

Tour
Information



Baltic Capitals





Passports

Please ensure your 10 year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to the Baltic States.

Visas

Visas are not required for British and EU nationals. For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Lithuanian Embassy:

Lithuania House, 2 Bessborough Gardens, Westminster, London SW1V 2JE
Tel: (020) 7592 2840. Fax: (020) 7592 2864.
E-mail: amb.uk@urm.lt
Website: www.urm.lt
Opening hours (visa section): Tue-Thu 1500-1600

Latvian Embassy:

45 Nottingham Place, London W1U 5LY.
Tel: (020) 7312 0041. Fax: (020) 7312 0042.
E-mail: consulate.uk@mfa.gov.lv
Website: <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/london/>
Opening hours (visa section): Mon-Fri 1000-1600.

Estonian Embassy:

16 Hyde Park Gate, London SW7 5DG
Tel: (020) 7838 5388. Fax: (020) 7589 3430.
E-mail: embassy.london@estonia.gov.uk
Website: www.estonia.gov.uk
Opening hours (visa phone line): Mon, Wed 1400-1700, Tue-Thu 0900-1200, Fri 1400-1600.



Tickets and Flight Times

Easyjet

Included with this documentation is an e-ticket, which shows the reference number for your Easyjet flight. EasyJet have now replaced all of their airport check-in desks with EasyJet Baggage Drop desks. **Therefore you must check-in online and print out your boarding passes before travelling.** Checking in online also provides the opportunity for you to pre-book seats, if you wish, at an additional cost.

Online check-in is available 30 days prior to travel using the reference number provided. Please see the enclosed e-ticket for more information or visit; www.easyjet.com

Air Baltic

The e-ticket for your flight with Air Baltic is included in your documentation pack. You must show this at the check-in desk along with your passport and you will be issued with your boarding pass. Online check-in is not available on these flights



Baggage Allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

With Easyjet and Air Baltic your ticket includes one hold bag of up to 20kg plus **one** cabin bag no bigger than 55 x 40 x 20 cm and weighing less than 8kg. Please note that personal bags (such as handbag or computer case) must be stored within you single piece of hand luggage.

Please contact the airline for further information <https://www.airbaltic.com/en/baggage>

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Departure Tax

The departure tax is included in the price of your flight tickets.

Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements. Please note that some airlines may charge for use of wheelchairs.



Accommodation

Hestia Ilmarine, Tallinn

The four-star Hestia Ilmarine Hotel is located close to the historical Old Town and is only a few minutes' walk away from the Port of Tallinn. The hotel offers a restaurant, bar, sauna & relaxation area and comfortable bedrooms with private bath/shower, hairdryer, TV, telephone, wi-fi, and safety-deposit box.

For more information please visit the hotel's website:

<https://www.hestiahotelgroup.com/>

Radisson Blu Latvija Hotel, Riga

The four-star Radisson Blu Latvija is located in the heart of the city close to all the museums and is only a 5 minute walk from the Old Town. The hotel offers 2 restaurants, and 3 bars – one of which offers fantastic views of the Old Town – and comfortable modern bedrooms with private bath/shower, hairdryer, air-conditioning, TV, telephone, mini-bar and coffee/tea making facilities.

For more information please visit the hotel's website:

<http://www.radissonblu.com/latvijahotel-riga>

Novotel Vilnius Centre, Vilnius

The four-star Holiday Inn Vilnius is located in the centre of town, near the atmospheric Old Town. The hotel's 'Rib Room' Restaurant serves a variety of delicious dishes, and the Lobby Bar offers a selection of over 100 different whiskies to try. Bedrooms are light and modern, with private bathroom facilities, TV, air-conditioning, hairdryer, minibar, telephone and tea/coffee making facilities.

For more information please visit the hotel's website:

<http://www.holidayinnvilnius.lt/>



Food

Largely based on seasonal and locally sourced produce, Baltic cuisine's main ingredients are meat, potatoes, vegetables such as cabbage, seafood, and a delicious, deep, black rye-bread.

Lithuania: Local specialities include *bigos* (meat and cabbage stew), *skilandis* (smoked meat), *salti barsciai* (cold beet soup), *cepelinai* (national dish made from grated potatoes with a minced meat filling), *vedarai* (potato sausage), *bulviniai blynai* (potato pancakes), and *smoked eel*. Sour cream is a favourite and frequently accompanies dishes or is used to prepare sauces.

