



Welcome to Rott's Manor

Celebrity Cruise 2007/2008 Trip Report

12/22/2007 – ATL to San Juan

We hopped on a Delta flight to Orlando where we had a short one hour layover then it was on to San Juan. We almost missed the flight in ATL, while having breakfast. We arrived in San Juan around 3pm. We were under the impression that we could not board the ship until much later. But, we grabbed a taxi to take us to the cruise terminal to drop off our luggage. To our surprise we were able to board right away, once we filled out the final form, which was the BVI's immigration form. Since we are Captain Club members we went to the short VIP line and were on the ship in no time at all... no wait. We found something to eat then unpacked. Soon it was time for the mandatory emergency & lifeboat drill at 8pm. Before we knew it the ship was pulling out of San Juan at 10pm. Shortly after that we called it a night.

12/23/2007 – St. Thomas/St. John, USVI / Eco-hike

This morning after breakfast, we had a scheduled tour for an eco-hike on the nearby island of St. John, known as the "Emerald of The Caribbean" as over half of the island is part of the Virgin Islands National Park. First we took a short ferry ride, after disembarking; we walked through the little town of Cruz Bay and proceeded to the park entrance and the Lind Point Trail. We gently ascended 250 feet to the Lind Point Overlook for scenic views of St. John, St. Thomas and the surrounding British Virgin Islands. Along the trail, our guide Thunder Hawk tells us of the history of the various inhabitants of St. John (including Taino Indian, English, Spanish, Danish, African and American). On our leisurely descent towards Honeymoon Beach, which is consistently recognized as one of the top ten in the world, Thunder Hawk tells us about the surrounding plant life and its traditional and modern medicinal usage. At Honeymoon Beach our guide gave a snorkel tour. From there, we proceeded to world-famous Caneel Bay Resort for a botanical tour of the grounds and a visit to one of St. John's famous Danish sugar plantation ruins, before we boarded a taxi to return to Cruz Bay and the waiting ferry.

This evening's dress code for dinner is casual. Escargot, mushroom soup & stuffed flounder were some of the menu options this evening. After dinner, we went to the 8:45 comedy show in the Celebrity Theater. The comedian tonight was Frankie Pace. You might have seen him on Saturday Night Live. We enjoyed the show.

12/24/2007 – Day at Sea

We slept in, ate a late breakfast, and grabbed a book to read by the pool, found a shaded spot, read until lunch time, had lunch, read & napped by the pool the rest of the day. This evening's dress code was formal. So, we got cleaned up & dressed up... nothing like black tie & a Santa hat. We really made our tablemates have a good chuckle. Seafood cocktail, French onion soup, and beef tenderloin were some of the menu options this evening. Tonight's entertainment in the Celebrity Theater was a "holiday Show" provided by the Galaxy onboard entertainment team. It was alright, but it would be

the last show by the onboard entertainment team that we would go to see... it's just not our kind of entertainment.

12/25/2007 – Day at Sea

We slept in, ate a late breakfast, and grabbed a book to read by the pool, found a shaded spot, read until lunch time, had lunch, read & napped by the pool for the rest of the day. Tonight's dress code was informal. After a bit of cleaning up we went to the Orion Restaurant for dinner. Tonight at dinner, new tablemates from Puerto Rico joined us. This really enhanced our cruise, as from this night forward we were taught a new word or two in Spanish every night. A tasty goat cheese soufflé appetizer and pork loin main entree were on the menu tonight.

12/26/2007 – Aruba / Scuba / Visit the SV Polynesia

Today we had signed up for a two tank boat dive. After a short van ride, Red Sail Sports then took us to our dive boat; where we were briefed on our two dives. Our dive leader wore a Santa hat during the dives. So it was really easy to follow him. We dove on two wrecks. The first was the Antilla, a World War II German freighter. We saw colorful sponges, beautiful coral and giant gorgonians.

After our dives, we attempted to have lunch at Cuba's but they weren't open for lunch. The reason that we wanted to go here was this is one place that provided meals to the Windjammer crew, when the home office failed to send money or supplies to the Polynesia. So, we went back to the ship and ate lunch onboard.

After lunch we got brave enough to see if we could get near the Polynesia. And we got very close.... Robert, the only crew left onboard, invited us onto the Poly for a tour. Cool.

For dinner tonight we decided to go casual instead of the dining room & formal wear, we opted for the casual sushi buffet.

12/27/2007 – Bonaire / Scuba

Today we had signed up for another two tank boat dive. We dove in the world famous Bonaire National Marine Park! Repeatedly rated the #1 Caribbean dive destination by Skin Diver and Rodale magazines. The pristine waters average a balmy 81 degrees Fahrenheit, year round. We dove Cliff & Keepsake sites.

