

Day 01 – 05/28/2024

Car parking pre trip. Flight San Francisco to Rome.

We woke up at our usual time and got things in order for us to leave at 9:30 am for SFO. As is typical these days, we were stop and go at the highway 50 interchange with 80. The rest went pretty smoothly. We made it to the Aloft hotel by SFO where we parked the car and waited for the shuttle to take us to the airport. Things went very smoothly and we arrived to check in and go through TSA in plenty of time before boarding. The flight itself took off on time, 3:30 pm, and we were on our way to London.

The two seats next to me were empty and Janet was across from me. We both had aisle seats. The two ladies next to Janet were Indian and at first one of the lady's husband sat next to Janet. That was not good so the lady switched with her husband. Probably a sexist thing. Anyway, the lady kept trying to get Janet to switch next to me so the three of them could sit together but Janet chose the aisle seat for a reason so that didn't happen. Anyway, it was a long flight to London, over 9 hours, and we arrived to our 2 1/2 hour layover before heading to Rome for another 2 hour flight. By the time we got to Rome we were beat and it was already the next day. Technically, that happened in London but we didn't really acknowledge it until Rome.

Day 02 – 05/29/2024

Civitavecchia, Italy.

Wednesday May 29, 2024 - Saturday June 1, 2024 (3 nights), Riviera Suites.

After arriving in Rome we went through a very limited customs, got our luggage and met our ride to Civitavecchia. He was there early, as we were, and he drove us the last leg of our day. It was nice to be able to just relax in the back seat and leave the driving to our driver. Cost money yes, but it was worth it.

Our driver dropped us off at the address for Riviera Suites but we didn't really know where it was. It was like we were in the middle of some busy street with no obvious signs of a Riviera Suites. Janet asked around and we found the address on one of the walls. Riviera Suites (according to a small sign on the wall) is on the second floor of the building. Of course the front door of the building was was locked and we couldn't get in. I think the expectation was that we would call the number listed and we would be given the code. We had no Wi-Fi though and our phones were on airplane mode so we couldn't do that with our phones. Some other people were leaving the building so we snuck in and climbed the stairs to the second or third flight where we found a door for Riviera Suites. We knocked and rang the doorbell but no one answered. There was obviously no reception area. Janet went back down to the outside and found a person next door that called the number for Riviera Suites. Janet got the code for the doors and we made it inside to find our room. Turns out no one from Riviera Suites is there but our room was prepared and ready. Their check-in procedure leaves a lot to be desired for the average tourist.

The only email I have from Riviera Suites says there is a front desk and that an access code will be emailed. Neither is true.

The room itself is basic, clean and quiet. There is an Nespresso machine but no ceramic or glass coffee cups. Just a couple of espresso sized paper cups and a couple of plastic water cups. The plastic cups just were not strong enough for the hot coffee. Speaking of the coffee. There were only a few k-cups available. Again, not very hospitable.

After we were settled in our room we went out to find a place for dinner. Just around the block from us was a place called Cosamimangiooggi. It looked good and interesting. Plus, the locals seemed to be gathering there. So we ate there and there was an American couple next to us that recommended a couple of items. Everything was very good and the locals added that special touch of Italian language and animations.

After dinner we made our way back to the hotel to turn in and try to get some sleep after having been up for about 36 hours straight. No sleep on the plane you know.

Day 03 – 05/30/2024

Holly's Birthday.

Civitavecchia, Italy. Riviera Suites.

We spent a fairly good night but still woke up around 2:00 am. We fiddled around for awhile until about 5:00 am when we decided to take showers and get ready for the day. We tried our Nespresso machine but it was not very successful. We had to try and use the very small espresso paper cups. All they did was collapse when the hot coffee hit them. We had to make do even though there were no real coffee cups and no cream or milk. Even the dry stuff would have been better than nothing at all.

Our first stop for the day was to find our so-called free breakfast. We knew it wasn't going to be easy. There was no lobby and no reception so where could it be? Turns out it is a small serve yourself cafe about 3 or 4 blocks away. We read they opened at 6:00 am but they were not opened yet at around 6:30 am. So we waited and found out the so-called free breakfast was a cup of coffee and a sweet roll. Hmmm. Not very satisfying. Hoping to write a bad review of our place after we leave.

An interesting part of this morning at the cafe was that there were a number of men dressed up in complete black suits and ties waiting for their coffee and pastry too. Couldn't quite figure out who they were but I thought they were bus drivers for tourists and Janet thought something a little more suspicious. Like they were Mafioso or something. Anyway, the next day I asked the proprietors who they were and after some communication issues we figured out they were a type of security force for some dignitaries that were around these days.

We walked around a bit trying to find the marketplace that supposedly was worth going to. When we did we find it they had all kinds of vegetables, fruit and meats, including fish. We bought some sliced cheeses that we can use over the next couple of days for

snacking and lunch. We went back to our room for a while.

We headed out to see further sights. The main stop today is taking the train south to Santa Marinella. We walked over to the train station and very quickly purchased tickets, validated them and jumped on the train. Santa Marinella is primarily a beach town, where the locals and tourists go to lay on the beach and play in the water. Four or five of the hotels and restaurants have hundreds of umbrellas and lounge chairs set up for renting. Not many were being used while we were there but tourist season is just starting. Janet walked in the water and we made our way through the town, stopping to have gelato and something to drink. Today is Holly's birthday so of course we had to celebrate that with something sweet and chocolate.

We headed back on the train to Civitavecchia around 2:00 pm and went prone for awhile, trying to break out of the jet lag. Later we will have dinner, probably at the same place as last night (Cosamimangiooggi).

On the way out of our room for dinner, we found a couple downstairs who could not get to their room at Riviera Suites. Duh! We walked them through what we had gone through and they said they were waiting for the owner to show up to help them. They had called him and he said he would be right over. They were from Carmel California, had many large suit cases and were also going to be on the same Oceania cruise as us. With one exception. The guy said they had the owner's suite on Marina and he was good friends with Frank. I asked who Frank was and he said he was the owner of Oceania or maybe it was just the suite. Anyway, they must have money. They were delayed flying United by 7 hours getting here in Civitavecchia and were now frustrated with their accommodations. Maybe we will see them on the ship. Something seemed suspicious about them being so friendly with Frank at Oceania. They claimed they had just secured their owner suite last week and that Frank would get them and their luggage to the ship. We looked up the execs on the Oceania website and lo and behold there is a Frank listed as President, so who knows. Turns out the Frank he knows is the older Frank who ran Oceania, but now it is his son Frank who has taken over. Janet and I have kind of scoped out how to get to the ship and it is not an easy process, so we shall see what happens on Saturday. We think that we are going to walk ourselves over to the ship though.

Turns out Cosamimangiooggi was closed! We had to walk around and find something else. We found a stretch of street that had a few restaurants and one had a musician who was pretty good. So we stopped and had drinks, pizza and salad. The food was good but the service was not. And the pigeons were really obnoxious. After that we walked around some more and came upon some religious parade that had all the traffic stopped with police and everything. There was also a street fair being set up. Not sure if it was just for the night or if it would still be there tomorrow. Then we headed back to the room to get some sleep, hopefully.

