

Los Angeles (Long Beach Port) – The Voyage Ends - Day 70 Dec. 05:

We were up by 5am in anticipation of our arrival at the Long Beach Port in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The sky was clear, the ocean calm and the outside temperature seemed cool to us at about 50°F. The lights of Los Angeles and Long Beach lined the water's edge in the distance. We were in the Lido having breakfast with Bob and Esther and Fred when the sun finally popped above the hills of Southern California and we photographed it through a window of the Lido for the last time, as shown on the right.



We were tied up at the Long Beach Cruise Terminal by 7am. The Cruise terminal at Long Beach is a huge white hemisphere with an elevated gangway leading from the terminal to the ship, as shown on the left.

The dock workers and Amsterdam crew immediately went to work on the job of moving all of our luggage from the ship to the cruise terminal. It was an amazing

demonstration of how well this operation could be coordinated with men, vehicles and containers of luggage moving in harmony. We took a few pictures to illustrate some of the views that could be seen from the decks of the Amsterdam.

The old Queen Mary, now a hotel and museum, rests at her berth next to the Cruise Terminal as trains of empty carts wait for their luggage container cargo.





Here is a better view of the Queen Mary that sits next to the Cruise Terminal.

In this view on the right, a large fork-lift truck moved the yellow cage from the loading bay of the Amsterdam to the dock where other fork-lifts transferred the luggage containers to empty carts pulled by the blue truck.



The luggage dance continues in this picture on the left. In the upper left corner of this view, new Amsterdam crew members can be seen filing along the walkway toward the gangway that was put in place for them.



We had been given colored tags that were attached to our luggage as part of the identification. Luggage that was to be shipped by Federal Express was transferred directly to FedEx and the next time we would see it would be at home. Luggage we were taking on the plane with us had the colored tag that would help us retrieve it in the Cruise Terminal. After the luggage had been set out in the Cruise Terminal the Amsterdam passengers were called to the gangway and we left the ship for the last time on this voyage. As with the whole process, we had mixed emotions as we said goodbye to the Amsterdam and friends on the ship but we also wanted to get on with the trip back home.

In the Cruise Terminal Building we found the luggage had been distributed in relatively small groups identified by the color of the tags we had been given, as shown in the photo on the right.



We easily found our luggage and left the Cruise Terminal. Transfer to the Los Angeles Airport (LAX) by bus for \$37 per person (\$74 for two). However, we had heard stories of delay as the bus stopped at the different airlines at the airport and luggage had to be sorted out and taken by the owner at each airline stop. If your airline were the last stop on the route your delay could be significant. We opted to take a taxi which we were told would be about the same cost as a bus for two people.



By 8:50am we were in a taxi headed out of the Long Beach Port area. We automatically went into our “touring a new port” mode. Our camera was out and we scanned the passing scene for targets of opportunity. Before we were completely out of the port we were

surprised by sighting the famous Goodyear Blimp. It was moored close to the highway and we were able to snap this picture shown on the left.

We searched in vain for gas prices posted in a way we could photograph. However, we did see one sign indicating that regular gas was selling for \$3.50 USD per gallon.

The traffic on the LA freeway moved along quickly, particularly in the car pool lane where our taxi traveled. We arrived at the Los Angeles (LAX) airport at 9:20am after a 30 minute ride from the Long Beach Port.

Our first view of the airport was a line-up of Federal Express planes as shown on the right. Hopefully, one of these planes would soon have our luggage on board.



The taxi ride to the airport cost \$75 including tip so it was essentially the same cost as two people taking the bus from the Long Beach Cruise Terminal. There weren't huge crowds at the airport. A friendly Delta attendant helped us get checked in and gave us our gate assignment. The security check line was its usual maddening process. We found that LAX has the latest "back scattered x-ray" technology installed so during the security check we both got our whole body x-rayed. The attendants emphasized that even paper should be removed from your clothes before going through the x-ray process. The TSA personnel seemed appropriately well trained and impersonal. The whole security check exercise took less than 15 minutes to work our way through the queue, get x-rayed and then fully dressed after the examination.

