

# Hong Kong to Southampton Voyage – Part 5

## Great Adventure Travelogue

### Part 5: Ascension Island to Southampton, England

April 29, 2016

Dateline: Georgetown, Ascension Island

Latitude at Georgetown 7.5 South, Longitude 14.2 West



Ascension  
Island

We awoke to a bright sunny and quite breezy morning as we made our approach to Ascension Island, so named because it was discovered by the Portuguese on Ascension Day. In the 1960's NASA established a tracking station and the base is still here and is used to track GPS satellites, and is also used as a radar base. It is primarily staffed by the BBC. It is strategically located, halfway between South American and Africa and the North Pole and South Pole.



Passengers  
buying  
Ascension  
Islanders  
“stuff”

We stopped at Georgetown about a mile offshore so local people could board the ship and sell their “stuff”, such as hats and shirts and stamps and postcards, mostly to support the Ascension Island Conservancy. Their primary focus is on endangered species, such as green turtles and sea birds that have almost gone extinct due to the introduction of cats on the island. They also work to protect native plant species from introduced plants and marine life in the area waters. Land crabs are the only native land animals here Ascension Island, like St. Helena, is a British Overseas Territory. They get 4 to 6 cruise ships per year and there is a flight here only every two weeks, so they have to be fairly self-sufficient on their tiny island of 34 square miles. The US Military built the runway here and had to relocate terns and other sea birds. For power they have wind powered turbines and they have 2 desalinization plants to provide fresh water.



A Small  
Village on

## Ascension Islands

We did a cruise by at a speed of 12 knots, 20 miles one way and then 20 miles the other so each side of the ship could get a good look at the island. The air temperature was a mild 86F. We were treated to the sight of hundreds of dolphins in several pods, racing thorough the water to keep pace with the ship. On the return trip, we dropped the islanders off. Most of the people on the island are not actually islanders. Out of the 800 who live here, there are fewer than 50 who are native to the island. NASA employs 800 and the BBC several hundred more, and there are several hundred conservancy and research personnel. The landscape is dry and lunar-like on the east end where many of the tracking and communications stations are located. The highest peak is Green Mountain, which is lush and vegetated. This was not always the case. Like St. Helena, arriving people imported non-native plants and they have spread on the slopes of the peaks of the island. Plants have been introduced that have actually changed the environment, creating rain forest and jungle greenery on a previously desolate mountain.

In the afternoon we listened to a lecture by Peter Hawthorne on the Scotsman David Livingstone, the African missionary and explorer who "discovered" Victoria Falls, which the local people, the Kololo Tribe, knew was there all along, of course. Their name for it was "Mosi-oa-tunya", which translates as "the smoke that thunders". Livingstone named it for his Queen. His goal was to further the 3 C's: Civilization, Christianity and Commerce for the British Empire. He started his career in Scotland as a millworker, but became a doctor and traveled to Africa on behalf of the London Missionary Society. He was sent to what was then called Bechuanaland, now Botswana. He was tough, resourceful and capable of surviving any number of hardships, as many Scots were back in the day. Livingstone survived both a lion

attack and malaria, the latter with the help of a warm bath and a purgative called the Zambezi Rouser, which apparently had a quantity of quinine in it.

The native people were in awe of what they called his “magic stick”, or more commonly known as a rifle. When he cured the chief’s son of some unnamed illness, he then became effective as a missionary. During the years 1849 to 1856, he set about exploring on foot and was not seen by other whites for 10 to 12 years. He conducted another second trek to Mozambique, also on foot. His third trek of exploration was to the watersheds of Central Africa where he was seeking the source of the Nile. He mistakenly thought he had found it, but he actually found the source of the Congo River. He mapped the Zambezi River from Victoria Falls to the Indian ocean, which was no mean feat. In his spare time he fought against the slave trade, a major source of income for Arab slavers. His goal was realized with the help of the sultans from Zanzibar who blockaded the ports being used by the slavers.

It was Henry Morton Stanley, a journalist for the NY Herald on assignment in Africa that “found” Dr. Livingstone at one point and uttered the famous words: “Dr. Livingstone I presume?” in 1871. Dr. Livingstone died in 1873 and is buried in Westminster Abbey.



Lunch Poolside  
on the Queen  
Victoria

We had burgers and margaritas for lunch by the Lido Pool as

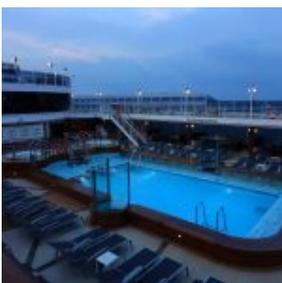
Ascension Island faded in the distance. We spent the afternoon by the pool and had a Betty Boop sighting. This is a young lady traveling with her mother who wears her hair in the 1940's style of Betty Boop and sports some pretty fair sized tattoos that we are sure Betty would not have approved of unless they were adorning a sailor. She wore a dress with a full gathered skirt which made Betty's Bottom look quite imposing. She also carried a geisha girl sort of parasol to keep the sun off her heavily made up face, including lashes thick enough to be formed out of fringe. Her hair color was a shade of red not found in nature. I snapped a few photos to make sure I was not hallucinating due to being over served with margaritas. We encountered another passenger on board who bears a remarkable resemblance to Alfred Hitchcock in profile. We noted that he seems to need an "ear lift" since his ears seem to be a half mast. These sea days we have much more time to be observant of fellow passengers. We wonder what they are writing about us.

**April 30, 2016**

**Dateline: Near the Equator, South Atlantic**

**Latitude at Noon UTC +0 1.5 South, Longitude 17.3 West**

Today we are on our first of 3 sea days to reach the Cape Verde Islands. We had our usual leisurely breakfast and spent the morning on the Promenade Deck in lounge chairs watching the ocean go by. At noon today we have traveled 422 miles since Ascension Island, 2, 404 from



Cruising in

the South  
Atlantic

Walvis Bay, Namibia with 1,197 miles to go to the Cape Verde islands. We are traveling at a speed of 18.9 knots on a North by Northwest heading. The closest land mass, aside from Ascension Island is Liberia on the African mainland at a distance of 600 miles to the east. The weather is sunny and 77 degrees F with a cool breeze blowing. The water temperature is 82 degrees F, and is always warmer than the air here near the equator due to the equatorial current, traveling in the same direction as the sun, provided extra heating time. Today we will cross the Equator and be traveling once again in the Northern Hemisphere. We will be traveling over the Romanche Fracture Zone which reaches a maximum depth of 25, 453 feet. The zone is actually a trench, one of the world's deepest, 12 miles wide and 186 miles long.

I listened to a lecture from a style consultant on how to part with stuff in your closet. Her theory is that clothes have a use-by date and if you don't wear them after a certain period of time, they need to go. I think this applies to me, but I am not sure I am going to rush home and start throwing things away, although it does sound tremendously appealing.

