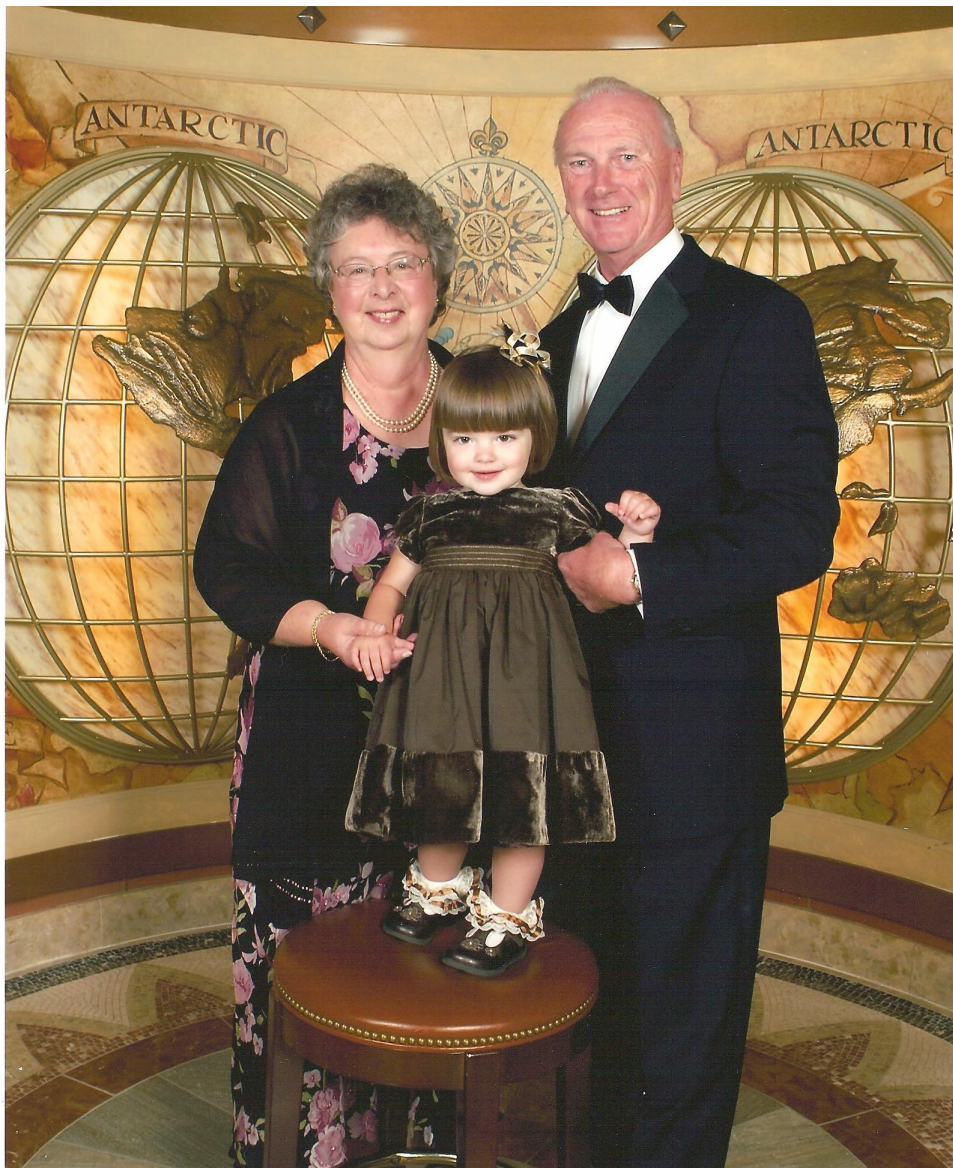


*Cruising with The Princess on board the
Crown Princess.*



*From Quebec City to New York City
September 2010*



Bob and Molly Hillery

August 2010 was the tenth wedding anniversary for Christopher and Cyndi so our gift for them was a cruise through the Canadian Maritime Provinces and New England from Quebec City to New York City. The timing was one that allowed both Cyndi and Christopher to leave their jobs for an extended period and, we hoped, would be about right for the Fall foliage. Unfortunately we were just a little early for the best of the colors and the weather was a little cooler and wetter than we had hoped.

