

maggiecatenjay

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REVIEW: Spirit - Boston to Bermuda - June 5 - 12 (long)

<http://boards.cruisecritic.com/showthread.php?t=1005742>

OVERVIEW: My niece, Maggie Cate and Jay, her honey planned to get married at Jobson's Cove in Bermuda. She disseminated her plan last summer and pretty much invited those she loved her and Jay to time their vacation to coincide with their wedding. No fuss. No stress. No worries. Just good friends, loving family cruising on the Norwegian Spirit to Bermuda. They essentially invited us on their honeymoon. Our group numbered thirty-three. We planned a few optional group dinners, of course the wedding day events and created a communication center on our cabin door – a must for a group. It was free and easy sailing.

BOOKING/PLANNING: If you use a travel agent, a week or two out from your sailing date ask for the PDF NCL Guest Invoice, which you are entitled to. Don't ask me why or I might tell you LOL!. Take my word for it. Also, MAKE SURE that the charges on your credit card are from NCL, NOT, I repeat, NOT from your travel agent. See above for explanation. Also, read, research, read. CruiseCritic was a great place to learn about the ins and outs of cruising. Bermuda4u.com; Bermudatourism.com were two great sites. I also surfed hundreds of others to create our group wedding site www.maggiecatenjay.wetpaint.com which contains oodles of information that will be, I think mostly pertinent until October '09. The more you know the more you will get out of your trip. On my last cruise (my second on NCL) I found out Room Service was 'free' on the very last day (duh!). THIS time I ordered coffee from room service the first morning. WHAT A TREAT! Just a few bucks for a tip and viola I'm sipping away the best coffee on the ship; easy as pie!

EMBARKATION: We arrived at the Black Falcon Pier quite early because Maggie Cate, our bride had arranged for a Liberty Coach (Braintree, MA) 'party bus' to transport many of us and wonder of wonders there were no SNAFU's and nobody was late... Hence we arrived at about ten-ish under the expert care of our driver, Elise. The skies were quite overcast but it was not raining - it was sweatshirt weather. We had an excellent MassPort porter who took our bags right from the bus to be checked and we got in line about twenty people from the main entrance to the terminal and waited; we had a great time in line. We were so centrally located that many of our group spotted us, which was great. As it approached 11:00 a long line formed to check their luggage and people had to shuffle their bags up a foot and wait, another foot and wait hundreds of times. This is Mass Port, not NCL though – a very bad system (I plan to write a letter!). We felt badly for those people but nobody in our group complained about it specifically. Apparently many folks had not yet disembarked and they seemed to trickle out during this time. Black Falcon Cruiseport Terminal itself is an embarrassment for a Bostonian. It needs a face lift, which I understand was postponed because of budget issues – but a coat of paint and better signage would be a HUGE improvement. Around 11:30 folks started to file into the terminal building and we were off. It was very exciting.

There was a very long counter set up a bit like a bank and we waited briefly for our turn. I got to the Latitudes check-in but I'd lost my cabin mate, Magz (mother of the bride) who had my paperwork and I joined her at the long counter. Folks on either side of us checked in seamlessly but our check-in person had a technical issue with here little electronic swiper machine and it

would not read our passports or credit cards. We waited there for what seemed like fifteen minutes or so which was really not a problem. We were whisked away to be processed properly and wonderfully and all was well... great actually. At this point we met Bruce, the Concierge who felt badly about our wait. He was very helpful and kind. We liked him right away and he was a big help to us throughout the cruise. He was (is) great. Tremendous, really. What a gem. It was at this point we told him about Maggie Cate's wedding and his ears perked right up. He is just a wonder. A great NCL emissary.

GATHERING: Our group trickled onto deck 7, outside Henry's Pub - directly across the reception area from the embarkation gangway. Beverages were purchased (it was, of course a bit after noon) and we passed a very pleasant hour or so (Times from here on in are very approximate and subjective i.e. how long thirty seconds seems while having a tooth drilled and how short those same thirty seconds would seem doing your favorite thing... Cruising!) Magz and I went to find our cabin and met our WONDERFUL cabin (10106) steward/stewardess team: Willy (Wilfredo) Jr. and Rachel. They were sweet and welcoming and "Of Course!" we could leave our bags, which we did. We asked them for the refrigerator that we'd requested as well as the egg crate thing for the bed which seemed to arrive before we even finished asking. Then we were off to explore the beautiful ship. (Cabin details later.)

