

Lankton Family Vacation Western Caribbean Cruise

December 27, 2002--January 3, 2003

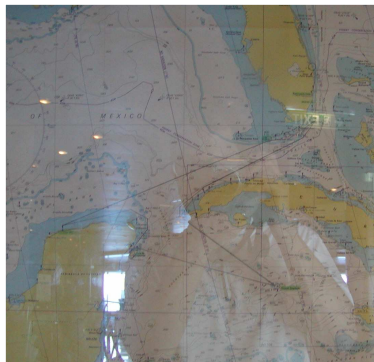


The Mercury Our Home Away From Home

Day 1: At Sea

Day 2: Grand Cayman

Day 3: Cozumel



Day 4: Progresso

Day 5: At Sea

Day 6: Key West

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Sailing, Sailing...

Sarah, Anne, & Julie waiting with just some of our luggage. (Yes, each of us had packed plenty of clothes.)



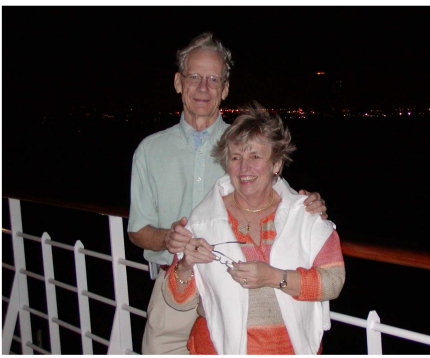
Tom & Julie -- It's hard to believe it's time to get on the ship!



Carol & Jim's embarkation photo.



View of Miami while docked in port.



Jim, Carol, Julie & Tom out on deck the first night aboard.



Our cabins (8074, 8076, & 8078) were on the starboard side of the 8th floor



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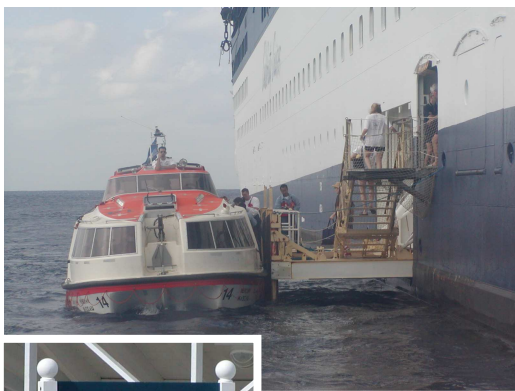
Grand Cayman

On the way to the Cayman Islands we passed Cuba



The sea was pretty rough when we woke up -- in fact, the ship was 'tossing' enough that Tom, Julie & Anne had problems staying on the treadmill. We heard we might not be able to go to shore, but by the time we got closer to the Cayman Islands, the wind was blocked & the water was a little calmer.

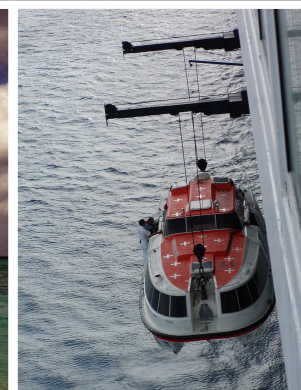
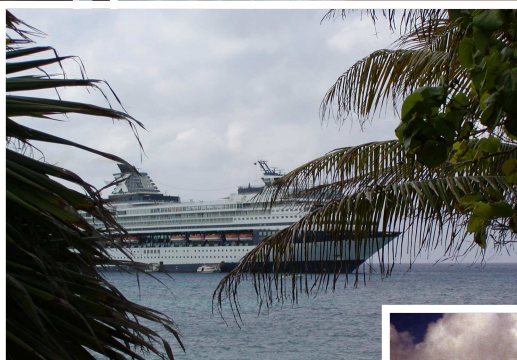
Steve, Lee Ann, Carol, Sarah, Julie, Jim & Tom ready for a day a little shopping then a few hours at the beach.



We did not dock at Grand Cayman, we used the tenders. (Four of the larger lifeboats provided our transportation.)



