Making the Most of Your Baltic Cruise

We asked our cruise expert, Ralph Grizzle, for his tips on making the most of your time in the Baltic ports.
The Baltic Sea is rich in culture and history, and thus, there’s a lot to see and do. In addition, some Baltic cruises feature no sea days at all, meaning that if you wish, you could always be on the go. Take St. Petersburg, for example. Some luxury ships spend two nights docked in this lovely city. If you’re the type who wants to do it all, you could spend all of three days touring, plus attend a ballet one evening. You’ll have little downtime if you try to do it all, and guess what? There are still five or more Baltic ports on your itinerary.

My suggestion: Take an afternoon to lounge on the ship. You’ll practically get the ship to yourself and can admire the incredible St. Petersburg skyline from the pool, resting up for the next day’s sightseeing.

TIP #1
Prepare yourself for a rigorous pace.

St. Petersburg, Russia
You could easily explore cities such as Stockholm, Copenhagen and Tallinn on your own. These cities even offer City Cards that provide transportation, entrance to museums and more – for one fixed fee. However, you want to see and experience as much as possible and with a guide who can inform you about the significance of what you're seeing. Do yourself a favor and book a tour. There's a lot to choose from. In Stockholm, for example, if maritime history is your thing, make sure to book a tour that includes the fabulous Vasa Museum. Or maybe seeing Stockholm's Old Town, Gamla Stan, and visiting the famed Ice Bar is on your list. You'll have a lot of choices, so start planning before you leave home!

TIP #2
Book tours in advance.
I’ve never seen more beautiful summers than those in the Baltic region. It’s well worth staying up to witness St. Petersburg’s White Nights (make sure you have your camera with you on deck) or Stockholm’s never-ending days. If ever in your life you can do with less sleep, do it on your Baltic cruise. I slept only two hours one night when leaving Helsinki en route to Stockholm. The reason: I wanted to see Stockholm’s beautiful archipelago during the three-hour transit into the city so I went to bed at 2 a.m. and woke up at 4 a.m.

TIP #3
Stay up late!

Old Town of Tallinn, Estonia
I see this happen time and again, and I understand the logic: You’ve paid for lunch on the ship so why pay again? Here’s why: You’re visiting some of the world’s most charming cities. Experience the food culture. Have a *Fika* in Stockholm, a *Smørrebrød* in Copenhagen. Take the time to savor the delights of the Baltics!
Pre- and post-cruise stays are industry parlance for adding a couple of nights before or after your cruise. Do not miss the opportunity to pre- post- in the Nordic cities where most Baltic cruises begin or end: Copenhagen and Stockholm. In fact, if you can swing it, I recommend two nights in each city. After all, you’ve spent the time and money to get here. Why rush home?

See for yourself!
Two Perfect Days in Stockholm.

See for yourself!
Two Perfect Days in Copenhagen.

TIP #5
Linger Longer!