

At sea in the Red Sea

At present we are cruising north in the Red Sea on our fourth consecutive day at sea. It is all rather easy and we have had wonderfully glassy seas and almost zero swell which makes for ideal cruising conditions. Amazing how calm it is for a sea when Port Phillip Bay is such a choppy mess.

We have passed the danger zone of entering the Gulf of Aden and sailing with the coast of Somalia on the port side and the coast of Yemen on the starboard side [note the nautical terms creeping in to the language here]. There was also a narrow, 50 km wide Bab al Mandab bottle neck that marks the entrance to the Red Sea. Apart from the barb wire and the rear decks closed off for 30 hours everyone handled it very well. At all times you could see other ships around, up to nine was my biggest count, and apparently there were helicopters within 15 min flying time and we were accompanied by a naval ship for some hours. All just precautions, but certainly added excitement, but we did find out later that another ship was boarded by pirates 180 miles south of Oman, where we had been and previously a Seabourn ship had been fired on. The best news came when they announced that the US State Dep had lifted the travel warning on Egypt and so our original itinerary has been re-instated.



We are due into the port of Safaga on April 4th and we have chosen to do the two day tour of Luxor [The Valley of the Kings] which means staying overnight there as it is a 3.5 hr trip from the port to Luxor. April 6th will see us in Aqaba, Jordan, for our trip to Petra, the 7th will be Sharm el-Sheikh [eastern Red Sea coastline of Egypt], the 8th is the port of Sokhna to visit Cairo and the pyramids and then the 9th is a sailing day through the Suez Canal. The 10th will see us in Ashdod, Israel to visit Jerusalem. Then on into the Mediterranean for Crete and Italy.



We are feeling very relaxed and lazy though we have been making use of the gym to help burn off some of the food and wine we have been consuming. I have been going to some of the early morning body workout classes and late afternoon yoga sessions. The daily lecture programs have been really interesting, especially the ones presented by a former English ambassador who is extremely knowledgeable and entertaining. Mind you there are plenty of sleepy heads after long lunches and then sitting listening. We are doing a tour of the bridge this afternoon and we have a

cocktail party with the Captain this evening before dining with our friends Lindy & Bill [Arizona] at the tasting restaurant this evening.

Last night was the special Arabian Nights theme which was a lot of fun. The staff worked all afternoon converting the pool deck with draped fabrics, cushions, candles, stuffed camels, palm trees etc. Everyone was invited to dress up and they did!! Sheiks, harem girls, two of the housekeeping staff dressed as a camel. Cocktail of the night was a sandstorm [don't ask]! We started with a cocktail party then adjourned for dinner [Middle Eastern themed buffet for us] and then back on deck later for dancing and dessert. By midnight we were hot, sweaty messes and third showers of the day were in order. Clothes are beginning to feel tighter [must be shrinking in the wash].



Day time temperatures are around 30C and the ocean temp around 29C and the evenings are balmy. Inside is very air conditioned so you often need a wrap...I have even seen a few ladies take the throw rug from their suites when going to a lecture or something. The wardrobe is holding out remarkably well though we are missing the second black tie night dining tonight by going to the other restaurant [formal dressing is usually for the main dining room].