

Cruise – 3	Baltic Explorer		
Itinerary	Copenhagen to Copenhagen		
Line	Princess		
ship	 <p>Grand Princess at anchor off Nyneshammn</p>		
No of Days	No of Nights	Cum Nights (This Line)	Cum Nights
11	10	17	23
Cabin Number	C614		
Cabin Standard	Balcony - BA		
Overall Notes			

Sunday 15th August 2004 : Arrival in Copenhagen

We were joining our cruise ship in Copenhagen.

Our flight to Copenhagen was scheduled to depart of 6:55am, which meant being up at 4am to get to the airport. Luckily, Chris wanted to borrow our car for a scout camp. His price was to take us to the airport. We checked in almost as Terminal 4 opened for business and had time for some breakfast in the BA First Class Lounge before boarding the plane. At check-in, we were told that the plane would be full. In the lounge, we found out that was not the case and got rather better seats. BA812 took off about 20 minutes late but arrived in Copenhagen slightly early at 9:35am.

On arrival in Copenhagen, we were met by a representative of Princess and taken by coach to our hotel for two nights, the Radisson SAS about a mile from the centre of the City.



Sue in the bar at the SAS Royal Hotel



Mike in the bar at the SAS Royal Hotel

Our room was not ready, so we left our luggage and went out. Unlike the Americans ahead of us in the queue to talk to the tour reps, we were advised to walk to the central station (a distance of about 1km).

Our plan was to get a train to Helsingor (Elsinore of Hamlet fame) and take the ferry across to Helsingborg on the Swedish side of the Sund so that we would get a view of the castles on both sides of the water. The plan worked perfectly. Both trains and ferries go every 20 minutes. The train was very new, jointly owned by Swedish and Danish railways and introduced for the international service between Helsingor and Malmo. It took us about 50 minutes to get to Helsingor and about another 30 to get to Helsingborg.

We got a magnificent view of Kronborg Castle in Helsingor and of some kind of event taking place in the harbour near the case. We also took advantage of time on the ferry to get a light lunch.



Helsingor Station



Sue on Board the ferry to Helsingborg



Flag in front of Helsingor Station



One of the three Ferries that provide the Helsingor to Helsingborg service



The ferry docks at Helsingor



Kronborg Castle



Kronborg Castle



Helsingor ferry port



Kronborg Castle



Danish flag on the rear of the ferry



Waterfront and conference centre



HH Ferries



Helicopter coming in to land at some kind of festival



A ship



Cruise ship heading North



Flags on the harbour wall



Small sandy beach



Helsingborg Castle



Helsingborg Water Front



Helsingborg Water Front



Helsingborg Water Front



Helsingborg Water Front



Helsingborg Water Front



HH Ferries at dock



Flags on the ferry



Life belt on Tycho Braha ferry



Small passenger boat



Military helicopter on the water front



Kronborg Castle

Our return to Copenhagen was equally painless. We chose to walk back to the hotel, rather than search out the bus. This time, we went the long way round Tivoli Gardens and through Radhus Stadsen (Town Hall Square). Walking along Vesterbrogade, we encountered some kind of parade.



DSB Diesel Train



Helicopter taking off



Helsingor Station, right on the water front



Building near Copenhagen station



A colourful cinema in the centre of Copenhagen



Some kind of parade along Vesterbrogade



Some kind of parade along Vesterbrogade



Some kind of parade along Vesterbrogade



Some kind of parade along Vesterbrogade



Some kind of parade along Vesterbrogade



Some kind of parade along Vesterbrogade .. a policeman brings up the rear



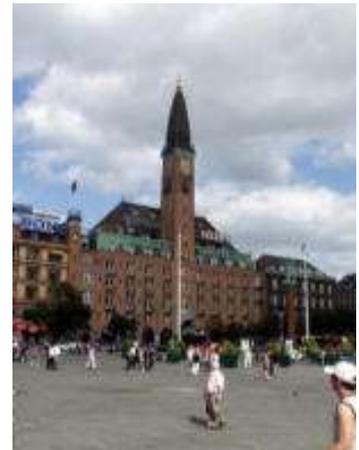
Building on the corner of Radhus Pladsen



Statue in Radhus Pladsen



The Radhus (Town Hall)



Building on Radhus Pladsen



Ornamental tower on Radhus Pladsen



Clock town on the Radhus



Pigeons in Radhus Pladsen



Statue in front of the Radhus Pladsen



Status of Hans-Christian Andersen



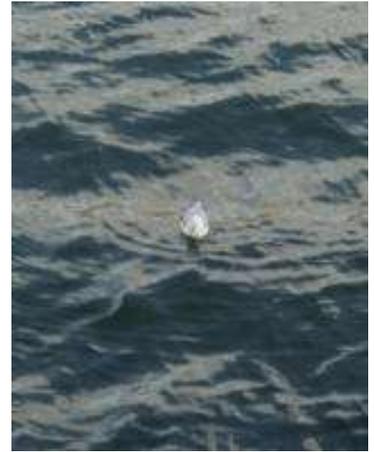
Strange skulpture on Hans-Cristian Andersens Blvd



The entrance to Tivoli Gardens



Canal cruise boat



Seagull floating on the waterway



Canal cruise boat



SAS Radisson Hotel



Old Danish Sugar Factory on the waterfront



Moorhen floating on Stadsgraven



Spiral Tower, Church Of The Redeemer

Back at the hotel, we had a room and our luggage was outside the door. We spent several hours in our room, relaxing and watching the olympic games in a variety of languages (non of which was English). Dinner was at the Teppan-Yaki Japanese restaurant. We were not particularly impressed with the hotel or the staff. Our room seemed to have been made up for single occupancy and power was enabled by the room key, meaning that it was stifling hot when we moved in.



Mike dressed for dinner in the Kyoto Restaurant



Mike & Sue dressed for dinner in the Kyoto Restaurant



Preparing the salmon

Monday 16th August 2004 : Copenhagen

On Monday morning, we needed to be up early for a Tour of the City, departing at 9am. The weather was interesting. The buildings close to the hotel were bathed in sunlight, but the distance was shrouded in fog. Breakfast was a buffet in the hotel restaurant. It was a zoo. Unlike many people, we did manage to get a table, but they seemed to be trying to cope with too few staff. Also, the toaster was broken! We were on the coach about 10 minutes early and we left about 10 minutes late. The tour took us around the streets of Copenhagen, with three stops.



Early morning fog (from our hotel room)



Street scene at the start of our tour

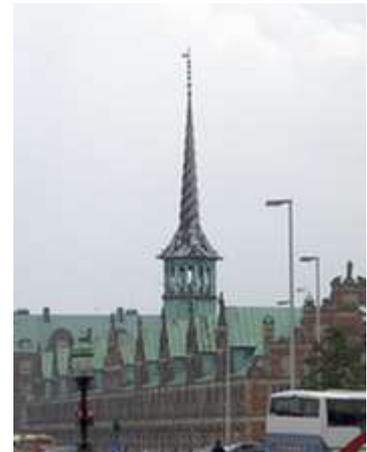
First stop was Christiansborg Palace .. This has been the official seat of the Danish parliament since 1918. We visited the ornate state reception rooms. This was a long interior tour. No cameras were allowed.



Equestrian statue in Helbro Plads



Equestrian statue in front of Christiansborg Palace



Tower on top of the old Stock Exchange



Tower on Christiansborg Palace



Clock Tower opposite Christiansborg Palace



Equestrian statue in Helbro Plads



Navy Church



Solid wheeled bike



Naval hero

Second stop was the water front at Ameliehaven. Apart from an opportunity to visit a loo and to get a drink, we had time for a short walk along the waterfront and to the Amelienborg Plads, in the heart of Amelienborg Palace. The Queen was not in residence, but there were still a few guardsmen in bearskins patrolling in the square.



Interesting road signs



Fountain at Ameliehaven and dome of The Marble Church



The dome of The Marble Church



Garden at Ameliehaven



Amelienborg Palace



Danish flag flying over Amelienborg Palace



The dome of The Marble Church



Queen's Guards



One of the Queen's Guards



Equestrian Statue in Amalienborg Plads



Street Lamp in Amalienborg Plads



One of the Queen's Guards



Equestrian Statue in front of the Amalienborg Palace



Equestrian Statue in Amalienborg Plads



Equestrian Statue in Amalienborg Plads



The Marble Church



Park at Ameliehaven

The water front is dominated by the enormous ferry ship used for the daily service to Oslo and converted warehouses. One of the converted warehouses is now a hotel (I stayed at it on a business trip more than 10 years before).



Interesting road signs



Boats at Ameliehaven



Ships alongside Ameliehaven



Ferry for Oslo



Ferry for Oslo



Old navy yard



Navy yard and indoor golf centre



Copy of Michelangelo's David

Our final stop was at the Little Mermaid Statue on the waterfront. Completed in 1913, this bronze statue of Hans Christian Andersen's heroine has become a symbol of Copenhagen.



Mike and Sue in front of the Little Mermaid



Interesting frieze on the wall of a building



Coach a long way from home



The Little Mermaid



The Little Mermaid



Ferry to Gdansk



The Little Mermaid



Industrial area opposite the Little Mermaid



Industrial area opposite the Little Mermaid

We left the tour near Radhus Pladsen and went into Tivoli Gardens with the intention of getting lunch. We succeeded in lunch, having a pleasant cold plate, Danish style, and then spent half an hour or so walking around the gardens.



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Mike at Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Fountain at Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Clock Tower of the Radhus from Tivoli Gardens



Clock Tower of the Radhus from Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens



Tivoli Gardens

We then walked through the pedestrian streets down to the quay on the canal where the tour start. We bought tickets for a tour and declined the one that was leaving imminently because there was no room on the seats in the open. We got on the next boat and got our seats near the back end, in the open air. As we waited, it gradually got darker. No sooner had we started than it started to throw it down with rain. We held out for a while, sitting under an umbrella, but were getting very wet. Sue went inside and I stood up with the brolly. We didn't see a great deal.



Wall thermometer on Radhus Pladsen



Statues in Radhus Pladsen



Fountain in Gammeltorv



Fountain in Gammeltorv



Double decker sightseeing bus



Canal cruise boat



Equestrian Statue in Holbro Pladsen



Flags at the Canal Cruise



Canal cruise starts at exactly 3pm



Equestrian Statue in Holbro Pladsen



Tower on Christainsborg Palace



Tower on the old Stock Exchange



New Harbour



Overnight Ferry for Oslo



The waterfront at Ameliehaven

At the end of the cruise, we really didn't have any alternative to walking back to the hotel. In the rain, taxis were nowhere to be seen. By the time we got back, we were soaked through. Getting clothes dry enough to pack was our first challenge.



Canal boat negotiating a narrow bridge



Christiansborg Palace



Christiansborg Palace

After a drink in the bar, we went back to our room for more Olympic coverage, and to prepare our suitcases to go outside our room for early morning pick-up.

