

12/10/23

**Alaska Cruise
Holland America Oosterdam
September 15 – 22, 2019**

Sunday, September 15.

Rainy day in Seattle. We were off the Star Princess at 9:45am. A really helpful porter lady loaded up our bags and took us through customs. Then to the Holland America side of the terminal which was only about 100ft. She got us two chairs in front of the security checkpoint. We could wait indoors until the doors to the outside opened for the boarding process starting at 10:30. She also made sure the Holland America people knew to get a wheelchair for Larue. Just cannot say enough about the service and the Holland America people that kept checking on us, and keeping us informed.

An older guy showed up with a wheelchair right on time. Really a talkative guy that gave us his life story. His name was Richard Gough with Richard Gough. He said he also works at the Boeing Museum of Flight, and he has all the books the Apollo astronauts wrote. I just happened to bring a book to reread, "The Last Man on the Moon" by Gene Cernan. It is autographed by Cernan and told him so. Also told him Gene Cernan and Edgar Mitchell, the 6th man on the moon, stayed at our motel for two days, and I got to visit a lot with them. That impressed him. (Note: Cernan also wrote ***"To Harry and LaRue Glad you enjoy this journey to the (unreadable word) and thanks for your hospitality. Gene Cernan 5/21/99***).

We whisked through security and checking in. Then to a waiting area for wheelchair assistance to wait for boarding to begin. We were #1 in line for wheelchair assistance. A ship staff member came with a wheelchair and he took us straight to our cabin shortly after 11am. We went to the Lido buffet around 11:30. We saw our bags that had just come off the elevator. What a way to travel. Transferring ship to ship was a pleasure.

Great to be back on the Oosterdam. It's a ship we know well having spent 17 days in April from Fort Lauderdale to San Diego through the Panama Canal. She was relocating to start the summer cruises to Alaska. We were also on her one other time on the Mexican Riviera for 7 days. Now we are back on her for her next to

last cruise to Alaska. So nice to have a couch to sit on a nice large bathtub ,and shower in the bathroom.

A nice little touch when the ship pulls away. A guy on the pier with a saxophone puts on quite a show. We all wave and give him a cheer.

Went down to dinner about 7pm. It is a straight shot from our cabin down to the dining room. There were two hosts directing people to tables and another special host that was handling guests for Orange Club priority seating. The Orange Club is something new. We found out later that you pay \$35 per person per day to get preferred seating. The Orange Club host saw us and welcomed us back to the Oosterdam. He said he remembered us, and after we looked at him, we remembered him. His name is Doni. We asked for our favorite waiter, Randy, but he is on home rotation. We decided on a table for two. We could have had any table we wanted. We had a good waiter that did a great job. The wine steward that we knew for that section was on home rotation also. We ordered a 6 bottle wine package#2 from the new wine steward. When he brought our wine, he said he would not place our order until the next day, as they have to collect a Seattle sales tax on departure day. Very nice of him.

We both started with the chicken and leek soup, then a green salad. Larue had pork loin with green beans. I had beef stroganoff that was very good. I had a lemon tart for dessert. Larue had crème brulee and a chocolate thing. It was a nice dinner and prompt service.

Monday, September 16.

A rolling sea causing some fore and aft up and down motion. Only 230 meters of water underneath us. It is always interesting to see the animation of the ships two rear azipods. They are never aligned exactly the same, and rotate at different rpm's.

Went to the dining room for breakfast and the Orange Club host, Doni, told the waiters standing around that we were on the ship through the Panama Canal in April. Was nice to see a big breakfast menu after the Star Princess. So many choices that we like. I settled on eggs benedict which were good. Larue had her favorite English breakfast which was huge.

Lounged around all morning and went to the dining room for lunch. Shared a table with a couple our age from Ohio. He was a former sales rep and his territory was the northwest states and he had been to Idaho a lot. He asked about the Stardust motel in Idaho Falls and I had to tell him that it had been demolished for a Hilton Gardens. The Stardust was our hangout in the old days. We both had a chicken, spinach, and squash soup. I had a Rubeen and Larue had tilapia. We both had a chocolate Sunday for dessert.

Heading into rain this afternoon with a low overcast. Juneau tomorrow is supposed to be good according to the Captain on the noon announcement. The whitecaps are getting bigger and it is getting rougher.

