

Post



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Auf Wiedersehen Deutschland - August 14, 2024

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SUMMARY

We end our adventure not with a bang but with a whimper. Actually, that's just me crying about the rain we're receiving on Our Last Day! I shouldn't really complain, this is only about the 3rd rain day we've had. We do some last minute shopping, seeing a really nice part of Hamburg. We think about having a hamburger for lunch but decide, nah... we'll have real French galettes (buckwheat crêpes) instead. And they are great! We board our home for the next 9 days (the Queen Mary II) and I find it rather intimidatingly large - it will probably take me the whole 9 days to figure my way around. Very good Japanese dinner and

English boy band show. At 8:45 this enormous ship has sailed further up the Elbe river and is executing a "pirouette" or 180° turn in the middle of town. This is done, and it is a very big deal, because today is the 20th anniversary of the ship first sailing into Hamburg. Crowds line the shore, waving and singing, and a flotilla of smaller boats accompany us. Quite fun and festive! - Karen

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DETAIL

Today's our last day in Europe (proper). It's the day we board our ship home here in Hamburg. In two days time we'll be in Southampton, England for a few hours, which is kind of Europe, but not really. Outside the weather looks threatening. The forecast is calling for improving weather with fewer clouds later in the day, but if we were a betting couple we'd say "Tut, tut, looks like rain".

It's funny, in this situation we think the weather gods are suggesting we go home. And do we really want to stay here if the weather is going to be crappy? We've had such good weather most of this trip, so we'll just keep a stiff upper lip and go about our day.

Step one is breakfast. It comes with the room. The hotel is having their restaurant redone, and we're sure it'll be awesome, but for now it's non-existent. Our hotel cost, paid to hotels.com, includes breakfast. The nice German young woman behind the counter says it'll actually be a "box lunch" that they'll deliver for our breakfast at 7am. And she would totally understand if we don't want it. Say the word and the breakfast, er lunch, won't appear and they'll take it off our bill. (But we didn't pay you, we paid hotels.com, how will that work?) We decide to just grin and bear it. We'll take the bagged/boxed breakfast for lunch and not find out how the monies would/wouldn't work.

Sure enough, at 7am, between our inner and outer doors, someone (or maybe an elf) dropped off our lunches. They were really quite good, tasty chicken salad sandwich and two kinds of cookies. Other stuff too, but can't remember.

We mostly pack and head out to go clothes shopping, in case the ship is as snooty about dress code as suggested. All we have left to buy are a couple of cheap dressy shirts for Scott and a tie for the shirts. We're really impressed by Hamburg. It's clean and has impressive buildings. Where we are seemingly every other street is actually a canal. The Venice of Germany, maybe?

We find some cheap shirts and I try one on. It's two shirts for 19 euros and they way they ensure you buy both shirts and pay the 19 euros is that the two shirts are stapled together with the "set off the alarm if stolen" device. This made trying on the shirt a bit awkward, but it (they) seem to fit. Karen finds and buys a tie (two actually, they're sold also as a pair). We also buy two bottles of wine, our limit for getting aboard the ship. Screw top as we're not packing a corkscrew.

On the walk back to the hotel it starts to sprinkle. We drop our purchases and head out to lunch. The restaurant is four or five blocks away but now it's raining like crazy. Where we're eating is French, of course. It's a crêpe place, theoretically set in Brittany. The torrential rain really makes it feel like that corner of France.

The waiter speaks to us in French and the crêpes are fabulous, as is the accompanying beer. On the walk back to the hotel the downpour really gets going. All our luggage in hand we pile into the Taxi and head for the cruise port. It's 1:30 pm and we're not really supposed to board until 3 pm, but we've folded our boarding pass to hide the "OK to be aboard" time. We hope they don't unfold the paper.

They do let us on, all we have to do now is get through security. Please take all wine, computers, phones, electronic devices out of your luggage. Remove your belt, watch, wallet, anything from your pockets, gold fillings, etc. and place them in the tray.

We're dragging our luggage with us, which makes us stand out. At the elevators the lines are backed up forever. We take the stairs (only one flight to our lowly Deck 4, we can manhandle our luggage one flight).