Day 1 - Tuesday 17th August 2004 : Copenhagen, Embarkation

We managed to stay in bed until about 8am, despite the noise from the building site nearby, which seemed to start just after 5. Breakfast was a lot better. We tried the overflow area in the Casino ballroom. Check out was 12 noon; we needed to board our coach for the transfer to the port at 12:30 pm.

After breakfast, we went for a walk round the "lake" opposite the hotel. In fact this is part of a larger body of water, linked in to the city's canal system, but the presence of a couple of bridges over a narrow section gives it the appearance of a lake and there is a jogging/walking trail round this section.

We crossed the road outside the hotel and turned to our right and walked as far as a statue of a kneeling cow, delicately decorated by one of the local dogs, and then retracted our steps a little and crossed the footbridge to the other side of the lake, walking towards the Church of our Saviour with its strange tower with external spiral staircase.

Walking round the lake, the Tower of the Radhus above the building emphasized how close we were to the City Centre. The main attraction on the lake was the birdlife. We saw

- Several magpies
- A variety of ducks and moorhens
- A flock of pigeons
- A pair of swans with a nest and six cygnets



The Radisson SAS Hotel



Ducks on the water across the road from the Radisson SAS Hotel



Moorhen on the water across the road from the Radisson SAS Hotel



The spiral tower of the Church of the Redeemer



Statue of a cow (Ko) in the gardens across the road from the hotel



Sue patting the cow



Footbridge across the "lake"



The body of water opposite the Radisson SAS Hotel



The clock tower on the Radhus peeps above the trees around the "lake"



Mike looking at a magpie in a tree



Magpie in a tree



Swans nest on the opposite side of the lake



Ducks



Pigeons



A moorhen



A magpie



Swans nest on the lake



A swan



Swans nest on the lake



Church of the Redeemer across the Lake

Back at the hotel, we spent a little time in the bar, watching heats of the Olympic swimming on the large screen TV before returning to our room to collect our hand baggage.



View from out hotel room



View from out hotel room



View from out hotel room

Downstairs, we joined several hundred others waiting for the coaches to the ship. Right until departure time, there was a dearth of information. Suddenly those of us with red stickers were directed to 2 buses.



The Casino at the Radisson SAS Hotel



Protected cycle tracks at a busy road junction



Flags outside the Radisson SAS Hotel



Radisson SAS Hotel



The Radisson SAS Hotel



Cranes next to the hotel



Waiting for the coach to the Grand Princess



The bus stopped in front of us!

It took us about 20 minutes to reach the dock which was dominated by the Grand Princess. As we got closer, we could see a long queue snaking out of the check-in hall. Our bus had to wait for almost 15 minutes before we were allowed to get off. We feared the worst and joined the queue.



Church of the Redeemer from the coach to the ship



Canal boats



Statue outside of the theatre



Copenhagen seems to be one large cycle rack



Buildings in the park commemorating the friendship between Denmark and Sweden



Our first view of the Grand Princess



Our first view of the Grand Princess

In fact, that queue, to check passports moved pretty quickly and when we got inside the check-in hall, it only took us a few minutes to check-in and we walked almost straight on to the ship, despite various security checks.

We found our cabin, sorry stateroom. It was almost the same as the one on the Island Princess the year before. There was less hanging space and a slightly larger shower. Like the previous year, the room was configured wrong, with a double bed, when we requested twins. That was not a problem.

We went almost immediately to the 24 hour buffet restaurant at Horizon Court for lunch and then returned to our room. Our bags appeared at intervals over the afternoon .. as each one arrived, we were able to unpack and hide the bag.

We spent a little time exploring the ship and taking the view towards the city and out towards the Baltic.

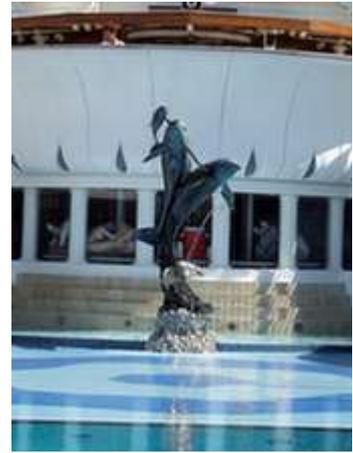
The configuration was similar to that of the Island Princess, but sufficiently different to be confusing. When we returned to our room we found a complimentary bottle of champagne and chocolate covered strawberries, in celebration of our Wedding Anniversary.



Queuing up to board the Grand Princess



Grand Princess - Outdoor pool



Water feature on Deck 14 of the Grand Princess



Wind turbines just off-shore



Wind turbines just off-shore



A train heading North from Copenhagen



Wind turbines and a lighthouse just off-shore



The swim against the current pool



Sue looking at the pool



The Grand Princess



Flags and the funnel stack



Mike on The Grand Princess jogging track



Flags and the funnel stack



The container port



Looks like Alcatraz just off-shore



Container terminal at Copenhagen



Container terminal at Copenhagen



MV Logos Hope



Lats minute painting on the Grand Princess



The Grand Princess flies the Bermudan flag



No queue to board



The Copenhagen skyline



Crane .. not actually doing a great deal



A train heading South towards Copenhagen



A train heading South towards Copenhagen



Champagne and chocolate covered strawberries in our room



Looking forwards from our stateroom



A small sailing boat in the harbour



Strong winds stretching out flags before departure



The open air pool complex



The open air pool complex



The container port



One of the ship's tenders about to tie up on the opposite side of the dock



Crew rowing across to work on the tender



One of the ship's tenders about to tie up on the opposite side of the dock



Crew on the bridge



Looking across towards Sweden



Off shore wind turbines



Colourful buoys on the dockside



Strong winds stretching out flags before departure



The ships tender returning to the ship



The ships tender returning to the ship

At 4:45 pm, we had the obligatory muster practice to explain emergency procedures and then we felt we were ready to go.

As we were preparing for dinner, we were treated to a short sharp shower that produced a wonderful rainbow and made sure that everything on deck was wet for our departure.



Sue at the Emergency Drill



Mike at the Emergency Drill



Rainbow over the container port



Rainbow over the container port



Rainbow over the container port



Rainbow over the container port



Rainbow over the container port



Seagulls



Heavy rain .. where did everything go?

It was dusk when we prepared to leave our berth in Copenhagen and almost dark as the Grand Princess impressively navigated the narrow exit from the harbour (with a gentle nudge from a tug at the rear end).



Hundreds of birds on the opposite dock



The exit from the harbour .. not much wider than the Grand Princess



One of the tenders/lifeboats



Getting near to departure .. local Copenhagen staff waiting to wave farewell



Smoke from the funnels signals that the engines are being prepared for departure



A tug waits to help manoeuvre out of the harbour



Container port, getting darker



Lights on at the industrial complex across the river



The Grand Princess prepares for departure



Mike at the bar just before departure



On our way .. looking back to the dock

Day 2 : Wednesday 18th August 2004 : At Sea

The first full day of the cruise was spent at sea. We were up by about 8:30am and just about made it into the main dining room for a leisurely breakfast. After a little time in our room, we spent late morning on deck, about the only time in the whole trip when we spent time of deck just relaxing and reading.



Not a great start to the day



A ship passes in the mist



The bar on Deck 15 above the pool



Sue relaxing on deck



Funnels against a rather threatening sky

We had lunch at the buffet in the Horizon Court restaurant. It seemed that everyone else on board decided to do the same thing at the same time. Finding a table was not easy and the buffet was a scrum. The food was excellent! We spent a pleasant hour at the on-board wine tasting in the afternoon. For \$7.50 each we tasted 4 wines and 1 liquor and got a \$5 discount off bottles of wine for dinner and a souvenir liquor glass to take away.

Evening was the first formal dinner of the cruise. WE dressed up and went for our first attempt to get a photograph (which we entitled to as part of the special package for anniversaries). The results were not good. There was then the captain's reception, where we were served low alcohol drinks and met the captain .. a Scot, he generated more confidence that the Greek captain on the Island Princess.



Sue ready for the first formal dinner



Mike ready for the first formal dinner

After a pleasant dinner, we went to one of the shows. The on-board theatre is surprisingly large. The "Sounds of the City" was a musical medley .. pretty good considering the environment.

Day 3 - Thursday 19th August 2004 : Nynashamn (Sweden)

One day of relaxation was all that we were allowed. On Thursday we were into the daily tour schedule.

The Grand Princess does not visit Stockholm, navigating the islands to the centre of Stockholm takes too long. Instead, it docks off-shore from the small town of Nynashamn, 50 km South of Stockholm. This was our first experience of the tour organisation on this kind of cruise. In Alaska, everything was pretty informal .. we just got off the ship and went in search of the tour. On this trip, everything was much more regimented. Each tour had to report to the Princess Theatre at a predetermined time and people were allocated to buses as they arrived and disembarked in small groups to minimize the queues.

We had already been to Stockholm, so decided not to take a tour to there. Instead, we opted for one with the title **Countryside drive with Mariefred and Gripsholm Castle**.

The name was a pretty good description of the tour. The first challenge was getting to shore. Nynashamn is not large enough for cruise ships to tie up alongside, so we were at anchor and had to take the ships tenders to get to shore. There was quite a lot of wind, so getting aboard was a non-trivial task and the tender tossed around a little until we got into the lee of the oil refinery.



Approaching Nynashamn



Approaching Nynashamn



The tender to shore



Grand Princess anchored off-shore



Grand Princess anchored off-shore

We were on our bus for departure at almost exactly the advertised time of 9am. We had a very pleasant one-hour drive through the countryside, passing farms with cereal, cows and horses and a number of small towns. Finally, on the outskirts of the small town of Mariefred, we came to Gripsholm Castle, one of the best-preserved castles in Sweden. It is still considered a Royal Castle, despite the fact that it was last occupied in 1864. Mariefred is situated on a freshwater lake that is linked to the Baltic by a canal with locks. The castle is on a piece of land surrounded on three sides by the lake.



Small plane seemingly parked in the middle of a field



Unidentified village



Our tour bus



Flowers at the entrance to Gripsholm Castle

We walked from the car park along a tree-lined drive leading up to the main entrance to the castle, passing a couple of Rune Stones to our left.



The path to Gripsholm Castle



Gripsholm Castle



Gripsholm Castle - Rune stone



Gripsholm Castle - Rune stone explanation



Gripsholm Castle - Rune stone

To get to the castle, we had to cross a small drawbridge over a reed filled canal, which served as a moat for the castle. Not wide and not deep, this would not be much of a deterrent to attackers. This point gave a great view across the water towards the town of Mariefred and was home to a number of tame ducks, who seemed to assume that everyone was there to feed them.

Gripsholm Castle is home to the Swedish National Portrait Gallery. Our guide seemed intent on explaining every single portrait and every single Swedish king. One of the other people on the tour commented that this was a complete waste of time because we could all forget 98% of it before the end of the tour.

We escaped before the end of the tour and walked around the outside of the castle which was much more interesting than the paintings and rather cooler. The tour included a coffee stop. The location of the cafe was nowhere near as obvious as the tour guide suggested but the coffee and fruit tart was extremely pleasant.