Nevertheless, the trip was very enjoyable and it was lovely to spend an extended dedicated period with our son and daughter-in-law..... and, of course, Samantha, now almost two years old. She was by far the youngest passenger and was a big hit with crew and fellow travelers alike. She certainly lived up to her title of Princess as we sailed for ten days on the Crown Princess.

Canada and New England Cruise, September 2010

Wednesday September 22

We left home soon after 7pm for our dinner at Morton's downtown before driving to the airport Marriott for the night.

Thursday September 23

We were up late (about 9am) and had breakfast in the Concierge Lounge and then relaxed in our room until a little before noon. At that time we got the shuttle to the airport for our 1:30 flight to Montreal. The flight arrived at Dorval airport on time but we then had to clear Immigration, which was a relatively slow process, before picking up our bags, getting some cash from an ATM (also very slow) and walking to the taxi stand. Consequently we were then driving into Montreal in the rush hour, so it was about 5pm when we arrived at the Marriott hotel in the city center.

Our friends Bill and Monica Wallace had arranged to drive down from Ottawa and spend the night with us so we met with them in the lobby shortly after checking in. We had a good chat for an hour before walking a few blocks to a very nice restaurant for a leisurely meal together. It was nice to spend a long evening (capped with a nightcap in the hotel lounge) with them, catching up on events since we last saw them three years ago.

Friday September 24

We met Bill and Monica for breakfast in the Concierge Lounge and then took the Metro to the site of the 1976 Olympics where we planned to visit the Biodome, a four eco-system building converted from the velodrome. Unfortunately the building was closed due to a strike by the staff. Monica had visited this site many times with school classes when she was a teacher but she and Bill had tried to visit it together on two previous occasions. Both times it had been closed – so Bill's record is intact.

As an alternative, we strolled through a part of the huge Botanical Gardens for an hour or so before having a light lunch. It had rained in the night and it was still cool and overcast all morning but not at all uncomfortable for walking around.

After lunch we took the Metro back to the hotel and Bill and Monica left us to return to Ottawa. Molly and I spent some time strolling near the hotel looking at restaurants and had a coffee (it was now warm enough to enjoy sitting outside) before returning to the hotel to relax until dinner.

Tonight we ate at a very nice (and very expensive) Italian restaurant a few blocks north of the hotel.

Saturday September 25

We were up about nine and had breakfast in the hotel (the Concierge Lounge was closed, it being Saturday) and then we packed ready to leave for Quebec. We had a Starbucks coffee in the hotel around 11am and then simply walked from the hotel to the railway station via underground walkways.

The train left on time at 1pm and we were served a very nice lunch with salad and dessert and coffee as well as all the wine we could drink. The train made three stops before arriving in Quebec City at 4pm. The weather deteriorated en route and it was raining quite heavily for the final hour of the journey. On arrival in Quebec we took a short taxi ride to the Courtyard where we were to stay for two nights.

After checking in we took a short walk into the walled old town (our hotel is right at one of the gates) and selected a restaurant for dinner. It was drizzling a little and there was a cold wind so we soon returned to the hotel and relaxed until dinner. The meal was good – although perhaps a little too filling in my case – and was the first one on this trip where the bill was less than \$100. The restaurant was crowded and very European in nature; it's amazing how French this city is, despite being so close to the US border.

Sunday September 26

We were up quite late (about 9) and walked into the old town for a crepe breakfast. As in many parts of France, crepes (savory and sweet) are very popular and there are several cafes here which serve nothing else.

It was bitterly cold with a strong wind blowing as we continued into the heart of the old town. The walled area of the city is on top of the hill overlooking the St Lawrence River and hence is quite exposed to the elements.



We walked as far as the *Chateau Frontenac*, the huge hotel that seems to symbolize Quebec, and then up further to the citadel. Quebec occupies a strategic point on the River and was the site of many battles between the British and French prior to the Revolutionary War and saw additional conflicts with the new American States. Obviously it ultimately remained under British Rule and became part of the Confederation, then the Dominion and finally the Constitutional Monarchy of Canada.

Both the city and the Province have retained a very strong French flavor, however, and, while all of Canada is officially bilingual, this area and some others to the East are as French as anywhere in the European country. All road signs, etc are in French (only) and, while English is understood and spoken in the tourist areas, there is no doubt that French is the first language.

