

TRAVEL AROUND THE WORLD

By Chase Binder

Imagine packing for a four-month journey! Viking arranged for the Harris's bags to be picked up a week ahead of time...insurance against lost luggage disasters.



Even though they live right across the street, friends Bruce and Lorraine Harris email or text often. Sometimes it's a one-liner—"wanna hit Tea Garden for lunch?" Sometimes it's an alert—"there's a flock of wild turkeys under your back deck!" But this week's email was different. "We're somewhere out in the Pacific Ocean and I just had a two-pound broiled lobster for dinner!" crowed Bruce.

You see, the Harris's have just embarked on an around-the-world cruise. Yes, it's the trip of their lifetime, although they have done a good bit of traveling. Yes, it's an expensive trip, although they did the math and figured that this particular voyage would save them many, many thousands of dollars. And yes, it's going to be a long time on one ship—four months, to be exact—but it's also an extremely efficient way to tick destinations off their Bucket List.

For the Harris's, the idea fell into place about a year ago. They had recently completed a significant phase of their post-retirement plan, building a home and relocating to Bow to be near family. They had enjoyed a European river cruise with Viking Cruises, were impressed with the company and began to think about other destinations. Then, just as that Bucket List started calling out to them, Viking sent a promotion they just couldn't refuse—sailing around the world on Viking's brand-new ocean-going ship, the Viking Sun. "Just five cabins left," Viking said. "Check out the inclusions if you sign up within 48 hours!" How could they resist?

Serious cruisers know that booking a maiden voyage can be a boon. Cruise lines will often toss out a cornucopia of offers to fill those

cabins—beginning with low prices, often lower than even repositioning cruises. The longer the cruise, the more perks can be tossed in. Free laundry. Free Wi-Fi and internet access. Free drinks—sometimes just wine and beer, sometimes a full bar—a \$4800 savings for the Harris's. They'll cover expenses like getting visas for all the countries on the itinerary—in the Harris's case, \$600 each right there! How about First-Class airfare on each end of the cruise? How about including gratuities? Imagine gratuities at \$14-20/day on a four-month cruise! Not only are these very common enticements, you can sometimes negotiate with the cruise line to get even more.

Some cruisers have the confidence and experience to book maiden voyages themselves. But the Harris's decided having a bit of help was called for. They walked into the AAA office on Fort Eddy Road and asked, "can you help us book this around-the-world cruise?" They were greeted with wide smiles and soon had a dedicated agent, John Godfrey, to help them navigate the process.

And when you're facing four months at sea, especially on a ship's maiden voyage, the process can be daunting. What if the construction runs behind and the departure date is pushed back? You'll need flexibility (though delays can be another boon—sometimes cruise lines will refund your money and offer a free cruise in addition). How to decide on four months of excursions? The Harris's had to peruse excursion offers for 67 excursions in 55 ports around the world—literally! Then there's the weather. The Harris's had to get to Los Angeles for a January 5 embarkation. Remember the cyclone bomb storm? Yup—it arrived smack in the middle of their flights across the country!

Navigating all these potential obstacles requires planning as well as knowing when to cede control to the professionals. Bruce and Lorraine reached out to us for advice on excursions to destinations we were familiar with—Bali, Australia, New Zealand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Egypt and more. We reached out to friends who had experience in other destinations like India.

Most importantly, the Harris's had AAA and Viking Cruises watching their backs in terms of getting to LA on time. The Viking Sun's itinerary called for an immediate 6 days across the Pacific to French Polynesia. There would be no opportunity to join the ship a day or so after departure. When Bud and I cruise, we often make our own arrangements getting to and from the ship—especially when traveling in the spring, summer and fall. Winter is another matter. Bruce and Lor-

raine had planned to begin with an overnight in Boston Wednesday the 3rd of January before flying to LA the next day, overnighing in LA and sailing off on the 5th. I dropped them off at the Concord Bus station and noon on Wednesday with hugs all around and a big "Bon Voyage!"

By 2:30 the forecasters were screeching about the incoming cyclone bomb storm! Enter Viking Cruises, AAA and the technology of instant communications with Wi-Fi and cell phones. Viking Cruises had a three-man team watching travel arrangements for the passengers on this trip and reached out to the Harris's and AAA to get ahead of the problem. Bingo! By 3:30 the Harris's were in a limo headed to Bradley International Airport in Hartford to hop on a 7:30 flight to Dulles in DC. They would overnight there and fly to LA the next day, arriving with time to spare. Flights and hotels were canceled and re-booked, limos secured—Plan B all managed seamlessly. Crisis averted!

Bruce and Lorraine are now aboard the Viking Sun—first stop The Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia. Bruce emailed that the seas are calm, the temperature is in the mid-sixties and they are beginning to relax. Thanks to satellite-based Wi-Fi, the Harris's will be sending back info on their destinations as well as photos and impressions of the many cultures they will encounter—so watch Travel Talk for updates over the coming months!

If You Go

Viking Cruises (vikingcruises.com, 866-984-5464) is best known for river cruises, but is branching out into around-the-world cruises. Check out worldcruises.com and cruisecritic.com to explore the breadth and depth of offerings from Viking and other cruise lines.

Concord's AAA on Fort Eddy Road (nne.aa.com, 228-0301) is one of the few remaining walk-in full service travel agencies. Travel consultant John Godfrey (godfrey.john@nne.aa.com) helped the Harris's with many of the details of their trip—a process that required patience, confidence and, most of all, time.

Just attaining visas for such an extensive trip can take 2-3 months, so it's important to book a minimum of 8-12 months in advance. Working through AAA can provide a number of benefits from onboard credits and rebates to having the ear of an experienced consultant.

Viking Cruises is one of several lines that have preferred status with AAA, so the lines of communication are always open and productive.



Bow Elementary School Kindergarten 2018-2019

Registration

If you have a child who will be 5 years of age by September 30, 2018, please contact our office at 225-3049.

If you have already pre-registered your child be on the lookout for your registration packets during the week of February 26th. Remember to include a copy of your child's birth certificate, most current physical and immunization record and two proofs of residence (lease, purchase & sales, utility bill).

Dates to Remember:

Kindergarten Parent Information Night - Adult only event
Thursday, April 12th at 6:00PM in the BES cafeteria

Kindergarten Screening Dates
Thursday, May 31st
Friday, June 1st