

Linda and Donna's Magical Mediterranean Cruise October 27-November 12, 2005

October 27 and 28, 2005 -- Days 1 and 2 – Getting to Barcelona

At 10:00 a.m. on October 27, 2005 we boarded a bus to San Francisco and arrived in Barcelona, Spain, on October 28, 2005 at 5:30 p.m. We flew on Air France's version of a 747 jumbo jet. It has been one long trip so far. The Air France flight was late leaving SFO because of an apparent manifest problem. Everyone had to produce the boarding pass receipt and show it to a flight attendant and some people also had to show their passports. After an hour, we were finally off. My seat mates were Marlys O'Riordan and Jean Priest. Both ladies were very nice and accommodating. I had a window seat but felt too confined so I traded for the aisle and Marlys was only too willing to trade. She slept up against the window most of the trip. The flight was very uncomfortable for some – those who have big butts. The seats are made for small to average sized persons and those who have big butts were not having a good time. The rest of us just felt like sardines in the can. Also, the seats were quite hard and my feet dangled so I made a footrest out of my purse. There were some bumps in the sky along the way, but the biggest hazard was when we landed in Paris. Many of us thought we were going to tip over. We made a sort of S-curve landing on the runway but through it all the pilot managed to keep us upright.

The plane to Barcelona from Paris was more comfortable than the plane from San Francisco to Paris. After nine hours of basic discomfort, it seemed like luxury for the short hop to Barcelona. We had leg room and soft seats! Donna and I were sitting next to a young Spanish girl of about 8 or 9 and the flight attendant asked me if I would change spots with the father who was across the aisle from us. I changed. Then Donna noticed the mother was one row ahead, so they changed places. I gave the father one of my See's Candies for the little girl and she seemed to really like it.

When we arrived at the Barcelona airport, we were greeted by an "English-speaking assistant" to take us to our hotel. The assistant, Miriam, was very capable, and took good care of her charges. The bus driver must have been Basque. He took one look at all the luggage and became a fountain of Spanish language that we probably didn't want to have translated. The look on his face was enough to scare me. But, with the help of some able-bodied men from our group and Miriam at the helm, all was taken care of.

Some Spanish tidbits: Spain is divided into regions much like our states. We are presently in Catalonia and Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia. The real estate around here is very expensive: \$300,000 to \$600,000 per SQUARE FOOT, according to Miriam. The Olympics were held here in 1992 and they were the best ever. The sport men and sport women of the Olympics were given all their needs for free. This is a

bilingual state. Cantalese (sp?) and Castillian Spanish are spoken here. They are considered two different languages.

We arrived at our hotel to find our room to be satisfactory. Donna and I spent some time trying to call and email Doug and Bob. Nothing was working. Being a naïve traveler, I didn't know about international calling cards. We ended up going to the reception area to email Doug and Bob. All my efforts at trying to do WiFi and HotSpots were for naught. We ended up paying \$6.00 Euro for 30 minutes of time.

Our first meal in Spain consisted of a breast of turkey and white asparagus sandwich with some French fries. When I ordered the sandwich I never considered the asparagus would be canned. It was soggy and very mushy, but the taste was interesting and we were very hungry. We ate the sandwiches in the bar area of the hotel. The dining room didn't open until 8:00 p.m. and we didn't want to wait that long to eat. It was about 6:30 when we got around to eating.

We are tired and it is time for bed. Tomorrow promises to be an interesting "day of leisure". We don't know what we're going to do exactly at this point, but one thing we do know, we're not getting up early!

October 29, 2005 – Day 3 – Barcelona

It is 9:00 a.m. and we are up. Donna is showering and when she is done we will head down for some breakfast. We plan to walk to an old palace and gardens. It is a fair ways away, but we think we can make it. The bus drove by it last night and it looks interesting with Spanish architecture and pretty gardens. Later this evening there is a fountain like at the Bellagio in Las Vegas that we want to see.

