



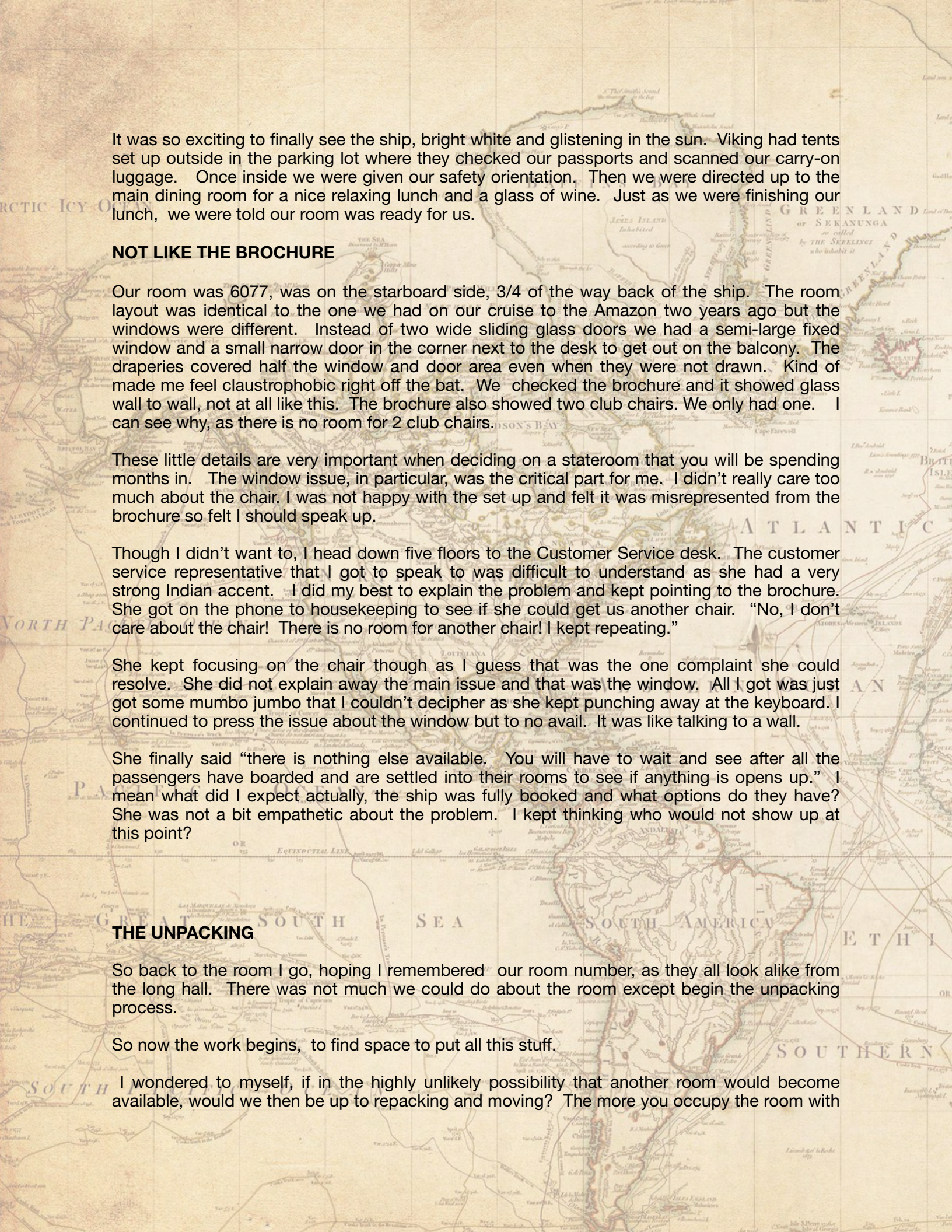
JANUARY 6, 2024 - DAY OF BOARDING, SAN PEDRO.

Finally the day has come to get aboard the ship. At times I thought it would never arrive. First we had to drop off the rental car in San Pedro where the ship is docked. We rented it from Enterprise in Tucson just 2 miles from home. When it came time to pick it up the car it was smaller than what we expected and nothing else was available. So having no other option, or time, we climbed in and off we went crammed in like two sardines.

SARDINE CAN

Our first stop was La Quinta, CA to spend two days with our good friends before heading to Long Beach to board the ship. Along the way, somewhere in the Sonoran desert, we stopped for a pit stop and my car door wouldn't open. The only way to get out on the driver's side was to have someone open it from outside or to put the window down and reach out and open the latch. Good thing there were two of us or I'd still be stuck near Gila Bend.

