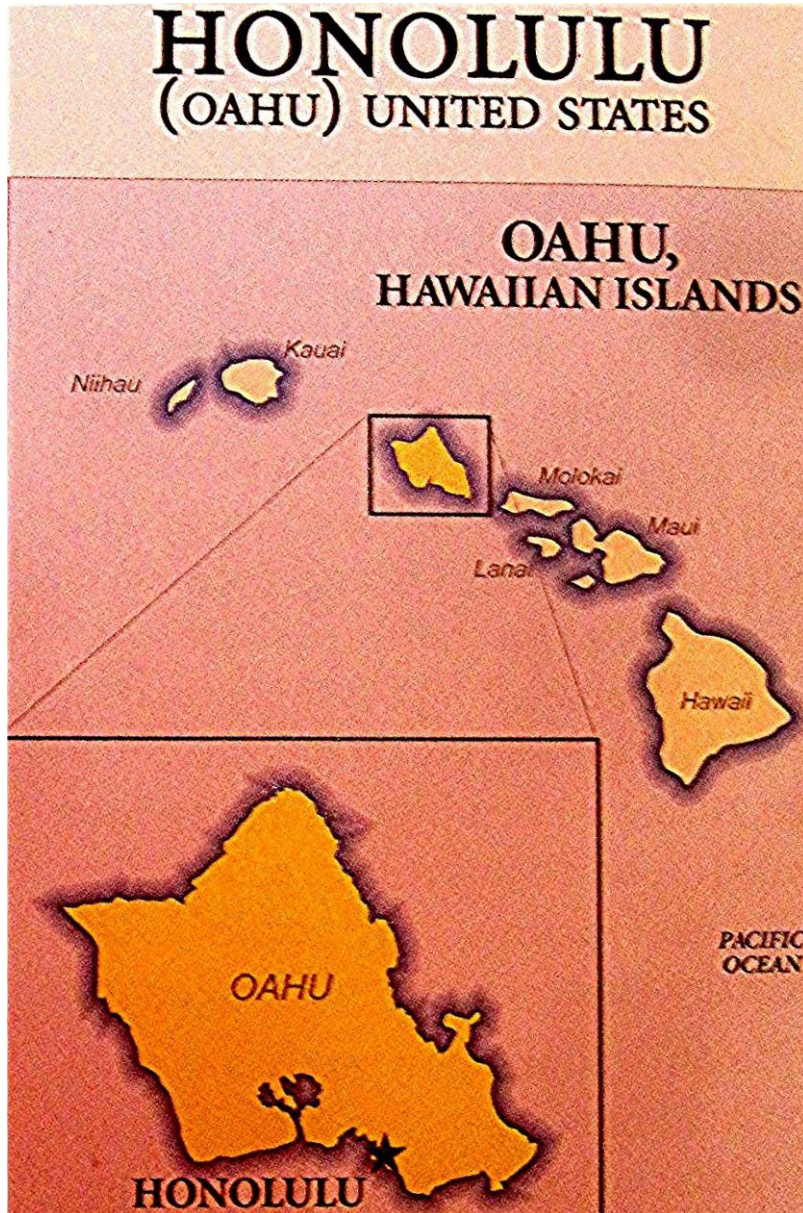
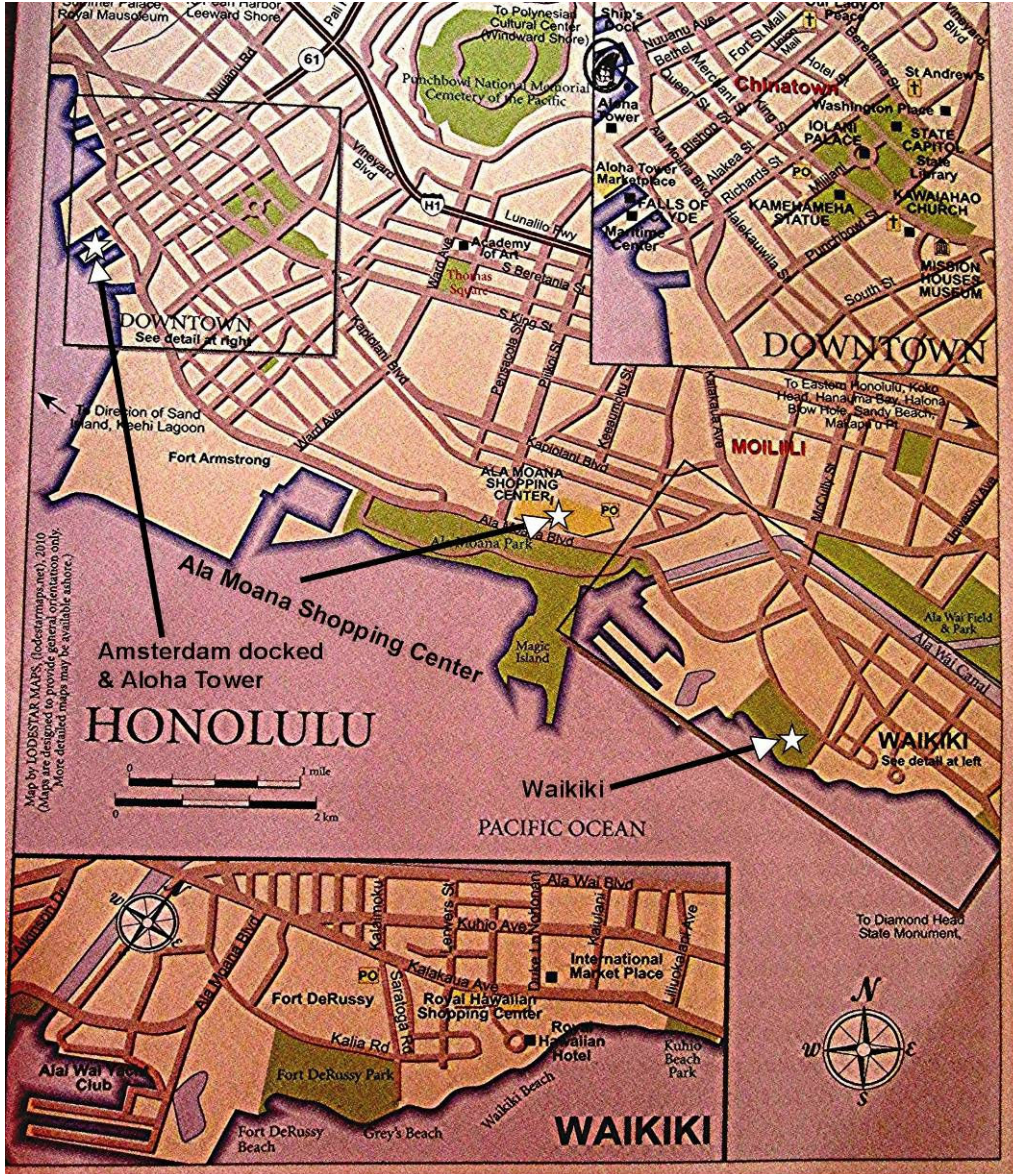


