

07 August 2024 – Wednesday

Dallas – London

We picked a good time for this trip: Dallas is forecast to be in triple digit heat for the next week or two...

Did the usual pre-trip things, plus dealt with a dishwasher problem (not draining) that required some intervention with the wet-dry vacuum, but we were on our way out the door at 10:30 as planned.

We have been back and forth about how to get to the airport: Ride the train, take a cab, Uber or Ride-Shard but finally decided on the low-hassle convenience of driving and parking ourselves. This was our first experience with The Parking Spot which just bought out Park N Fly.

Our flight does not depart until 4:50, but we went early to meet Kathleen's brother Joe, his wife Eva and son Benjamin who (by sheer coincidence) are passing through DFW on their way from Chicago to Mexico.



We first had lunch at Friday's, then met them at their gate as they departed from their Chicago flight. Sat at a Tapas bar we had noticed and had a pleasant few hours to talk and catch up on things before it was time for us to leave to catch our flight. Our departure was delayed for 20 – 40 minutes (they needed more time to clean the

plane) so we killed time at the Cru wine bar which was conveniently located across from our gate.

Once on board we had 2 seats by ourselves on the 777-300, just behind the exit row and next to the kitchen service area. Kathleen mostly watched movies, and I managed to sleep a lot, so the time went by very quickly. Food was mediocre: Chicken or Pasta for dinner, and granola & yogurt for breakfast (we both passed on that!).

08 August 2024 – Thursday

London

14,738 steps. Kathleen and I have been averaging 5,000 – 6,000 steps in Dallas....

Getting into England was simplicity itself – all automated now. They have individual kiosks set up for you to scan your passport, have your picture taken/photo recognition and we were in! Our bags were tagged for priority (we are still Gold with American) so they came up right away.

The bus station at the airport seemed quite busy. We had booked a 9:30 but to take us to the Victoria Bus station (which is just a few blocks away from our hotel – The Windemere), but we were able to get on one that left earlier. They could have charged us 5 Pounds each for the change but

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didn't. There was a lot of slow traffic as we headed into London, but I wasn't driving so I did not care! There were a lot of people on board.

It was a short (3 block) walk to the hotel, but it was a sunny, breezy and cool day and we enjoyed getting a bit more exercise (it was a long walk from the plane to the terminal).

Mary and Dottie flew British Airways and had arrived a few hours before we did (Kathleen had advised them to take a cab from the airport). They had already walked around the neighborhood and were having coffee at the hotel when we arrived at 10:00. As expected, our rooms were not yet available, so we agreed to walk to Harrods and have lunch there.

Kathleen and I waited at the table while Mary and Dottie used the restroom before we left, and one of the young women at the table next to us complimented Kathleen on her beautiful blue eyes. They were visiting from France, and we had a brief but enjoyable conversation about traveling in France.

We took a meandering walk to Harrods. Mary and Dottie are not very fast walkers to begin with, so the going was slow. Along the way we saw a woman across the street fall and they slowed down even more: They seem very cautious...

Harrods was crowded but fun. We settled into the Mediterranean Restaurant in the great hall located in the basement and enjoyed a leisurely and enjoyable meal. We walked around the store afterwards, then walked back to the hotel, arriving about 2:00 and finding that our rooms were available. We agreed to meet in the reception area at 6:15 for dinner.

Our room is a bit on the small side – it was hard to find a place for the larger suitcases we purchased for this trip. The bathroom (toilet and shower) is awkwardly carved out of a corner of the original room, and the sink is in the counter outside. But, it has Air Conditioning, it is quiet, and the bed is comfortable. We both felt quite refreshed after a short nap and a hot shower before heading out for dinner.

Mary and Dottie skipped the nap and shower. They said they hadn't slept of the flight over either: I don't know how they managed to stay awake through dinner, but they did.

The restaurant that Kathleen had scoped out for us was the near-by Artist Residence Club House located just 2 blocks away from the hotel at 52 Cambridge Street. The food was fabulous: I had the Steak w/frites, Kathleen had a crab pasta that was amazing. Mary went for the chicken and Dottie had lamb.

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We walked back to the hotel with them planning to have one last glass of wine at the bar, but they were not serving, so we agreed to meet for breakfast at 7:30. Kathleen and I headed back out to find someplace to buy a few bottles of wine. We found a Sainsbury's about 6 blocks away where we bought wine and cookies, which we enjoyed in our room before retiring about 10:30.

09 August 2024 – Friday

London

14,764 steps.

Kathleen did a masterful job of planning this trip. She set Mary and Dottie up for a bus tour of the city today, which departed from the Victoria Bus station. They wanted to be there early, so we decided to leave the hotel at 8:00. Breakfast at the hotel (included with our rooms) normally begins at 7:45, but they had agreed the night before to allow us to start at 7:30 with the warning that everything would not be available.

The restaurant manager seemed a little put out when we arrived and told us that we could only order things "from the top of the menu" (nothing that required cooking), but said that we "might" be able to get scrambled eggs if we waited for them to finish their preparations. Kathleen decided to settle for a croissant, but the rest of us held out for the eggs, which appeared quickly. The coffee was good (and plentiful).

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We all seem to have gotten over our jetlag quickly. We walked with them to the bus station and waited until they had boarded to begin their tour before walking the short distance to the Victoria train station to buy Oyster Cards for Mary and Dottie. We found the machines in the underground station and figured out how to use the machines quickly and were feeling pretty proud as the first card came out but were quite puzzled when the 2nd one failed to emerge.

