

GORDON BUCHAN BLOG

Just another WordPress site

JANUARY 22, 2018 BY ADMIN

The big text post about the Star Trek cruise 2018

Pictures

For reference, here are my blog posts regarding [my first post with pictures](#), and [a link](#) in my blog to [my brother's blog post with pictures and text](#). My brother's narrative is so complete I have chosen to simply copy and paste his text here, attributed to him by being in *italics*.

The beforetime

Our planning began in early 2017, where a whimsical discussion about a web ad for a "Star Trek cruise" turned into a dare, and an attempt to register. We waited 2 days too long, and missed our chance. In retrospect, that was a good thing, it allowed us the luxury of a year to plan for one of the 2018 sailings.

Booking

When the 2 Star Trek cruise sailings for January 2018 were announced in 2017, my brother and I did not wait very long, I think we booked the same day or next day that we became aware. We were able to book 2 single inside (no port hole/window) staterooms on the second sailing January 11-17 out of Miami to Honduras, Belize, and Mexico then back to Miami. As it turned out, the promoters had difficulty filling the second ship, and offered discounts. To mollify us, we got a

US\$50 discount on our bills, and something else, swag or a minor event of some kind.

Air from YUL to MIA and hotel on Miami Beach 2 nights before cruise

We had the luxury of booking far in advance. We got a good price (C\$580 return Montreal YUL – Miami MIA) on air, and allowing for winter weather on the East coast near the Atlantic, decided to book rooms on Miami Beach at the Four Points by Sheraton US\$200/night, so we would arrive on January 9, 2 days before our cruise was to depart January 11.

Ubers

We took lots of Ubers in Miami – about US\$180 worth during 2 days at beginning and 1 day at end of trip, and worth every penny – fast, easy, cheap. Between Google Maps and Uber, it is easy to hit the ground anywhere and find a good local craft beer.

As travelers, my brother Don and I had 5 objectives:

- Maximize participation in Comiccon setting and events on boat, especially by attending second-tier events like script read-throughs and small skits throughout the day, especially during the days at sea.
- Maximize premium experiences on ship ie try to eat in main dining room on ship every night, try to attend main show in theater each night. We ate in the main dining room and the main café, not the specialty restaurants. We did order wine and drinks from time to time.
- Visit each port, and go on on at least one excursion, which we did.
- Sign up for paid extra activities on the ship. We signed up for a ship kitchen and environmental systems tour, a Klingon pub crawl between 3 bars on board, led in song by Gowron himself, and a wine tasting led by Damar, who on earth poses as a super-relaxed rich guy from Northern California who now grows wine with his wife but was a Cardassian on Star Trek.

- Find a way to salvage the last day in Miami – after disembarking the ship with our luggage, without a hotel, no locker system at the port, and a flight in the early evening

Tuesday 9

My brother and I decided to book rooms on Miami Beach at the Four Points by Sheraton US\$200/night, so we would arrive on January 9, 2 days before our cruise was to depart January 11. We got to see Miami Beach, eat at the outside bar and grill of the Fontainebleau (it's in a James Bond movie called Goldfinger). About 2 days after we had booked our hotel, the promoters announced a US\$200 rate for the airport Hilton in Miami. We chose to stick with our original plans in case there would be too much competition to get from the airport hotel to the seaport at the same time the morning of the cruise.

Lynwood, craft beer

We took an Uber to the Lynwood to eat and drink at a craft beer hall called the Butcher Shop. The meal was simple – Bratwurst on a pretzel bun with fries. Nice takes on ambers and American ale, I did not try darker Belgian styles or whit beers.

Wednesday 10

Bay of Pigs Museum, Little Havana, craft beer

We visited the regimental museum of the veterans of the Bay of Pigs, then paid a visit the Union Beer Store in little Havana. In between we walked through the real Little Havana, with its stores and shops.

