Tour Code
PN1

ADVENTURESABROAD

POLAND, THE BALTICS & NORDIC EUROPE

31 days

Created on: 29 Mar, 2024

Day 1 Arrive in Krakow

Arrival in Krakow.

Krakow is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. It was originally the home of the Polish royalty (between 1038 and 1596), before the capital was moved to Warsaw. The cobblestone streets, majestic churches (almost 100!), and old world charm make Krakow an unforgettable destination.

PLEASE NOTE: Our Poland program will operate slightly differently depending on the date selected. Because of closures on certain days of the week, the sightseeing order will vary from Spring to Fall (our overnight points, however, remain the same). This itinerary reflects the order of sightseeing for the immediately upcoming departure; once that trip departs, this itinerary will be updated for the following date.

Overnight in Krakow.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Krakow: City Walking Tour

Krakow is very compact, and the whole central region with its cobblestone streets is full of well-preserved architecture, Gothic churches and splendid museums. On our sightseeing tour (largely on foot at a leisurely pace) we visit Wawel Hill with the Royal Castle, Market Square, and the 16th century Renaissance Cloth Hall. We continue onward to Jagiellonian University and St Mary's Church with the Wit Stwosz altar. This was designed in 1489 by Wit Stwosz of Nuremburg and is the finest sculptural work in Poland.

We then stroll down the hill from the castle complex and enter the Old Town, one of the most famous old districts in Poland and the centre of Poland's political life from 1038 until King Sigismund III Vasa relocated his court to Warsaw in 1596. The entire medieval old town is among the first sites chosen for the UNESCO's World Heritage List. The district features the centrally located Rynek Glowny, or Main Square, the largest medieval town square of any European city. There is a number of historic landmarks in its vicinity, such as St. Mary's Basilica (Kosciol Mariacki), Church of St. Wojciech (St. Adalbert's), Church of St. Barbara, as well as other national treasures.

While in Krakow, we'll also have a walking visit of Kazimierz, once an independent town governed separately from Krakow until the late middle ages. Later, it became known as the Jewish Quarter of the city and was finally transformed into a center for Krakow’s beatnik bars and cafe culture.

Overnight in Krakow.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Oskar Schindler Museum & Wieliczka Salt Mines

This morning we visit the Oskar Schindler's Factory Museum. The story of Oskar Schindler and his employees is one which has been well-known since the book and film by Thomas Keneally and Steven Spielberg (whose film 'Schindler's List' was shot almost entirely in Krakow). Individual histories of Krakow's wartime inhabitants guide visitors through the exhibit which covers the war of 1939, everyday life under occupation, the fate of the Jews and the city's underground resistance using vast archival documents, photos, radio and film recordings, period artifacts and multimedia.

We'll then break for lunch* after which we'll head to the Wieliczka Salt Mines. On our 5km (3 mile) journey below the earth's surface we will see the salt-formed caves and grottoes, a subterranean lake and a chapel with statues carved from salt. The mines' 11 levels of galleries stretch 300km (186 miles), and some 20,000,000 tonnes (22,000,000 tons) of rock salt were extracted over 700 years. According to local legend, the deposits were discovered in the 13th century by a Hungarian princess named Kinga, whose lost ring was found in a block of salt extracted here.

* Because of the fullness of our day, and because past travellers indicated a desire for some independence for dinner while in Krakow (and an earlier night), we include a light lunch instead of dinner today.

Overnight in Krakow.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 4 Krakow - Oswiecim (Auschwitz) - Czestochowa - Lodz

Our first stop today is the Oswiecim (Auschwitz) and Brzezinka (Birkenau) Nazi concentration camps preserved as memorials to the 1.5 million people of 28 nationalities who perished here, the overwhelming majority of whom were Jewish. Our guided walking tour of the site reveals the compelling history of this region and the very human aspect of this particular historic location.

We continue to Czestochowa, the "spiritual home" of Poland, where pilgrims from every corner of the country come to Jasna Gora (Luminous Mountain) Monastery to revere the image of the Black Madonna, Poland's most important icon. Legend says that the icon was painted by St Luke the Evangelist on a piece of cypress wood from the table used by Mary in Nazareth. The icon was brought from Jerusalem and installed in the monastery around 1384.

