

## At Sea – Day 1 Sept 27:

We had sailed up the Inland Passage between Vancouver Island and mainland Canada all night so the rough waters out in the Pacific Ocean didn't bother our sleep. The weather was overcast and misty but the scenery around the ship was enjoyable. Out on deck we caught this picture of another cruise ship close to the Vancouver Island shore with the mountains towering behind.



We had breakfast in the Lido. Normally the buffet line is open so you can serve yourself. However, one of the health related procedures used by Holland America is to have the stewards behind the counter serve the passengers in the buffet line for the first 48 hours of a cruise to avoid transmission of germs and stomach illness epidemics. After isolation on the ship for 48 hours the risk is lower and passengers serve themselves in the buffet line.

One of the events of the day was a meeting of passengers who participate in the on-line organization called "Cruise Critic" (URL = [www.CruiseCritic.com](http://www.CruiseCritic.com)). This is a very useful web site that we follow closely. A year or so before the start of a specific cruise,



people who are interested in the cruise get together in an on-line "Chat Room" and exchange questions and answers and general information. For this Grand Asia & Australia Voyage a stalwart person named Ray volunteered to be an informal moderator and organizer of several shore excursions. Here is a picture of Ray (on the left) chatting as the Cruise Critic people gathered for the meeting.

There were close to 100 enthusiastic Cruise Critic participants who streamed into the Crow's Nest this morning for our first meeting. Ray had worked closely with the Amsterdam Hotel Manager, Henk Mensink, and Cruise Director, Gene Young, to organize our first meeting. They had prepared the Crow's Nest Lounge with a nice spread of rolls, coffee and mimosa drinks. To start the meeting Ray introduced himself to the group and thanked the Amsterdam Staff for the great hospitality they had provided for our meeting. Ray explained to the Amsterdam staff that the name "Cruise Critic" is really a bit misleading in that we don't spend a lot of time criticizing cruise lines but really are more accurately described as "Cruise Enthusiasts".

Henk Mensink, shown on the right, then welcomed us to the Amsterdam in his usual gracious and humorous style. He mentioned that with only 780 passengers and with a crew of nearly 650 he was sure we would be well cared for.

Ray then introduced the Amsterdam Cruise Director, Gene Young.



who said he would do everything he could to make our cruise enjoyable. Gene, shown on the left, gave an enthusiastic description of on-board activities for all to enjoy throughout the cruise. He mentioned that he had replaced Bruce Sculler, a prior cruise director on Grand Voyages known by many of us, and he appreciated the example of excellence provide by Bruce.

As we looked around the Crow's Nest there were many familiar faces. Here are a few pictures we got of our fellow Cruise Critics. The people are identified with their "handle" which is an alternate name used when communicating on the Cruise Critic "Chat Room".

**Ray**  
"JORAY"  
(JOann & RAY)



L to R **Carol – Tony – Larry**

Carol & Larry = "WeBeCrusinNow"  
Tony = "TOEKNEE"

**Mike & Pauline = "HALLPAU"**





**Tony & Dorothy = “TOEKNEE”**

Prior to this cruise Lynn and Buddy Lewis, who were our Cruise Specialists escorts on the 2010 Voyage of the Vikings, had recommended Tony and Dorothy as good folks to know. We were glad to meet them now and look forward to getting better acquainted on this cruise.

In the afternoon the Amsterdam cleared the northern tip of Vancouver Island and headed out into the Pacific Ocean where some rough seas awaited us. The Amsterdam has stabilizers that help to minimize the rocking and rolling but there was still enough action to make it a bit uncomfortable. Barbara normally isn't affected by the rough waters but today she succumbed to Neptune's revenge and missed dinner in favor of her bed. In the dining room there were a couple tumultuous moments with the associated crashing of china and glassware. However, shortly after dinner, the skies cleared and the sea became significantly calmer. It turned out to be a very restful night.