

4/23/13 - Day 107- Belem, Brazil – Market Place – Fort Belem – Muddy Amazon:

The Amsterdam arrived at the entrance to Baía de Marajó about 7am but there was still about an hour of sailing up the bay to our anchorage in the Amazon delta region about 15 miles from Belem. The Amazon delta is a huge piece of real estate that includes several cities including Belem. The main stream of the Amazon was 200 miles north of us but during the rainy season the water of the Amazon spreads out and courses through the bay where we were anchored. The various water ways that fan out from the Amazon River through the delta may have different local names, like Baía de Marajó where we were anchored but they are known collectively as the Amazon River or “Rio Amazonas”.

The location of Belem on a map of South America is shown on the right. Belem is a very metropolitan city with a population of 1.4 million people. Belem is the capital of the



Para State in Brazil. We didn't have a formal tour of Belem booked so we were planning to take the free shuttle bus from the nearby village of Icoaracy to the market place in the city of Belem. The map on the left shows the places in Belem that we planned to visit today.

The distant city skyline of Belem, as shown below, looked like a large modern city and we were eager to explore it.



Since we were anchored away from a dock it was necessary to take a tender boat from the Amsterdam to the shore. It was going to be a little different today because instead of the Amsterdam tender boats we would be riding on ferry boats provided by the local marine services in Belem.

About 9am the double decker ferry boat named Luis Eduardo pulled alongside the Amsterdam and we got on board. Although we initially had some misgivings about using a Brazilian tender boat, it turned out to be a comfortable and fun ride to



the shore that everyone enjoyed, as shown on the left.

As we approached the shore of Icoaracy Village we could see the buses waiting to shuttle us into Belem or take passengers on

whatever tour they may have been arranged for today.

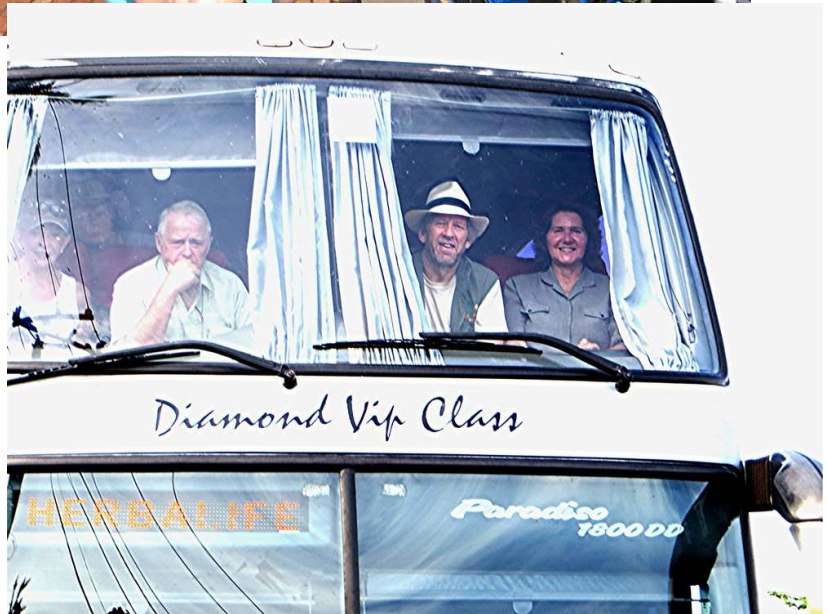


Although the local Brazilian crew had run the ferry boat we recognized the stewards from the Amsterdam who were there to help people onto the pier.

We made our way up the pier and onto dry land.



As we approached our shuttle bus we noticed that friends, Lee and Lorraine were seated in the front seat of a bus (on the right in the picture) that was loaded and just now pulling away for the trip into Belem. That looked like a great idea so we got the same seats when we boarded our bus.



The bus was very comfortable and we cruised along taking pictures of the passing homes and other scenes of interest. The following are some of the pictures we took on the way to Belem.



This hearty tree growing out of a tile roof, as shown on the left, seemed to be doing quite well in its unlikely location.





