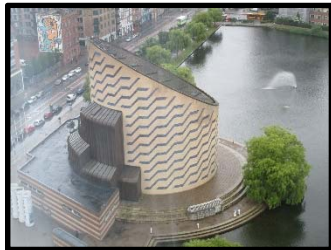




Monday, 6/13/16 ~ We arrived at the Marco Island Yacht Club very early since Eddie and I volunteered to be the “shepherds” for our group going over by bus... “The Delta Group”. We got there at 9am for a 10am bus departure. There were already 10 people sitting on the bus!! That is Marco Island for you! After I checked everyone onto the bus, we left right on time and had an uneventful trip over to Miami, except that the bus was a little warm. We were able to keep all 53 people



together and get them onto our first plane on time for our 3:30pm departure from Miami. We arrived at JFK and got everyone through JFK ok and onto our next flight. During our layovers, several of us had something to eat and beers in the airports. The flight “over the big pond” was very long. Eddie slept most of the way. I watched a few movies and tried unsuccessfully to get some sleep. We arrived in **Copenhagen** on **Tuesday, 6/14/16** at 12:30pm their time, 6 hours ahead of Marco Island time. We all got through customs and retrieved our luggage ok. We met the representative from RCCL who checked us all off his list and told us to follow another RCCL person through the airport to get to our bus. Now the journey got a little rough...this RCCL agent was pretty much jogging through the airport and it was very hard for us to all follow him, so our group got separated. We waited at the end of the airport while he left the building, we thought to get our bus, but it turns out that he was off duty and going home. Eventually we did find the correct RCCL person and we all got to our Scandic Copenhagen Hotel along with all of our baggage. Yea!!



Bob Marks had upgraded our room to the penthouse level-room 1009, which had beautiful views. The only problem was that our luggage didn't make it to our new room. Seven of us (Cindy, Eddie, Cathy, Eileen, Richie, Audrey & Joe) decided to do a walk-about in the drizzly cold rain to the pedestrian street. We stopped at Streckers Restaurant for an early dinner and beers. Both the food and the beers were great and our waiter, Tuea, was very nice. He is going to the USA in 2 weeks with his girlfriend and traveling for 2 months from San Francisco to Key West! He steered us to a great “belongsers” grocery store called Netto where you could get good wine at a very good price. On the way back to the hotel, we passed another street with many brew pubs and beer bars. We will have to come back tomorrow after our tour. Back at the hotel, after a few more tries with management, we finally got our luggage delivered to our room...they had sent it to our original room on the 6th floor. We put our passports and money into Cathy's safe because our room didn't have a safe!! Guess because you have to come up on a separate elevator and needed a room key to get to our floor, they figured you would not need a safe in the room. We went to bed early at 9pm as by this time we have been up and travelling for 36 hours.



Wednesday, 6/15/16 ~ This is our second day in **Copenhagen** and we have a pre-arranged tour of the city with Barbara as our tour guide. Steve was the bus driver on a double-decker bus. There were 79 of us. Barbara gave a brief history of Copenhagen and I managed to get only a little bit of it. Copenhagen has 1.2 million people. The Danes believe that in 1219 a flag fell down to earth from heaven on June

15th, so we are lucky to be here on the Danish Flag Day. There are many Danish flags flying everywhere on the buildings and on the buses for today only. We drove through Vesterbro, which used to be a rough area, but is now a “hip” party area. On average, everyone in Copenhagen “has 1 ½ bikes in case one gets stolen”. There are many, many bikes everywhere and you need to be very cautious because they will run over you. They are more dangerous than the cars according to Barbara. She told us about Tivoli Gardens which is a very large amusement park, supposedly an inspiration for Disney. Our first stop was City Hall Square. Our guide took off from the bus before most of us could even get off from the second floor. There were many, many groups at the same place, but we finally did manage to find



our guide talking to some of the group in front of Amalienborg Palace where Queen Margarite lives in the winter. Denmark is home to the world's oldest monarchy and Copenhagen is home to many beautiful castles. All kings have to be named Frederick or Christian. King Christian IV was the founder in 1617. A few of us walked up to the **Marble Church** for a quick look inside since we couldn't really hear much of anything that our guide was