We called the number on the screen for help, but they just told us to get help from someone there at the station. We did. They pounded on the machine a few times, and when that failed to make the card emerge, they called for some more experienced help. He arrived within 5 minutes, went into the room behind the machine, then came back out to tell us that the machine had no more cards to dispense. So, he gave us a cash refund (all coins!) and we bravely purchased the second card from another machine.

We took the bus up to Convent Gardens using our credit cards to pay. It turns out that you cannot pay for more than one person with the same card, so Kathleen got to ride (that time) for free.

Walked over to the London Transport Museum to meet the guide for our 10:15 walking tour, which turned out to be a fascinating tour of the area – a marvelous mix of history, architecture and transportation trivia. There was a couple from Atlanta in our group – he was obviously a devoted underground/train buff who has been on many such tours and has plans to take every one that is available while he is in London.

Had a few minutes to go into the museum (entry was included in our tour package). We got a glimpse at a deeply moving photo display showing pictures of the use of the underground stations in London during WWII and photographs that looked eerily similar of people in present day Ukraine.

We had tickets for the Courtauld art museum as well as tickets for a Thames boat cruise to Greenwich. We decided that the weather was too magnificent to be inside and opted for the boat cruise instead.

It was fun to be on the boat, and I will never get tired of seeing the many points of interest along the



Thames, but.... A German couple with two young children were sitting behind us and their non-stop chatter drove us both crazy. We could still hear and understand the narration provided by the boat travel guide, but it was a huge distraction. So much so that we agreed to get off of the boat at Greenwich and catch the next one back at 4:30.

We did nothing more than find a table in a shady spot outside of the museum near the Cutty Sark ship and enjoyed a Greenwich Lager before wandering back down to the river to catch our boat back to London. That is when Kathleen's carefully made plans began to fall apart.

We started out standing in the wrong line (wrong boat). We realized that pretty quickly and found the much shorter City Cruises line, only to discover that the 4:30 boat trip ended at the Tower

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Bridge. We had assumed that it went back to the Westminster Pier, which is where we had arranged to meet Mary and Dottie at 6:00.

We had the choice of taking the 4:30 boat or waiting for another one that departed at 5:10, which would not arrive at the Westminster Pier until 6:15. We opted for the 4:30 departure, confident that we could find a way to get from the Tower Bridge to the Westminster Pier in time to keep our scheduled appointment. It all worked out fine – we took the tube and arrived in plenty of time, However, Mary did not receive our text messages telling her to meet us at the City Cruise line ticket booth on the pier. Instead, they went up on the street towards Big Ben as previously planned. It took a few phone calls to figure out where they were, but we finally met up.

We took the bus back to Pimlico and shared a bottle of wine at a bar near our restaurant to pass the time until our 7:00 reservation at The O Sole Mia (35 Belgrave Road), which has expanded greatly since the last time Kathleen and I ate there. It was a little noisier, but the food was still very good (I had pasta) and we enjoyed sharing several additional bottles of wine from the surprisingly small wine list.



It was only a 10-minute walk back to our hotel, and we were all grateful to retire after a long day of being tourists.

I went up to Mary & Dorry's room to help them get their Air Conditioning working but it baffled me (maybe it was the wine?) and ended up calling down to the front desk to get someone to come up and get it running for them.

We purchased an e-sim card for Kathleen's phone... the phone part works OK but she has been having problems getting data access. Hope to work that out tomorrow...

10 August 2024 – Saturday

London

6,821 steps.

We met at 8:00 for breakfast. Kathleen and I slept OK, but Mary and Dottie were disturbed by the late and noisy arrival of someone in the room above them. So, in spite of having Air Conditioning they did not sleep well.

We re-arranged the schedule for the day a bit to accommodate shifting our arrival at the Westminster Abby to the afternoon and met up at 9:30 to depart for the day's adventures.

We took the bus to Convent Gardens and did a brief walk through the shops and restaurants on our way to the London Museum of Transport (our tour from yesterday gave us ½ admission!). We all enjoyed the museum immensely, especially the exhibit concerning the use of the underground as a bomb shelter during WWII and the comparison to the situation in Ukraine. The history of the growth of London and how the transportation system has evolved to keep pace was fascinating.

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From there we bussed to the Westminster Cathedral. We arrived a little early for our 1:00 entry, which worked in Mary and Dottie's favor: They got the last two spots available for the special tour which began at 1:30 and lasted 90 minutes.

Kathleen and I did the self-guided walk with the aid of a recorded narration which was very informative. The architecture of the building by itself is amazing, as are the statues and other aspects of the burials and chapels. When you add in the prominence of those buried or commemorated there it makes for an overwhelming wash of history.

Kathleen and I had a light meal in the Café (scone for her, salad for me) while we were waiting for Mary & Dottie's tour to end. Then we were back on the bus to return to the Covent Garden area for dinner and a play.



We ate at The Ivey, which was right across the street from The Ambassadors Theatre where our play (Kathy an Stella Solve a Murder) was performed.

The restaurant was elegant and full of people, located in the heart of the theatre district. The food was delicious and served with style. I had a steak, Kathleen and Mary split the Dover Sole, Dottie had Lamb, accompanied by a superb red wine.

The play was performed in an unusual setting. The stage was about 8 feet above the front row (we were seated in the 3rd row), but the performers stayed near the front of the stage so we were able to see everything OK.

Overall the play was good. The plot was a little thin, and Kathleen and I both had a little trouble following all of the dialog. But it was an enjoyable experience until we left to return to the hotel.

We have been totally relying on our phones to navigate since we arrived. For some reason we could not access the internet when we left the theatre. We have walked down to Charing Cross Road and fixated on our phones, trying to figure out where the nearest bus stop was when Mary observed an approaching bus #24.

