

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



The Baltic Capitals

2025

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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The Baltic Capitals Small Group Adventure

Lithuania: Vilnius, Klaipeda | **Latvia:** Riga | **Estonia:** Tallinn | **Finland:** Helsinki

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

16 days starting from \$5,195

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/blt2025pricing

Travel to the Baltics and discover the turrets, spires, and cobbled streets of Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn—three Baltic capitals that managed to lovingly preserve the timeless elegance of their Old Towns as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Then, ferry across the Baltic Sea to Finland's capital, Helsinki, for a walking tour of this coastal gem, a visit to a family farm in the Finnish countryside, and more.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 14 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 31 meals—14 breakfasts, 10 lunches, and 7 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 24 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Please Note: Travelers purchasing their own international flights will be responsible for additional internal flight costs.

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Vilnius, Lithuania
2-4	Vilnius
5-6	Klaipeda
7-9	Riga, Latvia
10-12	Tallinn, Estonia
13-15	Helsinki, Finland
16	Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Poland: Krakow, Auschwitz & Warsaw

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$2,095**

Lapland, Finland

POST-TRIP: 4 nights from **\$2,095**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Krakow** before your Poland pre-trip extension from **\$220** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Vilnius** before your main adventure from **\$130** per room, per night

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Pacing: 5 locations in 15 days, two full travel days by motorcoach

Physical requirements: You should be able to walk 2-5 miles unassisted over the course of each day, and over cobblestone city streets in Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn, and participate in 6-8 hours of daily physical activity

Flight Time: Travel time will be 12-20 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/blt

THE BALTICS: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Discover the multi-faceted culture of the Baltic region from many perspectives, such as a glimpse into everyday Latvian life in Riga when we break into even smaller groups of 4-6 travelers and join a local family to share stories and experiences over a **Home-Hosted Dinner**. Plus, embark on a rustic 40-passenger wooden boat, the *Galve*, for a private excursion to a Lithuanian island to meet descendants of the ancient Turkish Kipchak tribe and savor a lunch of traditional Karaite specialties.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Enjoy our **A Day in the Life** of a Latvian goat farm in Ceni Parish, learning about what it takes to raise a prize-winning herd and about the challenges of rural life. We'll also participate in a discussion about the **Controversial Topic** of Soviet monuments being removed from Latvia. Plus, visit Lithuania's Cold War Museum, located inside a former Soviet bunker that was once top secret.

The Baltic Capitals

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Poland: Krakow, Auschwitz & Warsaw*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive in Krakow, Poland

Day 3 Explore Krakow

Day 4 Explore Auschwitz

Day 5 Depart for Warsaw • Explore Podgorze and Kazimierz

Day 6 Explore Warsaw • Optional Chopin recital

Day 7 Depart for Vilnius, Lithuania • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

- Destination: Vilnius

Afternoon/Evening: Depart the U.S. on an overnight flight to Vilnius, Lithuania.

Day 2 Arrive in Vilnius, Lithuania

- Destination: Vilnius
- Accommodations: Congress Avenue Hotel or similar

Afternoon: Upon arrival in Vilnius, meet your fellow travelers including those from the pre-trip extension to *Poland: Krakow, Auschwitz & Warsaw* and those who arrived early in Vilnius before their main adventure. We'll set off on an orientation walk with our Trip Experience Leader before dinner.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—you are free to explore more of the area or retire to your room to rest after your flight.

Day 3 Explore Vilnius • KGB Museum visit

- Destination: Vilnius
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Congress Avenue Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Following a Welcome Briefing at the hotel, we'll embark on a walking tour of the Lithuanian capital. Vilnius distinguished itself as an important cultural center when Vilnius University opened in 1579, immediately attracting students from as far away as Sweden and Hungary. The 20th century proved a turbulent time for the Baltic city, but its historic buildings survived. We begin our exploration by walking the cobbled streets of the city's compact Old Town to admire the carefully restored Baroque buildings and medieval charm that earned it UNESCO World Heritage status. We'll also explore the Jewish Ghetto, President's Palace area and linked courtyards of Vilnius University.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Old Town.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll have a choice of taking public transportation back to the hotel or visiting the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights—commonly called the “KGB Museum” because it occupies the former KGB headquarters. For much of the 20th century, Vilnius was under communist Soviet occupation, both before and after a three-year Nazi occupation during World War II. We'll view exhibits that serve as a memorial to the victims of the atrocities that took place here, including a walk through the prison where the KGB held dissidents and freedom fighters. Your discoveries here will be led by a local historian and researcher.

Dinner: Get to know your fellow travelers a little better during an included Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

Evening: The remainder of your night is free.

Day 4 Vilnius • Excursion to Trakai **• Experience Karai culture •** **Home-Hosted Dinner**

- Destination: Vilnius
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Congress Avenue Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: A local expert will join us at the hotel, likely a journalist or university lecturer, to discuss Lithuania's past, present, and struggle for independence. Then, we'll take a brief journey outside of Vilnius to Trakai, considered the de facto medieval Lithuanian capital because Duke Vytautas the Great preferred the natural landscape punctuated by azure lakes and lush islands over Vilnius. First, we take a short boat ride on Lake Galve to catch a view

of Trakai Castle, a red brick, fairy-tale fortress built by Vytautas and his father in the early 15th century to fend off German knights.

