

Vikings, Trolls and Czars - A cruise review from 10-Day Baltic/Scandinavia Region on Crown Princess

By Cruise Holidays Mission Viejo

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Ship review from expert at Cruise Holidays of Mission Viejo. Experience the ship and ports in this indepth piece.

Background Information:

One week prior to departure, I got cleared for the cruise. I found a roundtrip air ticket for \$1,200 to travel from Southern California to Copenhagen. The Copenhagen airport is very nice, modern and orderly. The Princess team at the arrivals/baggage area was plentiful and very helpful.

Stateroom:

Our inside cabin was an on the Plaza deck (deck 5), 224. The cabin was small and very cramped. Our cabin steward was fantastic. He was generous with the toiletries, accommodating to our late nights and very professional. We set sail for Stockholm, Sweden at 8:00 pm.

Ship Info:

To say the ship is huge is an understatement. There are about 19 decks and when looking up from the ground one is dwarfed. The ship was built in June 2006. She has a passenger capacity of 3080, 1200 crew members with a gross tonnage of 116,000. The ship is 951 feet long. There are 1557 total cabins with 1105 of those outside and 452 inside cabins. Overall the public rooms are sophisticated and well appointed. There is a good mix of country club casual and contemporary design throughout. The ship is clean and spacious.

The Calypso Reef and Pool has a shallow area where passengers can watch "Movies Under the Stars" on a 300-square foot LED screen. The Terrace Pool (adults only) is a traditional pool area that offers fabulous views over the ship's stern. The Neptune Reef and Pool area is surrounded by two whirlpools. The Lotus Spa Pool offers a small sheltered pool, two hot tubs, and two outdoor showers. The Lotus Spa Pool has a current-machine for one person to swim laps against.

Entertainment:

Our Cruise Director Billy London did an excellent job. Each morning there was a live broadcast from Cruise Director Billy and he went through the Princess Patter to distribute all pertinent information. We had great full production shows with live dancing and singing. There were jazz musicians, pianists, comedians, acrobats, magic shows, cooking demos, and local entertainers from the various ports. The port lectures and resident expert onboard was Mr. John Lawrence. He spoke live about each port and his lecture replayed on the Princess TV channel throughout the day.

Crown Princess has a lot of smaller venues that hosted unique performances. Crooners is a centrally located martini bar located off the main piazza.

Dining:

A whole new level is reached with Princess and the Personal Choice Dining concept.

Crown Princess' full range of dining options includes:

International Cafe - The International café offers specialty coffee drinks and serves a changing menu of a

la carte items throughout the day. Passengers may enjoy freshly baked croissants or beignets in the morning, gourmet panini sandwiches at lunchtime, afternoon tea or chocolate fondue later in the day, or pre-dinner tapas in the evening. An Italian gelateria will also scoop up assorted flavors daily and serve fresh homemade bon bons. Purchasing a coffee card is a great value as unlimited premium coffee, hot tea and hot chocolate are included with the price of the card. Also, large paper cups are available and are useful to-go containers for shore excursions.

Vines - A wine and seafood bar that will tempt passengers in the evening with an assortment of fine wine and cocktail pairings accompanied by a selection of chilled seafood "cocktails"-- appetizers including salmon, oysters, sushi, gravlax or other treats from the sea.

Crown Grill - A showplace eatery with an open, theater-style kitchen where chefs custom-prepare steamed shellfish -- such as lobster, scallops, clams and mussels -- and cooked-to-order steaks and chops. A \$25 fee applies for dinner, some items may carry an additional charge.

Sabatini's -- Princess' famed Sabatini's Italian trattoria features a new top deck location aboard Crown Princess to offer fine dining with a view. The stunning new venue offers a grand entrance, views on three sides with dramatic vistas overlooking the wake of the ship, and open-air dining on the aft deck. An all-new menu, plus custom-made fine china and new stemware, makes this Italian extravaganza a fine dining experience to remember, which will subsequently be introduced in other Sabatini's restaurants throughout the fleet. A \$20 cover charge applies for the Sabatini's dinner.

Main dining rooms -- We had anytime dining. There are three restaurants. One serves traditional seating and two are focused on Anytime Dining.

Cafe Caribe -- This themed buffet captures the tastes of the Caribbean and beyond. Offers an alternative to Horizon Court. Has nightly dinner themes.

Horizon Court -- A primary feature of Princess ships, the top-of-the-ship restaurant features floor-to-ceiling windows with stunning sea views as a backdrop for a quick breakfast or casual dinner. The Horizon Court offers a variety of buffet meals or snacks.

Trident Grill -- For a quick poolside lunch.

Pizza and Ice Cream Bar -- The homemade pizza was delicious! Poolside pizzeria serving Princess' trademark Italian-style fresh pizza by the slice.

24-Hour Room Service -- Princess provides 24-hour room service enabling passengers to enjoy breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks in the privacy of their own staterooms.

Denmark, Copenhagen

We arrived and went directly to the ship.

Sweden, Stockholm

The Swedish capital, Stockholm, is not only Scandinavia's largest city but also its most enchanting, with its centuries-old alleyways and squares being spread across an archipelago of 14 islands. We visited the Nobel Museum, the Royal Palace and the Gamla Stan. We enjoyed the hop-on/hop-off boat. We used the credit card and did not bother with the currency. The weather was perfect.

Finland, Helsinki

We took the bus from the port that was arranged by Princess for \$10 roundtrip. The 10 minute ride was nice and the bus dropped us off at a central location.

Russia, St. Petersburg

Situated on the Gulf of Finland and spread over numerous islands in the Neva Delta, St Petersburg is a city of arched bridges, winding canals, wide boulevards, elegant palaces, impressive squares and ornate churches. We took a canal tour called, "Venice of the North" on the first day and then a tour to The Winter Palace and the Hermitage Museum on day 2. It was glorious. We did not have to wait in long line to get off the ship. It was great.

Estonia, Tallinn

This port is very close to Old Town. Very easy to create your own tour. Follow the crowds into the Estonia's ancient seacoast capital. The Old Town offers winding, cobbled streets and a historic city center. The walled old town is divided into two parts: Toompea Hill was the residential area of the aristocracy and gentry in the old days, while the Lower Town operated independently.

Poland, Gdańsk

Poland is another city that passengers might want to pre book a tour. We took the train from Gdynia into Gdansk. We found a change booth at the train station to convert some US dollars. Just make sure to pay attention to the names of the stations and plan on not very many people speaking English. The train ride was a destination in itself.

Gdańsk is an important port, situated at the mouth of the Vistula River on the Baltic Sea, and throughout its history has been a major trading centre. It is the best known of the Tri-City complex that it forms with the modern seaport of Gdynia and the fashionable beach resort town of Sopot.

Norway, Oslo

We were only in Oslo for a very short period. The shops were mostly closed but the harbor was bustling with activity. This expensive city is remarkable. It is charming and legendary. The sail in and sail away are truly amazing. Oslo, situated at the end of a 70-mile (110km) long fjord, is Norway's capital and its largest city, rich in culture and folklore with a fascinating Viking history.

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