

12/19/23

**Alaska Cruise
Holland America Line – Eurodam
October 1 – October 8, 2022,
Seattle, Washington**

Drove to Boise on Thursday, September 30. Overnighted at the Rodeway Inn airport, as they provide parking on a first come basis. Lucked out and got the last parking space available. Off airport parking is in high demand. A new parking garage is being built, and there is currently limited long term parking at the airport.

Went to dinner with Brian and Tina at the Willow Creek Restaurant on Vista Avenue.

Checked out of the hotel at 11:30am. Our flight was not until 3:37 in the afternoon. Decided not to fool around in Boise and caught the shuttle to the airport. It was a zoo as weekend travelers were out in mass. I made a remark about it. The TSA security guy said Boise is no longer the laid back enjoyable experience that it once was. I agree. Security was tight. LaRue's carryon was routed off to the side for further inspection. They took everything out and took swabs that went to a machine for analysis. It turned out her Metamucil set off an alert which required inspection and testing. It took a while before we got going. I said, "the stuff to make you go ended up making you stop," which cracked up the guy pushing her wheelchair.

Our gate was B22 at the very end of Concourse B, which was a solid mass of people. We were lucky to find two seats. Very limited options for food on Concourse B. It was a long wait to get into the two sit down dining places. I ended up getting two sandwiches and a big cookie at a self service stand for \$24.

Nice flight to Seattle on a small Embraer jet (made in Brazil) with comfortable seats in Comfort class. We like the Embraer much better than the Canadian regional jet that serves Twin Falls.

The Seattle airport has grown and changed so much that nothing was recognizable to us. It was a long trek that involved a tram ride and at least 4 elevators to get to the baggage claim. Our bags were there when we arrived. I don't think we could have found our way on our own. Nice to have a wheelchair attendant leading the way. The hotel shuttle arrived after a short wait. It was a quick three mile ride to the hotel. The driver was super nice and helpful. The hotel was great and reasonably priced, so we were happy. Ordered in a pizza and watched Boise State come from behind and win going away for a change.

Saturday, October 1 – Embarkation

Nice sunny morning in Seattle. The options for getting to the cruise ship in North Seattle was a shuttle service for \$40 at their schedule. It would make several stops to pick up people, The other options were a metered taxi, or Uber at \$55, which was a no brainer. Uber arrived in 3 minutes. We were off in a nice clean Hyundai Sonata with a safe driver that impressed us. Much better than a bus load of people, and stops to pick up people. Uber took about 40 minutes through downtown Seattle, and along the waterfront, which we enjoyed. It was a great decision, and I gave the driver a 5-star rating.

We dropped our bags, and they waved over a young wheelchair lady for LaRue. We were off nonstop through security and check in. She took great care of us. Then we had a 15 minute wait for boarding with a wheel chair attendant from the ship. We were in our cabin by 12:30. As we left our cabin to get something to eat on the Lido deck our bags arrived.

After lunch we went to our muster station to satisfy the emergency drill requirement.

When that was done we got on the elevator and a guy behind me called out, "Harry". That gets your attention. I turned around and he looked somewhat familiar. He was around the age of my Air Force buddies, but I could not place a name with the face. He went on to say that I was well known and on and on. I maintain a web site for my Air Force guys and deal with about 2,000 names and have been a part of many reunions. I quizzed the guy, and he said he was behind us during the check in process. He saw my name on my carryon. He thought it was a great prank. I don't think so.

The wheelchair attendant said there are 1,400 passengers for this cruise, and they have been averaging 1,800. Full capacity is 2,500. The average age is around 60, with a few families and kids, It is a different demographic than what we are used to.

We were on the Eurodam in 2020, and there is a table in the dining room that is our favorite. We had the same table nearly every night on the 35 day South Pacific cruise on the Zuiderdam in March. We checked to see if we could reserve it at 7pm. They could not do it until we come in for dinner. We arrived for dinner at 7pm and we have the table (#183) for the duration of the cruise. It made us happy. We both had a corn soup, and a crab and shrimp appetizer for starters. Larue had pork medallions for the entrée, and I had Alaska rock fish with mussels, clams, and risotto. We both had a lemon tart for dessert. Our wine was a Malbec from Argentina. It was a nice dinner.

Sunday, October 2 and a sea day.

