

SCANDINAVIA and RUSSIA by train and ship

July 12-27, 2017

price \$6,699 plus

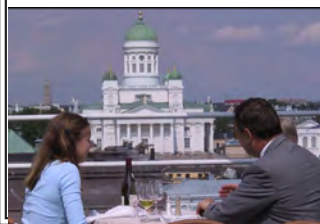
airline taxes



Highlights include:

- 4 days in St. Petersburg.
- 2 days in Helsinki. Tallinn visit.
- 2 days in Stockholm, 3 in Oslo, 2 in Bergen.
- 2 cruises. Two scenic train rides.
- Centrally-located hotels. Leisurely pace.

This carefully-planned tour visits the main highlights of Russia and Scandinavia with a customized itinerary that stays for several nights in most destinations. You will have time to soak up the local atmosphere and get to know the place, without being in a big rush. We conduct guided tours in each place so you can learn your way around and understand the many fine sights we will be seeing. The weather in July is very mild, with temperatures expected to be in the 70s. The places we are visiting are generally as far north as Anchorage, Alaska. Daylight lasts until 10:30 p.m., which enables us to fit many activities into our schedule, as you will see in this detailed brochure.



To reserve space on this tour
send a deposit of \$100 refundable until 100
days before departure. to:

Callans' Tours 1022 Prospect St., #1007,
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ST. PETERSBURG

Saint Petersburg is often regarded as one of the world's most beautiful cities. You will see architecture and art treasures on our visit that will astonish you! Unimaginable splendor was created during the 18th and 19th centuries when the czars ruled with near absolute power over the world's largest country. All of the wealth of this huge land, which reaches half way around the world, was funneled into the hands of its aristocracy living in St. Petersburg, who spent lavishly to support the royal lifestyle and constructed grand palaces, museums and great public monuments to themselves. These splendid structures were preserved throughout all the turmoil of a century of communist revolution and have been wonderfully renovated to provide some of the world's richest sights for you to enjoy.

It all began with Peter the Great, who founded the city in 1703, basing it on the great capitals of Europe. He chose this strategic location where the Neva River joins the Gulf of Finland as the perfect place to build his navy and launch attacks on his enemies to the north. Peter was determined to catapult Russia from the Dark Ages into modern times in a single generation, and he succeeded. Architects and artisans were imported from Western Europe and put to work constructing a glorious new city on

what had been empty, swampy, muddy islands. It was the only European capital to be built from scratch on a previously empty patch of land, following a plan.

St. Petersburg continued as the nation's capital for two centuries, growing ever grander, changing names now and then depending on which way the political wind blew. It became Petrograd, to honor its founder, then Leningrad, and now it's back to St. Petersburg. Current population is about 5 million, spread over 100 islands that are crisscrossed in all directions by rivers and canals.

Last century's social dislocations and lack of resources ironically helped to preserve the city's grand historic architecture, since there was no money for demolition or redevelopment. Now these historic sites are valued as magnets to bring in tourists, so they are kept in very good condition.

The grandest spectacle of St. Petersburg is the Hermitage Museum, which would take a full day to see, but you will find it best to split your visit into two half-days as even the most intrepid art fan can grow numb after too many hours filled with masterpieces. The Hermitage has a splendid collection that includes paintings, statues and decorative arts, while the interior design of the palace itself really is the star of the show, outshining even the great works on display. Other palaces, monuments and interesting shopping neighborhoods will round out your visit.



Late afternoon arrival; brief orientation tour after hotel check-in. We will take it easy this first evening to rest up after our journey from Hawaii.

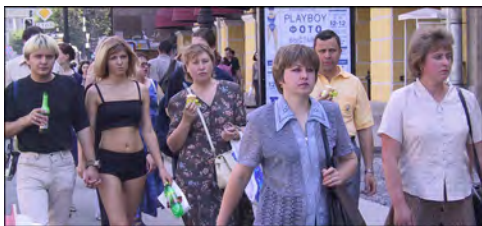
We begin with a three-hour city tour on a bus with our local guide who will be with us throughout our stay in St. Petersburg. This comprehensive overview of the city passes many of the major monuments and squares, with opportunity to get off the bus now and then to take photos and stretch your legs.

We start out with a visit to the Peter and Paul Fortress, where the city was born. Surrounded by a massive defensive wall, this fortification was the reason Peter the Great built his new capital here — to provide a military base for attacking his enemies to the north. Palace Square is another major stop, for it is at the very epicenter of the history and grandeur of St. Petersburg, with the Winter Palace on one side, containing the Hermitage Museum, and the magnificent General Staff Building of the Army on the other side, with the huge Alexander Column in the middle. This is the world's tallest pillar — the tallest free-standing monument, 154 feet high, commemorating Russia's difficult victory over Napoleon. It is in a grand setting along the Neva River Embankment.

Across the river we stop by two bright red lighthouses that are reminders this was an important port for Russia in previous centuries. Continuing along the Embankment past the Admiralty, we enter Decembrists' Square, with the great church of St. Isaacs in the center. St. Isaac's Cathedral is one of Europe's great

buildings, designed in the grand style of the Italian Baroque with Byzantine influences. Its huge dome, which soars 325 feet high, is covered with 200 pounds of gold leaf that sparkles brilliantly in the sun.

We continue our bus tour along Nevsky Prospect, the main street of St. Petersburg, lined with shops and restaurants. Nevsky is the best shopping strip the country has to offer, filled with thousands of residents out for a walk, so it is a fine place for serious spending and people-watching. Here we have free time to walk around and maybe do some shopping.



You will enjoy a stroll into the city's main shopping mall which occupies a large block in the heart of the Nevsky Prospect. Called the Passage, it is a large department store complex with hundreds of small shops filling two floors of a mammoth structure, catering mostly to local shoppers. It is a fun place to browse and hang out for a while to see what's up, examine the merchandise and check out the locals. Just over a decade ago these shops had very few items, due to a depressed economy that was tightly controlled by communist bureaucrats — so the merchants have really come a long way. Gostiny Dvor, originally built during the late 18th century to designs by Rastrelli as a merchants arcade called, has been nicely renovated while retaining a historic character that makes





it a most unusual department store.

The Church on Spilled Blood is nearby on a canal. This is the most Russian-looking major building in town, with its wild, colorful spires similar to

the famous St. Basil in Moscow's Red Square. It was built in the Russian Revival style as a memorial to Czar Alexander II, who was assassinated here by a terrorist bomb in 1881.

Returning to Nevsky Prospect from the church, you will be facing yet another church, Kazan Cathedral, which looks like a smaller version of St. Peter's in Rome, with a graceful dome and two long colonnade arms reaching out around the plaza in front.

Next morning we start out with a visit



to the Hermitage Museum, one of Russia's most important attractions. This is the world's largest art museum, with an enormous collection that covers the entire span of art history. There are 15,000 paintings and 12,000 statues, spread through 400 exhibition rooms, spanning an incredible range: from the earliest prehistory into the medieval and Byzantine arts, then the Renaissance, continuing through the Baroque, along with the 18th and 19th centuries, including a fine Impressionist

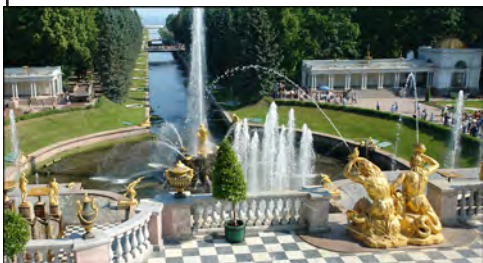
collection, and finally into the 20th century. It also has a wide variety of ancient art, with important pieces from Egypt, Rome and Greece. The extensive Hermitage collection is too big to see in one day, so we cover half today and come back tomorrow for more.

