

Day 01 - The Great Scandinavian Adventure

Hello and welcome fellow traveler.

So nice to have you on our adventure.

Our day began up and ready at 5 am.

I loaded the car, our nearly brand new Toyota Cross, which two days before captured a flying rubber mallet which bounced off the Thruway and drilled through my front bumper. But despite that little mishap, Little Blue Two (as we call her) was nearly ready to go, despite he now slightly damaged front end.

After loading my way too large suitcase into the hatch and adding my generously packed briefcase, I dove off to get gas and my proverbial iced teas. I went to the Mobil station on Route 50 across from the Glenville Target, as it is a two fer with both a gas station and a Dunkin Donuts. After filling up with both gas and Iced Teas, guess who I met in the station parking lot with a happy smile on his face. None other than Robert W. Geddis, the Geddi Master, and one third of our travelling party. He told me he had just eaten breakfast.

I invited our version of the incredible Yoda, master of all Geddi skills, to join us at my home, where he would leave his car for the duration of our adventure.

I next scooted over to McDonalds, bought some breakfast sandwiches for this morning's journey, and drove the mile back to my house to reconnoiter with the Geddi Master.

Once Home, I added Bob's equally large suitcase, a large black bag with an enormous white G stenciled on each side with white paint. He also had the largest black nap sack I've ever seen to accompany him as a carry on.

After loading all of the Geddi Master's luggage, we ventured back inside my house, said a proper goodbye to Marilyn and Sunny the Wonderdog, and now at about 730 am, mounted up and began our journey.

Ten minutes later we arrived at my Sister Susan's beautiful home at Fox Hollow Drive in Niskayuna. There, ready and awaiting us was my Dad and Mom, bags packed and ready to roll.

My simply amazing father is nearly 92 years old, but looks and behaves like he is 25. With more delightful energy than 6 normal humans, he is always ready and excited for an adventure. A person with a more friendly or kind disposition you would never find. Brilliant, sharp and thoughtful, he is more fun, and more valuable, to be around than anyone you can think of. Forbidden, for what he deemed as security reasons, to disclose his forty year career as Senator, for the purposes of this trip, we will simply refer to him by the moniker he deserves the most, AmazingHugh.

At Susan's, who was in Maine, we loaded Dad's luggage. Unlike Bob and I, he packed light, and although his suitcase was the exact same size as mine, it was half the weight. He of course also brought his famous samsonite light grey, slimline briefcase, that he brings everywhere, as a carry on. That brief case, which is older than I am, has travelled the world, and I am convinced, also contains the codes to launch nuclear missiles in a pinch. I also contained his passport and several other "essential" items. (The launch codes and button must be in a secret panel under the main opening.

After loading all luggage, including the surprisingly light superspy brief case, we were ready to roll. Dad and Bob arm wrestled for the back seat, and Dad won. Geddis would have the unhappy role as my front seat copilot.

Before we left, my wonderful Mom, Sharon took a few pictures of the three jolly boys to start the adventure. This is a habit we have done since we started taking these trips. You can find these photos, together with all other pictures from day one, here: <http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day01/>

The trip to Newark was perfectly uneventful. In almost no time at all (three hours) we had arrived.

We made the smart move to prepay for our parking at the long term lot 6, and were able to pull right in.

After quickly finding a parking spot, we ventured over to Shuttle Bus Stop 2, to wait the bus.

AmazingHugh, Geddi Master and myself all carried our own luggage and were soon aboard the Shuttle Bus with several other passengers, heading to Terminal B.

Quite early, as our flight would not allow check in on level one until 3 pm, meaning that we had 3 and a half hours to kill, we all ventured, luggage in hand, up to the level four food court, and found a three seat table in between the pizza place and Smash Burger.

All of us had lunch and then about 6 bags of pistachios. Each of us played on our ipads and cell phones, with Amazing Hugh watching the Rays game, Geddi Master reading from his cell one, while I watched the Yankee Game. Even doing nothing but waiting, these guys are wonderful company, and the three hour wait passed very quickly.

We all travelled back down to level one to check in.

A delightful British Airways Assistant named Sheldon showed us where we were to cue up. After giving Sheldon a small tip, we prepared to Check in with Gus the Desk Agent. After Checking in Bob and Dad, Gus was sad to inform me that my suitcase was severely over the weight limit. The solution was to unpack my bag in line, in front of everyone, and off load several items into my Dad's suitcase. Good thing Dad packs so light or I would have been completely out of luck before we even started.

After ignoring several glares from the crowded passengers ready to check in behind us, Gus was able to accept all our bags, and we headed back upstairs, with our carry on luggage to Gate 53. We found three seats outside the gate, and proceeded to wait the next 2 and ½ hours before boarding the beautiful British Airways Jumbo Jet that would take us to London.

Prior to boarding I spoke to the ticket agent about if there was any possibility that the three of us could pre-board with the infants and wheel chaired passengers, as my Dad was 92 years of age. The wonderfully sweet ticket agent, Ellen (great name) said in a wonderful British accent, "yes, but of course, simply come on up with the disabled and babies, and we will get you all on board".

When the time came, we fell in line behind a lady in a wheel chair (who had been walking around the airport the whole time we had been waiting) and a very large Hassidic family with 14 children and a pregnant mom. My first thought was I sure hope that Dad has a good job, because I was barely able to make things go with only two kids. He did seem to have a smile on his face the whole time. No so much sad to say for the pregnant mom.