Dark when I went out at 6:30am. Strong head wind made it impossible to walk on deck 10. Made my way into the forward observation lounge to check the monitors. Temperature is 58 degrees, strong wind, moderate sea, and we are ripping along at 21.2 knots. Ride is a little rough with a slight roll. The props are turning at 125rpm which is higher than I have ever seen. Went down to deck 3 and walked inside a while. It started out with a clear sky and a mountain range visible on the starboard side. It soon socked in

around us. It cleared up later and we cruised north along the coastline with rugged mountains all day.

Started feeling woozy after walking, so took a Dramamine. Breakfast didn't look so hot, so didn't eat much of my pancakes. LaRue had lox and bagels and we went back to the cabin. After a nap I was ready for lunch. I went to the dining room and I had a hamburger and fries. LaRue had fish tacos and a spring roll. We both had chocolate Sunday for dessert. All was good. Saw the prankster who called out my name yesterday, and talked to him and his friends. Turned out they had all lived in Richland and worked at Hanford. Told him I would go even someday. Went back to the cabin and watched football all afternoon. Glad to see the Raiders finally get a win.

It was "Dressy" night tonight in the dining room with a special menu. We both had the Alaska shrimp cocktail for a starter. LaRue had salmon chowder for a second starter, and I had French onion soup. She had lamb chops for the entrée and I had filet mignon oscar. We both had a very decadent chocolate mousse in a hard chocolate shell for dessert. Our wine was 7 Moons Red Blend, California that we have had before and like. It was a very good dinner. Our head waiter Sambang from Java, and his assistant Martin took great care of us.

Monday, October 3. Juneau about 1pm.

Clocks went back one hour last night. All fogged in this morning, and you can hardly see the water below. The ships fog horn blasts every 2 to 3 minutes. Even with the fog we are doing 18 knots, and the sea is as smooth as glass. It was 41 degrees out walking this morning. The onboard naturalist, Ross, was on the aft Lido deck at 7:30 for wildlife spotting, and I went. Ross was on our last cruise in March and is superb. Was surprised to see him again. Nothing to see due to the fog, but he had a lot of interesting information. We should see whales, otters, birds, and seals as well as spectacular scenery. He said the fog should blow away later. We were passing by Admiralty Island, and he said it has the largest population of brown bears in the world. There is a bear per square acre.

We shared a table at breakfast with a lady from Phoenix, a lady from Seattle, a lady from South Carolina, and a lady formerly from Minneapolis. The lady from Seattle was a pain when she pulled out her book of paintings to show us. We both had the ham and cheese skillet.

About an hour south of Juneau the fog cleared. There was a huge mountain beside us, which was rather startling. I spotted three moose retreating into the tree line as we passed. Checked out some dark spots (bear tracks) but they didn't move. Then right behind us was another cruise ship. I checked cruise tracker on my computer and it is the Holland America Koningsdam. We will be on the Koningsdam for the Christmas and New Year cruises out of San Diego. It is slightly larger and newer than the Eurodam that we are on.

We arrived at the dock at noon and the Konningsdam docked behind us. Then a big apartment building pulled in, and it was the Norwegian Bliss. We drove by it in Seattle, and it is scary big, and high. It adds another 5,000 passengers to the downtown chaos.

Went to the dining room for lunch and it was a new express menu. The starter was corn chowder, and an entree choice of beer battered halibut and chips, or a salmon something salad. It was carrot cake for dessert. We chose the halibut and chips that was excellent. Five nice size pieces of halibut in a very nice batter and as good as you will ever find.

I got off the ship around 2pm to walk and look around. Too many people wandering around. Wanted to have beer in the Red Dog Saloon but there was a line of people waiting to get in. I could have waited it out, but decided it was not a good idea to get into a crowded environment. Checked out the gondola ride up the mountain. It was \$45 and at least a two hour wait. Didn't need that. I was happy to get back on the ship.

Nice dinner in the dining room. We both had salad greens for a starter, and a second starter of deviled eggs to share. LaRue had a flat iron steak with mashed potatoes and root veggies. I had a chile relleno with Mexican rice. She had a chocolate thing for dessert, and I had a chocolate whiskey tort. We ordered Hangtown Pinot Noir for our wine, and it was "momentarily" not available. A more expensive Aconcagua Costa Pinot Noir from Chile was substituted. We will order the Hangtown wine again, and hope to get the same substitute.

Under way at 9pm for Skagway. Beautiful clear sky tonight.

Tuesday, October 4. Skagway, Alaska

Woke up at 6:30am and we were already docked. The Koningsdam is docked beside us. Walking was much easier without the ship moving. The temperature is a cool 43 degrees, and the humidity is 95%. The sky is a gray overcast.