We finish our day in Lodz (pronounced: Wooj). A small settlement, that in 1423 was granted civic rights, was thriving at the beginning of the 19th century. Lodz became one of the Europe's biggest and fastest growing textile industry centre. At that time, a new identity of the city - "a promised land" and "a city of many cultures" was created. In Lodz people of different nationalities and religions shared the same dream of a success. Despite the differences they were able to build the city together.

We arrive in time for dinner.

Overnight in Lodz.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Lodz - Warsaw: City Tour

This morning we travel to Warsaw, arriving in time to embark upon a full city tour.

After WWII, a reconstruction campaign by its citizens resulted in today's meticulous restoration of Warsaw's Old Town with its churches, palaces and market-place. It is an outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction of a span of history covering the 13th to the 20th century. Warsaw has shrugged off its dour Eastern Bloc image, and is finally showing its true colours. The vibrant heart of the largest country in "New Europe", Warsaw is now poised to make is presence felt as a business and cultural hub.

We begin our sightseeing with a drive along the Royal Route and a brief orientation drive around the city before beginning our walking tour of the Old Town, a UNESCO protected site. We visit Castle Square, the Uprising Monument, and then drive over to the Praga area for a view of the river. From there go to the Jewish Ghetto area and to Umschlag Platz where we visit the Museum of History of Polish Jews. The museum features a multimedia narrative
exhibition about the vibrant Jewish community that flourished in Poland for a thousand years.

Overnight in Warsaw.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Warsaw Sightseeing - To Torun

Before leaving Warsaw, we'll visit the Warsaw Uprising Museum, dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 (we visit today instead of yesterday as the museum is closed for group visits on Sundays). The museum sponsors research into the history of the Uprising, and the history and possessions of the Polish Underground State. It collects and maintains hundreds of artefacts, ranging from weapons used by the insurgents to love letters, in order to present a full picture of the people involved. The museum's stated goals include the creation of an

archive of historical information on the Uprising and the recording of the stories and memories of the still living Uprising participants.

We then continue our journey to the picturesque medieval town of Torun, a beautiful medieval city in northwestern Poland, situated on the Vistula River. Torun's architecture managed to escape bombing, and as such represents one of the only examples of true Gothic architecture in Poland. At warm times of year Torun's old town is full of street cafes and restaurants where you can eat and drink outdoors and enjoy the medieval atmosphere.

Overnight in Torun.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Torun: Nicolaus Copernicus Museum - Gdansk

This morning we enjoy the sights of Torun. Its Old Town has been included in UNESCO's list for its impressive 13th century Town Hall, superb churches and historic streets preserving Torun's past glory. We will visit the Nicolaus Copernicus Museum, Copernicus House, which collects materials about the life and work of Copernicus: a library, old prints and books from the time of Copernicus, various editions of his work, "Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres," and models of the astronomical instruments he used.

We continue to Gdansk, an absolutely charming place with its tall, narrow buildings, peaked roofs and decorative facades that combine perfectly with the cobblestone streets. The famous Gdansk Shipyards are visible from most parts of the city. During our time in Gdansk we'll visit the marvellous Old Town and its main street -- Dlugi Targ (Long Market).

Overnight in Gdansk.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Gdansk Area Tour

Its position on the Baltic has historically made Gdansk one of the most important port cities in Northern Europe, and tragically also the scene of a rather disturbing past. World War II was ignited by a dispute over the control of the city. By the end of the war the city lay almost completely in ruins. The German population was expelled and replaced by Poles as the city came under Polish rule and changed its name to Gdansk. However, the impact of its former
German ties is still evident. Although most of the old buildings were damaged or destroyed in WWII, they have been painstakingly restored or rebuilt.