We listened to a fascinating presentation today by reporter, Peter Hawthorne, who talked about Cecil Rhodes (American say Cee-sil with the accent on "Cee", the British and South Africans say "Sess-s il" with the accent on "Sess") His name was essentially meaningless to us prior to the lecture, but he is quite well known in the UK. The no longer existing country of Rhodesia was named for him (now Zimbabwe and Zambia). He had tuberculosis as a child and his family sent him to live with his brother in South Africa for his health when he was only a teenager. He was the consummate champion of British Colonialism – and in fact he was even in favor of trying to take America back some 100 years after the American

Revolution. His idea was that if all the world were British Colonies, there would be no more wars.

He proved to be quite a businessman, making a fortune in the Kimberly Diamond mines and later heading up the DeBeers Diamond enterprise. He also made money in the gold fields of the Transvaal Region, snapping up a claim for next to nothing which yielded the largest vein of gold ever found called The Gold Reef in the Wittwatersrand region. He reportedly bought out a rival diamond merchant for a bucket of diamonds over lunch

He died at 49 in 1902, but amassed not only a fortune, but also a lot of colorful history in his life, including being stalked by a Polish Princess with a colorful history of her own which included debt and forgery. He was involved in the Jameson Raid, a botched attack on South African Republic which had become free from the British. He remained an unapologetic nationalist – all things British were, in his view, superior to all things that were anything else.

His residence, called Grote Schurr , at the foot of Table Mountain today is the residence of the Prime Minister of South Africa. He funded the University of South Africa with donated land and established the Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University. Each year 36 people are selected to study at Oxford for a year. Bill Clinton had the privilege back in the 1960's

We spent the afternoon lounging by the Lido pool and taking a swim. We crossed the equator at 5:30 p.m. today.

**May 1, 2016**

**Dateline: North Atlantic**

**Latitude at Noon UTC 0 5.2 Degrees North, Longitude 20.2 Degrees West**

We are now in the Northern Hemisphere and awoke to cloudy and rainy skies, but the rain cleared just after breakfast, so we decided to take advantage of some decadent deck time – that is spending the day lounging in deck chairs. We are at UTC Zero, meaning we are in the Greenwich Meridian Time Zone, aligned with the place in England by the same name on which all world time zones are based. The temperature is a perfect 82 degrees F and the sea water is slightly warmer at 86F. The ship's whistle gives two long blasts at noon which is loud enough to awaken any on deck nappers so they will know it is time to rouse themselves to go have lunch. The captain announced our position and that we have traveled 439 miles since noon yesterday, with 760 to go to reach the Cape Verde Islands (which they pronounce "Verd" as if the "e" on the end does not exist). We are 3,000 miles off the coast of Sierra Leone on the African continent. There is a slight swell, but it is just enough to create a narcotic effect to rock us to sleep as we plow through tranquil seas on a northwesterly course.



Avoiding the  
Doldrums on  
Board

In fact the waters here are so tranquil, that this area was named The Doldrums, back in the days of sail. It is an area along the Equator where the southern and northern hemisphere trade winds converge (also known as the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone where winds become light and sailors run the risk of becoming becalmed for days. If the becalming lasted a long time, they would start to run short of water and food. This of course was very depressing and resulted in depression,

or doldrums. Or the area could produce terrifying storms ripping sails apart, creating the same shortages and mental state. We were very slothful – but we are in the Doldrums after all so we have good reason to be.

There is another sometimes becalmed area we are traveling through that can extend as much as 30 to 38 degrees beyond the Equator , both to the north and the south called the Horse Latitudes. The calm waters are caused by a ridge of high pressure that tends to develop over these regions from time to time. Where the name comes from is disputed – some say that in the sailing days when a ship became becalmed and water would become in short supply, horses and cattle would be tossed overboard to lighten the load so the ships wouldn't need so much wind to get moving. Some scholars scoff at this saying most ships didn't carry horses and wouldn't throw away a potential food source in lean times if they did. A third explanation is that ships taking horses to the Canary Islands from Spain, did often find themselves becalmed and tossed the horses and other cargo off in order to save themselves. So if your sailing vessel had been in the Doldrums and got lucky enough to escape that, then the Horse Latitudes might be waiting for you. It could be altogether depressing to be a sailor in the olden days. We, on the other hand, continued motoring toward the Cape Verde Islands in the lap of luxury.

**May 2, 2016**

**Dateline: North Atlantic, 350 miles off the Coast of Senegal**

**Position at Noon UTC 0 12.0 Degrees North, Longitude 22.8 Degrees West**

Our course actually takes us in and out of two different time zones, but for the sake of passenger sanity, the ship will stay on the same time throughout the day. A note on noting the time: outside we have two long blasts on the ships whistle, but inside we have eight bells. This harkens back to the

sailing tradition when ships crews did not have watches, but were expected to “stand watch” and perform whatever duties were assigned for a period of 4 hours also called a “watch”. At half hour intervals, the ship’s bell would be rung. Once indicated the first half hour, two for the second and so forth until the end of the watch would be eight bells. The crew would change and the process would start anew.



## Deck Time at Sea

We awoke to sunny skies and cooler weather as we continue to travel to the northwest. We spent a little time on the promenade deck, but as the day progressed, a 15 knot Northeast trade wind developed, which with the ships speed factored in, has the effect of a 30 knot wind on the open decks, so it was far too brisk for the comfortable deck lounging that we did yesterday. The air is 75F and the water is 77F

We were traveling at 18 knots, having traveled 437 miles since noon yesterday, with 350 miles to go to Mindelo, Cape Verde Islands. We are passing by the Islands of Santiago and Fogo, part of the leeward Cape Verde Archipelago. Our port tomorrow will be St. Vincent, part of the northern windward island chain.

We attended a lecture by Peter Hawthorne, the Time magazine journalist, whose topic today was entitled “An African Love Story” taking place in what was Bechuanaland (pronounced Bet-you-ah-nah-land) which is now Botswana. This was the story of Sir Seretse Khama, from a royal tribal family and a white

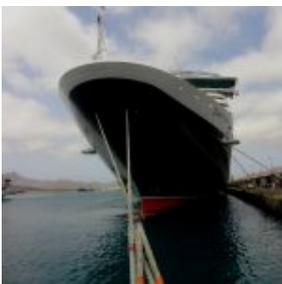
British girl named Ruth Williams, whom he met in the 1940's while going to college in England. Things really started looking up for the country when DeBeers came to mine diamonds, which certainly kept the British eager to keep it as a colony. There are fewer than 10,000 people of native tribes. The interracial marriage took place in 1948, and it caused a huge controversy both in England in and Africa. Khama was exiled from his country for 5 years, but this only served to make him very popular at home and upon his return, he was elected the first president of Botswana, and his white wife became largely accepted there.

We heard an amusing anecdote from Mr. Hawthorne. He told a story of a local acquaintance who taught himself English by listening to BBC broadcasts. Unfortunately he incorporated the static that came across the air waves into his speech, not realizing that it was static and his speaking Great Britain's Mother Tongue created quite a bit of hilarity.