EXPLORING: The reception area is just beautiful and very spacious. The sweeping staircase and glass elevators are beautiful, as are the fountains and Asian decor. However, I was expecting overwhelming Asian - like the Chinese restaurant down the street but it was not overwhelming at all. It is just beautiful and just right. An accent rather than a focus. We met others folks in our group at Raffles for lunch and had a great time. The food was very good. I had hoped to go to Windows only because of what I'd read on Cruise Critic but Raffles was not all that crowded, the food was great... and everybody was happy and busting with anticipation.

MUSTER: The Safety/Life Jacket Muster was scheduled at 3:30. You simply need to grab the life jacket in your closet, look at the map on the back of your door for your 'muster station' which is also printed on your life jacket and go to the designated spot. It was maybe fifteen-ish minutes. Our group was not very lively but I heard later that some groups were and the muster for them was fun (ours wasn't bad - just business-like). It was over in a flash. Don't try to skip it, your cabin number is on your life jacket and your leader checks off who's there and who's not.

POST LIFE JACKET GROUP GATHERING: We headed up to Raffles Terrace Starboard for our planned (the only 'mandatory') Goodie Bag Meeting that all thirty three of our group attended (whew!). It was great to see everybody together. Our bride handed out some great goodie bags. Magz had made and gave out some wedding CD favors and everybody got a great 'neck safe/wallet' (little waterproof plastic flip-top boxes to hold your key card and other trinkets). They worked out great (WindyCityNovelties.com). We also made little business card-size magnets to identify our wedding cabins (for ourselves). As far as I know not ONE magnet went missing.

CABIN: We went back to 10106 to get organized and set up our 'communication central' door. We posted our group's itinerary, a blank notepad, a pencil on a string (I actually brought a BUNCH of pencils figuring they would disappear but it never did LOL!), a "I am DEFINITELY doing such and such" form. We also posted highlighted dailies later in the cruise and other pertinent info. It worked out great. The cabin itself was great. Absolutely immaculate. Crisp yummy sheets and a 'white-white' coverlet on the bed. Mmmmm, the sheets smelled so good, too. The little desk and chair was very handy (with the 'fridge under it). There were a few drawers and shelves and the closet was quite large, I thought. I loved the bathroom set-up. The

sliding shower doors were great and the sliding door to conceal the toilet. was a great touch. The showers were hot and powerful (quite a surprise). The flush of the toilet was a bit loud but, well, that was just AOK with us (better safe than sorry!). We hung our shoe organizer thing (would NEVER cruise without one – Thanks, CruiseCritic). There was also a little couch but that was kind of my 'bureau' so we didn't sit on that much. The flexible suitcases fit perfectly under the bed. The pillows were scrumptious and varied. Some a bit more fluffy, some a bit firmer. PERFECT! I had to leave my own pillow, that I ALWAYS travel with at home because of suitcase space issues and was thrilled at the pillow situation (small pleasures LOL). Our balcony was just wonderful. Two canvas-slung-type chairs and a little table. When we had company (which was quite a bit) there was some lap sitting and straddling of the sliding glass doors with the desk chair. We loved the balcony. As a matter of fact, in retrospect I fear we spent way too much time there. Though we loved it we missed some fun stuff (Sexy Legs Contest on the last sea day for example) topside. Oh well, can't have it all! I didn't watch even a second of TV but did have the music station on quite a bit - a good mix of tunes... There were plenty of mirrors and some lovely artwork. The slider drapes shut all the way and really darkened the cabin. It was a great cabin (I miss it LOL!).

NOISE: I suspect we were pretty loud because our cabin was so busy many times a day and many evenings... We kept asking our neighbors if we were bothersome and they assured us that the noise level was fine. We were right at the mid elevator bank, starboard, two cabins up the hall. A great location. I thought the volume of traffic would going by such a central spot might be noisy but it wasn't...

