

2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 1 – Friday January 19th – Depart Pittsburgh



Today is the start of our fifteen day vacation in the Caribbean. Marcia and I (Jim) leave our home northwest of Pittsburgh at 4:45 AM, daughter Jaime driving us to the airport. We leave behind our little dog Pepper (whom we love) and the snow (which we don't). We fly for three hours to Miami and then another three hours to St. Kitts, arriving at 3:35 PM.



We get a nice view of the island of St. Kitts from our plane as we prepare to land. We have read that St. Kitts has 30,000 residents and 60,000 African Green Vervet Monkeys, descendants of a few brought to the island by sugar cane planters years ago as pets.

We are in St. Kitts as this is where we will start and end our twelve day cruise in the Leeward Islands. When we booked our trip, many months ago with the Island

Windjammers Company, we were scheduled to motor/sail mostly in the British Virgin Islands, starting in Tortola and ending in Saint Marten. Due to the hurricanes last fall, Island Windjammers has moved their cruises further south in to the Leeward Islands which were only moderately damaged by the storms.

We check in to our hotel for the next two nights, the Timothy Beach Resort.





This is the hotel that Island Windjammers suggested we stay at. Our ship will be departing on Sunday from the bay in front of the hotel and we have received a 40% "Island Windjammers" discount. The hotel has upgraded us to a nice suite with a small kitchen. In the exterior picture, above, our room is top floor, upper left. We have a great view of the Caribbean Sea from

our large balcony. At 5 PM we enjoy Happy Hour drinks at the hotel's beachfront bar and later "Cheeseburgers in Paradise" at Mr. X's Shiggidy Shack beach front restaurant, watching a nice sunset.



It is great being in warm weather again!

Off to bed early after a long travel day. Tomorrow we will explore the island of St. Kitts.

2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 2 – Saturday January 20th – St. Kitts



We are up at 7 AM and then down to the hotel restaurant for breakfast.

We had previously booked a group tour of the island for today. At 9 AM we are met at our hotel by Calvin from the highly recommended Thenford Grey agency. We are surprised to learn that there will only be the two of us on today's tour as there is no cruise ships docked today! Yesterday there were four huge cruise ships docked and tomorrow there will be three. We are lucky, as Calvin tells us that this means the island will not be crowded today.

We first drive through the Capital of Basseterre, a city of 12,000 folks. We learn that St. Kitts and the neighboring island of Nevis form the independent country of St. Kitts and Nevis. As former British Colonies driving is on the left hand side of the road. We spot the ship that we will be boarding tomorrow, the Sagitta, anchored in the harbor at Basseterre, provisioning between cruises.



Calvin takes us on a tour of an abandoned Sugar Mill and Rum Distillery. He explains that sugar cane is no longer grown on the island as there are less expensive sources in Central and South America.

Next we are on to the Earl of Romney's Manor, built in 1626, and the Botanical Garden.



We also visit the Caribelle Batik at the manor. They are known for the unique clothing and prints they produce using a five step wax and dye process. We watch a demo. I purchase a painting of the famous Jamaican reggae artist Bob Marley which I will frame when we get home. Marcia buys a fan.

We next drive up to Brimstone Hill, a beautifully restored old English fort from the 1600s. Great views.



We drive along the Atlantic coast of St. Kitts and then stop at Timothy Hill where we can see both the Atlantic and Caribbean from the narrowest part of the island. We can see the island of Nevis, with Mount Nevis' peak covered in clouds, in the distance.



The weather is just about as nice as it can be. Temperatures are in the upper-70s with almost no wind.

Next we are back at our hotel for a late lunch and then on to the beach for our first dip in the warm sea. We enjoy watching the monkeys cavort all around the hotel. One takes a drink from the hotel pool.



Dinner again tonight at Mr. X's Shiggidy Shack and then off to bed.

Tomorrow will be a big day; the start of our cruise of the Leeward Islands. We will board our ship, the Sagitta, and start our twelve day cruise.

2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 3 – Sunday January 21st– Board The Sagitta



I am up early at 6 AM and go down to the beach where I watch locals of all ages gather on this Sunday morning. They do group exercises on the beach and then swim in the sea. I spot a rainbow in the distance.

Next, back to the room to join Marcia and head out for a light breakfast. Then back to our room to pack.

We really enjoyed our stay at the locally owned Timothy Beach Resort and all of

our time on St. Kitts. What friendly and happy people!

I keep going out on our deck and looking at the sea to see if I can see our ship, the Sagitta, coming around the coast from the harbor at Basseterre. I see a large ship and am glad it is not ours; not wanting to cruise with 4000 other folks! Then, we spot the Sagitta coming up from Basseterre, towing its dinghy.



We know that the Sagitta was originally built for the Swedish Navy in 1960 as a laundry boat! It was purchased in the 1990s by a company for excursions in the Galapagos Islands off of Ecuador. They added the three masts; aluminum clad with wood for effect. The Sagitta is correctly advertised as a “motorsailer”. It travels mostly by diesel engines with only an assist from the sails. It is 120 feet in length, 22 feet in breadth, a draft of 10 feet and a top speed of 8 knots...about 9 mph.