So needless to say, on the day of our boarding, I was elated to say "good riddance" to that dysfunctional sardine can.



It was so exciting to finally see the ship, bright white and glistening in the sun. Viking had tents set up outside in the parking lot where they checked our passports and scanned our carry-on luggage. Once inside we were given our safety orientation. Then we were directed up to the main dining room for a nice relaxing lunch and a glass of wine. Just as we were finishing our lunch, we were told our room was ready for us.

NOT LIKE THE BROCHURE

Our room was 6077, was on the starboard side, 3/4 of the way back of the ship. The room layout was identical to the one we had on our cruise to the Amazon two years ago but the windows were different. Instead of two wide sliding glass doors we had a semi-large fixed window and a small narrow door in the corner next to the desk to get out on the balcony. The draperies covered half the window and door area even when they were not drawn. Kind of made me feel claustrophobic right off the bat. We checked the brochure and it showed glass wall to wall, not at all like this. The brochure also showed two club chairs. We only had one. I can see why, as there is no room for 2 club chairs.

These little details are very important when deciding on a stateroom that you will be spending months in. The window issue, in particular, was the critical part for me. I didn't really care too much about the chair. I was not happy with the set up and felt it was misrepresented from the brochure so felt I should speak up.

Though I didn't want to, I head down five floors to the Customer Service desk. The customer service representative that I got to speak to was difficult to understand as she had a very strong Indian accent. I did my best to explain the problem and kept pointing to the brochure. She got on the phone to housekeeping to see if she could get us another chair. "No, I don't care about the chair! There is no room for another chair! I kept repeating."

She kept focusing on the chair though as I guess that was the one complaint she could resolve. She did not explain away the main issue and that was the window. All I got was just got some mumbo jumbo that I couldn't decipher as she kept punching away at the keyboard. I continued to press the issue about the window but to no avail. It was like talking to a wall.

She finally said "there is nothing else available. You will have to wait and see after all the passengers have boarded and are settled into their rooms to see if anything is opens up." I mean what did I expect actually, the ship was fully booked and what options do they have? She was not a bit empathetic about the problem. I kept thinking who would not show up at this point?

THE UNPACKING

So back to the room I go, hoping I remembered our room number, as they all look alike from the long hall. There was not much we could do about the room except begin the unpacking process.

So now the work begins, to find space to put all this stuff.

I wondered to myself, if in the highly unlikely possibility that another room would become available, would we then be up to repacking and moving? The more you occupy the room with

your stuff and decide on places to put the stuff, the more the room becomes your home and the less important it starts to become to gain a few more inches of window to see out of.

I was not too happy but wasn't going to let this spoil the trip. I began putting things away. Larry on the other hand, was fiddling with the window coverings. He was trying to pull them back to open up the view. Next thing I know, he has used these handy magnetic hooks we brought for whatever use that might come up and along with some zip lock that he cut into strips had made some nifty drapery tie-backs. He had the draperies pulled back and nicely tsecured. We now did not feel so claustrophobic. By doing this, it almost doubled the view.

That will work until we get to port somewhere along the way where another ship is looking straight into our window. We'll worry about that when the time comes. Brilliant idea Larry and lots of ingenuity!

Amazingly all the stuff fit into the stateroom as I had my doubts. There is an amazing amount of concealed drawer space and also the empty suitcases can be stored under the bed and double up as storage lockers. So the things we would not be using for the first month, like hiking boots, jackets, etc., I put into the suitcases. But I will say, it's a good thing we did not bring one more thing as there is not an inch to spare.

FRIENDS ON EMERALD PRINCESS

We still have not been able to communicate with our friends who are on the **Emerald Princess**, We are so worried about them.

Last time we heard from them was in an email December 31:

"Happy New Year's Eve. FYI take some cold meds with you. We flew carry-on, so limited. Our ship had a 100 cough syrups at start and are sold out. At the moment I'm the only healthy one. And I wonder for how much longer? Think it must be RSV virus. (Husband) test negative for Covid but is really sick. Respiratory (chest). Came on slowly in Cartagena. (Other friends) too. Hopefully Viking will be a different story. Stay healthy. Happy New Year and Happy Birthday to Larry! Love..."

