

Chapter 1 : Viking Pride - Itinerary Schedule, Current Position | CruiseMapper

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My first contact was with Fran in sales. She was very helpful and was sympathetic to my fears that I may encounter another vacation upset through a cruise company. I was on board R5 when Renaissance Cruise Lines filed bankruptcy and left us stranded in the port city for Rome. I did not want to live through that process again. Since Viking is privately held, even our travel insurance company would not rate the company, but would cover if we purchased 45 days ahead of cruise. I expressed my concern to Fran and she said someone in authority for Viking would be contacting me. Jeff Dash, President of the line called me and gave me as much assurance as I needed to book the cruise. A few weeks later, we received the confirmation of the flights and cabin. Nothing else was needed until two weeks prior to departure. We received a Box from Viking that was elegant and packed with two Bag Tags of leather and a medallion of the Viking Line Logo, two neck purses that held our tickets and vouchers for the trip. We were very impressed. Flight day came and we boarded the Air France to Paris and had a good flight. When we arrived in Paris, we then found out that Air France treated us on the cruise with very poor attitude and stuffed us in a at the back of the plane. It was beyond coincidence that we were all in the back of the craft. As they have smaller baggage storage on the craft, many of us had to check the bag we used for the states to Paris. This can cause a problem in the return flight. We were greeted with professional and friendly personnel. Julia was the one who helped us the most. Our trip to the ship was nice and uneventful. When we got on the ship, the cabin staff and escorted to the cabin greeted us. It was clean and spacious for river cruises. We then had dinner and met the Dining room staff. All were professional and friendly. After dinner, we met Klaus Felgentreter, the Cruise Director. Klaus is a very pleasant man who demonstrated a professional, yet fun loving person. That evening, we met the staff. Captain is Achim Miertschin. We had a cocktail and felt that the cruise was off to a great start. Each city was wonderful and had tour guides that loved their city and showed great enthusiasm for what they were showing us. The tour guide in Vienna, Irene, was beyond exceptional. Not only did she give the on-board presentation of our trip into Vienna, she was our bus guide and showed us sites not on the agenda, yet maintained full schedule with the other buses. Then the rains came. Klaus, the cruise manager was tested more than any manager I have seen to date. He did exceptionally well in making bus tours of the cities we would miss otherwise and actually made it possible to enjoy more time in some cities. He got overly upset at a few minutes, but the passengers were more than willing to forgive the testiness. He really spent a lot of time seeing to our enjoyment under the conditions. The bus trip to Pilsen and Prague was a tour through beautiful countryside and the guide at the Brewery was a young woman who loved her company and her country. It was fun to be on the brewery tour with her. The check in at the Hilton in Prague was handled better than any previous cruise I had taken. It took only minutes to obtain our room and get inside and relax, clean up and get our tickets for our first concert. Viking provides a tour guide representative for a couple of hours each day to coordinate the tours planned for Prague and to help guest. Edgar was the agent, but he seemed more interested in getting his own tours going than he was in the needs of our group. Viking could not have prepared for this, but the Hilton put the tour group up in the Hotel Duo. When we called down to the hotel manager, we were informed that the hotel had no pillows, no sheets and no blankets! We then found out that the hotel had run out of food! The location of the hotel was far away from any other source of food! It was uncomfortable and musty and stuffy. Edgar was the rep for Viking and failed to communicate in a major way. As we went to bed we talked to the Information desk and was given the information that the departure time to the airport the next morning would be at 8: We made one more check before we went to bed. We were awakened by one of the tour members and told that they had moved the time up to 7: We had all of our stuff ready to go, and closed our suitcases and went down to the lobby. We then got the information that the time had moved to 7: Edgar walked in at 7: While he was doing this, he failed to advise us of anything. I asked him if he was there to take us to the airport. When he said that he was and that he was there to take us all, I asked if he knew that there

were about a hundred riders. He was not aware as he had driven a 6 passenger mini-bus. I escorted him to Edgar and allowed them to talk. Then I followed him out to the mini-bus and got my wife and me on it! Edgar never gave out information in a timely manner, we had to find out from other sources. In all, I would give a great rating to Viking Pride for the cruise portion. I would make several recommendations: Eliminate the Bus numbering requirement for seating. The passengers are all adults and then the Cruise Manager made us ride in the same bus every time. This eliminated the opportunity to foster friendships while on tour and made us feel that we were being treated like children. I dislike paying for a cruise only to be constrained by an arbitrary rule. Many seasoned travelers, such as my wife and I, are not interested in the narratives of a new city, but wish to experience as much of the city as possible. To have to stand for the slower members of a group and wait through long narratives of who lived where was not our desire. We can read that information in the guides. We asked one guide that the entire group desired a faster, more item tour than the slower narrative type and she said that she HAD to do the tour as it is. If we wanted more, we could return on our own time. Provide for optional tours in each city. Only two optional at optional cost tours were offered. We jumped at the opportunity and loved them. Add some sugar to the desserts. I noticed that a lot of people ordered the ice cream rather than the dessert of the day. In our discussions later, the consensus was that the sweetness was missing from all the pastry items. Memories that could not have come to us in any other way were made because of the heart and care of the staff of the Pride. I could not be more pleased with the boat portion of the trip. A lot of correction needs to be made to prepare for the eventualities that we faced.

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