

DOWN ANCIENT PATHS

Oberammergau Passion Play & Cities of the Baltic Cruise: A Journey Through Civilization to the Cross July 13-30/2010

The world famous Oberammergau Passion Play was first presented in 1634 on a crude wooden platform in front of the local church in Oberammergau, nestled in the picturesque Bavarian Alps. In 1633, devastated by the Black Plague, the inhabitants of the village dedicated themselves to the performance of the Passion Play as a sign of their repentance and sorrow over the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. From the moment the villagers convened to pray not one plague death was recorded by the local chronicles. Since 1680, the play has been staged at the beginning of every decade (except 1770 and 1940). 2010 will mark the 41st performance of the Passion Play which stands as a vibrant witness to the centrality of the redemptive story of Jesus Christ in western civilization throughout the centuries (www.oberammergau-passion.com). Notably the various passion plays which occur at locations familiar to North Americans are descendants of Oberammergau.

The Play, which happens only once per decade, is a remarkable expression of community solidarity in modern times. Only residents of Oberammergau are permitted to participate. In 2000 (the most recent performance), 1600 adults and 500 children were involved in the production which included a musical score sung and played by a mass choir and orchestra of 100 persons. The setting has changed considerably since early times. People now come from all over the world to savour this experience of sacred drama at its best, held in a 5000 seat, weather protected theatre.

The Baltic, being an inland body of water linked to the North Sea, has had much the same impact on the surrounding region as did the Mediterranean centuries ago. It has been a crossroads of northern European civilization with intensified interaction and numerous conflicts between the various peoples living along its shores who struggled to control it. By the turn of the millennium (1000 AD) the movement of wandering barbarians who had gradually extinguished the western Roman Empire had been halted which set the stage for the Christianization of northern Europe. In turn, the pagan tribes of Scandinavia, the Baltic Sea region and parts of eastern Europe converted to Christianity and came under the rule of Christian kings and chieftains who led their peoples into the new faith by a personal acceptance of the teachings and worship forms disseminated by Christian missionaries. A new, unified, Latin Christian, world order was thus forged in northern Europe. It was as though Christianity had taken a great leap. In due course, parts of this Catholic Christendom would be reshaped in its religious consciousness by the Protestant Reformation.

The conversion of barbarian peoples to a common faith subsequently translated into commercial power as wealthy merchant cities in the Baltic region formed the Hanseatic League (Hansa means 'company') in the 14th century which monopolized trade from Sweden to central Europe and effectively transformed northern Europe into one economic unit. At its peak the alliance included some 80 cities.

Modern times also testify to the importance of the Baltic region. Millions of immigrants migrated from Baltic countries to North America in the 19th century seeking a more prosperous life. Their rich, multi-faceted, contributions to the building of Canada and the US have been well documented by historians. More recently, in the decades of ‘cold war’ politics between the end of World War II and the fall of Communism, the Baltic States served as a strategic buffer zone between the military Alliances of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Our 12-night, Baltic cruise provides you with a splendid opportunity at the best travelling time of the year to contemplate the impact of Baltic countries on the history of the western world and to observe the magnificent, cultural accomplishments of northern European civilization as seen through the windows of some of its most beautiful cities.

July 13: CALGARY – AMSTERDAM

Depart Calgary to Amsterdam via KLM

July 14: AMSTERDAM

After arriving in Amsterdam around lunch time and clearing airport formalities we transfer to our hotel. **NH City Centre Amsterdam** (<http://www.nh-hotels.com/nh/en/hotels/the-netherlands/amsterdam/nh-city-centre-amsterdam.html>) The remainder of the day is free to relax or explore on your own.

July 15: AMSTERDAM TOUR – CRUISE SHIP

Amsterdam, on the Amstel River, was founded as a fishing village in 1200 but by the end of the 16th century it had risen to become the financial capital of Europe. People of all races and religious persuasions traded here with as many as 5000 ships berthed at city docks. Our morning tour of the city takes us to Dam Square, the Royal Palace, the National Monument, the Heineken brewery, the harbour, the Museum Quarter and some shops. Savour the leafy ambience of the old city centre as we glide through some of 150 canals which first began to be constructed in the 14th century on the city’s eastern and southern borders. The elegant merchant mansions, stylistic churches, houseboats and warehouses, the historic harbour with its impressive skyline and the criss-crossing ferries prompt us to recall the Golden Age of Amsterdam in the 17th century. Lunch is at a local restaurant. After lunch, we proceed to the cruise terminal to embark on our 12 nights Scandinavia & Russia cruise on board the **Celebrity Constellation** (<http://www.celebritycruises.com/plancruise/ships/ship.do?jsessionid=0000qQtZeFJ-2nS4JIogKQbqPy:12h3rnd1c?shipCode=CS&cS=FLASH>).

