

1/28/24

**Alaska Cruise
Princess Star
September 8 – September 15, 2019**

Sunday, September 8.

The Delta gate agent in Boise moved us up front to the comfort seats, so Larue would not have to walk so far. Had lots of leg room and free drinks. However, the weather was rough and service was cancelled. So much for free drinks. It was too early in the morning anyway.

A very helpful porter in Seattle recommended a \$60 fixed fare limo service and got us to the proper line. We were on our way to the cruise terminal by 8:45am, and worrying about what we would do until boarding time. It was a mess at the cruise terminal as two ships were unloading passengers. It was slow going to where the driver needed to let us off. We were glad we opted for the fixed fare limo service rather than the metered taxi. We finally got parked where a porter was unloading his cart for outgoing taxi passengers. I grabbed him. He loaded us up and took us to the entrance.

We needed a stapler to finish stapling our baggage tags as we had run out. He rounded one up and finished the job and showed us where to wait to check in. By then it was almost 10am. The wait was about 30 minutes before they opened the doors. We zipped through the check in process. Then it was wait in the wheelchair assistance area until the doors open for boarding. We were the 5th and 6th on the ship. Was in the buffet having lunch at 11:30am. The early arrival was not bad at all. We had to kill time in the buffet until 1pm when the cabins were ready. Our bags were sitting in front of our door when we got there.

The ship looks clean and in good shape for being built in 2002. Guest capacity is 3100 which is larger than we like. The downside of Princess is they do not put couches in their standard veranda cabins. The two times previously on Princess there was a nice comfortable chair and a desk chair. There is only the desk chair in our cabin. Asked our steward about it and he said the big chairs were taken out to provide more room. Room for

what? Not happy about that. We took a deck chair from the patio and put it in the cabin.

The shower is the smallest we have seen since the last time on Princess. A 300 pounder would touch all sides. If you were to drop the soap forget about picking it up. They provide liquid soap and shampoo ,so that solves that problem. However, you can't read the labels. There is also no handheld shower head, which is annoying. I wonder how big people get showered.

We were in our cabin a while and our steward came by to introduce himself. We were shocked when he told us they wanted to recarpet our cabin the next day. We would have to kill the afternoon elsewhere. We sputtered ok. After thinking about it we told him we did not want it done.

I guess we have cruised enough that we are very picky, and we will just make the most of it. No need to voice our frustrations on the crew. They for the most part are great.

Cruising out of Seattle we were overtaking a submarine traveling on the surface. It had an escort of six Coast Guard gun boats. Next to it was a large ship with a crane. They were just a few feet apart. It was a black submarine with no markings on the conning tower. Could not figure that one out.

Got a surprise on the dining room location. I picked our cabin near the aft elevators thinking it would be straight down to the dining room or straight up to the buffet as we have gotten accustomed to. This ship has two dining rooms in the middle of the ship. One is on deck 5 and the other on deck 6. The only deck that goes straight thru for us is on Deck 7 and we are on Deck 12. So ,we have to go down to deck 7 and walk to the middle of the ship and go down on the elevator again. A lot of walking.

Went to dinner around 7pm and shared a table with a couple from Spokane and a couple from Portland. We all opted for the prime rib and it was very good. We both had a shrimp cocktail for the appetizer. Larue had crème brulee for dessert and I had a fruit tart.

Monday, September 9.

Smooth seas. Found a fairly good walking deck on deck 15 as well as the Promenade deck 7. Shared a breakfast table with a couple from Klamath Falls, Oregon, and couple from Florida. Larue had a scramble for breakfast with scallop potatoes and I had pancakes.

We went to a lecture at 9:30 on Alaska wildlife. Following that was a talk by a fishing boat Captain that was on a boat that was on the Deadliest Catch TV show the first two years. He was then a 20 year old deck hand on the Aleutian Ballard in 2003 when a rogue wave capsized the boat knocking out the windows and severely disabling the boat. By a miracle it later righted itself and they limped two days into port. He said he took some time off then came back fishing in the Bering sea. After going overboard and being saved two times he gave it up and fished for crab out of Seattle and San Francisco. A few years ago his former Captain of the Aleutian Ballard contacted him to join him in a new tourist adventure with the old ship doing tourist tours in Ketchikan. I talked to him later and got me a ticket for the tour in Ketchikan. The rogue wave and capsizing was captured by the Deadliest Catch film crew that was on board. The producer says it is by far the most watched episode on Deadliest Catch.

