

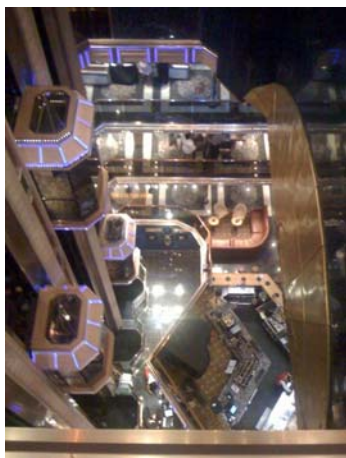
The Vermilion Bay Light: Cruise Edition

The Monthly VBYC Newsletter
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Knitting Cruise 2010! What an adventure! We were a group of nearly 40 people this year and enjoyed a full week of knitting classes, projects, and meeting new friends in a magical setting: aboard Carnival Triumph. Our travels brought us to Nassau and Freeport in the Bahamas and to Key West. Throughout the week we split off into mini groups to enjoy ports together or spend time on board. Class times and dinner allowed us all to come together at once. In the following travelogue, I blended a bit of everything: getting there, descriptions of the ship, humorous incidents on board, a description of the classes, as well as a little something about the ports of call. To get the full Knitting Cruise experience, you'll really have to sign up and come along with us the next time we go! It's impossible to relate everything from the entire week, but I hope this gives you an idea and inspires you to join us next year.

We were up at 5am on October 16th to prepare for departure from Lafayette at 7am, plenty of travel time. Between my mother and me, we had three massive suitcases: two rolling monsters, one traditional wood-framed valise that carried the Vermilion Bay Yarn Company shopette, and various carry-on's. The two roller bags sat upright in the back seat. VBYC filled the trunk. We made a quick stop by the shop, picked up a few scarves (just in case), and hit the road. Highway 90 was the route: no Basin Bridge uncertainty with more interesting scenery. As road travel goes around here, it's usually the longer way that gets you there faster. We rolled past the tombeaux of Metairie Cemetery around 9:30 and pulled out onto Poydras a few minutes later — without any driving debacles or travel discomfitures. For the previous knitting cruise, our carpool had stopped in Des Allemandes to freshen up and pick up a Bloody Mary. Since I was driving this year, I had to wait until I boarded for that. From Poydras onto Convention, then all the way to the dead end. Left turn over the street car tracks (Mardi Gras World!), then....stop. Traffic jam. Carnival Triumph was discharging its previous party cargo, so the cars backed up: pickup's and drop off's, vehicles fighting to reach the garage entrance. Parking paid and up the spiral ramp to level 3. Our three massive bags turned over to the tropical-shirted stevedores, we pulled into our parking slot on level 4 and made our way leisurely to the elevators. Having arrived quite early, relatively, the waiting was minimal. Straight up to the Check Point Charlie, metallics handed over for inspection, then through the gate. As I collected my paraphernalia from the bins and slung my bags back over my shoulder, my mother was beeping and trying again. Squared away and weapon-free, we proceeded to the check in. "Go to the Lido deck as soon as you board. Your cabin won't be ready until 1:30. Boarding begins at noon." This information promised a couple hours of prime people watching. The room began to fill as some 3400 passengers, their handbags, and hairdo's found seats to await the ascent up the enclosed walkway to Deck 3, Lobby. This waiting experience was the first time the ghost of Salvador Dali made his appearance. He would be heavily influencing the trip with an exquisitely surreal edge that would make quiet watching one of the most enjoyable activities on board next to knitting, falling asleep in deck chairs, and teaching English to the room service staff. As we sat, a woman sporting a contrasting hair bun tacked atop her head like an unstable cupola and pulling a bedazzled roller bag peacocked past followed by her friend, an elderly dame of shortly cropped, tightly coiled maroon locks, who stared at us intently. We would encounter this team at numerous venues aboard each day, hair bun teetering perilously on a wispy sea, wide eyes fixed.