The Sagitta was purchased by Island Windjammers a few years ago and then underwent major renovations. It was their second ship, joining their original 10 passenger ship Diamant. They have since acquired a third vessel, the Vela, which can accommodate 26 passengers. The Sagitta can hold 24 passengers with a 10 man crew.



Shortly before 2 PM the dinghy from the Sagitta comes to shore and takes our luggage back to the ship, anchored in Frigate Bay. Then we are transported to the ship via the dinghy.

We have met most of our shipmates on shore. We now know that there will only be sixteen of us on board, below the ship's capacity of twenty four. We will still be served by the ten man crew. Many of our cruise mates traveled with the old "Barefoot Windjammer" cruise line which went bankrupt in the late 1990s. While the old owners

looted the firm they knew would soon be insolvent, they sold discounted packages for future cruises which they defaulted on. Two folks on our cruise tell us that they lost a significant amount of money, in one case \$18,000. This new company, Island Windjammers, was started by folks that had sailed on and enjoyed the old "Barefoot" cruises, but now run a much more ethical operation!

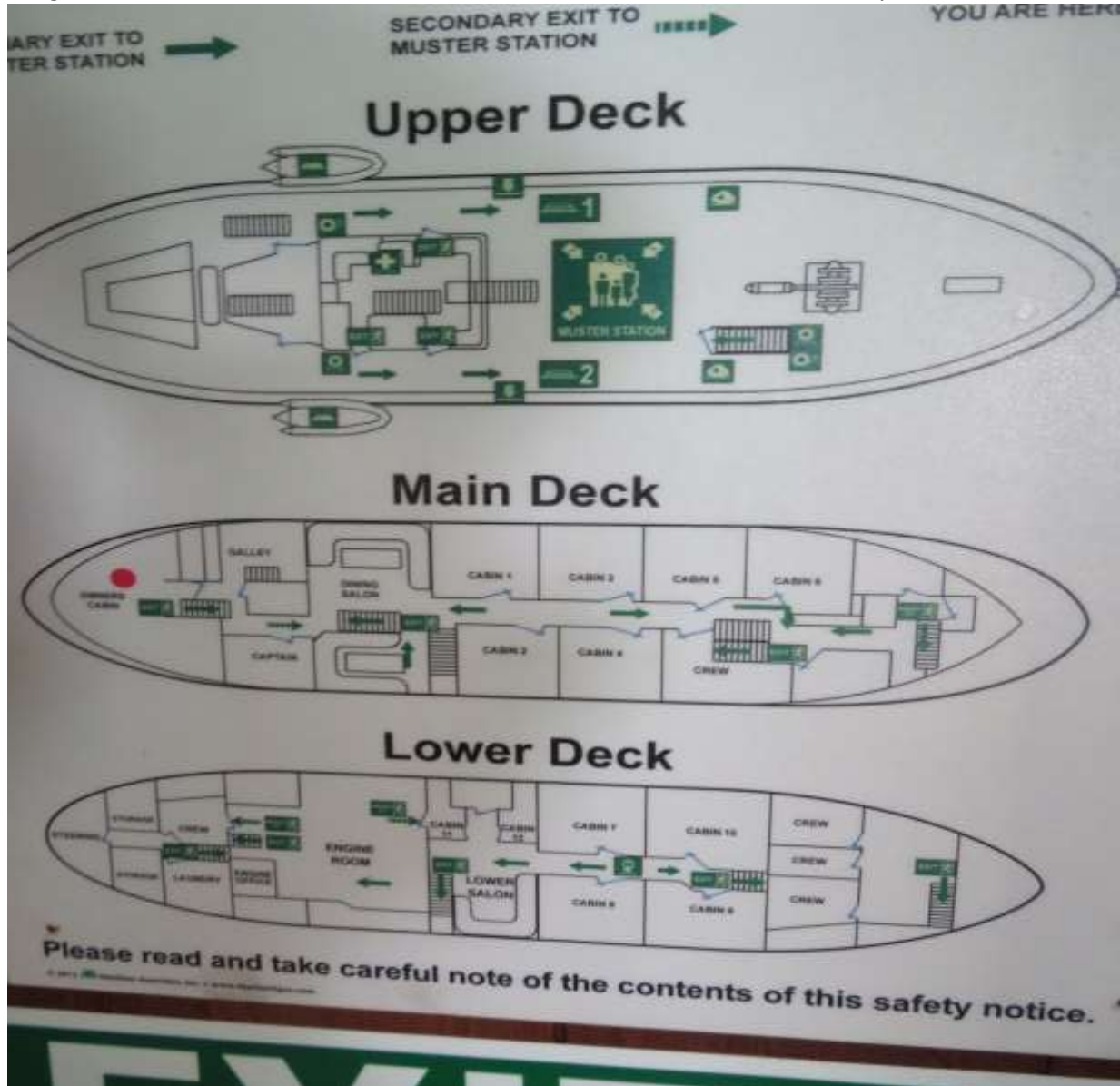
Having grown up in Rochester NY, I find a surprising connection with some of our fellow travelers. One gentleman lives in Fairport. Kathy lives in Greece NY, just west of Rochester, and runs a large orchard and fruit farm and a cider/bar/restaurant/wedding facility with the assistance of her son, daughter, and son-in-law (who grew up in Ballston Lake, where Marcia and I lived for 32 years). The three "youngsters", whom Kathy has brought along, are all around thirty years old. The rest of the passengers are all about our age; plus five or minus ten years.



