

Days 11 and 12 - Our Adventure Concludes

My Dear Fellow Travelers

This has been an adventure for the ages.

Scandinavia has been nothing short of spectacular. Best of all has been the company, and the wonderful memories we built together.

After Skagen, our ship, the magnificent Celebrity Silhouette, sailed west to England.

On the morning of August 4, 2023, we arrived early in the port of Southampton, England, from which we started.

We were up especially early that day. I arose at 3:30 am, soon followed thereafter by AmazingHugh and GeddiMaster.

We had packed and submitted our suitcases to the ship's travel services the night before, so all we had now was our carryon bags. Stateroom policed for last minute items, we vacated our home for the last two weeks, and traveled for the last time up to deck 14 for breakfast.

It was still dark out at 5:45am, but I nonetheless took a few last pictures. You can find them, together with the rest of the day's pictures, here:

<http://www.bobfarley.us/0800travels/833scandinavia/Day11/>

After breakfast, we went down to the ship's theater on the 4th deck, to await our departure call.

At 6:45 am, it arrived, and we took to the gang plank and left the ship for the large terminal.

There inside, we collected our luggage, boarded our shuttle bus bound for Heathrow Airport, and began our journey home.

The trip from Southampton to the huge Heathrow Airport takes about an hour and a half.

Unlike the excited energy that existed on the bus coming to Southampton, the trip back to the airport was quiet and somber.

Everyone was tired and thinking of their long trip home.

As the bus dropped us off, we collected our luggage from the underbelly of the bus and placed it in an enormous pile upon a free trolley cart.

What a nice surprise to have what costs at least \$30 in America, be offered for free here.

As others started to collect their luggage, an older gentleman a few feet away from me, backed over another trolley, fell backwards, and crashed onto the ground, on his back, slamming his head really hard against the curb, and the bus, as his trolley came tumbling down atop of him.

His wife screamed, and I did my best to rush to his aid, scooping him up in my arms and lifting him to his feet.

I was very worried for this gentleman, as he really banged his head, hard.

It may not have been the best idea to move him, but he clearly could not be left on the curb laying underneath the bus.

Somewhat to his discredit, the bus driver, who was unloading the luggage, basically just stood there doing nothing, watching us.

I delivered the man to the care and custody of his wife, somewhat carrying him over to her, having to hold him up and support him for a bit, until his senses seemed to somewhat clear.

I felt so bad for him. What a stinky way to end your vacation. Worse yet, as we were on a curbside departure spot, there was no place for this gentleman to even sit down or rest.

His wife took him gently into the terminal, having to cross two streets.

A short while after, after we were able to follow them inside, after recollecting our own bags and trolley, I tried to ask her if he was okay. She looked at me, and smiled, and said "I think so".

After that, Bob, Dad and I scoped out three empty seats inside the Terminal.

It was about 9:30am, and we couldn't check in until 145pm. Another long day, of waiting and sitting around at the airport.

We basically just took turns visiting the men's room, the two convenient stores (to buy cookies, crackers and waters) and checking the large flight status signs. It was a bit of a forced march.

At one point, Dad asked to borrow my cell and called my sister Susan. I tried to gently remind him that it was only 630am back home at the time. Ever the sweet daughter, she answered the phone nonetheless and talked to AmazingHugh.

After an inordinate wait, at 1:45 pm, we were allowed to check in.

The bag check for our four pieces of checked luggage was all automated, which took a bit of practice to get the hang of. I did my Dad and my luggage, and Bob did his own. Soon they were all checked in, and with receipts in hand, saying our bags were on their way to Newark, we began to make our way through security.

Heathrow airport that day was more crowded than any airport I've ever been at in my lifetime.

One could literally not fall down because of the volume of the people.

Security took us a while to navigate, like it always will, with all its special rules about how liquids, coats, shoes, and electronics need to be inspected.

After about a half hour, we eventually made it through.

Dad spotted three empty seats in the sea of people that were in the departure terminal, and like a heat seeking missile, immediately made his way to them, and sat in the center one.

He became rather unhappy when I sadly told him there was a reason those seats were empty, and that he should immediately vacate them.

He had yet to put his mask on, because it can't be worn through security.

I told him that such were the three most dangerous seats in the airport.

With the mass of people, it was rather noisy, and so he kept saying "what"?

I repeated myself, saying "please move Dad, these seats are not right for us".

Finally, he turned around, and saw the 70 uniformed people of the Chinese National Men's Soccer Team, many of which were sneezing, coughing, and hacking, and all without masks.

My Dad, never slow on the uptake, looked back at me, putting his mask on, and said "I understand, as he stood up and followed Geddis and myself further into the end of the terminal.

After checking a map, we found a restaurant, named Weatherspoons. We then proceeded there and found a table with three chairs, almost as if it had been reserved for us.

Ordering two burgers, an absolute pile of steak fries, two cokes, and a tea for Dad, we soon were enjoying a nice, really relaxing, meal.

