

Day 33 August 26, St. John's, Newfoundland – Hill Tour – Painted Houses – Indonesian Heritage Dinner

The day began with temperature in the mid 50s, a light breeze, calm sea and bright sun as we approached St. John's, Newfoundland. The first thing Barbara did was grab the camera and take the picture on the right.



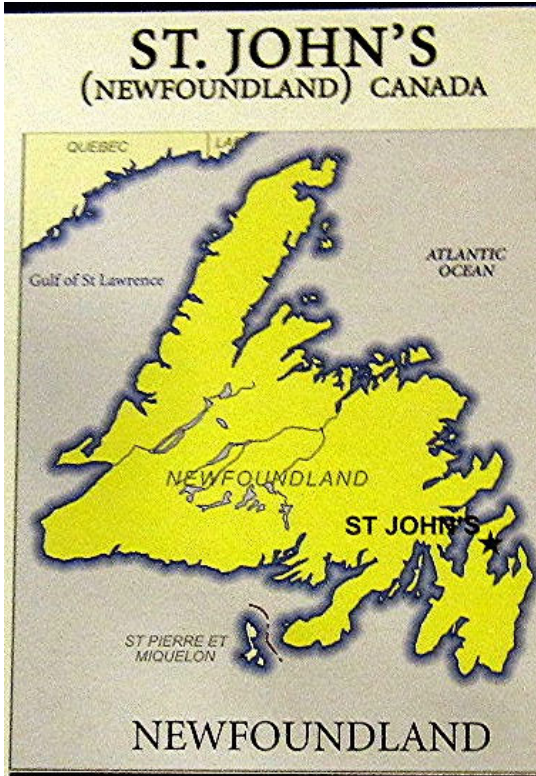
The ship picked up the pilot and the Maasdam started into the harbor entrance just as we went to breakfast in the Lido. Suddenly we noticed a huge rock wall seeming to just scrape by the



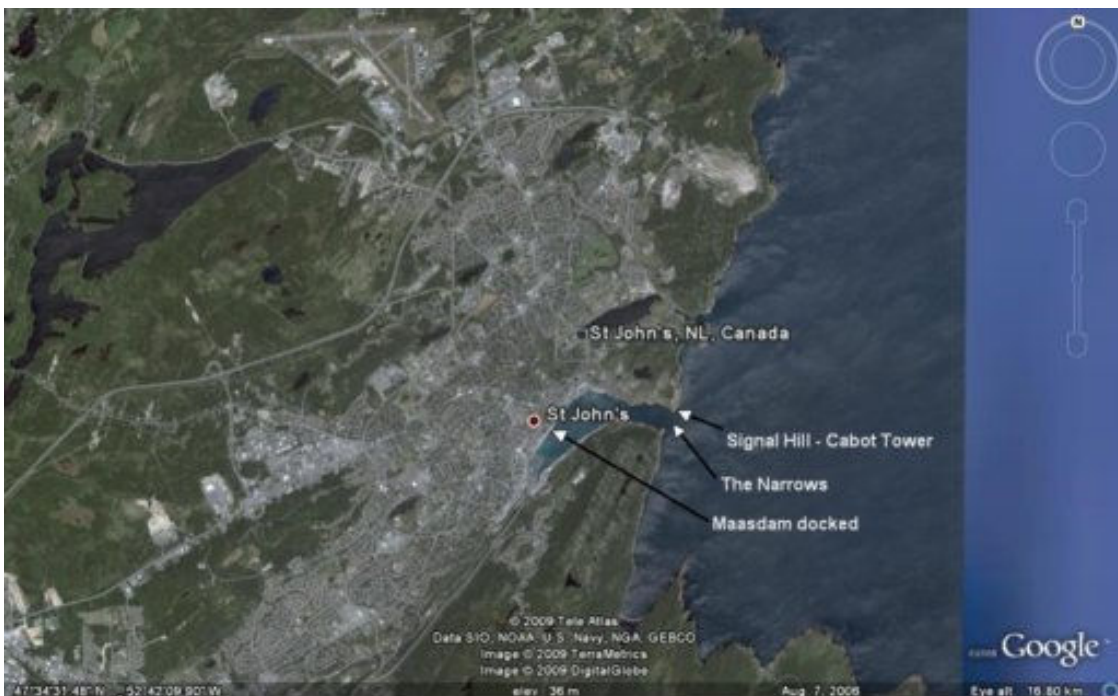
window of the Lido. It was startling to see rock that close to the ship. We had forgotten about “the narrows” at the entrance to the harbor. The rock was covered with white birds, probably Gannets, and we got this picture on the left, through the salt streaked window of the Lido.

