

Baltic countries

Long-lasting Evasion from the Baltic Countries

8 days / 7 nights

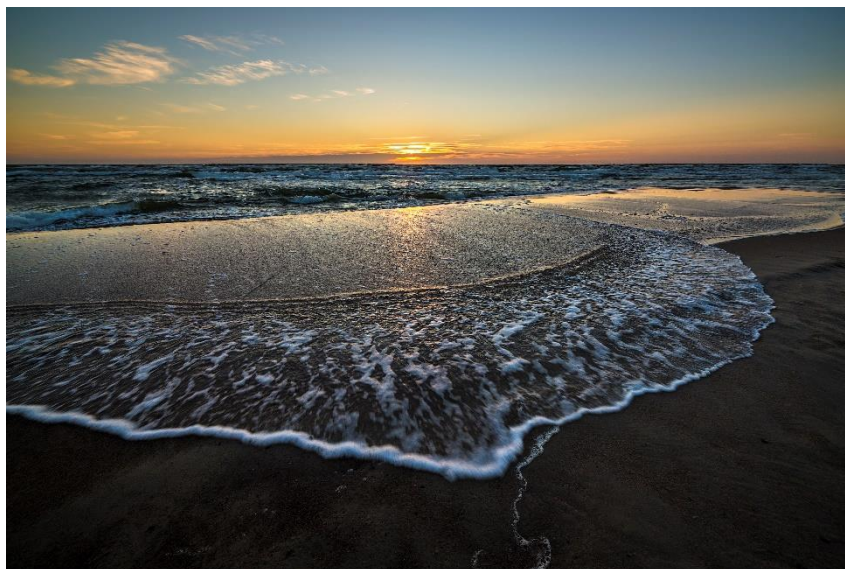
Must-see of 3 Countries on a Unique One-week Trip

Sustainable – Responsible – Solidarity

From € 2535 € vat included

Summer 2024

Small guided group of up to 12 travelers: an intimate and personalized experience. Unique itinerary featuring off-the-beaten-path sites for an authentic discovery. Small, non-chain 3-star accommodations in city centers. Full board with 3 dinners on your own: local cuisine and tastings. Carbon footprint offset : your participation helps plant trees!"



BENEFITS OF OUR SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

- Small group of up to 12 travelers: personalized experience
- Expert French-speaking guide-accompanist: local and certified
- Unique and local itinerary: reducing the impact of mass tourism
- Gourmet selection: specialty meals, organic options, tastings, dinners with drinks included
- Varied and sustainable transportation: minibus (CO2: <200 g/km), boat, tram, cable car
- Astonishing experience: secret Soviet-era nuclear bunker
- Private tour of the Museum of Fine Arts: named best museum in Europe in 2008
- Carbon footprint offset: ~50 trees planted per group and individual certificate with the Lithuanian National Untouchable Forest Fund (full offset including flights Roissy-Vilnius and Tallinn-Roissy, minibus travel, water, electricity, and waste consumption)
- 100% drinkable tap water: reusable BPA-free bottle provided
- Choice of original and authentic optional activities

Itinerary

DAY 1 | PARIS / VILNIUS – ARRIVAL, WELCOME, AND FIRST DISCOVERY



Departure on a scheduled flight to Lithuania. Arrival in Vilnius.

You will be welcomed at the airport and transferred to the hotel located in the old town (a UNESCO World Heritage site). Settle in and enjoy some free time for your first exploration of the Lithuanian capital, depending on your flight schedule. Dinner is at your leisure.

The beauty and charm of this city, founded in 1323, have been shaped by a variety of cultures, including Lithuanian, Polish, Jewish, and Russian influences. As the easternmost Western European city, Vilnius exudes a cultural crossroads ambiance within its baroque UNESCO World Heritage district.

Overnight stay in Vilnius, in a 3-star hotel in the old town.

OPTION: Hot air balloon flight over the red rooftops of old Vilnius or Trakai Castle!

DAY 2 | ACADEMIC SPIRIT, WORLD HERITAGE, AND BAROQUE ARCHITECTURE OF VILNIUS; TRAKAI, A TYPICAL LAKESIDE VILLAGE AND ITS CASTLE (60 km – 09h/18h)

After breakfast, meet your guide-accompanist to discuss the itinerary of your trip. You will also receive your travel booklet, a sweet treat, and a reusable BPA-free bottle.

Embark on **a walking tour** to discover the must-see sights of Vilnius. Begin with a visit to the Gates of Dawn, featuring the remnants of the city's walls and the famous Chapel of the Mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a sacred site for pilgrims and Catholic believers. Explore the upper part of the city, revealing stunning churches such as the Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church of St. Casimir, and the Church of St. Theresa. Stroll through the Town Hall Square, home to ancient merchant guilds, and the adjacent Jewish Quarter, which highlights the rich history of the Jewish community in Vilnius that comprised nearly half of the city's population before World War II.



