

Day 35 - At Sea – Lido Pastry Demo – Crew Farewell

The day started with a calm sea and bright and sunny sky. Barbara caught the sun just peaking over the horizon creating a beautiful picture with the reflection off of the clouds.



We were on our way to Boston on the last day of the 35 day cruise.

Lido Pastry Demonstration: At noon there was a demonstration by the always popular pastry chefs as they showed what they could do with an overload of sugar and chocolate. We stopped by to take some pictures while fighting the urge to sample some of their wares from the showcase.

On the right is shown the Eiffel Tower done up in white chocolate while some smaller goodies are being prepared on the side.



Here is the whole display shown below with the head pastry chef, perhaps sharing some secrets with one of the passengers.



Our dining room steward, Ari, was helping out on the Lido Deck at the time so we took the opportunity to get an impromptu picture of him, away from the dining room.

Crew Farewell Ceremony: In the afternoon the cruise director, Moyra, hosted a farewell celebration in the Rembrandt Lounge where the passengers had an opportunity to show their appreciation for the entire crew. As many as possible of the crew were assembled on the stage and the audience of passengers gave them a standing ovation. Not only were the stewards with whom we make daily contact recognized but also the guys and gals who work behind the scenes to keep the wheels turning. We got this photo at one point with Moyra at the front of the stage and nearly of the entire group representing the crew was present.



The white things being held by the room stewards on stage are towel animals they prepare each evening and put on our beds.

We got this closer photo our room steward, Yadi (fourth from the left). He is proud of his towel animal expertise and spent some time yesterday trying to teach Orlin how to make an elephant. It soon became obvious that with this student we had started too late in the cruise to make much progress in the towel animal making area.



In this photo we were able to get three of the stewards who have gone out of their way to make our cruise enjoyable.



Third from left is Charlie, our wine steward, then seventh from left, Marlon, the Ocean Bar Steward, and finally ninth from left, Yadi our room steward.

A curious division of labor exists among the crew, based on religious/cultural background. The room stewards and other housekeeping staff is mainly Indonesian because they are primarily of the Muslim religion and require work assignments that do not involve handling of alcoholic beverages. The wine and bar stewards are primarily from the Philippines. The reason for this arrangement is that the Filipinos are primarily Catholic and there are no restrictions regarding working with alcoholic beverages in their religion. It all works out and there is a harmonious relationship among all the workers and management as far as we can tell.

Moyra did a good job of orchestrating the crew farewell and letting the passengers express their gratitude for the hard work that the crew does for us.

This was the last day of the cruise so we decided to use the remaining minutes on our Internet Package to go on-line and pay for the three bags we plan to check in to the US Airways flight tomorrow on our way back home. We had been saving some time and assumed that the 14 remaining minutes would be more than adequate to accomplish that task. The system was operating at its usual slowness and we were probably also dealing with some sluggishness on the part of the US Airways website. When the dust settled it turned out to take 15 minutes to complete the transaction. We were paying 40 cents per minute on the package deal for Internet time on the Maasdam. Our remaining 14 minutes on the Internet package were already paid for and we just got billed 40 cents for the additional minute we used after our account was zeroed out. We heard several people complaining about the amount of Internet time they burned on these last couple days dealing with on-line travel arrangements. The Maasdam Internet Café literature has a cautionary note warning that we will experience slower Internet reaction times than we are used to but they are doing the best they can. We certainly agree that Internet speed is slow but it is a lot better than no Internet at all.

On the subject of electronics and communication, on previous Holland America Cruises we had been warned that if we used our personal cell phone on the ship it would be automatically hooked into the ship's communication system and we would be charged as if we were using the ship's phone in our stateroom. That policy has apparently been changed and we were informed that our cell phone usage on the ship would not have any charges from Holland America. It would be charged by our cell phone service provider at whatever rate we have worked out with them. We made a couple cell phone calls from the ship and as far as we can tell there were no charges from Holland America.

The sea was extremely smooth today. At times the water had an almost glassy appearance. That was sure good news compared with the concern we had when threatened with the advance of Hurricane Bill a couple days ago.

We put the last items in our suitcases. The airlines levy a hefty charge, in addition to the normal baggage fee, if the bags weigh more than 50 pounds. We weighed the 3 bags with a bathroom scales that Kamal brought in for us. We had tried not to add much to our collection of stuff on the cruise so eventually we were able to get all three bags below 50 pounds. We put on the tags we were given that were color coded to indicate that we wanted to leave the ship about 8:30am tomorrow. The bags were then wheeled out into the passageway outside our door and left for the crew to pick up and transfer to the passenger terminal tomorrow morning after we dock in Boston.

Tomorrow we arrive in Boston and the cruise will be over. It is always a shock to go from the life of leisure on the cruise ship and the reality of dealing with the task of getting ourselves and all our stuff back home. It's all worth it! We are just thankful we can still deal with these challenges and come out smiling.