



For our first wedding anniversary, Naren and I went on a cruise to celebrate. We went on the RCCL Adventure of the Seas on 4/3/05.



The sailing was from Puerto Rico and went to

Aruba



Curacao



St. Maarten



and St. Thomas.



I'll go into the details of the trip in a minute, but here are some general overall opinions and ratings.

The ratings are: bad – ok – good – great.

Traveling to the ship: bad

Weather: great

Embarkation: great

Cabin: ok

Cabin Attendant: ok

Ship: great

Entertainment: good/great

Food: good/great

Wait Staff: good

Aruba: ok

Curacao: bad

St. Maarten: good

St. Thomas: great

CruiseCritic crowd: great
Disembarkation: good
Traveling home: ok

Friday April 1, 2005 – Leaving for the airport

In a 9/80 schedule, I work every other Friday, today was my “Off Friday.” It was used to prepare for the trip. Naren also has this 9/80 schedule, and so we went to our local Hertz office to pick up the rental car. We got to the office, a guy started helping us, and then just sort of wandered off. Then another girl, Kirsten helped us. Because of the wandering and confusion, she gave us some free gasoline. We got $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tank for \$2.20 per gallon. That’s cheap because the station at the corner wanted \$2.54.

Anyhow we then ran last minute errands, some dealing with my job/payroll issues, and then we went home and packed. Yes we waited until the last minute. Naren then called his family. I did a quick manicure, then we watched a bit of the pope channel. We decided there was nothing else on, so we left early for the hotel. We went for a fancy Taco Bell dinner first, then drove up to LAX. There was a drunken lady weaving all over the road, but other than her, there was nothing eventful about that trip. We get to the LAX Hilton, and come to find out, there is a parking surcharge on that hotel. It’s an additional \$17 Valet or \$13 Self. This rate was not posted ANYWHERE! It was a very nice hotel. We got it through Priceline for \$45. The normal rate was \$109. So we got a very good deal. We checked in, and then took the room key to our room, and it didn’t work. The bellguy went downstairs and returned 5 minutes later with two working keys. It was very painless and we tipped him nicely. We then realized that our 3rd floor room had a terrace, which was nice ... so Naren could smoke. We then realized it was after midnight, and we needed to be up at 5am for our 8am flight. So we set our wake up call.

Saturday April 2, 2005 – Los Angeles en route to Puerto Rico via Newark

We woke up what seemed to be a minute later, and then got ready for a 5:30 am checkout. We drove the rental car back, and then took that shuttle to the terminal 6. As we passed terminals 1-5 we saw lines everywhere. We were thinking that maybe we didn’t give ourselves enough time. But when we got to Continental, there weren’t lines anywhere! Yay! We checked our bags in, and we took 2 big bags, and 2 small bags plus one diaperbag-sized bag. We carried the two small bags and the toiletries bag on ourselves. This would actually be the thing that kept us calm. I’ll explain later. There were no lines for our check-in, or our security so we got to our gate in enough time. Naren and I shared a Cinnabon for breakfast. We started to board the flight, and we sat there for 20 minutes.



Then the captain told us that we’d be delayed because of bad weather in Newark, New Jersey. So 20 minutes turned into one hour, which turned into two hours. We thought that everything would be fine at this point because of that rain, it would also be delaying our connecting flight ... in some sort of domino effect. But a 2 hour delay actually would end up being a 5 hour delay.

It was now 12pm, and we asked the gate agent, Yvonne, what to do. We could have taken the next connecting flight to Puerto Rico, but we were so delayed it looked like we were going to miss that flight too. So Yvonne told us that she'd pay for us to do another Continental itinerary or a non-stop LAX-Puerto Rico flight on American Airlines, but those flight itineraries wouldn't put us into Puerto Rico until 10am Sunday Morning, and our luggage couldn't be pulled off the Continental Jet. So for a few hours we sat with the real realization that we might have to cruise out of our carryon luggage until Aruba (Tuesday). But Yvonne continued to search the flights, and it turned out there were 3 flights to Puerto Rico from Newark on Sunday. The first two flights would work for us. There were no seats available. Yvonne continued to search flights for us and suddenly 3 seats opened up on the first available flight. So we booked it! We got boarding passes and seat confirmations. Now the only issue was eventually getting to New Jersey! According to policy, the luggage will take the first available flight too. So if we do miss all flights on Saturday, it will take the first flight on Sunday. Coincidentally it happened to be the flight we had just booked ourselves on.



Finally we took off at 1:30! And we landed at 8:30. We had to be in some stupid holding pattern over Allentown, PA because the weather took a turn for the worse when we were en route. So we finally land in the worst landing ever. The weather was very bad. I had a feeling that we'd be in Newark for a while, because this day was not going well. I took 2 blankets from the plane and put them in my carry on.

When we landed we asked Continental if they could please pull our bags for us. They said they could, but this would take 3 hours, and they stopped taking requests after a while. They were tired and wanted to go home. So we asked Continental if they would provide a hotel for us because we did miss both connecting flights to Puerto Rico. We had to wait 12 hours until the 8am flight (if the weather cooperated). They refused to provide a hotel, saying that if the weather is the cause they have no legal duty to provide compensation and all the passengers misplaced would have to deal with it.