Moat around the castle



Gripsholm Castle - The Entrance



Gripsholm Castle - Exterior walls



The inlet in front of Mariefred



Mariefred waterfront



Gripsholm Castle - "Moat"



Gripsholm Castle - Inner Courtyard - Canons



Gripsholm Castle - Inner Courtyard - Mouth of a canon



Gripsholm Castle - Inner Courtyard - Coat of arms



Temperature approx 24°C



Gripsholm Castle - Inner Courtyard



Gripsholm Castle - Inner Courtyard - Well



Gripsholm Castle



Gripsholm Castle



Gripsholm Castle - Weathervane



Gripsholm Castle - Chimney



Gripsholm Castle - Drawbridge



Mariefred waterfront



Sue looking for ducks



Gripsholm Castle - Exterior walls



Sailing boats at harbour



Gripsholm Castle - Exterior walls



Small rock covered in seagulls



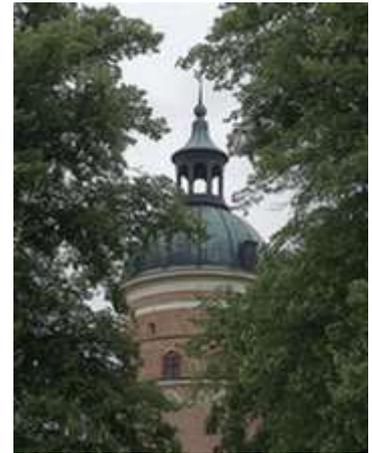
Mansion opposite Gripsholm Castle



Gripsholm Castle - Sundial



Gripsholm Castle



Gripsholm Castle - One of the towers



Gripsholm Castle - Ducks



Gripsholm Castle - The drawbridge

Next we had a walking tour of the small town of Mariefred. We avoided the guide and managed to find our own way round. We probably missed an awful lot of essential information that we would have forgotten again immediately. The village is named after the Carthusian Monastery of Pax Mariae, founded on the site in 1843.

First stop was at the local station, which is the terminus of a narrow gauge steam railway, with a small locomotive sitting in the platform ready for departure about thirty minutes later.



Mariefred station



Narrow guage steam locomotive



Narrow guage steam locomotive



Mike standing by a narrow guage steam locomotive



Narrow guage steam locomotive - The footplate



Narrow guage steam locomotive



Mike standing by a narrow guage steam train



Narrow guage steam locomotive



Narrow guage steam train

Next we walked along the main street, with its red and yellow painted wooden frames buildings, to the Town Hall on one side of the road and the white baroque Church, which dominates the whole area on the other side. Eventually we came to the water front and walked slowly around towards the place where our bus was waiting. From the castle we could see the town; from the waterfront of Mariefred, we got a great view of Gripsholm Castle.



Welcome to Mariefred!



Map of Mariefred



The Main Street



Bank sign on the main street



Blacksmith's sign



Art shop



Book shop



Cake shop



The Town Hall



The church



The church tower



The Church



Mariefred waterfront and marina



Swedish Flag



Sue recording Mariefred



A rather windy and overcast day



A small passenger ship



A family of ducks



A Hotel



Gipsholm Castle across the water



Gipsholm Castle across the water



A duck



The Church



Our tour bus



The Church



Flags



The edge of the toilet block and the extension of the railway along the waterfront

Back on the bus we returned the way we came. The guide talked constantly all of the way back. We really wanted a period of silence to relax .. we didn't get it. Back at the dock, we had time to visit the souvenir shop to get post cards for Cathy and Jenny and to post them from Sweden before taking a tender back to the ship (arriving about 2:30 pm) in time for a late lunch. On arrival at our room, we discovered that our door was decorated with balloons for our Anniversary.



Ferry to Gdansk



One of the markers in the car park



One of the tenders



The Grand Princess at anchor



The oil terminal



Getting off the tender



Our Wedding Anniversary

Mid-afternoon we took a stroll around the Promenade Deck. At 5pm, we were up on deck for our departure from Nynashamn. The weather and visibility to shore was slightly improved. As the Grand Princess slipped its anchor and we started to move slowly away, there was some sunshine. As we cruised through the islands rain threatened, but the sunshine won through.



Construction details for the Grand Princess



One of the tenders about to return to the pier



Close up of the tender as people reboard the Grand Princess



Tenders



One of the ship's tenders .. detail



Two local anglers



The Oil Terminal



Better visibility as departure time approaches



The promontary hides most of the oil terminal



The oil terminal



Looking towards the bridge as departure time approaches



Flags for departure



Smoke from the funnel in preparation for departure



The last tender from the pier heads towards the ship



The tender comes round to be loaded into its davits



A sea bird glides past the Princess as we depart from Nynashamn



The archipelago of small islands



Sunlight over the oil terminal at Nynashamn



Looking back towards Nynashamn



Sailing boat in the bay off Nynashamn



Fleet of motor boats crossing in front on the Grand Princess



Fleet of motor boats crossing in front on the Grand Princess



The sun trying to break through the clouds



Larger island on the way out of Nynashamn



Island with lighthouse and bell as we departed from Nynashamn



Larger island on the way out of Nynashamn



Island with lighthouse and bell as we departed from Nynashamn



Ferry (heading for Gdansk) following us out from Nynshamn



Ferry (heading for Gdansk) overtaking us on departure from Nynashamn



Boat comes alongside to take off the Swedish pilot



Spray blowing in the wind



The captain on the bridge



The pilot boat departs back towards Nynashamn



The pilot boat departs back towards Nynashamn

Day 4 - Friday 20th August 2004 : Helsinki

We lost an hour of sleep en-route to Helsinki as we changed to local time, 2 hours ahead of the UK. We started something of a routine, getting up about an hour and a quarter before the scheduled tour meeting time in the theatre. We were just arriving in Helsinki as we got ready for breakfast.



Approaching Helsinki



Sea bird tracking our approach to Helsinki



Approaching Helsinki



Approaching Helsinki



Approaching Helsinki



Approaching Helsinki



Helsinki Tug

There were four busloads of people who had chosen the same tour as we had, "Helsinki, Porvoo and Steam Train". Departing at 8:35am we drove through part of Helsinki and then through the Finnish countryside to the small village of Sippo for our first stop. On the way, we passed through the centre of Helsinki, passing the complex built for the 1952 Olympics. As we continued into the countryside, our guide explained about the role of Finland in World War II, fighting both Russia and Germany at different times.



Helsinki Tram

At Sippo we visited the Old Church, built in the middle of the 15th century. The stone church features a separate bell tower. The church is no longer regularly; a newer church has been built across the road. The old church has been restored to its original appearance. The rough cobblestone floor is quite hard to walk on.



Sippo Old Church - War Memorial



Sippo Old Church - Bell Tower



Sippo Old Church



Sippo Old Church - The Pulpit



Sippo Old Church - Interior



Sippo Old Church - The Pulpit



Sippo Old Church - Bell Tower



Sippo Old Church



Sippo Old Church



Sippo Old Church



Sippo Old Church - Bell Tower



Sippo Old Church - War Grave



Sippo Old Church - Tree in the grounds



Sippo New Church

From Sippo we had a short ride on a bus to the village of Hinthaara where we would start a gentle ride on a steam train through the Finnish countryside.

The Provoo Museum Railway runs between Hinthaara and Porvoo. During the summer months, there is an occasional steam powered service using the preserved wood burning locomotive, number 1168 'Lili'. Built in Tampere in 1952, the locomotive worked on Finnish National Railways until withdrawn in 1975. Linked to the Russian system, railways in Finland use a gauge of 5'3". In addition to the public services at weekends in summer, the train is available for hire. Princess hires the complete train of 4 carriages including a buffet car, so there was plenty of room.

Our coach was number 2 (of 4) to arrive. As we got there, the empty train was just pulling in to the station. Calling it a station is a bit of an overstatement, the station comprises a low concrete platform less than a foot off the ground. The locomotive entered the station backwards and then shunted to the other end of the train to pull it forwards

towards Porvoo. There seemed to be no restrictions at all. We were allowed to walk all around the locomotive and across the tracks, giving lots of great photo opportunities.



Steam train approaches Hinthaara station



Steam locomotive



Steam locomotive smokestack



Steam locomotive .. close up of cylinders



Steam locomotive .. close up of cylinders



Steam locomotive .. smokebox door and lamp



Wood burning steam locomotive



Wood burning steam locomotive



Steam locomotive .. close up of driving wheels



Steam locomotive .. close up of builders plate



Steam locomotive .. logs in the tender

Taking advantage of the natural disinclination of people to walk any further than they absolutely have to, we walked the length of the train and got into the rear carriage. The front 2 carriages were virtually full. There were only 6 people in our entire carriage. The cup of coffee we got from the buffet was extremely welcome and before long we set off on the 40 minutes ride to Porvoo, through predominantly agricultural countryside.



Sue in the train waiting for departure



Looking forward from the rear of the train



Our tour buses lined ready to travel to Porvoo to collect us



Looking back along the track



Looking back along the track



Our locomotive at the end of it's run

On arrival in Porvoo, we were guided back to our coach through the station building, which seemed to have been turned into a hardware shop, for a short drive around the town. We were deposited near Porvoo Mediaeval cathedral along with hundreds of other tourists. For the first time, we got the impression that the town could not cope with the number of people. In addition to our group, there were other Princess tours and many groups from other cruise ships, all doing more or less the same itinerary.

We walked around the outside of the rather attractive cathedral, with its free-standing bell-tower and were given a few minutes for an "unguided" visit to the inside, which had a nautical flavour with model boats forming part of the decoration.



Tour buses waiting to pick up us



Swivelling drivers seat on our tour bus



The old church in Porvoo



The old church in Porvoo .. Bell tower



Copy of Da Vinci's Last Supper in the Old Church



Model ship in Porvoo Old Church



Porvoo Old Church .. the ornate pulpit



The old church in Porvoo .. Bell tower



The old church in Porvoo

We then walked down the narrow, cobbled streets to the town square. A feature of the local houses is mirrors to enable people to look up and down the street from the inside of their houses. At the town hall, we were given about an hour to stroll around the town and back to the coach park, where our bus would be waiting. The centre of Porvoo has been turned into a traffic-free area of tourist shops. We walked slowly round, via a rather disreputable public loo. The shops and cafes were just too crowded to be pleasant.



Street sign



Finnish Flag



Old building .. not the "nosy parker" mirrors



Narrow cobbled street



Street names in Finnish (above) and Swedish



Narrow cobbled street



Narrow cobbled street



Courtyard surrounded by wooden houses



Courtyard surrounded by wooden houses



The Town Hall



The Town Hall



Signpost in the centre of the town square

The end of the walk was the most pleasant. From the town hall square we walked down a gentle slope to the bank of the Porvoo River and then across the Old Porvoo Bridge with around 15 minutes to enjoy the view before re-boarding the bus.