It passed us and we all chased after it hoping to catch it before it left the next stop. Kathleen ran on ahead while I stayed with Mary and Dottie. We weren't running, but they were moving faster than I have seen them move since we arrived in London, and we all got on the bus before it left.

On a sad note, Kathleen's cold has progressively worsened throughout the day.

11 August 2024 – Sunday

London

10,596 steps.

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Met for breakfast at 8:00 again. Kathleen and I walked Mary and Dottie to the nearby Catholic Church, then returned to our room where I caught up on this journal while Kathleen sniffled and began to pack for tomorrow's departure for Southampton.

We did not depart until 11:30 so we had a welcome bit of downtime to relax in our room.



Took the bus up to Trafalgar Square for our visit to the National Portrait Gallery. The square was full of people (in spite of the fact that the fountains were shut down for upgrade/repair), and performers were attracting large crowds. There was long line waiting to get into the National Portrait Gallery, but we were admitted almost immediately thanks to Kathleen, who had scheduled a 1:00 entry for us in advance.

I am somewhat ashamed about my lack of interest in art, but Dottie (and Kathleen, of course) seemed to really enjoy the visit. Mary and I were frequently sitting together on any available bench.

We then walked back up to Convent Gardens and milled around the shops there (we really didn't have much time to shop on Saturday, so this was a nice opportunity to look more closely at what was available. We ended up buying some leather gloves (Kathleen), wallet (me) and a belt (Dottie – a gift for someone). It was a beautiful, warm and sunny day and there were very many other people there as well.

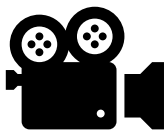
Soon it was time to head to the Savoy Hotel on The Strand where we enjoyed two bottled of wine and strained conversation... We were seated right next to a piano that was just a piece of furniture when we arrived, but that all changed when the piano player and singer arrived (just after we were served our first bottle of wine), so it was challenging to hear each other, but we managed somehow.

We had a 6:30 reservation at the Savoy Grill and ended up sitting at the same table that Kathleen I had the last time we dined there. The service was just as good as we remembered, and only surpassed by the quality of the food. Dottie and I both ordered steaks. Kathleen and Mary had the 6-course meal. Each course was marvelous (Kathleen let me sample everything): it was the best Beef Wellington I have ever tasted, and the Haddock Souffle was heavenly.

We just missed the #24 bus back at Trafalgar Square so we had 20 minutes to enjoy the musician still performing there and watching the steady stream of people and vehicles pass by while we were waiting for the next bus.

Kathleen's cold has continued to get worst...

We were all happy to retire to our rooms once we got back to the hotel.



Kathleen created three videos documenting the trip while we were sailing back to New York. The first one focused on our time in London: [Watch it now.](#)

12 August 2024 – Monday

London -> Southampton

7,243 steps.

It was a rough night for Kathleen (and me) as we were both awake a lot during the night. We both hope she improves soon...

Kathleen really put a lot of effort into scheduling things for this trip, and she created a very detailed itinerary for Mary and Dottie: the couple at the next table commented on it when we were at breakfast.

She separated our activities from the document she gave to Mary and Dottie, but apparently did not copy that document onto the Google Drive, so now she is having to go back through email messages to find the tickets and reservations for our activities on the days when we are not doing things with them.

My sunglasses (in their case) mysteriously disappeared overnight. We have packed for the bus trip to Southampton, so I am really hoping that Kathleen packed them without realizing it.

We have finished breakfast, packed up and will soon check out to go to the bus station. Poor Kathleen... this cold has really impacted her: she is obviously not feeling very well.

It is a 3-block walk to the bus station, and the sidewalk and streets are manageable, so Mary and Dottie decided to forego the cab and walk with us instead.

The bus terminal was quite crowded, with a wide variety of people, most of whom were just hanging out waiting for their bus to depart. Ours left from gate 18 (out of 19), which was located in a 2nd building that was a little less frenetic. We found 4 seats together for the short wait for our departure.



The bus was about half full. There was a surprising amount of traffic. I slept a little towards the end when we were on the M3. We made one stop before reaching Southampton.

We chose to take a cab to the hotel. Much to my surprise we all (and all of our luggage) fit into the Ford. I gave him 10 pounds for the 5.60 charge.

The hotel (Leonardo Royal Hotel) is markedly different than the Windermere - much larger, and appears to be more oriented to tourists or business people. We arrived at 2:45 and only had to wait about 15 minutes for our rooms to be available but were soon provided with keys to the kingdom.

Mary and Dottie had the nicer room in London (more room, more modern bathroom), but we have the better one here. It has a large sitting area, a walk-out deck, and a bathroom that is just about as large as our entire room in London.

Kathleen really needed some cold medicine, so after arranging to meet Mary and Dottie later for dinner we set out to find the local Boots Pharmacy, which turned out to be a bit of an adventure.

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We navigated using our phones, but when we got to the first location there was no Boots in sight. I later decided that we were standing outside of a mall, and the Boots was inside, but there was no sign or entry in sight, so we navigated (successfully, this time) to an alternate location.

My sunglasses still have not made an appearance, so I bought another pair of sunglasses and some athletes foot crème for my toe, which had begun to flare up on the flight over from Dallas.



Met Mary and Dottie back at the hotel at 6:00, then walked through the nearby old town to get them oriented for a tour they will be taking on Tuesday, then on to drinks at the Dancing Man Brewery (along with a lot of other people who were enjoying the brilliant late-afternoon sunshine).

From there we move on to Ennio's Italian restaurant (just down the road a block or so). It was quiet, elegant and with (at our request) slow-paced service and good food.

