

FRANCE, SPAIN, AND PORTUGAL SEPTEMBER 13 TO SEPTEMBER 29, 2018

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 TO FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

[ENTRY WRITTEN SEPTEMBER 12] This overseas trip, organized with the assistance of Stefan Bisciglia of *Specialty Cruise and Villas*, a family-run travel agency in Gig Harbor, will take us to three* countries.

*Well, *four* if you include England where we'll stay for less than a day before embarking on a cruise across the English channel. And, maybe, *five* if you consider Catalonia, the province for Barcelona, to be a country distinct from Spain.

But before we even depart, **disaster** occurs. On September 11, Lee (in examining the many papers associated with the trip) notices that our trip insurance covers the period Sept. 13 to Sept. 29 in **2017!!** The policy had been written in early 2017 and Stefan did not notice, nor did we, that the dates were incorrect. Following a frantic exchange of emails, Stefan said that he'd call Berkshire Hathaway to determine if they'd change the date to 2018 but keep the terms of the policy unchanged. I suggested that he call Warren Buffett and beg him to be receptive to the plaint of a fellow Nebraskan, namely Lee. Well, the good news (on September 12) is that the company allowed Stefan to rectify his error without any penalty. Whew!

[ENTRY WRITTEN OCTOBER 17] And, as you, Dear Reader, will discover in the entry for September 21, it's fortunate that the trip insurance policy was corrected because another **disaster**, a significantly more painful one, will befall one of the intrepid travelers. Now I won't reveal, at this juncture, which of the Magid Team will suffer a significant injury - suffice it to say that it is the younger one, the taller one, the prettier one, and the (usually) more sure-footed one who will be the focus of medical attention on board the ship for a tense three hours. I was going to use the word *perilous*, but chose *tense* instead. Why? The next time some sporting event is featured on TV, please pay attention to the person who is singing the national anthem. With only three exceptions, in my own memory, the word *perilous* (as in "*through the perilous fight*") is butchered - either one or two of its vowels is/are mispronounced, most often as PEROLESS. Is it possible that these young singers - and all of them *are* young - don't know the word *perilous*? The exceptions were two opera singers at a World Series game and a Super Bowl (Renée Fleming and Joyce DiDonato) and a male opera singer at a Tacoma Rainiers game who sang the word correctly. Whew! Rant over.

In my travelogue for the Scotland-England trip (<http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/Scotland-England2018.pdf>) I wrote about the strange behavior of my Kindle reader:

An unexplained mystery. At one time or another, I "borrowed" several Kindle books from Amazon via Pierce County Library. As with a physical book, the borrowing period for e-books is only three weeks. Amazon is supposed to "snatch" them back from the device. For whatever reason, several books have remained intact on my Kindle for a number of years: Meg Wolitzer *The Interestings*, Joan Didion's *Blue Nights*, Olen Steinhauer's *All the Old Knives*, Christopher Hitchens's *The Portable Atheist*, Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, and several that I've already read: Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Everything*, Jim Lynch's *Border Songs*, Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, Jasper Fforde's *A Thursday Next Collection* (from which I read the first one), and Daniel Silva's *Gabriel Allon Novels* (from which I read the first of four). Why are these books still on the Kindle? *Wer weiß?*

I read the Wolitzer on the May trip and have since downloaded two additional titles from Amazon and Pierce County Library: Rachel Cusk's *Kudos* and Tom Rachmann's *The Italian Teacher*. So I'll have these two plus the others unread from the Kindle (see above) along with these physical books that I'll also pack: Neil deGrasse Tyson's *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* (borrowed from the library), Richard Powers's

Gain, John le Carré's *A Most Wanted Man*, and Jon Krakauer's *Under the Banner of Heaven* (these last three from our personal collection). And, of course, I'll pack several issues of *The New Yorker*, *TIME*, *Yale Alumni Magazine*, and *The Progressive*. Surely this will give me sufficient reading material for the plane flights and for free-time on the cruise ship.

Over the course of the trip, I took some 973 pictures!! Oh, the joy of using a digital camera that does not require purchases of film and the cost of film processing! Only a relatively small number* have been

*By this I mean a mere 700 or so. Well, I did say *relatively* small.

uploaded to my Google Photos account: some of the rejected pictures were poorly focused; others were poorly lit; some were very very very very repetitious; and some showed the two intrepid travelers in a less than flattering light. I've posted the pictures in four separate albums at <https://tinyurl.com/y7sbtg3t>

September 13 has been an unusual day. Because our Seattle to London flight is not scheduled to leave until 7:20 pm, the day is quite unhurried. I can do my laundry, pack my suitcases, transfer files to Lee's laptop, read the newspaper, and still have time until we have to leave for the airport. Nervous people that we are, however, we head to Seatac very early, at 3:10, just in case the highways are very slow. Well, that turns out not to be the case: both WA 16 and I-5 are amazingly uncrowded and we find ourselves in the Seatac garage at 4:10! We also find an excellent parking space, just a few feet from the green elevator on Level 6. At the British Airways counter, we check our suitcases and are issued new boarding passes (the ones we printed at home last night are no good?). Although the boarding passes certify us for Priority, both our lane (and the adjacent one for the "peons") move very very slowly. The apparent reason: only a small number of TSA agents are on duty at the stations where bags are scanned and the passengers are folded/spindled/mutilated. We finally emerge at about 5:00 and head to the BA Lounge where we can relax before boarding. Because I know that we'll be well fed once on-board, I limit my food intake to some coffee and snacks.

In my Scotland travelogue earlier this year (<http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/Scotland-England2018.pdf>), I described all of the things that I disliked (actually *hated*) about the seating arrangements in their Boeing 777. This time we are flying on a Boeing 747, both to London and on September 29 when we return. Nevertheless, the same 2-4-2 seating in Club World* is maintained, with half of the seats facing forward

*"Club World" is the name that BA gives to "Business Class," just as they've renamed "Economy Class" as "World Traveler" and "Economy Class Plus" as "World Traveler Plus." Go figure.

and half to the back. The only "good" feature this time is that Lee and I have seats 20A and 20B. Because these are the last seats in Club World, I (who have 20A) do not have to climb over a stranger's legs if I want to get to the aisle. A man in 19A who is not a well-traveled BA-er, however, is flummoxed over the seating arrangements. Lee calmly explains to him that he will have to climb over her outstretched legs if he wants to go to the bathroom.

But I can report one pleasant thing: the very amusing safety video from May has been replaced by a different one, just as amusing and featuring a cast of TV, stage, and film actors some of whom are actually familiar to me. Take a look at <https://tinyurl.com/y8e5euqq> and enjoy the performances of: comedian Asim Chaudhry, who, as "Chabuddy G," is "directing" the video that features Sir Michael Caine, Joanna Lumley, David Walliams, Olivia Colman, Jourdan Dunn and Naomie Harris. (If you wish, you can compare it with the older video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RedV-KyXWO4>)

Menus are distributed. For dinner, I order pan-roasted scallops for my starter, then pan-roasted fillet of beef (I hope that they change the pan) with potatoes and veggies, concluding with a lemon tart. I also place my order for breakfast, which will be served about an hour before landing: juice, coffee, and bacon/tomato on a brioche roll.

The doors to the plane are closed at 7:10 (10 minutes early) but we are held at the gate while we wait for clearance by the tower. Push back occurs at 7:20 and there ensues a very long taxi from the south end of the airport to the north where we finally reach the runway; we are air-borne at 7:35. I begin by reading *TIME* and *The New Yorker*. I also work some crossword puzzle.

At 8:30 I order a whisky (Glenlivet is the only single malt available) which is served with a bowl of warmed nuts. The scallops starter is served at 9:45 and the main course at 10:15. We get our dessert (lemon tart for me) and coffee at about 10:45. At 11:00, I stretch out and close my eyes ... but open them at 12:15 am (PDT) - did I sleep? I don't know. I move my watch eight hours ahead (for London time) and begin reading Rachel Cusks's *Kudos* on the Kindle at 10:30 am. Shortly before breakfast is served, I decide to take my "morning pills," but manage to lose my grip on the bottle and spill much of the contents on the floor. Lee is my "savior" and manages to retrieve most of them. Breakfast comes at 10:45 and the bacon/tomato on brioche proves to be very messy. Because it is slathered in cheese, the bacon and tomato tend to slide off the roll when I try to pick it up.

The plane lands at 12:10 (thirty minutes ahead of schedule) and we are at the gate at 12:20. There then ensues a rather long walk until we reach passport control. Last May, British Airways gave us Fast Entry passes that we were unable to use because we were switching to a domestic flight (to Inverness). This time, we *could* have made good use of such passes, but they were not given.* Thus, we find ourselves in

*Four Club World passengers, whom we spoke to in the lounge at Seatac, were in line behind us. Then, they talked to an agent who let them "escape" under the tape and ushered them to the Fast Entry lane. Did they have passes that we didn't? It turns out that they didn't, as I discovered when I spoke to one of them in the breakfast room on board the cruise ship; rather they told the agent that they had flown Club World and that was enough to let them through. Why didn't we think of that?

a seemingly endless line, working our way up and down as we move from one "cattle pen" to another. (One of our fellow cattle is wearing a New York Yankees hat, but I choose not to beat him to a pulp.) We enter Passport Control at 12:35 and don't finally emerge until 1:35!! We then retrieve our luggage (how long it had been sitting there, I don't know - fortunately nobody has stolen it) and emerge into the Arrivals Area ... but there is no Regent Seven Seas representative. Anywhere! So much for their claim that "Regent Seven Seas representatives are stationed at the airport ... and will meet guests as they exit from Customs or baggage claim"!

I leave Lee to "guard" the luggage while I walk through the entire area, looking for someone (anyone!) with a Regent identification. I find a man, who seems to be with Regent, who makes a phone call and lends me his phone so that I can tell the person on the other end where we are. I'm assured that someone will come soon, but after a while it's clear that nobody is coming. So I call the U.S. office of Regent and am put on hold for a long time while the woman tries to contact a driver in London. As I never bothered to buy an overseas phone plan, this hold is going to cost a bundle. (In fact, the Verizon bill that arrives when we return to the states, shows a charge of \$16.11.)

I get a call on my phone, but am unable to answer it by "swiping" up. However, I do find it in my "recent calls" so I phone the number and am told that someone will show up in 10 minutes. After 20 minutes, I call again and speak to the same man who assures me that someone is coming but is held up in traffic. (These two calls cost \$1.79 each.) Meanwhile, Lee has tried calling the Landmark Hotel to see if there is a Regent representative there, but can't get anyone to answer. Lee also sends an email to Stefan asking if he can offer any help.*

*As upset as I am with the charges for my three phone calls, Lee has an even ruder awakening. When she called the hotel, she forgot to turn off "cellular data roaming" on her iPhone. Although she buys a data plan for the iPad, she always remembers to turn this off on her phone when visiting a foreign country. Well, almost always. Because she forgot to do so and because several apps (e.g., maps, Safari, email, etc.) kept running throughout the day, she got an email from AT&T that evening

informing her that she had already downloaded so many megs of data that her charges were over \$100. This did not sit well with her!! Seems to me that Regent should reimburse the two of us, but that ain't gonna happen.

Finally, Lee spots a man, holding an iPad, with the names LEE AND RON on it. He insists that he's been there all day(??) and that he saw us earlier. "Why didn't you make contact with us?" asks Lee. "You saw our Regent tags on the suitcases, didn't you?" Lee continues berating him as we walk to his van. He wants our credit card to pay for the ride, but Lee tells him that the charge should be to Regent, not to us. When he drops us off at the hotel, Lee asks for his name but he refuses to give it, nor does he have a business card that he is willing to give us. It's after 4:00 by the time that we arrive at the hotel.

The Landmark hotel is a five-star luxury hotel that dates its origins to 1899. Its interesting history and its many changes of ownership can be found at <https://www.landmarklondon.co.uk/about/heritage/> See also <https://www.landmarklondon.co.uk/> . It is a huge structure, occupying a full city block with rooms built around a central atrium which, at one time, was probably open to the sky. The van driver drops us off at the Melcombe Place entrance but we need to get to the Marylebone Road side to find the registration desk. There are many ramps and short staircases on the way, but fortunately a porter has taken our large suitcases so we don't need to drag them with us. Before getting to the check-in, we stop at the Regent desk and get our information about transportation to the ship tomorrow. At the hotel's registration desk, we're told that we have a twin room - after a protest, we are given a very elegant (if also old-fashioned) double room on the 6th floor. The bathroom, however, is modern and very large, featuring a separate closed room for the toilet and separated shower on one side of the room and bathtub on the other.

There's really no reason to unpack as we'll be here for less than a day and, besides, we're instructed to leave our suitcases outside the door before 7:00 am so that Regent can collect them. Even though sleep is "calling" me, we go for a brief walk in the neighborhood. (Had we arrived at the hotel when we should have, we would probably have visited Daunt Books* on Marylebone High Street, a 10-minute walk from

*Daunt Books is a chain of five independent booksellers throughout London. We went to the Marylebone store when we were here in 2015. It's a spectacular place, as the virtual tour at their web site will reveal <https://www.dauntbooks.co.uk/marylebone/> Its most unusual feature is that widely different genres are grouped together (e.g., travel, history, fiction, biography about Sweden).

here. Instead, we walk around the immediate neighborhood, admiring the elegant architecture of the attached five-storey (British spelling) Georgian town houses, noting the large private gated parks, and saluting the flags of the Swiss and Swedish embassies. I don't have my camera with me, so I can't take a picture of the buildings, gardens, and (worst of all) the wall plaques. I'm "rescued" by the image (to right) that I found on the web.



We eat dinner in the hotel's casual dining room, *Great Central Bar & Restaurant*, featuring fanciful murals dedicated to the golden age of train travel. I have a bacon burger, but it's all that I can do to keep from falling face first into my plate. Lee has Scottish salmon with apple strips followed by a small serving of linguine with crab. No drip coffee, so we have Americanos at the exorbitant price of £6 each. We go to bed* at 9:30, but set the alarm for 6:15 so as to be able to put the suitcases in the hall before 7:00. The

*It's at this time that Lee gets a message from AT&T informing her that she has burned through \$100 in international roaming charges (see the commentary starting at the bottom of p. 3).

plan, of course, is to sleep for more than eight hours, but (damn it) I have trouble falling asleep. I get out of bed twice to read some of my Kindle; once to drag a chair into the bathroom so that the light doesn't wake Lee when I read a magazine; and once to use the laptop for email. Alas, I make too much noise and create too much light, so Lee gets up at 4:45. As for me, this is the worst jet lag I've ever had - the lack of sleep is going to catch up with me sometime.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Had we not risen until 6:15 (as was our plan), I would have put only my large suitcase outside the door, retaining the carry-on for toiletries, shaver, etc. But as we are up (if not also awake) so damned early, it's possible to put the small case outside as well. I retain only my briefcase, mainly because it has my camera, Kindle, flash drives, and Lee's laptop.