We were tired and didn't want to deal with this, so we asked for blankets and pillows from the airplane, and we took our blankets, pillows and luggage and made camp in the airport. We got dinner at McDonalds, which was opened 24 hours and packed with stranded passengers. We didn't sleep well on the floor because it was cold.



Sunday April 3rd, 2005 – Stranded in Newark

We got up at 4am, and stood in line for check-in for the 8am flight. We felt we had to confirm our boarding passes, seat assignments and the fact that the plane would eventually take off. We got to the gate, and fell asleep in the chair. We were woken up by the gate agent, who had confirmed my inquiry earlier whether or not this flight was going to leave on time.

The plane was at the airport overnight, so that wasn't a problem. We boarded the flight. It was smooth, and we slept the entire way down to Puerto Rico.

We deplaned at 1pm. The weather was cloudy and humid but not raining, it just looked like it might rain soon. We went to the baggage claim and said a few hundred prayers. The luggage came in shifts. Our theory is that they only had 1 car, and had to take the bags in shifts. But 30 minutes later, we had our two bags. We got it, and I started crying, because I really thought the bad luck was behind us. We left the baggage area, and got a taxi. The trip to the ship is 15 minutes. It cost \$18.50 for the two of us and our 5 bags.



We arrived at the ship at 2:30, and gave the big bags to the porter. We took the little bags, sent them through x-ray, and then stood in the non-existent line. It was roped off by floor, and there wasn't anyone in any line. We checked in, Naren's passport was confiscated, and then we were allowed to board the ship.

We embarked on deck 4 forward port, and got to our room, which was deck 9 forward starboard. We looked at our watch and it was 3:30. We don't know how it took an hour, but apparently the time was already flying by. We were told the Maitre D would only be available until 4. So we saw him on Deck 4. Second seating was completely full, and he took our names, but didn't feel he could accommodate us.



We took pictures of the main dining room,



then went to the Windjammer, deck 11 aft. I had Honey Chicken (amazing), ham (so-so) and pizza (very good). The lemonade was very good.



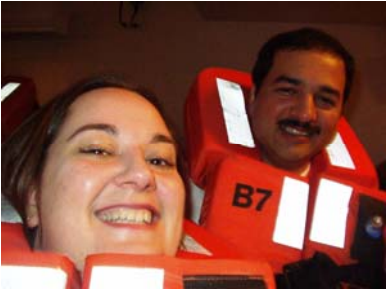
We came back to the room and finally showered. We met 1 of our 2 cabin attendants. Anne Marie explained how she worked, and the hours. We asked her to empty the fridge so we could put our own stuff in there. She said no, she wouldn't do that. We asked her to put the dressers on one side of the bed so that we could actually walk around the bed. There was literally no room to walk, you had to enter the bed from the foot. She said she'd have Carl move the dressers. I also asked for her to put both spare blankets on my side of the bed. This, it would turn out, never happened. Each night I had to make my own bed. We asked Anne Marie about the wine that was supposed to be in our cabin. It wasn't there. She said she'd have to talk with her supervisor, and to look for the wine at dinner.

We went to the pre-meet and mingle at 5:30. That was great, because we got to meet all of our cruise mates. Then we went to dinner at 6, and this was weird because we never eat this early.

We didn't have our wine. We asked the Head Waiter Mohsen from Tunisia. He said that he'd look into it, and I gave him the print out of the email I had between me and the Customer Service Manager at our TA. She had emailed me, confirming our wine, and that it was supposed to be in the cabin waiting for us. Mohsen came back and said that the TA ordered two bottles of wine for dinner on Saturday, and not one for the first night, Sunday. So we asked it to be spread out one bottle per night. He obliged happily. We also asked that our wine be alternated each night between red/white. The whites were better than the reds, but I like whites better.



Our waiter Raj was from India. Our assistant, Clara was from the Philippines. Then at dinner we ate Tomato Soup (good), mango melon with ginger (good), fish mousse appetizer (really bad), shrimp ravioli and veggie quesadilla entrées were both good, the prime rib was good, the rum cake was good and the white chocolate mousse with berries was very good.



After dinner we went to the muster drill, which sucked because it was so hot. After the muster drill we went to our cabin, and then to the bow (to get there, go to deck 4 forward, and exit via the sliding doors onto the muster deck, turn to the forward of the ship, and take the stairs up, just keep going forward). Then we went to the welcome aboard show. That was good. The cruise director is Richard Spacey. He was really funny.



Monday April 4, 2005 – At Sea

We woke up at 9:30 and our room service arrived at 9:35. We had cookies, pastries, cereal, and omelets. They were all good. The weather was perfect and sunny.

Then we went to the actual Meet and Mingle, at 11:00.

We had a great time, we talked and met the nice cruise mates. We got M&M goodies. Then we went to the casino. We lost money, me \$60, Naren \$50. Little did we know that this would also be a trend.



Then we had lunch in the dining room. Naren had the BBQ Chicken Salad, and that was good. I had the Steak Sandwich which was so good! For dessert we had the Mango cheesecake, which had a mousse consistency, but was good, and the chocolate crème brûlée. That was very good. Then we went back to the cabin and finished unpacking. We brought along an extension cord (very helpful), a power strip (very helpful), a nightlight (inside cabin, very helpful) and an alarm clock (very, very helpful).