We were Zone 5. When called, we gathered our bags: up the covered walkway slowly to the top of the ramp then to the zig-zaggy part and up onto the deck to be photographed for security. We were now on board Deck 3, Lobby, a blazing gold and blue showplace of modern cruise-glam, replete with lighted glass elevators fashioned to resemble giant cut gemstones ascending and descending the wall. Live music filled the space. Everyone had received the same directive: as soon as you board, go to the Lido Deck. We disobeyed and went to Deck 6, Upper, where our cabin was located. By some slim chance, maybe we could park our carry-on's there before investigating the buffet. It was at this time when we met one of our best and most-mimicked friends on board: Olga the Elevator Woman. Her recorded, distinct Slavic accent happily announced the arrival of the elevator car at its

destination each time the doors opened, always with an upward inflection, as if she was just as happy and eager to arrive as we. As soon as we stepped out, we could see the Deck 6 passage ways were closed off. No dice. Time to follow the rules and head up to Deck 9, Lido. Olga brought us there, as curious about her discovery of the 9th deck as we. With all the roomless passengers channeled up to 9, and nothing much other to do at this point than to eat, the buffet lines were unwieldy. We would need Olga's resilience for this task. A few thousand folks searched for places, as serving staff furiously worked to clear away the messes left by earlier arrivals. It was here we met up with some other knitters and enjoyed a casual lunch of random buffet items and salads. Back to Olga: "Deck 5, PROMenade?" she queried. We stepped out onto the large tiled deck that actually connected one end of the ship to the other. The Carnival Triumph is arranged somewhat like the Winchester Mystery House. Not all the decks run the entire length of the ship, that is, there is not public access to all parts of some decks, which makes it necessary to find a deck like 5 that has public areas from front to back. Some stair halls accessed specific dining rooms or special areas only. It was quite easy to get out on the correct deck, yet find a flight of steps to nowhere. Here on 5, we walked around window shopping and inspecting the various pubs and eating areas that would open later as soon as the ship sailed. Gaggles of gamblers staked out their slot machines early, selecting the games best suited to incinerate their cash in the wee hours as we rocked down the Mississippi. Café Vienna: the Jugendstil-inspired coffee and pastry bar with circular booths illuminated by intriguing lamps fashioned like twisted vines. Time to sit. Some other knitters joined us, likewise waiting for the cabins to open. Several wedding receptions had been underway as we boarded. White dresses, tuxes and awful bridesmaid's dresses perched on inexperienced heels clacked the length of Deck 5. Taffeta and linen ruched nightmares swept along: Dali's paintbrush at work. One more cocktail, and someone was gonna get hurt, falling about 8 inches off a snapped stiletto (dyed to smatch!) to a miserable broken-ankle-hangover. At long last, cabins open! Deck 6, Upper? Spacious cabin with balcony. Chilled just above 32 degrees with plenty of storage and a pink bathroom! Mom: "When will the bags arrive?" "As soon as they bring them up. There are 3400 people on this ship. Multiply that by 3 or 4, and there you have about how many bags they're working with." We sat in the room for a bit, watched the television, took pictures from the balcony. "When are the bags arriving?" "Yes." I went up on deck to take more pictures. The crowds had lessened by now, since we all had a place to go. Time for a beer, snap shots of New Orleans, the river, and the trademark Carnival stack. About an hour later, back to the room. "Luggage isn't here yet." "Be patient." Right about that time, our room steward knocked to introduce himself. In a waterfall of smiles, nods, and giggles, we understood "Steward", and knew whom to call if we had a problem. "When will our luggage arrive?" "Luggage come when ready yes, hahaha!" My mother was worried about the luggage. I went back up on deck to take more pictures.



When I returned, still no bags. Mom went out into the hall, found the happy steward, and asked yet again “Any sign of our luggage?” “Hahaha! Luggage not ready. Come when ready. Ship has many luggage. Hahaha!” To which she answered “Yes, that’s what my son said, but I wanted to hear it from the horse’s mouth.” I buried my head in my hands. Happy guy would have no clue with that English of his what exactly my mother had just said to him, and he didn’t. The tape recording in his head jammed, as he emitted a monotone “urrrrrrrr”. No doubt he was envisioning actual horse’s mouths spitting luggage or wondering whether my mother had called him a horse’s mouth. Perhaps he was working out how it is that horses could even talk. Just leave it, I thought. But no. “You know, in English, we have a saying.....” Happy steward learned early on to avoid 6384. Not only do you get a barrage of questions, you also get free English lessons in the hall. We had early seating for dinner: 6:00pm. No luggage before dinner. We emerged from our cabin and made our way to the



