

NEW YORK CITY TO MONTRÉAL

OCTOBER 1 TO OCTOBER 12, 2022

When we returned from our Rhine-Danube cruise on June 13, I wondered if my weak legs would enable me to go on yet another adventure. I had already arranged to have spine surgery a week after the return from Europe - it seemed to me that, *surely*, I would be recovered enough by the time October arrived. The surgery, scheduled for June 20, was postponed until June 27 because, at my pre-op visit, it was determined that I had COVID. Thanks, fellow travelers in the Budapest, Amsterdam, and Seattle airports!

Well! Now, nearly 14 weeks later, my "recovery" can scarcely be called that. I remain badly stooped; and my legs are tired, weak, and numb. I also have muscle pain in my back and abdomen. I considered backing out of this trip (Lee would go without me) but finally decided to take a chance and carry my four-wheel walker with me. I had worried that it might be destroyed by aggressive baggage handlers on the planes, but reasoned that if I were to gate-check it, it might survive any rough treatment. If I discover that having the walker *still* does not allow me to go on some of the excursions, so be it. Just as on the May-June cruise, during which I went on only three excursions, I can get a lot of reading done when staying on board.

One positive development - on September 27, it was announced that as of October 1 Canada would no longer require proof of a negative COVID test, something that we had been planning to have done two days before departure at a local prompt care facility (and at an exorbitant cost of over \$200). (This event is reminiscent of our narrow "escape" last June when, just two days before the river cruise ended, the U.S. lifted its requirement that returning passengers had to prove that they were COVID negative. Maybe we are living right?)

One other glitch - In reviewing material sent to us by Regent Seven Seas, I noticed a discrepancy: one travel document indicated that we are assigned to stateroom 907 but another has us in 917. Our wonderful travel agent Stefan Bisciglia (of Speciality Cruise & Villas) confirmed that 917 is correct, which is preferred because it puts us closer to the elevators at the center of the ship.

The next two paragraphs are from the first pages of my Rhine-Danube 2022 travelogue:

READING MATERIALS In addition to several magazines (*The New Yorker*, *TIME*, *The Progressive*, *Yale Alumni Magazine*), NYT crossword puzzles, Sudoku puzzles, and soft-cover books (*Shards of Memory* by Ruth Praver Jhambvala and *The Biographer's Tale* by A. S. Byatt), I will have my Kindle Reader. In earlier travelogs, I've marveled at the fact that several titles that I downloaded to the Kindle from Amazon through the Pierce County Library have remained on my device, *long* after their three-week borrowing period had ended. From those many titles, these five remain and are unread: Olen Steinhauer's *All the Old Knives*, Robert Harris's *V2*, H.R. McMaster's *Battlegrounds*, Bill Clegg's *The End of the Day*, and Richard Russo's *Chances Are*.

"Surely this is enough for the upcoming trip," you say. Well, yes, but given that my weak legs may force me to stay onboard the ship when I should be out on excursions *and* given that we have two more cruises planned for the next eight months, perhaps I need more. So ... having demonstrated that as long as I keep the Kindle in Airplane Mode, I can ~~steal~~ borrow additional books without worrying about their being snatched back by the (rightful) owner... a few months ago, I arranged things such that 17(!!) books would become available for download at the same time. And so, Dear Reader, I exited Airplane Mode for the minimum time needed and I downloaded all 17. Do I feel guilty? Not really. Surely my "possessing" these e-books does not prevent Amazon from lending them to others. Besides, it's fun to think that I may be poking the lion (i.e., Jeff Bezos) without fear of retribution. At least that's my hope. When the Amazon police come knocking at my door with a warrant for my arrest, I won't be so sanguine any more.

As it will turn out, the combination of my weak legs and the remnants of Hurricane Ian kept me from going on more than three excursions. Thus, the number of pictures that I took is quite limited. Nevertheless, if

you go to tinyurl.com/3c549sc or <https://tinyurl.com/548ns62s> , you'll connect to a page with links to all of the digital travel photos I've taken since 2000, including the relatively small number from this cruise.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

As we've done on recent airport trips, we arranged to have local driver Jesse Langford deliver us to the airport and pick us up on our return. Because we have an early morning flight to New York, Jesse recommended that he pick us up at 4:45. That's a.m.!! So we set our alarms for 3:15. We had finished most of our packing last night, but there were some last-minute items to get into the suitcases; and we had to "prepare" our apartment for the scheduled housekeeping visit on October 5. Most of this had been done yesterday, but a few tasks (e.g., getting items off the bedroom floor and onto the bed) could not be done until today. As we had chosen not to eat breakfast, we actually finished our chores with plenty of time left, so I re-booted my PC and read the *Seattle Times* online.

Jesse arrives right on time. He loads our two hard-sided suitcases, my carry-on, my briefcase, and my walker into the back of his vehicle. Lee had no wheeled carry-on but, rather, an over-sized tote. As there is essentially no traffic, we make it to Sea-Tac in record time, less than 30 minutes. Well, not quite. As we make the final approach to the terminal, we find ourselves at a standstill because the airport authorities have closed the arrivals level, requiring everyone to use the departure level. Well, we made it at last. I put my carry-on and briefcase on my walker's seat while Lee manages to wheel both suitcases to the Delta check-in counter. (This is made a little more difficult than it should be because one of the four rotating wheels on my suitcase is not responding well.) I ask the attendant where my walker would be returned to me if we decide to gate-check it. She says that it will be returned to me on the plane.

Because we are Delta Pre-Check, we walk all the way to the southern end of the terminal, only to discover that pre-check is really no easier than regular TSA security. We endure the emptying of pockets and walking through the scanner (my suspender clamps cause difficulty) but at least we are not asked to remove electronic devices from the carry-on.

We emerge from the security line mercifully very close to our departure Gate A5, so we take a seat there rather than seeking the Delta Lounge. At about 6:30, I try to read but am defeated by the noise that pervades the terminal. It is a raucous combination of some people talking on cell phones, others (sitting right behind us) having a loud conversation, the shrill voices of the MSNBC announcers, on a wall TV, pontificating about economics, and the general airport ambience (whistling sounds, annoying music, etc.). Finally, 7:00 arrives and we are allowed to board the plane.

My walker is tagged for gate check. When I arrive at the end of the jetway, the flight attendant says that they have lots of storage space on the plane, so there is no need to consign the walker to the baggage handlers. Great! We make our way to Seats 2A and 2B. The seating arrangement in Business Class on this Boeing 757-200 is 2-2. I find the seats uncomfortable - very narrow with very little arm room. And the ambient noise, mostly what Delta would consider "soothing" music plus the wooshing sound of the air handlers, is grating on the ears. A flight attendant tells us that the galley's oven is broken, so they'll be unable to deliver the pancakes that we had each pre-ordered. Instead we are to choose between charcuterie and "chia oatmeal" (whatever the hell that is), We opt for the former.

The plane's doors are closed at 7:50 and we are into our taxi when the captain announces that the wind direction has changed and that he now has to proceed to the other end of the runway. Good, think I to myself, this will be a rare north-bound departure that should give us wonderful view of downtown Seattle and Bellevue. Not so fast! As we take off, we are immediately in thick fog and clouds. So much for the joy of a window seat! In fact, it's only when we're finally over the Cascades that the tallest peaks can be seen just protruding above the clouds.

It's an hour later and we still haven't seen land save for the tallest peaks (now, I suspect, in the Rockies). Breakfast is served and it consists of: (1) a croissant roll and a (sticky) blueberry muffin; (2) a bowl with

oranges slices, kiwi, and honey dew; (3) another bowl of some sort of pudding, sprinkled with various grains and nuts; (4) the main course, consisting of various cold meats - one Lee warns me may have cumin - selected cheeses, and green grapes; and (5) coffee.

