

Columbia River Cruise July 2008

Other than a train trip to Seattle a few years ago, I have never been to the Northwest U.S. Kathy and I had both watched the TV programs on Lewis and Clark, and it seemed a good idea to sort of retrace their steps. In fact, we bought the 6 hour PBS DVD to reacquaint ourselves with the area through which Lewis and Clark traveled.

The Queen of the West is a paddlewheel boat, and I remember enjoying my trip on the Mississippi Queen. They even have a Paddlewheel Lounge with live music, and that sounded like a lot of fun.

We went on-line and found a very nice 9 page review of the ship, and are really looking forward to the trip

A few weeks before departure, we got a call from the travel agent about the air arrangements. There was a non-stop flight that arrived at 11 AM, or a one-stop that arrived at 2 PM. I told him there was no sense in getting there at 11AM, because we could not board until 3 PM, normally.

As usual, Kathy drove down from Santa Paula to my house to catch the shuttle to Burbank Airport. Our driver showed up on schedule, and as he was getting our bags, I heard a thump, and he was sprawled out on the living room floor. He apparently did not see the small step, and fell. Well, it turned out that this was the same driver that gave us a bad time on a previous trip. Karma, I guess.

We had two short flights, and arrived in Portland. We were taken to the Embassy suites to wait transfers to our ship. They had veggies and dip and some fruit to hold us.

We were taken to the ship, and went to our cabin, which was compact, but had enough room for everything. I started unpacking, and much to my chagrin, I discovered I had forgotten to pack my dop kit! It contained all my toilet articles, my electric razor, and travel clock!

I spoke to the cruise director, and he said we would be stopping at Stevenson around noon the next day, and gave me directions to the supermarket and pharmacy.

STEVENSON

We left early the next morning and headed up the Columbia River. Portland is called the "City of Bridges", and they were not kidding. Among the different types of bridges we passed under were a lift bridge and a bascule bridge.



We passed a dragon boat training for the dragon boat races, and by a museum. Docked outside the museum was a submarine that was the last of the non-nuclear subs. It was used during the

shooting of the movie "Hunt for Red October". I loved the book and have watched the movie so many times I know the Russian Dialogue!



Here is a view of our ship prior to boarding. We also passed some very interesting 2 story house boats



We then entered the Columbia Gorge which is spectacular-I will let the pictures speak for themselves.





We came across a fisherman proudly displaying his catch, and then passed a rock that Lewis and Clark described in their journals and called "Beacon Rock"



After passing the rock, we transited the first of many sets of locks at Bonneville Dam.



After crossing under the “Bridge of the Gods” so-called because of a Native American legend, we landed at Stevenson. The bow ramp had barely touched down when I crossed it to head to the market. Needless to say it was 3 blocks all uphill.

I got my deodorant, toothpaste and toothbrush at the market, and then headed across the street to the pharmacy. I got the last Norelco electric razor they had in stock and a travel alarm clock. I was back on board a half hour after I had left!

After lunch we boarded our bus for a trip to the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center. It was filled with many exhibits about Lewis and Clark and the Oregon Trail. They also had a café where I shared a burger with Kathy because we were so hungry. More about the food on board later-suffice to say it was sorely lacking.

One of the most interesting things at the Center was a bald eagle that they were nursing. Kathy and I got to see it by ourselves when one of the park rangers saw how interested we were in it. She would not let us in the cage, so I had to shoot through the fence. It is a magnificent bird!



After leaving the center, we were taken to a vista point called Rowena point. A man brought Italian stonemasons there to erect the guardrails. The view is magnificent and there was a semicircle of the stonework below where we stood.



PENDLETON

On the third day we were taken to Pendleton and visited the Woolen Mill there. I have a nice Pendleton jacket that has kept me warm on many a trip. From there we visited the Underground City. We visited a speakeasy, and ice cream parlor, and a meat market. The meat market was of

particular interest to Kathy, as her family had a market when she was growing up. She told about having to scrape the butcher block clean every night as a youngster.



After the tour we were taken to Hamley's Slickfork Saloon for lunch and a show of Native American dancing. They ranged from adults to two cute 5-year-old children.



After the show we were taken to the Tamastlikt Cultural Center. The most fascinating this there were some live raptors they had on display. They ranged from a Golden eagle to a tiny Saw-Whet owl.



There was also a red-tailed hawk and a barn owl.



The American Kestrel was a beautiful bird, but the little Saw-Whet owl was really cute



You can see by the man's hand how small that owl was. I asked him to move his hand closer, but he said he did not want to lose any of it!

We then were taken back to the ship on our nice buses and boarded by the bow ramp.



The bow ramp is interesting, as that way the ship can board or depart passengers almost anywhere. The previous night we had a show with 2 country singers. They were quite entertaining, and one of the songs they sang was, "If my nose was full of money I would blow it all on you". It was hysterical. Their finale was to do a Spoonerism version of Cinderella called Rindercella. It was done by reversing two syllables of key words. The only other time I heard it was on the Hebridean Princess a few years ago when one of the passengers who was lubricated with a few single malt scotches did it.

After their act, the ship pulled up along side the riverbank and stopped. They lowered the bow ramp, and the singers left and walked across an open field, where a car pulled up and loaded their instruments and the singers. It almost looked like a dope drop!

That night another Native American named J.R. Spencer who sang and played the flute entertained us. He gave a funny description of how flutes are made using a grub to bore out the willow branch. He also said that Black and Decker worked, too.



CLARKSTON/LEWISTON

We cruised up the Snake River and when we docked, lo and behold there was a COSTCO! That meant that civilization had finally arrived!