Paris Dining Room table 433. Stepping off the elevator, we immediately spotted our shadows. The hair piece punctuated the skyline like the dome of St. Peter’s. Unblinkingly, the companion’s gaze flashed towards us from beneath her barrister’s coiffure of blinding carmine. Some of our table mates had already arrived. Many of the other knitters were already there too, spread out among 5 neighboring tables. This was the first time we had all seen each other assembled. It was a superb group, and this trip would be a blast. A great mix of people, an interesting ship, and 3360 or so other passengers ready to coalesce with the spirit of Salvador to imbue our week with a limitless supply of melting

duty-free watches. “Bottle water, mister? It has the boobles.” “Good, yes. We like the boobles.” After the delicious first dinner, we returned to the cabin to find our luggage delivered. Time to unpack for the week and to relax. Tomorrow: Sea Day 1 and day 1 of classes in the London Dining room.

As the ship made its way out onto the Gulf, the ride became smoother, just now and then a bit of sway. Mom and I made our way to the elevators. Olga was happy to greet us and bring us to: “Deck 3, Lobby?”. Magic Loop was already well underway, and intermediate lace was about to start at 9am. Beginning knitting would get going by 10. With assistance from the knitters, whose open palms served as the yarn swift, we mounted the winder and prepared the hanks for work. Everyone with needles and yarn, we learned what knitted lace was, how it was mathematical, and how increases and decreases had to match. The work commenced. Kudos to our friend Loretta who finished her fabulous Tilli Tomas Beaded Plie Lace Scarf by Friday of the cruise! The rest of us had a good amount of length on our pieces (including me), but hadn’t quite finished by the time the cruise was done. Everyone was well enough along, however, that the basic principles of lace had set in, for relatively worry-free knitting to the end of the project. We had the project in beaded silk, in Rowan Felted Tweed, in Classic Elite Silky Lace Alpaca, as well as in Cascade Ultra Pima. Each project was the same, yet each piece had its own personality. The London Dining room was an outstanding location for our class meetings. It was just large enough that each class could work separately, yet small enough that we all remained a cohesive group. Instructors and students moved during breaks in the knitting from table to table to visit the other classes, check out the yarns, and meet new friends. One thing that was true for all the classes: each had a distribution of folks who knew each other already and of folks who had just met recently.



Room Service: adventure better than any ship-sponsored excursion. The household and dining staff on board who were in service to our cabin had very little English, as evidenced by the now-famous “horse’s mouth” incident, second only to the “Bagel and Schmear” incident which transpired on the first morning. As it went, Mom filled out two separate forms for room service breakfast: one for me, and one for herself, instead of only one for the whole room. As a result, we received two trays of lox, 4 coffee cups, 2 coffee carafes, and 4 bagels. I listened to the exchange between Mom and the room service guy. “Where all kids? Big Breakfast. Many kids?” Apparently, our delivery man had expected to see a cabin teeming with preadolescent humanity, greedily awaiting their bagel and smoked salmon. This time, my mother was perplexed. The man indicated he had another tray, yet he made the mistake of attempting an explanation as to why he had thought there were many more people than two staying in cabin 6384. This is when he learned all about bagels — it was like a scene from “The King and I”: *Getting to know you...* Exasperated by the rapid string of words dancing from my mother’s tongue, he interrupted her in dramatic Kabuki fashion, emitting a guttural, repeated “OK, OK, OK, K, K, K, K, K”. I opened the bathroom door and looked out, “what all did you say to him?” “He’s bringing the second tray of bagels.” I had dressed and was in the cabin when the old boy returned with our second tray. Eyes to the floor, he parked his cargo on the nearest open spot, tucked tail and pity-patted across the carpet and out the door like the racing foot of a sewing machine. He was obviously suspicious of the Americans in our cabin: childless, voracious eaters, prone to spontaneous and complicated didactic monologues. He was never sent again up to our room with the breakfast tray. Actually, we never did see the same one twice. The next morning, room service was not as animated. We had lost an hour to Eastern Time, and the room was still dark when the brooding, shadowy Anubis knocked. Having found my glasses, fought my way from the bed, and opened, an unamused hieroglyph stood ramrod straight opposite me bearing a tray of bagels and lox. “You were late coming to the door. You know we had a time change. You didn’t set your clock?”, he admonished. British colonialism had ensured a bit better English from this candidate, but he was fiercely piqued, despite his presentable syntax, possibly himself having forgotten to set his clock ahead. I accepted the tray and wished him good morning. He scowled and walked away. As I looked at the tray, I realized there was no coffee. Taking the blame myself in hopes of easing the man’s obviously excruciating morning, I popped my head back out into the hall to get his attention: “Sir, I failed to mark coffee. Could you bring some coffee?” He grunted and returned a bit later. “You did not receive coffee because you did not indicate you wanted it.” Not only did he think we didn’t deserve coffee, he also had a notion we deserved only one bagel. I refused to deal with the missing salmon. I dialed 8000, handed the receiver to Mom and said, “Here. Talk.” Each morning was luck of the draw. Forms were filled out identically each night, but were subject to the interpretational skills of the person preparing the trays for delivery. Sometimes one bagel, sometimes two, sometimes, 4. Feast or famine.



Sea Day Two, second day of classes. A full day for me: Fixing Mistakes at 9, Knitting Tutorial at 1. The tutorial class had two purposes: to accommodate knitters who had scheduling conflicts with other knitting classes or who had special project or technique requests. The afternoon was three classes in one: Fixing, Amigurumi, and double-point socks. The socks were begun in a fury of needles, the Amigurumi folks worked on their knitted life-sized eggplants, and purposeful mistakes found solutions. Many thanks to our fine yarn brands who accompanied us along on this cruise: Brown Sheep Nature Spun and Lamb’s Pride for Amigurumi, Brown Sheep Wildfoote, Malabrigo Sock, and Lana Grossa Meilenweit for DPN socks, Tilli Tomas Beaded Plie, Rowan Felted Tweed, Classic Elite Silky Lace Alpaca, and Cascade Ultra Pima for intermediate lace.



Ports gave us all the opportunity to get away from the ship and take in some local scenery. Many of us in the group scheduled special excursions and tours, while others spent time on their own walking in near-by shopping areas. Mom and I opted for the latter, which made for more leisurely mornings and free afternoons. Of most interest was our last stop: Key West. Fascinating history and many ties to notable personages of whom we all know: Thomas Edison, Ernest Hemmingway, Audubon, and other characters had come and gone. The Key is laid back and casual. Friendly. Besides its inviting charm, Key West was our only

port with a yarn shop. *Knit* is located directly across from the Audubon house near the Maritime Museum, through the café in the forecourt, up the steps and around the porch. It's an intimate shop with a bit of everything for the vacationing fiber fan. A good selection of patterns and books, a spectrum of colors and a good choice of needles. I walked away with a nice hank of Fiesta sock yarn in purples and lime green (of course) and a fantastic book of men's knits. The highlight of the Key West experience for us was a 90 minute ride on the Conch Train, during which our guide drove us throughout the Key, shared bits of Key history, and pointed out what was interesting on the way. A definite must for first-time visitors.



On Thursday of the cruise, we celebrated two anniversaries: the wedding anniversary of one of the knitters and the 2nd anniversary of VBYC! It was a festive evening. One of our friends inquired several days earlier about an anniversary cake for dinner, but her waiter informed, "You must have a man to get a cake and singing." And so it was arranged that my dinner placement be changed for that night, and that I should "stand in" at table 431. No

Southern gentleman arrives at a party empty handed, so I organized a yellow rose and a bottle of champagne to be brought to mark the occasion. A fine evening of toasting! As the celebratory dessert arrived, the waiters all gathered round for a rousing congratulatory song. Cameras flashed. We were celebrities!

There was a latent curiosity among the well-informed exactly whither I escaped in the evenings. What is it that a yarn shop guy does on a cruise after dinner?



I'll reveal this much: it often involved olives, good conversation, and a nightly Grey Goose dirty martini expertly prepared by a Romanian named Slava who worked in the Neo-Persian styled wine bar on Deck 5. Otherwise, the standard rule applies: what happens on the Lido Deck *stays* on the Lido Deck.



We'll soon be making preliminary plans for next year's Knitting Cruise. Stay tuned to the newsletter and the blog as we consider various cruise options! As soon as we know, you'll know! Special thanks to Carnival Cruise Line, Travel Machine, and our dear friend Jane Hebert for making arrangements for us and ensuring such a splendid and enjoyable week at sea. It was a pleasure working alongside Rosa from Knits by Nana (Baton Rouge) and Heloise from Sugarland Yarn Company (Houston) as the three of us passed along the joy of knitting to such a wonderful and energetic group of friends!



**Indisposed?
We
Ship!**

Christmas is coming!

Knitwear gift giving begins at VBYC. We do custom knit items for the special people on your list. Order now for sweaters and other larger projects. Gift Certificates are always available!

CLASSES IN NOVEMBER

Saturday, November 13, 10:30am: Schaefer Criss
Cross Wrap

Saturday, November 20, 10:30am: Fixing Mistakes

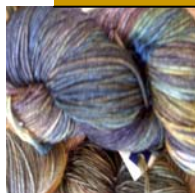
Saturday, November 20, 1pm: Pattern Reading

Saturday, November 27, 10:30am: Double Point
Socks



Carezza!

You like Chiara? You'll adore Carezza. It's a similar yarn with a bit fuller figure. Silk, Alpaca, Merino, and Rayon combine in this soft, classy yarn! Lana Grossa at its best, folks!

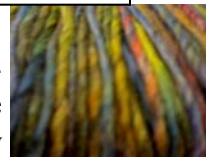


Stained Glass!

That's what these new colorways in Malabrigo sock bring to mind. Absolutely stunning! Socks, wraps, and sweaters all look great in Malabrigo sock weight!

Like a meadow of flowers...

Cascade Lana Bambu mixes colors with softness to bring you one of the best multi-shade chunky yarns for your fall and winter knitting and crochet projects. Lana Bambu!



Need a hat or shrug?

"Me 2" from Lana Grossa is just the thing! Make quick work of gift projects this year and choose one of stylish designs in Ragazza! This stuff is perfect for scarf and hat knitters and those trying to beat the Christmas deadline!



It'll have you singing!

Combine Cashmere and Merino in one strand and you'll have a ball of butter:

Ariosa from Classic Elite. On Size 10's or 11's you'll have a quick project that spells out luxury. Our fav: Lipstick Red!



Chiara, the Crown Jewel

This DK weight mohair blend remains one of the popular yarns for elegant designs. Light-weight and soft, the metallic sheen of Chiara makes you look and feel like royalty. New colors for fall 2010!



CRISS CROSS!

It's the new Clapotis! Learn to make the Criss Cross Wrap on Saturday November 13th! Choose Schaefer Laurel for the most exquisite look!

Technique classes!

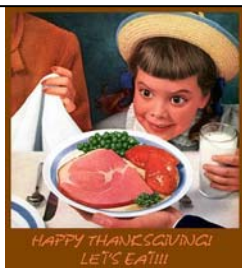
Saturday November 20th is technique day at VBYC! In the morning, sign up for the popular "Fixing Mistakes" class and learn to tackle common flubs on your own. Add to your toolbox of techniques to make you a more confident knitter. In the afternoon, it's "Pattern Reading". Gather up basic skills to interpret those often vague stitching patterns. In "Pattern Reading" we'll also take a look at making sense of charts.

Toe up, Toe Down, Around the Leg, Through the Heel, Over the Foot, Blah, Blah...

Dang it, just make the darned socks! With all those nouveau techniques and sock trends floating about, sometimes it seems all we're doing is spooning whipping cream on a hot dog. Get back to basics and learn to make a pair of socks on a set of DPN's. Bring a left-over turkey sandwich wrapped in foil, dress casual, and spend the day making socks at VBYC!

Thanksgiving Schedule

VBYC will be closed Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov 25, and will re-open on Friday, November 26th at 10:00am! Monday - Wednesday of Thanksgiving week, VBYC will be open according to the regular schedule with Knit Café 6-8pm that Tuesday!



Christmas Vogue Knitting is here!

Get a head start on glamorous and glitzy knits for Christmas gatherings and casual designs for family get-togethers throughout the holiday season!