**May 3, 2016**

**Dateline: Mindelo, Sao Vicente, Cape Verde Islands**

**Latitude at Mindelo, 16.87 Degrees North, Longitude 24.98 Degrees West**



Dockside at  
Mindelo, Cape  
Verde Islands

Today we arrived at Mindelo on the island of Sao Vicente in the Cape Verde Islands. We arrived at 7:30 a.m. with half a

day to spend in port. While the island is on UTC Minus 1 time, we are staying on UTC Zero to avoid confusion because we will be undergoing another time change as we head northeast toward the Canary Islands. It was kind of tricky since we used our cell phones to set our alarm, but they didn't stick to ship's time and fell back an hour. Fortunately there was plenty of noise to awake us as we docked. We took on our local harbor pilot at 6:00 a.m.



Port of  
Mindelo on Sao  
Vicente

The Cape Verde Islands are a group of 10 volcanic islands, 350 miles off the coast of North Africa. The islands cover an area of roughly 1,500 Square miles. The name comes from its location which is 400 miles west of Cape Verde, Sengal on the continent of Africa. There are 9 main islands, 5 in the Windward (Barloventa) group, and 4 in the Leeward (Sotavento) group. The capital of the islands is Praia on the island of Sao Tiago, but Mindelo on the island of Sao Vicente has the deep water port. In the days of sail, due to the prevailing winds, almost every ship going anywhere in the Atlantic would go by these islands, and thus they became a source for provisioning, the most common commodity being salted goat meat. The islands are situated in the tropics and have a mild temperature in the 70's all year round.

Sao Vicente was discovered on St. Vincent's Day in 1462 by

Portuguese explorers, and became the property of the King of Portugal. The islands were uninhabited, but a few Portuguese settlers moved here. Most of Cape Verde's prosperity was based on the slave trade and the money they made, left them ripe for pirate attacks. When the slave trade was outlawed and sail was replaced with steam, the British established a coaling station here, but that did not restore the former prosperity to the islands, which were further afflicted by drought and famine in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. All island residents were given Portuguese citizenship in 1961, but it was not until 1975 that they were granted independence.



Volcanic Rock  
on Sao Vicente

Sao Vicente is only 88 square miles in size. The natural deep water port, Porto Grande was originally the crater of a volcano, whose north side caved in, allowing the sea to create the harbor. Mindelo is the cultural capital of the Cape Verde Islands. The island has surfing and sun bathing beaches with sand blown here off the Sahara over the centuries. They still have occasional sand clouds called "haboobs" in Arabic, which blow in from the east and often will blot out the sun.

Another prominent feature on the island is the Monte de Cara (Mountain of the Face). Depending on your nationality, you may be told that it is a likeness of George Washington, Napoleon, or Lord Nelson to name a few.



## Colorful Houses in mindelo

Three quarters of the population of the islands is under 30 with a mere 2% over seventy. Education has been largely neglected in the past. As recently as 15 years ago half the population was illiterate and almost 90% of the people over 25 had no formal schooling. Formal schooling is now compulsory, but it apparently there are a lot of loopholes.

The terrain is dry, rocky and mountainous. The easternmost islands are the only ones with any flat land to speak of.

They get so little rainfall that not much grows here and only 10 % of the land has sufficient moisture for grazing. On the sotavento island of Fogo, they still have an active volcano called "Pico de Fogo" which means fire peak in Portuguese, which last erupted 3 years ago.. It is the official language although most speak a dialect called "Criulo" (creole). Seventy per cent of the inhabitants are themselves creole, a mix of European and African blood.

We had only heard of Cape Verde from weather forecasts in the US when they talked about hurricanes forming off the coast of Africa. It rains here only 2 months (August, September) and for only 2 weeks out of those months and not every day. They get water from gathering it in aquifers underground that have to refill with annual rains and they pump it out with windmills. They do limited corn farming with the little water they have and there are little huts for farmers to live in that come to the farms during the season.



In the Fog  
with Willy  
atop Monte  
Verde

Our tour started with a drive through the capital city of Mindelo with quick glimpses of the colonial architecture and local markets along the main street called the Rua Lisboa. We had Willy as our guide and Domingo at the wheel. Willy played rather static-ridden samples of local music for us on a recording device of some sort. We left the town behind and began a rather harrowing climb, along with 3 other tour buses, to the peak of Monte Verde (Green Mountain). Ideally we would see amazing vistas for miles in every direction, but what we mostly saw was fog at the higher elevations. What we had read about the islands indicated that the island of St. Vincent would be like a moonscape with volcanic rock, steep mountains, in an extremely arid climate, so that is what we surmised was behind the fog. Coming down from the mountain, we saw terraced hillsides with stone walls, and a place called Hope Plantation – they hope for rain, but it never comes. They are better off using the windmills and aquifers in the valley.



The Dunes of  
Praia Grande

## Beach

Once off the mountainside, we proceeded to the Praia Grande Beach. It is surrounded by black volcanic mountains and yet the beach is a golden tan with soft fine sand. Our guide told us that is because this beach is one of the ones where the sand blew here from the African Sahara. Only 3 of the 10 Cape Verde Islands have these golden beaches – the ones closest to the African continent and they only have it on the east side facing Africa. Upon dipping in our toes, we found the water was surprisingly warm.

We call the Cape Verde (pronouncing it in the Spanish manner “Ver-day”, however our guide advised us it is pronounced “Cape Verd” . Willy referred to the olden days as “back in the time”. For example, he showed us the town square and back in the time, you were not allowed to walk in it unless you had shoes on – guess that kept the riffraff out. They have 3 big celebrations: (1) Carnival – a.k.a. Mardi Gras (2) a Music Festival (3) a New Year’s Celebration,

The population of the Cape Verde Islands is 500,000. Our guide’s ( Willy’s) grandfather had 48 children with 8 different women. So he made quite a contribution to the population all by himself. Many more Cape Verde people live abroad than live here. They have a president and a prime minister, gaining full independence in the 1990’s.

Cape Verde has a serious water problem. They have a golf course with sort of a lunar landscape, but no grass so we were not sure how playable that might be. There are a number of buildings that are made of unfinished concrete and concrete blocks and not painted. Willy said many people’s need is so basic, they only want shelter from the wind and rain. There are people living in what looks like ruins, sort of an amalgamation of scrap material and rock.



## Farms of Cape Verde

Average income is 15k escudos per year (around \$150.00 in US dollars) and there is 16 per cent unemployment. Many of the wealthier people moved from Mindelo out into the country and built colonial-style homes there to get away from the troubles in town (like poverty for example). When they have a funeral here it is in 4 stages – (1) the funeral itself (2) a week of comfort to the family (a Jewish shiva of sorts) (3) a remembrance at one month and (4) another remembrance at one year.

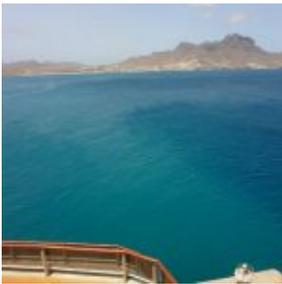
We finished up our tour by driving through the agricultural valley called the Ribeira de Calhau. This part of the island is reminiscent of Morocco, where they have little wells every so often to draw water up for irrigation and drinking. When the water from a particular underground cavity is exhausted (or as Willy says it is “over”), they have to wait for the rains to refill them. Farms and palm trees are clustered around making it look like an oasis. One major bonus is there are no insects here.