This morning we head out of town a short distance to visit the Oliwa Cathedral. This Holy Trinity, Blessed Virgin Mary, and St Bernard's Church was first erected as a Cistercian shrine back in the 13th century. Reconstructed in 1350 after a great fire, it re-emerged in the Gothic style, but many of the new fixtures were to be relatively short lived. The Gothic interior was extremely damaged in a 1577 fire and was replaced with the Baroque fixtures we admire today for their beauty and intensity.

The Oliwa Cathedral is perhaps best known for its massive, splendid organ. The organ is comprised of over 7,000 pipes and is decorated with movable angels and brightly painted stars. When built, the instrument was the largest in Europe. The main alter is also very impressive, and if the organ is in use, you're sure to be riveted by its magnificent sound!

While in Gdansk we'll also visit the European Solidarity Centre, a museum and library devoted to the history of Solidarity, the Polish trade union and civil resistance movement, and other opposition movements of Communist Eastern Europe.

The balance of the day is free to enjoy Gdansk. Gdansk is sometimes called the Amber Capital of the World; the surrounding area is the richest known source of this semi-precious stone, and the product can be viewed (and purchased, of course) in many shops in town. In order to maximize your free time in this interesting place, we do not include dinner this evening.

Overnight in Gdansk.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 9 Gdansk - Malbork - Olsztyn

After breakfast, we drive to Olsztyn. En route, we stop at the Teutonic Knights Castle in Malbork, the largest brick building in Europe and one of Poland's greatest tourist attractions.

In the afternoon, we continue to Olsztyn, a town located in a region of lakes and forests. The most attractive part of the city is the old town, encircled by a set of fortified walls.

Overnight in Olsztyn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Olsztyn - Olsztynek - Warsaw

After breakfast, we return to Warsaw. On the way, we visit the Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek, site of the Museum of Folk Architecture, one of the oldest open-air museums in Europe. The museum contains many interesting examples of folk architecture, including houses, barns, windmills and other traditional buildings. A particular attraction of the park are the interiors of old houses, the evangelical church, a blacksmith, a pottery stand, a windmill
as well as various temporary displays representing items of traditional craftsmanship and modern folk art and handicraft from the region.

Continue to Warsaw.

Overnight in Warsaw.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Warsaw, Poland - Vilnius, Lithuania

Today we fly* from Warsaw to Vilnius and transfer to our hotel.

"Narrow cobblestone streets and an orgy of Baroque: almost like a Jesuit city somewhere in the middle of Latin America," wrote the author Czeslaw Milosz of pre-war Vilnius. Soviet-era satellite suburbs aside, it's a description which still rings true today. Despite being the capital of the medieval Lithuanian state, Vilnius was occupied by Poland between the wars and was inhabited mainly by Poles and Jews who played such a prominent role in the city's life that it was known as the "Northern Jerusalem". Vilnius is still a cosmopolitan place -- around twenty percent of its population is Polish and another twenty percent is Russian -- though with just 543,000 inhabitants it has an almost village-like atmosphere, making it an easy place to get to know.

* NOTE: Depending on final group size and flight schedules (which can be erratic), this journey may take place overland (by private bus). If so, we apologize for the backtracking and inconvenience.

Overnight in Vilnius.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Vilnius & Trakai

This morning we have a walking tour of Vilnius.

Sweden, Poland, France and Russia have all ruled Vilnius in the past, and today we will witness the influences that this has had on this beautiful city. The Old Town is one of the largest in Europe, with nearly 1,500 historic buildings of note built over several centuries creating a splendid blend of many different architectural styles.

Our walking tour will take us to Cathedral Square in the heart of the city. Inside the cathedral we see the famous chapel of Saint Kazimieras,

considered an architectural gem. Rising in the distance behind Cathedral Square is the Gedimino Tower, once part of the 14th century defense system. We will also see the baroque Peter and Paul Church, originally built in the 14th century. The Gates of Dawn, on the eastern side of the Old Town, were one of the original nine gates into the city. The original Gothic defensive wall was once over 2 km (1.5 miles) long. From this remaining gate we will walk down through the streets of the old town. Nearby is the Jewish Quarter, with its cobblestone lanes and hidden courtyards.