Onboard we have a nice view of the Timothy Beach resort and their beach. We meet the crew. Captain Deylan (from Bulgaria), Operations Manager/Tour Director Andrew (from South Africa), Chief Engineer Adrion (from Romania), and the other great seven; Stewards (Denis and Stephen), Chef and Cook (George and another George), First Mate (Bryon), Bosons (Mark and Bamboo). All are from the islands or from Guyana on the north coast of South America. All of the crew members are about thirty years of age. The Captain gives us a safety talk as well as an overview as to what to expect. We have not been

supplied with any solid trip itinerary as he explains we may visit islands in various different order depending on the weather and ocean conditions. Wow....everyone is so nice and so friendly.

We are escorted to our cabins. Now, Marcia and I have somewhat splurged on the "Owners Suite". It is huge and covers the width of the stern of the main deck, as shown on the deck plan on the back of our



door (ours is marked with the red dot). All of the cabins have excellent air conditioning. There are no keys issued for the cabins, although the cabins can be locked from the inside. Each cabin has one port-hole, with the exception of ours which has five large rectangular windows. We also have a small refrigerator, restocked daily, and a TV/DVD and DVD library. Also we have a really huge bathroom. Fanciest shower we have ever seen! We should be most comfortable.



Now this is an “all inclusive” cruise. In addition to our daily breakfast, lunch and dinner, at 5 PM each afternoon we will have snack time in the bar area. We will be served different, special snacks each day and “Sagittaritas”, a rum drink concoction. There are large coolers on deck, one kept supplied with beer and another one with soft drinks which we can help ourselves to at any time. Also white and red wine is always available in a cooler behind the bar. Folks have been told they can bring aboard their own liquor, at no charge, and the ship will supply the mixers.

We are told that we will mostly be traveling between islands at night time so that we will be able to spend a whole day at anchor at each island. Activities will be announced the day before. We will always be taking the dinghy to shore and back to the ship. Activities like snorkeling, hikes led by Andrew and walks and shopping in the towns will be at no charge. Professional island tours will be offered, utilizing trusted local guides. Amazingly, we find that Island Windjammers, unlike the large cruise ships we have been on, offer these at cost with no mark-up. A typical tour will cost us \$30 vs. what the big guys would charge \$70 for.



We see a nice sunset and then enjoy a great dinner of Calaloo Soup, salad, Mahi Mahi and a caramel flan dessert. Lunch and dinner are normally served on deck in a permanent seating area in the stern of the ship. Here we are dining with new friends Jim and Cary from Rapid City SD and Kathy from Greece NY.

Shortly after dinner we set sail due east for the island of Antigua. The Captain has told us that this will take about eight hours and has warned us that once we get into the Atlantic Ocean we will be running into some pretty rough seas; mainly swells that we will be heading straight into. He has the deck crew raise some of the sails for increased stability.

2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 4 – Monday January 22nd – Antigua

We drop anchor near the island of Antigua at Jolly Harbor at 5 AM. It has been a very rough sail overnight as we drove through what must have been some significant swells. The ship was really rocking “fore-to-aft”. Marcia, who has never been seasick had to “adjourn” to our bathroom three times overnight. I kept feeling that I might fall off of our large bed. Marcia is feeling much better this morning.



Each night Andrew details the next day's activities and other useful information on a white board and posts it in the bar area (yes, he had the day/date wrong on this one for which he took much abuse). Here, coffee and breakfast snacks are available for early risers by at least 6 AM.

Breakfast is always served at 8 AM in a dedicated seating area on the main, fully covered, deck. Here we are with Michelle from Regina in Canada, Jeremy, Jill and Kathy from Greece NY and Jim and Cary from South Dakota.

We all take the dinghy to shore at 9 AM. Six in our group go on a 15 station Zip Line excursion which they report was “the best”. The rest of us walk around town, do some shopping at the supermarket, and look at the long abandoned, massive, casino. We return to the Sagitta on the 11:30 AM dinghy.





Antigua is a very beautiful island and this harbor is most popular with sailors.

After our 1 PM lunch (with great salads) the Sagitta raises anchor and motors to the southwest coast of Antigua for our first snorkeling experience on this cruise.

We are fitted for masks, snorkels, and fins that we will keep for the rest of the trip. The equipment is excellent. The snorkeling is great; Marcia really enjoys it and we both feel most refreshed after the good exercise in the warm ocean.