Both of us spent the night awake like hoot owls. We talked and laughed and had a good time. About 5:00 a.m. we felt like we could sleep. Well, Donna felt like she could sleep, and sleep she did. I rested for quite a while and finally slept. The alarm was quite jarring. I was VERY asleep at 9:00 a.m.

It is now 23H11 (11:11 p.m.) on 29 October in Barcelona. We did go to the palace and are we glad we did. We walked from the hotel about a mile and a half to get to the palace. We strolled along with all the locals who were out and about. We saw some very exclusive shops and entered the Swarovski shop to check out the jewelry. I saw many pieces I would like to have, and when we come back here on our last day I plan to buy some.





The palace was the residence of Queen Isabella and has now been turned into a museum. We went through the ceramics part of the museum. There were tiles from the 13th and 14th centuries and plates and china pieces that were inlaid with ivory and silver and gold. Mucho bonito!! We also were able to see the throne room of the palace. It was on the first floor and we could view it from the second floor – we

were not allowed to actually enter the throne room. It was marvelous with a magnificent Persian rug on the floor and massive chandeliers, not to mention the throne itself. We were not prohibited from doing so with no flash, so I took many pictures inside the palace. We also enjoyed the formal gardens outside the palace. The gardens are very structured with fountains here and there. When we were walking to the palace it was very hot and humid. After we came out of the palace, it was cloudy and cool. What a difference a couple of hours make!



We retraced our steps to the hotel, stopping along the way to eat lunch. Donna had a salad with tuna and I had roasted chicken and salad. We both enjoyed the food. It turned out that the restaurant was in a sort of mall so we walked around the shops to see what was there. I saw a Biba store. I'm pretty sure it was Mrs. Christy's store. It was selling handbags and accessories at astronomical prices. We came back to the hotel and took a nap.



Upon arising from the nap, we went to the fountain mentioned above. What a magnificent thing that was! I can't even begin to describe it. There was music playing and the water was in sync with the music along with different colored lights shining on the water. I took several pictures and I hope they show how massive and exciting the fountains were. We climbed to the top of the stairs and saw a beautiful view of the heart of Barcelona beyond the waterfalls and fountains. It was magical.

On the way back to the hotel from the fountains, we made a wrong turn somewhere and got completely lost. We had to hail a cab to get back to the hotel. I did not take the GPS along on this little walk because it was supposedly a straight shot from the hotel,

according to the concierge, and we would have no problem getting there and back again. Not so! Next time I won't leave the GPS behind.

Donna is currently soaking in the bathtub. When she is done I will be showering to freshen up a bit before hitting the bed. It was a hard day of walking for both of us. The heat and humidity took their toll on us. I think I will sleep soundly tonight. Tomorrow we board the ship "Brilliance of the Seas".

October 30, 2005 -- Day 4 – Embarking the Brilliance of the Seas

We transferred to our ship today. Basically that's all we did. First we ate breakfast in the dining room of the Abba Hotel, then we went to our room and got our luggage and brought it downstairs, then we waited for our bus, then we drove to the pier. The check-in went smoothly even though Donna and I had no "papers". Because we had previously checked in online, we went sailing through the lines. I know Marty was stressed out over how it was all going to work. Apparently she has done this sort of thing before without a smooth process like the one we experienced. It pays to check in beforehand – by plane or ship.

Our cabin is so small it's almost claustrophobic. I never want to have an inside cabin ever again. Whatever the cost, it's worth it to have a window to the outside world.

I am finding that a lot of things that were free on Princess when we went to Alaska are not free here. You have to buy a ticket to leave the ship if tendering is needed! Of course, the internet is not free. It is astronomical and it is really slow. I can't figure out how to do my WiFi Card, so I am using the business center to send emails. If I wanted to rent the RC WiFi card, I would get to pay double the price each day.

