

Travel log 2015

Disney Cruise with David, Jessica & the Kids

Friday night, August 7, 2015 - Krugerville, Tx, sunny, hot (104) and calm

The dogs went to their vacation home, The Big Doghouse at 3:30 PM and the true adventure began when the David Nipe family descends on the house at 6:30 PM. The kids ate up grandmas' waffles and their parents got Fuzzy's takeouts. Jessica parked her new Camaro in our garage, I still don't know why she didn't want to leave it at the trailer park.

Have to be up by 3:30 AM so in bed early and most of us got a fitful night's rest. Ashtin and Peyton are especially excited! It will be their first time out of Texas, first time in airplane and first time on a cruise ship. Bailey is excited, too, since he hasn't been on a ship either, though he has been in a plane.

Saturday August 8, 2015 - Krugerville, Tx, sunny, hot (104) and calm and Orlando, Fl, stormy, hot (90) and humid

We leave for airport at 4:05 AM to ensure we have enough time for our 6:55 flight. Into the airport, tickets set, through security and at the gate by 5:45 only to find a 55 minute delay on flight.

Eventually, the flight is ready at 7:45 to go, Geri and I were able to upgrade to first class, but in seats on window on opposite sides of airplane. The other five were deep in the rear of the plane, seated in a pack. Captain made up about 10 minutes of lost time and we arrived at 11:15. Since Disney takes care of checked baggage, we just proceeded to the Disney transport area of the airport {yes they have their own separate ground transportation area in the Orlando airport}. The bus ride to the ship was about 55 minutes and within another 30 we were on board. Staterooms were not ready yet so we found the food courts on the 11th deck and had lunch. Geri got us the drink of the day and through confusion, ordered a case of water for the room, more on that later.

Our stateroom 6688 was in the very back (aft) of the ship, looking down on Dumbo's rear as he was flying below us. We have a nice balcony and a fairly spacious room. Unlike the Viking cruise, we actually had places for our clothes, what a novel idea, Viking!

Dinner was at 5:45 and we set off for the restaurant and were seated at our table, but the David Nipes weren't there yet. After a bit they showed up and had been waiting at another entrance for ten minutes for us. Dinner was good, Ashtin actually found something he liked (Mac n Cheese!) the rest of us had the various specialties. We separated after dinner, Geri and I explored some of the ship and found the water coaster. I will definitely ride that before week is over.



Sunday August 9, 2015 - At Sea, sunny, warm (84) and calm.

After cruising all night, we were opposite Key West, FL when we got up. This was a day of sailing to reach Cozumel on Monday morning.

The breakfast buffet was quite extensive and we decided not to go to the restaurant. Geri and I wandered in the variety of gift shops and got some snacks. While doing some people watching, David, Jessica and Peyton showed up, they had dumped the boys off at one of the youth venues and went down where the Disney princesses were meeting kids.

Peyton wanted to meet all the Disney Princesses and have her photo taken. Jessica had tried to get her an appointment but there had been none left for the remainder of the cruise. She stood there watching and Cinderella came over and talked to her, since she knew Peyton was disappointed. The lady at the head of the line kept looking at a guy who was obviously her manager. Soon, the manager of the event saw a gap in the line (some missing late arrival) and slid her into the spot. They treat kids like kings and queens on the cruise line. Peyton was thrilled.

We cruised most of the day along side of Cuba which could be seen on the port side of the ship and about mid day, we could see Havana, my pictures aren't very good since it was hazy.

The show in Walt Disney Theater was John Cassidy, a balloonist and comedian, he was great



Day at Sea, David, Bailey and Peyton

with kids and funny in a style similar to Robin Williams. He got kids from audience to assist him and he worked hard to embarrass them. He finished with three dads dancing for one prize (a stuffed Disney character for their kids). They were very funny and he gave them all a prize.

We rotated restaurants to one with an animators theme which was basically Nemo, there were large video screens throughout the dining room from which sea characters appeared and talked to us. If you were closer, the main character, a turtle, would engage you in conversation. It was quite impressive.

We stopped by the service desk to straighten out billing, (David and Jessica had been billed for our stuff and their card limit was exceeded), it was an easy fix, now if I could only fix repayment to credit card that easily!

We returned to Walt Disney Theater to see a play version of Aladdin, the famous Disney movie. The show was stolen by the actor who played the Genie, though they all were good. Geri had to leave, the theater was sweltering and I heard many comment on it as we exited, but the show was still worth the time.

Back in the room, we asked Arris, our room porter, to straighten out the case of water mixup. In about an hour, a barkeeper came and removed it and our bill was credited with a refund.