As we return to the Sagitta I get a photo of the stern of the ship showing the four rectangular windows that brighten our pretty special cabin.

We now move to the southern part of the island and anchor for the night off of Falmouth Harbor.

An excellent dinner tonight (pork tenderloin) and Andrew briefs us on what sounds like some great activities for tomorrow. We all head off for an early night, as most of us did not get a lot of

sleep on the rough seas last night.

2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 5 – Tuesday January 23rd – Antigua



I believe all enjoyed an excellent night's sleep last night as we were anchored in the calm waters off of Falmouth Harbor on the southern side of Antigua.

Falmouth Harbor is a favorite base of "Mega-Yachts" and we see many. Most of us take the 9 AM dinghy ride to shore.

Seven of us are going with Andrew on a hike up Shirley Hill. The rest of our group is going on an easier climb up Goat Hill.

Now, my guide book said that this hike up Shirley Hill is an easy stroll, so I am able to convince Marcia to join me on this trek. This ends up being quite a steep climb over and down rough trails and boulders and I fear my hiking days may be over (I did slow down the group) but we did get the amazing views promised of Falmouth Harbor and English Harbor.



Now, our folks that went on the “easier” Goat Hill hike tell us it was no stroll; pointing out the ropes they needed to use to pull themselves up the cliffs! We all laughed about the good exercise we just experienced. And, it was all free!

Back to the ship. At noon we all take the dinghy back to a nearby beach where the crew brings lunch and a cooler of refreshments for us. Most relaxing cooling off in the ocean. Bosons Mark (on the engine) and Bamboo (at the bow) are the best. They can and will safely even hoist me every time to safety!



Yes, everyone has a “permanent smile” on their face; what could be nicer than this! Yes, this is really great.

Andrew (not shown) is resting up after carrying me up and down the mountain on this morning’s hike.

We eventually go back to our ship. We have been informed that dinner will be moved up to 6 PM tonight so that the Sagitta can start motoring south to avoid more rough seas and weather possibly coming in. We have no vote but we all say OK! Umm...this appears to be becoming our most relaxing vacation!



2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 6 – Wednesday January 24th – Dominica



We raised anchor at 8 PM last night in Antigua and started the 90 mile cruise south to Dominica. Sails are raised again for added stability but this was one rough trip. This time the swells are hitting us from the side of the ship so we fear falling out of bed. It is really a challenge to “crawl” to the bathroom in the middle of the night. It calms down for a couple of hours when we cruise down the western coast of Guadeloupe, shielded from the Atlantic swells, but then picks up again when we enter the open sea. We drop anchor at 7:30 AM this morning off the town of

Portsmouth in Dominica. Quite an experience! Now, Hurricane Maria ravaged Dominica last September. We learn that what was supposed to be a Category 3 storm surprisingly intensified to Category 5 and then moved up the whole length of the island. Most houses were destroyed when their roofs blew off in the 220 mph winds. The normally green mountains are now denuded either due to the trees being blown over or all of the trees’ leaves being stripped away. The devastation is still most visible.



Relief supplies were slow in coming to Dominica. Island Windjammers made two trips from Florida to Dominica with their ship Daimant empty of passengers but filled with food, medical supplies and other relief stuff for this independent country of 70,000 people. The crew made sure that most of the supplies were delivered to the interior parts of the country. Island Windjammers keeps Dominica on their itinerary to help support tourism, the main industry on the island.



At 9 AM we take the dinghy to shore. Those of us that have signed up for the trip up the Indian River meet Sam who will man the oars to take us up river. No motorized craft are allowed on the river, except when they are working to clear the channel of hurricane damage!

Sam explains, as he rows us up the river, that the Indian River was known for the tree canopy that stretched across the river. Most was lost to the hurricane. We see the spot where they filmed the "witch house scene" in Pirates of the Caribbean 2.



We stop at a dock a ways up the river. We can go no further as the river is blocked here by hurricane debris. But, this is a good place to stop as there is a small open-air bar, where we meet Trevor and order our morning rum drinks!



We spend quite a bit of time talking with Sam and Trevor about the hurricane (they both lost their homes), the work they are participating in to clear the river, and their experiences when they worked

with the crew filming Pirates of the Caribbean 2. This is a very nice experience, talking with the locals.



We are back on the Sagitta at 11 AM and are surprised to learn that the Vela, Island Windjammer's third ship is in port, sailing north from St. Lucia. It is a true sailing ship but also uses its diesel engines for propulsion. We are told that we will be able to visit the Vela later and that their passengers will also visit our ship.

After lunch, at 1 PM, we take the dinghy back to shore for our Island Tour. We have a good one with talkative driver/guide Max. Much hurricane

devastation everywhere we look.



But there are also many scenic areas that we see. Tropical climate...things are growing back fast!



After our 5 PM Sagittaritas we take the dinghy over to our sister ship, the Vela. It is nice. A true sailer. The rooms appear to be a little smaller than those on the Sagitta and they have no dedicated outside seating, like the Sagitta does, for lunch and dinner (although we are told that they can set up tables outside). Like us, they are under capacity. They have 13 passengers and they can accommodate 27. I think this is common in the Caribbean this year. We hear about huge cruise ships sailing with only a fraction of capacity filled.



