

# Cruise on the MSC Musica

12 November – 2 December 2019

We flew from Oslo to Marseille on Air France, transferring from Charles de Gaulle to Orly on the way. At the airport we transferred by bus to the Holiday Inn Express, St Charles, right opposite the main train station.

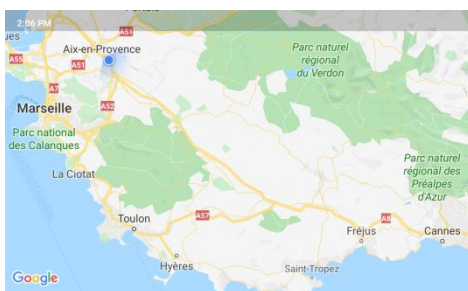


## Tuesday 12 November. Marseille, France.

Marseille was founded as a trading port in 600 BC by the Greeks, making it the oldest city in France. We walked down to Le Vieux Port at the end of the Canebière, the major street of Marseille. It was a clear day, but very windy and cold but we wandered around the old port and saw the fish market, the lovely old buildings, the forts guarding the harbour and St Victor's Abbey. A very historic place!



Back at the hotel we took a taxi to the cruise terminal and, unexpectedly, found ourselves on a bus going to Cannes, two hours away! It was too windy for MSC Musica to dock in Marseille, so our 21 day Grand Voyage to South America started with a tender from Cannes out to the ship! We are in 5060 on Grazioso Deck 5 – a Fantastica ocean view cabin the middle of the ship. MSC Musica carries about 3200 guests. First impressions are that it is big, luxurious, and in beautiful condition. Our cabin is comfortable and spacious, with two extra beds and some easy chairs. Dinner was at the L'Oleandro restaurant.



## Wednesday 13 November. Genoa, Italy.

Genoa is the capital of the Italian region of Liguria and the sixth-largest city in Italy. Over 1.5 million people live in the city and along the Italian Riviera. Genoa is a port city and is sometimes known as la Superba ("the proud one") due to its impressive landmarks. The old town is a World Heritage site and is noted for being the birthplace of Christopher Columbus. We took the ship's "Panoramic Genoa" sightseeing tour, driving through the city to see Columbus' birthplace then continuing down to the picturesque Boccadasse



fishing village. The harbour is flanked by the colourful houses of the local fishermen. We then passed through the residential neighbourhood of Albaro on our way to the historical Piazza de Ferrari, Genoa's main square. In the old town we saw the San Lorenzo Cathedral (still containing a bomb that didn't explode in 1942), the Palazzo Ducale and the Doge's Palace. The churches, palaces, villas and historical buildings in Genoa are just incredible! Many date back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and almost all are ornately decorated. The tour finished with a drive up Castelletto Hill for lovely views over the city. Afterwards we walked along the waterfront and saw the main tourist area on the foreshore. Notable was a pirate ship used for filming "Pirates of the Caribbean." After dinner we watched a show in Spanish by comedian/ventriloquist Serge Massot.



#### Thursday 14 November. Barcelona, Spain.

Barcelona is the largest city in Catalonia, and the second biggest city in Spain, with a population of about 3.5 million people. It was founded as a Roman city, then in the Middle Ages became the capital of the County of Barcelona. After merging with the Kingdom of Aragon, Barcelona continued to be an important city in the Crown of Aragon and then became the capital of the Principality of Catalonia.

We took the ship's "Gaudi's experience" so we could see some of Antoni Gaudi's amazing architectural works. We passed by la Rambla and the iconic statue of Christopher Columbus, then saw the Casa Batlló - covered in thousands of multi-coloured tiles, and the Casa Milà - with its strange shapes and perspectives. Then it was on to the Park Güell, a garden created for Eusebi Güell by Gaudi. It began in 1900 as a home for rich families, but few wanted to buy there due to Gaudi's unique style of building. The park is filled with Gaudi designs in the gardens and buildings, most of which with unique shapes covered with mosaics. Construction ceased in 1914 with Güell's death and Gaudi then focused on building the Sagrada Familia church.



The Sagrada Familia is magnificent! Still unfinished it contains 18 spires (for the 12 apostles, the 4 evangelists, Mary and Jesus). It is the Bible in stone - a truly remarkable building. The front facade tells the story of Jesus' life and the back facade tells of His death, resurrection and glorification. Inside is magnificent, and full of symbolism. Gaudi was killed in 1926 when he was hit by a tram, but construction has continued and the church was consecrated in 2010. It is hoped that it will be finished in 2026 for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gaudi's death. Back on the ship we had dinner in the Belle Epoque and then watched Anna Vinci - an Italian opera singer.