Naren went back to the casino and lost another \$20. Then he took a nap. We then went for wine tasting and that was ok. The guy was a little hard to understand through his accent, and we tasted 6 wines. It wasn't exotic. The whites were Pinot Grigio, Sav Blanc, and a chardonnay. The reds were a merlot, a Shiraz (a Spanish Terranzella).



Then we got ready for formal night dinner. I wore my green saree, and am happy to say that no other woman was wearing my dress! We took the wine in our cabin to dinner. Naren had lobster bisque (ok but garlicy), chilled pear soup (good) and filet mignon (extremely tender and juicy) and chicken curry thanks to Raj. Jen had the shrimp cocktail (good), the oranges in mint chutney (good), and the filet mignon, which was very good. Dessert was the sugarless coconut layer cake which was excellent. The cherries jubilee was good. We took formal pictures, then went to the show Beetlemania. That was so awesome. They were so good. Really, don't miss this show!

Then we watched the battle of the sexes/family feud. That was really funny, and the men won 50 to 20. It was the first time in 8 weeks the men won. Then we watched Karaoke Idol. There were some great singers there. Megan was awesome. Kay had a funny dance. The adult comedy show was Robby Prince. He was good and very funny. Then we went to the Café Promenade for a midnight snack. It was a sandwich and a pizza and a banana. They were all good. Also available were cookies and pastries. Coffee and Cocoa were also available. Then we slept, and set the alarm for Aruba at 6am.

Tuesday April 5, 2005 – Aruba



We set the wake up call for 6am, but slept until 6:30 because we didn't hear the alarm. We were just that tired. The room service delivered cereal, milk, fruit, danishes and they were all good. The coffee was not. It was bitter and strong. Then we got dressed and disembarked. We got down to the 1st floor, and I forgot my Sea Pass. I went back upstairs to get it.



Then we left the ship. The weather was great, and it was very windy.



We got the rental car, it took a bit, but it was relatively painless. He gave us a really good island map.



We stopped at a supermarket for water and the bathroom. I noticed that the back tire was low. We found a gas station, and put air in the tire. I then heard a hissing. I put my hand around the tire and felt a huge hole, about the size of a pea. We asked the gas station if he would change the tire for us. He would charge \$5 to change the tire or \$20 to repair the tire.

We were debating about what to do, when I heard a hissing again. It was actually coming from the other back tire, and so basically our stupid rental car had two flat tires. We didn't repair the tires. We drove back and returned the keys to the guy. He voided our credit card, and we lost 2 hours in Aruba. I don't know how to advise around this situation, short of bringing a can of fix-a-flat along with you on vacation.



We then went to find a taxi so that we could at least see the rest of the island. Instead we found an island tour on a 20 pax minivan bus. It was \$15 per person for a 3 hour tour. That took us to places we wanted to go to anyway, so cool! We went to Big Rock.



Naren climbed up and took pictures. You have to squeeze through the rocks and climb up, and I didn't want to do that. I'd probably get stuck.



Then we went to the Natural Bridge. That was way cool.



We saw the lighthouse, and the fort used to mine gold. That was really cool too. It was here that I bought the best bag ever. It was \$5 and it came in SO handy! Naren bought a safari hat. I think he looks rather dashing!



The bus tour then drove around to Arashi beach. The driver advised it was great for snorkeling. We left the bus tour and decided to catch the bus back. Arashi Beach is probably nice for snorkeling, but for us it sucked!



It's great for snorkeling if you visit via boat, and don't have to walk on the sand. There are rocks everywhere and there aren't any



places on the beach for soft sand wadding. I don't recommend this beach for swimming! There were lizards and ants all over the sand.



So we decided to catch this bi-hourly bus, and after 45 minutes started to think we'd have to walk down to the ship ourselves. We found a local who spoke Spanish, and asked him about the bus. He said that it does eventually come, and we'd have to wait. The bus driver

wanted \$2 per person to go back to the ship. We passed by Eagle Beach and it looked nice, and the water was beautiful.

We were so mad at the island for our day not having the best luck, that we decided to just go back to the ship and go into the swimming pool. We had lunch, and the burgers in the Windjammer were so juicy. I had a burger and a hot dog, and they were both great. Then Naren had a very juicy burger and so-so fries. The lemonade was not mixed well.



Some days it was good. Other days it was not. Then we took a nap and a shower, then we played Name that Tune TV shows. We won, our score was 17/20. For our efforts we got a padlock each. Then we took our cabin wine bottle to dinner. Jen had the tropical fruit salad which was good, the spring roll which was good and the sirloin which had good flavor but was tough. Naren had the jerk chicken which was spicy and good, and the banana soup which was good. Dessert was the banana crème pie which was good and the Coffee Crème brulee which was good. The Love and Marriage show was very funny. They picked the newlywed by latest time married, and the oldest couple by longest anniversary. But the middle couple was an open audition for “everyone else who wanted to play”. Each couple had to audition for the part. By volume of their applause the audience narrowed the 15 couples down to 2. Then the two most popular couples selected by that applause vote then competed for the most applause between them themselves. That couple was married for 7 years. After that we went to the promenade to write the day’s events, and met a nice guy from India, who actually grew up around Naren’s neighborhood.



There were a lot of crew members from India on this ship! We then retired to our room and did not get up early the next morning! We did notice a sloshing sound coming from the wall next to our room. We decided it was a fluke and went to sleep.