At 7 PM we go to shore and join the passengers from the Vela for dinner at a partially destroyed restaurant. Our crews bring to shore our dinner, barbecued chicken and ribs plus fixings. It is shared with the restaurant workers. We buy our drinks from the restaurant bar to help support their recovery from the hurricane.

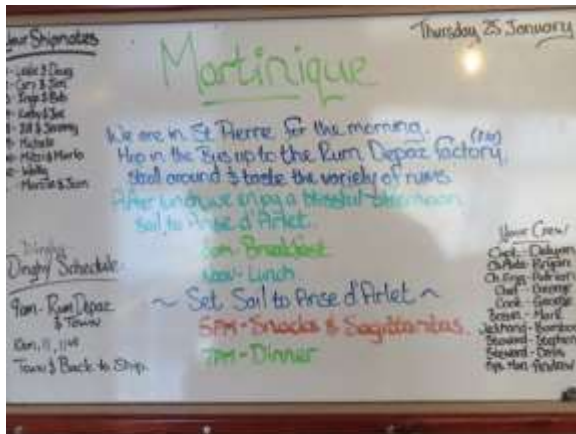
It is fun interacting with the folks from the Vela. Although, I must say, I cannot envision having a better (friendly, knowledgeable, etc.) group of folks than we have right now on the Sagitta. Everyone is always so friendly and happy.



Tour Director Andrew rallies the youngsters for a “pub crawl” around town. Below, the Sagitta at night.



2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 7 – Thursday January 25th – Martinique



We travel all night to Martinique and anchor at 7:30 AM off of St. Pierre, close to Mt. Pele. Yep...another bit of a little rough overnight sail with the swells but we are getting used to it.

Mt. Pele famously erupted in 1902 and killed most of the population of Martinique, 30,000 people. The ash cloud lowered global temperatures by several degrees for a few years and led to poor harvests around the world.

Most of us take the 9 AM dinghy to shore for a visit to a rum distillery up in the mountains. We enjoy a walk around this beautiful setting and sampling their wares. We even buy some (for Marcia, of course).



Back to the town we see George (our Chef) buying local produce for our meals. We also spot our ship, the Sagitta, on the left and the Vela on the right in the above photo.



After lunch we motor for 2-1/2 hours to the southern part of Martinique, anchoring at Anse d'Arlet at 3:45 PM.

This is a most pretty place.

Andrew unleashes the rope swing and some folks have fun using it to launch off from the top deck of the ship. There is also swimming off of the side of the ship. We enjoy the 5 PM snacks and later dinner and then sleep well as we are anchored all night in the calm bay.



2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 8 – Friday January 26th – Martinique



We all get a good night's sleep anchored in the calm waters off of Anse d' Arlat in Martinique.

After breakfast young Joe does his yoga exercises. At 9 AM Mark and Bamboo take us to shore.

Martinique is a "Department" of France, actually part of it; folks here vote for the French Parliament and President. Unlike the other island we have been in (which were formerly British colonies) few here speak English, they have funny cars, Peugeot, Citerons, and Renaults, drive on the right side of the road and do not take US Dollars; Euros please. We do some shopping and find an Internet Café.



Then some time at a great beach and some OK snorkeling.

At 11 AM we take the dinghy back to the Sagitta. On the way I am chided by the "youngsters" over how I have affixed my life vest.

After lunch ten of us take the dinghy to another snorkeling area and experience some nice coral formations and fish.



We are back to the Sagitta at 2:15 PM and start on a long motoring/sail north on a trip that will last until the early morning. It is mostly calm sailing as we are on the leeward side of Martinique.



It is most relaxing to sit on the deck as we pass up the west coast of Martinique. Andrew initiates a “drinking game” for any youngsters that might feel bored! Jeremy loses...his nose is already turning red! Marcia relaxes reading in our cabin.





We anchor for 5 PM snacks and later dinner. Above, Andrew briefs us on tomorrow's activities while we enjoy refreshments in the bar area. Seated to the right in the above picture is Wally, one of our great fellow passengers. He has spent more than twenty weeks on Island Windjammer cruises. In fact, he spent the prior two weeks, before this cruise, on the Sagitta going over mostly an identical route. After this trip he is flying

down to St. Lucia and boarding the Vela for a cruise he is hosting for his two sons and their fiancées as a wedding gift. He is a wealth of knowledge on the Caribbean.

I go up to the top deck and get a picture of the Captain's "office". I asked him how he stays seated in front of the wheel at night going through the big swells. He laughs and says he doesn't sit; he stands and tries to hold on to something so that he doesn't fall!

After dinner we continue motoring north. It is smooth sailing when we are on the leeward (western) side of the large islands Martinique and Dominica but the Atlantic swells again hit us when we are in the open seas between islands. Captain Delyan later tells me the swells were ten feet high!