Then on January 2nd we get an answer back to our inquiry on how they are doing:

"Sorry I didn't answer yesterday. Really didn't want to share our woes since you guys are headed off in a couple of days. We are all doing okay except for (husband). He on the other hand had a temp of 102 when he finally went to the ship's medical center on New Year's Day. Confined to his room since then. Kind of scary, feels like he's on his deathbed, Raspy whistley lungs and chest and although his temp is finally down he feels just as bad and doesn't want to eat anything for days now. Not exactly a fun trip. I'm beginning to think our first stop will be a hospital or doc upon our return unless things change. Need a lung Xray. I'll keep you posted. Bon Voyage."

Wow, that is very concerning.

WELCOMING COCKTAIL PARTY WITH VIKING CEO

The first night the passengers on our ship were treated to a welcoming party put on by Viking CEO and owner, Torstein Hagen. His daughter, Karine Hagen, was there too. She is the executive Vice President. It was a total surprise for everyone that they her for our send off. They both were swarmed with people wanting to take selfies with them.

Torstein gave a short speech saying they were there to welcome us to this special world cruise event and would also stay on in Long Beach to welcome the Viking **Neptune** ship which was arriving a few days behind us. He said it's the first time they've had two ships doing the same world cruise within days of each other so it was a special event.

AFRICA?

The most interesting thing we learned from his speech was Viking's concern about the war in Israel and how it might effect our travel itinerary. He assured us that Viking is closely monitoring and studying the situation and they have decided that Mumbai, India will be the cut off point for making a decision whether we go through the Red Sea to the Mediterranean or head south around Africa! HOLY COW! My suspicions were correct.

That night we had dinner in one of the ship's many restaurants. Got to talking to the people next to us. John and Janice from Ohio. He was retired executive working in the copper mining business. Funny as hell and lots of fun. Another good sign for the trip.

LEFT SAN PEDRO THAT NIGHT, AROUND 8 PM FOR SANTA BARBARA

After dinner we came back to the room. Very tired and ready to get some sleep. The light was blinking on the room phone indicating we had a message. It was from the customer service lady. She said everyone has checked in and there are no extra rooms available but she would let me know if something opens up in a few days. How could anything open up when we're at sea for five days unless somebody falls off the boat?

Oh well, we're settled in, everything we brought now has a place and the window draperies were nicely pulled back by Larry. I'm not going to pursue the room issue anymore. So we crawled into bed.

Soon you could hear the engines gaining momentum and we felt the motion of the boat as it began to head out of the harbor onto this exciting journey and adventure ahead of us.

Tonight we will be heading up the coast, a very short trip up to Santa Barbara. We've done it many time before in our boat so was familiar.

JANUARY 7TH, SANTA BARBARA - OUR FIRST STOP -WEATHER IS SUNNY AND PERFECT, SEAS A BIT SWELLY

We awoke at dawn as the ship was just arriving to Santa Barbara. The sun was coming up and the orange sky contrasted against the black silhouettes of the oil derricks that line the

Santa Barbara Channel. There is a lot of oil in this area. It's not uncommon when walking barefoot on the sandy beaches that the bottoms of your feet become spotted with globs of thick goeoy oil that have washed ashore.

The sun began to shine highlighting the beautiful coast and hillsides. It was truly a beautiful sight to see from the water. I'd forgotten how beautiful the area is. The coast looks pretty

much like it always has. Santa Barbara works hard to preserve its Spanish Colonial architecture and heritage. They have a very strict architectural committee that insures this. They will not allow the town to become overwhelmed with blocky sky scrapers and ugly buildings. Instead one of the tallest buildings you see from the distance is the old bell tower of the Mission. It has been a landmark for sea farers since the 18th century. I think Santa Barbara is one of the most beautiful cities in the US.

We know Santa Barbara pretty well having lived here for a few years. So there was no need for us to sign up for a sightseeing excursion. Some of the cruise passengers were going to go see the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, others were headed to Los Olivos to enjoy the wineries and



others were sticking close by to see the notable architecture: the Mission, Courthouse and others.

We on the other hand, just wanted to take it easy. We were planning to leave the boat late morning after the mad rush. Since SB has no dock large enough to accommodate cruise ships (thank God), the ship is anchored out.

They told us there will be a 45 minute delay as they analyze the conditions before they will let the tenders take people safely to shore as they say the swells are too large right now. They also had everyone on notice to be prepared that we might not be able to get off, period. It looked pretty calm to us.

It brought memories back of some of the storms we experienced living here. The shoreline is very exposed to swells and strong winds. Many times after a storm boats that had been anchored off shore would be swept ashore. Their final resting place would be laying sideways in the sand like seals sunning themselves. It was strangely a common sight after a bad storm.