As my tummy was still a bit off from the great metformin adventure, I only ate a couple of bites, but Dad and Bob ate most of Fry Mountain, and we all got drink refills.

Our flight was scheduled to depart at 4:45 pm, so about an hour before, we headed up for the gate.

From the restaurant, we had to take a train then two large escalators to our assigned gate, at a different terminal, but we were soon there.

At the check in spot, I once again spoke with a very nice lady from British Airlines, who allowed Bob and I to accompany 92 year old Dad to the front of the boarding line. The fact that he walks as well as I do didn't stop our progress, and we were literally the first boarders on the plane.

I placed Bob's immense carryon bag in the overhead bin together with Dad's 1963 samsonite briefcase with the nuclear launch codes. Sorry, no retaliatory missile response while we were on the airplane. My carryon would go under my legs along my seat front.

We resumed our seat assignments with me at the inside window, Bob in the middle and Dad in the aisle. Like sausage in a tube, poor Bob was stuck in the middle again. I tried to bleed into the window, and Dad into the aisle, to give our buddy as much room as possible.

It was a really long flight coming home. Much longer than going over actually. The flight over was just over 6 hours, while coming home was more than 7 and three quarters. Darn headwinds.

During the flight, the airline offered us one of the worst dinners I had ever tasted, but in fairness, with my tummy I didn't give it much of a real chance. Bob and Dad did say, however, that their chicken also died without any merit whatsoever.

Several hours later, I heard with great hope that the flight attendant was offering us pie. That could be okay I thought. Until I heard that it was either chicken and leak pie or vegetarian pie. Sad to say that neither sounded very appealing, so I passed.

With the noise and the flight attendant's accent, GeddiMaster thought they were offering us Cherry Pie. He asked for it several times. But eventually, the flight attendant shouted kindly, "I'm sorry Sir, we have no Cherry Pie, its Veg I Tarian Pie". Bob and I looked at each other with sad, upside down smiles.

At about 730pm, New York time, we landed. At this point, we had all been up about 22 straight hours, and were all kind of fatigued.

We deplaned and headed down to collect our luggage, then to passport control/customs.

From there, about 45 minutes later, we headed to the terminal exit and ground transportation to meet the shuttle bus.

The three jolly boys, weary but still standing, then met the friendly Charlie the Skycab, who kindly helped us collect our bags and board the Bus for Parking lot C.

After quite a wait, and quite a walk, we were all aboard, and headed out to the long term parking. I would say it was in New Jersey, as it was really far away, but the whole airport facility is, so it kind of loses its meaning.

About 20 minutes later we hit the lot, and I tried to get off the bus at the first stop. We are stopped by a nice Asian couple and the bus driver who each say such is not our stop.

So, we continued on, all around to the last stop through the enormous lot. It turns out I was correct, and the Bus driver gave us a bit of a hard time dropping us off anywhere near our car.

It took us a while to walk to our car, and at one point, I had to drop off Bob and Dad with our bags, in the middle of this huge lot, to go get our car, and drive it back to them and pick them and our luggage up.

The lot was prepaid, and as it was now about 10pm, I was glad. But when we pulled up to the exit, the front gate refused to lift, despite my presenting the QR code on my phone.

I eventually pressed the automated talk button and was told that our time expired at 10am (which I still don't think it did). I nonetheless swiped my credit card, bought an extra day, and when the bar lifted blew out of that tomato stand.

Broomhilda (better known as our GPS powered by Google Maps) led us on our way, and up the Garden State Parkway.

After about an hour, just before the Thruway, we were all able to pile out at a rest stop, use the restroom, and buy some Cokes at the only open restaurant, a Burgerking. I would have preferred an unsweetened Iced Tea, but no such elixir was available, so I coked for caffeine. I just can't drink coffee.

Three more hours later, at about 12:30am, 27 hours after beginning, I reached my sister Susan's house in Niskayuna, where my Dad and Mom summer, and dropped him off via the garage.

What a simply remarkable job he did. AmazingHugh was the star of the trip. At 92, one would think he was 50, and right to our finish, he was simply the best. He made the trip for both Bob and I, and we were blessed to have his incredible company.

15 minutes after that, we made my house in Glenville, where Bob had parked his car. This poor guy had another half hour yet to drive himself back to his house in Hagaman.

Ever cheerful and positive, Bob packed up his Toyota, waived a friendly goodbye, and began his trek home.

I carried in my luggage to my kitchen, and made my way upstairs to our bedroom.

Marilyn was sleeping soundly, so I tried to be quiet.

Sunny the wonderdog, greeted me with tail wagging and her trademark doggie smile.

I washed my hands and face, brushed my teeth, and changed my clothes for bed.

As I lay down beneath the cool breeze of the ceiling fan, I thought of the absolutely wonderful time I had, with my Dad, Bob and all of you.

Thank you so very much for keeping us company.

It was the trip of a lifetime, and it was because all of you were there with us.

Please know how grateful I am.

Stay well.

My Warmest Personal Regards,

Bob

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