At 7:00, we partake of the breakfast buffet in the hotel's *Winter Garden*, located on the ground floor of the atrium. There is a huge selection of fruits, meats, fish, cheeses, rolls, etc. plus hot fare such as eggs, beans, mushrooms, sausage, and (of course) blood pudding. I sample the hot foods, along with juice, coffee, and toast. We return to our room where I read the Kindle and work puzzles (crossword and Sudoku). At 10:00 we go downstairs, check out, and walk to the far far end of the hotel to catch the 10:30 Regent bus to Southampton. The drive is supposed to take about 1.5 hours, but because of road construction we don't arrive until 1:00. There is some confusion when we reach the dock area - the bus driver had been given incorrect information about which dock the ship would be docked at - it's not at Gate 8 but rather Gate 4. After a few wrong turns and retracing of our steps, we find our ship, in spite of a huge boat show over several gates that creates considerable car and pedestrian traffic.

In the large building devoted to security, we remove items from our pockets and large electronics from our cases and remove our belts. We then move through cattle pens until we reach the desk where we fill out a health questionnaire, are photographed, surrender (temporarily, I hope) our passports, and are issued our identification card/room key. (This is different from earlier cruises where the latter activities were done onboard the ship.) We enter the ship but are not permitted to go to our rooms until after 2:30 so we stop in the café for coffee (for me) and a sweet roll (for Lee).

We are sailing on the new ship, *Regent Seven Seas Explorer*. According to the company's web site, "Officially welcomed to the Regent Seven Seas Cruises' fleet on July 13, 2016 in Monaco, and christened by Her Serene Highness Princess Charlene of Monaco,* *Seven Seas Explorer*® is spaciouly intimate,

*About Princess Charlene I know nothing, but Wikipedia informs me that she "is a Zimbabwean-South African former Olympic swimmer and wife of Prince Albert II." According to the photos online, she's a well-preserved, blonde-coiffed, 40-year old.

breathlessly elegant and perfectly staffed to offer Regent Seven Seas Cruises' special brand of all-inclusive luxury." It is the largest of Regent's cruise ships, with 750 passengers and 540 crew members. On earlier cruises, we had sailed on Regent's *Navigator* (490 passengers and 340 crew) and three times on *Voyager* (706 passengers, 447 crew). The new ship is a little larger with one extra specialty restaurant, a larger café/coffee area, more subdued furnishings, but essentially the same as the *Voyager*. Our cabin 1210 is on



Deck 12, higher than we would have liked but it was the only one of the Concierge D type available at the time we booked. There are only 14 suites on this deck, most of the space being taken up by outdoor activities: a jogging track and a sports area (bocce ball, shuffleboard, pickle ball, golf putting and driving range). The outdoor areas are mostly open space, as one can look down onto the pool on Deck 11. There are two banks of elevators: a set of four toward the bow (that's "front" for you landlubbers), just a few feet from our door; and a set of two toward the aft or stern or rear of the ship. The former goes to all

decks from Deck 14 (with its small number of eleven suites) down to 3 (where there are no suites; however the medical unit is there); the latter starts at Deck 5 and goes up only to 11. The dining venues are on several levels: *La Veranda*, where we will eat our buffet-style breakfasts is on Deck 11, *Compass Rose*, the large dining room is on Deck 4, *Chartreuse* (French) and *Prime 7* (steaks) are on Deck 10, and *Pacific Rim* (Asian fusion) is on Deck 5. No reservations are required for *Compass Rose* or for *La Veranda* (which transforms into an Italian restaurant, *Sette Mari*, at night). We are entitled to make reservations for one meal at each of the three speciality restaurants.

Our suite (1210) is much like the one that we had on *Voyager*. The layout is a bit different, but the square footage is about the same. There is a huge amount of storage space in the walk-in closet, in the chests of drawers, and in the bathroom; the beds are high enough off the floor to stow suitcases underneath. Like all cabins on *Regent*, we have a decent-sized balcony with outdoor furniture. The bathroom has double sinks and separate shower and bathtub. Descriptions are at:



https://www.rssc.com/ships/seven_seas_explorer/suites Our housekeeper, Vhonaby, meets us and tells us that she will be assisted by Fredy. We are reminded that we have an on-board credit of \$300 to use as we wish. Fear not, it will be spent before we disembark!

At 4:15 there is the (expected) mandatory safety drill. The cruise director, Andy Heath, has one of those ingratiating tour-director type voices as his announcements are piped into the rooms (if urgent) or just the public spaces (if informational) at least once a day. The surprise comes when a heavily accented female voice comes over the PA; she is Serena Melani, the captain of the ship. Following a career on oil and gas tankers, she was hired as *Regent's* first female Master. Well, good for her and for *Regent*, but I really do wish that she was easier to understand. (A second surprise will come a few days later when a new Captain, this time a man, announces that Ms. Melani has left the ship and is now on vacation. This sounds suspicious but probably isn't.) We remove our life jackets from the closet and (because the elevators are turned off) walk down the stairs all the way from Deck 12 to 4. In the *Constellation Theater*, we are given instructions about putting on the bulky jackets. In contrast to earlier *Regent* cruises, however, we are not required to walk to our muster station on Deck 5 where the lifeboats are stored.

The ship sets sail at 5:00. I take some pictures of Southampton harbor and of the sail boats and large commercial vessels that are here. At 6:30, when it opens, we go to *Compass Rose*, where we tell the hostess that we'd like to share a table. (On earlier *Regent* voyages, the "share" tables often seated six or eight people; here on this ship they have seating only for four.) We are joined by Nancy and Jim from Fairfax, VA, she a former school teacher and he a retired secret service agent. Really! We try to pry information from him about his adventures, but he is rather tight-lipped. I order shrimp cocktail, then sea scallops with baked potato and mixed veggies. Lee has foie gras, Caesar salad, scallops, and finishes with a dark chocolate mousse. We also have coffee. Our wine is a South African Chardonnay.

OBSERVATIONS (SOME CHARITABLE, SOME NOT)

- We hear many accents onboard from Noo Yawkers and other North Easterners. Even though I spent the first 24 years of my life in New York and Connecticut, these accents now grate on the ears. How strange!
- A group of women on the elevator are of the spackled-and-plastered type, some of them having been botoxed (or whatever). Two are carrying wine glasses and one shouts "Party, party" as they teeter on their way to the Sail Away party.
- Four times during dinner, a group of four or five of the wait staff would gather near a table and serenade a guest either with "Happy Birthday" or "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." I assume that the latter was for people celebrating an anniversary, but maybe not.

- The patrons in the dining room, for the most part, are not as upscale as our fellow inmates at Heron's Key, although they are (with a few exceptions) notably younger. At an adjacent table are two men, about my age, with their younger wives/girlfriends/companions; both have the unmistakable appearance of aging Yalies. (I'm probably completely wrong about this. Maybe they're only from Princeton or Harvard.)
- When we return to our suite after dinner, we notice that some moron has thrown a beer can onto our deck and that most of its contents have spilled. Was this an accident or a deliberate act of terrorism? We'll never know, but we do point it out to Vhonaby when she comes in to empty waste baskets, deliver new copies of *Passages* and *USA News*,* give us two small mints, and

**Passages*, delivered daily, gives the schedule for the next day plus other information about the ship, its crew, special events, tourism, etc. *USA News* is a four-page summary of news from the U.S. - it's not exactly a newspaper, but it's better than nothing (especially since we discover that internet connectivity is spotty or even non-existent). Separate newsletters (also in English) focus on Australia and England; and there are versions in Spanish, Italian, and German.

prepare the bed for the night. We are also reminded that France is one hour ahead of England, so I re-set my watch and alarm clock. There's no need to reset the camera, as I had already set it for France's time zone.

- *Passages* informs us of activities that, were we to partake in all of them, would put us in the infirmary for exhaustion. For example, at 7:00 am one can "walk a mile" with Fitness Director Marko; at 8:00 there is the MENSA DAILY QUIZ with social hostess Tammy; at the same time there is Morning Stretch with good-old Fitness Director Marco; at 10:00 there is BAGGO BONANZE (huh?) with the Entertainment Team; at 11:00 there is the Canyon Ranch Seminar "Pain, Pain, Go Away." And so on throughout the day. Spurning all of this, we plan to go on an excursion tomorrow morning and, in the afternoon, to the first of five "enrichment lectures," this one entitled "What about the French wine scene?"

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

The ship drops anchor at St. Malo at about 6:00. I take pictures of a beautiful sunrise at about 7:30. We have breakfast at *La Veranda*. Yes, there are tables and tables of goodies, both hot and cold, but I choose to be virtuous: I have *Corn Flakes* (all of the cereals onboard are from Kellogg's), juice, coffee, and a bagel (which lacks the proper chewiness of a good American bagel). Undoubtedly, Lee over-indulges, but I keep no record of her food consumption.

We are docked some distance from the shore, so it's necessary to take a tender to St. Malo. These tenders are considerably larger than those on earlier cruises, but no more comfortable - the seats, such as they are, are hard, there is no leg room, and passengers are scrunched bum-to-bum (which could have been pleasant had the bum belonged to a woman rather than a man). Because Lee and I had toured St. Malo in 2011, we chose an excursion to Dinan, a lovely town that we also visited in 2011 but were eager to see again. It's about a 45-minute bus ride along the River Rance until we reach the town, situated on a hill some 75 m above the river. Our tour guide is Hilda, German-born, who lives in Paris.

We begin our walking tour of the town at about 10:00. I find myself walking alongside a fellow passenger who bears a startling (frightening!) resemblance to my Yale research advisor, Bill Doering. Granted this man is stooped, moves slowly, and is not as tall as Doering, but considering that the great man died in 2013 this could be expected. I say to the man, "This may be of no interest to you, but you look amazingly like my Ph.D. research advisor." He says nothing in reply, either because he's deaf or understands no English or, simply, that like Doering he chooses to ignore me.

In the old city, the stone buildings, the half-timbered houses, the restaurants and shops, the cobblestone streets are all familiar to us from our last visit. We enter the St. Sauveur Basilica, which dates from the 12th century. Gothic it is, with some excellent stained glass windows. We walk to a stone wall that allows us to look down on the river and at part of the town. Hilde "abandons" us and gives us time to explore a bit on our own from 11:00 until noon. Lee, of course, takes this as an order to GO SHOPPING, so she does so while I rest on a bench that gives me an excellent vantage point to view the citizens of Dinan and their dogs. Surprisingly, I see no tattoos, no body piercing, and no weird hair colors. Have the French lost their flair for the bizarre? We return to the bus and then to St. Malo where we take a tender to the ship.

A suggestion for Regent: one of the outstanding features or excursions on Tauck tours is that everyone is issued a radio receiver and the guide has a radio transmitter. Thus, as long as one is within 100 feet of the guide, every word can be heard. Such is not the case with Hilde, who can barely be heard over the city's din, even if one is standing near her. The same will be true of all of the other excursions in this cruise, save one (in Lisbon) where the guide's words were, finally, delivered by radio transmission.

We are back on the ship at 1:20. Because it's rather late, we take our lunch in the outdoor Pool Grill (on Deck 11). I neglect to write what Lee and I eat.

At 3:30 we go to the enrichment lecture "What About the French Wine Scene?" by William Crowley, a retired geography professor from Sonoma State University. He's entertaining and knowledgeable about the vineyards near Bordeaux and of the different kinds of wine that are available. Surrounding Bordeaux are four major wine regions: Médoc and Haut-Médoc, St. Emilion and Pomerol. Overnight, we'll enter the Gironde estuary which splits into two rivers: Dordogne and Garonne. Bordeaux is on the west bank of the Garonne. The St. Emilion region is to the east, the Médoc to the north. We'll visit the former tomorrow and the latter the next day. I take no notes, but Lee, undoubtedly, has ample documentation; I'll raid her journal a little later. (Having now examined her journal, I choose not to invest the vast amounts of time that it would take for me to transcribe the five handwritten pages of information about history, geography, wine-growing, etc.) This is the first of six lectures that Crowley will give. On a more mundane note, I sense that I may be coming down with a cold. Damn!

We have dinner at *Sette Mari*, the Italian restaurant that is *La Veranda* earlier in the day. We start with soup: minestrone for me, white bean with ham for Lee. Her main course is veal Marsala and mine is a delicious veal parmesan, but either I eat it too rapidly or the bread coating bothers me but I have one of my embarrassing regurgitation episodes. Fortunately, my clothes are spared, but I do befoul several of the restaurant's cloth napkins. Following the "event," I feel fine. We have coffee at our table. Back in our room, I read, work some puzzles, surf the internet, and get to bed at 10:45.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

It's 400 nautical miles* from St. Malo to Bordeaux, so we will not arrive until tomorrow. Thus, today is a

*As "everybody" knows (and if you don't, then Wikipedia will tell you), "The nautical mile ... is a unit of distance that is approximately one minute of arc measured along any meridian. By international agreement it has been set at 1,852 metres exactly (about 6,076 feet)." Or, in other words, it is equal to 1.15 miles. And, before you think to ask, the ship's speed is given in knots, where 1.0 knot is 1.0 nautical mile per hour.

day at sea where we need to find our own sources of "fun."

Last evening was a restless one. Clearly I'm still feeling jet lag, made worse by the cold that I'm developing. I was able to sleep only until 1:30. After tossing and turning, I got to sleep but awakened at 3:30. This time, I couldn't fall asleep again, so I arose at 4:00 to read my Kindle.

We have breakfast at *La Veranda*, as we will every morning on the cruise. I had planned to walk the outside jogging track this morning, but the temperatures are too low and the wind, either natural or the result of the ship's movement, is too brisk. I finish the Rachel Cusk book. Lee and I then attend the second William Crowley lecture at 10:00 - "Bordeaux: The City of Wine." Following this, I sit outside on the balcony, hoping to "cure" my cold by exposing it to the elements. Alas, this old remedy not only fails but also seems to exacerbate the illness because I am now sneezing profusely.

For lunch, we go to *Chartreuse*. Unlike evening meals at this and the other two specialty restaurants for which reservations are needed, in the afternoon it's first-come, first-served. We each enjoy a French onion soup. Lee orders *salade landaise* (Romaine lettuce, foie gras, duck breast) and finishes with (typing this almost makes me ill) Stefano's ice cream (vanilla bean) topped with pistachios, amarena cherries, and whipped cream. I have a charcuterie platter, then ricotta/chocolate pie. But this meal, too, does not cure my cold.

The afternoon is pleasantly warm and the winds not so fierce, so I do a fast walk around the jogging deck (14 min 33 sec, if you care, probably six laps but this is just from memory) I then join lazy Lee who is on Deck 10, sitting on a comfortable double chaise lounge alongside the pool but out of the direct sun. I order a beer and an ice cream while Lee has a mojito (after deciding that she didn't like the piña colada that she had ordered). I start on the second issue of *The New Yorker* that I brought with me. We remain outside until 4:00. My cold feels better when we're outdoors, but it returns with a vengeance in our suite. I read *The New Yorker* and begin *The Italian Teacher* by Tom Rachmann on the Kindle.