Visit Vilnius University with its 16th-century courtyards, frescoed halls, and the Church of St. John with its beautiful baroque organ. Explore the Church of St. Anne, considered a masterpiece of

northern Gothic architecture, and the Cathedral of St. Stanislaus and St. Ladislaus, known for the Chapel of St. Casimir.

At noon, **depart for Trakai**, the former capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, located 27 kilometers from Vilnius within a national park dotted with 15 glacial lakes. Trakai is a picturesque village inhabited by the Karaim minority ; there are only about 60 Karaim descendants remaining in the village today, but they have preserved their culture with their own temple, school, and culinary traditions. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant and sample Karaim specialties. After lunch, explore the historic district with its quaint wooden houses and take a boat ride for a cruise around the famous red-brick island castle. Enjoy free time for a pleasant stroll along the lake.

Return to Vilnius. Spending an evening in Vilnius allows you to enjoy the many inner courtyards transformed into lively terraces. Take your time to wander through the narrow streets of the old town and visit the Republic of Artists.

In the evening, enjoy a **welcome dinner** with Lithuanian specialties and local craft beer with your guide.

Overnight in Vilnius at a 3-star hotel in the old town.

DAY 3 | THE INSPIRATION OF VILNIUS TO HILL OF CROSSES, REUNIONS AT RUSTIC MANOR, AND THE ROCOCO OF RUNDALĒ PALACE (380 km – 08h30/19h30)



This morning, your guide will take you to discover the magnificent **Church of St. Peter and St. Paul**, a baroque masterpiece with 2,000 stucco sculptures. Begin your journey to Riga and make a stop in Pakruojis to visit a rustic manor run by an architect family. You will meet the owners, tour the manor, and enjoy lunch in their home.

Next, proceed to Šiauliai, where you will visit the famous **Hill of Crosses** (Kryžiu Kalnas). This site features thousands of crosses planted on two twin mounds and draws pilgrims and tourists from around the world. Starting with just a few hundred crosses erected in the late 19th century, believed to offer spiritual and physical healing, the site grew significantly during the Soviet era as a symbol of resistance against imposed atheism, and especially after the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1993.

Continue towards **Rundāle**, known for its extravagant palace set in bucolic surroundings. Enjoy a guided tour of the palace, designed by Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, the master architect of the Russian imperial court and the creator of the Winter Palace (the Hermitage). Discover the rooms of this baroque-rococo summer residence of the dukes, including the throne room, the white room, galleries, the duke's apartments, and the duchess's boudoir. The former Duchy of Courland, which existed between 1561 and 1795 and prospered from agriculture, even had two overseas colonies and gave life to Dorothea of Courland, companion of Talleyrand and heiress to his wealth.

Afterward, head towards the **Salaspils memorial**, erected on the very site where the Nazis gathered tens of thousands of people in 39 barracks between 1941 and 1944. Jews and resistants from Latvia and other occupied countries were massacred here. The memorial, which stands today in a large clearing, consists of a large inclined concrete monument called the "Wall of Life and Death," marked with the words: "Beyond this gate, the earth moans." The centerpiece of the memorial is a gigantic concrete bunker that you can enter.

The final leg of the journey takes you to Riga. Settle into your hotel in the old town and enjoy dinner at a typical restaurant with local specialties. Riga, the capital of Latvia and the metropolis of the Baltic States, is home to nearly 800,000 inhabitants. Founded in 1201, it preserves its medieval old town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, the ring of gardens, elegant grand boulevards, a picturesque canal, and the famous Art Nouveau district.

Overnight in Riga at a 3-star hotel in the UNESCO heritage district.

DAY 4 | RIGA: EXTREME RICHNESS OF ART NOUVEAU AND DAILY LIFE ON ITS STREETS, SQUARES, FOOD MARKET, AND LOCAL TRAMWAY (09h00/14h00)

Panoramic Tour of Riga and Discovery of the **Art Nouveau District** Your day begins with a guided tour showcasing the architectural richness of Riga, particularly its Art Nouveau district, which boasts more than 800 impressive facades. Enjoy a stroll through this neighborhood, admiring the intricate designs and details that make it unique. After the tour, take a break at a café that houses Art Nouveau objects and furniture, giving you a taste of this emblematic style.



Next, **hop on a local tram** that passes by the National Opera House and leads you to **Riga Central Market**. The market, housed in five former Zeppelin hangars, is a UNESCO World Heritage site, just like Riga's old town. Dating back to the 1930s, each hangar is dedicated to a specific specialty, such as butcheries and vegetable stalls. This visit offers an excellent opportunity to discover local delicacies.

