

Initial Preparation for the Cruise: (2/9/09- 9/22/09)

Signing up for the 63 Day Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific Voyage: On February 9, 2009 we visited our travel agent Wanda Moretz in her AAA East Tennessee office. She signed us up for the cruise and booked us into an Ocean View stateroom DA category on the Main Deck. The Main Deck is the one beneath the Lower Promenade Deck. The Lower Promenade Deck is where we do our walking on the teakwood deck while at sea. We signed up for early dinner seating. Since we signed up for a cabin in the DA Category before May 31 we qualified for some important perks that included luggage shipment to and from the ship and prepaid cruise ship hotel service gratuities.

Air Transportation: Barbara did her usual magic in making on-line reservations with Delta. We fly to Los Angeles on 28 September. After visiting with friends and doing some sight seeing in Los Angeles we board the Amsterdam on September 30 and leave for the South Pacific. On December 2 we arrive back in Los Angeles where we stay for one night before returning home.

Land Tours: Barbara reviewed the available land tours on-line at the Holland America website and we discussed options. On April 17, 2009 we visited our travel agent (TA), Wanda, to sign up for tours. We explained which of the Holland American tours we had decided to take. We had started early on this task so there were plenty of openings left on the tours. Wanda made quick work of getting all of our selected tours reserved for us. Here is a photo of Wanda at her desk and Barbara happily smiling about being another step closer to the cruise.



We usually take the Holland America Line (HAL) tours even though independent tours at the various ports are usually available. The HAL tours are more expensive but we have found reasonable value in the quality of the guides, transportation, and dining arrangements. The HAL tours have another advantage in that the ship will wait for us if the tour returns after the scheduled sailing time. However, when cruising friends have identified a reputable and particularly attractive private (non HAL) tour we don't hesitate to join them. There is usually a significant cost savings with private tours. We have also found that the Hop-On Hop-Off (HOHO) bus systems in the larger cities are a great way to see the local sights at a low cost. The table below shows the tours we have selected. So far the cost of tours for the two of us adds up to about \$2600.

Grand 2009 Australia–New Zealand–South Pacific Voyage Land Tours

Country	Date	City	Name of Tour	Duration (hours)	Cost each \$US
Marquesas	10/7/09	Nuka Hiva	Claude's all day tour (private-Kween Karen)	8	150
Moorea	10/10/09	Moorea	Moorea Nature & Culture (private-Karen - bksunduddies)	5	88
Rarotonga	10/15/09	Avarua	Do on our own		
American Samoa	10/17/09	Pago Pago	Tisa's Coastal Tours (private-Mike & Pauline – hallpau)	5	50
Australia	10/25-26/09	Cairns	Do on our own		
Australia	10/31-11/02	Sydney	Opera-Mikado at the Sydney Opera House	3	106
Australia	10/29/09	Brisbane	Brisbane Sights&Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary (HAL)	4	59
Australia	11/4/09	Melbourne	A Tour with a Difference (private-Pauline-hallpau)	8	124
Australia	11/6/09	Hobart	Colonials and Convicts (HAL)	8	145
New Zealand	11/10/09	Dunedin	Tour of Dunedin City, lunch, Penguin Reserve, Taiaroa Head (private-Bill & Sharon – sk8teacher)	6	86
New Zealand	11/11/09	Christchurch	Christchurch & Canterbury (HAL)	9	199
New Zealand	11/12/09	Wellington	Do on our own -HOHO bus if available		
New Zealand	11/13/09	Napier	Picturesque Puketapu (HAL)	4	85
New Zealand	11/14/09	Tauranga	Culture & Nature Trails of Tauranga Moana & Rotorua (Indigenous Trails-Kween Karen)	8	79
New Zealand	11/15/09	Auckland	Antarctic Encounter & Sky Tower (on our own)	to be determined	to be determined
New Zealand	11/16/09	Bay of Islands	Cultural 'Northland' Trail (Indigenous Trails - Kween Karen)	4	54
Tonga	11/19/09	Nuka Alofa	Tonga with Teta Tours (private-Kween Karen)	6	80

Passports and Visas: Both of our passports were current with plenty of time before expiration so for once the passports were a non-issue. Wanda got our Australian visa for us on 9/8/09. We plan to obtain the necessary visas for other countries while we are on board the Amsterdam.

Cruise Critic Message Board: We have found the Cruise Critic message board (www.cruisecritic.com) to be a wonderful aid in preparing for cruises we have taken. It provides an opportunity to get acquainted with fellow passengers before the cruise and to exchange ideas and past experiences with the aim to make cruising as enjoyable as possible. The information on Land Tour experience is particularly useful. In the countdown to this cruise we have been regular readers and contributors to the communication that takes place on the Cruise Critic message board thread that is devoted to just the Grand 2009 63 Day Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific Voyage.