Day 04 – 05/31/2024

Riviera Suites.

Another night of fairly good sleep, till about 2:00 am. Then we were wide awake. We

did some reading of the news and found that Trump had been convicted on all counts. He will appeal of course. Apparently it is OK for a convicted felon to run for President and be President. Something is definitely wrong there. Anyway, we had our miserable little paper cups of coffee. By the way, Janet found a closet outside our room which had a few extra Nespresso k-cups and toilet paper. There was only one roll in our room and also no tissue paper, so that roll went fast. Guess we will head out after showering for our measly free breakfast of a cup of coffee and a sweet roll.

Going to Tarquinia today, by bus. No train goes there so bus it is. It wasn't as long as we had thought to get to Tarquinia, only about 1/2 hour. Must have taken an express bus. After we were dropped off we went searching the town. There is a huge section of old, historic buildings so we spent some time looking at the old town. We didn't expect to find the old historic part of the town that was there when the Necropoli was created. We were looking specifically for the Necropoli del Monterossi Tarquinia. We walked out of the old section of Tarquinia and found the entrance to the Necropoli.

The Necropoli del Monterossi is an archaeological site in the Italian municipality of Tarquinia (VT). The funerary chambers, modeled on the interiors of the houses, have walls decorated in fresco on a light layer of plaster. The most famous tombs are those of the Lionesses, of the Leopards, of the Hunting and Fishing and of the Jugglers. There are around a total of 6,000 burials, mostly rooms dug down into the rock and surrounded by mounds, the oldest of which date back to between 400 and 600 BCE.

After paying our fee we walked out into the area that contains a number of mounds that you walk down into. At the bottom of the steep stairs there is a big glass window and a button to turn on the light inside the room behind the glass door. Turning the light on reveals the chamber that had been dug out and various artifacts removed, such as sarcophagi, pottery and personal items. The sarcophagus was made out of heavy stone and covered with a heavy stone carved with the image of the person buried within. Left on the walls were color drawings of what the chamber contained. It is a wonderfully preserved archaeological site.

We looked through most of the burial chambers and then walked back into town. Part of the fee included a visit to the museum that contains the artifacts removed from the burial chambers. The museum was called Museo Archeologico Nazionale Tarquinia. Most of the artifacts there were the sarcophagi found within the burial chambers. All in all, it was a very good visit.

We were both pretty thirsty and hungry so we tried to find something to eat and drink. Most places didn't open until after 12:30 pm and it was only around 11:45 am. We finally found a bar that had some nibbles and good wine. We also bought a bottle of wine to take on the cruise ship.

When were done we went to wait for the bus to take us back to Civitavecchia. We finally found the bus that we thought would take us back but, unfortunately, it was the wrong bus. We went way out of our way and circled back to Tarquinia. The bus driver wasn't real happy with us and he only spoke Italian but he resigned himself to taking us all around and back on his normal route which ended up taking us back to Civitavecchia along the express route. So we ended up taking a couple hour tour of this part of Italy.

Long day but we finally made it back. To our surprise the restaurant, Cosamimangiooggi, who we thought was closed and we thought was so good the first night we were here, was going to open for dinner at 6:00 pm. So I guess that made up for our error. So we ended up going there for our last night in Civitavecchia and were once again enamored with the place. Once finished, we took a short walk and returned to our room to get ready for bed.

Day 05 – 06/01/2024

Riviera Suites.

We both had a better night. Still woke up early but it was 4:00 am for Janet and 4:45 am for me. Whoo who! This morning we get packed up for the walk to the ship around 12:00 pm or so. But first, we will head out for our marvelous cup of coffee and pastry. At least it's something to start the day.

We enjoyed our last coffee and pastry in Civitavecchia and then walked around a bit. We went out as far as we could go on a different pier and thought we spotted the Marina. We met a couple who were cruising that day too but on a Clipper ship which was also docked. The difference between the ships is rather obvious. I think we will be happy with our ship. The guy looked on an app he had and identified which of the two cruise ships was the Marina and we were right. There seems to be an app for just about everything.

We returned to our room and packed up everything and then made one last walk to the daily market. It has all kinds of vegetables, fruits and meats. Still lots of people, mainly locals getting their daily supply. We are now just waiting to walk our way to the ship.

Oceania Cruise start. Civitavecchia, Italy.
Saturday June 1, 2024 - Thursday June 13, 2024 (12 days).
Arrive Embark: 1:00 PM Depart: 6:00 PM

We arrived at the embarkation terminal about an hour before our scheduled time at 1:00 pm. It was a little bit more of a walk than we thought but still doable. The process itself was pretty fast and easy. No long lines and no hassles. We got on board and were immediately directed to go to our muster station for safety instructions. Seems to be just a formality more than anything. We had already looked at the muster instructions online a few times. Thought we were done with it.

We were not supposed to go to our rooms until 3:00 pm so they could get everything ready and deliver our luggage. So, instead we ended up at Waves for a sandwich, wine and beer. Since this was the first time we had been on Oceania we had to feel out the situation some. We got some of the rules about the wine and beer clarified. I also was able to find the ice cream station and some cookies. It almost looks like only SOME of the ice cream is Humphry Slocumbe based on the way it is listed. Found out later that ALL of the ice cream is Humphry Slocumbe. The list doesn't seem to label all the versions in the case, but at least you can ask what they are and even get a taste if you want.

Not understanding the rules yet. I tried to get a wine and beer as we arrived by the pool but that was not part of our SimplyMore plan and we would have needed to pay for the alcohol. So, part of today was learning all that we could and could not do. Basically, with our SimplyMore plan we can have free wine, champagne and beer at lunch and dinner, but it has to be at a restaurant or dining venue. In other words not by the pool or in the bars. Once you have a drink though you are free to go about the ship with it. That came from one of the supervisors in Waves.

The ship itself is very nice, a lot of nice pictures and display items. We will have a few more levels up to get our coffee in the morning but ... other than that we like what we see. The ship seems to be a lot more spacious, even though it is a smaller ship. Ration of crew to passenger is about 2 to 1. There is no water level walk around the outside of the ship. The upper deck is for sporting stuff, but the weather will determine how useful that is.

After lunch we explored the ship and waited for our room to become available. At 3:00 pm it was ready so we went to the room to put stuff away and relax. The room itself is nice, just a tad bigger than Holland America. The one thing we don't like is that the bathroom has a small shower and a bathtub. I had thought that all the bathrooms had been remodeled to take out the tub and expand the shower. Guess not. We found out later that it was only the suites that had the bathrooms remodeled to take out the tub and make the shower larger. That's too bad. Also, we did like that the door to the veranda is a sliding glass door and not the kind as in Holland America which is a regular glass door. We then went up to Horizons (equivalent to the Crows Nest on Holland America) for a little celebration for taking off at 6:00 pm. It was actually more like 6:30 pm but whatever. The room itself is very spacious but still it was crowded for embarkation. Horizons seems to be more open than the Crows Nest. Plenty of seating. It is also the place where High tea is set and some limited entertainment.

