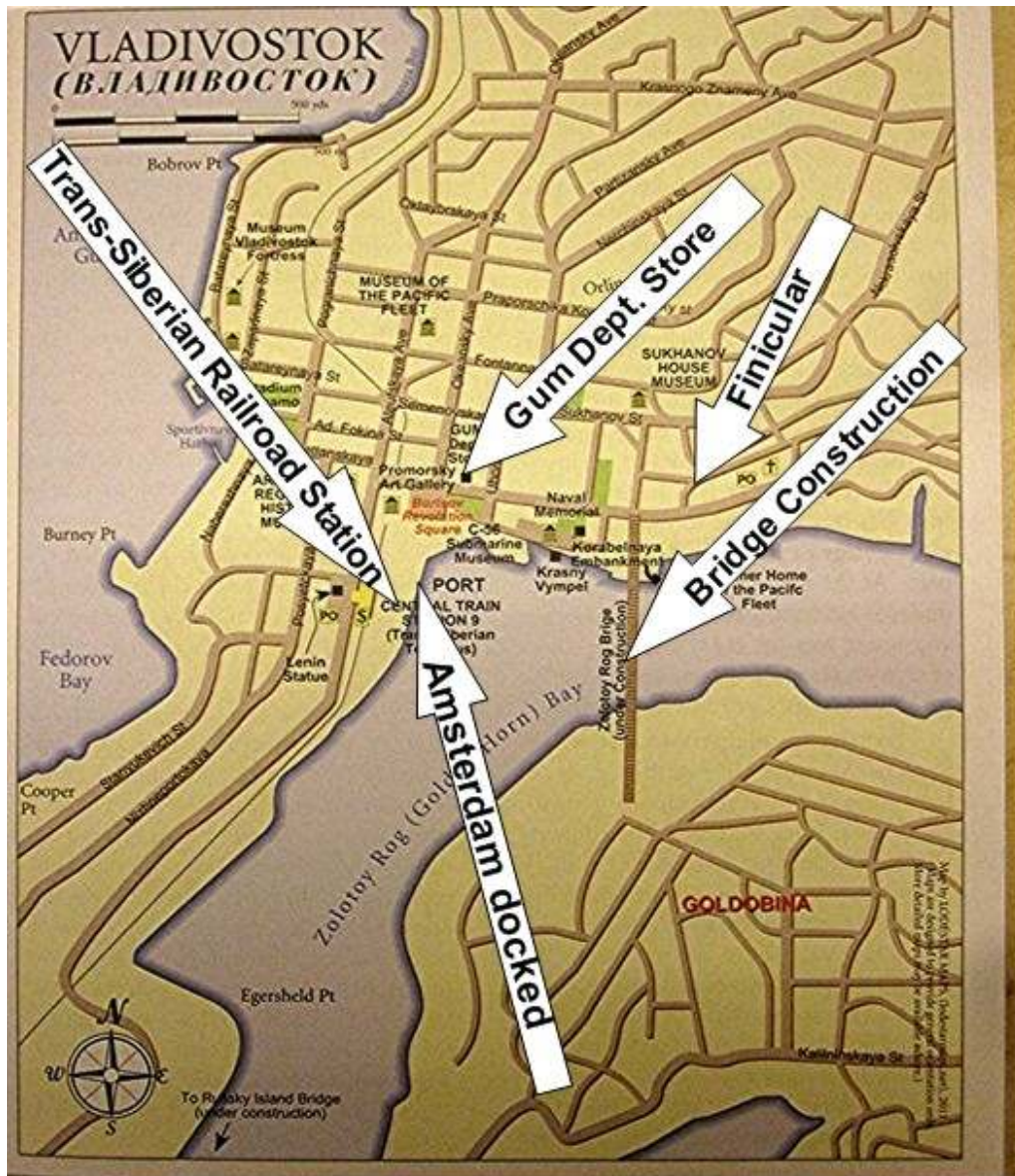


## Vladivostok, Russia – Day 12 Oct. 9:

The Amsterdam was docked in Vladivostok by 6am. It was still dark outside but the nearby train station that serves as the Eastern Terminal of the Trans-Siberian Railroad was visible from the deck of the ship. Shown below is a map of Vladivostok indicating some highlights that we saw or attempted to see during our visit. The Cyrillic spelling of Vladivostok, **ВЛАДИВОСТОК**, is shown on the map and was the usual spelling of the city's name that we saw.



Because of the favorable natural harbor and strategic location of Vladivostok near to China, Korea and Japan Russia turned the city into a military stronghold with particular emphasis on naval power. For national security reasons access to Vladivostok was severely limited until as recently as 1991. This background explained the many military monuments that we were to see in our touring of Vladivostok.

From our cabin window we could see the large Cyrillic spelling of **ВЛАДИВОСТОК** for Vladivostok on the cruise terminal building next to the ship. Barbara grabbed her library card and we trotted upstairs to the open area on deck 9 where we could get a clear shot showing that her library card had arrived in Vladivostok.



We collected our passports from the Amsterdam staff about 9am and left the ship on



a self guided walking tour of Vladivostok. We had read some of the literature about the city and had set our goals as the famous Gum department store and a funicular cable car ride up the Orinoye Gnezdo Mountain to see a view of the city. As we left the ship we could see that for the Amsterdam crew this was just another work day as part of the deck crew could be seen busily painting the side of the ship next to the pier.