By being able to preboard we were able to load all our carry on luggage into the overhead bins. I took the window seat, with an enormous black box where my feet should go, while Dad took the aisle seat. Poor Geddi Master got the middle seat, like the peanut butter in the sandwich. As is their nature no one complained a wink, no sadly slept much, on the nearly seven hour flight.

After a beautiful landing and a smooth but rather crowded flight we arrived in London. We deplaned right onto the tarmac and boarded a shuttle bus to Heathrow Airport's arrival terminal. Heathrow must be one big airport, because that shuttle ride was mile and about ten minutes long.

Once there, we went through passport control, then picked up our luggage, which made it through without event, and then onto customs. We walked through customs and into the terminal without seeing a human being, except for a single guard at the exit.

Once in the terminal, we found three seats with our luggage, and I went off, after we all took a bathroom visit, to find Siobhan the Celebrity Cruise Agent, for directions to the shuttle. It was now about 630 am London time.

She kindly directed us to take three different seats on the right side of the terminal, and said she would return back to us shortly, when more passengers arrived. Two hours later Siobhan returned with an almost filled shuttle bus.

AmazingHugh, Geddi Master and I then loaded our luggage underneath the bus, with the kind and able assistance of Guy the Coach Driver, and hopped aboard to grab some seats. Dad and I sat together, with Geddis behind us with his enormous carry on backpack. It took its own seat. Dad and I had our carry ons on our laps. Despite being very tired, Dad chose not to launch any missiles, as his briefcase remained closed.

There was rather heavy traffic between Heathrow and our destination of the Port of Southampton.

Southampton is a very interesting town, located at the top of an inlet, in the South of England. 30 miles down the inlet is the town of Plymouth, famous as the site for the launching of England's naval vessels that defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, and then again serving as a major staging area for the Allied Normandy Invasion in 1944. Southampton, where our ship lied in berth, was the site where the famous Mayflower was reprovisioned, before making its historic voyage from Plymouth, England to Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620.

It was raining in Southampton when we departed the Shuttle bus at around 11 am for the Celebrity Terminal. Behind the Terminal stood an enormous 15 deck ship, christened in 2011 as the Silhouette.

Constructed by German based ship builder Meyer Werft, the Silhouette is a floating city. At 122,210 gross tons, it is 1047 feet long and 121 feet wide. It travels at a speed of 24 knots (28 miles per hour) and is designed for 2886 passengers and 1500 crew.

It contains 10 restaurants, 14 bars, 2 pools, a large gym, a large main theater, 6 performance spaces, a library, an outdoor movie theater, 3 help your self coffee and tea stations, 4 outdoor external decks, a casino, and a dozen shops and stores.

Our promised stateroom is 8243, one of several hundred aboard.

After passing through security and boarding check in, the three joy boys, with carry on baggage in hand, were directed to the main waiting room, for cue up to board. Our suitcases would be transferred from the bus to our stateroom automatically after a couple hours after boarding.

We sat in the main waiting room until around noon time, when we were at last directed that our seated row could board.

AmazingHugh, Geddi Master and myself then proceeded up the multiple zig zagging gangways to board the ship.

Once aboard we were ushered to an art gallery on deck five where we were given a security briefing, not unlike the ones received in pre flight mode on an airplane. We were told how to deploy our life jack stored under our beds and where to muster to board the over 123 life boats (each of which hold 23 people) in case of emergency. We are all hoping that this will be a Titanic Free cruise.

We then proceeded to our lovely state room, where we each have our own bed (hooray). Clean, comfortable and efficient, it is submarine like living where no space is wasted. Geddis and I immediately set up and deployed our electronics, power converters, chargers, computers, ipads, cell phones and rechargeable watches. Dad kept his ipad in his briefcase. I charge it if it needs it.

After lunch, at the lovely top deck restaurant, with every food choice imaginable (buffet) our luggage arrived, and we proceeded with the excruciating process of unpacking. With limited space, we each selected a bed, a dresser drawer and 1/3 of the closet and hangers. As anyone of us could have stretched out to use it all, it was the art of compromise and negotiation on steroids.

After unpacking we went to explore the ship. It is huge, with dozens of stairs, elevators and pathways, on 14 decks.

Learning a bit, with little sleep, we all started to crash, and returned back to the stateroom to take a bit of a nap.

Our stateroom has a lovely balcony overlooking the ocean. Although still in port when we placed our heads down, we left the patio door open to enjoy the nice ocean breeze.

Soon the three jolly boys were snoring with a much needed nap. We were tired.

We got up a couple hours later, at 430, toured the theater, and then grabbed our sport coats and went to dinner at one of the ship's nicer restaurants. AmazingHugh got the pock chop and onion soup. Geddi Master got a steak and Mushroom soup. I ordered spaghetti Bolognese.

We each had a nice meal, apple pie for dessert, and coffee (tea for me).

After dinner we proceeded to the top floor of the theater.

There we saw a variety show with a lovely English singer comedian, and then a very good piano man.

Right after the show began Geddi Master began to crach, and took his leave to go back to the stateroom to go to bed.

About a half hour later, AmazingHugh had had enough and asked if we could quit.

I said sure, and we quietly made our exit, where we returned back to homebase 8243, and Dad and Geddis were soon snoring.

For myself, I went out and explored a bit more, taking a walk on the outside decks, in the still light but cloudy twilight, listening to a live trivia show in one of the topside bars, listening to music in a couple of small theaters, buying a hairbrush that I forgot in one of the shops, and then going back to our stateroom to sleep at about 930.

We slept through the night very comfortably to the rock and roll of the ship, ready to awaken tomorrow.

Really looking forward to what an adventure on sea can bring tomorrow.