While in Vilnius we'll also visit the KGB Museum (the Museum of Genocide Victims). For Lithuanians, the KGB Museum symbolises the 50-year-long Soviet occupation. During World War II it was the site of Gestapo headquarters and later of the KGB. The museum building is as intact as it was in 1991, when the KGB left the premises. You will see KGB rooms authentically furnished and secret KGB spying equipment.

After a full morning and a break for lunch, we we'll travel to Trakai, a former capital of Lithuania. The town, situated on the shores of several lakes, has two prominent castles built to fend off German knights in the 14th century. Trakai is famous for its population of Kara-Kalpak people. Brought to Trakai from the Crimean Peninsula by the Grand Duke Vytautas in the late 14th century, the Kara-Kalpak still hold their Jewish religious services in the yellow Kinessa, built in 1812. Our tour here includes a visit to the Trakai Historical Museum, housed within the main rooms of Trakai's island castle.

Overnight in Vilnius.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Vilnius - Siauliai, Lithuania - Rundale Palace, Lativia - Riga

Today we trave to the Hill of Crosses, located just north of the small industrial city of Siauliai. Siauliai is the Lithuanian national pilgrimage center, and a city of famous cultural traditions and legends. On a small hill stand thousands of crosses that represent Christian devotion and act as a compelling resistance memorial to the German and Soviet occupation. Today newlyweds often come here after their wedding ceremony to ask for God's blessing.

We then proceed to the border and continue on to Riga stopping at Rundale Palace in time for lunch. We then visit the palace, an architectural pearl created by architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, designer of the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. Construction of the palace was completed only in 1768 and now it is a magnificent sample of baroque style with elements of classicism, with crystal chandeliers, rich stucco moulding, silk wallpaper, collection of paintings, and frescoes by Italian artists. This is the place where leaders of the state, wishing to receive high guests with really regal honours, hosted the royal couple from Denmark when they visited in Latvia.

We continue to Riga for dinner and overnight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Riga: City Tour

Today we will enjoy a walking tour of the Old Town of Riga, getting us to some of the top sights and giving us a real feel for the city.

Over the last decade Riga has been going through a restoration phase, revitalizing many of its faded art nouveau buildings into pristine gems. While these buildings can be found throughout the central downtown area, the best place to see them is in a neighbourhood of streets centered around Alberta Street. Riga literally has hundreds of buildings in this flamboyant style as it experienced a period of unprecedented wealth at the beginning of the 20th century when art nouveau was all the rage in Europe.

While exploring this part of the city we will visit the Art Nouveau Museum, which is a completely restored art nouveau apartment. Our walk will include a stop at the mighty Freedom Monument, dedicated to those who fought for Latvia's independence. We will pass by the Latvian National Opera House as well as the Powder Tower. Kalku Street is the main 'semi-pedestrian' thoroughfare, and it slices straight through Old Town leading us to Livu Square, created after the destruction caused by World War II. Today this is one of the Old Town's most bright and cheerful corners. Bastion Hill Park runs along the northeastern edge of the city. Once the old city's fortifications, Bastion Hill was replaced with this romantic park full of gardens, canals, and ornate bridges. The park makes a great transition space between downtown Riga and the historic center.

Working our way through the backstreets of the Old Town we come to a fixture of Riga's skyline, St. Peter's Church. The tallest church in the city, this large Gothic church dates back to 1209, although little of the original church is actually left. Another of Riga's enchanting city squares is the Dome Square which sits out below the impressive Riga Cathedral. Throughout the city of Riga there are a lot of exceptionally

well-preserved buildings, but the Three Brothers are quite unique in that they are the oldest residential buildings in the city. These three adjoining buildings date from between the 15th to 17th centuries and are home to local craftsmen. We will pass by Riga Castle, which today houses the offices of the Latvian president.

One of the last remaining segments of the city's defenses is the Swedish Gate, a small gateway through what looks like a row of traditional residences. We will stop at the Town Hall Square to see the iconic House of the Blackheads where we admire the stunning design of its facade. Built for members of a merchant guild known as the Blackheads in the 14th Century, this is one of Riga's most picturesque landmarks.

