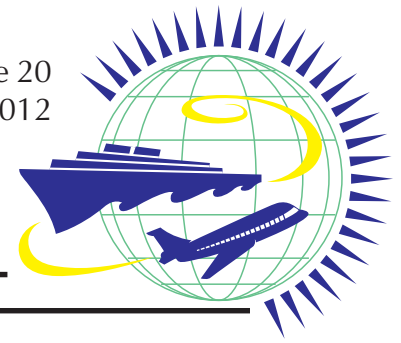


# Routon's **ROUSING** Reports

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A Routon's Romantic Reservations Publication – not for resale

Welcome to the April, 2012 issue of Routon's Rousing Reports! Well, based on my intent when we got home in February, it was supposed to be out by April. Due to urgent needs for our condo association concerning by-laws and procedures, the latter only two years behind, suddenly it was June.

June through September – *where did it go?* The "New Television Project" (NTP) which "started" in October of last year with the purchase of a cabinet got going and took until late September of this year to complete. (Of course, from October until June the cabinet still in its box in the garage only served to assure Helen that some day...) Starting in May we were also blessed with higher than usual occupancy here at the Chez Routon with family and friends coming from near and far. We were delighted to have them all. And we did have one short trip, our now annual trip to Arkansas. This time it was the third annual celebration of my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party.

While most of our travel since the last issue of RRR was crowded into November through January, we did have a total of six trips in the past year. Of course, two of

those were by ambulance to the emergency room for me. However, I did not get any pictures – except X-rays – so we'll skip over those trips.

We did make the flight to Rome and the cruise back to Fort Lauderdale in November that I mentioned in the last letter. I think the theme was something like a voyage of discovery. I discovered that I can no longer go 32 hours without sleep and still make it to dinner the first night – oh, to be young again, like maybe 75.

Once settled in, the Rotterdam and the cruise were as expected, very good indeed. We did have a delay in getting up to speed due to the jet lag and fatigue from the long trip from home plus no sea days for recovery before hitting six ports in the first six days. The "loss" of Barcelona on day two was not a big deal as we have been there several times, but the little time we had on day one in Corsica left us wanting more. We had to sail early so we had only a couple hours ashore. We did enjoy a coffee in a sidewalk café and strolled a bit but did not have time for the Napoleon museum (Napoleon was born on Corsica) or the old fort. Maybe another visit, another time.

And "another times" do happen. Malaga is a case in point. I had been through Malaga several times but always on the way to Grenada and the magnificent Alhambra. This time we went to see a bit of Malaga itself and we found a lovely city – nice wide streets blended with narrow and picturesque streets and alley ways, sidewalk cafes everywhere, a big cathedral, and a Picasso museum in the city of his birth. Unfortunately, we did get to the museum. Our recommendation: go to the Picasso museum in Barcelona.

Malaga is a very old city. The first settlers arrived about 1100BC, refugees from Troy, but the first permanent settlement was about 500 years later – Phoenicians, I believe. Then came the Romans and finally General Tariq and the Moors from North Africa in 711AD. Malaga became the major port for commerce and trade with North Africa. The Moors, of course, held southern Spain for more than seven centuries leaving a permanent impact on the architecture as well as their pioneering work in medicine, the sciences, and mathematics. There is much to see from the base of the famous Sierra Nevada to the sea. Not enough time, but we liked Malaga.



*Our entry into Malaga – also where I realized I had forgotten the camera. Back to ship while Helen enjoyed the Marriott Hotel Palacio.*



*Shopping in downtown Malaga is very up market – lovely street with posh shops on the street and apartments for living above.*

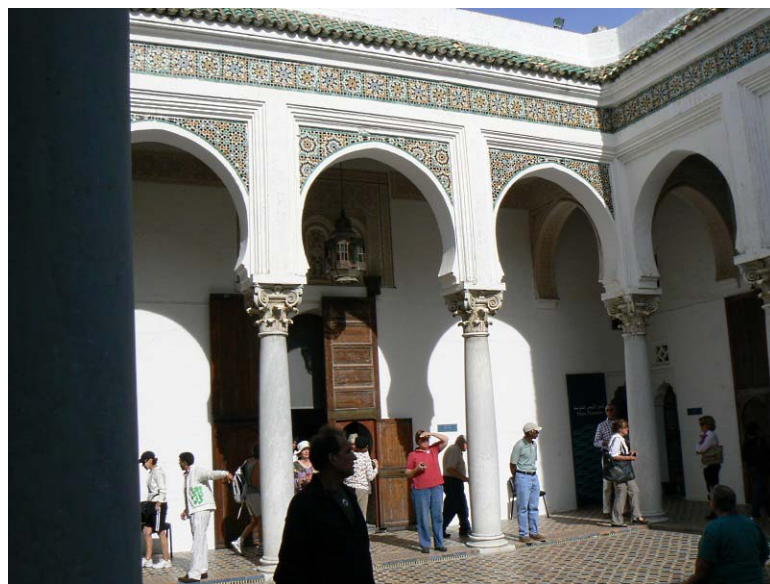
Almost directly across the Mediterranean is Tangier, Morocco and the Kasbah. Unfortunately, I must tell you the bar and the piano player are no longer there – I guess – but even worse, the Kasbah is not a bar, not a town, not even an area of a town. The Kasbah is a very old fort and palace. As an aside, a Google search on the term Kasbah turned up 6,590,000 results, almost all of which referred to restaurants like the Kasbah Kosher Steak House in New York (kosher?). There is also the Kasbah Hookah Lodge in Austin, Texas. Of course, as you all know I'm sure, this is not as it sounds in English – a hookah is a water pipe. There is even a color line of paint by Benjamin Moore named Kasbah. I also found a reference to the Kasbah Zoo. It's a music group; perhaps they have musicians that are animals?