At 10:00, the deep cloud cover persists, but now we are well above it and can finally see clear blue skies. (I adjust my watch three hours ahead to EDT.) At 1:15, the clouds break and we find ourselves over farm land, but in short order the clouds return. I give up on any hope for sight-seeing and open my Kindle to finish reading Jonathan Karl's "Betrayal: The Final Act of the Trump Show" - excellent, one of the best accounts of this dismal final year of Trump that I've read. On the Kindle, I begin reading Amor Towles's "The Lincoln Highway," highly recommended by Lee.

At 2:00, *finally*, when we are over eastern Minnesota, the clouds break and the ground is visible for the rest of the flight, although the air does become murky from time to time. Throughout the flight, there have been extended periods of extreme turbulence, so severe that food service was stopped several times. (An adventure with coffee trying to escape from my mug, was a "highlight.") Our final approach takes us over the Hudson River from New Jersey to New York - we cross the river just south of the George Washington Bridge and fly across midtown and downtown Manhattan, with excellent views of the numerous skyscrapers. We arrive at JFK at 4:15, almost on schedule.

Lee recommends (and it is an excellent decision) that we get the wheelchair that we reserved, while she pushes my walker with the carry-on and briefcase on its seat. We arrive at the luggage carousels but it is a surprisingly long time before the first suitcases makes an appearance. I am fascinated by the variety of faces, many of them suggesting countries of origin outside of the U.S.; and by the variety of foreign languages that I hear. I am surprised, but also delighted, to see just one New York Yankees cap. (As those of you who may have endured reading my earlier travelogues, I despair at the preponderance of these hateful articles of apparel in every country we've visited, whether in Europe or Japan or "down under"; I won't repeat my life-long hatred of the Yankees and everything associated with them. If you're interested, you can read my screeds (e.g., in the Rhine–Danube 2022 travelogue, pp. 20-21.)

We gather our suitcases. Somehow, the wheelchair pusher manages to wheel both me and the luggage through the door and into the arrivals lobby where we make contact with a Regent agent, who calls for a car, which takes a surprisingly long time to arrive; the wheelchair lady stays with me until luggage and passengers are safely inside the vehicle; this earned her a well-deserved \$10 tip.

The drive from the airport to the hotel is awful - bumper-to-bumper traffic on both the Van Wyck Expressway Ha!) and the Queens-Midtown Expressway (double Ha!). (Maybe "express" has a different meaning in New York?) The only saving feature is the excellent view of the New York skyline as we approach Manhattan ... slowly. I ask the driver if it's always this bad. He replies we should have seen it two weeks ago when numerous foreign diplomats arrived for the opening session of the United Nations.

We arrive at Hotel Lotte New York Plaza (at Madison Ave. and E 51st Street) at 6:30 and get to our room on the 24th floor. The view is spectacular, as we are looking down at Madison Avenue and St. Patrick's Cathedral. We go back down to the lobby to get a ticket for the bus that will take us to the ship tomorrow (the Regent agent is swamped with new arrivals, all making the same request) and then to the hotel concierge for the Wi-Fi login credentials and to ask where the complimentary Regent breakfast is located. It's late, so we order room service: burgers and fries plus coffee; these arrive after a considerable delay, the food barely above room temperature. The French fries vary from soggy to so crisp that they have the consistency of toast.



For such an expensive hotel, the amenities are lacking: no coffee service in the room, no mini-bar, no clock, no pads of paper plus pens. Following consumption of our "delicious" repast, I open my computer to read today's Tacoma News-Tribune and the NYT headlines. Finally, it's bed time near midnight,

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1

We arise at 6:15, finish packing, and place our properly tagged suitcases inside the door for pick-up. We then head downstairs to breakfast, a special affair for Regents travelers held in a large banquet room. There are two rows of self-serve stations, one at each end of the room. It is a nice spread of cold and hot offerings, although the latter prove not to be very hot.

A couple at our table tells us they heard that the ship we're planning to board is not even in New York. Lee checks VesselFinder.com and confirms that the Regent Seven Seas Navigator is at the eastern tip of Long Island, chugging westward at 19 knots* and not expected to arrive in New York at about 4:00. Oy!

*"What is a knot?" I hear you ask. "Well, it's one nautical mile per hour," I reply, condescendingly. "Uh, so what is a nautical mile," you inquire. In truth, I've forgotten the answer, but to the rescue comes this description that I wrote in my 2018 Netherlands-Belgium-Ireland travelogue and others.

Wikipedia offers this extremely "clear" description: "A nautical mile (symbol M, NM or nmi) is a unit of distance that is approximately the length that spans one minute of arc on the surface of the Earth, measured along any meridian. By international agreement it has been set at 1,852 metres exactly (about 6,076 feet)."

Perhaps it would be clearer if I told you that 1 NM is 1.1507794480235 mile? (The laptop's conversion calculator doesn't know about significant figures, does it?) I think it would be safe to say, simply, that a nautical mile is a bit longer than a mile by about 15%. Now some smarty-pants is going to ask "What is meant by a *knot*?" Well, my children, one knot is a speed of one nautical mile per hour. Right? Right. That's 1.852 km per hour or 1.151 miles per hour.

David, the Regent representative, confirms this. Apparently, severe weather caused by the remnants of Hurricane Ian completely upset Navigator's intended itinerary, causing it to cancel one or more ports of call. It's not clear what provision the hotel can make for us, as we're required to check out of our rooms before noon.

At our table is a couple from Phoenix (the woman was the source of the information about the delay) and an English couple from north of London with whom I discuss the monarchy (they're neutral about it), new Prime Minister Liz Truss (they're quite negative), and Brexit (they were in favor). All four of our dining partners agree that they never, again, want to experience the kind of traffic that they encountered on the way from the airport to the hotel. As I scan the room, I see a sizable number of people in wheelchairs or using canes, and one (the Phoenix man at our table) with a walker, although his is not as elegant as my sleek model.

We return to our room. The luggage is picked up at 9:45 and taken to ... where? There's no ship to receive it. I suppose that there's a large room, either here in the hotel or at the port, where such items can be stored. At least that's the hope. At 10:30, Lee and I head to the Regent courtesy desk to learn if there's an update. It seems as if every other passenger has had the same idea, so we are confronted by an impatient crowd, seeking answers. I leave Lee to fight the mob and I return to our room. Lee learns that there is a large room on the second floor that's been set aside for us to wait; there is, also, a buffet table with snacks (cookies, candy bars, fruit, coffee, and soft drinks). It's also anticipated that we might board the ship at 7:30 and that the crew will provide a very late dinner.

An app on Lee's phone shows our intrepid schooner still moving at 19 knots and it is now at the midpoint of Long Island. The room that has been designated for our "leisurely" wait is the hotel's ballroom. Some 300 chairs are set up, all facing forward as if the audience were waiting for a performance. Over the course of the afternoon, some of these chairs will be turned sideways and others backwards, but I can salve your worry by telling you that no chairs were harmed during the day. Only a few people have taken seats when I arrive, but the mob gradually fills the room. As I scan the passengers, I note that there are

very few younger than 50 and only a small number who are people of color (all of them Asian). They do not look like a gathering of academics or serious thinkers. Rather, they look uncultured, but (undoubtedly) well-off in order to afford this cruise. (OK, I confess, I'm a supercilious snob.) It's a shock to my ears to hear so many northeastern accents, despite my having grown up in such a milieu.