We had to be up early for our Cozumel adventure, so it was early to bed, even though we moved back to Central time and got back the hour we lost on Saturday.

Monday August 10, 2015 - Cozumel, Quintana Roo, Mexico, hot (90), showers early, but mostly sunny.

In port at 7:00 AM, Cozumel had become much more commercialized then when we were last here (1994). Once again, breakfast was at the buffet. Bailey had about 2 lbs. of bacon on his plate, but he is 12 and growing.

We had scheduled a Catamaran, snorkeling, and beach adventure that left at 8:45 AM. It was fairly well organized, though we've been on smaller ships where there were multiple lines for debarking and embarking, this one only had one, so it wasn't very quick. Nevertheless, we boarded the catamaran, and sailed to the snorkeling spot. The trip was about 30 minutes and



Jessica, Peyton and Bailey Snorkeling

the resorts and homes on the beach were quite nice. Geri decided not to try snorkeling, but I did. I was fine for about 15 minutes, but became tired and afraid enough to turn back. A crew member helped me back on board and I spent the next 15-20 minutes watching the others, Peyton also turned back, but the boys and Jessica and David had a great time. The short time I was in the water, was amazing. The water was very clear and there were fish of all colors everywhere, they were quite used to people and came quite close. I'm glad I at least gave it a try, I just wished I was 10 years younger! The catamaran then proceeded to a private beach and we had about an hour and a half to swim and play on the huge water toys anchored there. I picked up some rocks for the back porch rock edging. A prize to anyone who

spots the ones from Cozumel, The Bahamas or the ones from Scotland put there several years ago.

After we returned to the port, we had about 2 hours to shop in the tourist trap near the dock but only Peyton wanted to go with David, Jessica and I. We had fun bargaining and probably still spent 200% of what the items would normally sell for, but that's better than 400%!

Dinner tonight was in the enchanted forest, where the flowers (light fixtures in ceiling) opened up and changed colors. After dinner, Geri and I retired to our room while the others went on their way. The boys were out in the Tween area until midnight or so we were told.

Tuesday August 11, 2015 - Georgetown, Cayman Islands, warm(85), humid and sunny.

Our tour today was a turtle farm and we assembled at 10:15. The ride to the turtle conservatory was 25 minutes and our driver, Omar (Teddy Bear) gave us a running commentary about the islands. We were on Grand Cayman where most of the population lives.

The green turtle farm was very interesting and our guide, Tim, was somewhat interesting. Included was a snorkeling lagoon to swim with turtles, which everyone except Geri, Peyton and I did. We retired to the swimming lagoon and Peyton spent an hour having fun without her brothers, including a water slide. Lunch was provided and I would never had written home about any of it. The best compliment might be that the lemonade had seen a lemon sometime in the distant past.

Grand Cayman looked like a nice place to have a condo or even home, our driver told us that a three bedroom home went for the mid 200's. There were hotels and resorts everywhere and

though we didn't visit them, beautiful beaches. Since it is part of the British Commonwealth (the Governor is appointed by the Queen), we were driving on the left which is easy to get used to if someone else is driving.

Geri and I decided to return to the ship, while the others visited the shops in town, there are no docking facilities in Georgetown so we were tendered to and from the ship, an uneventful 10 minute ride, we did come into the boat right under the bow and it is amazing how large the ship is.

Dinner was back in the first restaurant. Bailey has been ordering from adult menu all week and he has had steak at least twice, he also tried Sea Bass on bed of Risotto, he liked the fish, not the pasta. I have to agree with him, the pasta sides like Orzo, Couscous and Risotto are not very good at all. He has tried some of the exotic appetizers and soups and is quite accomplished. Ashtin has even ventured from his comfort zone and tried a few things he wasn't sure of, tonight, he had some boiled shrimp which he liked, but most of them probably for the last time 😊 . We left port

as we were eating and by the time we returned to the room were already out to sea. I could still just see some lights from the shore in the distance.



Ashtin, before he got to hold a Sea Turtle.

Wednesday August 12, 2015 - Falmouth, Jamaica, warm(85), humid and sunny. Thunderstorms in PM.