Thursday 11

Seaport

On January 11, we took an Uber to the seaport, and we were lucky to have Googled in advance that we wanted to be at Terminal D. We got off very close to the processing center, which was like a cross between a hotel checkin desk asking for photo ID like passport and issuing a ship ID card, and a private sector TSA with mags, wands, and xray of bags. Bag attendants in port took care of luggage, but hustled for tips – just like Vegas, have a stack of one and five dollar bills on hand.

We got on the ship by 1200, but staterooms were only ready around 1300. We had a drink, but declined a \$20 ceramic Tiki mug as an upsell on the drink. As seasoned cruise ships travelers (ie one short cruise from Vancouver to Alaska in 2014) we were both already comfortable with cruise ship life.

My brother and I made a friend while sitting in the dining room, listening to safety drill information. Our friend Tracy joined us for dinner in the dining most nights of the cruise.

The single inside staterooms (US\$2200 for 6 nights cruise) were small but well-designed, and each complete with all of the facilities of a good hotel room, including bathroom, minibar, a small table, a double bed (or perhaps 2 single beds pushed together) and a good TV. Nice design, art, and mirrors, easy to forget no windows to the outside world. I was content in a small stateroom by myself for the sleeping time between after late show snack and breakfast in cafe. However, if I had to share a stateroom with a second person, even in the context of a relationship, I would opt for a bigger place with windows and a balcony and more personal space per person.

Italics in this post identify text copied directly from [my brother's blog post on the subject](#). Don's blog post is so complete it made more sense to reproduce portions of it whole within the timeline below.

The first evening's show

- *Michael Dorn introduced Levar Burton, who read a children's book he'd written, as well as an essay he'd written.*
- *Later when he introduced René Auberjonois and Nana Visitor, one of Michael Dorn's quotes was 'you'd still be clapping even if I were reading from the phone book' — a comment I found fascinating, and which followed me and the shows I saw all week long, since so many of the shows were NOT Star Trek related at all beyond the actors starring in them, but were still rather entertaining.*
- *René Auberjonois and Nana Visitor reading various humorous quotes and a scene from DS9.*

Friday 12

- *Photo op with George Takei (basically, 15 seconds with Mr. Takei)*
- *Star Trek's Script Secrets Revealed with Lolita Fatjo. Interesting points: Star Trek The Next Generation had an open invitation for the public to submit scripts, virtually unique in the TV world. And, at 10AM, people were ordering noisy-to-make margaritas.*
- *Scopes Monkey Trial with John de Lancie, Ethan Phillips, and Robert Picardo. As I recall, Mrs. de Lancie, René Auberjonois and Jeffrey Combs participated as well, and three people from the passengers, amongst whom one who was a dead ringer for Col. Sanders of chicken fame, who also dressed the part. The show was a dramatic reading / stage play based on the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925 in Tennessee.*
- *T-shirt party with DJ Needles: Basically, a pool party on the pool deck offering free punch and carbonated barley water (oops, I think they called it Budweiser and Coors Light) to all those wearing the cruise T-shirt.*
- *[snip]*
- *Interstellar Improv: An episodic overdub with Denise Crosby and Friends (René Auberjonois and Robert Picardo) — a really dumb show with the three of them ad-libbing dumb comments to a silent viewing of 'And the Children Shall Lead', including some shady comments about Captain Kirk. (Ahem, NOT along the lines of 'Spock is better!')*

Saturday 13

Roatan, Honduras

- *Roatan, Honduras (suffice it to say that beyond the small and minimal but adequate tourist zone, we turned back within minutes, disappointed in the overly ferocious solicitation by the locals);*
- *A Visit to Original Trek with Gates McFadden and Jonathan Frakes (and Picardo, Philipps, Auberjonois, de Lancie, Mrs. di Lancie). Reading the script to ‘The Trouble with the Tribbles’ – Hilarious! And, having had a good amount of time on my hands, I had showed up about 50 minutes early to get a good seat. Good call, it was an overflow crowd!*
- *Gow-Rom: A skit and then Q&A with Gowron (Robert O’Reilly) and Rom (Max Grodenchik) – in full costume and makeup, and during the first part, in character!*
- *In Search of Lost Time: Brent Spiner performing Broadway hits. As it turns out, despite having know about ‘Ol’ Yellow Eyes is Back”, I learned that Brent Spiner is actually a decent singer!*

