

Post



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Just another 'At Sea' day - April 29, 2023

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SUMMARY

Number three of five "At Sea" days.
Sailing from Hong Kong to Da Nang, Viet Nam. Much like the previous two we were somewhat lazy, hitting the gym, attending talks, eating and drinking too much. Oh yeah, and I had a hot stone massage! - Karen

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DETAIL

Today is another 'At Sea' day, as we transition from Hong Kong to Vietnam. Being at sea, there are no excursions (wouldn't THAT be fun!?) but there are two or three talks that we may attend. We decide to be more social today and have breakfast in the more casual buffet restaurant (rather than in our cabin as we've been doing). The weather is nice so we sit 'out back' near the aft railing. The seas are calm and the ship is gently gliding along.

Mid-morning we split up, Karen goes to exercise while I attend a Q&A session with the ship's captain and hotel manager. They're both relaxed and the big auditorium is half full. They've done this many times, I'm sure, and they know what (most of) the questions will be.

The captain get the majority of questions: what causes him worry, what keeps him up at night, how big are the engines, what do you do when there are warships in the area, what about Somali pirates?

Thankfully our type of ship, with the high sides and so many people aboard, aren't of interest to pirates. There have been a couple of attempts on cruise ships over the years, but none ever successful. When they're in that area they have more of the crew on watch. This ship is headed in that direction after Singapore, so I can see how this might be of interest to them. There'll be six "days at sea" in a row after we get off. Whew... that's going to be interesting.

I was surprised to learn that (if I understand things correctly) the actual motor that moves us through the water is electric. Four big engines powered by big diesel generators. I guess electric would be more responsive and controllable.

We learn about how much food and beverage is needed on the ship. In Singapore, for the next leg of the ongoing itinerary, will be 100s of Australians (they live nearby) and so, many crates of Vegemite are being added to the ship's larder. On this ship now, there are 300 Americans, and 100 each of UK and Canadian passengers. Everyone else comes from up to 20 other nationalities. Next cruise? 382 Aussies. That should be raucous!

What about the waste food, or food not eaten? That's all pulverized into tiny pieces and (if we're 40 or more nautical miles from shore) are released into the water. I'm sure there's a feeding frenzy then. The favorite ports of these two officers? Bordeaux and Seville. They also like the South American coasts of Peru and Chile. The ship carries 950 tons of fuel and can travel for twenty days, at 15 knots, without needing to refuel.

Karen also misses the next talk, by Colonel Klinck, about the South China Sea. There's a treaty that governs such international and shared waters, and waters closer to shore, the UNCLOS. The US never signed it, as we don't agree with the clause about the authority of sea beds.

The Chinese point to maps made by various Chinese over the years and claim ownership of pretty much the whole body of water to their south (called "The Cow's Tongue" based on its shape). This is true even up close to the shores of countries that ring this sea, such as Vietnam and Philippines. There are regular skirmishes and disagreements (that the US tries to stay out of). Countries will drag the Chinese into court in The Hague and win. The Chinese will shrug their shoulders and say "Yeah, you won, so what? What 'cha going to do about it?" For countries that stay alive by (and make a living off of) fishing these waters, this is scary.

The US does do regular "FoN" (Freedom of Navigation) operations, in which they sail (or fly over) places where international law says we can (to reinforce that allowed power). Such fun. The AUKUS security pact (between the Aussies, the UK and the US, signed in 2021) should help.

At some point the Captain comes on the PA to say "Hi" and give the weather and our location. We're 'in the tropics', even with Hawaii and the BVI. From the blueness of the water, we believe him.

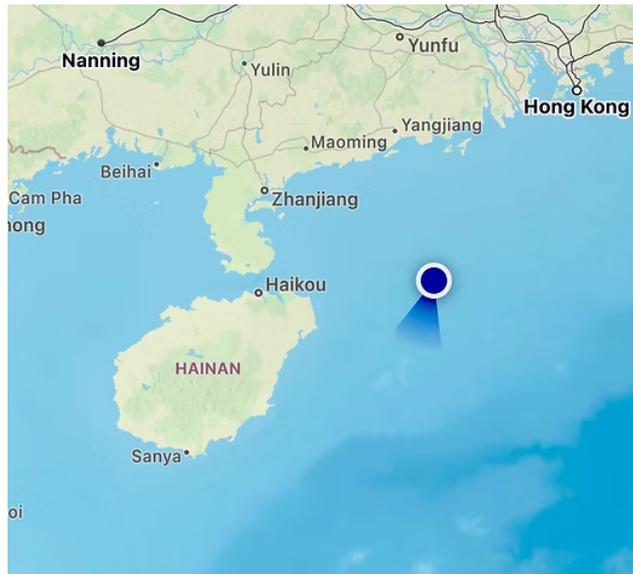
Karen enjoys her massage/rock stacking exercise (the rocks are stacked on her). Later we head to the pool to soak in one of the hot tubs. Before we could get in a dark grey squall with high winds blows through. Most everyone abandons the pool as the winds whip the cushions and towels around. The boat is listing pronouncedly from the wind. The surf is choppy with lots of white caps and the winds through the wires makes an eerie wail.

An hour later? All good. Calm seas again. Dinner and then hot tub. It's open til 8pm and we're finding they're mostly empty in the dusk/dark after 7pm. It's delightful.

Photos



For most of the day the weather was lovely and ideal for balcony sitting. The temperature is lovely, we should enjoy it while we can.



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We're going from Hong Kong to Da Nang,
and from what we can tell, the captain is
on the correct track.



Speaking of the captain, he and the hotel manager on board gave up some work time to answer our questions. They seem like good blokes.



The squall chased away all of the sunbathers here just a few short minutes before.

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