Wednesday April 6,
2005 - Curacao

We woke up at 10am.
We had little breakfast
as our Midnight snack
from the night before
was still sustaining us.



We exited the ship around noon, and walked off onto the dock. The cab to Cas Abao beach was \$40 each way. And it was a 1 hour drive. We decided that we didn't want to spend that kind of money, so we decided to take the driver's advice and go to Kontiki Beach, which for the two of us was \$15 each way. So we went to that beach and paid the \$3 per person entry fee. They said that if we wanted a chair, it would be an extra \$2.50 per chair and payable to the person on the beach, but we never found anyone taking that money. There were plenty of chairs available and it was a nice secluded cove for swimming/snorkeling.



We put our stuff down, and put our masks and vests on, then headed down to the water. The temperature was nice and we started snorkeling. When the wind picked up, the water got choppy really quickly, and then the waves started crashing over the rock breakwater that formed this lagoon. Apparently it's always windy in Curacao too. We were snorkeling around, and the water was pretty, but there wasn't anything much to see in this lagoon. I wouldn't recommend it, even if our day here hadn't turned tragic. Anyhow, we were snorkeling around and before we knew it, we were swimming near the rock breakwater. We tried to swim away from it, but then we realized we were caught in a rip tide/corrent. No matter how hard we swam, it just took us in the opposite direction – which leads to the ocean! We tried to swim away from it, but it just literally kept moving us in the opposite direction. Naren's vest made him a literal buoy and he couldn't swim away from the current either. He found a mossy pipe which connected into these rocks, and he hung onto that. He didn't know how he was going to get up from the water. The wind was pushing the water onto the rocks, and was causing waves to crash on the rocks. I don't know how you could have held on to that rock. I yelled for help from the shore, because I couldn't hold onto this pole, it was too slippery and I was getting exhausted. Two girls jumped into the water to save me, and while they were swimming to me, a guy named Cory came out onto the rock and was communicating with us. Both Cory and the two girls were all passengers on the cruise ship there on the beach for the day. I'm really glad they were there. Cory helped Naren onto the rock while the two girls (one of which was a lifeguard in her profession) swam me back into the shore. They wouldn't let me look back to Naren, but apparently Cory was helping him onto the rocks from the water. Cory saved his life. The two girls saved me, and we tried to get their name and cabin number, but they left the beach shortly after coming out of the water. So girls if you're reading this, thank you so much! When we got to the beach, the entire group of sunbathers had been watching what happened. So since we realize we didn't die, but were in very serious trouble at one point, we were very freaked out, and slightly embarrassed. Cory, while helping Naren onto the rock, had cut his foot very badly. So after learning

this, we felt very bad. We tried to take him to dinner, but he asked for a bottle of wine instead.

We arranged with our driver to be picked up at 2:30, and he was on time. We went back to the shopping area, to look for a Louis Vuitton bag. Carousel had nice bags, but they wouldn't sell a separate detachable strap if my bag style didn't come with it, so I didn't buy their bag. According to Naren I have enough bags already, so apparently I didn't need another one. In another store we saw a Tanzanite and Diamond pendant slide on an Omega chain that sold for \$38,000! We didn't buy it! ☺



No one store had loose topaz stones, so we went back to the ship, but there was a cargo ship leaving the area, and the bridge was opened for its passage. So we boarded this ferry which took us across to the other side of the dock. My leg had started to hurt from swimming so hard earlier that day, and so we walked slowly back to the ship. It should've taken 15 minutes, but it took me 30. Then we took a nap until it was time to get ready for dinner. We were hungry because we had skipped lunch and not eaten much for breakfast. So we took our cabin wine again down to the dining room.



Dinner tonight was Minestrone soup (very good), strawberry bisque (great), Antipasti (weird grilled veggies and ½ entire roasted garlic bulb “12 cloves”), tiger shrimp (very good), Indian Curry (good), Rigatoni Marinara with tiger shrimp on top (fabulous), Tiramisu (ok – good), Low Fat Angel Food Cake with Strawberries on top (so great!!). The crew sang O Solo Mio for us. That was really good!

Then we went to the crown and anchor party. That was really nice and the rum punch wasn't as good as the sangria that was being passed around. The captain took questions from the audience. I asked when a Voyager class could come to California. He said probably in 2007. The water was rough tonight, and the ship was really rocking. The dancing show Velvet Rope was a 7. There was one theme song which was sung about 5 times during different parts of the show. That, to me, got annoying. Then we donated money to the casino. No one in our M&M group was winning, by the way!

Then we took our camcorder to Quest. It was located in Studio B. This show was tooo funny! We got there at 10:15 because the doors opened at 10:30 and the show started at 10:45. We were in the front row and had a great view. The team captains remained on the ice/dance floor. We recorded it, and our team came in second. I won't say what their prize was. Then we went for a midnight snack at Johnny Rockets. We misplaced our c&a coupons for one visit. Our bill was: One diet coke \$1.50, 2 shakes at \$3.60 each (but they were soooo good!) and \$2.81 gratuity. We ate a western cheeseburger which was awesome! Naren had a hot dog which was very good and a BLT which was good as well. The service fee was \$3.20 per person, but we later found our coupon and so this charge was reversed for us. The onion rings and fries were very good too! The jukeboxes were all broken except for two, and so we had to walk to them to play songs, but then the crew started dancing to Staying Alive. That was too cool. Stanislav was a 10+. He was so good, and happy, and accommodating and just a really good waiter. I told him that I'd let all of my CruiseCritic friends know that he was really nice!