The beds in the cabin are the size of cots and the mattress is hard. The bathroom area is so small, there's hardly any wiggle room for me, so I can't imagine how Donna is getting around in there.

The ship itself is quite beautiful. There is an open atrium with the public areas surrounding the atrium and of course the deck is full of stuff to do and there are lots of deck chairs all around. There is a rock climbing wall, but I've not seen anyone using it.

Our meals here have been good. After we came aboard we went to the Windjammer, a cafeteria-style dining room, for a buffet lunch. There was a goodly supply of several kinds of



things to eat. I had some ham, chicken, fresh fruit, coleslaw and biscuit. Then I went back for a slice of pizza – just couldn't resist. It was all good and I felt stuffed afterward.

Soon after that we had our muster drill. That was a sight to behold. Donna took a picture of me in my life jacket. I spared her the embarrassment.

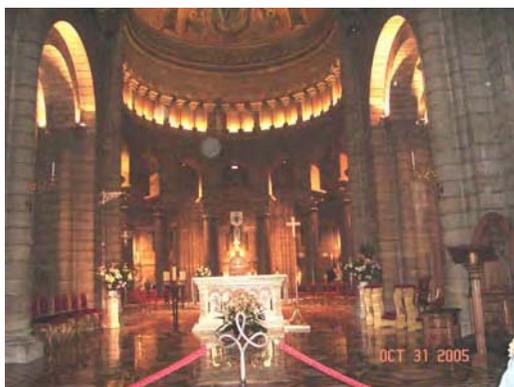
We finished the drill in time to go to dinner. I had some fruit for appetizer, a spinach salad, chicken cordon bleu, and a sugar-free cream puff. It was very good. Our table consisted of Tom and Barbara Borman, Jim and Nell Dozier and Nell's sister Henrietta, who were friends of the Bormans, Barbara's grandson and granddaughter and her friend, and me and Donna. It was a little slow to get warmed up, but we had a good time at the table. We did not finish eating in time for the evening's entertainment, so Donna and I just went to the top deck and let the wind blow in our faces. I did not sleep well at all that night. I just hoped it would be better the next night.

October 31, 2005 - Day 5 – Monte Carlo and Monaco

We woke to find ourselves in Monte Carlo. It was picture perfect. There was another ship in the harbor and the whole sight was magical. After breakfast we went ashore and walked around and shopped until it was time to meet up with our tour. I bought a little plate with Monaco painted on it. I took scads of pictures.



We met up with our tour at 2:30 and then we boarded a bus and began our ascent to the top of the mountain by steep, narrow, winding roads. There are apparently three roads leading to Monaco and the interior of France. We were on the middle road. The views were fantastic. As we passed the beautiful villas our guide pointed out the ones owned by Bill Gates, Elton John, etc. Que Magnifico!!



We arrived at Monaco and immediately entered the royal palace grounds. We passed Princess Stephanie and Princess Caroline's villas on the way to the Cathedral where Prince Rainier and Princess Kelley were married and are now buried. What a magnificent building! It felt very holy.

We then went to the palace. We could not enter the building, but just seeing the outside was okay with me. The oldest part of the palace was built in the 1200s and the newest in the 1700s. The story is that it was a

monastery and pirates came and killed the monks and took over the site. Hence the crest shows two pirates with swords. The views from the palace ground were breathtaking. The villas and Mediterranean Sea are so picturesque; it's hard to describe the splendor and beauty you see.

We then went to the Grand Casino. This was built in the 1890s. It has modern gambling going on now, but it was only for the rich and famous in Rainier's time. It is so beautiful inside – beautiful chandeliers, paintings by famous artists, all the glitz and glamour of a royal palace. We were prohibited from taking pictures inside. In fact everybody had to check their cameras before entering. Donna and I gambled a huge \$3.00 at the slot machines. We lost, of course, but now we can say we hob-nobbed with the rich and famous.