Formal night tonight. Shared a table with a couple from Israel. She said she is 5th generation. After talking a while he said he lived in Mendoza, Argentina until he was 22. No other explanation about his past. They said it was election day in Israel for a new President and they did not want the current guy Netan... (can't spell it). Was waiting for them to bring up our politics but they didn't. We both had a nice shrimp cocktail that featured very large shrimp. I then had a green salad and Larue had escargot. For an entrée I had a very nice beef tenderloin and Larue had rack of lamb. I had romanoff strawberries with vanilla ice cream and Larue had a chocolate thing. It was a very nice dinner.

After dinner we headed for the theater all the way forward. However, it was difficult walking as we were in rough seas. We decided not to risk a fall. So, we turned around and returned to the cabin.

Tuesday, September 17.

Clocks went back an hour last night. Was still hard to get up at 7am. Temperature is 51 degrees and sunshine. The azipod animation showed a 1 degree difference with one at 96 rpm and the other at 103 rpm. Ships speed is 18.8 knots in 600 meters of water.

Cruising up the Stephens Passage towards Juneau where we arrive around 1pm. Spectacular scenery with high mountain peaks. A big snow covered peak with a huge glacier is on our starboard side. Now seeing a few small icebergs in the water.

Had breakfast in the dining room. I had a ham and cheese skillet with poached eggs ,and Larue had a southwest omelette. It was a good breakfast.

Beautiful sunny day in Juneau when we docked at 12:30. Had lunch in the dining room with a couple from Copenhagen, Denmark and a lady from Tennessee and her grown son from somewhere else. It was a short menu featuring a choice of two appetizers, two entrees and two desserts. Larue had soup, halibut fish and chips, and a berry crisp for dessert. I had a bay shrimp cocktail, halibut fish and chips, and the berry crisp.

Larue stayed on the ship and I got off for a while and bought her a remedy for a dry cough. Also went to the world famous Red Dog Saloon which was packed since there are three cruise ships in town. Enjoyed the old boy playing honky tonk piano and antagonizing people with his commentary. A sign in the bar said, "if you don't like the service or the place, lower your expectations". A pint of beer was \$7. I only had two.

We have both got a dry cough so asked for a table for two for dinner. Got a great one with hardly anyone around and great ambience. Good waiter (Rahmat), assistant waiter (Hansen), and wine steward (Ellen). Will try for them again. I had a spicy vegetable spring roll and chicken soup for appetizers. Didn't want any of the entrée's on the featured menu so chose a NY strip steak from the everyday menu. Had a banana something for dessert. Larue had a salmon bruchetta, the spring roll, lamb shank, and pineapple crisp with vanilla ice cream for dessert. It was a nice dinner.

Wednesday, September 18

Heavy overcast and started to rain on my first lap on the top deck. Stopped in the Observation Lounge and saw the temperature is 56 degrees and the humidity is 96%. The speed is 18 knots and the sea 3-5 ft with whitecaps. The azipods were 1 degree different with the left one at 85rpm and the left one at 94rpm. Finished my walk on deck 3 under the cover of the lifeboats and the ships overhangs. About 4 people out walking or looking around.

We pull into the Hubbard glacier this afternoon, but we might not see much with the weather condition.

Had a quiet breakfast in the dining room and we both had a fruit plate then Larue had Texas French toast and I had buttermilk pancakes.

I went to the theater at 11am to an Ask the Captain session that was interesting. The Captain is Dutch, is in mid 50's, and very professional. It took seven years of maritime schooling to get his Master's License. I was impressed with him compared to the showoff Italian Captain on the Star Princess. He was talking about the diesel power plants of which there are six. They are split between two separated engine rooms in case of fire or other bad things. They are tall as two decks in height. He said we don't talk about mpg but we will use 700 tons of fuel on this trip. He said it is something like 100 gallons per 65 ft if I remember him right. We will use 600 tons of fresh water every day and the ship makes that much easily. On sea days he can work in his office and conduct meetings and tour around the ship talking to staff and people. He visits the bridge about every four hours. On port days he is on the bridge 3 hours before and 3 hours after docking. He said there are four officers on duty on the bridge. He said stabilizers control side to side roll, but there is nothing he can do for the fore and aft pitching.