2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 9 – Saturday January 27th – Iles des Saintes



We wake up this morning anchored off of Terre D'en Haut in the Iles des Saintes. This is a group of small islands off the southwest coast of the French island of Guadeloupe. This is a really beautiful spot.



At 9 AM Mark and Bamboo take us on the dinghy to shore. This first group is climbing the hill to the old French fort. Marcia and I go on the second trip, reserved for folks just planning to shop in this pretty “French” town.

In town damage from Hurricane Maria is visible. Note the partially denuded hills.

After lunch, at 2 PM, we go to a great beach and snorkeling area. We see many fish. Marcia is really enjoying the snorkeling, as am I.



Back to the Sagitta for 5 PM snacks. Andrew had asked us to each buy a bottle of wine in town and he would buy the cheese and we'd have a wine and cheese party. Now, I figure this is great as we were given a bottle of wine in our unique refrigerator in our "Owners Suite" that we'd never drink, so I will donate this bottle and not have to buy wine in town. Unfortunately, when I give my bottle to Andrew he informs me "Jim, this is not wine, it's Champagne". Oh well; we had enough wine for the party!





Anyways, we had much fun at the 5 PM wine and cheese party.

At dinner it is announced that new friends Leslie and Doug are today celebrating their 40th wedding day (Marcia reminds me that ours is later this year!).

This is great as now we can open our bottle of Champagne to celebrate (along with a few other bottles that

the Stewards find).



2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 10 – Sunday January 28th – Marie Galante



We stayed anchored for most of the night off of the Iles de Saintes and slept well. At 4 AM the Sagitta raises anchor and motors about 20 miles east to anchor off of another small island south of Guadeloupe, Marie Galante.

We anchor at 7:30 AM in the harbor at St. Louis.

Starting at 9 AM the dinghy takes us to a very secluded beach. We are the only folks around. No snorkeling but we enjoy swimming and walking through the jungle trails behind the beach. At noon the Sagitta's

Chef, Cook, and Stewards bring ashore beverages and lunch...chicken wraps, bean salad, and freshly baked cookies.



Stephen climbs a palm tree to knock down coconuts! We take them all back to the ship. Andrew (from South Africa) and Stephen (from Guyana) pretend they know how to play Cricket.



Back on the Sagitta we lift anchor at about 1:30 PM and start motoring for the northwest coast of Guadeloupe. We are mostly sailing “with the wind” and the swells and then we go up the Leeward side of Guadeloupe so it is smooth sailing. I complement Deylan, our Captain, on doing a much better job of steering the ship than he did a couple of nights ago when we were almost rolling out of our beds!



Mark and Bamboo raise the sails. Andrew conducts a “knot tying” class this afternoon. I sit out due to my retained expertise from Boy Scout days. Marcia is very proud when she finally ties a Bowline on her tenth try!



We are still motoring at dinner time so we eat downstairs (indoors). We anchor off the northeast coast of Guadeloupe near the small town of Deshaies at about 8 PM. The weather continues to be just about perfect.



The Sagitta is very proud of the awards they won last year (2016) in the small ship category on the widely read Cruise Critic site. These are only two of the awards they won. They basically swept all ten categories. Somewhat amazing for a ship with such a small client base. Wally must have voted dozens of times.

2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 11 – Monday January 29th – Guadeloupe



We wake up anchored on the northwest coast of the French island of Guadeloupe in the calm bay at Deshaies.

Now, Marcia, three year old Jaime, and I were near here way back in 1985 at the old Club Med at Fort Royal, less than 30 miles from where we are now at. We enjoyed our time there even though everyone got sick

for a couple of days. They closed down the club a couple of years later. We ran into one of the GOs that worked at the old club at another Club Med in Mexico. He told us they closed down the club because they could not figure out how to get rid of the stomach virus that all guests got! Yes, it was a rare vacation where we all lost weight! Make sure that you wash your hands when you are on Guadeloupe!

This morning we go to the Jardin Botanique Gardens while others walk to the Grand Anse Beach or go hiking up the tough trail by the Deshaies River. The gardens are really nice; stuff from all around the tropical world. Marcia is most happy; she spots a Hummingbird!





Yep, this place is OK.



Back on the Sagitta we see that the largest sail vessel in the world is anchored near us. It is the Star Clipper that has a capacity for 250+ passengers, although we find out that there are less than 100 on board...a tough tourist season in the Caribbean.

This ship was built in the early 2000s and, as you can maybe see in this photo, the masts can rotate to adjust to the wind, unlike any other sailboat I have ever seen!



Now, with steward Stephen's good efforts at decapitating the pineapples he had earlier brought down from the trees on the beach, Andrew brews a potent concoction that he has fun serving to unwitting passengers (like Marcia).

Our afternoon snorkeling expedition is cancelled. Too windy and rough seas plus it is a little cloudy meaning poor underwater visibility. After our 5 PM snacks Adrion takes us on an Engine Room tour.



2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 12 – Tuesday January 30th – Montserrat



We raised anchor at midnight and traveled through huge swells at 7 knots for thirty-four miles, anchoring in Little Bay in Montserrat just before breakfast.

