

Holland America Koningsdam December 2017

Embarkation Wednesday December 20 was a disgrace. The line wrapped around the building for, what I would estimate to be about 5 blocks. No evidence of staff or assistance for people with disabilities or mobility challenges until we entered the port building.

Once onboard I was immediately impressed with the brightness and beauty of Holland America's newest ship carrying a maximum capacity of 3000 passengers which was quite a bit less than I was used to on both RCCL & NCL. I found the lack of crowds and an absence of frenetic activity to be a refreshing change of pace. I still love the mega ships but the Koningsdam was going to prove to be perfect for my own vacation after an extremely busy year. I was seeking rest and relaxation with no set schedule. We had anytime dining as 5 or 5:30 was too early and 8 too late. Settled on dining between 6:30 and 7 each evening. The first night was pretty bad....found out later that their computers went down. The wait staff now uses iPads to take orders and it turned into quite a fiasco. Oh well, by the second night it was sorted out. I found the quality of the food in both the dining room and the buffet to be excellent. The fish was very good and not salty. Baked potatoes were soft and not hard in the center. Butter on the table was always soft so you could spread it. Staff was eager to deliver whatever you asked for and just wanted you to be happy. I ate more than I usually do on cruises because the food was so good. The buffet had an excellent salad bar. All food was served so people weren't playing around with the food. My only complaint in the buffet was that it was difficult for a person in a wheelchair or scooter to see the choices and sometimes the wait staff didn't see I was there. We even went to the buffet one night for dinner and I had a delicious steak cooked fresh to order. Other complimentary food choices were Dive In for burgers and Nathan's hot dogs. I had a portobello burger (no meat) one day and it was delicious. Steve tried both the hot dog and the hamburger and enjoyed both. Another venue was the NY Deli serving deli sandwiches, pizza and salad. I tried the pizza and it was very tasty. Their food is definitely a step up from the mass market cruise lines. Lobster night was very good. Steve had 9 and they were very nice about serving him. I actually ate three! My accessible verandah stateroom was excellent. I knew Holland America uses very high mattresses even in their accessible cabins so asked for a lower mattress before I came onboard. The lower mattress worked out very well as it was level with my wheelchair. The balcony was easy to access as was the bathroom. I enjoyed the large transfer seat attached to the wall. The shower had one of the best shower heads so really enjoyed our showers! Our stateroom, 8134 was well situated close to the aft elevator bank and not too far from the midship elevators.

There was an abundance of wheelchair accessible bathrooms on the public decks but I did find a problem with how the doors opened out and were placed in such a way that you had a problem as they were right by the two non accessible bathrooms and people were going in and out and it was very difficult to navigate. There was one accessible bathroom, I believe on deck 3, that had a sliding door which was much easier to use. None of the accessible

bathrooms or accessible cabins had power doors. This would be a good thing to implement on future builds and to add to existing ships.

The stateroom door, while not automatic, was not too heavy and could be opened by myself while in the scooter with little problem.

I truly enjoyed the entertainment which provided more culture and was more sophisticated than my normal experiences. I especially liked Lincoln Center Stage and the 5 highly talented musicians that performed classical music for 30 minutes several times each evening. BB King's Blues Club was excellent as were the two piano player/singers in Billboard Onboard. Very, very enjoyable and lots of fun! The main shows were quite good and, again, different and more avant-garde. The highlight for me was the Christmas Eve Concert performed at 11pm on Christmas Eve and featured choirs made up of Filipino and Indonesian crew members singing Christmas carols in English and their native language. It was very heartwarming. Standing room only for this show.

I used the pool twice and loved it as always. The staff had to go get the battery pack for the pool lift as they don't leave it connected. I had an audience, of course, but find that most people are just curious and impressed that someone is willing to get in the water in my situation. What the heck, I'm there for a good time so no longer care about what anyone thinks. People are, for the most part, quite helpful and nice.

Especially when I got caught in a sudden downpour and people came running with towels! No worries, I was already wet!

We got off in Grand Turk but didn't go anywhere. Same with St. Thomas....just went around Havensight shopping area. Did do a little shopping! Got off the ship in Half Moon Cay, Holland America's private island in the Bahamas. They use a port side roll on, roll off ferry to tender passengers to shore. You get on on the top deck and roll down a series of ramps to the bottom deck where you disembark and do the opposite on the return trip back to the ship. The island does have a lot of paved areas and they have beach wheelchairs available for use. I was not able to find the accessible path to the beach. The island is quite large. The barbecue area is accessible and they have two golf cart type vehicles with wheelchair ramps to take you there and back. Accessibility is not as good as RCCL's private island of Labadee. We didn't feel the need to go to any of the private restaurants which were quite pricey. I'd rather spend the money on a good meal at a restaurant at home.

All the entertainment venues were located on deck two which made it very easy to go from one to the other. Our dining room was also on deck two so this is where we spent the majority of our time. Deck 3 had guest services and a lovely Dutch cafe with specialty coffees for purchase and complimentary sandwiches and pastries. Never had any but they looked wonderful.

Holland America has a partnership with Oprah and O magazine celebrating how to Live Your Best Life and I enjoyed some of the presentations such as a fashion show and packing seminar. They have a section in the gift shop featuring some of Oprah's favorite things and books. I, of course, am a sucker for this so bought a T-shirt and sweatshirt!

All in all, I had a wonderful week and relaxed more than I can remember in the recent past. I would definitely recommend this ship to my clients.







