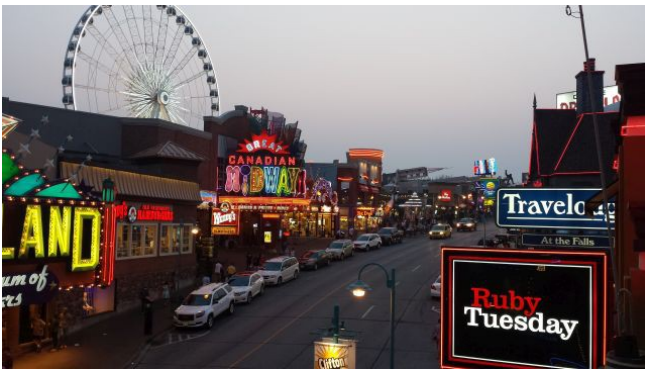


Niagara, New York & Bermuda September 2015



A week before we left Rick tore a calf muscle when he was a little over enthusiastic whilst playing Rounders at our "Rudgwick Music Festival family motorhome get-together" (what a mouthful). Hence we got to try out the Heathrow BA mobility assistance with me pushing him in a wheelchair as it was a lot quicker than waiting his turn with a room full to bursting of other physically impaired passengers. Although he was disappointed not to be upgraded there was plenty of leg room and the flight was a pleasant one. In Toronto they were much more on the ball and had assistants ready and waiting with wheelchairs before we were transferred to a mobility truck and beeped our way through the crowds.



It was a two hour transfer to our hotel "Sheraton on the Falls" and on the way we passed by numerous factories, some as big as our villages. Most surprisingly though were the number of vineyards, I never knew there was a Canadian wine industry. We got to try some out and it was fine. Wow, wow, wow, what a fantastic view of The Falls from our room, we were quite taken back it was really amazing. Brother George had pre-warned us that just round the corner was a mini Blackpool. We spread the main attractions over two days and enjoyed them all. As it was really hot our afternoons were spent by the pool enjoying an occasional dip and Margarita.



It sounded romantic and picturesque when we booked the journey from Niagara to New York on the Maple Leaf train but it was a complete waste of a day, It was a strange experience as the station was closed when we arrived at 9.15 am and we never did see anyone open the doors or sell tickets. The Amtrack train was very old and a few minutes after setting off we were the other side of the river and in USA where we had to wait over 2.5 hours for everyone to go through customs. We were in business class which wasn't much different to coach class but it did include free wifi and soft drinks. There were queues at the cafe car for almost the whole journey and the one poor chap serving there looked as if he was about to have a nervous breakdown or heart attack. Also, you could only buy rubbish microwave food. The air conditioning made it feel cold and everyone complained of feeling chilly. Due to customs and having to slow down for other trains at one time we were one and a half hours behind schedule. The final delay was crossing the Hudson River where there was a technical hitch in opening the bridge. Amazingly, somehow we ended up only about 45 minutes late. The scenery was boring until we got towards the end of our journey but by then it was dark. If we had been at home we could have made it to Hong Kong in the 12 hours it took us to complete the journey.



New York, New York the city that never sleeps. We stayed for three nights at The Hilton in Manhattan East, unfortunately we were now crammed into a shoebox, nothing like our magnificent Niagara room. They refer to it as an Heritage Hotel but the plus point was that it was within walking distance of the United Nations and Chrysler buildings, Grand Central Station and Times Square.



A Big Bus two day ticket which included a Hornblower cruise past the Statue of Liberty gave us the opportunity to see all the major landmarks and catch up on some of the history. We ate at an Italian across the road from our hotel that did gluten free spaghetti. We also took the Staten Island ferry, which was free, and had lunch in a Spanish themed restaurant. There was a lovely park on our way back from Times Square where there was a free performance of "The Taming of the Shrew" and an outdoor library and reading area. New York is a wonderful city, great for a visit but I wouldn't want to live in one of their apartment blocks and the fast pace and noise would get me down.





We were looking forward to relaxing on our Norwegian Breakaway cruise to Bermuda. However, our initial reaction was to run for cover as the garishly painted exterior said it all, this was a party ship on a big scale, full of loud American families with us Brits in the minority. This is the biggest ship we have sailed on as it has a capacity for 3963 guests. It was complete bedlam in the buffet cafe with kids running around everywhere. This was a money making ship that was sale, sale, sale, buy, buy, buy. A photographer appears at every opportunity with each print costing \$20, you also had to pay extra for quite a few of the activities and there were dining and several beverage packages.