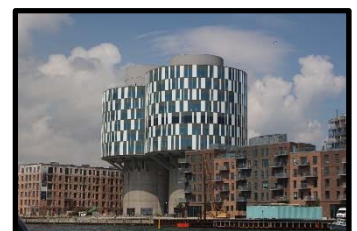
saying...she didn't have a microphone and we didn't have headsets. We walked back past some pretty fountains along the waterway to our bus. We drove past the Church of St. Albans as well as the Citadel which has very beautiful gardens. Our next stop was Langelinie Harbor, where we got to see the statue of the **Little Mermaid**, a tribute to Hans Christian Anderson. The sculptor, Edward Erickson carved the statue with the face of a ballerina that he was in love with, but the body of his wife, since the ballerina would not pose in the nude for him. This was a very popular tourist stop with throngs of people here. It was almost impossible to get really close to the statue, which is actually very small. Our guide told us that the Danish people really hate the statue. It has been beheaded twice, lost an arm, and had paint thrown over it. What we actually saw was a replacement as the original is in a museum. The statue was once taken to China and put on display there. While there, the statue was televised so that tourists in Denmark could see it, but they forgot about the time difference and the tourists could only see blackness of night.



Barbara told us that there are more than 350 cruise ships in Copenhagen each year. It has the best cruise ship harbor in the Baltic. She also told us a little about education. There are three kinds of high schools. There is a 3 year university for some degrees, a 3 ½ to 4 year university for other degrees. Post graduate school is for 2 additional years. There is no tuition. Students actually get paid to go to school. Denmark is one of the safest countries in the world. There is very little crime and no drug problem. Copenhagen is a very safe city. There were two very large fires in Copenhagen in the past and much of the city was destroyed during the wars. The University of Copenhagen dates back to the 15th century. The large pedestrian street, Stroget, is one of the largest in the world. Next we began our boat tour with



Emilio as our very cute guide. This was a fabulous boat trip all around Copenhagen's many canals and harbor with wonderful weather. There were many very low bridges to go under. Most impressive was the reuse of very old buildings into new apartments. We were told that 1000 people are moving to





Copenhagen each month, so there is a great need for many apartments. We could see in the distance the huge artificial mountain being built for winter skiing. We could also see the many windmill turbines for electricity. The water in the canals is extremely clean and there are several roped off areas for people to swim. There are so many very interesting buildings which house apartments. We went by the Christianshavn area known as

“**Little Amsterdam**”. After our great boat ride, we boarded our bus and went back to the hotel where we had free time. A group of us went back to the street we had found yesterday and stopped by the **brew pub** for some beers. While there we got to meet with the brew master and have our pictures taken with him...**he was about 7 feet tall!**



Then we walked through Stroget to **Tivoli Gardens**, where we walked around, enjoyed the ambiance and had some ice cream and some beers. Some of us wanted to watch the puppet/ballet show. Eddie and Dave disappeared from the group and after trying to find them for quite a while, Cindy, Susie, Eileen and Richie went off on our own to find something to eat. We found Rosie O’Shea’s Restaurant which was a great Mexican restaurant. We ate in the library which was from John Lennon’s estate. This was a beautiful restaurant and bar. After our meal we headed back to the hotel. Eddie showed up much later with Dave, drunk as can be. He passed out while Cindy packed up for our morning departure.



Thursday, 6/16/16 ~ We checked out of our room and after a nice buffet breakfast, we took Bus C to the ship. Check-in was uneventful and we went up to our room 7086...it was so nice to have a balcony! RCCL screwed up our dinner seating and Eddie and I spent several hours getting that fixed. The show was at 7:45 and featured the Russian Duo Bolshakov doing acrobatics and the Royal Caribbean singers and orchestra. Dinner was good but took a LONG time...we finally finished dinner around 11pm.



Friday, 6/17/16 ~ Eddie and I had breakfast with Clint & Pat Bunke this morning. Our port city is **Rostock, Germany** and although some members of the group took the tour to Berlin, we didn’t feel like having the 4 hour bus ride there and back. Our tour began at 8am with a bus trip to **Lubeck and Wismar**, two beautiful UNESCO towns in Germany. **Katie is our guide** and Kurt is our driver. Katie told us that a greeting in German is “Moin” and a friendly greeting is “Moin Moin”. Rostock (our port city) is in the State of Mecklenburg and once belonged to East Germany. It has a population of 200,000 people. The Hanseatic League was founded in the 13th century and Lubeck was “Queen of the Hanseatic League”. There are 80 million people in Germany and 5.6 million cats. I love this place! The drive through the countryside was very



beautiful with many farms, lots of fields, and beautiful trees. There are many wind turbines and solar panels which produce 70% of the power used in Germany. We drove on A20 (Autoban20) which was built 8 years ago. There are fences on both sides of the highway and "wild" bridges for the many deer to cross safely. Rostock is about 800 years old and was bombed very much during WWII because there were many factories there to build planes. **Lubeck** was founded in 1159 by Henry the Lion. It has a population of 218,000 people. The city is surrounded by 2 rivers. It was a free city ruled by the