Day 61 – Honolulu, Hawaii – Ala Moana – Waikiki – 25 Nov 09: The day started with the sea rough but not as bumpy as yesterday. The sky was partly cloudy and temperature in the high 70s. The Amsterdam was approaching Honolulu harbor at about 7am and it was just getting daylight. The maps below show where we were on the globe and also a street map of Honolulu that shows with stars the local highlights we visited later.





From a distance the skyline of Waikiki and the familiar shape of Diamond Head to the right finally took shape as shown below.



As we came closer the tall buildings that line the main streets of Honolulu near the port made an imposing scene, as shown on the left.



The iconic Aloha Tower finally came into view, as shown on the left in the photo below. The Aloha Tower was dwarfed by the office buildings in back but it confirmed that we had arrived in Honolulu.



Slowly the Amsterdam approached Pier 10/11 at the Aloha Tower Berth. We heard the lilting rhythm of the Hawaiian music and the hula dancers could be seen through the morning light, as shown on the right.



We were safely docked by about 8am and shortly thereafter the Amsterdam received clearance from the local authorities. Normally passengers could just walk off the ship after clearance was granted. However, the procedure when entering the US is more rigorous.

In a manner similar to that in Australia we had to pass through a process where a US Immigration Agent compared the picture in our passports to our faces this morning to see if the resemblance was good enough to assure that we were who we said we were. All the passengers and crew had to go through this process. The passengers gathered in the Queen's Lounge as shown in the photo on the left.