Our expert guide will lead us through, explaining all the significant pieces. We enter through the grandest staircase you have ever seen, filled with beautiful



statues, mirrors and golden decorations in the elaborate Baroque style. The Malachite Room is one of the most famous galleries, decorated in semi-precious green malachite stone. Pavilion Hall, used mostly for entertaining, has a breathtaking white marble design with lots of gold ornamentation. The Impressionists are a special treat, with excellent works by all your favorites: Monet, Manet, Renoir, Pissaro, Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gaughin. There is also a nice selection of more modern canvases by Leger, Kandinsky, Picasso and 37 paintings by Matisse, Europe's largest collection of his works. After walking through more elaborate rooms of the private apartments of the czar, we shall save the rest for tomorrow.





PETERHOF and the GOLDEN CASCADE

This afternoon is a perfect time to visit Peterhof, a spectacular palace in the suburbs. We get there on our private tour bus with our local guide. Considered to be the most beautiful park in Russia, Peterhof was the main home of Peter the Great.

The most spectacular feature of the palace is the Golden Cascade, which just might be the world's most wonderful fountain! It has dozens of golden statues drenched in a huge water display that celebrates one of the most important events in Russian history — the defeat of Sweden in the early 18th century.

Also known as Petrodvorets, this was the first major palace complex constructed in St. Petersburg. A massive construction project began that would finally finish 200 years later, but during Peter's lifetime the early versions of the Great Palace and fountains were opened. There are many beautiful sections of this park to admire, with formal gardens stretching hundreds of yards towards the Gulf of Finland, sprinkled with statues and smaller fountains on both sides of the palace. The gardens are laid out in a formal French style with neatly trimmed bushes arranged with regular symmetry along straight paths. When driving from the palace back into town at the end of our tour, we pass

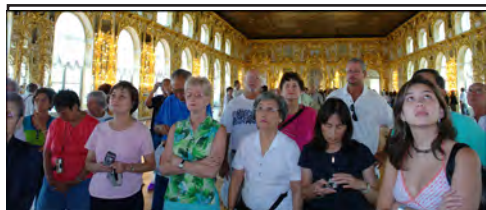
through some pleasant wooded areas in the countryside sprinkled with small villages and farm plots.

This morning we visit Catherine Palace, one of the most beautiful of all Russia's royal homes, an hour's drive outside of town. This stunning place was created by Peter the Great's daughter, Czarina Elizabeth I, who commissioned her favorite architect, Rastrelli. That same pair were responsible for the two other major palaces we have seen, the Winter Palace, containing the Hermitage, and Peterhof.



Catherine Palace was later expanded by Catherine the Great into the magnificent structure we see today, helped by the innovative designs of Charles Cameron, a Scot with no previous building experience. While she had many palaces to choose from, this became her favorite residence. Built over two generations, the palace displays a dramatic mix of Baroque and Neoclassical styles. The façade is nearly 1,000 feet long, featuring many muscular statues of Atlas, whose massive shoulders hold up the windows, doors and roofline, flanked by dozens of pilasters and 200 types of stucco ornamentation that complete this amazing architectural scene.

Inside this museum are 20 rooms restored to their original appearance as well as special exhibition galleries with informative historical displays. The



most important room is the Great Hall. The room is long and narrow but gives a feeling of wide spaces because of the illusion created by all the windows and mirrors, while the painted sky in the ceiling adds a sensation of more space to this ballroom. Hundreds of unique Rococo wood carvings on the walls of birds and flowers, with no two images looking alike, extend the space even further. Walls of several rooms are completely covered in precious Chinese silk, with beautiful pictures woven into the threads depicting allegorical landscapes and pleasant floral patterns, with many colorful birds and natural scenes. Matching Asian furniture, vases and decorations enhance the effect.

When finished, we take a break in the excellent shopping arcade on the ground floor with a dozen different stalls that sell the full range of Russian souvenirs at negotiable prices. There is more to see in the extensive royal gardens, with little duck ponds, rolling lawns, manicured bushes, surprise gazebos and scattered statues, all connected by comfortable gravel pathways.

This afternoon we complete our visit to the Hermitage, starting with the Italian collection, which holds some of the museum's greatest treasures, including Renaissance masterpieces by Raphael, Perugino, Botticelli, Fra Angelico, two paintings by Leonardo da Vinci and Russia's only Michelangelo. Several rooms of Baroque art of the 18th century include Russia's only canvas by Caravaggio, "The Lute Player" and 26 major works by Rembrandt. Nearby

is a room filled with armor, featuring medieval knights sitting on horseback. The Spanish section is considered to be one of the richest in the world, perhaps second only to the Prado in Madrid. A large ensemble of Rubens, Hals and Van Dyck fills the Flemish department.

We finish our visit downstairs among the ancient statues from Greece, Rome and Egypt. You will find the Hermitage is an entire intact palace filled with treasure, wrapped in an amazingly decorated package. Every place you turn there is something marvelous to look at. Too much art can make the head spin, so it's a good thing you broke it into two days, and that there are benches scattered throughout the rooms so we can sit down to rest while processing this visual bombardment. What a museum!

EVENING ACTIVITIES

Ballet, and more ballet. Take advantage of the marvelous Russian dancers and go the Mariinskiy Theater for a superb



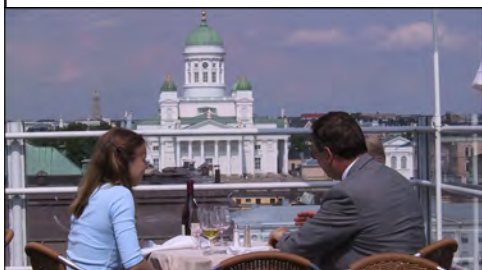
evening of sensual entertainment provided by the world-famous Kirov Ballet. Don't worry if you have never been to a ballet, or went once and didn't care for it -- these performances are accessible to everyone. The colorful costumes and beautiful sets in this majestic theater provide a dazzling environment for the magic of the dance, accompanied by a live orchestra.



Next morning we take the train from St. Petersburg to Helsinki, through beautiful natural countryside, enjoying the fine comforts of the excellent rail service, which includes a lovely dining car.

HELSINKI

Continental Europe's most northern and remote capital city is an underappreciated gem that will surprise you with its beautiful people and attractions. This efficient and thoroughly entertaining city is clean and green, with parks, cafes, museums, shops of all kinds and a picturesque little harbor lined with excursion boats and a bustling waterfront market.



Helsinki is a city of fine design with nicely-planned neighborhoods that function efficiently. Founded relatively late by European standards in the 17th century and designated as capital in 1812, the small town was initially built of wood and burned down several times, so nearly all the buildings we see today are no more than 200 years old. The nation is also quite young,

achieving its independence only in 1917 after a century of occupation by Russia and 650 years of control by Sweden.

Helsinki's modern town planners have done an excellent job of creating a livable city praised by the Harvard Architectural Digest as the "Best Designed City in Europe." The familiar European pattern is here: a compact city with most residents living in apartment buildings located near shops and offices and served by mass transit to efficiently move people around without causing major traffic jams. This is a small capital with just 500,000 residents, but there is an underground metro system and numerous light rail trams running on the surface along the main streets. This transit system will help us get around in our visit. Because of the compact urban center, it is very easy for us to see most of the sights on foot.

July is an excellent time to visit because the weather is at its best and the city is not crowded, for many locals leave on vacation then. Temperatures are mild, usually in the 70s, because Helsinki is so far north, nearly as high as Anchorage, Alaska, and the days have 20 hours of sunshine. There will still be plenty of locals in town for you to mingle with if you choose: most are friendly, fluent in English and they spend a lot of time outdoors on the streets, cafes and parks, enjoying the fleeting good weather.

