

Classic International Cruises

Athena

ST. PETERSBURG & THE BALTIC CAPITALS

Cobh/Dublin - Dublin

11th / 12th – 27th July 2007

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS

OSLO, Norway

15th July

A - Oslo Grand Tour (Full day lunch on board) – approx. 6 ½ hrs.

You will drive through the centre of Oslo, passing all the main sights - the Akershus fortress, the main street "Karl Johan" with the Parliament Building and the Royal Palace, and the Nobel Institute will all be pointed out to you on our way to the Vigeland Sculpture Park.

The Vigeland Sculpture Park was created and completed by one man - Gustav Vigeland. Centrally placed in the park is the 55 ft high monolith featuring 121 stone figures of men, women and children climbing on top of each other, in their struggle for life. You will walk through the park with the guide.

Continue through beautiful residential areas of Oslo to Holmenkollen Ski Jump from where you have a fantastic view of the city and the fjord far below. The first ski jump was built here in 1892. The ski jump was the main venue of the 1952 winter Olympic Games.

You will then return to the ship for lunch.

After lunch onboard you will board the bus again and travel to the Bygdøy Peninsula.

At Bygdøy you will visit first the Viking Ship Museum. This museum houses three authentic Viking long ships, dating from the Viking era. All ships are excavated from the mud banks along the Oslo fjord. You will also see a large collection of items found with the ships, such as household goods, tools, jewellery, clothes, etc.

The next stop will be at the Fram Museum. The polar ship "Fram" was built in 1892 and this ship has advanced further north and south than any other surface vessel. The ship was used for polar expeditions both to the North Pole and the South Pole by Fritjof Nansen, Otto Sverdrup and Roald Amundsen. The original interior and various objects used on the polar expeditions can be seen inside the vessel, along with a comprehensive history of arctic exploration that is presented around the vessel.

Last but not least you will visit the Kon Tiki Museum situated next door to the Fram Museum. Here you can see a range of boats and artefacts from Thor Herdahl's expeditions. You will see the original Kon Tiki Raft from 1947 and the papyrus boat RA II from 1970. There is also an interesting collection of archaeological finds from Peru, Polynesia and Easter Island.

Returning to the pier from Bygdøy you will pass the royal farm at Bygdøy.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes.

B - City Tour with Vigeland & Holmenkollen (Morning) – approx. 2 ½ hrs.

ATHENA Baltic Cruise 2007/ Optional Excursions

You will drive through the centre of Oslo, passing all the main sights - the Akershus fortress, the main street "Karl Johan" with the Parliament Building and the Royal Palace, and the Nobel Institute will all be pointed out to you on our way to the Vigeland Sculpture Park.

The Vigeland Sculpture Park was created and completed by one man - Gustav Vigeland. Centrally placed in the park is the 55 ft high monolith featuring 121 stone figures of men, women and children climbing on top of each other, in their struggle for life. There are altogether more than 150 sculptures in the park, made of stone and bronze, all symbolising the different stages in the life of mankind.

Your guide will walk together with you through the park and tell about the different sculptures and monuments. The coach will be waiting for you at the other end of the park.

Continue through beautiful residential areas of Oslo to Holmenkollen Ski Jump from where you have a fantastic view of the city and the fjord far below. The first ski jump was built here in 1892. The ski jump was the main venue of the 1952 winter Olympic Games.

You will return to the pier enjoying more city sightseeing on the way.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes.

16th July

A - Grand Copenhagen & Harbour Cruise (Afternoon) – approx. 4 hrs.

Your drive will begin along the Copenhagen Waterfront where you will pass the famous Hans Christian Anderson statue, the Little Mermaid. A stop at the Gefion Fountain will provide an excellent photo opportunity. The fountain portrays the goddess Gefion and is one of the largest monuments in Copenhagen. Here you can also view the English Church.

Continue your journey and take an outside view of the Royal Amalienborg Palace, built in 1749 and now home to the Danish Royal family, pass the impressive Fredericks Church, the Royal Theatre, a renaissance building dating from 1872 and the old stock exchange “Borsen”. Your drive will pass the 16th century Rosenborg Palace, and arrive at a local church for a short stop and inside view. Your journey then continues by coach driving past Tivoli Gardens and “Stroget”, a local bustling pedestrian area.

Then cruise through the old canals and harbour of Copenhagen. Your canal cruise will last approximately 50 minutes.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes.

There is a 85 metres walk to get to Amalienborg Castle.

The launch cruise boats are covered with approximately 104 seats inside, 40 outside. The size and style of the launch boats will vary depending on passenger numbers.

B – Panoramic Copenhagen & Dragoer (Afternoon) – approx. 3 hrs.

Our journey to Dragoer will take us through some of the older areas of Copenhagen including Amalienborg, Gefion fountain, the King's New Square, Christiansborg and the Stock Exchange.

We will continue our drive to the fishing village of Dragoer situated on the Amager Island of Copenhagen. This village was renowned in medieval times as an international marketplace for hanseatic merchants who came every year to buy herring. During the 15th century this came to an end along with all other commerce. The Dutchmen who settled in a nearby village in 1521 established a harbour in Dragoer and for the next 200 years Dragoer developed into a prosperous shipping town. Today Dragoer no longer has a shipping industry and is one of the few villages in Denmark that has managed to keep its charming old centre intact. The majority of the houses date from the end of the 18th century and are characterised by simple building style with the exception of the front doors. You can enjoy some free time to walk through the quaint pedestrian streets and explore an abundance of shops. Take a stroll through the narrow cobbled streets and experience the lifestyle in this medieval Danish fishing village. Your tour concludes with the return drive back to the port.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes.

C - Tivoli Gardens (Evening) – approx. 3 hrs.

