

Serendipity Travels to the Caribbean, 2014

This trip involves cross-country travel and cruise-ship cruises from two different ports in Florida. One of the cruises is a four-day affair from Port Canaveral, near Orlando. The other is an eight-day cruise from Port Everglades, which is in Fort Lauderdale.



Carnival Freedom Eight Day Eastern Caribbean

22 March, Port Everglades

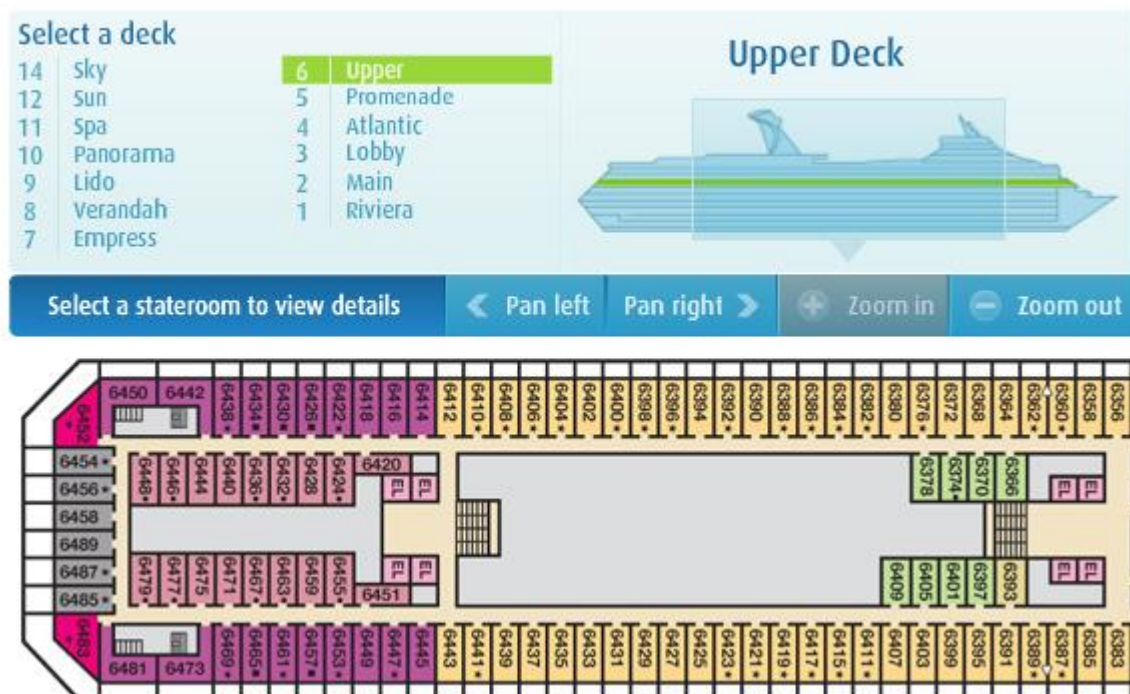
16:00 Departure

By reserving early (almost a year in advance), we were able to choose a cabin that had a larger balcony – Cabin 6481. After cruising in both aft-facing and side-facing cabins, we tend to prefer the side-facing ones. You have a better view of passing islands and activity entering and leaving ports.

We attended the mandatory safety briefing, then found a comfortable spot on the deck where we could watch the ships depart Port Everglades. Two other, larger, ships were in the



DECK PLANS



way, so the *Freedom* was kept at the dock for quite a while. Fortunately, there was a bar convenient to our observation place, and we avoided dehydration. Eventually, we departed. Dinner followed, then off to the cabin to unpack.

23-24 March, Days at Sea

Our first port of call was St. Thomas, about 1000 nautical miles from Fort Lauderdale. Traveling at about 18 knots, and avoiding islands and reefs, the journey requires a couple of days at sea. There is plenty to do aboard the ship in the meantime, including *nothing*, reading, various talks (we attended two, one about art and another about the ports of call), and of course eating and sleeping.

25 March, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

08:00 Arrival, 18:00 Departure

Cruise ships dock at Havensight, a new terminal across Long Bay from Charlotte Amalie, main city and capital of the U.S. Virgin Islands, which is on St. Thomas Island. To simplify, most simply say they are docking at St. Thomas. St. Thomas is one of the three major islands in U.S.V.I., St. John and St. Croix are the others.



There are interesting sights and activities on St. Thomas, but we opted to travel to neighboring St. John for the “St. John National Park Island Tour.” This includes a foot-ferry ride from the cruise ship dock to Cruz Bay on St. John, then an open-sided bus tour of the island. Afterwards, the ferry returns to the ship dock. Much of St. John is a national park, but there are plenty of facilities to feed and house tourists. The island is ringed with beautiful beaches and verdant vistas, many of which you can see by clicking the Photo Map Tour link below.

Mr. Wonderful was our tour guide, and he filled the drive with anecdotes about the island, with plenty of photo opportunities. One of the stops was the ruins of the Annaberg Sugar Mill. This facility was devoted to the processing, using slave labor, of sugar cane grown on adjacent slopes. The discovery of the sugar beet made sugar cane processing less profitable, and social change led to the end of slavery.

The U.S. realized the strategic location and purchased the Virgin Islands from the Danish in 1917. Since 1927, Virgin Islanders have been U.S. Citizens. The U.S. dollar is the currency and one does not need a passport to travel to or from there. (The remainder of the trip did require passports, however.)

