

4/21/13 -Day 105-Fortaleza, Brazil-Central Market-Cathedral-Wind Turbines: We arrived in the port of Fortaleza, Brazil about 7am. The location of Fortaleza is shown in the map on the right.



The picture below shows the city skyline as seen from the outer harbor. Beyond the wind turbines was a nearly solid wall of high rise



buildings in the business district. Fortaleza is the capital city of Ceara State in Brazil and it has a population of 2.5 million people. The chief exports of Fortaleza are coffee, cotton, carnauba wax, beans, rice, sugar, rubber and rum. While in Fortaleza we learned that other exports include the components of large wind turbines for the production of electricity.

As the Amsterdam moved in to the harbor and approached our dock we could see that our location was going to be in an industrial part of the harbor. There were large grain silos for storage as well as cranes and conveyor belts to move product in and out of the cargo ships, as shown below.



We had signed up for a Cruise Specialists International (CSI) tour in Fortaleza. The tour was going to show us the key features of the city including the beaches, Central Market,



Cathedral, the old Teatro Jose Da Alencar and end up with refreshments before returning to the ship. We joined our tour group, including friends Lee and Lorraine, and then went out on the dock on our way to the bus parking area. There was a little grumbling as we coped with the normal features of a hard working industrial dock, as shown on the left.

We boarded our bus along with 28 other passengers

and then met our guide whose name was Alber. Alber's first language was Portuguese but he spoke good English and was eager to tell us all about Fortaleza. Our bus got started and we pulled out of the port area. Right away we noticed that traffic was on the "correct" side of the street, that is, the right side like we have back in the good ole' USA. We had finally gotten away from countries with a strong British history.

The first thing Alber did was take us along the beach near the port. There was a lot of construction going on to upgrade the area in anticipation of more tourist traffic when the

World Cup Soccer Competition takes place in Fortaleza next year. Some of the ongoing work on sidewalks near the beach is shown in the picture on the right.



As we rode along we saw a gas station posting of current gasoline prices and snapped a quick picture as shown on the left. Gasoline was selling for 2.779 Brazilian Real per liter. At the current exchange rate for currency that price is equivalent to \$1.39 USD per liter. Assuming 4 liters per gallon that yields a price of \$5.56 USD per gallon of gas, a little higher price than currently typical in US cities.



Alber told us that cashew nuts were produced in large amounts in Brazil and the Brazilians loved them. Then he brought out the fruit of the cashew tree, as shown below.



We were surprised to learn the cashew nut grows from the bottom of a soft fruit that looks like an apple. As seen in the picture on the right the cashew nut protruding from the bottom of the fruit has the traditional crescent shape like a cashew nut but in this image the nut is curving toward the viewer. Alber said the nut is broken off from the main fruit and after the shell is removed the meat inside is prepared for market.



We were distracted by the cashew nut demonstration and almost missed seeing a Sam's Club store with its huge sign, as shown on the left. Obviously, WalMart and Sam's Club have made an investment in Brazil.

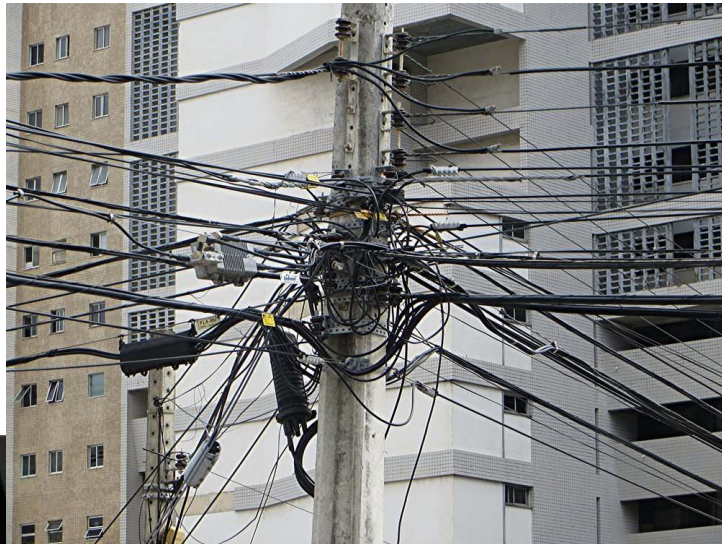
Many of the parks had trees showing their colorful foliage, as shown below.