Enjoy your evening with a visit to the legendary Tivoli Gardens - a “must” when going to Copenhagen. We shall be transferred from the ship to Tivoli in the heart of the city, where you will have free time on your own.

The entertainment programme changes weekly, and depending on the evening, you may see live bands, orchestras, theatres and much more. Or you may prefer to just sit and watch the world waltz by at one of the many cafés, bars and restaurants before rejoining the coach at the conclusion of our visit.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes.

There are no guides on this tour, but members of the ship’s staff will accompany the coaches. The entrance fee to the Tivoli Gardens is included, but a pass for the amusements must be purchased separately inside the park.

It can sometimes be cool in the evening, so passengers may like to take a sweater or jacket with them.

18th July

A - Stockholm & Sigtuna (Full day – free lunch) – approx. 6 ½ hrs.

From the pier, commence with a drive to the island of Gamla Stan, the Old Town. Witness the historic elegance of the dominating Royal Palace when leaving the coach for a short guided walk. Stroll along the narrow, twisting alleys and cobblestone streets of the oldest and coziest quarters in Stockholm. As you wander with your guide, experience the medieval intimacy of what is today a living historical monument of international renown with most buildings dating from the 16th-18th centuries. In the centre of the Old Town is Stortorget, the Great Square, where among other beautiful buildings you will see the old Stock Exchange, today home of the Nobel Prize Museum and the Swedish Academy.

On the nearby island of Djurgården, the Number one attraction in Stockholm is located, the Vasa Museum. Visit the museum, housing the warship Vasa, once the pride of Sweden's mighty navy. On her maiden voyage in 1628 she capsized and sank in Stockholm's inner harbour. In 1961, after 333 years at the bottom of the water she was salvaged and is today restored to much of her original magnificence.

Continue through the northern outskirts of the city and through the scenic countryside en route to Sigtuna, an idyllic little town, approximately 45 minutes drive north of Stockholm and beautifully set with the Lake Mälaren on one side and cultivated, old areas bearing countless traces of old cultural traditions on the other.

Sigtuna was founded around 980 AD on the threshold of a new age as the Viking period became the medieval period, and Sweden united into one kingdom. Sigtuna became the first Christian town in Sweden, a centre of the new religion.

Many stone churches were erected but only the ruins of three of them remain to be seen. In the 13th century Dominican friars built the first brick church, St Mary's which since the 16th century and the protestant reformation has been the parish church. Sigtuna has also preserved its original town plan.

A town with great charm, picturesque wooden houses, narrow alleys and the smallest Town Hall in Scandinavia, dating from 1744. During your visit, tour the major points of interest including one of the Church Ruins, the Town Hall, St Mary's church and "Stora Gatan", the oldest street in Sweden.

Enjoy some free time for lunch on your own before returning to Stockholm and the pier.

Subject to minimum 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes, as this tour involves some walking. There is approx. 500 metres guided walk in the Old Town; around 300 metres easy walking within the museum; and approx. 30 minutes walk over cobble stoned streets in Sigtuna.

B - Stockholm Highlights (Morning) – approx. 4 hrs.

Covering the city districts of Södermalm, Gamla Stan, Norrmalm, Östermalm and Djurgården each with its own special character, your tour begins with a drive up to Fjällgatan for a panoramic view of the city.

Drive west along Söder Mälarstrand and across the Western Bridge spanning Riddarfjärden and offering extensive views of the city skyline.

In the distance you will see the three crowns atop the imposing City Hall, beautifully situated by the shores of the Lake Mälaren. Inaugurated in 1923 after 12 years of work by the combined elite of Swedish construction workers, sculptors, artists and craftsmen. Renowned for its architecture, murals, mosaics and for being the site for the annual Nobel Prize banquet. Experience the grandeur and spaciousness of the impressive Blue Hall and Golden Chamber and enjoy the beautiful view from the Garden.

Continue past the Royal Dramatic Theatre along Strandvägen to the island of Djurgården, regarded as Stockholm's amusement and recreation centre with great park lands but also museums as the Skansen Open Air Museum and the Vasa Museum, housing the Swedish warship Vasa.

Visit the Vasa, once considered to be one of the world's largest and most prestigious warships. The museum is built around the 17th century warship, which sank in Stockholm's inner harbour on her maiden voyage in 1628. Salvaged in 1961 and today restored to much of its former glory, the Vasa represents an authentic piece of living history.

Continue through the Diplomat areas and through Östermalm, a fashionable neighbourhood of stately apartment buildings to the modern shopping and business areas at Hamngatan and Sergels Torg. Pass the Royal Opera and the Parliament building before reaching Stockholm's oldest quarter, the Old Town with the dominating Royal Palace. Enjoy a short guided walk through then narrow cobbled stoned streets and alleys passing many old, beautiful buildings. Return to the ship.

Subject to minimum 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes, as this tour involves some walking. There is approx. 500 metres guided walk in the Old Town; around 300 metres easy walking within the museum; and approx. 200 metres within the City Hall.

C - Stockholm Waterways (Afternoon) – approx. 2 hrs.

Stockholm, strategically built where the freshwater lake Mälaren meets the Baltic Sea, shows herself from the most beautiful side when seen from the water. Often referred to as "the Beauty on Water", Stockholm is built upon 14 different islands and the mainland, all linked together by over 50 bridges.

Water plays an important role in every day life and boating, swimming and fishing are popular activities in this capital city where over a third of the total surface area is water.

While cruising the glittering waters, pass under numerous bridges, through two locks connecting the waters as well as passed most of the main sights of the city such as the Old Town with the Royal Palace, the magnificent City Hall, the Djurgården island with the Vasa Museum, Skansen Open Air Museum and the Tivoli "Gröna Lund".