Later that evening my sunglasses turned up – packed in my shaving kit.

13 August 2024 – Tuesday

Southampton

8,464 steps.

Woke up to a cloudy and cool day, which was a good thing because the Air Conditioning in our room is not working. It is a good thing that we have several windows that open and a small fan that kept us cool overnight.

We had a pleasant start to the day with coffee on our private balcony, which gave me a chance to catch up on this record of events.

Breakfast here at the hotel is good – a buffet with a wide variety of the usual suspects.

Mary and Dottie are scheduled to take a tour of the old town today.

Kathleen has checked ferry schedules and ticket availability and has decided to reverse the order of our planned itinerary for the day. We will also travel to the D-Day Museum by cab instead of trying to get there by boat.

We walked up to the Solent Sky Museum, a 15 minute or so walk through a working class/light industrial part of town. From the outside the museum didn't look like much, but we found it to be cram-packed with airplanes and airplane motors (expected), plus a fascinating collection of information about life in a city that was the target of Nazi bombing attacks during WWII. The city had a lot of companies that produced airplanes, including one that made Spitfires, and the Germans did their best to bomb them out of existence.

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They failed (manufacturing was just dispersed: luckily the bombs did not damage the equipment required to build the planes). Sadly for the inhabitants of the city the bombs also destroyed homes and other businesses, generally disrupting life for everybody.

This museum is a gem that deserves a lot more funding and a better location.

We Uber'd over to Portsmouth (a 20-minute ride) to visit the D-Day Museum. Stared with lunch in the museum café, then toured the Landing Craft (Tank) on display outside. It is the last known surviving such landing craft still in England that participated in the Normandy invasion. It has an interesting history: After the war it was moved to Liverpool and was converted into a restaurant/disco. It eventually sank, was raised, restored and moved to the museum.

The museum itself was modern and well arranged, but we didn't get as much out of it as we did from the Solent Sky Museum this morning.

The trip back to Southampton was fun. We had to walk 15 minutes to get to the Hover Craft terminal for a ride out to the Isle of Wight. We took a long cab ride to the Catamaran terminal for the ride back to Southampton.

We met back up with Mary and Dottie, had a few drinks at a bar called The Grape, then ate at the White Star restaurant a short distance away.



14 August 2024 – Wednesday

Southampton

13,613 steps.

Planned to meet in the lobby at 9:00 to walk to the train station to catch our 9:33 train to Winchester. Kathleen and I arrived right at 9:00 but Mary and Dottie were nowhere in sight. We finally noticed Mary walking into the restaurant at 9:05. Turns out they were sitting on the other side of the wall in front of us waiting for us, and she thought we might still be eating breakfast.

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Kathleen and I disagreed on the route to the station and that ate up a few more minutes of time, so we arrived at the station just as the train arrived. It took us a while to get through the tunnels, up the stairs, over the tracks and down to the platform. Fortunately, the conductor saw us coming and held the train for us so we made it, a bit winded and sweaty.

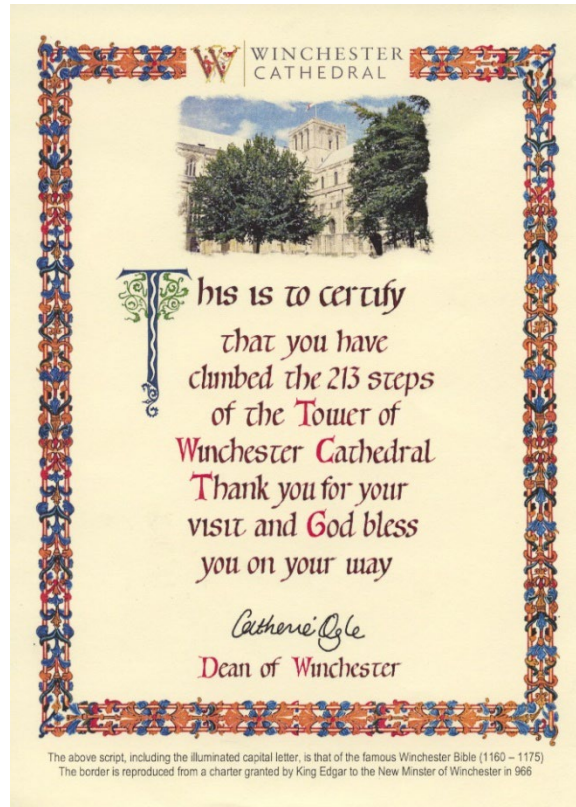
It was a short 2-stop ride to Winchester, which turned out to be much hillier (more hilly?) than we had expected. This was the original capital of England (before it was moved to London). We walked through the cool, misty morning towards the Great Hall, a medieval building that (thankfully) has survived the ages and now serves as a magnificent tourist attraction that is also used for public and private events.

It is also home to what is reputed to be King Arthurs round table. Regardless of whether that is true or not (it is probably a much more recent, but still very old, replica), the building was impressive. They had a lot of information about the history of the hall and surrounding area.

In addition to the unanticipated hills, we had not anticipated the light rain that began to fall as we left the great hall. None of us had bothered to bring an umbrella, but it did not rain hard, nor for very long. The restaurant we had selected was closed, so we backtracked a bit to one we had passed and ate sandwiches for lunch.

Our next destination was Winchester Cathedral. WE all took a tour from a very knowledgeable woman who shared a lot of information about the history and construction of what is the longest cathedral in the world. I left her tour a bit early so I could join the 2:15 tour of the tower. 426 steps later (213 up and 213 down) I knew a lot more about how the cathedral was constructed and about the bells located in the tower, all of which was fascinating. They broke the climb up by stopping at stages to explain things, so it wasn't really very difficult.