WHALE SIGHTING: We and oodles of others saw whales frolicking off the starboard side on the first day... around dinner time, I think. BONUS!!!! Capitan Harstrom told us that the Spirit voluntarily slows down in whale feeding/frolicking grounds to give them time to 'get out of the way.' BONUS POINTS for him and the Norwegian! Dave in our group caught a great photo of the whale's fluke (not sure what kind of whale – pretty sure it was not a humpback).

WEATHER: Our weather in Bermuda often looked 'iffy' but there was very little actual rain (a burden for Bermudians as they are VERY short of water). It was rainy leaving and returning to Boston and too chilly for the pool once we were a few hundred miles from Bermuda. But no worries. There was plenty to do and the hot tubs are open even in the chilly weather.

MEET AND GREET: Quite a few folks from on our Roll Call came as well as many staff and crew. A few didn't show up and we missed them but we understand. We played a trivia game and had little prizes and we had name tags which were a good way to start conversations. Our cruising celebrity, Radio was, of course there and we hung out now and then throughout the cruise, here and there. He is a wealth of information and extremely pleasant company. I read Radio's live posts <http://boards.cruisecritic.com/forum...ysprune=&f=107> and it was like cruising all over again. His unbelievable photos are also on the web at <http://public.fotki.com/Radio88/norwegian-spirit--7/>. Another woman from our roll call, Tammy from Maine took a boatload of photos of Maggie Cate's pre-wedding prep and wedding dinner and then of the bride and groom for the rest of the trip. What a sweetie. Her companions, Laurie and Kathy also rocked. I have to say that when I joined CruiseCritic it was simply another internet tool with anonymous fingers tapping on keyboards all over the world. Now it seems it was an opportunity to make new friends. Specifically TOMCT, RADIO, Tammy and Sandy. What a world. Unbelievable. Thank you CruiseCritic. My only regret is that I did not make the time to spend more time with Sandy, my Roll Call buddy from the Midwest.

WEDDING AT JOBSON'S COVE: Unbelievably beautiful. A sunset ceremony. Parrot-fish (18-20ish inches) right along the shoreline... The wedding was truly beautiful. However, if you are planning a Bermuda beach wedding THERE MUST be a better wedding planning outfit than the one our bride used (and regretted – ask and I will get the name to you). They wanted to charge her \$40ish PER person for one glass of champagne and one piece of cake. Nope. They wanted to charge her \$2,000 for a bus to transport thirty people the nine miles to and from the Dockyard. Nope. The planner couldn't figure out how to level the table so the cake wasn't precariously perched. The boom box died in the middle of her being walked down by her wonderful Uncle David and the music didn't function AT ALL for the 'recessional.' The wedding 'planner' hurried the guests off of the beach which stymied me - so the guests, instead of waiting for transport looking at the beautiful Jobson's Cove, looked at the parking lot. These minor things did not detract one iota from the joy of the occasion but the planner charged our bride a FORTUNE and for a fortune everything should be, if not perfect, at least seamless... One of our NCL 'buddies' dealt briefly with them because of possible iffy weather and with disdain and a wrinkled nose said he was 'Not impressed... not impressed at all.' The one thing the planner did right for sure was the officiant. **REV. JUDITH GARDNER.** What a blessing she is... to God, Bermuda and to our bride. Her robe was a celestial white - it looked as though it had been tailored by angels. Her manner was calm. Her outlook sweet, warm, kind, spiritual and wise. The ceremony she provided was, in short the most beautiful wedding ceremony I'd ever seen. I don't know if she can be contacted directly and/or easily (I'm trying to find her contact info to post) but if I was planning a Bermuda wedding I'd hire her, get my own bus from Bee-Line Transport, hire Alex Masters (FaceBook) for a super-duper photographer and read up on other beach weddings and do it. It was so very beautiful. Make sure you have an inclement weather plan, however!. Oh, yea, bring your own CD player with *fresh* batteries. Also, have a place set aside for everybody's bags and such. Many of the pics our group took are great but with beach bags strewn around the periphery. Not terrible but just a little planning would have solved that.

