

2/3/13 - Day 28 – International Dateline Crossing & Super Bowl Monday: We were casually walking the deck on Friday, February 1st when we saw that the Amsterdam was crossing the International Dateline.



This event triggered calendar chaos and also a case of anxiety among some US passengers. When we crossed the Dateline we had to turn our clocks ahead 24 hours and essentially lose an entire day. Usually, when isolated on a cruise ship at sea the loss of a day doesn't make a lot of difference. However, this case was different because February 3rd (otherwise known as "Super Bowl Sunday in the US) would start for us long before it started in the US. This meant that by the time Super Bowl XLVII (47) between the Baltimore Ravens and San Francisco 49ers is actually played in the US we would be well into Monday, February 4th.

Avid football fans on board had been worrying about this situation even before we crossed the Dateline. Not to worry though, the Amsterdam staff had arranged for the game to be shown live by ESPN a big screen in the Queen's Lounge and on stateroom TVs. We will be seeing the game starting at 1pm on Monday, Feb. 4 complete with a pre-game "tailgate party" in the Queen's Lounge.

International Dateline Comments: The International Dateline is one of those geographic features that travelers have to deal with when crossing the Pacific Ocean. It is somewhat mysterious but it has a very practical purpose and more people interact with it as travel and the global economy have expanded.

There is a story that when Magellan made the first circumnavigation of the world in 1520 he kept a meticulous journal of each day's events. He and others were amazed when he returned home and found that the calendar date for that day in his journal was one full day behind the actual date in his home city. There was great consternation among

scholars and there was an attempt to understand how the day could have been lost. Eventually, the explanation for the lost day was found and the International Dateline was established as a fix for the problem. The International Dateline corresponds roughly to Longitude 180 degrees (halfway around the world from the Greenwich meridian). It passes through the uninhabited part of the Pacific Ocean with deviations to pass around the far east of Russia and various island groups in the Pacific.

The following mental experiment helps in understanding the need for the International Dateline in a modern world of long distance travel and global commercial transactions.

In this experiment a person would leave Fort Lauderdale at noon on 15 January and traveled westward at a high speed so that he would circumnavigate the globe instantly. Even though traveling very fast he would set his clock back one hour for every 15 degrees of longitude he traveled westward. This is what every traveler must do when traveling westward at a normal speed in order to keep daylight hours reasonably consistent. If he followed this procedure and in the absence of the International Date Line he would set his clock back 24 hours and arrive back at Fort Lauderdale at noon on 14 January, a day before he started.

This illogical result is what took place in less dramatic fashion when Magellan traveled around the globe at a slow speed. That is, he lost a day because of the 24 one hour clock adjustments. The use of the International Date Line avoids the lack of closure on calendar dates when circling the globe. It does this by adding 24 hours to your clock when crossing east to west or subtracting 24 hours when crossing west to east. In the example of instantaneous global circumnavigation given above, the presence of the International Date Line would require the traveler to add 24 hours to his clock when crossing the Date Line east to west. Then he would continue to subtract one hour for every 15 degrees of westward travel. When he returned to Fort Lauderdale he would find that it is still noon on January 15, a logical result for instantaneous circling of the globe.

Regardless of the effects of the International Dateline we continue to sail on toward our next port of call in Auckland, New Zealand. But first we will be enjoying “Super Bowl Monday” tomorrow.