

Well, it's been awhile since we've reported in. But we've finally arrived in Europe as we complete our 'accidental' circumnavigation of the earth by sea. We've both been around the world in the past, but this is the first time on the surface, sans aviation, and the first of us sharing the experience together.

Lisboa, Portugal, Bon Dia – Good Morning!



Sailing in from the Atlantic Ocean up the Tagus River estuary, and passing under the first bridge as we enter Puerto Santa Maria Major, Lisboa (Lisbon), marking our return to Europe.

Portugal and Lisbon are well noted for its many navigators/explorers: Prince Henry the Navigator in the early 1400's showed routes around Africa, and initiated Portugal's dominance of the seas in the 15th and 16th centuries. Vasco de Gama in 1499 showed his maritime prowess leading multiple expeditions until his death from malaria in India in 1524. His tomb is located in the Church of Santa Maria. Fatima Basilica was built in 1917.

We were late disembarking the ship, so most of the rat race scrum to get taxis, tours, busses and fancy quiet electric Tuk Tuks was missed. However, we waved down and hired an old-school (two-cycle petrol) Tuk Tuk to drive us through the very narrow and hilly streets in this very old city. It was early morning, and our driver (also very old) knew many of the merchants along the way to the top off the hill, to whom he waved and said Bon Dia. Our Tuk Tuk was very old and had difficulty making it up the next rise if he lost momentum. The contraption sounded like it needed to be overhauled, or at least have a qt. of oil. Anyway, he was a character, charming, and knew a few words of English.



We had a fun, smokey, noisy ride around the old city to get our bearings from above the old city.

Well, after 45 min of bouncing around in this contraption, we bounded down the hill to the bottom without a hitch. It's a great way to take pictures, be closer to the smells and noises of the city, or wherever, but our bones were rattled, and we called it enough.

The city hills are colorful, and very busy with tourists and locals all viewing for trolleys, sidewalks and photo opportunities. Portugal is famed for its porcelain blue tiles, many that depict detailed vistas from history long past. The art of tiling started in the 16th century and can be seen on building sides, water fountains, windows, and around statues. There are so many magnificent castles, museums, and monuments to see, it would take you a lifetime to visit all.

Throughout the city there are examples of contemporary approved street, as well as brilliantly executed graffiti which if appropriate art and message is allowed to remain. The trams and busses are an excellent way to experience the city, and people.



We managed to board a crowded tram, standing room only, so we stood in the jostling mass of locals and tourists - no vacant seats. After about 5 minutes, a local grandma sitting in the very front cross seat starts talking very loudly in her local language AND focusing the volume toward a bunch of teenagers that were sitting in most of the other front seats. She carried on until these teens reluctantly got up, and we were to sit down. We didn't understand a word she said (and we don't think they did either), but we all KNEW exactly what she meant: young people get up and give their seats to us elders. At first they refused, but finally stood up and offered us their seats. A French family riding together and standing next to us didn't understand a word the grandmother was saying either but we all got the message. The mom spoke English and we shared travel stories and hints, and had a laugh about the seating 'episode'... and she was right!

Time for a snack: All kinds of eateries street side. Cafe'Latte & Americano with Falafels w/hot sauce, yummy. More sightseeing and "tramping" til we got back to the port area. Then we hopped on a local bus to see what we could see. Making note of our bus & route # so we could find our way back. We bumped up and down more hills when Kapalili spotted a Museum of Puppets. Off we hop and spent an hour or so in an amazing world of puppets, masks, miniatures, and more from many, from many countries and centuries past, telling stories about our world. It turned out to be the highlight of Lisbon.



We wandered through room after room filled with string puppets, hand puppets, models, miniature dioramas, masks, costumes, and more. We spoke with the curator and asked if they were familiar with the masks of indigenous American and other New World cultures. He admitted that they weren't, so Smit gave them a link from his phone so they could do some research, and maybe additions to their collection.



