

Day 34 – At Sea – Halloween on the Amsterdam – 30 Oct. 09: The Amsterdam was sailing from Brisbane, Australia to Sydney. During the night as we sailed southeast along the east coast of Australia lights of Australian towns and navigation lights could be seen from our verandah on the starboard side. The sea was calm with a light breeze and temperature was comfortable. At daybreak there were scattered clouds.

In the morning we worked on the blog for yesterday in Brisbane. There were disembarkation meetings for the 250 or so people who signed up for only the first leg of the cruise and will be leaving the Amsterdam when we reach Sydney. Since we continue on for the complete Grand Voyage the meetings did not pertain to us.

Our southeasterly course took us into a new time zone where Sydney is located. At 2pm today the clocks on the ship were moved ahead one hour to 3pm to be consistent with the new time zone.

Officer's Open Forum: At the new time of 3pm there was a presentation in the Queen's Lounge by the senior officers of the ship in which they answered questions from the audience. We attended along with a couple hundred other passengers. The officers were lined up on the stage with microphones as shown in the picture below. Left to right: Captain - Fred Eversen, Hotel Manager - Henk Minsink, Chief Engineer - Ian Taylor, Chief Officer - Frisco Kramer, and Environmental Officer - Robert Preston.



Steve and Jackie, Assistant Cruise Directors, then handed microphones to people in the audience who raised their hand so they could ask questions. There were a couple comments of high praise for the officers and crew for the wonderful cruise we have had so far. Most of the questions were about mechanical features of the ship. One surprising fact we learned was that all food waste is ground up and discharged into the sea when we are more than 12 miles from land. This is a legal procedure that is necessary because most port facilities do not have capability for handling such waste material and storing it on board for long periods of time would present a biological hazard. We had not heard

an explanation for the yellow substance we had seen on the surface of the ocean the day after we had left Cairns, Australia (Day 31, 27 Oct. 2009) so Orlin asked about that. The explanation was that it was the result of a natural algae bloom that was taking place in the water. It was an hour long session and we enjoyed learning some more about the ship and how it is managed.

Halloween: Today was designated as Halloween on the Amsterdam and there were elaborate decorations in the Crow's Nest and in the dining rooms. In this way the guests departing in Sydney could participate in the Halloween festivities before we reach Sydney and port activities get in the way.

The Four Seasons sculpture in the stairwell on deck 9 in front of the Crows Nest was decorated with masks, ghosts and crepe paper balls. This was a clever decoration job done by the staff as can be seen below.



In preparation for the Boo Ball tonight, The Crow's Nest Lounge was decked out in black and orange Halloween colors along with a few ghosts here and there, as shown below.



The Lido had pumpkins carved in the classical Jack'O Lantern shape by the kitchen crew. Some examples are shown below.



The main event for us was the dinner hour when people arrived wearing their costumes they had carefully packed and brought along just for this occasion.

Our costumes were pretty tame. Barbara wore a tee with pumpkins embroidered on it while Orlin wore a black tee shirt with the “glow in the dark” image of a skeleton on the front. Here is a picture of us with Jean and Doug at the entrance to the dining room.

Doug was wearing his pirate eye patch and a tee shirt with the caption “Instant Pirate, just add Rum!”. Jean had on her “Boo!” shirt.

The stewards and dining room managers were also wearing costumes of all descriptions. They greeted us in the best scary tradition as we entered the dining room, as shown in these photographs below.





The dining room had been decorated with crepe paper balls, balloons and little ghosts hanging on every available space. The view we got as costumed passengers entered the dining room is shown below.





Some Cruise Critic friends at a table next to ours were joining in the costume fun, as shown below.



At our table Karen had the most imaginative costume and she livened up the evening with this “Cat with fat lips” outfit shown below.



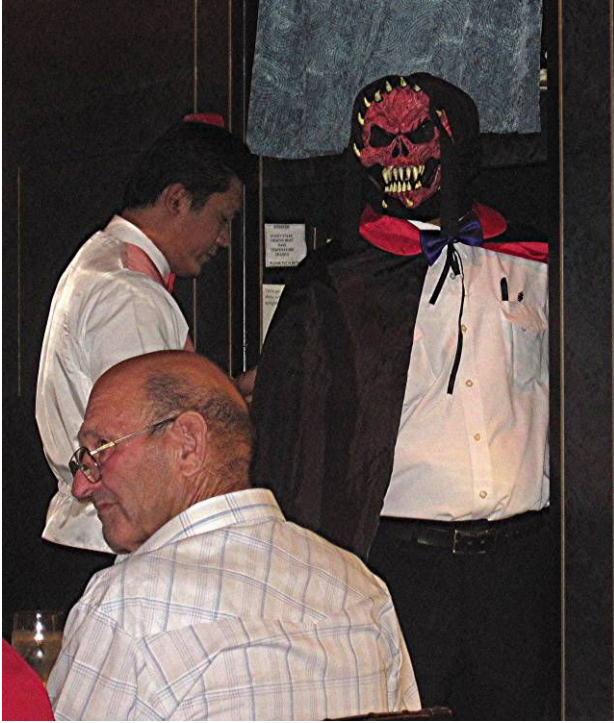
Here is a photograph of our whole table on the left.

Romli, hammed it up with Barbara.



Didi, shown below, did his best to be scary. In the background, Russell and Ev are busy figuring out what to order from the menu.





Nestor, the wine steward was probably the scariest with this outfit.

It was a chaotic but fun time as everyone who had brought a costume did their best to entertain their friends. When the evening eventually wound down we returned to our cabin with the now familiar Halloween decoration on the door.



Inside our cabin we found that the stewards had left us a little “Trick or Treat” gift on the pillows.



Tomorrow is a big day as we arrive in Sydney for the start of a three day stay in that city. The sail-in to Sydney Harbor is a wonderful experience and we will be up early to take it all in. The schedule is for the sail-in to start about 6am so we will be up early for that.