The ship proceeded into the harbor through the narrow opening and docked at the cruise ship spot between Prescott Street and Baird's Cove Street.

The map below shows where St. John's was located in the southeast corner of Newfoundland.



A satellite image below, from Google, shows the size of St. John's city, with a population of about 150,000, and the location of the Maasdam in the St. John's harbor.



The port city of St. John's is named for St. John the Baptist and is among the oldest cities in North America, being established about 500 years ago. St. John's has been the site of

several significant modern events. Marconi made the first reception of radio signals from across the Atlantic in 1901 on Signal Hill, above the harbor. Then there was the 1919 departure of Alcock and Brown from St. John's on the first successful transatlantic flight by a team of aviators. Finally, Cabot Tower on Signal Hill is the last North American landmark sighted by Charles Lindberg on his famous solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927. One reason for these particular honors is the fact that St. John's is located further east than any other city in North America.

The local commercial and government organizations made us feel welcome. Representatives were on the pier and at a desk set up on the Maasdam to give us maps and suggestions for touring the city. This particularly energetic lady gave us some good advice about a loop walk around the city to see the churches and shopping district.



Also on the pier were some local people visiting the Maasdam along with their dogs, a Labrador retriever and two Newfoundlanders. They drew a crowd of dog lovers and set us on a quest of finding a Newfoundlander stuffed doll as a souvenir of St. John's.

One of the reasons we had looked forward to St. John's was that we didn't have any preconceived notion of some major landmark we needed to explore. This would be a port we could just explore and let whatever we found lead us through the day.

Hill Tour: We decided to start our tour by proceeding through the city directly up the steep hill beside the Maasdam. Our goal was to get a close-up view of the large buildings in this photo taken from the ship.



Starting at the lower left of the photo is the Supreme Court of the Canadian Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Above the Supreme Court in the picture is the modern looking building, called The Rooms, which consist of a museum, art gallery and archives. To the right and down

from the The Rooms is St. John the Baptist Anglican Cathedral. Further to the right and up, with two large towers is the Basilica of St. Jean the Baptist. The air was fresh and the temperature was just right so we set off on our walk around the town.

Like many people from the US we don't have a good knowledge of the governmental divisions of Canada. At the Supreme Court building was a plaque announcing that the Supreme Court was part of the government of the single province of Newfoundland – Labrador. Since St. John's is the capital of the province the Supreme Court and other governmental bodies are located there.



We walked up a couple flights of stairs between the streets and arrived at the front of St. John the Baptist Anglican Cathedral shown in this picture.

The next building up the hill was called The Rooms, which is a large structure housing a museum, art gallery and document archive facility for the region. We presumed that the name, “The Rooms” was based on the division of space into rooms to separate the three types of exhibits in the building. The Rooms is a modern looking building that presented a striking contrast with the classical older buildings along the city skyline, as shown previously in the photograph above that was taken from the Maasdam. We walked around to the front of the building and took this picture which shows how the architecture carries out the theme that the facility consists of three rooms.



The next building on our tour was the Basilica of St. Jean the Baptist. The Basilica has been in existence in its namesake city of St. John since 1855. Here is how this popular site looks up-close.



We went inside, along with a lot of other tourists. The stained glass windows were beautiful and we tried to capture a little of the grandeur with this picture.



Painted Houses: We left the Basilica and walked east as part of the loop tour that our friendly local resident down on the pier had recommended. We didn't find any buildings or monuments that left much of an impression. However, we really enjoyed the streets lined with houses painted a variety of different colors. Here are some examples.



A resident came out of one of the houses and we struck up a conversation. We told her how much we liked the way the houses were so

well maintained and beautifully painted with the wide range of colors. She said that the painting program was initiated by the city council 3 years ago and is well managed. We were surprised to learn that the home owner can't select the house color but had to use what the city council selected based on an architect's plan. The objective is to make St. John's look much the way it did back in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

It looked to us like the citizens are enthusiastic about this organized approach to making their city look appealing. This mail box on one of the houses showed that the homeowner is willing to take the program an additional step.



We continued walking down into the shopping district of St. John's and found that the house color scheme is receiving support from the commercial section, as shown on the left.

Occasionally we would come across flowers that were blooming nicely in the Newfoundland summer.



These flower beds were also a pleasure to see.



