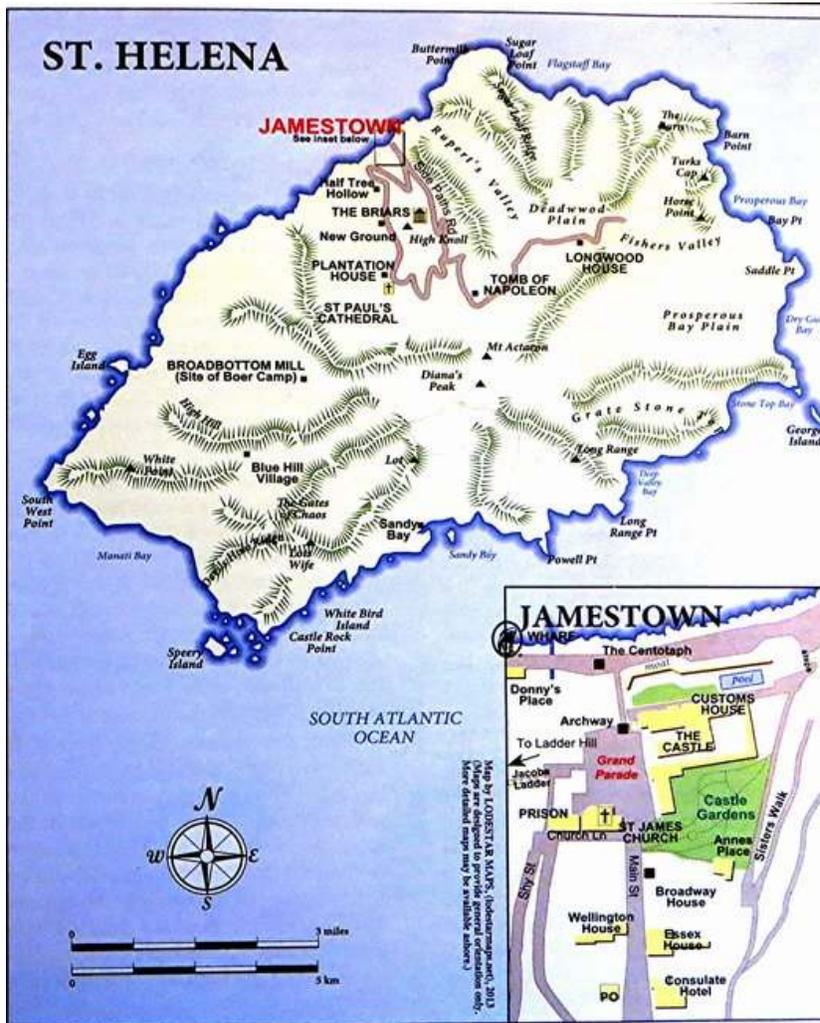


4/15/13 -Day 99-Jamestown, St. Helena–Napoleon as Prisoner-Jacob’s Ladder: The Amsterdam arrived and anchored in the harbor at Jamestown, Saint Helena Island about 7am. The location of Saint Helena Island in the South Pacific Ocean is shown in the map on the right. The shape of the island and some sites of interest are shown in the map below.



Saint Helena is a British Overseas Territory and one of the last relics of British colonies. The island is of volcanic origin with a rugged mountainous terrain. The coastline of the island is comprised of high vertical cliffs cut by steep-sided v-shaped valleys. The coastal areas are rugged, dry and barren whereas the higher elevations in the center of the island (2700 feet) receive

significant rain and have lush vegetation. We saw a gravel beach and some boys swimming at Jamestown. However, many people give St. Helena scant possibility of developing a viable resort and tourist industry because there are no sandy beaches that are typically one of the attractions of a tropical island, like this.

Saint Helena is one of the most isolated places in the world being located more than 1200 miles (2000km) from the nearest major landmass. The island is most famous for the fact that Napoleon was imprisoned on the island (1815-1821) by the British after he escaped from an earlier exile on the island of Elba in the Mediterranean. He died in 1821 at his farmhouse home known as Longwood, near Jamestown.

As the Amsterdam approached St. Helena we were on deck and took a picture of the entire island as shown on the right.