The craftsmanship, ideas, and cultural influences were amazing. The exhibits range from ancient and contemporary, and life-size puppets to minute slices of life in tiny boxes.



Hundreds of photos later, we head for home, stopping for a glass of Maderia in the central square to relax and enjoy people-watching before all-aboard time.

Cadiz, alas ...

Leaving Lisbon we were scheduled to land in Cadiz, Spain, where we were looking forward to revisiting the city, but we had to by-pass the port due to high winds, and we moved on across the Med to Cartagena.

To recall a bit, Smitty and Kapalili traveled to Cadiz for a Christmas week in 2018, and had a wonderful time in a funky 'hotel' where we celebrated Christmas with a merry group of young and old folks still being hippies. We were looking forward to seeing the lodgings again because it apparently has been renovated.

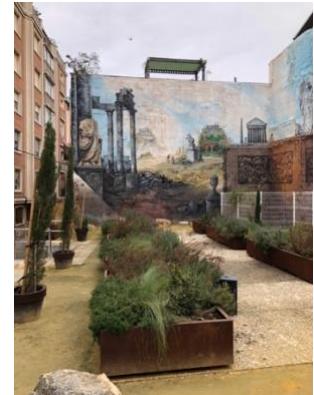
Ah well, Cadiz is a city in the Andalucia Region. Picasso and Salvador Dali were known painters in the area. Cuisine favorite is paella. Christopher Columbus also set sail from here in 1492. February is carnival season too. If that is your fancy, remember the month. The main cathedral is Santa Cruz on the main square and as in most cities the mercado is open 9 to 4 if not longer. In 1970, the Museum Cadiz was formed and includes many puppets. The archeology is Roman from the 1st Cent. BC, and many new discoveries have been found since 1980. There's the Tavita Tower--148 ft. high and has 170 steps to the top. Genoa Park is a botanical park and free. Seville is a 1.5 hr. drive away. Things of interest here to note are the Torre de la Catedral, Plaza de Espana, and Royal Alcazar built in 9013 as a fort for Christians. Sea conditions didn't allow us to visit the port, so the ship diverted with a day and night at sea to Cartegena.



Stormy seas or no, we had a beautiful sunset over the Mediterranean.

Cartenega, have we been here before?

Yes, no, maybe, not sure ... was the ongoing discussion amongst the Castaways as we walked en masse through the narrow street and lanes of the old town (actually, Smitty thinks the whole island is 'old town'). Everyone but Smit were certain that the main square and its huge banyan trees confirmed our previous visit, reinforced by the 'Cartegenia' label on the huge Christmas creche we saw as we left Rome for Ft Lauderdale (see Episode II). This was another day of tramping through history, over layers of past civilizations, each built upon the ruins of the previous realm. The city is home to many examples of wall art, from the provocatively political to the plain 'artsy' and fun subjects.



After a day of exploring lanes, ruins, and community wall art, we all retired to a café where the 'been here before' lively discussion continued during a Sangria gathering, to be revisited at our favorite on-board watering hole, as we sussed out the past sailing history. The outcome? The rest of the Castaways had visited Cartegenia on a previous sailing, but we two hadn't been on that cruise. The similarity of the main square in Malaga and Cartegenia banyans lent to the déjà vu feeling that we had been there before ... but not.



This was another day of tramping through history, over layers of past civilizations, each built upon the ruins of the previous realm. One thing we've learned on this adventure is that not only do the conquerors get to write history, they get to destroy the past to build their version of the future ... America take note! The city is home to many examples of wall art, from the provocatively political to 'artsy' and fun subjects.