We arrive in the afternoon, which gives us time for an orientation walking tour. A great place to start our explorations is at Market Square, the colorful outdoor food market next to the harbor. This is only a few blocks from our hotel. Here we will find all sorts of fresh produce and prepared foods ready to eat, along with some booths selling souvenirs and crafts. The air is fresh with sea breezes and the music of seagulls accompanying



the sounds of the merchants hawking their goods. This harbor scene is so fascinating that you will probably come back again.

Numerous excursion boats are docked here, offering a variety of enticing itineraries including lunch and dinner cruises, or a choice of several 90-minute sightseeing voyages along the city's shores and through the nearby archipelago. Have a look at the various cruise posters and brochures and select one for later, making note of departure times to help plan your schedule.



Another wonderful marketplace at the harbor is found in The Old Market Hall, which has been a favorite hangout of food lovers for 110 years. This beautiful old building has two long shopping aisles lined on both side with thirty merchants selling a nice variety of foods ranging from pastry snacks to ingredients for a gourmet meal. You can sit down for lunch at one of the snack bars or purchase foods to go: cheese, coffee, fish, chocolate, meats, spices, fruits, vegetables and alcohol. There is lots more to discover in the many stalls, including sushi and smoked reindeer meat to bring home as a gift.

After you've had enough of the market and harbor, begin your walking explorations of the rest of town. From here we walk towards the heart of town, heading for the green park just beyond the large bronze fountain of the Havis Amanda, the mermaid symbol of Helsinki.



ESPLANADE

The most popular park in town, called the Esplanade (they say "Esplanadi") runs through the middle of downtown from the waterfront to the main commercial street of town, Mannerheimintie, just three blocks away. This is very much the heart of town and a place most visitors come back to several times to relax, shop, sip and catch some entertainment at the bandstand in the middle of the park. There is a fashionable café in the park, called Kappeli, with a nice range of dining options and special beer brewed on the premises. You can sit outdoors and snack at their large terrace café, or relax inside with a sophisticated meal. This lovely old restaurant was built in the 19th century in an Art Nouveau, solarium style, with large glass walls, potted plants and elaborate interior decor. It was a major hangout for artists and is now a big favorite with the young crowd.

Two streets on each side of the Esplanade host the main concentration of stores selling Finnish goods,

such as Marimekko fabrics, Aarika wooden jewelry and gifts, Hackman Arabia porcelain and Artek furniture. Especially along North Esplanade, these shops are all noted for their world-famous Finnish designs, with a sleek, modern, functionalist look. The Finns are proud to be a major creative force in the development of the Scandinavian design movement, whose roots stretch back to the Art Nouveaux movement of the early 1900s and have continued evolving into our post-modern world. Several excellent restaurants are also found along both sides of the park.



CITY CENTER

The main shopping district of Helsinki is found in a compact area between the Esplanade and the train station, just four blocks square with the large department store, Stockmann, in the center. Department stores are open from 9:00am to 9:00pm, while the malls and smaller shops close one hour earlier. The two most important shopping streets, Mannerheimintie and Aleksanterinkatu intersect at Stockmann, forming a busy little plaza called Three Blacksmiths Square. Trams run along both of these main streets making it very easy to get here from anywhere in the city, but once you are in this zone you merely need to stroll a few blocks to cover all the possibilities. This is the epicenter of Helsinki, so of course it is filled with a lively outdoor café and surrounded by people in motion. Two

blocks further along Mannerheimintie is the second largest department store of Helsinki, Sokos. The Forum, the largest mall in town, is across the street with 125 stores. Of course, there are many places to eat and drink in this shopping zone, ranging from inexpensive take-outs (yes, it is possible to eat cheaply here) to high-end, gourmet dining.



There is one more highlight for today: Helsinki's only "skyscraper," the Torni Tower, with a roof-top observation deck on the twelfth floor that looks out over the city. The Torni welcomes the public up to the rooftop Vista Bar, from which you can see the whole city. This overview will help you look forward to tomorrow's continued exploration of downtown.

Market Square comes alive by 7:00am, so we can have another look at the busy morning market and perhaps purchase some fresh fruits for later. We walk one block over to Senate Square, the main ceremonial center of town, dominated by Helsinki's famous Cathedral, which sits majestically on a small hill. In the center of the plaza stands a noble statue of Czar Alexander II, serving as a reminder of Finland's occupation by Imperial Russia from 1809 to 1917.

Alexander wanted Helsinki to look like St. Petersburg, Russia's capital at that time and just a few hundred miles to the east, so during the 1830s he sent Carl Engel, an eminent German architect, to design the Lutheran Cathedral and surrounding buildings. Finnish

architecture, as a result, has many similarities with the Russian style that we have already seen, particularly in the use of neoclassical columns in the ancient Greek manner.

The similarities are so convincing that numerous American movies, such as “Reds,” “Gorky Park,” “Dr. Zhivago” and “White Nights,” were filmed in the area around the Cathedral during the communist era when filmmakers could not go to the Soviet Union, and therefore used the Senate Square as a stand-in for Moscow or St. Petersburg.

Leaving Senate Square, we walk a block to the Helsinki City Museum, the second most-popular museum in the city. Separate display areas dramatically illustrate the three eras of the city: the Swedish, Russian and independent Finnish.



There are some fun, alternative ways to get around that could replace or supplement the bus tour. An easy way to see Helsinki's sights is by hopping aboard the 3T tram. This route is perfect for tourists as it passes by the Finlandia Hall, Parliament House, National Opera and Senate Square. You can get off the tram at any stop, or you can do the whole loop in one hour.

You won't get lost because the tram runs in a figure-8 loop through the center of the city and takes you right back to where you boarded it. For a slightly different sightseeing tour, try Spårakoff,

a restored tram that serves as a moving restaurant, allowing you to enjoy Helsinki's sights while sipping a beer! A sightseeing tour in a boat from Market Square is another fine way to see this maritime city.



After the tram tour you are free for the rest of the day. You should consider visiting another one of the city's top museums which are clustered in the downtown area. It is simply amazing that Helsinki, a small city of 500,000, has 70 museums, many of which also have attractive cafés and gift shops.

TOUR TO TALLINN:

On our second day in Helsinki we have take a 90-minute boat ride to Tallinn, Estonia and spend the day walking through the beautiful Old Town.

Late this afternoon, about 4:00pm we board our large ferry for the overnight cruise from Tallinn t to Stockholm. This modern, comfortable ship carries up to 2,500 people for a very pleasant, calm cruise across the Baltic Sea to Sweden's capital. It is like a floating hotel, with comfortable cabins, restaurants, promenade decks, tax-free shopping malls and casinos. Bon voyage.





Stockholm is one of Europe's truly beautiful capitals. This amazing city was created by a society that truly cares about people and provides for their welfare and their pleasure, resulting in wonderful conditions for the visitor to enjoy. Scandinavians believe in quality of life and are generally considered to have the world's highest standard of living. Stockholm offers a magical blend of efficiency and beauty, romance and skill all working together to make your visit extremely rewarding. It is modern, yet has some of Europe's best-preserved historic neighborhoods, with an atmospheric mix of ancient cobbled alleys, 17th century buildings and contemporary shops. Something special is happening here.

You can easily keep busy and have fun in Stockholm for two days. The most worthwhile activities are: walk the Old Town (of course), take a boat ride around some of the city's 14 islands, visit the reconstructed historic

village of Skansen, tour the world's largest occupied Royal Palace, visit the three best museums, check out the modern downtown and shop along the great pedestrian promenade of Drottninggatan. You'll love it!