**Friday November 15. At sea.**

Our first day at sea was quite trying! MSC is an Italian cruise line and we were increasingly affected by the noisiness, pushiness and aggressive approach displayed by so many of its passengers. Even having breakfast in the main restaurant was challenging! It seems that all of the routine systems on board are affected negatively by the sheer number of passengers on board and by the demanding nature of so many. This was compounded by having our toilet getting blocked for three days in a row, and by it being so cold outside that we couldn't sit in the sun. We haven't yet got into the rhythm of the ship, which unlike all of our other cruises, will entail finding places of peace as our fellow passengers carry on with their unique cultural approach to life. It makes us appreciate that New Zealanders and Norwegians (and even Australians!) are pretty calm, peaceful, quiet and patient in their interactions with others. We had dinner at the buffet, then watched the excellent show 'Paris after dark' which we had seen on the Sinfonia.



**Saturday 16 November. Cadiz, Spain.**

Cádiz is the capital of the Province of Cádiz, one of eight that make up Andalusia in south-west Spain. Cádiz is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Western Europe, with archaeological remains dating back 3100 years. It was founded by the Phoenicians and has been the home port of the Spanish Navy since the 18th century. The old town is close to where the ship docked so we wandered around exploring the main sites: the Plaza de San Juan, the Plaza d’Espana commemorating the passing of Spain’s first constitution in 1812, La Caleta - Sunset Beach, the massive Cathedral, the Plaza de las Flores and the old Mercado marketplace. The fish they were selling was incredibly fresh! Back on the ship our toilet got fixed, but it blocked straight away, so we were moved to a new cabin: 5048. Much better! After dinner we watched ‘La Voce dell ‘Anima’, by an amazing classical quartet. About as good as it gets in cruise ship entertainment.

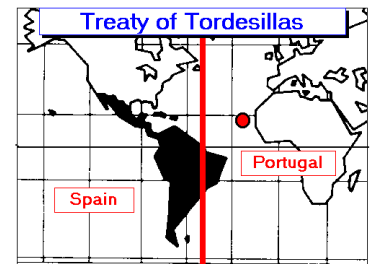


**Sunday 17 November. Lisbon, Portugal.**

Lisbon is the capital and the largest city of Portugal. Around 3 million people live in the city and in the Portuguese Riviera (about 27% of the country's population). Nearby is Cabo da Roca, the westernmost point in Europe. Lisbon is one of the oldest cities in the world, and the second-oldest European capital city (after Athens). It was captured by the Moors in the 8th century then retaken in 1147 during the Crusades. It was recognised as a separate country in the 1270's and since then it has been the political, economic and cultural centre of Portugal. We took the ship’s tour to Sintra and visited the Quinta da Regaleira, a magnificent quinta (estate) built by António Augusto Carvalho Monteiro. It was raining but we explored the grounds of the estate including the spiral staircase down into the ground, intended to aid a journey of contemplation on the way down and rebirth on the way up. We exited through a tunnel to see the chapel and the extensive garden, before having a brief look inside the magnificent palace.



Monteiro's family gained its wealth from the colonisation of Brazil (as did the owners of many of the other magnificent palaces in Sintra). Prior to the cruise we read Errol Uys' book "Brazil" which describes the process of colonisation of Brazil by the Portuguese after the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. It describes how Pope Alexander VI instigated an agreement between Spain and Portugal to reduce conflict over lands newly discovered during the 'voyages of discovery' in the early 1500s. The Treaty of Tordesillas gave the western part of Brazil to Spain, and the eastern coastline to Portugal. We will be following in their footsteps as we depart from Lisbon and cross the Atlantic to Brazil. Knowing the history of places like Sintra and Lisbon will make our visit to Brazil so much more meaningful. Next, our tour visited Cascais, a fishing village popular with European royals, and now a busy tourist centre. On the way back to the ship we saw many monuments and forts on the Tagus River (where Portuguese explorers and colonists departed from), then explored Trade Square, the site of the main Royal Palace destroyed in the mid 1700's (along with much of Lisbon) by a massive earthquake. It has a big statue of the King at the time, Joseph 1<sup>st</sup>, and is now mainly government offices. After dinner at the restaurant we saw a fantasy variety show.