After diving, we had lunch on board. After lunch, we walked through town & the little flea market. Inquired about a taxi tour, but it takes 2-hours and we didn't have that much time left in port.

Tonight is another informal dress code night for dinner. On the menu was New England clam chowder, duck a l'orange, and four cheese penne pasta.

12/28/2007 – Curacao / Scuba

Today is the last of our diving excursions on this vacation, today we signed up for the two tank shore dives. Both shore dives took place in front of the [Lions Dive and Beach Resort, which has at their front door](#) the National Underwater Park of Curacao. The first dive reached a maximum of 60 feet and the second dive 40 feet. We sighted a few new critters on the first dive; a mantis shrimp & flying gurnard. The second dive had a difficult swim back on through the outgoing tide.

We were tired after the shore dives, so we ate lunch onboard and stayed onboard relaxing the rest of the afternoon.

Tonight's dress code was casual (thank goodness, all that dressing up is not for us). Some items on the menu tonight were shrimp cocktail & sliced beef.

After dinner we were entertained by Noodles Levenstein, a pretty funny comedian.

12/29/2007 – Day at Sea

We slept in, ate a late breakfast, grabbed a book to read by the pool, found a shaded spot, read until lunch time, had lunch, read & napped by the pool (see a pattern here).

Tonight we have to "clean up" for yet another informal night.

12/30/2007 – Grenada / Grand Etang Tour

This tour began in Grenada's Capital, St. George's. Then we headed up the western main road to Gouyave, passing through the villages of Grand Mal and Happy Hill before arriving at Beausejour Bay. This is one of the Bays that the U.S. frogmen landed on during the military invasion in 1983. We continued through Brizan, Concord, Marigot, and Grand Roy before getting to the Dougladston Spice Estate, where we had a brief stop. This is the same spice factory that we visited a year ago while on the Yankee Clipper.

After the spice factory we continued over Belvedere Road to Grand Etang Lake, situated at 1900 feet above sea level. We had a brief refreshment stop. And we got to see several young mona monkeys. Then back in the van we descended to Annandale, where we stopped briefly at a waterfall where locals and a few crazy tourists were jumping from the cliff top into the river below. Back in the van again, and we continued the tour through the villages of Snug Corner, Beaulieu, and Tempe, to Fort Frederick, where we had about 20 minutes to explore. Fort Frederick has an awesome view of the horseshoe shaped harbor of Fort George. The construction of the fort was started by the French in 1779, and completed by the English in 1783. The drive then returned us to St. George's Pier via Lowther's Lane.

After our tour we walked over to Carenage harbor where we docked last year on the Yankee Clipper. Sadly there were no tall ships in the harbor.

After such a long day we were glad it was another casual night onboard. The stuffed pork loin was a yummy entre on tonight's menu.

12/31/2007 – Barbados / Snorkel with Sea Turtles

What chaos! Two other cruise ships were in town. All the tours for all the ships left from the cruise terminal... it was a zoo, trying to figure out what line to get into for your tour.

Our tour included two snorkel locations – Turtle Bay and a shipwreck site. The crew feed both the fish and the sea turtles at our snorkel stops. This allowed close up encounters but not in a natural way. We wouldn't do this tour again because they feed the wildlife. We also had time near a beach to swim and relax where cool drinks and rum punch was served. The staff was friendly and the rum punch was served freely.

Of course tonight, New Years Eve, would be a formal night. Lobster bisque and medallions of beef were very tasty. After dinner, we were entertained by the magic and comedy of Gossamer Magic. We really enjoyed this show.

1/1/2008 – Day at Sea

We slept in, ate a late breakfast, grabbed a book to read by the pool, found a shaded spot, read until lunch time, had lunch, read & napped by the pool (at least we were consistent).

Dinner is a casual affair and we enjoyed the veal cordon blue tonight.

1/2/2008 – St. Kitts / Essential St. Kitts Tour

Today's tour started with the French built, capital city of Basseterre. Founded in 1625, it became the capital of St. Kitts in 1727. Many landmarks lie within the city confines dominated by Georgian architecture, cobblestone streets, squares, monuments and forts.

Our first stop is at Romney Manor, home of the world famous Caribelle Batik. We visited the demonstration room, where the artists illustrated the wax and dye process of Batik making. Everywhere we go on the trip, we seem to be reminded of Windjammer and their ships. The Polynesia is featured in many of the finished Batik fabrics. The Romney Manor Estate encompasses eight acres of historical ruins, ancient Carib Indian Rock drawings and a beautiful botanical garden.