We did not get back from the tour in time to eat dinner with our people in the dining room. We ate at the Windjammer and then we strolled around the decks looking at the lights of Monte Carlo until we sailed away and all that was left was blackness.

November 1, 2005 – Day 6 – Livorno and Pisa

Livorno/Pisa – We woke up this morning to find ourselves docked at Livorno. This was a far cry from the sight we saw yesterday morning. This is a working dock full of big machines and freight containers. There is also an oil refinery here. There were shuttle buses to take those who were going to Livorno to the downtown area. For the rest of us who were going on tours, the buses were all lined up and ready to go.

Donna and I went to Pisa for the afternoon. The drive there from the dock took about a half hour. We drove by a U.S. military base and then we were out on the flats. Right now nothing is growing, but in the high summer months you will see grapes, sunflowers, and maize in the fields. As we approached Pisa, the duomo of the cathedral could be seen from the distance. It is an awesome sight. It is hard to imagine this building could have been built in 1200. This is where Galileo worked out his theory of gravitvity. I think this duomo is just as pretty as Florence from the outside. The inside is more plain, but it has an awesome holy feel. Of course, the leaning tower is clearly visible and it looks so out of place. Everything is so engineered and then there is



this leaning tower. It is part of the cathedral, housing the bells to call the parishioners to worship. There is also a cemetery here, which is inside a building. The dignitaries of the area during that time are buried there. The cathedral was built under the auspices of the de Medici family. Pisa was an important world power during the time that the duomo was built.

There were many, many stalls selling all kinds of souvenirs from trinkets to very expensive leather purses. Donna and I both bought some stuff. I am totally out of Euros. Yesterday was a bank holiday, Day of the Dead, and nothing, not even an ATM, was open, even on the ship. Thank goodness for credit cards!

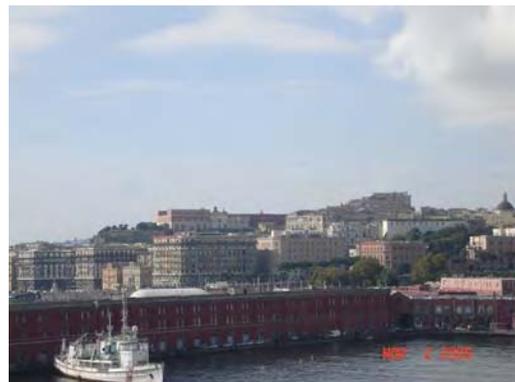
We came back to the ship to find the entertainment crew all dressed in costumes. It was fun! We were supposed to dress in black and white for dinner. Don't know why as no announcements were made about it during dinner. The food has been very good. I had a cold apple soup (good, but very sweet) and risotto. The risotto was to die for. It was that good. So creamy and tasty. There was a slice of eggplant, which I usually do not eat, but I took a bite or two of it to see what it was like and it wasn't as bitter as I would have expected. Still not something I want to eat, but not horrid. I had some sugar-free ice cream and biscotti for dessert. (Pat me on the back, because there were some really good-looking desserts being set out on our table like Baked Alaska, Black Forest Mousse, and dulce leche cheesecake.)

We went to the night's entertainment, who turned out to be a comedian. I sat through about a half hour of it and I thought I was going to fall asleep in my chair. I left Donna there and came back here and crashed. For the first night since we began our journey, I finally got a good night's sleep.

Tomorrow is Naples and Pompeii. The itinerary is a little different than I expected. I thought we were going to be in Naples on November 9, but not so. I tried emailing Jon when I discovered the itinerary change, but so far I have not heard back from him.

November 2, 2005 – Day 7 – Naples and Pompeii

We woke up to the sight of Naples. It was different than I expected. It is a very crowded city, narrow streets, lots of vehicles including motos. Donna and I walked a few blocks around the wharf area where we were docked and decided to just go back and wait for our afternoon tour of Pompeii. The area where we were was decidedly rough and pickpockets apparently run rampant in the area. We felt we couldn't walk far enough to get out of the bad area in the time we had before our bus left for





Pompeii.

