I am a hearty seafaring type of individual, so recently I spent a week faring around the sea aboard the largest cruise ship in the world that has not yet hit an iceberg. It is called the Voyager, and it weighs 140,000 tons, which is approximately the amount I ate in desserts alone.

The Voyager sails out of Miami every week carrying 3,200 passengers determined to relax or die trying. The ship has (I am not making any of this up) an ice-skating rink, a large theater, a shopping mall, a rock-climbing wall and a nine-hole miniature golf course. We have come a long way indeed from the days when the Pilgrims crossed the Atlantic aboard the Mayflower, which — hard as it is to imagine today — had no skating rink and only four golf holes.

While aboard the ship, we passengers engaged in a wide range of traditional cruise-ship activities, including eating breakfast, snacking, eating lunch, drinking complex rum-based beverages while lying on deck absorbing solar radiation until we glazed like exit signs, snacking some more, eating dinner, eating more snacks and passing out face-down in the pate section of the midnight buffet. Needless to say I did not attempt to climb the rock wall, which is good because the resulting disaster would have made for a chilling newspaper headline: Cruise ship evacuated as man falls, explodes; hundreds spattered by semidigested shrimp.

The only stressful part of our shipboard routine was looking at photographs of ourselves. When you’re on a cruise, photographers constantly pop up and take pictures of you; they put these on display in hopes that you’ll buy them as souvenirs. At night, my wife and I would join the throng of passengers looking through the photos, hoping to find a nice flattering shot of ourselves, and then suddenly — yikes — we’d be confronted with this terrifying image of two bloated, bright-red sluglike bodies with our faces. Jabba and Mrs. Hutt go to sea!

When every passenger had attained roughly the same body weight as a Buick Riviera, the ship would stop at a Caribbean island, and the passengers would waddle ashore to experience the traditional local culture, by which I mean shop for European jewelry and watches. I frankly don’t know why it makes economic sense for a tourist from Montana to fly to Miami, get on a ship and sail to Jamaica for the purpose of purchasing a watch made in Switzerland, but apparently it does, because shopping is very important to cruise passengers. If these people ever get to Mars, they will expect to find jewelry stores.

The other thing you do when your ship is in port is take guided tours to Local Points of Interest. Under international law, every tour group must include one tourist who has the IQ of sod. In Jamaica, we toured a plantation, and our group included a woman whose brain operated on some kind of tape delay, as we see from this typical exchange between her and our guide:

Guide: These are banana plants, which produce bananas. You can see the bananas growing on these banana plants.

Woman (in a loud voice): What kind of plants are these?

Guide: Banana.

Woman: Huh! (To her husband:) Frank, these are banana plants!

The woman repeated virtually everything the guide said to Frank. One day he will kill her with a kitchen appliance.

But I am proud to say that winner of the award for Biggest Tourist Doofus was: me. What happened was, during the tour, a man demonstrated how he could climb a coconut tree using only a small rope made from twisted banana fibers. When he came down, he showed me the rope, and I, out of politeness, pretended to be interested in it, although in fact it was, basically, a rope. The man handed it to me and suggested I might want to “take it home to the kids.” I frankly doubted that any modern Nintendo-raised American child would be thrilled by such a gift (“Look, Timmy! A rope!”).

But I pretended to be grateful. Then the man told me that such ropes usually sell for $15 (he did not say where), but he would let it go for $10. And so, unable to figure out how to escape, I gave him $10. I imagine the other plantation workers laughed far into the night when he told them. (“He gave you $10 for the rope?” “Yes! He must be even stupider than the tape-delay woman!”)

But don’t get me wrong: I truly enjoyed the cruise. It was fun and relaxing, and it gave me a rare chance, amid all the hustle and bustle of my busy life, to pick up a substantial amount of body mass. Cruising is also romantic, so let me just say this to you couples out there: If you’re looking for a way to rekindle the flame in your relationship, I’ll sell you my rope.