

12/21/23

Cruise 2018
Mexican Riviera on the Carnival Splendor
March 17-24, 2018

Drove to SLC Thursday afternoon in snowstorms most of the way.

Had my eye checkup at the Moran Eye Center on Friday. A nurse said I was an ideal candidate for a study she was doing. Then asked if she could perform another hour of scans and photos for her research project. I agreed and she must have taken a 100 pictures. I was about to say uncle before she was done. Dr Bernstein said there was a nice improvement and recommended another laser treatment saying, "we are going to get you there". He did the procedure and said to come back in 3 months.

Saturday, March 17, 2018

Our 8:30am flight to Long Beach Saturday morning looked a little iffy, as a snowstorm was blowing in. We taxied to the de-icing facility, and after a waiting for a while, we were cleared to take off, much to our relief. Missed getting upgraded to 1st class by one seat, but was upgraded to comfort seats in the next row. Had about 3 feet of leg room, so that was nice.

In Long Beach we got a taxi and stopped to buy two bottles of wine that are allowed by Carnival. At the cruise terminal a porter took our bags, and a wheelchair attendant came for LaRue. and away we went. Carnival has done away with the long lines to check in. We presented our boarding passes to a guy that scanned them with a portable device, and then went directly through security, and straight onto the ship. However, security took away our opened bottle of water. We hardly stopped and were in our cabin by 11:30am. The room key sail and sign card was in the mailbox by the cabin door. Slickest boarding we have ever done.

We are very familiar with the ship. We were on it 48 days around South America in 2013.

For lunch I had a hot pastrami sandwich from the aft outside deli (my favorite place), and a green salad. LaRue grazed through the Italian line in the buffet.

We always get a wine package after boarding as it is about a 20% savings. There are usually 3 different packages but this cruise there is just two with the basic selection of 5 bottles for \$115 then a premium selection of 5 for \$157. The basic level was too limited, so we splurged for the premium one with a great selection. What the heck, another \$9 per bottle for better wine seems to be worth it when you are on a cruise with no other options.

It was good to see the Splendor again. It brings back a lot of memories. A lot of young families and kids, since it is spring break. The ice cream machines can't keep up with the demand.

We were headed down to deck 4 for the life boat drill and an attendant noticed LaRue with a cane and directed us to a nice lounge. We could sit for the briefing, instead of lining up on the deck outside. When it was over we were directed to a reserve elevator for special needs people.

We went to anytime dining in a midship dining room at 7pm and had a table for two. The servers were friendly, efficient, and did a great job. I had a shrimp cocktail, green salad, sweet and spicy Thai shrimp, and apple pie ala mode. LaRue had a salmon appetizer, green salad, the shrimp entrée, and chocolate melting cake that she likes so well for dessert. With a special reserve bottle of Malbec we had a good evening. We skipped the late show as we were shot.

Sunday, March 18, 2018 At sea

I was awake at 6am, so got up and went up for coffee and a walk. The sea was smooth and made it easy walking. Hardly anyone out that early. The sports track on deck 11 had two joggers, but I prefer the longer decks 10 and 11. I was the only one. I hit all three decks and got back to the cabin where we had ordered coffee and a couple of muffins.

Cool and cloudy with rain squalls in the distance. No ship movement at all. We went to the dining room for a late breakfast. Shared a table with two couples about our age, and hit it off really well. I had eggs benedict which was good. LaRue had a steak filet and eggs that she really liked. I tasted her filet and it was great.

We were not ready to eat lunch in the dining room before it closed. Went later to the Lido buffet for something light, I had a green salad and a hot dog from the poolside grill, and LaRue got a tuna sandwich from the aft outside deli. I gave up on getting a soft ice-cream cone as there were too many in line. Just as well.

It was formal night, or at least dress better, for dinner. Had one of my mini bottles in the cabin then headed for dinner at 7pm for anytime dining. Had to wait about 15 minutes and was called for a table for two. LaRue requested John, who was our waiter the night before. We got John but it was a different John on the other side of the dining room. I went for the shrimp cocktail, Italian wedding soup, prime rib, and chocolate ice cream. The prime rib was a huge slab but rather mundane. LaRue had fried oysters, spinach salad, two orders of lobster tail, and crême brulee. Each order of lobster tail had three large sautéed shrimp, so she had a lot. Our wine selection was a nice bottle of Columbia Crest estate merlot.