Sunday 14

- *Harvest Cay, Belize, a private island owned by NCL best described (positively so!) as Gilligan’s Island run by Mr. Howell for tourists (yes, I am aware of ‘The Castaways’ Resort);*
- *Star Trek Squares, with George Takei as the centre square, and a Gorn with (intentionally) unintelligible speech.*

Monday 15

- *Costa Maya, Mexico, where I hope that the haggling over the price of a ‘Mexican’ blanket in the large tourist zone, both of which I expect are about as authentic as the deed to a bridge in Brooklyn – but both of which I liked anyway – made me a little less of a mark than anyone who may have paid the original price I was quoted (assuming anyone else was labelled to be one of a given number of ‘marks of the*

day”, and outside of which I got to go out to see genuine Mayan ruins!

- *Notes on the visit to the Mayan ruins: The guide was excellent, and at least trilingual (she spoke French with me, to my pleasant surprise). I learned that in a very flat area, not only were the ruins all built by volunteer labour (trying to get more ‘points’ to get to the Mayan equivalent of Heaven), but also a low mountain!*
- *Star Trek Online presents Gameshow Night: The Liar’s Club with Jeffrey Combs, Phil Plait and Robb Pearlmann*
- *Evening with George Takei: George Takei spent an hour recounting his experiences in a WWII Japanese-American internment camp as a child, his path to becoming an actor, and as a civil rights activist both surrounding the Japanese-American internment camps as well as LGBT rights.*

Tuesday 16

- *Behind the Scenes Tour: A two hour walking tour of the ship in areas such as waste disposal, laundry, galley, and other areas, where passengers normally don’t get to see anything.*
- *Klingon Pub Crawl: A pub crawl to three of the ship’s bars led by Chancellor Gowron (Robert O’Reilly) in full costume and makeup. As a part of his act, Gowron told two great dumb jokes, feigning a lack of understanding of the humour:

 - *Two cannibals are eating supper. One says, ‘I don’t care for my mother-in-law.’ The other responds, ‘Try the potatoes’.*
 - *Two cannibals are dining on a clown. One says, ‘Does this taste funny to you?’**
- *(Second half of) The ‘Women’s’ View with Mrs. de Lancie, Nana Visitor, Denise Crosby, Lolita Fatjo*
- *Oh My! With George Takei, hosted by Brad Takei — Q&A with George Takei*
- *Wine Tasting with Casey Biggs: As it turns out, Casey Biggs, who played Damar on DS9, owns a vineyard in California, and is involved in making his wine!*
- *The Real Life Search for Planet Vulcan, a short presentation on Mercury’s orbit, which at times fooled historic astronomers into claiming to have found another planet in close orbit to the Sun.*
- *‘BFF’ with Robert Picardo and Jordan Bennet. A show starting off with the Star Trek theme lyrics sung, and a cute set of jokes, stories and slides, but which*

ultimately featured a ho-hum performance by Robert Picardo and Jordan Bennet with a string of recognizable songs that (armchair critic here) could have been sung better, and which had little if any discernable link to each other, the show overall, Picardo and Bennet, and obviously Star Trek in general, and which left me scratching my head as to why they were included beyond a desire to fill up a one hour time slot.

Wednesday 17

My dear friend Dale happened to be in Miami for a conference and graciously let us keep our luggage in his hotel room, then gave us a tour of the funky side of Miami Beach and Lincoln Road.

We then took an Uber to the airport and flew home.

 **STAR TREK**