Tomorrow is a sea day! We hope our luck gets better. We hope we start winning in the casino. We hope that our room stewards don't keep forgetting to put the blankets on the bed!!!! We hope they tilex the shower soon, as there is mildew growing in the bottom! The cabins pipes are still sloshing, and would slosh every night! DO NOT GET CABIN 9253! We ran into Jeannie, who said her brother's cabin shower never did ever get fixed. I don't know where he showered. The maintenance crew was called, but it never did get fixed. Perhaps she can explain more about that.

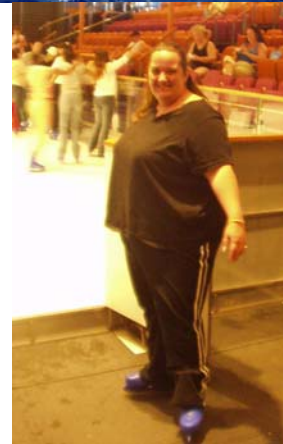
Thursday April 7, 2005
– At Sea

We set the alarm for 9, but decided that we didn't want to wake up. So we eventually got up at 11:15.



We saw that ice skating ended at 1:15, so we got up and put long pants on with socks. We went ice skating first (or Ice Walking, in Naren's case).

We signed our waver and went 3 or 4 times around the ice.



Then we went to lunch. Naren had the Nicoise salad which was good. He said it was potato salad, egg, anchovy, and lettuce and olives. He liked everything except the potatoes themselves. He had the corn chowder and said it was good. It was definitely better than my black bean soup. He had the Italian wrap. He said it was good, but wasn't

very hungry. I had the Orange Chicken, and it was ok – good. It wasn't Asian tasting at all, but it did have good flavor. The iced tea was good. The cherry pie was very good! The low sugar orange mousse was also very good. After lunch Naren donated more money to the casino. Then we went to the Card Room and played Chinese checkers and chicken foot. We left because it was getting loud because the entire card room was booming with the Spanish shoutings of two very loud Puerto Rican women! I'm not saying there's anything against being from PR, but there were so many PR people on the ship that all announcements were also in Spanish, and they even had events (like trivia and the love and marriage show) in Spanish for those guests. It didn't deter me from having a good time. It was just something I noticed. Oh yeah, how did I know they were from PR and not another Spanish speaking country? Because when one of the comedians asked who was from where, he asked if there were any PR residents onboard and ½ of the lyric theatre went wild! Go Figure! Then we went to the swing dance class. That was lots of fun and it brought back dance steps we learned while we took dance lessons for our wedding. Naren then went back to the Casino and didn't win anything! I got ready for dinner, but didn't get dressed in my saree yet. I wanted to get a good seat for the ice show. So we went to the ice show wearing our casual clothes and most other people were already wearing their formal stuff. We had Portofino reservations tonight, so our dinner didn't start at 6, it was 7:30 instead! So after the ice show which was such a great show (don't miss the ice show), we went to the cabin and got ready for dinner. I draped my saree with Naren's help and it turned out very good.



We then took our portraits and then went to Portofinos for dinner. We brought our cabin wine, and they wouldn't believe us that we had received this gift from our TA and the corkage fee was waived. I told them they needed to talk to Mohsen, and they did. But he was gone for 20 minutes, and in this 20 minute timeframe, we weren't offered bread or water. We sat there looking dumb.

But once he came back with our wine, he brought the bread with the dipping items (chopped tomatoes, an olive paste, and a tuna salad). They were all very, very good! The waiter had too many tables too. He was very busy and it was difficult to get good service in the first 2/3 of the meal. But once all the other people left, our service greatly improved. During dinner, we were treated to a rain storm with lightning. For dinner we had the Tiger Shrimp with Risotto (very good), Goat Cheese Soufflé (very good), tenderloin with pieces of parmesan (not what I expected, tenderloin was blood rare and very thin ... it didn't taste like tenderloin, it looked like pepperoni), Lobster pieces in Pasta (good, the peas and veggies were good), Filet Mignon (very, very good) and I had the filet with the Tiger Shrimp (also very good).

Dessert was the hazelnut meringue (so great, melted in your mouth)



and the buttermilk pannakota (so-so . . . you're going to have to ask Naren what this was . . . it had grapefruit pieces in it)!



And I had the chocolate flourless cake (tasted like fudge, it was so good!).



Then we went to the dance show "Can't stop the rock". It was a good show. It highlighted the songs from all of the greatest movies from the last 60 years. But there were no songs from Saturday Night Fever or Grease or big hits like that. Instead they had slightly obscure songs. No one could figure out their reasoning for this. Maybe they didn't have permission to use the really good songs. Then immediately after the show, we went to take pictures of the gala buffet.



But they were closing it, and rushed us out of the dining room. We tried to explain that the show JUST ended, but the waiter didn't care. Then we went to the cabin and went to sleep.

Friday April 8, 2005 – St. Maarten



We got up at 9, and went to the windjammer for breakfast. We were silently saying a prayer that our next port would be much better than the last ports!

