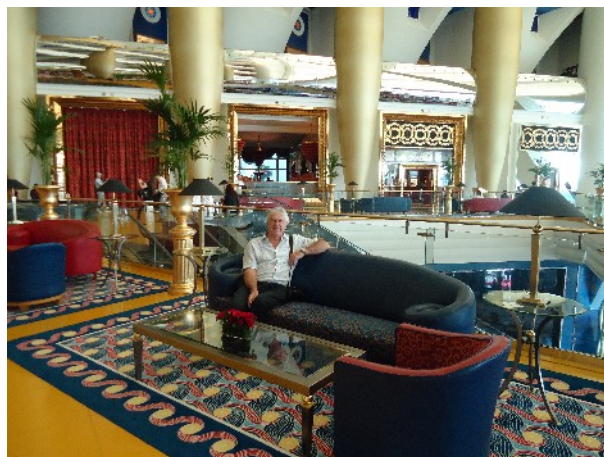


Friday 27 January 2012 – Dubai 22° Sunny



The lift doors, gold is everywhere.



A seating area at the top of the atrium escalator

Thank goodness I have got over the dodgy paella and what a great day we've had. Wow, the famous Hotel Burj Al Arab that is built on reclaimed land in the shape of a towering sail was fantastic. Unfortunately, we didn't take any photos of the outside. It was full of Japanese and all the suites are on two floors each with a spiral staircase and butler. We had our tea on the 27th floor and could see the helipad from our table. Also, we had a good view of The Palms and the World Islands. Later, when we sailed round the Palm Jumeirah you couldn't really get the impression of a palm as it needs to be seen from above. The skyline is truly fantastic and most of it has been built only over the last 6 years. We drove past the shopping malls and the tallest structure in the world the Burj Khalifa at 2600 feet as featured in the latest Mission Impossible film with Tom Cruise. The economic downturn has stopped most of the building but here you can find the biggest, tallest, highest, longest, most expensive and so on buildings in the world. Dubai's oil is only going to last for a few more years and the present ruler His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum has great vision and he is trying to make it the best tourist destination in the world. It has recently attracted world attention through many innovative large construction projects and sporting events, golf, tennis and horseracing. It's an Engineering and Architectural paradise. Dubai's property market experienced a major downturn in 2008 and 2009 as a result of the worldwide economic downturn but we heard stories of people being able to triple their investment within about 4 months just after the Palms houses were released for sale. I don't know how much to believe of what our guide who came from Sri Lanka said. He said that most of the oil comes from Abu Dhabi where they are really rich but the locals, the real natives of Dubai are also rich. To encourage marriage between locals they are given approximately £20,000 and a house when they marry. Lamborghini's and other expensive cars were given to some people when they bought properties.



One thing that bothers me is that whilst Holland and Dubai are re-claiming land in a big way why can't we even manage to maintain our sea defences. In Egypt, Jordan and Dubai there is a dress and behaviour code. This is what we have been given for Dubai: public displays of affection (hugging and kissing) to be avoided; don't photograph any Arab lady wearing the traditional dress without obtaining permission; affection displayed by same sex is not accepted; odd behaviour and being ashore whilst under the influence of alcohol is an offence and possession of drugs/pornographic material is a punishable offence – you can't even take a paracetamol in your handbag – they have zero tolerance to crime. It is suggested that ladies do not wear skimpy or revealing clothes and wear closed in shoes whilst going ashore. I have a wardrobe full of these type of clothes which I can't really wear either because it has been too cold or not culturally correct. I'd like to come back to Dubai, with lots of money as there is still lots to do: sightseeing, horse racing, golf, sailing, shopping and even having a go at skiing indoors. However, it gets unbearably hot in the summer (up to 48°C, 118°F) and I do believe they have some human rights issues with foreign workers.



5 star Hotel Atlantis in background. The expected next ruler's picture is on the billboard. The current ruler chooses the wisest one who is not necessarily his first born son.

Saturday 28 January 2012 – Arabian Sea 26° Sunny – clocks forward 1 hr - + 5 hours GMT

Come back Julia and Brian, Bridge today was horrid! Jeff seems like a nice guy but Ruth said that her husband had decided to join the class and that left us with a player short. Kevin joined us and even with only seven points he wiped us off the table. He shouldn't be in the beginners, he did try to help us but he was so fast and we couldn't understand him as he spoke quietly and quickly. Jeff really is a beginner and we three left the room in a state of shock. Kevin's parting shot was “same time tomorrow”. The new arrivals are a lot younger, maybe because this leg from Dubai to Singapore is only 12 days and its only 21 days if they get off at Hong Kong. The 5pm fitness class was full of new, younger faces. We were treated to a number of fly passes, “Top Gun” style and the presence of a USA aircraft carrier with 6000 personnel on board and equipped with all the F fighters you can think of, it was nuclear powered and doesn't have to refuel for 25 years. It was the Captain's Gala Party and the Stores Manager kept us entertained informing us that food supplies are fairly easy to control, most of it arrives in containers and they just buy fresh fruit and vegetables from approved suppliers at each port. Kate Aide of “Stop the war I've lost my pearl earring” is on board.