Traditional Lithuanian sweets include fruit-based cakes, *Spurgos* (doughnuts), *Šakotis* (similar to the German Baumkuchen, or tree-cake), *Žagareliai* (thin deep-fried pastries, dusted with sugar), and mild white curd cheese, served with honey.

Latvia: Pork, sauerkraut, potatoes, sour cream (*skabs krejums*), dark rye-bread, and seasonal, locally grown vegetables are the main ingredients for everyday Latvian cuisine. In the coastal regions, seafood is plentiful – smoked fish (salmon and trout) and herring are the most common.

Delicious, warming soups are favourites – the cabbage *skabu kapostu zupa*, the meat-ball *Frikadelu zupa*, and sorrel soup with boiled pork, onions, potatoes and barley. Other local specialities include *kotletes* (meat patties), *piragi* (pastry filled with bacon and onions), and *Sklandu Rausi* (vegetable tarts).

Typical desserts include *Alexander Torte* (raspberry- or cranberry-filled pastry strips), *Debessmanna* (berry mousse), *Apple pie*, and *Rupjmaizes Kartojumus* (layered rye bread dessert with whipped cream and cranberry jam).

Estonia: Although Estonia has a long coastline, fish is rarely eaten as a main course, but rather as a hors d'oeuvre, smoked or slated. Traditional Estonian dishes include *Tallinn sprats* (small raw sprats preserved in brine and spices) spread on boiled eggs or bread and butter, *sült* (jellied veal), *täidetud vasikarind* (roast stuffed shoulder of veal), *rosolje* (vinaigrette with herring and beets) and *braised goose* stuffed with apples and plums. Pork with

sauerkraut and potatoes, blood sausage, boiled pork in aspic jelly, wild mushrooms in salads, smoked salmon, and of course sour cream, will also frequently feature on the menu.

Among popular desserts are *rhubarb cake* and *Kissell* (milk with sweetened berries).

For a three course meal with beer or a soft drink, it is hard to pay more than £15.00 in any of the three countries. It is common to tip 10%, and usually this discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants. Check the receipt to see if any further tipping is required.



Drink

Beer is possibly the most popular beverage in the Baltic region and each state has its own local breweries. The three States also share a fermented drink made from rye bread – Lithuanian *Gira*, Latvian *Kvass* and Estonian *Eesti Kali*. It is a delightfully refreshing non-alcoholic drink in the summer.

Lithuania:

Locally brewed beers, such as *Švyturys*, *Gubernija*, and *Tauras*, are popular and come in a range of strengths and darkness. Lithuanians also produce

different herb or fruit based spirits, such as *Trejos devynerios*, and excellent honey and herb mead (*Midus*).

Latvia:

Local Latvian beers include *Aldaris*, *Līvu*, *Senču*, and you will find plenty of beers produced in the great number of small microbreweries. Another local drink is *Riga's Black Balsam*, a thick, black alcoholic herbal drink which has been produced since 1700. Quite a strong drink on its own, it is often mixed in a cocktail, or a few spoons are added to coffee.

For a non-alcoholic drink, try the fresh fruit juices, made from local wild berries.

Estonia:

Beer is the most popular beverage in Estonia, and two of the country's oldest breweries are *A Le Coq* and *Saku*, both founded early 19th century.

Local liqueurs include *Vana Tallinn* (a spiced rum liqueur) and juniper and caraway-flavoured spirits, such as *Kännu Kukk*.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily



Destination

The 20th century was a complex and turbulent time for the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, but all three have emerged from these troubled times to become unique, fascinating and cosmopolitan destinations. Explore their capitals – Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn, each with its own, distinctive character and culture, as well as visiting other historical gems in each country.

Details of places of interest included in your tour:

Tallinn

Estonia's capital, Tallinn is a city on the rise. A delightful mix of the medieval and the modern, the old town is World Heritage-designated – a maze of narrow, cobbled streets overlooked by a charming muddle of 14th century churches and beautiful buildings. At the same time, new and exciting galleries of local artists, delightful boutiques, bar and restaurants are flourishing within the old city walls, sitting side by side with traditional artisans. This is the perfect city to take a leisurely stroll and soak up the atmosphere, enjoy a meal at one of the many restaurants serving cuisine from around the former USSR and beyond, or take in the main sights, that include the *Estonian Parliament Building*, the 1921 simple, pink, functional building and the contrasting Russian Alexander Nevsky *Cathedral*, an elaborate, powerful onion-domed structure completed in 1900 as a symbol of the Russian Empire.

For more information about Tallinn:
<http://www.tourism.tallinn.ee/eng>

Lahemaa National Park

Lahemaa, Estonia's first and largest national park, established in 1971, gives a beautiful overview of the landscapes of the country. Rich in flora and fauna, it is an extremely important conservation area within Europe, and home to many large mammals including moose, boar, brown bears and lynxes.

Located on the coast at the North of the Lahemaa are the beautiful **Altja** and **Käsmu**. With their row of houses built along a rocky shore, these two traditional fishing villages are delightful and offer stunning views of the sea.

The Jägala Waterfall sits on the lower course of the Jägala River, just 4kms from its mouth at the Gulf of Finland. An incredible sight in winter – its flow is suspended, frozen into thousands of icicles – it is equally impressive in the warmer months, with water gushing down from a height of 8 meters across its 50 metre width.

For more information about Lahemaa National Park:
<http://www.keskkonnaamet.ee/lahe-eng>

Pärnu

En route from Tallinn to Riga, we shall visit Estonia's "Summer Capital". The resort town of Pärnu huddles in an inlet of the Gulf of Riga boasting beautiful beaches, lush green spaces and a historical gem of a town centre – this is Estonia's most popular summer destination. The town also has some excellent museums and is also known as a health resort throughout Eastern Europe, where both old Soviet-style and glamorous, modern spas abound.

For more information about Pärnu:
<http://www.visitparnu.com/en/>

Riga

Riga, capital of Latvia, is in the middle of a renaissance, the restoration of its many magnificent old buildings and fairy-tale skyline of turrets and steeples making it one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. The largest of the three Baltic cities and a wonderfully vibrant place, Riga is a fascinating fusion of old and new. Riga's population is roughly 50% Latvian and 50% Russian, the cultures mixing harmoniously to make a delightful and cosmopolitan city.

The old town, a maze of narrow cobbled streets, located between the Daugava River and the city canal, boasts a wealth of historic buildings dating back to the 13th century and is best explored on foot. Highlights include the 1330 *Powder Tower*, the *Swedish Gate*, the *Executioner's House*, *Riga Castle* which now houses three museums, the 15th century *Three Brothers houses* on *Maza Pilsielā*, the *Parliament Building*, the *House of the Cat*, the *House of the Blackheads*, and many attractive medieval streets and squares. Riga is also home to some stunning churches, including them of *Our Lady of Sorrow*, *John's*, *St Saviour's*, *St Peter's*, and an impressive *Cathedral*.

Riga is particularly known for having the largest concentration of Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) architecture in the world and its new town is distinguished by this distinctive style. From 1896 to 1913 around a third of the buildings in Riga were built in the Art Nouveau style, the most extravagant of which are located on *Alberta Iela*, some of which were designed by Mikhail Eisenstein, father of the famous film director, Sergei. Other sights in this part of the city include the massive *Freedom Monument*, the tallest of its kind in Europe, the *Laima Clock*, the *National Opera House*, the *National Theatre*, the *Orthodox Cathedral* and several gracious parks. Further afield, the *Ethnographic Open Air Museum*, the *Motor Museum* and the beaches of *Jurmala* also reward exploration.

For more information about Riga:
<http://www.liveriga.com/en/>

Rundāle Palace

En route from Riga to Vilnius, a visit is made to *Rundāle Palace*, a magnificent vision of opulent Baroque and Rococo. Designed by Italian architect Francesco Bartholomeo Rastrelli, who, as the Russian court architect, also created the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg, this ornate palace with its extensive gardens was built in the 18th century as a summer retreat for the Dukes of Courland.

For more information about Rundāle Palace:
<http://rundale.net/>

Vilnius

Lithuania's capital Vilnius is home to Europe's largest Baroque old town – full of decadent churches, magnificent facades, narrow streets and intimate squares, this is picture-perfect city architecture. Main sights include the majestic *Cathedral*, dating from the 13th but drastically updated in the late 18th century, and *Cathedral Square*, the focal point of the city that is dominated by the 16th century *Belfry*. The Old Town's largest complex of buildings is the *University*, dating from 1570, which boasts a series of fine buildings including the *Library*, *Astronomical Observatory*, *Littera Bookshop*, *Church of St John*, *Belfry* and *Great Courtyard*.

At the top of the 48-metre high *Gediminas Hill* lies the *Higher Castle* which offers wonderful views of the city from its observation platform. Further down is the *Lower Castle*, transformed in the 16th century into a Royal Palace.

An enchanting place, Vilnius also has a hint of the Bohemian freethinker about it and has seen a huge Jewish influence which led to it being the scene of some of the worst atrocities of the Soviet era, something that you'll see remembered everywhere.

For more information about Vilnius:
<http://www.vilnius-tourism.lt/en/tourism>

Trakai

Located 28km west of Vilnius and formerly the capital of Lithuania lies the attractive lakeside town of Trakai, surrounded by water and sitting on five lakes. The city's lovely painstakingly restored *Island Castle* contains a fascinating history museum. Other sights include the Russian *Orthodox Church* and the *Church of the Assumption*.

For more information about Trakai:
<http://www.trakai-visit.lt/en/trakai>

Reading suggestions

Colin Thubron, *Among the Russians*.

Colin Thubron gives a beautifully descriptive and poetic account of his travels through Russia and Soviet States in the 1980s.

Stephan Collishaw, *The Last Girl*.

Novel set in Vilnius at the end of the 20th century – an ageing poet tells the story of his first love, Rachael, lost to him during the war.

Boris Zemtsov, *The Merry Baker of Riga*.

An enjoyable story of a small business setting up in ex-Soviet Latvia.

Anthony Powell, *Venusberg*.

Powell's second novel relates the story of a British journalist who relocates to a Baltic State.

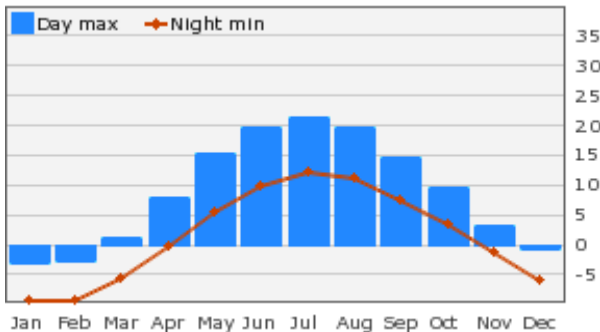
Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.



The Basics

Climate – The weather in the Baltic States at this time of year is likely to be pleasant. However, it can get chilly in the evenings, and there is always the chance of the odd shower, so our best advice is to be prepared.



Time – GMT +3 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 2 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian.

Religion – predominantly Roman Catholic (Lithuania), Lutheran and Catholic (Latvia), majority non-religious, with some 20% Christian (Estonia).

National holidays – Common to all three states: New Year's Day (01 Jan); Labour Day (01 May); St John's Day (24 Jun); Christmas Day (25 Dec); Boxing Day (26 Dec).

Lithuania: Independence Day (16 Feb); Restoration of the Lithuanian State (11 Mar); Easter Monday; Mother's Day; Father's Day; Anniversary of the Coronation of King Mindaugas (6 Jul); Assumption (15 Aug); All Saint's Day (1 Nov).

Latvia: Good Friday; Easter Monday; Declaration of Independence Day (4 May); Ligo (Midsummer's eve) (23 Jun); Independence Day (18 Nov); New Year's Eve (31 Dec).

Estonia: Independence Day (24 Feb); Good Friday; Whit Sunday; Victory Day (23 Jun); Restoration of Independence Day (20 Aug).

Currency –

Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a

transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe, although it has high mineral content and can be cloudy. Therefore, bottled water is safer and widely available.

Shops and museums – Shops and stores are generally open Mon-Fri 0900-2100. Many are also open at the weekend including Sundays. Please note that most museums are closed on Mondays.

Clothes & Shoes – You may like to bring medium weight clothing and a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – Bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone in the Baltic States, depending on your operator and contract.

Tipping – To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 20 7431 8201 or

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Embassy Vilnius

Antakalnio str. 2

Vilnius

LT-10308

Lithuania

Email: Consular.Vilnius@fco.gov.uk

Tel: +370 5246 2900

Fax: +370 5246 2901

Open Mon-Thu 0830-1645 and Fri 0830-1300.

British Embassy Riga

5, J.Alunana iela

Riga

LV 1010

Latvia

Email: britishembassy.riga@fco.gov.uk

Tel: +371 6777 4700

Fax: +371 6777 4707

Open Mon-Thu 0830-1300 and 1400-1700 and Fri 0830-1330.

British Embassy Tallinn

Wismari 6

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