This afternoon is yours free to explore.

Overnight in Riga.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Riga: City Touring

Today we will get to some of the landmarks which lie outside the city's Old Town, including a drive through modern Riga.

We will start with a visit to the massive Central Market. This visit will help to give you a sense of what local life is like in today's Riga. This bustling indoor & outdoor market focuses on several large 1920s pavilions and the area around them. Here we discover plenty of local Latvian goods, from meats and fish to loads of other locally grown produce.

We continue with a panoramic drive around Riga that will take in some of the most famous sights. Our route along the embankment of the River Daugava provides us with wonderful views of the city, and we will drive through the modern part of the city where we see the University Building, the Academy of Arts and the central train station. Along Riga's riverfront we will come to the Riga Ghetto and Latvian Holocaust Museum which details the city's history of the Holocaust. Set inside an outdoor courtyard, this museum details what happened to the local Jewish population during the city's Nazi occupation. The exhibits here focus on individuals' stories and photographs.

Built during Latvia's period under Soviet rule, the towering figure of the Latvian Academy of Sciences is hard to miss. Here we will take the elevator up to its observation deck for great views of Riga with the church tower visible amongst the skyline.

You will have some free time this afternoon before our evening meal.

Overnight in Riga.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Riga, Latvia - Tallinn, Estonia

This morning we depart Riga for Tallinn, making a lunch stop in Parnu, "the Summer Capital of Estonia." From the middle of the 19th century, Parnu developed as a resort town with its good beaches and relatively good weather. During the Soviet era, Parnu's guesthouses, inns and hotels were converted to sanatoria. We continue to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

Historically, Tallinn has been attacked, sacked, razed and pillaged on numerous occasions. Although extensively bombed by Soviet air forces during the latter stages of World War II, much of the medieval Old Town still retains its charm. The Tallinn Old Town became a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 1997.

Overnight in Tallinn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Tallinn: City Tour

Today we have a guided WALKING tour of this important Baltic Sea harbour city. We begin with a visit to the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral,

built in the nineteenth century. The cathedral dominates the Lossi Plats, and is an imposing testament to the Russian imperialist influence. We also visit the Dominican Monastery, which played an important role in bringing Christianity to Estonia. We have the opportunity to visit the Toompea Castle site, a 13th century castle where the current parliament of Estonia holds its sessions. In the immediate area we will also visit the Toomkirik Lutheran cathedral, founded in 1233, with its impressive carved tombs inside.

This afternoon you will have some free time to stroll through the picturesque Old Town with its jumble of medieval buildings, turrets and walls. The market in town is also very colourful and lively.

Overnight in Tallinn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Tallinn, Estonia - Helsinki, Finland

Today we take a fast ferry from Tallinn to Helsinki (HAVE YOUR PASSPORTS HANDY!).

Helsinki is situated at the arrowhead of a peninsula, surrounded by an archipelago of 315 islands, perfectly placed between its two great trading cousins, Stockholm and Moscow. From a European perspective, Helsinki is relatively young (450 years), yet it is Finland's sixth-oldest town. The Swedes, who extended their empire into Finland in 1155, founded the city of 'Helsingfors' (the name still used by the Swedes) in 1550 when King Gustav Vasa needed a site for a strategic, competitively placed trading port. It languished as a coastal backwater until Imperialist Russia invaded in 1809.

On arrival we'll have a walking orientation tour of Helsinki.

Overnight in Helsinki.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Helsinki: City Tour

Affectionately known as the 'Daughter of the Baltic', Helsinki is sited at the arrowhead of a peninsula, surrounded by an archipelago of 315 islands, perfectly placed between its two great trading cousins, Stockholm and Moscow. In a European perspective, Helsinki is relatively young (450 years), yet it is Finland's sixth-oldest town. The Swedes, who extended their empire into Finland in 1155, founded the city of 'Helsingfors' (the name still used by the Swedes) in 1550 when King Gustav Vasa needed a site for a strategic, competitively placed trading port. It languished as a coastal backwater until Imperialist Russia invaded in 1809.