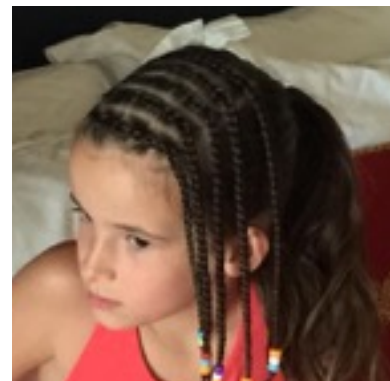
We arrived early in the morning, Falmouth sits at the base of a low range of mountains and the views were great. Geri decided to have room service breakfast, but I went up to 11th deck for the buffet and to look out over the city. It wasn't a big city, but seemed to be bustling and the view of mountains and inlet and small bays was worth the effort of eating alone 😊 . At nine, David and Jessica left the kids in our care so they could spend the day zip lining, etc. Jamaica was the scene of the crime four years earlier when they were married, so we gave them some adult time.

At ten, I took boys to a video sports adventure we had set up for them. Bailey did golf, which he told us later he wasn't very good at. Ashtin had a medley of sports and didn't really mention his success.



At 10:45 we left the ship with all three kids to visit the markets. We had money for each of them and they could decide what they wanted. Ashtin found a set of Beats headphones for which he had been looking for some time. He claimed that at home they were over \$100.00 and these were \$40.00. Of course, his parents had only given me \$20 a piece for them. He argued that he really had come on trip with \$50, so he could

repay a loan. Of course, I fell for it and spotted him the extra \$20. Later he bought a \$10 hat so at that point was into me for \$30, when will I learn? His parents weren't real happy he bought them, since Jessica works for Wal-Mart and could



probably have gotten as good a deal, but it is his money and his education on how to use it (okay, Grandpa, shut up).

Peyton had her hair braided and did indeed look like the princess she believes herself to be. Bailey spent \$10 on a bracelet and another \$10 for a Jamaican ball cap. He wisely spread out his allotted \$20 and had some remaining on board. I bought them all snow cones and had to finish Peyton's. In all we spent about 1 & 1/2 hours in Falmouth and returned to the ship for lunch.

The boys wanted to go back to the Tween deck and play, I never did find out if they had lunch. Peyton wanted to watch the remainder of Frozen and then she, Grandma and I went to lunch.



The boys checked in long enough to satisfy the requirement and we're off again. After lunch, Peyton watched Tangled, well she watched the first half and fell asleep next to Grandma.

At 5:00, the announcement came on that we were about to debark and we had not heard that the kids were back on board. Of course, they had returned and decided a nap sans children would be a good idea. So much for worrying about them!

It was "Pirates of the Caribbean" night and our wait staff and many of the guests were in full regalia. Once again, the cruise line tried to make the entrees seem exotic and once again missed the mark badly. The buffets are not bad,

but the main meals are really pretty poor, usually because the chef tries to mix spices or exotic flavors to common fare. As an example, Geri had a duck appetizer one night that looked like Spam, only didn't taste as good.

After dinner, a pirate party on the upper decks with fireworks was scheduled. At 10 PM, we went back to room before it started, I was feeling a bit sick to stomach and also needed my emergency inhaler. No problem, though, at 11:30, we watched the fireworks from our balcony.

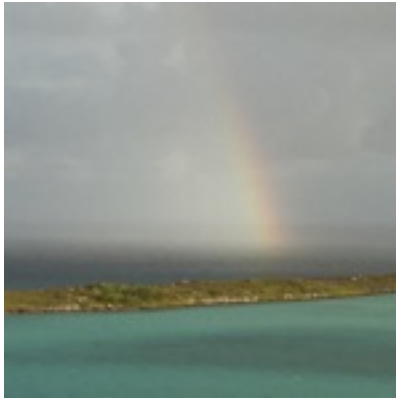
Thursday, August 13, 2015 - at sea, warm (85) and sunny.

A lazy day at sea, Geri and I made it to breakfast about 9:00, no sign of any other Nipes or Stuarts, they may be recovering from a late night topside. Geri went out to shop for some souvenirs for the kids and I did a tour of some of the areas I hadn't seen before. Even with all the decks I'd been on, I am sure I still missed a bunch of them.

We went up to pool area for lunch, the hamburgers were not great and the so called "Philly Cheesesteak" even worse. There must have been 2000 people in the pools, well maybe 800 or so, since this ship has a crew of 1500, there are a lot of folks on board. At lunch we passed a couple of islands of the Bahamas. The water around them is really blue. They were about a half mile apart and both quite small, but one had a small lighthouse and there was a yacht between them. I guess folks find remote places to visit or call home.

After dinner, Geri and I walked on the decks and sat awhile looking at the sunset. Back in the room we watched as a bunch of Bahamian Islands slid by on the Starboard side, we couldn't see the Port side, but the maps showed that there were some close by there as well including Nassau. One of the islands we passed was probably Eluethera, since it was very long and all lit up.

Friday, August 14, 2015 - Castaway Cay, Bahamas, warm(90), partly sunny, thunderstorms.