I manage to nap from 4:30 to 5:30, but then at 6:00, as on earlier cruises, Regent has its "Explorer's Shipwide Block Party" where passengers are encouraged to gather in the hall outside their suites, drink champagne poured by Vhonaby and the other housekeeping staff, and be greeted by the captain and other officers who dash madly from deck to deck, making contact with everyone. Surely the crew can't enjoy this, especially since those who have been onboard for several months have had to engage in this silly activity at the start of each cruise.

We return to our room. My cold is feeling a bit better (the champagne is a cure-all?). We need to kill some time, as our reservation at *Prime 7* is not until 8:00. This is not meant as criticism of my in-house tour consultant - well, maybe it is - but we (she!) missed the date on which restaurant reservations could be made. Thus, we got stuck with the very late (and, admittedly, very fashionable) 8:00. What makes "killing time" enjoyable is that we have purchased a bottle of Lagavulin from which we pour generous helpings this evening.

At dinner, we are joined by John and Jane (I suspect that these are aliases for Boris and Natasha) from Toronto. He is Canadian, she is Canadian-American. He is a retired accountant, she a former school teacher; she is proudest of the one-share ownership of the Green Bay Packers. As for the meal, my in-house food critic writes the following:

Prime 7 seems a bit off their game. They are rushing us, perhaps because there is a show scheduled for 9:45. And they forget Lee's salad, bring an overly done filet and very little Bernaise sauce. Our waitresses are Russian and Latvian - too chummy, not professional enough!

My meal is shrimp cocktail; clam chowder; six-ounce filet with Bernaise sauce, baked potato, and mushrooms; Sauvignon blanc; coffee; no dessert. Lee has crab cake; harvest salad (pumpkin, beets, and corn); the afore-mentioned six-ounce filet with Bernaise sauce, potato, asparagus; Syrah; coffee but not dessert.

We're back in our room at about 10:00 where we read for a while before going to bed at 10:40. My cold is clearly *not* getting better: lots of sneezing and coughing. I have trouble getting to sleep. I awaken at 3:45 but manage to fall back asleep and am awakened by the alarm at 6:30.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

The several hours of sleep feel good, but my cold is no better. Along with my sneezing and coughing, I'm feeling sluggish. The ship arrived in Bordeaux at about 3:00 am. We are docked in River Garonne, alongside Quai Louis XVIII. At 7:35, when we head to *La Veranda* for breakfast, it's still too dark to be able to take any pictures. The breakfast room is very crowded - there must be many early morning excursions. Ours is not until 1:15 this afternoon. In the morning, we are planning a "walking tour" on our own to see sights that are not too distant from the ship. We get some useful suggestions from the local travel consultant who has set up shop near the reception desk on Deck 5.

At 8:30, I take several pictures from our balcony: to the left is the Place des Quinconces (the largest public square in France), straight ahead is the impressive Bourse Maritime building, looking much like when it was built in the early 20th century, but now a hotel; and to the right a connected series of three-, four-, and five-story stone buildings whose present function is not apparent. Immediately, I realize that the day is very humid and already quite warm.

Before heading out, we stop at the medical center on Deck 3 to see what they recommend for my cold. I don't know if they don't keep cold medicines on board or if they are loathe to dispense them, but all that they can suggest is that we find a pharmacy in town and get advice from the staff. The Bordeaux guide gives us a useful map on which he marks the location of two pharmacies. (As it turns out, these - and several others - are easy to find, as throughout the country they display a flashing green cross perpendicular to the building's facade.)

We leave the ship at 9:15 and walk to Place des Quinconces where we take many pictures. In the plaza there are two tall columns and several monuments, two of which are statues of Montaigne and Montesquieu, both of them denizens of Bordeaux. At the rear of the plaza is the enormous monument from the late 19th century in memory of the Girondists, one of the organizations that found itself on the "wrong" side during the French Revolution's Reign of Terror. I take several pictures, but they fail to capture what these words (lifted from Wikipedia) tell us:

It has a large pedestal framed with two basins, decorated with bronze horses and troops, and surmounted by a large column with a statue on top to represent the spirit of liberty. Among the sculptures are: towards the large theatre: triumph of the Republic; towards Chartrons: triumph of the Concorde; towards the river: the Tribune with the French cockerel; to its right, History, and on its left, the Éloquence (2 seated people); towards the Tourny square: the city of Bordeaux sitting on the prow of a ship with a cornucopia. To the right of the base: the Dordogne River and to the left the Garonne.

At the feet of the tank with horses: Ignorance, Lie and Vice. The quadriga horse-fish is a representation of Happiness ... In 1942 the horses that were removed during the German occupation of France in World War II were reerected with their bronze restored.

We find a pharmacy where, with the use of hand gestures and vague recall of French words (like those for nose and throat), I convey my distress. The pharmacist recommends two non-prescription medicines: *Strepsils* (a Sucrets-like lozenge whose ingredients, in French, are *chlorhydrate de lidocaine*, *amylmétacrésol*, and *alcool 2,4-dichlorobenzilylique*) and *DolirhumePro* (a decongestant pill containing *paracétamol*, *pseudoéphédrine*, and *doxylamine*).

We walk to the Cathédrale Saint-André, dating from the 11th century, Roman Catholic and distinctly gothic in design, which seems to have an "inferiority complex" as evidenced by this online description:

Obviously, it is not like the cathedrals in the Paris region. Although it is not easy to compete with Amiens, Chartres, or Reims, Saint André's heterogeneous style is nevertheless unexpected and endearing, especially because of its freestanding belltower. Eleanor of Aquitaine and Louis VII, the future king of France, were married here 1137, as were Anne of Austria and Louis XIII. The cathedral

was used to store fodder during the French Revolution... a sad fate for this monument that also suffered from a devastating fire in the 19th century. All of the furniture was replaced with that taken from other churches.

We should note that Eleanor was a mere 13-year-old who, just a few years after marrying Louis, became queen of France. Alas, after 15 years Eleanor (with the "input" of Louis) produced only daughters, so the king had the marriage annulled on grounds of "consanguinity within the fourth degree" (meaning that the married couple were close relatives, something that doesn't dissuade Americans from Arkansas and other benighted regions). Did Eleanor fret about this? No, she did not. Almost immediately she became engaged to the Duke of Normandy who became King Henry II of England. (That he was 15 years younger than she and also her third cousin did not seem to have been an impediment to their nuptials which took place just eight weeks after the annulment.) According to Wikipedia:

Over the next 13 years, she bore eight children: five sons, three of whom became kings; and three daughters. However, Henry and Eleanor eventually became estranged. Henry imprisoned her in 1173 for supporting their son Henry's revolt against him. She was not released until 6 July 1189, when Henry died and their second son, Richard the Lionheart, ascended the throne.

As queen dowager, Eleanor acted as regent while Richard went on the Third Crusade; on his return, Richard was captured and held prisoner. Eleanor lived well into the reign of her youngest son, John. She outlived all her children except for John and Eleanor.

That's quite a career! Surprisingly, Wikipedia fails to mention that Eleanor and Henry were reincarnated in the 20th century as Katherine Hepburn and Peter O'Toole.

It's not clear when the doors will open to admit visitors but finally we get inside. It is typical Gothic in construction and style, with soaring vaults and a side chapel with geometric decorations from the mid 1800s. I suppose that "inferiority complex" is apt, given that Lee has written in her journal "... but, honestly, having seen Durham Cathedral in May, this by comparison is less than impressive." Whew!

We walk next to Basilique Saint Michel, a rather gaudy Gothic edifice from the 15th century, which features the second tallest tower in France. Whoopee! The walk proceeds via a poorer area and one that Lee describes as "the further east we go, the sleazier it gets." She also writes, "The basilica is really run-down! Its limestone is black - it looks like no cleaning at all has been attempted. A beggar directs you to the front entrance." Said beggar is also at the exit, asking for money.

By this time, I am drenched in sweat (and Lee is not much better) but we walk back along the quai whose name seems to change, every hundred feet or so, from Quai Richelieu to Quai de la Dounane to (finally) Quai Louis XVIII. (We have noticed this rapid name change in other places, most notably Perros-Guirec which we visited in 2011, p. 47 in my France travelogue <http://web.utk.edu/%7Ermagid/France2011.pdf>)

On the way to the basilica, I had slipped on a curb and fell, banging my left knee (which bled quite a bit) and created a tear (barely noticeable) in my pants. (Why the pants survived damage but I didn't is a mystery.) This led to a "lecture" by my formidable life partner about how I should be mindful of where I walk and be aware of impediments. (Now I won't say that I believe in Karma or pay-back, but the irony of her scolding will become evident in what I'm called the "La Veranda Incident" on the morning of September 21; *vide infra*, as we say in the chem biz.) When we return to the ship, I'm much too sweaty to go to lunch (Lee does go and brings back a coffee and a couple of cookies for me) but I also discover that I can't go to our cabin because Vhonaby is still cleaning it. So I sit in a public area near the reception desk until she has finished. When I am allowed into our suite, I examine the damage to my knee. I wash the wound with soap/cold water followed by lots more cold water. When Lee returns from lunch, she applies some micromycin ointment and applies a few bandages. It's surprising that the pants do not show any blood stain.

The 1:30 tour that we've scheduled for this afternoon is called "St. Émilion Vineyards and Village" to the east of Bordeaux. It consists of a drive to the St. Émilion and Pomerol regions, a walking tour of St. Émilion village, a visit and wine tasting, and a drive back to the pier. Our guide is Marie. After a 45-minute ride, we are in St. Emilion, a UNESCO World Heritage Cite. It is a village that has some impressive ruins (a former ecclesiastical palace) and an interesting village square and shopping center. Lee describes it as "all honey-colored limestone and really very beautiful. Many wine shops, bistros, and wine bars, and buildings associated with various other businesses of wines." Because I had not had a proper lunch, we don't follow Marie to a partially underground church but, instead, sit at an outdoor café and have a burger plus a Heineken's; Lee has a *café allongé* and a *Coupe de Liégoise* (caramel ice cream, sauce, whipped cream).

A fellow passenger is wearing a New York Yankees hat. I, of course, challenge him on his dreadful choice of a chapeau. A few years younger than I am, he grew up in Brooklyn and went to Wingate High School, a little over a mile from where Ebbets Field once stood; he was a pitcher and said that he pitched against James Madison High School, my *alma mater*. He then went to St. John's University and pitched for them in the 1966 College World Series. "So why the Yankees hat?" I ask. He replies that he was recruited by the "evil empire" and had a tryout, but he blew his knee out which ended his baseball career. In my best ecclesiastical manner, I absolve him of the sin of wearing the hat, but soon realize that he is beyond redemption when he reveals that he was a New York Giants baseball fan. He gives his name as Steve Olin, but all of my attempts to locate him online failed. In Baseball-Reference.com, there *is* a pitcher named Steve Olin, but he was born in Oregon in 1965.

We drive past many vineyards (*many* vineyards) but stop at Château de Pressac for a tour and wine tasting. The local guide says that this year's harvest will begin on September 24, all hand-picked. (Marie had divulged the dirty truth that 75% of the grapes in this region are harvested by machine.) In her journal, Lee devotes four(!) pages to technical information that includes words like chemical vs. natural yeast, the angel's share, flocculation, albumin, and maceration (which can make you go blind, I suppose). The bus returns us to the ship at 6:15.

We have dinner at *Compass Rose* with Mike and Sherrie from Fort Myers, FL, he a retired hospital administrator and she a business woman with several careers, including destination weddings and the sale of "authentic junk." She reveals that she is 13 years older than he. They also own a condo in Chattanooga (or all places) which they use as their hurricane refuge. They've traveled many times by cruise and prove to be a good source of information about other cruise lines. The dining room is quite empty. Either some people have chosen to eat at a restaurant in the city or have signed up for a tour plus dinner at Château Kirwan, five hours, cost per person \$269 (non-refundable). As for the meal, I have a green salad; grilled shrimp with baked potato and veggies; chocolate ice cream. For Lee, it's pork dumplings in broth; Thai BBQ pork chop with jasmine rice and green beans; vanilla and chocolate ice cream with chocolate syrup. I should add that at every *Compass Rose* meal, an "intermezzo" is served before the main course; tonight, it is coffee-Kahlua sorbet. We also have wine during the meal and coffee afterwards.

An interesting feature about the huge tidal fluctuations here on the Atlantic. When we went on this morning's tour, the gangplank was perfectly level; when we returned at noon, the ship had lifted and the gangplank had morphed into shallow steps; when we returned this evening, the gangplank was at a steep angle with full height steps. Similar behavior will happen on other days, even more dramatically, when the gangplank is shifted from Deck 4 to 5 or vice versa.

In our room after dinner, we read and surf the internet. The connection tends to be better than at sea, although still not very strong. We head to bed at 11:00.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

We have breakfast at *La Veranda* - very crowded again, presumably because of early excursions for many passengers. The day seems less humid than yesterday, but the prediction remains for high temperatures (low 80s). An indication of how hazy or polluted the skies are: one can look directly at the sun without causing pain.

The tour that we've scheduled for today is called "Medoc Vineyards," described as photo stops at some of the most famous châteaux vineyards, driving along the Medoc wine châteaux road, and tour (with tasting) at a wine estate. In contrast to yesterday, today we will heading north of Bordeaux

Our tour guide is Laurence (female!) We drive (and drive and drive) past numerous vineyards and wineries. Laurence explains that we will take the fast road going north, but then head east at 10:00, and change to the slower, scenic route southbound on the way back. We stop to take pictures (and gawk) of teams of people picking grapes at various vineyards. We also stop to take pictures (and gawk) at other wineries, such as Château Pichon Baron, Château Leoville las Cases, and Château Branaire-Ducru, all about an hour north of Bordeaux. We have a brief stop at Château Margaux (at about 11:00) and a longer one at Château Dauzac Margaux (similar name, different winery), both about halfway back to Bordeaux, for a tour of the production factory and a brief wine tasting. Local guide Cecile tells us that the winery has about 100 employees and is one of the largest in the region. In fact, their "gift shop" sells not only wine, but also honey (made from bees that pollinate the grapes), cork stoppers, yellow rubber boots, and books about wine and about the region. The bus returns us to the ship at 1:15. Lunch is at the outdoors Pool Grill for its "burger festival" (be still, my heart).

Departure is scheduled for 2:15. It's important to account for the tides so that the ship can pass safely under the drawbridge Pont Jacques Chaban-Delmas* (whose center section is raised to its full height to

*He was a member of the Gaullist party and was the long-time mayor, eight terms, of Bordeaux from 1947 to 1995 and Prime Minister of France from 1969 to 1972.

allow passage). I take pictures of the arched stone bridge Pont de Pierre* to the south of where we are

*Unlike the other bridge, this one is not named after a politician or writer or any other person. Rather, *pierre* is the French word for *stone* and so this merely describes the structure. Too bad - as a teenager, my friends and I would giggle over "lucky Pierre" which Wikipedia and other prim sites fail to reveal as an interesting sexual threesome, but is confirmed as such by Urban Dictionary.

docked and of the drawbridge as we pass underneath on our way northward on River Garonne.

