a table for 4, and Dave from Houston showed up. We hadn't seen him for awhile. I finally chose chicken with chard soup, salad, and scarlet snapper filet on couscous. Larue had chicken on a stick, salad, and salmon. She had crème brulee for dessert, and I had pineapple crisp. All in all sort of blah dinner.

### **Day 13 Wednesday, April 12**

Fairly smooth sea this morning with a temp of 61F. Went through rain earlier, but clearing up. Heading straight for Sardinia but do not stop. We will go through the narrow straight between Sardinia and Corsica later today as we proceed on to Italy.

Shared a table for 6 at breakfast this morning with the couple from Nashville that we have met before, and a couple now living in Virginia. What a pain she was. She sat down and never stopped talking telling us about all their posts with the State Department, where their kids went to school, and the languages they speak. Then on about their son in the State Department, and now at the embassy in Rome. Then all about the grandkids schools, languages they speak, and on and on. She finally asked what I did. I said "very little", and before I could add my line about, "into convenience stores" she moved right on. She then asked Larue something and resumed talking. Larue said, "if you would just shut up for a while, I would answer your question". That stopped her and her husband was almost cheering. However, she recovered and kept on going. Could not get out of there fast enough.

Down to our last day and time to pack up. We are scheduled off the ship around 8:30. Hope to stretch it out as our van is scheduled for 11am.

### **Day 14 Thursday, April 13**

Arrived at the Rome cruise port very early. By the time I went up for coffee at 6:30am the back deck was closed off. Cranes were depositing containers of stuff for the refit. Noted the elevators were

lined with plywood to protect them for the work ahead.

Our debarkation time was 8:30am. Our number was called about 7:30am while we were in the Lido for breakfast. They were getting people off really early. We took our time and got to the area for wheel chair assistance at 8:15. Then an alarm sounded three times and an announcement directed everyone to proceed off the ship immediately. We were not aware of it, but smoke had been reported on deck 3, and an emergency was in progress.

A young attendant came quickly with a handicapped chair with wheels on it for Larue. Off we went going by emergency responders. The Captain then came on with an announcement that the smoke was found to be a steam leak, and said everything was ok.

We were the last few off the ship and it was only 8:30am. Our bags were standing all alone. Our ride was scheduled for 11am. We just sat around and waited hoping it would show up early. We were the only passengers around. Several busses arrived with workers. They boarded the ship to start the refit. Containers were being loaded onto the fore deck.

Our ride arrived at 10:45. It was an hour long scenic ride to the airport area, and our hotel. We had stayed at the hotel on an earlier trip to Rome, so we were very familiar with it.

Larue didn't feel up to walking a few blocks to get lunch. We went to the little market next to the hotel. Got a package of salami, a package of proscutto, cheese, small bread rounds, potato chips, two beers, and a bottle of Chianti for the evening. The total cost was 15 euros. A little dark looking guy saw us looking and commenting on stuff, and followed us around. As we got to the check stand he asked us if, "we were friends of Trump". We said yes, and he grinned and said, "no like Obama?" I think he liked our response as he was grinning widely. Larue was admiring the fish on display, and she said "English?" He stopped and turned the other direction.

Had a nice lunch on our patio. For dinner we decided to walk down the alley to the mom and pop "4 Steps" pizza and pasta restaurant that we ate at our last trip to Rome. Got there and it was closed, and

in sad condition. Went around the block looking for something on the way back to the hotel. The only option was a Chinese restaurant. So, we had Chinese while in Rome.

The next stop is Geneva. This is continued on that trip report.