After dropping anchor in the harbor we got this photo below showing more detail. The white buildings of the port area in Jamestown can be seen at water level. The buildings in an extensive residential area can be seen at the higher elevation on the right of Jamestown. Good but narrow roads connect the communities of St. Helena. The famous “Jacob’s Ladder” connects Jamestown with the residential area at the top of the mountain to the right of Jamestown as shown in the photo below. The name of the local icon is a reference to the Biblical Old Testament event when Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth into heaven.

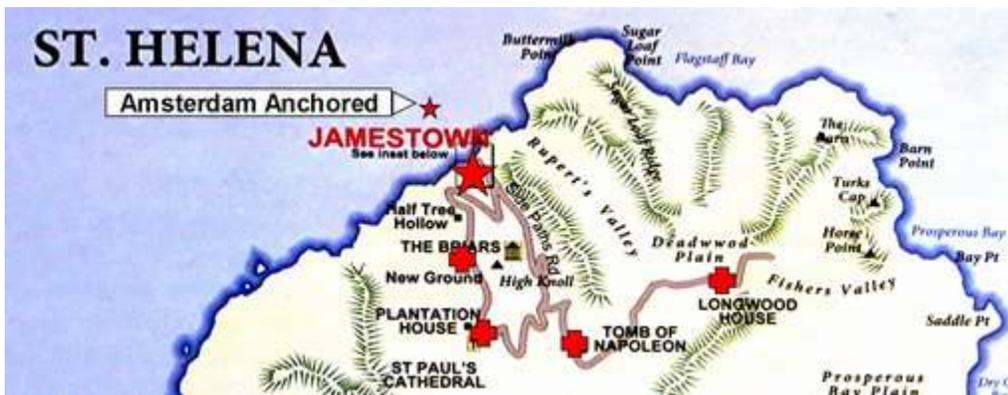


We had signed up for a Holland America tour of St. Helena. The tour was going to explore the Napoleon initial burial ground and the homes where he was imprisoned. It would also give us a chance to enjoy the lush scenery of the higher elevations that we had heard about. We joined our tour group on the Amsterdam and caught a tender boat that took us to the wharf steps in Jamestown. We boarded our van at the wharf, as shown in the photo on the right. In the photo there is a faint white line near the center that heads up the hillside in the background. That line is Jacob’s Ladder which we would visit near the end of our tour. Our Holland America shepherd on this tour was Maureen and the name of our local guide/driver was Peter. After Maureen was sure she had all of her passengers accounted for, Peter got us going on the tour.



The island of St. Helena has a population of about 4000 people and nearly all of the 1000 or so passengers on the Amsterdam were going to descend on the island for a tour today. The local tourist organizations did a marvelous job of coping with the Amsterdam visit. We were amazed at how they were able to bring together enough vans and guides on the island to accommodate us today. Later, Peter said that the islanders (known in local jargon as “Saints”) may not know each other intimately but they know by sight everyone who lives on the island and in most cases at least know their name. This close relationship probably helped bring all the forces they had on the island to bear on today’s tourist challenge.

The sites we were going to visit are highlighted by a red cross on the map of St. Helena Island shown below.



Peter headed up a steep narrow road out of Jamestown to our first stop that would be at The Briars. Looking back we could see the road we had taken as an inclined mark on the volcanic hillside above Jamestown. Before we got to The Briars site



Peter stopped at a wide spot in the road so we could take a look at one of his favorite features which was a heart shaped coloration of the volcanic rock with a water fall located at the top of the heart. A picture we took of the waterfall is shown on the left. We didn't actually see water falling but the green growth extending downward confirmed that water was present.

After we had taken our picture of the heart shape waterfall, Peter's mother happened to show up. She was very proud of her son who was leading a bunch of foreigners around the island today. We took a picture of Peter, his mother and Maureen (red shirt) as a memento of the occasion. It



turned out that Peter's mother lived in the reddish colored house peaking over the bank in the background and Peter had grown up in that house. Peter's regular job was with the road department and he was just doing this guiding as a favor to someone. Before the tour was over we grew to appreciate Peter's knowledge of the island and his ability to express himself. We were lucky to have him as a guide today.

We left the heart shaped waterfall spot and moved on up the mountain to a place where we could view The Briars. Referring to the map of tour sites above, we were not on the road that leads directly to The Briars. We were on Side Path Road that put us in an elevated position above The



Briars so we could get a good view of the building. The significance of The Briars is that a British family lived there in 1815 when Napoleon first arrived on the island as a prisoner. They called their home The Briars. Napoleon stayed at The Briars temporarily until construction of his permanent home at Longwood House could be completed. A photo of the rooftop of The Briars as it stands today is shown on the right.