We drove by some of the low cost housing in this part of town, as shown below.



There was also some sign that the rapid growth of the city may have stressed the cable and electric wiring technology a bit in this town, as shown on the right. We didn't see any loose ends so maybe it is all working.



Then we moved on to the business district where we saw some examples of modern high rise buildings like the one shown on the left.

Here and there about the city were the black and white tile patterns in the sidewalk, as shown below. We had seen these patterns before and they can be traced back to the Portuguese heritage of Brazil.



We had been told of the marvelous “Mercado Central” or Central Market of Fortaleza. It is an enclosed market area filled with all sorts of Brazilian craft items and manufactured goods. Our bus was approaching the Central Market when we saw that a sidewalk vendor market was in full swing with lots of customers, as shown on the right. Our guide, Alber, said prices of goods from these sidewalk vendors might be lower but the quality was not as good as could be found in the enclosed Central Market.



Our bus parked and we were directed to the entrance to the Central Market shown on the left.

Barbara saw an opportunity to document her library card's visit to Fortaleza and made the most of the moment with this photo on the right.



Inside the Central Market we were amazed at the size of the building and its imaginative interior architecture, as shown in these photos on the right and below.

We browsed through three of the four busy floors of the Central Market and then it was time to go. It was all interesting and well presented but we didn't find anything that couldn't be left behind.



After the Central Market our bus took us to the nearby Catholic City Cathedral, shown in the picture on the right.

We were told that taking photos inside the Cathedral was permitted. With some misgivings we quietly went inside and took a few pictures of the beautiful interior.

Some photos are shown below.





We had been told that since our visit was on a Sunday, most of the city would be shut down. However, we saw that bars and places of entertainment in the Central Market and Cathedral area were open and doing a good business, as shown in this photo on the left.

However, further away we drove through areas where businesses were closed up tightly as shown by this picture on the right. Our guide pointed out that it was good time to tour around the city because traffic was much lighter than it would be on a normal business day.



The next stop on our tour was at the venerable old theater called Teatro Jose De Alencar, with the beautiful entrance shown on the left. It was built in 1910 and has been in continuous service since then.

We stepped inside the theater and were impressed with the elegance and charm of the room. There was extensive use of wrought iron in the balcony railings and the theater seats were of wicker, as shown in the photo below. Alber said the use of wicker,

with the ventilation it provided was particularly appropriate for those early years before air conditioning became available. Alber said all the furnishings were original but we suspect that at least the wicker has been replaced a few times.



The ceiling of the theater, as shown on the right, was a marvelous work of art that must have kept theatergoers looking upward frequently.



surf and beaches in the area.

This district around the English Bridge marks the center of Fortaleza's nightlife. The picture on the right shows one of the restaurants and the broad promenade that attracts people for their night life entertainment.



Our next stop was at an area of Fortaleza known as the Praia de Iracema. One of the prominent features of the area is a pier, shown on the left, that goes by the unlikely name of "Pontes dos Ingles" or English Bridge. We were going to get some nice views of the surrounding beach area from the end of the pier but unfortunately the pier was closed today. However, swimmers were enjoying the

From the English Bridge we went a short distance to a restaurant called Tia Nair where we had refreshments. The food and beverages were included in the cost of the tour. It turned out to be an excellent restaurant well set up and staffed for the tourist bus crowd. We had a good time at our table with friends Lee and Lorraine plus Jane whom we just met on the tour. Near the end of our stay we got this picture of our little crowd, as shown below.



Barbara

Jane Lee Lorraine

Then it was time to take some pictures at the beach across the street from the restaurant. There was a prominent statue called “Fiber”, shown on the right. It depicts a person bending a fiber with all her strength. It seemed to make a statement about high strength fibers that we find in golf clubs and wind turbine blades. Maybe it was inspired by the wind turbine business in town.





In another view from the beach it was possible to look across the bay and see the white superstructure of the Amsterdam. This must be one of the most beautiful parts of Fortaleza.

Back at the Tia Nair Restaurant it was time for our tour group to load up the bus and head back to the Amsterdam. As we were approaching the bus we noticed that a police car had parked very close to the back of our bus, as shown on the right. Some of our group had been noticing that police cars were seen frequently in the vicinity of all the buses carrying hundreds of Amsterdam tourists. This police car may have been assigned to us. We never noticed any signs of hostility or civil unrest during the day but didn't mind a little extra security if someone thought it was necessary.