WEDDING DINNER BACK AT WINDOWS: There are not words to describe the overwhelming feeling I had when I saw the set-up Bernhard, the Food and Beverage Director and his Windows staff had created for our Bride and Groom. The mother of the bride, Magz had lugged (carry-on because they were breakable) some centerpieces and the Windows staff agreed to put them on the tables for us. They did but, in a nutshell went the extra mile for our bride and groom. The little touches that make a special occasion special were all there. The wait staff was extraordinary; the food was to die for. The look of joy on our bride's face said it all. Now, I am 100% Irish. I am not a natural hugger. I am uncomfortable with the new overly-prevalent hugging thing that has permeated the circles in which I travel. A pat on the back, a little wave, even a handshake and I'm good. This night, however I could NOT stop hugging people. Poor Bernhard... my earring kept getting stuck in his name tag! One of my best memories of the evening (and I have soooo many) was looking over at the staff and crew stand in a little line in the background - each of them had a big smile. Not the forced corporate 'gotta put on a good face smile' but smiles from their hearts that they had set the stage for such joy to our bride and her guests. Where does NCL find these people???? AND THEY WORK SO HARD! And they had to stay so late that night because we were a bit slow... (I felt quite guilty about that... keeping them on a port night.) I'm getting weepy so I've got to move on. It's like I'm hearing the entire kitchen/wait staff sing 'Let me Call You Sweetheart' all over again!

NCL SPIRIT ACTIVITIES/NIGHTLIFE:

Karaoke in Henry's Pub. My only complaint (!?!?) is that it ended too early LOL! Don't have any idea of what time it was - may have been four a.m. but I was having oodles of fun.

The **Martini Tasting** with Gede (pronounced like the Australian G'day) was lots of fun due in no small part to the copious amounts of flowing alcohol - specifically Grey Goose. I learned a lot and had lots of fun. We invited ourselves to chairs near (at?!) a table of obviously fun-loving friendly women... a bit of chit chat and lo and behold they were from our CruiseCritic Roll Call! What a treat. (More on Tammy and her buds later.) One word of warning... if you are planning to do anything productive or involved after the martini tasting - do it beforehand or don't do it at all LOL! That's all I'm going to say about that! Also, have a glass of water or two!

Though I did not go, I heard the **Second City** show was many folks' favorite event on the cruise (besides the wedding festivities, of course). I saw a brief **Second City** show on the last night and laughed and laughed and laughed. It was quite late and much of it was off-colour but VERY funny... not for the prudish, though.

That same night was **The Quest**. Also not for prudes but the tear lines through my perfect make-up was a visual testament to the level of laughter - rolling down my cheeks. A member of our group participated fully. I am laughing now just typing about it.

The **White Hot Party** was, in fact not my favorite, though it was fun. It was very loud (proof that I'm getting old). There were a LOT of kids and a lot of alcohol which makes me a bit uncomfortable. We went prepared with glow stick necklaces, white leis and white outfits (most of us, anyway see space issues above LOL - I was in pink... duh). The DJ talked over much of the music - a pet peeve - but I think that's what the 'kids' are used to. They did a few line dances (which I love) and played a some great songs I knew. Visually it was very cool with the black light and white décor, ice sculptures and wing-ed staff (heavenly)... There was a brief dance exhibition which was very cool. It was funny, my son (27) had whispered in my ear that he didn't know where NCL had 'got' these girls but he suspected that it was out of a catalogue. One of them was, he said the most beautiful girl he had ever seen in person. A word of caution, it was VERY HARD to find other members of our group. If you are in a group have a designated geographical area/time to meet up... I didn't stay all night but I suspect that the kids petered out and the alcohol dampened the decibels and oodles of folks had a GREAT TIME. A word of advice: Dollar Store; glow necklaces/bracelets. BRING EXTRA because everybody will ask you where you got yours and are overjoyed when you share!

Because, I think the Captain Harstrom took a shine to our beautiful bride, Maggie Cate, she, her groom, the mother of the bride and I (I felt a bit like an interloper as I am not technically immediate family but was thrilled to be there) had an absolutely wonderful **dinner with the wonderful captain and his wonderful officers**. I mean truly wonderful. Conversation flowed easily. The food was delicious. I suspect the wine was top notch but being an Irish girl from Boston I prefer a good lager to the grape. You know when you cringe thinking about something you did no matter how much time has elapsed since? Well, I'm cringing now. When the waiter was pouring me a glass of wine I whispered that I would prefer a beer. Holy moly, my mother probably turned over in her grave. One of the officers asked 'have we ever had beer at one of these dinners?' (or something like that). It was not a big to-do and it was all in good fun but my Budweiser appeared instantly and was frosty cold and delicious. Word of Advice: if you are lucky enough to dine with the captain, drink the wine LOL!