Not only spoiled with water, parks and green areas are other important parts of city life and since 1995 Stockholm has her own Eco Park, the world's first National City Park.

Subject to minimum 60 / maximum 100 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable and non slippery shoes.

There is around 150 metres walk involved from the ship to the pier where the sightseeing boat is docked.

Soft drinks and some snacks can be bought onboard (at your expense).

This tour will only be operated if the ship is docked at Frihamnen 638 pier.

19th July

A - Highlights of Tallinn (Morning) – approx. 4 hrs.

On this tour you will visit all the main sights in the Medieval Upper Old Town and conduct a coach tour in a lovely seaside area Pirita and in a contrasting Soviet style dwelling area Lasnamäe.

Departing from the port towards residential Pirita district you enjoy a scenic drive past the Kadriorg Park, founded by Peter the Great. Nowadays art museums and the residence of the Estonian President are nestled amidst the park and the vegetation. A photo stop will be made at the Song Festival Ground, where Estonians sang their way to freedom from Soviet power in 1988. The tradition of song festivals stretches back to 1869 with no interruptions and attracts tens of thousands of people. The Olympic Yachting Center is a reminder of the sailing events of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. You drive by the ruins of St. Briget's Convent of the 16th century, the Forest Cemetery and one of the most famous monuments in Tallinn - the Russalka Monument, dedicated to a sunken ship.

During your panoramic coach tour you will also see, besides the beautiful, old and modern buildings of the residential Pirita area, a Soviet style district called Lasnamäe. It is an area built in the 70's and 80's and with its gray, all-alike 5- and 9-storey apartment blocks is of a great contrast to high-valued Pirita with fine buildings and houses, old and modern, simple and classy.

Proceed towards the Upper Old Town along scenic, seaside driveway with the city silhouette at the background getting closer and closer. Drive through the city centre all the way up to the Upper Old Town - Toompea Hill that has always been the symbol of power and the home to many German aristocrats during the days of Hanseatic League. After arriving at the feet of Tall Hermann Tower – a proud holder of Estonian tricolour – you will disembark and start your walking tour in the winding streets of the old town.

On the Palace Square stands a pink, baroque building that now houses the Estonian Parliament and, across the square, stands the dominating Russian Orthodox Church – the Alexander Nevski Cathedral with its onion-like cupolas. Pay a visit inside this church, whose walls are embellished with golden icons and mosaics. You will shortly after visit the most important church in Estonia – the Dome church, also known as St. Mary Cathedral (from 13th century). The interior of the church offers on display close to 100 coats of arms once belonging to the local noble families. Every family chose an element to be a symbol of their pedigree – an animal, a fish, a plant, a tree, etc. These coats of arms are one of the few decorations of the church interior. The exterior clearly represents the so-called “nude gothic” style.

After visiting the churches, which depict two completely different sacral buildings and religions, you will walk a short distance to reach a couple of viewing points, which offer a beautiful panorama over the Lower Old Town with its dwelling houses, towers, churches and spires rising above the cluster of red-tiled roofs. In the background you will see the modern city centre, the harbour, the sea, the ferries and vessels gliding in and from the port. The view from Patkuli platform demonstrates clearly that once Tallinn was really a town of towers. Now out of 46 only around 20 are left.

In the area of the viewpoints you will also have some time for shopping - browse through the small souvenir shops to find a memorabilia to take home as a reminder of your cruise.

Subject to minimum 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes and a summer hat.

This tour involves walking over uneven cobbled-streets of the old town, therefore is not suitable for passengers with notable moving difficulties.

The Dome Church may be occasionally closed for different religious services without prior notice.

B - Medieval Tallinn & Rocca al Mare (Morning) – approx. 4 hrs.

Depart from the port and drive through the city centre with its lively streets. On the way you may view various modern and historic buildings: e.g. a Concert Hall from the Soviet times, a Railway Station, dwelling houses, and of course, the outline of the medieval old town with its defence wall, gateways and towers. Look up on the Upper Old Town, situated on a 50m high Toompea Hill, and enjoy fascinating views on this historic stronghold of German aristocrats and church representatives.

Continue with your panoramic bus tour heading towards a nearby suburban area for a tranquil walk in a lovely open-air museum-park. Rocca al Mare is an area on sandstone banks of the south-western coast of Tallinn - Kopli Bay. The name "Rocca al Mare" alludes to its seaside location – "a cliff by the sea". The name comes from Girard de Soucanton's summer estate, built in 1863. Neighbouring estates later borrowed the name, and today it applies to the entire region. The area has become an attractive centre for spending free time, relaxation, sports and shopping opportunities. The museum continuously organizes on its premises different get-togethers, cultural events, seasonal happenings, exhibitions etc.

This open-air museum is a fine example of rural architecture consisting of 18th- and 19th-century windmills, farmhouses, a church, a pub, a fire station and other buildings gathered from all around rural Estonia and are now located in a pleasant park. You will have the possibility to see for yourself how the peasants built their houses centuries ago and how those houses stood together even without any nail. You can peek also inside the houses and barns to see the interior, the furniture and utensils of the epochs long gone by. Walk back to your tour bus and return to the city centre.

After arriving in the Old Town, disembark at the Nun's Gate from where your exploration along the network of medieval streets begins. Walk along the Pikk (Long) Street, where your guide introduces you the concept of local Guild Houses – associations of merchants and artisans.

Right opposite the Great Guild stands the simple, humble Holy Ghost Church (from 14th century), which is the only sacral building that has preserved its original medieval exterior, except for the Baroque spire. The tower bell used to be the oldest one in Estonia, but was badly damaged in fire in 2002. Make an inside visit to verify that its rich interior offers many good examples of wooden sculpture of the Gothic era and its altar is one of the most precious medieval works in Estonia.