The wait was not painfully long and soon, Steve, the assistant Cruise Director, came by our row and led us to the Immigration Officials, as shown on the right. The whole process seemed very well organized. In just a few minutes our travel-worn faces were compared with our passport photos and the resemblance was found to be better than ever. We were then free to leave the ship and explore Honolulu.



Before leaving the Amsterdam we had noticed that clock in the Aloha Tower was stuck at 9:40 and it did not work while we were in port. The Aloha Tower dates back to a time when nearly everyone arrived in the Hawaiian Islands by ship and this harbor was the center of activity. Now most people arrive in Honolulu at the airport. As we left the Amsterdam this morning, the passenger terminal and the outside area looked a little bit “down at the heels”. The terminal building was pretty much a vacant shell and the shops around the terminal building had very little customer traffic. In addition, the Aloha Tower clock was broken.

We walked off the ship and up a pedestrian mall to King Street where we turned right. Our intension was to visit the King Kamehameha Statue as one of the iconic symbols of Hawaii and then continue on the Ala Moana Shopping Center. We found the commanding King Kamehameh Statue and took this photo shown on the right.



We decided to skip walking around the Iolani Palace and the State Capitol buildings that are close by. We wound our way through the industrial (and frankly not very attractive) part of town towards the Ala Moana Shopping Center. By accident we came across a library building and were able to get a photo of Barbara’s library card visiting Honolulu as shown on the left.

The Friends of the Library referenced in this plaque raise money to support local Hawaiian Libraries and Book-Mobiles around the islands. This seemed like a good way to commemorate the card’s visit.

We arrived at the Ala Moana Shopping Center and entered the huge undercover garage on Ala Moana Blvd. In the dim light of the garage we could see workers unloading live Christmas trees from a line-up of refrigerated semi trailers. We have allowed ourselves to disconnect from reality while on the cruise and the brief glimpse we have of Christmas decorations in the various ports helps us get back in touch a little bit. However, seeing this forest of fir Christmas trees after walking along palm tree lined streets was a bit of a shock. A picture of the Christmas trees is shown below.



We browsed around the Ala Moana Shopping Center looking for a couple items. We ended up buying some tee shirts in the Crazy Shirts store.

Then it was time to buzz down to Waikiki for lunch. Our favorite restaurant in Honolulu is Duke's. To find Duke's you have to walk through the lobby of the Outrigger Hotel. We caught a shuttle bus going to Waikiki and it dropped us off in front of the Outrigger Hotel. We walked through the lobby where we saw that they were also getting into the Christmas Spirit, as shown on the right.



We passed through the lobby to the Waikiki beachfront and arrived at Duke's.



Looking around the Duke's restaurant lobby you can't miss the connection with Duke Kahanamoku (1890-1968), the father of international surfing and six-time Olympic medalist in swimming and water polo. He was a Waikiki beach boy who became a hero and a legend. His pictures adorn the entryway, as shown on the right.



We were seated at a table next to the hotel swimming pool that separated the restaurant from the sandy beach. The following pictures attempt to capture the fun and excitement of the moment we had at Waikiki today.



This was the view looking south down the beach toward Diamond Head at the far end.

We were enjoying the view of one of the most famous resort beaches in the world. And yet the delicious meals of fish and chips and barbequed pork sandwich were with drinks cost less than \$45. This sure beat the high costs of French Polynesia.



The old Royal Hawaiian Hotel with its pink Moorish architecture is in plain sight next door to the restaurant. For people with a memory of the “good old days” this is a nice treat because the Royal Hawaiian is now completely hidden from casual tourists by high-rise hotels blocking the view from the street.



We have never stayed at the



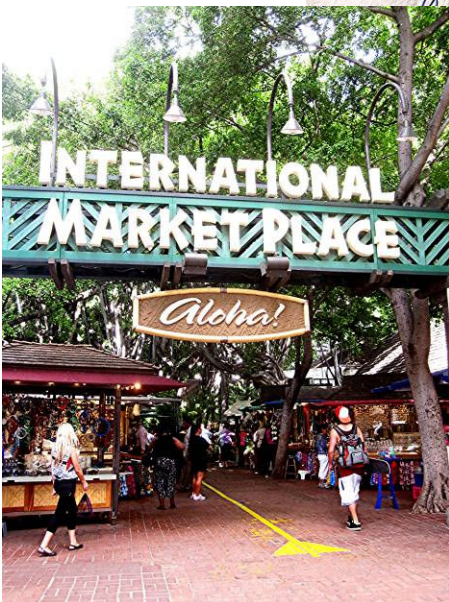
Royal Hawaiian Hotel but every time we visit Honolulu we make a point of visiting the lobby to “smell the old money”. After finishing our meal at Duke’s we made our way through the swimming pool areas over to the entrance of the Royal Hawaiian. Here, on the right, is a view of the entrance to the grand old hotel.