## Old Boats on the Beach at

## Mindelo

We took the shuttle bus after our tour to go back to the town of Mindelo to walk around a bit and take some pictures and perhaps find a treasure for our library, which we did at a local crafts market. Mindelo is a pleasant village with bright colorful buildings, really nice people and the weather was perfect. We liked the docking situation here where we could walk to and from the ship from the town. So many ports (especially the larger cities) have cruise ship terminals that are several miles from the city center, often in the midst of commercial shipping operations.



Leaving Sao  
Vicente

Back on board, the chefs had prepared a barbecue for us by the Lido Deck Pool with reggae music and rock and roll oldies. This is the only sail away we have done in the middle of the day and it was great to see us leaving Mindelo and the Cape Verde Islands slipping away behind us. We spent the entire afternoon by the pool and have the sunburn in the spots we missed with sunscreen to prove it. This was sort of our tropical swan song because we are heading north and the weather is going to get cooler every day – not cold, but not swimming weather either. The temperature isn't the only thing – once we left, the wind was at 28 knots and we were doing twenty so it was plenty breezy on the open decks. We had to leave Cape Verde early (1:00 p.m.) and go full speed tomorrow

and tomorrow night to get to our next destination – the Canary Islands by early morning.

We saw a very entertaining comedian tonight named Kev Orkian. I didn't think the name was a co-incidence, but perhaps the Suicide Doctor Kevorkian is too obscure now and this is purely a coincidence. He billed himself as only a poor Armenian comic, but we learned he was British born from Armenian parents and the accent is strictly a gag.

**May 4, 2016**

**Dateline: Atlantic Ocean, Tropic of Cancer**

**Latitude at Noon UTC +1 22.8 North, Longitude 20.5 West**



Last Night in  
the Tropics

Just after noon today we crossed the Tropic of Cancer, Latitude 23.5 North , that is the northern border of the tropical zone – the Southern Border is defined by the Tropic of Capricorn, the same latitude, but it is south not north. We have noticed that once we left the tropical zone, it was not nearly as pleasant on the deck and not comfortable without bundling up a bit. We moved into the Temperate Zone with the air temperature at 72 degrees F, as was the sea temperature, but we were moving at 21 knots and the wind was blowing out of the north at a pretty good clip as well. The depth of water under the keel was 13,779 feet as we travel over the Cape Verde Abyssal Plain, with the Canary Current keeping the water cool. The terrain on the ocean floor at this point has no

mountains, and is relatively flat but really deep. We have traveled 434 miles from the Cape Verde Islands with 409 to go to reach the Canary Islands. We are 260 miles from the coast of Morocco.

We had a lazy morning, but roused ourselves for breakfast and a lecture by journalist Peter Hawthorne, whom we have listened to several times before. Today was his final lecture and his topic was "Winds of Change" and he talked about his 40 plus years covering Africa. Many of his articles have appeared in *Time* magazine and he is a fascinating speaker as well as a talented journalist. In 1950 the continent of Africa only had 4 independent countries: Egypt, Liberia, South Africa and Ethiopia, although South Africa did not become a republic until 1961. Today there are 56, and it has not been a simple path to independence, much less democracy for any of them.

Mr. Hawthorne sketched out some of the highlights of this path. Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, was the source of the majority of slaves brought to the Americas,. Kenya, whose first leader as an independent country, Jomo Kenyatta, had been jailed for his radical views and there had been the Mau Mau rebellion against colonial rule with brutality on both sides.

In what was the Belgian Congo, the Belgians simply fled, leaving the country in turmoil. Patrice Lumumba, a radical Marxist backed by the Russians ruled for a while, but. He was replaced in a coup by Mobutu and then he was arrested and executed Today the country is called the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but there is Continued chaos involving mercenaries and indiscriminate killing. To add to the chaos, there are 200 different languages spoken in the Congo, not dialects, but languages.

There were assorted other atrocities throughout Africa including the reign of Idi Amin in Uganda, the genocide in Rwanda and the totally corrupt Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe

(formerly Rhodesia). Then there was the 25 year civil war in Angola, spurred on by foreign interests, all vying for oil.

Africa has been riddled with problems with armed conflict everywhere, and corrupt and incompetent leaders who were radicals, tyrants, predators and crazies. There is AIDS and other diseases, climate issues such as drought and flooding, not to mention political turmoil. At any given time there are 2 million refugees in Africa. Currently the largest camp is 200k between Uganda and Rwanda.

On the upside, there is rapidly growing tourism and immense natural resources. Today's population is 1 billion, projected to be 2 Billion by 2015, but the land is vast and can still not be crowded, unlike China and India. Cell phones and PC's and the Internet have made Africa part of the global society.

After this heavy lecture we decided we better do something decadent. So we went to the pool for burgers and pina coladas. It was a little too breezy for swimming and sunbathing so we played cribbage. We made an observation: something about drinking pina coladas in the middle of the afternoon makes the day disappear as if by magic. We had dinner and watched the evening's performance – Hollywood Rocks by the Cunard singers and dancers who are always good. Tonight we set our clocks forward by one hour. We have been spoiled by going the other way. Normally we could make up the 1 hour, but we are in port tomorrow, so we may have to work in a have a compensatory nap.

**May 5, 2016**

**Dateline: Santa Cruz, Tenerife, Canary Islands**

**Latitude at Santa Cruz, 28.2 North, Longitude 16.12 West**



Queen Victoria  
Docked at  
Tenerife

Tenerife is the largest of the 7 Canary Islands and is a province of Spain, and its peak of El Teide at over 12,000 feet is highest in all the Atlantic islands. Like the Cape Verde islands, Tenerife was created by volcanoes, but it gets much more rainfall, and is therefore very lush and green. The island got its name not from the song birds, but from ferocious dogs that a Berber king's expedition found there (*canis* is Latin for dog. The islands were known to the Romans in ancient times and they called them the Fortunate Isles. The original inhabitants were the Guanaches who came from North Africa in the first or second century B.C., but no one is sure how they made the crossing. They were cave dwellers and like the Egyptians they mummified their dead. The Spanish conquered them in 1495 and established a colony. From then until 1936 things were pretty tame on Tenerife, with only the occasional attack by the British Royal Navy. In 1657 they destroyed a Spanish treasure fleet, and in 1706 there was another attack that failed to capture the island. The final attack was in 1797 led by British Naval Hero Horatio Nelson, and left the islands to return home, minus one arm lost in battle. There is a cannon in the local military museum called El Tigre (the Tiger) which is credited with firing the shot that hit Admiral Nelson) and is treasured for this unusual achievement.

In 1788 the HMS Bounty called here under the command of Captain Bligh for repairs and provisions, including 863 gallons of wine. When Captain Bligh returned home, he was

minus one whole ship after the famous mutiny took place in the South Pacific. 1936 was an historic year with Francisco Franco meeting here with senior officers to plan the military coup which led to the Spanish Civil War. Happily nowadays, it's the tourists who do all the invading, with Tenerife being a major holiday destination for Europeans.