Proceed to St. Catherin's Passage, situated in the Latin Quarter, where a number of tasteful workshops have been opened in a very lovely setting of a medieval passage connecting two roads. With some luck, you may be able to see artists making their new masterpieces (a glass-blower making a vase, hat maker sewing a hat, an artist making pieces of stained glass, etc.). There are also tombstones from St. Catherin's Church attached on the passage walls and behind the corner there is an open-air wool market under the arches of the medieval town wall itself.

Nearby are the Dominican Monastery and the only Catholic Church in town. Follow your guide to the heart of the Old Town – the Town Hall Square, where the Town Hall stands very well preserved in its original Gothic appearance, dating back to 1404. Here the town rulers, city council members, gathered to discuss important town matters and pass legislation. On this square there is also one of the oldest pharmacies in Europe, which once sold medicine made of bat powder and snakeskin.

You will have some free time for individual exploration or relaxing in one of the numerous street cafes before walking back to your tour bus and returning to the port.

Subject to minimum 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes and a summer hat.

This tour involves walking over uneven cobbled-streets of the old town, therefore is not suitable for passengers with notable moving difficulties.

20th July

A - Imperial St. Petersburg (Full day with lunch) – approx. 8 ½ hrs.

This tour offers you a chance in one day to explore the most remarkable sites of St. Petersburg which represent the finest examples of the world's cultural heritage as well as to sample local cuisine in one of the top dining venues of the city.

Peterhof, the town of palaces, fountains and parks, was built by Peter the Great to rival Versailles. It lies on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland, 22 miles west of St. Petersburg. Built in the beginning of the 18-th century, Petrodvorets, or Peterhof, is known as the most brilliant of all the summer residences of the Russian czars. This estate bore the name of Peter - Peterhof ('Peter's Court' in German) until 1944 when it was renamed to Petrodvorets due to anti-German sentiments. In 1994 the original name was returned to the city and the estate. The estate construction spanned two centuries, and upon its completion, the estate encompassed seven parks and more than 20 smaller palaces and pavilions. The layout of the 300-acre park and spectacular fountains were designed by Peter himself. The Grand Cascade, often considered the chief delight of the grounds, consists of three waterfalls, an avenue of 64 fountains and 37 gilded statues. Samson, constructed in 1734-1735, the main attraction of Petrodvorets and is located at the base of the Great Cascade. During World War II, the estate was occupied and all the buildings and fountains were completely demolished. For many years the palace and the Grand Cascade were under extensive restoration. Now all guests of the city can enjoy the spectacular view of the fountains and the palace.

After the tour of the Palace the guests will have pleasant walk through the Low Park followed by a coach transfer to St. Petersburg for lunch (drinks incl.: mineral water, a glass of wine and tea / coffee).

After the lunch the coaches will depart for the city tour with a brief introduction to the history of St. Petersburg en route. Your first stop will be on the Spit of Vasilievsky Island. There you will enjoy the magnificent view of the Neva River and the Rostral Columns, which in the old days served as signal towers. This stop will give you a perfect chance to take pictures of the Winter Palace and other buildings of the Hermitage Museum, as well as the St. Peter and Paul Fortress situated right across the river.

The tour continues inside the Fortress, to the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul. Once inside the Cathedral, you will be surrounded by marbled columns, glittering chandeliers, and painted decor combined with carved and gilded iconostasis, which create a magnificent setting for the tombs of Romanov monarchs. In July 1998 the remains of the last Russian Tsar Nicholas II and his family murdered in Ekaterinburg in 1918, were also buried in St. Peter & Paul Cathedral.

The tour continues along the Neva embankment, past Peter the Great's log cabin built by his soldier-carpenters in just three days in 1703 and approaches the Cruiser Aurora. The cruiser came into Modern History as a battleship, whose fore-gun announced the beginning of a new Communist Era in October, 1917. Nowadays, the cruiser is permanently docked on the Neva.

After a brief photo stop in front of the cruiser, the tour continues to the Church on the Spilled Blood built on the site, where the Russian Tsar Alexander II had been assassinated. It took a quarter of a century for the magnificent facades to grow up and become covered with elaborate mosaics and crowned by imposing domes. The temple stopped functioning as a church in 1930 by the decree of the Soviet government. It was used as storage for the opera theatre stage properties. The Church on the Spilled Blood was under reconstruction for more than a quarter of a century. The restoration works came to an end only in September 1997.

The tour continues to the St. Isaac's Square. St. Isaac's Cathedral dominates the square. It's one of the world's most beautiful cathedrals built between 1818 and 1858 to Montferrand's design and named in honour of St. Isaac of Dalmatia, on whose day Peter I was born. The leading craftsmen of the time participated in its construction – sculptors Vitali and Klodt, painters Bryullov and Bruni, the bell-maker Stukolkin from Valdai and others. The cathedral has columns of Karelian granite and pediments with statues of the Apostles and the Evangelists and is 101.5 meters high. After a photo stop, the coaches depart the square and drive towards the ship.

Subject to a minimum of 35 / maximum of 350 participants.

This tour is not recommended for persons with walking or climbing difficulties. There are long walking distances.

The Grand Palace is not wheelchair accessible due to narrow staircases and no elevators.

Visit to Inside of Peterhof Palace is approximately 1 hour, although you might get a glimpse of the fountains this tour is of the Palace Interior.

B - Peter and Paul Fortress & City Highlights (Morning) – approx. 4 hrs.

This tour offers you a chance in half day to explore the most remarkable sites of St. Petersburg which represent the finest examples of the world's cultural heritage.

Short drive with a brief introduction to the history of St. Petersburg en route brings you to the city centre, the Spit of Vasilievsky Island. On the Spit you will enjoy the magnificent view of the Neva River and the Rostral Columns, which in the old days served as signal towers. This stop will give you a perfect chance to take pictures of the Winter Palace and other buildings of the Hermitage Museum as well as the St. Peter and Paul Fortress situated right across the river.