On the ship's PA is an announcement of a change in plans. Our next port was to be Hendaye, south of here and close to the Spanish border. It, itself, was a substitute for the original port Saint-Jean-de-Luz, about 30 km north of Hendaye; but this was canceled because of construction work at the dock. Well, we're not going to Hendaye either. Tropical storm Helene, which is in the Atlantic near England, is making the waters on the coast of France too choppy to allow use of tenders to get from the ship at anchor. Thus, our planned tour (A Taste of Basque Country) is canceled. Instead, we're going to sail to Bilbao, a day ahead of schedule, and spend two days there before heading to A Coruña. The captain expects us to arrive in Bilbao at about 8:00 tomorrow morning. New tours will be scheduled for September 20 (tomorrow). Tours already booked for September 21 will be unchanged.

MORE OBSERVATIONS

- I don't know quite why the term "white privilege" comes to mind, very often, on this cruise. The passengers are no less courteous and generous than other travelers we've met. Most are well-educated. And clearly they are well-off financially if they can afford such a cruise. Perhaps I have this impression because the cruisers are different in ways (other than age) that I can't define from our fellow "inmates" at Heron's Key. Maybe it's just that I've gotten used to what's called "Seattle

Nice" and are somewhat put off by the gruffer and less patient New Yorkers and others. This is a strange thing for me to admit, given that I spent my first 24 years in that part of the country.

- Our final look at Bordeaux, as we sail away, reminds us that it is a very vibrant city with lots of cars (and traffic) but also with many bicyclists of all ages, some going to/from work, others out for pleasure. There are also many pedestrians and (alas) many on skateboards.

My cold seems better: no sneezing or running nose, only an occasional cough (with some phlegm), and no pain in chest muscles from too much coughing. I still have an ample supply of the throat lozenges, but I'm running out of decongestant. Perhaps we can buy some in Bilbao tomorrow, if we can negotiate our way around the language barrier.

From 3:30 to 4:30, we attend a presentation by Bruce Van Rooyen, the Cruise Sales Manager, about the destination cruises that Regent is planning for 2019 and beyond. This is useful because we have a scheduled meeting with him on September 22. (Stefan had suggested that we book a cruise while onboard because discounts are given.) At 4:30, we go to destination services in an attempt to add an excursion for tomorrow (Guernica and the Biscayne Coast) but it is already full. (In retrospect, we should not have gone to the one-hour presentation but, rather, used that time to try to schedule the excursion.)

We have dinner at *Sette Mari*, returning to the scene of my unfortunate incident on September 16. This time, I avoid the breaded veal dish in favor of minestrone, then veal scallopini with lemon sauce. Lee has cream of pumpkin soup with pasta bits, followed by some nibbles from the buffet table. For her main, Lee has cavatelli with a creamy veal bolognese. During dinner and in the evening, the seas are getting a bit rough. We stagger back to our room, holding the rail when necessary, and read until it's time for bed at 11:00.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

We rise with the alarm at 6:30. As before, we have breakfast at *La Veranda*. Walking alongside the pool to reach the restaurant, we note that the day is already quite warm and humid. Because we did not secure a place on one of the excursions, we decide to explore Bilbao on our own. We obtain a map from the local representative, who has come onboard, which he annotates with things that might be of interest to us. We are docked in Getxo, a port on the Bay of Biscay that is about 15 km from Bilbao.

Prior to making this trip, the only thing that I knew about Bilbao was from the Kurt Weill/Bertolt Brecht song *Bills Ballhaus in Bilbao* from their play *Happy End*. I had on LP (and now on CD) the wonderful Lotte Lenya recording. The song begins "Bills Ballhaus in Bilbao/war das schönste auf dem ganzen Kontinent./Dort gab's für einen Dollar Krach und Wonne,/und was die Welt ihr Eigen nennt" which translates as "Bill's Ballhaus in Bilbao/was the most beautiful on the whole continent./There was noise and bliss for a dollar,/and what the world calls her own." The singer laments that outsiders with sacks of money bought the place, renovated it, and destroyed its character. "Bill's Ballhaus in Bilbao .../today it is renovated so discreetly,/with palm and with ice cream quite ordinary ../like another establishment ... Old Bilbao Moon .../I do not know if that's what you like, but/it was the most beautiful/in the world."

There's a shuttle bus that goes to the central shopping district. It's scheduled to leave at 9:30, but we are surprised (and pleased) when we board it at 9:15 and it departs almost immediately. The bus deposits us on a major street called *Gran via Don Diego Lopez de Haro** (surely there must be a shorter way to refer

*From Wikipedia, we learn that he had the nickname *el Intruso*, lived from 1250 to 1310, was a Spanish noble of the House of Haro, and held the title of the Lord of Biscay which he took from the pretender to the title, John of Castile.

to it) along which are high-priced stores that would fit comfortably in New York or London. The streets are

filled with well-heeled pedestrians, the sidewalks are clean(!), the traffic lights are well-timed, and the buildings show no sign of disrepair. We pass green areas, fountains, large apartment buildings, and government installations. At least based on this neighborhood, we conclude that the city is very prosperous. (Are we deceived by all of the splendor? I don't know.)

We cross over *Ría del Nervión O de Bilbao* (quite a mouthful, eh?) to the old quarter of the city in search of what is advertised as the largest indoor food market in Europe. Along the way, we come upon a small park with bright blue exercise equipment of all sorts. Near each device is an instruction sheet written in Spanish, Basque, and English. A little later, according to our map, we *have* arrived at *Mercado de la Ribera* but it seems to consist of a covered walkway with no food stores and no way to get access to the building (at least none that we see). There are seven narrow streets, parallel to one another and perpendicular to the covered arcade, but exploring them reveals a variety of stores and shops but no food market. Have we failed Tourism 101?

Lee, also, is beginning to get a cold (is it *my* cold or someone else's?) so we stop in a pharmacy and, with hand gestures and some English, she communicates her problem to the clerk. She buys some *Frenadol* whose ingredients, although in Spanish, seem similar to French-language ingredients for *DolirhumePro* that I purchased in Bordeaux on September 18. *Frenadol* contains *Paracetamol*, *Clorfenamina*, *Dextrometorfano*, and *Pseudoefedrina*. (European pharmacies are not as antsy about distributing *pseudoephedrine* as are pharmacies in the U.S.)

On our return to the town center, we stop at *Arrese* which Lee (who knows all things about food in every country we visit) recognizes as a famous pastry shop that has been in business since 1852. "They have the best cookies and chocolates in Bilbao," she opines. We buy some chocolates for our Heron's Key friend who is watering our plants (we hope). We then head to the location where the shuttle bus left us off and ask the tour guide, who has been stationed there, if we have time to go to the *Museum of Fine Arts* which is just a couple of blocks away, easily seen from where we stand. She assures us that the museum is worth visiting, but we'll never know because when we get there the doors are locked and there's a sign that it won't re-open until October 6!* Shouldn't the Regent guide have known that?

*What we would have seen, had it been open, is an excellent collection described this way by Wikipedia: "It houses a valuable and quite comprehensive collection of Basque, Spanish and European art from the Middle Ages to contemporary, including paintings by old masters like El Greco, Cranach, Murillo, Goya, Van Dyck, Ruisdael and Bellotto, together with 19th century and modern: Sorolla, Mary Cassatt, Paul Gauguin, Henri Le Sidaner, James Ensor, Peter Blake and Francis Bacon." Sigh.

Shouldn't the local expert on board the ship have known that? After all, we did ask him about the museum and he helpfully circled it for us on the map. When we tell the guide at the bus stop of our disappointment, she replies "OK, you can come back tomorrow." What part of "won't re-open until October 6" does she not understand? At any rate, we hasten back to the bus drop-off location where a shuttle bus has just arrived and let some passengers out. We are covered with sweat (it's pouring down my back, legs, and forehead) although not as profusely as was the case in Bordeaux. It's good to get onto the air-conditioned bus.

MORE OBSERVATIONS

- All of the street signs and store names are in the Basque language, aside from those that sport English names like Starbucks and Lacoste. Also, the language makes ample use of the letter X, whether at the start or end or in the middle of words.
- The downtown streets have many dogs on leash, not only on the sidewalks but also in the parks and green areas.
- In Bilbao (and Bordeaux and other European cities), residents don't respect personal space. That

is, they cut in front of us, while gabbing with one another, causing us to stop short ... or they stand in clusters in the middle of a sidewalk, impervious to the fact that they are blocking pedestrian traffic.

- A surprisingly large number of pedestrians have canes. Some are of the conventional sort, either wood or metal, but there were quite a few (medical equipment?) that had arm cuffs. Is there some contagious disease that has afflicted much of the population? Should we worry?
- We see a fair number of homeless people and panhandlers. Maybe Bilbao is not as prosperous as would be gleaned from this upscale neighborhood? Nevertheless, the impression that we get is that both Bilbao and Getxo seem very prosperous.

When we return to the immigration building at the dock, we are surprised at how tight the security is. As at an airport, we are required to empty our pockets and pass through a scanner before we're allowed to re-board the ship. Because my shirt (especially the collar) is soaked with sweat, I remove it to let it dry. But I'm determined to wear it again tomorrow - damned if I'll allow Bilbao to force me to put on yet another clean shirt.

We decide to eat lunch at *Prime 7*, most of whose menu items are rather substantial. I choose something less filling: Manhattan clam chowder (which is devoid of any clams, so far as I can tell) followed by a beet/hazelnut/cheese salad. Lee also has the soup and then Asian pork BBQ sliders. I choose not to have dessert but Lee opts for banana *tres leches*. In the afternoon, we remain in our cabin. I read, work puzzles, and surf the internet. And I'm sorry to report that Lee, it seems, is getting my cold.

Because Regent is featuring "Seven Seas Explorer Grand Deck BBQ" on the pool deck, accompanied by the Regent Signature Orchestra to which people can dance, we choose to go to *Compass Rose* for dinner. So do lots of other people, judging from the crowd. Although we indicate a desire for a shared table, nobody joins us this evening. My dinner consists of shrimp cocktail; grilled scallops/baked potato/veggies. Lee has lobster bisque; Panang beef with coconut curry/jasmine rice/asparagus. No dessert for either of us. For wines, it's a NZ Sauvignon Blanc for me, a red Bordeaux for milady. We spend the remainder of the evening in our cabin, finally going to bed at 10:45.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Today is the last day of summer, according to the calendar. Has anyone informed Spain of this fact? The morning feels as hot and humid as it was yesterday. Although I had thought that my cold was over, it isn't. It's mostly in my chest now, leading to coughing with the production of phlegm, but at least my stomach muscles don't hurt when I cough.

We have breakfast at *La Veranda*, but this time the routine is shattered. We are sitting at a table for two next to a window. Having finished most of our breakfast, Lee decides that the sweet roll that she took has a filling of "mashed up substance that is ... identifiable as neither fruit nor meat," so carrying a small plate she returns to the food area for something more palatable.

I'm facing away from the food area, but behind me I hear a crash followed by lots of people running to help. Apparently someone has fallen, but since I never gawk at accidents I have no idea who it is. After a short while, there is an announcement over the PA: **CODE MIKE, CODE MIKE**. Apparently this is the signal for the medical staff to arrive, which they do, along with both a wheelchair and a stretcher. It's only when I see them wheeling my bride toward the door that I realize that it is Lee who had fallen! Apparently the sole of her left sandal stuck to the floor, causing her to pitch forward violently.

We take the nearby elevator to Deck 3 where the medical offices are. It's surprising that, in an emergency, the staff is not able to override the elevator's controls, but in fact we are stopped two or three times at

decks intermediate between 11 and 3. The medical area has three examining rooms. Lee is taken to the furthest one and is carefully maneuvered onto an examining table. She is bleeding profusely above her right eye and she is complaining of terrible pain in her right arm.

Two medical personnel are present: Dr. Ruben Rodriguez and Nurse Ruth. (He is wearing a name tag with only the name Ruben - it's not clear, at the start, whether this is his first name or last.) The doctor is very efficient. While I fill out a questionnaire, telling when happened and giving information about Lee's allergies and prescription medicines, the doctor is directing staff (maybe from the dining room) to wipe up the blood that is pouring from her wound, down the side of her face, and into her ear. They remove her shirt. Ruth brings him the "sewing" kit that he can use to stitch up the deep laceration. It takes five small stitches and one large one. During this time, Lee is asking for help with the pain in her arm, but he says that he needs to attend to the wound first. She is given 30 mg of Ketorolac (a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory) and a mild sedative; she reports that the shoulder pain is somewhat diminished if I hold her wrist with the arm bent at the elbow. There is also a small laceration on her lip, but this requires only one suture.

There is a portable x-Ray machine. The good news is that the arm bone is not broken - this would have required transportation to a local hospital and (probably) cancellation of the cruise. The bad news is that she has a shoulder separation. Nurse Ruth administers small doses of propofol (2 ml) at the doctor's instructions and waits a few minutes for the patient to fall asleep. The doctor tries and tries to maneuver the shoulder back into place, but is unable to do so. He takes another x-Ray image so that he knows better what to do. He then enlists two burly men to hold a canvas wrapped around Lee and pull tight on two axes while he works the shoulder into place. Finally!

During the time that Lee is being worked on, the ship's safety officer (or whatever title he has) is desperately pumping me for information about how the accident occurred. He's deathly afraid that we're going to hold the ship at fault. I'm not much help for him, as I did not witness the accident. But Lee assures him, several times, that she is to blame, that her left shoe grabbed onto the marble flooring, causing her to pitch forward. (In a sense, it really *is* the cruise ship's fault - had the kitchen staff not stuffed the sweet roll with inedible goop, Lee would not have returned to the food area for a replacement.) By the way, I have several pictures of Lee's face, both before and after the surgery, but I am under penalty of death if I dare to post them or put them in this journal. So you'll just have to use your imagination.

The doctor then walks Lee over to the x-Ray machine so that he can scan her skull and nose to be sure that there is no damage to either. He's also worried about neurological trauma, but there is no evidence of such. She is given a sling with instructions of how to use it and what arm motions are allowed. Before being wheeled back to our cabin, we are taken to "the scene of the crime" so that we can show the safety officer where Lee fell and to assure him that Regent is not at fault. She then is wheeled back to our room at about 11:00, so a nearly three-hour ordeal! The doctor wonders what caused the laceration - it can't be a table leg or chair leg, given the deep nature of the wound and the fact that she was in an aisle, clear of furniture. He speculates that it may have been the plate that she was carrying - I suppose that she's fortunate that it didn't break, causing shards to penetrate the wound. It's also fortunate that she did not break her glasses or her nose or any teeth.

