



Welcome to Rott's Manor

Costa Rica 2007 Trip Report

We have been on four previous weeks aboard Windjammer vessels, and are looking forward to our fifth sailing. We used our timeshare guest option to take Mary's sisters, Ann & Kathy, and they too are excited about the week. Below is our trip report... and yes, it will be long and detailed.

Saturday, June 30th **ATL to the ship**

Today we are booked on a direct Delta flight from Atlanta (ATL) to San Jose (SJO), Costa Rica and we will meet up with Mary's sisters in the San Jose Airport, Costa Rica. Or so we thought...

We arrived at ATL just in time to avoid the REALLY long lines. I probably shouldn't say this because it will never happen again, but we made it from the parking lot to our departure gate in less than an hour, wow! Trust me, that never happens in ATL.

We had a little breakfast in the food court near our gate and then **IT** happened... Mary's phone rang. Mary's sisters are stuck in Manchester, NH with a broken plane they will not make the connecting flight in Philly that will get them to Costa Rica today. Uh oh. They are trying different flight options but nothing is available for them until Sunday!

We hired private transport from Costa Rica Shuttle (www.costaricashuttle.com) – WHICH WE WILL **NOT** USE AGAIN. So, the first call Mary made was to them to tell them to expect two people today not four, and to inquire about pickup for the other two on Sunday. No problem with the change, on the phone they were happy to assist us.

Our luck was holding up, we had a smooth on-time flight the only screaming baby was way in the back far far away from us (sorry if you were back there with the screamer). Delta even served us a hot meal for lunch.

SJO can be a little confusing with long lines to clear customs/immigrations. We had plenty of time to talk to folks in line around us. The lady right next to us had thought about doing a Windjammer, but hadn't yet. After talking to her, she is definitely

Windjammer material, and we look forward to sailing with her in the future, she was a hoot!

Finally, we cleared customs and picked up our luggage. Now, the real madness begins, we started to look for our driver in the huge crowd that waits outside. It's just crazy. Well, we finally find our driver. One of our requirements for private transportation, was that the driver speak English... he didn't. Strike one. The second was the transport company promised a nice comfortable van with good air-conditioning... our driver led us to a four-door piece of @\$% taxi! Strike two. Another of our expectations and items promised from the private transport was photo stops on the way... we rode two hours, no stops, no conversation with the driver. Strike three. Enough said about Costa Rica Shuttle.

Along the way from SJO to the ship, the scenery was beautiful. Beside the road around one corner, the boulders had beautiful paintings on them. Anyone know what that was about? Our driver didn't tell us. There were a lot of roadside stands selling crafts, fruits, and baked goods. We arrived at the marina, and were very happy to see four masts... Legacy. All is fine in our world, well almost, wish Ann & Kathy were here ... then again after that ride, well, hope they have better luck tomorrow.

At the marina, we find a bench in the shade and relax for a while watching the birds flying around....then Mary's stomach really begins to growl, two more hours 'til we can board. Nope, she's not going to make it 'til swizzle time. We look around and find the Hook Up Bar & Grille, gem of a find. And right now is happy hour Woo Hoo! We order up some munchies and a couple of local brews, Imperial is the name of the beer. The food here was good, and not too expensive. Can't beat the beer prices, our bar bill was around \$6 for 6 beers, tax, and the included service/tip. There is much discussion as to whether to tip extra, we felt the service here was excellent and deserving of more than a 10% included in the bill.

The launch arrived at the dock, and we were one of the first groups to be ferried over to the ship. First thing of course is all the paperwork... and this cruise has a little extra. Apparently we will be going to Panama, so we have to fill out two extra forms; one to enter Panama (leaving Costa Rica) and the other to enter Costa Rica (leaving Panama). And of course, we can't forget to sign up for tomorrow's excursion – Canopy Tour (aka Zip Line).

After paperwork, is time for snacks & swizzles from 6pm to about 7pm. Then there wasn't much time after swizzles before the dinner buffet was brought out around 7:30pm. After dinner we have to attend the dive meeting, so for us not too much time tonight to meet & greet our fellow passengers... but tomorrow is another day.

Sunday, July 1st
Los Suenos

We sleep in and barely eat breakfast before it's time for Captain's story-time at 8:45. This starts a trend for the rest of the week... Mary never saw the sunrise. Story-time was a bit long this morning. Captain Fernando introduced the crew, told us about today's activities, the ship, where we were going... etc.