The tour continues inside the Fortress. Once inside the Cathedral, you will be surrounded by marbled columns, glittering chandeliers, and painted decor combined with carved and gilded iconostasis, which create a magnificent setting for the tombs of Romanovs monarchs. In July 1998 the remains of the last Russian Tsar Nicholas II and his family murdered in Ekaterinburg in 1918, were also buried in St. Peter & Paul Cathedral. After the guided tour of the Peter & Paul Cathedral and territory of the Fortress the city tour continues.

During the drive along the embankments of the Neva River you will pass by the Cruiser Aurora, famous battleship whose gun gave a signal to begin Bolshevik Uprising in October 1917. Past Cruiser Aurora you will be heading towards Smolny Convent where you will have an opportunity to take pictures of this breathtaking architectural ensemble.

From Smolny your coach proceeds to drive along the main thoroughfare of the city, Nevsky Prospect, towards one of the main landmarks of St Petersburg - the Church on Spilled Blood. This dazzling and exquisitely decorated cathedral was built on the spot where Tsar Alexander II had been fatally wounded by a member of the People's Will revolutionary terrorist organization on March 1, 1881. Combining the artistic styles of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, the cathedral is a kaleidoscope of decorative elements with the extensive collection of awe-inspiring mosaics that covers over 8,400 square yards and the five domes are covered with more than 1,000 square yards of jeweller's enamel. Right next to the Church on the Spilled Blood you will find one of the most popular city's souvenir markets where you can browse the aisles and bargain for the best deals on colourful Russian souvenirs.

From the market the tour takes you to St. Isaac's Cathedral for another photo opportunity. This Cathedral, designed by the French architect Montferrand in 1818-1858, is the largest church in St. Petersburg with the capacity of 10 000 people. Even after the Cathedral was finished, constant repair work was done on it for many years. It is believed, these repairs were prolonged due to a superstition among circles of Romanov dynasty. This superstition says, as soon as the repairs are finished, the dynasty shall fall. The interior of the cathedral is richly decorated with different kinds of marble, malachite and other semiprecious stones. The tour ends at St. Isaac's Square from where the coaches will depart back to the pier.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

C - Yusupov & Canals (Afternoon) – approx. 3 hrs.

The city was founded by Peter the Great along the embankments of the Neva River, the main waterway of St. Petersburg. The embankments of the Neva were constructed in the middle of the 18-th century. Developing the best traditions of Russian architecture and town planning, the architects of St. Petersburg made expert use of the natural conditions and created splendid architectural ensembles on the Neva which are interlined by the community of their artistic design. This tour offers you an exciting opportunity to look at St. Petersburg from a completely different angle. You will see the city from the water surrounding its numerous squares, monuments and palaces.

The coaches will bring you to the pier in the city centre where you will start your fascinating journey through the rivers and canals of St. Petersburg which is also called the “Venice of the North”. The exact route of your trip will depend on the boat size and traffic conditions of the waterways.

After an hour spent on water you will disembark your boat not far from the Yusupov Palace where you will discover an intriguing story of the palace and its owners and the dramatic events which ended the life of famous favourite of the last Romanovs - Grigory Rasputin. The Yusupov Palace is located on the bank of the Moika River and is only one of the 57 palaces in Russia, four of which are in St. Petersburg, which were owned by Felix Yusupov. It was often said that Yusupov was almost as wealthy as the Tsar himself. This palace, designed by Vallen De La Mothe and Andrei Mikhailov, was Yusupov's favourite and exemplifies his wealth and very eccentric style. Once, while in Italy, Yusupov admired a beautiful white marble staircase and wished to purchase it, but unfortunately the owner of the palace refused to sell it. This did not stop the eccentric Yusupov who bought the entire palace and had the staircase transported to St. Petersburg, where it sits in the palace overlooking the Moika. The staircase leads to the private theatre of Zenaida Yusupov, which has been carefully preserved in its rococo style and has been the stage for many performances of very famous artists. Among the palace's treasures are works of art by Rembrandt and Rubens, French tapestries and porcelain, and Venetian mirrors and wood-carvings. It was here in 1916 that the notorious Grigory Rasputin was assassinated. He was lured to Yusupov's palace by several influential figures of the time, given poison cakes, which for some reason had no effect on him, then shot several times and thrown into the river. Today, the palace is the property of the Educationalist's Trade Union. The tour will take you through the rooms of the palace, and after climbing down the narrow winding staircase you will see the very place where Felix Yusupov with accomplices assassinated Grigory Rasputin.

Subject to a minimum of 30 / maximum of 200 participants.

Boats are not wheelchair accessible.

D - Ballet Performance (Evening) – approx. 3 ½ hrs.

St. Petersburg has long been regarded as one of the world's most famous ballet centres. This evening you will have the opportunity to enjoy a special performance.

The mansion on the Italyanskaya Street (one of the oldest streets of St. Petersburg) was built between 1799 and 1801, during the prosperity of Classicism. For example, the rustic-style walls on the first floor, the horizontally centred compositions on the facade of the building, and the windows of the second floor are all typical of Classicism. In the 1830s, the facade's construction was brought in line with the general tone of facade construction of Michaylovskaya Square, designed by Carl Rossi. As a result of later reconstructions of the building, various architectural elements of the French Renaissance appeared on the façade. In 1910, the building was reconstructed again by Balbashevsky, who tried to convey the style of 'modernized classic'.

