

THE BALTIC SEA AND APPROACHES – RCC Pilotage Foundation, 4th edition.
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Having just completed my fourth summer cruising in the Baltic (with a well-thumbed 3rd edition of this book) I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to review the 4th edition of The Baltic Sea and Approaches.

The first question is, ‘Why go to the Baltic?’. Here are just a few of the reasons:

- The summer weather is generally far warmer than might be expected in those latitudes.
- The days are long, so there is little need for night sailing. For Scandinavians, the season starts around 21st June and lasts for approximately six weeks, but cruising is perfectly possible from May until the end of September.
- Apart from a few easily avoidable hot-spots in high season, the Baltic is generally, relatively uncrowded.
- There are no tides.
- There are hundreds of beautiful anchorages and a huge variety of harbours with good facilities, and which are generally much cheaper than the UK. 61
- In the sheltered archipelago there is relatively flat water, very little swell and short distances between anchorages. This makes it ideal for sailing with young children or less experienced crew.
- All the Baltic countries have rich and eventful histories, with a great number of castles, churches and interesting towns to be explored should the weather turn nasty. The 4th edition of The Baltic Sea and Approaches has been completely revised in order to cover the many changes that have taken place since the previous edition was published in 2010. Each country has been researched by a different editor who has first-hand knowledge of their area, and they have drawn on the experience of many others. Should you decide to explore the Baltic, this book is an indispensable aid to getting there and, once there, deciding where to go. It provides a general introduction to the surrounding countries, capturing the flavour of the places and the people, and because in one volume it would be impossible to cover such a large and varied area in detail, it acts as a reference to more detailed pilot books and charts. While not a comprehensive pilot book it includes, in great detail, the main harbours and their approaches, and is invaluable as a planning guide to a fairly confusing cruising area. It also includes information directly relevant to us as ‘foreign’ cruisers which would not normally be included

in a local pilot book. The Introduction covers some of the history of the Baltic, has a section on how to get there, and another describing navigation – with a relevant comment on how surprisingly small some of the buoys are. There are several beautifully illustrated pages showing the various methods of securing a boat. Due to the lack of tides, some of the berthing systems, such as tying up to a rock, are quite different from those in tidal waters. Following this are ten sections covering the countries which border the Baltic. The Key Information for each lists, among other things, available pilots and cruising guides, formalities and regulations, public holidays, and useful websites. Then there is a section giving information about the country, its history, the cruising area, and practicalities such as shopping, yacht services and chandlery, diesel, gas availability, alcohol limits and health. The bulk of each chapter covers harbours and marinas. Everything is beautifully illustrated with excellent photos and large- scale chartlets. Where appropriate there are pilotage notes, followed, for each harbour, by a general description – including, importantly, how to pronounce the name. Who, for instance, apart from a Pole, would pronounce Trzebież Chehbyeh? The harbour approach is described, and there is information regarding berthing and the facilities available. The Appendix gives addresses for the suppliers of charts and publications, Abbreviations used on Russian charts, information of firing practice areas (of which there are a great many in the Baltic Sea), search and rescue, radio and weather, and lastly chart coverage of Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

If you are considering cruising in this beautiful area – which I would thoroughly recommend – then you should definitely invest in a copy of *The Baltic Sea and Approaches*. It will make interesting winter reading, and later be invaluable on the chart table.

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