After a night of sailing we reached Castaway Cay, which is at the south end of Grand B a h a m a Archipelago.

This is a Disney owned Cay with beaches, snack bars, snorkeling, jet

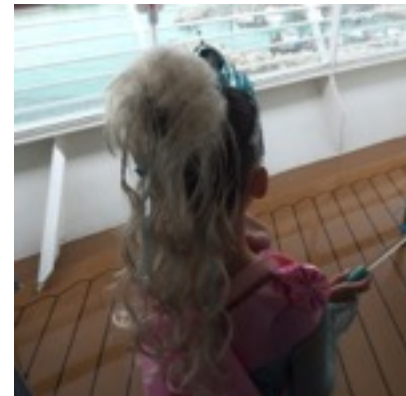


skis and parasailing just to mention a few. When we arrived it was great and we spent 3 hours on the beach, lunch was provided, but the hamburger was only fair. Oh and when we left the ship on a very hot and sunny day, water was only \$3.26 !!!!!!! Every other cruise we've been on gave us water for our shore excursions. Oh well, the drinks at lunch came with the meal, so we could hold out. At noon, Geri, Peyton and I started for the ship since Peyton had an appointment for a Princess makeover. The skies opened up and it began to pour. We were quite a distance from the ship and there were trams to take us back and forth. We boarded the wrong one and it took us to the last stop and then back to where we started. These trams were open sided and we were wet, but finally got on the correct tram only to have it stop one quarter of the way to the ship with the announcement that there was a problem with another tram and we couldn't get through (A BIG LIE, the road was open all the way to the ship). So we walked all the way back in the worst of the storm. Were there dry towels for us when we got back or a hot drink or anyone with an explanation? NO! I expected better of Disney.

We still had time to shower and get Peyton to her appointment, she chose Princess Elsa from Frozen. She was thrilled and the makeover was good. There were three beauticians to help her since she was the only one having it done at the time.

At dinner, only Geri and I ate in the main restaurant and we made sure our servers got their tips (Disney wanted to do set rates added to bill and have these pre-paid and one had to opt out by waiting on line at service desk - I'm sorry, we tip well, but no one tells us what we HAVE to tip - By the way the servers and room steward made out better this way and didn't have to share with others).

Suitcases all packed and the checked bag was picked up at 8:00 PM, we hoped to see it again in DFW {Which we did!}.



Saturday, August 15, 2015 - Port Canaveral (85, humid), Orlando (85, sunny, humid), DFW (95, Sunny), Krugerville, TX (95, Sunny)

We were expected to be off the boat by 8:30 AM, so we rose early and made our way to early breakfast on deck 11. Everybody was in the lobby and ready to go about 8:00 AM and we left the boat for the last time. I searched for one bag and Geri used the ladies' room while the others cleared customs and went for a smoke (well not the kids!!).



An hour's ride back to Orlando brought us to the airport about 10:00 and in another 30 minutes we were through security, Geri and I were TSA pre-checked, but it took almost as long as it did for David and Jessica and kids (go figure). So we had a 2:35 PM flight and now had 4 hours to kill. Fortunately, Orlando airport had free wifi (Hear that DFW, FREE WIFI) so the kids were able to wile away the time connected!!

Of course, keeping with American Airlines tradition (two for two this trip), our flight was delayed 40 minutes, so it was quite a long wait. Eventually, we boarded and got airborne. The lady next to Geri must have been uber-tired as she was doing a jigsaw puzzle on her iPad and had placed her finger on a piece to move it and didn't move for the next 25 minutes or so. I should have taken a picture, but that is

probably not respectful.

Her grand-daughter's kid behind us was super annoying throughout the trip and the lady had on noise canceling headphones, perhaps she knew something we didn't.

Of course, we had taken off from terminal D and DFW and we landed at terminal C (not next to each other as you might suspect but on opposite sides of airport). So, we left Geri, Jessica and Peyton to get the two checked bags and we boys took the tram to terminal D to get the cars. An interjection here, if we all leave the security area to pick up bags, then we have to wait for the buses that travel around the airport, which are not as regular and we have to carry all luggage with us. Within 15 minutes we are back at terminal C, loaded up and on the road

I had called the kennel when we landed and even though they were officially closed for the day, she told me to swing by on way home to pick up dogs, this saved us one day (they are absolutely closed on Sunday. The dogs were pleased to see us and explored the entire yard upon arrival at home. David had beaten us to our house and the Camaro and any sign of them was gone!!

All clothes unpacked and the washer full, we were back to normal by 6:00 PM.