But back to Tangiers. Tangiers was founded by Berbers in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC, taken by the Romans 400 years later and held mostly by them until the Arabs captured it in 702AD and held it for seven centuries until the Portuguese and Spanish took over in 1471. From that time it was controlled by first one and then another including a period when it was an "open city". It was not until 1956 that a solid government established the current continuity. Some interesting facts for Americans, Tangiers was the first "country" to recognize the USA in 1776. Tangiers was the site of the first US consulate which was during the administration of George Washington, and the legation building given to the US by the sultan is the first overseas property acquired by the US. This was in 1821 and we still own the property. So the bar and piano may be gone, but the US has stayed on.

Since we were to be in port just one short day and I had not done much research, we did take a ship's tour. After more driving than needed and two "obligatory" stops (obligatory stops on a tour are those where the tour operator is being paid to stop) we did get to the Kasbah, very small but perched on the high point of the medina or old city, ideal for defending against an assault. From there we followed the guides through the narrow passageways and streets of the medina, fortunately mostly downhill as they tended to be on the steep side. This part of the tour is what I wanted, and a guide or a better map than I had was essential to find our way through the maze like streets and get back to the ship on time. The old town is full of homes and people and a way of life. Unfortunately, there was no time to stop in one of the cafes or to browse the real world. There was time, of course, for one tour sponsored shopping stop (yes, they no doubt got a percentage kick back) but it was a good stop and gave us a chance to get a couple small wall hangings you can see when you visit us. One quick phrase to help you when you are in Tangiers, "shu can run" means no thank you.



*Helen tries local "bus" outside of Tangier, Morocco.*



*Center courtyard of Kasbah in Tangier. Rooms for living and for worship were around the courtyard and defensive wall and gardens outside.*



*Typical "street" in the medina or old town in Tangier. I'm sure I can get you a good nightly rate in one of the pensions – but cab service with your luggage could be a problem.*

Home again, we had three weeks scheduled to get ready for our big trip, six weeks was the planned duration. The schedule started with two nights in New York City so Helen could see the lights, the store windows, and the magnificent Christmas show with the Rockettes at the Radio City Music Hall. Then it was drive the rest of the way to Atlanta in two days for a family Christmas prior to rushing to Ft. Lauderdale for our New Year's Eve cruise. All was planned in my "normal precise" manner. But...suddenly one evening a week ahead of scheduled departure, I added an additional "trip" when I missed a bottom stair. A word of advice: when having cocktails consume the drink *before* starting downstairs. I held onto the glass but the drink was lost – and the ambulance people did not allow a refill. Fortunately, the only real damage (other than the lost drink) was a fracture of my L-3 spur like rib on the right side. As some of you may know, this is one of those useless bits we do not need, but when broken it hurts like hell for 4-6 weeks and there is no treatment

except time. Getting into the car was touchy, but fortunately once in, the Toyota seat was great so we left on schedule to see the Rockette show and have one night in New York and three days to get to Atlanta.

By the time we got to Florida, we were ready for the cruise, another "dam ship" of Holland American, the Amsterdam. This time I had a surprise for Helen, not just a port hole as was the surprise in Rome but a cabin with two big windows, directly under the bridge, and facing the bow. (A redundancy – if you are directly under the bridge and are not facing forward, the ship has a big problem.) It really got things started off right.

Our goals for this cruise were (1) to find a bunch of people who could stay up and party past midnight on New Year's Eve and (2) to just enjoy the "resort hotel" aboard the ship. We did both and had a great time. The New Year's Eve party was a bit crowded but even that worked out. We shared a table with a very nice German couple – only problem was the lady did not speak English. However, we

overcame that with a bottle of real champagne (not to be confused with the normal ship stuff), the gentleman translating, and lots of festive noise makers and gestures. When we finally slipped away about 1:30AM we felt we had finally seen the new year in as it should be.

While the party was fine, the rest of the "resort hotel" experience was even better. Excellent food, great service, good shows, and outstanding musicians. While my sore back still limited our dancing, we found another group of musicians that we enjoyed so much we did not care. They were billed as the "Moonlight Trio". They were Hungarian and the leader could make his violin sing – gypsy, classical, show music, whatever you requested. They became our before dinner cocktail music and our "shut the ship down at night" music. And to top it all off, we had a truly great table for dinner – a real fun group with one couple from Montreal, one from the Los Angeles area, and ourselves. Dinner had both excellent food and lively conversation and laughter. It was great.