We will want to spend a lot of time exploring the quirky streets of Gamla Stan, the old town, where our hotel is located. This is the site of the medieval city center and is the number one most interesting place in town. Wandering the Gamla Stan is the prime reason for coming to Stockholm, so have a good look around. They just don't build cities like this any more.

The narrow twisting cobbled streets of Gamla Stan are lined with superbly preserved old buildings which contain some very modern stores, so you can enjoy the historic experience while shopping! In fact this neighborhood has been a place for commerce since the 12th century, when it was first settled as a trading center. Most of the handsome buildings you see now were built of brick and stone in the 17th century when Sweden was one of the greatest powers in Europe.

Nearby we will visit the Drottningholm Palace, which is the largest occupied royal palace in the world. Arrive in the courtyard well before noon for a good position to see the spectacular Changing of the Guards. The highly decorated



palace interior is typical of what you find throughout Europe's extravagant royal mansions.

The main event in Gamla Stan is to walk along the fascinating shopping lane, the Vasterlanggatan, but you will



also enjoy a wander into the little side alleys, exploring past centuries frozen in stone. It is much quieter here away from the shopping throngs and there is an abundance of small pleasures to be found in the details of buildings, gardens and older shop fronts. There is so much rich atmosphere to absorb in Gamla Stan we will lead you back for another few hours on the final day.

When hunger strikes you could find no better choice in Gamla Stan than the series of ancient restaurants behind the 13th-century Storkyrkan Cathedral on Skomakargatan. If the weather is mild you can sit outdoors, or better yet, have a traditional meal in their medieval barrel-vaulted cellars which were storerooms four hundred years ago. This you must see, even if you are merely passing by looking for a restroom. Here you really step down in time as you venture below street level. Alternatively, pick from the charming outdoor restaurants that line the Stortorget main square of the Gamla Stan, overlooking the historic Bourse stock market. This is the only part of town where stores remain open late, so you will have plenty of time for browsing and shopping until dropping.

You could start your second day in Stockholm with two outstanding history

museums that you would really enjoy — the Vasa and the Nordic. You will want to see the 17th century wooden warship, the Vasa, briefly the world's largest battleship until it tragically sunk



on its maiden voyage in 1628. It was top-heavy with hundreds of wooden statues. You can see them all, because the massive ship was rescued from the deep twenty years ago and put on display here, with many related nautical artifacts, and friendly knowledgeable guides who lead frequent tours of the exhibit. It looks brand new. When you are finished here walk one block over to the Nordic Museum, the largest collection of Scandinavian artifacts in the world. They have tons of history on display, including folk art, handicrafts, furniture, table-settings, clothing, interiors and special exhibits such as the current splash on ABBA, Sweden's most successful pop group.

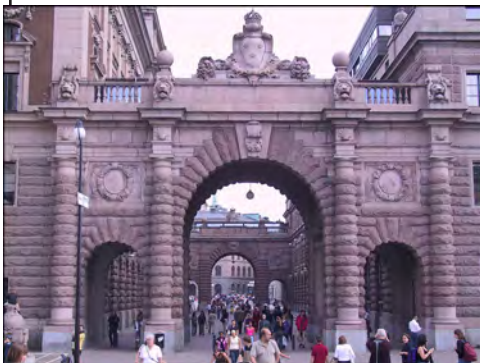
After you finish these two museums take a five minute tram ride to Skansen, the world's first, and still the best, outdoor museum. Sweden-in-a-nutshell, this vast park features about 150 houses and farmsteads that have been collected from all over the country and brought together in an exquisite living exhibit. For many of you this transplanted chunk of old-fashioned life will be the main highlight of Stockholm. Most of the houses are open only from 11:00am until 5:00pm, so you don't want to



get here when the park gates open at 10:00am. Arrive at mid-day and recharge your batteries with lunch at one of the many eateries in the park or just outside the gates.

Skansen's buildings date from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and show how people in different social classes lived, worked and were housed. There are costumed local guides dressed in historic outfits ready to explain the story of each display and tell you about life as it used to be lived in the house you are visiting. You will also find animals in the farmyard, and a naturalistic zoo with bears, bison, elk, wolves and reindeer. Later you can enjoy a charming folk dance performance with live music and skilled traditional dancers.

On our third and final day in Stockholm you will want to see some of the modern downtown in the morning, visit the fine art museum, eat in a stylish café, walk the main shopping street back to the Gamla Stan in the afternoon and stay there through the evening.



The center of downtown has some interesting streets and squares around it, so have a brief look as you walk past heading for the nicest shopping blocks of Hamngatan where you began your tour at the information office. If you want to peek inside NK go ahead, but it's just another big department store. For more posh shops walk another two blocks to Birger Jarlsgatan and take a left up to Ostermalmstorg if you would like to grab some take-out, or just look at the Sluhallen food market. Then we walk to the very pretty park called Kungstragarden which is the outdoor living room of the city. Here you will find locals relaxing, kids playing, fountains gushing, statues standing and flowers blooming.

Passing through the gardens we pop out the other end by the waterfront near the Nationalmuseum, which holds the country's main collection of fine arts, including a sprinkling of Old Masters and Impressionists. It is a good museum, definitely worthwhile for the art lover. After the museum,



enjoy some refreshments in the opulent Grand Hotel, or perhaps enjoy their fabulous smorgasbord buffet featuring a dozen kinds of fresh herring. Another nearby restaurant is the very famous Operakallaren in the Opera House. It's now an art deco masterpiece, first opened in the 18th century and noted for a smorgasbord lunch and heavy crowds, so it's better to arrive at a non-

peak time. Upstairs you will find the equally beautiful Opera Café, also busy at lunch and dinner.

Our first goal for this final afternoon is the busy pedestrian shopping street of Drottninggatan, just three blocks from the Opera, filled mostly with locals out for a stroll - a perfect spot for people-watching. Here you will find several side streets that are also worth exploring in this shopping center of town. Make



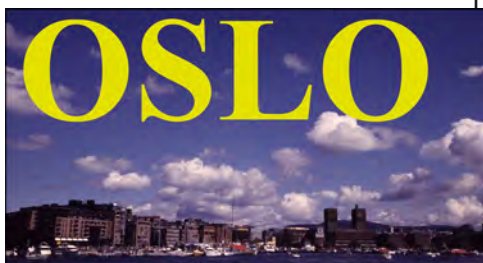
your way south along this lane heading back towards the Gamla Stan. You will pass over a canal and through two triumphal arches at the back of the Parliament, where you can take a brief detour if you want another glimpse back into the past. The Museum of Medieval Times, underneath the Parliament, recreates the atmosphere of old Stockholm including a section of the city wall and many artifacts from the Viking days.

As you walk back along the shopping route you will discover this same narrow pedestrian alley continues as the main commercial spine of the Old Town that you were on your first day. It totals nearly a mile of shopping nirvana. It is great to be back in this enchanted neighborhood, the best part of Stockholm. Things to buy include the famous Swedish crystal and related glassware, wooden toys, silverware, handicrafts and anything that shows Swedish design. Non-shoppers can wander into little side alleys to explore four centuries of ancient buildings. The

more you stroll around Stockholm, the more you'll appreciate how much variety of architecture there is to enjoy.

If you can find any spare hours between our suggestions, hop another boat for the "Under the Bridges" two-hour tour if you enjoyed the water first time around. It's especially nice towards sunset. Venturing further afield, there are many palaces and homes devoted to Sweden's monarchs scattered throughout suburbia, connected with a multitude of parks, walking paths and bicycle trails. You can walk everywhere in this civilized place, or utilize the efficient public transit bus and subway system to really cover some extra ground. The Swedes are friendly and most of them speak English, so it is worth your effort to say hello.

The next morning we travel by train from Stockholm to Oslo through very scenic countryside covered with farms and forests.



