

Day 65 – At Sea – Packing – Last Formal Night – Baked Alaska – 29 Nov 09: The day started with sunshine and calmer seas than yesterday. The temperature was in the high 60s.

We will be leaving the ship on December 2 and all our stuff in the room must be in suitcases and ready to go out the door by the night of December 1. That's 2 days from now. As part of our cruise package we have Federal Express shipping of four suitcases with no weight limit from our Amsterdam cabin to our home. Fortunately, arrangements have been made to allow our bags to go to our home by FedEx without us having to retrieve them and personally take them through a US Customs check point. That is a huge improvement over requirements for US Customs check we faced at the end of a cruise in 2007.

Today we pulled our empty suitcases out from under the bed and proceeded to pack all the souvenirs and most of the clothes out of the closet. The scene part way through this ordeal is shown in the picture on the right. It actually didn't turn out to be as bad as we expected. The clothes and souvenirs all fit into the luggage we will ship by FedEx and the few things we plan to take with us will fit into a roll-on duffle bag. What a relief!



The dress for dinner tonight was formal. This is the last formal dress night of the cruise. After tonight we can pack the tuxedo and formal shoes. We were feeling nostalgic as we joined our table mates at good-ole Table #53. A few days ago we had put some photos on a memory card and given it to Phyllis so that she could transfer them into her computer. She brought the card back tonight after adding some of her photos of a red flowering "Christmas" tree and a waterfall from a tour we had missed.

Most of the dinner conversation was around plans for Christmas and the coming year. George and Judy have a cruise to the Caribbean with family scheduled in December so they were thinking about that. The rest of us don't have any immediate cruising plans and were concentrating on just getting back home. While everyone was cleaned up so well we had the group picture taken of us, as shown below (Left to right – George, Judy, Phyllis, Louise, Karen, Valerie, Orlin and Barbara). For this last photo, even Valerie faced the camera for us.



There is a cruising tradition that on the last formal night in the dining room the desert will be baked Alaska. The stewards parade around the dining room holding the baked Alaska dishes high. In the old days before such high concern for safety, the dishes would get a dash of high alcohol content liquor and set ablaze for the trip around the dining room. Tonight, instead of actual flames, they put Fourth of July type sparklers on the Baked Alaska so it was an exciting scene as the stewards marched around the dining room. Taking pictures of the event was complicated by the fact that our table was a long way from the marching route but we got a representative photo to give an idea of what we saw, as shown below. The bright sparklers mark the path of the stewards holding the Baked Alaska.



As always, the Baked Alaska was delicious and capped off our evening meal nicely.

After dinner we went back to our stateroom and finished the blog for yesterday plus we did a little packing.

The good ship Amsterdam continues on its route to Los Angeles and the end of the cruise. Soon we return to reality after two months of luxurious living and travel.