The seven hours (approximately) that we spend in the ballroom allow me to scan the faces to see if I recognize anyone, say from an earlier cruise. It has been said that every person on Earth has a doppelgänger - and I believe it because a large number of our fellow passengers look amazingly like residents at Heron's Key. Those of you readers who don't live at Heron's Key might wish to skip the rest of this paragraph; the rest might like to see if they are named in my list. I see look-alikes for Sam Vazquez, Al Standish, John Holberton, Don Hansen, Cindy Thayer, Don Egge, Ross Gaussoin, Florence Helliesen, Dan and Margaret Bozich (a couple both here and in Gig Harbor). On the following days, I'll spot Audrey Larson, Barb Cummings, Margaret Miller, and Ralph Wozniak, along with Heron's Key Administrator Sarah Whitmarsh and (totally unconnected, not only to Heron's Key but also to reality) John Malkovich. Some of the preceding were stretches, but there's one case of an almost exact double: not a resident of Heron's Key but of a similar retirement community in North Carolina is Dean McCumber, who (with wife Nancy) visited us just a few days ago. Well, it proved to be a good way to pass the time.

An observation: every employee of the hotel is wearing a mask. Among our fellow passengers, I'd guess that about 15% are masked. I was surprised, yesterday at the airport, to see a significant number of masked passengers. (Lee dons her mask as she sits in this cloud of pestilence in the ballroom.) Lee's vessel finder web site still does not show an ETA for the ship. I feel sorry for those several hundred passengers whose flight plans must be in disarray.

In the ballroom are several large murals, one of which is characterized by Lee as a *faux Watteau*. I don't know if I could distinguish a Watteau painting from one of his many 18th century contemporaries, but I can't help, whenever I hear his name, thinking of Bertie Wooster's proclaiming, "What ho, Jeeves" in P.G. Wodehouse's tales.

Well, I don't spend all my time trying to decide who looks like who (whom?). I open my Kindle and read a bit of "The Lincoln Highway" until I begin getting sleepy near 4:00. David arrives with excellent news: **Navigator has docked in New York!** Once all of the passengers have disembarked and cleared customs; and the crew has the opportunity to clean the cabins and the common areas; it's estimated that we'll be able to board at about 7:00.* In light of the lateness of the hour, however, the ship will stay in port

*Our friend Al Vazquez, a retired airline captain for United, writes "Given how long it took to clean an airplane with 200 passengers, I'm surprised they were able to do the ship in 3 hours. Better wear your latex gloves 24/7

over night and not set sail until tomorrow. Undoubtedly, this will require an adjustment of the schedule and the dropping of one or more ports of call.

I have to feel sorry for David. He is being assaulted with questions from the passengers, questions to which he cannot possibly know the answers. The crowd is like a bunch of five-year olds, demanding to know what time they'll board, what bus will take them to the pier, will there be food, etc. etc. etc. The one question that he *can* answer is that the color-coded card everyone was issued will be used for the color announced for the next bus. "But what if we don't have a card?" "Then come with me to my desk and I'll give you one." "But what if all of the buses are full?" "Don't worry. Nobody will be left behind." And so it goes, *pace* Kurt Vonnegut.

We have a green card and when our bus arrives at about 7:00 we head to it. The rain has started but we're not outdoors for long. My walker is folded and placed in the luggage compartment. What should have been no more than a 15-minute drive to the pier took over a half-hour because of heavy car, bus, and bicycle traffic on every street. Entering the arrivals hall, we turn in some papers, show identification,

go through detectors (after emptying our pockets), and emerge to walk a considerable distance to the gangplank and onto the ship. (This proves to be a bit of a challenge, as the ramp is quite steep - I don't recall if it was pointing down or up, but it did require some effort with the walker.). On board the ship, we go to a brief safety lecture because one of us (Lee) has dutifully watched the video about donning life jackets. (I never got an email requesting that I do the same.) Rooms on Deck 9 are not yet ready for occupancy, so we go to Compass Rose for dinner. The food is delicious but the "mood music" piped in is not. Every employee in the restaurant is masked.

While eating dinner, there is an announcement that all rooms are now ready. We also learn that we will wait until tomorrow morning to set sail. On account of the delay, the stop at Martha's Vineyard is canceled. We'll head directly to Boston harbor, arriving in the morning of May 3. Sigh - I had hoped to see what "damage" had been inflicted by the undocumented asylum-seekers who were bused there from Texas using funds provided by Ron DeSantis, the governor of Florida. Talk about a grand-standing, unfeeling, politician!

There are announcements piped into our room by Captain Aristeidis Mertzanis and Cruise Director Ray Solaire. The captain is from Greece and has an accent, but can be understood. The cruise director is English but that's not his fault. We get started unpacking. Initially it seems that the doorway is too narrow to admit my walker, but Lee discovers a clever way to accomplish this a day from now; alas, the bathroom door really is too narrow - if needed, we could always collapse the device, but it doesn't seem worth it. We meet our housekeepers Andy and John as well as our butler Preston, all three of whom described various features and procedures to us. Then after a little computer work, we get to bed around midnight. And thus endeth an exhausting day that consisted mostly of doing nothing but sitting and waiting.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2

We arise at 6:30. A little after 7:00, I hear the ship's engines start up as we edge away from the dock. As soon as I'm dressed (and not before), I make my way to the pool deck (Deck 11) to watch and take pictures of the New York City skyline as we cruise southward on the Hudson River. The morning is chilly, but I'm rewarded with excellent photos of mid-town (including The Empire State Building and the Chrysler Tower), lower Manhattan (including the rebuilt World Trade Center), the Battery (where I spent the summer of 1955 working in the office of a building contractor), the Statue of Liberty, Queens, Brooklyn, and the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge after which I go back inside.



As we approach and sail by the Statue of Liberty, we are "assaulted" by a pompous, unctuous, self-indulgent "essay" about all of the freedoms that we have and the wonderful example we set all over the world, read by Cruise Director Ray Solaire (with his English accent) followed by a rendering of "God Bless America" with chorus, orchestra, and occasional accompaniment by several fellow passengers. I collect Lee from our cabin and we go to La Veranda for breakfast (mine is tomato juice, bagel, corn flakes, and coffee). When we return to our room, we see that it is still being cleaned (we won't discover the DO NOT DISTURB/PLEASE CLEAN placard for another day), so we repair to the library on Deck 6.



While we are eating breakfast, the captain makes an announcement on the PA. We are heading into the remnants of Hurricane Ian which will "reward" us with strong winds and heavy waters. This is an understatement, as we'll learn a little later, but already in the mid-morning we are beginning to experience unpleasant motion of the vessel. At 10:00, Lee and I go to the theater (called the Seven Seas Lounge on

this ship) for a lecture, the first of five, by "Dr. Dave." Dave Roberts is a retired university anthropologist who is now an educational programmer and docent at several museums in San Diego, see <http://www.drdivesandiego.com/>. His topic today: "Boston. Coffee, not Tea." It's hard to concentrate because the ship is really beginning to rock.

Back in our cabin, there is another announcement by the captain: we should expect winds of 40-45 mph and swells of 4-5 m (that's m for meters, not miles). He tells us that Decks 11 and 12 are closed. Oy! I work at my computer and do my best to type (my typing is inaccurate enough even under calm conditions) but I'm not particularly distressed by the motion. Lee is feeling it, a bit, so she stretches out on the couch to read. As the day progresses and the heaving increases, water splashing onto our deck and against the window, whether from rain or sea, begins to seep through.

There are several updates from the captain, including warnings to be careful on stairs and to use handrails. He also delivers a heart-felt message to the crew for their incredible work on the challenging cruise that preceded this one, and for getting the ship cleaned in time for new passengers to board.