The Captain in his noon announcement said weather and ice conditions will dictate how close we can get to the Hubbard Glacier. Right now the forward outside decks are closed. I don't expect we will see much of the Hubbard Glacier. Oh well, we were there once on a beautiful sunny day. I even thought it looks like this may be it. Was not aware of it but a small expedition tour boat is meeting us to take passengers on an up close and personal look at the glacier for only \$260 per person. An announcement just stated that once they are loaded we will resume our trip to get as close to the glacier as weather and ice conditions allow.

The weather lifted a little and we got to within about a mile of the glacier. Had a great view. They put our side parallel to the glacier and we heard loud booms and cracks, but saw no big calving activity. That was probably due to the cool weather. The weather started coming in again just as they turned the other side of the ship to the glacier. The view was gone for that side. You could go topside anytime, but it was pretty wet. The people that paid big money for the tour boat were about halfway between us and the glacier,, so don't think it was worth it for them. It is raining hard as we leave the glacier.

Went to the dining room for dinner and asked for a table with Rahmat. Doni immediately came over from the Orange Club desk and said he would take care of us and would go check. He came back and had table 183 that we liked so well the night before. Rahmat, Hansen, and Ellen were glad to see us back. It is an honor for them and good for their career to have guests request them. Hansen the assistant waiter is really a character. He weighs about 90 pounds and is the one that carries the stacks of food from the kitchen. We do a lot of laughing and visiting with them. Also have to mention Mary the little gal that escorts people to the table. The first night she could not pronounce Larue. It came out laloo. She saw us come in and was so proud she could now pronounce Larue. She said she had been practicing all day.

The couple from Ohio, that we had lunch with a day or so ago, came by our table and said they had shared a table at lunch with a lady and her daughter from Twin Falls. He didn't recall her name, but that she had owned a plastic fabrication business in Twin.

Thursday, September 19

The sea was rough during the night. I kept waking up, so it was a long night. Overcast and rain as we pulled into Sitka. The temp is 51 degrees and 98% humidity. The azipods are both headed straight, but there is a difference of 10rpm's.

It is a pretty place with islands and high mountains all over the place. The last time we here was 13 years ago. We anchored in the bay in front of the downtown area and were tendered in. Now they have a cruise ship dock in a small cove well away from downtown. Cannot see anything of Sitka from the ship. It is raining and will probably not venture off the ship. No Verizon service here and thus no free internet service. Will have to wait until Ketchikan tomorrow.

Simple breakfast in the dining room. I had the American breakfast and Larue had a build your own omelette.

Every time I would decide to get off the ship it would start raining again. Finally gave it up. The dining room was closed for lunch so went to the Lido buffet. Had a salad and built me a super taco at the taco bar. Larue had a salad and grazed the buffet.

When we entered the dining room for dinner, Doni was checking in Orange Club Members. He left them and gave our table assignment to our host. It was the table we really like and have had three nights in a row. We feel really special. The dinner menu was creations of the celebrity chefs on the Culinary Council ,so it was a bit eclectic. We both started with a bean soup and decided to go with fish. Larue had crusted sole on a bed of couscous and a mixture of other things. I had halibut on a bed of lemon mashed potatoes and chopped prosciutto. Neither entrée was that great. Larue had a fruit sunday for dessert and I had a lemon tart thing. Our wine stewardess spent a lot of time talking to us. Her contract (they now call them rotations) is for 8 months then she is on vacation for 3 months. Her husband also works for Holland America and is a beverage manager. Since he is an officer his rotation is 6 months ,so it is a bit awkward. Holland America does everything they can to get them on the same ship. He rejoined the ship 2 weeks ago and their rotation will be at the same time. Family cares for their son. She plans on doing this 10 more years. She says they need to get their son through college and make payments on a house and car. It is a good life for them.

Our assistant waiter, Hansen, was really busy. I remarked on how busy he was and he said “I’m just pretending”.

Friday, September 19

Pulled into Ketchikan really early as we were docked when I looked out at 6am. It is socked in and a steady light rain. Nothing but souvenir shops along the pier, so will not get off unless the rain stops. We leave at 1pm. The temperature is 54 degrees and the humidity is 100%

Wasn’t paying any attention and we ended up at a table for 8 for breakfast. It was an oval table. Not many people around us so I could hear most everything. The lady beside me couldn’t hear much of anything. There were 3 people from Redmond, Washington, 3 people from San Diego, and us. The couple from Redmond said Microsoft, Google, and Amazon are based in Redmond and it makes it nearly impossible to go anywhere when shifts are changing. I said we get perturbed when we have to wait for 2 or 3 cars. Everyone at the table had eggs except me. I had banana bread French toast with berries.

