

Mid-December

This year our December was normal until mid-December. That included the annual Christmas musical put on by our church. It was “Four Tickets to Christmas”, a story set a hundred years ago in Upstate New York and Ohio. A family gathering was involved but relationships needed to be restored to better health. The performance used many dozens of people from our church. The three performances were packed full, with lots of new people attending the musical for the first time.



Then Gail and I started a vacation lasting nearly three weeks. It was based on an educational cruise from the Bahamas through the Panama Canal to San Diego, California. We had been on the same Semester-At-Sea boat seven years ago on a trip around the Caribbean Sea. I am writing separate reports for the places that we visited during the trip. This time the trip was December 18 to January 3.

We went to our airport Sunday evening, December 15, for a flight on JetBlue Airways leaving after midnight. Monday morning we connected at the JFK airport in New York City for the flight to Nassau, Bahamas. We needed to be on the ship by Wednesday afternoon yet intentionally arrived two days early. That was to allow for travel disruptions by major weather events. It turned out that our connection in New York was in between two major snowstorms, and so we had no difficulties. Similarly, our January 3 return to the Denver airport also avoided a snowstorm the following day.



This is the Orange Hill hotel, north of the airport, where we stayed for two nights in the room on the lower level to the right of the palm tree. The other photo is of the reverse view northward from our patio. We just quietly relaxed there until the day we needed to go into the city and get on the ship. On the next page is a view of the lonely beach. The common birds were Palm Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler (shown), Common Ground-Dove, and Northern Mockingbird.



Then we got our first view of our ship, the “Explorer”, shown in the next photo. This time we had an interior room on the fourth deck. Seven years ago it was an exterior room with a window on the second deck. These are views of our room, with mirrors showing me taking the pictures.



The next view shows how our crew folded our bedding each evening. Then are views of our long hallway and our large lecture auditorium.

Here is a better view of our ship at a different port, Cartagena, Columbia, and a view backwards as we were cruising on the ocean.



Before we left Nassau, Bahamas, everyone had to put on life jackets and stand beside their assigned lifeboat. Throughout the voyage we had no further drill. Only the crew practiced lowering a lifeboat when we were in various harbors.

The next ports (and reports) are Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and Cartagena, Columbia.

Ed Holroyd, January 2014