In the afternoon, our butler* Preston arrives with a bottle of Lagavulin which we decided to purchase,

*Why do we have a butler? I have no wish to have a butler. It goes against my sensibilities. But we have no choice - our level of stateroom comes with such an amenity. It reminds me of the dilemma that Matthew Crawley faced in "Downton Abbey" when he moved into quarters adjacent to the Crawley Mansion and his newly acquired butler tried to dress him. His aunt explains that he would be insulting this man if he resisted what he had spent his life training to do. Does that, in any way, resemble the present situation? Not really.

given that the "free" scotch whiskies offered by Regent lack the peatiness of this prized concoction. Even someone with good sea legs is having trouble on this careening vessel. Preston is very insistent that he should provide sustenance beyond the meals in the restaurants. Tomorrow, Lee will order prawns, egg rolls, and chocolates, but on the following day and the one after, Preston will take it upon himself to deliver a plate of crackers, cheeses, and fruit.

We stagger(!) to Sette Mari (on Deck 10) for dinner. This is an Italian restaurant in the same space as La Veranda, its name for breakfast and lunch. We are black-and-blue by the time we arrive, having crashed into one wall and another. The servers are amazing. Even while wobbling and staggering, they manage to deliver food and drinks without catastrophe. I nibble a bit at the antipasto that is "automatic"; for my main course, I choose veal parmigiana, but I can only nibble at it (I feel guilty about leaving most of it uneaten). I don't feel queasy but I am just not interested in food. I do have wine and coffee. What makes the meal experience unpleasant are these extraneous sounds: (1) the gale-force winds coming through a crack in the sliding doors sounding like the moans of a group of deranged ghosts; (2) the Italian arias in one of the room's sound systems; and (3) a very loud and gregarious man from Minnesota, at an adjacent table, who was pontificating on this and that to the couple at the table opposite his.

Dear Gentle Reader. If ye be of a sensitive nature and be loath to read about medical conditions and bodily functions, ye should feel free to skip the following paragraph.

Last January, my friendly neighborhood urologist informed me that my bladder was not emptying properly and that I needed to use a catheter. *Four times a day!* So, it's a nuisance, yes, but also something manageable ... until one thinks about the logistics of doing so when on an extended absence from home. First, there is the issue of packing about 60 of the damned things in a suitcase. Then, there's the matter of finding time and opportunity to employ these devices while on an airplane or on one of the ship's excursions. So, I make an executive decision - instead of hewing to the prescribed "four times daily," it wouldn't be very wrong to fall back to three if that should prove more manageable. Even the physical act of deploying a catheter when confined to the tiny, poorly-lit lavatory on an airplane which may be being buffeted by air turbulence proved not to be a serious

impediment. And as for the rocking and rolling of this cruise ship ... well, I deserve a special commendation.

I be finished now. Ye can return to reading new about our voyage.

The Captain's Reception, scheduled for 6:00 this evening, is postponed until tomorrow. Also, our excursion for tomorrow ("Historic Cambridge and Boston") is cancelled but we are encouraged to check in the morning if an opening for an alternative is available. I'll head to Destination Services when they open tomorrow at 9:00; I'll also ask their advice about my ability to go on the other excursions that we have scheduled. Exhausted, we go to bed at about 10:00. Sleep is difficult as the ship continues to rock and roll while the wind and spray make a frightening sound.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 3

When we rise at 6:30, we realize that the ship is still rocking and rolling, but much less so than yesterday. Still, we need to hold onto railings (Lee) or walker (Ron) as we stagger toward Compass Rose for breakfast. (We had figured that it was preferable to have experienced staff carry food to our table rather than trying to do so ourselves.) I choose the same items that I would at La Veranda (juice, bagel, corn flakes, coffee). On the PA is classical piano music (Debussy, Chopin, Grieg), which is good, but in snippets of no more than 2-3 minutes with zero blank space between selections (which is an abomination). Yet again, I despair to think about yet another attempt to destroy art appreciation among the unclean multitudes. The most grievous insult: a tiny excerpt of Bach's "Goldberg Variations."

We head to Destination Services and learn that our cancelled excursion can be replaced by a very similar one, "Scenic Boston" at 2:45. I also ask about the feasibility of using my walker on several excursions that I had selected. Most are still within my expertise, including those that require taking a tender from ship to shore. At 9:00, we attend the second Dr. Dave lecture, "Settling of the East," accompanied by a coffee and a cookie. At 10:30, we return to our room just as the ship is sailing into Boston harbor. Lee places an order with Preston for a late afternoon delivery of prawns, spring rolls, and "Chocolate Enchantment" (as if we're not getting enough to eat).

At this point, we still hadn't discovered the PRIVACY card to hang on the door knob, so our room is being cleaned when we return from the lecture. No problem - we head to the pleasant (and mercifully quiet) library on Deck 6. It's then down the hall to Coffee Connection for (you guessed it) coffee and a cookie.

I imagine that most of the announcements over the PA are necessary, particularly those with information about safety, but the amount of detail from the captain is excessive (temperature in Celsius and Fahrenheit, wind speed in knots and mph, ocean swells in meters and feet, etc.); and there is also the information about games, shows, events etc. from the British cruise director. Back in the room, I occupy myself with reading newspapers (NYT, TNT, and ST) online and working crosswords.

The bus tour of Boston begins at 2:45. The guide is a woman of a certain age, but very well informed about the role that Boston played in the establishment of our country. She says that she is a native of this city - and this is confirmed by her pronunciation of words like Bah Hahbah (Bar Harbor) and yahd (yard). But there are hints of other influences - for example dawg (dog) which makes her sound like someone from New York (or should I say Noo Yawk). Most surprising is her clear enunciation of T, as in alphabEtical, whereas many of us, myself included, replace the T with double d's or a glottal stop, as we also do in words like bottle, battle, etc. And the biggest surprise of all is that she's the only person in my recollection to pronounce the middle C in ConneCticut. The bus takes us past all of the expected sites (e.g., the Boston Commons, the USS Constitution, Faneuil Hall, the State House, and many churches. The first stop is Copley Place, but I choose to stay on the bus and read my Kindle. I made the same decision for a second stop (I forget what).

Back in our room, I am frustrated by getting nowhere on the latest Will Shortz quiz, but my anxiety is

alleviated by Preston's arrival with our snacks, which we accompany with a wee dram of Lagavulin. At 6:00 the ship leaves for Bar Harbor, and at 7:00 we go to Prime 7 for dinner. Today, we choose to eat alone, but on future days we'll share our table with other travelers. The walk to the restaurant is moderately challenging, but nothing like what we encountered yesterday. At 9:30, we attend the postponed Captain's Reception which is fairly brief (he introduces only six other officers and not the entire crew). By 10:00, when we return to our cabin, the turbulence has increased again - we offer silent prayers and loud curses in the hope of staving off a repeat of yesterday's severe rolling. We get to bed at 11:30.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4

We arise at 7:00. About an hour later, we are anchored off Bar Harbor. It is a sunny day. At Lee's urging, we have breakfast at Compass Rose; mine, again, is juice, corn flakes, bagel, and coffee. A sign of the times: Lee spots an elderly couple at a nearby table who appear to be praying, but who (on further inspection) are merely staring at their cell phones. The PA, again, delivers snippets of classical piano music (Debussy, Chopin, Grieg, Bach - see October 3) with a new wrinkle: a guitar rendition of the ubiquitous Rodrigo *Concierto* that intrudes into every trip we take, no matter what continent we're on.

I go to Destination Services to solicit their opinion on whether or not I'd be able to negotiate the tender (from ship to shore) and the schooner that does a tour of the surrounding waters. I'm told that the schooner will **not** accept wheelchairs or other devices. I ask why I wasn't told this when I asked about it yesterday. There is no answer. The agent makes a couple of phone calls and confirms what she just told me. Lee will go on this excursion alone.