There are 9 islands that make up the Canary Islands, 7 major and 2 minor comprising two provinces of Las Palmas and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, and both are provinces of Spain, as are the 3 Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean. There are 800,000 people on the island of Tenerife and they get 8.9 million visitors a year. It is only a 4 hour flight at the most from Western Europe, so this is a favored holiday destination with a lot of European "snow birds" coming here to escape harsh winters at home.



Funky Artwork  
in Tenerife

We found the cities on the island to be very clean and reminiscent of Barcelona, with the mix of dramatic new modernistic architecture and the older historic buildings.

The concert hall here was designed by the same architect who is doing the transportation hub for the World Trade Center. They have all the seasons here and sometimes all in the same day. Mount Teide which had a record 6 feet of snow this past winter. The lower parts of the island don't really have winter, but the climate is so variable, they say they always have sunshine somewhere. The average temperature is 72F all year round and it never drops below 68F. Today it was quite

foggy and cloudy up on the mountain top, but we were told the peak is actually showing above the clouds.



Porto de la  
Cruz

Today we chose to do some exploring on our own in the resort town of Puerto de la Cruz, an old colonial port town. We took a bus that the ship had arranged (although the British call them “coaches” and the local people on the island here call them “wah wahs”). After the desolate landscape of the Cape Verde Islands, we were surprised at how green and forested the mountains were as we drove from the port city of Santa Cruz on the northeast coast across the mountains to the resort city of Puerto de la Cruz. In the lush Orotava Valley, there were farms, banana plantations and vineyards on the hillsides along the winding road. We were told that 40% of the wine production of these islands comes from Tenerife. The landscape was picturesque in itself, but there were flowering trees, shrubs and plants seemingly everywhere we looked.



The Waterfront  
at Porto de la  
Cruz

We found an ATM to stock up on Euros and spent the morning strolling the streets and enjoying the waterfront. The town has shady squares, narrow winding streets, a fascinating waterfront with stone breakwaters for anchorages and swimming and a few blocks away there are dramatic waves crashing on volcanic rock. There were a number of colorful fishing boats in the harbor with crews readying them to go out at more of a saunter than a bustle. There was a tremendous amount of renovation going on in this area. This is one of two major resort areas, with the other being on the southern tip of the island.

Our drop off and pick up spot for our bus ride was at an internationally known landmark, McDonalds. Gary had wanted a restroom break and so this was perfect, but being wise to the influx of tourists, this McDonalds had a keypad and you had to know the code, which would be printed on a receipt of a purchase. So we bought a Diet Coke to get the secret password. However, this clever stratagem of the local McDonald's was easily thwarted by crafty tourists with full bladders. They simply wait for someone to come up with the code and then "tailgate" into the bathroom with the code holder, or else catch the door on the way out. They need a potty marshal here, but it might be easier just to let the people go.



"Coarse" Sand  
on the Black  
Beach

We walked the Lido Martianeze area and took a stroll on their black sand beach (no Saharan sand here). We were told that the resorts in the south imported Saharan sand to pretty up their beaches and make them more appealing to tourists. Black sand is quite coarse, but its major drawback is that it gets really hot when it's sunny out and not conducive to barefoot strolls.



Seawall at  
Porto de la  
Cruz

Walking through the village of Puerto de la Cruz, we were reminded of so many different places – San Juan Puerto Rico, Cinque Terre, Mallorca, Capri and even Monte Carlo with the steep mountains looming over the beach – although it must be said it would be a poor man's Monte Carlo with nary a Lamborghini or Bentley in sight. The climate here is absolutely delightful, short sleeve weather, but not muggy or hot with a gentle breeze off the water. We stopped for wine and tapas at a local sidewalk café called Columbus where we could hear music from local street performers (the British call them “buskers”) and the sound of waves crashing on the rocks. It was totally idyllic, and then Dennis, the Cuban caricature artist, showed up and it became totally hysterical.



## Admiring the Work of Dennis the Cuban Caricaturist

Dennis came up to our table with a caricature sketch of Gary that he had just made while watching us sip our wine. It was interesting that we were sitting two rows back from the street with perhaps 40 people between us and Dennis, but he picked Gary out of the herd to sketch and to receive his sales pitch. This happens a lot to him and I think he puts out some sort of “sucker” pheromone because he always gets singled out by people hawking merchandise and services. Or it may be that he can’t shake the habit of making eye contact, but since he had sunglasses on, I am going with the pheromone theory.



Dennis at Work

We had a good chuckle over the caricature, for while it featured an outsized neck, nose and chin – it was indeed and undoubtedly him. Dennis was himself sort of a walking caricature – skinny as a rail, one prominent silver tooth, grimy baseball cap and pigtail, carrying a clipboard. When he

found out we were Americans, he proudly showed us the back of his clipboard which prominently featured an American and a Cuban flag. Well it wasn't quite an American flag, in that it was about 30 stars short, but he had the right idea. He said he dreams of going to America one day. Gary commissioned Dennis to draw the two of us and for a mere \$5 euros – just over 5 dollars US- , he did one. Again, there was no mistaking the identity of those fabulous tourists in the sunglasses, but I had to wonder if my neck really is that skinny and my chin that pointy.

Before our encounter with Dennis, we had ordered a toasted Panini for a snack and it was very slow in arriving. We wondered if there was same day service on the food here. It was so slow in fact that Gary theorized that they may have had a power failure to the toaster and were toasting it with matches. But we had to remind ourselves, we are not aboard the Queen Victoria and are no longer getting Cunard White Star Service and we need to adjust our thinking and our watches to European tempo, which is relaxed and slow. When it arrived it was delicious and we really wanted to order another one, but we had to meet our bus for the ride back to Santa Cruz in two hours and were afraid we would miss it if we waited, even if we ordered it to go.



Church of San  
Telmo

We took our extra time further exploring the town and found it absolutely delightful, with quaint old colonial houses with shutters and narrow wooden balconies , old churches, parks

with ancient trees, fishing boats bobbing in the harbor – just perfect. We took some time to promenade by the oldest structures in town, the Church of San Telmo and the Casa de la Real Aduana. But too soon our wah-wah had arrived and it was time to go back to Santa Cruz.



At the Tasca  
Robotica in  
Santa Cruz

Once back at the ship, we had extra time in the afternoon so we walked from the ship into town, perhaps a half a mile walk to the Plaza de Espana, whose chief feature is the Monumento de las Caidos (literal translation is Monument of the Fallen) which commemorates the dead from the Spanish Civil War which lasted from 1936 to 1939 and resulted in Franco becoming the dictator of Spain until his death in 1975. Santa Cruz has around 300,000 inhabitants and is quite easy to explore on foot. There were several interesting museums which will have to be saved for a future visit. We walked around the old part of Santa Cruz, much as we had Puerto de la Cruz and found it almost as charming, but the waterfront here is mostly commercial and so we went inland a few blocks. We were able to see the Iglesia del Nuestra Senora de la Concepcion, the city's oldest church, originally built in 1502, but only from the outside. Clearly we had too little time here and would have to come back, so in light of that we decided to again stop for wine and tapas at an outdoor restaurant on Plaza de Principe de Asturias (translation is the Prince of Asturias –

a region in Spain. The restaurant was called Tasca La Rebotica (translation is the Back Room Pub). As we drank our wine, we gazed out on the square which has a statue of Jose Murphy, an unusual moniker, but through the power of Google, we learned he was a real person of note. His father was Irish and his mother was from the Canary Islands and he is the individual credited with getting the Spanish Government to allow the Canary Islands to be a free trade port. Jose Murphy is not the subject of the joke that goes like this:

Man to woman he just met: What nationality of men do you think make the best lovers?