The food here was the normal breakfast buffet stuff. It was good. The oatmeal had no taste. The coffee was getting better. Maybe Naren diluted it when I wasn't looking. He had the French toast and said it was very good. The breakfast potatoes were good, but the tater tots were a little crunchy. The cranberry juice was good, and a welcome change from the usual orange juice. Now if I only brought my SoCo and my Sweet lime, I could make Scarlet O'Hara's.

Anyhow ... I went up to the top deck and filmed the beautiful water and surrounding dock area while Naren finished getting ready.



We then exited the ship at 10:30 and walked into the pier area. There we went to the taxi area and shared a taxi to Maho Beach. This drive took 40 minutes because there was some traffic. But it was \$7 per person, per way. We arrived at the beach at 11-11:15. It was a very nice day, not very breezy and we were dropped off at this hotel.



To get to Maho Beach they said to go through their lobby, and then down to the water. But you could also just have followed the road around, because the beach came out on the other side of the hotel. You didn't have to walk in the sand ... that's hard to walk in.



The sand was very soft, and there weren't any rocks in the beach part that we were in. There were a few rocks, and you could definitely see them, but if you walk down toward the restaurant there on the beach, you'll get clear of them. The water was warm, and beautiful, and we spread our blanket out and had a great view of the runway, and the approaching planes as they came into the airport. We sat on the beach on our sheet with our towels and cameras and suntan lotion. That sun is hot and powerful. It wasn't very humid at all. In fact, the taxi driver was saying that the island is going through a drought and there hasn't been much rain to speak of. To keep cool, we kept our t-shirts on, and got them wet in the water, and this helped keep us cool. No we didn't get farmer tans. I actually burned through my shirt and lotion. But I imagine that it could have been much worse.

There are many little planes (turboprops) and they're cool to see landing so close to you.



But the REAL show comes when the jets land.



We had one American Airlines Boeing 767 jet land there, one Continental 767 and one US Airways Boeing 757 land right over our heads! That was so amazing! If you do this activity, please be advised that when the jet has finished flying over you, the jet thrust will blow the sand all over the place and this will hurt. You can minimize this by putting your head down, so at least you don't get sand in your face. Oh yeah, and lay on your belongings, because they'll get blown into the water too.



When the AA 767 took off, the sand blew so hard and actually knocked a kid into the water. It blew people's belongings into the water, and made the sand stick to us where we had applied the suntan lotion. It was so awesome! We left Maho at 1:45 because we wanted to get some shopping in. So we asked the driver to take us to the shopping area. The taxi ride was \$14 for us both. He took us to Front Street where there were hundreds of jewelry stores and diamond stores. We were looking for blue topaz so that we could get earrings to match my pendant. I didn't take my pendant, but we made a good choice. So we purchased two 12 carat pear shaped London blue topaz stones, so I can get them set into earrings. They're beautiful! So we shopped for about 2 hours. Then we took a taxi back to the ship. That was \$3 per person, and only took about 10 minutes because our driver was coming close to hitting pedestrians and then when it came time to turn right, he actually cut some guy off (or was it that the guy let him in?) and so we didn't have to wait in the line of cars waiting to turn. I thought it was pretty slick and saved us about 15 minutes. Then we were taken back to the taxi area, and I stopped into this other jewelry store. I was about to buy this other pair of Rainbow Topaz earrings, but the guy wanted too much money for a stone that is just heat treated white topaz. Geeze, it's not like its Tanzanite! Anyhow, then we went back to the ship, and the liquor was so cheap here. For 1 liter, it was \$9. That was for most liquors. We actually regretted not purchasing it, because it wasn't this cheap in St. Thomas. This is a quote from Naren, "I think Grey Goose was \$12-ish whereas in US it is \$20 but don't quote me on that, I don't remember. I do remember Absolute was \$9 (US \$20), Baileys was \$15 (US\$27-35)."

Then we boarded the ship at 4:30, and went for a shower to get the sand off of us. While showering, and making sure the sand was going down the drain, I noticed this black stuff on the bottom tiles of our shower. I know what it is, and couldn't figure out why our cabin attendant would allow mildew to grow in our shower. I didn't think anything of it until I found a fungus in my toe later that night. Nice hua?



After showing for dinner we went to play Name that Tune, TV shows from the ancient world. We totally sucked! I didn't watch TV in the 60s because I wasn't alive then! Anyhow, we left while they were scoring the sheets because we had to go to dinner and we know we didn't win! Tonight was Lobster night, but it's disguised as Fisherman's Plate. Just to be sure we didn't book Portofino's on a night when they had lobster, we asked Raj when Lobster would be coming. He advised Friday night. But we looked at the capers-on-tv "tv channel", and only found Fisherman's Plate. So they try to trick you ! ☺

Anyhow, we had the salmon appetizer which was very good, the wild mushroom pastry which was excellent!, the pear soup with strawberries which was ok to good, and the Caesar salad which was ok. Naren said the lobster had two different consistencies, but it was good. He gave it a 7, and had 2 tails. The prime rib was a 9 tonight. Oh wow it was so good! Naren's Indian food tonight was chicken curry and it was mild and just ok. It's the thought that counts. They sang to us tonight for our anniversary, and brought the candle in a dessert from the menu. Tonight's desserts were a sample plate, 3 items on one plate. They were chocolate flourless cake (like in Portofinos ... so good!), cheesecake (I thought it was good, light and airy. Naren thought it was ok), and some rum cake thing (I thought it was gross, Naren loved it). The low sugar strawberry desert was very good. We left and got our formal night pictures. They came out very good. Then we went to the casino and lost our sorry-tushes again!!!! Then we went to the show and Tony Tillman was good. He had great energy and put on a good show. Then we came home and prepared for immigration tomorrow.

