

Tallinn, Estonia: A Disney Cruise Line Port of Call Review

by Cheryl Pendry, *PassPorter Featured Columnist*

The Disney Magic heads back to the Baltic this summer, albeit on a much more limited engagement than in some previous years.

In summer 2016, we were fortunate enough to enjoy some of the ports of call it will be making. One of the ones I was most looking forward to was Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

I studied Estonia's politics in the early 1990s, when I was at university. We were seeing real life politics all around us, with the break-up of the then Soviet Union, and the establishment of new countries, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. I'd also had a friend at work, who'd raved about how beautiful Tallinn was, and was a regular visitor there. This was back in the mid 2000s, when it still wasn't a major tourist destination.

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□As it was our first visit to the city, and the country, I knew immediately which shore excursion I wanted to take, and that was one that allowed us to explore the old town of Tallinn itself. Judging by Disney's offering of excursions for this lunch, it looks as if I'm not alone in that. Out of the 24, more than half feature either a drive through, or a walking exploration of the old town. We opted for Celebrity's equivalent of the Old Town Walking Tour (\$56/adults, \$33/ages 3-9), although Disney offers an adult only departure, and if we'd have had that option, we'd probably have selected it.

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□I did debate over whether to bother with an excursion at all, as most cruise ships dock very close to the city center, literally just a 20 minute walk, but in the end, I decided it wasn't a huge cost, and it would hopefully give us a good introduction to the place, so I went ahead with it. It ended up being the right call, as our guide was superb, and we learnt so much from her, plus we experienced a complete downpour on the way back, and I was very glad to be on a bus, rather than walking at that point!

The tour we took sensibly started in the upper old town, which meant we would be making our way down, rather than scrambling up the various steps between the upper and lower section. I was very pleased with this approach, and assumed all tours would do this, but we did see tour groups coming the opposite way, so be warned -- you may end up with a climb, depending on which route they take you.

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□ The first sight we saw was the former Toompea Castle, which is today used as the Parliament building. In the nearby Palace Gardens, we learnt all about Estonia's history, and how it was occupied by a series of different rulers, including the Danes, Germans, Swedish, Soviets, and even the Nazis during the Second World War. Independence in 1991 was really a new concept to them, and in so many ways, the country is very different to many others. For one things, their Prime Minister was only 38 years old (when we visited anyway), and voting is done online, so they have a huge turnout of young voters.

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□ We then had free time to explore the interior of the spectacular Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, built by the Russians in the late 19th century, and that became a hallmark of this tour, as we enjoyed a lot of free time during it, which I really liked. We saw the beautiful classic buildings of Toompea, the upper old town, and then had time to enjoy the Estonian church of the Cathedral of St. Mary. This whole tour was done at a nice, slow pace, which I really enjoyed, as you were never rushed, and could take your time getting all the photos you wanted.

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□ The highlight of any visit to Tallinn is the Patkui viewing platform, which has stunning views across the city. I'd read about this in my guidebook, and it did not disappoint. I can see why this is a must-do on so many different shore excursions.

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□ We then made our way down to the lower old town, and got a chance to see the city walls, which date from the 13th century. This was the easier route down, but even so, this was along a very slippery cobble stone road, so I was glad to have good grip on my shoes.

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□ Once down, we continued to explore the old town, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and it was easy to see why, with stunning buildings everywhere you looked. The next major sight was the Town Hall Square, which had a massive market on the day we visited, which helped to bring it alive. I would have loved to have visited the Town Hall in the free time we had, but sadly it wasn't open, as they had a VIP visit.

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□ At this point, our guided tour was done, and we were given more than enough time to ourselves to explore, or shop, before we had to be back at our meeting point. The beauty of the location of the cruise ship terminal was that, if you wanted to stay longer, you could, and just make your own way back. We took the opportunity to do some shopping in the Town Hall Square, and of course had to get a set of Russian dolls. If you've ever wanted some, this is the place to come, although alongside the traditional ones, you could get all sorts of others, including Tigger, Winnie-the-Pooh (sadly no Eeyore) and Angry Birds. You think of it, there's a chance they had them!

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□I'm sure there's much more to see around Tallinn, but we found this tour to be perfect. It allowed us to see all of the main sights at a reasonable pace, and gave us a good idea of the city. I came away feeling the time we had here was just about right, whereas in many other cities, you feel as if you needed much more time to see everything.

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□The Magic stops at Tallinn on the seven-night Northern Europe cruise from Copenhagen, departing May 28, and June 11, and it's also a port of call on the 10-night Northern European cruise from Copenhagen to Dover, departing June 18.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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