

Sept. 25 – Seattle:

On Sunday, September 25, we had breakfast with Joe and Sally before starting the day of touring. Here is our happy little group with Joe and Sally on the right.

Today's objective was to check out Pike Place Market at the harbor side in the old part of Seattle. This market was opened in 1907 to bring together local farmers, fishermen and Seattle consumers. It has evolved over the years



and is now considered an essential part of the “heart and soul of Seattle”. After a 45 minute ride we arrived at the Pike Place Market between Pike and Virginia Streets.

The vegetables and fruit on display were plentiful and beautiful to see. One of the most colorful displays was made of different kinds of chili pods strung together to make



wonderful hanging decoration and source of tasty seasoning. The picture on the left shows one of the stalls with chili for sale.

Flowers are also one of the popular

items offered for sale. We got this picture of a lady whose hat shows her pride in the Great Wall of China which we will be visiting later in our cruise.



The seafood stalls dominate one end of the market. The displays are not fancy but with the fresh fish, crabs, lobsters and other tasty seafood bathed in crushed ice it makes for a very attractive display as shown in the photos below.



Near the fishmonger section of the market is the unofficial mascot of the Pike Place Market in the form of a bronze pig named Rachel. Rachel is usually being ridden by kids and surrounded by parents with cameras clicking. During a brief break in the action we were able to catch a photo of Rachel as shown on the right.



At one point we noticed several people taking pictures of a large plane on the approach to Boeing Field which is near the Pike Place Market. It turned out that the plane was Air Force One coming to Seattle as part of President Obama's scheduled visit. The local TV and newspapers had been full of the news of his visit.

Continuing with our tour of Pike Place Market we took note of Post Alley. Post Alley is a narrow, pedestrian-only nook running under the Pike Place Market. Looking down at one spot from the market we could see people carefully looking at and manipulating something attached to the brick wall of Post Alley. It appeared that they might be working on some large mural of some kind.

Upon closer inspection it turned out that what people were doing was sticking wads of chewing gum on the wall which was festooned with lumps of the stuff in all possible colors. This appeared to be a local tradition that was not mentioned in the tourist guides that we had. Here are a couple pictures of the random collection of goo.



It had been rainy and windy most of the day but fortunately much of the Pike Place Market was located in a covered arcade that provided protection from the weather. There was a break in the rain so we finished our tour of Pike Place Market and rushed to the lot where we were parked.

Engaging the trusty Garmin GPS we negotiated the surface streets and were soon on Interstate Highway 5 headed south toward our hotel in a heavy rainstorm. The Seattle Seahawks professional football team had a game that was about to start but thankfully our timing was such that we avoided a bumper to bumper tie-up as we sped past the football stadium. Even the expected traffic jam around Boeing Field as part of President Obama's visit was not a problem. We got back to the hotel with just enough time to get a little rest and prepare for a reception and dinner that our travel agency, Cruise Specialists International (CSI) had scheduled for their cruising clients at the hotel. They are headquartered in Seattle and were making this evening a special event. We anticipated meeting Shannon Nelson, our travel agent whom we have only engaged by telephone and email so-far.

We had also been looking forward to the reception and dinner because we knew that several people we had met on prior cruises were also going on this Grand Asia & Australia Voyage. We expected that we would be able to renew acquaintance with them and have an enjoyable evening. We were not disappointed.

We arrived a little after 6pm and the party had already started. One of the first people we met was our travel agent, Shannon Nelson. We enjoyed getting more acquainted with Shannon on a face-to-face basis and appreciated this opportunity to meet. We got an obliging person to take our picture with Shannon as shown on the right.



We were surprised by the sudden appearance of Karen (Kween Karen of blogging fame www.kweenkaren.com). She had originally booked on this voyage but then had to cancel. We didn't expect to see her this evening. She lives outside of



Seattle and had driven down just to see her many cruising buddies who were attending the reception. Here is a picture of Barbara, Karen and another friend, Mike who, along with wife, Pauline will be going on the voyage with us.

This was truly a night for renewing old acquaintances. Martha, a friend from the 2007 Grand World Voyage, came out of the crowd with an enthusiastic greeting. Like us, she and husband Mike live in Tennessee. They had signed up for this Grand Asia & Australia Cruise so we will have a chance to get even more acquainted. Here is a picture of Martha and Mike with Barbara.



As the dinner hour was winding down, Holly, who had organized the Cruise Specialists event, introduced key Holland American and Cruise Specialist staff members in the audience. Then, as shown on the right, Janet Lanterman, who founded Cruise Specialists International (CSI) nearly 25 years ago, spoke. She emphasized the fundamental values and care for their clients that have guided Cruise Specialists in their successful business trajectory over the years.



As we were leaving the dinner on the way to our room, Dolores and Bill introduced themselves to us. We had mutual interests in the Oregon City of Bend, and they live in



Medford Oregon where Orlin spent his childhood and graduated from high school. We enjoyed a chat with them and got their picture while we were at it. We'll look forward to getting better acquainted during the upcoming voyage.

That pleasant encounter with Bill and Dolores completed our day and we turned in for the night. Tomorrow we will have to say goodbye to Joe and Sally and then start the long awaited Grand Asia & Australia Voyage.