Some general thoughts for today were: Richard Spacey's dancing is funny. The camcorder never fogged, but it wasn't very humid on this trip in any of the ports, it was VERY windy though. The pipe water is still swishing and swished every dang night. The guest relations desk said that they were doing maintenance on the pipes, but it continued every night! The extension cord came in handy because it was used to put the alarm clock next to the bed. The seas were very rough on the cruise and the staff said that the seas had been more rough in the past 3 weeks. Go figure. Oh yeah, and why can't the room steward remember that I wanted both blankets on the bed. I reminded him daily, and he never seemed to remember! What was wrong with him, really? In the dining room, instead of coffee, I got cocoa every night. It was great, and there wasn't a charge.

Saturday April 9, 2005 – We woke up at 6, and were out of bed at 6:30. We were ready to go at 6:40. We read in the compass that the line for immigration started at 7, and when we went down to deck 5 (for US Citizens) and deck 4 (for everyone else), there was already a line!



At 7:00 the line moved fast. When the officer looked at my information they didn't investigate the fact that my passport page is in my maiden name, and the cruise card was in my married name. If they wanted to look at the last passport page, they'd see it was amended, but they never investigated that. So much for security. So any Jennifer can take my passport? So after immigration, I went to the purser's desk to turn in the lost Johnny Rockets coupons. She said they'd be applied to the account. We also turned in the departure card, which they asked for 3 different times. Oh well. Maybe their dog ate the cards we kept turning in. Then I went back to the cabin and Naren was already there. So we got ready for St. Thomas and left for the windjammer. The waffles were dry. The OJ was watered down now. Perhaps they ran out of concentrate? The doughnut was good. The round potato tots (hash browns) were so crunchy when you put your fork into them, the 1/2 flew across the room. It was pretty funny. The fruit and the normal potatoes were very good. The coffee was strong again.

We went to deck 1 and disembarked at 8:15. The weather was warm, sunny, and bright and beautiful. We told the taxi people we wanted red hook at 9am. They put us into this open air taxi with 10 other people all going to red hook. When we sat in this dang taxi for another 15 minutes, we all started to get anxious. We kept shouting at him to “GO” but only the lord knows what he was waiting for. Not anymore people could fit into our taxi, and we all wanted to go to the same place. Finally at 8:40 we were off. Now imagine Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride! We were cutting people off, and weaving in and out of traffic, and exceeding the speed limit by 20 mph. It literally felt like a roller coaster. We were all having a good time on the way over there, and were at red hook at 9:01! So what should have taken 30 minutes took only 20. Woo hoo! We paid \$8 for each person for this ride. Naren bought the ferry tickets at \$7 each person. We stood in line and there were 100 people already in line, and there was no shade for us. We were getting baked under the sun. It was now getting pretty hot. The ferry came and all 250 of us loaded the ferry. I don’t think they could have held any more people, and the ferry was 15 minutes late.



It took 20 minutes to get to St. John. The channel water was very rough. The ferry was moving about and was sort of scary at times. We got to St. John and got into another taxi for Trunk bay.



That taxi \$7 each person, each way. At the park, the entrance fee is another \$4 per person. IT IS WORTH EVERY PENNY! We arrived at 10:00. The water is so gorgeous and the sand is so soft and the water is so blue and warm.



There aren’t any waves to crash on you, and you can go out into trunk bay about 30 feet from the shore and still be in waste high water, and you’ll be able to see your feet! We loved it here. We got into the water and just frolicked around for a few hours. I wish we didn’t ever have to leave. There was a snorkeling area over to the side, but after our fiasco in Curacao, we didn’t want to snorkel. There was a lifeguard, but only up until a certain point on the beach. They did have a snack shop, showers and lockers. I believe there was a place to rent the snorkel stuff, but we didn’t do that. We left Trunk Bay at 12:45, and we showered before catching the taxi. We made it to the dock with time to spare for the 1:00 ferry. The ferry dock contains the embarkation for the Charlotte Amalie and Red Hook ferries. The Red Hook ferry left first. Then the Charlotte Amalie ferry left and the water was so rough. WE finally made it, and docked across the water from the cruise ships. I looked all around the islands, and finally found mallorca pearls. So once we bought them, We looked around the shopping area, but then took a taxi to the

ship for \$3 each. We had to walk the entire length of the Celebrity Horizon and the RCCL Adventure on the docks, so this took 5-10 minutes. We got back on board the ship, and went to the promenade for our snack. The pizza was very good, and the desserts were chocolate pecan pie which was good, and the vanilla pound cake was fabulous! The chibabatta sandwich was good.

We rested, showered for dinner, and found two bottles of wine in our cabin. We don't understand how this happened, but we took both bottles to our table and shared them with our table mates. We really had great conversation every night, and met the nicest people, so we were happy to share with them.



Dinner this night was shrimp cocktail (good), chilled strawberry buttermilk soup (sour but good), spinach dip (very good), Caesar salad (good), pumpkin soup (tasted like chicken, but good), tri tip of beef (very, very good), Indian entrée (very good) and I had cornbread which was very moist. There was singing which was good. We went to the casino and lost AGAIN! We then saw the farewell variety show, which was a good show. Then at 10:00 we thought we'd better pack because it had to be out before 12! I might get flamed here, but whatever.