Decided not to stay up for the late show. All the venues were really hopping, as the young crowd was getting into it. Not rowdy but having fun.

Monday, March 19, 2018 At Sea

Smooth sea all night and this morning. I had a half cup of coffee on the aft deck and was out walking by 6:30am. Only a few people out. Clear skies and 68 degrees with the sun just coming up. Watching for whales but no activity. I did see a large school of dolphins jumping along the starboard side.

LaRue had room service coffee and croissants when I got back to the cabin. She got a dollar bill from the safe for a tip and punched a wrong number when she closed it and didn't remember what it was. Oh well, a phone call, and an officer came and opened it.

On sea days brunch is served in the main dining room until 1pm so we went to a late brunch. We used our two free drink vouchers for huge bloody marys. I had a fruit plate and huevos rancheros that were excellent. LaRue had a fruit plate and a salmon plate. It was a nice relaxed morning.

For lunch I had a salad and a reuben sandwich from the aft deli. LaRue grazed the Caribbean buffet.

Went to the dining room for dinner at 7pm. Had a 15 minute wait for a table and ended up at the same table and the same waiters as the night before. I had leek and potato soup, spring rolls, grilled tilapia, and blueberry pie ala mode for dessert. LaRue had, a shrimp cocktail, navy bean soup, lamb shanks, and passion fruit flan for dessert. She said the lamb shank was the best ever, and most satisfying dinner ever on a cruise ship. My dinner was good but tilapia is tilapia. At least I got my fish night over with. Our wine was a nice Napa valley Hess Cabernet Sauvignon. First time for a Hess wine and we liked it.

Tuesday, March 20, 2018 Puerto Vallarta.

Up early and got my walk in. Just me walking on deck 11. Nice sunny morning at 75 degrees and smooth seas. Skipped room service and went early to the main dining room for breakfast. The greeter said “good morning LaRue” and that was just our third time seeing her. I had a spanish omelet and LaRue had an egg white frittata. Pulled in and docked about noon. Watched for whales all morning but saw nothing. Guess they have already migrated north.

We got off the ship at 1pm as we wanted to go across town to the Sea Monkey in old town for lunch. City buses go by very close, but are too difficult and dangerous for LaRue. We already knew the port transportation would be expensive. A port taxi driver quoted \$36 per person or a shared van at \$26 per person. I could see yellow taxi's across the street, and knew we had an affordable option. I then saw a taxi driver was on our side of the street soliciting. He wanted us to walk across the street to his taxi, which we said we couldn't do. He then said he would go get his taxi and pick us up in front of the ship even though it was against the rules for him. He quoted \$10, which was about double what it should be, but we were not about to hassle him. He would take us to the Cheeseburger Monkey on the Malecon. He didn't know where the Sea Monkey was, so we directed him. It was a lot further than he thought but a deal is a deal.

We had fish taco's, and \$1 Corona's at the Sea Monkey. The temperature was 78 degrees, with a little breeze coming off the ocean, which seemed cool to us. Kept looking for Hank and Conrad but didn't see them. (We met Hank and Conrad in our early years in PV. They started and ran Chillies restaurant on Pulpito Street. We met them since Hank was from Mackay, Idaho. They are now retired, and live full time behind the Sea Monkey, where we often see them) Passed on the Burro Beach Bar as we were full. We looked around a little and got a taxi back to the ship.

We overnight in Puerto Vallarta. We had planned to go back to old town for dinner, but decided to avoid the hassle. We will have a nice quiet (and paid for) dinner on the ship.

We ended up in the same area as the two previous nights with the same head waiter, John, and he called us by name. He then moved us to the same table we had the previous two nights, as it was a better table by a window. He said it was our table. I had the shrimp cocktail, beef barley soup, penne mariscos, and chocolate panna cotta with warm chocolate to pour over it. It was a lot of decadent chocolate. LaRue had escargot, green salad, grilled salmon, the same desert, plus a special one she likes, buttery popcorn pot du crême. My taste of it was excellent.