As I commented in my entry for September 18 (when I tripped and fell in Bordeaux), the irony of Lee's much more serious fall is evident (and would be delicious revenge if not for the terrible pain she suffered). But I am also a victim - of all of the excursions that we booked, the one I was most looking-forward to was this morning's to the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum. Since we didn't get to see it in person and take my own photos, I'm attaching one here that is borrowed from the internet. On a positive note, however, several of our fellow passengers (with but one exception), said that they did not like (or appreciate) the art in the museum's collection. There seemed to have been several installations with diverse building materials that were structurally amazing but not pleasing to the senses. Still, I would have loved to have been able to form my own opinion.



We relax in our room until lunchtime, then go to the outdoor Pool Grill for some nourishment. I go to the self-serve area and return with a salad, sausage, hamburger, and slice of pizza. The latter proves inedible. For the sausage and hamburger, I eschew (but still chew the meat) any rolls. Lee orders a pulled pork sandwich; I help her cut up the meat.

We return to our cabin. Since I didn't sweat during today's excursion (because of the activities mentioned above), I decide to get my daily quota of perspiration by doing a fast walk on the jogging track. After seven laps in 16:47, I achieve my goal of being covered with sweat. At 3:00, we attend the William Crowley lecture ("Galicia: Spain's Cool Spot") on Coruña and why it is called La Coruña in some places and A Coruña in others. We skip the reception at 6:00 for those of us who are multi-cruisers on Regent.

Dinner, tonight, is at *Pacific Rim* where we are joined by Mark and Pam. Although now residing in Tucson, Arizona, they met and worked in Cincinnati, he at Procter & Gamble, she as a school counselor. He was born in Brooklyn and went to Lincoln High School; she was born on Long Island, not far from JFK airport. They have a daughter who lives in the Queen Anne neighborhood of Seattle. We trade lots of stories about earlier cruises on Regent and other lines. The serving staff at the restaurant are intrusive and annoying, constantly interrupting conversations and pushing their specialities (such as a cocktail made of vodka, apple juice, and grapefruit juice). They are also, to a person, *not* from anywhere near the Pacific Rim; indeed, they are from Russia or a Slavic country in eastern Europe. The food? For me, duck spring roll; Asian salad bulgogi/passion fruit cake. For Lee, pork shumai; miso soup; lobster tempura with Asian greens; coconut *tres leches* cake.

As was the case on September 19, the ship is rocking - and this is especially noticeable on Level 11 where our cabin is. We read and do email for the remainder of the evening. Lee says that she's doing okay. What a trouper!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

We departed Bilbao at 4:00 yesterday afternoon. Just after we arise, today, the ship blows its horn every two minutes - it must be very foggy outside. (Probably it was also blowing its horn while we slept, but we were not awakened.) On the outdoor walk along the pool to *La Veranda*, the horn is very very very loud.

Lee's eye is beginning to discolor. Taking a shower was a bit of a challenge as was getting a shirt on over her head. As for socks, these prove impossible so I take charge. Following breakfast (in which she is a center of attention and sympathy), she decides to be brave and go on the excursion that we booked.

The excursion, *Highlights of La Coruña*, promises to have a panoramic drive of the city, a visit to its famous gardens, and (best of all) a visit to "Maria Pita Square and Hercules" (to be explained in a short while). Our guide is a very pleasant young woman named Iria.

We begin with a drive through the city, noting the unusual construction* of all of the apartment buildings.

*The city is also well known for its characteristic glazed window balconies, called *galerías*. Originally, this type of structure came about as a naval architecture solution for the challenging weather, particularly designed for rainy days. This fashion started in Ferrol in the 18th century when some of the technicians working for the Royal Dockyards had the idea of using the shape of the back of a warship in a modern building. Soon afterward, most seaports in northern Spain, including the Basque region were adding these glazed window balconies to their city-port houses.

Indeed, wherever we drive or walk, these *galerías* are on every building, regardless of whether or not it faces the ocean. Our guide, Iria, tells us that this part of Spain has two official languages: Spanish and Galego, described this way by Wikipedia:

[It] is an Indo-European language of the Western Ibero-Romance branch. It is spoken by some 2.4 million people, mainly in Galicia, an autonomous community located in northwestern Spain, where it is official along with Spanish. The language is also spoken in some border zones of the neighbouring Spanish regions of Asturias and Castile and León, as well as by Galician migrant communities in the rest of Spain, in Latin America, the United States, Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe.

Modern Galician is part of the West Iberian languages group, a family of Romance languages that includes the Portuguese language, which developed locally from Vulgar Latin and evolved into what modern scholars have called Galician-Portuguese. The lexicon of Galician is predominantly of Latin extraction, although it also contains a moderate number of words of Germanic and Celtic origin, among other substrates and adstrates, having also received, mainly via Spanish, a number of nouns from the Arabic of Al Andalus.

Iria tells me that she speaks Galego with her grandparents, Spanish with her parents. This is reminiscent of John Macdonald's telling us, last May, that he speaks Gaelic with his grandmother, English with the rest of the family.

From 10:00 until 11:15, we do our city walk, first to Maria Pita Square. María Mayor Fernández de Cámara y Pita, her full name, is described as "a Galician heroine in the defense of Coruña, northern Spain, against an English attack upon the Spanish mainland in 1589." According to Wikipedia:

On the 4th of May 1589, English forces, already in control of the lower city, breached the defenses of the old city. Maria Pita was assisting her husband, an army captain manning the defenses, when he was killed by a crossbow bolt that struck him in the head. An English soldier with a banner, who was making his way to the highest part of the wall, was killed by Pita. She appeared on the heights of the wall herself, shouting: *Quen teña honra, que me siga* ("Whoever has honour, follow me!") whereupon the English incursion was driven back by the defenders.

The square, itself, is enormous. At the far end, and looking much like a cathedral, is Palacio Municipal (Town Hall and Council Building). In the center of the square is a statue of Maria Pita. Along the sides of the square are numerous shops, restaurants, and residences. We continue our walk through the narrow streets of the city and visit three churches: *Igrexa de Santiago* (12th century), *La Colegiata de Santa María del Campo* (also 12th century), and *Igrexa de San Xurxo* (which has a maximum number of X's).

We walk to the Garden of San Carlos and see the tomb for Sir John Moore.* At about 11:30, we are back

*Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore was a British Army general, also known as Moore of Corunna. He is best known for his military training reforms and for his death at the Battle of Corunna (January 16, 1809), in which he repulsed a French army under Marshal Soult during the Peninsular War. After the war General Sarrazin wrote a French history of the battle, which nonetheless may have been written in light of subsequent events, stating that "Whatever Buonaparte may assert, Soult was most certainly repulsed at Corunna; and the British gained a defensive victory, though dearly purchased with the loss of their brave general Moore, who was alike distinguished for his private virtues, and his military talents."

on the bus and are driving to the Hercules Tower. It is an ancient Roman lighthouse on a peninsula about 2.4 kilometers from the centre of the city. Until the 20th century, the tower itself was known as the "Farum Brigantium." The Latin word farum is derived from the Greek pharos for the Lighthouse of Alexandria. The structure is 55 m tall and overlooks the North Atlantic coast of Spain. The structure, built in the 2nd century and renovated in 1791, is the oldest Roman lighthouse in use today.

Why Hercules? He doesn't sound very Spanish, eh? Well, according to Wikipedia:

Through the millennia many mythical stories of the lighthouse's origin have been told. According to a

myth that blends Celtic and Greco-Roman elements, the hero Hercules slew the giant tyrant Geryon after three days and three nights of continuous battle. Hercules then—in a Celtic gesture—buried the head of Geryon with his weapons and ordered that a city be built on the site. The lighthouse atop a skull and crossbones representing the buried head of Hercules' slain enemy appears in the coat-of-arms of the city of Corunna.

And that explains it. Yes?

At the base of the Hercules Tower hill is a large brass sculpture of what appears to be a naked Sumo wrestler but with enormous pendulous breasts. Neither a title nor the sculptor's name is in evidence. Think I to myself, this looks like a Botero creation. And, upon further review (as they say in the sports biz), I find a citation linking the work to Fernando Botero but with no title nor any explanation of why this Colombian artist plopped his sculpture here.



Also at the base of the hill is a modernistic sculpture of Breogán done by Xosé Cid Menor in 1994. "And who is/was Breogán?" you may ask. Here is Wikipedia with the answer:

Breogán (also spelt Breoghan, Bregon or Breachdan) is a character in the Lebor Gabála Érenn, a medieval Christian history of Ireland and the Irish (or Gaels). He is supposedly the son of Brath, and is described as an ancestor of the Gaels. The Lebor Gabála purports to be an account of how the Gaels descend from Adam through the sons of Noah and how they came to Ireland.



It tells us that they spent 440 years wandering the Earth and underwent a series of trials and tribulations, which is based on the tale of the Israelites in the Old Testament. Eventually, they sail to Iberia and conquer it. There, one of their leaders, Breogán, founds a city called Brigantia and builds a great tower.

Well, there's much more at Wikipedia and you are welcome to read it. The article concludes with a fascinating comment: "Although this is generally regarded as myth, the conquering of Ireland by people coming from the Iberian peninsula in prehistoric times fits in with a genetic study conducted in 2006 at Oxford University, which concluded that the majority of people in the British Isles are actually descended from neolithic farmers coming from the coastal north regions of Spain." Take that, Great Britain!

We drive, next, to a park that overlooks the Hercules Tower and, also, has an excellent view of the Atlantic and of the beaches below us. Then, it's back to the ship at noon. Two things were especially good today: (1) our guide, Iria, is by far the best that we've had so far - she's knowledgeable, pleasant, and eager to interact with the passengers; (2) the weather is pleasant: breezy, low humidity, temperatures around 22°C, but still I work up a good sweat. We "snowflakes" from the Pacific Northwest are not accustomed to such strong sun.

We are back on board at 1:20? Lunch is at the Pool Grill. For me: hamburger and hot dog (none of the inedible pizza slice from yesterday; for Lee, Cubano sandwich.

At 4:00, we meet with Regent's Cruise Sales Manager (see September 19) to book a cruise from Lima to Buenos Aires (21 nights) in February, 2021 (will we still be alive at the time?). As Stefan had advised, it was cheaper (by \$6,000) to book the cruise while onboard the ship. If I understood the consultant correctly, we can also add a three-day pre-cruise or post-cruise tour, free of charge, with hotels and transportation taken care of.

We pay a brief visit to the medical center so that Lee can sign some papers. Clearly, she was in little condition to do so yesterday morning. We need to return tomorrow so that the nurse can re-dress the

wound above the eye. We have dinner at *Compass Rose* with Mike and Carleen from Rochester, NY, each on a second marriage (but determined not to do a third one). He has a construction company and is a dead ringer for Bob Newhart. Along with dinner, we both drink Viognier. I order shrimp cocktail; roast chicken/mushrooms/veggies; New York cheese cake. Lee has foie gras Roquefort pear salad; dorade filet/potatoes/carrots/spinach; (apparently) no dessert. Of course we accept the intermezzo, lime-vodka this evening.

Back in our cabin, we move our clocks back an hour (Portugal is on London time - who knew?) and get to bed at 10:00 (Spanish time).

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

We rise with the alarm at 6:00 (about nine hours of good sleep) but my damned cold just won't go away. Lee, bless her heart!, is managing quite well, although I'm pretty much a disaster in clipping her hair before she showers and in helping her in or out of over-the-head garments and in putting on the sling. Breakfast, as always, is at *La Veranda*, but this time I go for hot food (eggs, sausage, beans) along with bagel, cream cheese, and smoked salmon. I also carry Lee's plates to the table for her.

We are approaching Oporto at about 7:00, but it's too dark and foggy for pictures. After breakfast, I do get some good pictures of the city from our balcony. Lee is feeling a little "punk" so she decides not to go on the Oporto tour. I'm on my own. Gulp! We had originally booked a six-hour excursion, "The Charming Minho Province," but changed it to a much less challenging three-hour "Panoramic Oporto" because of Lee's accident.

The bus proves much easier to enter than the earlier ones because the steps are much closer to the ground. Is it a coincidence that most of the passengers are ancient? The port area has a very strong fish smell, not surprising because fishing is one of the main industries of the city but it also features heavy industries and the export of port wine.

We drive through the city, noting the many tiled outer walls. According to Vanessa, our guide, this keeps the humidity from entering the structure. Maybe. We stop near the 18th century Clerigos Church but don't go in. Instead we have about 30 minutes of free time to wander among the nearby shops and garden.

Camilo Castelo Branco was a prolific writer who lived in Oporto in the mid 19th century. One of his most famous novels is entitled *Amor de Perdição*. It's a torrid tale of the feud between two families and of the "impossible" love affair between teenagers, each from one of the families. There are prison sentences, exiles, murders, convents, and all sorts of other folderol. I mention it because there is a fantastic sculpture showing an embrace between the fully clothed young man and his naked lover. Art-haters have affixed all sorts of decals and slogans to the young woman's buttocks. Tsk, tsk.



FUN FACT J. K. Rowling lived in Oporto and wrote much of the first book of the Harry Potter series at the Café Majestic. According to <https://www.portugalist.com/harry-potter-porto/> much of the inspiration for the clothing worn in the Potter books and of the fanciful beings came from things that Rowling saw every day in this city. Vanessa tells us that it's traditional for university students in Oporto to dress up as Harry Potter figures on important occasions such as taking oral exams. (My notes say that we drove past the café but I seem to have no photos of it.)

We drive to Oporto Cathedral, but view it and its neighborhood only from outside. We are, however, "entertained" by the world's worst trumpet player, or so I judge him. He is playing *My Way*, which is not a bad way to describe his unique style of musicianship. In the city center, there is a taxi drivers strike. One large square is lined on all sides by taxis that are parked two-by-two, impeding the flow of traffic but not preventing it. There is considerable police presence as well as reporters and camera people from local TV

stations.

Our final stop is at the beach with spectacular views of the ocean, the rest of the city, and (unlike beaches in the U.S.) craggy rocks both on land and in the water. If the preceding seems less descriptive than on other excursions, it's because the meticulous note-taking Lee was not with me and because my notes, written on a bouncing bus, are largely unintelligible - more so than my normally horrible handwriting would suggest.

And then it's back to the ship at 12:15 where I gather my well-rested spouse and we head to *La Veranda* for lunch. I make no note of our meal but I do record a despicable scene: one of the ship's officers and his attractive-young-blond-accompanying-person parade past us. She is wearing a New York Yankees cap. For shame!

We return to the room. At 3:00, Lee heads to the ship's salon, Canyon Ranch, to have her hair washed (this being an activity that she is unable to negotiate with her wounded wing). At 4:00, there is another Crowley lecture: "Lisbon: Head for the Hills (Or the Elevator)." Following this, we go to the medical center where the doctor checks Lee's shoulder for range of motion and suggests some easy exercises for her to begin doing (as well as cautioning about certain arm motions that she should avoid). The nurse removes the bandage, seems satisfied, applies new bandage. The doctor also re-checks the x-ray of her nose and eye orbitals to be sure that there is no damage. He concludes that she fell face first (well *that* was pretty obvious) but is still unclear about how she got the laceration above the eye. I suggest that it might have been from the plate that she was carrying. So she is well on the way to recovery, except that her blood pressure is abnormally high. Dr. Ruben attributes this is a burst of adrenaline following her accident.