Pompeii!! What an interesting place that is. It is much larger than I anticipated. 12,000 people perished that day in 79 AD. Before the large earthquake which preceded the volcanic eruption, there were 20,000 people, so some Pompeians were saved. The buildings are very much intact with the frescoes. Some of the grander villas were closed to tourists, which bummed me out, but we were able to see some

of the grandeur that existed at that time. Those people, at least the rich ones, lived in quite elegant splendor. The frescoes are absolutely breathtaking in their detail and the mosaics on the floor are very detailed as well. Beautiful patterns abound. Also, the guide told us the walls were waxed so they shined. When you were inside a building, it was as though there were mirrors on all the walls. Some of the courtyards were exquisite. The columns were still intact and the Park system or whoever keeps the grounds had planted what was



growing there at the time. The guide said that Pompeii was a seacoast town. Now because of all the lava flows, it is about a kilometer inland. Must be like the lava flows in Hawaii that keep adding real estate. We got to see the casts of some of the bodies found after the eruption. The detail of the clothing is visible as well as the features of the face and body. I just hope the people were dead from gases rather than from the burning ash. The suffering that must have taken place is hard to imagine.

We came back to the ship in time to get dinner in the dining room. I had tortellini filled with beef and spinach for dinner and was it ever good. Can't complain about the food on this boat. It is all good!

The evening's entertainment was a local Italian tenor. Wow! Did he have a voice that could fill the room. He sang some Italian standards like O Sole Mio, but he also sang some very fine classical arias. I enjoyed the show very much.

November 3, 2005 – Day 8 – At Sea

This was a sea day today. Donna and I slept in. We did make it up in time for lunch. We had an invitation to dine with the captain and his staff, so we went to the function. Turned out to be a bad decision. We were seated with a snooty couple, two old ladies from Chicago, and one old biddy from Pennsylvania, plus Gordon, who was some kind of crew member, not sure what. The old biddy was one of those rude bitches who has sailed dozens of times and knows every menu by heart. The snooty couple monopolized the conversation with their uninteresting banter about the fleet of ships they have sailed on. The two old ladies were okay, but were too far away to be heard. It was a dismal hour and a half. The only good thing was the steak. Whatever the sauce was on it, it was very tasty!

After that fiasco, Donna and I had a nap until it was time to get dressed up for dinner. Marty had a group picture taken at the dining room, so we had to go early for that. Everyone looked very sharp in their fine clothing. The captain hosted a get-together in one of the lounges before dinner so we went to that. The room was so crowded it was impossible so we stayed for a little bit and then left. Nell, Henrietta and Jim joined us in another lounge where there were comfortable couches and we waited there until it was time to go in for dinner.

Dinner was yucky! For the formal night, they had a formal menu. I could not find anything I wanted to eat – there was seafood, duck, lamb and beef. None of it appealed to me. I was too full from the steak lunch. I got some fettucine with tomato sauce, which was so rich, I could only eat about half of it. That is a good thing though. Food around here is in abundance.

November 4, 2005 – Day 9 – Katakolon



We were not able to put into Mykonos because of gale force winds and rough seas. So instead we put in at Katakolon. This was a very interesting place. They call it a sleepy fishing village, but I call it shoppers' paradise. There was so much fun stuff here. We were there for only a few hours, but everybody helped the local economy.

After our shopping expedition we boarded the

ship and it motored out to the ocean. Donna and I walked around the deck for awhile until the wind became so fierce we thought we would not be able to stand up.

Our dinner this evening was very good. I had chicken breast piccata with rice and carrots. Quite the delicacy. For dessert I had a chocolate mousse that was also quite the delicacy.

The entertainment tonight was a magician. Neither one of us was interested, so we tried the deck again. Gale force winds are quite something. The ship is a-rocking and a-rolling. Our room steward, Wayne, says it is called a hurricane in the states.