After seeing the Newfoundland dogs this morning we had decided to buy a Newfoundland dog doll as a souvenir but we hadn't made much progress in that area. Since we were now in the shopping district concentration on the souvenir issue was in order.

The competent work of people in charge of preparing St. John's for visitors was evident from the start with the helpful people who met us at the ship. They had also arranged for a free city bus we could take that ran back and forth along the length of the shopping district. As we walked around the shopping district many of the shops had printed signs welcoming visitors. Most of the shops had a sign only for the Maasdam passengers but the window of this store, shown on the right, was aimed at a broader audience.



In a way these signs make a person feel a bit like a commercial target. However, the storekeepers and townspeople in general all showed great friendliness and courtesy.

There was a bit of excitement at one corner of Water Street where the night before there had been a fire in one of the stores. The street had been blocked off and a huge backhoe was in the process of tearing down the damaged building while a man with a fire hose wet down the pile of debris. A large crowd of sidewalk superintendents had gathered at mid-day to watch the demolition process. This observation could be filed under the heading of "People are pretty much the same all over".



We were on a shopping mission so we threaded our way through the crowd and moved on. After bouncing in and out of about a dozen souvenir shops along Water Street and Duckworth Street we finally found the Newfoundland dog we had been looking for.

A short way down the street was Harbourside Park where we found a bronze statue of a Newfoundland Dog. Some fellow passengers from the Maasdam had also gravitated to this spot and one of them took this picture on the right. We were amazed at the size of a full grown Newfoundlander. Orlin held up our new puppy for comparison.



It turns out the Newfoundland Dog was the result of a few hundred years of selective breeding by fishermen who used the dog for certain tasks in fishing the icy ocean waters. The dogs have a cold and water resistant coat, webbed feet, good social skills and work ethic, along with great strength so they could handle any task, including rescue of drowning men.

It was nearly time for the Maasdam to get underway so we returned to the ship. During our stay the Maasdam had hosted pre-approved visitors on board and many people just came down to the dock to see a cruise ship. A sign, as shown on the left, had been posted with general information about the Maasdam for the visitors to see.



About 4:30 the Maasdam got underway. The harbor at St. John's is relatively small and there seemed like just barely enough width of the harbor to allow the Maasdam to turn around. However, it was turned without incident and we proceeded out of the harbor.

We wanted to closely watch as the Captain sailed the Maasdam through the narrow entrance to the harbor. This picture on the right attempts to show how width challenged this harbor entrance is for ships the size of the Maasdam. It's not quite like passing through Panama Canal Locks but you wouldn't want it to be much more narrow.



Signal Hill with Cabot Tower on top is the promontory on the left of the harbor entrance.

Indonesian Heritage Dinner: In the Rotterdam Dining Room this evening we had an Indonesian Heritage Dinner celebration. Some of the Indonesian ladies on the staff were dressed in ceremonial Indonesian costumes and greeted us at the entrance, as shown on the left.



During the meal the Indonesian manager of the dining room passed out an Indonesian percussion instrument made of bamboo and volunteer passengers helped him through a rendition of the Frank Sinatra favorite, "My Way".

The instruments were the only connection with Indonesia but at least the audience could agree that the tune was basically the familiar "My Way".

The dinner menu Indonesian included several Indonesian dishes. The menu included our favorite, Nasi Goreng, which is an Indonesian style of fried rice with chicken and a fried egg along with a fiery secret sauce. The whole dining room staff really put their hearts into the Indonesian Heritage celebration. Our waiters, Mike and Ary are from Jakarta on the island of Java, Indonesia. They had arranged to have beautiful batik shirts sent to them from home, which they wore for this occasion.

Here is Mike on the right using his two handed serving technique.



Below, Ary serves Mary while Caroline looks on.



Part of the Indonesian mythical tradition is a being in the form of a monkey. We have always seen the monkey behaving in a way that harasses people in a light hearted way.

Tonight the monkey person was perfectly cast and he worked his way around the dining room causing all kinds of chaos as he nuzzled the ladies.



After much fanfare we finished eating and retreated from the dining room.

The ship is scheduled to arrive in St. Pierre on the Island of Miquelon which is south of Newfoundland in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Although, nominally in Canadian water, The Island of Miquelon is officially a French Overseas Region, which is politically equivalent to a mainland French Region. Like Liverpool, UK this is a port we probably would never visit if it hadn't been on the Voyage of the Viking itinerary. We are going to have a look around and maybe we will like it as much as we did Liverpool.