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It had started to rain a little heavier again as we left so we headed back to the train station, caught a train back to Southampton (which had incorrect announcements – it kept saying we were headed to London Waterloo station!) and arrived back at the hotel more than a little tired. Had drinks at the hotel, walked the short distance to the Dancing Man Brewery where Kathleen enjoyed short ribs while the rest of us enjoyed their delicious Pork Belly.



Kathleen and I have been really enjoying our balcony each night. Being there gives a chance to open the balcony doors and cool the room down, so we have not been suffering from the lack of Air Conditioning.

Our shower is also a point of frustration... It is really small (especially when you consider how large the bathroom itself is!), with a cheap door that keeps coming off its tracks.

We had a bit of conversation with another guest on the elevator... he said that his air conditioning was also not working. He has stayed at the hotel a lot and has noticed that they have not been doing much maintenance for quite some time.

15 August 2024 – Thursday

Southampton

9,522 steps.

Our last full day in England!

Had breakfast (we have been eating separately), met in the lobby at 9:15 and walked to the ferry terminal to catch the high-speed catamaran for the 30 minute ride to Cowes on the Isle of Wight. It was a short walk to the #1 bus stop, which we rode to Newport located near the center of the island. From there we caught the #9 bus to Wooten to begin our steam train journey.

It was kind of underwhelming at first – just a small platform, a few small buildings and two sets of tracks. The train appeared soon. Once they transferred the engine to the other end of the train we boarded the restored Victorian-era coaches and rode the short distance through the countryside to Havenstreet, which is the hub of the operation.



It features a café, a restaurant, restoration & maintenance facilities, and a museum showcasing the history of railroad (which was started by two teenagers in the 1960's), engines (11), and cars (very many). It was all quite interesting (and informative).

We took a break from our touring and had lunch in the restaurant, then finished our visit with an out and back train ride to Smallbrook Junction, then rode back to Havenstreet and then Wooten. The day was overcast and cool, which made being outside riding on trains and busses quite enjoyable.

We had about a 20-minute wait for our #9 bus as we began to retrace our steps back to the ferry. We had thought about stopping of at the military museum on the way, but we spent a lot more time in Havenstreet than we anticipated so we skipped it and headed directly back to Southampton.

We did have a bit of confusion about our dinner reservations – we all thought it was scheduled for 7:30. Kathleen almost called to see if we could move it back to 6:30, but while she was looking up the phone number, she came across the reservation confirmation which was for 6:30 after all.

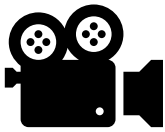
We stopped off at the nearby Grapes bar and had drinks and rested a bit.

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Arriving at The Porters Steakhouse at 6:30 we were informed that the reservation really was for 7:30, but they were not at all busy and seated us right away. We slit the specials (Mary and I had the Ribeye, Kathleen and Dottie had the Chateau Brion) served with generous sides of potatoes, vegetables and, of course, a very nice bottle of wine.

I have not mentioned the flies, which have appeared at virtually every restaurant we have eaten at on this trip. They have been really annoying!

Mary and Dottie came up to our suite and joined us on our balcony as we enjoyed the last bit of wine and chocolate covered cookies before we called it a day. We will meet our Uber driver at 1:15 tomorrow to begin our voyage to New York.



[Watch the second video](#) that Kathleen created to see more about our stay in Southampton.

16 August 2024 – Friday

Southampton & Aboard the Queen Mary

9,184 steps.

A leisurely morning: all we need to do is have breakfast, pack, and get to the boat on time. We ate, packed quickly, stopped by Mary and Dottie's room to coordinate our schedules, check out, left our bags with the concierge, and took a bit of walk in the brilliant sunshine. Ended up at the White Star Bar and had a leisurely cup of coffee, then walked to the pier where the Red Hat Ferries depart and arrive. We found a comfortable place to sit and enjoyed the coming and going of people, cars and boats.



We met Mary & Dottie back at the hotel at 1:00 to meet our Uber, which was scheduled for 1:15. He arrived early, in a Prius that could not handle 4 passengers plus luggage. Mary & Dottie went on ahead and the hotel staff arranged for a cab for Kathleen and I: It arrived promptly and drove us the considerable distance to the Mayflower Dock. Everything that Kathleen had read had said that this not something we should try to do on foot, and that advice was absolutely correct: it would have been a long and unpleasant walk!

Cunard has boarding down to a fine science. They took our luggage at the curb, then Kathleen and I were whisked through the check-in process thanks to the priority status (due to the room we had booked) and were soon on-board and in our room.

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The room isn't huge (on deck 13), but it is going to be big enough for us. There is tons of room in the closets for all of the clothes we had packed. The couch/desk area is adequate, and the deck is private and nice. We enjoyed a snack of peanuts and the last of the wine we brought on-board with us.

The safety drill was accomplished by us watching a video on the TV in the room then walking down and checking in at our muster station which is located on deck 7.

I got my internet access working but realized that we would not be able to communicate with each other (or Mary & Dottie) unless we purchased internet access for Kathleen as well.

We met up with Mary & Dottie with the idea of having drinks and a snack to hold us until dinner



(Mary & Dottie have a 8:30 seating) but all we could find was a bar that provided small bowls of potato chips, which we gratefully accepted. Kathleen and Mary used the time to purchase their internet access packages.

The ship is huge – very long, with 13 decks. It is like a small city!