Emperor. Many houses were built with red bricks. The Nazis took over the city during WWII. Lubeck is the largest producer of marzipan in the world and we toured the oldest and **best marzipan store, Niederegger**. Marzipan is a confection consisting primarily of sugar or honey and almond meal which is then rolled into thin sheets and glazed for icing cakes or used as chocolate covered sweets. We saw many beautiful



churches including the Cathedral of Lubeck with 2 spires, **St. Jacob's Cathedral which has a boat inside**, St. Catherine's Cathedral, and St. Mary's Cathedral



which dates back to the 14th century. One very interesting statue is the **Devil's Figure on the Devil's Stone** which sits next to St. Mary's Cathedral, supposedly thrown here by the devil himself when the builders promised to build a wine cellar next to the church. We enjoyed a visit to the Willy Brandt Museum where we



were able to see a part of the **Berlin Wall**. Katie told us that 95% of the houses in E. Germany were rebuilt after reunification when there was more freedom and freedom to travel. We had some free time for lunch and shopping. We had a nice lunch from a deli along the street. Then Eddie and I had great ice cream in sugar cones for one euro each. Amazing! As we left Lubeck we saw the **Holstengate**, one of the most famous buildings in Lubeck which was a very interesting site...one side is leaning about 30 degrees.

Our next stop was **Wismar** which was founded in 1229 and has a population of 45,000. The city was given to Sweden for 150 years and then given to the Duchy of Mecklenburg for 100 years. It was heavily bombed during WWII and after WWII was given to the Soviets. It has a famous university for architects. The most famous landmark is the spire of St. Mary's. There are many quaint **houses built of red brick**. We walked through the small



winding streets and Katie told us about the "artificial waterways" in the middle of the street...the sewage was actually running from the houses through the middle of the streets. So in the olden days, you had to be careful of where you walked! And of course we saw the American Embassy (M-bassy) which is everywhere...McDonalds! St. Mary's and St. George's Churches were bombed during WWII and then rebuilt. We visited **St. Mary's Cathedral** and stood in what was originally the front part of the church. The only thing left was the pillars around the edges. It was very sobering to stand here. The church was bombed during WWII because they had extra bombs to get rid of before returning to base...so sad. Behind the part of the church that was left



standing we visited with a monk and watched as he made bricks. We also found great ice cream here in Wismar. Back on the ship tonight the show was called "Stage to Screen" and was very entertaining.

Saturday, 6/18/16 ~ Today we are cruising. We slept late and ate two of our cupcakes (from S & K Travel) on our deck for breakfast. We ate BBQ at the Solarium and then attended the lecture at 2pm

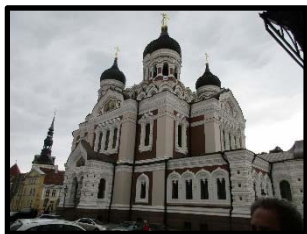


"History of Russia". I couldn't really take good notes, but I do remember that there are several eras in Russian history...Romanov-the Czars, Federalist, Soviet Era-communist, and finally Democracy. Tonight, our first formal night, the entertainment was "Revolvers" a theatrical experience with many songs from



the 60s.