After story-time, we hung out on the ship waiting for Mary's sisters. We didn't know if Ann & Kathy had gotten an early flight, but we hoped that it got them to Los Suenos before 3pm the last scheduled launch for the day.

Soon it was time to go off on our zip-line tour. No Ann & Kathy yet, hope they're on the ship when we get back. The coach ride to the zip-line was only about 15 minutes. Good for us, Mary is not fond of the twisty roads. Once there we were fitted into harnesses and given a helmet & gloves. Then it was a short walk down the road and up some steps to the first platform. Nothing too strenuous about this excursion, except the heat and humidity which had us sweating just standing still. We were given a brief talk about how to hold on, brake and relax, have fun. We were the last in line. One of the ladies in front of us had a real fear of heights, she was shaking, but she did it... and I think by the last "run" she was laughing and smiling. At the first platform, Mary saw some leaf cutter ants. There were 9 runs in total. While waiting at one of the platforms for her turn, Mary spotted a colorful bird way up in the trees. Our guide was very excited about the bird and took Mary's camera to get a better picture of it. The whole excursion was over in less than two hours.

Back on the ship, it was lunch time. Lunch was delicious.

We looked all over the ship, but no sign of Ann & Kathy yet. So, we hung out on the top deck under the shade of the tarp reading all afternoon waiting for them to arrive. It was late, almost 3pm and no sign of them yet. Good news (for us), the afternoon zip-line tour is running late, so the ship will not be leaving without them. This gives Ann & Kathy just enough time. They showed up and made the very last launch to the ship. Mary gave Ann & Kathy a quick tour of the ship then let them settle in after their long day of travel.

Soon the anchor was raised and we were underway. First order of business was the mandatory safety drill. Other than, being hot & humid, and rocking and rolling... nothing unusual to report here. But soon after Mary wasn't feeling the greatest and retreated to the cabins air-conditioning... not to be seen again until Monday.

We raised the sails and headed for Tortugas. Snacks & Swizzles were served at 5pm. Pete brought Mary some crackers and ginger ale.

Then after it was time to rent snorkel gear for the week. Pete got fins only. We brought our other gear. Though in hind sight, other than the diving & one beach day, there was not much need for snorkel gear this trip.

Just as the crew was ready to set up the BBQ ashore the rains came down. So, BBQ was served on the ship. About this time Pete checks on Mary to see if she was up for dinner. Now if anything can pull Mary out of the cabin it is tonight's dinner of ribs & chicken. However, she decided room service was a better option and Pete brought her a rib. At this time, Mary said that there was no way she would be up for the 6:30 am dive that they signed up for. So, Pete found Tomash and cancelled Mary's reservation.

Tomash offered a night dive, but no one took him up on it. If Mary had been feeling better we would have been all over that.

Monday, July 2nd

Tortugas

This was an odd day, with sticky buns & mimosas served on the beach. The first launch was at 6am and the last was at 10am. It was a gorgeous beach, the only real "beach" day this trip.

Pete was up early and off for his only dive this week. The divers got back just in time. Visibility was about 30 feet. He said it was an OK dive. So, Mary didn't feel too bad about missing it.

Mary got up and hung around the ship. With everyone at the beach, it was like having her own 300 foot sailing yacht.

Ann & Kathy went off to the beach. It was a really nice stop. Too bad we couldn't stay later here to have lunch on the beach. So, why are we leaving at 10am? We need fuel. The 10am launch came back from the beach, up came the anchor, and then we were off to Caldera.

It was a late story-time and one without a very noticeable crew member... no captain. The best story-time of the week, nice and short.

Caldera, OK, well that just sucked, but hey you gotta get fuel or you just don't go anywhere else. Why was it so awful? Well, when we got there they didn't have room for us to dock to take on fuel. So we just sat there watching all the container ships that were also waiting for a slot to dock. It was just the luck of the draw that they didn't have a slot for us when we got there, but the captain never gave us an update. We used the afternoon to relax and read our books. What was a nice relaxing afternoon for us, was seen as a wasted afternoon of valuable vacation time by many of the passengers... this was just the start of the "tension" onboard.

The afternoon fades away and snacks & swizzles are served. And we're still waiting to get fuel.