On the first floor, a cabaret was constructed and above, on the second floor, a theatre. It was at that time the mansion became known as 'Palace – theatre'. The interiors of the mansion are comfortable but at the same time luxurious, all decorated in different styles. Soon after the revolution, the mansion was occupied by the 'Heroic Theatre', but in 1918 was changed to Palace – theatre. In 1938, the building was inherited by the musical theatre.

It is in this grand setting that you will enjoy one of the best of classical ballets, the Swan Lake.

Swan Lake is a ballet by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, based on a libretto by Vladimir Begichev and (possibly) Vasily Geltser, fashioned from an ancient German legend, which tells the story of Odette, a princess turned on into a swan by an evil sorcerer's curse. Swan Lake is the most popular ballet in the world. It's the ballet that captures like no other the full range of human emotions - from hope to despair, from terror to tenderness, from melancholy to ecstasy.

After the show, your coach will be waiting right in front of the theatre to return you to your ship.

Subject to a minimum of 35 / maximum of 150 participants.

Tickets are subject to availability; therefore we regret that once tickets are bought, refunds cannot be considered.

The theatre is not wheelchair accessible; there are stairs and no elevator. Photo and video recording is not allowed during the performance.

Prior to the tour's departure, an early dinner will be served for those passengers booked on this tour. A late-night buffet will be served after your return to the ship.

21st July

E - Glorious St. Petersburg – Pushkin & Hermitage (Full day with lunch) – approx. 8 hrs.

This tour offers you a chance to explore in one day two of the most remarkable sites of St. Petersburg which represent the finest examples of the world's cultural heritage as well as to sample local cuisine in one of the top dining venues of the city.

Your tour takes you outside of the city to the historical town of Pushkin. It takes about 50 minutes to reach Tsar's Village (Pushkin). The drive will take you through Moscow Prospect then on Kiev highway to the Egyptian gates, the entrance to the Tsar's Village. The Catherine's Palace in Tsar's Village ranks as one of the masterpieces of world art. Peter the Great presented this estate to his wife Catherine in 1710, and architect Braunstein built a small palace there. From this time until the time of the last Russian Tsar, Pushkin was used as the summer residence of the Royal Family. In 1756, Bartelomeo Rastrelli expanded the Catherine's Palace in baroque style. Its grandiose, white and gold facade stretches 978 feet. During the World War II the Palace was damaged severely but since then it has been restored and stands now in its original glory. The palace tour takes you through the series of magnificent rooms, including the famous Picture Gallery and, of course, the Great Hall.

The parks of the estate add to the splendour of the palace, and several of them are embellished with a number of charming pavilions. As you are walking in the park you will admire lavish Grotto Pavilion, the Hermitage and the Chinese Pagoda. The town of Pushkin is famous not only for its remarkable palace and parks, but also for the man it was named after for 56 years. Since 1937, it has been named after Pushkin, the most celebrated poet in the country. He lived in this town at the beginning of the 19th century. The lyceum where he studies is connected to the palace by an arch.

Lunch will be served at a restaurant (drinks incl.: mineral water, a glass of wine and tea / coffee).

After the lunch your coach will bring you to the Hermitage. The Hermitage Museum is the largest art museum in Russia and ranks among the most prestigious and fabulous museums in the world, with its collection of Western European art being second to none. It was founded by Catherine the Great in 1764 as a private court museum and evolved into the most remarkable collection of art in the world, containing about 3 million objects of unparalleled importance. The Hermitage Museum occupies the Winter Palace, the winter residence of the Russian Tsars, and four more buildings: the Small Hermitage, housing Catherine's original collection, the Old Hermitage, the Hermitage Theatre, Catherine's private theatre, and the New Hermitage. The route takes you through the State Rooms of the Winter Palace, the collection of Western European art, featuring Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian and others, Dutch and Flemish art collections, including masterpieces by Rembrandt, Rubens and Van Dyck, French Impressionists Collection. The guests will see the collection of Spanish art (only the second to Madrid's Prado), and the collection of French art, which is the largest outside France, displaying works by Degas, Renoir, Monet, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Matisse.

The tour ends in the Palace Square. You can take this opportunity to take memorable pictures of the square and the museum. Palace Square is the main square in St. Petersburg with the 155 feet high Alexander Column put up in honour of Alexander I, who defeated Napoleon in 1812. There is another landmark on the Palace Square dedicated to his memory - the Arch of the General Headquarters (this building has the longest facade in Europe, over 3300 feet).

Subject to a minimum of 35 / maximum of 300 participants.

This tour is not recommended for persons with walking or climbing difficulties.

There are long walking distances through the Gardens of Pushkin. Catherine's Palace is not wheelchair accessible due to the steep staircase and no elevators.

The visit to the Hermitage Museum involves considerable walking and stair-climbing, and passengers with physical limitations should take this into consideration. There is no seating inside, and with the popularity of the attraction, there may be as much as 20-minute wait to enter the museum. The building is not air-conditioned, and the room temperature can be quite warm at times. Passengers are requested to remain with the guide throughout the visit.

F - Peterhof – Russian Versailles (Morning) – approx. 4 hrs.

This morning you will visit one of the most beautiful Royal Estates of St. Petersburg.

Our comfortable coaches will take you for an hour drive outside of St. Petersburg to the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland. Peterhof, the town of palaces, fountains and parks, was built by Peter the Great to rival Versailles. It lies on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland, 22 miles west of St. Petersburg. Built in the beginning of the 18-th century, Petrodvorets, or Peterhof, is known as the most brilliant of all the summer residences of the Russian czars. This estate bore the name of Peter - Peterhof ('Peter's Court' in German) until 1944 when it was renamed to Petrodvorets due to anti-German sentiments. In 1994 the original name was returned to the city and the estate. The estate construction spanned two centuries, and upon its completion, the estate encompassed seven parks and more than 20 smaller palaces and pavilions. The layout of the 300-acre park and spectacular fountains were designed by Peter himself. The Grand Cascade, often considered the chief delight of the grounds, consists of three waterfalls, an avenue of 64 fountains and 37 gilded statues. Samson, constructed in 1734-1735, the main attraction of Petrodvorets and is located at the base of the Great Cascade. During World War II, the estate was occupied and all the buildings and fountains were completely demolished. For many years the palace and the Grand Cascade were under extensive restoration. Now all guests of the city can enjoy the spectacular view of the fountains and the palace.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

Peterhof is not wheelchair accessible and is not recommended for persons with walking or climbing difficulties.