Sunday, 6/19/16 ~ Our stop today is **Tallinn, Estonia**. We toured the medieval Old Town with its huge square of cobbled stone streets. It was raining when we arrived, but we walked through Lower Old Town and saw many quaint merchant houses, barns, and warehouses. There was a Gothic town hall, museums, churches, and concert halls. The Town Hall tower has a weather vane in the shape of the town's historic guard, Old Thomas. We walked out into a wooded hilly area...I am not really sure why. Next we boarded the train to **Nomme**, a 19th century suburb, where we walked to the local market and then went to a restaurant for coffee and fresh donuts. After our train ride back to Tallinn, we were on our own and walked up to Upper Old Town where we saw the beautiful



Alexander Nevski Cathedral which is a Russian Orthodox building with the onion domes, the outside of Toompea Castle with the pink Parliament House built in 1773, the outside of Toomkirik Cathedral, Town Hall Square, and the outside of **St. Nicholas's Cathedral**, which is currently a museum and has



many really cool statues outside. From here we took the steep winding road back down to the Lower Old Town. Now the rain has stopped and the huge town square is full of vendors, musicians and dancers putting on a folklore show, street musicians and funny street performers dressed as goats. Tallinn is a very beautiful and quaint town and our one regret is that we didn't have time to eat at **Olde Hansa**, a fabulous medieval restaurant which serves authentic period meals and drinks from the 15th century. We did get to walk through the inside of the restaurant and it was amazing with only candlelight, waitresses dressed in period costume, and medieval background music. It



was said that many scenes from "Game of Thrones" were filmed here in this very restaurant. We will just have to come back to Tallinn someday to experience this masterpiece. Back on the ship, tonight's entertainment featured Mel Mellers, a comic.

Monday, 6/20/16-6/21/16 ~ **St. Petersburg, Russia**. We have booked a two day tour with the private tour company DenRus. Our guide is Lana and Sergio is our driver. Russia is a little bit different from the



other stops so far...we had to go through customs with our passports to get off the ship and go on this tour. We arrived in port at 7am and our guide met us at 7:30am dressed in a bright red dress. **Lana** told us that there are only 30 days of sunshine per year in Russia and today is one of them...yea!!! The population of St. Petersburg is 5 million and there are 7 months of winter. We are here during White Night season when it seems like it is never dark...truly the land of the midnight sun. Peter the Great, who was 7 feet tall, founded St. Petersburg in 1703 as the new capital of Russia. It was named after St. Peter. It was called Petrograd,

then Leningrad till 1991, then named St. Petersburg since 1991. There are 400 museums, 100 colleges, and 42 islands, the largest of which is Basil Island, and 3 million cars. There are 500 bridges and 500 palaces, each seeming to be bigger and more ostentatious than the last. There are many poplar trees and many beautiful parks. Till 1905 no building could be higher than the roof of the royal palace. The city is very flat, no mountains. Lenin came to power in 1917 and there was 80 years of Communism, a period in which St. Petersburg and all of Russia was very isolated. We had our first photo stop at the Neva River where there is a beautiful Sphinx statue and a famous statue of a Griffin in front of the Academy of Arts. **Everyone got to rub the Griffin and whisper a wish into his ear.** As our bus drove to Pushkin, Lana told us a little about life in Russia after the Revolution of 1917. About 15 percent of the people lived in communal apartments. The people living there didn't like each other or trust each other. During the Soviet time they got the apartments for free. Khrushchev ordered many 5 story buildings with no elevators. There was 60% unemployment in the countryside and over 25% of the population of Russia lived in Moscow or St. Petersburg.



When we arrived in Pushkin we had a tour of the spectacular **Tsarskoye Selo**, better known as **Catherine's Palace**, which was presented by Peter I to his wife Catherine. In the 1730s when Anna Ivanovna was on the throne, Peter and Catherine's daughter Elizabeth spent much of her time here. It began to flourish when Elizabeth herself came to the throne. Catherine II preferred this palace above all others and it was during her time that it was enriched. This huge palace had so many rooms, each more beautiful than the last. One room was completely covered in Amber. Tsarskoye Selo is dear to every Russian's heart because a wing built on the palace in the 1790s housed the Imperial Lyceum, a boarding school for noble boys in which Alexander Pushkin spend his childhood and youth from 1811.

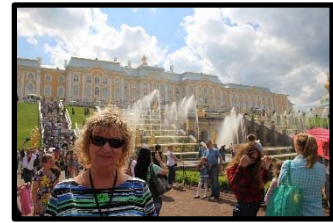


The Lyceum Garden has a lovely statue of Pushkin which was created in 1899 to mark the 100th anniversary of the poet's birth. The gardens were quite beautiful and we walked over to our lunch spot which was in a building once used as the kitchen for the palace. We had borscht soup and blinis for lunch. After lunch we drove to **Peterhof, the Russian Versailles**, where we walked through

the Upper Park to Fountain Park. The Great Cascade is one of the largest fountain ensembles in the world with over 60 fountains and over 250 statues. The Samson Fountain is the highest in Peterhof, at 21 meters high.