You will be delighted with our visit to Oslo, capital of Norway, which the United Nations has ranked as the best country in the world to live. We stay here for three days. The fascinating downtown is a compact area just one mile long and a half-mile wide, filled with the typical European variety of shops, parks, restaurants, museums, scenic waterfront and historic sights to keep you highly entertained for several days. Oslo's population is only 550,000, making it the smallest Scandinavian

capital, and very easy to get around.

Our hotel has a prime location in the central section of the main street, Karl Johans Gate, which begins at the train station and continues for one mile to the Royal Palace. This boulevard is definitely the heart of town, buzzing with people all day long. Karl Johans has fine shops and restaurants along both sides in the neighborhood of the train station where it is a lively pedestrian mall extending for six blocks,



with several enticing side streets also reserved for pedestrians.

Our orientation walk begins across the street in a pretty park that is Oslo's major gathering place in fair weather, serving as an outdoor living room. The busy garden café in the middle is an excellent place to stop later for drinks and a light meal, or just sit on a bench and watch the entertainers. At one end stands the Parliament, finished in 1866 with a mix of Renaissance and Neoclassical styles that has created one of the prettiest buildings in town.

Oslo's three main shopping streets, Karl Johans, Rosenkrantz and Stortingsgata, surround this popular park, forming Oslo's best neighborhood. At the next block along Karl Johans we find the oldest university buildings in Oslo, opened in 1854. The three attractive university buildings are in the Neoclassical style



with impressive columns and pediments, set back in a one-block campus of green lawns and tall trees.

Have a look inside the central building to appreciate the beautiful entrance hall, lined with tall columns and coffered ceiling, like a Greek temple, and then proceed into the auditorium where you will find three walls covered with large murals by Edvard Munch, Norway's most famous



artist, who worked on them for ten years. Many more paintings by Munch await those interested in the next few days.

From here it is an easy three-block walk towards the waterfront to see the impressive home of the city government. City Hall was built between 1931 and 1950 in what was then the very modern style of Functionalism, with a plain brick design that looks like three large, plain boxes.

City Hall faces the harbor, which is a major focus of activities in Oslo, with a large restaurant mall, historic sights and excursion boat services. Here you will find Aker Brygge, the most exciting dining and shopping complex in town, where a shipyard that stood until the 1970s has now been transformed into a wonderful place to have a meal, do a

little shopping and take a stroll along the waterfront. An indoor food court and lovely sidewalk cafes offer prime position for watching the attractive crowds on parade along the waterfront.

Ferry boats leave from the harbor to the Bygdøy Peninsula, which has



several excellent museums, including the Norwegian Folk Museum and the Viking Ship Museum, to be explored later. Excursions boats also leave from these docks, offering one, two or three hour cruises through the archipelago, passing many flat islands with hidden coves and vacation homes.

On the other side of the harbor you will see the imposing Akershus Castle and Fortress, which is Oslo's oldest and most historic attraction, built between 1299 and 1319. A ten-minute walk along the waterfront around the fortress grounds

brings you up the fort's ramparts, which offer a lovely view looking back across the harbor.

We complete the day's walking tour with a stroll back

to the hotel through the oldest section of town in several blocks between the fortress and the Parliament. This neighborhood offers a pleasant place for a city stroll, with shops, restaurants, a couple of modern art museums and some historic buildings, presenting a typical business environment that has



special appeal for connoisseurs of city life.

Along the way we pass through the pretty square in front of the Oslo Cathedral, the Domkirke (1697). The Stortorvet Square in front often hosts a colorful flower market, and across the street is Oslo's largest and best department store, Glas Magasinet, which offers many goods of Norwegian design, and is especially noted for high-quality glass works. Stables that once circled this square have been converted into attractive shops and cafes. Yet another pedestrian mall, Torggata, extends three blocks north from here into another nice shopping area that could keep you busy for the rest of the evening.

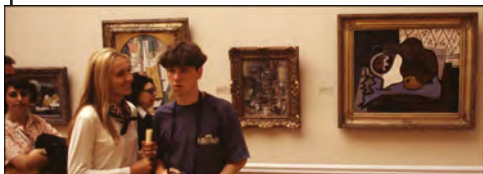
This morning we enjoy a tour that takes us to a couple of important sights on the edge of town beyond walking distance — including Frogner Park, with an amazing outdoor sculpture collection. During the ride you will hear about Oslo's history as well as get shopping and dining tips which can greatly enhance your visit. Riding along we discover that Oslo is a green city with lots of trees, fountains, parks and gardens. There are many neighborhoods of beautiful, old houses mixed nicely together with modern apartments.

The Vigeland Sculpture Park is often cited as Oslo's top attraction, so it should not be missed: an amazing collection of 200 statues by Gustav Vigeland, arranged



in one of the world's most interesting sculpture gardens. Even those who don't care much for statues, this will find this a worthwhile expedition because the subjects are people and human emotions, which have universal appeal. The pastoral setting in a large, green park also enhances the experience.

This afternoon would be an excellent time to visit Oslo's two major museums for art and history, easy to find in the center of town just behind the three university buildings, one block from Karl Johans Gate on Kristian IV's Gate. These fascinating museums are free and



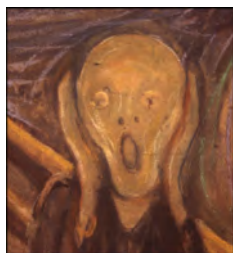
worth at least one hour each.

The National Gallery is the most important art museum in the country, with an excellent collection of important European paintings in a large space extending through sixty rooms on three floors. You'll be delighted by the nice sample of French artists, including Manet, Renoir, Cézanne, Gauguin and Matisse along with several rooms of Old Masters from Renaissance and Baroque times, including Velasquez and El Greco.

The Historical Museum, one block away, covers the evolution of culture from the Stone Age through the Middle Ages, then continues the human story with an Ethnographic Collection, exhibiting artifacts from the Arctic, Africa and the Americas. The Viking section is especially interesting: horned helmets, battleaxes, farming implements, swords, boats, gold jewelry and hundreds of other fascinating items depicting life

of those infamous Norwegians, who thrived in the years 780 through 1050.

Art-lovers would thoroughly enjoy a pilgrimage to the Munch Museum, which has about 1,000 of his paintings displayed in rotation at this large, modern building which opened in 1963. It is beyond walking distance, but easily reached by Bus 20 or metro to Toyen. If you are just getting off the ferry at City Hall, take the tram from there to the main train station and connect to the bus or subway.



It's ironic that Edvard Munch (1863-1944) is widely known for just one painting, "The Scream," and yet the rest of his pictures show the same skillful hand at work, laced with existential anxiety and strong human feelings. These other pieces are not well known because he sold very few paintings and



donated his entire collection for this museum. You have to come to Oslo to experience the wide range of subjects and emotions he explored. Munch studied in Berlin and Paris, influenced by Gauguin, Van Gogh and other Post-Impressionists, but then took the art world to a new level of Expressionism, infused with powerful, frightening passions and brilliant colors.

By now the day is nearly done and you will be looking for dinner and perhaps a last crack at the shops, so head back to the main stretch along Karl Johans Gate and take it from there.

Next morning begins with a ten-minute ferry ride from the docks in front of City Hall across the harbor to the Bygdø Peninsula, where there are several outstanding museums. Imagine traveling back to the 19th century and seeing all of Norway in one small park, with original farm houses, country manors, village centers and local experts dressed in authentic costumes to tell you all about it. That is just what you will find at the amazing Norwegian Folk Museum, one of Europe's largest open air museums, with 150 original

buildings moved here from all regions of Norway.