Luggage Transport Service: Holland America provides a nice luggage shipping service that makes it easier to get the bulk of our luggage from home to our cabin on the Amsterdam. For the class of room that we booked for the entire 63 day cruise we will be able to ship two bags each from our home to the ship and back home again at no extra charge. As soon as we received our cruise package from our travel agent we called the Seattle headquarters of Holland America and made the arrangements. It turns out that they have contracted with FedEx to pick-up and deliver the luggage both going to the Amsterdam in September and returning to our home in December. The agent explained that they used to have a limit of 100 pounds per passenger but now just set a limit of two bags per passenger with no weight limit. This arrangement sounded adequate for us so we set up a pick-up date of September 18. We will send everything on that shipment except for short term essentials we need for the trip out to Long Beach to catch the ship on September 30.

Fall and Halloween Decorations: As if there weren't enough details to attend to, Barbara indulged an instinctive urge and is planning to decorate our stateroom door with fall and Halloween items. In view of limitations in luggage space the decorations have to be fairly simple and of small volume so she has worked with that constraint. She collected her treasures and they appear to meet the "small volume" test as shown in this photo at our front door which sports a barely visible fall wreath-like decoration on the window.



Pre-cruise touring in Los Angeles: Our plan is to arrive in Los Angeles and be there for two nights before the Amsterdam leaves on September 30, 2009. Our friends, Dave and Elsie are driving up from San Diego for a visit before we leave. The Los Angeles County Museum is featuring an exhibit of the archeology that was done on the city of Pompeii and we plan to check that out with Dave and Elsie on September 29. The La Brea Tar Pits and Museum is also on our list of attractions we want to see while in the Los Angeles area.

Packing the Luggage: With the September 18th FedEx luggage shipment date approaching we had started to think about what we need to take for a 63 day voyage. We figured most of the weather is going to be warm or temperate so we wouldn't need a lot of bulky warm clothing. With sweaty days in the tropics in mind, the amount of shirts, underwear, and so on that we needed was reduced somewhat by our decision to buy the unlimited laundry option for the 63 days on the Amsterdam (pre-cruise package \$225).

As usual, Barbara's instincts drive her to give in-depth thought to such things as color coordination, fabric weight, dining room dress schedule and so on. The traditional selection of candidate outfits was carried out over a period of a couple days. The busy lady was caught auditioning some of her favorites in this photo on the right.



Orlin will be getting to this dreaded job soon, assuming there is space left in the luggage.

Speaking of space left in the luggage, we started piling the clothes and other essentials into the suitcases and at first there appeared to be space crises. The problem became evident as soon as Barbara began to put her essentials into the suitcases.

Orlin came to the rescue by applying a few remaining mechanical skills to evacuate the “space bags” using a vacuum cleaner.



In fact, even after Orlin shoehorned some underwear, pants, shirts, and a

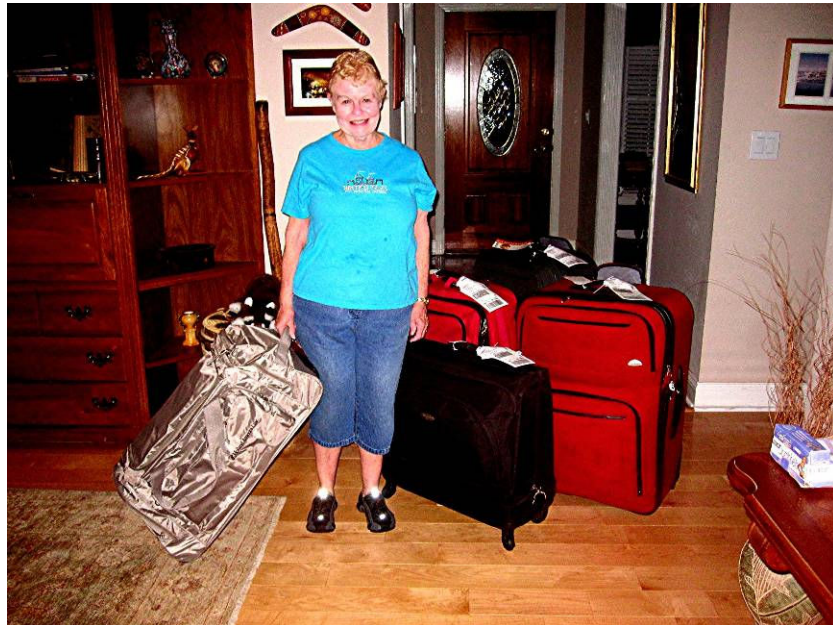
tuxedo outfit into the bags there was a little room left over. This fact was quickly noted and corrected as Barbara found some more essentials that had somehow been set aside during the earlier audition of her wardrobe. She gleefully grabbed the inventory sheet and penciled in the new additions.