Boats on the river and the Old Bridge



Houses facing the river front



The Old Bridge



Up river from Porvoo



Looking across the river towards the Old Church



The Old Church



The Old Church .. Bell Tower



Homes fronting on to the river



Floral display showing the age of Porvoo



Looking upstream under the old bridge at Porvoo



Looking towards the Town Hall



A WWII canon



Memorial plate on the old cannon



The railway station from the coach park

We did discover during the cruise that organised lunches during the shore excursions always were pretty good quality. In Porvoo we were taken to Haiko Manor, a recently renovated country house, now a hotel and conference centre. The food was excellent and we had a few minutes after lunch to walk in the grounds. Haiko Manor is beautifully located with lawns running down from the patio to the sea shore below, and several ornamental fountains.



Haikko manor



Haikko manor



Haikko manor



The grounds of Haikko manor



The grounds of Haikko manor



The grounds of Haikko manor



Fountain in the grounds of Haikko manor



Fountain in the grounds of Haikko manor



Statue near the fountain in the grounds of Haikko manor



Statue near the fountain in Haikko manor



The grounds of Haikko manor



Fountain in the grounds of Haikko manor



Another fountain in the grounds of Haikko manor



Another fountain in the grounds of Haikko manor



Weed covered pond

Back on the bus, we headed back towards the centre of Helsinki and the first of our two stops, at the Temppeliaukio Rock Church. Somehow, the bus found somewhere to stop and we had time to go into the church for a few minutes and to buy postcards and stamps.



The rock church



The rock church



The rock church .. Interior



The rock church .. Interior



The rock church .. Interior



The rock church .. Interior



Road sign

Our final stop in Helsinki was Senate Square. Senate Square is enormous and for the first time we did not feel overwhelmed by hordes of tourists. We did not even try to get into St. Nicholas Cathedral. Sue went off to find a post box, while I walked around taking photographs.



?? taken from the bus as we drove through Helsinki



Senate Square



St. Nicholas Cathedral



St. Nicholas Cathedral



St. Nicholas Cathedral - Dome



St. Nicholas Cathedral - Detail



St. Nicholas Cathedral - Detail



St. Nicholas Cathedral - Detail



Tram in Senate Square



Tram in Senate Square



Tram in Senate Square



Statue in the centre of Senate Square



Statue of Czar Alexander II in the centre of Senate Square



Statue in the centre of Senate Square



Statue in the centre of Senate Square



Pigeon on the steps of St. Nicholas Cathedral



The Palace of the Council of State



The Helsinki University main building



The ferry docks are not far from Senate Square



Tour buses in Senate Square



Open deck sightseeing bus



Tour bus control sign

Back on-board ship, we were on deck for departure from Helsinki. The seagulls were battling against the wind alongside the ship. Several ferries departed while the last few passengers were re-boarding the Grand Princess.



The Grand Princess docked in Helsinki



Souvenir ships on the dock



Flags on the cruise ship dock



The Cruise Ship Dock



Container ship entering the port



Helsinki Harbour



Seagull



Seagull



Seagull



Helsinki Container Port



Fast ferry for Tallinn



Looking towards Helsinki from the deck of the Grand Princess



Helicopter taking off near the ship



Helicopter taking off near the ship



Boat bound for Stockholm



Ferry for Talinn



Finnish flag



Satellite communication equipment



Ferry bound for Stockholm



Silja Line ferry bound for Stockholm



Helicopter landing near the ship



Starting to pull away from the dock

With the prospect of an early start in St. Petersburg and the loss of another hour, we enjoyed an early dinner and some Olympic swimming before going to sleep.



Red sky at night



Red sky at night



Red sky at night

Day 5 - Saturday 21st August 2004 : St. Petersburg

Another very early morning. We had to be at the Princess Theatre by 6:45am and we lost another hour overnight. Along with almost 1000 other passengers, we had signed up for the Grand Tour of St. Petersburg. Unlike at other places on our itinerary, passengers were only ashore on organised tours.

We were still approaching St. Petersburg when we left our stateroom for the day. The weather was heavily overcast but dry.

By the time we left the ship at around 7:30am, there was a light drizzle. We had to queue at a small immigration control point to get a permit to enter Russia. As we joined the queue, approximately 20 metres long from the door to the building, the heavens opened and we got drenched, despite having an umbrella.

With 29 coaches, it was not practical for them all to follow the same itinerary. We were relatively lucky in that most of our morning in the heavy rain was spent inside palaces. Others had a canal trip, which was really a waste of time.

We headed towards Peterhof in the pouring rain, so really didn't appreciate the residential and suburban districts. It was still raining as we arrived in the car park at Peterhof Palace. We were pretty early in the morning, so most of the souvenir stalls were closed. The entrepreneurs, however, were there selling umbrellas. We had quite a long walk in the rain to reach the entrance to Palace interior.

Our first experience of Russia was not particularly inspiring. We had to queue in the rain to get inside the building and had to wear overshoes that gave so little grip on the polished floors that they were positively dangerous. One disabled person in a group ahead of us had real trouble keeping her feet and on one occasion had to be rescued as her legs slid in opposite directions.

We had the same guide for the full two days. She did not win any prizes for popularity. Her English was fine, but she spoke without a great deal of intonation. She had been a guide for many years and was extremely knowledgeable. She was intent on imparting ALL of that knowledge to her group. As a result, we found ourselves being overtaken by faster groups and somehow, promised free time at the various locations failed to materialise, except mysteriously at shopping points where, like tourist guides the world over, she seemed to be getting commission for bringing a group along.

We were only inside the Palace for an hour, but it seemed much longer. We had endless portraits explained to us and, if we had been able to retain everything we were offered, could probably have got an A-level in Russian history at the end of the tour.



Peterhof Palace - One of the golden domes



Peterhof Palace - Garden in front of the palace in the rain



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Throne room



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior



Peterhof Palace - Interior

By the time we had finished, the rain had eased, and a short tour of the gardens was possible. Here, we made our first break for freedom. While we kept the rest of the group in sight, we went our own way around the magnificent gardens.



Peterhof Palace - The tour group in the rain



Peterhof Palace - Brass band on the terrace



Peterhof Palace - Gardens



Peterhof Palace - Gardens



Peterhof Palace - Fountains



Peterhof Palace - One of the gold domes



Peterhof Palace - One of the gold domes



Peterhof Palace - Fountains



Peterhof Palace - Fountains



Peterhof Palace - Fountains



Peterhof Palace - Fountains



Peterhof Palace - Exterior



Peterhof Palace - Fountains



Peterhof Palace - One of the gold domes



Peterhof Palace - Exterior



Peterhof Palace - Gardens



Peterhof Palace - Gardens



Peterhof Palace - The Tour Group



Peterhof Palace - Signposts in Russian and English



Peterhof Palace -Gardens



Peterhof Palace - Exterior

Back on the coach, we headed back towards St. Petersburg, with a brief photo stop at the Peter and Paul Cathedral in Peterhof. Unlike most of the churches we visited, this one had not been converted into a museum and was a working Russian Orthodox Church.



Church of Peter and Paul

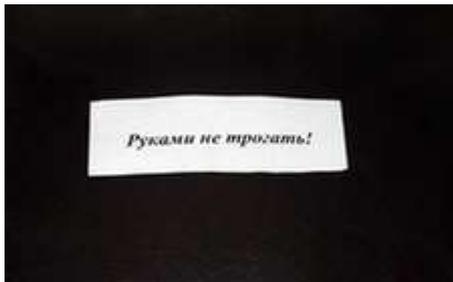


Church of Peter and Paul



Church of Peter and Paul

The torrential rain returned, so once again we were denied the opportunity to appreciate the residential and suburban districts. Our next target was the Yusupov Palace, best known as the place where Rasputin was assassinated, and another lengthy guided tour.



Yusupov Palace - Do not touch sign



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - The death of Rasputin



Yusupov Palace - Electrical wiring



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Interior



Yusupov Palace - Theatre



Yusupov Palace - Theatre



Yusupov Palace - Theatre

The weather was gradually improving. By the time we left the Yusupov Palace, the rain had stopped. By now it was time for lunch. A short drive through the centre of St. Petersburg and across the Neva River brought us to a strange building where we stopped for lunch. Originally some kind of Palace, the interior of the building has been converted into a large hall for conventions or for large groups of people to have lunch. Lunch was pretty good, with Vodka (strong and rough) and champagne (weak) provided. There was entertainment too. After lunch we escaped for ten minutes to cross the road and look at the traffic on the river and the impressive buildings on the other side.



St. Isaac's Cathedral



View across the Fontanka River



St. Isaac's Cathedral and river boat



River boat



Hydrofoil on the Fontanka River



The Fontanka River



Not a clue what this means!



The building where we had lunch



The building where we had lunch



Our tour bus .. unmistakably green

After lunch, we were back on our bus for a short drive to the Peter and Paul Fortress, with a brief photo stop on the banks of the river near the Rostral Columns and a sailing ship presented to the city by Vladimir Putin.



The Hermitage Museum



Rostral Columns



Replica sailing ship



The Fontanka River



The Hermitage Museum

Next it was over a narrow wooden bridge to the Peter and Paul Fortress island.

Like several other people in our group, we didn't really follow the tour guide. Peter and Paul Cathedral is a large building. To fully appreciate it, it is necessary to look at it in its entirety. Our guide seemed to focus on a series of minutiae, rather than the totality of the experience.



Peter and Paul Cathedral



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Pulpit



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Interior



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Interior



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Interior



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Interior



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Interior



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Interior



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Interior



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Interior



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Spire



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Clock



Peter and Paul Cathedral - Statue on the roof

After leaving the cathedral. I was not successful in funding a loo, so the first call at our next stop, the Church of the Saviour, was to find a public loo.

Once again, we avoided the guided tour and made our own way around the building, leaving in time to walk around the exterior. This was one time where we were allowed time for shopping. After a cursory walk through the shops and a brief stop to buy postcards, we came to a canal bridge, featuring a queue of wedding parties waiting for the opportunity to take photographs, and then back at our bus we discovered the door open and the bus unattended, despite promises that it would be secure.