Following swizzles, crab races heat up on the top deck. We get through the qualifying races, and just about are ready for the big race when the sky opens up and it pours. We move down to the quarterdeck, for the final race. Mary wagered a few buck on a couple of crabs. Finally the big race is run, and the winner was one that Mary bet on. Yeah.

After the race, the first dinner seating is served. We always wait for the second seating... who's that hungry after snacks & swizzles?

We hang out on the quarterdeck chatting. At some point the rain let's up enough for Mary to make a run up to the bar for something refreshing. Well, that's just what she got. After picking up drinks for her & Pete, she was walking out from underneath the tarp when the ship rolled in her direction which allowed all the water that had been collecting in the tarp to shower down on top of her. Too funny, timing is everything.

After we ate dinner, we just weren't up for "battle of the sexes". So, we went to bed.

Tuesday, July 3rd

At Sea

The run to **Panama**, for us was not so bad... at least we weren't in cubicles at work. However, it would be nice if Miami would sort this out to eliminate the need to go there, just to clear the ship from Costa Rica. The day started out by looking for dolphins racing at the bow of the ship. Mary was able to capture a few good photos. It was a beautiful morning.

At story-time, Captain Fernando felt the need to kill some time. So, he was a little long winded today. He gave us a little history lesson about Legacy. Well, where else were we going to go, he had a captive audience. Then Jade came up and told us the bad news, that there would only be one waterfall tour tomorrow with very limited spaces, and then there would also be a botanical garden tour that Tomash would lead. After story-time the signup sheets would be in the normal location. Well, all the ship wanted to go the waterfall. And tension increased; when one person from a huge group of twenty signed up her whole group... this meant that the second person in line for the sign up didn't get on the list. Not cool. We didn't make the list either. So, we decided that we would just venture off on our own tomorrow.

The really nice thing about today was the crew went out of their way to entertain us. Pirate trivia, L-G-R game, Bingo, and a veggie-gami demo are on the schedule today. Jade & Tomash led a round of pirate trivia. Because of the lengthy story-time this game lasted right up to lunch. And the scheduled L-G-R game was cancelled. There was just a little time following lunch for reading on the top deck. Then it was time for bingo. We heard it was quite the bingo game with cash winnings. Well, if Mary had

known it was for cash, she might have played. Then Strokey wowed us all with his skill with a paring knife.

And that brings us to another snacks & swizzles. Following snacks & swizzles was dance class led by a couple of passengers. Pete & Mary tried a few steps. Ann got up and danced too. Kathy was feeling a bit under the weather and wasn't seen much all day.

Tonight is PJ night. So, we go get dressed appropriately before dinner.

After dinner was movie night; National Treasure was the feature. Mary grabbed a mat and immediately fell asleep to the gently rocking of the ship.

Wednesday, July 4th

Golfito or so we thought... we're still at sea.

Mary looks for more dolphins, but she slept too late and missed them. Instead we are visited by pelicans.

At story-time, Jade tells us that she thinks they can get some more tours to the waterfall, so there are two more sign up sheets. We got our names on the third list.

It's pretty much another lazy day at sea. Oh, an occasional sea snake spotted drifting by the ship... OK so, there were lots of sea snakes. At 10am Wacky Olympics was held on the top deck.

Lunch was served in the galley... and we're still at sea.

Finally we arrive at Golfito, but it is after 1pm when the first tour to the waterfall is scheduled. Due to the FUBAR in Caldera, we arrived very late and the 3rd waterfall hike was canceled. But that's WJer... drop back and punt... be flexible. So instead we joined Tomash for the tour to a botanical garden. Very wet landing... swim, not wade a shore! One odd thing, the excursion could not be paid fully through the ship. It was \$30 charged to the cabin, then \$7 cash to the land owner. The owner of the garden, Ron, was a wealth of information. We definitely got our moneys worth out of this tour. It was late and actually getting dark on the boat ride back to the ship. It's about this time that Mary realized we were missing snacks & swizzles. Arrrg! And it was make your own swizzles tonight!

Just as we get close to the dock, Legacy is pulling away. For once, something on this trip is going off on schedule. Legacy moves down the coast just a bit, where she will anchor and run tenders to shore for dinner.

There was time enough for a quick shower before dinner.