Speaking of the inventory sheet, we copy it into a WORD table in our computer. Each item is identified with a specific piece of luggage. It would provide a good reference in case one of the bags is lost but, thank goodness, that has never happened. We have found the inventory most useful in the first day or two on board the ship to find things that may still be in the luggage but we can't remember which bag they are in or even if we packed it.

We finally declared victory over the packing wars on September 18 which was the fateful day of the FedEx pickup of the luggage. Holland America had sent us Federal Express luggage tags and labels with all the pertinent shipping information on them. Each bag got one of the bar coded FedEx tags indicating they should be delivered to Sarah Coles, the Grand Voyage Luggage Shipping Supervisor. Holland America had also given us luggage tags on which we put out cabin number. These tags were placed on each bag with fervent hopes that we would be rejoined with our luggage on the ship. We lined the four packed bags up in the foyer so they were ready to be picked up. Then for good

measure we rolled out the piece of luggage we plan to take with us on the plane to Los Angeles. In the photo below Barbara proudly displays the four packed bags ready to go with FedEx and the luggage we will take.



We had been told to expect the baggage pickup between noon and 4pm so we were patiently waiting when the familiar FedEx truck pulled up to the front door about 2:30. We were greeted by Karen, the same cheerful FedEx lady who picked up our luggage in 2008 for the Holland America Asia & Australia Grand Voyage. Here she is in 2008 picking up our stuff for the trip to Seattle and that 65 Day Cruise.



She had recognized us on her assignment sheet and wondered where we were going this time. We filled her in on our cruising plans and gave her a card with the blog address in case she wanted to follow along. The Federal Express people did a great job for us in 2008 both going and coming from that voyage and we got comfort knowing we were turning the luggage over to the same person and company this year. We got Karen to slow down long enough for a 2009 picture.

The four pieces of luggage weighed individually between 32 and 55 pounds for a total of about 165 pounds. Whew! It was great to see those bags on their way!

Internet Time: We think that the blog, email and other Internet services can be covered within a 1000 minutes. Our TA, Wanda, generously bought us a 500 minute package so all we had to buy was another 500 minutes at \$175. Each of the two 500 minutes packages came with an additional 50



minute perk so the total time will be 1100 minutes. We can add to that later if it is not enough time.

Acer Netbook Computer: On previous cruises we have noticed that more and more of our cruising friends are getting the small computers called Notebooks or Net Books. The main advantage of the smaller computer is that they are more powerful and much easier to carry around than the laptop computers that were heralded as the ultimate in portability 10 years ago. The ability to easily carry the computer off the ship can be a real cost savings for email communication, on-line financial transactions and Internet browsing when free or low cost Internet connections are available in the cruise terminal or coffee shops in the cities we visit. With these positive thoughts in mind just a few weeks before the cruise we purchased a small notebook computer. We bought an ACER Aspire One (KAV60) Netbook computer, wireless mouse, and computer case for a total of \$412 at Amazon. The Acer computer is superior in every computing aspect compared with our Dell Inspiron E1705 laptop computer that we purchased for \$1120 three years ago in November 2006. This remarkable decrease in the cost of computing power each year probably can't continue forever but we are glad to benefit from it for the time being. A picture comparing the size of the two computers is shown on the right.

We will take the "large" Dell laptop, weighing 6.5 pounds on the cruise for the blog work and other computer work in our stateroom. The keyboard is larger than the Acer and more comfortable for heavy



duty typing. In addition, we are familiar with its idiosyncrasies and we know it will work for the blog. The Acer which weights only 2.5 pounds will also be going on the cruise but it will be primarily for Internet use ashore and a backup to our "old" laptop in case it should fail.

Mariner Society Perks: The Holland America Lines has a customer incentive program similar to airline frequent flyer deals. The Holland America program is called the Mariner Society. They offer little perks to people as they accumulate days of cruising on Holland America Lines ships. They are currently revamping the perk package and it we were notified of our four star status on 9/22/09. The main gift we will gladly take is unlimited free laundry and pressing service (\$225) during the 63 day voyage.