For dinner it was a formal night. We shared a table with a couple from southern California. but they grew up in the Azores. The other couple was from St. Louis. The lady from St Louis was an ex airline hostess and got really gregarious after some wine. Her other half was quiet and drank coke. When he spoke he had a very dry wit that got everyone going. He was a spitting image of Vladimir Putin, and I almost called him Vladimir. His suit must have been a \$1,000 or more suit. He tipped the waiter \$20 when they left. It was a loud and fun dinner.

Tuesday, September 10.

It was very smooth sailing all night. Three cruise boats in Ketchikan. Rather nice day in Ketchikan, which is the rainiest city in the U.S. For breakfast I had the special which was huevos rancheros, which I love. It was two fried eggs on top of a flour tortilla and a bowl of bad refried beans and a little pico de gallo. Not what I expected. Larue had salmon, bagel, and cream cheese.

I took off at 10.30 to catch the tour aboard the Aleutian Ballard. It was fitted with three levels of seats facing the launcher and retriever gear. The Captain and his staff demonstrated the art of crab fishing, rock fish, halibut fishing, and shrimp fishing while we sailed out to the fishing area. They then set and retrieved pots with live crab in them. I even got to hold a crab while it was trying to latch onto me. All the while the Captain and staff told us what it was really like fishing in the Bering Sea and surviving the rogue wave that capsized the Aleutian Ballard. The tour was three hours and probably one of the best tours I have ever been on.

We sailed from Ketchikan at 3pm. It was warm and sunny. We sat on our verandah in the sunshine until 7pm in shirt sleeves enjoying the view. Our Captain announced we might see whales around 7pm and we did.

We went to dinner and requested Manny who we liked on the first night. We had a table for four but ended up by ourselves. We both had the shrimp cocktail for an appetizer. I had a boston bib salad and a medallion of beef thing. It was really a fancy beef pot pie Larue had a goat cheese souffle for a second appetizer then scallops with pork belly and green beans. I had crème brulee for dessert and Larue had a chocolate extravaganza that she didn't like. Manny also brought a cheese cake and strawberry compote that we really didn't want, but had a couple of bites to be polite.

Wednesday, September 11.

Up early has we are entering the Tracy Fjord at 6am. very spectacular and narrow with towering mountains on both sides. The water is glacial green and a few small icebergs floating around. Reminds me of the Magellan Straits at the tip of South America. People on the decks everywhere making it difficult to walk.

Shared a table with the couple from Spokane for breakfast. I had the special, which was minute steak and eggs, and Larue had pancakes. Nothing to brag about. We had the same bad waiter as yesterday.

Four cruise ships in Juneau today so the town will be busy. Nothing scheduled for us. I got off the ship and walked around Juneau. Was going to visit the Red Dog Saloon but the line was out the door. The music was

blasting my ears off, so I decided to continue on. Checked out the tram to the top of the mountain, but a ticket was \$35. I didn't want to do it that bad. Returned to the ship and took a nap.

Had dinner with Manny, our favorite waiter, and shared a table with a couple from Phoenix, a lady from Edmonton, and a lady from Lynwood, Washington. It was seafood night and I had potato soup, a salad, surf and turf, and red current sorbet. Larue had a crab cake, surf and turf, and a Sunday. Manny brought three extra desserts. Oh well.

Thursday, September 12.

Smooth sailing during the night. Arrived in Skagway and two cruise ships were already docked. Cool day and overcast, but no rain. Went for a quick breakfast in the dining room and ended up at a table with the couple from Phoenix that we had dinner with last night. We both had the special ,which was eggs benedict. Among the worst eggs benedict ever.

Got off the ship at 8:30 to catch our tour on the White Pass and Yukon train for the trip up the White Pass. It is a narrow gauge railway with vintage cars and a vintage diesel. It was spectacular winding up 20 miles and 3,000 ft to the top where we looped around and came back. In places we could see the trail the would be gold miners used to get over the pass. For them it was another 600 miles to Dawson City, which was their destination. Not many made it. Never saw any bears but we did see Mountain Goats. It was a very worthwhile tour.

It was very scenic departing Skagway as it is narrow with towering mountains on both sides. Lots of rivulets of water streaming down and waterfalls. Once in a while we could spot a glacier. Kept looking for a bear but I think the terrain was too steep.

Asked for a small table with Manny for dinner. Ended up at the table for four without anybody joining us. It was Italian night and we both had proscutto and melon for an appetizer. Then I had minestrone soup and Larue had a green salad. We both had scallops and shrimp that didn't have any flavor. Manny also brought a plate of spaghetti and meatballs. The spaghetti had a little flavor. We have noticed that food is very bland on this ship. We both had lemoncello sorbet that was very good.

Friday, September 13.