There are stairs, no elevators, gravel paths and long walking distances.

Visit to Inside of Peterhof Palace is approximately 1 hour, although you might get a glimpse of the fountains this tour is of the Palace Interior.

G - St. Petersburg through the Eyes of Russian People (Afternoon) – approx. 3 ½ hrs.

Feel yourself Russian this afternoon and try to see St. Petersburg through the eyes of its inhabitants.

While touring palatial Petersburg one is dazzled by the beauty of its palaces, cathedrals and parks, but the city offers much more than this and one of the tourist attractions is a ride on a metro. The metro's stunning stations intended by Stalin to be "palaces for the people" should be placed high on the itinerary. The Soviet best architects were employed to design St. Petersburg's metro stations. Thousands of tons of marble, granite and lime stone were used to face the walls, and sculptures, mosaics and chandeliers were commissioned from leading artists. The first line opened in 1955 is the most fascinating. You will be shown several stations of this line and take a short ride on the train. Because of the many waterways in the city, stations are buried deep underground, and long escalators lead down to the platforms. Metro ride is quite an experience and gives a glimpse of the daily life of the people of St. Petersburg.

A peek at St. Petersburg's markets and food stores provides an intriguing insight into local life. Many locals shop for food in the Kuznechny market which sells fruit, vegetables, fresh meat and fish, delicious homemade cottage cheese and wonderful natural honey. Sellers in the market come from all over the former Soviet Union and one can witness quite a variety of nationalities there and enjoy friendly attitudes.

One of the most reputable delicatessen stores in the city is called Elyseev's and it's the best place to buy caviar and vodka. It is located in the Nevsky Prospect, in one of the most opulent Modern-style buildings constructed at the turn of the 20th century. It is adorned with beautiful bronze, sculptures and huge windows. The equally impressive interior with its marble counters and crystal chandeliers steals the attention from delicacies on sale. The store has been recently renovated as well as the area around it. One of the side streets has become an attractive walking area and at the end of it you can see one of the best apartment houses recently built in the city.

The tour will terminate at the Restaurant, a trendy and stylish restaurant decorated in classical minimalist style. It specializes in Russian food. The restaurant is known for its home made vodkas and you will be treated to a variety of such vodkas together with classical vodkas and traditional Russian condiments served to compliment this famous Russian drink.

Subject to a minimum of 30 / maximum of 200 participants.

This tour is not recommended for persons in a wheelchair or with walking difficulties. There are long and steep escalators to reach metro stations and photos are not permitted.

22nd July

A - Helsinki Highlights & Sibelius' House (Morning) – approx. 3 ½ hrs.

Begin this tour with an introduction of Helsinki. You will see the lively Market Square which is situated by the waterfront and where you not only can find fresh berries, vegetables and fish but also souvenirs made by wood, stone or glass and even maybe your next winter's fur hat.

Continue along the South Harbour to the Embassy district Kaivopuisto, one of the loveliest parks in Helsinki and a popular place for a walk. Pass the Masa Yard shipbuilding area, where many of the world's finest cruise ships have been built. Return to the city centre, passing the Old Church near the Swedish Theatre, centrally located on Helsinki's main street, Mannerheimintie, named after Carl Gustav Mannerheim, Finland's president and hero after the wars against Russia (1939-44). You will pass the Parliament Building, one of the last large buildings in Finland to be built entirely by hand; the National Museum and the Finlandia Hall, a concert and conference centre designed by the world-famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto.

Next you continue to the Finnish National Opera, which is located in the beautiful surroundings of Hesperia Park and Toololahti Bay. You will catch a glimpse of the Olympic Stadium, site of the 1952 Olympic Games. After a 35-minute drive you will enter the garden of Ainola, the home of Jean Sibelius (1865-1957). It received its name from Aino, the wife of the master composer. In Ainola, he created the most significant compositions surrounded by the Lake Tuusula's nature and tranquillity that were his biggest inspiration. Nowadays, the home is a museum and is preserved as it was during the family's lifetime. The grave of Jean and Aino Sibelius is in the garden at Ainola. Along with the museum there is a small café and souvenir shop. Driving back to Helsinki you will experience the Tuusula lake road and see some of the typical Finnish countryside.

Subject to a minimum of 30 / maximum 120 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes, as this tour involves some walk - an approx. 100 yard walk at Ainola and approx. 700 yards guided walk in Sibelius' House.

The use of photographic equipment is permitted at Ainola (No flash allowed).

B – Helsinki City Tour (Morning) – approx. 3 hrs.

During the city tour you will experience the unique and beautiful sights of Helsinki the capital of Finland, like the Market Square, located on the waterfront with its colourful stalls offering fruits, vegetables, flowers, fish, handicrafts etc. In its midst, atop a fountain is a bronze statue of the sea-nymph Havis Amanda, the symbol of the city.

Helsinki coddles its visitors with its wealth of architecture, the most valuable being Carl Ludvig Engel's neo-classical Senate Square surrounded by public buildings. The Cathedral, completed in 1852, stands on the northern side of the square.

