

2011 Grand Asia & Australia Voyage

Journal of Orlin and Barbara Stansfield

INTRODUCTION:

This is a journal of Orlin and Barbara Stansfield describing their experience of sailing on the 70-Day Grand Asia & Australia Voyage of the Holland America Motor Ship (ms) Amsterdam from September 26 to December 5, 2011. First we'll give a little introduction and then launch in to the day-to-day activities as the Amsterdam takes us through the cruise itinerary.

Deciding to Go: Early in 2010 we learned about the 70 Day Grand Asia & Australia Voyage of the Holland America ship Amsterdam. We had been on the Amsterdam for long cruises before and we liked the ship, shown on the left, which carries 1380 passengers. The itinerary for this cruise includes some of the ports we have visited previously but many will be new to us. The major selling point was the opportunity to tour Beijing and



the Great Wall of China (a "bucket list" item) along with several cities in Australia that we have never visited. Just like other cruising decisions we made in recent years there were worries about the national economic downturn we are living through. However, taking account of our senior citizen status we weighed the dwindling years of good health remaining against the near-term financial pain and quickly decided to take this voyage.

Cruise Itinerary: Here is a map, on the right, that shows the 26 ports (including Seattle) that we will be visiting.



We board the Amsterdam on 26 September in Seattle, Washington and start the cruise that evening. The dates for visiting each of the ports are shown in the table below.

Port Schedule for the 2011, 70 Day, Asia & Australia Voyage

Cruise Day	Week Day	Location
0	Mon 26 Sep	Seattle, WA- First day -at sea after 5pm
1-5	Tue 27 Sep-Sat 1 Oct	At Sea
6	Sun 2 Oct	At Sea–Cross International Dateline ³ - No 3 Oct !
7	Mon 4 Oct	At Sea
8	Wed 5 Oct.	Petropavlovsk, Russia
9-11	Thu 6 Oct-Sat 8 Oct	At Sea
12	Sun 9 Oct.	Vladivostok, Russia
13	Mon 10 Oct.	At Sea
14	Tue 11 Oct	Pusan, South Korea
15	Wed 12 Oct.	Jeju (Cheju), South Korea
16	Thur 13 Oct.	Incheon (near Seoul), South Korea
17	Fri 14 Oct.	Dalian, China
18-19	Sat 15 Oct-Sun 16 Oct	Tianjin, Xingang port (near Beijing), China ^{2,4}
20-21	Mon 17 Oct-Tue 18 Oct	At Sea
22-23	Wed 19 Oct-Thu 20 Oct	Shanghai, China ^{2,4}
24	Fri 21 Oct	At Sea
25	Sat 22 Oct	Xiamen, China
26	Sun 23 Oct.	At Sea
27-28	Mon 24 Oct-Tue 25 Oct.	Hong Kong, China
29	Wed 26 Oct.	At Sea
30	Thur 27 Oct.	Nha Trang, Vietnam ⁴
31	Fri 28 Oct.	At Sea
32-33	Sat 29 Oct –Sun 30 Oct	Singapore ²
34	Mon 31 Oct.	At Sea
35	Tue 1 Nov	Tanjung Priok, Jakarta ⁴
36	Wed 2 Nov	Semarang, Java, Indonesia
37	Thur 3 Nov.	At Sea
38	Fri 4 Nov.	Tanah Ampo (near Padang Bai), Bali
39	Sat 5 Nov.	At Sea
40	Sun 6 Nov	Exmouth, Australia ^{1,4}

Port Schedule for the 2011, 70 Day, Asia & Australia Voyage (Continued)

Cruise Day	Week Day	Location
41	Mon 7Nov	At Sea
42-43	Tue8Nov-Wed9 Nov	Perth (Fremantle), Australia ^{2,4}
44-46	Thu10 - Sat12Nov	At Sea
47	Sun 13 Nov	Melbourne, Australia ⁴
48	Mon 14 Nov.	At Sea
49-50	Tue15-Wed16 Nov.	Sydney, Australia ⁴
51-52	Thur17-Fri18 Nov.	At Sea
53	Sat 19 Nov.	Ile des Pins, New Caledonia ¹
54	Sun 20 Nov.	Noumea, New Caledonia
55	Mon 21 Nov.	At Sea
56	Tue 22 Nov.	Suva, Fiji
57	Tue 22 Nov	Cross International Dateline ³ Repeat 22 Nov !
58	Wed 23 Nov.	Pago Pago, American Samoa
59-63	Thur24–Mon28 Nov.	At Sea
64	Tue 29 Nov	Honolulu, Hawaii
65-69	Wed30Nov-Sun4Dec	At Sea
70	Mon 5 Nov	Arrive and Disembark in Los Angeles, California

Footnotes:

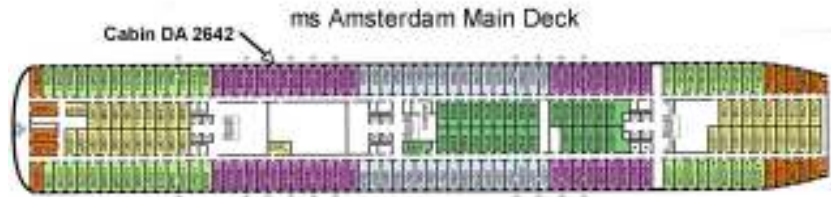
1. Tender Required, 2. Overnight, 3. Cruising Only, 4. Visa Required

Journal as a Blog: A journal on the Internet web is frequently called a "blog" where the word is derived from "weB LOG". Our son, Steve, who is a computer guru, set us up with blogs for four prior cruises in 2007, 2008 and 2009. Those can be viewed at www.2007gww.thestansfields.com , www.2008AsiaAucruise.thestansfields.com , <http://2009voyageofthevikings.thestansfields.com/> and <http://2009aunzcruise.thestansfields.com> . Reporting a journal as a blog takes some effort but it provides a good record of the cruise for when we are reminiscing about those good times. In addition, if others enjoy reading about the unfolding cruise we are happy about that.

During this cruise we will prepare our daily journal entry off-line with lots of pictures and then upload the information to our website. When viewers go to our website, which has the address of <http://2011asiaavoyage.thestansfields.com> , they will find a listing of individual files labeled to identify the day that each file describes. The most recent entry will be first on the list so that it is easy to find and open. Similar to usual blog format a viewer wanting to read an earlier entry can scroll down the list to the desired day of the cruise and then mouse click to open and read the file.

Signing up for the 2011 Grand Asia & Australia Voyage: On April 13, 2010 as part of Barbara's birthday celebration we called our travel agent, Shannon Nelson, at Cruise Specialists International (CSI) in Seattle Washington and signed up for the Holland America 2011 Grand Asia & Australia Voyage. We agreed that finding more exciting gifts for future birthdays will be difficult. Shannon booked us on the good ship Amsterdam into

Ocean View stateroom DA2642 which is located as shown on the right. Our cabin is on the Main Deck which is



the one beneath the Lower Promenade Deck. The Lower Promenade Deck is where we will do our morning walks on the teakwood deck while at sea. We selected early dinner seating. Since we signed up for a cabin in the DA Category before June 30 we qualified for some important perks that included FedEx luggage shipment (2 bags each with no weight limit) to and from the ship and prepaid hotel service gratuities (suggested gratuity is ~\$12 per day per passenger).

Visas: It was necessary to purchase visas for China before we left. The two visas were obtained at a total cost of \$493 using the Zierer Visa Service (ZVS) in Washington D.C. Cruise Specialists obtained our Australian visas (\$20 each) before departure. We plan to obtain any additional visas for other countries while we are on board the Amsterdam.

Passports: Both of our passports were current with plenty of time before expiration so the passports were a non-issue. We are running a little short of empty passport pages for the immigration stamps received at most ports but we decided there were enough for this trip.

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. Barbara has been a regular reader and contributor to the communication that takes place on the Cruise Critic message board thread that is devoted to just the 2011 Grand Asia & Australia Voyage.

Land Tours: We used to only take the Holland America (HAL) tours even though independent tours were usually available at the various ports. The HAL tours are more expensive but we have found reasonable value in the quality of the guides, transportation, and dining arrangements so we go with them. 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 on the Cruise Critic Website have identified a reputable and particularly attractive private (non HAL) tour we don't hesitate to join them. 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 for the 2011 Grand Asia & Australia Voyage. So far the cost of tours for the two of us adds up to a significant \$2318, as shown in the table below.