November 5, 2005 – Day 10 – Kusadasi and Ephesus

Here we are at Kusadasi, Turkey. This is an enchanting place. It is the playground of the rich and famous. The guide who led us around Ephesus today said some of the rich and famous included Richard Nixon, Bush Sr., Prince Charles and Princess Diana, and of course Clinton and his entourage. We briefly saw the harbor as we motored on to ancient Ephesus.



There is a modern town of Ephesus, but we toured the ruins where Paul and John and other apostles ran around. The city is being excavated by various countries and is basically in ruins now. They expect the excavation to take about 100 more years before it is complete. We saw some pretty interesting columns, statuary, and remains of building facades. Also there were some mosaics that were in pretty good condition. We saw the prison where Paul was held in chains and we saw the Grand Theater where he preached Christianity. It was awesome to think we were standing right where he might have been.



The town of Ephesus was built by Alexander the Great as it was a good port location and the center of the trade routes between the main European continent and the Asian continent. Our guide was very knowledgeable and told us a lot of interesting things about the area. Crops that are grown here include all kinds of fruits, wheat, and corn. Turkey is fully self-sustaining according to John, our guide. It does not import food of any kind nor does it rely on any other country for anything including oil.

John talked about the nomads and how they make the kilim rugs. He described the detail and the hours and hours needed to make a rug. He said there are nomads around now and they are fully self-sustained. They have angora and regular sheep for the wool and silk used in the rugs. He said they are blonde and blue- and green-eyed. Definitely the influence of the crusaders.

After we wandered around Ephesus we returned to Kusadasi and John took us to a rug selling place. There they discussed the making of the rugs, showed us the materials, and a young lady demonstrated the technique. Then they started bringing out the rugs. Oh, my goodness, they were so beautiful. They started with the wool rugs and worked their way up to the silk ones. I was enchanted. I bought a small rug and they wrapped it up, put it in a carrying case with a certificate of authenticity, and sent me on my merry way. As of now, I don't know exactly how I'm going to get it home. It seems unthinkable to mail it. I think Donna and I are going to buy another suitcase somewhere along the line.

Oh yes, Donna bought a beautiful handbag in Kusadasi. It is leather with the wool kilim design on the sides. Very elegant.

November 6, 2005 – Day 11 – Santorini

Ahhh, Santorini -- a beautiful island that was so much more than I expected. Santorini is best known for its beaches and whitewashed cliff-top villages with stunning views, and our trip around the island certainly did not disappoint. We first tendered our way over to the Port of Skala, which is 890 feet below the town of Fira, the island's capital. We rode up steep winding NARROW roads with (literally) breathtaking views of the ocean and nearby islands on a bus that took up all available space



on the switchbacks. Our guide, Nickos, looked like a Greek god with flowing black curly hair. All the women instantly fell under his spell. As we headed to Fira we saw just what you would expect to see: white houses with blue roofs and blue doors. So strikingly beautiful! We were able to walk around and get a feel of the place. I could happily live there as if in a dream.....



Santorini was destroyed by an earthquake in 1956, but Fira was soon rebuilt and there now are the famous domed churches and barrel-roofed houses. The terraces are packed with hotels, bars and restaurants. All those white houses are made of concrete. They take several months to construct and are made in several stages. Each stage must have time to cure before the next one is begun. There were many houses being built and we were able to see all the stages on display as they were curing. Very interesting!

We boarded our bus again and were driven to a winery. We tasted several kinds of wine; my favorite was a very sweet red dessert wine made from sun-dried grapes. Since Donna doesn't drink alcohol of any kind, she wandered about taking pictures. She got some great shots of the countryside while I sat there sipping away. The shores of the island of Santorini are slopes that have been terraced for grape growing. The grapes grow close to the ground in a basket shape. They have always been grown that way because there is very little moisture. They say this method is more efficient than staking the plants.