This is a very beautiful area with many impressive fountains and even a few trick fountains which the children love. Next we took a hydrofoil back to St. Petersburg and back to the ship. Tonight's entertainment was wonderful piano music by Count Dimas.



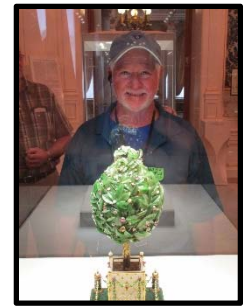
Day two of our **St. Petersburg** tour featured a ride on the **metro (subway)**



which included a very fast, steep, long escalator down to the trains. The underground stations are extremely clean and decorated with much **beautiful artwork**. The trains are very fast.



Then we had another canal boat ride. It was raining a little now so we had to spend most of this ride inside but Lana told us of the many sights that we passed. We next visited the **Faberge Museum** which was exquisite! Lana described most of the eggs and told us all about the little hidden treats that were put into each egg. Our next stop was a visit to the **Savior on the Spilt Blood Cathedral**, a remarkable place which was built between 1883 and 1907 around the part of the embankment on which the blood of the mortally wounded Tsar Alexander



II had been shed on March 1, 1881. **(The official name is the Church of the Resurrection.)** The inside was completely covered with beautiful scenes, all done by mosaic tiles...the total area covered by the mosaic images is 7,000 square meters. It is the incredible wealth of mosaics and tiles that enabled cultural activists in the Soviet period, when there was constant talk of the church's demolition, to stand up for it as an extremely valuable "museum of Russian mosaic". The outside was Russian Orthodox in style with onion domes and many different colorful



paintings. Afterwards we enjoyed another nice lunch at the **Russian**



Yooharoom Restaurant No1, where borscht soup and something that was like a mini meatloaf was enjoyed by all. There was a Vodka Museum in the restaurant which Eddie enjoyed viewing before we left. After lunch we visited the **Hermitage Museum**...along with about 10,000 other people! The museum is made up of five huge buildings built at various times, one of which was the



Winter Palace built by Rastrelli from 1756-1762 for Peter's daughter Elizabeth. At one time there were 4,000 servants who lived permanently in the palace. In the 1920s and 1930s the Winter Palace underwent a tremendous reconstruction where 1,150 rooms were converted into halls for the display of painting, sculpture, and the other works of art. Today there are more than 350 halls. The Hermitage as a museum began with Catherine II who decided to transfer the art treasures that she kept in secret rooms in the Winter Palace to a new home in a pavilion that became known as the "hermitage" meaning "a place of solitude".



The imperial art collection grew and grew and its home was enlarged in the 1780s with the building of the Large Hermitage. Then in the middle of the 19th century the museum complex was completed by the New Hermitage with its famous portico on Millionnaya



Street. A walkway from the Large (Old) Hermitage leads to the building of the Hermitage Theatre. The treasures of the Hermitage include 15,000 paintings, 12,000 sculptures, 600,000 works of graphic art, and much more. One could literally spend weeks going from hall to hall in order to see it all. When we got there the lines were extremely long to get in, but Lana pushed us ahead of most of the other people and then led us through the museum at breakneck speed so that we could visit many of the beautiful rooms to see the priceless artwork. Many rooms were so crowded

that it was difficult to see some of the artwork. And it was very warm. One room was like being in a sauna with 3,000 of your closest friends! After the Hermitage visit we ran out of time and didn't get to see Saint Isaac's Cathedral. Too bad...I will have to come back to this lovely city sometime to see it. Tonight on the ship our entertainment was Lindsey Hamilton, who was fantastic!



Wednesday, 6/22/16 ~ Helsinki, Finland was our next country and we booked the City of Helsinki tour with Rikka as our guide. On this tour we had a bus ride past many beautiful cathedrals, Parliament House, museums, and the Opera House. The Embassy area is very expensive. Helsinki is made of many islands and the sea freezes completely during the long winter. Finland was under Swedish rule for 600 years, then under Russian rule from 1809-1927 when it became independent. The city of Helsinki was founded in 1550 and became the capitol of Finland in 1812. We drove by the waterfront area where there were many wooden piers to wash rugs. They have a system of yellow City Bikes which anyone can use for free. Apartments in the city are very expensive-about 6,000 Euro/square meter. Finland is famous for Finnish coffee and cinnamon buns, as well as herring. We went by Uspenski Cathedral, built high on the hill in 1688, the largest Orthodox cathedral in Western Europe. Our first photo stop was at