Nearly all of the gasoline stations around Belem had their prices clearly posted so we were quickly able to get a picture showing the price of gas, as shown on the left. Regular (Comum) Gasoline was selling for 2.899 Brazilian Real (BRL) per liter. At the current exchange rate for the US dollar that would be equivalent to \$1.45 USD per liter. Assuming 4 liters per gallon that works out to \$5.80 USD per gallon.

The Supra Aditivada gas was selling for 2.929 BRL/l, or \$5.84 per gallon. The Ethanol from their vast sugar production was the least expensive at 2.599 BRL/l, or \$5.20 USD per

gallon. With all we had heard about the production of ethanol from sugar cane in Brazil we were surprised there wasn't more of a price break for buying ethanol.

For much of the way in to Belem city there was a well protected bicycle lane. We saw that many people were using this energy efficient option.

We were quickly getting used to vehicle traffic driving on the correct (that is - right) side of the road, just like in the good ole' USA.



This unpretentious church caught our eye because even on a Tuesday, the parking lot was full. Maybe they were preparing for the big event tomorrow on 24 April,



As we approached Belem the high rise buildings started to appear, as shown on the left and below.



We particularly liked this building on the right with the super balconies.

The bus wound its way around the crowded streets of Belem and soon deposited us at the corner of President Vargas Avenue and Castilho Franco Boulevard. There were four college age men and women there to greet us. They gave us maps and little souvenirs of Belem. They spoke good English and helped us get oriented for what we wanted to do with our time in Belem. We appreciated this tourist friendly gesture on the part of the tourist industry of Belem.



One of the first things we noticed was the striking pattern of dark and light tiles that made up the sidewalk, as shown on the left and below. We had seen this sidewalk pattern in other cities with a Portuguese heritage and it made sense to be seeing it again here in Brazil.



There was a large building between the Boulevard and the waterfront on the bay. The building used to be a railroad station but had been renovated and was in the process of being turned into a shopping mall tourist attraction. We walked along the water front of the bay and enjoyed the view and cool breeze off the water. Soon we came to the booths of the market place. It seemed appropriate that the first vendor we should see would be a fellow cracking Brazil nuts, as shown on the right. He was bagging up the large pieces of Brazil nut meat he got from each nut and selling them to people passing by.



Our observation of the Brazil nut vendor was followed by a long sequence of vendors selling food, clothing and hardware items. The following pictures show some of the scenes we were able to photograph.





At the end of the fruit, vegetables and craft market area was the large fish market. The display of Dourada and P. Amarela fish looked appealing and it is shown on the left.

We passed through the fish market and then came to a small harbor where the boats were packed in tightly, as shown on the right. A couple of white herons were in the area and we caught one of them in this photo.



One of the boats had some pigs in a pen, as shown on the left. Presumably they were ready to be sold at the nearby market.

The boat harbor had a noxious smell about it. The refuse from the nearby fish market may have been tossed in the water or left on the dock. A large flock of buzzards had been attracted by this tasty treat just lying there and they had

congregated to enjoy the feast, as shown below.



We hustled passed this scene and further down the water front to the Forte Do Belem which is also known as Forte Do Presepio. This fort was built in 1616 and had largely fallen into disrepair until it was a restored a few years ago. The fort has some of the old canon on display. They were used to protect the city from other European powers as the Portuguese struggled to start their colony here in Brazil. A picture taken on the wall of the fort, showing three of the canon, is shown on the right. The skyline of the



modern city of Belem is shown in the background. While Orlin had explored the Forte do Presepio Barbara had waited outside with Bernard and Irma, our Canadian friends who live next door to us on the Amsterdam. This picture on the left, taken from the Fort wall, shows Barbara waving from below while Irma (green shirt) and Bernard (with hat) are taking a look around.

We left the Forte do Presepio and walked to a nearby open square. Across the square was the beautiful Cathedral de Se, shown in this picture on the right.



