

## NEW YEAR'S CRUISE 2016-2017

This trip started with an e-mail from Princess Cruises titled, "Here is a deal with your name on it, STEPHEN" I looked through the cruises offered, and found an 8 day Mexican Riviera cruise over New Year's that we liked. Neither of us had been to Manzanillo, and we are looking forward to fresh fish tacos in Cabo. I called our favorite travel agent, and she got us a port side balcony cabin amidships near the elevators.



Since we have been to the other 3 ports, we are not planning to do any shore excursions in any of them. We may go to some restaurants for lunch, however. We also may do something in Manzanillo, maybe a private tour.

Since we have sailed on Princess many times, the perks we get are free internet, a bar setup, and most importantly, free laundry service!

One of the first things I will do on board is go to a dining room and grab a water pitcher, so I can brew Kathy's special iced tea. Room service will only send up glasses of iced tea, so this solves the problem. While I am brewing the tea, I will also grab a couple of coffee mugs for our morning coffee instead of those little cups we get.

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

The second night on the ship was New Year's Eve and a formal night, and we had forgotten to make dinner reservations. After being sent back and forth between 2 restaurants, we finally sat down to dinner at about 8:30. After dinner, we went up to the pool deck to ring in the New Year. They had a band playing, and there were top hats for the men and "2017" tiaras for the women complete with horns for everyone. At midnight, the ship blew its horn 8 times. We kissed, wished each other a happy and healthy New Year together. We wondered if the ship's horn had startled anyone who went to bed earlier.

### CABO SAN LUCAS

On the way to Cabo San Lucas, we came across some whales breaching. I ran to our cabin, and they were directly even with our balcony. It is difficult to time the shots, but I did get a couple.



Also, near Cabo San Lucas on the Pacific Ocean side was a lighthouse. I took the obligatory pictures for my brother in law, who is a member of a NY Lighthouse Society.



As we got closer to Land's End at Cabo, I took pictures of both Los Arcos (The Arch), and Lover's Beach. Both of the features face both the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of California.



Lover's Beach-Pacific Side



Lover's Beach- Gulf Side



Los Arcos-Pacific Side



Los Arcos Gulf Side



Since we had visited Cabo San Lucas last year, we had no desire to get tendered in and look at the same souvenirs we saw last year, so we enjoyed the less crowded ship instead.

## MAZATLAN

We had both been to Mazatlan years ago, and were surprised by how much it had grown. The population is about 500,000 now. We went into the port building, which was full of shops, to help the local economy. We met a tour guide who offered six of us a private tour in his air conditioned van for \$25 a person, and said we could pay him at the end of the tour. In comparison, the ship offered a hop on-hop off bus that made 3 stops for \$40!

The first stop we made was at the Faro (lighthouse) that at 600 feet is supposed to be the highest naturally placed lighthouse in the world. The guide described the climb to the top as difficult. There is a switchback road that goes most of the way up, but you have to scramble up the rest of the way.



The view was great from our vista point, as we could see our ship and the Massive Pacifico Brewery, which ships thousands of cases a day. As an aside, our guide offered us one, and while cold and refreshing, it would not replace any of the IPA (Imperial Pale Ale) that many of our microbreweries produce.



Our next stop was at Sanchez Taboada Square, to watch the cliff divers. While the height of the dive is not as great as in Acapulco, the water is much shallower. It was really exciting to watch the divers!



Our next stop was at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. According to several sources, The Cathedral in Mazatlan, Mexico, is the world's only Roman Catholic Church with the Star of David displayed in each of its 28 stained-glass windows. These were installed in gratitude for the donation of construction funds by a wealthy Mazatlan Jewish family.

There was a Mass being celebrated, but I was confused as it was not on the posted schedule. Kathy later informed me that it was a Funeral Mass, as there was a coffin near the altar.





Across from the Basilica was a park, and there was a musician playing guitar and flute. One of my favorite souvenirs of a trip is CD's made by local musicians, Every time I play them; I am reminded of the experience.

We drove up Cameron Sabalo, which is the main shopping street, and also looked at some condos that had been built since the last time we were there. We wound up back the Port Terminal, and I noticed a stand selling fish tacos. Needless to say, we ordered 3 each, and enjoyed them thoroughly.