We browsed through some of the stores, then hired a taxi to take us to 7-mile beach where we swam, walked, jet-skied, and relaxed.. It is a beautiful beach with clear turquoise water. It was sunny most of the day, but a little overcast part of the time -- kept if from getting too hot :)

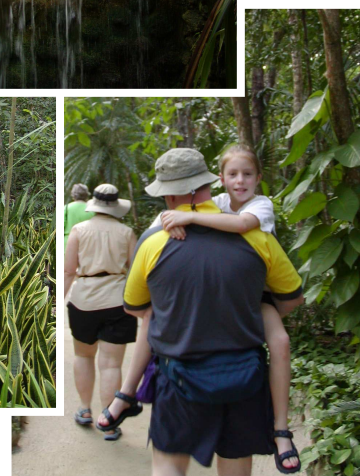
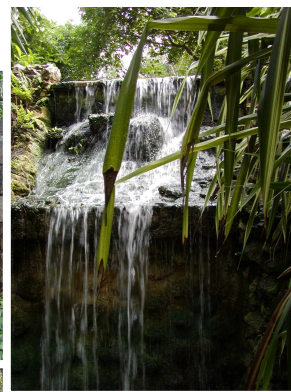


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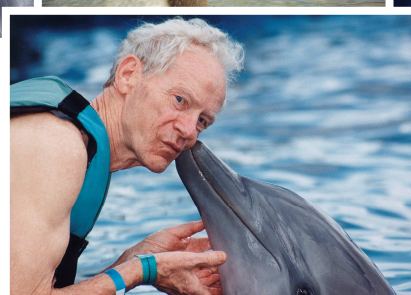
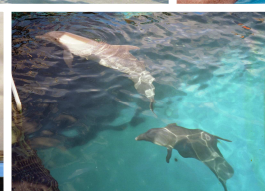
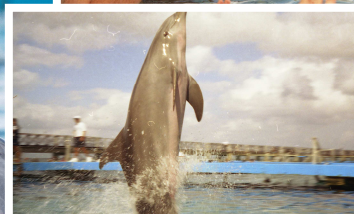
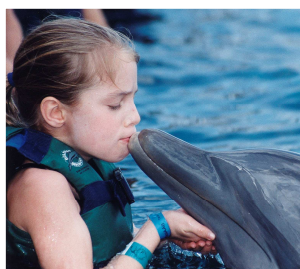
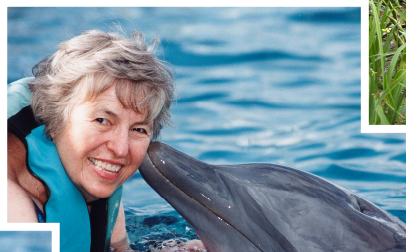
Cozumel



The dolphin encounter was at Chankanaab, a Mexican National Park. Part of the park had a walk through a jungle where you could see iguanas and a variety of plants. Another part had a reproduction Mayan ruin and village. The third section was an area set aside to meet the dolphins. You walked down slippery steps and stood in waist deep water to pet the dolphins. (Be sure to avoid the fire coral.)



The dolphin we met was Amaya. Her baby was also in the enclosure along with Helen (an older dolphin), who helped with the baby.



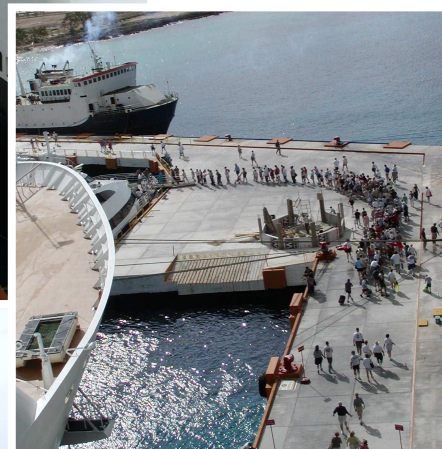
It was an interesting experience to kiss & be kissed by a dolphin. Also to have her swim by at 25 MPH just a few feet away!

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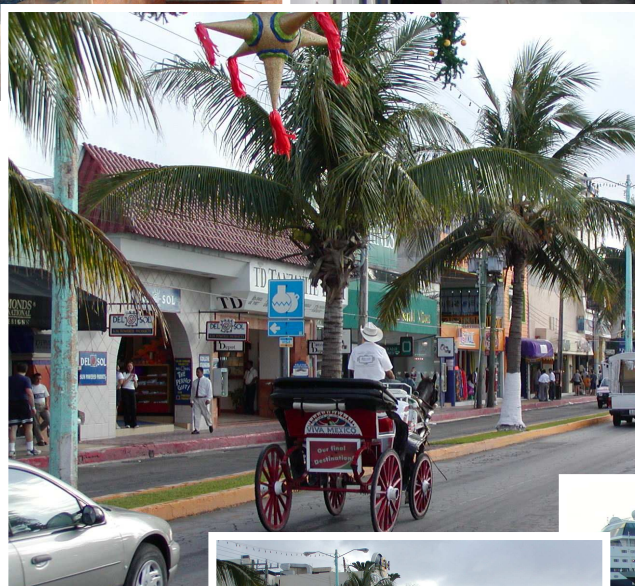
Cozumel



The people poured off the ship and looked like ants lined up waiting to go on a shore excursion.