There has always been a minority voice for a "Quebec Libre" and about 15 years ago it reached a peak which took a referendum to curtail it. It appears that there are more important things to worry about today (such as the local and

global economy) and little is heard from the Separatists, although the Provincial Government still has a very strong representation by those with a separatist bent.



shorter
tour
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Quebec City

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Although not particularly dramatic, it was a pleasant drive and an easy way to see a little

In the afternoon we visited the Musee du Fort to see a diorama on the battles that have taken place in and around Quebec, including the most famous in which the leaders of both sides (Montcalm and Wolfe) were killed in what amounted to a ten minute battle on the Plains of Abraham just west of the citadel. It was an interesting half hour presentation and added a lot to our understanding of the importance of this city in North America's history.

Tonight we dined at Le Saint Amour, a very French and very high class restaurant not too far from the hotel. We had an excellent meal; a five course table d'hote with each small course presented beautifully with impeccable service. The service was sufficiently relaxed, without feeling slow, that the meal took just over 2 ½ hours. It was certainly the best meal we have had in quite some time and not inordinately expensive.

Monday September 27

It was almost nine again when we got up and went into the Old Town for breakfast. This time we chose McDonald's – a stark contrast to the dinner we had enjoyed last evening. We then returned to the hotel to pack and sit for a while before checking out. We left our bags and took another stroll through the Old Town before getting a taxi at our hotel to take us to the cruise ship. It was now a warm and sunny afternoon but more rain was forecast for tonight and tomorrow.

The trip down the hill was very short and we were soon through the check-in line, only to find that the security line was rather slow. However, by 3pm we were settled in our stateroom and had had a light lunch by 4:30. We then settled in the room to wait for our next door neighbors to arrive.



By 7:45 they had still not appeared *Settling on board the Crown Princess*

so we went for dinner in the Da Vinci dining room. Service was

quite leisurely, unlike previous voyages, but perhaps it was more to do with the relatively small numbers on board. Many, it seems, had taken advantage of the evening in port to dine in the city.

When we got back to our room around 9:30 we were informed that the other Hillerys had arrived so we went to the buffet dining area on the 15th deck and soon found the three of them. Samantha was wide awake and eating well so we waited with them until it was time to go to bed. Even then Samantha was fascinated by the fact that she could walk between the two rooms via the deck and she was reluctant to stop playing and go to sleep.



Tuesday September 28

It was a rainy day as we awoke (about 9am) and while we ate breakfast on deck 15. Molly then went to the library while I walked about 1 ½ miles around the Promenade Deck. It was about 11 before our neighbors were up and about so we immediately went ashore and soon found somewhere for lunch. It was raining, sometimes heavier than others, but we continued via the funicular to the Old Town on top of the hill.



Samantha in a rainy Quebec City



We



spent about two hours walking around – mostly in a steady drizzle – and returned to the ship at 3:30. We made a dinner reservation and then relaxed for a while before the life boat drill. The ship sailed from Quebec around 5pm; the rain had stopped and the clouds had lifted some, so we had a good view of the city and some of the Fall colors as we headed east down the St Lawrence River.

We all met up for dinner at 7:30. Again the service was quite leisurely but Samantha – dressed in her black velvet dress – was very good and sat happily in her high chair for the whole two hours. She ate and did some drawing and was generally treated as a princess by all the crew and many of the passengers.

Wednesday September 29

This was a day “at sea” and, with the cloud and fog over the River, we might just as well have been at sea. We couldn’t see land on either side of the ship even though we

were technically still in the river early in the day. Molly and I went for breakfast around 9 and then I went for a 3.5 mile walk around the Promenade Deck. I saw another cruise ship going upstream and we passed the occasional commercial vessel, but otherwise we seemed to be totally alone. There was also a considerable movement of the ship and we both thought that it was more than we had experienced the entire voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in May.

We had a "British Pub Lunch" at 1pm with Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha and then Samantha played in the kids' area for quite some time while Grandma and Granddad rested. The weather improved some in the afternoon and we caught occasional glimpses of land in the far distance but for the most part we were completely "at sea", now well into the Gulf of St Lawrence.