The rain continues ,so will stay on the ship. A good day for reading. Brought up Cruise ship Tracker on my computer and I see two more cruise ships on the way in. With us and two ships that came in behind us it will make five cruise ships visiting Ketchikan.

The dining room was only open one hour for lunch. It was a minimal menu of two items per course. We both had scallops for an appetizer. Larue had the brisket and I had the three cheese mac and cheese. She had lemon merange pie and I had rum raisin pudding.

Formal night tonight and the clocks also go forward an hour. Went to the dining room a little later than usual as Boise State and Air Force was on TV. Doni already had our table assignment tag printed and waiting for us and it was the table we like. The head waiter, Rahmat, came out and assisted Larue up the two steps to the higher level our table is on. The menu was special for formal night and we both went with the surf and turf. We started with the shrimp cocktail. The shrimp were large and good. Holland America uses a different white sauce, so we ask for American red sauce and get it. The surf and turf was excellent. The lobster tail was large (about 3 times larger than on Princess) and really tasty. On Princess we could hardly eat it. The beef was tenderloin of beef and done perfectly. We were perfectly happy. Hansen wanted to bring us another lobster tail but we were full. For dessert I had an orange cake and larue had flowerless chocolate cake with ice cream. Hansen brought extra ice cream. He says everyone needs ice cream. One night he said he had four scoops before starting the dinner service. Hansen has six years with Holland America. I asked him how long it takes to make head waiter and he said a long time. I told him to bypass the head waiter job and go for Captain. He liked that. It was a really nice evening. The whole dining room staff takes care of us. Gonna have to leave some cash tips.

Saturday, September 21

Hard to get up after losing an hour last night. Made it out at 7am and the wind is blowing so hard I could barely walk on deck 10 to get to the Observation Lounge. We are flying along at 22.8 knots and the temp is 60 degrees. Total overcast but no rain so far. Azipods are both at 1 degree with 10 rpm difference. Went down to deck 3 to walk but found the outside decks are now closed, so walked inside.

Noticed for the first time a handwritten flip chart noting wildlife that have been seen. Humpback whales were seen on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday and always around 8:30am. One Orca whale was seen. We have not seen any whales on this trip, but have not been really looking either.

Shared a table with a nice couple from Olympia, Washington. They mentioned their invitation to the Captain's lunch and we realized we had not gotten an invitation. Checked with the front desk and we got our invitation. All it gets you is a lunch and a glass of wine, so it is no big deal. The Captain says a few words. Things got mixed up as I booked this cruise through Expedia because they give a \$200 credit on your shipboard account. I had it covered (I thought) with Holland America but apparently not.

It is pack up day again. We are using a new service where our bags go directly to Delta. This morning we got our Delta baggage tags and boarding passes, so we don't have to go through checking in at the airport. Best part is there is no extra charge.

The Captain spoke briefly at lunch and we had a champagne toast. The lunch menu was simple. At least you don't over eat. We were at a table for 10 and hard to talk but were seated next to an old couple from Las Vegas. He was 90 years old and has lived his whole life in Las Vegas. He remembers Las Vegas when the only street was Fremont Street and it was a dirt road.

Pulled into Victoria at 6pm and leave at midnight. We will stay on the ship. We traveled all day alongside the mega ship Norwegian Bliss that was just off our patio. They eventually dropped behind and came in behind us and the Star Princess.

Went to the dining room for dinner and our favorite section and table was closed since most of the people were off the ship. We were the only table in our area until we were about done. I had a pasta dish and Larue had calves liver which she said was very good.

Seattle in the morning so this is about it for this cruise. One important thing I learned on this cruise is that black bears do not attack people. There are no reports of it happening.

Sunday, September 22, 2019

We travelled 2283 miles on this cruise and used 187,000 gallons of fuel. That is .012 miles per gallon. Eggs consumed was 23,400.

Off the ship at 9:30am and straight to a taxi. No traffic and had a flat fare of \$47 with a nice driver. What was once a nice airport is now a mess. Hordes of people and we walked a mile to our gate. Good that Larue had a wheelchair. Noticed as we went by long lines for people checking in that Delta has lines just for Microsoft and Amazon employees.

That's it for this journey. hh