

## PANAMA CANAL

The next day starts cloudy but warm, and we take the opportunity to go up onto



Deck 10 - this is a restricted area for staff, and we are taken up there by Tony and Sheila, who have permission to be there. This is an excellent view point to see Gatun Locks, which take us up from the Caribbean Sea into Lake Gatun.

While we are in the locks, we go on the internet with our laptop, and find the web site for the Panama Canal. Here we

can view the web cams alongside the locks and can see ourselves travelling through them! At this time we are pleased to receive a phone call from Ben, who tells us he can also see the Van Gogh making its way through the locks.

It takes around 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours to pass through Gatun Locks, and then we arrive in Lake Gatun. There is a lot of traffic through the canal today, so we have to anchor in the lake for 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours before we can make our way to the next set of locks, which will take us down into the Pacific Ocean.

While we are at anchor in the lake, a local guide comes aboard, and gives interesting announcements about the history of the Canal, the many facts and figures regarding this engineering marvel, and the local flora and fauna. Apparently, The Van Gogh has been charged \$90,000 to travel through the Canal, which is based on the size of the ship.

Even though this seems like a lot of money, it is still cheaper for ships to use the canal, than to travel around the southern tip of South America. The extra journey would take a further 2 weeks, and much more fuel, staff wages, food etc.





It is now lunch time and it is very hot on deck; we have chosen to stay inside and catch up with our own computer work. Owain is busy using the internet, and Alvina is typing this. We dealt with many queries about mobile phones, cameras and computers yesterday, but so far today we seem to have escaped!

We have just started our journey across the lake, this will take around 2 hours, and as we set off we see many cargo ships, and the occasional cruise liner in front, or behind us. After the journey through Lake Gatun, we will pass into the Gaillard Cut, a narrow channel carved through the hills that mark the continental divide.



Later on, we will be entering the Miraflores Locks, and then onto the Pedro Miguel Locks. By the time we leave the canal completely, it will be dark, and we will be able to see the lights of Panama City as we head off towards our next port of call in Ecuador.