BucaneerLand: GO DOWN THE SLIDE!!!! Not advice. An order LOL. Wicked fun! And adults are allowed (but no adults or children in diapers)! The kids, though have the 'right of way' so I only went in when there were no kids in the pool. One of the slides has a bar at the top so you can get some momentum going... I want on in my back yard LOL!

CHAIR HOGS: Did not find this to be much of a problem but I didn't spend too much time by the pool but I didn't hear any complaints.

PHOTO FRENZY: Sadly, not offered on our cruise. Don't know why. It would have been great to

get more pics but the wallet is only so deep...

GIFT SHOP: There was lots of good stuff from Tommy Bahama shirts to refrigerator magnets. The last full day the gift shop had a 30% off select sweatshirts (I have mine on right now LOL) and 50% off some other cool stuff. Don't know if this happens every time but it is worth a walk-by. (CLOSED WHILE IN BERMUDA)

INTERNET CAFE: I sent one and received one e-mail. Unfortunately I apparently didn't log out properly and somebody sleezed onto my dime. Duh. My fault entirely. The Internet Manager tweaked the bill down a smidge but I am responsible for my own non-clicks... The problem was I was hurrying to get back to the hot tub! Focus. FOCUS!

ELEVATORS: Pushed the button oodles of times. Waited. Took the stairs most of the time which is a good way to counteract cruise-calorie-consumption. The middle elevators seem to be the busiest so if you are an elevator person plan your trek to include one of the end elevator banks and your wait will be shorter.

TIPPING: We tipped three, five and sometimes ten bucks at various meals, depending on the hugeness of the superlative service. We left our steward and stewardess a hopefully great tip because our cabin was like Grand Central Station and often in disarray. We left the twelve dollar a day 'service charge' in place. I did not tip extra when getting drinks. On my first cruise I added 15-20% to all of my checks... duh. Another reason to read, research, read before cruising.

CIGARETTES – DUTY FREE: A ten-pack of Marlboro Lights was \$27. There were larger packages for shorter money, as well but I don't know those prices. (CLOSED WHILE IN BERMUDA)

LIQUOR – DUTY FREE: 750ml of SKYY vodka was \$10. Lots of other stuff was available but they ran out of some things so don't wait until the last minute! The guy behind me almost cried when the clerk told him there was no more Kalua. (CLOSED WHILE IN BERMUDA)

BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR: Word of advice: TAKE IT! What a treat. It seems goofy typing about it but seeing the galley staff at work and the food moving from here to there: 'wash your hands' when entering and all of the sanitation rules in place and actually followed was great. Also, the pastry galley and the size/contents of the 'fridges/freezers, etc. was very cool (pardon the pun). The wine cellar... the soup vats (steam powered). All kinds of interesting things! Seeing backstage at The Stardust Theater was good. Also the laundry. There is an incredible machine that dries and folds the sheets and tablecloths... a bazillion of them a day. The washing machines hold (from memory) 250ish pounds of laundry. The dryers 175ish or so. Whew! The laundry manager, Ralph was very informative and funny, as well. The environmental manager, his name escapes me had me riveted with his shtick. How virtually EVERYTHING is recycled and how the potable water is 'made' and how other various forms of waste are dealt with. Very, very cool. Doesn't sound cool, really but if you are a curious type, take this tour. You must have closed-toed shoes and it is pretty long on the clock but goes by in a heartbeat. It ended with a Q&A with the captain on the bridge (where I learned about the whale thing above). Ask him anything. Look at Radio's pics <http://public.fotki.com/Radio88/norwegian-spirit--7/> - he took a lot. Take the tour!!! Magz and I couldn't stop telling folks little Spirit tidbits for the rest of the cruise... Whether they wanted to hear them or NOT, LOL!