When booking we opted for the Dining Package as we get to eat in different speciality restaurants each evening. NCL operate "Freedom Dining" which means you can eat when and where you like. There were 29 eating places to choose from, most of them complimentary and you could choose to dress casually or formally with neither looking out of place. It also meant you didn't get stuck sitting with the same people each day. We've eaten in Cagney's Steakhouse, Italian at La Cucina, French at Le Bistro, Japanese at Teppanyaki and Brazilian at Moderno. The standard of food is really good. Moderno have waiters coming round with a constant supply of barbecued meats on a sword. That evening Rick said "I feel I've eaten quite sensibly tonight". I somehow don't think a selection of salads, a small bread roll, sausage, 2 fillet steaks, 1 sirloin steak, 3 lamb chops, 1 pork rib, 1 beef rib, 2 chicken breasts, 1 chicken leg, barbeque pineapple, plantain, black beans, ice cream and a selection of cheeses is eating sensibly.



Naval Dock Yard



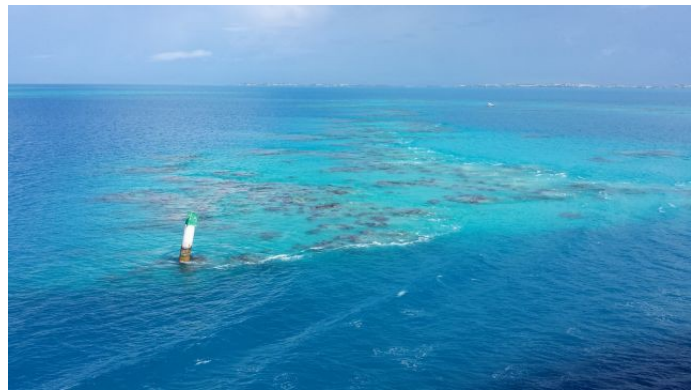
All the buildings have white roofs

We did pay extra for the wine package but we should have opted for the Ultimate Drinks Package. One Brit couple bought the package for £79 each when they booked through Travelzoo whereas it would have cost us £560 to buy it onboard. You could tell who was on the Ultimate Drinks Package as they had drinks in their hands all the time and were walking around all glassy-eyed and Zombie-like. We worked it out that you had to be a borderline alcoholic to break even.



By the second day we were really getting into it as most of the families had dispersed throughout the ship. There's loads for the kids to do, really good exciting activities and it is actually a great family holiday. There are not so many oldies about, we being in that genre now. Hardly any mobility scooters and sticks but Rick did have his moon boot with him. Rick is still being a little careful when he walks as each time he jars it he sets it back a bit.

There is a full activity programme each day. We did **not** opt for Bingo, Deal or No Deal, Mr Sexy Legs or the Hot Dog eating competition but we have been to some cookery demos, wine, rum, martini and tequila tastings. The entertainment is of a high standard, we have particularly enjoyed the Circ de Soleil Jungle theme, Rock of Ages, and Burn the Floor Shows. We had a busy last day on ship when we went to the Wine Tasting Comedy show which included lunch and of course wine tasting. This was immediately followed by Martini tasting. We were a bit concerned how we were going to be able to fit in our last bottle of pre paid wine but as dinner was so late we somehow managed. In between we saw a very clever comedy improvisation sketch.



All this went on the ship but of course we also had three days in lovely Bermuda where the water is crystal clear and the sand tinged with pink from the coral reefs surrounding the islands. We docked at the Royal Naval Dockyard, it's a British Colony and they speak English, drive on the left and are very polite. Bermuda is shaped like a fish hook and consists of 181 islands and is only 20.6 square miles. There's not too much see but we took the ferry to St George and Hamilton and spent some relaxing time at the beaches; rocky but sandy Tobacco Bay where you didn't need to snorkel as the fish swam around your feet, beautiful sandy Horseshoe Bay and Snorkel Beach right by the ship.



We didn't really have much of a chance to get too friendly with the few other couples on the same package but the Welsh couple gave us all a lot to talk about. Despite asking on a few occasions at the beginning of the cruise if they had any packages it wasn't until half way through that they found they were on the Ultimate Drinking (sorry Beverage) Package. They were gutted as they had missed out on 4 days and NCL weren't particularly generous in compensating them. The husband made up for it though as he managed to clock up \$300 in one day and that was the day his wife wasn't well.



Rick trying his luck



Our Martini Tasting Buddies
this immediately followed the Wine Tasting
I also won an extra tray to add to this lot

Really Great Holiday !!!