Today we will enjoy a comprehensive walking tour taking in the most important and interesting parts of Helsinki, such as the historical centre and the diplomatic quarters, the Presidential Palace, City Hall, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall and the Opera House. We stop at Senate Square, and, if possible, Temppeliaukio Church.

During the afternoon you can explore the busy market place or the many souvenir shops close to the harbour. Fans of modern architecture and/or libraries may enjoy a visit to the Oodi Helsinki Library, which occupies a hugely significant site in central Helsinki: facing the steps of the Finnish parliament building. The upper surface of the canopy structure has been used to create a large public terrace, from which one can look directly over the square to the steps and main entrance of parliament. The terrace doubles the amount of public outdoor space provided for library visitors and creates a new destination where people can meet and observe the city below.

Overnight in Helsinki.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 20 Free time in Helsinki / Ferry to Sweden

Today you will have a free day to explore Helsinki. Helsinki is small and intimate; lively but not bustling. Its size makes it easy to walk around and cafes, markets, and the nearby islands are just a few of its summer delights.

This evening we will board our overnight ferry to Stockholm. Our overnight ferries feature modern facilities, restaurants, duty-free shopping, and cozy cabins with low beds (ie not bunks) and en-suite washroom.

Overnight ferry.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 21 Stockholm: City Tour

Welcome to Sweden!

After our morning arrival we check into our hotel before commencing with our walking tour of the Old City. With its location on the east coast of Sweden at the mouth of Lake Malaren, by the Stockholm archipelago, it is widely renowned for its beauty. Three islands make up the oldest part of Stockholm -- Riddarholmen, Staden and Helgeandsholmen -- the whole history-riddled mass a cluster of seventeenth- and eighteen-century Renaissance buildings backed by narrow medieval alleys.

It takes only a matter of seconds to cross the bridge onto Riddarholm, where the Riddarholmskyrkan Church is located. Originally a Franciscan monastery, for over six centuries the church has been the burial place of Swedish royalty.

Our walk around the island will take us to the back of the church for stunning views of Stadshuset, the City Hall and Lake Malaren. Nearby is the island Langholmen where in the winter people skate and even take their dogs for walks on the ice, as the water freezes solid right up to the bridges and beyond.

We will continue to the City Hall, where we will view both the controversial Blue Hall and the Golden Chamber with its 18 million mosaic tiles, known to the entire world from the annual traditional Nobel Prize banquets.

Overnight in Stockholm.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 22 Stockholm: Boat Tour & Vasa Ship Museum

This morning we enjoy a sightseeing tour by boat (50 minutes) on which we discover the history of Stockholm. The tour starts at the City Hall and takes us around the second largest island in the city, Kungsholmen. We also pass the historical islands of Långholmen and Reimersholme. Travelling through narrow canals, past leafy shorelines, and many interesting buildings, you will learn all about the history of this beautiful city and its development from early industrial to modern times.

After our cruise we'll visit the Vasa Ship Museum. The Vasa warship left the pier by the Old Town in 1628 for her maiden voyage, but sank right in the harbour of Stockholm after just a few minutes of sailing. In 1961, after 333 years at the bottom of the sea the ship was salvaged, and the museum was established.

The balance of your day is free day in Stockholm. Stockholm is, without doubt, one of the most beautiful national capitals in the world. The Old Town is particularly spectacular, and walking around the city's waterways and parks is a glorious way to spend your afternoon.

Overnight in Stockholm.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 23 Stockholm, Sweden - Fly to Copenhagen, Denmark

Today we fly to Copenhagen. Welcome to Denmark!

Upon arrival we'll visit the Carlsberg Glyptotek Art Museum. This is one of Copenhagen's most important museums, thanks to its exquisite

antiquities, Gauguins and Rodins. Surrounding its lush indoor garden, a series of nooks and chambers houses works by Degas and other Impressionists, plus an extensive assemblage of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and French sculpture, not to mention the best collection of Etruscan art outside Italy and Europe's finest collection of Roman portraits. After a brief orientation, you will be free to explore on your own.