This island was settled by Irish immigrants in the 1600s and is still the only place in the Caribbean that celebrates Saint Patrick's Day.

Unfortunately, Montserrat is more famous for volcanic Mt. Soufriere. There were 11,000 folks living on Montserrat in

1995 when the volcano erupted for the first time in more than 400 years. Subsequent eruptions in 1997, 2003, and 2010 resulted in half of the island, including the capital city of Plymouth being evacuated and being put in an "exclusion zone". This is the half of the island covered in ash from the volcanic eruptions. Montserrat's population, today, is less than 5500 folks. Constant steam is still rising from the volcano.

At 9 AM we all take the dinghy to shore for an island tour. The swells are pretty rough. Marcia almost



slips into the sea stepping from our gangway into the dinghy but is saved by Mark, Bamboo and the Captain.

We meet our Tour Guide/Driver, Danny, and start off on our island tour.

This island was the favorite of the "Rich and Famous" prior to the volcanic problems. It is mentioned in the Jimmy Buffet song "Fins".

Now, this tour starts off like most we have been on the Caribbean. “Here is the Post Office, the oldest Church, the Government Building”, etc. Then it gets more interesting as we see some good coastal views and drive into the “exclusion zone”.



We drive up to the Montserrat Volcano Observatory. We watch an excellent twenty minute video covering the history of the eruptions and the displacement of most of the island population from the southern part to the northern part of the island. We get our first views of Mt. Soufriere.





We see eroded ash fields and many destroyed houses. Most fascinating is the visit to the abandoned Monserrat Springs Hotel. The swimming pool is now the home to a family of poisonous frogs.



A major industry on the island is the mining of the volcanic ash for conversion into fertilizer and asphalt.



Afternoon snorkeling was again cancelled due to rough water. We hang out on deck and read.

After dinner the Sagitta raises anchor and motors for three hours northwest to the island of Nevis. This is a very smooth transit. I congratulate Captain Delyan for doing a much better job of steering the ship tonight!

2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 13 – Wednesday January 31st – Nevis



We wake up this morning anchored outside of the town of Charlestown on the island of Nevis. The sea is very calm and there is no wind. It appears we will have yet another great weather day.

At 9 AM we go to shore and meet our very talkative and informative Driver/Guide for our island tour, Sarge.

We are told that it is very rare to see the top of 3000 foot high Mt. Nevis not enclosed in clouds.

We drive through Charlestown and see the birthplace of one of the Founding Fathers of our country, Alexander Hamilton. Then on to the 109 degree hot springs, the old fort, the Montpelier Plantation (now a hotel), an old sugar mill, the Nesbitt Plantation/Beach Club and the old Anglican Church built in 1643. Nevis is a beautiful island. This has been a very good island tour.





After lunch the crew raises all of the sails and takes us all on a photo opportunity around the Sagitta on the dinghy.



Now the Sagitta motors up the western side of Nevis Island and anchors off of Pinney's Beach.

We all take the dinghy to the beach where we enjoy the sun and the sea but the real attraction is Mr. Sunshine's Bar, "home of the Killer Bees". This is a famous potent rum concoction. Mr. Sunshine has stated that he will reveal the special formula of the Killer Bee to anyone who can drink five of

them. He figures anyone that can will not be able to remember the formula the next day.