Tonight was the first of two formal nights so we left our staterooms around 7pm to run the gauntlet of the official photographers before our 7:30 dinner reservation. We had one "photo shoot", which included all five of us and another of Samantha with her grandparents. She of course looked beautiful in her brown velvet and silk dress and was once again the highlight at dinner where the waiters couldn't do enough for her.



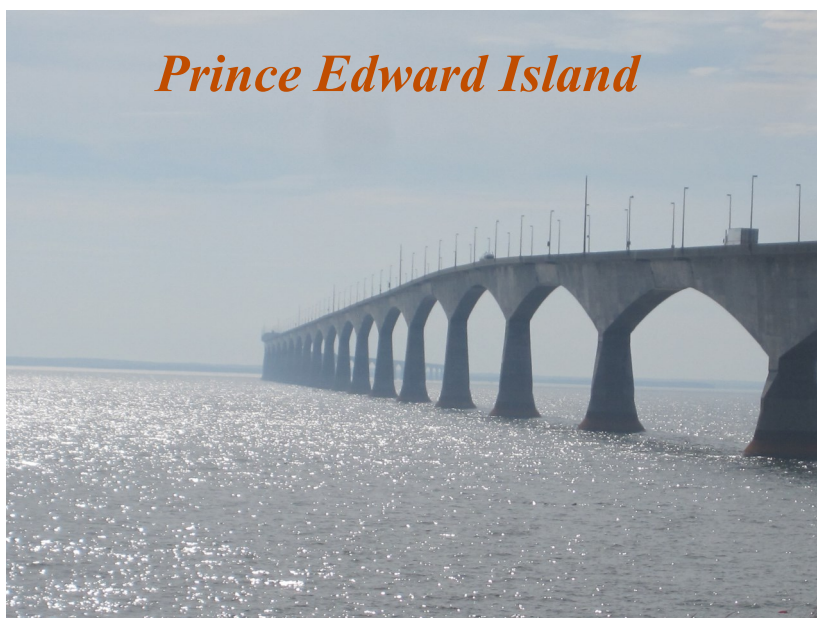


Thursday September 30

It was cloudy when we woke but as the morning progressed it became sunnier and much warmer. By noon, when we left for our shore excursions (Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha to the Hop on/Hop off bus, Molly and I on a panoramic drive) it was very pleasant.

Our panoramic drive took us from Charlottetown west along the south coast to the relatively new bridge which joins Prince Edward Island with New Brunswick. The bridge was opened in 1997 and replaced much of the car ferry services which to that point had been the only way of getting to the island. The bridge itself is 8 miles long and reaches a height of almost 200 feet in the center. Since New Brunswick shares a border with Maine and Quebec, it is now possible to drive from anywhere in the US or Canada directly on to Prince Edward Island.

The drive to the bridge was through farming country; potatoes are the major crop on the Island and there is some beef and dairy cattle farming. Fishing – particularly lobster – is also very big here. Tourism is the second largest industry and, of course, PEI is the home of Anne of Green Gables. We didn't take the tour to see the house since we had seen it last time we were here and preferred the shorter coach tour this time. Although not particularly dramatic, it was a very pleasant drive and an easy way to see a little of the Island and learn some of its history.



We arrived back at the ship around 4:30 and sailed shortly thereafter. The captain announced that we were about to experience some rough seas and strong winds, due to the remnants of a tropical depression which was now over Nova Scotia. It stayed relatively calm throughout the evening, however, so we were able to enjoy our dinner as well as some “play time” on our balcony afterwards. It was at this time that we received notice that all shore excursions the next day requiring buses in Sydney had been cancelled, not as a result of the weather but “factors beyond the control of Princess”. This suggested some work-related dispute in the city. We were still hopeful to get ashore (via tender, in this port) and do some exploration on our own.

Friday October 1

We were awakened by an announcement from the captain telling us that he had had to abort the visit to Sydney in its entirety. This was indeed due to the weather, the high winds not allowing a safe approach to the intended docking area. So, the bottom line was that Sydney would be missed and we were to spend this day at sea, slowly heading towards Halifax.

The seas were definitely heavier this morning and 7 to 12 foot waves were experienced. As I took my walk around the Promenade Deck, the sea looked very rough and the wind across the bow was almost strong enough to blow you over. The weather was not expected to improve before Saturday afternoon.