We have NEVER had our luggage out by 12! There has also always been luggage in our hallway until at least 2. So we decided that we'd make an effort and lo and behold at 12:15 we were finished!



Not bad for two hours eh? We then set our alarm for the morning.

Sunday April 10, 2005 – Back into Puerto Rico

Our pipes sloshed all throughout the night. I really had my issues with this cabin! We got up at 7:30 and were ready by 8:20. We went to the dining room, because they were open for breakfast until 9. We had Raj again for our waiter. That was nice.



I had the classic breakfast and Naren had the French toast. He said it was very good. The orange juice was very concentrated and was great once diluted. As Naren and I were sitting there eating our breakfast, two Indian waiters pass by talking to each other and according to Naren were venting disgruntled anger about how another waiter was doing his job. It was in Hindi, but still, didn't they think that someone would be able to understand them? Or was it that they were so frustrated, they didn't care? We weren't offended, we just were curious what the other waiter had done to make them so mad. Then we took our disembarkation number, and realized that it might be a little late for our 1:30 flight. It was fine, we could get another number, we just couldn't get the first disembarkation group number. But they were on group 4 anyway. So she gave us group 5, which was better than group 10. A number 10 would have put us off the ship at 11. So anyway, we decided to exit the ship, and we'd already gone through immigration when we were in St. Thomas yesterday, so we showed our customs form to this officer, and then went into the luggage room. I snagged a porter, and we were off. 20 minutes later we had our cab, and were off to the airport. It was \$20 to get us there. Continental's line was huge. But it moved quickly because they kept adding gate agents and there was electronic check in. The dude printed out the sticky luggage tags, and boarding passes, but we checked ourselves in. Then we went to stand in the security line and this is where the day took a turn for the worst. I still had that fungus thing on my toe thanks to the mold in our shower. I didn't want to take my shoe off and walk around in the airport. Also, please add this to the SEVERE sunburn that we received on trunk bay. I took off my left shoe, but kept the right one on. They x-rayed my stuff, but asked that I take my shoe off. I said, "no, hand wand me." Apparently in Puerto Rico that means take your wand and put it into my butt crack. I raised my arms as much as I could. But my shoulders didn't want to cooperate, and this means I'm a terrorist. Any idiot could see what I was dealing with as my face was peeling too. So, she takes my other shoe (right shoe) and insists this has to go with the other shoe through the scanner together. Fine, ok! So I'm standing there with my foot up, and they can't understand what I'm doing. I told them again I had an infection on my toe and wasn't going to put my foot down. She finally gave me back my shoes after not finding anything. Surprise! Then told me to spread my legs. This is when she put her wand through my legs, and then up my butt crack. When I flinched, she got mad. I told her not to stick that thing IN my ass, and she didn't listen. Her supervisor came over and told her I was cooperating, and to let me go. Naren was getting really pissed at me, for making her job so hard. I really didn't care at this point. Finally she let me go, but then called me a "really bad name" in Spanish. I can understand her, so I turned back to her, and said in her language "Just because I'm not from here, doesn't mean I can't understand you, weirdo". Then we left, but Naren was mad at me. I did have an attitude with her, but to be 4th grade about this, "she started it". Apparently you can't have an infection and a sunburn when going through security. God, I hate the airport.

We went to our gate, and our flight was actually 45 minutes late because there was a flat tire on the airplane. They said it was the jetway, but not one person had the same story. They asked for volunteers to stay behind. But that means I'd have to get goosed by the security again, I didn't want to do that. My shoulders hurt so bad, I took my bra straps down. That helped somewhat. What didn't help was a very crowded flight. There just isn't a lot of room on planes and the flights are long! We finally took off, and barely

made our connecting flight. I was really worried about our luggage. But we took off, and this flight was crowded too. Our seats didn't recline, and the people in front of us, their seats reclined 1 ½ seats worth of room. So that really sucked. I leaned forward and used her back of the chair as a pillow. Yeah, it was that tight. We landed, we got our luggage quickly as it was the first bags off the carousel. I'm thinking they just made the plane! We got our rental car, and when Hertz realized what happened in Aruba, they gave us an SUV upgrade. Damn gas guzzling car! But it was a very nice car with all the buttons on the other side of the car. Anyhow we got home at 2am on Monday morning.

Since we just bought a house, now we get to move in! I'm still working on getting the pictures up. I'm hoping to have them up by this weekend. I'll post again when they're ready for viewing!

We didn't have kids, so we didn't do the adventure ocean activities. We didn't do any ship excursions, and our folio was \$200. We tipped accordingly for the services. Raj and Clara were great. Carl and Anne Marie were not! They still got money, but not as much as they would have, had they just **MADE THE BED LIKE I'D REQUESTED** (repeatedly). Richard Spacey was great. The captain was also very personable. We liked him very much.

The ship is gorgeous. We had a great second half of the cruise once our luck in ports turned around. Our luck in the casino, however, never did turn around. We didn't lose a lot of money, but found it odd that we never won anything.

Any questions? I'll try to answer them (if I haven't already). If you'd like you can send me an email at lephysteria@yahoo.com.