

Day1 July 25 Boston Tour & Start the Cruise:

Boston Tour: Yesterday we had taken a walking tour of the historic North End of Boston and the wharf area with overcast sky and some rain showers. Today started with bright sunshine and promised to be a grand day to spend a few more hours touring Boston before we boarded the Maasdam. We checked out of our hotel room and stored our luggage with the bellman. We then caught the “Old Town Trolley Tour of Boston” (\$33 each) at a stop near the hotel. The Old Town Trolley Tour of Boston is one of several companies that provide colorful buses on a predetermined route taking tourists by the highlights of Boston. The driver of the bus provides a running monologue describing the sites of interest. The one we chose was of the Hop-On Hop-Off (HOHO) type of tour where the buses cover a 10 or 15 mile circuit with enough buses so that one passes each bus stop about every 15 minutes. You can hop off at any of about 20 designated stops and after exploring that site you can hop back on a following bus by showing your ticket stub. We opted to stay on the bus for the entire route which took about 2 hours. The following are some of the highlights of the tour.



First of all it was obvious that tourist season was in full swing with large crowds of people gathering at the bus stops as we approached the noon hour. There were several tour lines competing with the one we were on. One popular company put passengers in an amphibious World War II carrier called a “Duck” as shown on the left. The vehicle had a propeller in the back and the tour route for these adventurous people included a harbor voyage as well as the city streets.





One of the buildings we saw was the public library which, of course got Barbara's attention. There was no opportunity to get her library card into the picture but here it is anyway on the left...

the inspiration for the popular old TV sitcom known as Cheers. From the street the place looked just like the picture shown in the introduction to the TV show.

On Beacon Street we passed by the site of a bar that was



Next we rolled by Fenway Park which is the home of the Boston Red Sox baseball team. **(note added 6/27/09: In the initial blog entry we called the team the Red Socks. Back home our friend Ben passed the alertness test and let us know the correct spelling is Red Sox. Good going Ben!)** The guide said this was the oldest and smallest park in professional baseball. The maximum seating capacity is only 40,000 people but it is one

of the most famous parks because of the long history and many great players on the Red Sox team. A statue of Ted Williams, outside the entrance, was drawing a small crowd.



For \$12 a person can take a tour of Fenway Park and as shown in the picture below, there were plenty of people taking the tour as we passed by.



The guide mentioned a famous feature of Fenway Park known as the “Green Monster” which is a large structure on the outfield fence. We are not avid baseball fans so the significance of the “Green Monster” was lost on us but it seemed important to the guide so here is a picture of its backside.



After Fenway Park we crossed over the Charles River for a quick tour of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) campus in Cambridge before crossing back over into Boston. The next striking feature of the tour was the Massachusetts State House with a glistening golden dome. Even though the building is over 100 years old it is still considered the “new” courthouse compared with the

“Old” Statehouse down at the site of the Boston Massacre of Revolutionary War times.

Across the street from the Massachusetts State House is an interesting monument that is on the grounds of the Boston Common. According to the tour guide Union Army General Shaw headed up a regiment of black soldiers in 1863 and the monument shown on the right commemorates the service of those men in the Civil War. We had been unaware that such a regiment ever existed.



We drove by a large building that is known in Boston as the Cheese Grater Building. An opening through the base of the building and the



window architecture does give it the appearance of a giant cheese grater. We thought it also had similarity with several buildings we have seen in Hong Kong where they put holes like that in large building to avoid annoying dragons who want to pass through. The building is shown in the picture on the left.

We completed the entire tour route and got off the bus near our hotel. We noticed that a ship with the Holland America logo on the smokestack was docked near the hotel. We guessed that we were looking at the Maasdam which had come in early this morning. After a short hike our suspicions were confirmed. It was docked at the Black Falcon Cruise Terminal as shown in the photo on the right. Barbara is smiling in anticipation of the pampering she will receive in the next 35 days.