Cozumel can become very busy. They get 41 cruise ships a week. There were 4 in port the day we were there. Shopping is the main activity. The ship has a shopping director who holds a seminar on shopping at the various port cities. She handed out maps and coupons to get "free" things in various stores.



They take security very seriously in Mexico.

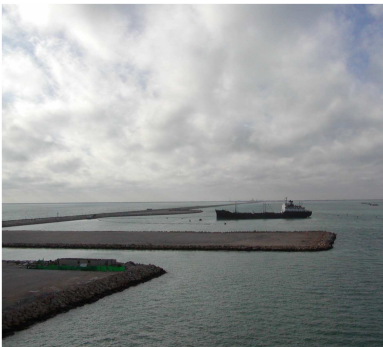


Anne had to try out the water (wading not drinking).

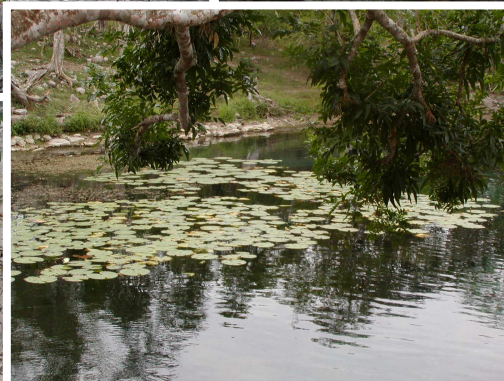
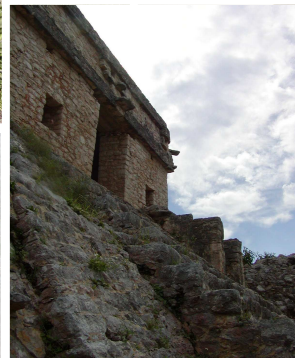
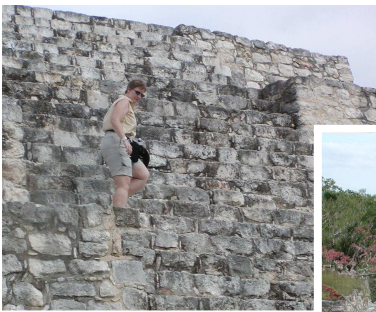


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Progreso



The pier in Progreso is 4 miles long. While there, we went on the tour to the place that no one could pronounce – the Dzibilchaltun ruin. Our guide, William, explained how the Mayan calendar worked. He pointed out that it is only off 77 seconds over 500 years. Much more accurate than our calendar. Much of the population still lives in one room houses like the one pictured here. Religion is very important and they have shrines in their homes. On March 21 each year, over 10,000 people gather at Dzibilchaltun to watch the sun align with the Mayan temple. Making sisal products used to be the main source of income for the area.



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Key West Hemmingway House



Hemmingway bought a house next to the light house so he could find his way home after “self-medicating” at Sloppy Joes. He had four wives. One paid \$20,000 to have a pool put in. He only paid \$8,000 for the house. There are currently 61 cats on the grounds –31 with 6 toe feet and 3 with 7 toe feet. Some of the cats are name for famous people. The bury the cats in the patio area with their own ‘headstones’.



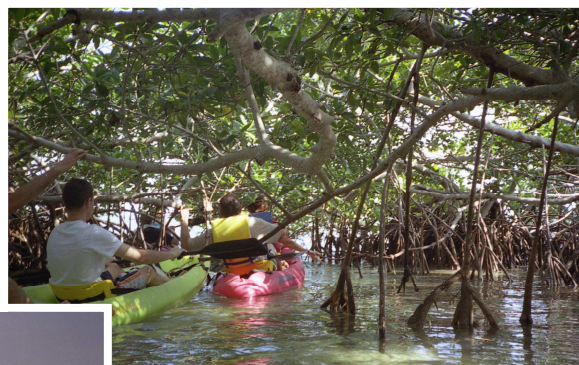
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Key West



The harbor was quite busy with birds and a wide variety of kayak, dive, and sightseeing tours starting.