Each building cluster has a knowledgeable guide in native costume who will entertain you with a personal tour of the property, demonstrate some crafts and answer any questions you might have. You

might see a blacksmith in action, taste some freshly baked goods, or watch the goats and pigs being fed. The most important treasure is the traditional Stave Church, with its tall, gabled roof dating to the Middle Ages. Interior visits of each site show you traditional furniture, kitchen utensils and domestic items which really provide an accurate feeling for the traditional culture. As you walk through the homes and farms with your guides, they often tell stories about the actual people who lived there, bringing the nation's history to life.

The grounds are landscaped in a natural way that gives the feeling of being way out in the country, with farm animals to create that rural atmosphere. Each building complex is separated from the others by trees and pastures, so you can enjoy the adventure of navigating from one area to the next as you discover the many sites. Nearly all the park's buildings are made of wood, since timber was the main natural resource of Norway. This gives an earthy appearance to the design that is greatly enhanced by the sod roofs on many of the houses.

Lovers of arts and crafts will be especially delighted with the Old Town center where the artisans have their workshops, demonstrating traditional skills and selling unique products made there. This includes a silversmith, weavers, candle makers and especially, The Pottery, which has been part of the park for 50 years. Some kind of musical entertainment is usually going on to further enhance your visit to the park.

After the folk park, walk about ten minutes to the Viking Ship Museum, 600 yards away, or wait for the city bus to bring you there. This small museum is another one of the treasures of Oslo, containing two large Viking ships and many cases of artifacts accompanied by informative descriptions. We then walk back to the ferry dock at Dronningen





for the ten-minute trip back to City Hall.

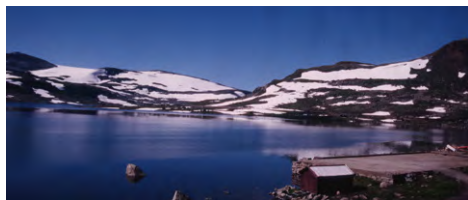
Our ship is leaving in the late afternoon for Copenhagen, giving you a few hours free time to complete your visit to Oslo.

BERGEN

For our final destination of the tour we are heading to the far western shores of Norway to visit the charming seaside town of Bergen. To get there we're going to take you on one of the most spectacular train rides in all of Europe: starting in Oslo, we're heading cross-country through some fascinating mountain terrain, passing lakes and rivers and waterfalls, and then by boat through a vast fjord, finally we will be arriving later in the day at the ancient capital of Norway the town of Bergen.

We travel to Bergen from Oslo along one of the most scenic train routes in Europe: through the high mountains over Northern Europe's largest mountain plateau. We change trains mid-way and board the Flam railway which takes us about a mile from the mountain tops down through seven lush valleys to the waters below in the Sognefjord, Norway's largest fjord, which we cruise for several hours surrounded by breathtaking mountains on our way to Bergen.

We change trains mid-way and board the Flam railway which takes us about a mile from the mountain tops down through seven lush valleys to the waters below in the Sognefjord, Norway's



largest fjord, which we cruise through past towering mountains on our way to Bergen.

We're up the next morning for buffet breakfast and a big day: walking tour of town and the outdoor food market on the harbor; visit to the Brygen; and ride up the mountain by funicular to get a great view over the city. Our walking tour will have a look at downtown and some of the quiet residential neighborhoods.

The most impressive historic site in Bergen is the large collection of wooden buildings known as the Brygen, constructed about 300 years ago. These wooden buildings are so important they are on the UNESCO list of world heritage sites.

There will be time here for an excursion by cable-car to the top of a nearby mountain for a lovely view over the town, harbor and countryside. We can ride down the same way, then take a stroll through the historic residential area at the foot of this peak, on the edge of town.



Centrally-located, high-quality hotels



St. Petersburg:
Nevsky Grand Hotel
10 Bolshaya Konyushennaya



Helsinki:
Sokos Hotel Vaakuna,
Asema-aukio 2,



day cruise:
Helsinki - Tallinn

TALLINK SILJA LINE



overnight cruise:
Tallinn-Stockholm



Stockholm:
City Hotel Gamla Stan
Lilla Nygatan 25



Oslo:
Grand Hotel
Karl Johansgate 31,



Bergen:
First Hotel Marin
Rosenkrantzgt, 8

Comments about the tour from our travelers:



Best experiences:
St. Petersburg visit
to the Hermitage
Museum, the
palaces of

Catherine & Peter the Great with all the masterpieces & artwork was overwhelming. Of course our excellent guide, Svetlana, added to my appreciation of the grandeur of the past. Plus you couldn't ask for a more caring bunch of people to travel with than the group we had – including our leader! I might add that the breakfasts were excellent at the hotels. Can't beat traveling with Dennis & group from Hawaii! Walter Hironaka



Our visits to
St. Petersburg,
the Hermitage,
the palaces, the
gardens, were very

impressive and memorable. Svetlana was a gem. The train ride from St. Petersburg to Helsinki was luxurious and very pleasant. Olga's services were generous and professional – will be forever grateful for her assistance. We won't forget the young man in a posh Helsinki restaurant who came running 1/3 block to direct us to Café Esplanade for a soup and sandwich meal. This tour provided opportunities to learn, experience,

walk, eat, shop, interact according to each individual's interest and stamina, i.e. lots of flexibility to make choices, which enhanced the schedule and met the varied interests of the group. The members of the group were all very cooperative and pleasant – amazing for such a diverse group. Thank you Dennis for sharing so generously your knowledge, experiences, and time. This tour has enriched my life in many ways – new knowledge, new experiences and new friends. Vi Hironaka



This was one
of the very best
tours I have ever
experienced. I
particularly liked
the pace, the

balance between touring time and free time, and the excellent centrally-located Scandinavian hotels. The tour participants were also a good mix and fun to be with. You certainly know what you're doing. Merrily Leong



We had a wonderful
vacation, and
have many warm
memories of our
tour with you. We
were delighted

by your blend of structured

sightseeing, optional goodies such as the museums and ballet, and the generous helping of free time which allowed us to experience things of special interest to us. You designed and ran a great tour, and we'd love to travel with you again. Many, many thanks. Peter Leong



Russia: Svetlana was a wonderful guide (great knowledge and took care of us). Hermitage was awesome, Kirov Ballet was great, Peterhoff was unbelievable.

Oslo: Vigland sculpture park was a sight to behold, enjoyed outdoor cultural park with old bldgs., Norwegians in period costumes. Loved it because we learned so much

Stockholm: Finally saw a changing of the guard ceremony, very impressive and colorful. Vasa Museum was wonderful – had read stories about this ship & actually seeing it was an experience. Skansen was an eye-opener too. Enjoyed interacting with Swedish teenagers on train ride.

Very enjoyable tour. The group was an excellent one, everyone got along so well & on time (or usually early). We even had a youngster (Lisa) that the group sort of adopted. Excellent tour leader, always working tirelessly to stay one step ahead of the group, checking out locations, schedules,

etc., late into the night while the group relaxed at the hotel. Breakfast buffets: good food, wide selection, good time to exchange experiences; also liked the fact that Dennis made an effort to sit with different people every day.

Walking all over: loved it; got to know the general area around the hotel intimately. Using public transportation is a good idea. Flight on British Airways – full meals, personal TVs, etc made the long flight enjoyable....Water bottles at the Russian hotel dinners a wonderful & thoughtful idea. Both train rides very enjoyable (quiet & comfortable). “Crown of Scandinavia” cruise ship was superior (bright room, good dinner & wonderful breakfast buffet.

We would not hesitate to recommend your tour to friends (and we have). But we warn people that if they sign up for one of your tours, they'd better be in shape to walk a lot. Robert Muronaka



Best experiences:

St. Petersburg: Hermitage Museum! Kirov Ballet. Finland: the Sibelius Sculpture.