### Monday 18 November. At sea.

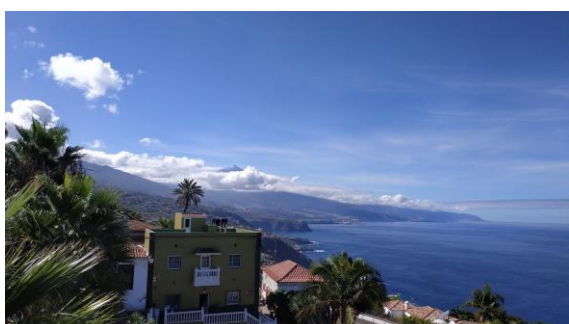
A quiet day at sea. We went to a presentation about Tenerife, and to the gym. After dinner we watched show by singer Anna Vinci. It seems that many of the Italian passengers have disembarked, and now about 2000 of the 3200 passengers are Argentinians, going home. There are only about 200 English speakers on board!



### Tuesday 19 November. Tenerife, Spain.

Tenerife is the largest and most populated island of the seven Canary Islands, and the most populated island of Spain. It has a population of about 1 million but is visited by over 5 million tourists each year. We docked at Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the capital of the Canary Islands, (shared with Las Palmas de Gran Canaria). Our "Impressions of Tenerife" tour started at a local park then took us to the La Garañona viewpoint on the beautiful northern coast. Next was the lovely little village of El Sauzal, a settlement that still observes Portuguese traditions. We visited the early 16th-century Church of St. Peter, and the "De La Sirvieta" museum, dedicated to Sister María de Jesús who lived in Sauzal dedicating her life to

God and whose body still remains incorrupted in a convent in La Laguna, after more than 250 years. We saw lovely views of Mount Teide during a stop at La Baranda then had a short photo stop at the impressive Opera House: shaped like a bird. Afterwards we walked in to the city centre and saw the Holy Cross and main shopping centre. After dinner we watched a flamenco dancing show.



**Wednesday 20 November. At sea.**

This was the first of five days at sea, crossing the Atlantic. The weather was getting noticeably warmer and we were able to have some time lying in the sun by the pool. We went to presentation about Recife and Maceio in the morning and had a formal dinner in the evening.

**Thursday 21 November. At sea.**

Another lovely day with the weather changing from warm to hot as we headed towards the equator. In the morning we went to a lecture on Salvador, then in the afternoon we went to the gym, had a swim and watched the movie 'Mary Poppins returns'. We had a bit of a holiday from eating, then in the evening went to another concert by the amazing classical quartet.



**Friday 22 November. At sea.**

After the morning lecture (on 'Rum and Whisky') we showed our videos to some New Zealanders and then worked on our cruise video. After dinner at the restaurant we watched a 'Boogie world' show.

**Saturday 23 November. At sea.**

After the morning lecture on Rio de Janeiro we went to the gym and had a quiet afternoon. (There was a bit of rain around so no time by the pool). After dinner at the restaurant the show was 'Bella Italia'.



**Sunday 24 November. At sea.**

We really enjoyed our five days at sea, crossing the Atlantic. Today we watched lots of albatrosses which were soaring around the ship, then went to the Neptune equator crossing ceremony and a lecture on Buenos Aires. After this it was a gym and a swim, dinner at the restaurant then another wonderful concert by our classical quartet. Tomorrow it's back to touring - in Brazil.



**Monday 25 November. Recife, Brazil.**

Recife is the capital of the state of Pernambuco and the fourth-largest city in Brazil. It has a population of about 2 million people. Recife was founded in 1537, during the early Portuguese colonization of Brazil. It was the main harbour of the Captaincy of Pernambuco (its land was given to a colonising ship captain for services to Portugal), and was known for its large-scale production of sugar cane, and for being the first slave port in the Americas. Later, it became Mauritsstad, the capital of the 17th century colony of New Holland of Dutch Brazil, established by the Dutch West India Company. There are many reefs, islands and beaches around the harbour so Recife is known as the "Brazilian Venice".



We took the ship's "Recife and Olinda" tour so we could see the two cities we had read about in Errol Uys book 'Brazil'. We started with a panoramic tour of Recife including the three main islands (Recife, Santo Antonio and Boa Vista), the beaches, the Mauricio de Nassau bridge and the Republic square - home of the Governmental palace. The historic city of Olinda is 7 kilometres north. Olinda was destroyed by the Dutch but rebuilt in the 18<sup>th</sup> century after the Portuguese retook Recife. In Olinda we saw many grand houses and churches of this period including Alto da Sé Church and the São Bento Monastery. The views over Olinda and Recife are magnificent. Back in Recife we visited Casa da Cultura located on the side of the Capibarive river, which was a 19<sup>th</sup> century prison but is now a crafts centre. The Brazilian Carnival in Recife and Olinda is world famous. Thousands of people parade traditional 'puppets like the midnight men' or follow 'carnival blocks' like as Pitombeira and Elephants. After a formal dinner we watched the very creative show 'The wild'. It portrayed a girl dreaming about interacting with wild animals.