After the wine tasting, we were taken on a short tour of the island and eventually to another village where we were dropped off to wander about and spend the time as we liked. We had an enchanting time wandering around the open bazaars of this little village. We happened upon one of the 450 Greek Orthodox churches on the island. We went inside to find it heavily scented with incense and very beautifully decorated with huge gold and silver icons. This being a Sunday, the priest was there and gave me permission to take a picture of the interior of the church but not of him. It was a very holy place.



This was our last stop before heading back to Fira and down to the port. We had three options to get down the cliff: walk down 600 very steep stone steps, ride a donkey down, or take a sky ride in a cable car gondola. We opted for the gondola. Donna was queasy as we rode down, but she made it without too much fuss.

November 7, 2005 – Day 12 – Athens

Athens: Athens was not at all what I expected. It is a modern, bustling, crowded city. I expected it to be more like Kusadasi. Kusadasi was bustling, but it seemed less crowded, less modern, more exciting. We took a bus to the bottom of the Acropolis. Then we hiked uphill to view the ruins. Now that was more than I expected it to be. Donna was disappointed because of the restoration going on, but they allowed us picture-takers plenty of opportunity to take some good pictures. The guide explained all about the building of the columns, and she had a lot of Greek pride. Nobody did it better than the Greeks! There are several vantage points to see the city of Athens from the Acropolis. I took several pictures of the Parthenon, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Dionysos and Odeon Theaters, and Ancient Agora from the Acropolis vantage points. Wonderful views!



After our stop at the Acropolis, we boarded the bus and got a tour of Athens. We saw the Olympic stadium that was constructed in 1896 for the first modern Olympiad. We also saw the National Garden and several important buildings of modern Athens. We stopped for some shopping and I got a couple of good T-shirts for Doug and me and Donna got some earrings.

After our tour we returned to the ship happy and tired. For dinner that evening, it was English night. There was everything except Yorkshire Pudding. I had a wonderful split pea soup and roasted chicken dinner. Very good. Can't complain about the food on this ship. It is good and there is plenty of it.

The after dinner entertainment was a woman singer who did mostly Latin numbers. She sang and danced and was very good. She tried singing a version of Don't Cry for Me Argentina that wasn't very good, but then nobody can do it like Madonna does.

November 8, 2005 – Day 13 – At Sea

This was a day at sea. Donna and I slept in until about 10:00. After breakfast, we decided to pack our suitcases to see how we were doing space-wise. It looks like we can do a little shopping in Rome without having to resort to buying another suitcase. We both have room left in our cases – I don't know how, but that's the way it seems now. We spent the day doing not much. We emailed Doug and Bob and then lazed around the deck drinking tea and coffee. We did go to the onboard shopping area and we both bought some jewelry. I bought a couple of cute rings and Donna got some earrings. This was our second formal night for dinner. We dressed up and headed to dinner at 6:00. We had really good food tonight. It was filet mignon for me and prime rib for Donna. Scrumptious!

After dinner, the entertainment was extraordinary. It was a production based on the tango. There were two main tango dancers who were extremely good and the rest of the dancers were also excellent. It was a good show. After that there was a Love and Marriage game. That was a hoot. Three couples from the audience played the Dating Game. It was so funny, everybody had a good time.

November 9, 2005 – Day 14 – Rome

We toured Rome today, by foot. We rode from the port of Civitavecchia by bus to somewhere in Rome. We were dropped off and we started our walking tour. We saw the Spanish Steps, the Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon, Piazza de Navona, and the Vatican. What a day! I was really tired by the time we got done. It was advertised as a 3-1/2 mile walking tour, but I think it had to be more. We were on our feet for more than five hours! But did we see some sights. We walked down narrow alleyways and into interesting piazzas and we saw old



buildings and ran into a demonstration against the Italian Senate. We saw polizia with BIG guns and BIG frowns on their faces. Our guide steered us away from the crowds, thank God. It looked like it could get ugly.