So we sat in what they call the “Explorer’s Lounge” drinking coffee and watching the bright orange tenders shuttle groups in to the wharf, one after another. About lunch time we meandered down to the departations platform and got into one of the orange pill shaped tenders and headed ashore. We met a family on the tender that was from Egypt. Very friendly and so inquisitive. They asked us a gazillion questions about where we were from and what there was to see in Santa Barbara. They immigrated here 34 years ago, living in Fort Myers, Florida. That’s the first time I’ve ever met anyone from Egypt.

We had lunch at Brophy’s, one of our old local hangouts that overlooks the marina. It was just as we remembered it, hadn’t changed a bit. It’s been so long since we’ve had good cup of clam chowder, FRESH seafood and a nice spicy Bloody Mary to top it off.

Afterwards, we walked around the wharf, smelled the fresh sea air and enjoyed watching the sea birds, the people and the water. Only thing we missed seeing were the sea urchin divers unloading their catch on the wharf.

There always is a lot of activity around the harbor including marine life. We used to love watching the dolphins playing in the waves with the local surfers, seals laying about on ringing buoys and begging a snack off the fishermen. Gobs of pelicans everywhere and still hanging out on top of the old wharf buildings leaving it covered in white guano. Now living in the desert we realize how much we miss the ocean and all that comes with it.

We took a free shuttle bus for a ride around town. At the end of the 45 minute shuttle ride we got back on one of the ship’s tenders and weaved our way back through the swells back to the ship.

It was a simple night. We had a quick dinner at the buffet restaurant and went to bed early. The seas had a slow soft swell and lulled you right to sleep.



JANUARY 7TH, DAY 1 AT SEA, LEAVING SANTA BARBARA PORT, 8 PM, TO CROSS THE PACIFIC OCEAN - WEATHER COLD, SEAS ROUGH

The calm seas were getting restless and began to build during the night. It became increasingly rough during our first day at sea. We were struggling to get our sea legs working again as we wobbled and grabbed things to brace us as we maneuvered around the ship. This was going to take some getting used to again.

Didn't do much the first day as still tired and getting used to the rough seas. We managed to do a few laps around the ship exploring.

Tonight at dinner we met a nice couple from Ohio, John and Janice. He's retired from the copper mining business and funny as hell. We laughed through the entire dinner.

JANUARY 8 - DAY 2 AT SEA, MONDAY, SEAS STILL ROUGH, UNEXPECTED CHILLY WEATHER, DIDN'T BRING THE RIGHT CLOTHES, SET CLOCK BACK AN HOUR

UPDATE FROM FRIENDS ON THE EMERALD PRINCESS

We still had not heard from our friends on the **Emerald Princess** and were very concerned. Last we heard (he) was confined to their cabin and may have to see a doctor or go to hospital at their next stop which we thought could be Puerto Vallarta or Cabo San Lucas but weren't sure. Seemed like days went by without hearing anything. We finally got an answer, from their daughter on January 7th:

"Hi Jayne - The little I know is that he's improving since being admitted on Thur., Jan. 4; and as of today (Sunday) he's stable. He's talkative, able to sit in a chair, and wants to come home, of course. He's still in an area that's less critical than the ICU. Mom's doing ok. I just wish I could be in two places at once! You guys have a grand time! Wash your hands a lot and stay 6 feet away from people -hahaha! Seriously, though...be mindful!"

We're confused. Now we find out they were escorted off the ship, but where? So we send another email, this time to the other couple that were traveling with them:

"Can you update us? We got a note from (daughter) and it sounds like he is in a hospital but where??? Did you both make it home OK or are you with them? Sorry to hear that you all got so sick on the trip."

Finally, we get an email January 8th:

"Larry and Jayne, I am sorry I haven't communicated with you but didn't want to ruin your send off. He has pneumonia. When we reached Puerto Vallarta they transferred us off the ship to Hospital Joya. He is presently in an extension of the ICU. Stable but slow improvement. Doctor says he will be here 7+ more days. No one speaks English making everything very difficult. I will give you updates when I can. Love to you both and take care of yourselves."

Then, got an email from the other couple later that day on January 8th:

"We all came down with a very bad chest virus about 5 days ago, we are all coughing. We arrived in Puerto Vallarta, he had been moved to sick bay on the ship where they took x-rays and diagnosed he had pneumonia in both lungs so they transferred him off the ship and to the hospital. He is in intensive care and probably will be for another week. They cannot not Med Flight Home with liquid in the lungs. We got home last night and immediately went to Emergency room to get X-rays and our lungs are clear but just feel like crap with lots of coughing. Lots of sick people on the ship. Just talked to her and she feels just like us."