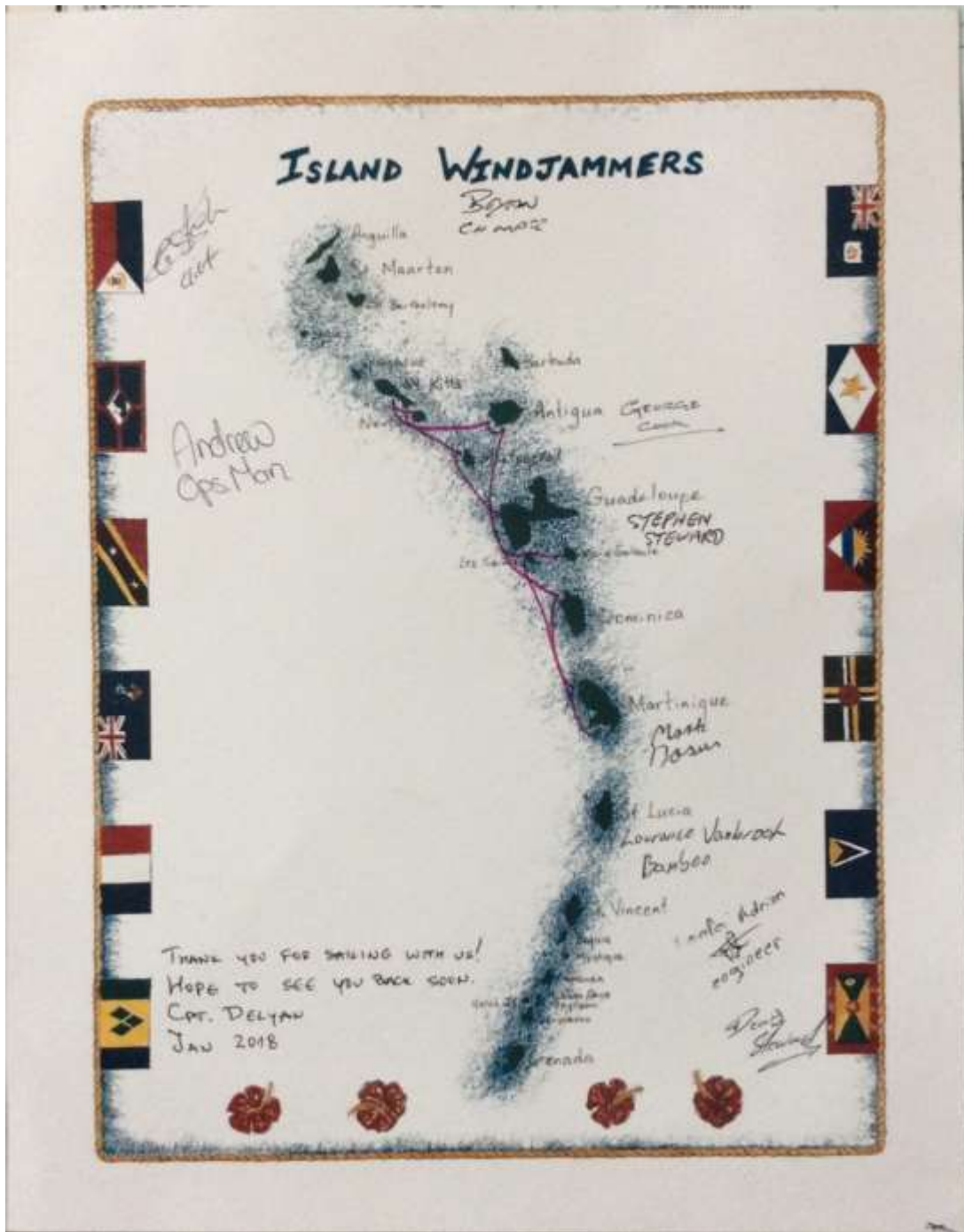
Now, as I am not a "foodie", I have probably been a little remiss is not commenting more on the excellent quality of the food served on the Sagitta. Chef George and Cook George do a great job and the portions are just the right size. Stewards Denis and Stephen always come around, though, asking if anyone would like "seconds". They post the days' menu on a white board each morning in the breakfast area. Tonight's main course is "Goat's Stew". Not being really sure what that is I think a lot of us were

happy when the 5 PM snacks came out and in addition to the fruit were three large freshly cooked pizzas! Those of us wary of Goat's Stew chow down on pizza. Marlo wears his suit coat to dinner, with bare feet, figuring if he brought that jacket this far he should at least wear it once.



After dinner the Sagitta motors the short distance from Nevis to anchor for the night at South Friar's Beach near Frigate Bay on St. Kitts.

2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 14 – Thursday February 1st – St. Kitts



After breakfast we all find a nice laminated map that has been left on each of our beds, signed by all of the crew. It also shows our route from St. Kitts to the south and then back north. What a nice memento!

Most of our fellow passengers go on a tour of the island of St. Kitts this morning. We don't as we toured the

island prior to starting on the cruise. We spend the morning mostly reading up on deck.

In the afternoon Marcia and I take the dinghy to shore for some snorkeling. Jim (from South Dakota) has alerted us that the snorkeling site is outstanding and that he even saw a rare Lion Fish. Thanks to Jim's

tip am able to find the Lion Fish hiding in its cave but not get a great shot of this evasive “import” from the South Pacific (last underwater photo). This is probably our favorite snorkeling site on this trip.



Later Michelle and then Rob master the rope swing.



Now it's time for pictures with the crew and our fellow travelers.



At dinner time we all go to shore to Mr. X's Shiggity Shack. The Chefs and Stewards bring ashore food, grill it, and serve to us a great Chicken and Ribs BBQ.



2018 Leeward Island Cruise – Day 15 - Friday February 2nd – Going Home

Today we go home. Packed bags out by 6:30 AM. A quick breakfast on board the Sagitta and then ashore and off to the airport at 7 AM, assisted all the way by this great ship's crew.

We see some nice islands on the flight to Miami.



We land in Pittsburgh at 7 PM. Daughter Jaime picks us up and are back home by 8 PM.

This has been a most excellent vacation. I mention to Marcia that this must be one of the most “restful” ones we have been on. Two weeks around only happy people with smiles on their faces all the time; fellow passengers, the Sagitta's crew, and the residents of the islands.

We have a “welcome home” e-mail from Island Windjammers reminding us that we will get \$1000 off of our next booking with them if we book within seven days from disembarkation. This we do. Marcia and I are booked on their January 6, 2019 Twelve Day Explorer Cruise from St. Kitts through the Virgin Islands to Tortola.

Below is a photo of the souvenirs we returned home with.