Wednesday, March 21, 2018 Puerto Vallarta

I was up at 6am ships time which was 7am local time. The temperature was a cool 72 degrees. It was hoodie weather for the locals. I walked from the pier to our old resort, the Villa Del Palmar and Del Mar which is a little over a mile. It was the reverse of what I often do when we are in Puerto Vallarta, and I walk to the pier and watch the cruise ships come in. I felt right at home. I walked by the Villa Del Palmar restaurant and saw a waiter we know, Celestino. He recognized me and we talked for a bit. The resort looked the same.

Got back and we went to the dining room for breakfast. Not many people around, as most are out on tours. I had eggs benedict and LaRue had a salmon thing.

Looked for Jerry, our beach vendor friend, in the vendor booths at the pier. He sells sunglasses at the pier when cruise ships come in. I didn't see him.

For lunch LaRue hit the Indian cuisine in the aft Tandoor grill, and I got a cheeseburger at the poolside grill. The Norwegian Star pulled in this morning somewhat blocking our excellent view towards downtown. We were on the Star in 2006 with the Washington wine growers cruise on the Mexican Riviera.

Departed PV at 3:30pm on a smooth glassy sea, blue sky, and sunshine. Sat out on the veranda watching the downtown area fade away, and watched for whales. Saw about six that were not active. They would barely roll their back above the water to breath and disappear. I think they must have been taking an afternoon nap.

Went to dinner about 7:30pm. Didn't get John, as all of his tables were occupied, but we were close. John saw us and came by to say hello. Had a nice bottle of Layer Cake Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley. I went Italian for dinner with melon prosciutto, minestrone soup, Milanese fettuccine with sausage, and ended with chocolate ice cream, since it was the least decadent. LaRue had a shrimp cocktail, lettuce wedge salad, pork spare ribs, and a s'mores layered dessert which she liked. We called it a night after dinner.

Thursday, March 22, 2018 Cabo San Lucas

I was walking on the upper decks as we pulled into Cabo and enjoyed the sights. Smooth sea and sun coming up with a temperature around 78. Lots of fishing charters headed out. One was heading across our bow, and our bridge crew gave him three blasts of the horn to warn him. I love that deep sound. The guy kept going and did not clear us by a whole lot. We anchored out a ways and tenders run nonstop all day.

We had a leisurely breakfast in the main dining room. I ordered the corned beef hash breakfast. All that came out was hash. The waiter was thinking a side of hash. I then had him get me French toast and poached eggs. LaRue had waffles with apple compote, poached eggs with bacon. The compote was missing. Other than those things it was pretty good.

We decided to stay on the ship in Cabo. Boarding a tender is risky for people with mobility issues. Also, once you get to the pier it is the same old souvenir shops and vendors. Nice quiet day reading in sunshine, and 83 degrees.

Did not see any whales. Not surprising as there are so many jet skies and boats roaring around. Everyone was to be back by the last tender at 2:45 for our departure at 3:30pm.

Formal night tonight. We went to dinner at 7:30 expecting to wait for a table but went right in for a table with John. Had a good visit with a couple from Fairbanks on one side, and a couple from Los Angeles on the other side. I had an Italian bean and pasta soup, green salad, jumbo prawns, and grand marnier souffle for dessert. LaRue had a crab cake, green salad, lamb chops (\$20 upcharge), and the same dessert. She said the lamb chops were excellent and worth the upcharge. Our wine selection was Kendall Jackson Merlot. Hardly anyone in the venues tonight. Everyone must be burned out.

Friday, March 23, 2018 At Sea

The ship is rocking this morning for the first time. Overcast and 72 degrees. Too difficult to walk outside as a strong wind is blowing. Went to the brunch and I had huevos rancheros that I really like. LaRue had steak and eggs that she really likes. For some reason I don't like steak for breakfast. The taste I had of hers was excellent.

Debark tomorrow, so it is pack up time today. We are in the first group off, and scheduled for 9am. Getting wheelchair assistance for LaRue, so we might have to wait for that. Tonight is the Captain's party, so will go to that at 5pm.

The end