**Click for a
Photo Map Tour
of U.S.V.I.**



26 March, Antigua

08:00 Arrival, 18:00 Departure

Antigua is the more-populous island of the two-island nation known as Antigua and Barbuda. The islands have been under continuous British control from their colonization in 1632 until independence in 1981.



We signed up for “The Best of Antigua Highlights Tour,” which promised to give us a ride across the island in an air-conditioned bus (in fact, an enlarged Toyota van that holds about 30). We were given a narrative about the island’s current economy, not prosperous but quite viable, and saw government buildings, schools, and other aspects of the modern economy.

At the far end of the island, we stopped at three places that were once part of the British fortifications protecting this strategic island: The Block House, Shirley Heights, and Nelson’s

Dockyard. The views from the first two were spectacular. The third is an interesting place, with many of the buildings from more than 200 years ago still standing, repurposed to modern uses. You can see our photos from the tour by clicking the Photo Map Tour link below.

After our tour, we were returned to St. John, the capital city where the *Freedom* was docked. Lunch on the balcony at Hemingway’s was followed by exploration of the local marketplace. We were back on the ship in plenty of time, and observed the antics of the frigate birds as we sailed away. Antigua was the southern- and eastern-most point of the cruise, we were now returning toward Florida.

**Click for a
Photo Map Tour
of Antigua**



27 March, Tortola, British Virgin Islands

07:00 Arrival, 14:30 Departure

The Virgin Islands, originally named by Columbus on his second voyage, have been claimed, captured, or owned by several countries since 1493: Spain, The Netherlands, England, France, Denmark, and the U.S. Although two flags fly over the Virgin Islands, their close physical proximity makes one wonder if a unified entity would be preferable. (How close is the proximity? ... Read on,)

The BVI are legendary among cruising sailors, and today we would discover why. The *Freedom* docked early in Road Town, the population center of Tortola Island. Our tour today would be “Tortola by Land & Sea.” We started by boarding a power catamaran at 07:30, shortly after docking (and *too early* by some accounts).

Our cat headed south from the harbour. Once clear, we were surrounded by islands – many with anchorages. Clockwise from the north, we saw Tortola, Beef Island, Virgin Gorda, Ginger, Cooper, Salt, Dead (Man’s) Chest, Peter, and Norman Islands, and U.S.V.I. St. John. At one point in our cruise, we would be within cell-phone distance of St. John.



Bight Bay on Norman Island is an especially attractive anchorage, and we cruised slowly among many boats hanging out there. Eventually our boat ride took us to Soper’s Hole, Pusser’s Landing, on the West End of Tortola. There we debarked and had a short time for shopping at the local stores.

Shopping accomplished, we boarded an open-sided taxi for the land portion of our tour. Part of the route was along the coastline, and part was over the mountainous backbone – aptly named “Ridge Road” – of the island. We took many photographs on the boat and bus tours; click the Photo Map Tour link below to see the beauty of Tortola and surrounding islands.

28 March, Day at Sea

We left Tortola in early afternoon, and would spend the next day at sea, taking almost 46 hours to sail between the B.V.I. and The Bahamas. As with other sea days, we managed to fill our time with on-board activities, not the least of which were various forms of relaxation.

**Click for a
Photo Map Tour
of B.V.I.**



29 March, Nassau, New Providence Island, The Bahamas 13:00 Arrival, 19:00 Departure

We had toured Nassau eleven days earlier, on our first cruise. This time, we each had our own priorities – Meredith to visit the rather large Straw Market and me to visit the Pirates of Nassau Museum. We took the short walk into town and split up – agreeing to meet in 90 minutes at the Athena Café.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the museum. Museum snobs will point out, correctly, that it is less a museum with antiquated objects and more



a series of displays constructed of modern materials depicting life as it was some 300 years ago. That was fine with me, I enjoyed seeing what the streets and ships looked like and reading the descriptive signs scattered about. I expect my grandsons would enjoy this as well, perhaps someday they will visit. Photos taken in the museum are in the set of Bahamas pictures referenced earlier in this travelogue.

Missions accomplished, we met as planned at the Athena. We asked the (very Grecian looking) proprietor about the name. He told us he was born and raised in The Bahamas, but his parents are indeed from Greece. A couple of beers and a shared appetizer of conch fritters would serve to end the Caribbean portion of our trip. We were soon back on the ship, setting sail for Port Everglades.

30 March, Port Everglades

08:00 Arrival

Today's plan is simple:

- 09:00 EDT (approx..) Disembark *Carnival Freedom* and catch the shuttle to Fort Lauderdale – Hollywood Airport
- 12:00 EDT Virgin America 327, arriving in Los Angeles at 14:55 PDT.
- 17:10 PDT Virgin America 795, arriving in Seattle at 19:39 PDT.
- Shuttle back to the Super 8 to pick up our car.
- Drive to Bellingham, arriving about 22:00 PDT.

Amazingly, it all worked as planned. There were a few issues disembarking because our credit card company was questioning some overseas charges (despite the fact that we had informed them of our travel plans). And, the cruise line shuttle was rather slow (next time, taxi). We made it, however, and are already planning our next adventure(s).

Click the Photo Map Tour of The Ships link below to see the pictures we took on and of the ships during our cruises.

**Click for a
Photo Map Tour
of The Ships**