Enjoy a walking tour of **the old town, exploring** its essential landmarks: the House of the Black Heads, Riga Castle, the Three Brothers, the Freedom Monument, the ancient city walls, and the churches of St. Peter, St. Jacob, and St. John. You'll also have an interior visit of the Dome Cathedral, renowned for its vast central nave, one of the world's largest organs with 6,718 pipes, and its historic cloister. Take in a 20-minute **organ concert** during your visit. Lunch will be served at a local restaurant as part of your tour. The late afternoon is yours to enjoy at your leisure. You can ask your guide for recommendations on places to explore or simply wander the streets and let yourself be surprised.

Overnight in Riga at a 3-star hotel in the UNESCO heritage district.

OPTION: Take a historic boat cruise on the canal and river, followed by a visit to the House of the Black Heads, where you can enjoy a glass of sparkling wine.

DAY 5 | GAUJA NATIONAL PARK: ESCAPE INTO PICTURESQUE NATURE FILLED WITH FOLKLORE AND SECRETS OF THE PAST (120 km – 0900/18:h00)



After this morning on a trip to **the Gauja National Park**, nicknamed the "Swiss Alps of Latvia." Founded in 1972, the park protects the deep valley of the Gauja River with its medieval castles, unique villages, and natural monuments. Take a ride on **the cable car** to cross the Gauja Valley and admire "The Big Green." A short walk through the forest leads you to **Gutman's Cave**.

Spend a good hour in the Turaida Open-Air Museum. This large green space includes the manor house with its typical buildings and pond system, the park of famous sculptor Indulis Ranka, the still-functioning 17th-century wooden church, the tomb of the legendary Rose of Turaida, and the ruins of the red-brick Episcopal castle. Have lunch in a tavern that serves as a refuge for hikers.

Continue to the **village of Ligatne**, once a paper mill center run by the merchant Mentzendorff, who supplied high-quality paper to the Russian emperors. The paper mill provided its workers with housing, heating wood, schools, daycares, and a leisure club in exchange for a below-average salary. Today, with the mill closed, the village has become a tourist destination filled with curiosities: the old mill, typical workers' houses, hiking trails, and 365 caves carved into the sandstone for storing products. Visit a site carefully hidden until the collapse of the USSR—**the anti-nuclear bunker** of the communist elite, located under a wellness hotel. Travel back in time and enjoy a Soviet-style snack in the bunker's canteen.

Upon arrival in **Cēsis**, the town where the Latvian flag was born, stroll through the old town with its St. John's Church and massive ruins of the medieval castle, once the largest fortress of the Livonian Order.

End this unique day with dinner at **Ungurmuiža**—an exquisite 18th-century wooden baroque manor that has survived wars and fires intact, preserving its mural paintings. Surrounded by a magnificent park of centuries-old oaks, it's an absolutely magical place.

Enjoy the evening at your leisure and spend the night at a 3-star hotel in the heart of Cēsis.

DAY 6 | IN SEARCH OF THE BALTIC WAY OF LIFE IN DECADENT TOWNS, BUCOLIC COUNTRYSIDE, AND SANDY BEACHES OF THE BALTIC SEA (320 km – 09h00/18h00)

This morning, immerse yourself in the Central Lands (Vidzeme region) of Latvia, beginning with **a private visit to the Lielstraupe Castle**. Recently opened to the public after serving as a detox hospital, this rustic neo-baroque castle dates back to the 13th century when it was known as Schloß Gross-Roop.



Excursion to the **typical town of Limbaži** to gain a better understanding of local life in rural Latvia through a visit to an organic farm that produces goat cheese and ice cream—enjoy a bio tasting and lunch with the locals.

Head to **Pärnu, a seaside town on the Baltic Sea**, for a relaxing walk along the sea to the old town of this former Hanseatic port of Embecke. Then, continue on the direct route to Tallinn. Upon arrival, take **a panoramic tour** of the third Baltic capital and its surroundings: the Pirita district, a marina developed for the 1980 Olympics, and the stage of the Singing Revolution. Check-in at the hotel. Orientation walk and dinner at a local restaurant. Free evening to start exploring the city, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997, Tallinn's old town is one of the most beautiful medieval towns in Europe with its fortifications, cobblestone and steep streets, numerous churches, and beautiful residences. Take a walking tour of the city's ancient quarters. Over the centuries and through successive occupations, the city has been enriched with numerous monuments built in a variety of architectural styles.

Overnight in Tallinn, 3-star hotel in the city center.

DAY 7 | TALLINN: MEDIEVAL AND VIBRANT - A FORTRESS WITH INCREDIBLE RAMPARTS AND TOWERS, UNKNOWN FINE ARTS, AND DIGITAL CULTURE (9h00 AM – 3h00 PM - 4 hours of walking)



Discover the upper town dominated by **Toompea Fortress**, home to the Estonian Parliament, the Orthodox cathedral, and beautiful historic mansions. Visit the **Dome Church** with its collection of coats of arms and tombstones. From a height, you can admire the views from the Patkuli and Kohtu viewing platforms. Among other things, you'll enjoy an impressive view of the ramparts surrounding the lower town.