She: I think maybe the Irish or the Spanish

He: Well allow me to introduce myself. I am Jose Murphy.

We had a leisurely, if long, stroll back to the ship, arriving in time for dinner of course, and resolved to visit the Canary Islands again at a more leisurely pace.

**May 6, 2016**

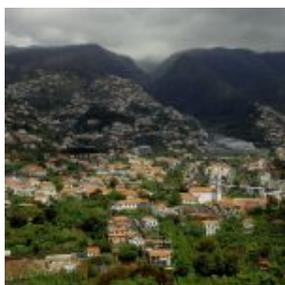
**Dateline: Funchal, Madeira**

**Latitude at Funchal 32. 3 Degrees North, Longitude 16.54 Degrees West**



Docked at the  
Port of  
Funchal,  
Madeira

Today we docked at the port of Funchal, Madeira, 600 miles southwest of Lisbon. We had an overnight trip of 251 miles from Tenerife. There are seven islands in the group, but only 2 are inhabited. The word, "madeira" means wood in Portuguese and it was a fitting name since the entire island was covered in timber in the olden days. There is archaeological evidence that it was visited by the Vikings prior to discovery by the Portuguese, who claimed it for their own in 1419. In the period from 1415 to 1542, the Portuguese did a lot of "discovering" and claiming. Madeira was found by a Portuguese ship traveling down the coast of Africa which was blown off course. Today it is an autonomous region of Portugal.



Clouds  
Gathering  
Above Funchal

The island, volcanic in origin is approximately 309 square miles, but it is old enough to have vegetation take over centuries ago. The climate only varies by 10 degrees between summer and winter and is in the temperate zone so it is not too hot, not too cold, not too dry, not too humid – in short it is a delightful climate, famous for its wine and flowers. It is mountainous, with the highest point being Pico Ruivo at just over 6,000 feet. The population of the island is around 267,000. Funchal gets its name from the fennel plant (funcho in Portuguese) that was found growing wild here. The city has three main parts – the Lido a beach area with 5 star hotels, the old town with colonial era buildings and the city center with street after street of shops

Tourism is their major business, but they also have farming and fishing. Bananas and flowers are exported, as well as tuna and other fish, as well as the famous fortified wine named after the island (Madeira). The city of Funchal sits in a natural amphitheater below the mountain slope.



Toboggan  
Drivers  
Getting Sleds  
Ready

Our adventure ashore today was called "Cable Car and Toboggan, which would lead you to believe we were going someplace snowy, but this was a toboggan ride like no other. We rode a cable car called the Teleferico which takes passengers to the top of a peak called Monte (about 4,000 feet) in a 15 minute ride, but in the old days it was slower on a rack and pinion railway. The trip down is in a wicker sleigh basket sort of contrivance, and has not changed in the last 100 years. It is a brisk 10 minute, 2 kilometer (about 1.2 miles) thrill ride. And the interesting thing about this ride is that it is on a public street with vehicles going down it which sort of mix in with the sleds. Then there are cross streets where cars are supposed to stop and look uphill for approaching toboggans at various intersections.



The Shrine at  
the Spring

But before we embarked on our downhill adventure, we had a few minutes at the top in the Parish of Monte (formal name is Nossa Senhora do Monte – translation is Our Lady of the Mountain). We walked to the Monte Square where there was a shrine at a spring where a miracle took place. This spring has never run dry even during droughts. The miracle involved a little girl whose mother was very ill. Her father observed her as she retrieved water every day for their household and she seemed to be talking to someone he could not see. The little girl told him that she saw a “lady” and asked her to cure her mother. The mother was cured, and a Church was built on the top of the mountain and called Our Lady of the Mountain. The apparition was given the same name and she became the patron saint of Funchal. We walked up the 120 steps to reach it and it was well worth it. It was very simple on the outside and surprisingly ornate on the inside. Here at the top of the mountain the last Emperor of Austria was buried in 1922, who had been living in exile in Madeira.



Our Lady of  
the Mountain  
Church

Surrounding the shrine of the Fountain of our Lady of the Mountain, were giant sycamore trees, said to be over 400 years old. Just below the fountain there is a garden with exotic plants and a series of waterfalls cascading down a ravine of mossy rocks and fern covered ledges. The exotic plants we see at home, small and grown in pots, we saw here, but they were taller than my head in many cases and they seemed to be growing wild – calla lilies, bird of paradise, orchids, fuchsia and on and on. I have pony tail plants growing at home in pots, whereas the same plants are called elephants foot and grow into trees with huge circumferences. We did learn that while pineapple plants and olive trees will flourish here, they will not produce any fruit.



Laughing All  
the Way

For the ride down Monte, we got into a wicker sled with hardwood ski-like runners, called a *carro de cesto* (basket car). Passengers go two by two, unless there are 3 skinny ones which will fit. Then the fun begins. The sled is powered by gravity and the course is a very steep and winding street (kind of a bobsled course without the ice). The steering and braking is handled by two sled runners referred to as pilots who steer with ropes and brake with their rubber soled feet from behind. They pull, run alongside and hop on the back like dogsled mushers as the situation calls for. The sled runners also pull the ropes to spin us this way and that, adding some extra excitement to the ride. We the passengers are alternately laughing and screaming – not so much terrified as elated I think. We think it was like the line in “Jingle

Bells” – we were laughing all the way.

At the bottom of the toboggan ride there was a photo of us in mid-scream about halfway down, printed and ready for purchase the minute we unloaded from the sled. We are not sure how they pulled that off in the five minutes or so they had, but they had photos ready for sale of every passenger on every sled as they arrived. We marveled at the wonders of wireless technology.



Overlook at  
Pico Dos  
Barcelos

We stopped at Pico Dos Barcelos, a scenic spot that overlooks the city of Funchal far below. The houses all have red tile roofs and seem to spill down the hillside, amid hundreds of flower gardens, and blooming trees – this time of year it was the orange flame tree and the lavender jacaranda amid a riot of green, with the deep blue of the ocean as a backdrop. It was truly stunning to see. The Se, the old cathedral, built between 1485 and 1515, was visible in the distance, as well as the Colegio (formally known as the Collegiat Church of St. John the Baptist and the Convento de Santa Clara, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. One sight we wanted to see but simply did not have time for was the Mercado dos Lavradores, (the Worker’s Market), an open air market with stalls selling meat, cheese, fruits and vegetables, as well as fish, clothing, wicker items and flowers.