That's the update so far. Still assuming they are still in Puerto Vallarta in the hospital. What a worry. Can't imagine what they are going through.

GETTING OUR SEA LEGS BACK

It's hard to walk anywhere or do anything as the seas are rough and we are still not used to it yet. Makes you very tired. So we have mostly been sitting around and trying to walk here and there. Went to a beginning Bridge Class. I did not understand any of it. Larry is trying to tutor me on the side. I'm skeptical that I will catch on.

Had lunch at the pool side cafe, hamburger and Philly steak sandwich.

Went to the LGBTQ... etc. cocktail party out of curiosity to see who the heck might show up. I think it was a flop, no one showed up. Getting to be a strange world we live in.

We had dinner at one of the upscale restaurants again. Sat next to another nice couple, BJ and John (retired from Citibank). Had a nice conversation. They are from Chicago.

JANUARY 9 - TUESDAY, DAY 2 AT SEA, SEAS CALM, STILL COLD BUT SIGNS IT MAY BE WARMING UP

DAY IN THE LIFE AT SEA ON A CRUISE SHIP

Second day at sea. Still has been a bit rough, overcast and cold. Have not seen a ship, bird or even a flying fish. Breakfast was crazy, so crowded, couldn't find a seat. Everyone was up at the same time and in a mad eating frenzy it seemed. Lots of good people watching though.

The ship has lots of activities for the passengers to keep them busy. Each day an announcement comes out with the day's list of activities: lectures, games, conversations, exercise classes or what special spa treatment is available. So I guess they all were up early to go to their various activities.

We went to Bridge lesson 2. Still didn't understand one thing the guy said. It's supposed to be beginning Bridge but many people there already know how to play so why are they there? They know all the answers and shout them out so the teacher so he thinks we all get it. Other people seem confused like me. Terrible. I think I must be stupid.

We are searching out different areas to hang out on the ship. Today we took a nap by pool and probably won't do that again as we both could hardly get out of chaise lounges as they are so low to the ground. I had a giggling fit as we both struggled to get up while the couple nearby just stared blankly at us. Where is their sense of humor?

There's a wide variety of people on this ship. There is a large group of knitters and needle pointers. They gather in a large group in the sun room and pick a little, talk a little, pic pick pick. There is a group of LGBTQ+... I think. And there are two women with seated motor devices. One thinks the gangways are her personal racetracks. She speeds by and you better get out of the way. She looks like a blur going by with her moo moo and gray hair flying in the wind. Today I am sitting near a gathering of CB radio enthusiasts and overhearing their conversations. And then there are the people that are constantly exercising and mixing their protein drink in the breakfast room. This morning we walked by the pool and the decks were covered with people laying on yoga mats doing exercises. Holy cow what a menagerie, us included I'm sure. We are just wandering around wondering where we fit in and trying to find a comfortable piece of furniture.

Most of the passengers are 65? And over? Mostly over. There are only two couples that look like they are in their 40s. They must be wondering what they are doing here with this group.

There are a few Chinese on the ship. I haven't seen them travel since Covid.

We ate again at the buffet. Crowded again and this time not very good. Guess it couldn't handle the rush of people.

Today was crew safety training day. There were sirens and announcements over the intercom every so often. Each announcement ends with "practice, practice, practice" to let us know we don't need to rush to the elevators or stairs to board the emergency orange pill boats.

In the afternoon, it was also outside cleaning day. One day was the port side and the next day was the starboard side. You were warned ahead of time in case you were in your room and a worker was outside on your balcony.

We looked at the pool and jacuzzi thinking it might be good for our sea legs to get in and soak but you might drown it was so rough. More likely you could surf it if they had a board.

We decided to go to one of the lectures that evening before dinner. It was titled "Chinese Seafarers: Did they follow the Vikings to the Americas?". Short answer, is, no. The speaker had such an exaggerated English accent that it was almost hilarious at times. He sounded a bit like Peter Sellers in the Pink Panther. It was interesting though and gave us insight into some of our future stops and the influence of the Chinese had in the early days of trade.

We decided to skip the battle of people at the buffet counter and head to one of the service Dinner restaurants again. Turned out to be very elegant and delicious and the service was super. Getting to really appreciate the service people on this ship. They really go out of their way to make you happy. Had a delicious meal of sea bass and Larry had pot roast with a chocolate soufflé and poached pear for dessert.

