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Ginger Utley

Recall Essay: Half Moon Cay

I've never been one for taking vacations in general, or cruises in specific. To me, the negatives of vacations were still strongly associated with the distant memories of my youth: long road trips, arguments with siblings, and spans of nothing happening for hours even when we were at our destination. The thought of going on a cruise was never prominent in my mind until I met my future wife (who is now condemned by wedding vows). She was a girl who had been raised on cruises, so she had nothing but wonderful things to say about it. Going against my better judgment, I chose to join her on a cruise to the eastern reaches of the Bahamas.

Seeing the world is not something I've done much. Apart from visiting a smattering of states along the western United States, the Frankfurt Airport, and parts of Italy, I've done little real travel. I'm just not the sort who sought out opportunities to wander. This cruise was a break to a monotonous routine I had worked so hard to maintain for years. Yet in the end, it was one of my more memorable vacations.

Notwithstanding the numerous fishing trips I've taken with my grandparents in Jackson Hole, I haven't spent more than a few hours on any body of water. The thought of spending more than a week at sea was somewhat daunting, though I

thought myself resilient enough to survive. The first few days at sea weakened my resolve somewhat, but eventually I became used to the lulling sway of the ship both at dinner and at night. It took some getting used to in the shower. The constant motion at night became a soothing sensation, rocking me to sleep. I looked to the small speed bumps that covered the ocean as a source of comfort, though this ended up making excursions on land quite awkward. Even on solid ground I was not able to escape the rocking of the water, their invisible force compelling me to stagger back and forth down the road as if I were a drunkard. Thankfully, my swaying did not appear too suspicious to warrant for the police to detain me. But I digress.

Half Moon Cay was to be the first stop on the cruise, a private island owned and maintained by the cruise line. It was this beach that set the bar for every beach we visited thereafter. That made the rest of the trip quite the disappointment as Half Moon Cay was the best beach we came across. The weather was perfect and the waters calm. The sand was so fine that I could walk the beach barefoot without fear of stepping on a shell shard or sharp rock. That was something I've always noticed on other beaches. There were always rocks and shells and coarse sand that was less than pleasant to the bare foot. The beach here was almost something out of the stories (if a person wrote stories about beaches). The length of the beach ran the entire course of the small boomerang-shaped isle. On the unsettled portion of the island I could see the wilds of a green forest where the horseback riding activities took place. Distant cruisers could be seen traversing the furthest reaches of Half Moon Cay, jumping from rock to rock where the jetties protected the bay against the rougher waves of the ocean.

The waters in the bay were unnaturally calm, which lent itself to a crystal clear view. Even when my toes could no longer touch the sands below, I could still see every detail of the ground. The water was surprisingly warm, soothing my body in an instant. Floating along on my back, I accepted the possibility of slowly drifting out to sea, because right there and then the water was bliss.

Natalie was there by my side for the entire trip. As she was more well-traveled than me, it was rather surprising to hear how perfect she thought the beach was. The fine sand cooled her feet and made her simply want to stay on the island forever. She loved how peaceful the bay was, how refreshing the water was, and how warm the sun had become. Untainted beaches are quite hard to come by, which made this experience even more enjoyable for us. Camera in hand, we captured many enjoyable moments during this cruise. Half Moon Cay was by far the most enjoyable part. The soft breeze would lick our backs while we sunbathed. The warming rays of the sun helped dry us quickly from our swim, though it lent toward both of us falling asleep on our beach chairs. We would both awake to see each other, slight smiles playing across our lips before we would race back out into the cool water.

The sunburn was slow to manifest itself from my time on the beach, but when it came I quickly regretted having fallen asleep in the beach chairs. Before and during our visit to Half Moon Cay, my skin was a rather unsightly white complexion. The sun and I have never quite seen things eye-to-eye. Most encounters ended with me scorched and the sun mockingly warm. I didn't and still don't get outdoors much, which lends itself to my skin being fairer than most. I used the usual oily sunscreen,

though it appeared ill-suited to the task of protecting me against the wiles of the sun. My body was thus kissed with an indescribably painful sheen of dry and sensitive skin that made any movement quite painful. Natalie felt horrible for the pain the sun inflicted on me as she had promised my mother that she would ensure I would not be burnt. A silly promise, to be sure, though humorous that she failed to succeed in this regard. SPF 7 sunscreen would be hard-pressed to keep pure white skin from being completely destroyed.

Despite the less-than-positive outcome of the trip, I still found the memories created on Half Moon Cay to be my best cruising experience. I was among family and friends experiencing something I had never done before. Seeing a beach is one thing, but traveling to a private island in the Bahamas is something else. I may have been sharing the experience with several thousand other cruisers, but this was still an escape from the rest of the world.

Todd Barfuss
Review of Ryan's Essay
1/18/2012

1. What is the memory being recalled in this essay? Ryan is recalling a blissful vacation cruise that took him to a very exotic locale and left him with some wonderful memories and a fantastic sunburn.
2. As A reader, what do you find to be the significance of this event? For someone that was not an avid traveler, the enjoyment found on this cruise is fairly enticing. The descriptions make you want to visit the location for yourself. Sign me up... I want to go for a cruise.
3. I do believe that Ryan did a good job of using an active voice over the course of this paper. I don't recall any areas where he slipped into a passive voice at all. Well done.
4. I think your use of paragraphs and structure as well as flow has been done very well.
5. Overall Ryan, I really do like your essay. Some of the descriptors you use make me want to drop what I am doing and head out for a cruise. My only real advice would be to expound a little more on the beauty of the landscape and really sell to the reader how amazing your trip was. There are a few little edits that I threw on here, but you can take them or leave them. They are only suggestions. Except for the one sentence that is missing something that would actually make it a legit sentence. I think with a review or two, you will have a good essay going. – Side note... I think your photo works very well as well as the tag you have added. Overall... well done.