So, we spent the day on board; breakfast followed by a rest (or walk) period, followed by lunch (all five of us), followed by a little more play and relaxation. Then we had dinner together once more and prepared for another night of high seas.



Saturday October 2

It turned out that the overnight sailing was not as rough as we had expected (“Moderate Seas, up to 7’ waves”) and we were docked at the quayside in Halifax well before we woke up. Molly and I had breakfast on the Sun Deck on a cloudy but mild morning. There were a few heavy showers throughout the morning but by the time we started our shore excursion it was dry. We had all chosen the Hop on/Hop off bus for our exploration of *Halifax* so we set out together a little before noon. There are three routes that can be taken; two lasting 30 minutes each and one which covered the majority of the downtown area in one hour. We chose this latter as a starting point and we got a good introduction to the city from the guide.

Halifax is the second largest harbor in the world (behind Sydney, Australia) and consequently is very busy with commercial traffic as well as cruise liners. It has two massive container ship docking areas and is a major distribution center for both Canada and the US.



After almost completing the circuit on the first bus we got off and separated for a while to select appropriate places to eat. Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha chose a crepe café while Molly and I visited one of the two Starbucks in Halifax. Coincidentally we met again at the bus stop to take us up to the citadel. This fortress was built by the British at the time of continuing wars with France over the New World but was never attacked and never fired a shot in anger.

Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha chose to stay at the Citadel and tour inside while Molly and I took the bus back down the hill and picked up the third in the series which took us along the waterfront. The area has been changed from warehouses to boutique shops and restaurants and looks like a nice place to simply stroll along the harbor’s edge. This time, however, we stayed on the bus which took us back to the ship in plenty of time for our 4:30 “all aboard”



time. Our neighbors were back on board just about the deadline time. Again we had a very pleasant dinner with everyone present. The seas were quite rough as we left Halifax and became even rougher as we headed further out into the Atlantic. However, so far none of our party has suffered from motion sickness.

Sunday October 3

Molly and I were up about 9am again and had breakfast sitting in an open area on Deck 15 as the ship docked in **St John, New Brunswick**. It was quite cool but the sunshine from a clear blue sky made it feel pleasant.

Christopher had decided on a photography tour for his shore excursion here and Cyndi and I had tickets for a jet boat ride on the "Reversing Falls". That left Samantha to entertain Grandma for about two hours, which apparently she did very well.

Cyndi and I took the tour trolley into town where we had a brief stop at the covered city market; it reminded me of many similar markets in the UK. There

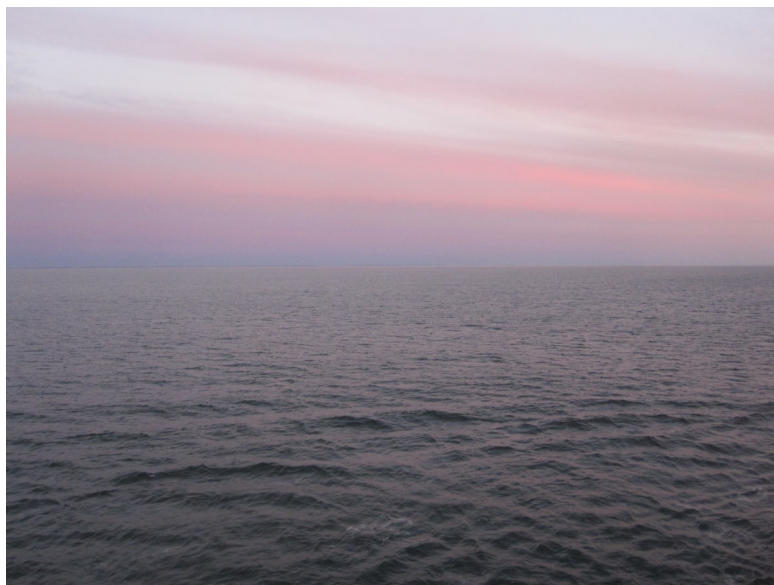


was lots of local produce and plenty of souvenir stalls for the tourists.

When we arrived at the location for the jet boat ride we could easily see just how turbulent the water was. It was at a point where the St John River is constricted severely and, with a 450 mile head of steam, the water created a Category 4 White Water stretch of about 1/2 mile.