We saw this guy (Tom Snyder) perform in Wisconsin. He has ridden his bike 119,000 miles putting on comedy acts to survive.



We took a kayaking shore excursion. A boat took us to the kayaks – it lost a propeller on the way, so it took a little longer than planned to get there.



We kayaked in channels through this mangrove 'island'. The mangroves are a really fun place to kayak – sometimes you felt a little 'tangled up'.

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Our Ship, the Mercury



We were at table 551 in the Manhattan Dining Room, the corner table.



We watched *Life or Something Like it* and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* at this cinema.



Jim and Tom playing a little shuffleboard under the lifeboats on deck 6.



Forward Stairtower A	
8	PANORAMA DECK
Sunrise Deck 14	Golf Simulator
Sky Deck 12	Navigator Club Cyber Space Sky Bar Sky Suites & Cabins 1200-1243 Jogging Track Sports Deck
Resort Deck 11	Aqua Spa La Playa Pool La Playa Bar & Grill Palm Springs Cafe Palm Springs Pool Palm Springs Bar & Grill
Penthouse Deck 10	Penthouse & Royal Suites Suites & Cabins 1000-1167
Vista Deck 9	Cabins 9000-9255 Ship Mates Fun Factory
Panorama Deck 8	Cabins 8000-8265 Michael's Club
Entertainment Deck 7	Celebrity Theater Rialto Galleries Sony Wonder Fortunes Casino Pavilion Nightclub
Promenade Deck 6	Celebrity Theater Cinema & Conference Center Card Rooms Library Tastings Rendez-Vous Square Manhattan Restaurant
Plaza Deck 5	Cabins 5000-5073 Grand Foyer Reception Excursions Bank Manhattan Foyer Champagne Bar Manhattan Restaurant
Continental Deck 4	Cabins 4000-4177 Medical Center
Deck 3	Tender Embarkation



Sarah, Julie, Jim, Steve, Anne & Carol at one of our favorite lunch spots.

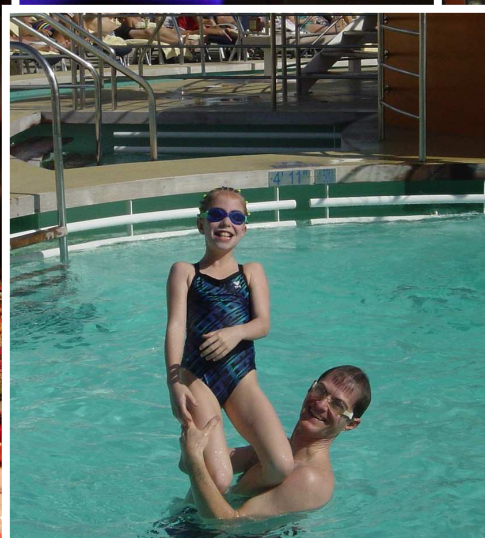
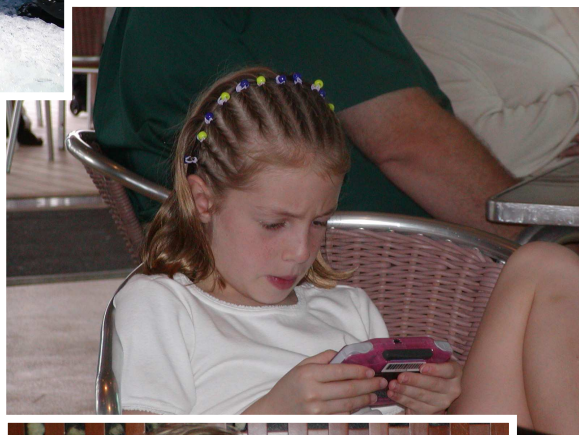


The Celebrity Theatre and some of the lounges..

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Things to do on the ship

There were many activities to choose from while on the ship: ice carving, dress up, Uno, eating, reading by the pool, splashing in the pool, relaxing in seaweed at the spa, running very small laps around the deck, shuffleboard, live entertainment, watching movies and many other things.



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The Grand Buffet

One night the midnight buffet was 'grand'. They let everyone go through to take pictures before the buffet started.

