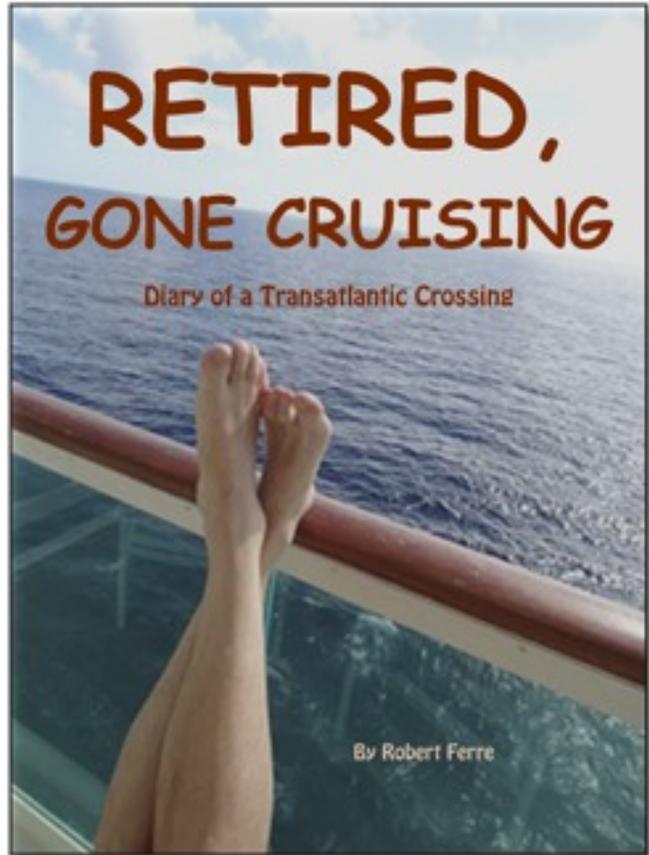


PART II: LEAVING PORT

Upon entering the ship, the new arrivees were crowding around the elevators, so we climbed the stairs to Deck 4. This would be our goal, to take the elevators as little as possible, walking up and down the stairs instead.

From Deck 1 to Deck 8 are 170 stairs, with 56 more to get to Deck 11. The stairwells all contain artwork -- something many cruise lines pride themselves in, spending millions of dollars for original pieces. One whole stairwell had a theme of cars, including the interesting painting below, of a gathering of Jaguars. I'm sorry to report that I lost the name of the artist.



We stepped up to the glass doors on Deck 4, which parted, giving us access to the port side promenade deck. From our hillside hotel it had looked as if there were three Royal Caribbean ships in port. I had

wondered if that could be true. Across from us was a row of cruise ships, lined up bow to stern, the first of which was *Liberty of the Seas*. *Liberty* is part of the Freedom Class of ships, which is newer (2007 vs. 2003) and larger (by 18,000 tons) than *Mariner*, carrying 3,600 passengers to our 3,000.





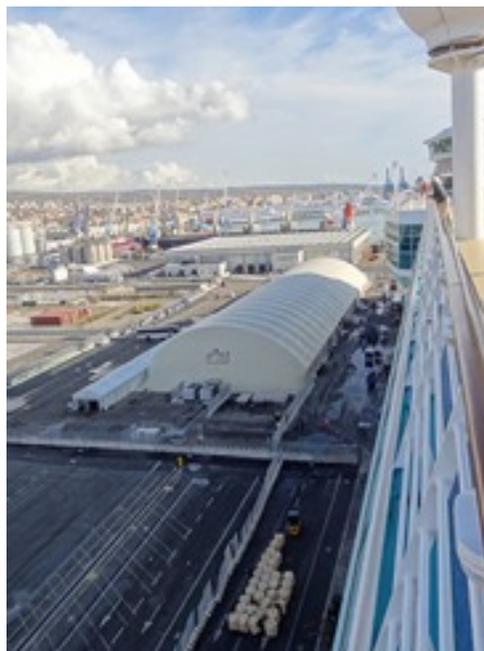
But the biggest surprise was the ship behind *Liberty*. We walked to the stern to get a better look. To our amazement, it was *Voyager of the Seas*. Built in 1999, it was the first of the five Voyager Class ships. More than that, it was on *Voyager* that Linda and I had taken our first cruise, had fallen in love, and had become a couple. We took *Voyager* from Barcelona, Spain, to Galveston, Texas, leaving on November 29, 2009. There she was! What memories came flooding back from that wonderful time in our lives.