Donna and I both took more than 100 pictures each today! It was an incredible way to see Rome, or any city for that matter.

Dinner was prime rib for me and Donna. Excellent end cuts for both of us.

The after dinner entertainment was a Motown group doing songs from the sixties. The theater rocked! They were very good. They got the crowd jumping up and dancing – they were that good.

November 10, 2005 – Day 15 – At Sea

Today was a sea day sailing to Barcelona. The ship is rocking and rolling again. I mean it is REALLY ROCKING AND ROLLING AND SHAKING. I hope I can sleep tonight without hurling my wonderful turkey dinner. We finished packing and emailed Doug and Bob and then we spent a lot of time on deck reflecting on the trip. It has been a wonderful two weeks. We saw such wonderful magical things. We plan to get together soon to make a slide show of our best pictures. I also plan to get a scrapbook together. I have some really awesome pictures and I want to show them off!

At dinner Marty gave everyone little American flags to wear that light up. Everyone had theirs on and flashing. It looked neat.

When we got on the ship the first day, Donna and I sent flowers to Marty's stateroom. She was so thrilled with them. When she called to thank us, she cried. She is always doing such nice things, little things that mean so much. At the start of the trip she had lunches for all of us while on the bus, then little Halloween bags for all of us, then she had some Chinese herbal medicine for all of us, then she had sun visors for all the women, then she had candy for all the men, then she had these little flags. I don't know how she carried all this in her suitcase, but it sure was nice to get all these things from her. She is so sweet.

The Chinese "snake oil" that Marty gave us really works. I was getting a bad migraine on the plane coming over here. I had taken some Ibuprofen, but it wasn't helping. I

applied the snake oil to my neck and temples as the directions stated and, lo and behold, the headache went away! I used it several times after that for various things, headaches, aching knees, a blister on my foot. Worked great!

November 11, 2005 – Day 16 – Barcelona



Our last day in Europe, at Barcelona. We took a bus tour of the city and saw all the important sights including the Gaudi Cathedral and lots of Gaudi architecture. The city is quite modern in architecture with free-flowing styles. We saw a bull-fighting ring which was under restoration – apparently the only one in Barcelona proper. We also saw several of the 1982 Olympics venues, in particular the diving platforms and track and field stadium.



After the bus tour, we got ourselves ready for our flight home, as we leave Barcelona at 0-dark hundred in the morning – really! We fly to Paris then on to San Francisco.

November 12, 2005 – Day 17 – Coming Home

Well, the trip to Paris was uneventful – it was about 2:00 a.m. when we boarded our flight in Barcelona and there were very few people about at that hour. However, at the Paris airport it was another story; I would call it pure maniacal chaos. I didn't think we were ever going to get on the right plane heading for SFO. We were shunted here, there and everywhere along with about a thousand others trying to get to their planes. Finally we got on little buses that motored us out to the plane somewhere out there on the tarmac. We got on the plane and breathed a sigh of relief. We didn't care how long we had to wait to get airborne, we were on, and that was enough!

Once in the air, the flight was uneventful. I sat next to a very nice young Frenchman who spoke fair English. Considering I don't know any French at all, it went well I thought. He was going to Santa Rosa for a week-long seminar for his work. In addition, he was going to be seeing his girlfriend who was flying into San Francisco from Germany. It's sure a different world nowadays.

When we landed in San Francisco, the going was easy. We boarded a bus that was waiting for us and rode back to the hotel to meet Doug and Bob. Donna and I were sure glad to see our respective husbands. When Doug and I got home, I got to show my pictures to him and Paul who was here visiting. I had been without sleep for about 36 hours at that point, but hey, when you have a captive audience, you must show off your pictures!

This was a magical trip. I would do it again in a heartbeat. I hope the opportunity arises again sometime in the future.

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