Windjammer has a deal with a hotel/bar on shore. Windjammer brings the food and you buy your beverages from the resorts bar. The bar for dinner was OK... very loud though (Uh Oh, am I getting old). It had pool and ping pong tables. It also had a rather large gift shop that we browsed for souvenirs. On our way out of the gift shop, we spotted Captain Fernando playing pool with one of the kids. This was the only "late" night ashore scheduled stop. The music was just too loud and when they played country... we couldn't take it, we went back to the ship. Back on the ship, we had one final cold one at the ships bar before calling it an evening.

Thursday, July 5th

Bahia Drake or Drakes Bay

Today is a fairly quick story-time (for Fernando). He tells us that the tides are not in our favor for running the launches all day. It looks like we will get to just run a few launches before the tide gets too low. Then there will be no launches between 11am and 1pm. So, most people are staying on board until after lunch. But not us, we will be having lunch on the beach. Then Jade tells us that Miami hasn't set up contracts with any vendors here yet, but she did tell us where we could go to book with the local tour operator. Jade then picks three captains for Sea Hunt later this afternoon. We are reminded that the last launch is at 5pm. Don't worry, Mary won't be late, since tonight is going to be a repeat of make your own swizzles.

After story-time Mary rounded up a few things from the galley for our beach lunch... apples, bread and cheese from the breakfast buffet, etc. And then we made the first launch ashore.

Across the dock, up the stairs, then turn right and go about 45 minutes until you come to the beach... that's about the extent of the directions we have to get to the beach. It was a nice easy hike. We crossed the river on a rickety looking suspension "footpath" bridge. The path then intersected a road, which we turned left onto and followed until we came to a sign with an arrow pointing to the beach. Along the way we were joined by a friendly dog. Our little gang, dog and all, gets to the beach ahead of all the other passengers. It was a nice quite time. We scanned the trees for the monkeys that are sometimes reported to leap in the trees, but they are not here today.

Believe it or not it was already lunch time. So, we found a secluded spot and had our little lunch.

After lunch we did a little beach combing and just had fun looking into all of the tidal pools.

We didn't want to spend all afternoon at the beach; there was still the town to explore. Back on the trail we found lots of things to snap pictures of. Mary was still fascinated with those darn leaf cutter ants. Kathy discovered a coconut with a tree, about a foot high, growing from it. Then Ann spotted some sensitive mimosa plants. Sensitive mimosa is a little fern-like species that folds up its tender leaves when something brushes against them, revealing protective thorns. When we got back to the dock area, we were ready for some refreshments and there is a resort/bar right there. So, we all ordered something refreshing.

After drinks, Mary wanted to go back to the ship to rinse off the sand and Pete was ready to dump the backpack. We split up; Ann and Kathy go exploring, while Pete and Mary catch the next launch back to the ship. A quick rinse and a change, we were on the next launch back to shore. At the dock we met Ann and Kathy who were now ready to return to the ship.

We wandered down the road and then crossed the beach. Mary stopped in her tracks when the mare and colt (horses) wandering the beach went into the surf to get a drink. How can they survive drinking salt water?!?!? We wandered a bit up the hill and were rewarded with a great view of the ship in the harbor. Now, we wished we had brought our camera. Oh well, it was nice not to have anything to carry.

Before we know it, it is time to catch the launch. Mary wants to be near the front of the line for swizzles. Rats, barnacle Bob beat her to it. Not to worry, there was plenty of rum left even after Bob & Mary made their drinks.

With everyone well lubricated from "make your own" swizzles, it was time for Sea Hunt. Mary was selected as one of the judges. Pete sat on the sidelines watching all the fun. Ann & Kathy were having a great time on one of the teams. It was a close race and at the end, the Miss Windjammers from all the teams tied up the scores.

After Sea Hunt we returned to our room to dress for dinner. Tonight is the PPP-BLT party. The galley crew set up another wonderful buffet dinner. After dinner, the costumes were judged. And by that time there were only three people still in costume, one being Mary. Heck there were probably only eight people up and about, where is everyone?!?!? For her efforts Mary won a free drink from the bar.

Friday, July 6th

Quepos

This ended up being Mary's favorite stop.

No "organized" tour for us today. We're venturing out on our own to get a guide at the Manuel Antonio National Park. We take one of the first launches to shore. Then we wander into town for a little shopping.