We were expecting our own table for 2 when we arrived for our dinner (which, because of the class of the room we have, we can eat any time between 6:00 – 9:00), but ended up at table for 6 with a woman (Seph) who apparently spend much of her life sailing around the world on the Queen Mary 2. She had lots of freely given (and un-asked for) advice on navigating the menu, and carried on in a friendly/snippy way with our wine Stewart throughout the meal.

We were joined by another couple (Tom and Allison) who were also expecting their own table. They have been doing a lot of trekking with a company called Footsteps Family Walks that sounded really interesting – they handle your luggage and fashion walks suited to your abilities and desires.

Bought wine back to our room and enjoyed a cool and breezy evening on our balcony before calling it a day and heading for bed.

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Aboard the Queen Mary

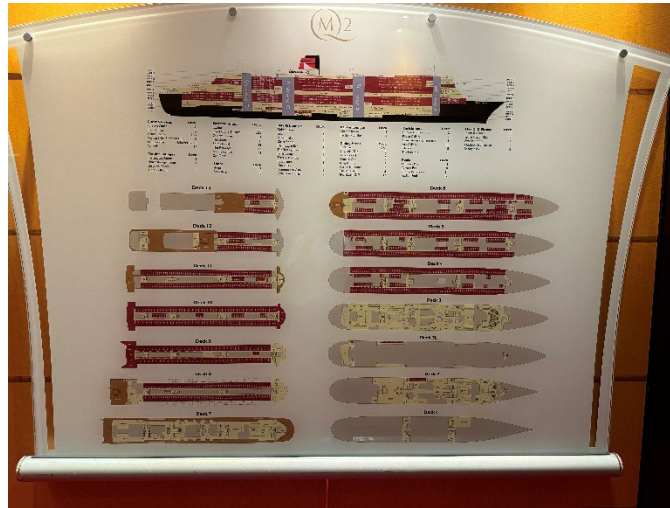
5,660 steps.

Lost an hour overnight – We should be making gradual time zone changes through this week and so should arrive home with minimal jetlag (boat lag?).

We are both a little surprised by the amount of movement we felt overnight and continue to feel this morning. The wind is whistling through the balcony door, but there doesn't appear to be much wave activity. Neither of us are feeling any signs of motion sickness – hope that continues to be the case.

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Need to spend some time today figuring out where everything is on the boat. At least I know where to go for my 10:00 massage!



We think our seating issue has been resolved. We stopped off at the Concierge office on our way to breakfast. He gave us another map of the ship (so we both have one) and answered several questions that we had. He told us that dining table requests are not provided to the boat crew but said that the dining room staff should be able to accommodate our table request. He was very helpful and nice – he did not inform us until we were leaving that his office was reserved for a higher class of passenger.

When we arrived in the dining area things got off to a good start. We were seated at a table for 2 with a window, but that was short lived. The hostess swooped in and informed us that that table was reserved for someone else. I brought up the fact that we had also requested a table for 2 she just said OK and directed us to a table in the corner of the room and informed us that that was now “our” table. Kathleen (who has been very critical of just about every aspect of our boat experience so far) said “but you don’t even know our names”, the hostess just smiled and said, “I will remember”. We will see....

I had a quick (we did not sit down at “our” table until 9:15) breakfast of bacon and eggs, stopped off at our room to brush my teeth, and walked to the spa for my massage.

It started off well... it was a large area with many rooms. Niu started my massage, but soon stopped and explained that she was feeling very sea-sick and asked me to re-schedule. I did – now have a 2:30 appointment with someone else.

Met Kathleen, Mary and Dottie at the Kings Court café area for lunch. We had initially planned to meet at the Britannia restaurant, but I had walked around after my massage was re-scheduled to scout out the different eating areas. I sent text messages with a few pictures of the Kings Court café area to Kathleen and (without realizing it, to Mary as well). Mary just assumed that I wanted to eat there instead, and so we did.

Mary is also feeling the effects of the ship’s motion, so she let us wait on her while she stayed at the table. There were very many different types of food available, all served cafeteria style (and served

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by the ship's crew – they announced that would be doing that for the first 3 days of the voyage in an attempt to control the spread of germs.

We enjoyed a leisurely lunch until it was time for me to return to the spa. The massage (100 minutes) was great – a thoroughly enjoyable way to spend an afternoon!

Kathleen helped Mary purchase something for her motion sickness. Mary and Dottie went back to their room so Mary could rest. Kathleen found a place to read and enjoy time to herself.

Trouble ensued after my massage. I went back to our room to take a shower, and then found that I no longer had access to the internet and thus could not contact Kathleen to find out where to meet her.

I went down to the Internet center on Deck 2 where I was informed that just needed to go back through the login process again, something I apparently will need to do each day. Their access system (and web site) are hopelessly complex – not at all user friendly.

I returned to our room on the assumption that Kathleen probably did not have internet access either and would probably check in to our room to see if I was there. She did, newly outraged at our frustration with the challenges, difficulties and disappointments experienced so far on our voyage. Cunard is not living up to their reputation in our room!

This being a formal night we dressed for dinner, let off some steam over a few glasses of wine in the Chart Room bar (which was where we met Mary and Dottie last night) on deck 3.

When we arrived for dinner, the hostess did indeed remember us and escorted us to “our” table in the corner. The couple at the table next to us were professional musicians (piano players) from New Jersey. They were just finishing their dinner, but we had a delightful conversation with them before they left. We share very similar views on Trump and Kamala.

My attire fit right in at dinner... there was a wide range of clothing in evidence, from my modest suit and tie to formal tuxedos for the men while the ladies' dresses ranged from simple to fancy.