**Tuesday 26 November. Maceió, Brazil.**

Maceió is the capital and the largest city of the coastal state of Alagoas, Brazil. It has a population of about 1 million people. "Maceió" means 'a spring'. Most maceiós flow to the sea, but some get trapped and form lagoons - 'lagoas' in Portuguese. There are numerous maceiós and lagoons in this part of Brazil which is why the city was named Maceió and

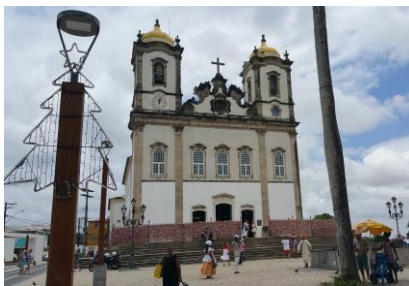


the state, Alagoas. Maceió is a port city. It began in an old sugar mill and plantation around the 19th century and is known today for its beautiful white sand beaches. We took the ships' tour to France's Beach, seeing beaches, lagoons, and countryside along the way. Swimming at the beach was lovely! Afterwards we drove through the city centre before stopping at the Ponta Verde Beach markets. The city centre is uninspiring with lots of people, and few beautiful historic buildings. After dinner at the buffet we saw the show 'MSC crew's got talent' then had a drink at the 'Welcome back' party.



**Wednesday 27 November. Salvador, Brazil.**

Salvador, also known as São Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos (Savior; Holy Savior from the Bay of All Saints) is the capital of the Brazilian state of Bahia. It has a population of about 3 million and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Brazil, after São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Salvador was founded by the Portuguese in 1549 as the first capital of Brazil. A sharp escarpment divides the lower town from the upper town. The two have been connected by an elevator since 1873. The Pelourinho district of the upper town contains many colonial buildings and monuments and its Carnival is thought to be the biggest party in the world. Salvador was one of the first slave ports and the slaves' descendants make it a centre of Afro-Brazilian (negro) culture. We took the ship's "Panoramic and historic Salvador" tour and starting with the old fort "Farol da Barra". Next we visited Bonfim, on the way seeing many farvelas - where the poor live. In Bonfim we visited the beautiful "Nosso Senhor do Bonfim Church". It was named to celebrate a "good finish" to the voyage from Portugal to Brazil. A lovely service was taking place.



Next we went downtown and stopped at the top of the elevator to get a lovely view over the city. We then walked through the historic Pelourinho district starting at Municipal Square. The highlight was the incredible "Igreja da Ordem Terceira de São Francisco". This Franciscan convent was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and has a marvelous stone façade in baroque Spanish style. Inside is the most gold-decorated church ever. Absolutely amazing! We finally found some wifi at a cafe (after 7 days without). The tour ended at the "Mercado Modelo" the famous handcraft market. A great tour of a very interesting and historic city. After dinner at the restaurant we watched a show in Spanish by Guillermo Guido.





## 28 November. At sea.

In the morning we went to an interesting presentation about the ship's systems then in the afternoon had our usual sea day gym and a swim. After dinner at the restaurant the show was a musical "Rhythm divine". Excellent!

## Friday 29 November. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Rio de Janeiro is the capital of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's third-most populous state. Rio was founded in 1565 by the Portuguese, and was originally a Captaincy of the Portuguese Empire. In 1763 it became the capital of the State of Brazil, a state of the Portuguese Empire. In 1815, after the Portuguese Royal Court transferred itself from Portugal to Brazil, Rio became the capital of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and Algarves. This is one of the few instances in history that the capital of a colonising country officially shifted to a city in one of its colonies. Rio stayed the capital until 1822, when the War of Brazilian Independence began. It was the capital of the Empire of Brazil until 1889, and then the capital of republican Brazil until 1960, when the capital was transferred to Brasília.

The city of Rio has a population of about 6 million, second only to Sao Paulo, and the greater metropolitan area has a population of about 14 million. Rio de Janeiro is one of the most visited cities in the world and is known for its beaches, carnivals and historic landmarks. We took C2Rio's "Christ the Redeemer, Sugarloaf and Copacabana Beach tour" so we would get a quick overview of the main tourist spots in Rio - just 4 on the tour. We were picked up by our excellent tour guide Jalbeir Guimaraes and driven up to the Christ the Redeemer Statue - one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. The drive took us up some bumpy streets; through the Tijuca Forest, one of the largest urban forests of the world, to the top of Corcovado Mountain. 'Christ the Redeemer' is 38 metres tall and its arms are 30 meters wide. There is a little chapel under its base. It was misty but the view over the city of Rio was incredible.