We finished our viewing of The Briars and motored on towards the Tomb of Napoleon. We were now at the higher elevations of St. Helena so there was an abundance of plants and lush growth. There were the long leaves of flax plants everywhere. The production of hemp fiber from flax for use in ropes used to be a major part of the St. Helena economy. However, about 40 years ago nylon replaced hemp as a rope fiber and the hemp industry on St. Helena collapsed. Nevertheless, the flax plants have continued to multiply and thrive on the hillsides of St. Helena. Most of the photos we were to take of the landscape today have flax plants showing somewhere in the picture.

The following pictures show some of the scenes we enjoyed as we traveled to see Napoleon's Tomb.





Our van arrived at the site of Napoleon's Tomb along with 15 or 20 other vans full of Amsterdam tourists. It turned out that the tomb was not something you could see from the road. There was a grassy, gently inclined path that led through the trees about half a mile down to the tomb. Even though many Amsterdam passengers have some physical challenges most of the folks got out of their vans and made the trip down to the tomb as shown in these pictures.



entirely enjoyable walk.

This sign "The Tomb" about half way to the tomb gave hope that we were on the right path. Fortunately it was a glorious sunny day and temperatures were mild so it was an

We met friends, Alex and Judy who had seen the tomb and were headed back to their van.



These Amsterdam passengers on the right were on their way to the tomb when they got engaged in an interview with a reporter from a local St. Helena radio station. Peter had his radio in the van turned on while he waited for us and the visit of the Amsterdam was a major topic of the day over the local airwaves.



We passed through this substantial looking gate on the left as we neared the tomb.

Finally, when we were virtually in sight of the tomb we got this nice sign pointing our eyes in the right direction.





Shown on the right is the tomb on St. Helena where Napoleon was first laid to rest after he died at Longwood House in 1821. Later, in accordance with his wishes, his body was moved to Paris and entombed near the River Seine. With the sun beaming down on it the scene was as beautiful as a tomb could get. There were terraced flower gardens on one side, as shown in the photo.

On the other side, landscaped plantings were used to cover the hillside that dropped off into a valley.



The good people of St. Helena had provided local experts at each of the Napoleon related sites that we were going to visit. At the Tomb of Napoleon was the gentleman standing on the right side of this picture. He was answering questions that were raised by the visitors and offering background detail.

After seeing Napoleon's tomb we retraced our steps and got back into our van with Peter,

Maureen and the other 6 people on our tour. We now headed for Longwood House which was the next site of interest on our tour. Longwood House was originally a barn but was converted to living quarters for Napoleon's use. The house has not been used as a residence since the death of Napoleon in 1821.

We pulled into the Longwood House compound along with the rest of the entourage of vans loaded with Amsterdam tourists. The facility provided very adequate parking space in a large open grassy area. A tent with refreshments for sale had been set up in the parking lot for us.

The grounds of the Longwood House had informal landscaping that was well cared for and beautiful to see. The following pictures show what was there.



The French flag still flies proudly at the Longwood House, as shown in this picture on the left.

There was a huge poinsettia plant in full bloom near the front porch, as shown on the right.



We climbed the stairs up to the porch and entered a sparsely furnished green reception room where an attendant explained that no flash photography was allowed but otherwise we were free to take pictures. The house appeared to be very well cared for and was presented in fine shape.



Most of the items on display were reproductions of the furnishings that were used while Napoleon was a resident in the house.

We passed into the next room that contained Napoleon's death bed, draped in green cloth, as shown on the right.

There was a picture on the wall that purported to show Napoleon's death scene. The bed in the painting appeared somewhat larger than the authentic reproduction we were viewing today.





Then there was a formal living room, shown on the left and a bathroom, shown below.



We weren't able to climb this staircase on the right. It led to the servant's quarters at Longwood House. It appeared that the prisoner at Longwood House may have lived better than his servants.



We enjoyed our visit inside Longwood House. We are not students of Napoleon's life but the displays and information we received helped us put the man in a more historical context than we had before. The simple and isolated lifestyle he led here was so different from the triumphs of his younger years it was hard to imagine how he coped with it. According to literature we received, Napoleon got along well with the citizens of St. Helena but had gripes about government officials not showing him enough respect.

We left Longwood House and enjoyed our walk back to the van through the gardens, as shown on the right.