#### PUERTO VALLARTA

When we docked in Puerto Vallarta, we saw that the Grand Princess was docked there. While sitting on our balcony, we saw the Carnival Magic pull into port. Because it had to back up to dock, it effectively closed the outlet to the ocean for quite a while. We did a little calculation, and figured that there would be about 10,000 cruise passengers wandering around Puerto Vallarta, so, other than a brief look at some of the vendors set up near the ship, we stayed on board.

We watched with interest as passengers from the Carnival ship were loaded onto the pirate ship. They could only take about a dozen or so at a time, so it took over an hour to get everyone loaded (in more ways than one).

Just before going to dinner and watching a Folkloric show, I got a great picture of the pirate ship and the setting sun.



The Folkloric show was very enjoyable, albeit a little long on Mariachi music. It started with a man dressed as an Aztec warrior, and the segued into the Mariachis. One of the featured dances was one where the couple tied a ribbon into a bow with their feet.



The next performer was a man with a lariat. He started in small circles, and gradually opened the loop up far enough for him to jump through it. It was really amazing to watch. The final act was 3 couples in a dance.



Part of the entertainment for us, prior to the show, was 2 passengers sitting down below us in the showroom. They were both wearing baseball caps and hoodies. Kathy and I kidded about going down to them and saying, “Yo, bro there ain’t no convenience stores here to stick up”. As much fun as it was to think about it, disgression is the better part of valor.

#### MANZANILLO

Unfortunately, there was very little of interest that the port had to offer. When I got off the ship, I saw that we were docked next to the Grand Princess. I had not noticed from the ship, as our cabin looked out toward the ocean. Since the pier was about 50 feet wide, the two ships were very close. I can imagine a person on the starboard side of our ship, or on the Grand Princess, expecting to have an ocean view or city view, only to find they are looking at another balcony 50 feet away! This affected about 2,000 passengers between the two ships!

I got off the ship, and wandered around the shore, but there was nothing of interest, other than a huge sculpture of a sailfish by the Mexican artist known as Sebastian.



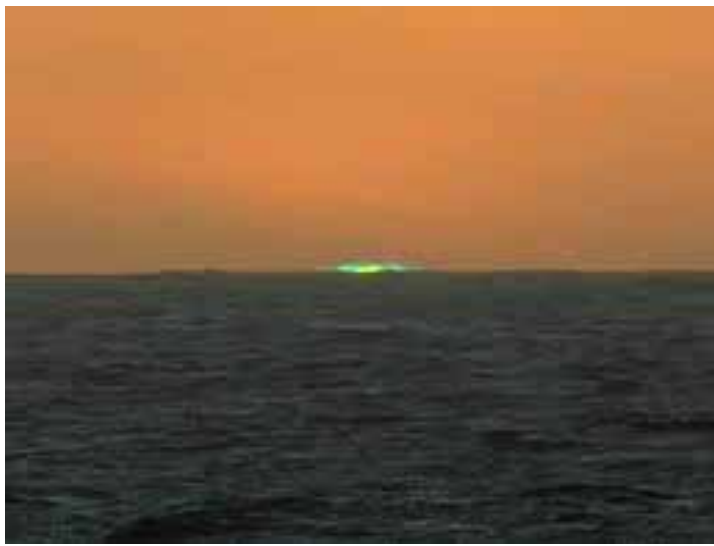
#### HOMeward BOUND

This was our last port before heading back to Los Angeles. We followed our progress on the ship’s TV map channel. We enjoy sea days, as we can kick back on our balcony. We both have readers, and I downloaded a lot of music to Kathy’s reader. We have a pair of mini speakers so we can listen to music and not disturb anyone else.

Every evening on our northbound cruise, we would look at the setting sun, and wait for the “Green Flash”. From Wikipedia, “**Green flashes** and **green rays** are optical phenomena that sometimes occur right before sunset or right after sunrise. When the conditions are right, a green spot is visible above the upper rim of the disk of the sun. The green appearance usually lasts for no more than a second or two.”

Just north of Cabo San Luis, we were rewarded with a green flash, albeit a small one. We have been very fortunate to see this rare phenomenon twice before. The first time we saw one was in Ventura California, when we were just dating, and again in New Zealand, after we had been married 3 years.

It’s said that once you have seen a green flash, you will never go wrong in matters of the heart. In our case this seems to be true.



## DISEMBARKATION

We were off the ship a little after 9 AM, and even with finding our luggage, going through Customs, and waiting for our driver, we were home at 11:30 AM.

We love no flying trips, and we had a wonderful time.

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