The Mountains  
of Madeira  
from Dos  
Barcelos

We did have a good laugh here at the scenic overlook. There was a beautiful vista that I wanted to take a picture of, but on a bench right at the edge of the overlook there was a couple facing each other and she unfortunately had a shirt that was not long enough and pants that were not high enough and the result was a plumber's butt crack, which would have been right in the middle of my picture. I don't know if there is a Photo Shop app for that or not. In any event, I took the picture with the subtitle in mind – instead of Madeira , it would be Derriere in Madeira.



Sampling the  
Goods at  
Blandy's Wine  
Lodge

Back in town we stopped at Blandy's Wine Lodge, essentially a

tasting room to sample the local product, Madeira fortified wine. Fortified wine is wine to which a distilled liquor has been added and allowed to ferment. Regular wine had been produced on the island for quite a while, when fortified wine was discovered quite by accident on a sea voyage when wine from Madeira was stored in barrels and got too hot and became fermented, but they drank it anyway and it tasted pretty good so they started doing it on purpose. Today there are several types of Madeira including Malmsey – a full bodied sweet wine, Boal, a semi-sweet dessert wine, Verdelho, a medium dry wine and Sercial, the driest wine and closest in taste to sherry. The people of Madeira have the British to thank for making it know world-wide as Madeira.



### Strolling the Avenues of Funchal

After the tour we were on our own so we did our favorite thing, stroll about a new city and explore the sights and mingle (if not blend) with the locals. We walked down the Avenida Arriaga, taking in the sights. It was a beautiful avenue with decorative sidewalks with patterns in black and white stones – reminiscent of the Copa Cabana in Rio de Janeiro, but this was on every street in the area. The street was a broad boulevard with sycamores and jacarandas overarching it, with a fountain at one end and the Se Cathedral at the other. A crowd was gathered in front of the church watching a street band – not too far out of the ordinary, except they had a percussion instrument with long pipes made of what looked like PVC corrugated irrigation pipe

like you would have in your landscaping.



The Street  
Band Plays at  
the Cathedral.

We stopped the Café Apolo for a bite of lunch and some non-fortified wine, where we could still hear the music, but we also had other unexpected entertainment. There was what appeared to be a street person – a man of maybe 50 (or he could have been 30 and had a hard life) dressed in a trench coat, with floppy shirt and trousers, combat boots like Bill Murray had in Caddy Shack and a pork pie hat. He has spread a few table cloths out on the pavement with some fake flowers and a few doggy toys, and he had 3 black non-descript dogs with him – all mutts, including a puppy and its mother. We weren't sure if the other adult dog was the daddy or just a friend. Our street-side diagnosis was that the man had OCD. He meticulously cleaned the mother dog off after nursing the puppy, and repeatedly wiped the faces of all three dogs. The puppy piddled and he got out a cloth and cleaned it up. He left the dogs and came back a few minutes later with food and a bowl of water. People continuously stopped by to pet the dogs and hold the puppy. He left again and came back with antiseptic wipes. He would wipe down every animal after each encounter. Then he would comb through their fur looking, we assumed, for fleas) He had a baby stroller and so when he decided it was time to move, he loaded up all 3 dogs in it and made the rounds of the crowd and people in the restaurants for donations. Then he folded up his table cloths, wiped down the whole area and moved on. We saw him later at a different

place, puppy worn out and sound asleep, but mom getting further "flea grooming".



On Board the  
Queen  
Victoria,  
Leaving  
Madeira

We took some side streets into some local neighborhoods and those too were charming, stone patterned sidewalks, colorful buildings, spotlessly clean. We bought some local oranges for a snack and they were excellent. We walked back to the ship which proved to be quite a hike, but it was an enjoyable one and included a stop for gelato. We were docked at great location which allowed us to sit by the Lido pool at the stern of the ship and watch the sunset and see the lights of Funchal twinkle on. We were not set to leave until 11:30, but we decided to not go back into the city for dinner, since we were still full from lunch and tired out from all the excitement and even more so, all the walking. Instead we listened to an on board concert by a Sixties tribute band. It was great, and we knew every song and all the words. Our favorite line was "Remember the 1960's when you wore flowers in your hair and you still had hair to wear flowers in?"

**May 7, 2016**

**Dateline: Eastern Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Portugal**

**Latitude at Noon UTC + 1, 35.7 North, Longitude 14.8 West**



## Gloomy Skies in the North Atlantic

Today we awoke to a rolling sea and gloomy skies on our first sea day out of Madeira, after sleeping much later than usual. We think it's that rocking motion that keeps us snoozing. We were cruising about 200 miles off the coast of Portugal today. We will be traveling over the Josephine Bank which rises from a depth of close to 9,000 feet to about 557 feet. At this point we were 400 miles west of the Strait of Gibraltar. At noon today we had traveled 220 miles from Madeira with 1,094 to go to Southampton. Our noon position was 288 miles off the coast of Portugal, traveling at 17.8 knots. The wind was a brisk 25 knots out of the west at noon, but increased to 30 by mid-afternoon, creating moderate to rough seas with waves of 12 to 15 feet. The water temperature was considerably cooler at 63 F, and the air temperature was the same and we had afternoon and evening rain showers. Today was the day to seek out a cozy retreat and we spent a good bit of the morning in our favorite on board lounge, the Carintha on Deck 3 where we could watch the raging ocean and sip our tea and coffee.

We attended an interesting lecture by Jonathan Dimpleby, a noted journalist and author of WWII history, who talked about the Battle for the Atlantic and the terrible cost to human life, as well as how close the Allies came to defeat based on key decisions and actions of politicians and admirals. His lecture started with the historic events of 1939 and how things unfolded from there. The war took a terrible toll on both sides, but was especially deadly in the German Navy where

30,000 out of a navy of 38,000 died. Thousands of ships (both merchant and military) were sunk. The US East Coast was especially hazardous for Allies since the ships leaving for Europe were backlit by the city lights, making perfect targets for German u-boats. Unfortunately it took several ships being sunk before they came up with the blackout idea.

In the afternoon we listened to an amazing concert by one of the orchestra musicians who has collected musical instruments from all over the world, including bagpipes and he played them all beautifully. Well almost all – there was a kazoo in the collection that wasn't too musical, but everything else was wonderful. We continued to be amazed at the talent of the musicians on board. We chatted a few minutes with someone we were sure we had never seen before, who unfortunately seemed to have only one sort of fang-like tooth. Not to try to second guess anyone too much, but it seemed that she might have wanted to spend some money on dentistry and forego her annual trip on a Cunard ship. Call me crazy, but that seems to be where my priorities are.

We learned a nautical fact today – the word “port hole” originated in 1485 in England during the reign of Henry VI who wanted to use guns too large for traditional deck mounting since it would make the ship too top heavy and a French shipbuilder was commissioned to solve the problem. He ordered the cannon mounted inside the ship below decks and he put small doors on the sides of the ship that could be opened when the cannon was to be used. The French word for door is “porte” and thus the name. It later came to mean any opening in the ship's hull.