Looking beyond the parking lot there was a



clearing in a nearby valley were six wind turbines were spinning, as shown below. We asked Peter if the wind turbines produced significant electricity for St. Helena. He was skeptical that they made a contribution. He blamed on the poor performance on bad management.



We got back to the parking lot which was still filled with many of our vans, as shown on the right.





Even this vintage open touring car, shown on the left, was pressed into service today. It was empty here but later we saw it full of Amsterdam people having a ball on their tour.

Of course, there was the usual line-up at the lady's restroom, as shown on the right. Some things never change!



Maureen and Peter compared notes and decided that all their passengers on Van #12 had returned. We were then on our way through marvelous scenery to the next stop at the Plantation House.





Plantation House is the residence of

the Governor of St. Helena who is appointed to that position by the Queen of England. The house was constructed in the late 1800s and represents fine colonial architecture. The most famous resident of Plantation House is a giant tortoise named Jonathan. This tortoise is more than 150 years old and he lives at Plantation house with several of his relatives.

We arrived at Plantation House and took our place in the line-up of vans on the narrow road leading past the house. The local traffic police had planned for this congestion and the fact that we blocked traffic on the road for an hour or so didn't seem to matter. We got out of the van and immediately searched out Jonathan as most of our fellow tourists were doing. A staff person from Plantation House came out with some food for Jonathan and that got him moving in our direction. Everyone had a good time taking pictures of the giant tortoise, shown in the picture on the right.



We were in a good position to see Plantation House with the British flag flying above it, as shown in the picture below.



After checking out Plantation House and the famous tortoise, Jonathan, we boarded our faithful van again and headed towards the top of Jacob's Ladder located in a residential area on the high ridge above Jamestown. While we were moving along we asked Peter about the price of gasoline in St. Helena. He said gas costs 1.70 St. Helena Pounds per liter. At the current exchange rate that equates to \$2.61 USD per liter. Assuming 4 liters per gallon that results in a cost of \$10.44 USD per gallon of gas. That is the highest cost we have seen for gasoline in our travels. It probably makes economic sense in view of the remote location of the island. Peter said most people on the island depend on a personal car for transportation but there is a public bus system that drives around the island roads 3 times a day.

As we drove through the residential section we took some pictures of the homes that we saw. Here are some of the typical homes that we saw.





Every home seemed to have a fabulous view out over the Atlantic Ocean.



We asked Peter what a typical wage was in St. Helena. He said the average wage was about 100 Saint Helena pounds per week. At the current exchange rate that is equivalent to \$154 USD per week or a little over \$600 USD per month. We expressed surprise that the average person could survive on St. Helena with that wage and the relatively high prices of the remote location. He said it was quite possible to do alright with that wage but he thought that some people like, nurses at the local hospital were underpaid at 300 St. Helena pounds per month (\$460 USD per month). He thought that was not enough money to survive well in the local economy. He said that many of the people on St. Helena commute monthly to Ascension Island where they work on government projects underway there. Peter joked that the US should establish a submarine base on St. Helena so there would be a better source of jobs on this island.



We came to a stop at the top of Jacob’s Ladder along with our usual collection of tourist vans. We got out and walked to the top of the stairs. Barbara used this opportunity to document her library card’s visit to St. Helena. She found the name “St. Helena” in the upper right corner of the plaque describing the attractive features of St. Helena so she went with the photo shown on the right.



Then we took some pictures of Jacob’s Ladder and the stalwart folks who were coming up or going down on this 900 ft (699 steps) staircase. Before the staircase was built there was an active military fort at the top of the ridge and all the materials and food for the facility had to be carried by hand or raised up by a pulley system from Jamestown dock below to the fort above. Then people started to build homes in the area and the need for a handy means for pedestrians to make the trip up and down the mountain increased. They finally built the staircase which is now a prominent feature of Jamestown and can be seen in most photos of the place as shown in the picture on the right. Jacobs ladder is the white line starting in the green trees on the right side of the Jamestown waterfront and angling straight up the steep slope to the top. Here is how Jacob’s ladder looks when viewed from the top.





In this picture above the British Royal Mail ship RMS St. Helena can be seen anchored in James Harbor. The mail ship makes scheduled rounds for passengers and mail between St. Helena, Ascension Island and Capetown, South Africa. St. Helena doesn't have an airport so the St. Helena is the main source of public transportation onto and off the island.

Climbing Jacob's Ladder on St. Helena was the subject of many conversations on board the Amsterdam before we arrived. We saw today in this photo on the right that some of the hearty young stewards were making the climb and we caught them taking a break on their way up.



Some of the passengers who were in better physical shape than us also made the climb and survived.

Speaking of keeping in good shape, the Amsterdam Hotel Manager, Henk Minsink, and his wife, Guest Relations Manager, Christel are frequently seen jogging in various parts



where we stop at. Today was no exception as we saw them, as shown on the left, confidently making their way to the top of Jacob's Ladder for a thrilling trip down the stairs.

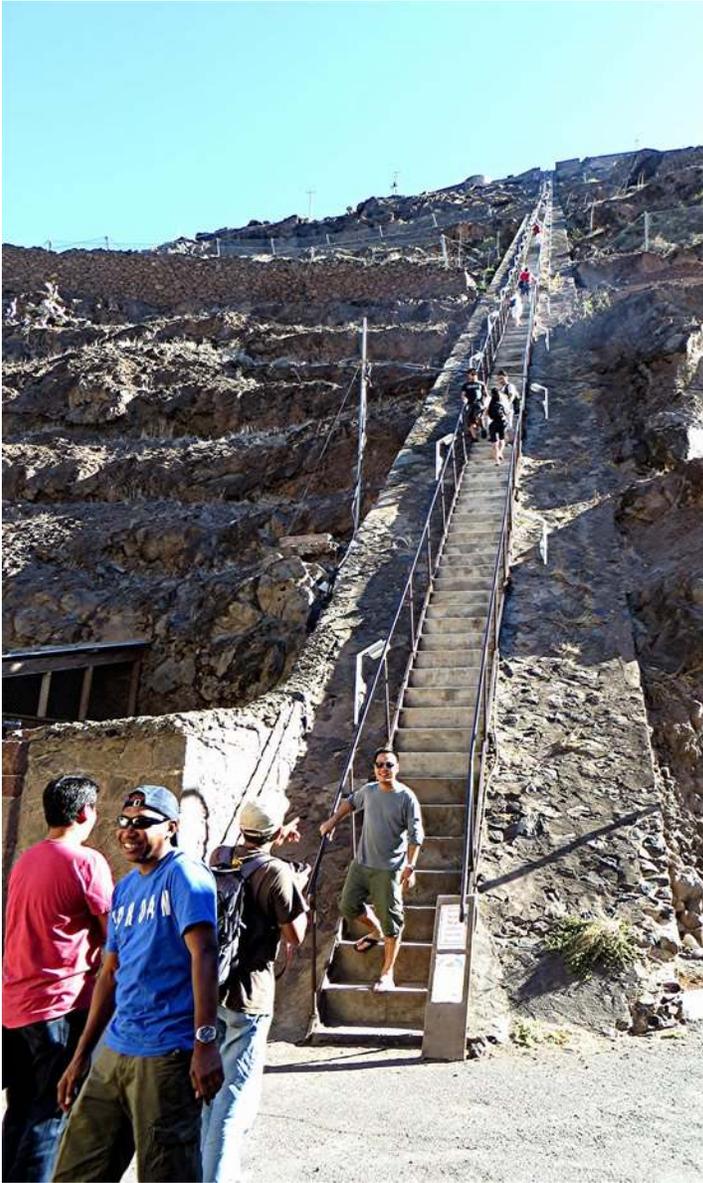
Having completed this encounter with Jacob's Ladder, Peter took us down a steep

road into Jamestown. We said goodbye to Peter and the Amsterdam folks and then went on our own down the main street of Jamestown.

After checking out some craft shops and the Jamestown Library we found a vendor of St. Helena coffee and bought a couple bags of coffee beans from him. They grow and process the coffee on St. Helena and look forward to getting a taste.



Nearby we saw some boys swimming in the warm Atlantic water just off the rocky waterfront beach, as shown on the left.



We had seen the top of Jacob's ladder but now we wanted to see the bottom steps. They were easy to find next to the museum and near the water front. Some Amsterdam stewards were preparing to make the climb when we were there and took the picture shown on the left.

We then headed back to the Amsterdam. There was a little wait for a shuttle bus to take us safely through the working port to the tender boat landing but we were soon on board the Amsterdam after a grand tour of St. Helena. The ship got underway about 5am and was headed for Ascension Island off to the northwest of St. Helena. We expect to arrive there next Wednesday after a day at sea.