NCL SPIRIT RESTAURANTS/FOOD: I am not a 'foodie.' If I sit down hungry and stand up full

I'm content but will give you my impressions anyway. Almost everything I had was great. The bacon every morning was crispy and delicious. Eggs made to order were perfect (I didn't have any buffet eggs). The croissants were really, really good... not too big, not greasy. Also, I loved the orange juice. The room service coffee was the best coffee I tasted on the ship. Lunch in Windows and Raffles Terrace and the Blue Lagoon (Fish & Chips and cole slaw especially) and the Bier Garten was all good. I was really looking forward to the pretzels I'd read about on CruiseCritic but never found them. I did see one fellow one night with what I suspected was one of THE pretzel but he was too drunk to tell me where he got it LOL! Dinner at Windows, Cagney's, The Blue Lagoon and the Bier Garten was all wonderful. SERVICE WAS SPECTACULAR. Fast but not too fast. Solicitous but not 'in your face.' SPECTACULAR. The only thing I had that I didn't love was the mashed potatoes. However, to qualify this I am a mashed potato snob and often don't care for restaurant mashies... The particular highlights that come to mind were the steak, halibut, Caesar salad, the escargot, the soups and desserts. I apologize for not being more detailed but generally speaking I'm more concentrated on the conversation and take a bite now and then. Also, the drinking water all around the ship was very good. Word of advice: I would not bother with lugging bottled water on board at all... just bring something insulated to walk around with – The Spirit's water is definitely better than most bottled waters...

NCL BARS: Henry's Pub was fun. The Bier Garten made a GREAT White Russian. Champagne Charlie's was great. Word of advice: if you plan to do the bucket of beer thing bring a bottle opener. I had to chase the wait staff to pop my caps... kinda frustrating but only a little as the reward was icy cold and refreshing.

NCL STAFF AND CREW: I'm not sure what direction to go in here. I could write a hundred paragraphs detailing all the small kindness and services these hard working provided for me and my group. We felt right at home yet like royalty. **Sean Wurmhleringer, the Hotel Director...** there are not words. He is a wonderful man and a true credit to NCL. His smile lights up the room... and it's a smile that goes all the way to his pupils. I feel honored to have gotten to know him – even a little. **Bernhard Schindlaur, the Food and Beverage Director...** Holy moly. I wanted to take him home with me (though I think he was appalled/amused by my request for a beer at the captain's dinner). If he had taken off his coat for me to walk upon I wouldn't have been surprised a bit. NCL is brilliant for hiring him and I feel blessed that I got to know him, just a little as well. **Bruce Van Der Boon, Concierge** who will not be sailing again on the Spirit until, I think August was pure joy wrapped up in skin. It's funny but when we told him what we had in mind wedding-plans-wise, in particular having the bride come to the pre-wedding cocktail hour he was aghast. I mean he literally gasped. I think he thought we were idiots (because it was an idiotic idea LOL). He punched his palm with his hand, straightened out his backbone and stepped in to save us from ourselves. We have laughed about it a hundred times already. Thank God for Bruce. I mean that. Our cabin steward **Willy (Wilfredo Jr.)** and **Rachel**, his partner were extraordinary. I mean so far above and beyond anything in our experience we hesitated to ask for anything because it was probably already 'in the works.' Willy made us, I think the cutest towel animal ever constructed. Custom. Perfect. I think he took some ribbing for leaving it hanging in or cabin but we loved it so much he left it for us. Willy and Rachel greeted us by name with beautiful smiles every time we saw them. I don't think they sleep much because they always seemed to be busy here and there. We loved them. Also, **Kelly** and **Amita** at Reception were just great. The poor things, we often had to check with the bride for their questions and they were very patient and sweet. There are so many more... The bartenders, especially **Gede** were all great. The **maitre 'd of the Garden Restaurant** (I'm kicking myself because I can't find his name), from Hawaii was so pleasant and helpful - even after I forgot to cancel a brunch

reservation for 33. What a dope. **Chef Hans-Peter?** Could he have been any sweeter? Nope. There was one crew-member (I thought she was Windows maitre 'd but when I called to get her name she gave me a man's name and then somebody came into our cabin and I never 'got back' to my task). in Windows that I forgot to get her name. She is from Columbia and has the cutest short haircut on board. She was always there in the background making sure all the "T's" were crossed and "I's" dotted. Also, **Dumpling** was awesome... she 'ran' the "Giant Pictionary" game, kept score at Quest and was great at disembarkation. I took a couple of 'compliment cards' home with me and fill them out for the folks I missed; I asked and I can send them to Miami.

