

Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation

The Baltic Sea and Approaches – Fifth Edition

By Andy Beharrell

Published by Imray

The Fifth Edition of Imray's pilot *Baltic Sea and Approaches* by Andy Beharrell is a must-have for any cruising sailor destined to these beautiful waters, whether an old hand or new to the area. With 471 pages of text and over 700 harbours and anchorages included, one is never far from a well-described overnight stop.

There are many colour photographs which bring the ports to life – as expected in a modern book, a lot of these images have been taken from a drone - and will give the navigator a great sense of their route in and the hazards to avoid. The chartlets are clear and precise, although as the author himself states they should be complemented by further information – whether electronic or paper – to make a secure entry.

The introduction addresses many of the key questions faced by a yacht owner contemplating visiting the Baltic, including coping with Schengen immigration rules, as well as the rules for UK or EU VAT-paid vessels. Matters pertaining to preparations of skipper and crew – such as weather, mooring systems and equipment – are very helpfully included. A generous sprinkling of URLs points the reader to sources of further information.

Each of the ten countries covered by the book has a specific entry describing holidays, communications, rescue services, and chart and pilot book advice, as well as commenting on where and how a boat can be over-wintered there. The entries for the Stockholm archipelago and the Baltic states have seen significant update compared to earlier editions. On the technical side, the book describes the easiest ways to approach the many different Baltic mooring options – many of which UK-based sailors may never have experienced before – as well as highlighting the best sources of information on weather systems and changing water heights (or vattenstånd).

Beharrell's style makes for an engaging and pleasurable read, describing the many natural, social and historic highlights which are to be found in this sailing ground. The towns and cities come to life – the reader will feel the warmth of the mid-summer sun, and sense the fun and enjoyment of dancing around a flower-bedecked "maypole". The rich and fascinating history, including the Hanseatic period which saw the establishment of many Baltic trading ports, is easily accessible. The text is fully supported by technical detail on air drafts, depths and bridge opening times that will allow effective prior planning. Top tips on where to shop, and the best places to fly, drive or get the train to, enable the reader to plan for crew changes, or where to leave a boat while returning to the UK mid-season.

In summary, this pilot book lives up to the finest traditions of the Imray and Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation traditions. Whether you intend to sail there-and-back to Stockholm in one season, or to spend very many enjoyable years in the Baltic and make it to the top of the Gulf of Bothnia (don't forget to collect your certificate, page 267!), this should be top of your pre-reading list and beside your chart table. It will be well-thumbed by the time you have completed your Baltic exploration, and if you manage to visit even a fraction of the fascinating places described by Beharrell you will have had a most enjoyable experience.

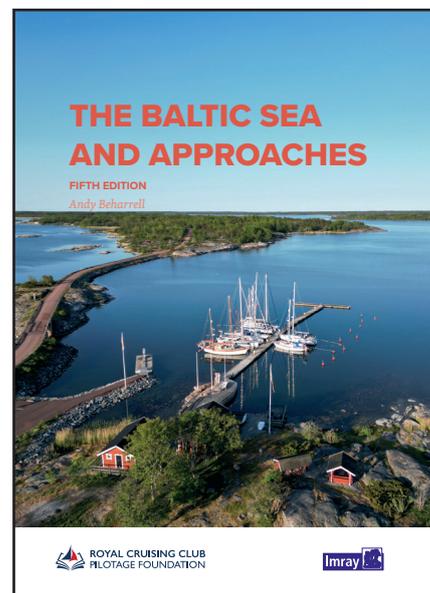
Bob & Fiona Slay, April 2025

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