July 16: At SEA

July 17: BERLIN (WARNEMUNDE)

Berlin, situated on the Spree River, is certainly Germany’s liveliest city and some would claim one of the most fascinating capitals of the world. Its cultural delights are endless. In driving to Berlin from the seaside suburb of Warnemunde we’ll pass through Rostock, Germany’s main Baltic port on the Warnow River, the picturesque lake district of Pomerania and the Brandenburg plain. Our tour of Berlin, the new capital of the unified Germany, will expose you to the cosmopolitan energy and vibrancy which has taken over the city in a new age of reunification. The Kaiser- Wilhelm I Memorial Church reminds us of the destructive horrors of war. The famous KaDeWe Store, Europe’s largest temple of consumption, the Yorckbrucken Bridge, culturally colourful Kreuzberg, Potsdamer Square, the Crown Princess Palace, St Hedwigs Cathedral, Berliner Dam, the TV Tower, Alexander Square, the German and French Cathedrals, the Konzerthaus, Rosenthaler Square, and the Synagogue Centrum Judaium.

The Checkpoint Charlie Museum is situated next to former official crossing point for Allied forces and returns us to the spy ridden 'cold war' world of the divided Germany. The exhibits of the museum testify to the creative ingenuity of the many people who escaped (or unsuccessfully tried to) from the former GDR, East Germany. A few remnants of the disappearing Berlin Wall remain. We'll relive the evils of the Nazi Regime at the Topography of Terror exhibition. Three terrifying Nazi institutions had their headquarters in this vicinity of the city. Our return to the cruise terminal will be via Oranienburg, with a haunting visit to Sachsenhausen, Germany's first concentration camp opened in 1933 as a 'wild camp' for political prisoners. From 1936-1945 some 100,000 persons were murdered here.

July 18 : At SEA

July 19 : STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Stockholm, a city with a 760 year history, exudes an elegant beauty which is hard to capture in words. It was founded in the 13th century by Regent Birger Jarl at the meeting of Lake Malaren and the Baltic Sea to protect the former from marauding pirates. Built on no fewer than 14 islands, one-third of the area within city limits consists of parks and woodlands. Another third consists of water. There is something interesting to see on virtually every street corner. Our half day city tour will visit the City Hall, Sweden's biggest architectural project of the 20th century, the Royal Palace, where defensive fortifications have stood on the island of Stadsholmen since the 10th century, as well as state apartments and the Treasury which houses the royal regalia and Erik XIV's jewel-studded crown crafted in 1561. The city's quaint Gamla Stan (Old Town) which grew up on three, bridge-linked islands transports one into Stockholm's mediaeval past and is in architectural juxtaposition to the modern buildings which inhabit the other islands. We'll take a short drive out of the city for a guided tour of Drottningholm, Sweden's greatest royal palace. Return to ship.

July 20: HELSINKI, FINLAND

Finland was a province of Sweden from 1362 to 1807 and of Russia from 1807 to 1917. Helsinki, founded by King Gustav Vasa of Sweden in 1550, differs in mood from the other Scandinavian capitals. In many respects it resembles the major cities of Eastern Europe having been an outpost of the Russian empire for almost a century. In 1812 Tsar Alexander I named it Finland's capital. Our full day's tour of Helsinki savours its unique neoclassical brick buildings around Senate Square which is overlooked by the gleaming Lutheran Cathedral. The musical composer, Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), played a key role in the creation of Finnish national identity. In memory of him we'll visit the stainless steel Sibelius Monument in Sibelius Park and Finlandia Hall which was designed by the country's premiere architect, Alvar Aalto.

The cobbled Market Square, the expansive and rocky Kaivopuisto Park, the Olympic Stadium, originally intended for the 1940 Olympic Games, the outstanding Parliament Building, and the New Opera House are all on our agenda. You'll be artistically astonished by the Lutheran Temppeliaukio Church ('Church in the Rock') which was blasted out of a granite outcrop. It is used for worship services, organ recitals and choral concerts. An added feature of this tour is a drive through the Finnish countryside to Porvoo, 50 km northeast of Helsinki and one of the oldest towns on the south coast. Here in the narrow stone streets lined with wooden structures, time stands still and one can see traditional Finnish life as it was prior to the neoclassical age embodied in Helsinki's architecture. Return to ship.

July 21: ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

Resolved to give his country a Baltic port, Peter the Great founded St. Petersburg on the Neva Delta in 1703 at a cost of 70,000 Russian peasants and Swedish prisoners from the Great Northern War who perished in the construction of the city. The city had to be western, baroque and modern - Peter's 'window on Europe'. By the time he died in 1725, there were at least 6,000 houses and numerous, government buildings in the city. By 1782, with a population approaching 300,000, it was one of the world's largest cities. In 1712 it became Russia's capital, eventually renamed as Leningrad by the

Communists in the 20th century only to revert to its original name with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The city, sumptuously enhanced during Peter's daughter's reign by the Italian architect, Bartolomeo Rastrelli, is an artistic extravaganza to which two days of the itinerary are devoted.

Hermitage & Peterhof Tour. An approximate one-hour drive will take us to Peterhof, the town of palaces, fountains, parks and the most brilliant of all the summer residences of the Russian tsars. Conceived by Peter the Great to rival Versailles, the complex was officially opened in 1721. We'll explore the Palace with its opulent staterooms and priceless art. See the breathtaking Grand Cascade, a series of 64 fountains, 37 gilt statues and 3 waterfalls. Following a Russian lunch, we'll return to the heart of the city to visit the famous Hermitage Museum. Discover Russia's largest art museum with an astounding collection of over 2 million pieces of art. Founded by Catherine II in 1764, the collection is housed in four buildings, the most grandiose of them being the Baroque Winter Palace. The Hermitage is a veritable, artistic encyclopedia made possible by the remarkable purchases of Catherine the Great. Her expenditures were unrivalled by any of her successors. The Hermitage collection of some of the world's finest art masterpieces is extraordinary.

[*Note:* Guests must be able to walk approximately 2.25 miles over gravel paths, cobblestones and even surfaces with approximately 200+ steps in Peterhof and approximately 120 steps covering 2 stories in the Hermitage. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. Special shoe covers must be worn touring the Peterhof Palace.]

July 22: ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

A free day to book other tours and explore St Petersburg at your leisure. Start making your plans for how to use this day!

July 23: TALLINN, ESTONIA

Tallinn is the seacoast capital of Estonia, the most dynamic of the Baltic Republics. A jewel in northern Europe, the origins of the city go back to the 13th century. Its name means 'Danish Town', a continual reminder that for most of its history it has been under foreign domination, most recently under harsh Russian rule until liberation in 1991. The Old Town, enclosed by massive walls, must be walked to be appreciated and that's the way we will do it-by a guided walking tour. This will be a treat as it is one of Europe's most perfectly preserved, medieval cities which miraculously survived the ravages of war and fire. Courtyards behind repainted facades, stone staircases and spectacular views from elevated platforms await us as we stroll winding streets for the morning. The 13th century Town Hall which dominates the central square is the only Gothic town hall remaining in Europe. You won't forget Tallinn! Its historic centre was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997. Moreover, the city, for all its endurance of occupation by outside powers, retains its Estonian soul. Return to ship.

July 24: At SEA

July 25: COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Copenhagen ('merchants harbour') is truly a city which dominates an otherwise pastoral country. Little more than a tiny fishing village in the 12th century, it became Denmark's capital in 1443 but continues nevertheless to retain the relaxed, welcoming atmosphere of its humble origins despite both its political status and being the official residence of the Danish Monarchy. During the white nights of summer it hardly gets dark in Copenhagen and street entertainment abounds to the delight of tourists. The Tycho Brahe Planetarium celebrates the important contributions made during the Scientific Revolution by the inventive, Danish astronomer (1546-1601) regarding the modern understanding of the structure of the universe. The Tivoli Gardens are one of the city's main attractions offering the visitor an array of amusements and cultural delights. Its paths are lit at night by more than 100,000 uniquely designed lamps. The New Carlsberg Glyptotek, the city's most elegant art gallery located behind the Gardens,

features a dazzling display of classical art in classical style. We continue our walk through a network of colourful canals past the National Museum to Christiansborg Palace where the Danish Parliament sits.

There's more to see! The Old Stock Exchange is an architectural masterpiece built between 1619 and 1640. In the Kogens Nytorv square is the Royal Theatre, world famous for its Royal Ballet. We will visit the Amalienborg Palace, the winter residence of the Royal Family; followed by visit to the Gefian Fountain and the Little Mermaid, who stares out relentlessly to sea, her creator inspired by Hans Christian Andersen, Denmark's most renowned storyteller. Our Danish, cultural feast continues with stops at the magnificent Grundtvig Church and the two-storey Rosenborg Castle, where the crown jewels are kept. Enroute to the ship, we'll visit the small, appealing, village of Roskilde, the ancient, former capital of Denmark which boasts a Viking Ship Museum with rarely seen, Viking ships on display that are more than 1000 years old. The Roskilde fjord provided the Vikings with access to the open sea. Some of them even made it to the coasts of Canada.

July 26: At SEA

July 27: AMSTERDAM – MUNICH

Disembark ship in the morning with transfer to airport for our flight to Munich. On arrival, we'll transfer to our hotel, **Treff Munich City Centre Hotel** (http://www.munich-info.de/hotels/treff-hotel/welcome_en.html). The 20th century writer, Thomas Mann, said 'Munich glows'. It has all the aura of a national capital though it isn't one. Founded in 1158 by Henry the Lion, the city's name in German means 'monks'. In 1503 it became the capital of a united Bavaria but remained modest in size until the 19th century when it underwent expansive urban planning due to its new role as a royal capital given it by Napoleon. Known to many as the city of Oktoberfest when the locals really drink it up, the city also has an inglorious, 20th century chapter in its history when it was known as the 'Capital of the Nazi Movement'. Our morning city tour of Munich will give you a taste of its cultural delights. The afternoon is free for rest or more Munich exploration. Perhaps you'd like to meditate your way through one of the city's outstanding, world class museums such as the Alte or Neue Pinakothek. You'll feel at home in Munich as it has more visitors than any other German city.

July 28: MUNICH – OBERAMMERGAU

Today we transfer by coach to the town of Oberammergau at the western edge of the Upper Bavarian Alps. Our accommodations have been assigned by the Passion Play organizing office at a later date, in a superior middle class hotel in Oberammergau. The balance of the day is free to explore the town. There are many shops which sell the finely crafted works of the local woodcarvers. In addition, the streets of Oberammergau are worth a leisurely stroll. The facades of many of the houses are decorated with frescoes depicting biblical scenes, a style of uniquely Catholic art called *Lufilmalerei* which dates to the 18th century. [Note: Oberammergau Museum tickets are included in this program.]

July 29: OBERAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY

The morning is free. We'll have a hot lunch in Oberammergau prior to commencement of the Passion Play in the theatre which was custom-built for the production in the 1890's. The performance will begin in the afternoon and be concluded in the evening hours with dinner between the two sessions included.

July 30: OBERAMMERGAU – CALGARY

Depart Oberammergau in the morning for Munich for our flights home via Amsterdam.

PRICE:

Inside Cabin : C\$ 6438.00 per person, twin sharing

Outside Cabin: C\$ 6819.00 per person, twin sharing

Balcony Cabin: C\$ 7261.00 per person, twin sharing

Port Taxes, Air transport taxes & airline surcharges: C\$ 682.00 per person (subject to change)

Price Includes:

- Return economy airfare from Calgary on KLM/ Northwest Airlines
- All hotel accommodations as specified
- 12 nights cruise on board the **Celebrity Constellation**
- All shore excursion tours as indicated above
- All transfers, sightseeing tours and shore excursions as indicated above with private coach & English-speaking guides
- Full board while on Cruise (3 meals and snacks)/on land component, daily breakfasts and other meals as required by itinerary

Terms:

- \$2000 deposit per person due with registration by Nov. 21st/2009.
- Balance of full payment due by April 15, 2010.
- Payment by cheque made payable to Premiere Tours (Note: Any payments made by credit cards subject to surcharge).