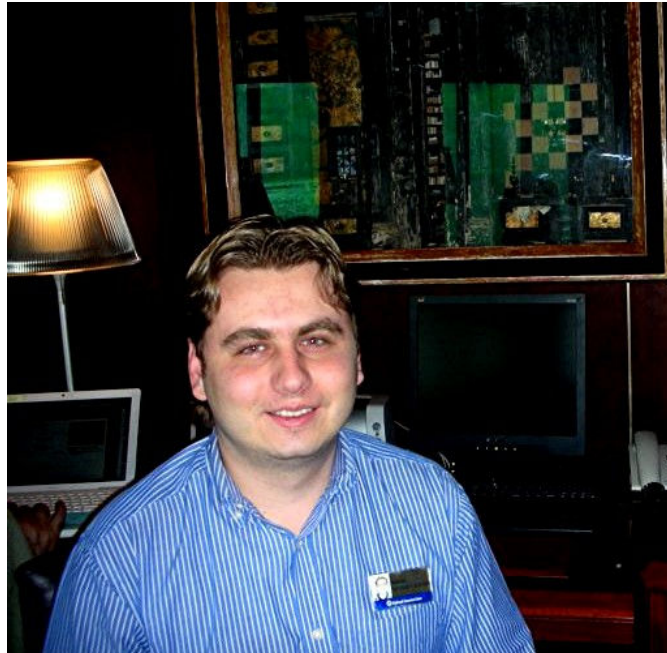


Day 2 (Sat 9/20/08) At Sea, Cruise Critic Meet & Greet, Med Evac: The day started with overcast sky, temperature about 55F and thankfully the sea was calm. We were able to walk around the Promenade deck 7 times to log in 2 miles and qualify for dessert tonight.

At 9am there was a brief seminar led by Mihai, the ship's Internet Manager and computer guru. He explained how we could negotiate the process of logging on to the Internet with our laptops. The minutes that we spend using the ship's radio transmitters cost \$250 for 1000 minutes. If you purchase smaller packages of time the cost per minute goes up. We had bought 1000 minutes and our travel agent purchased another 1000 for us so it looks like we are well covered for the 65 day cruise. After a little coaching by Mihai we were able to get our computer communicating with the Internet so it was a GO for the blog and email. Later in the day I was fumbling around with my computer and lost all of my text files. I thought they were lost forever and panic was setting in. Mihai was able to find and restore them with professional confidence. Boy was I relieved! Here is a picture of Mihai. He has a really tough job of dealing with senior citizens burdened with marginal computer skills and also a wide range of computer models and brands that they bring on board.



CruiseCritic.com Meet and Greet: At 10am MaryAnn (wowzo), our CruiseCritic.com coordinator, held a "Meet and Greet" session in the Crow's Nest Lounge. There were at least 40 people attending and we all had name tags so it was a great time to match faces with the "Handles" that people use when posting on the CruiseCritic.com website. MaryAnn made brief welcoming comments and then introduced the Amsterdam Cruise Director, Bruce Scudder, who had come to our CruiseCritic (CC) meeting. Bruce is a loquacious fellow who



introduces celebrities in the Queen's Lounge and in general acts as the interface between the ship's organization and the 1300 or so cruise guests. Bruce thanked us for cruising with Holland America and offered any assistance we needed to have an enjoyable cruise.

MaryAnn and Barbara then described the plans to organize lunches with CC people in the La Fontaine Restaurant on "at sea" days. MaryAnn also announced that an anonymous benefactor had canvas bookbags made with an embroidery monogram reading "Cruise Critic 2008 Asia Australia Cruise". All of the attendees got one of these special bags in which to carry their stuff and make it easier for us to track each other down. The meeting then evolved into

groups enjoying the refreshments and lively conversations about CC postings and experiences past and present. People who love cruising never seem to have trouble finding something to talk about. Here are some of our CC compatriots enjoying the moment in the sumptuous ambiance of the Crow's Nest Lounge.



We took this opportunity to get better acquainted with a few of the CC posters and finally connect pictures with their Cruise Critic "handle". Here is a picture gallery of the folks we managed to capture with the digital camera.