Take a local tram to Kadriorg Park with its palace (exterior visit only, as the palace has not preserved its original interior). The palace was built by Tsar Peter the Great in 1718 in honor of his wife, Catherine I. The summer residence and park were designed by Italian architect Niccolò Michetti. Take **a guided tour** of one of Europe's best fine arts museums, KUMU.

Return to **the old town**. Stroll along the medieval ramparts and continue with a tour of the lower town, which has preserved its medieval spirit since the 13th century. Visit the Town Hall Square, surrounded by splendid medieval buildings and wealthy Hanseatic homes that reflect the city's prosperity and the merchants of the time. Visit St. Catherine's Passage with its Estonian handicraft guilds. To end the tour, treat yourself to a **medieval-style meal** and enjoy **artisanal marzipan** at Tallinn's oldest café, founded in 1864.

The late afternoon is free for your personal explorations—take a stroll through old Tallinn.

Dinner on your own. Tallinn's friendly bars offer a pleasant way to extend your evening.

Overnight in Tallinn, 3-star hotel in the city center.

OPTION : Authentic Afternoon - 3 hours with guide: visit the food market in the popular wooden neighborhood, the industrial district of the former brick factory converted into creative and leisure spaces, and the Port of Nobel with its unique architecture. Tour the maritime museum located in the historic seaplane port with access to the submarine.

DAY 8 | LAST DAY IN THE BALTIC STATES - TALLINN / PARIS

Depending on your flight schedule, morning/day free. Then, organized transfer to Tallinn International Airport and return flight to Paris. Upon individual request, this trip can be extended with a stay in Helsinki, which is just a 2-hour journey by high-speed ferry across the Gulf of Finland.

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Price per person in Euros vat included	
Adult in twin or double room	€ 2535
Single supplement	€ 300

Departures in 2024 :

May 17 to 24
June 21 to 28
July 12 to 19
July 26 to August 02
August 09 to 16
August 23 to 30

OUR RATES INCLUDE :

- Regular Air Baltic flights from Paris to Vilnius and from Tallinn to Paris in economy class
- Taxes of €145 as of today, subject to change
- Small group guarantee - never more than 12 travelers
- 7 nights in 3-star hotels located in historic districts (attractions and restaurants within 3-7 minutes' walk)
- Full board (3 free meals): 7 buffet-style breakfasts; 6 typical lunches, including meals with local hosts and local specialties; 4 typical dinners with wine or beer; 3 tastings/snacks
- French-speaking native or resident guide from the region
- Air-conditioned 19-seat minibus transportation (pollution standard : Euro 6, CO2: <200 g/km)
- Organized airport transfers in Vilnius and Tallinn
- Boat trip on Lake Galve in Lithuania (in case of bad weather - indoor castle tour)
- Cable car ride across the Gauja Valley in Latvia
- Private guided tours according to the itinerary, including UNESCO cities, Pakruojis Manor, Rundale Castle, Art Nouveau district in Riga, the secret Soviet bunker of the nomenklatura, Straupe rural manor, and organic farm in the Limbazi region
- Special experiences: organ concert in Riga, National Art Museum in Tallinn
- Admission fees: Vilnius University, Rundale Castle, Riga Cathedral, Turaida Castle and Park, Dome Church in Tallinn
- Carbon footprint compensation : neutralizing the impact of the round-trip flight (direct) and the journey on-site : 5 trees planted per person + individual certificate
- Travel guidebook with maps, tips + reusable bottle + artisanal chocolate
- O-Nord Premium 24/7 assistance in case of emergency
- Free assistance insurance

OUR RATES DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Gratuities for the tour guide and local guides if their service exceeds your expectations (suggestion: €25 per traveler) and driver (suggestion: €15 per traveler): 100% of tips go directly to the guides and drivers
- "PREMIUM" Multirisk Cancellation Insurance (please contact us)

Optional Extras:

- VILNIUS OPTION €165 per person: hot air balloon flight over the red rooftops of old Vilnius (3 hours total, 1 hour flight)
- RIGA OPTION €45 per person: cruise on a small historic boat on the canal and river + tour of the House of the Brotherhood of Black Heads with a glass of sparkling wine (2.5 hours total)
- TALLINN OPTION €65 per person: guided tour of "Behind the Scenes of Tallinn": food market, industrial district repurposed into creative spaces, old workers' houses, Nobel port and sea views, seaplane harbor maritime museum + access to the submarine; drink (beer or wine); bus ticket (3 hours total)