We went to the MDR for dinner and got a table by the window right away at about 6:40 pm. The MDR is a lot more open and spacious than Holland America. The decorations are wonderful and the staff is very helpful. We sat at a table for two, but were close to another table for two that made conversation very natural. The food was good but nothing special yet. Pretty typical of the MDR for Holland America. We each had Chianti with, during and after our meal.

Entertainment onboard is usually scheduled for after 9:00 pm so we walked around the ship a bit and then headed back to our room to get ready for bed. Unfortunately, our bedtime doesn't sit well with the entertainment schedule. The Marina Lounge is the auditorium and its size and configuration is a lot smaller than Holland America but ours is a smaller ship. So the entertainment suffers some but it is mainly the times for the entertainment that make that venue on Marina less attractive to us.

Day 06 – 06/02/2024
Cruise. Saint-Tropez, France.

Last night's sleep was quiet but I still woke up around 2:00 am. Janet had a better sleep and around 5:30 am she woke up and I went to scope out where we could get coffee. Waves doesn't open until 6:30 am and Terrace Cafe doesn't open until 7:00 am so I wondered where there might be coffee.

Outside of Terrace Cafe was a place that had a coffee station and machine so I grabbed a couple of coffees and headed back downstairs to our room. We took our showers and got ready to head back up to Terrace Cafe for breakfast. We sat outside on the deck where it was a little breezy but not bad. It was nice to be outside. That is a big bonus over Holland America.

Once done with breakfast we got ready to go to Saint-Tropez. We had to anchor off shore so we had to take a tender to get to shore. That was a bit of a process as guests with excursions were scheduled first followed by the independents, as we were called. Seems they could have expedited the process better but using the tenders is out of the norm.

We made it to shore and began walking through the town checking out the various locations. Along the harbor were all the rich and famous boats that Saint-Tropez is famous for. In other words, Saint Tropez is for the rich and famous. You can see that in the harbor full of outrageous boats, the restaurants and the fancy shops. We walked along the water for a ways until we headed up a hill to some old walled structure. It looked as if there was some old archaeology there. We never made it to the very top, I guess we missed a turn. Then we returned to the town and walked through it looking at all the exclusive and fancy stores.

There was one fancy dessert/pastry that we heard of so we found a place that had it. It was called Tarte Topezienne and was very tasty but there were no tables available so we had to kind of improvise. Actually, it was very typically pastry and cream filling with raspberries. We found a place to sit far from the pastry shop and shared the pastry between the two of us.

We walked around some more, got tired and decided to head back to the ship. Of course, first, we had to wait for a tender. The ride back on the tender was very choppy with a number of people very visably shaken or upset. It was very questionable to be running the tenders in these conditions but there wasnt much that could be done. Boarding the ship from the tender was very precarious as the waves kept the tender bobbing up and down against the side of the ship.

When we were finally able to safely get off the tender we returned to the Terrace cafe for some food and refreshment. I, of course, started with a good chocolate malt. Janet is just appalled. Janet decided to try doing some laundry, as it is free on Oceania. Worked great!

Rested for most of the rest of the time but we did get upstairs for a game of miniature golf. It's kind of like a little miniature golf course, complete with pencils and score cards. A little windy but not as bad as the early morning when it was closed due to wind.

We went to dinner at MDR, met a nice couple next to our table named Alan and Sandy and all were a bit disappointed. The other couple had to send their steaks back and they still didn't get it right. Ours, didn't involve red meat and was good, but not quite up to expectation. So far, not that impressed with the cuisine. At least in the MDR.

Went back to our room and got ready for bed. Again, not much entertainment going on until after 9:00 pm.

Day 07 – 06/03/2024

Cruise. Barcelona, Spain.

RED GINGER Restaurant 6:30 pm.

We both slept much better last night, although we were woken up around 1:30 am by a phone call. The lady was asking for a Jackie. What she was calling about who knows at that time of morning. She was probably drunk. We were both up and ready around 6:00 am. I went up to Terrace Cafe and got our pre coffee again.

While Janet showered I went up and sat down for breakfast. Janet joined me when she was ready. I must say the service by the waiters was not great until a lot more people showed up. I had to ask for my own coffee and juice, when that is supposed to be their job. Anyway, minor inconvenience.

We are getting ready to head ashore in Barcelona. The terminal is far away from town so the ship has a shuttle bus to take everyone from the ship to a central point in town where they can walk to the city center. The central point is the tall statue of Christopher Columbus. Then, it is a short walk up Las Ramblas to the center of town and the gothic district. Although a short walk to Las Ramblas, it was extremely crowded and noisy. Once you start off in town you notice right away the bad smells and crowds of people. There was a lot of construction going on and the hoards of people made it a difficult walk. We made it up to a well known Spanish store called Zara's where Janet bought a stripped blouse. It seems stripes are definitely in now. We walked to various places, including the gothic district, and tried particularly to find architecture that was or resembled Gaudi. All in all, I'm sure Janet thought everything was lovely but I thought it was way too messy and crowded with people.

On the way back to catch the bus to the ship we stopped and each had Sangria on Las Ramblas. People watching was very good but we were pretty worn out by then. We walked back to the Columbus statue and caught our bus back to the ship.

There was a Captains reception at 5:45 pm where we were all introduced to the captain and crew, along with free bites and cocktails. We had reservations at Red Ginger at 6:30 pm so we stayed until then. Nice touch to have the free cocktails and bites.

Proceeding to Red Ginger, we sat at a table with two other couples, John and Jane and Paul and ??? We learned later that it was Paul and Jane and John and Enyth. Although we briefly saw Paul and Jane throughout the cruise, we mainly saw and talked with John and Enyth.

We have to say the food was incredible. The miso sea bass was amazing and the Malaysian Beef was amazing. This place upped our impression of the food quite a few notches. The other couples seem to agree that the food in the MDR is ok to good, but it is the specialty restaurants where Oceania shines. We had a good and fun conversation with the other couples just like we did earlier with Alan and Sandy. Nice people and like interests. We spent probably over 2 hours and then retreated to our room to get ready for bed.

Day 08 – 06/04/2024

Cruising the Alboran Sea.

I had trouble sleeping last night. Janet seemed to do ok. We did our usual routine for getting coffee and taking showers. Today is a sea day so the restaurants opened up about 1/2 hour later than normal. Janet went up first and found a spot on the deck of the Terrace Cafe. We waited turns so that we wouldn't step on anybody else's toes. We both had a good breakfast and we went back to the room.

I stayed up at Horizons and Janet went downstairs shopping. About 11:25 am I made my way back to the room, it was being cleaned up. I couldn't find anything from Janet so I texted her and said I would meet her at the Marina Stage. Our package includes free Wi-Fi. We sat and listened, hoping to win \$250.00 to help defray some losses. I think our luck must have run out as we didn't win anything. The presentation had to do with future cruises. Kind of a waste of time.

We went up to The Terrace Cafe for lunch but inside this time. The weather has been great so far but since it was a sea day things seem a little more crowded when inside. After lunch we went back to the room and decided to go up to the pool and jacuzzi. The pool itself is saltwater and the temperature is just right. There were more people than usual of course, but it was nice to swim a little and relax in the sun. Both jacuzzis were already full so we couldn't do that.