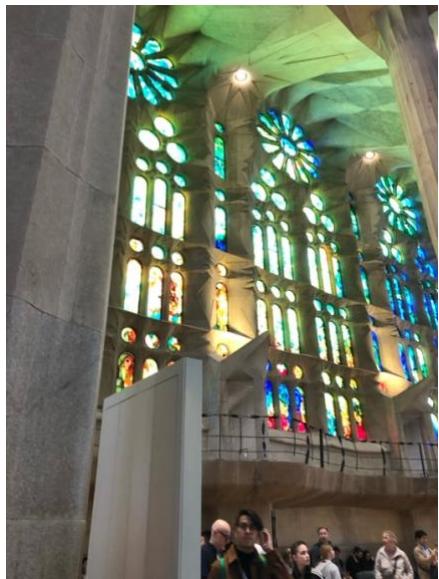
Barcelona is Gaudi is Barcelona

Of course, first on our list we had to go see Anton Gaudi's La Sagrada Familia, under construction from 1882 to present. With the projected completion date yet years in the future. The towers of the Virgin Mary and Jesus are to be done in 2026. Some of us shared a taxi ride to town. We wandered around the circumference taking in the amazing structure, statues and massiveness, and complication. Found the place to pick up our tickets then waited for our "guide" to begin this long-awaited tour.



Still a work in progress, the intricacy and detail are amazing. The crucifixion on the left is the only 'sanctioned' naked Jesus. As you walk around the cathedral his story is told in different eras and styles.

Gaudi lived 1852-1926. He suffered from childhood arthritis and spent much of his childhood alone. He became enamored with, and by, his surroundings as expressed by the natural world. This awareness was reinforced by a deep Catholic faith, and together were the prime expressions in his prolific volume of architecture, furnishings, and decorative designs. Gaudi was one of the initiators of the Arte Neuvo school of design. As an architect Gaudi did few plans and calculations. He seemed to have an innate sense of engineering, construction, and finishing techniques, and relied on detailed models as the design source of his creations, including the massive Sagrada Família. The original architect Francisco del Villar drew his image of what it should look like based on a church in Italy, but resigned from the project after one year, leaving Gaudi to start over with his mystical vision. Gaudi died on Easter Sunday after being run over by a tram. After his death, builders continued construction based on interpretive and executed over 100 years of construction.



The beauty is mesmerizing. Light is captured through glass and colored tiles, reflected onto walls, and moves throughout the cathedral with the rise and fall of the sun and moon.

Glorious, and we spent hours marveling at the interplay of light and sound within the massive apse! The wind began to pick up so we were not permitted to go to the upper towers.

After our tour we found our way to via Las Rambla to the massive Mercat de la Boqueria public market, where we invaded an open air café for beers and cocktails, and the best fried sardines we've ever had (we went back some months later with Soli and Darwin (our grandkids) and they weren't as good, different cafe.

After wandering around clutching dripping ice cream cones, we walked to a local salon for a rest and vino before taking in a flamenco show. We sat in the front row, of course. Those floor and tap shoes take quite a beating, and the sounds along with floorboards reverberating, and the subtleties of angst, love between partners, and jealousy made for a fantastic night. And those dresses! Oh My.

Ah, romanza, from the Flamenco stage to the 'Kissing Wall, made up of thousands of photos of kisses.



We eventually found our way back to the ship for evening departure; only to be informed that we would be delayed due to a boiler that would not start. From the Captain, ship reports a propulsion problem - a 'computer thing'. We ultimately get underway by midnight; we enjoy a sight from our balcony of the moon in the claws of Cancer the crab (Kapalilli's horoscope).

Ahhh, Provence in the spring, if only for a day

We hired a van to explore the beautiful countryside, small ports for smaller boats, and vineyards galore.



We seemed forever in pursuit of that special bottle of wine (left to right – Joe, Tim, Kapalilli) ...and lunch.



We spent the morning wandering around the heart of Aix en Provence, then to Cassis harbor for lunch at a waterfront outdoor café, followed by driving up the surrounding mountains for scenic overviews from perilous clifftops. We've mentioned about the masses of people that arrive daily aboard an unending stream of cruise ships, more hotels, crowds, and traffic ... but we shared wonderful cuisine, fine wines, and joyous friends (and left a considerable contribution to the local economies ... so, take THAT haters).