This is a great stop for all of those things that you just need to take home. In one store Mary got to practice the tiny bit of Spanish that she knows. She asked for directions to a bank. Ann had some traveler checks to cash, and only banks (and as we soon would find out, certain banks) will accept travelers checks. On the way to the first bank we find the “line” of taxis. At the first bank Ann takes a ticket and waits... the rest of us go from shop to shop browsing and buying. Ann finally comes out and tells us she needs to go to the bank around the corner, the bank she just came from won't take the travelers checks. So off we go in search of bank #2. At bank #2 Ann goes in and the rest of us go shopping. Pretty soon Ann joins us and tells us “forget it, that line is too long”.

With the great bank search over, we find a taxi with a driver who speaks English. Turns out he was a good guide too. The ride to the park cost about \$5 each and since he was such a good driver and very informative, we gave him a tip on top of that. When we got to Manuel Antonio National Park our taxi driver even helped us track down a guide. We were looking for Estelle, she had been highly recommended by another Windjammer passenger. But she was already in the park with another group. Our guide's name is Mop (guides cost \$20 for each person in the group). As it turns out he was really good at spotting small insects. Before we even got into the park, Mop pointed out a bullfrog. The guides have radios and communicate with each other the location of some animals, like the bats sleeping high up in a tree. At the beach, we were greeted with white-faced capuchin monkeys. They were really active... looking for things/food that they could steal from an unsuspecting tourist. Then we got really lucky when we turned a corner in the trail and came across a three-toed sloth on the ground doing his “business”. Sloths spend all of their time pretty high up in the canopy. They only come down every 12 hours or so to go to the bathroom. At the end of the trail we came across a group of howler monkeys that were settling down for their afternoon nap.

After our guided tour, we shopped a little at the flea market that is set up just outside the park. We bought a few things. We didn't haggle the price like we would in Mexico or Jamaica, but things seemed fairly priced.

Next on our to-do list for the day was a late lunch at El Avion Restaurant (<http://www.elavion.net/>). It's an old C-123 airplane that is now a restaurant. We have two choices walk up the hill or take a taxi. We chose the taxi... it cost \$1 each. The view was awesome and the food was good. While eating we watch the rain approach, then it was like a monsoon, just when we were ready to leave. We had the restaurant call a taxi for us.

Our next taxi driver spoke no English at all. This made for a fun ride. At first we were going to go downtown to pick up some coffee before returning to the ship, but then we looked at the time and it was awfully close to last launch. So, we decided to return to

the marina. Mary's pronunciation of marina in Spanish was obviously incorrect and our driver had a hard time understanding where we wanted to go. But we finally got it all worked out and made it back to the marina with plenty of time.

The National Park was the highlight of our week. And wandering around this busy little town was a lot of fun. It would have been nice to stay here late enough to have dinner ashore.

Back on the ship, it was snacks & swizzles time. We had just a few snacks, but overloaded on the swizzles. The swizzles were deceptively strong tonight... you know the kind that you don't taste the alcohol, but you sure can feel it. Well, between the swizzles and the late lunch we didn't feel like eating dinner. So, it was an early night for us. You know, we still had to pack. They are kicking us off the ship tomorrow.

Saturday, July 8th **Los Suenos - ATL**

It's an early morning. Our transfer to the airport leaves around 9am. This was a much better transfer. First it was in a nice air-conditioned comfortable bus. Secondly, we stopped to look at the crocodiles in the river. And thirdly, we stopped midway for a bathroom and shopping break. The company wasn't bad either.

Arriving at the airport the transport company told us exactly where we had to go to purchase our tourist exit thingy. We said a quick goodbye to Ann & Kathy, they were on a different airline at a different gate. Then we hung out for an hour or so with some of our fellow Windjammer passengers. Pretty soon we were boarding (and on time... the airline captain's name wasn't Fernando... oh, that's bad!). We were served a hot meal in-flight. We arrived in ATL pretty much on time.

One funny thing, remember the lady that we meet in line at SJO immigration at the start of the trip. Well, we ran into her in line at immigration in ATL. That's was too funny.

We had the usual "fun" retrieving our bags at the carousel. They had way too many flights arriving than they had room for the bags. It took us **three hours** to get from our plane to our car, mainly due to delays in customs/immigration and the horrendous baggage carousel.

Back home now, and we can reflect on the trip we just had. There is never a bad Windjammer cruise, but this one lacked the "Windjammer feel" as Barnacle Bob so eloquently described it... lack of beach days, a captain who just didn't participate as much as others, or maybe the schedule with long distances between ports that forced us to not be at one place from early am to late into the evening. Even so, visiting Costa Rica on a tall ship was great!