We then went up Sugarloaf Mountain, the other major landmark of Rio. To get to the summit we had to take two cable cars, the first to the top of Urca Hill, and the second to the top of Sugarloaf, height (395 m). This gave us an even better panoramic view of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara Bay. The first Portuguese explorers discovered the bay in January and thought it was a river - hence 'Rio de Janeiro', and the Indians believed the bay was the uterus of all waters in the world, hence its name, based on their word for uterus. Next we passed by Copacabana Beach, one of the most famous beaches in Brazil. A great tour of a wonderful city! Back on board we had dinner at the restaurant then another wonderful show by our excellent classical quartet.





### **Saturday 30 November. At sea.**

We had a quiet day at sea. We showed our videos to some friends, had a swim, helped someone with her English and enjoyed the 'Rhythm divine' show after the formal dinner in the restaurant.

### **Sunday 1 December. At sea.**

Another quiet day at sea. We worked on our video, packed up, went to the gym, had a spa and then, after dinner, went to the 'Best of' show.

### **Monday 2 December. Buenos Aires, Argentina.**

Buenos Aires is the capital and largest city of Argentina. It is situated in a big bay: the Rio del Plata. "Buenos Aires" means 'fair winds', a name given by its founders in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The population of around 16 million is very multi-cultural as there has been much immigration in the last 150 years. Buenos Aires was colonised in 1536 by a Spanish expedition led by Pedro de Mendoza. A permanent settlement was established in 1580 and became a centre for trade, although ships were regularly menaced by pirates. A military protection system was developed but high taxes led to an informal contraband industry with much resentment of Spain. Buenos Aires became an open port in the late 18th century and after the Argentine War of Independence in 1815 it became the capital of the nation of Argentina.

We arrived in Buenos Aires and disembarked from the ship smoothly. We took the ship's "Grand tour of Buenos Aires" so we could see the city and also get a transfer to the airport. We were taken on a panoramic drive along the main avenues, and then through residential neighbourhood, including "Recoleta", with its elegant restaurants, sidewalk cafés.

Interesting was the cemetery of Eva Peron, where the graves were sometimes like small houses. In "9 de Julio" Avenue, the world's widest avenue, we saw the "Teatro Colon" and the "Obelisco", the city's landmark. We stopped at "Plaza de Mayo" lined by the "Casa Rosada" (Government House), the Metropolitan Cathedral and the historic "Cabildo", which was the Town Hall in colonial times. We then had some free time at Calle Florida with its many shops, including Galerías Pacifico, one of the most elegant places in Buenos Aires. Lunch was at the "El Viejo Almacen", located at the corner of the most traditional district of San Telmo, Independencia and Balcarce.





We then went to “La Boca”, a colorful portside area where the first Italian immigrants settled in 1751, and walked along the famous “Caminito” street. The contrast between the modern English influenced north of BA, and the Italian and Spanish influenced southern side couldn’t be more pronounced! The north is like a big version of Melbourne with lovely parks and modern apartments and buildings, while the south is colourful and lively with much music, graffiti and street art. The Boca district is the home of the tango, and is Maradona’s home town. Afterwards we had a panoramic drive through the port area “Puerto Madero”, one of the most modern areas of Buenos Aires, where the old docks and warehouses have been turned into restaurants, bars, offices and movie theatres. We were then taken 50km to the airport.



We waited around for 7 hours then our direct Air New Zealand flight departed at 11.45pm and we arrived in Auckland at 5am on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December. We then flew to Wellington and used bus and the train to get home.

Highlights of our cruise on the MSC Musica were:

- The amazing ports we visited particularly Genoa, Barcelona, Lisbon, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.
- Seeing so many incredible old buildings and beautifully decorated churches.
- Appreciating how the ‘voyages of discovery’ from Portugal and Spain influenced the new nations of Brazil and Argentina.
- The lovely big ship, caring staff and amazing shows.
- Flat seas and almost perfect weather all the way - just an hour of rain in Portugal.
- Proving we can enjoy a 3 week cruise, even if we had to learn how to adapt to the behaviour of other passengers.

Overall, a really great cruise with memorable visits to many interesting old cities and ports.