

## Bridgetown, Barbados

The Braemar docks in Bridgetown before 6am and all disembarking passengers are required to present their passports to Barbadian customs officials soon afterwards. It was a long day yesterday, culminating in The Great Suitcase Packing Exercise. Fortunately we had not bought too many bulky souvenirs so packing was easier than we expected.

We placed our 3 main suitcases outside our cabin door at 11pm, when they were spirited away overnight by the efficient crew. We will not see our cases again until we reach Manchester tomorrow. As we need to vacate our cabin by 9am, we are given the opportunity to store our hand luggage and coats in a secure area. Members of staff are on hand to store the luggage, and look after it until our return at lunchtime. They give us a ticket in order to reclaim it later.



After breakfast on-board, we walk towards the cruise terminal shops in order to buy some souvenirs. Owain particularly wants to buy some thin silky tropical shirts, and we know just the shop in which to buy them. As we near the cruise terminal, some steel drum musicians are serenading us under a canopy that proclaims "Welcome to Barbados". They all use full size 400 gallon oil drums, which give out truly authentic Caribbean sounds!

Inside the terminal there are many souvenir shops with goods at reasonable prices. There are also the inevitable expensive jewellery shops with waiting staff hovering near the doors. We do not bother going into any of these shops, Alvina has decided to buy her birthday present from the Argos catalogue back home! We spend a pleasant morning shopping and have a cool Barbadian beer called Banks in an open air bar. We find suitable Caribbean mementos - tee shirts, a local music cd, shirt for Owain, 2011 calendar, plus a few small souvenirs.



We are back on board the Braemar for lunch and relax in the lounge area to await our 1.30 pm transfer to the airport. Unfortunately we are told that our flight to Manchester is delayed by around 5 ½ hours, although passengers going to Gatwick will leave on time.

We are able to stay on-board the ship until our flight transfer is due, and a light meal is prepared especially for all Manchester-bound passengers. Apparently most Cruise companies in similar circumstances transfer passengers to the airport for them to wait there instead, so we are fortunate indeed. Fred Olsen certainly looks after their passengers well.

Our friends, Tony and Sheila, are flying out to meet the ship in Barbados, where they will teach Bridge on the next two cruises on the Braemar. We did expect to pass them in the airport, but because of our delayed flight we realise that we may even see them on board before we leave. We exchange text messages with Sheila as they board their flight in Gatwick, and when they arrive in Barbados, and tell them where to find us on board. When they arrive at the ship we have an hour or so to exchange our news before they retire to their cabin to unpack and catch up with some sleep before dinner.

Eventually we are called, by cabin number, to disembark the ship at 6.45pm, and climb aboard the transfer bus for the 45 minute drive to the airport. We only have a wait of around 1 ½ hours before our flight so just enough time to have a cup of coffee and send our previous cruise report to you all using the airport's free Wi-Fi.

The flight home takes around 8 hours and as we sleep for some of that time it goes relatively quickly. Ben is waiting for us at Manchester, and takes us home in his car - we just manage to get all the cases in!

This has been a successful trip in many ways, and we feel slightly confident that the suitcases will be back in use quite soon - we wonder which part of the world our next contract will take us to!