For dinner we are heading to the Terrace Cafe. We do not have a reservation at a specialty restaurant for tonight. John, from last night at Red Ginger, said that if you go to the grill portion you can have them grill prime rib and small lobsters. Thought we would try that, since normally they do not have that as an obvious choice. Actually, John was partially correct. But, it's not prime rib but, instead, it's rib eye steak. Janet had the grilled lobster and I had the rib eye. Both were very good.

We finished our dinner and had to rush up to Horizon's for our reception. They are holding a reception for the Oceania first-timers. Free cocktails and bites. Another nice touch. We got our drinks but didn't need the bites since we just had dinner. The announcer said that there were 600 newbies, so that means that half of the passengers on Marina are first timers.

Tonight, about 1:30 am, we pass through the Straits of Gibraltar. Nice to know but it will be too dark to mean much. Any sleep we can get is much appreciated. Not going to

wake up at 1:30 am.

Day 09 – 06/05/2024

Cruise. Cadiz, Spain.

Paid For Excursion: Os-Seville Cathedral And Reales Alcazare Can-008.

POLO Restaurant 6:30 pm.

We have both been getting up early, between 5:00 am and 5:45 am. I get our first, early morning coffee and bring it back to the room from the station on the 12th level to the 8th deck. We didn't have a whole lot of time this morning as we had to meet our tour bus at 8:45 am. It seems that crossing the pool area to get to the coffee and coming back again is getting a little more difficult. It is so nice in the early morning light, but lately it has been getting more wind. Makes it difficult to walk, let alone trying to carry a couple cups of coffee.

Janet started it off up at Waves on the 12th deck as they are opened first. I took my shower and met her up there where we went over to the Terrace Cafe and sat outside. Everything was pretty overcast or foggy but it cleared up quickly. We saw John and Edith (we will call her Edith since we can't really pronounce her name) from the other night. We finished up breakfast and then left to get ready for meeting down at the Marina Lounge for our excursion at 8:45 am.

We all headed out to the bus and loaded up for the long drive from Cadiz to Seville. Our guide reminds us a lot of Billie Mitchel. His name is Antonio but we can call him Tony. He is from Cadiz and is quite the historian. Same look and mannerisms as Bill. It was an hour and 45 minute drive to Seville on a nice bus with the guide pointing out things along the way. Such as nesting cranes, sunflowers, corn and olive trees. We made it to Seville and drove through parts of the downtown with the guide pointing out all the buildings that were built during the Exposition years long ago. It reminds us a lot of Balboa Park in San Diego.

We finally pulled up and stopped and we all got off to start our walking tour. We picked up our individual sound devices and started to follow our guide around as he took us through the various sights.

These are the places we stopped at to take a lot of photos:
Seville panoramic tour including stop at Plaza de Espana
Walk to the city center
Cathedral and Reales Alcazares
Walking tour in Santa Cruz Quarter
Lunch at Robles Placentines

We ended up at a local restaurant for lunch, which was quite extensive. We were running late (mainly because Tony had so much information) and we were worried we would be too full for our dining at the Polo restaurant on board at 6:30 pm. Anyway, we finished, including dessert, and we walked to the bus to get us back to Cadiz and the ship.

After arriving back at the ship, Janet and I went prone for a while. We were exhausted and needed to rest before heading up to the 14th floor for Polo restaurant. We shared a table again with two other couples. I have to admit they weren't quite as engaging as the other couples we met. One couple seemed a little snobbish about everything. Seemed to complain about the lack of concern anymore for the appearance (or attire) of the guests attending the specialty restaurants and the MDR. Anyway, Polo is a steakhouse. The food was very good although we had to limit what we ate.

We finished up our dinner and conversation and then went back downstairs to our room to get ready for bed.

Day 10 – 06/06/2024

Cruise. Casablanca, Morocco.

Paid For Excursion: Imperial Rabat Half Day Cas-004.
JACQUES Restaurant 6:30 pm.

We both woke up early again, although we were not quite sure what time it was. The time turned back an hour somewhere during the night. The clocks on board reflected this but Apple did not seem to be as good as it usually is and did not reflect the time change. We have another, even earlier start to our day where we have to be ready for our tour at 7:45 am. Today we dock at Casablanca, Morocco and get on a bus to take us to Rabat. Today's tour is only 5 and 1/2 hours and no lunch so it should not be as tiring. We started the morning with our coffee, but again, we were not sure if it was 4:30 am or 5:30 am. The weather seemed to be more of an issue getting the coffee back to the room. The weather became quite overcast. That was ok for a cooler day but later it became even cloudier once we got back to the ship.

We went down to the Marina lounge to get our bus number for the tour today. We were bus number 11 so we loaded up and headed out of town to Rabat, which is about an hour and a half away. The traffic in the city of Casablanca is just horrible. Cars are driving everywhere, in and out and all about. The bus driver is doing an excellent job of not running into other buses, trucks and cars, let alone the pedestrians standing in the middle of the street hoping to get across without dying. It took quite a while to get out of the downtown and start on the highway to Rabat.

The traffic on Rabat was slightly better, although still very congested. It seems honking your horn is the best way to plow your way through the traffic. The places we stopped were:

- Royal Palace Esplanade
- Kasbah Chellah
- Hassan Tower
- Mohamed V Mausoleum
- Oudayas Kasbah
- Cafe Maure for refreshments

Everything was beautiful although only in the King's areas. There are a lot of people hanging out trying to get back. Somewhere, not really sure where.

Our driver spent a lot of time on the way back to Casablanca complaining about the government of Morocco. A lot of politics that wasn't needed for us tourists. I think he thought he needed to talk the whole time and then just started going off on the government. There also seemed to be a lot of talk about women and their coming out more often, becoming more visible. Not sure our guide thought that was a good thing. He seemed to be blaming all the women drivers for all the bad traffic.

Anyway, we made it back to Casablanca, back through all the noise and traffic and stopped at the guide's favorite tourist trap. Janet bought was referred to as Magic Spice with 32 different spices. There was a story about the Magic Spice being a requirement for a good marriage. Probably more myth than anything.

Once we got back to the ship Janet decided to go for a swim and I headed to the pool area for a smoothy. Janet finished and went back to the room for a shower and I hung out at the pool until it was time for the 4:00 pm high tea up in the Horizon room. The high tea was good and included some bite size egg sandwiches and a couple of scones. We head to Jacques for dinner tonight. The weather has gotten worse. The winds came up and as we headed out to sea, it became a lot rougher. Should be interesting. The dinner at Jacques was very good, although I'm not exactly sure what I got. I think it was lamb, but it was tender and delicious. I think the specialty restaurants are the way to go, if you can. They tend to offer some kind of meat, whether red meat, fish or fowl. But they all have their own special take on them.