Brought the remains of our excellent wine (a 2018 14 Hands Cabernet Sauvignon) back to our room.

18 August 2024 – Sunday

Aboard the Queen Mary

3,217 steps.

We had been informed yesterday to expect rain today, but (so far) it is sunny with scattered clouds.

During my massage yesterday my mind had time to wander around and wonder about how different the Atlantic crossing must have been for my ancestors. The length of time would have been about the same for the Norwegians (they all traveled by steam ship), although I suspect that they did not enjoy anywhere near the level of comfort we are experiencing. It would have been a very different story for the Germans who most likely traveled under sail.

After breakfast at “our” table, Kathleen and I settled into the Commodore Club located at the front of the ship on Deck 9. It was a quiet area with windows, lots of chairs, and a bar. Kathleen read while I did some thinking and planning for an upcoming Genealogical Society Leadership Forum meeting I will be co-hosting in September.

Stopped by the room on our way to lunch and picked up a telephone message (how quaint!) from Mary. She also lost her internet access and has not yet figured out how to access it again.

Met then at their room and walked to the Chefs Gallery for hamburgers and pizza.

We resolved Mary’s internet access issues... she is still feeling under the weather, although she says she is feeling better than she did yesterday.

We left them and returned to the Commodore Club for a relaxing afternoon of contemplation and reading, followed by some wine as the dinner hour approached. We were joined by a gaggle of LGBTQ men who appeared to be attending some kind of meetings in rooms located in the club, and they were ready to have a few drinks and talk (a lot).

The rain did finally arrive around noon, but it had stopped by the time we walked back for dinner (pork for me, veal for Kathleen).



A few words about the dining arrangements.... The ship has a large open area where Mary and Dottie are eating. We are eating in a smaller room off of the big room. The menu has a section that is the same every day and another area with the day’s specials. We can order anything we want, and as much as we want.

We brought the remains of our bottle of wine back to our room and enjoyed the windy but pleasantly warm weather on our deck before retiring for the evening.

19 August 2024 – Monday

Aboard the Queen Mary

3,976 steps.

Slept well. I finally used my exercise bands and did a few of my exercises!

After breakfast we went to the Chart Room on Deck 10 where Kathleen read while I did a lot more work on my upcoming presentation.

Went to the Veranda on Deck 8 (where we will be having dinner on Wednesday) at noon for a wine tasting. It was very informative: the wines were all from California and were uniformly good, as was the food: Salmon, Guinea Fowl, Lamb and a selection of cheese.



Kathleen had an afternoon massage, so I settled into the Commodore Club on Deck 9. Kathleen joined me after her massage (sounds like it was as good as the one I got), and we had a nice conversation with a couple from England. They have done this trip many times and are doing it this time without spending any time in New York – just sailing over and immediately returning. I said something about not really being a cruise person and she (I do not remember her name) said something that I did remember: “This isn’t a cruise: It is a crossing!”.

Mary and Dottie joined us at 5:00 as arranged. Fortunately, or unfortunately (depending on how much you liked string trio’s), my attempt to find a quieter area to sit where we would not be overwhelmed by the talkative LGBTQ gang resulted in our sitting about an arm’s length away from the Chello player, so conversation was difficult until they finished their set.

We separated for dinner (the food is really good!) and spent another enjoyable evening with wine on our deck. It was windy but warm, and the brilliant moon made a brief but beautiful appearance.

20 August 2024 – Tuesday

Aboard the Queen Mary

4,110 steps + 1.4 miles walked without my phone.

We were anticipating waking up to wind, rain, and large waves from tropical storm Ernesto, but instead were greeted by a windy but warm and sunny day. We both did our exercises in our room, then went down to Deck 7 and walked 4 windy, salt sprayed laps (1.4 miles). We got some coffee and sat outside near the terrace pool on Deck 8 in the strengthening wind.



We cleaned up, had breakfast, then settled down in the Commodore Club on Deck 8 for the morning. One nice thing about traveling by ship is that we get to gradually adjust to each time zone change. However, without cellular coverage our phones are not automatically adjusting the current time for us. We got crossed up and were an hour behind the rest of the world, so we were late for our arranged lunch meetup with Mary and Dottie (didn't realize it until they texted us from the Kings Court food area).

We plan to go to the 3:00 tea service so nobody (except me!) ate lunch. Kathleen has started working on what will be three videos about the trip in Canva and continued to work on the first one while we sat, ate (me), drank coffee and talked.

Mary and Dottie booked a lecture at 2:00, so Kathleen and I adjourned to the Chart Room bar on Deck 3 where Kathleen continued working on the video while I read and caught up on the news of the world until teatime.

The tea was held in the Queens Room on deck 3. It was a large room, and it was jam-packed with people. It apparently is a very popular thing to do: It is free and was offered each day of the crossing. Everybody applauds as the servers' parade into the room with the tea and snacks, which included sandwiches, scones with cream and jam, sweets and (of course) tea.

We all proceeded to the Commodore Club on Deck 8 for drinks before dinner. We sat in the same area as yesterday, but today's musical entertainment was a harp which did not get in the way of our conversation.

Mary appears to have gotten over her motion sickness but is now suffering from a mild cold, so Kathleen stocked her up with cold medications and advice on when and how to take it.

Mary and Dottie decided to pass on dinner (the staff was generous with what they served at the tea!). We had pre-ordered our dinners (Kathleen had fish, I had the duck) so we kept our 7:00 rendezvous with a elevated dining experience. The duck was excellent!

We finished the evening with wine on our deck.