Overnight in Copenhagen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 24 Copenhagen: City Tour

Today we kick off our Copenhagen touring with a one-hour historical canal boat tour, which provides an excellent introduction to our day. The trip includes a visit to the statue of the Little Mermaid on the Angelina promenade. The 1913 statue commemorates Hans Christian Anderson's lovelorn creation, and is the subject of hundreds of travel posters. Donated to the city by Carl Jacobsen, the son of the founder of Carlsberg Breweries, the innocent waif has also been the subject of some cruel practical jokes, including decapitation and the loss of an arm, but she is currently in one piece.

After lunch we start our walking tour of Copenhagen, first to Rosenborg Castle, the home of the builder-king Christian the Fourth. We pass through some beautiful gardens en route and see a statue of Hans Christian Anderson. At Rosenborg Castle there are three floors to visit, as well as a basement vault where the Danish Crown Jewels are kept.

NOTE: The order of Copenhagen sightseeing may depending on weather and other logistical considerations.

Overnight in Copenhagen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 25 Copenhagen: City Tour - Overnight Ferry to Oslo

Today we continue our tour of historic Copenhagen and visit Christianborg Castle. Surrounded by canals on three sides, the massive granite castle is where the queen officially received guests. Even though the first two castles on the site were burned, Christiansborg remains an impressive Baroque compound, even by European standards.

If time permits prior to our ferry, you may choose to visit the National Museum, with its permanent collections pertaining to Danish history as well as several very good ethnological rooms.

This evening we board our evening ferry for the overnight journey to Oslo. Our route takes us along the coast of Denmark and the body of water that separates the North Sea from the Baltic and into Norwegian waters. Our cabins are small but comfortable with ensuite facilities. These vessels are large and well appointed with amenities that include restaurants, shops, maybe even a cinema and swimming pool.

Overnight ferry.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 26 Arrival in Oslo: City Walking Tour

In the early morning we will enter the Oslo Fjord and the last 1.5 hours before arrival should be enjoyed on deck with cameras ready to go. The scenery is enchanting, with the old fortress at Droebak and the scattered islands full of summer homes enjoyed by the Norwegians. The ship will dock right down town and a bus/guide will be waiting to commence our sightseeing program.*

Upon disembarkation, our guide will conduct a walking tour of Oslo’s centre. Our tour includes a visit to the Opera House, where our the guide can point out the Munch Museum, which you can visit on your own this afternoon. We visit the Akershus Fortress for some nice views of Oslo, and the City Hall primarily to view the murals inside. From City Hall the guide will also point out the National Museum -- 'the best new art gallery in Scandinavia' -- and definitely a place where you could spend the better part of your free time after the formal guided part of today's program.

The balance of the day is yours to spend at leisure, visiting the museums mentioned above and possibly strolling down the main street of Carl Johan, enjoying the activity in a city that comes alive during the summer months.

* Please note that our Oslo hotel rooms may NOT be ready for us this early in the day. Your large baggage will be securely stored; you might want to prepare your daypack ahead of time.

Overnight in Oslo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 27 Oslo: Area Sightseeing

Today we'll visit one of Oslo's most celebrated and popular cultural targets, the Vigelandsparken, an open-air sculpture park which, along with the Vigeland Museum, commemorates a modern Norwegian sculptor of world renown, Gustav Vigeland (1869-1943).

Next is the Viking Ship Museum (please note that this museum has been intermittently closed for renovations and may not be available at the time of our tour), housing the three ships found buried along the Oslo Fjord, all of them nearly 1,200 years old.

We also visit the Fram and Kon-Tiki museums, the latter of which houses the balsa raft used by Thor Heyerdal and his international crew in 1962. They sailed from Peru to Polynesia to confirm his theory that the first Polynesians originally came from Peru. The Fram Museum Museum tells the story of Norwegian polar exploration.

We return to the city and the Norwegian Folk Museum, where a collection of city homes, farm buildings, one of the famous Stave Churches give you a overview of Norway, its culture, and history.