Our current ship, *Mariner of the Seas*, was the fifth and last ship of the Voyager Class. Royal Caribbean has consistently built ships which, when launched, were the largest cruise ships on the seas. After the Voyager Class came the Freedom Class, followed by the Oasis Class -- behemoths that are 40% bigger than *Mariner*, carrying more than 5,000 passengers. I look forward to someday cruising on *Oasis of the Seas* or its sister ship, *Allure of the Seas*.

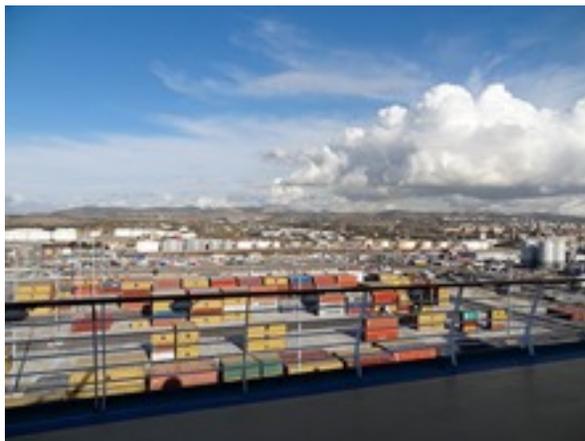
Seeing *Voyager* here was an auspicious beginning to our cruise. We went back inside, climbed to Deck 11, and went outside to look around.



Compared to a building, this ship is almost 20 stories tall. It offered quite a vantage point over Civitavecchia. We could see the terminal building far below, and the continuing process of loading goods onto the ship.



During the time we spent on deck, the rain clouds scuttled away, replaced by clear blue sky. Some ports have been especially built for cruise ships, allowing them to be within easy reach of the town. Funchal, Madeira, and Nassau, Bahamas, are two examples. Civitavecchia is not. A large working port separates the cruise ships from the town, making it necessary to take shuttles or taxis to reach the walkable areas.



We decided to go up to the Windjammer Cafe for some lunch. Food, of course, is one of the big attractions of cruise ships. The Windjammer has seven or eight buffet lines, easily accommodating as many people as wish to eat, even on embarkation day, when the ship's other restaurants are closed.



How much weight people gain on cruises is legendary. On *Voyager*, I gained half a pound a day, seven total for the 14 day cruise. This is a 17-day cruise, but I am determined to use moderation. My goal is to gain no more than two pounds. I currently weigh about 182 pounds -- we'll see where I end up. While the food is plentiful, the tables are less so. There are seats for over a thousand people, or about one-third of the passengers at any given time. We saw someone leave and we grabbed their table. The paella looked good (right), but I just had some salad and hummus, plus a little dessert (right, above). We then moseyed back out on the deck, where I took more photos.





The Viking Crown Lounge comprises the bars and card rooms that occupy Deck 14, having the very identifiable disk shape which I think resembles the *Starship Voyager* in the Startrek series (above). The Viking name comes from the fact that Royal Caribbean was founded 45 years ago by the merging of three Norwegian companies. Their logo is the crown and anchor, seen in the photo above, left. Deck 15 holds a small ecumenical chapel, more suitable for weddings than services.



After the lifeboat drill (reporting to our “muster stations” on Deck 4), we went up to our stateroom balcony to watch the *Mariner’s* departure. Behind the two Royal Caribbean ships we could see the Norwegian *Jade*, then a Costa ship, followed by two I couldn’t identify, one with a blue funnel and one with a blue whale tail, which typifies Carnival ships, but I thought theirs were red, white, and blue. Maybe it was a former Carnival ship, repainted. Beyond these ships, in the far left of the photo above, to the left of the cranes, were two more local cruise ships and a ferry -- quite the line up! The local pilot came aboard to direct the departure, after which he returned to shore and we were on our way.

This ends Part II.
There are eight parts.