From the Cathedral we started to retrace our steps back to where we could catch the shuttle bus back to Icoaracy Village. Along the way we saw a bit of city artwork that unfortunately is nearly lost in the chaos of traffic that flows around it. It was a mural painted on the wall of a large building, as shown on the right. It portrayed a city street adorned with awnings and bustling people and the painted street connected with the real city street where we were standing. We had seen



similar art form in the old city of Quebec in Canada. In that case it was in a pedestrian friendly environment so that it could be thoroughly enjoyed. In this setting in Belem, the street traffic was intense with little sidewalk space. Although the artwork appeared to be very good, it was difficult for us to view and appreciate. According to our map it was in the vicinity of the Museum of Art but the heat and humidity of the day had taken a toll on us so we continued on our way to the bus stop and didn't investigate further.



Close to where we saw the painting of buildings on a city street was this attractive real building, shown in the picture on the left. It was clear that our tour of Belem was going to be too short for us to really get the whole picture of what this city had to offer.

We found our return shuttle bus and were soon on our way back to Icoaracy Village in air conditioned comfort. Again we passed by several striking scenes, like the one on the right, where the soaring high rise buildings gave a sense of a dynamic city in motion.



Then in the shadow of the high rise buildings there was the graffiti marked street side buildings like those shown below. Graffiti like this seems to be a part of the culture and no-doubt carries a message for those with a better knowledge of Brazil than we have.



Along the way back to Icoaracy Village were more examples of comfortable looking homes, like the one shown on the right and below.



We also passed a Navy Base and an airport with some vintage airplanes parked on the apron as shown below.



We arrived back in Icoaracy Village after about a 35 minute ride from Belem. As we approached the tender boat pier Barbara spotted a sign that would serve nicely to record the visit of her library card to Belem, Brazil, as shown on the right. Without the benefit of knowing any Portuguese it appeared the purpose of the sign was for the Prefecture of Belem to claim credit for investment of 409,905.33 Brazilian Real in the refurbishment of the pier that the tender boats were using. It did appear to be newly built and in good shape.



Even though we were on a large river, it was low tide in the nearby Atlantic and the water level on the river had dropped many feet leaving boats high and dry around the pier as shown on the left. Apparently this was an expected routine occurrence.



We boarded a boat and enjoyed another ride on our Brazilian tender boat as shown on the right.

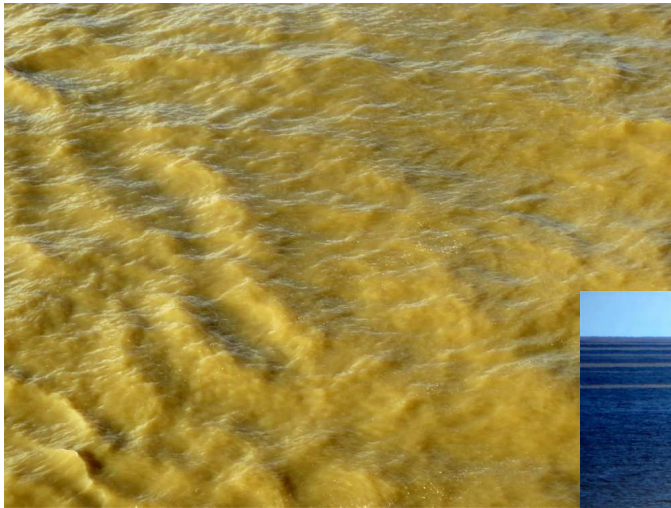


The Luiz Eduardo ferry boat that served as a tender for us is shown below. Although the analogy is far from perfect, this image brought a smile and memories of the movie “African Queen” with Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn many years ago.



We boarded the Amsterdam and as usual enjoyed the return to the relief of our air conditioned room and a shower. The Amsterdam got underway about 5:30pm as we were going to dinner. We were bound for Devil’s Island in French Guiana. We expect to

arrive there on Thursday after one day at sea. Even though we were many miles out to sea, on Wednesday, while cruising towards Devil’s Island, we saw much of the muddy water of the Amazon, as shown by these pictures on the left and below.



Finally, about 5pm on Wednesday, about 300 miles from Belem, we were clear of the muddy Amazon water in the Atlantic. Tomorrow we land at Devil’s Island.