Unpacked and empty bags under the bed, we tour the ship. This one holds four (plus) times the number of passengers as the ship we were on for Norway. The boat is huge, both longer, wider, and more floors, er, decks. There are lots of pictures of famous people who have traveled on this ship, Lizzy (Queen Elizabeth), her mom, David Niven, Walt Disney, Audrey Hepburn, etc. etc. You get the picture. (Aren't all of these people dead?)

Karen signed us up for a special dinner at their Taste of Asia restaurant. It's really quite good. After dinner we go to the 8:15 pm show in the theater. It's embarrassingly empty, but that's to be expected. Today is the 20th anniversary of when this ship, the Queen Mary 2, first docked in this town (now its home port, or at least one of them). There's scheduled to be a big send off, including the ship sailing into the heart of Hamburg, doing a pirouette in front of the famous Elbphilharmonie concert hall.

Karen ducks out of the show early to watch the send off. I hear that the pirouette does happen, and the ship is sounding its horn. Everyone on the ship has a little "QM 2 20th anniversary" flag to wave. There is a small armada of tour boats, loaded with revelers cruising along side our ship. On the shore, and in all the buildings, throngs of people are waving and singing God Save the Queen. This goes on for miles as we cruise down the Elbe towards open water. It really is exhilarating, seeing how much this ship means to this (not so) little town.

Eventually everyone calms down, stops waving their smart phone and turns off their flashlight. Time for bed. Tomorrow is a day at sea, as we motor through the North Sea down to Southampton, our last port of call on this side of the pond.

Photos



Up early and off to go shopping. We loved the city of Hamburg. Lots of impressive buildings and flowers where we were.



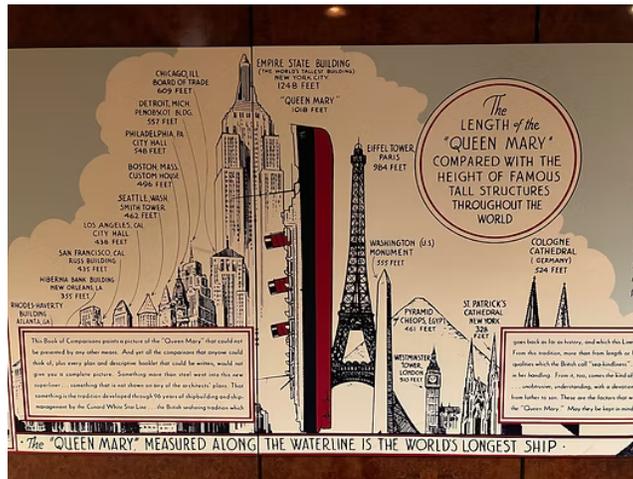
French crêpe lunch. Very tasty.



Waiting in line to board the ship. Lots of people with hair color other than grey and white. We're not used to that on a cruise ship.



Touring the ship we found from where they'll evacuate us. The "Winch Only" message seems to say "DO NOT LAND". We guess they lower a cable, clip someone in, and up they get winched. We don't want to find out if we're right.



Lots of olde timey photos and infomational drawings aboard. Very quaint.



We look off into the distance towards the airport that we went to (that we weren't supposed to go to). This is not the prettiest side of Humburg.



Karen in our room. It's maybe one foot wider than we're used to. In such tight quarters any additional space helps.



Asian dinner at one of their special restaurants. After one meal we were impressed. Small sample size, though.



Entertainers from the West End theaters in London. They were really good, but were playing to an almost empty theater. The big show was the special send off outside.



The ship did a pirouette in front of the Elbphilharmonic building (the one with the scalloped roof, here). It's the 20th anniversary of the Queen Mary 2 docking in Hamburg and apparently that's a really big deal.



FARNSNIENTE



On the shore, for miles, were people standing and waving their smartphones with the flashlights turned on. Some venues were playing "God Save the Queen" and everyone would sing along.



On the ship all the railings were filled with passengers witnessing this momentous occasion.





And along side us were an armada of other smaller tourist boats, full of revelers, observing this (apparently) important date.

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