After our visit, we'll venture to the Karai community tavern to meet with local Karaims who belong to the oldest Turkish tribe—Kipchaks. This ethnic group was brought from Crimea to Trakai in the 14th century to act as bodyguards for the castle. There are fewer than 250 people remaining in this indigenous group today. Next, our small group will enjoy a Karai cooking demonstration led by a local chef, after which we'll try our hand at traditional Karaite specialties, such as *kibinai* (savory meat pastries).

Lunch: We'll enjoy the fruits of our labor for lunch. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about a community leader working hard to preserve a waning local culture, as well as to learn new cooking techniques.

Afternoon: After returning to Vilnius, the remainder of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries.

Later, we'll drive to our **Home-Hosted Dinner**. This special meal will be your opportunity to truly connect with Lithuanian culture in an intimate, comfortable setting: a family home.

Dinner: The families we'll be dining with this evening are likely all middle class, making their livings as teachers, engineers, small business owners, and healthcare workers. Our cultural conversation will be served up alongside typical Lithuanian dishes, all handmade by our hosts.

Evening: The rest of the evening is free for your own discoveries.

Day 5 Rumsiskes Open-Air Museum • Travel to Klaipeda

- Destination: Klaipeda
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: National Hotel Klaipeda or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: On our way to Klaipeda, we'll stop at Rumsiskes to explore an open-air ethnographic museum. We'll walk through a collection of 18th- and 19th-century rural dwellings and farmsteads, gaining insights into the history, lifestyles, and character of Lithuania's four main regions. We'll also meet with a local resident to learn about regional folk traditions and ceremonies. We'll also visit a dwelling used by people from Lithuania who were deported to Siberia by the communists, referred to as a *yurta*.

Lunch: At a local tavern en route to Klaipeda. Here, we'll meet with the owners who will welcome us to this traditional eatery and tell us about their life and culture.

Afternoon: Upon our arrival in Klaipeda—Lithuania's oldest city—you can relax or join your Trip Experience Leader for a vicinity walk around your hotel.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on the best locales for whatever your preferences are.

Evening: You have the rest of the evening on your own.

Day 6 Klaipeda • Curonian Spit • Hill of Witches

- Destination: Klaipeda
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: National Hotel Klaipeda or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll take a short ferry ride to the Curonian Peninsula. Klaipeda is the gateway to a coastal stretch known as the Curonian Spit, a massive sand dune peninsula that is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Separated by a protected lagoon on one side and exposed to the harsh Baltic Sea on the other, the Curonian Spit was once a settlement of a now nearly extinct Baltic ethnic group, the Curonians (Kuršiai). Our discoveries include a search along the beaches for amber—known as Baltic gold—that washes up during storms. We'll also come face-to-face with Lithuanian legends as we hike to the "Hill of Witches," an outdoor sculpture gallery located on a forested sand dune. We'll journey through a dense, lush path lined with more than 80 unique wooden sculptures based on mythological figures, including the dramatic Queen of Serpents statue, goblins, and devils.

Lunch: In the private tavern of a local family.

Afternoon: We'll visit an amber workshop and gallery located in Nida. The Baltic region contains the largest deposit of natural amber in the world, dating back approximately 44 million years. This industry is a major source of income for the area. Here, we'll enjoy a hands-on masterclass and demonstration given by an artisan, where we'll learn about the many uses for this beautiful fossil resin—and even get to take home our own amber necklace. We'll also sample a special vodka produced with amber before returning to Klaipeda.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You're free to continue your discoveries as you'd like.

Day 7 Klaipeda • Travel to Riga, Latvia

- Destination: Riga
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Ridzene Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: On our way to Riga, Latvia, we'll stop to visit the Cold War museum. Located inside a former Soviet bunker that was once top secret, the museum boasts a collection of authentic machinery and propaganda posters from the Cold War era as well as a well-preserved nuclear missile shaft.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll visit the Hill of Crosses. This grassy double hillock is blanketed by about 100,000 crosses and is considered a historically significant site for Lithuanian Catholics. Our Trip Experience Leader will walk us through the legacy of this religious group in the region before we continue our journey to Riga, the Latvian capital.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—perhaps you'll start your explorations of Riga before tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 8 Explore Riga • Controversial Topic: The removal of Soviet-era monuments in Latvia • Visit Rumbala Holocaust Memorial & Salaspils labor camp

- Destination: Riga
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Ridzene Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll start our day with a conversation with a local on the **Controversial Topic** of Soviet monuments in Latvia, and why there is a big push from the public today to dismantle and remove these relics of a past era. Just recently, Riga removed the central stone obelisk of a monument that was dedicated to the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany during World War II, due to the fact that it was decorated with Soviet iconography. The monument, built in 1985 while Latvia was controlled by the Soviets, has been a controversial image since 1991, when Latvia gained its independence from a collapsing USSR.

