

3/9/13 - Day 62 – Manila, Luzon Island, Philippines: Manila is a large city located on the island of Luzon and it is the capital of the Philippines. The location of Manila in the Philippines is shown in the map on the right. Manila is situated on huge Manila Bay, as shown in the map below.



During the night we had passed by the infamous island of Corregidor that is located in the center of the 12 mile wide entrance to Manila Bay. Because of its strategic location it was the scene of a ferocious battle carried out by Filipino and US allies against invading Japanese forces during WWII. The Japanese were eventually victorious and the memory of that terrible loss is carried by many people in the US and the Philippines.

About 70 people on board the Amsterdam wanted to take a tour of Corregidor today. Corregidor is about 35 miles across the bay from Manila and they planned to take a regularly scheduled ferry boat. The timing was a problem because the ferry didn't return until the Amsterdam was scheduled to leave this evening. Remaining at the Manila dock until the passengers returned from Corregidor was not possible because of a prior dock commitment to another ship.

Captain Johnathan Mercer of the Amsterdam then made a super effort to help those passengers who wanted to go to Corregidor today. After much negotiation with Manila Harbor officials he was able to accommodate all parties with the following plan. The people going to Corregidor would catch the morning ferry from Manila and return in the evening after the Amsterdam had departed its berth in Manila. The Amsterdam would sail into Manila Bay and anchor a few miles off shore. An Amsterdam tender boat would be stationed at the ferry boat landing where passengers returning from Corregidor would be picked up and delivered to the Amsterdam, sitting in the bay. By a fortuitous coincidence there was an international fireworks contest being conducted in Manila this week where the countries of Italy and The Netherlands would be putting on a fireworks

show while the Amsterdam was waiting for the guests returning from Corregidor. The Amsterdam would be positioned so that we all could view the show.

Getting back to the subject of our entrance into Manila, we arrived at the dock about 7am. Even as the Amsterdam approached the pier the local tourist industry folks were putting on a nice welcoming party on the pier. They had several bands and dancers as well as two people who wore huge traditional costumes and walked around among the throng, as shown below.



The show was enjoyed by the Amsterdam people lining the rails of the ship. This was particularly true today because there are a lot of people from the Philippines who make up the crew of the Amsterdam. With the encouragement of Holland America many of them have been able to make this trip to the Philippines into a family visit. Some of the crew had family members board the ship in Puerto Princesa a couple days ago and ride with us to Manila. The photo on the right shows one crew member with a child and perhaps his wife taking in the scene as we approached the welcoming party on the dock.



We had booked a Holland America four hour tour of the old walled city of Manila. We often go on our own but in this large city we decided to be cautious and go with a guided excursion. We left the ship at 9am and boarded a bus along with about 30 other people. Our guide's name was Lilia and she turned out to be a winner with good English and a terrific knowledge of Manila history.

The old walled city of Manila goes by the Spanish name of Intramuros, meaning "Between the walls" and it can be found on the map below.



The Intramuros is the oldest colonial settlement in the Philippines. It started as a Chinese settlement and then the Spanish fortified it with walls in the mid 1500s. After 300 years of Spanish rule the United States took over the Philippines after victory in the Spanish American War. Finally in 1946 the Philippines gained independence but the influence of various occupiers lives on in the city today.

On the way to Intramuros there was a kaleidoscope of scenes for us to digest as Lilia provided a monologue describing what we were seeing. Here are some photos we took.



The famous Manila Hotel, shown on the left, is close to the waterfront and we saw it as we left the dock area. This is the premier hotel in Manila and very expensive.

The vehicle on the left in the photo below is called a “Jeepney”. Lilia said that

early versions utilized the chassis from old American Army Jeeps. They obviously have evolved a bit and hundreds of them provide the public transportation in Manila and probably throughout the Philippines today. The vehicle on the right was a motorcycle powered machine hauling a too big load with dubious visibility for the driver.



Here is a food market in full operation.