Tours Planned for the 2011 Grand Asia Australia Voyage

Port	Date 2011	Tour	Organizer	Cost for two (USD)
Petropavlosk	5 Oct	None	on our own	
Valdivostok	9Oct	None	on our own	
Pusan, Korea	11 Oct	None	on our own	
Jeju, Korea	12 Oct	Jeju Highlights	CSI	142
Inchon (Seoul)	13 Oct	The Soul of Seoul	Larry	110
Dalian	14 Oct	All day, Ocean Park, Dalian Museum, People Square, Zhoungshan Square	Ira	230
Beijing (Xingang)	15 &16 Oct	Two Day Tour/wall,square	Joray	360
Beijing	15 Oct	Dinner & acrobat show	Joray	70
Shanghai	19 Oct	Local Lifestyles of Shanghai & acrobat show & dinner	CSI	328
Xiamen	22 Oct	Xiamen China	Ira (aka bestz5403)	174
Hong Kong	24-25 Oct	None	on our own	
Nha Trang	27 Oct	Nha Trang	Pauline	100
Singapore	29- 30 Oct.	HOHO bus	on our own	
Tanjung Priok, Jakarta	1 Nov	Jakarta Obama school	HAL	168
Semarang	2 Nov	Semarang Sights	HAL	178
Tanah Ampo, Bali	4 Nov	None	on our own	
Exmouth, Austr	6 Nov	None	on our own	
Perth, Austr	8 – 9 Nov	HOHO Bus	on our own	
Melbourne	13 Nov	Free Bus	on our own	
Sydney	15-16 Nov	Blue Mountain Tour	Wandervogel	140
Il de Pines, New Caledonia	19 Nov	Il de Pines	Louise	90
Noumea	20 Nov	None	on our own	
Suva, Fiji	22 Nov	Pure Fiji & Cannibal Museum	CSI	168
Pago Pago	23 Nov	Barefoot Bar	Pauline	60
Honolulu	29 Nov	None	on our own	
Los Angeles	5 Dec	None	on our own	

TOTAL (USD) 2318

Air Transportation: On-line airline reservations with Delta were made using our frequent flyer points. We fly to Seattle on 24 September. After visiting with friends and doing some sight seeing in Seattle we board the Amsterdam on September 26 and leave on the cruise. On December 4 we arrive back in Los Angeles where we stay for one night before returning home on a Delta flight.

Barbara's Library Card: Barbara does volunteer work at the City Library of Oak Ridge. The library has a public interest program called **"Where in the World is Your Library Card?"**. The title was probably based on a familiar refrain they hear as a patron searches frantically for their library card. As part of this program people are encouraged to send in pictures of themselves holding their library card at where ever they happen to be in the world. We have enjoyed participating in the program and Barbara has submitted many photos. However, we have never shown her card at the Oak Ridge Library so we decided to cover that event with this cruise, as shown on the right.



Luggage Shipment by FedEx: Since we booked the full 70 day Grand Asia Australia Voyage by June 30, 2011 we qualified for a nice luggage shipment perk offered by Holland America. We each were able to make a complimentary FedEx shipment of 2 pieces of luggage by directly to our room on the Amsterdam in Seattle. In this age of high cost of checking luggage on airlines this was a welcome benefit. We made an appointment for the luggage to be picked up at our house on September 19. Our routine



for packing has evolved over the years but we have gradually learned not to take so many things that are never used. However, the process is always a bit chaotic as we sort through all those "essentials" and decide which ones we can live without for 70 days. Spreading the stuff out on a bed helps in the process and we managed to get 4 bags packed without too much domestic strife. Barbara is auditioning several items in the picture on the left. As usual we recorded the contents of each bag in a WORD text file so that we would have some idea of what we were taking to the Amsterdam.

September 19 soon rolled around so we zipped up the four bags and attached all the shipping tags. There was no weight limit on each bag but we managed to keep the weights in the range of 35 to 40 pounds. In the early afternoon we tuned our precious belongings over to FedEx. Just for the record we snapped a picture of the luggage as shown on the right. The leg of our bashful FedEx driver was exposed as he opened the van door.



Coping with Anticipation: The time for heading off to Seattle and the Amsterdam was growing shorter by the minute as we suffered from a case of high anticipation for the start of the cruise. We were trying to carefully orchestrate our exit. Barbara has been



diligently planning meals that will deplete the pantry on the day we leave. This luggage shipping event triggered a burst of travel enthusiasm and she was ready to leave today. With great fanfare the kitchen was closed as shown in the picture on the left. Much to Orlin's relief this turned out to be just a humorous preview of plans for our departure 4 days from now.

We spent some time packing a suitcase for the flight to Seattle and corralling the essential items that we would carry on board the plane. The passports are the crown jewels that must get to the Amsterdam with us. Nobody goes anywhere without them. In order to fill in the remaining time before departure we busied ourselves with some Christmas decorating in preparation for our December 5th return home. Decorating the china cabinet with poinsettias now should give us head start on the Christmas Season.



Last minute inspection of the nearly empty refrigerator yielded a couple open bottles of wine. There was no way we were going to take the chance of the wine spoiling while we were away so we ended the day with our own private “going away” party on the back deck.

About 5:30pm on September 23rd Steve and family picked us up and we headed for the Hilton Hotel at the Knoxville Airport. Since our Delta flight leaves early tomorrow we will have to get up about 4:30am so staying at the airport hotel removes a lot of uncertainty about our getting checked in and to our flight on time. On the way to the hotel we initiated our blogging tradition of recording the local price of gasoline where ever we may be. Here we can see that today's price of regular gasoline in the Knoxville area is in the neighborhood of \$3.23 USD per gallon. It will be interesting to see what price we find in the ports we visit.