We have a dinner reservation at *Chartreuse* where we are joined by Lee (what a strange name!) and John from Raleigh. She is 72, a retired business consultant with a Ph.D. in something or other; John is a career U.S. army officer. Originally from Georgia, he retains a tell-tale drawl but is disappointed that my Lee is not conversant about SEC football. He has two divinity degrees. Oh, yes, dinner. I drink a Pinot Grigio and Lee has a red Bordeaux. My meal consists of beets/goat cheese salad; fish stew soup; filet of veal with port reduction/polenta/green beans; apple tart. Lee has a cheese soufflé; cream of artichoke soup; the same veal dish as I had; Mont Blanc, described by Wikipedia as "dessert of puréed, sweetened chestnuts topped with a dab of whipped cream. The name comes from Mont Blanc, as it resembles a snow-capped mountain." And so it does! We get to bed at 10:45.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

At 7:00, we are approaching the pier at Lisbon, about an hour ahead of schedule. As Crowley had said, it is a very hilly city. I take some pictures in the semi-brightness of 7:00 and some more when the sun is out in full (around 8:00). At *La Veranda*, I revert to my more virtuous breakfast of juice, corn flakes, bagel, and coffee. I eat only half of the bagel as I'm getting full. And a crisis: I take what I think is a small container of peanut butter from the tray where it has always been and, on opening it at the table, I discover that it's maple syrup! I return to the food area and head to the other tray where peanut butter is usually available. It, too, has only maple syrup but the woman behind the counter finds one last peanut butter container for me. "Will there be a re-stock tomorrow?" I ask. She has no idea.

Our tour today, "Lisbon Highlights," begins with a surprisingly long walk from the ship before we reach the area where the buses are parked. Our guide, today, is Violetta. (From time to time, she forgets that her audience is English-speaking as she lapses into German.) This is an older bus: there is no pull-down shelf on which to write nor a pouch in which to store the water bottles. The bus begins its drive down the esplanade near the water but we really want to go in the other direction and this is possible only by circling around and passing our ship again. As we drive, the extent of graffiti is quite noticeable, much more than in any other place we've been. We drive past several large parks with imposing monuments, most having to do with despotic reign of António Salazar from 1932 to 1968. According to Wikipedia, "In 1968, Salazar

suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. Most sources maintain that it occurred when he fell from a chair in his summer house. In February 2009 though, there were anonymous witnesses who admitted, after some investigation into Salazar's best-kept secrets, that he had fallen in a bath instead of from a chair." We walk a bit in a promenade with an excellent (but haze-impaired) view of the city; there are (as Lee describes it) "vendors everywhere selling really tatty stuff."

Shortly, we encounter yet another taxi drivers strike, much like the one yesterday in Oporto. I try to match the monuments in my photos with those in web sites but fail miserably. We stop across the street from the huge Jerónimos Monastery, but are not authorized to enter it - instead, we get a lecture from Violetta about the history of the monastery, whose construction began in 1501 and took over 100 years to complete.



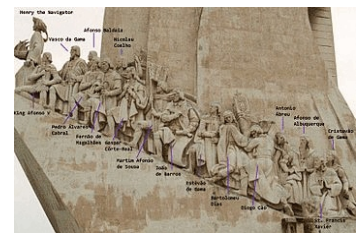
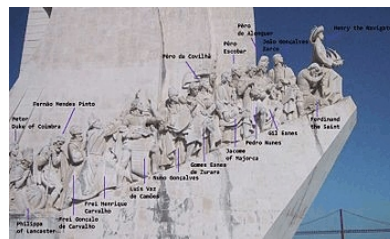
The bus takes us to Jardim da Torre de Belém, a large green space at the end of which sits Belém Tower on the banks of the Tagus River. Built in the early 16th century, it was intended to defend Lisbon from attack along the river. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bel%C3%A9m_Tower Also in this green space is a seaplane, mounted on granite, to commemorate the first flight over the South Atlantic in 1922 from Lisbon



to Rio de Janeiro. Not far away is *Padrão dos Descobrimentos* (Monument of the Discoveries). According to Wikipedia:

The monument was conceived in 1939 by Portuguese architect José Ângelo Cottinelli Telmo, and sculptor Leopoldo de Almeida, as a temporary beacon during the Portuguese World Exhibition opening in June 1940. The

Monument to the Discoveries represented a romanticized idealization of the Portuguese exploration that was typical of the Estado Novo regime of António de Oliveira Salazar. It was



originally constructed as a temporary construction, located in the Praça do Império as part of an urban renewal project favoured by minister Duarte Pacheco, but with the resistance of Cottinelli Telmo. Yet, by June 1943, the original structure was demolished after the exposition as there was no concrete formalization of the project. On 3 February 1958, the government, through the Ministério de Obras Publicas (Ministry of Public Works), the Overseas Provinces and the Câmara Municipal of Lisbon,

promoted the intent to construct a permanent Monument to the Discoveries. Between November 1958 and January 1960, the new monument was constructed in cement and rose-tinted stone (from Leiria), and the statues sculpted from limestone excavated from the region of Sintra. The new project was enlarged from the original 1940 model as part of the commemorations to celebrate the fifth centennial of the death of Infante Henry the Navigator.

It's about a 20-minute drive to the *Oceanário de Lisboa* (Oceanarium). According to Wikipedia:

The Lisbon Oceanarium has a large collection of marine species — penguins, seagulls and other birds; sea otters (mammals); sharks, rays, chimaeras, seahorses and other bony fish; crustaceans; starfish, sea urchins and other echinoderms; sea anemones, corals and other cnidaria; octopuses, cuttlefish, sea snails and other mollusks; amphibians; jellyfish; marine plants and terrestrial plants and other marine organisms totaling about 16,000 individuals of 450 species.

The main exhibit is a 1,000 sq m (11,000 sq ft*), 5,000,000 L (1,300,000 US gal*) tank with four large 49 sq m (530 sq ft*) acrylic windows on its sides, and smaller focus windows strategically located

*The usually reliable Wikipedia has let us down on this attempt to convey to American readers the size of this facility. The precise conversion from sq m to sq ft is 1,000 to 10763.9. And, 5,000,000 L is 1,321,000 gal. And 49 sq m is 527 sq ft. But we appreciate the effort.

around it to make sure it is a constant component throughout the exhibit space. It is 7 m (23 ft) deep, which allows pelagic swimmers to swim above the bottom dwellers, and provides the illusion of the open ocean. About 100 species from around the world are kept in this tank, including sharks, rays, barracudas, groupers, and moray eels. One of the main attractions is a large sunfish.

Four tanks around the large central tank house four different habitats with their native flora and fauna: the North Atlantic rocky coast, the Antarctic coastal line, the Temperate Pacific kelp forests, and the Tropical Indian coral reefs. These tanks are separated from the central tank only by large sheets of acrylic to provide the illusion of a single large tank. Throughout the first floor there are an additional 25 thematic aquariums with each of the habitats' own characteristics.

We are free to roam over the building for about an hour, but could willingly have spent much more time. I take many many pictures, a few of which actually are usable. Emerging from the structure and walking to the bus, we find the Portuguese sun very warm. What wusses we Gig Harborians are!

We return to the ship at about 1:40 and have lunch at *La Veranda*. And then it's another Crowley enrichment lecture: "Cadiz and Sevilla" (the least imaginative of all of his titles). (Lee's journal has four highly detailed pages of notes from the lecture; what a wonderful student she is!) When we return to our room, I discover that Lee's laptop is misbehaving. It won't open its typical log-on screen nor can I get it to shut down, even by depressing and holding down the power button. If we were leave it in this condition overnight, the battery would drain down. I write an email to Bill Gurley, our techie friend in Knoxville, but just on the chance that the onboard computer expert might help I go down to the business center on Level 5. Much to my delight, he know exactly what to do - he opens the battery door, waits about a minute, and closes it. The laptop is, of course, now turned off - and when he pushes the power button it comes back to life. (When I check my email, I note that this is the same procedure that Bill Gurley recommends.)

We stop briefly at the medical center. Lee's blood pressure, which had been normal at the time of the accident, has been elevated for the past few days. The doctor attributes this to the flow of adrenaline from the accident, but just to play safe he gives her seven pills at a double dosage (50 mg) of HCTZ, the blood pressure medicine that she's already taking.

We have dinner at *Compass Rose* with Ken and Annette from Houston. She is retired but organizes a song and dance troupe (consisting of women of a "certain age") who perform at retirement communities;

and he owns a company that makes traffic lights and other traffic-control devices. Of all of the people whose opinion we solicited about Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum, they are the only ones who really liked the collection.

For dinner, I have matzoh ball soup (in Portugal?), then veal liver and steamed vegetables, and finally New York style cheesecake. Lee starts with a Caesar salad, then roast turkey with chestnut stuffing accompanied by sweet potatoes and peas, and finishing with a pistachio soufflé with crème anglaise.

Before going to bed, we move our watches and clock forward one hour for our return to Spain tomorrow.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

The pictures that I take of Cádiz harbor around 8:00 am are poor because the time zone change leaves us in twilight. On the walk to *La Veranda* for breakfast, we note that the path alongside the pool is quite wet, an indication that the day will be quite humid. We'd already heard predictions that the high temperature will be in the 90s. I'm not very hungry this morning, so I have only half a bagel (again, not suitably chewy - in fact, none of the staff even looks "chewish"), Rice Krispies, juice, and coffee.

Several weeks ago, we had signed up for a nine-hour excursion called "Seville's Cathedral and The Reales Alcazares." All of our earlier excursions had been free, but this one cost \$225 per person, non-refundable. It includes a 1 hr 45 min drive from Cádiz to Seville followed by lots of walking in that city (a total of about four miles), most of it guided but with one hour of free time. At breakfast, I ask Lee if she feels up to doing so strenuous an excursion, particularly in view of the hot weather. I suggest that we scrap the original plan (while losing \$450) and replace it, if spaces are still available, with a two-hour tour "A Panoramic Look at Cádiz." She readily agrees. So we go to Destination Services and learn that seats are available on the shorter excursion.

Back in our room, we have a bill for \$186 for yesterday's medical services: office visit, blood pressure measurement, seven HCTZ pills. I shudder to think how huge the bill will be for the closing of the laceration and for replacing the dislocated shoulder.* At least we have trip insurance (see p. 1) that ought

*As of this writing (January 1, 2019), we have not received a bill for these services. Lee has checked the travel insurance document: it allows us to submit a claim as long as one year after the incident. Will we ever get a bill from Regent? 'Tis a mystery.

to cover it. The sun has now come up and the pictures of Cádiz that I take from our balcony are much better than those in the gloom of early morning.

As was true in Lisbon, yesterday, it's a surprisingly long walk from the ship to the buses. There is a gentle breeze and the day is warm, but not yet as hot as it will be. Our tour guide is José, a knowledgeable and humorous young man. The bus driver is Jesus. When José wants the bus to head to the next tourist destination, he says "Vamonos, Jesus." Cádiz is the "capital of the Province of Cádiz and is considered to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in Western Europe, with archaeological remains dating to 3100 years" (thanks, Wikipedia). The province is one of nine in the autonomous state of Andalusia for which Seville is the capital.

We drive past many monuments and plazas. We stop at one of many beaches, perhaps La Playa de Santa María del Mar. We continue driving through the city. Cádiz is at the northern tip of a long narrow slice of land, surrounded on three sides by ocean and Bay of Cádiz.. We cross the Bay of Cádiz on a modern bridge (Le Pepa) to Puerto Real on the mainland. We then drive to Cádiz Cathedral, and although we do not enter it, we walk around its bustling plaza that is well-attended by armed security guards. Gulp.

Our next stop is at Playa de la Caleta, described by Wikipedia as "the best-loved beach of Cádiz." José

tells us (and it is confirmed by Wikipedia) that because Cádiz so resembles Havana it was used as the location for the James Bond movie *Die Another Day*. Many locals reported sightings of Pierce Brosnan, Halle Berry, and other members of the cast. Adjacent to the beach is a lovely park with impressive flowers and trees. (Am I embarrassed that my notes are so meager compared to Lee's? Not at all! Should I appropriate her notes about the founding of the city, the plagues that came, the legend of Hercules, the Moorish influence, and so on? No.)

We return to the ship at 12:15 and go to *La Veranda* for lunch. Following lunch, we sit in the ship's library. I begin reading Neil deGrasse Tyson's *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry*. After a while, Lee and I are both getting drowsy so we return to our cabin where we lie down for a nap: 40 minutes for me, two hours(!) for Lee. (She's still feeling a bit weak. This morning's excursion took a lot out of her.)

We go to *Sette Mari* for dinner (salad bar, minestrone, penne bolonese) and are back in our room by 8:15. Surprise! The room has not yet been cleaned. We call Reception and they send Vhonaby and Fredy (not clear why they didn't clean earlier) while we go to the library to get out of their way. At about 9:30, the ship (which had set sail at 7:00) is really rocking and rolling. It's 610 nautical miles to Barcelona - I hope that the entire journey is not this bumpy.

I continue reading the Tyson book (see above) and finish the Rachmann. We go to bed at 10:30.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

We awaken at 6:30. The ship has continue to rock throughout the night and into the daytime. Oh, hell, we're experienced sea folk - we can endure it. Still, we stagger as we make our way to *La Veranda* for breakfast. My cold refuses to leave my body - I'm still sneezing and coughing up phlegm. My supply of decongestant has run out, so Lee gives me some of her *Frenadol* (from the pharmacy in Bilbao).

Following breakfast, Lee is still feeling a bit shaky. The nurse measures her blood pressure (I suppose that this will result in another \$186 bill) and it's down from yesterday but still not as low as she'd like it. We'll return to the medical clinic this evening for the doctor to remove the stitches (the nurse thinks it's too soon - she says that we'll have to find a doctor in Barcelona) and measure the blood pressure again. I hope not.)

Last night, at about 1:00, we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar. Considering how dark and foggy it was, it probably would have been pointless to get out of bed to see what we could see. At 10:30 am, we attend the sixth (and last) Crowley lecture*: "Barcelona: Historic Currents, Visual Treats." Following this,

*Once again I find myself humbled by the pages and pages of notes that Lee has written in her journal. If you'd like to learn about Catalan (the language spoken by many in Catalonia), about Franco's malign influence over this city, about the celebrated architect Antoni Gaudi, about pick-pockets in the popular tourist areas, about the history of the city and its invasions, about its more famous kings and other royals, etc., her journal is the place to go.

we decide to have lunch at *Chartreuse*. I have onion soup and charcuterie; Lee has corn chowder and a leeks quiche. In the afternoon, the sun gives way to clouds. The ship is still quite wobbly. We return to our room to pack out suitcases and set them outside the door for the crew to remove and (we hope) return them to us when we're on shore.