Stockholm: Gamla Stan (loved its old streets), the Vasa Museum; Skansen; Oslo: the Resistance Museum at Akershus Castle, the Historical Museum & National Gallery – also

the Munch Museum, the sculptures at Frogner Park, (loved tasting the freshly-made lefse bread).

The tour exceeded my expectations! I've been raving about our wonderful experiences to friends and acquaintances. The format included the best things to see in each city & the time to appreciate & explore each locale. We were well prepared because of the information you sent us prior to the tour (including photos & names of tour members). The maps that you gave us were very helpful. I never felt afraid of getting lost. The centrally located hotels were key to our being able to explore on foot. One of the best resources you gave us in our pre-trip package was the booklet you prepared on Scandinavia & Russia. We appreciate the effort & energy you spent in planning a meaningful, memorable and educational trip for us.

Thank you so much for a memorable trip to places we had always dreamed of visiting. Your meticulous planning, extensive legwork (literally & figuratively) and detailed knowledge of the places we visited all made for a most satisfying experience! Please stay healthy so you can plan more wonderful adventures for us. Mahalo and much aloha. Karen Muronaka

Thanks for a safe and wonderful tour. Enjoyable, interesting and educational. (Highlights were) the tours and sites in St. Petersburg.

In fact the entire city was very interesting and awesome. Our guide, Olga, of course, was a big plus. Stan and Irene Arakaki

The pace fitted us perfectly. The format of the whole tour is very good. Everything balanced out. Excellent narration. Dennis knows what he is talking about. Will we go with Dennis again? Yes, yes, yes! Howard and Clara Chun



Enjoyed the cruises & train rides. People on the trip were friendly – we were a terrific group. The names and pictures you gave us was very helpful. Enjoyed the Russian guide. She really knew a lot. We are not art museum people, but the Hermitage was good. Liked the variety of things we did in St. Petersburg. Choice of hotels were good. We were in the center or within walking distance of places to see, places to shop at & places to eat. Soo Kil & Iris Park

Best experiences: 1. Oslo was our favorite city. 2. Experiencing the train, cruise ships, was good. 3. Hermitage was definitely a highlight. 4. The restaurants in all the cities were very good and we enjoyed almost all of them. We want to thank you



More comments from our travelers:

for an interesting and educational experience. We were impressed by your genuine concern for all of us. You were very approachable and easy to talk to, thanks! Ray & June Kimata



What a wonderful trip we had! Many thanks for your sincere concern about our welfare. We truly appreciate your thoughtfulness and for offering such a wonderful sojourn through these four interesting countries at a leisurely pace. The group we found very compatible, but most of that is credited to a very well organized and thorough schedule. Happy that we did not have to endure endless hours of bus rides to get from one country to another. Hotel accommodations were better than I had anticipated – all very charming and comfortable. Planning to start the trip in St. Petersburg was an excellent strategy. Thanks again for a memorable trip. We know our paths will cross again! Rex and Ethel Kuwasaki

St. Petersburg with Svetlana as our guide was definitely the highlight – she is intelligent, articulate

and a first-class communicator. The museums and palaces – superb! The train to Helsinki was 5-star. You have created a fabulous tour...thank you Dennis for an unforgettable experience. You are indefatigable!!! Gaye Glaser

It was great! Our modes of transportation were excellent. We were able to see so much more of each country. The hotel locations were ideal. Real easy to get around by yourself. The breakfasts were so good! Such a variety of eats. What a friendly and helpful group to travel with. Everything at St. Petersburg was so interesting, (especially) having Olga as our guide to the Hermitage. Highlights were: meeting and talking to so many local people in

our free time; eating in the quaint restaurants; in Stockholm the young sentry came out of his box so I could have my picture taken with him; seeing the fjords. I feel you are very knowledgeable about all the places we visited. Alyce Varnell



Best experiences: Majestic palaces in Russia and Denmark. Sidewalk cafes and restaurants. Breakfast at the hotel in Finland and Sweden. Walking the pedestrian walkways in Sweden, Norway and Denmark...and good people watching. Viewing the ship exhibits in Norway. Herbert Uesugi St. Petersburg was very educational and interesting because it was so different than the other countries. The ornate palaces and the Hermitage were outstanding. Frogner Park in Oslo with all the sculptures was impressive. Enjoyed trying the local foods of each country.

Mahalo nui loa for a great experience. You both were great! You gave us enough "slack on the leash" so we could try to be independent, and yet we felt the security of being able to depend on you when we needed assistance. The tour guides were excellent in each city that we visited. Everything turned out much better than I thought things would be. We were impressed by your knowledge

of each city and country. Mahalo! May and Dick Omura



One of the best trips I've been on because of the train rides and overnight ferries – no long, long bus rides. Staying 3 nights in each city was ideal with the excellent hotel locations. Enjoyed going where the locals go. Tour members were friendly, seasoned travelers who got along and no 'grumblers.' Thank you for your excellent leadership and cast knowledge on one of our most memorable trips. Hope to join you on some of your exciting trips in the future. Irene Reyla



It seems everyone enjoyed the Sibelius Monument (in Helsinki) – including the tram ride and the hike to get to it. I liked the boat trips in each city – plus the overnight ferries. Folkloric show in St. Pete and the ballet in Copenhagen. Glyptotech & Danish Nat'l Gallery. Thought it was excellent! I think the hotel locations make all the difference – and I like the smaller "quaint" hotels better than big. Norma Jean Ferguson



It was an excellent tour. I did my homework. Excellent tour guides, especially Olga in

Russia. Small group was nice and compatible. I also liked traveling by train and boat. Suggestions for optional activities and places to eat were helpful. Millie Fukumoto

I was very much impressed with the cultural wealth of St. Petersburg – so rich! I never expected this tremendous wealth of the Russian Empire. History and Romance of the past. Standing in front of the Little Madonna by Leonardo da Vinci was something I'll never forget.

This was my first experience of a group tour under Dennis' leadership. As long as I am physically fit and I can keep up with your energetic pace, I want to participate in many more tours to come. Hiroko Sakiyama



Kimi and I wish to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your wonderful tour of Scandinavia. From St. Petersburg to Denmark, we experienced both extremes. From

being in a Third World country to small but pleasant Denmark, with many forms of transportation in between: airplane, taxi, subway, trolley, bus and of course, ship. Hope you keep us on your mailing list. We have the rest of the world to experience with you. So maybe one day we can call ourselves World Travelers. Richard and Kimi Kim



Best experiences: Hermitage; various modes of travel; Catherine Palace; loved Helsinki – quaint. Good fun and great group of

people. I appreciate you accommodating requests to see sights you hadn't planned. Paula Glaser



Best experiences: Visiting the ship and history museums. Taking the different type of transportation

between countries. A great tour for retired teachers. I like that the hotels were located in the old part of towns. I also like the folk museums in Sweden and Norway. I really enjoyed our traveling companions. Mark Glaser

I enjoyed the trip, the people, the food and the city tours very much. The hotels and the transportation

were good. I appreciate both Dennis and June making everyone feel comfortable. I enjoyed the tour because it was well planned with excellent guides who gave abundant



background.

Chaesoon Youngs

I loved the ballet!

Thank you for

arranging that.

The Hermitage

Museum and

Catherine's and

Peter's Palaces will always stand out in my memories. I enjoyed all the cities in Scandinavia we visited. It was a wonderful trip. Interesting and beautiful. Had a great time. Pearl Masuyama

I truly feel that every city offered its own highlights, based upon your well chosen tours and excursions. Besides the usual museums, palaces and castles, I personally enjoyed the opportunity to see the amazing Kirov ballet, the beautiful gardens, the wonderful folk museums, the colorful open markets and the excellent restaurants we discovered. For me, every new experience is a blur. The different modes of transportation were really an adventure...by air, train, cruise ship, taxi, tour bus, city bus, tour boat, and whatever D. Callan told us to literally jump on! The Hawaii group was great and the common bond made it easy for everyone to get along.