We are in the Gulf of Alaska this morning and bouncing. It is a gray overcast and some rain. Had to improvise and walk indoors. Later I took a low dose Dramamine as a precaution.

Had breakfast with a nice couple from North Dakota and two guys from Minnesota who are first time cruisers. We have met a lot of first time cruisers, and very few high time cruisers, which is very unusual. I had the special, which was blueberry pancakes, and Larue had a salmon omelette. Our service was very slow, and we were about the last out of the dining room.

At 10:15 I went to a cooking demonstration in the theater with a tour of the galley after the demonstration. Every seat in the two level theater was filled, and people were standing everywhere. So much for that. I gave up.

The ride is getting rougher this afternoon with sharp jolts back and forth. Larue didn't want to walk to the dining room, so we went up to the buffet which we don't care much for. The salad bar is good, and the ice cream is good, except it is a long walk forward for the ice cream. So, I go get two ice creams and stagger back and forth. The pizza and hot dogs and hamburgers are all the way forward. I sampled a slice of the pizza the first day of the cruise and thought it awful. Same with the hamburgers, but the hot dog was good. Shared a table with a couple from north of Seattle. They said it was their first cruise and it was their 60 year anniversary cruise paid for by her sister.

Formal night tonight. Attended the Captain's cocktail party at 5pm in the large Vista lounge directly below us. A nice venue and well done with the ship's orchestra playing. They were stingy with the drinks. The Captain is a fairly young Italian and a wannabe comedian. He was totally about himself and family for about 15 minutes. He never acknowledged or introduced his officers. He was funny though.

Went to dinner and requested Manny, but his tables were full. We got a table for four next to him. Manny introduced our waiter and helper so that was nice. Our waiter said he was from Puerto Vallarta, so we had a lot to

talk about. He knew Villa del Mar and Villa del Palmar and said he had worked selling time shares before joining Princess. A nice older couple from Wisconsin joined us for dinner. I had the shrimp cocktail, green salad, and lobster tail. Larue had escargot, green salad, and lobster tail. The lobster tail was really small and served on a bed of green risotto (yuk) that did not seem to fit. It was terrible. Larue had apple pie with ice cream for dessert and I had chocolate ice cream with chocolate syrup.

Saturday, September 14.

Socketed in and rain this morning. Fairly heavy sea, but the ship is riding better than yesterday. Wind is 34 knots so there is a lot of spray. Walked back and forth on the protected side of the Promenade deck under the lifeboats.

It is pack up day, and we sail all day until we get to Victoria at 7pm, and leave at midnight. The dining room is not doing breakfast, but having a brunch from 10am to 1pm. So, we are laid back this morning in our cabin with coffee and bran muffins.

Went to the brunch in the dining room. It was set up as a buffet or you could order from a limited breakfast menu. Ended up at a table with the couple from Wisconsin that we had dinner with last night, and a couple from Oregon. We opted for ordering from the breakfast menu. I had a ham and cheese omelette and Larue had eggs and bacon. It took forever and the food was barely warm. Not happy at all. I went and got a hot dog.

Rain and fog most of the day, and you could often hear the fog horn. Pulled into Victoria around 6:30pm and docked beside the Holland America Oosterdam (our next ship). The Norwegian Bliss pulled in and parked on the other side. The Bliss is their newest megaship with over 5000 passengers. We are on deck 12 and it towers above us another 8 or so decks. It is a spectacular sight but would not want to sail on it. The cruise ship dock is a long ways from anything, so we are not getting off.

The only dining room open tonight is the one Manny isn't in, so we took our chances. Not many people and we were at a table for two for a nice quiet dinner. I had the shrimp cocktail, baked potato soup, peppercorn NY steak, and decadent Drambuie souffle. Larue had the shrimp cocktail, caesar

salad, copper river salmon, and a decadent chocolate thing as well as a crème brulee. It was a good dinner for a change.

As we came out of the dining room people were flocking back onto the ship, as it was pouring down rain. They were pretty wet.

Sunday, September 15.

Seattle is overcast and rain. Had breakfast in the dining room that was open. Lucked out and Manny was our waiter. Was glad to see him as we wanted to leave an extra tip for him. Shared a table with a nice couple from Seattle. Larue had eggs and bacon and I had special French toast and sausage links. I ordered V8 juice and they were out, so I asked for tomato juice, and they were out. Ended up with watered down orange juice.

The waiting area for debarking passengers needing wheelchair assistance is in the Steak House, so it is plush. Told them we would go last to minimize the time we have to wait for getting into the checkin area for Holland America.

This wraps this cruise up. Looking forward to the familiar Oosterdam. This was a nice itinerary and cruise, but Princess is lacking in many areas.

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