The tour then continued along the coastal road through remnants of sugar cane plantations to Brimstone Hill Fortress. The highlight of our tour was exploring the 300-year-old Brimstone Hill Fortress, also known as The Gibraltar of the West Indies. This magnificent fortress, sits impressively atop 38 acres of limestone and sulphur composites, it is the result of 100 years of slave labor and has endured many wars fought between English, French and Spanish troops, for its control. From the fortress our tour returned us to the ship via Basseterre's Caribbean Sea coastal road.

After our tour we hung out in Basseterre for the carnival. We were able to see two groups of dancers but not much else going on. So, back to the ship we went to prepare for formal night. It was "Captains Dinner". Pete's lobster was tasty, but Mary's was extremely salty... good thing she also ordered the prime rib, which was very good. Tonight's dessert is baked Alaska and the wait staff make a big deal by parading the lit baked Alaska's around the room.

1/3/2008 – Tortola, BVI / Snorkel at the Caves / Tour to Sky World

Today, we enjoyed a scenic ride across the Sir Frances Drake Channel to one of the British Virgin Islands prime snorkel sites, Norman Island. The reputed history of piracy on this island is immortalized in Robert Louis Stevenson's famous book Treasure Island. We snorkeled in pristine surroundings of colorful coral formations, exotic fish and abundant marine life. We explored the Caves at Treasure Point, where pirate treasure is known to have been hidden. Pete spotted an octopus and showed it to Mary. Mary spotted a Flamingo Tongue (a very colorful sea slug) and Pete was able to get a good picture of it.

After snorkeling, we hit another Windjammer hot spot, Pusser's Landing. We ate lunch at Pusser's and reminisced about our week on the Mandalay (wishing we were on one of those tall ships right now). After lunch, we took a tour/taxi ride to Sky World, which has great views of the BVI's.

Our last night on Galaxy and it's a casual night. Good thing too, since all bags (except carry-on) have to be in the hallway for the porters to pick up by 11pm. Dinner was interesting tonight. Pete ordered the chicken dish, while Mary ordered the seafood stuffed fish dish. The serving size was pathetic on Mary's entre, but on the bright side it left plenty of room for dessert.

Entertainment tonight was provided by both Noodles Levenstein and Gossamer Magic.

1/4/2008 – San Juan (depart ship in AM) / Old & New San Juan tour / Bioluminescent Bay

We booked a morning tour through the ship, and thus we got off the boat very early. Alex was a great tour guide/driver. We stopped at the Capitol building and fort San Christobal, before lunch at Lupi's. Then after Alex dropped everyone off at the airport, he took us to our hotel. That's right we arrived in our own 36 passenger coach!

Our room at the Coral Princess Inn wasn't quite ready, so we dropped off our luggage, inquired about a kayak tour to the bioluminescent bay for this evening, then went out to explore the neighborhood. The hotel is just two block off of Condado Beach. The surf was too rough to get in, but we had fun walking up and down the beach. We stopped into the Marriott's tour desk to inquire about tours for tomorrow and came to the decision that renting a car would be a much more economical way to see the sites that we were interested in. So, back to the Coral Princess we go. They found a tour operator who had space available for tonight's kayak tour. So, we're all set for a 5pm pick-up. Pete makes calls to line up a car for the weekend. Since we want an early start tomorrow, we have to pick up the car tonight. So off we go for the "short" walk to Charlie's Car Rental. On the way we stop at Subway to pick up our dinner. We barely make it back to the hotel in time for our tour pick up.

Our guide/driver for tonight's excursion is named Pete. At first he seemed a bit testy; zipping from hotel to hotel picking up 6 other kayakers. We were sitting up front and Mary was getting worried looking at the EMPTY gas gauge. Well, it wasn't long before we pulled into a gas station to remedy that and were told that this was the last bathroom stop for the night. After the rustic bathroom stop we arrived at our launching point for the kayaking. Here is where our guide finally showed a better side of his personality.

It was a very dark night and our kayaks were equipped with glow sticks on the rear. Our guide told us that from here we have to kayak through a channel in the mangroves... and we have to do it without flashlights since that would ruin our night vision which is required to get the most enjoyment out of the bio-bay. Right away we could tell that we were the most experienced kayakers in the group, so with our guide taking up the rear (to make sure no one got lost), we led the way through the channel. Within minutes of entering the channel, we were noticing the dim glow around the mangrove roots and our paddles. Once the channel dumped us out into the bay, we lashed our kayaks together and our guide told us about the specific species of plankton that we were observing. Pretty amazing little creatures... or was it a plant?

We got back to our hotel after midnight and went straight to bed.

1/5/2008 – San Juan / Camuy Caves Park / Arecibo Observatory

Early morning... we need to get to Camuy Caves Park by 10am (when they open) and it's about 2 hours away. Camuy Caves Park is one of the largest tourist attractions in Puerto Rico. They only allow a certain number of visitors a day into the cave, so if you get there after the buses of tourist you might be denied entry. Plus one other concern is the weather, today it is scattered showers. If it rains at the park, the pathways become too slippery and they will shut the park down.