Inside the lobby are classy pieces of art like this old chart, shown below.



There is also the light hearted memorabilia photos of a bygone cruising era when the only way to get to Hawaii was by a ship. The gala celebration at the sailing of a cruise ship is shown in this picture on the left. This festive scene was a far cry from the somber tone when Barbara, and her mother and sister were evacuated from Honolulu in 1942. They were military dependents who left on the Mattson Line ship called the Lurline, after the Japanese Pearl Harbor attack.

After making the rounds of the lobby



and beach verandah area we left the Royal Hawaiian and walked across Kalakaua Avenue to the International Market Place.

The International Market Place is a Waikiki institution with the familiar entrance as shown on the left. The vendor stalls are packed with all kinds of tourist related goods.

There are huge stately banyan trees growing between the stalls and providing a natural roof and shade for the whole area, as shown on the right.



An artificial waterfall and wonderful koi fish pond provides a spot of beauty near the center of the International Market Place, as shown below.



We hardly ever buy anything at the International Market Place but we enjoy walking through it and feeling all the hustle and bustle of this popular tourist site.

We left the International Market Place through a side exit and found ourselves in a market place that was new to us. It was Duke's Market, as shown by the sign on the right.

This market place is obviously playing on the fame of Duke Kahanamoku, like the restaurant across the street.

We checked out the venue, as shown below, and found it a bit narrow and crowded in spots but it was basically the same as the International Market Place.



After satisfying all our shopping urges we took a few random pictures of the Waikiki scene before leaving the area. We just wanted to indicate how completely developed this area has become.

In case there is any doubt, some typical Waikiki street scenes are shown below.



We decided it was time to return to the Amsterdam. We thought that last year, when at Waikiki we had caught a cute little trolley bus back to the Aloha Tower Terminal for a few dollars each. There were similar trolleys on the streets of Waikiki today so we checked on the price with one of the drivers. She said that if we had some kind of a pass we could come on aboard and ride back but if we didn't have a pass then the charge was \$30. For that kind of money we could take a taxi back to the ship so we backed away. The trolley driver told us we could catch city bus 19 or 20 and they would take us back to the ship for a few dollars. The bus stop was just around the corner so we opted for that and were soon on a nice city bus with a helpful driver. The bus ride back to the ship was full of stops but we made the trip in about 20 minutes.

In the evening a steady rain began to fall so there was little incentive to go back in to Honolulu to walk around. We decided to just stay on board and to the barbeque party planned on the Lido Pool Deck. The Amsterdam staff goes out of its way to provide food and entertainment for passengers who prefer to stay on board in the evening when in foreign ports. We usually fit into that category and appreciate those evenings on board. Tonight there was a party with a barbeque and Hawaiian band on the Lido Pool Deck so we went to that. The stewards from the Lido were decked out in bright Hawaiian shirts and looked sharp.

These guys were busy cooking and serving the delicious food, as shown on the right and below.



Rudy and a friend were serving tables along with Pas as shown in these photos on the right and below.



Anton, whom we met on a cruise in 2007, was also on duty tonight, as shown below.



The barbeque on the Lido Pool Deck was particularly enjoyable because we were able to share a table with Bill and Sharon (sk8teacher) who are Cruise Critic friends, shown on the right. Bill had arranged the tour in Dunedin, New Zealand that we had enjoyed so much.



There was an



excellent professional local band for the event. However, for our optimum pleasure and conversation the music volume should have been turned down a notch. The hula dancers were exceptional and had all the grace and beauty of that classical dance as shown by the ladies in the photos on the left and below.



The music and the dancing had to come to an end by about 9pm because the ship was preparing to get underway for Kona, Hawaii. The party was wrapped up and the ship got underway by about 10:00 as planned.

The sea was moderate with just enough rocking motion to put you to sleep. We were on our way to Kona Hawaii where we expect to drop anchor in the harbor about 8am.