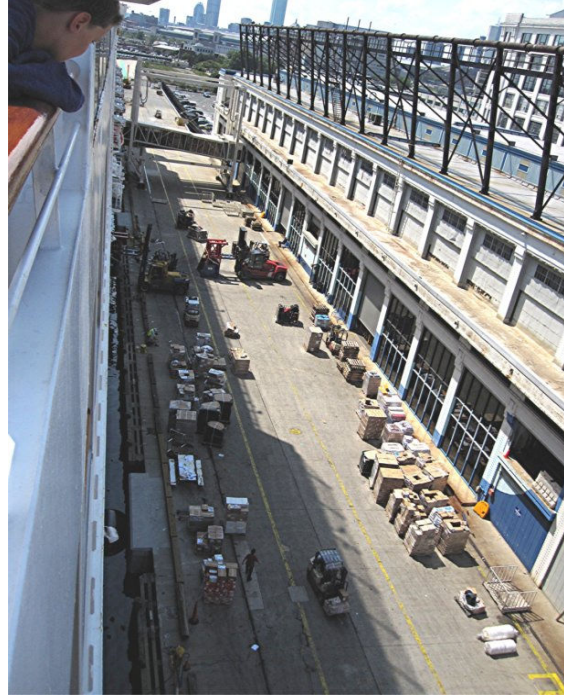
We Start the Cruise: We hustled back to the hotel and after retrieving our luggage took a taxi on the short ride to the Maasdam. Porters took our bags and we were ushered into a large room to wait our turn for the check-in procedure. There were not many people in the room as shown on the left. We congratulated ourselves on good timing for avoiding the large crowds we have experienced in previous cruise check-in events. We found that our congratulations were premature when we were called upstairs where we found long lines waiting for us. After working our way through a 15 or 20



minute line of people we were checked in at the counters shown on the right.



The process of planning and ordering supplies needed by about 1800 passengers and crew of the Maasdam is an awesome task to contemplate, but the coordination needed to get provisions and luggage from the dock to the proper place on the on the ship must be equally difficult. Today we were able to see the transfer of a massive amount of stuff from the dock to the ship as shown in the photos below.



Once we were settled into our stateroom it was time to wander around the ship and get familiar with the Maasdam. The Maasdam is similar in design to the Amsterdam on which we have sailed several times before. The carpets and furniture in the public places appeared fresh and appealing. At first we were surprised by the deck numbers which appear to be +3 higher than on the Amsterdam. On the Maasdam we are on deck 9 but on the Amsterdam this same deck is number 6. Fortunately, the confusion factor was minimized by the fact that at this stage in life most of what we know is overwritten quickly by what happens to us in the last 24 hours.

We had a late lunch in the Lido Buffet and then strolled out the back door and down a flight of stairs to the Aft Swimming Pool deck. There we quickly spotted the friendly face of Jeff whom we had met on a prior cruise. Jeff spends most of his time cruising and sports a luxurious tan. No surprise, his handle on the Cruise Critic message board is TanningPro. He writes a wonderful blog of his travels at the address of <http://amazingvoyages.blogspot.com>. Here is a photo of Jeff who is familiar to many fans of the cruising life.



On the way back to our cabin we stopped by the Internet Café in hopes of getting some instructions about how we could use our laptop computer to hook up with the Internet. On the last two cruises on the Amsterdam we were anxious to get our blog on-line but the process of getting set up on the Internet was fraught with difficulty and delay. The Internet Managers were diligent but with all the passengers

having the same trouble as we were having the scene was chaotic. Frankly, we were not looking forward to the process.

We met the Internet Café Manager, Rodin Leitao, who was in the process of helping new passengers get logged in to the Internet. What followed was one of the most pleasant surprises of the day. Unlike prior Internet Café Managers, Rodin was surprisingly relaxed and eager to engage with us. He immediately began the process of getting us set up on the Internet. Using the ship's computer he set up our Internet account (including email) and sold us 250 minutes of on-line time (\$100 - ouch!) in less than 5 minutes. Here is picture of Rodin whom we were very happy to meet.



About 4pm the ship's loudspeakers announced the obligatory lifeboat drill was about to begin. Each passenger must put on the life jacket stored in the cabin closet and assemble at his/her assigned lifeboat station. No matter how many times we go through this there is always a bit of confusion getting all the straps in the right location. Barbara is shown here having passed her IQ test on this cruise.



The lifeboat stations are located under the boat that the passenger would use in case of an actual emergency. These are the same boats used as tenders to take passengers ashore at the ports of call but they are always fully stocked with emergency rations and gear. During these drills the life jacketed passengers assemble and a roll call is carried out to make sure each person is present and knows where to go in case of an abandon ship emergency. Our lifeboat station is #6 and the location is clearly noted on the wall and overhead near the boat's propeller.



At 5:30pm we went to the early seating dinner in the Rotterdam Dining Room. We had been assigned to table #63 on the upper level and there we met Lee and Caroline who will be our table mates. Lee and Caroline, who live in Provo Utah, have had some interesting cruising experience, including Antarctica, that we enjoyed hearing about. Table #63 was set up for 6 people but the other two expected passengers didn't join us. Our dinner stewards, Mike and Ary, did a great job taking care of us and we thoroughly enjoyed our first dinner on the cruise.

About 5:45, during dinner, the Maasdam left the dock and got underway on the Voyage of the Vikings. We slowly left the Boston Harbor and headed out to the open sea.

We had to walk through the Casino on the way back to our cabin. The temptation was too much for Barbara to resist. She sat down at a video poker machine and much to our pleasure closed out the day \$7 ahead of the casino.