We were loaded on the jet boats and sat up front where we could feel it the most. Kathy loves being on the water, and used to drive a jet boat, but not this big.



We stopped at a visitor center and were treated to cookies and fruit. I picked up a nice rock to put in our rock garden along with the one I got from the Crazy Horse monument.

We also passed some rafters and Kathy said it looked like fun. I suggested I look into rafting on the American River near Sacramento California.



We were looking for all kinds of animals but only saw some deer and bighorn sheep.



We also stopped to view some petroglyphs next to the river. Some of the figures looked like they had antennas!



We were then returned to the Queen of the West for dinner and cruising. I had a funny thing happen that night, though. Kathy mentioned that our room steward had only left us one bath towel and she was not happy about that. I knew the ship's big linen closet was just across the hall from our cabin, so I opened the door and went to grab some towels. Much to my surprise (and theirs too) I saw our cabin steward sitting on the floor behind the door with one of the girls on his lap! Having savoir faire, I said, "just need a couple of towels" and left. I told Kathy about it when I got back to the cabin and she thought it was hysterical.

COLUMBIA RIVER CRUISING

The next day was what we call a "sea day", as we were cruising down the Snake and Columbia Rivers. It was very relaxing to just sit up on the sundeck and watch the scenery. We finally got a clear view of Multnomah Falls, which is about 600 feet tall. It did not look like the pictures we had seen, because the trees blocked the view of the bridge over the splash pool at the bottom of the upper falls.



MOUNT ST. HELENS

We docked at Longview Washington and were taken to the Johnston Ridge Observation Center for a video presentation of the eruption and its aftermath. Unfortunately, it was very cloudy, and at the

end of the video, the curtains rise and you are supposed to have a dramatic view of Mount St. Helens. All we could see were the clouds!

Looking down from the Center, you could see the depth of the ash, and that water was already cutting through it in places.



ASTORIA

Our last day of excursions was at Astoria, Oregon, which was named for Jacob Astor of the fur trading family. We docked next to a maritime museum, and I took a picture of a lightship that used to be outside the Columbia bar for my brother-in-law. I also took a picture of a Fresnel lens used in lighthouses.



We toured the historic district, and then went up to the Astoria Column. There were a series of 12 towers erected in the early 1900's between St. Paul, Minnesota and Astoria.



The markers were a pet project of Ralph Budd, president of the Great Northern Railroad to salute the settlers for their role in extending the United States to the Pacific Ocean.

There are 164 steps to the top, but they were in such poor shape they were unsafe. I still tried to talk one of the engineers there to letting me climb the tower, but he said even he would not do it. After the tour, we were taken back to the ship for lunch, but could not face another gastronomic disaster. Across from the Maritime Museum was a little fish and chips place made from a bowpicker, which is a kind of local fishing boat. There was also a cute trolley that took you up and down the waterfront for \$1. Since there were no overhead lines to run, they had a little car with a 60 KW generator supplying power coupled to the trolley!

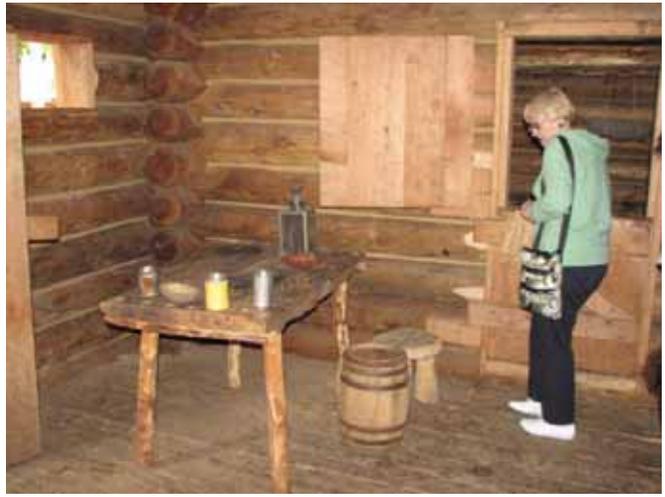


The fish and chips were excellent, and we were joined by some other passengers who shared our view of the on board food.

Our last excursion was to Fort Clatsop, where Lewis and Clark wintered in 1805/1806. Since it is so near the coast, they only had 6 days of sun and many rainy days. We toured the exhibit area, and then went to the replica of the fort.



The rooms were quite small, and were filled with replicas of some of the things that were used by the Corps of Discovery in their daily lives.



One of the last things I saw was a demonstration of the firing of a flintlock rifle. The narrator told us that is where we get some expressions that we still use today. "Lock, stock, and barrel" describes the 3 parts of the rifle. A "flash in the pan" is where the powder in the pan of the rifle goes off, but does not set off the main charge.



We were then taken back to the ship for the Captain's Gala Farewell Cocktail Party and Dinner. The hors d'oeuvres consisted of overcooked mushy shrimp still in the shell! If you tried to peel them they disintegrated.

We spent a quiet evening on the sundeck watching the sunset and then turned in for our last night on board.

The next day we had 2 uneventful flights home. We then went out to dinner to get some real food! We are home for 2 months until we go to Sedona and the Grand Canyon.

The cruise was fantastic as far as the scenery and the sense of history of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

I will not dwell on the gastronomic disasters on the cruise-it is summed up by the comment Kathy put on her Comment Card. "I did not expect gourmet fare on this cruise, but I expected it to be at least as good as the food at our local café". Strangely enough, we both put down the same comment independently on our Comment Card- "Fire the Chef"

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