21 August 2024 – Wednesday

Aboard the Queen Mary

8,429 steps

Slept well, woke up early, did our exercises in the room, then headed down to deck 7 where we did 5 laps (1.7 miles). Got coffee and settled into a quiet area by the pool located at the back of the ship on Deck 8. We enjoyed being outside so much I went back to the cafeteria on deck 7 and got us each another cup of coffee.

We decided to have breakfast in the Kings Court on Deck 7 for a change, and it was really enjoyable.



Headed back to the room, cleaned up and prepared to vigorously attack another relaxing morning. We lounged on deck for a while enjoying the sunny, warm but windy weather before heading inside to find someplace where Kathleen could continue working on her videos. We parked at a table in the Kings Court and worked. Mary and Dottie joined us at 11:30 and provided Kathleen with some pictures they had taken to include in the 2nd (Southampton) video after the 1st (London) video is finished. The 3rd one will focus on the crossing.

Mary is still under the weather – not a good voyage for her!

After lunch Kathleen and I went to the Chart Room where she continued to work on the videos while read, caught up on the news from the Democratic National Convention (Go Kamala!) and played Hearts on my iPad.



Paused at 4:00 for a few glasses of wine, then changed for dinner (I broke out my 2nd suit: we bought it – I packed it, so I sure as heck was going to wear it!) and met Mary and Dottie at The Veranda on Deck 8 for our special dinner. The food was a bit better than we have been enjoying, but the ambiance and service really made the experience special. We all order steaks except Kathleen, who order the superb short ribs, all washed down with a nice St. Emilian.

It was a very pleasant and leisurely meal, so much so that we missed the 8:15 start time of the musical show we had planned to attend.

Afterwards we all went out on to the deck near the pool and enjoyed a last glass of wine (just Kathleen and I) and the thoroughly lovely weather before finally retiring for the evening.

22 August 2024 – Thursday

Aboard the Queen Mary

9,041 steps

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The last full day on board what has become “our ship”. We disembark shortly after 8:00 am in New York tomorrow.

Kathleen admitted that, despite the initial problems and motion of the ship she might be open to doing this cruise again at some point in the future. We both agree that arriving fully rested and in sync with the local time zone has a lot of appeal.

The day is sunny and warm. We did our exercises, then went down to Deck 7 and walked 6 laps (2.2 miles). Got coffee and sat on the deck chairs we had observed as they were being set up by the crew on our circuits around the ship.



Had breakfast in the Kings Court again, got cleaned up, and enjoyed the sun, fresh air and privacy of the deck outside of our room. I could get used to traveling this way! Crossing this way we gain an hour each day, which makes it really easy to get an early start on each day.

Moved down to “our” table at the Kings Court area so Kathleen can continue working on the videos... She is making good progress and hopes to finish all three today.

Met Mary and Dottie at 1:00 to collect more pictures (for the 3rd video) and have lunch. We hung out after they left (to walk around and then pack) before heading up to the Commodores Club to stake out a table and meet them before dinner for drinks. It was a good thing we did – by the time they arrived (at 5:00) the place was packed. Kathleen did indeed finish all three of the videos and air-dropped them to their phones.

We eventually had dinner (at “our table”), packed, then locked ourselves out of our room while we were moving our suitcases out into the hall to be picked up overnight. I walked down to the purser on Deck 3 to get another room card, which did not work when I returned to the room. Fortunately, Kathleen had encountered a porter who let her into the room, so all ended up well.

We enjoyed one more beautiful evening on our deck before retiring for last night on the ship.

23 August 2024 – Friday

Aboard the Queen Mary, in New York, Newark and Dallas

5,703 steps

We had planned to get up at 5:00 so we could see the Statue of Liberty and the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge. Kathleen's phone was eager get our day started and went off at 4:00... We fell back asleep and woke up (again) at 5:00 but passed under the bridge while I was still in the shower so we missed seeing that. But we did have a great view of the Statue of Liberty – it was on our side of the ship so we did not need to stand with the crowd that had gathered on the top deck of the ship. It was a beautiful, clear day.



Had breakfast at the Kings Court – it was very crowded, but we ended up (by pure chance) sitting at the table next to Mary and Dottie.

Waited for our 8:10 disembarkation time in our room. Went down to deck 3 to meet Mary and Dottie as we had discussed the night before, but they never showed up (and did not respond to our text messages and phone calls). We decided to get off anyway and hoped we would find them on-shore.

My room card incident from last night almost caused a problem. I almost threw the one they made for me away (because it would not open the door) but I tossed it into a pocket on my backpack to keep as a souvenir from the trip. That turned out to be a really good idea as the original card would not scan as I tried to leave the ship: I had to use the “new” one to leave!

Caught up with Mary and Dottie – they thought we had agreed to meet after we passed through immigration and security.

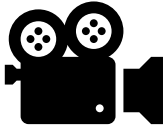
Got on our bus for the 45-minute ride out to Newark. Parted ways with Mary and Dottie (Lorraine was driving out to pick them up), checked our bags, and settled in at the Ambassadors Club waiting for our 1:00 flight back to Dallas.

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The flight was uneventful – we had exit row aisle seats across from each other so had lots of leg room. Dallas was, as predicted, hot. Officially 101 when we landed, but the thermostat in the car showed 106 during the drive home.

It is different (make that really nice) to arrive back from a trip to Europe without any jet-lag.



Enjoy watching [Kathleen's final video](#) showing the wonderful time we had sailing on the Queen Mary 2.

Epilog

We purchased an eSim with service from O2 for Kathleen's iPhone. We frequently had problems accessing the internet, and never quite figured out how to disable the AT&T service, so we ended up paying them for access as well. We need to figure this out before we travel to Europe again.