I begin reading Joan Didion's *Blue Nights* (Kindle), an account of her adult daughter's life and tragic death, coming less than a year after the death of her husband (described in *The Year of Magical Thinking*). At 5:30, we return to the medical center. The doctor examines the wound and decides that it's healed enough for the stitches to be removed. The nurse, at his direction, puts some Steri Strips perpendicular to the scar, then coats it with antibiotic, and places a bandage over it.

Because Lee has an appointment at the ship's salon to have her hair washed at 7:30, we decide to have a quick dinner at the Pool Grill. Alas, even though the issue of *Passages* didn't indicate it, it's closed! So we go to *Mari* for a fast meal (pasta only).

Later in the evening, we place our suitcases outside the door and get to bed at 10:15. Our Heron's Key fellow resident, Jeannette Johnson, said by email that she had secured an appointment for Lee with Dr. Windgren next Monday. And Lee, via the internet, arranged for wheelchair service when we arrive at Heathrow on Saturday.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

Even though the sun is barely up, I take some pictures of our arrival in Barcelona. We note that the day seems cooler and less humid than yesterday as we make our way alongside the pool to *La Veranda*. The ship has arranged to stagger departures depending on the destinations stated by the passengers: airport, train station, private car, hotel in Barcelona, etc. Nevertheless, the restaurant is quite crowded. We have covered 610 nautical miles on this last leg, making the entire trip 2210 nautical miles.

We are being met at 9:00 by the tourism company, *Made for Spain*, that Stefan had recommended. Our disembarkation time is scheduled for 8:20. We had asked for a wheelchair to get Lee and the luggage from the dock to the location where the car will meet us, but we're assured that there will be many porters on the pier to help. And, in fact, one clever man manages to wheel both large suitcases with one hand and push Lee, holding her carry-on, in a wheelchair.

No tour company employee is in evidence, so we take a seat. Many people from the cruise come over to the brave invalid to give her encouragement. One man says that he was the first one to rush to her aid and try to stanch the flow of blood. He tells Lee that she is a "champion bleeder!" Whoopee! I walk down the line of black SUVs and sedans, hoping to find one labeled *Made for Spain*. I find none. But shortly afterwards, our guide, Zaida Peris Gimeno, shows up and calls to the driver, Volker, to bring the Mercedes SUV to the curb. (She is Spanish, he is German. Both are fluent in English and very knowledgeable.) Zaida has a degree in art history, endowing her skills that will be useful in many of the places we will visit today.

After a drive through the city, we ascend to the summit of Montjuïc for its excellent panoramic view of much of the city, including the bullet-shaped water company building which scurrilous wags have renamed, based on its phallic shape. The name of the mountain is derived from a medieval Jewish graveyard that was uncovered there. Rising a mere 185 m above the city, it's not much of a mountain, certainly to those of us who live in the shadow of Mount Rainier. On the "mountain" is the 1929 Olympic Stadium (seating capacity 65,000) which, along with new construction, was also used for the 1992 summer Olympics. Nearby, with a capacity of nearly 18,000, is the Palau Sant Jordi indoor arena. Also on the mountain are art museums (one devoted to the works of Joan Miró, a native of Barcelona), gardens, and statues by famous sculptors.

On the steps of the National Museum of Art is a familiar-looking group, a group of tourists from our cruise ship. Included among them is Steve Olin, the St. John's pitcher who persists in wearing the detested New York Yankees baseball cap.

Zaida tells us that bull-fighting was banned in 2011 (good!). She also revealed that Francisco Franco, who ruled from 1939 to 1975, spread flamenco and paella to this region even though these things are typical only of Southern Spain. Catalonia, the Basque region, and Galicia were the areas most resistant to Franco's rule. As a rule, they suffered hardships during his reign.

We return to the city center and walk along the Passeig de Gràcia, a very wide, elegant street that features several buildings that were designed by Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926). He was the most famous architect of Barcelona and, also, one of the slowest working, always charging huge prices for one of his masterpieces that reached completion long after the promised date. The apartment buildings that we pass all have fascinating stories about them, a good thing as they are among the weirdest and most ornate structures I've ever seen. Perhaps the most famous is Casa Batlló, built for Josep Batlló, a textile industrialist.



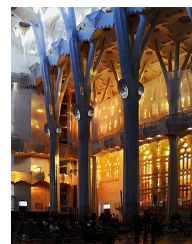
It's a short walk, surrounded by a multitude of fellow tourists, to Gaudí's most famous structure, *La Sagrada Família*. Begun in 1882, it was still unfinished (only about 20% complete) when Gaudí was run down by a street car in 1926 and killed. Under the tutelage of Zaida, we spend about 1.5 hours examining the structure from the outside and from within. There is so much detail carved into the stone, much of which would have escaped our view had Zaida not directed to look at it. Wikipedia informs us:

While never intended to be a cathedral (seat of a bishop), the Sagrada Família was planned from the outset to be a cathedral-sized building. Its ground-plan has obvious links to earlier Spanish cathedrals such as Burgos Cathedral, León Cathedral and Seville Cathedral. In common with Catalan and many other European Gothic cathedrals, the Sagrada Família is short in comparison to its width, and has a great complexity of parts, which include double aisles, an ambulatory with a chevet of seven apsidal chapels, a multitude of towers and three portals, each widely different in structure as well as ornament. Where it is common for cathedrals in Spain to be surrounded by numerous chapels and ecclesiastical buildings, the plan of this church has an unusual feature: a covered passage or cloister which forms a rectangle enclosing the church and passing through the narthex of each of its three portals. With this peculiarity aside, the plan, influenced by Villar's crypt, barely hints at the complexity of Gaudí's design or its deviations from traditional church architecture. There are no exact right angles to be seen inside or outside the church, and few straight lines in the design.



Gaudí's original design calls for a total of eighteen spires, representing in ascending order of height the Twelve Apostles, the Virgin Mary, the four Evangelists and, tallest of all, Jesus Christ. Eight spires have been built as of 2010, corresponding to four apostles at the Nativity facade and four apostles at the Passion facade.

The Church will have three grand façades: the Nativity facade to the East, the Passion facade to the West, and the Glory facade to the South (yet to be completed). The Nativity Facade was built before work was interrupted in 1935 and bears the most direct Gaudí influence. The Passion facade was built according to the design that Gaudí created in 1917. The construction began in 1954,



and the towers, built over the elliptical plan, were finished in 1976. It is especially striking for its spare, gaunt, tormented characters, including emaciated figures of Christ being scourged at the pillar; and Christ on the Cross. These controversial designs are the work of Josep Maria Subirachs. The Glory facade, on which construction began in 2002, will be the largest and most monumental of the three and will represent one's ascension to God. It will also depict various scenes such as Hell, Purgatory, and will include elements such as the Seven deadly sins and the Seven heavenly virtues.

Zaida tells us that the architects now hard at work expect to complete (most of) the building by 2026, the centenary of Gaudí's death. However, upon our return to Seattle we read an article in the October 20, 2018 issue of the *Seattle Times* (a reprint of an article from *The New York Times*) that adds intrigue to the story:

The Sagrada Família basilica in Barcelona has worldwide fame as an architectural treasure, the dreamlike masterpiece of Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí, which draws millions of visitors a year though it, is still under construction, 136 years after work began.

What it has not had for more than a century, according to the city, is a valid building permit.

The Sagrada Família basilica has agreed to pay city authorities 36 million euros, or about \$41 million, over 10 years to settle the dispute over the legality of the work and help pay for transportation improvements around the basilica.

Work began in 1882 on the Sagrada Família, whose radical design, incorporating elements of Gothic revival, art nouveau, modernism and Asian art, has been compared to everything from a Dr. Seuss drawing to an underwater forest of kelp and coral.

Gaudí died after being hit by a tram in 1926, with the project only about one-quarter complete, and for decades after his death, progress was slow, sporadic and often intensely debated. But the pace of work picked up in recent years. The Sagrada Família is more than two-thirds completed, and planners hope to finish it in 2026, in time for the centenary of Gaudí's death.

Critics contend that the Sagrada Família has drifted too far from the vision of Gaudí — some of his plans were destroyed long ago — or that it has more appeal as one of the world's greatest unfinished monuments. Even incomplete and surrounded by scaffolding and building cranes, Sagrada Família is Barcelona's most famous monument, visited by over 10,000 people a day and pictured on countless postcards and calendars. In November 2010, Pope Benedict XVI consecrated the church as a basilica and held Mass there before 7,000 people.

At 12:30, Zaida takes us to a Tapas* restaurant that features an extensive menu, in Spanish, of course.

*According to Wikipedia: "The word "tapas" is derived from the Spanish/Portuguese verb *tapar*, 'to cover', a cognate of the English top. In pre-19th century Spain tapas were served by posadas, albergues, or bodegas, offering meals and rooms for travellers. Since few innkeepers could write and few travelers read, inns offered their guests a sample of the dishes available, on a 'tapa' (the word for pot cover in Spanish)." But a different origin story (and one cited by William Crowley) is "The custom of covering a glass of wine with a tapa became a necessity to avoid flies drowning in the wine." I prefer this latter version.

With her guidance, we select several items that the three of us share. She explains that the strategy is to start with only a small number of dishes, then add more if one is still hungry. We are not.

Lee, bless her heart, has recorded all of the different delicacies we sample: fresh figs with ham; cod fritters with romesco sauce; bread with tomato and olive oil; cod with ratatouille; shrimp, langoustine, and calamari skewers; and cannelloni stuffed with veal.

Following lunch, we walk through the old city and stop at *Mercat de Sant Josep de la Boqueria*, Barcelona's most famous indoor food market. Zaida says that we are not to take pictures. The reason? In the past, so many tourists came (and took pictures) that locals stopped shopping there. So we get to wander up and down the aisles, enjoying the colors, the aromas, and (of course) the crowds of both tourists and locals.

Following this, we stroll along *La Rambla*, described by Wikipedia:

A tree-lined pedestrian street, it stretches for 1.2 kilometres (0.75 mi) connecting *Plaça de Catalunya* in the centre with the Christopher Columbus Monument at *Port Vell*. *La Rambla* forms the boundary between the quarters of *Barri Gòtic*, to the east, and *El Raval*, to the west.

La Rambla can be crowded, especially during the height of the tourist season. Its popularity with tourists has affected the character of the street, with a move to pavement cafes and souvenir kiosks. It has also suffered from the attention of pickpockets.]

The Spanish poet Federico García Lorca once said that *La Rambla* was "the only street in the world which I wish would never end."

Ah, yes, pickpockets. Guide books and also Zaida are very insistent about the stealth of pickpockets in this part of Barcelona. Zaida says that the least suspicious looking people are often the ones we should be most wary of. She *insists* (and I obey) that I remove my wallet from the back pocket of my pants and put it into a deep side pocket. (Sounds like a game of pool, eh?)

We then stroll through narrow streets, lined with eclectic shops. Lee's eyes open when we encounter a confectioner's shop where she buys some items to bring home as presents. We walk through the Jewish quarter, which dates from the Middle Ages, noting the heavy stone construction of the synagogue and residences. Near the Archive of the Crown of Aragon, there is a wall with stone blocks that have Hebrew inscriptions; these are, presumably, re-purposed from the Jewish cemetery on Montjuïc.

We then head to the Picasso Museum where we don't spend enough time and, sad to say, are hustled along by Zaida. Picture-taking is not allowed inside, dammit! The museum, which stretches over five medieval palaces, does not contain a huge number of his works - rather it's a historical/biographical display of his evolution over the years. But you, dear Reader, can sample some of its collection at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Museu_Picasso Picasso (with his family) moved to Barcelona when he was 14 years old. In the ten years that he lived there, he painted many of the works that belong to his Blue Period. (Art from his middle period is stored in the museum's archives, or so we're told.)

Volker drives us to *El Palace*, the hotel where we will spend two nights. This is an elegant hotel of considerable vintage, as the pictures at its web site will reveal. The halls are very long, filled with gaudy (but not Gaudi) bric-a-brac (although this word has the connotation of inferior works of low value) and very Victorian (if some place in Spain can be so designated). According to the hotel clerk, our room has been upgraded to a junior suite (why?) which turns out to be very large with a king bed, a large bathroom, with separate shower and tub. <https://www.lhw.com/hotel/El-Palace-Barcelona-Barcelona-Spain>

We have dinner in the Terrace Restaurant on the 7th floor. The staff wants to seat us out of doors, but we ask for an inside room. We share a large Mediterranean salad (mixed greens, tomatoes, goat cheese, olive, raisins, walnuts, and sunflower seeds bathed in a honey vinaigrette dressing. My main is filet mignon with mashed potatoes; Lee has "lobster rice" (which is a tomato-drenched rice in a mini-paella pan with lobster meat). Back in the room, we read, use the fast(!) internet, and get to bed at 10:30.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

Breakfast is served in the Garden Restaurant on the first floor of the hotel. It's a surprisingly long walk from the elevator through several elegant drawing rooms until we finally find the room where the buffet breakfast is offered. From the appearance of this space, the canvas "ceiling" can be rolled back such that one is sitting outdoors. But for now, the space is enclosed. The buffet is also excellent, but still not as spectacular as that at Hotel Bareiss from our 2015 trip - see <http://web.utk.edu/%7Ermagid/Europe2015.pdf> pp. 33-34. It would be tempting to over-indulge but I limit myself to cold cereal, excellent sliced bread, salmon and cheese, juice, and coffee.

Today's itinerary will take us to Figueras, a drive of 1 hour 45 minutes from Barcelona. Figueras is 140 km northeast of Barcelona and nearly as far as the French border. At this point, we need to digress to discuss some political developments in the region. Barcelona is the capital of the autonomous state of Catalonia. From Wikipedia:

After the Spanish Civil War, the Francoist dictatorship enacted repressive measures, abolishing Catalan self-government and banning the official use of the Catalan language again. After a first period of autarchy, from the late 1950s through to the 1970s, Catalonia saw rapid economic growth, drawing many workers from across Spain, making Barcelona one of Europe's largest industrial metropolitan areas and turning Catalonia into a major tourist destination. Since the Spanish transition to democracy (1975–1982), Catalonia has regained considerable autonomy in political, educational, environmental, and cultural affairs and is now one of the most economically dynamic communities of Spain. In the 2010s there has been growing support for Catalan independence.

On 27 October 2017, the Catalan Parliament declared independence from Spain following a disputed referendum. The Spanish Senate voted in favour of enforcing direct rule by removing the entire Catalan government and calling a snap regional election for 21 December. On 2 November of the same year, the Spanish Supreme Court imprisoned 7 former ministers of the Catalan government on charges of rebellion and misuse of public funds, while several others, including the President Carles Puigdemont, fled to European countries.