BERMUDA ACTIVITIES/NIGHTLIFE: Quite a few folks in our group rented the **scooters** from **Smatt's** in Hamilton. They were very nice and quite accommodating. One of the renters was very uncomfortable and turned hers in right away for which they praised her. Another person in our group rented a scooter for the three days but returned it after one day and Smatt's was very accommodating there as well. There were no mechanical issues with any of the scooters (we had had a great deal of trouble in '04 with the scooters 'failing' - rented from one of the bigger outfits that I strongly suspect do not maintain them all that well). We had no mishaps in our group, thank the Lord. However, one woman on our cruise (but not in our group) did have a mishap and spent a few hours in the hospital.

Frog and Onion: very nice in the afternoon. Wicked fun at night. Tables set up in the open courtyard... very nice. A bit expensive but nice.

Swizzle Inn South: Gotta go. Yummy Swizzle Punch. Good food. Great service. The ladies room left QUITE a bit to be desired, however (another pet peeve).

Jobson's Cove near Warwick Long Bay. Beautiful. Just beautiful.

Hamilton: I am not a shopper but my friend bought a great shirt at A.S. Cooper and he looked like a million bucks.

Ferry: THE way to travel. Short money at \$28 for a three day ferry/bus pass.

Bus: Gets you from here to there. A great place to meet locals, who are often very willing to share knowledge, etc. The bus drivers are quite friendly, as well. Also, the ride along the South Road on #7 affords breathtaking sights... and breathtaking clearances LOL!

Scaur Fort: Try not to miss it. What a view! What a well maintained park on a hill in Somerset. Lovely benches. Lots of informative signage. Almost manicured grounds. Those coin binoculars were there, though we didn't use them. Also, the ladies room was immaculate LOL! No, really it was.

Somerset Walking Tour (Frommers.com). This was certainly a highlight. Wear comfortable footwear and bring water. The walk along the railway was a Bermuda I'd never seen and was pleased a punch along the way to hear the sounds and smell the smells. Also, some of the most beautiful Bermudian homes... not the huge mansions but 'regular people' homes... The sights, the sounds, the smells were a treat. Also the lizards were VERY COOL. At a crossroads, the three of us sat in the shade to look at the map and have a drink of water. We were a little tired LOL. A sweet man, Glen Simmons - a Bermudian electrician stopped along-side and asked if we were alright... if we needed any help. I kid you not. We declined help but he stayed and chatted for ten minutes or so - giving us advice and telling us a bit about Bermuda. The friendly Bermudian culture adds an entire dimension to a Bermuda visit. I'd guess in Boston one of ten folks might stop and ask a tourist if he needs help - and probably only if the tourist looked incredibly lost or was bleeding or something. In Bermuda, I think nine of ten will engage a tourist in conversation if they see an 'opening.' A beautiful thing.

Somerset Country Squire: DO NOT MISS THIS PLACE. The bus goes right by it on the way to anywhere from the Dockyard. The barman, Donald welcomed us like long lost cousins. It was the last stop on our walking tour so we were quite thirsty. We planned to have a quick drink but ended up spending the afternoon chatting with Donald and other customers. The ladies room

was great! Also, the fish chowder which is served with little cruets of Gosling's Rum and some kind of pepper infused liquid - to season your chowder to taste. MMMMMMMMM. I'm getting hungry. TRULY A "DON'T MISS!" Tell them Clare from Boston sent you LOL!

Late night at **Snorkel Park** was interesting. There was a ten dollar cover and it was packed. You have to wait in line to get 'tokens' and then wait in line to get a beverage... It is, we came to understand later in the night the cruise ships' crews' 'place.' It's not that we were not welcome but we left with the impression that we were intruding a bit. The ship's crew work very very hard on EXTREMELY long shifts and this is their opportunity to hang out and let loose. They are NOT on duty and I suspect that they would just assume not see us there... These are just my impressions.

The **Dockyard** was a very cool place to walk around. There was live music a couple of times which was nice.