We sat at a table with another couple. They were two ladies (Carol and Judy) traveling together (but different staterooms, as they made clear). They have been friends and colleagues for many years and have decided to travel together even though their husbands either don't want to travel or cannot. They are both retired professors and important in their fields. The one lady, Carol, was from Minnesota and her maiden last name was Anderson, although she did not seem to be from Scandinavia as my Mom and her Mother were. This lady seemed to be more German. Anyway, she's the only one that seemed to know where Ada was compared to other people I have met from Minnesota.

Day 11 – 06/07/2024

Cruise. Agadir, Morocco.

Paid For Excursion: The Walls And Souks Of Taroudant Aga-003.

We both slept pretty well and woke up between 5:30 am and 6:00 am. I got our coffee from upstairs and came back to the room. I took my shower and returned upstairs and sat inside the Terrace Cafe by the window to watch the ocean. And of course to have more coffee and pastry. I happened to see a school of dolphins as I sat there. Fascinating! After a bit I joined Janet in the Aqua room where, supposedly, a little more healthy offering is had.

We returned to our room and Janet finished some washing and we watched as we pulled

into Agadir. Today, we decided to not take our excursion as we were tired of being on the bus over the last couple of days. We will forgo the excursion and just tour Agadir ourselves.

Agadir is a lot like Casablanca and Rabat. It is very crowded with cars, busses and exhaust. This is definitely a third world country with a lot of poverty on one end and a too heavy government that keeps all the money in their pockets. We took the Marina shuttle bus from the ship and were dropped off in town. We walked quite a ways in order to get to the suka or market. Along the way we stopped to admire a very affluent-looking gardens and house. I tried to take a picture but a gentleman came up and told me that no pictures were allowed of the President's palace. The house itself was very secluded in the back of the large gardens, obviously to prevent any of the peasants from seeing someone with so much power and money. Of course, I had to oblige.

We made to the market eventually and went inside to see stall after stall of pretty much any kind of junk a tourist would want. Janet picked out a few small items for the grand kids but even that was a hassle. This guy said using a credit card was not justified for such a small number of items. After Janet and I started to walk out he acquiesced and used one of his neighboring credit card machines to make the sale. We also purchased a few dates that were quite nice, tasted great and he even through in an extra one. We left the market and proceeded to a corner restaurant that had live Moroccan music playing and ducked inside to have something to eat and drink. We verified with the waitress that we could use our credit card. In some cases a credit card is accepted, others only Visa. We had both Visa and Mastercard so we needed to check. We received our meal and when Janet went to pay it with the credit card, the other waiter asked her to follow him out of the restaurant to a place next door that had a working credit card machine. Janet noticed that the amount on the bill was certainly not that we got and refused to pay the higher amount. After a while the owner came over and apologized saying that he has only owned the restaurant for a month and has had nothing but trouble with getting his employees to do any thing right. He asked us to pay the correct amount in Euros and we said we didn't have enough Euros and that was why we asked if they would accept a credit card. Long story short, we gave him what we had in Euros and he accepted that as payment enough. So I guess we basically got orange juice and lunch for about \$4.

Morocco and places such as Agadir are really not ready for tourists yet. It's just not a good place and the people try to rip off all the tourists who do come in to offer support. Someone else on our bus said she tried to purchase some items for a few dollars and then got a call from her bank saying they had just been charged over \$200. Makes my point exactly.

We walked back to the drop off point and loaded onto the bus to take us back to the ship. The driver eventually took off but missed the place to turn to go to the ship and everyone was wondering where we were going. Not good. Anyway, we eventually made it back and went up to Waves to get something to eat and drink.

We finished that and then decided to take a swim. So we did and that was refreshing. Next up was the talk given about our next port of call in the Canary Islands. More about that tomorrow.

We went up to the Terrace Cafe for dinner tonight. Another good meal with plenty of wine and desserts. As we left the port we started sailing out in the same direction we came in this morning. I remembered seeing the dolphins and, sure enough, they appeared in about the same area. At least Janet was able to see them this time. We hung out for a while and then headed back to the room to get ready for bed.

Day 12 – 06/08/2024

Cruise. Arrecife (Lanzarote), Canary Islands.

Today was kind of a late day getting all the shore stuff done. We both woke early as usual and we got our coffee and breakfast as usual. We weren't expected to dock in Arrecife until about 10:00am so we had plenty of time to organize ourselves. We are just going to walk round town ourselves today, don't need an excursion or tour. About 10:00 am we disembarked and headed for the Oceania bus that would take us to town. Even though we are not anchoring the last few ports we have had to take an Oceania shuttle to get out of the port and into town. Today's was kind of a bit of a joke. The bus didn't take us very far before it stopped and let everyone off. It's just not that far into town, but we had to walk a far piece anyway.

The the town of Arrecife is not that large and there were a lot less people and congestion then we found in Casablanca, for example. The waterfront for Arrecife is quite nice. There is a major hotel there and you can go up to the 17th floor to a small cafe/bar and look out over all of Arrecife. So we stopped in and had a couple of drinks, ate some snack and used the restroom.

After that we went back to street level and went over to the beach. Janet walked through the water and I sat under a palm tree. We then started to walk back toward where the shuttle bus let us off. But before getting there, Janet stopped in a couple of places to look for gifts.

We made it back to the bus, waited a bit and then made our way to the ship. It was nice to have the shuttle, but it probably wasn't quite worth it for such a close distance. While we were waiting in our room, the announcement came that there was to be another talk on tomorrow's port. Also, the dinner tonight in the Terrace Cafe was going to be a special Spanish dinner.

We went to the talk and then went over to the Terrace Cafe to get a good table for the night's dinner. The meal was very good with a lot of options. The one bad thing was that there was Sangria but it wasn't very good and was \$9.00 a glass. Of course the waitress didn't say anything about it costing extra.

After dinner we returned to our room to get ready for bed.

Day 13 – 06/09/2024

Cruise. Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands.

Waking up to Tenerife this morning. We are getting kind of a late start as we woke up around 5:45 am instead of the usual 5:00 am. As we pull into Tenerife it looks a lot more like a city. A lot more high rises but still a lot of the traditional White House's on the hillsides as we have seen in the Canary Islands. It's supposed to get to 76 degrees F today so it looks like shorts and T-shirt.

We made arrangements to head back to Red Ginger tonight but not until 7:00 pm. We made a walk into town. Once again the cruise ship seems to be docking in ports that are a ways away from the town. If you have a cruise tour or excursion the buses are waiting for you after you get off of the ship. But if you just want to walk to town you have a long walk to get there. Kind of limits what you can do in town. Gone are the days when you got off of the ship and there were private tour companies vying for your business.

Anyway, we walked to town and apparently there was some major music festival going on. Lots of loud music. The town itself was partially closed since it was Sunday. We did a lot of walking and then I decided to go back to the ship and have a down day. Janet went off on her own to walk, ride the bus and ride the tram around town.

When I got back to the ship after a long walk I decided to take my iPad up to the pool deck to flake and read. I did that but also had some lunch and a banana split. The rest of my time was spent relaxing, reading and watching people as they came back onboard. Janet got there a few hours later and I met her by the pool as she was having lunch.