This is a beautiful place and is my favorite of the places we have been to in Alaska. In a narrow fjord with high mountain peaks with snow fields on both sides of us. A few peaks are completely white. Dead ahead is White Pass that the gold seekers had to go over to get to the gold fields. The last time we were here we took the train to the top of White Pass and back. It was a great experience, but don't need to do it again. Will walk to town later today.

Discovered later that the White Pass train excursion was cancelled due to a rock slide. Over 600 people were disappointed, but got refunds.

Leisurely breakfast in the dining room. I had a Belgian waffle, two eggs, and ham. LaRue had the English breakfast that is huge. We had lunch in the main dining room and shared a table with an interesting couple from Ft Worth, Texas. We both had a cobb salad and a Sunday for dessert.

I got off the ship about 2pm. The ship is pointed straight up the main street which is Broadway and only about ¼ mile from it. Quaint little town with board walks for about 6 blocks, and shop after shop selling tourist stuff. Went into the Park Service Visitor Center and looked over the exhibits of the early gold mining days. Visited the famous Red Onion Saloon, but it was too crowded. Next option was the Klondike Brewery, but the saloon was closed and only the restaurant open. I gave up and came back to the ship. A pint of beer at the Klondike was \$8 according to the sign outside. The food prices were not much higher than at home. Wonder what all these shops do after the cruise ships stop coming, which is next week.

Very nice dinner in the dining room tonight. We both had a coconut crusted shrimp beet salad for a starter. The entrée was a tough decision between halibut, prime rib, and several other good sounding things. We both finally went with the prime rib that was very good. For dessert we both went for a raspberry ricotta tart with vanilla cream. Our wine was Arboleda Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile. When our waiter brought it he said it was the last bottle.

Sail away is 9pm and we should be leaving shortly. Will not be seeing the scenery as we leave tonight, which is a bummer, as it is spectacular. I went out on the patio and it is very nice, even in a short sleeved shirt. We are sailing into a black void with no lights around, so I hope the radar is working good.

Wednesday, October 5. Cruising

Entering the Tracy Arm Inlet this morning. Will cruise for about three hours to the end at the Sawyer Glacier. Cloudy overcast sky and 51 degrees F. Cruising slowly at 11.2 knots and ice is floating by. It was starting to get light and I saw a big white long object that I thought was a fishing boat. With a little more light I saw it was a large iceberg.

Spectacular high mountains and sheer rock walls on each side of us with streams of water cascading down. More and more ice floating by as we cruise along. A few icebergs as large as big cars, with one the size of a motorhome. At the turn around point, with Sawyer Glacier in view, we stopped for about an hour. Split pea soup was served on the open decks. We had ours on the aft Lido deck and enjoyed the view around us. Split pea soup is a Holland America tradition on occasions like this.

We squeezed in breakfast in the main dining room and got a table by the window. We shared with a couple from Beaverton, Oregon, on their first cruise, and a couple from Kent, Washington. We were all in awe of the scenery going by. I had V8 juice with tabasco, orange slices, and classic eggs benedict. LaRue had sliced bananas and a yogurt thing.

Exited Tracy Arm about noon and a heavy mist settled in. The roundtrip Tracy Arm to the Sawyer Glacier and back is as scenic as it gets. It ranks with the best of what we have seen and close to the Magellan Strait passage in South America.

Had lunch in the dining room and we both had street fish tacos for a starter. Then tomato bisque soup for LaRue and mac and cheese for me. Dessert was a Sunday for her and chocolate ice cream for me.

Smooth sea all afternoon and this evening. LaRue saw the spout of a whale in the distance but no other sightings.

Quiet dinner in the dining room. Everyone was quiet and laid back. The dining room was only about half full. We both had a bean and pasta soup, and then beef stroganoff that was good. LaRue had a fruit cake for dessert and I had a hot fudge Sunday. Her fruit cake was not a fruit cake as we know it. It was a cake with fruit on top. Our wine was Hangtown Pinot Noir, California.

Thursday, October 6. Ketchikan, Alaska

Smooth ride last night and never felt a thing. The thing I like about cruising is that I go to sleep as soon as my head hits the pillow. At home it takes forever. Already docked in Ketchikan when I got up.

It is a short stay as we depart at noon. Heavy fog and 51 F. Can barely make out the Diamonds International sign and it is only 50 yards or so away. The Lido buffet was jam packed at 6:30am with people eager to get on the ship. Could not see far enough to tell if any other cruise ships are here. Checked cruise tracker on my

computer and see the Norwegian Bliss is docked in a separate area about a mile away. The Koningsdam is docked later. The fog lifted a little at 10am, and I see it parked in front of us. All of us proceed to Victoria, arriving in the early evening tomorrow. Then on to Seattle. Been a great ride so far, but will be out in the open sea to get to Victoria. It will be a rougher ride tomorrow.