Church of the Saviour on the Spilled Blood



Church of the Saviour on the Spilled Blood



Church of the Saviour on the Spilled Blood



Canal boat



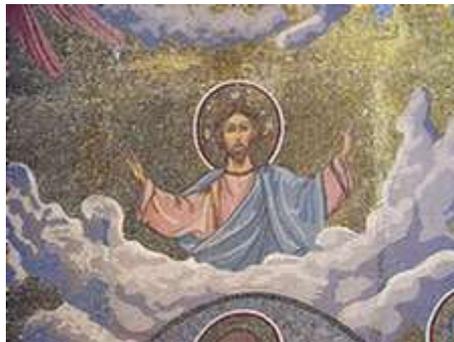
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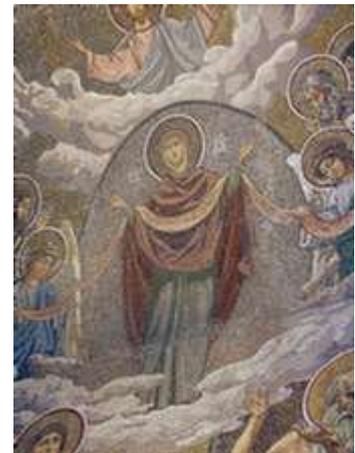
Almost everything goes inside the Cathedral



Church of the Saviour - Interior



Church of the Saviour - Interior



Church of the Saviour - Interior



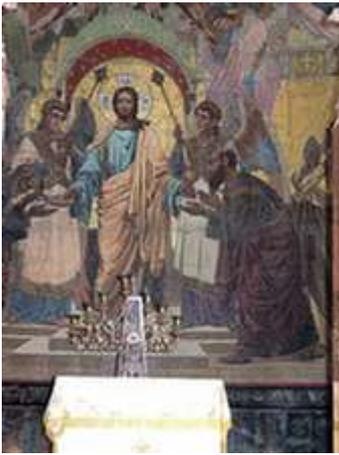
Church of the Saviour - Interior



Church of the Saviour - Interior



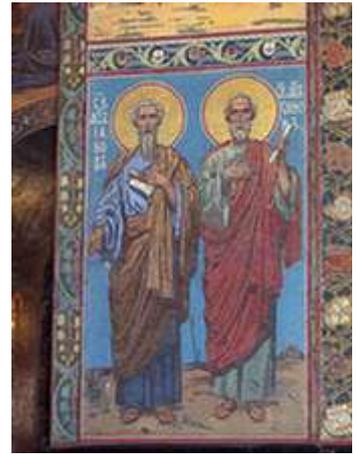
Church of the Saviour - Interior



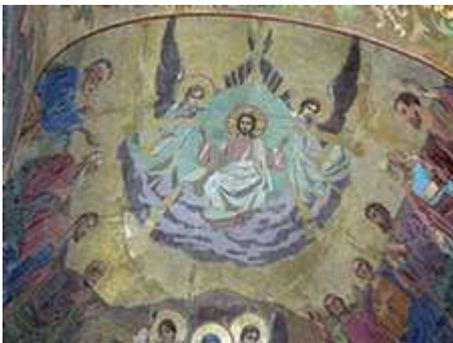
Church of the Saviour - Interior



Church of the Saviour - Interior



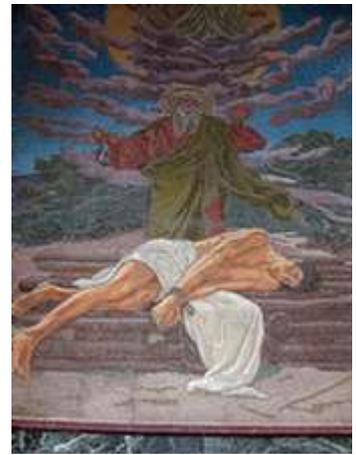
Church of the Saviour - Interior



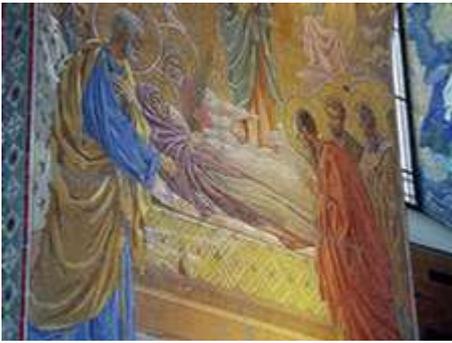
Church of the Saviour - Interior



Church of the Saviour - Interior



Church of the Saviour - Interior



Church of the Saviour - Interior



Canal alongside the Church of the Saviour



Horse carriage drivers don't seem too keen on finding customers



Just married



Canal alongside the Church of the Saviour



The Church of the Saviour



Souvenir Marker near the Church of the Saviour



Wedding photos



Wedding photos



The Church of the Saviour



Wedding photos on one of the canal bridges



Canal boat dock



The Church of the Saviour

Our return to the ship started with a drive along the banks of the Neva river, past Decembrist's square and the bronze statue of a Horseman, one of the famous symbols of St. Petersburg.



Spire of the Peter and Paul Cathedral



Rostral Columns



Academy of Sciences



Bronze Horseman in Decembrists Square



Bronze Horseman in Decembrists Square

Back on the ship we had a brief time to relax before getting ready for the visit to the Conservatoire Theatre for a ballet performance. The weather had brightened up, so I went up on deck for a look around. Once again, we were docked in the middle of a busy cargo port. On the other side of the channel, there was plenty of activity from the locals taking advantage of the late summer sunshine.



Once again we were not docked in the centre of the city



St. Petersburg docks



Russian Flag



Locals fishing on the opposite bank of the docks



The dock area



Derelict building across the dock



The dock area



Tour buses lined up

We just about had time for a quick meal at the Horizon Court restaurant before joining the hundreds of others heading for the ballet. I was undecided about this trip; surprisingly I really enjoyed it.

First of all we had to get to the theatre, almost in the centre of St. Petersburg and then the bus had to find somewhere to park. We were told that the bus would be in the same place after the performance.

Equipped with English language programmes that gave us the story, we took our seats for the performance of Giselle. We had good seats near the front. I was particularly struck by the amount of noise that the performers made, especially those on points. At the interval, we were served Russian champagne, which tasted rather like lemonade.



Status of Rimsky Korsakov



Photo opportunity at the ballet

The return to the bus was a challenge. It was NOT parked where we were dropped-off and we could not find our guide. None of the other "Princess" guides seemed to know what was going on. It was close to 11pm when we got back on board, ready to get up early again the following day!

Day 6 - Sunday 22nd August 2004 : St. Petersburg

Morning came very quickly. As we opened the curtain of our stateroom, the SUN was coming up. After a quick breakfast we went ashore just before 7am to find our bus for day 2 in St. Petersburg.



Early morning light

The weather was a total contrast to the day before. The sun was shining from a cloudless sky. We got through the immigration check much more quickly than on the previous day, so I had a little time to walk around the dock area around the ship. As we waited, another cruise ship, the Norwegian Dream (from NCL) was just coming in to dock.



Railway wagon on the dock near the Grand Princess



Tour buses lined up



Tour buses



The Grand Princess in the early morning sunlight



Lines securing the Grand Princess



Norwegian Cruise Liner just docking



Norwegian Cruise Liner



Diesel locomotive

We left the dock promptly at 7:15 am, which meant that we were running a little early for our first planned activity of the day. We got an extra photo stop in front of St. Isaac's Square.



St. Isaac's Cathedral



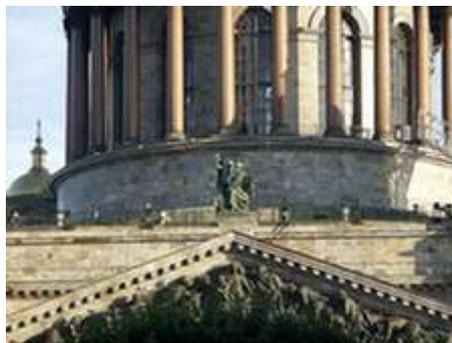
St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



Admiralty Building



Statue of Nicholas 1 in St. Isaac's Square



Statue of Nicholas 1 and Mariinsky Palace



Mariinsky Palace - the seat of Legislative Assembly



Trolley Bus in St. Isaac's Square



Trolley Bus in St. Isaac's Square

Just after 8am, after a false start when we went to the wrong dock, we were on board our canal boat.

The canal cruise was a delight. The sun was shining; there was a fresh breeze but it wasn't cold. We were welcomed with a glass of champagne and then set off along the canal, turning along the Winter Canal beneath the middle of the Hermitage museum and onto the Neva River.



Sunlit buildings from the canal boat



The canal bank



View from the canal boat



View from the canal boat



Canal alongside the Hermitage



Canal through the Hermitage

We turned downstream, underneath the bridge we drove over on the previous day and along the stretch of river we looked at immediately after lunch. The buildings looked very different to the previous day, with mellow early morning sun. We passed Decembrist's Square with its bronze horseman, turned and cruised along the front of the Academy of Sciences, and back under the bridge.



The Hermitage



Rostral Column



Peter and Paul Fortress



Peter and Paul Fortress



Rostral Column



Tower on the Admiralty Building



Ship presented by Vladimir Putin



Building near Decembrists Square



St. Isaac's Cathedral



River Fontanka



River Fontanka and the Bronze Horseman



Academy of Sciences



Academy of Sciences



Academy of Sciences

With the Rostral Columns to our left and the Hermitage to our right we continued towards Peter and Paul Fortress, with the golden spire of the cathedral gleaming in the sunlight. Continuing in the same direction, we came to the the Cruiser Aurora.

Turning around, we cruised back across the Neva River and onto the Fontanka River alongside the Summer Gardens and Peter the Great's Summer Palace. All too soon in the wonderful weather, our canal cruise came to an end.



Bridge over the Fontanka River



Rostral Columns



Fontanka River



The Hermitage



Peter and Paul Fortress



Walls of the Peter and Paul Fortress



Peter and Paul Fortress and Cathedral



The Mosque



Sailing boat on the banks of the Fontanka River



Small temple at the end of a bridge over the Fontanka River



Building on the banks of the Fontanka River



Building on the banks of the Fontanka River



Naval Academy



Cruiser Aurora & Naval Academy



Cruiser Aurora



Cruiser Aurora



Cruiser Aurora



Entrance to one of the canals



Building on one of the canals



Canal Bridges



Summer Palace



Canal bank by the Summer Palace



Summer Palace



Canal cruise boat



Domes of the Church of the Saviour



Approaching an ornate but rather low bridge



Unidentified spire



Gold leaf on one of the canal bridges



Evidence of local inhabitants



Distant view of the Cathedral of Our Saviour



Ornate bridge



At the end of the canal cruise .. our buses waiting



At the end of the canal cruise

Next stop was the Hermitage Museum. We arrived more than an hour before the public opening, but still had to join a queue of cruise ship tour groups for entry.

Although the exhibitions at the Hermitage are impressive and we got the chance to see some wonderful works of art by old masters, we were herded round in a group. We stayed for too long at places that interested the guide and we were rushed around other areas. At what seemed to be the half way point of the tour, we were left to our own devices for about 20 minutes at the museum gift shop and then abruptly, the tour was over.



Entrance to the Hermitage Museum



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - Interior



Hermitage Museum - View outside to the Fontanka River



A rather battered Lada



A rather battered Lada

We were driven to the "Last Palace" for lunch. The food was good, but we were promised a harp recital that didn't happen.



The palace where we had lunch on day 2



Canal near our lunch stop



Balcony on the palace where we had lunch on day 2



Address of the lunch stop



Commemorative plaque where we stopped for lunch



The tour group gathers after lunch



Is this an attempt to develop a grass roof

After lunch we were driven the short distance to "Red Oktober", another souvenir shop, and given almost an hour to wander around. This was far too long and the shop was the only point of interest apart from trams (none of which passed while we were waiting) and trolley buses.