Sat next to a woman in her 60s traveling solo. Originally from Chicago but now living in LA to be near her kids.

JANUARY 10, WEDNESDAY - DAY 3 AT SEA, WARMING UP, WHITE CAPS BUT RIDE IS SMOOTH

Up early for breakfast. Saw our first ship, a freighter, off the port side heading East. Still have not seen a bird or anything in the sea except swells, white caps, mist and intermittent rain.

Skipped the awful Bridge Class, which I was very happy about, and instead went to another lecture by a guy that used to be a wing commander in the Royal Air Force. The topic was "Pacific Exploration." About the issues of East meets West as explorers and settlers discover the South Pacific. It was a great lecture. Later we went to another one about whale migration, Hawaii's Winter Whales. About why the humpbacks from Alaska and Canada migrate to the warm waters of the Hawaiian Islands. Not as good but still interesting. We are expected to see many whales on our 5th day as they migrate south to Hawaii to birth. We will see.

Tonight the buffet menu is advertised as a big Mexican food buffet. We will see. I love Mexican food so looking forward to it. Larry is still in his interior designer mood and has is still redesigning the room. He asked the housekeeper to remove the club chair and bring in another desk chair and also asked for more cushions to go under the sofa cushions so they aren't so low to the floor. It's getting to be funny. Not sure this room will ever be the same when he gets done with it.

The seas are somewhat rough again making for hard work to walk around the ship. We had a very light lunch today so decided to go to the daily afternoon tea which was fun. You can tell the climate is getting warmer. We have the door open to the balcony now and so nice.

They had a Mexican buffet tonight at the big restaurant. I don't think the Vikings know what real Mexican food tastes like.

JANUARY 11, THURSDAY - 4TH DAY AT SEA, LARRY UP AT 5 AM, FORGOT TO TURN HIS CLOCK BACK AN HOUR

It looks wretched outside. White caps, waves and rain. Skies, dark gray. The ship is wobbly. Larry was up at 5 AM because he forgot to set his clock back. So now we're both up and no coffee. The maid forgot to replenish the coffee pods and nothing open for a couple of hours. Grrr.

Went to breakfast and then to the "coffee chat". Got updated on why there is no satellite TV. The reason...?, they have no idea and nor do I think they care too much. He said the satellite TV has been out since Puerto Vallarta. Oh, and they still are working on it. I'm just grateful we have internet. Never thought that we would have such good internet connection.

I went to a talk on "Why There a Union Jack on the Flag of Hawaii?". Same speaker we had the day before with the strong exaggerated high society English accent. He sounds a little like Mr. Bean. Good thing Larry went to a photography talk as he surely fallen asleep learning about all the Hawaiian royal family. ZZZZZZZZZ.

Another lunch at the pool restaurant and back to the room for a snooze. Larry second chair was delivered and installed. He's quite the decorator these days. Not sure what the maids think of his scheme but works for us.

We have another lecture to go to this afternoon with the ex retire Wing Commander for the Royal Air-force. Now he is a good speaker so looking forward to that. "Tokyo Rose-Patriot or Traitor?" Short version, she was railroaded.

Dinner at the nice restaurant again. Had a wonderful dessert that looked like a peach. The shell of the peach was made of white chocolate and the interior was a peach moose with a jelly filling. Larry had schnitzel and my dinner of red snapper was less memorable.



The seas are really rough now. Impossible to leisurely walk around the ship so sitting in the bar. That's when my "friend" sent me a picture of a cruise ship in distress thinking it was funny. Turns out it was our Viking Sky in 2017 off the coast of Finland! I will need to figure out how to get back at him. LOL.

Here's the link:

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/video/chaos-board-distressed-viking-cruise-ship-61905979>

<https://gcaptain.com/viking-sky-cruise-ship-in-distress-norway/>

After watching that, didn't have a good sleep that night as the seas were very rough.

Tomorrow is our 5th day at sea. It's the final day before we reach land. Today is the day we are supposed to see marine life again. Stay tuned.....



Arctic Icy Ocean

Baffin's Bay

Greenland or Sakanunga

as called by the Skellings who inhabit it

Prince William's Land

Northern Eskimau

Hudson's Bay

La Brador

of New Britain

Southern Eskimau

Atlantic

North Pacific Ocean

North America

Western Ocean

Pacific Ocean

Ocean

South America

Ethiopia

The Great South Sea

South Pacific Ocean

Southern