The tides in the Bay of Fundy, into which this river flows, rise and fall by 28 feet in a six hour period. At low tide (which was the situation at the time of our ride) the river flows naturally downstream and the rapids are at their peak. As the tide rises, it finds a null point with the river upstream of the rapids and this stretch is calm. At even higher tide, the river actually reverses direction and the incoming tidal waters create rapids in an upstream direction.

The jet boat ride itself lasted about twenty minutes during which the pilot found whirlpools and extremely high wave crests which we had to experience. He also raced the boat towards the cliff sides of the river, only to spin around just a few feet from the rocks. All in all it was a very exciting (not to say frightening) ride during which there were several times where everyone just had to hold their breath until we were through the high turbulence area. Needless to say, despite the issuance of water-proofs, every part of the body was soaking wet. It reminded me very much of a similar experience we had at Iguazu Falls where we were taken under the waterfalls for an equally wet ride.



We arrived back

A Very Rough Ride!

at the ship around 3:30 to find that Christopher had been back for about an hour and had provided Molly with some additional babysitting help. Tonight we sailed from the Canadian waters we had enjoyed for the past week and headed towards Bar Harbor, Maine, our re-entry point into the US. Bad weather was predicted for the overnight hours but the ship seemed to handle it well and it wasn't unduly rocky.

Canadian Sunset

Monday October 4

This morning we had to clear US Immigration (about a one hour long process) and get ashore via tender (another hour waiting for the five minute ride). Samantha had had to be awakened early for the immigration process so she and Cyndi stayed on board while Christopher joined us for the trip ashore.

We had lunch in one of the many cafes on the main street of Bar Harbor and then strolled a little longer until our tour time of 1:30. The weather was pleasantly warm and mostly sunny. It was also very clear so we anticipated some good views during the tour.

When we checked in for the bus, Cyndi and Samantha were at the head of the line so we were all able to take the tour after all. The majority of the tour was in Acadia National Park and included riding to the summit of Cadillac Mountain – the highest mountain (1530 feet) on the Eastern seaboard. We had some fabulous views of the harbor where our ship was anchored as well



Downtown Bar Harbor, Maine

as the mountains to the west on the
we were able to take in the whole 360 degree panorama.

On the way back to Bar Harbor we visited a small museum for a talk on lobster fishing (quite amusing but not very educational)

mainland. In fact, from the summit



Views around Cadillac Mountain

and a former "cottage" (read "mansion") of one of
on this island. We got the last tender back to the ship at 5:30 and were underway shortly thereafter.

the millionaires who had summer homes

Tuesday October 5

We were at our berth in Boston when we awoke and looked out on a very dreary morning. We had breakfast and then went ashore, using a shuttle bus to get from the ship to downtown. Molly and I walked a mile or so of the Freedom Trail in Boston, passing many historical points associated with the early settlers and the fight for independence. The rain was only a steady drizzle so it didn't really affect our itinerary.

Meanwhile Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha visited the aquarium, again using the shuttle to get there and back to the ship.



This evening was the second of our



*On the
Freedom
Trail
In Boston*



formal nights on board.



Wednesday October 6

Today our ship was anchored off Newport, Rhode Island in relatively thick fog and rain. We had a tour scheduled for the afternoon and it was still raining heavily as we took the tender ashore. The rain did abate, however, and we were able to enjoy our bus ride through Newport and specifically the mansions that had been built here in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These were summer homes for the rich from New York (the Astors, Vanderbilts, etc) who built huge mansions for the 10 week "season" away from the city.



Many
of the
NEWPORT



mansions have been converted to condominiums and a number are owned by a Trust which provides the upkeep with monies from tours such as ours. In attempting to outdo each other (and essentially form their own "aristocracy") the mansions were decorated in grand style with European imports and copied many of the palaces and castles of the Old World. The one we visited had an 80 by 40 foot ballroom which would not have been out of place in Paris or Vienna, for example.

Thursday October 7

We sailed past the Statue of Liberty early this morning and were berthed at Manhattan Pier 88 by 7am. This was the same berth from which we had sailed on the Queen Mary II in May and we had the same wonderful views of the city as we had a quick breakfast before disembarking. Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha are spending an additional few days in New England visiting friends while Molly and I are now on our way to Cincinnati to prepare for our next trip!