Nesting dolls in the Red Oktober souvenir shop



Well used trolley bus



Well used trolley bus

Our next stop was to St. Isaac's Cathedral for a tour of the interior. By now, many of the group knew what they were in for and left the group immediately we got inside the building. Like most of the other churches we visited this is now a museum rather than a working church.



Entrance to St. Isaac's Cathedral



Entrance to St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral



St. Isaac's Cathedral

By now, we were almost finished. As a variety, our bus drove along the main shopping street Nevskiy Prospekt on the way back to the ship and we had a short photo stop at a statue of Catherine the Great. Back in the harbour, a train was stopped completely blocking the main road back to the cruise ship dock. Our bus was forced to take a roundabout route through the docks, not on marked roads, to get through.



Nevski Prospekt



Tram crossing Nevski Prospekt



Tram crossing Nevski Prospekt



Statue of Catherine the Great



Statue of Catherine the Great



Statue of Catherine the Great



Statue of Catherine the Great



Ballet Theatre



Ballet Theatre



Ballet Theatre



Ballet Theatre



Ballet Theatre



Streetside bar



The English gives a hint at how to pronounce the Russian work above



The entry to St. Petersburg docks

Departure from St. Petersburg was the most dramatic of the week. There were at least three other cruise ships in port. One of these, the Sundream, left before us, heading for the same destination, Talinn.

With the sun still shining, we were up on deck for departure. The port band which got so wet on Saturday morning was playing its strange mixture of Russian and Western music and seemed to be getting a reasonable response in terms of tips from stragglers coming back on board. As we departed, they turned to play us away.

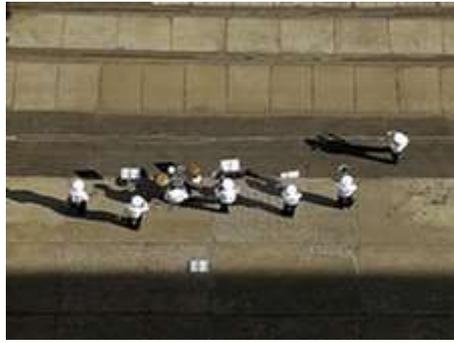
While we were waiting, an enormous floating crane passed by. The cruise ships are enormous; the crane towered over the ships. The loading of rolls of steel, one roll at a time into the ship opposite, also kept us interested.

As the time came for departure, one of the harbour tugs came alongside, to be on hand if the Grand Princess had any trouble navigating the narrow channel out to the open sea. Slowly we edged away from the dock, with the band playing. Passing the Norwegian Dream we followed the channel out of St. Petersburg harbour. There were small islands and banks on both sides of the channel, with locals taking advantage of the last days of summer.

On exit from the harbour complex, we passed the only Leningrad sign left in the city, retained as a souvenir.



Norwegian Deam tied up alongside



The Port Band welcoming tour groups back to the ship



The immigration shed



We were in the middle of a working port



Rolls of sheet steel waiting to be loaded onto the freighter on the opposite side of the dock



Steel waiting to be loaded onto the freighter on the opposite side of the dock



Steel being loaded onto the freighter on the opposite side of the dock



The Norwegian Dream



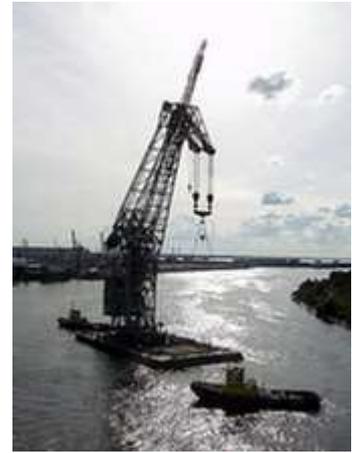
Large floating crane going past the upper deck of the Grand Princess



Tug pulling the large floating crane



Tug pulling the large floating crane



Large floating crane



Floating crane passing Norwegian Dream



Locals enjoying the last of the summer weather



Nearing departure time .. tour buses converge on the ship



View of an active port



Large floating crane continues its travel around the dock



About to depart and the port band plays us on our way



Another cruise ship



Another cruise ship



Looking back towards St. Petersburg as we depart



Looking back towards St. Petersburg as we depart



A tug keeps us company



Harbour pilot accompanies us out of port



Harbour pilot accompanies us out of port



Locals enjoying the last of the summer weather



The port band plays us on our way



A smaller ship



The immigration shed .. the band is already packing up



Passing the NCL ship



Passing the NCL ship



Leaving an active port



Leaving an active port



Leaving an active port



Leaving an active port



Translated



Passenger ships still in port



Passenger ships still in port



Locals enjoying the last hot weather of the summer



Locals enjoying the last hot weather of the summer



Shallows at the edge of the dredged channel



One of the many islands alongside the deep water channel

About an hour away from dock, we passed Peterhof and a clear, if distant view of the Palace and Peter and Paul Cathedral.



Long distance view of buildings on the shore



Peterhof



Peterhof



Clouds building near sunset

Day 7 - Monday 23rd August 2004 : Talinn

After two hectic days, we did regain an hour on our cruise to Tallinn in Estonia. The clock still only read 5:45am when we got up for our tour of Tallinn. After breakfast in the Horizon Court, we were into the familiar routine of reporting to the Princess Theatre to be marshalled into groups for tours.

We were one of the earliest groups away, which helped avoid the crowds, at least for the first hour or so. As we left the ship and walked along the narrow pier to the shore, the sun was shining, but dark clouds were gathering menacingly.



Sunrise on approach to Talinn



Sunrise on approach to Talinn



Sunrise on approach to Talinn



Sunrise on approach to Talinn



Talinn Old Town

First stop was the Estonian Song Festival Arena. The Festival is closely associated with Estonian Nationalism and has been going for more than 130 years. The grass arena itself is designed to hold 200,000 people; the stage can hold 30,000 singers. (In the winter it is used as a ski hill). From the top of the arena, we got a great view of the harbour and the Grand Princess. We also got a great view of a rainbow, showing that somewhere at least there was rain around.



Souvenir stand at the Song Festival Grounds



Century of the Tallinn Song Festival



Tallinn Song Festival arena



Statue of a famous Estonian composer



Statue of a famous Estonian composer



Name of the famous Estonian composer



Grand Princess behind the Song Festival grounds



Grand Princess behind the Song Festival grounds



Rainbow behind the broadcasting tower at the Song Festival arena



Pulleys for ski lifts used in the winter

Next stop was at the Pirata yachting centre, used for the sailing events in 1980 summer Olympic games. One piece of trivia is that this contains the only building constructed in the Soviet Union for use as a church, this being a requirement for hosting the Olympics. Immediately after the Olympics it was converted for other use.

Our guide was a Ph D student in his mid-20s. There was no doubt at all about his view of the period when Estonia was part of the Soviet Block. He declared that the day when "Estonia's application to join the Soviet Union" was a black day indeed and was somewhat sceptical about membership in EU, after such a short time as an independent country.



Olympic yachting centre used for the 1980 olympics



Olympic yachting centre used for the 1980 olympics



Olympic yachting centre used for the 1980 olympics

With a dearth of restrooms in Tallinn, we stopped back at the ferry port for a comfort stop. This was the time when the heavens opened for the first time. The rest of the morning was spent dodging showers and trying to shelter under umbrellas and trees. There is heavy ferry traffic between Tallinn and Helsinki, mostly for Finns coming across to shop, with ships departing at least once per hour.



Helsinki ferry



Torrential rain at our comfort stop

Back on our bus we were driven the short distance to the top of Toopea Hill and the start of a guided walk through the old town of Tallinn.

First stop was the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. After an introduction from our guide in the drizzle, we had about 20 minutes for a brief look inside the cathedral. Happily, because it is a working cathedral, no guides are allowed. The old town of Tallinn is not really big enough to cope with the hordes of people pouring off the cruise ships. Our guide had difficulty in finding somewhere where he could brief us, out of earshot of other tour guides, we had to queue to get into the Cathedral and then again to get out.



The local police HQ



Birds on the roof of the Police HQ



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



Cleaning up the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



Lamp post near the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral

Back together as a group we walked slowly towards the Cathedral of Mary the Virgin, stopping outside a long-established drama school.

Once again our guide introduced the church and we went inside on our own. This was a great contrast to the ornate Russian Orthodox Cathedral. The Cathedral of St. Mary is Lutheran; the inside is largely white with little decoration.



School of performing arts



Outside the school of performing arts



Cathedral of St. Mary the Virgin



Cathedral of St. Mary the Virgin



Cathedral of St. Mary the Virgin



Leaning tree outside the Cathedral of St. Mary the Virgin

Next came the inevitable stop at a souvenir shop. We managed to negotiate the length of the stop down to 25 minutes. Rather than spend our time in the shop, we walked around looking for postcards and the local post office and re-joined the group just before the time was up.



Post box used for our daily postcard



Street sign



Narrow cobbled streets



Souvenir shop

The old town of Tallinn is on two levels. One of the highlights of the upper town is a panoramic view over the lower town. Ironically, after 25 minutes in the souvenir shop, we were allowed just 5 minutes at the overlook, which was packed with people jostling to get to the front.



Looking down from the Upper Town



Looking down from the Upper Town



Looking down from the Upper Town



Looking down from the Upper Town



Looking down from the Upper Town



Crowds at the Lower Town overlook

Now we had to make our way down to the lower town, which meant retracing our tracks past the EU embassy, to a path through the town walls and down a steep narrow street towards the Old Town Square.

Near the bottom of the street, we stopped for a welcome cup of coffee and a local pastry in a very pleasant cafe, before moving on to Town Hall Square.



The EU consulate in Tallinn



Narrow cobble streets



Alexander Nevsky Cathedral



The walls of the Upper Town



The walls of the Upper Town



The walls of the Upper Town



The walls of the Upper Town



Bird with hooked beak



The walls of the Upper Town



Shop sign



Narrow street from Upper to Lower Town



Church in the Lower Town



Narrow cobbled streets



Restaurant where we stopped for coffee



Restaurant where we stopped for coffee



Restaurant where we stopped for coffee



Beer House



Beer House



Town Hall



The Town Hall



The Town Hall



Town Hall Square



Town Hall Square



Town Hall Square



Tourist "train" in the Town Hall Square



Town Hall Square .. The oldest continuously operating pharmacy in the world



Town Hall



The oldest continuously operating pharmacy in the world

After a brief stop in the square, we headed across towards the old pharmacy and a narrow alley that took us alongside the Holy Ghost Square to a small open area in front of an old guild hall. We were given 30 minutes to visit the Holy Ghost Church and enjoy an organ recital. It did not quite work out that way. As we entered the church, we heard the last note of one recital and then realised that it would not be repeated for 30 minutes.