First things first, breakfast. The hotel offers a nice continental breakfast that we can enjoy while seating in their gorgeous tropical garden courtyard.

On the highway, we passed through several toll booths and saw several rainbows. One other thing that we learned last night is that the police in Puerto Rico always drive with their lights on. Apparently, it is called "Show of Force", they would rather alert the public to their presence than issue tickets. So, when we saw a police car coming up behind us with its lights on we knew not to worry. But it sure seemed strange to us. Even though Puerto Rico is an US territory, they have some strange customs (more about this tomorrow).

Finally when we got to the park the gates were open, so we were lucky. We got a ticket number and were told to wait in the visitor's center until our number was called. They called the first range of numbers for the day and we were just a few numbers short of being in the first group.... Oh, well, that meant that we had time to explore the grounds & displays at the visitor's center. The first group of about 60 went into the movie theater for the safety briefing video (which can be summarized as "don't touch anything"). Just 10 minutes later our numbers were called... apparently after the movie when they loaded the trams they had room for just 4 more people, so we got to skip the movie. The tram wound its way down to the cave entrance. There the rest of the tour is on foot. Our guide told us how lucky we were since there were only 2 guides today (it's a holiday) so everyone at the visitor's center will be waiting about an hour before they can come down here. Just inside the cave our guide pointed out a roosting bird and a crab. The path meandered through the cave and went outside where we were at the midpoint of a sink hole with the Camuy River flowing below us. Our guide had lots of facts to tell us... we missed most of his stories because we hung back so that Mary could set up her camera on her mini-tripod for some long exposure shots. Near the end of the tour we walked through a section where the bats roost for the day. Mary was able to get quite a few good pictures of these little critters.

After almost two hours of exploring Camuy Caves Park, we were off to our second stop of the day, Arecibo Observatory. Arecibo is the world's largest radio telescope. It has been used in at least two movies; Golden Eye (James Bond) & Contact. It is currently used to search for extra terrestrial signals. From the parking lot it's a mere 500 steps up hill to the visitor's center. The visitor's center is packed full of information & displays. After a few quick photos, Mary's stomach began to grumble... it was lunch time.

Everyone we asked told us to eat at El Taino... so we did. To us it was nothing special, maybe even a tourist trap kind of place.

With full tummies, we went off exploring. We had a few different maps. We decided to go find a couple of waterfalls that were marked on the maps... well, it was a good idea, but once we got to where the waterfalls were suppose to be, there were no signs or obvious trails/roads so we didn't see any waterfalls, but we had a great drive through the countryside past a pretty big lake.

For dinner tonight we walked from our hotel to a neighborhood Italian restaurant with a covered outside dining area. We had a really good margarita pizza; yummy... reminded us of our Italy trip. Sometime during dinner the scattered showers turn to a pouring rain and we didn't have an umbrella. We were able to keep pretty dry by walking under the awnings along the sidewalk. At one corner we stopped to watch an automated Christmas music/light show on one of the buildings (Mary wished she had brought her camera out tonight). The plan was to get to the Walgreens on the corner by our hotel and buy a cheap umbrella to use tonight & tomorrow if needed. By the time we got to the

Walgreens, the rain was pretty much done. And since the Walgreens was a 24-hour store we decided to buy an umbrella in the morning if we needed it (mistake, more about this tomorrow).

1/6/2008 – San Juan to ATL

Sunday and Three Kings Day holiday... important information. Well, it's raining again and our plan for today is to explore Old San Juan a little more. So, off we go to Walgreens to buy that umbrella. Guess what you can NOT buy from a 24-hr store on Sundays... yup, an umbrella - it's the LAW! And oh by the way, it was a holiday so the normal stores that open from 11am - 5pm on Sundays, which are allowed to sell umbrellas on Sunday, weren't going to open. Speaking of Puerto Rico & holidays, they have more holidays than anyone (or so they told us). The month of July has many Puerto Rico holidays. Christmas is celebrated for many days; it includes a celebration of "Three Kings".

Today on our self-guided tour of Old San Juan, we explored a fort - Castillo San Felipe El Morro.

We had lunch at Cafe Amapola. They have pretty good mojitas.

Our direct afternoon flight leaves at 4:55pm... and we are in first class. But wow, what a disappointment. There is a family with a fussy toddler seated just in front of us and Delta serves no meal... just lots of biscoff cookies, peanuts, crackers... nothing special for the first class passengers. On the bright side, the ordeal of customs and immigration in Atlanta went smoothly. We were able to get home just in time for bed on Sunday night.