Nearby, visit the neo-classical old town centre around Senate Square passing Uspenski Cathedral with its golden domes, built in the mid-19th century to accommodate the large number of Russian Orthodox believers, the President's residence, the South Harbour and the Embassy district before driving along Esplanadi, the famous Finnish design street.

Continue along broad Mannerheimintie, the main street of Helsinki named after Finland's great leader during the wars against Russia 1939-44 and later the President of Finland Carl Gustav Mannerheim. Pass the Parliament Building, Finlandia Hall, the Opera House and the Olympic Stadium, site of the 1952 games.

Stop at Sibelius' Park to see the stainless steel monument dedicated to the great composer Jean Sibelius and at Temppeliaukio Rock Church, an impressive structure carved from granite and roofed with a striking copper dome. Due to its magnificent acoustical qualities, the church is also used as a concert hall.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

We recommend the use of comfortable shoes, as this tour involves some walk – a 100 yard walk over cobble stones at the Senate Square and Market Square and a 50 yard walk at the Sibelius' Monument.

The minimum amount of walking of approximately 400 yards required on the entire tour is optional.

25th July

A - Amsterdam City, Canal Cruise & Windmills (Full day – free lunch) – approx. 6 ½ hrs.

This is a tour through old and modern Amsterdam. See historical landmarks such as the Royal Palace, the Mint Tower, the Skinny Bridge and Portuguese Synagogue among other famous monuments. The city is known for its tree-shaded canals, friendly multilingual people, bubbling nightlife and sophisticated shopping. During the tour we take time for a cruise through some of Amsterdam's 100 canals. View fabulous merchant's mansions from glass-topped boats while gliding through reflections of bridges and trees along the canals. You will then have free time for lunch on your own.

We depart from Amsterdam for a drive over farmland reclaimed from the depths of the former Zuiderzee, surrounded by dikes. In the "Zaanse Schans" you will catch a glimpse of how the Dutch lived before industrialisation. Here you find several of Holland's 955 remaining windmills, all different shapes and sizes, still producing lumber, paint, oil, mustard and flour. The mills are surrounded by old fashioned wooden houses (a rarity in Holland) - a breathtaking open-air museum.

Afterwards there will be an opportunity to see local colour and traditional costumes in the fishermen's village of Volendam. Stroll along the shopping streets and admire the local sights of the harbour.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

B - Amsterdam City & Rijksmuseum (Afternoon) – approx. 4 hrs.

A tour through old and new Amsterdam. See historical landmarks such as the Royal Palace, the Mint Tower, the Skinny Bridge and Portuguese Synagogue among other famous monuments.

The city is known for its tree-shaded canals, friendly multilingual people, bubbling nightlife and sophisticated shopping.

We will then visit the Rijksmuseum - the National Museum of Art and History - dedicated to arts, crafts, and history. It has a large collection of paintings from the Dutch Golden Age and a substantial collection of Asian art. Its outstanding collection of masterpieces by famous artists, such as Rembrandt, Vermeer and Frans Hals will complete the tour.

Subject to a minimum of 30 participants.

GENERAL INFORMATION & CONDITIONS

To enhance the enjoyment of your cruise, we have created a programme of optional shore excursions designed to show you the highlights of each of our ports of call. Our Shore Excursions Manager will be pleased to assist you with your choice of tours to help you make the most of your time ashore.

HOW TO BOOK

Just complete the booking form with your tour selections and hand it in at the Shore Excursions Desk in the Reception area. Opening hours will be shown in your daily programme. Details of the times when bookings close will be featured in the daily programme.

PAYMENT

Payments are debited to your shipboard account and the Shore Excursion Manager will ask you to sign your agreement and will then issue your tickets accordingly.

EXCURSION TIMINGS

The duration times shown on the booking form are approximate. Please consult the daily programme, which will direct you to assemble in the Main Lounge fifteen minutes prior to a tour's scheduled departure. A member of staff will escort each group of participants to the quayside and the coaches at the appropriate time.

All excursions are subject to a minimum and maximum number of participants.

EXCURSION PRICES

The prices include transport and entrance fees according to the published itinerary, meals and drinks where indicated, and guides.

Children under 12 years of age are entitled to 30% discount on the half-day and full day tours, except on the Ballet Performance at St. Petersburg where no discount is applied.

REFUNDS

In the event of a tour being cancelled e.g. due to insufficient numbers, a full refund will be made on board. We regret that we are unable to refund the cost of tours which are cancelled by passengers after bookings close, unless the cancellation is for medical reasons duly certified by the Ship's Doctor.

DRESS WHILST ASHORE

We recommend that you wear appropriate clothing and flat, comfortable shoes, as some walking will be necessary to gain full enjoyment from the excursion programme. When visiting churches and other religious sites, conservative dress will be required.

SMOKING

For the comfort of all passengers, smoking is not permitted aboard tour coaches.

RESTORATION WORK

Please note that restoration work on certain buildings or sights in a port of call may involve the use of scaffolding and/or screens, which may impair the view.

GUIDES SPEAKING SPECIFIC LANGUAGES

Please note that in certain ports it is difficult to find bilingual guides speaking specific languages. In this case and when possible a staff member will escort the group in order to translate the local guide.

IMPORTANT NOTES

For the safety and assurance of passengers, all the tours are operated under the management of responsible and experienced local Agents. Only the authorised Shore Excursion Manager on board is permitted to arrange or accept payment for such excursions or act as an Excursion Agent during the cruise.

Any excursions purchased form part of the single contract evidenced by the passenger ticket issued prior to the commencement of the voyage, and are subject to all the terms and conditions of that contract.

The information represents the shore excursion plans and intentions at the time (May 2007). Subsequent events may cause us unavoidably to change our plans, which could affect the published itineraries and/or fares. In the event of such changes or alterations, wherever possible you will be advised in advance, and thus all information must be considered as subject to alteration.