An email from son Steve alerts me to a news article in today's New York Times: NYU has fired Mait Jones, ostensibly because of poor teacher evaluations from a few students. Mait is a brilliant classroom

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/03/us/nyu-organic-chemistry-petition.html>

teacher and a compassionate (but demanding) teacher. This scandal (and that's what it becomes over the next days) just does not ring true. I spend countless hours, today and in the succeeding days, not only corresponding about this with my "groupies" but also reading follow-up articles that appear in Slate, The Washington Post, The New York Times (in addition to the first one), and, *god save us*, FOX News. Several opinion articles by various faculty in social science departments are sympathetic to the students (and their parents), feeling free to label the intro organic course as a weed-out class for students aspiring to go to med school. What nonsense!

It's not often that I *know* two people featured on the front page of the New York Times! Today, there is the article about Mait Jones and the announcement of the Nobel Prize in chemistry awarded to three scientists, one of whom is Barry Sharpless (his second Nobel Prize in chemistry).

Back in the room, I use the computer to read the news. We then go to the Coffee Connection and Lee leaves for the excursion. When she returns a couple of hours later, she is angry: there was precious little on-shore guidance for the bus tour and the schooner; further, she and her fellow passengers sat on the schooner for 40 minutes, waiting for a contingent from a Princess cruise ship that also was in port; and the sea-going part of the excursion was very short (it had been advertised as lasting 1.5 hours) and devoid of interesting commentary. I guess that I'm glad that I didn't go.

While she's gone, I check out Galileo's Lounge (Deck 11) which doesn't open until 3:00. I order a beer, sink into a very very soft chair (I wonder if I'll be able to get up), and read while listening to classical music (full pieces, not snippets) over the PA. Alas, this comes to an end when a young man with an electric guitar sits down, turns on a recording of accompanying orchestral music, and begins to play. This is not conducive to reading so I leave.

Lee returns a while later. We go to the small Navigator Lounge (Deck 6, mid-ship) where she can drown her anger in a Cosmopolitan (the drink, not the magazine). Preston arrives, unannounced and unbidden, with nibbles: cheeses, crackers, fruits. Then it's Compass Rose for dinner where we are seated with Janet and Francis, who live in Southern California. He is a retired aerospace engineer for JPL.

The ship sets sail a little after 7:00. We are reminded to set our watches and clocks one hour ahead for Atlantic Daylight Time. Bed time is at 11:00.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5

We get up at 6:00 and head to La Veranda for breakfast. Our ship has docked in St. John, New Brunswick. The day is grey and cloudy, but rain seems unlikely. At 8:45, we head to the bus for its "St. John Highlights" excursion. Over the course of the tour, there are three stops. Most of the passengers disembark, but I (and my Kindle) stay on board. I have no desire to visit the Old City Market (which Lee agrees was not worth it) nor the Reversing Falls Rapids (which I had seen in 1996 when we visited New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) nor Fort La Tour. Lee reports that this final stop was interesting, as it covered the founding of the fur-trading colony by Charles de Saint-Etienne de la Tour (what a name!); he and his wife established positive relationships with the indigenous people of the region.

According to Wikipedia:

In July 1640, Charles de La Tour and Charles de Menou d'Aulnay began a series of violent and costly confrontations that would last for the next five years. Hostilities continued to escalate and by 1642 d'Aulnay managed to get La Tour charged with treason and disrespect to the French Crown. Knowing he would be imprisoned if he were to return to France, La Tour sent his wife, Françoise-Marie, to advocate on his behalf which she did skillfully. She was allowed to return to Acadia with a warship to help her husband defend himself. In the Spring of 1643, La Tour led a party of English mercenaries against the Acadian colony at Port-Royal. His 270 Puritan and Huguenot troops killed three, burned a mill, slaughtered cattle and seized 18,000 livres of furs. In 1645, while La Tour was in Boston seeking reinforcements and drumming up more support for his cause, d'Aulnay retaliated by seizing all of La Tour's possessions and outposts, especially Fort La Tour at Saint John and Cap de Sable. In the Battle of Saint John, La Tour's wife defended the fort for three days. On the fourth day despite losing 33 men, d'Aulnay was able to breach the fort, and La Tour's men were sent to the gallows, forcing Françoise-Marie to watch with a rope around her own neck. Three weeks later she died at age 23 while a prisoner.

At 11:30 we return to the ship and head to the pool deck (the clouds have dissipated and the sun is out) for cheeseburgers and fries. After doing computer-related things in our room, we go at 3:30 to another Dr. Dave lecture, "What to See at Sea," about animals ranging in size from whales down to fish to plankton. We return to our room. Our butler Preston delivers, unbidden, a tray of snacks (crackers, cheeses, fruit). He must be worried that we are on the edge of perishing by starvation. At 5:00, the ship sets sail for Shelburne in Nova Scotia. At Compass Rose, we are joined by Frank and Carol-Lynn from Orlando.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6

The morning begins as dark and rainy with thick fog, and the ship is doing its bucking-bronco imitation as we (very carefully) make our way to La Veranda. Just as we are about to head into port, the captain changes course and explains over the PA that the Shelburne excursion is cancelled - the waters are too violent to allow safe use of tenders from ship to shore. So we head to our next stop, Sydney. (Our dining pleasure is "enhanced," once again, by the annoying new-agey music being piped in.) This morning, I decide to get a more substantial breakfast: scrambled eggs, cheese and cold meats, mushrooms, and a bagel.

We head briefly to our cabin, then retreat to the library while the room is being cleaned. At 8:30 there is

another announcement by the captain: we will experience 2 m swells and 25 knot winds which will lead to a bumpy journey, although not as harrowing as last Sunday's. He had tried to turn into Shelburne's harbor but thought better of it. We expect to arrive in Sydney tomorrow morning at 8:30. The cruise director takes his place at the microphone and announces that a brand-new set of games and other activities are now planned for morning and afternoon, just so that passengers who have no lives will find something to do. (He didn't say it that way, but it was my interpretation.)

He also announces that he called Dr. Dave (at 7:00 am !) to ask if he could do an unscheduled presentation, which is delivered at 11:35. Devoid of serious history, anthropology, and biology, it is a hilarious talk titled "35 Things You Didn't Know About Canada." Among them (from Lee's excellent notes): • Canada has more coastline (over 25,000 miles) than any other country. • Individuals cannot own a bank in Canada. • Moose/car encounters occur about 500 times a year. • Hawaiian pizza was invented in Canada by a Greek restaurant owner. • Canadians are polite and kind. Typical bathroom graffiti are "Your mom is a nice lady" and "Your dad is proud of you." • Canadians have the largest per capita consumption of donuts and of mac and cheese in the world. • Pejorative nicknames for Canadians: Québécois are called pea soup eaters, Nova Scotians are lobster-heads, and Prince Edward Islanders are spud pickers. • A "two-four" is a case of beer; a "two-six" is a 26-ounce bottle of ale. • The ubiquitous "eh" can have different meanings - it's a question when the speaker uses a rising tone and has one eye partially open; it's a statement when uttered with a neutral tone and both eyes open; and it can serve as a sentence-filler (like uh or um) if uttered with a neutral tone. • Canadians use prepositions differently from Americans - e.g., "He will be arriving *at* the weekend" and "I used *out* the box of flakes." • The phone number of the Canadian government's consumer services is 1-800- 622-6232 or, easier to remember, 1-800-O-Canada.

We stagger back to our cabin (clearly we are landlubbers and not sea-worthy). The internet has many new stories about Mait Jones, academe's newest *cause célèbre*, many of which miss the point of what Mait (and I and others) try to accomplish in the introductory organic chemistry course. One of the misguided emails comes from a fellow chemist and Heron's Key resident, who shall remain nameless but whose initials are Oscar Roberto.