One of the guild halls



Tower of the Holy Ghost Church



Cobbled streets



Cobbled streets



Clock on the Tower of the Holy Ghost Church



The Holy Ghost Church



The Holy Ghost Church

Back outside, it was raining again. We sheltered in the doorway of a hotel as the rest of the gradually came back together. Then it was a rather damp walk along the cobble streets to the old Monastery where we sheltered under a tree waiting for the rain to stop.



Tour group sheltering from the rain



Wet cobbled streets



Flags above shops



Narrow cobbled streets



The Lower Town



The Lower Town



Local signs



Convent



Convent sign



Shop sign



Cobbled street along the wall of the old convent



Cobbled street along the wall of the old convent



The wall of the old convent

Several members of our group had asked earlier where they should buy knitwear, a speciality of Tallinn. When we arrived at the knitwear market, conditions were not ideal, with most of the stalls covered in polythene to keep out the rain. Nevertheless, we were allowed more time for shopping. After a very quick look at the woollen goods, we walked around a bookshop and then along the colourful flower market before re-joining the others to wait for our bus back to the ship.



Woolen clothing market



Lower town walls



Old Town McDonalds



Lower Town Flower Market



Lower Town



Lower Town Flower Market



Lower Town Flower Market



Local entrepreneur



Ivy covered town in the Lower Town



Lower Town Flower Market



Lower Town Flower Market



Shop Sign



The ubiquitous golden arches

Happily, by this time, the rain had eased off, so I could admire the local trams without getting particularly wet.



Tram



Small newsagent



Tram



Tram



Tram



Tram

Back at the dock, another ship, a rather dowdy looking Holland Amerika ship had docked alongside us. As we walked along the narrow jetty, it looked as if we were going to have to queue to reboard. In fact, the queue was for the other ship.



Grand Princess and Noordam



Grand Princess



The front of the Grand Princess



Holland Amerika Noordam

We went on deck for the departure from Tallinn and enjoyed Pizza for lunch. On deck we realised that the best views of Tallinn were to be obtained from the deck of our ship. In one direction, we could see the Song Festival Grounds and the yachting complex. On the other side, there was a great view of Tallinn old town. As soon as we left the dock we realised that it was going to be blustery and cold and not a good afternoon to be out on deck.



Silja Line high speed ferry



Helsinki ferries



Olympic sailing centre



Russian War Memorial



Song Festival Grounds



Song Festival Grounds



Flags ready for departure



Estonian Flag



Talinn Old Town from the ship



Talinn Old Town from the ship



Talinn Old Town from the ship



Holland Amerika Noordam



Holland Amerika Noordam



Holland Amerika Noordam



Holland Amerika Noordam



Holland Amerika Noordam



Seagulls around the ship



Seagull around the ship



Talinn - Old Town



Holland Amerika Noordam at dock



Talinn to Helsinki ferries



Inbound ferry from Helsinki



Inbound ferry from Helsinki



Talinn Old Town



Exiting another busy port

Because of the distance to Gdynia, we left relatively early, which meant that we had time to relax on board in the afternoon. That included afternoon tea in the restaurant.

Day 8 - Tuesday 24th August 2004 : Gdynia

Another hour gained and this time we did not have to be up particularly early for our tour. In fact, when we did get up at 7:45, we were just approaching the Port of Gdynia. The weather was glorious with no threat of rain at all.



The approach to Gdynia



The approach to Gdynia



The approach to Gdynia



The approach to Gdynia



Cormorants on the breakwater



Birds in flight



The breakwater



The approach to Gdynia



Lighthouse at the entrance to the harbour



Buses waiting for us



The approach to Gdynia

We were booked on a relatively long tour, Marlbok Castle and Gdansk City. As usual there were hundreds of people booked, so the buses were split into 2 groups and we went first to the Old Town of Gdansk and then on to Marlbok. It took us about 45 minutes to drive from Gdynia to Gdansk, driving through the ribbon of development that links these two cities and the resort of Sopot. Clearly much had changed since my previous visit to Gdansk in the mid 1970s, with Western European style shopping malls and filling stations all along the road. One thing was the same .. the trams.

We got the old town at Gdansk just before 10am. Our coach parked just outside of the Green Gate. Our tour guide took us across the river, through the Green Gate and into the open-area of Dlugi Targ, lined with old buildings and dominated by the City Hall and Neptune Fountain. The buildings all look old, but are faithful reproductions built since the second world war, during which the old town of Gdansk was almost totally destroyed.

By now we had learned that the tour guides were paid to give us a lot of information that we really didn't need and probably wouldn't remember, so we tagged along with the group but did not take much notice of the guide.



Green Gate to the Old Town



Water front and the old crane



Water front and the old crane



The Old Town - Waterfront



The Old Town - Green Gate



Looking out through the Green Gate



The Old Town - Shop Sign



The Old Town - Narrow Street



The Old Town - Dlugi Targ and the Town Hall



Town Hall Clock Tower



Houses on Dlugi Targ



Flowers round one of the lamp posts on Dlugi Targ



Houses on Dlugi Targ



The Town Hall Clock Tower



The Town Hall Clock Tower



The Town Hall Clock Tower



Roof tops along Dlugi Targ



Roof tops along Dlugi Targ



Roof tops along Długi Targ



Roof tops along Długi Targ



Buildings along Długi Targ



Neptune's Fountain



Pigeon on Neptune's Fountain



Pigeon on Neptune's Fountain



Signpost



Pigeon on Neptune's Fountain



Crowds in Długi Targ towards the Golden Gate



Neptune's Fountain



Neptune's Fountain



Długi Targ in the direction of the Golden Gate



Golden Gate



Sign on the Town Hall



The Town Hall



The Town Hall



The Town Hall



Ice cream shop



Sue taking respite from the guide

From the main City Hall, we walked to St. Mary's Church.



Narrow street towards St. Mary's Street



Shop sign



St. Mary's Church



St. Mary's Church - Interior



St. Mary's Church - Interior



St. Mary's Street



St. Mary's Street



Building at the end of St. Mary's Street



The Old Town

After a brief look at the interior, we did our own thing. Armed with a few Polish Zloty, we found a cafe for coffee and a cake and then braved the post office to send postcards home.



Beer Street



The Golden Gate



Shop sign



Długi Targ and the Town Hall



Coffee shop where we stopped for coffee



Shop sign



Road sign



Street cafes on Dlugi Targ

By the time that we got back on the coach it was past midday and the tour promised lunch. We drove inland in the direction of Łódź and after about 45 minutes turned East towards the town of Malbork. This road, which took us across the Visla River, was cobbled for several kilometres.



Half Timbered Buildings



Wharf and old crane



Ducks



Ship docked in the wharf



Cobbled street



The Visla River



Malbork Castle

Eventually, at around 1:10pm we arrived at Malbork, to be told that we would first have a guided tour of the castle and then at around 2:00pm have lunch. Getting rather hungry, we started on the tour of the castle.

The castle was impressive, especially in the bright sunlight. The 800-year-old bricks and mortar seem to have been more than a match for 20th century bullets. We could see why this is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. BUT the tour did go on and on and we were all getting rather hungry.



Malbork Castle - Exterior



Malbork Castle - Exterior



Malbork Castle - The area outside the entrance



Our tour bus



Malbork Castle - The Entrance



Malbork Castle - Knights



Malbork Castle - Porticulus at the main entrance



Malbork Castle - Walls and the moat



Malbork Castle - Statue embedded in the wall



Malbork Castle - First Courtyard



Malbork Castle - First Courtyard



Malbork Castle - First Courtyard



Malbork Castle - First Courtyard



Malbork Castle - Cannons in the first courtyard



Malbork Castle - Inner Courtyard



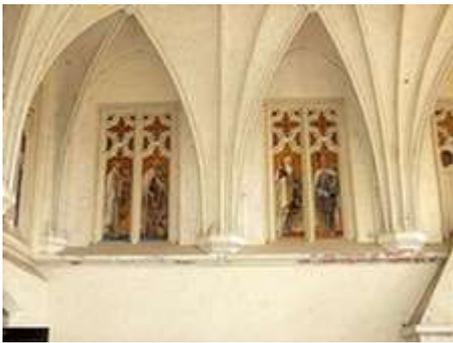
Malbork Castle - Inner Courtyard



Malbork Castle - Interior



Malbork Castle - Interior



Malbork Castle - Interior



Malbork Castle - Exterior walls of inner castle



Malbork Castle - Coat of arms on inner courtyard



Malbork Castle - Inner courtyard



Malbork Castle - Outer courtyard



Malbork Castle - Statues of knights in Outer courtyard



Malbork Castle



Malbork Castle



Malbork Castle



Malbork Castle - Inner Courtyard



Malbork Castle - Inner courtyard



Malbork Castle - Inner courtyard



Malbork Castle - Inner courtyard



Malbork Castle - Inner courtyard



Malbork Castle - The kitchens



Malbork Castle - The kitchens



Malbork Castle - The kitchens



Malbork Castle - Original bricks and mortar



Malbork Castle - Bullet holes in the bricks

Finally at 2:30pm, we made it to the restaurant. We were told that we would have 20 minutes free time before the coach had to leave at 3:30pm. There were four coach loads having dinner at the same time. We finally got our first course just before 3pm and by the time we got outside it was 3:40pm, so no free time.



The restaurant where we finally had lunch



Lunch tables



Polish beer



Decorations on the walls



Buildings around the castle



Ancient Polski Fiat

Luckily, there were no hold-ups on the way back and we had time for a brief tour of Gdynia before we returned to the ship.



The Visla River



Modern church



Around Gdynia



Around Gdynia

We were almost the last to return, so before long we were on deck for departure. While we were waiting the few minutes for clearance to depart, we had an opportunity to look around. The nature of local industry was clear from the cargoes being loaded, with bulk coal and minerals dominating. On the other side of the ship, there was a small naval installation and in the distance Sopot Pier.



The church at Gdynia



Polish flag



Naval base



Small ferry



Naval base



The pier at Sopot



Another working port



Another working port .. coal is a major export



Souvenir stalls closing up shop



Getting ready to depart



Working port



Freighter

As we departed, the harbour fire tender came alongside to escort us out with fountains in all directions from the fire hoses, to give us another memorable send-off.



Harbour fire boat



Harbour fire boat



Harbour fire boat



Harbour fire boat



Harbour fire boat



Gdynia Harbour pilot



Gdynia Harbour pilot



The pier at Sopot



The pier at Sopot



Harbour fire boat



Ferry entering port



Ferry entering port



Ferry entering port

After another excellent dinner in the Da Vinci Restaurant, we were tired and ready for bed. This time we had no reason to get up on the following morning and no alarm set.

Day 9 - Wednesday 25th August 2004 : At Sea

This was a day at sea, cruising the length of Denmark on our way towards Oslo. We had a pretty lazy day, involving a lot of eating. We did set ourselves the target of walking three times round the promenade deck before we went for our mid morning coffee and snack.