Sea glass: I didn't know it until this week but I am, apparently a sea glass snob. It's a bit frightening to find such a thing out in my forties... Around the Boston area there might be a bit of sea glass here and there. White is good. Green is not so good. Brown is yucky. Thick is good, thin: not so good. Thick blue is the holy grail for heaven's sake. We went to a beach in Somerset on Mangrove Bay to hunt for sea glass. Hunt was an inappropriate goal. You need to avoid the sea glass. It was everywhere... I mean figuring out where to step in my flip flops was a challenge. It is a miracle that none of us was cut. Why the beach was like this is a mystery I plan to look into. My friend did find quite a bit but in my snobbish opinion it was substandard. Maybe if you are from the Midwest sea glass hunting in Bermuda would be fun but if you are from anywhere near the coast forget the sea glass and head right to the Somerset Country Squire and get a glass of Bass Ale, instead... Maybe there are better places to hunt... hope so!

HEADING HOME: We, for some great reason stayed a bit later than our itinerary said in Bermuda and got to see the Norwegian Dawn go by. There were a few Yankees/Red Sox jeers across the harbour but all in good fun. I hope they have as great a cruise as we did! There was a bit of melancholy - just a smidge - that our time in Bermuda was over but the trip home was awesome. The weather got progressively cooler and we went through a huuuuuge fog bank. The water was as calm as a bath tub. Hearing the fog horn now and then was a particular treat.

DISEMBARKATION: If you are not in a hurry you will have no stress. There were people milling around the reception area from very early on... sitting on their luggage, etc. They looked stressed and the crew had to keep shuffling people around because the hallways/stairs cannot become congested. The process is fairly easy, though, you choose a color/time beforehand (and hopefully the rest of your group does the same). You fill out a little customs form and you head out after your color is called. You NEED your key card and customs form to get off the ship. You don't need your passport. On my next cruise I plan to take Radio's advice and walk around, eat, etc. until the crowds have disbursed...

REGRETS – I HAVE A FEW: Not having chosen a better travel agent. Spending so much time on the balcony, though it was great. Missing the Sexy Legs contest. Being a bit too loud in our cabin though our neighbors insisted it was fine. Not having established a 'meet in the port far corner' of Galaxy of the Stars for White Hot Party Night. Not having a better plan i.e. a meeting place on the sidewalk after disembarkation. Forgetting nail polish remover... duh. Not bringing sneakers and socks. Not hugging Sean, Bernhardt and Bruce one more time. Not having arranged for our own transport to the Jobson's Cove wedding regardless of the wedding planner telling us we couldn't do that. Not getting a close-up pic of the Portuguese Man of Wars we saw on the beach (I don't know of anybody who saw them in the water so I think the 'season' has passed, btw). Not having AT LEAST ONE blue beverage with Sandy, my Roll Call buddy. Not

being better jotting names of wonderful crew members down – next time I'd bring a golf pencil for my little neck wallet. Not drinking a glass or two of water during the martini tasting. Forgetting to cancel our brunch reservation. Not clicking 'logout' better (I KNOW that I clicked *near* the box, but my heart was already in the hot tub LOL!). I wish I'd planned an early group dinner and group 'show' night... I wish I'd brought more singles/fives (dollars bills). I would have established a meeting time/place on board the morning of disembarkation. Next time LOL!

THINGS I/MY GROUP DID RIGHT: Planned, planned planned but remained flexible to changes. Also having a pre-cruise get-together worked out great... folks recognized each other on board and had already formed acquaintances. Communication Central Door. A few 'group' dinners but not too many. Meeting Sean, Bernhardt and Bruce (and taking heed of Bruce's excellent 'advice'). Duct tape. Paper. Everybody having a list of everybody's cabin number. Spent a lot of time and learned a lot on CruiseCritic. Contacted NCL when we had a huge issue with our travel agent. Went to the Meet & Greet. Did the Behind the Scenes Tour. Had a FANTASTIC time! Took ooooooodles of pics. Took the stairs a lot. Had those neck wallet things. Made new friends. Exchanged lots of e-mail addresses. Made use of BuccaneerLand. Went to the Martini Tasting. Not scooting out of the Somerset Country Squire as we'd planned. Making new friends. Posting pics right away on FaceBook.

THANK YOU NCL & CRUISECRITIC!

Clare