

Day 17 Aug. 10 – At Sea on to Rotterdam – Medical Evacuation – Digital Camera

The day started with light fog and rain in the North Sea on our way from Edinburgh, Scotland to Rotterdam, The Netherlands. As with most days at sea this was a chance to put some things into the blog and catch up on a little rest. Some passengers, about 300, will be leaving the ship and returning home from Rotterdam. Those folks would be spending the day packing and making arrangements for travel.

About 10am there was a change in the usual routine when the Captain came on the PA system and announced that we had a medical emergency on board. The ship was turning around and heading to a city in the UK. Arrangements were being made to either have a boat come out to pick up the patient or have a military helicopter come to hoist the patient off the ship and return to a hospital in the UK. Shortly after that there was an announcement that a helicopter would make the medical evacuation.

Of course, everyone grabbed their cameras and headed for the Crow's Nest or some other upper deck location to get some pictures of the evacuation process. We have been on the ms Amsterdam for two different helicopter medical evacuations and that was the standard operating procedure there both times. We got some good photos of the exciting action but that was not to be the case today. Captain van Schoonhoven came on the PA system with several announcements. First all flash photography was banned because it might interfere with the vision of the rescuers. Secondly all people were ushered out of the Crow's Nest and the Fitness Center (Gym) immediately below the Crow's Nest. Both rooms have expansive windows looking out onto the bow where the rescue was scheduled to take place. Then, in addition, all people were moved away from the large windows in the public areas on the lower decks. Presumably all these measures were in the interest of safety in case the helicopter crashed into the ship.

About noon a large British military helicopter, described by the Captain as a double decker bus with rotors, arrived at the Maasdam. Because of wind and weather complications the rescue site was changed to a back deck where it was carried out successfully.

Because of the restrictions put on viewing we had given up trying to see the rescue proceedings. Instead we spent the time in a line of passengers waiting for some Netherlands immigration officials to inspect our passports and authorize the visit to Rotterdam that we plan to make tomorrow. Anyway, we were happy that the evacuation went well. About an hour later the Captain came on the PA system again and said the patient had already been delivered to a hospital in the UK and he would update us as information came available.

We have seen the need for medical evacuation by helicopter from each of our last three cruises. Seeing the emergency people working in such a competent way to help someone in need always leaves us with a good feeling about the support systems we have. However, we are curious about how the expenses of such services are paid for. Most of us have travel insurance that claims to pay for such medical evacuation but we don't

know how the bill for such service is calculated and how it is eventually delivered to the person receiving the service. That will be a subject for further research.

As we continued to cruise through the North Sea on the way to Rotterdam we saw the occasional oil drilling and pumping platform. As dusk fell they became even more visible with sometimes five or six of them visible on the horizon at one time.

Digital Camera Use: Since this was not a very extensive day for the blog we will include some information that has been requested by several people regarding the kind of camera we have been using on the cruise. We are not experts but are certainly users so our experience may be of some interest.

We have a new camera but here is some background on our old camera. Our old digital camera is a Nikon Coolpix S6 that we bought in 2007. We have taken over 10,000 pictures with it and the photo counter rolled over to zero on a cruise last year. The Nikon camera was working fine but it didn't have a viewfinder so in bright sunlight we had difficulty getting the scene framed just the way we wanted it in the LCD screen. We were also afraid the old Nikon might fail on the Voyage of the Vikings so earlier this year we bought a Canon Powershot SD 780 IS Digital ELPH camera. We still use both cameras when touring around but most pictures are taken with the Canon camera.

We really like the Canon Powershot SD 780 IS Digital ELPH camera for the following reasons:

1. It is slightly smaller than the Nikon and fits into the pocket and purse easier. This photo shows the camera, the Li-Ion battery and SD memory card.



2. It seems to take pictures of similar or better quality than the Nikon in all kinds of lighting.

3. It has a view finder for use in framing pictures in bright sunlight.

4. The LCD screen is brighter than the old Nikon so actually we don't find it necessary to use the viewfinder very often.

5. The Lithium-Ion battery seems to last longer in the Canon than a similar battery lasts in the Nikon.
6. The Secure Digital (SD) memory card is the same as the ones we have used in the Nikon so we don't have to keep different kinds of memory cards.
7. Canon released this model for sale in early 2009 and we bought it on-line from Amazon for about \$280 which we thought was a reasonable price.
8. We use the Microsoft Picture It! 7.0 to edit the pictures before we put them on the blog and that usually helps the quality significantly.

That's about all we have to offer on the subject of cameras. We don't know the technical wonk language to describe the camera. We just point and shoot and hope for the best.

Rotterdam: Tomorrow at 7am we will be docking in Rotterdam for a short visit. We have scheduled a 4 hour bus and canal boat tour of Rotterdam. After the tour we'll spend the rest of the day on our own seeing what the tour may have missed. We have to be back on board the Maasdam by 4:30 pm for the sail away.

For the Maasdam crew it will be a very busy day. They have their usual duties taking care of the passengers staying on the Maasdam. In addition, they have to help the 300 or so departing passengers get themselves and their luggage off the ship early in the morning and then move about 300 new passengers and luggage on to the ship and into their cabins in time for departure about 4:30 pm. We will try to stay out of the way.

The internet service has been very intermittent at best the past day or so. We are hoping that we will be able to post our entries for the past two days soon.