

We started off the month, on the 5th, with a tour to Middleton Place. This was another of our tours with Robin McCall and Storehouse Tours. Middleton Place is a National Historic Landmark and home to America's Oldest Landscaped Gardens. The house was built in 1775, and originally consisted of three buildings, but unfortunately two were completely destroyed during the Civil War. We had a guided tour of the remaining house which is now a museum. We toured the gardens and grounds on our own, and also enjoyed a delicious country buffet.



We followed that tour, shortly thereafter on the 8th, with something that should be on everyone's "bucket list" - a cruise through the Panama Canal. Once again we traveled with our good friends, John & Barbara. We flew into LAX, where we were picked up by bus for the ride to the port where the Island Princess awaited us. No sooner were we onboard when there was a lifeboat safety drill. We were really ready for that!

The ship made port stops in Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Columbia, and Aruba - but of course the highlight was traveling through the canal itself. The canal opened in 1914 and was transferred over to Panama in 1999. The toll for our cruise ship to use the canal was \$157,000, plus additional fees for pilots and a safety inspector.

We travelled from the Pacific to the Caribbean (westward). On the Pacific Ocean side there are three locks which raise the ship to the level of Lake Gatun. After traversing the lake, there are two more locks to lower the ship to the level of the Caribbean Sea.

The pictures show the first lock gates opening, then the second lock, and finally the third lock with Lake Gatun beyond.

On the lake we passed another cruise ship which was heading west.

On the eastern side, we passed through the final two locks before sailing out into the Caribbean Sea.

The ship barely fit into the locks, and at the next port we could see scuff marks on the sides. Of course there were deck hands already painting over the marks.



Panama Canal Cruise Excursions

Cabo San Lucas, Mexico



San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua



Puntarenas, Costa Rica



Cartagena, Columbia



Oranjestad, Aruba