Senate Square where we saw the very large **Cathedral** as well as Helsinki University which is free and where 60% of the students are women. We saw many beautiful statues such as "Mother's Love" which was of a mother and baby horse. This is a town where every statue of a person seemed to have a bird sitting on its head! Rikka told us that education is free for students 7-16 years old and students get one free meal per day. Books and all supplies are also free. The city has very many modern buildings and lots of trees and



parcs. There are many bikes as well as the green trams which are electric. We drove by the Olympic Stadium where the 1952 games were held. There are many unusual sports in Finland such as "wife carrying championship", "mobile phone throwing championship", and "boat throwing championship". Finland is famous for production of ship building, especially cruise ships, ice breaker ships, metal



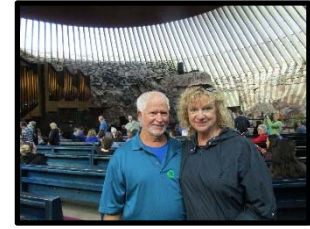
industry, engineering, forest industry, Angry Birds movie, Nokia phones, and scissors. We drove to the Seurasaari Folison area, which is a beautiful hilly island with an outdoor museum and the president's residence. Our second stop was at the **Sibelius Monument**, made in remembrance of the famous musician Yohan (Jean) Sibelius. Sibelius burned his 8th symphony after working on it for 15 years. This park monument has 600 welded

pipes. Next we went to the famous **Tempeliaukio Rock Church**, built in 1960 during an architect competition. The church is carved completely from rock. After this church, we had some time on our own to explore the shipyard area with the open air markets where we enjoyed a traditional

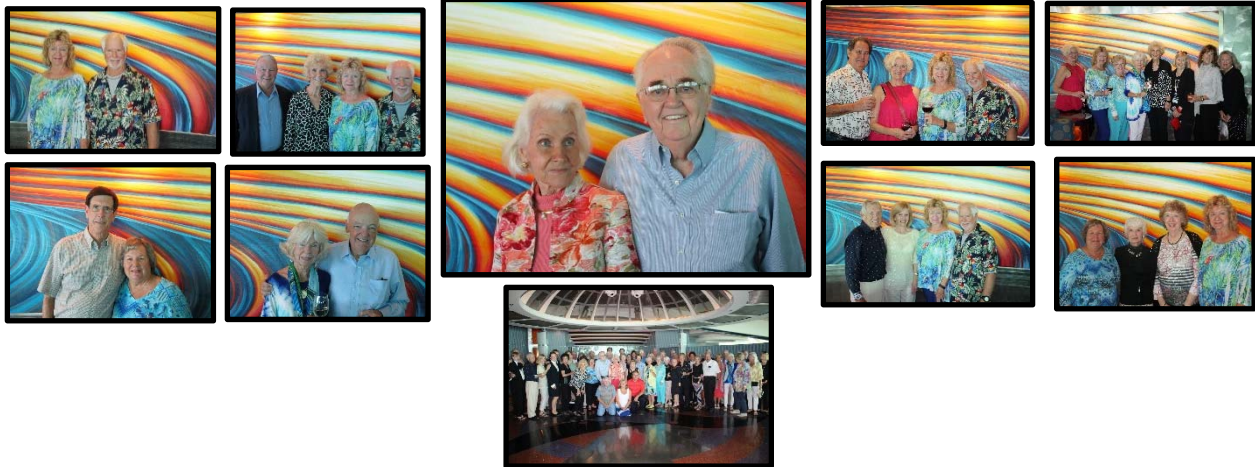


Finnish seafood lunch. Next we hiked up to the beautiful hilltop **Orthodox Uspenski Cathedral** and then walked back along beautiful Mannerheim Street with its restaurants, shops, and beautiful park to catch our shuttle bus back to the ship. On board ship tonight the entertainment was

“Vibe*Ology” a high energy show featuring songs by artists from the 1960s to the 1990s.



Thursday, 6/23/16 ~ Today we have another day at sea. We got to sleep in late again and take some time to leisurely explore the ship. The highlight of today was our surprise party for Bob & Sue Marks as a way to thank them for all their hard work, and to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary and Bob’s 85th birthday and also Sue’s upcoming birthday. The entertainment before our late dinner was Niels Duinker, the Dutch juggling champion.