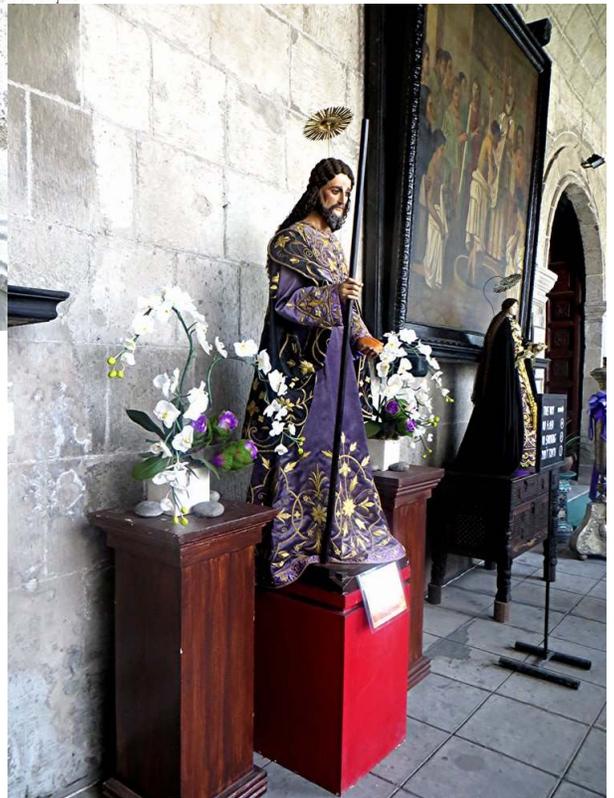


While the Catholic and other Christian religions dominant in the Philippines there is a Muslim community. We got a fleeting glimpse of a sign on a building indicating that we were passing “Ahlair Wissahlair Muslim Town” that was a project of Jessie T. Phartef and Council.



We soon arrived at the walled city of Intramuros. During WWII the ancient city was virtually destroyed by bombs and artillery shells as the allies drove out the Japanese late in the war. In 1979 a development effort was initiated to restore Intramuros as a monument to the Spanish period of Philippine history. Therefore most of the structures we saw today were not the original but carefully reconstructed copies of buildings containing displays representing the years of 1500s and later time periods.

One of the interesting places we visited in Intramuros was the San Augustin Church which is among the nation's oldest churches. We got the following pictures as Lilia guided us through the old church.



As part of the reconstruction of the church they had duplicated a marvelous ceiling painting that had been in the original church built over 400 years ago. The painting technique produced a 3 dimensional effect with the appearance of great depth in the architectural treatment of the ceiling, as shown below.



In the courtyard of the church was a banner proudly claiming the 440 year history (AD 1571-2011) of the Augustinians in Intramuros.



Across the street from the San Augustin Church were a couple structures representing the homes of wealthy residents in the 1500 and 1600's. We walked through the rooms which



had been filled with antique decorations and furniture representing the old time period.

In the courtyard of one home was a group of young people who were preparing for a

play about the trial and execution of a Philippine national martyr by the name of Dr. Jose Rizal. Lilia, shown on the right with dark pants and white shirt, was familiar with the story and explained how Dr. Rizal resisted the Spanish rule but was eventually subjected to a mock trial and executed. The execution took place in Fort Santiago where we would be going next on our tour today.



We took the short walk across a street and park area to Fort Santiago. Along the way we spotted a sign boosting the Philippines as a place to visit. This promotion was part of a national campaign that we had seen numerous times today and Lilia had even used the motto at least once. We thought this would be a good place to document Barbara's library card visit to the Philippine capital of Manila, as shown on the right.

We continued walking with our group which tended to get strung



out and dispersed as we went along. Lilia's assistant was a young lady volunteer with a flag bearing our tour number, as shown on the left, and she did a good job of shepherding us along. She was a student at a local university studying "Cruise Management". Her tee shirt proudly advertised that course of study. Since none of her doddering cruisers got lost today, she should get a good grade.

We arrived at Fort Santiago and viewed the ancient moat that protected the main gate, as shown on the right. Lilia said that the Spanish maintained the moat but when the Americans took over in the early 1900s the moat was filled in with dirt and trees. During the reconstruction that started in 1979 the moat was restored to one that held water like in the Spanish colonial days.

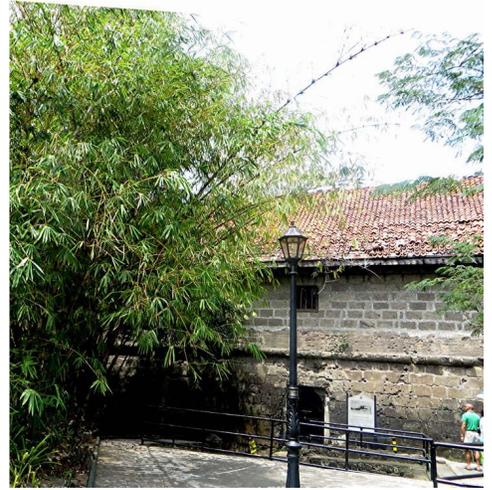


Inside the walls of the fort was a park-like setting with fountains and luxurious shrubbery. However, we soon came to the location of the dungeon, shown on the left. This cellar-like enclosure was used to house prisoners in ancient times and during WWII. Lilia became somewhat emotional as she explained that Filipino resistance people were held here and they were subjected to torture and death by the Japanese who occupied the Philippines at that time. One particularly terrible Japanese act was to flood the dungeon with sea water to drown hundreds of prisoners at one time.