According to Zaida and to our guide for today (see below), the desire to separate from France is not equally strong across all of Catalonia. Barcelona, in particular, is reluctant to secede, probably because of the severe (and unpredictable) economic consequences that would follow. Figueras, on the other hand, is a center of independence activity, as evidenced by the many flags that fly from windows and terraces. To the near right is the official flag of Catalonia (called Senyera); that to the far right is the flag of Catalan independence (called Estelades).



At 9:00, Jorge, our driver for today, arrives and we commence the drive north. Because of heavy traffic, both within Barcelona and on the highway, it takes us a full two hours to reach Figueras. Along the way, we talk with Jorge about life in Catalonia, about the independence movement, and about a host of miscellaneous things.* When we reach the center of Figueras, Anna Contreras, our guide, is waiting for

*For example: We note that truck traffic is very heavy on the way to the French border. Jorge explains that France prohibits trucks on its roads on Saturday, so the drivers are eager to get to the border where they'll while away the time, following intellectual pursuits ... such as sex. Thus, this border-crossing area has the largest concentration of prostitution in Europe, or so alleges Jorde. On a not-unrelated (an academic's way of saying "related") topic, Jorde says that in the 1960s his father and grandfather would travel to Perpignan, France to see erotic movies; often they found themselves surrounded by neighbors from home.

us. Like Zaida she is very knowledgeable, but unlike Zaida she is somewhat of a disciplinarian, moving us along when we might like to linger. In the Dalí Museum, for example, we might be studying a particular

painting or sculpture when she would bark "Look here!" followed by instructions to focus our attention elsewhere. She is older than Zaida and her English is more strongly accented but still understandable. One curiosity of speech, probably resulting from Spanish construction, is that both of the guides would say "I explain you ..."

Our reason for our coming here is to visit The Dalí Theatre and Museum (*Teatro-Museo Dalí*) built under the artist's direction in his home town <https://tinyurl.com/y8dzbvse> But before discussing the museum, I should tell you a bit about Dalí. Toward the end of his life, he was a "clown" as he appeared frequently on U.S. television, resplendent with his signature waxed mustache and crazed-looking eyes. But he was a major artist and one of the main exponents of surrealism. We remain in the museum for about 1.5 hours, but could easily have spent much more time.

Salvador Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dalí i Domènech (1904 - 1989) was born in Figueras and lived there until moving to Madrid in 1922. He was already a well-established artist and an excellent draftsman. For more about his life, see: <https://tinyurl.com/coslvmg>

According to the museum's web site, "Inaugurated in 1974, the Dalí Theatre-Museum rises on the remains of the former Municipal Theatre of Figueres and is considered to be the last great work of Salvador Dalí. Everything in it was conceived and designed by the artist so as to offer visitors a real experience and draw them into his unique and captivating world." Indeed, the outside walls are adorned with unusual sculptures (see the pictures posted at my Google Photos site, <https://tinyurl.com/y7sbtg3t>) Probably better than any word description that I can provide, I suggest that you do the virtual tour of the museum, available at <https://www.salvador-Dali.org/en/museums/Dali-theatre-museum-in-figueres/visita-virtual/> Click on any of the five large boxes, then sit back and enjoy the show.

Wikipedia tells us:

The museum displays the single largest and most diverse collection of works by Salvador Dalí, the core of which was from the artist's personal collection. In addition to Dalí paintings from all decades of his career, there are Dalí sculptures, three-dimensional collages, mechanical devices, and other curiosities from Dalí's imagination. A highlight is a three-dimensional anamorphic living-room installation with custom furniture that looks like the face of Mae West when viewed from a certain spot.

Here are some images, "borrowed" from Wikipedia and other sites, that show exterior and interior views (and including the "face of Mae West when viewed from a certain spot").



We (i.e., Jorge, Anna, Lee, and Ron) drive in a southwestern direction from Figueras to Girona, about a third of the way back to Barcelona. We arrive at 1:30. Jorge parks near the river and stays with the car while the rest of us stroll along the river's banks, ending up in *Plaça de la Independència*, a large public square lined with shops and restaurants. With Anna's guidance, we seat ourselves at an outdoor table and, using Anna as our translator, order several tapas dishes. We ask her to sit with us, but she says that she has to add time to the ticket for her parked car, but will return in about 30 minutes to share coffee with us. We finish our food - no Anna - so we delay ordering coffee and wait - still no Anna. Finally she arrives at 2:30 and, because so much time was wasted, winds up rushing us through the rest of the sight-seeing, always saying "Look here! Look here!" when we, "foolish" tourists that we are, are more interested in seeing something else. I feeling peckish having not had my promised coffee and tell her that I'd like some, but this wish is not granted until the very end of the afternoon.

When she arrives, she asks what we want to do first: tourism or eat some ice cream. We both say "tourism," so of course she takes us first to an ice cream parlor. In protest, I have none but Lee and Anna succumb. Does the ice cream parlor have coffee? Of course not. As many "independence flags" as we saw in Figueras, there seem to be many more here, hanging from balconies, terraces, windows, etc. We walk to the Jewish quarter through ancient narrow streets flanked by stone buildings. We visit the Museum of Jewish Life which tells the story of Girona's prosperous Jewish population prior to the mandatory expulsion of the Jews or conversion to Christianity in 1492 <https://www.girona.cat/call/eng/museu.php> Even here, we are assaulted by Anna's insistent calls of "Look here, Look here!" whenever we "fall behind." Of course nothing is air conditioned, neither indoors nor out (obviously), and, so, once again I'm drenched with sweat.

Upon leaving the museum, I again raise my plaintive request for *Coffee! Please Coffee!* And it is granted as we enter a small shop that is also air-conditioned! There *is* a god, think I! And behold, this shop is filled with U.S.-related memorabilia, including an autographed baseball (I can't make out the signatures), Bruce Springsteen posters, pictures and photos of Sitting Bull and other native Americans, and a wooden Indian statue of the kind that one used to see outside tobacco stores. This reminds me of *Bone's Real American Restaurant* in Koldingfjord, Denmark that we happened on in 2010. My travelogue of that trip gives details of the artifacts that this restaurant had (see p. 44-45 <http://web.utk.edu/%7Ermagid/Europe2010.pdf>). The walls had pictures of baseball and football players, pennants, movie stars, and singers. There was even a full-sized Big Boy statue like those that stood at the entrance to restaurants.

Jorge is eager to return to Barcelona and Anna is starting to push us (well, it was *her* fault that we were so far behind schedule). We enter the car at 4:00 and would have made it back to the hotel by 5:15 except for the fact that some streets in downtown Barcelona are blocked by demonstrations. When we get close enough to see the protesters, they are a surprising blend of "average-looking" people, some of them children and others of advanced age, none of them looking especially threatening. At any rate, the police clear the congestion and we can proceed. (We do learn, however, of several protests scheduled for tomorrow morning, some of them on the route to the airport. One of them is to protest the aggressive behavior of the police at last year's demonstration!)

Well, we're delayed only a bit and we arrive at the hotel at 5:25. At the front desk, we reserve a table for 7:00 in the Terrace Restaurant. As we did last night, we ask for an indoor room rather than sitting outside. Now, listen - I realize that many Europeans are fascinated by American rock or hip-hop or rap music, but what was playing over the restaurant's PA was a "delightful" and "heart-warming" ditty with the singer's intoning, again and again, "I want to fuck/I need to fuck/I'm a lucky fuck." Cool!

Following dinner, we go to the hotel's business center and try to print our boarding passes for tomorrow's flights. We fail! So we return to the room, pack our suitcases according to airline and TSA regulations, read for a while, and get to bed.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

We get up with the alarm at 6:45, have breakfast in the Garden Restaurant, and check out at 8:00. The hotel clerk had told us that the ride to the airport would take about 30 minutes. Because of the planned

demonstrations along the route, we depart early for our 11:40 flight to London. The taxi cab driver that we are "lucky" enough to acquire makes the trip in 15 minutes(!) by wheeling around corners, going through red lights, and cutting other cars off on the roundabouts. But we make it in one piece! And, indeed, we pass two large police presences (both officers and cars) who are deployed to keep today's demonstrations (not yet started) in line.

At the British Airways counter, we ask if it would be possible to arrange a tarmac transfer (as we had been lucky enough to have last May) at Heathrow, given how enormous the airport is and the fact that we (i.e., my "invalid"* wife and I) will need to not only go through immigration and security but also transfer from

*Funny language, that English is. Here is a word whose first syllable should be accented in the meaning that I used it but whose second syllable is accented when one intends it to mean "without foundation." It must be hell for foreigners to learn our language, given that there are numerous instances of such words. Other examples: *attribute* and *conduct* can each be either a noun or a verb, depending on the accented syllable. Similarly, *contract*, *desert*, *incense*, *minute*, *object*, *permit*, *record*, *refuse*, and *subject*. As I said, English is a difficult language for non-native speakers.

Terminal 3 to Terminal 5. This is rejected (because of the requirement to go through immigration) but the clerk does arrange for a wheelchair to meet the flight. We are directed to the BA Priority Line which moves quite quickly, but the terminal is quite warm. Our boarding passes show FASTTRACK (one word, two T's) through security, but we still have to empty pockets, remove belts, take out large electronic devices, etc. Since we are not subjected to a full body scanner, why in the world are we required to empty pockets of non-metallic items like tissues, handkerchiefs, condoms, etc.?

Passport control is also fast and we get to the BA business class lounge at 8:40 (just 40 minutes after leaving the hotel). The air conditioning is minimal, at best, especially when the strong morning sun comes blasting through the windows. After a half hour, the sun has risen high enough that I'm no longer being baked and I can stop sweating. One of the passengers in the lounge is the ersatz-Bill Doering (see the entry for September 16).

At 11:10, we board the Airbus A320, seats 5A and 5C (with 5B unavailable for anyone to sit). Expected flying time is 1:45. All announcements are in English (no Spanish) but, alas, there is no amusing safety video. The doors are closed at 11:25, we get push back at 11:40, and after a very long taxi we are airborne at 11:55. At 12:15, lunch is served: sandwiches with cucumber, sun-dried tomatoes, and oodles of cheese.

The weather is nice and we can watch the scenery of western France. At 12:30, we are flying over Bordeaux with excellent views of the two rivers (Garonne and Dordogne) which merge into the Gironde estuary as it flows into the Bay of Biscay and then the ocean. We cross the English channel and enter England over Southampton; the only reason that I know this is that the man sitting behind me announces that it is Southampton, and he has an English accent so he must be right. Right? We approach Heathrow from the east because I recognize Twickenham Stadium (a rugby stadium) where the Seattle Seahawks are to play the Oakland Raiders in about one week. (When we get back to the states, we learn that Twickenham could not be readied in time and so that teams will play in Wembley Stadium.)

We land at Heathrow at 1:45 and arrive at the gate at 1:50. At this point, I remember to turn my watch back one hour for London time. So, in fact, we've arrive earlier than the expected time of 1:05. The flight crew tells Lee and me to stay on board until everyone else has left. This will allow the wheelchair to get as close to the plane's door as possible. With Lee firmly entrenched on her throne, we are whisked into the terminal and transferred to an electric conveyance (with seating for four) that takes us to another location where another wheelchair arrives to take us on an elevator (down? up? I don't remember) to a bus that takes us to Terminal 5. Whew!

But our journey is not yet over. Yet another wheelchair with pusher arrives and he is in a grumpy mood. He complains, again and again, that he's being forced to work beyond his scheduled finishing time. Thus, we pushes the wheelchair at considerable speed with poor Ron (and his carry-on) doing his best to keep up. We arrive at Passport Control and Security. Although our "keeper" is grumpy, he does manage to

push the wheelchair to the front of the line at the entrance to Security. (Lee's faithful companion also slips by the waiting passengers.)

When we emerge from security, we already know that our Seattle flight will leave from Gate B48, but our grumpy pusher has no intention of taking us that far. Instead, he takes us to a lounge (not even a business class lounge) in the A wing of Terminal 5. Is this near the B wing? We'll find out ... eventually. In fact, as I will discover when I view an airport map back home, the A gates are on Level 2 and the B gates on Level 1; and, indeed, yet another wheelchair pusher arrives (he is very pleasant, in contrast to you-know-who) who just shakes his head in bewilderment when he learns where Mr. Grumpy has deposited us) and takes us by elevator to the correct level. Even then, it's a very long walk to Gate B48 and then a surprisingly very very long walk until one reaches the actual Jetway. But finally we are on board the plane, another Boeing 747, at 3:00.

As explained on p. 2, because we have Seats 19J and 19K we are no longer in the last row of the cabin. Thus poor Ron, in rear-facing window Seat 19K will have to climb over the legs of the person who is stretched out and fast asleep in Seat 20J. Sigh.

Menus are distributed at 3:10, doors are closed at 3:20, and push-back doesn't occur until 3:40, even though the captain had announced at 3:35 that the control tower was holding us at the gate for an indefinite time until an opening occurs.. We see the same safety video as described on p. 2. As was true on the flight from Seattle as well as on the two long flights between Seattle and Heathrow in May, I find it almost impossible to understand the announcements. It's only partly because of the clipped English accents. The main culprits are the noise of the plane's engines and the constant whooshing sound of the air circulation system. But I do understand when the captain says that the lack of strong winds from the west means that we should arrive in Seattle ahead of schedule (a flying time of 9:15 as opposed to the announced 9:45). We are air-borne at 4:05 and are heading home.

I set my watch to PDT. We'll be in daylight for the entire flight. At 9:15 am, we're served whisky and nuts. "Dinner" is served from 10:30 to 11:55. I have Scottish smoked salmon; filet of beef with veggies and potatoes; chocolate/almond/butterscotch pudding along with some wine; and coffee. During the flight, I finish the September 10 issue of *The New Yorker* and start the September 17 issue. I also finish the Didion book (Kindle), work some puzzles, and catch a little sleep (about one hour). "Afternoon Tea" (well, that's what they call it) is served at 4:00 pm: two sandwiches (egg mayonnaise and smoked salmon with cream cheese) are brought to my tray; I reject the third sandwich because it has curry.

We approach Seattle in clouds, but what does it matter given that I'm facing backwards and can only see where we've been, not where we're going. We land at 5:15. Unlike our "adventures" from the May trip (unbearably slow passport control coupled with lost luggage), this arrival goes smoothly: rapid passage through Passport Control, baggage among the first to emerge, get to our car and get home at 6:45 (an incredible 1 hr 30 min after touchdown!).

We are exhausted, of course, but we unpack our luggage and put our apartment back in order (all of the surface items in all rooms had been removed so that Eddie could clean the apartment on September 26). Endurance is not our middle name, so we collapse in bed at 9:00. I sleep until 3:00 am and Lee only a bit later, so we get up and start catching up on things that had occurred during our absence.

Summary of books read on the trip:

Joan Didion *Blue Nights*
 Rachel Cusk *Kudos*
 Tom Rachmann *The Italian Teacher*
 Neil deGrasse Tyson *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry*

And these magazines:

The New Yorker (4 issues)
TIME (2 issues)
Yale Alumni Magazine (2 issues)
The Progressive (2 issues)