

Days 4 & 5 (Mon & Tue, 9/22-23/08) At Sea, Stateroom, Internet, Signature Shop:

The weather Gods continue to smile on us as the sea remains placid, winds moderate and outside temperatures cool but bearable in the low 50s.

On these days at sea the activity level is pleasantly muted so that we can finish getting our things located in the stateroom and just enjoy mingling with old and new friends that we meet around the ship.

Speaking of locating things in the stateroom, one satisfying feeling as we settle in is that you can find important things like the room key, medicines and camera in the same place twice in a row, a nice change from the chaos of the first day or so. The stateroom is comfortable but not overly large at 290 square feet, including an open



verandah accessible through the glass door. Here are some pictures showing the layout after our steward, Acep, had straightened up the place in the morning.

A good deal of time was spent getting the computer to communicate properly with the ship's server system. We had quickly established the ability to reach the Internet and post the blog and we could also download email. However, we found that we could not send email out. Mihai, the Internet Manager, was usually surrounded by anxious people with laptops in hand so rather than join that pack we took our usual approach of fix by trial and error. Unfortunately, all we found was error so we were forced to read the fine print in the instructions picked up from Mihai's desk. It turned out that we were victims of a problem peculiar to Microsoft Outlook users and we had to change a setting in the computer in order to send out email. With all the confidence of someone doing brain surgery with a butter knife, we made the indicated entries. Once the change was made, like magic, we could send out email. Another significant bit of progress regarding the Internet was that we found that it was possible to link up with the Internet in the comfort of our stateroom rather than having to go to the usual "Hot Spots" in the public areas

around the ship. Our earlier unsuccessful attempt at connecting to the Internet in the room was a result of the steel stateroom door blocking the radio signal from the ship's server. By keeping the stateroom door open it was possible to connect with the Internet when we wanted to send or receive information. A strategically located curtain in our room provided a reasonable degree of privacy during these brief periods so we were good-to-go on the Internet communication issue.

Barbara had noticed that the Amsterdam had just completed her last Alaska cruise of the season before picking us up in Seattle. Her 24/7 active shopping genes had signaled that the Amsterdam Signature Shop should be discounting prices on shirts and other clothes related to the Alaska scene. She was disappointed on the first day when she saw the sign posted on the Signature Shop window indicating that the shop was closed until September 23. Well, September 23 finally rolled around and the doors swung open. No Alaska tee shirts on sale but an Asia & Australia tee was quickly purchased and swept into a bag. We purposely didn't



pack many tee shirts for the cruise in anticipation of such acquisitions.



On cruises that include many days at sea the Holland America Lines provide professional speakers who deliver entertaining and instructive lectures as part of what is called the Explorations Program. We have enjoyed two lectures by Dr. Jay Wolff who spoke about the early human migration from Asia to Alaska and the historical events that followed up to the coming of the Americans after the Russians had exploited the fur trade to the maximum. Another speaker was David Smith who is a professional photographer. He showed digital and travel photography that he has taken. He provided many helpful suggestions for how amateur photographers could enhance their skills in taking photographs with their digital cameras.

Before dinner on Day 4 we joined Ray and Ann in their stateroom for drinks and another opportunity to get better acquainted. It turns out that Ann enjoys crafts and watercolor painting. She had taken part in a couple classes on those subjects during the day. Soon it was time for dinner and we adjourned to the La Fontaine Dining Room.

After dinner we stopped by the Ocean Bar where we recovered what remains of our dancing ability while assisted by the smooth rhythm of the Station Band. Then we made our way to the Queen's lounge where we took "Escape Seats" in the balcony near Jack and Evelyn who were also in their special seats. They had shown us this Escape Seat feature when we traveled with them during the 2007 World Cruise. These seats are near the back and on the aisle so if the performance is less than enjoyable it is a simple matter to quietly peel out of your seat and disappear out the back of the theater. Unfortunately, tonight was one of those events for us and we exercised the "Escape Option". We'll have to check later to see how Jack and Evelyn dealt with the situation.

Tomorrow the rest of the world will experience Wednesday, September 24, 2008. We on the Amsterdam will never have that pleasure of knowing September 24 because of the peculiarities of crossing the International Date Line. At midnight on Tuesday, September 23 the ship will magically move to Thursday, September 25 and life will go on. Fortunately, our grandson, Andrew, whose birthday is September 24th will be safely back in Oak Ridge, Tennessee where he can celebrate his twelfth birthday in spite of his grandparents missing the whole day. **HAPPY BIRTHDAY ANDREW!**