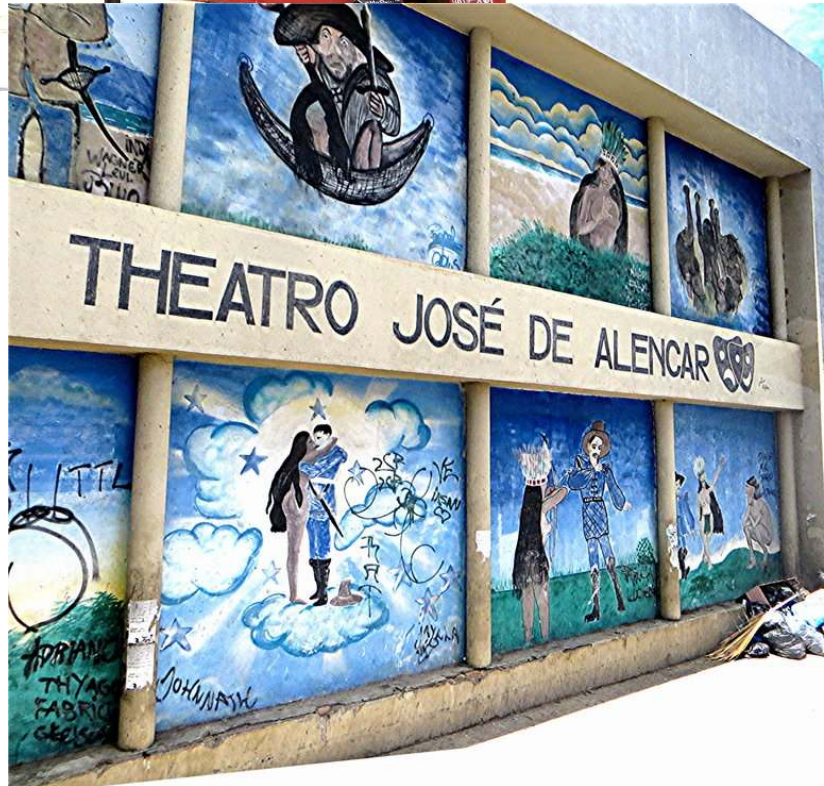
As we rode back to the port we passed an area in the bay where fishermen anchored their boats, as shown on the right. It appeared that fishing was a significant part of the local economy.



While riding around Fortaleza during our tour we saw several wall murals that were of outstanding quality. It is hard to explain but they all had a certain Latin style permeating the images that were painted in vivid colors. It appeared that they must have been sanctioned by the city or property owner because they obviously took much time and planning by the artists. Rather than show them randomly as we saw them they



have been collected and shown together here.





Our bus took us back to the port. On the way we got this photo on the left showing the ancient lighthouse (Farol Do Mucuri) that has served the port for hundreds of years.

At the final bus stop we said our goodbyes to Alber and walked back to the Amsterdam. Back on board the Amsterdam we were getting ready for the sail-away at 3pm when Captain Mercer came on the PA system with information about sailing plans for the next couple days. As a side note he mentioned that much of the white plastic wrapped equipment on the dock next to the Amsterdam were components for wind turbines used to make electricity. They were manufactured here in Brazil and were in Fortaleza waiting for loading on a cargo ship and export to users elsewhere. We had seen the equipment on the dock but could not determine if they were being imported or exported. Now that it appeared they were a product of Brazil and Fortaleza we decided to take some pictures of what we had seen on the dock. The following are some photos we took of the wind turbine equipment on the dock.

These white modules on the right appear to be the electric generator component of the wind turbine.



These wind turbine propeller blades shown below were nearly hidden by the shipping containers.



The Amsterdam got underway about 3pm and Bruce Scudder, the cruise director organized a sail-away party on the Lido Back Pool Deck. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon and we were happy to have seen and learned at least a little about this big city in the fast developing country of Brazil. As the Amsterdam sailed slowly out of the harbor we got this last photo of the Fortaleza skyline.



The Amsterdam took a course to the northwest headed to Belem, Brazil our next port of call. We expect to arrive in Belem next Tuesday, after one day at sea.