The captain confirms what he said earlier: the 2 m swell, 40 knot winds will make our journey to Sydney uncomfortable; we hope to arrive tomorrow morning at 6:30. At 1:00, we get coffee and some nibbles at Coffee Connection. To make Preston happy (and us as well), we ordered prawns and spring rolls for later this afternoon.

I think that we were lucky, last Sunday and Monday, that only a few drops of water seeped through our balcony door. Others were not so fortunate. Frank and Carol-Lynn, our dinner companions yesterday, have a cabin on Deck 10 - when water started coming in through the door, crew members "solved" the problem by applying duct tape. Janet and Francis, who ate with us two days ago, reported that their Deck 7 room was flooded. The crew brought in fans to try to dry the carpet, a slow process as the fans are still operating today.

At 6:30, there is a Seven Seas Club party in the Seven Seas Lounge (that seems appropriate). It's not clear what qualifies one to be a member of this "exclusive" club, but apparently more than 2/3 of the passengers have been invited. The captain and all of the officers and entertainers greet us as we enter. A pianist is on stage until the captain arrives to give awards to three employees who have served on this ship for at least five years. The cruise consultant provides data on the number of countries from which the crew comes and from which the passengers come. He then states how many of us have cruised 20 days, then 40, then 60 ... and finally he introduces one couple who have exceeded 1000 days! A female singer, accompanied by the pianist, takes over and by 6:30 we feel that we can leave gracefully even though the drinking and nibbling are still going on.

At Compass Rose, we are joined by Carol and John who live in a Vi retirement home in Arizona. In the section of this travelogue devoted to October 1, I marveled at the large number of look-alikes among our

fellow passengers. I can now add three more sightings: at the pool deck on October 5, a second Sam Vazquez double - we'll call her Sam Jr. - and at dinner on October 6, seated at a nearby table are Jerry Walton and Gary Stottler.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7

We arise at 6:15. By 7:00, we are anchored in Sydney harbor, necessitating the use of tenders for a more than 30-minute ride to shore. According to CruiseMapper, which Lee has discovered, two other ships are docked at the short. Why they and not us? We have breakfast at La Veranda (for me - corn flakes, bagel with cream cheese and lox, juice, coffee). We return briefly to our cabin, put out the SERVICE sign, and go to the library. After spending considerable time there, we return to the cabin only to discover that it's still being serviced, so we retreat, this time to Coffee Connection. I decide that my legs are so weak and tired that I'll skip today's excursion, "Historic Sydney Walking Tour." I turn in my ticket and make it back to our room, now completely cleaned - the room, that is. At 11:30, Lee heads out for the tender ride and the walking tour. Professional shopper that she is, she's already identified craft shops that are on or near the walking route.

I work on the computer and read the Kindle. Lee returns a little after 4:00, limping quite badly. The walking on the tour aggravated her bum leg. (As described in her journal, "On the way back to the tender, Lee's left leg suddenly goes wonky - horrible pain in the thigh and marked difficulty walking - hobble, hobble!") Such are the ravages of old age (or, more precisely, *pseudo* old age). We go to Coffee Connection for a coffee and a cookie. Dinner is at Sette Mari, a much more pleasant experience than last Sunday when the ship was rocking violently. The captain makes his standard announcement: distance to cover, average speed needed, wind and water conditions, and "For romantic souls, sunset is at ... and sunrise is at ..." This time, he adds the extra information that for Newfoundland we have to set our watches and clocks ahead by 30 minutes. (I won't bother.)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8

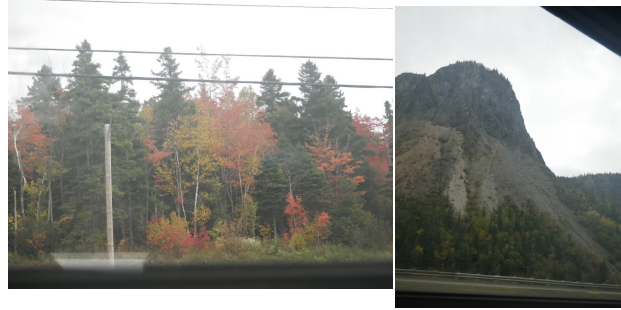
We arise at 6:15 (i.e. 6:45) and are greeted by bright sun as we sail toward Newfoundland. Following breakfast at La Veranda, we return to our cabin for a short while, leaving shortly after to hear today's Dr. Dave lecture, "Coming to the Americas - The Story of the First People." Back in our stateroom at 10:30 (11:00) we are approaching Corner Brook with its huge paper mill (ugh) and hillside with lots of fall colors. At 10:45 (11:15) Lee leaves for her day-long excursion to Gros Morne National Park. I remain in the room until I leave for my excursion "Highlights of Corner Brook" at 2:25 (2:55). This half-hour "adjustment" is driving me nuts.

The day is dark, grey, gloomy with a threat of imminent rain. I make it down to the pier, but only with the help of a crew member - this ramp features a set of steps rather than a smooth incline. Our vehicle is an old school bus (thank goodness we don't need air-conditioning). The driver is a personable bloke named Rick - he and I will have several conversation when I stay onboard after passengers have departed to view the sights (such as they are). The tour guide is Kevin, a fast-talking, wise-cracking, man who imagines himself a stand-up comic and who could be a younger version (in appearance, not in eloquence) of noted British actor David Bradley. He offends by his poor grammar, his loud gum-chewing, and his attempts at slightly off-color humor. (For example, he relates a joke about Tiger Woods who came to Corner Brook to play golf and tells a local that these wooden tees are what he rests his balls on when he drives. Ha-ha.)

I ask about pronunciation. "We hear both *Newfoundland* and *Newfoundland* is the U.S." Rick says that it is pronounced the way "understand" is spoken, which negates both of my suggestions. And, when Kevin is doing his spiel, he often truncates the word so that it sounds like Newfland. Weird. We also learn that its companion territory has its accent on the final syllable: *Labrador*. Kevin and Rick have an accent that I would describe as half Scottish/half-Cockney. I leave it to you to figure that out.

We (some 18 of us) depart on time. Our first stop, just 10 minutes later, is at an abandoned railroad

station that features an abandoned locomotive and one attached car. I choose to remain on the bus for this and all subsequent stops. I try to read my Kindle if there is not too much chatter behind me. Next, just 15 minutes later, is another stop, this one for the geographical feature Man in the Mountain. As we drive, the city and surrounding area seem rather grim - perhaps it's because the day is so dark. At 3:10, we stop in the town of Steady Brook, somewhat more upscale, featuring stores, supermarkets, car dealers, etc. Kevin points to a Tim Horton and says that he is the biggest drug dealer in Canada. An obtuse passenger says that she doesn't understand. "Well, it sells lots of caffeine." "I still don't understand," she says.



A half-hour later, we stop in the Margaret Bowater park, a tax dodge by Mr. Bowater who "gifted" his wife with the park. He was the owner of the paper mill, which formerly employed some 3,000 workers but now needs only about 500. And after another half-hour, we are at the Capt. James Cook Memorial. In the 1760s, Cook charted this coast and spent four years here, his "apprenticeship" before his celebrated travels to the South Pacific.

Because the wind has picked up, the temperature has dropped, and the skies have darkened, the driver and guide decide to head back to the ship, about 30 minutes earlier than scheduled. (Does this have anything to do with the 30-minute time zone?) And it's a good thing because rain begins to fall just as we are walking from the bus to the ramp.

Lee returns from her tour at 6:00. Her experience was vastly more positive than mine. Good. Dinner at 6:40 is with Larry and Holly from southern California. He is a retired H.S. teacher and athletics coach. Each was married earlier - his wife was best friends with Holly's daughter. Each is a godparent of one of the other's grandchildren. They are not married to one another but they do travel together, although staying in separate staterooms. Confused? Me, too.