Genoa, Italy the gateway to the Renaissance

Think OLD, BIG, HISTORY - just take a look at Giuseppe Garibaldi, one of the father-generals of the Italian unification and liberation from the grasp of Napoleonic, astride his horse.



Girabaldi, a mandatory arch of Triumph (Roman?), water fountains, and a city of medieval buildings.

We elected to start our day around the harbor and discovered a really interesting and innovative maritime museum with a multitude of interactive exhibits and interpretive displays, ranging from a Phoenician galley (you get to be a rowing slave) to a walk-in reproduction of a typical US bound immigration steamer and the story of the sinking of the Andrea Doria (a Genoa based liner). In the latter, the story is told with a walk-through timeline, and the floor gets steeper and steeper as the ship capsizes before slipping into the depths. Especially interesting to Smit as he lived on Cape Cod at that time, and along with a friend attempted to take his family's cabin cruiser out to sea to see the sinking ... we got caught by the harbor master and sent back to the dock. Roberta was transported inside a Cold War era diesel submarine, with its noise, smells, and cramped living/working conditions.



The immersive exhibits in the Museo del Mare (Maritime Museum) were some of best we've seen.

The rest of the blustery, chilly day was spent walkabout admiring the ancient architecture, fountains, and statuary of the city, and lunch at a trattoria away from the port. Wandering about we got lost and had to take a taxi back to the ship. Returning to the ship we queried Tim about life on a sub, but his experience on a modern nuclear submarine was far different and more comfortable than those old diesel boats.

Back at sea for weather standoff

We were supposed to dock at Livorno next day, where the real event is Florence, a 1 ½ hour bus ride from Genoa, but again weather prevented us from landing and we spent our last day and night at sea on the Island Princess, before landing back in Civitavecchia, Rome's port city.

And – the accidental circumnavigation of the globe is complete

The Island Princess will sail on, with the rest of the Istanbul Castaways aboard her, but we are ending our cruise line travels in this town/port. It is a return for us, and we walk around like we are long-time residents. We know our favorite night dinner places (start serving at 21:00) and clothing shops and fountains and cell phone shops, and outside cafes. We stepped into an unfortunate Air B & B situation.



Hardhat zone entry, probably coated in asbestos dust, then moved into a weird cartoon spy fantasyland

The place had not been cleaned well and half of the building was under major construction (would have been a hard-hat only site anywhere but Italy and a couple of third-world countries we visited), AND the garbage receptacles were located on the bottom floor of this residential building AND! they had not been emptied in many days especially after a 3-day holiday weekend. Well, the co-ordinator came back the next am to help us "relocate" to another place "that should be okay because it is only for one night". The "HELP" to relocate was to assist us getting our luggage OUT OF the unit into a very small/narrow European elevator and tote it 1/2 kilometer thru the narrow streets pulling 1 piece of luggage. We were managing everything else (which we KNOW is too much – but then again, we were planning for a 3 year travel plan). We plod along in front of shops and then alongside the train station to this waterfront ancient building. More stairs/steps/narrow elevator that only 1 person can fit into with a small rollie* NOT what we have. This is what we walked into: (pics). We didn't know if we were in an Air B&B or an international spy safehouse!

* This, it turns out is the norm for ad hoc lodgings everywhere in Europe. We dragged or humped our oversize luggage up uncounted stairs and into claustrophobic elevator cabs into everything from city-central flats to village cottages ... not to mention airports, train and bus stations. Advise to our dear readers: LEAVE IT AT HOME! Take what you need for a weekend and buy what you need on the road.

FINI

Our Round-the-World episodes are pau, and our next adventures will be in a different, simpler format. So for now, arrivederci as we drag our far-to-big luggage (remember, we packed for THREE YEARS) to the train station to head out on our own ... Europe, here we come!

POST SCRIPT: We missed the train.