When she was done we lounged around awhile, went to afternoon tea and back to the room. Then we rested until it was time, 7:00pm, to go to the Red Ginger. We sat with another couple that was kind of snooty. The lady was the one I had seen and heard the other night about all the people not properly dressed for dinner. Too bad she had to sit with us.

After we were done we made it back to the room to get ready for bed.

Day 14 – 06/10/2024

Cruise. Santa Cruz de La Palma, Canary Islands.

Another late start in the morning for us. We both slept until around 6:15 am and the ship was docking at 7:00 am. We didn't have any excursions or tours so we just took our time to enjoy breakfast and the views of La Palma from the ship. This is a gorgeous island. Reminds us a lot of Hawaii with steep cliffs, mountains and different varieties of vegetation. There are black sand beaches. The parts closer to the water are a lot drier but

the higher you go there are a lot more vegetation changes. There are a lot of pine trees, palm trees and banana trees. The real reason you go higher is because of the mountains that were created with the volcanoes that are found here.

Janet and I decided to take a bus up and over the top to see that volcano. We met a guy at the bus station (young German) who was here visiting his grandparents up around where the volcano is. So he kind of acted as our guide. Very nice guy and spoke an English very well. The ride up to the top and over onto the other side took about 45 minutes. Our young friend took us to the spot where we could get the best view of one of the volcanoes that exploded in 2023. It nearly took out his grandparent's house but devastated quite a few others. He also showed us where to catch the bus back down the mountain and when to catch it.

We went back to La Palma and walked around some and stopped to have Sangria. We walked out on one of the black sand beaches. The wind was blowing pretty hard. The wind kind of pelted our skin like we were being sand blasted. Janet filled a baggie with some black sand to bring back for Tim. Then Janet took off for more shopping and I headed back to the ship for lunch and beer. Janet came back and she is doing some laundry. We will eat in the MDR tonight.

Went up to the MDR and got a table by the window. Our table mates from the other night, Carol and Judy showed up next to us so we all had a good visit and dinner. We are supposed to be at Toscana the last night of the cruise so we are going to try and arrange to sit together. They are the friends who travel together, because their husbands don't like to or can't travel and they live in different states. Carol is the one with maiden name of Anderson and lives in Minnesota.

We finished dinner and set off to head to our room to get ready for bed.

Day 15 – 06/11/2024

Cruise. Funchal (Madeira), Portugal.

We woke up at our usual early morning time. When I went up to get coffee around 5:30 am it was very windy on the pool deck. Walking back the wind was forcing the coffee out of my cup. Back in our room now reading news.

We had a very leisurely breakfast before making our way off the ship. We walked around a bit before finding the main thing we wanted to do, which was to ride the cable cars up the steep cliffs. We found the ticket office in the port area and had to walk a ways to find the entrance. We got in line and boarded a cable car with another couple and made our way up the hill. The views were pretty incredible. Once we got to the top we went down a street to take another cable down part way on the other side where the gardens are. Our ticket covered this, the ride back up from the gardens and back down to the town.

The gardens were very beautiful with just about every plant and flower you could

think of. The outlooks over the valley below were also very nice. It was surprising to see a number of plants we thought would only survive in San Diego, Auburn and Hawaii. We walked most all of the paths, made our way back to the cable cars and took one back to where the first cable car dropped us off.

We went back down the first cable car to the town and walked around a bit before finding a place to get a drink called Poncha. It was orange juice with rum and some other things. Very good rum drink. We then walked through the market where they had a lot of crafts and vegetables and fruits. We also found some good rum that we will bring back to the states.

I returned to the ship and Janet joined me a few minutes later for something to eat and drink. After that we spent some down time around the pool waiting to get ready for dinner.

We had dinner on the MDR again, table by the window of course. It was all very good. Tomorrow night will be our last dinner on board. We will be going to Toscana.

Day 16 – 06/12/2024

Cruising the North Atlantic Sea.

TOSCANA Restaurant 6:30 pm.

We both woke up fairly early again, around 5:00 am. Janet decided to go with me to get our coffee as yesterday was rocky and quite windy and the coffee kind of blew everywhere. So today she decided to go with me in which case she will experience what I experienced. Today is also rocky and very windy.

We went up around 5:30 am and it was rocky and windy. Janet carried the coffee and I the pastry as we made our way past the pool. That's where the wind is the worst and sure enough the coffee was blowing outside the cup and spraying everywhere. Nice views though.

We are just lounging this morning as this is a sea day. Our last day and night on board Oceania. We are checking directions to the rental car place from where we dock and the drive to our next stay in Pinhao. Janet got notice from Andrea that Emily was heading or at the hospital ready to have her baby.

We went up to Terrace to get some breakfast and Janet decided to do some laundry. She likes to go to Aquamar for breakfast but she brought her Asai bowl over and sat with me for awhile.

We spent the rest of the day just walking around, having lunch and attending the last Martin P Lee lecture on the port of call. In this case it was Lisbon. It has been very windy today and overcast so we can't just sit by the pool or even walk on the upper

deck.

We went to Toscana for dinner and arranged seating with Carol and Judy. Had a nice dinner and conversation and said goodbye as we will be leaving the ship tomorrow. Went up to the room to get ready for tomorrow and going to bed.

Day 17 – 06/13/2024

Cruise. Lisbon, Portugal.

Disembark 9:00 AM.

Car rental pick-up – Hertz.

PINHAO

Thursday June 13, 2024 - Saturday June 15, 2024 (2 nights), Casa de Casal de Loivos.

We woke up pretty early, around 5:00 am and headed up to pool deck to get coffee. We got our stuff somewhat packed and then went up to have breakfast at Terrace cafe. Before going up for breakfast, Janet went upstairs to get photos of coming under the bridge in Lisbon and the statue of Jesus Christ. I took my shower and happened to get out on the veranda to take the same pictures.

We finished our breakfast and went to our room to pack up and leave. Next we rolled our suitcases and backpacks out of our room and off of the ship. We found a taxi to take us to where we were to pick up our rental car. It was across the bridge and down a ways to the Hertz place. A time it was nice to have someone else worry about the driving and directions.

After getting our car and loading everything up we took off for Pinhao. The directions to our car were off as it wasn't where they told us it was parked, but the guy who we dealt with finally found it parked away away.

We had a very difficult time getting out of Lisbon. The first problem was getting in the correct lane for the toll roads. Turns out all roads in Portugal are privatized, according to the Hertz guy. The car comes equipped with the device that automatically registers the car as you pass through the toll station. Problem is, we were in the wrong lane of the toll station, so the arm would not raise. One of the workers had to give us some piece of paper to allow us through. Now we knew which lane to get in for the rest of the journey. In talking with a guest we met in Pinhao we found out that it will probably be expensive when all the tolls are added into the rental. All along our route to Pinhao we kept hearing mysterious beeps. Turns out it was an electronic toll being taken.

The second problem was not knowing where we were going. We took a wrong lane in Lisbon which sent us off in the wrong direction over a bridge with no way to get off and turn around. All we could do was enjoy the view of the bay or ocean and wait for a place to turn around. Once we got off and were able to turn around we were on our way to Pinhao. Nice drive, easy. Once we got to Pinhao, hours later, we could not figure out how to get to the hotel. Turns out after getting help from various people, we had to climb

up some steep hills and very narrow roads to finally end up at our hotel. Only by luck and sheer determination did we make it there.

