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Show Open Files

Page 6

Page 6.psd

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Layers Effects Filters Styles Graphics More

Photo Bin Tool Options Undo Redo Rotate Layout Organizer Home Screen

In 2020 we attempted to go on Majestic Fjords & Vibrant Russia, a 22-day trip offered by Viking Ocean Cruises. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic interfered and Viking canceled the trip. One of the big attractions of this cruise was three days in St. Petersburg, Russia.)

Viking did not offer the Majestic Fjords cruise in 2021 but we were able to reschedule for Viking Homelands, a 15-day trip also on Viking Ocean Cruises but with two add-ons: (1) Oslo & Scenic Train (a scenic train ride from Oslo to Bergen with two nights in Oslo before the cruise) and (2) Stockholm (two additional nights there after the cruise.) One disadvantage of this cruise was that we would be in St. Petersburg, Russia, for only two days. Also, since it was 7 days shorter, it passed by a number of ports we would have liked to have visited.

Late in 2020, Viking offered a new 28-day itinerary called Baltic Jewels & the Midnight Sun. This included two days in St. Petersburg, Russia, and restored a number of the other ports that had been included in the canceled 2020 cruise. We booked this for 2022 and included a three day post-cruise extension that would take us to Iceland.

Sadly, Vladimir Putin decided to invade Ukraine which prompted Viking to eliminate St. Petersburg (Russia,) Tallinn (Estonia,) and Helsinki (Finland.) Nonetheless, and in spite of ongoing concerns about COVID-19, we went ahead with the revised cruise which had the "plus" of taking us north of the Arctic Circle.

Traveling with our friends Tim Barcroft and Carolyn Davis, we started our trip by splurging on SC Express Aiken limo service to Charlotte Douglas Airport, where we departed for London. There we joined our cruise on the Viking Mars, docked at Greenwich Pier. The cruise visited ten countries and we followed with three days in Iceland on the Reykjanes Peninsula.

Our ship, the Viking Mars, was berthed at the Greenwich Pier, literally right next to the Cuttysark. Since we had spent a week in London in 2010, we contented ourselves with a single shore excursion, Royal Greenwich by Foot before our ship departed the Port of Greenwich.



To get to the Viking Mars, we had to walk right past the Cutty Sark, a British clipper-ship built in Scotland in 1869 that celebrated as the fastest ship of its time, was the last of the Tea Clippers.



Page 6