

## MADEIRA, NEW YEARS EVE

We arrive late into Madeira, and the excursions planned for this afternoon have had to be cancelled. The Van Gogh is anchored near to the capital city of Funchal, and as there are 8 other cruise ships here today, it is taking a long time to tender all the passengers ashore.



There are many disappointed passengers left on the ship when the tendering operation has to be cancelled, including us of course. Fortunately, we have visited Funchal before, so we still have some wonderful memories of this beautiful city.

The highlight of the stay here in Madeira is to be the firework display at midnight. Until recently Sydney in Australia was the world's premier firework extravaganza, but in 2006 Madeira beat Sydney into second place. Apparently 27 tons of fireworks will be set off from 40 fire stations around the bay. The theme of the display is to be "Legend of the Ocean", and will be based on the legend of Atlanta, which, it is said, was the land which joined Madeira to the Azores.

The evening starts with a formal dinner, and as we do not wish to get dressed up in our formal wear tonight, we have already taken some food down to our cabin.

After eating, we use our laptop to go online, and to read and send our emails. This is the first time we have been able to do this since Australia, and we have had to ring up our Service Provider to ask them why. Apparently they had blocked our card, were able to unblock it over the phone, and now it is working fine.

We choose to spend the evening in the "Sky Bar" on deck 9, which has an outside area with chairs and tables. The temperature outside is a little cooler than we have been used to, so we wrap up warmly.



Just before midnight, the Captain moves the ship, so that the back decks are facing the shoreline, and exactly on midnight, all the cruise ships in the bay sound their horns. From our vantage point we can see the whole of Funchal as it explodes with colour and light.



This is the most spectacular display we have ever seen, and we are all mesmerised with the synchronised, colourful light show. This display would be impressive enough on land, but out in the bay it is truly magical, with a panoramic view of all the fireworks, and beautiful reflections in the water. At the end of the show, hundreds of noisy firecrackers are set off, and we sail away, leaving a pall of smoke hanging over Funchal. Madeira at New Years Eve is certainly one of the highlights of our fantastic cruise.