After we arrived, we got into our room and enjoyed the view over the Douro valley and river. It is absolutely breathtaking, although the effort getting here was ridiculous. We had a welcome drink and relaxed so that we could enjoy the experience of being so high up over the valley and looking out over the river and all the vineyards. Rather than drive in the car down the steep hill to the bottom where Pinhao is we took advantage of the dinner being offered by the hotel. We had a very good dinner provided through the hotel, met some nice people and went to bed early as we were very tired of our long day.

Day 18 – 06/14/2024

PINHAO. Casa de Casal de Loivos.

Woke up fairly early again, around 5:30 am. There was no coffee available so we had to wait until 8:00 am for breakfast provided by the hotel. The breakfast was very good. Plenty of good food and coffee.

We spent the rest of the day walking around up here through the vineyards. There was a nice walking trail so to speak that the owner suggested. So we took that but I think we must have missed a turn somewhere because we ended up in some vineyard. We could see the road down below where we knew we wanted to be so with the help of some vineyard workers we made it through and down to the road. From the road we walked back to the hotel.

We stopped in at the hotel for a while and then walked a short distance to a wine tasting place with a museum for olive pressing. The museum was closed for their afternoon siesta so we just had some wine and almonds. Almonds are also big around here. Then we walked back to the hotel, rested and then walked over to a different wine tasting place. It was supposed to be better according to our owner. It was a bit more of a walk but we met up with another lady from our hotel and shared wine, treats and some port. The views are just incredible which is also why we didn't want to descend down into Pinhao. That, and the fact that it is so narrow and windy roads all the way down. Easier to just stay here.

We spent the rest of the afternoon looking out over the Duro valley and river and waited for dinner. We decided to just eat the family style dinner here again. New people and a different dinner. I don't think the dinner was as good as the first night but it was still homemade and good. The conversation got to be a bit more lively and we both decided to call it a night. Seems we keep meeting up with people from Austin Texas.

Day 19 – 06/15/2024

PINHAO. Casa de Casal de Loivos. PORTO.

Car Rental Return.

Saturday June 15, 2024 - Tuesday June 18, 2024 (3 nights),
Hotel das Virtudes.

We leave this morning to head to Porto. We slept fairly well. At least we didn't get out of our bed until around 6:45 am. The morning is more blue sky than yesterday, making the valley and river look so much nicer. We will have breakfast here again and then drive our way down the very narrow streets to the bottom to begin our drive to Porto.

Breakfast was the same as yesterday but plenty good. Different personnel as this is Saturday. Talked to one of the guests that didn't fit the numbers game at the dinner table last night. She and her husband and another couple ate together downstairs. She said it was more mellow than the lively time we all had upstairs. Anyway, she is pregnant and she was good enough to let us know the sex and name of her baby. Nobody else knows except her husband. The baby's name is Tennessee Jane. Janet and I joked with each other that wouldn't it be weird if she knew Luke and Tabitha who are from Austin and are getting married at the end of March 2025.

After breakfast we finished our packing and checked out of the hotel. Had our last views of the Duro Valley. We were able to fairly easily make our way down the hill into Pinhao. We also were able to fairly easily make our way along the Duro ending up eventually in Porto. A long but beautiful drive.

After that it became extremely frustrating trying to navigate the downtown area to find the Hertz rental office to return the car. We were running pretty low on gas by the time we were able to find the Hertz office. Many people tried to help us, but with lots of traffic, lack of a common language, and one-way streets we just couldn't seem to find the right streets. Finally one couple were able to convince us we were really close and we followed their directions to Hertz. We returned the car, paying what was probably \$200 more than we thought, with tolls and having them fill up the gas tank. We were told by the Hertz guy in Lisbon that there would be no extra charge for filling up the tank. We don't know how much per kilogram we were charged but by this point we just wanted out.

After dropping off the car we proceeded to walk our way, suitcases in hand, towards the hotel. Once again it was very frustrating finding out where it was. We finally had a couple of guys point us in the right direction, whereby we had to haul our suitcases down a large number of stairs before we found the hotel. We checked in and the staff were amazed we had come that direction down the stairs. Anyway, here we are.

We were given a much-appreciated welcome drink and shown to our room. Nice room. Small but with all that we need. Especially, decent WI-Fi. We are waiting awhile before venturing out into the city after a very frustrating and tiring day for the both of us.

After resting we headed out to get a lay of the surroundings. We found a different way to get to the hotel, with no stairs but there would be no way we could have gotten a car down these narrow streets to have dropped off our luggage first before returning the car. Unfortunately, the location of our hotel and the up and down of very narrow streets is not something we were able to anticipate. Anyway, the walk back into the busy parts of the town and down by the river are very scenic but a lot of very narrow ups and downs. We ended up in a very busy part of the town. But that is where all the action is. This being Saturday there were tons of people and a lot of street musicians. We found a place

where we stopped and had a bite to eat for dinner and something to drink. We then walked down by the river where it was packed with even more people. Across the other side of the river we could see at least three of the more notable port wine places, Sandeman, Calem and Taylor. We crossed over the bridge going over the Duro river and stopped and had some port at Sandeman. It was very good. Janet liked the Reserve and I liked the LBV. Tomorrow we will try to taste the others and see the difference or which we liked best.

We returned to our hotel, needing some help again to find our way back. Even though it is a five star hotel its location is difficult at best to find unless you have been there long enough.

Day 20 – 06/16/2024

PORTO. Hotel das Virtudes.

Father's Day.

We had a pretty restful night. It is very quiet here and modern. The in-room coffee is a little off, but we do have a free breakfast here so we will see how that goes. Janet has a bit of a cough but she is feeling ok otherwise.

The breakfast was way more than expected. It even included mimosas and/or champagne. We told them about our room not having the thermostat working and they switched us to an upgraded room. The room is nice, a little larger. No patio (which we were not going to use anyway) but a window that had a view.

While we were gone from the room being switched, we went down to the river to take a boat ride. The ride went through the six bridges and gave us some history. Then we stopped at the old but small church close to where we are staying and went inside as a service was ending. Another fabulous church with plenty of character. We also went up to the Jewish hill, Mt Judeus that looks out over the river.

Then we walked across the bridge over the Duro and went back to try a couple more ports. The first stop was Caleb where we tried port similar to yesterday. The waiter got the order wrong, to put it nicely, and tried to overcharge us for what we ordered. Two different prices for port from the same bottle. We only paid a lesser amount based on the menu. The port was ok but I think the port yesterday from Sandeman was better.

Next we walked over to Kokpe and tried their port. Their tasting was all inside and they gave you some chocolate to open up the taste buds. It was better than Caleb but I think not as good as Sandeman. We will try a couple more ports later. For dinner we have a reservation at a place Heather recommended. We headed back to the hotel to rest up.