Friday, 6/24/16 ~ **Riga, Latvia** was our next stop and our tour for the day was called “Taste of Riga”. We had **Marguerite** as our guide and Edward as our driver. We are in Riga on a big holiday called the Longest Day. This is the culmination of three days of partying, so the streets are blessedly empty,



which made our walking tour of the market place very pleasant. Marguerite told us that there are 2 million inhabitants of Latvia and 700,000 of these live in Riga. Riga was the first Christian city in Latvia. The history of Latvia, like most of this region, was one of conquest. It was ruled first by Poland, then Sweden, then during the 18th century it was conquered by Peter the Great. After the revolution it became an independent nation from 1918 until WWII when it was conquered by the Communists, then the Nazis, then the Communists again. Finally it became independent again as it



remains today. The average salary is 760 Euros per month. Riga's Old Town and the Riga Central Market are both UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The market, which is one of the largest in Europe was built in 1930 and its five market halls were previously used as zeppelin hangars.



We enjoyed a nice spread of **Latvian cuisine** including meats, cheeses, breads, honey and chocolate. Next we walked over to City Council Square and visited the **Black Magic Bar** where we went down to the basement bar area and tasted Riga



Black Balsam—a famous Latvian herbal liquor. It was very strong and seemed to actually help my sore throat. We continued our walk through Old Town and came to our next stop which was a **beer tasting** in the cellar of a local pub where we had snacks including garlic bread, cheeses and sausages and 4 large glasses of different delicious beers. Eddie was quite happy since many of the guests gave him their beers to drink. He always seems to make out like a bandit at these beer tastings. Back on the ship tonight's entertainment was "ABBAmix" which was great!



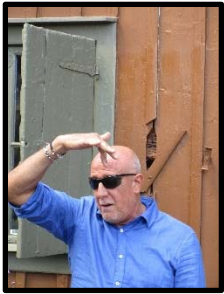
Saturday, 6/25/16 ~ We visit **Stockholm, Sweden** today and as the cruise ship slowly makes its way into port, we are enthralled by the beauty of this area. We cruised slowly past so many islands in this archipelago with rustic cottages and rock cliffs. There were several lighthouses and so many seagulls flying along with us. The scenery was very reminiscent of Maine. We got into port at 11am and met our tour guide Mark and driver Elle (male) as we began our tour called Historic Stockholm and Sigtuna. Stockholm is known as the Venice of the North because of the water surrounding it. Stockholm lies at the mouth of Lake Malaren and consists of 14 islands with 57 bridges, each beautifully decorated with statues. Stockholm's story began in 1252 when the fort was first built. A town was built up around the fort when Sweden became a major Baltic power. It began to flourish under Gustav III. Stockholm is now famous for opera, cutting-edge crystal design, and Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies. The population of Stockholm is one million but the rest of Sweden is very sparsely populated. The air and water are extremely clean and Stockholm plans to be petrol free by 2050. The outskirts of the city have very modern buildings. Mark told us a little of the history of Sweden. People started to come here as early as 3000 BC when it was much hotter here. Then there was a minor ice age with lots of snow during the winters. During the Iron Age there were many large farms and a huge growth of population. The airport was built in 1961. Sigtuna was the birthplace of the Swedish Vikings. Mark told us that they have had 27 meters of snow this winter and not much rain this year. Sweden's health care is almost free and it has a very strong economy, but not a



free market economy. We drove up to **Sigtuna** which was the first capitol of Sweden and Sweden's smallest town. It is a lovely medieval city and a very nice place to live. It once had a population of 7,000 and is a beautiful 1000 year old medieval town. Sigtuna used to have 7 churches but there is only one left standing now. It was built in the 13th century and was very



beautiful but its copper roof was stolen in the past. Of the other 6 churches, there are only stone relics left. There used to be a Benedictine Monastery here and a piece of the holy cross used to be here. Now



there are only 378 people who live here and they have 18 bars to enjoy. Mark took us to the town hall and showed us where drunk citizens could lock themselves up for the night in the town hall. Mark showed us how to find the key. The first Bishop of Sigtuna was killed by Viking pirates and his remains have been found from here. There were women called "Veluva", who used to live here and they could predict the future. They were very revered by the population and their remains as well as the remains of the Bishop have been found here. We drove back down to **Stockholm**, the current capital of