Overnight in Oslo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 28 Oslo - Flamsbana Railway - Gudvangen - Stalheim

An early departure takes us to Oslo's train station where we will catch a +/- 08:00 departure to Flam via Myrdal where we connect to the Famous Flamsbana, the Flam Railway, one of the world's most spectacular rail journeys.

In 1923 work was started on the separate railway line from Myrdal down sheer cliffs to Flam. Since the tunnels were done by hand, the first of the track wasn't put down until autumn 1936. By 1940 the line was opened and run first by steam engines. Electric engines took over in 1944. It takes about an hour to cover 20 km (12 miles) of track on the Flamsbana train. Eighteen of the 20 tunnels were chiseled out by hand which took one month of hard labour for each meter excavated. To avoid risk from avalanches, the railway criss-crosses the river and the bottom of the valley three times. Then, instead of building bridges, the river was routed through a tunnel under the railway line. Nowhere else in the world do adhesion rail cars on normal tracks have a steeper journey. Almost 80% of the railway line has a gradient of 5.5% (1:18).

At the bottom, we will enjoy the scenic landscape of the Flam Valley and admire the lovely Aurlandfjord, an offshoot of the Sognefjord, the longest in the world.

We will enjoy a break for lunch in Flam and then board a leisurely 2-hour cruise along the narrowest arm of Sognefjord and Aurland fjords. Here we are surrounded by the dramatic West Coast fjord landscape of steep snow-capped mountains (up to 1800 m /6,000 ft) and tumbling waterfalls, sheltered hamlets, and high mountain farms. After this journey we will catch a bus at Gudvangen and continue on to Stalheim, located at the very heart of Western Norway's beautiful fjord region.

Overnight in Stalheim.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 29 Stalheim - Bergen

Before departing Stalheim we'll visit the Stalheim Folkemuseum, which features exhibits of traditional crafts and rustic objects as well as 30 log buildings laid out as a traditional farm.

Departing Stalheim, we travel by windy mountain road to the train station at Voss. From Voss we journey by rail once again via the famous Bergen/Oslo railway line arriving in Bergen followed by a bus transfer to our hotel.

Bergen is widely regarded as one of the more beautiful cities of Norway, and is an ancient city that looms large in Viking sagas. Until the 14th century, it was the seat of the medieval kingdom of Norway. Later the Hanseatic merchants established a major trading post here, holding sway until the 18th century, when the locals reclaimed their trading rights. Bergen has survived many disasters, including several fires and the explosion of a Nazi ship during World War II. It is a town with important traditions in shipping, banking, and insurance, and its modern industries are expanding rapidly. The oldest part of town overlooks the busy harbour; along the harbour's edge are myriad shops, boutiques and the famous open-air fish market.

Overnight in Bergen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 30 Bergen: City Tour

Our tour starts in the center of town at Torget, also called Fisketorget or the fish market, where fishermen and farmers deal their goods. Next we walk over to Bryggen, the wharf on the northeast side of Bergen's harbour. The gabled wood warehouses lining the docks mark the site of the city's original settlement. We take time to walk the narrow passageways between buildings; shops and galleries are hidden among the wooden facades.

Our walk continues down the wharf, past the historic buildings to the end of the Holmen promontory and to Bergenhus festning (Bergenhus Fort), which dates from the 13th century; the nearby Rosenkrantztarnet is a 16th century tower residence. Bergen's oldest cathedral is located behind the fort, the 12th century church called Mariakirken. Walking around the back of the church down four blocks to Floybanen, the funicular that runs up and down Floyen, one of the city's most popular hiking mountains -- the view is like no other. At the base of the funicular is an area of crooked streets and hodgepodge architecture where you'll find most of Bergen's antiques shops.

A midday stop at the Fish Market where you can enjoy fresh caught prawns right of the fishing boats, sit down on the quay and enjoy them like the locals do -- peel and load them onto fresh bread, add a bit of lemon and locally made mayonnaise.

Overnight in Bergen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 31 Depart

Today we depart from Bergen.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast