

Travelogue for Caribbean cruise January 2012

Day 1. Nice bus ride to the Baltimore cruise terminal, arriving at 10:30am. Boarded the ship, Enchantment of the Seas, at 1:45pm. Salt crystals on the deck because of possible ice. Great lunch, but crowded because all people are eating at nearly the same time. Emergency drill at 3:30pm, prior to leaving the pier. Dancing-singing entertainment plus comedian in the evening after a nice dinner.

Day 2. Sailed out of the Chesapeake Bay at 12:30am. Warmer and partially cloudy. At sea.

Days 3 and 4. At sea. Beautiful sunsets. Because we are now much closer to the equator (than when we are at home), sunset is at 6:05pm.

Day 5. Tortola, British Virgin Islands. We walked part way into the town, then took a three-hour jitney tour of the island. It was a bargain at \$15. Beautiful scenery and beaches.

Day 6. St John's, Antigua. Walked around town near the pier, seeing an old church cemetery, shops, and a public market for fruits and vegetables. Sidewalks are unmaintained wood, re-bar, rough concrete, and ceramic tiles.

Day 7. Philipsburg, Saint Maarten. Walked around town at the bay, and near the beach. Took a taxi to Maho Beach, at the west end of the Saint Maarten "Princess Juliana International" airport. This beach is where people (hundreds today, and as many as a thousand) gather to take photos and video of jumbo jets landing at the airport. We arrived just in time to see a KLM Boeing 747 land right over our heads. The photos will show you how close the plane was. Most people were off to the side; we were in the center of the flight path. :-)

Day 8. Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. Walked to the main part of town, past the governor's house, then up "99 steps" to Blackbeard's Castle. Walked around shops and the bay, then back to the ship. We need to walk-off the food calories!

Day 9. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Walked around Old San Juan, contained mostly inside thick, tall, walls. There are also two large forts. We saw the San Juan Cemetery, described as "one of the most picturesque burial grounds anywhere" because of its elaborate tombstones and the circular, red-domed chapel. We also saw the governor's mansion, where TV crews were setup with cameras and mics. We went into the Cathedral, the Hotel El Convento (previously used as a convent), and the Hotel Casa Blanca. Friendly and helpful residents and police provided directions and information. The streets in Old San Juan are paved with cobble stones cast from furnace slag, and brought as ballast on Spanish ships. San Juan is the largest home-based cruise port in the world, with twenty-eight cruise ships using San Juan as their home port. In the late afternoon we saw a school of dolphins cross our course at the front of the ship. We also saw numerous flying fish.

Day 10. Labadee, Haiti. Labadee is a private resort owned by Royal Caribbean Cruise Line. It has long beaches with fine white sand, water activities, zip-lines, and an artisans village where local residents sell items they have either purchased or created. Most items have substantial fees, except swimming and sun-bathing. The beaches are probably the best I have seen anywhere.

Days 11 and 12. At sea.

Day 13. Arrived home.

We were disappointed that the cruise line is so oriented towards tourists (who want entertainment) versus travelers (who want education).