I'm totally pleased that we did our first real tour with Callan's Tours... Dennis' continued enthusiasm is infectious, actually quite amazing since he has done these tours how many times??? He has truly found his passionate pursuit in life and we are lucky enough to reap the benefits. Reyn Choy

Thank you for the many places that you had us see and appreciate. This has been such a rewarding tour for us. It has made the places and history more meaningful and alive. May you be blessed with good health and many more tours. Janet Horinouchi and Florence Tsuda



Thanks for all you did to make our trip

a memorable one. This trip was one we had wanted to take for sometime. All the countries we visited were truly interesting. We got to see all the magnificence of each country's history and culture. Each had its own uniqueness & yet many similarities, especially the Scandinavian countries. Truly if more people could travel the world would be more harmonious and peaceful w/ greater appreciation & respect for all. Mahalo for all your efforts in making this an unforgettable experience. Dick & Fran Hamasaki

Let's compare our travel style

We travel by train

The train is comfortable, smooth, quiet, relaxing, and so fast it gets you there in half the time. On the train you are free to walk around, have a meal in the dining car or enjoy a picnic lunch, and talk with some of the other travelers on board. First class trains are air-conditioned, so they are cool and quiet. The spacious seats are like sofas, and can recline to make you very comfortable -- you might even take a nap. You can use the clean, convenient bathrooms anytime you want. The rail routing is through scenic countryside, and you can move around to enjoy the views on both sides through picture windows.

Centrally located hotels

We have made a great effort to select fine hotels in the historic centers of the places we visit. This is extremely important, for it enables you to experience much more by just stepping out your front door. In such an advantageous location there are many nearby restaurants, monuments, shops, historic sights, important buildings, landmarks, and other features that you have come on vacation to see. Most European cities have a historic central district dedicated to the pedestrian, filled with these attractions, and this is where we like to stay. Our central hotel locations enable you to walk freely and safely through interesting neighborhoods, which is the best way to get to know a place. We want you to get the most out of your precious time, and really get a feeling for each destination. Nothing enhances that better than a good hotel in a central location. This is probably our biggest difference in approach.

Shopping like a local

With us you always have time for shopping in local stores, or, if you are not a shopper, use your precious time for other activities, instead of being led by the nose into tourist traps. The historic centers of town are filled with fascinating and unique little shops that are fun to browse through, and we will point you to those neighborhoods and set you loose. If you are looking for any particular items, your Hawaii escort can take some time to help you find them.

with the typical bus tour:

They travel by bus

Sitting on a crowded bus for up to eight hours on a long journey can be very tiring. You are confined to a small space, and cannot move around at all. There is no dining car, and often when you pull into a roadside cafeteria, long lines are waiting ahead of you. Rest-room stops also slow down the journey and waste your precious time, and they might not stop when you need it the most. The “scenic view” is dominated by the highway filled with trucks and cars. Buses often get stuck in heavy traffic jams on crowded streets, with many other vehicles competing for your road space, which can produce a lot of stress.

Hotels on the edge, or beyond...

You finally arrive at your hotel after an all-day bus ride, and find that you are still far away from the main attractions of town. Your tour operator is saving money by putting you in a nondescript hotel on the fringe of the city. There will be very little to see in your immediate vicinity, so you have to spend money and time on a taxi ride into town, or you just don't bother, and miss out. You are practically held hostage in these remote locations, so your tour guide can sell you optional tours. These hidden expenses quickly increase the price you pay for the trip. Sometimes these big operators even put you in a hotel that is not in town at all, so you are really out of the picture. All you are going to see is what the tour operator shows you on a brief bus tour, and that is usually a quick view of highlights through the window, and then off to the next city for more of the same treatment.

Shopping in tourist traps

With the bus tour, during the brief time you have in a place, you are often herded into tourist-trap “factories” and “showrooms” for “bargain” shopping. You are stuck on the bus, so you are at their mercy. If the tour bus stops at a souvenir mill, you stop too, and there is usually no other shop nearby except the one they have chosen for you. Your guide and driver are getting a commission for taking you there, so that's the place they want you to shop.

More comparisons of our style

In-depth city tours

We include several tours in each city, to give you a well-rounded look at the place. In the large cities we offer panoramic tours are on a motorcoach, and we always provide in-depth walking tours with your Hawaii escort. Our guided walks really make you familiar with a place, and prepare you for some exploring on your own. Because we are staying for two or three days, you have enough time for this, with time left over for your independent activities. We put a special emphasis on history and fine arts. The trips are educational, cultural experiences, and they are also a lot of fun. Our walking tours will take you through historic neighborhoods filled with architectural treasures, and you have time for museums and other cultural attractions.

Leisurely pace -- quality time

We stay for two or three nights in each place. This gives us enough time to show you around with our tours, and then you actually have free time so you can do some exploring on your own. This approach gives you the “best of both worlds” for the guidance we provide on our included tours helps you get the most out of your free time as well. With a proper orientation to a city, you can make the best choices for your independent activities, and we are always there to help. You will have some time to relax and enjoy the sights instead of being constantly on the go. This is how you really get a sense of place, and gain a feeling for the character of each of the cultures on the itinerary.

Small groups, from Hawaii

We limit our group size to 20 or 28 people, which we have found is quite important, for when you get above that size the group becomes very impersonal. Nearly every one of us is from Hawaii, so we become a friendly ohana on the road, looking out for each other, and showing a lot of courtesy. For example, it is very unusual for anyone to be late, so we do not waste time waiting. New friendships are made that last well beyond the length of the tour, and after returning home we have a reunion party to celebrate the trip!

with the typical bus tour:

Quick city tour

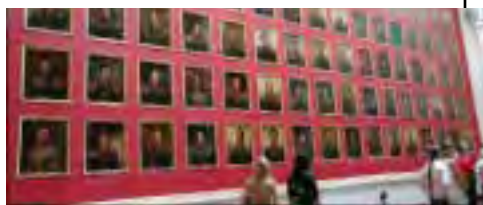
At best they might give you a three-hour bus tour, and that's all. You are usually in town for only one night, and then leave the next morning, so there is little time for anything else. If there is any extra time, you will find the tour guide wants to sell you options that take you away from town, and if you don't buy the option, they set you loose with very little preparation, so you are on your own. Without proper guidance you might end up wasting time and being unable to find the important sights on your own. But there is no time, since you are already heading for the next city. If you get lucky you might have a quick look in one museum, and the little bit of history that you hear is probably delivered in dry lectures on the long bus rides that just might...lull...you...to...sleep.

One-night stands

Most bus tours keep you moving all the time. You arrive in a city late in the day, after driving for many hours, and then you leave in the morning for your next destination. The standard bus tour operators have devised exhausting itineraries that appear to show you all of Europe in 17 days, but when you analyze them, you are sitting on the bus most of that time! Unpacking every night, and repacking every morning, you don't have much time left for sightseeing. With a bus tour you have precious little free time for you are on the go all the time. If it's Tuesday, where are we now? All too often the quick stream of cities becomes a fuzzy forgettable blur.

Big groups, from everywhere

You really don't know whom you are going to be traveling with, or how full the bus is going to be. The bus has up to 55 seats, and they are usually full, with everyone jockeying for position, so you are part of a very big group, with most of the people from every place but Hawaii. A big anonymous group like that creates a less friendly environment in which people do not care much about each other. In this case you are just a face lost in the crowd -- and you probably will not get to know many people in the group by name, or ever see them again.



SCANDINAVIA and RUSSIA