Lilia shared a Filipino saying that encapsulated some native wisdom. She said that Filipino parents tell their children to grow up like bamboo. They should grow as much they can and be successful like the bamboo that grows so tall. But when they have achieved their goals and live in prosperity they should bend and look down, like the bamboo, so they can see where they came from and help others less fortunate.



We walked back towards the main gate of the fort and passed a statue of Dr. Jose Rizal, shown on the left. Filipino people had been posing in front of the martyr's statue so it was difficult to photograph without people in front of it. We finally got this photograph on the left with a young lady approaching the statue to have her picture taken.



Part of the story about Dr. Rizal's final hours are memorialized in a very touching manner on the walkway of the fort. He was accused by the Spanish of supporting a revolution and a sham trial was held in Fort Santiago. He was found guilty and sentenced to immediate death by firing squad. He walked from the courtroom and through the main gate to be shot in an outside courtyard. They have embedded brass plates that look like Dr. Rizal's footprints along



the pathway through the fort and out the main gate, as shown in these pictures.



We left Fort Santiago and returned to the Amsterdam. Back on board we went to the buffet lunch in the Lido. While eating lunch our wine steward, Teo, stopped by our table to chat. He was one of the Filipinos who were meeting with family members today. We asked him if we could meet his family and he took us to another part of the Lido where they were waiting for him to complete his work shift. We made our introductions and then asked if we could take a photo of his family. Shown below is Teo in his maroon steward's uniform with his family, including his mother on his left and father (looking over a sister's head) on the extreme right.



It was good to see that his family had a chance to see the place where he works and spend some time with him. Not all of his time was spent working. Many other stewards and Filipino workers on the Amsterdam had their families in the Lido so there were lots of conversations and a festive air about the place.

After lunch we caught a shuttle bus and rode to the Robinson's Place shopping center at the location noted on the map of Manila shown earlier. The mall had a very modern appearance, as shown on the right. There were security people at the entrance to give a cursory check of handbags as we entered. Everyone entering the store went through the process which didn't seem to cause any problems for the people coming in.



The lobby where we entered was huge with a ceiling that went up beyond the fourth floor, as shown below.



We walked for what seemed like miles along comfortable air conditioned corridors lined with stores and filled with prosperous looking people doing their shopping.



We quickly noted that sales are utilized in Manila to stimulate business, just like in the US. In the Robinson's Department store we found a Philippine craft department where we bought some coffee and souvenir coasters.



We finished up our visit to the shopping mall and returned to the Amsterdam by way of the free shuttle bus. On the way we spotted a filling station near the dock and snapped a picture of the posted prices as shown on the right. The regular gasoline was selling for 42.6 pesos per liter. At the current exchange rate that would be \$1.06 USD per liter. Assuming 4 liters per gallon that works out to about \$4.25 USD per gallon.





We also drove by the American Embassy and were able to get the picture of the entrance as shown on the left. It was a sad commentary on our times that the sign was nearly hidden behind concrete and

cyclone fence barriers. On a more positive note, at least the barriers were less obtrusive than the nearby high, thick walls of Intramuros built 400 years ago for defensive purposes.

Shortly after we returned to the ship, a contingent of people arrived on the pier to give us a grand “Bon Voyage” sail away party. The uniformed band played lively tunes and people lining the rails of the Amsterdam cheered and clapped. At 6pm the Amsterdam pulled away from the pier and headed out into Manila Bay. The enthusiastic crowd shown below with colorful balloons gave us a rousing send off, which everyone



on board appreciated. The Philippine ports we have visited have shown more warmth and organized interest in us than we have seen in other countries so far.

As previously announced by Captain Mercer, the Amsterdam sailed out into Manila Bay a few miles and then dropped anchor. The ship was then positioned with the port (left) side facing Manila and we waited for the scheduled fireworks show to start.

The Amsterdam passengers were standing at the rails or seated on the open decks to watch the fireworks. At 7:30pm the show started and continued with some interruptions for about an hour. We tried to get some photos of the fireworks with limited success. The following pictures represent our best efforts.



While all of this was going on the folks who visited Corregidor today returned to the ship by tender boat. It was a classic win-win solution that the Captain had arranged to solve the schedule problem with the Corregidor visit and ship movement. We also appreciated the effort of the tender boat crew that had to do some previously unscheduled extra work through their early evening hours to make this plan work.



By about 9pm we sailed out of Manila Bay and headed for Hong Kong, China. After a day at sea we should arrive in Hong Kong on March 11.