I need to set clock and watch back one hour (one-and-a-half hours for those who took account if the half-hour change today) because tomorrow we'll be in the EDT zone.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9

We arise at 7:00 and are greeted by (tentative) sunlight as we cruise the Gulf of Saint Lawrence on our way to Saguenay. We discover that the button for our vacuum-operated toilet is not operative. The same was true yesterday. I call the front desk and, within five minutes, a crew member arrives. He says that there had been a problem with the vacuum system, but all is well now. I hope he's right.

We have breakfast at La Veranda. It is mobbed (unlike all of the previous days). Perhaps it's because we're a little later than normal? I eschew my regular breakfast (cold cereal, bagel) in favor of French toast. Two reasons: (1) I feel like a change and (2) by ordering something special I can avoid having to fight off the desperate horde who are monopolizing the buffet tables. We are rewarded by two more sightings, although not of Heron's Key people. At nearby tables are (deceased) chemists Jerry Berson and Lars Onsager, the latter a Nobel Laureate.

At 10:00 we go to a Dr. Dave lecture: "The Saint Lawrence," then back to our cabin to read and work on the computer. A little after noon, we go to Coffee Connection for a selection of cold cuts, cheeses, sweets, and coffee, then back to our room. The traversal of the Saint Lawrence is smooth ... so far - let's hope that it stays that way.

Because I cannot connect to NPR.org, seemingly for security reasons, Steve acquired today's Will Shortz

quizzes, just as he did last week. The take-home quiz was so easy that I solved it in seconds, although I had to check online to convince myself that I had really found "a popular TV show." In fact, I did. I also engage in some email trash talk with Steve about the upcoming playoff series between Houston and Seattle. The Mariners, not only came back from huge deficits in last night's first-round game, but also won the second game, both games having been played in Toronto. At least the best-of-five series with the Astros coming up is in a 2-2-1 format, guaranteeing Seattle at least one home post-season game, their first since 2001.

A little after noon, we go to Coffee Connection for some sustenance. And as if we're not getting enough calories, Lee asks Preston to deliver crackers and cheeses at 5:30. We have a shared reservation at Prime 7. Our dinner partners turn out to be Carol and John, with whom we ate last Thursday. They are the first repeat guests on this trip, in striking contrast to what happened on one of the Regent cruises in Europe during which of the eight times that we asked to share a table, six of those turned out to be with the same couple, he a medicinal chemist (of some note) and his wife.

Following dinner, we retire to our cabin and do computer "stuff" in which we learn that the Seahawks blew a lead against New Orleans and, worst of all, the Mets were eliminated from the playoffs by getting only one hit and no runs at the hands of San Diego. Well, at least I won't have split allegiances if the Mets and Mariners were to meet in the World Series.

I decide to bag tomorrow's scheduled tour, "Saguenay Highlights," for three reasons: (1) we'll be at anchor, thus necessitating the use of a tender to get to shore; (2) Lee has chosen a different tour, so she'll not be with me to help if I run into trouble; and (3) the description of the excursion does not sound interesting. I am also somewhat unnerved by the warning: "This tour involves a moderate amount of walking. It is available to guests who utilize a collapsible wheelchair/scooter, are able to both make their way on and off the coach *and have a companion to assist them. Those guests with mobility issues are cautioned to evaluate their personal level of ability and stamina.*" [my italics]

I finish reading "The Lincoln Highway." I found it enjoyable (if scarcely believable) but was put off by the nearly angelic behavior of several of the main characters. I would rate it B-minus, certainly not as good as the other Amor Towles novel I'd read, "A Gentleman in Moscow." We go to bed at 11:00.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10

We rise at 7:00 and have breakfast at La Veranda. I return to my standard fare: juice, corn flakes, English muffin (instead of a bagel), and coffee. Our ship is cruising up the Saguenay River and, *mirabile dictu*,*

*A colleague in the English Department at the University of Tennessee tells the story of a rather mediocre student who, one day, turned in a remarkably good paper. My colleague wrote *mirabile dictu* on the front page and returned it to the student. A day or so later, the faculty member got a call from his department head - apparently the student had gone directly to the main office to complain that his professor had called him a miserable dick.

the sun in out! We will finally reach our destination, where we drop anchor, at about 11:00. Following breakfast, we are consigned to the library because housekeeping has not yet serviced our room. After about an hour, Lee goes up to deck 9, but returns with the news that it is still not ready for occupancy. A second reconnaissance hike to deck 9 at about 11:00 indicates that we can return to our room.

While in the library, I work a New York Times crossword puzzle with an amusing theme. Consider these three clues: **19A** - One for whom 36-Across has four syllables; **36A** - See 19- and 57-Across; **57A** - One for whom 36-Across has three syllables. After some filling in of other answers, I discover that **36A** is UN-IONIZED. Aha! **19A** is CHEMIST who reads the word as UN-IONIZED; **57A** is PLUMBER who reads it as UNION-IZED.

Lee, whose chosen tour ("The Best of Saguenay") sounds no more compelling than mine (see above), still chooses to go on it at about 1:30. The ship's internet connection has been sluggish, at best, over the past few days, but today it is molasses-like. Not only are web sites loading very slowly but I find myself losing my connection even while working on the computer. I guess that Saguenay may be the most rural place that we'll visit on this cruise.

I begin another Kindle book, George Packer's "Last Best Hope." Lee's excursion was supposed to get her back to the ship at 5:00, but she is delayed. Preston delivers some spring rolls and shrimp at 5:40 - and still no Lee. I didn't notice, but she had sent two emails announcing that she'd be delayed. Finally, she arrives a little after 6:00; while waiting for her, I showed amazing restraint by eating only two of the six shrimp and none of the spring rolls.

We decide to defer our glass of Lagavulin until after dinner which we do at Compass Rose, arriving at 6:30. Our dinner companions, already seated, are Steve and Judy. When he asks where we come from, I say, "We live in the Seattle area, just across Puget Sound from Tacoma ..." and he starts laughing. Turns out, they live in Tacoma (Fircrest, to be precise) so the four of us spend much of the dinner time comparing notes on restaurants in the area, stores, groceries, etc. Judy had worked with Samantha Fisher, so she was somewhat knowledgeable about Heron's Key.

Back in the room, we read, use the computer, and consume that promised wee dram of Lagavulin. A message from Regent tells us that we need to have suitcases outside the room by 10:00 tomorrow evening; and that we need to vacate our room by 8:00 the following morning. Our ride to the airport will be at 8:30 Wednesday morning. Bed time, today, is at 11:00.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11

We rise at 7:00 and go to La Veranda for breakfast (juice, bagel, Cheerios, coffee). We arrive in Québec at 8:30 - out the window is a view of the Chateau Frontenac. We then take reading material and a particularly difficult NYT crossword puzzle and hide out in the library while waiting for our room to be cleaned. Upon our return at about 10:30, we see that our suitcases have been set out on the bed - they really do want to get rid of us.

We begin to pack, to the extent that it can be done before everything is ready. We'll finish at the end of our excursion (about 4:00). At noon, we go for a light lunch at La Veranda; and at 1:35 we head down for our 1:45 departure ("Historic and Modern Québec with Montmorency Falls"). The bus makes three stops but I stay on board: Plains of Abraham, Hotel Frontenac and neighborhood; Montmorency Falls. We get back to the ship at 5:10.