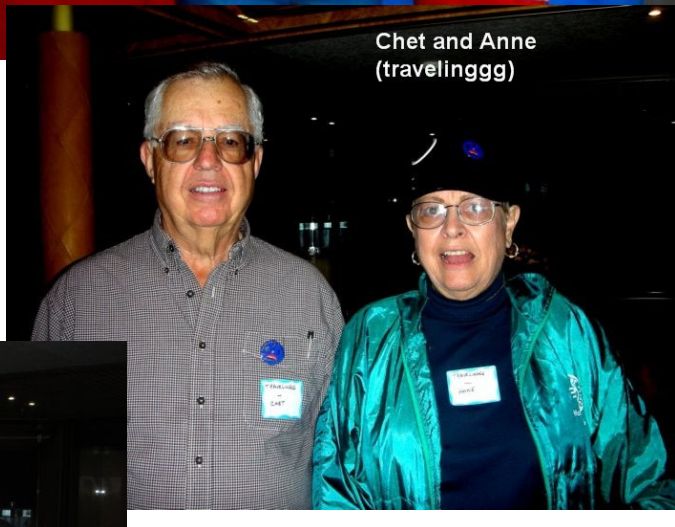




Anne,
(ansalberg)

Evelyn,
(itravel2much)

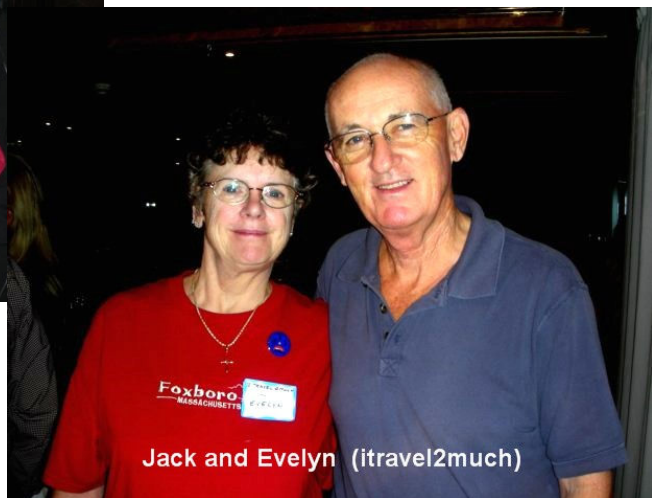
Darrel and Karen
(c&c4me, cruisertwo)



Chet and Anne
(travelingg)



Jack & Susie
(jack&susie)



Jack and Evelyn (itravel2much)



Orlin, Ken & Lois, Barbara
(tabk for Ken & slotl for Lois)

Ken and Lois organized the effort to have the "Grand Asia & Australia Voyage 2008" logos emblazoned on polo shirts and made them available for purchase by enthusiastic fellow CruiseCritic.com posters.



Doug and Jean (aussieoz)

Here are Doug and Jean, our friends from East Tennessee.



Bob & Rosemary (rozo'sbeau)

Sheila
(cruiserstl)



Lyle & Marjorie (70 +)



MaryAnn & John
(wowzo)

Barbara
(Tenncruisers)

Here is Barbara along with MaryAnn and John (wowzo) sporting the special Cruise Critic Asia & Australia Grand Voyage 2008 book bags.

Emergency Medical Evacuation: About noon today Captain van Zaane came on the ship's loudspeaker and informed us that there was a medical emergency on board that required an air evacuation. We found out later that a lady had suffered a stroke and needed immediate medical attention. Her husband remained on board and had to proceed on the Hakodate, Japan with us. The Captain turned the ship towards Canada and arranged for a military helicopter to fly to the ship from Vancouver, Canada. Between 3 and 4pm a two engine military patrol plane came and circled the ship while a helicopter and crew lifted the stricken patient from the bow area of the Amsterdam. The top decks forward on the ship were blocked off to the passengers so we gathered in the Crow's Nest Lounge for the best available view of the medical evacuation process. Our friend Evelyn, shown here, joined the crowd and tried to find a good vantage point to see the action.



The rescue started by lowering a specialist from the helicopter to coordinate the activity on deck. Here is how that part of the operation looked. A stretcher was then lowered to the deck and the helicopter left the area to a safer position while the patient was prepared for the evacuation.



After about 20 or 30 minutes the patient was strapped in the stretcher and ready for evacuation to the helicopter. Here we were able to get a picture of the stretcher being lifted into the helicopter by a wire rope and winch. The helicopter pilot did a masterful job of holding the craft in a

constant position relative to the deck of the Amsterdam so the handling personnel could do their job. After the patient had been safely taken on board the helicopter, the specialist who had first been lowered onto the deck of the Amsterdam was taken up. After the last man was winched on board the helicopter all the people in the Crow's Nest Lounge gave a cheer and applause. The helicopter then tilted slightly to the east and quickly disappeared over the horizon in the direction of Canada. We felt sadness for the misfortune that had befallen the lady passenger who had just been evacuated but she was fortunate that Canadian equipment and military people were available to effect a quick transport to appropriate medical facilities. This was a wonderful display of skill and bravery by the Canadian rescue team.



Captain van Zaane soon announced over the ship's loudspeakers that the medical evacuation had been successful. The ship was now turning toward Hakodate, Japan and the Grand Voyage continues.