Unfortunately, we are going to have to cancel our dinner reservation. Janet has come down with something and it's better she stay in bed. We shall see what tomorrow brings. Whatever it was Janet has I got about two hours later. Could be food poisoning could be something else, but Janet was able to get some sleep after about midnight. I on the other hand was about every hour throwing up. What a miserable night for the two of us.

Day 21 – 06/17/2024

PORTO. Hotel das Virtudes.

This morning we were both totally wiped. Janet was able to get up and do a few things but I was in bed for the day. The day was kind of rainy anyway, but still being kept in bed is not what we had planned for.

As I said the day before, the day was a total down day. It rained off and on but Janet was able to make arrangements for a taxi to take us to the train station tomorrow as we make our way back to Lisbon.

I'm still feeling pretty out of it although the throwing up has stopped. Hopefully, tonight we will be able to get the rest we need to make it through tomorrow.

Day 22 – 06/18/2024

PORTO. Hotel das Virtudes. LISBON (Portugal)

Tuesday June 18, 2024 - Thursday June 20, 2024 (2 nights), Boutique Chiado Suites. We woke early today, both feeling better after a good rest. We still feel kind of weak though. Better in the morning but by end of day we will have been depleted.

We ate a light, very light, breakfast down below. Went back to our room to finish packing up and getting ready for the taxi at 9:45 am. We went down to the front desk around 9:30 am and waited for the taxi to take us to the train station. There are two stations close by but we need the one that will take us to Lisbon.

The taxi arrived right on time and we loaded up for about a half hour drive to the station. We figured out which platform and lane to be in and then we went there to wait for the train. When the train arrived there were a bunch of people all trying to get onboard, with more than their fair share of luggage. Needless to say, it is was chaos and there were not enough places for all the luggage. Part of the problem was that people were getting on the wrong cars, either first class/second class or the number of the car that was on their ticket. The assigned seat numbers were the same but the car number made the difference. Anyway, we found our seats and waited for the train to start moving in order to find a place for Janet's bag back away from where we were seated.

As we made our way along our approximately 4 hour journey various people got on and off as we stopped. Finally, we arrived in Lisbon. Turns out the train station was almost right across the street from where we disembarked from our cruise.

We exited the train station and found a taxi to take us to our hotel. We were too burned out to try and figure everything out on our own. Good thing we did. We would have had another very frustrating time. Anyway, I had received an email from the hotel owner specifying a building code, room number, room code and Wi-Fi. We were to get in rather easily, a lot better than we were able to in Civitavecchia.

We found our room on the second floor and unpacked a little. The room is right above the street. I am sure it will be very noisy tonight. The room is ok, kind of quirky with the lights and air but it will do. We decided to go out for a short walk to see what was around us. We stopped off at the reception (so called) and the guy was able to set up a taxi for our early morning flight out of Lisbon on Thursday, 06/20/2024. We will be picked up at 6:00 am.

We walked to few spots within about a four or five block radius. We stopped and got something to munch on in the morning as this place does not provide breakfast. We also stopped and had some pizza , wine and some salad for dinner. Then we slowly made our way back to our room. We are in a very touristy central location so there are lots of people milling about.

I made it back to our room and Janet went to a little store to try and find some milk for our coffee in the morning. When she got back all she could find was a small bottle of lactose intolerant milk. Good enough I guess. We were exhausted so went to bed.

Day 23 – 06/19/2024

LISBON. Boutique Chiado Suites.

I had a very troublesome night, although Janet seemed to be able to sleep ok. The noise was one thing, but also it seemed like I was getting worse not better. It was kind of hot or warm, too much light coming in from the street and because of football (soccer) it was very noisy. Long story short, I had no sleep and was worried about getting back on the plane.

The next morning we opened up the windows to get some cool air in. I took a shower but was still feeling pretty out of it. Janet took a shower and went off to find me something to drink and eat. I encouraged her to go out and do something on her own. I wasn't about to go out and exhaust myself again. So I'm staying in for the day. Janet was gone about 4 hours and I stayed put to rest. When she came back she had taken the train trip to Sintra, which we had planned to do. I was happy that she was able to do that on her own, although I was a little worried about her being out alone. She described the things she did and saw and showed me her iPhone pictures so that I could at least have a sense of what Sintra is like. She described it as being almost Montserrat like but different of course. A lot of beautiful buildings and castles and such but also very lush like. Probably a better place to stay than in Lisbon for an ex-pat.

Anyway, we hung out for a while and then headed out to look at a few things Janet had spotted for dinner. We went to this one place that was kind of out of the way but also looked like they would have good food. We ended up sharing a salad with roasted chicken and some Sangria. I still can't eat much without it affecting my stomach. The Asian lady next to us ordered octopus which Janet was intrigued by and took a picture. Somehow, anything fish related is just too much these days.

We walked back to our hotel room and got ready for bed. We have to get up around 4:45 am in order to get ready for the taxi that will meet us out side at 6:00 am.

Day 24 – 6/20/2024

LISBON. Boutique Chiado Suites.

Flight back to SFO.

Car parking post-trip.

We woke up at 4:45 am and both took showers. We made sure we had everything and met the taxi downstairs at 6:00 am. He was very prompt and met us immediately. We drove the distance to the airport and were quite impressed with the way the taxi drivers maneuver their way through town. Even at 6:00 am in the morning.

At the airport we quickly figured out what line to get in for Iberia check in. Turns out there are only 2 check in stations and the line was already long. We were there 2 hours early but it still took us an hour just to get checked in. We then proceeded to TSA which wasn't too bad. At least we didn't have to take our shoes off. After that we were finally told what gate to go to and after making our way there it was just a few minutes before they started boarding. It was just a short flight, probably less than an hour and a half, to Madrid.

In Madrid we had a long way to get to the gate for our next Iberia flight to SFO. Once again we got to the gate and it was just a few minutes before we boarded. We were not able to select our seats on this flight so Janet and I were separated and not on the aisle. Once seated and ready to take off there were plenty of open seats. The lady next to me moved back to where she was closer to her husband. The other lady next to me moved back to be with her husband. I didn't take offense. So Janet moved into her seat and, as it turned out, Janet was next to me and she also got her aisle seat. The seat on the other side of me was empty.

It was over a 12 hour flight, very long and tiring. Pretty smooth flight though. The larger Iberia plane for international flights was very similar to Air France or British Airways. Arriving in SFO we went through customs, waited a long while for our luggage (which, fortunately was there) and then went outside to wait for the shuttle to the Aloft hotel and parking. We didn't have to wait too long. The whole process for getting our car and getting out of the lot went very smoothly.

Traffic through San Francisco was bad, as we expected it to be. It was around 5:30 pm so everybody was out trying to get home from work. We just plodded our way along until we finally cleared San Francisco. Every place else went smoothly, except for Berkeley of course. We were set for about a 3 hour drive.

Arriving home around 8:30 pm we pulled everything out of the car and unpacked a little. It was still light and all the landscaping and the house looked good. We both took quick showers and got ready for bed after drinking a lot of water and snacking a little. The night went smoothly, it wasn't too hot. We both woke about 4:00 am but we expected that.

Felt very good to be home at last.