Decadent  
Shipboard  
Desserts

The ship has a specialty restaurant which switches from Italian, to steak, to Indian and to Chinese, the latter being called Bamboo. We ate there this night and enjoyed every morsel, even the sushi which neither of us are wild about and the shrimp tempura was outstanding. There was a great night of sleeping with endless rocking as the ship moved through rough seas.

**May 8, 2016**

**Dateline: Eastern Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Vigo, Spain**

**Latitude at Noon UTC + 1, 42.1 North, Longitude 11.1 West**

This is our second sea day out of Madeira. We awoke to a sunny and cool day, making 18 knots. We treated ourselves to a fancy breakfast in the dining room, lured there by promises on the menu of maple syrup. However, I was sad to learn that they only have imitation maple and no one was even the least bit concerned about the false advertising. I do not believe the British are aware of the sublime taste of true maple syrup from the "colonies". Just try giving them Nestea instead of

brewed tea and you would have a riot on your hands – but syrup – that’s a different matter and totally inconsequential. We did manage to choke down the pancakes nevertheless. It was chilly and windy out on the open decks, a brisk 24 knots, so we were afforded another day to seek cozy spaces inside for reading and snoozing.



On Deck for  
our Last Full  
Sea Day

We had traveled 418 miles since yesterday at noon, with 674 to go to reach our final port of Southampton. The closest point of land is Cabo Finisterre, (translation is Land’s End Cape) Portugal, the northwestern most point of Europe. We had been in very deep water, over 7,000 feet, but as we entered the shallower Bay of Biscay, the seas got even rougher and the swells even higher. The bay is notorious for fierce storms and unpredictable weather, but it is the widest inlet to Europe from the Atlantic and so ships traverse it regularly.

While the Indian Ocean that we crossed traveling from Hong Kong to South Africa was huge, the Atlantic is even more vast at 41 million square miles, second only to the Pacific in size, but instead of crossing what is referred to jokingly as “The Pond”, we are traveling south to north. Its deepest point is off the coast of Puerto Rico, measured at 12,232 feet

We learned a little Cunard history today. An early liner, the Britannia launched in 1840 and powered by steam, carried 115 passengers and 89 crew and 600 tons of coal. It took the mail

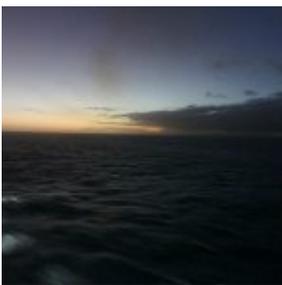
to and from America. They kept on board chickens to eat and a cow to provide fresh milk. They also had 3 cats to keep the rats under control and it was strictly forbidden to feed them lest they get lazy and fail to hunt down the rats. She had a sister vessel called the Caledonia. Both carried a full set of sails in case of engine trouble. There was some fear of steam powered vessels in the early days and one minister is recorded denouncing them as “the work of the Devil”.

We had an incredibly decadent day – eating, drinking, napping, reading and playing cribbage, but we did manage to rouse ourselves enough to take our brisk two walk around the Promenade Deck, aided with a tailwind in one direction and hindered by a headwind in the other. A brisk walk in very brisk weather!

**May 9, 2016**

**Dateline: Bay of Biscay, 19 miles from the French island of Ushant**

**Latitude at Noon UTC + 1, 48.2 Degrees North, Longitude 5.6 Degrees West**



Sunset on the  
North Atlantic

Today, sadly, is our last day at sea and our last full day on the ship. Traveling from Hong Kong (where we boarded to Southampton where we will disembark) the ship will have covered 12,841 nautical miles in 42 Days. We finished our crossing of the Bay of Biscay in the late afternoon and

continued our approach to the English Channel. We are to pick up a local pilot around 3:00 a.m. and will slow our speed to time our arrival for the rendezvous.

We decided to enrich our minds a bit and attended an interview with Jonathan Dimbleby, the British broadcast journalist, who is quite distinguished looking with his silver hair and linen suit. His father was the BBC's first reporter. It was founded in 1922 and by the 1930's, was broadcasting across Europe. He covered WWII including the atrocities of Hitler's death camps.

Mr. Dimbleby's (the son's) fame came from his coverage of the famine in Ethiopia in 1983-85, in which an estimated million people died, much of it concealed by the Ethiopian government. He has also covered the royal family a great deal, including the 1997 turnover of Hong Kong from Great Britain to China. He was aboard the royal yacht, the Britannia with Prince Charles, for the ceremony. The pageantry included a host of navy ships sailing by in salute and an RAF flyover as the band played "God Save the Queen" ( a bit of trivia here – it is the same melody as "My Country Tis of Thee" which was no doubt borrowed from the Brits since they were singing it when we were still a colony).

Another highlight came at the 1989 meeting between Margaret Thatcher, then the Prime Minister of England and Mikhail Gorbachev, then the Premier of Russia. Mr. Dimbleby says his worst moment was when he was on the air and his mobile phone started ringing. He could not seem to make it stop so he tossed it over his shoulder into the wings where finally someone backstage was able to silence it.

Tax payers actually fund the BBC (sort of like our NPR, but on the scale of CNN) which has some good points, chief of which is to not be beholden to private investors, (e.g. like Rupert Murdoch) or advertisers. This allows them to be more impartial and accurate, but they have to depend on taxpayers to buy programming and on air talent and it is hard to be

competitive. Now there is great competition from social media which has the problem (in Mr. Dimbleby's words) that "a lie gets halfway around the world before the truth can get its boots on". He says it is crucial the broadcast journalism be kept independent from politicians.

Today at noon we were traveling at 17 knots, having traveled 438 miles since noon yesterday, with 234 miles to go to reach Southampton. The Queen Mary is 28 miles behind us, traveling at 20 knots and the Queen Elizabeth is 55 miles behind us traveling at 20 knots. The other two "Queens" will also be approaching the port and will be docking tomorrow morning as well.

We spent our last evening packing and stopped for a short dance to Jimmy Buffet on my IPOD singing "It's Been a Lovely Cruise" which has become sort of a family tradition.

**May 10, 2016**

**Dateline: Mayflower Terminal, Southampton, England**

**Latitude at Noon UTC + 1, 50.9 Degrees North, Longitude 1.4 Degrees West**



The Queen  
Victoria at  
her Berth

With around 10,000 passengers and crew disembarking, with 20,000 to 30,000 pieces of luggage we figured it was going to

be hectic and indeed it was. We had hired a car to take us to a hotel near Heathrow Airport, and the driver, despite being local, got snarled in traffic and went to the wrong terminal a time or two, but with the help of a porter and his cell phone, we managed to talk him in to the Mayflower terminal where we were.

We had an uneventful ride to the Hilton Hotel at Heathrow , but the traffic was heavy and it was raining. We had originally thought we would take the train into London and have one more adventure for this trip, but with the miserable weather, we decided we had plenty of adventures and had dinner at the hotel and called this adventure concluded – and what a satisfying adventure it was. We flew 8,380 miles from Atlanta to Hong Kong and traveled 12,841 miles on the Queen Victoria from Hong Kong to Southampton. Tomorrow we will fly 4,204 miles from London to Atlanta and thus completing a truly memorable trip around the world.