Sweden and center of politics. **Gamla Stan** is the medieval Old Town of Stockholm. During the winter there are only 5 hours of daylight and it is very cold, getting down to 8 or 9 degrees below zero. We went to the **Great Square** where the Royal Palace as well as the Cathedral (Storkyrkan) are located. It is in this Cathedral, built in 1279,



that all royal baptisms, coronations, and weddings take place. The Royal Palace, standing at the foot of the Norrbrö Bridge contains over 600 rooms and is said to be one of the largest palaces in Europe. We went to City Hall which houses the Municipal Court as well as the Nobel Prize Banquet in the Golden Hall which is covered with 19 million mosaic tiles. Next we had some free time to roam the streets of Old Town where we saw the outside of the Nobel Museum. We found a quaint ice cream shop and enjoyed a little treat. Next we visited the museum to see **Vasa**, the famous



warship which sank on its maiden voyage in 1687 after only a few minutes and traveling one mile. It rested on the bottom of the sea floor from 1628-1960 and has now been carefully restored. Our guide Mark was extremely knowledgeable about the story of Vasa. Turns out he has a degree in archaeology, and



in economics, and he speaks 5 languages fluently. This was Eddie's favorite part of the whole cruise and I bought him a book about Vasa so he could learn more about the ship. After we finally found everyone in our group and got back to the bus, we drove by the newer ABBA Museum which along with the Vasa Museum are two of the most popular tourist attractions of Stockholm. Back on the ship tonight's entertainment was magnificent...Duo Bolshakov once again in "Above the Sky".

Sunday, 6/26/16 ~ Sadly this is the day we disembark our ship, RCCL Serenade of the Seas, and begin our long journey home. This trip is a little scary for us since once again Eddie and I are in charge of getting everyone safely back to Marco Island. We start out knowing that we have 4 airports, 3 flights, and a bus ride to get through and the turn-around time is extremely short between flights. The flight from Stockholm to Copenhagen was late leaving, but we figured that we could possibly make our next one because we were only going from one gate to another in the same terminal in Copenhagen. Little did we know that we had to walk an extremely long way, go out from one area into another area, and go through customs and security again, where there were exceptionally long lines, before we finally came to our departure gate in Copenhagen. I swear, it seemed to me like we walked through the entire country of Denmark and actually flew out of Norway. Luckily for us, this second plane was late leaving, so we all made it aboard. The flight "over the pond" from Copenhagen to Chicago was very, very long. We watched some movies to pass the time. But we knew that we were about 1 ½ hours late and we would probably not make our connection in Chicago. Eddie spoke with the flight stewards and warned

them that there were over 50 of us in our group on board and we didn't want to miss our flight with United, sister airline to SAS. She told the pilot, who sped up the engines and somehow managed to make up the time. After getting off the plane, we had to claim our luggage and get through customs. Eddie and I were thinking that since we had Global Entry, it would be much faster for us. Unfortunately most of the Global Entry machines in the Chicago airport were broken and it was fairly chaotic getting through. And the security checkpoint was like something from a horror movie. Two members of our group were practically strip searched and this took a long, long time. But we finally managed to get our bags, get through customs, re-check our bags, and get to our gate. When we got there as I was checking that all of our group made it, we were informed that our plane was delayed, then delayed again, then they switched planes on us. We finally made it on board and the flight to Miami was uneventful. Once there, it was early morning (3am) and we each had to claim our baggage and wait till we were all together for Eddie to call our bus to come and pick us up. Unfortunately, there were about 8 of us who were missing some baggage and each person had to then fill out a lost baggage claim. Once this was all accomplished Eddie quickly got our bus to pick us up and we started on the trip back to Marco Island. Immediately, we knew there was a problem. The bus was hot, very hot. Eddie and I kept working with the driver to see what could be done. Eddie tried to call Dolphin to see if another bus could be sent to get us. No one answered. So the driver pulled off the highway and jury-rigged the bus to get some fresh air in. The roof hatch was propped open and the security escape windows were propped open. We finally made it back to the Marco Island Yacht Club parking lot at 5:30am with 51 very tired and hot passengers.

The next day, Eddie told Bob Marks of our adventure and Bob immediately spoke with Dolphin who agreed to reimburse us for the cost of the bus ride home.