*Dinner on New Year's Eve on board the Amsterdam – note the cute little blond I managed to pick up for the evening.*



*Helen's surprise cabin was right here. We're on deck 6, bridge on 7, gym and spa on 8, and then a bar above. Who needs more?*

I did go ashore once in the ten days in Fort-de-France, Martinique. This did not seem quite like the typical Caribbean “tourist” port. It was more of a real city. Of course, the great greeting directly in front of you was a large McDonald’s, but with a view of the very nice wooden cathedral just behind. I went ashore to see the Romanesque-Byzantine Schelcher Library. It had the same architect as the Eiffel Tower and joined it in the 1895 Paris Expo. After the fair, the building was dismantled and shipped to Martinique where it was assembled on its present site. Martinique is, I understand, classified as a region of France itself. I believe it. On my way back to the ship I was window shopping and in one very ordinary looking store they had a very simple, plain, cotton print dress with a price of 140 Euros or about \$180. This looked like a French price to me.

After the cruise we had a week or so in Florida seeing Helen’s son Mark and wife Raina and other friends in the south Florida area. Then as we turned north and west, a visit with Sam and Joy Campbell at The Villages”. However, the *secret destination* – secret at least to my eldest son, Bill, – was Tyler, Texas, for a surprise party for Bill’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 21<sup>st</sup>. Bill’s wife, Lara, with help from her mother and some really good friends, organized and put on a super surprise party. Lara told Bill and their children, who were not in on the surprise, they were going to a “special” restaurant for dinner. And until Lara blindfolded Bill for the drive to restaurant, he did not have a hint. After the blind fold was removed and the 60-70 guests yelled the normal “Happy Birthday” Bill then found my surprise – Helen and me plus his brothers David and Peter. David and Paula drove down from Arkansas and Peter flew in from California; it was the first time they had been together in three years. (In May I flew to California to help Peter celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> – how can I be this old???) It was a memorable party and our heartfelt thanks to Lara. Lara, I promise we won’t do this again until his 70<sup>th</sup>, OK?

For a change, at this time we only have one big item on our calendar for this winter. Lara and Bill plus Beth and Will are coming for the Christmas holiday. They were here four years ago and everyone had a ball. We had a good ground cover plus several inches of fresh, clean snow for a truly white Christmas. Snow is not a big item in Tyler and we had snow angels plus a real snow man with advice from Helen. Hopefully, unlike the last two years, we will again be able to provide a true white Christmas. We’re looking forward to it. As far as later in the winter, who knows? We’re invited to Arizona and to Australia – we’ll have to see how the stock market moves when the election is over. And, thanks be to God, it *will* be over *at last*.

Again, this “late” April edition brings each of you our best for the holidays – Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, and our fervent hopes for a much better 2013 for each of you and the world. May good health, happiness, and joy be yours, and if you cannot come to us, please do email, write, or call to give us your news.

Let me close with my usual and most sincere wishes that ’til next time *may a kind and loving God walk with us and with each of you.*

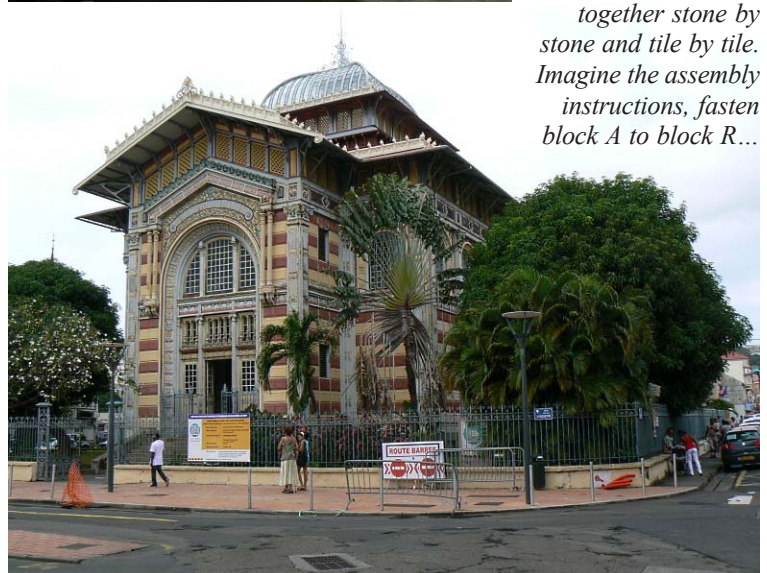
*Amen*



*Fort-de-France, Martinique. A formal “region” of France, home of French cuisine, but apparently the locals prefer MacCafe and McDonald’s.*



*This lovely, wooden cathedral seems to be the center of Fort-de-France – not large but charming in simplicity.*



*The Schelcher Library from the Paris Expo of 1895 – Dismantled, shipped to Fort-de-France and put back together stone by stone and tile by tile. Imagine the assembly instructions, fasten block A to block R...*