Ferry between Puttgarden and Rødby



Ferry between Puttgarden and Rødby



Ferry between Puttgarden and Rødby



Freighter in the Kattegat



11:27 Walk three times round the deck for 1 mile



The wake of the Grand Princess



Lifeboat sign



Bell tent sign



Meat pie shop sign



Life belt



Passengers taking exercise



11:45 Third time round



The coast of Denmark



Freighter in the Kattegat



Looking back as Grand Princess turns



Freighter in the Kattegat

The highlight of the day was the passage under the Great Belt Bridge, which links the two main islands of Denmark, Zealand and Funen. At 1624 metres long it is the second longest suspension bridge in the world. As the pictures show, the Grand Princess only just gets under the bridge. We reduced speed, so clearly the captain was taking great care to pass under the highest point. Once clear, the plume of black smoke from the funnels showed that a lot of power was being applied to accelerating back up to cruise speed.



The Grand Princess approaching the Great Belt Bridge



Passing under the Great Belt Bridge

The Grand Princess approaching the Great Belt Bridge



The Great Belt Bridge

The Grand Princess approaching the Great Belt Bridge



The Great Belt Bridge



Passing under the Great Belt Bridge



Passing under the Great Belt Bridge



The Great Belt Bridge



The Great Belt Bridge



The Great Belt Bridge



The Great Belt Bridge



Sailing North from the Great Belt Bridge



Sailing North from the Great Belt Bridge



Sailing North from the Great Belt Bridge



Sailing North from the Great Belt Bridge

The next meal after lunch was afternoon tea. We dutifully did our three laps of the promenade deck in preparation.



Freighter in the Kattegatt



16:04 Another walk round the deck - lap 3



Brightly coloured buoy marking the deep water channel

This was the second formal dinner of the cruise and as a return Princess Cruiser we were invited to an intimate gathering of all other Captain's Circle members with the captain (just over 900 of us). Then it was on to a very pleasant dinner in the Da Vinci dining room.

Before retiring for the night, we had to visit the casino. We invested \$40 with nothing to show for it at the end, but it did keep us busy for half an hour.

Day 10 - Thursday 26th August 2004 : Oslo

The last stop of the cruise was Oslo, capital of Norway. We had booked on a tour entitled Norway's Maritime Heritage, which departed relatively early, so we needed to be up at 6:30am to get breakfast. As we were getting ready to leave, we were just coming in to Oslo and the sun was already shining from a virtually cloudless sky.



Alongside Oslo



Oslo harbour tug



Oslo harbour



Looking across Oslo harbour towards the Maritime Museum



Looking across Oslo harbour towards the city centre



Looking across Oslo harbour



Looking across Oslo harbour

We started with a bus tour of central Oslo, passing various buildings, including the Royal Palace on our way to our first destination ...



Oslo city tram



Oslo - Royal Palace



Oslo - City sightseeing bus



Oslo - Royal Palace



Oslo city tram

... which was the Holmenkollen Ski Jump. Perched on the side of the hill behind Oslo, the enormous ski jump tower dominates the area. Only from close up do you get a sense of the size and STEEPNESS. Ski jumpers land on a slope steeper than most people are prepared to ski down. The centre was in summer mode. The area below the landing zone was flooded to create an artificial lake providing an attractive auditorium for open air concerts. Looking across Oslo, our ship was docked alongside Akershus Castle.



Norwegian flags at Holmenkollen



Welcome of Holmenkollen



Holmenkollen ski jump



Holmenkollen ski jump



Holmenkollen ski jump



Holmenkollen ski jump



Holmenkollen



Holmenkollen ski jump



Holmenkollen ski jump



Holmenkollen ski jump



Holmenkollen ski jump



Looking across the city towards the harbour from Holmenkollen



Looking across the city towards the harbour from Holmenkollen



Looking across the city towards the harbour from Holmenkollen



Ski jumper



A troll



Mike subdues the troll



Holmenkollen ski jump



Holmenkollen

From Holmenkollen, we drove to the Bygdoy peninsula, home to three major maritime museums, two of which we visited briefly. On arrival, we entered the Fram Museum, home to the Fram, a wooden-hulled polar exploration vessel.

The Fram was specifically designed to survive being trapped in ice and to prove a theory that a polar current would carry a ship all the way to the North Pole. Between 1893 and 1896 it proved the existence of the current, but did not make it all the way to the North Pole. Between 1910 and 1912, the Fram provided transport for the Amundsen expedition that was the first to reach the South Pole. The ship with its 70cm thick hull is now on permanent display in its own dedicated museum hall.



Polar bear at Maritime Museum



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Polar bears at Maritime Museum



Penguins at Maritime Museum



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Early 20th century exploration provisions



Polar exploration vessel "Fram"



Mooring at the Maritime Museum



Grand Princess across the harbour from the Maritime Museum



Grounds of the Maritime Museum



Maritime Museum



Oslo from the Maritime Museum

Our next stop was the Norwegian Maritime Museum.

After a 20 minute film, there was little time left for us to tour the museum before boarding our boat for a tour of the harbour on the way back to our ship.



Kon-Tiki hall at the Maritime Museum



Our bus



Sue with a polar bear at the Maritime Museum



Maritime Museum



Maritime Museum



Maritime Museum



Maritime Museum

This unique tour of Oslofjord commences with a short walk along the pier to one of the beautiful old sailing vessels of Norway. Fully restored to its former glory, your launch features open-deck seating allowing for wonderful views. Setting sail, head for the highlights of the fjord including the ruins of an 12th-century monastery on the island of Hovedoya and the nearby Dyna lighthouse. You will see the Bygdoy Peninsula, where many maritime museums are located, the beaches of Oslo including Huk Bay, the fortress/castle of Akershus and the two characteristic towers of the Town Hall that were inaugurated in 1950 for the city's 900th anniversary.

We finished the tour with a boat trip and then the short walk along the dock. As we came towards the end of our tour, we passed a very brightly coloured Italian Cruise Ship, a car ferry to Denmark (maybe even the same ship we saw in Copenhagen) and finally the Grand Princess.



Grand Princess across the harbour from the Maritime Museum



Freighter in the harbour



Looking across the harbour towards Holmenkollen



Looking across the harbour towards Holmenkollen



One of the many car ferries in the harbour



Maritime Museum



Harbour speed limit



Harbour cruise .. rather exclusive restaurant on a harbour island



Harbour cruise .. rather exclusive restaurant on a harbour island



Church on the shoreline



From the harbour cruise



From the harbour cruise



Grand Princess was never far away



From the harbour cruise .. the City



From the harbour cruise



A "lightning" house



Lighthouse



Lighthouse



From the harbour cruise



From the harbour cruise



Harbour island .. home to rabbits



From the harbour cruise



The harbour cruise boat



An Italian cruise ship and a car ferry for Copenhagen



City Hall



Grand Princess alongside Oslo



Italian cruise ship Aida



Car ferry for Copenhagen



Grand Princess



Grand Princess



City Hall



One of the harbour cruise ships



Grand Princess



Grand Princess

Leaving the ship in the morning for our tour, we were focused on getting on to the right bus on time. When we returned, we were able to appreciate for the first time that Grand Princess was moored right in the centre of Oslo, rather than in a container port miles from anywhere. In fact the ship was moored alongside the Akershus Castle and the best views of the castle were from the deck of our ship. The Town Hall was not far away.



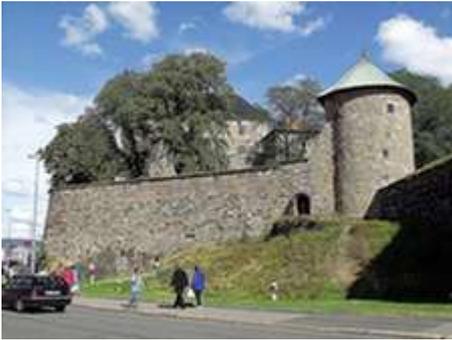
Akerhus castle



Grand Princess alongside Akerhus castle



Statue on the waterfront



Akerhus castle



Akerhus castle



Akerhus castle



Looking across the harbour towards the Maritime Museum



Sue on our balcony



Akerhus castle



Akerhus castle



Akerhus castle



Akerhus castle



Akerhus castle



Akerhus castle



Akerhus castle



Oslo harbour



Norwegian flag



Akerhus castle



City hall



The harbour cruise boat



Akerhus castle .. mounted policeman

We had an early lunch in the Horizon Court and then spent time on deck until departure. As we left our mooring and sailed away from the Oslo waterfront, we were followed by the Aida alongside the narrow channel of the Oslofjord, finally reaching the open sea. We crossed numerous shipping lanes as we sailed South including a small fishing boat with a cloud of birds following it along.



The last few passengers coming aboard



Akerhus castle as we depart from Oslo



Church in central Oslo



Oslo Maritime Museum



Church in central Oslo



Island restaurant in Oslo harbour



Departing Oslo .. the "Aida follows us along the Oslo Fjord"



Departing Oslo .. Holmenkollen on the hillside above the city



One of the many islands in Oslo Fjord



The shoreline of Oslo Fjord



The shoreline of Oslo Fjord



Oslo Fjord channel marker



One of the many islands in Oslo Fjord



The "Aida" follows us through the narrowest section of the Oslo Fjord



The shoreline of Oslo Fjord



The shoreline of Oslo Fjord



The shoreline of Oslo Fjord



Small ferry in Oslo Fjord



Small boat being followed by a flock of gulls



Lots of traffic in the Skagarratt



Lots of traffic in the Skagarratt

Day 11 - Friday 27th August 2004 : Copenhagen

Despite the fact that our return flight was not until mid afternoon, we were due to disembark at 7:30am. We got up at 6:30 and were on our way to breakfast at about 6:50 when we heard the instruction for our group to go ashore. We ignored it and had breakfast first.



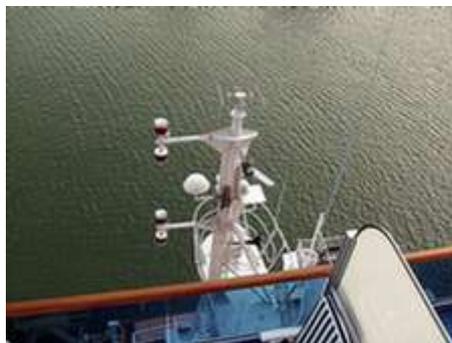
Early morning arrival in Copenhagen



Early morning arrival in Copenhagen



Early morning arrival in Copenhagen



Early morning arrival in Copenhagen

Once on shore, we were ferried to our "hospitality suite" for the long wait until our flight departure.

The hospitality suite turned out to be the lobby of the Airport Hilton Hotel, which was far from hospitable. There weren't enough seats, the atmosphere was full of smoke and the hospitality comprised a vat of strong coffee. We were even denied access to the nearest toilets and directed to a small facility in the corner of the lobby.

I went for a walk across to the airport terminal to buy a newspaper, only to find that all the shops were the other side of passport control.

This was a very unfortunate end to a pleasant week. Finally, we headed across to the airport (slightly earlier than we were supposed to), got some lunch and then got our plane back to the UK and our taxi home.



Freight train from Sweden



Freight train from Sweden

