

Day 7 (Friday 9/26/08) At Sea, Port Lecture, Captain's Reception, Towel Animals:

During the night the sea became very rough and we had trouble sleeping. The bouncy conditions continued into the morning hours but fortunately they were not severe enough to trigger the dreaded call for "O' Roark" over the bathroom sink. The water in the swimming pool on the Lido deck was sloshing around vigorously and the pool had been closed to swimming. This picture shows the bronze bear statues getting a bath from the splashing pool water.



This is one of the longest periods of time that we have spent at sea with no port stops. We still have two days to go before we reach Hakodate, Japan on September 29. We have not sighted another ship since leaving the port of Seattle. Apparently, the Aleutian Islands route to Asia is not a main shipping channel.

Port Lecture: At 10am we attended a lecture by Frank Buckingham about the first three Japanese ports we will visit. Those ports are Hakodate, Aomori and Miyako. He gave some background on Japanese culture and what we should expect as we tour. He said a peculiarity of Japanese culture is that they want to please a stranger. They will tend to tell you what you want to hear. For example, you might ask a Japanese person if it is a difficult journey to some tourist site, if the Japanese person thinks you want to hear it is an easy journey, that is what he will tell you even if it is a very difficult journey. The official exchange rate for money is about 118 yen per US dollar but he said a more likely rate after fees is about 100 yen per US dollar. Taxi cabs will probably cost about 2000 yen or \$20US to typical places we want to go. From his description, the three Japanese ports, Hakodate, Aomori and Miyako should be very interesting. After those first three Japanese ports we will stop at the Kobe/Osaka port for two days.

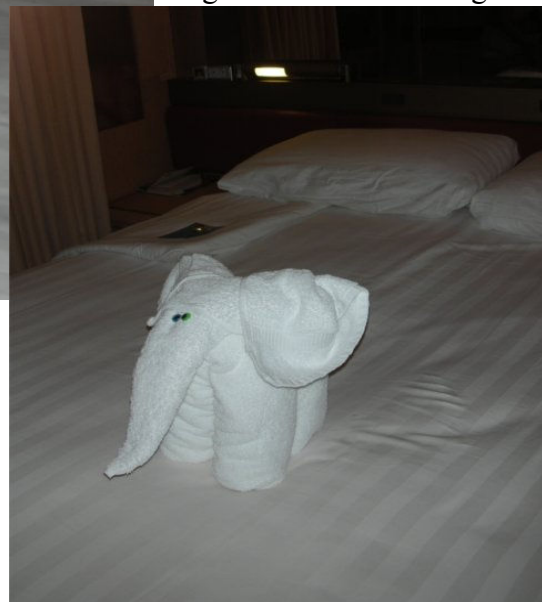
Captain's Reception: Last night we received an invitation to a cocktail reception that took place today. Captain van Zaane and his hotel manager, Willem Cruijsberg, hosted the event at 4:45pm this evening before the first seating in the dining room. We arrived and shook hands with Captain van Zaane who appeared to recognize us from the 2007 Grand World Voyage. Barbara asked if Apollonia, his wife, was going to be at the reception. Unfortunately, she was engaged in some other event at the same time and could not be at our gathering. We also met Willem Cruijsberg, the hotel manager in the receiving line.

Many of the ship's officers were at the reception. We were fortunate that Ms Emmely Kik, the ship's Navigation Officer and her assistant, Mr. Mark Wilson (Third Officer Navigation Dept.) came over to our table and we were able to talk to them. Yesterday I had submitted

a question to Ms Kik about the International Date Line and she had most graciously provided a detailed written answer within a matter of a couple hours. We had emailed our grand daughter, Emily, with the news that a lady with a Dutch name the same as hers was the navigator of our ship. Mr. Wilson will be leaving the ship on leave when we arrive in Sydney but Ms Kik will be guiding the ship all the way back to San Diego. We were able to get a picture of both Emmely and Mark before the reception came to an end.



Towel Animals: Our steward, Acep, sculpts an animal out of bathroom towels and leaves them on our bed each night. We always wonder what this night's surprise will be when we return to our stateroom from dinner. Last night we had a little dog.



Tonight we were greeted by a small elephant.

It will be interesting to see just how many of these pets Acep has in his bag of tricks.