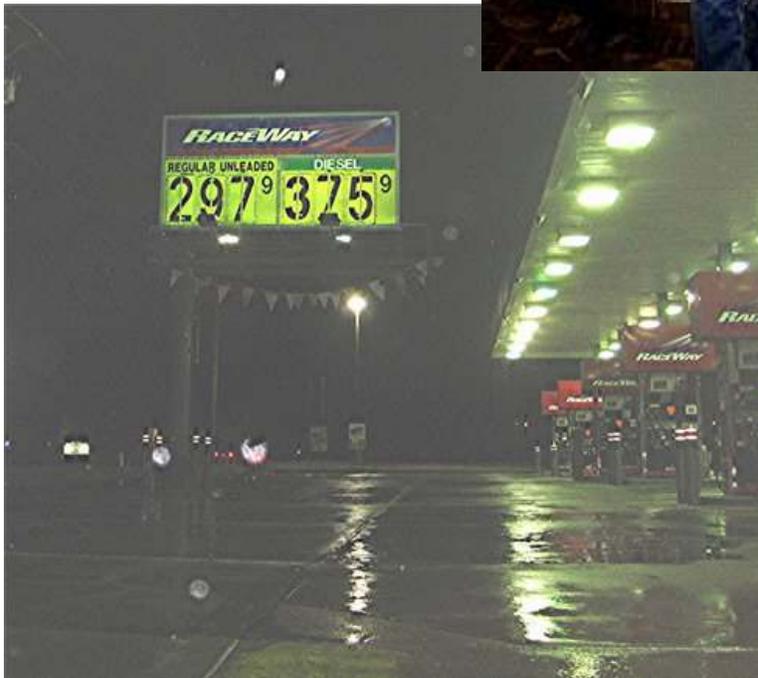
Our Delta flight to Knoxville involved a plane change in Memphis. We boarded the plane about noon at LAX and the flight took off about 12:30pm. It was a full airplane and there was a little air choppiness on the way to Memphis but we stayed on schedule. While in Memphis we had a few minutes to spare so we got a sandwich for dinner, as shown on the right. This was a crash course in adjusting to the reality of not having the Amsterdam Chefs and Dining Room or the stewards to serve us.



The flight from Memphis to Knoxville took off on time and thanks to a 160mph tailwind it arrived about 9:00am after a 45 minute flight. Steve was there to greet the weary travelers and welcome us home. We took the traditional photo in front of the carved wooden Black Bear in the Knoxville Airport fountain foyer, as shown on the left.

Steve had gone to a University of Tennessee (Volunteers) football game recently and was sporting a new Volunteer orange sweatshirt as shown in this picture on the right.

It didn't take long to load the car and be on our way home in light rain. It takes us a while to wind down after a cruise so when we saw this sign advertising the price of gas near our home in Oak Ridge we had to take the picture shown on the left.



There was no need to worry about conversion to USD or liters to gallons. We were home now and the sign clearly says that regular gas costs \$2.979 per gallon. That's the lowest price we have seen for gas since we left on the cruise in September.

We were home safe and sound by 10:00pm, about 8 hours since we left the Amsterdam in Long Beach.

Our home had weathered our absence without any problems. Steve and Scott checked it out occasionally which allowed us to minimize any worry about the home scene.

We had just about completed the whole circuit of the 2011 Grand Asia and Australia Voyage. The only remaining loose ends are the receipt of the didgeridoo we mailed from Honolulu and our 5 luggage bags we sent by Federal Express from Long Beach after the Amsterdam docked today. We expect that those items will show up in the next few days. We will then close out the blog for this cruise. The blog for the 2011 Grand Asia and Australia Voyage will stay on the Internet but there will be no additional entries.