We met Travel Guide, Barbara Haenni, on the pier and she pointed us in the right direction for the day's hike. We started out on Aleutskaya Avenue that passes in front of the Cruise Terminal and Railroad Station. While in the neighborhood we got pictures of the Cruise Terminal interior, shown on the left. These facilities were a marked improvement over the austere terminal seen in the much smaller city of Petropavlosk just a few days ago.







Nearby was the eastern terminal building for the Trans Siberian Railroad, shown on the left. The railroad station is an example of the beautiful old style architecture in Vladivostok that we were to see throughout our walk today.

There was an ancient looking locomotive on display, as shown on the right. We didn't take time to check it out but presumed that it may have been one of the original steam engines on the Siberian route.



A tremendous amount of construction was going on around the port area. Our shipboard newsletter said the frenzied activity throughout the city was in preparation for the upcoming Asia Pacific Economic Council (APEC) summit meeting to be held in Vladivostok in 2012.

It turned out that Aleutskaya Avenue, which we had chosen, was apparently "shovel ready" and major renovation was already underway. We, along with many other pedestrians, carefully picked our way through the construction zone. Some pictures of the obstacle course we negotiated are shown on the right and below.





Fortunately, our route soon turned down Svetlanskaya Street which greeted us with broad smooth sidewalks and pretty flower beds, as shown below. At the intersections of

major streets there were welcomed pedestrian tunnels under the streets and when it was necessary to use a surface crosswalk, the Russian drivers were courteous and not threatening. An interesting observation was that although Russian traffic drives on the right hand side of the road, many of the cars have their steering wheel located on the right hand side rather than the left side.

Along Svetlanskaya Street were numerous memorial statues and monuments. Most of the memorials were for military people who had lost their lives in the service of Russia and defense of the local community.





In addition to the memorials were many examples of beautiful architecture from a bygone era. In this example on the right the old buildings are being dwarfed by the Zolotoy Rog Bridge that is under construction.



These buildings, shown below have retained their charm.



Along the way we crossed trails with Steve and Bobbie whom we had met at the Cruise Critic meeting a couple days ago. They joined us in the quest for the funicular cable car ride up the mountain. We walked several blocks and couldn't find any helpful signs pointing the way to the funicular. About that time we met up with Larry and Carol, friends from the Amsterdam, who said they had just returned from the funicular ride and the view from the top of the mountain wasn't worth the effort. At that point we abandoned our funicular search and headed for the Gum Department Store which, on the map appeared much more accessible than the funicular.



We found the Gum Department Store without any problem. It was not very distinctive but the logo above the entrance finally gave us the clue that we had arrived.



Inside the Gum store we found the show cases to be filled with nice quality goods as shown below. However, there was nothing that we wanted today.





Not far down the street from the Gum Department Store was a burger restaurant that would fit in with nearly any American city.

While most signs in Vladivostok were in Cyrillic and unintelligible to us, this



BURGER sign was a pleasing familiar sight. We had also noted a couple other signs that contained words we could actually read. Curiously, these ads were for cat food, as shown here. Like many Americans, there are clearly people in Vladivostok who are fond of their cats.

We loved the cat pictured below with the jaunty pirate hat.



Speaking of familiar sights we also came across the international icon of our time --- a sign showing the local price of the three popular grades of gasoline, as shown on the left.



We assumed the symbol for the lowest price gas stood for what we call regular gasoline and the price was listed in 10 Rouble units for one liter. We were able to purchase 600 Roubles for \$20 USD and approximating 4 liters per gallon this works out to about \$3.80 per gallon. This is about what we are paying in East Tennessee and not a bad price on an international scale.

At this point we parted ways with friends, Steve & Bobbie, Larry and Carol to go separate ways with the rest of our tour of Vladivostok. Larry had mentioned a series of Navy and memorial displays on a street closer to the harbor so we headed to that attraction which was in the direction of the Amsterdam. The following pictures show what we were able to see.



This beautiful building on the right is The Arch of Triumph.



Nearby were some ladies selling crafts on the sidewalk. Barbara was able to find a nice knit purse for 100 Roubles (~ \$3 USD) which seemed like a bargain.



This church and eternal flame on the right was part of the memorial complex.



This wall, on the left, contained thousands of names of military people defending Russia. Below is a picture of how each name was displayed on the wall.

Nearby was the submarine C56 which was now on dry land and available for walk-through tours (100 Roubles). The C56 was



responsible for the sinking of 10 enemy (presumably German and Japanese) warships during World War II.



We walked a few blocks back to the Amsterdam where we found the sidewalk vendors had set up shop on the pier to give us a last chance to buy Russian souvenirs.

Back on board the Amsterdam it was possible to point our camera up the harbor toward the Zolotoy Rog Bridge, as shown below. The cantilever roadbed is supported by cables strung from the tall concrete pylons. The plan is to have the bridge completed for the APEC meeting next year in 2012. That looks like a big challenge.



About 5:30pm the Amsterdam got underway and left the Vladivostok pier. Some good people of Vladivostok came to watch from the plaza around the Cruise Terminal, as shown on the right.

We were glad to have had the opportunity to visit this city. Now



we were on our way to the next destination of Pusan, South Korea on October 11. After many days at sea, now the ports will be coming fast and furious. After dinner we

returned to our cabin to find a notice that the clocks will be turned back another hour tonight.