Prior to dinner, we get most of our packing done. At Compass Rose, we choose to sit alone. A somewhat gruff man, a type often found in New York, leans over our table and asks, "How many sisters did our guide have?" "Two," reply both Magids. Why he stopped here and why he asked that question, I have no idea, but we get to talking. He grew up in the Bronx, went to Bronx High School of Science, then to Harvard for his B.S. and Ph.D. in mathematics, taught at UCLA and Wisconsin-Madison, and now lives in San Diego. I trash talk a bit about Dodgers-Yankees and about notable graduates from my high school. Later, he walks by our table again and I ask him what year he graduated from high school. He answers 1956, one year after my leaving James Madison. I say that two Madison grads went to Harvard to study mathematics. He didn't know David Bachrach (not surprising because he would have been a year behind David and, sadly, because David committed suicide). But he did know Steve Lichtenbaum. Steve was a year behind me at Madison and was clearly extraordinarily gifted in mathematics. My memory is that he taught at Cornell, confirmed by my new BFF.

We finish packing and get out suitcases out the door before 10:00.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12

We arise at 6:45, eat breakfast at La Veranda, return to our room to finish packing, and are out the door before 8:00 (as instructed). We wait in the lounge for our departure group to be called. We had placed RED2 tags on our luggage and it was an announcement for RED2 to disembark for which we are waiting. I need some help from the crew because the exit ramp has stairs at the beginning. Three helping hands reach out, which is one more than I need. We are on the bus at 8:30 and at the airport at 9:00, despite a few areas of significant congestion.

A summary of the distances covered on this voyage. The shortest legs were 131 and 135 nautical miles, respectively, from Bar Harbor to Saint John and from Québec to Montréal. The longest were 517 and 548 nautical miles, respectively, from Saint John to Sydney and from Corner Brook to Saguenay. The total distance traveled was 2,249 nautical miles. (Not included in this were the incessant vertical traversals, up/down/up/down ... in the rough seas of the first few days.

We head to an Air Canada counter, only to be turned away and told to go to the United counter because they are the carrier of record. Because we have a tight connection in Chicago, I decide not to gate-check my walker, but rather to send it through with the rest of the luggage. Props to Air Canada for providing a wheelchair and pusher, a woman who is one of the airline's professional staff and not a minimum-wage, over-worked laborer. First she wheels me to the "oversize baggage" counter to leave my walker. She then eases us past Security (although it's still necessary to empty pockets, take out the laptop, etc.) The metal clamps on my suspenders cause an alarm to go off, but after "wandering" me, I'm declared not-dangerous. From there, we go through U.S. Customs and Passport Control, thus negating having to do so when we arrive in Chicago. (This same system was in use in Dublin, three years ago. It would be wonderful if other foreign airports would provide this service.) She then takes us to the lounge at 9:45 where we wait for our flight to leave, some four hours from now. (Why did Regent get us here so early? I have no idea.)

I have some coffee and try to read my Kindle, but I'm defeated by the cacophony of miscellaneous airport sounds (people talking, dishes clanging, air handlers whooshing, cell phone users employing their "outdoor" voices, etc.) At 12:20, an agent calls my name and yet another Air Canada employee arrives to push me to the departure gate. It seems a bit early, but he says that they are short-handed. He delivers us to the front of what will be a boarding line ... except that at 12:45, there is a change of gate from 73 to 81. This may not sound like a huge change, but it is a very long walk - and, as no pusher arrives to move me, the ticket agent at the gate takes this task upon herself. We board the plane and are seated by 1:15. I am deeply impressed by the attentiveness of the Air Canada staff.

[An unfortunate event - I spot two New York Yankees baseball caps in the airport. Having seen only one of these when we were at JFK, I had thought that I might escape this assault on my sensibilities.]

On the Air Canada plane, the safety announcements are pre-recorded as are instructions from the flight crew about placing luggage in the overheads or under the seat in front, etc. This seems much more efficient than doing these announcements "live" as on most other airlines.

The plane is air-borne at 2:02 (half-an-hour later than advertised). We are offered a snack at 2:20: cheese, crackers, nuts. We make up the lost time and are at the gate in Chicago at 4:10 by my watch (3:10 CDT). The final approach is over Lake Michigan and then due west, passing over the All State Arena (concerts, minor league sports) and into O'Hare. Upon exiting the plane, there is a brief wheelchair mix-up, but fortunately it gets resolved because it is a very long walk (from B5 to C42), involving moving from one terminal to another, to reach the gate for the Seattle departure. Lee gets separated from us, as she could use escalators whereas we needed elevators, one to go to a lower level and another to return to the departure gate level. We arrive at the gate at 4:40 (3:40 CDT) and are seated in 2A and 2B.

Two women are seated in front of us. One is very frail. Her much younger traveling companion has an exceptionally loud voice, perhaps necessary because of poor hearing by the other woman but more likely her normal volume. Not only is it loud, but it is penetrating - a foghorn voice if ever there were one. So even though she is facing forward or sideways, it's as if she yelling right into my face. This plane, a Boeing 737-900, lacks typical amenities - for example, there is no monitor at each seat, thus obviating the viewing of movies. At 4:52 EDT, I reset my watch to 1:52 PDT.

The doors are closed and we are air-borne (after a very long taxi) at 2:30. On the flight, I finish reading George Packer's "Last Best Hope" and begin Andy Weir's "Project Hail Mary," both on the Kindle. I also work a couple of NYT crossword puzzles; earlier, I had also done one at the Montréal airport during our long wait. A meal is served at 3:15. My notes are more illegible than the norm, but Lee and I both remember that the food was awful. I *think* that we started with a plate of cheese balls plus followed by vegetarian meat balls, broccolini that was so fibrous that it was uncuttable, and couscous; desert was a sweet muffin with chocolate filling.

After adeptly deploying my catheter (in the lavatory, of course) at 5:10, we begin our descent into Seattle, passing Mt. Rainier at 6:05 and touching down at 6:38. There is a wheelchair with my name on it, so we make our way to baggage claim - we get there a good 20 minutes before the first suitcases arrive - and then to another carousel where oversized luggage (i.e., my walker) arrives. I call Jesse and he shows up in a few minutes to drive us home.

A brief review of Navigator, the ship that was our home for the past week-and-a-half. Is it an indication of financial troubles that Regent no longer provides the beautiful metal ballpoint pens (several of which I've "liberated" from earlier voyages and am still using) and, instead, offers a cheap, plastic, Bic pen? I also missed having a relatively quiet place to read or have a conversation. Yes, there was the library, but its seating was limited. Granted, Navigator (with a capacity of 490 guests) is considerably smaller than Voyager and Explorer (each with over 700), but it lacks the type of observation deck that the others have. Perhaps the following is also true of the larger ships (it's been a few years since we sailed on them) but Navigator seems determined to assault one's ears with announcements and unwanted music. I'll cut them some slack about the announcements that were piped into our cabin, given the need to keep us informed about the inclement weather and rough seas, but can there be an excuse for having live musicians not only in the theater but also in Galileo's Lounge and Stars Lounge? I also take issue with the bed: the mattress is very thick, thus making it difficult to get into/out of bed (my feet don't touch the floor and there is no wooden rail). Because of the severe hip/leg pain that I'm suffering as a result of the surgery, I like to ease my way into a prone position with legs on the bed - this is difficult. And this is exacerbated by the significant slope of the mattress toward the edge of the bed. What also does not help is that the mattress cover is somewhat slippery. I am also angered by the incorrect information that I was given by Destination Services about the Bar Harbor excursion (see October 3-4). OK, enough grouching.

As I explained on p.1, I had packed numerous magazines, puzzles, soft-cover books, and my Kindle Reader for this trip. And even though I did bail out on several excursions, I did not read as much as I intended. Yes, I did finish all of the magazines and I did complete most of the puzzles, but the two soft-cover books remain unread. Perhaps on our January cruise to New Zealand and Australia? What I did accomplish was reading the following on the Kindle:

Jonathan Karl's "Betrayal: The Final Act of the Trump Show"
 Amor Towles's "The Lincoln Highway"
 George Packer's "Last Best Hope"
 Andy Weir's "Project Hail Mary" (in progress)