

Crossing the Atlantic Ocean

We are now well into the first major part of our voyage, which also coincides with one of my long held ambitions - we are crossing the Atlantic Ocean by sea. To be precise, the journey route is from Falmouth to Central America, via the Azores and the West Indies.

You see, when we were kids, America was seen to be the land of plenty, land of riches, big flashy cars, home to Hollywood, Beverly Hills and the Big Apple. These were the days before charter air flights and package holidays had ever been thought of, and yes, the traditional method of crossing this mighty ocean was by a long sea voyage.

But this was an expensive way of travelling, and generally used by business folks, and the rich and famous. The ships were large and famous, well appointed for their well heeled passengers, and usually powered by steam engines and with traditional funnels. These travellers used large trunks for their luggage, with numerous stickers left on from previous trips to far flung parts of the globe - no need for luggage allowances here.

So, here we are, travelling on a modern cruise ship, oil powered, quiet and efficient - our modern day counterpart to those iconic vessels of years ago. What we share is the same sea, the same distances, and the same elements of nature, to me a true taste of Atlantic travel by ship.

So far, we have encountered rain at sea, heavy swells which make walking in a straight line impossible, sunbathing under a warm sun, and being rocked to sleep at night.

We have sat at home in the comfort of our easy chairs watching the exploits of adventurers crossing the ocean in small and unusual craft on tv. We have sat in pressurised air conditioned aircraft cabin seats looking at the oceans laid out beneath us like a map. But, sitting on a ship on this particular ocean gives a totally different dimension to this immense area of water. We have often affectionately referred to the "pond" which divides the UK and the US, but pond it is certainly not, as pond implies peaceful and still waters.

I now realise just how vast this ocean is. For four whole days and nights we have travelled continuously at around 16 knots, have seen only two

other vessels, and no marine life at all. During this period we have not sighted any land at all, the view through 360 degrees is always just sea. The water is never still, as the ship rides the swells and waves, which alter their rate and pitch without prior warning. The daily messages from the ship's captain advises us of wind speeds, water and air temperatures, likely sea conditions for that day, and also the depth of water we are travelling in .

Unlike the ships of yesteryear, ours has the benefit of stabilisers, and quiet and clean engines. What has not changed is the vastness, the unpredictability, and the facts of nature which make the Atlantic Ocean such an exciting part of our current adventure.



Life on the ocean waves