Breakfast in the dining room as usual and not many people around. I had orange slices, buckwheat pancakes, two eggs, and bacon. LaRue had fresh berries and the yogurt mixture she likes. It was a nice relaxed breakfast. It will be tough going back to corn flakes or Wheaties at home.

The fog cleared away around 11am. It was nice sitting on our patio in our shirtsleeves enjoying the sun and scenery.

We sailed at noon and went to the dining room for lunch at 12:30. Got a table by the rear windows. We shared with a couple from Florida and a couple from Maryland. The lady from Florida talked nonstop and ate like a horse. She even got a 2nd bowl of soup to go as she said it was the best tomato bisque soup she has ever had. They rode out the hurricane north of Tampa and were barely able to get a flight to catch the cruise. She talked a lot but was entertaining. LaRue had calamari for a starter and catch of the day for the entrée. I had a half club sandwich with tomato bisque soup. She had a Sunday for dessert, and I had strawberry ice cream. I was the only one that didn't order a starter, so I sat and watched everyone eat.

Beautiful afternoon cruising along in the sunshine and smooth sea. Sat out on the patio enjoying it all. It doesn't get much better than this, even in the tropics. Late afternoon I got a hotdog and beer and sat looking on the ocean and mountains in the distance. I was in the midship pool area and there was very little activity, it was quiet and peaceful.

“Dressy” night tonight. We were late getting to the dining room due to watching the awful Broncos and Colts football game. We got to the dining room and they had seated other people at our table. Many apologies, but let them know we were unhappy about it. We got a table nearby that worked out. Special menu for “Dressy” night but no lobster. I had a jumbo shrimp cocktail, and beef tenderloin with shrimp. LaRue had escargot and the beef tenderloin with shrimp. She had a decadent chocolate mousse with hot chocolate sauce, and I had a coconut tart thing. Good dinner. Our wine was a very good Mondavi Private Reserve Pinot Noir from California.

While the food has been good I see a cutback in the more expensive items like steaks, and no lobster on formal nights. Stands to reason with fewer people aboard, inflation, and high fuel cost. Still a great experience and have heard nobody complaining.

Clocks go forward one hour tonight.

Friday, October 7. At sea and Victoria this evening.

Fogged in this morning. Around 55F and doing 22.2 knots with a smooth sea and little wind. Fog horn goes every 2 minutes (I timed it). It is very loud on the outside decks, but we don't hear it in our cabin as we are in the aft. Pleasant walking on deck 10. I was the only one out except for an occasional crew member getting some air. There have been very few people out walking when I am out this whole voyage.

Breakfast in the main dining room. I had V8 juice, Texas toast French toast and two pork link sausages. LaRue had berries and the yogurt mix again. I went to the "Ask the Captain" presentation at 10am. Very interesting video tour of the bridge and engine room and then questions. Problem was that I could only get about a third of what he was saying. I did get that we were fortunate to get to go up into Tracy Arm yesterday. If the wind is blowing hard it is too dangerous for cruise ships.

Had lunch in the Lido Buffet today for the first time since boarding. We both had a made to order salad, and LaRue went through the American line. I tried the Asian line for chow mein that was not to my liking. Sat to the side and got a made to order pizza that was pretty strange. We both had ice cream that is always good.

Packed up this afternoon for debarkation tomorrow. We are signed up for luggage transfer at no extra cost. We got special baggage tags, our boarding passes, and are checked in for our flight tomorrow. Our bags are taken to Delta for us. We just walk off the ship and go to our gate at the airport. Pretty slick.

The fog burned off this afternoon and it is brilliant sunshine and no clouds. I was sitting on the patio watching and watching and finally five or so whales breached up close. Then the show was over.

Had martinis in the Pinnacle Bar before dinner and watched the entry and docking at Victoria, Canada. Shocked at all the debris, such as boards, trees, limbs, etc floating in the bay.

Dinner in the dining room and we both had heirloom tomato soup, and shared spring rolls for a starter. I had chicken cordon blue, and LaRue had leg of lamb for our entrees. She had strudel for dessert, and I had a three berry tart. Our wine was a French Cote du Rhone that was good. Short trip to Seattle tonight and this one is the books. Great cruise.

end