While many in Latvia consider this a way to heal from the traumas of the past, there is a large, ethnically Russian population in Latvia that feels different, and usually lay flowers and other tokens at monuments like this to remember the sacrifices made by the soliders of the past. Recently, however, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, tensions have flared, pushing Latvia to remove these monuments. We'll be able to discuss this recent development and the implications it has for the future with a local.

Later, we'll depart for our walking city tour of Riga. Set close to the mouth of the Daugava River, which travels from the Baltic Sea, Riga was historically an important trade port. Its prosperity also made it a target for conquerors; before Latvia declared itself an independent nation in 1918, Riga was claimed by countries like Sweden, Lithuania, and Germany. As a diverse, thriving city with a prominent upper class, Riga experienced radical change under occupation by the Soviets and Nazis. Riga was heavily damaged during World War II, but buildings from Riga's most prosperous eras—particularly the Art Nouveau period—still stand throughout the city as every effort was made to reconstruct those buildings,

such as St. Peter's Church. Today, Riga is a vibrant cosmopolitan city, revered as an artistic hub, particularly in the realm of ballet. Mikhail Baryshnikov, arguably the most famous male ballet dancer in the world, was actually born in Riga when it was under Soviet rule and still currently resides here.

Our tour begins in Riga's Art Nouveau district, where we'll be led by a local guide and see how this architectural style influences the city today. Riga contains among the highest concentration of Art Nouveau architecture in the world, making it an excellent place to seek out this distinct style. Most buildings were designed in the early 20th century and generally represent one of four niches within the architectural genre: eclectic, perpendicular, national romantic, and neo-classical.

Then we'll take a tram to a local market, where we'll meet vendors and peruse goods, before slowly making our way to Riga's Old Town, a dizzying collection of cobbled lanes, gargoyle-adorned buildings, and lovingly restored 17th-century architectural treasures. Led by a local guide, we'll walk approximately one hour down the main avenues, familiarizing ourselves with important landmarks as we go and giving us the opportunity to gather ideas for how to spend our free time in the afternoon.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide dining suggestions, if you'd like.

Afternoon: You may choose to join us for a visit to Salaspils labor camp, which was established in 1941 during the Nazi regime and saw the demise of thousands. Although Salaspils was not technically a concentration camp, there was still much violence and extremely poor living conditions in this so-called "labor correctional camp." Here, our Trip Experience Leader will lead us through the camp, shedding light on the resilience of its survivors. We'll also witness

the Soviet sculptures, whose looming figures represent themes such as humiliation and solidarity to honor the trials and triumphs of all who passed through the camp's doors.

Next, we'll drive to the Rumbala Memorial, which commemorates the lives lost in Latvia during the Holocaust. Your Trip Experience Leader will explain the meaning of this monument as you explore.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. You may retire to your room to get some sleep. Or, perhaps you and your fellow travelers will head to the hotel's bar for a nightcap to discuss your discoveries thus far.

Day 9 *A Day in the Life of a* Latvian goat farm

- Destination: Riga
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Radisson Blu Ridzene Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our day begins with a journey outside of Riga to enjoy our *A Day in the Life* of a family-owned goat farm located in the municipality of Ceni Parish. Founded in 1992, this award-winning farm is among the first and largest goat breeding facilities and milk producers in Latvia. During our time here, we'll meet with the owner, learn about the history of the property—including how it was impacted by Soviet occupation—and have a chance to help with daily chores as we tour the grounds. Later this morning, we'll help to prepare some food for lunch.

Lunch: We'll sit down with our hosts to enjoy the lunch we helped to prepare.

Afternoon: You'll have a little more free time to spend on the farm. You might choose to get to know the owner or observe the farm workers. Whatever you choose to do, this is a unique opportunity to learn about animal husbandry and small business practices.

Later this afternoon, we'll bid farewell to our hosts and drive back to our hotel, where we'll have the remainder of the day free for our own discoveries.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for a recommendation or discover somewhere new to try.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries.

Day 10 Travel to Tallinn, Estonia • Visit Parnu • Song Festival Grounds visit

- Destination: Tallinn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hestia Hotel Europa or similar

Activity Note: Today will be a particularly long travel day. Our bus transfer from Riga to Tallinn will take approximately 8 hours, with several included stops along the way.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. This is a long drive of approximately 8 hours, which we will break up throughout the day. Our first stop is in Parnu. Here, we'll have a chance to stretch our legs and catch a glimpse of Estonia's premier seaside resort during a short walk led by our Trip Experience Leader.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Parnu.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Tallinn after lunch. Once we reach the city, our first stop will be to the Song Festival grounds. Tallinn was the site of Estonia's "Singing Revolution"—a series of protests

in the late 1980s where thousands gathered and sang for independence from the Soviet Union. After four years of singing and other acts of protest, Estonia achieved something remarkable—independence from the Soviets through a relatively bloodless revolution. Today, Tallinn manages to preserve its history and quaint medieval buildings, while at the same time continuously evolving and modernizing. As the home of the only technical university in Estonia, Tallinn has earned a reputation as quite the technology hub.

After some time to explore, we'll drive to our hotel, concluding our journey for the day. Once there, we will receive our room assignments and check into our hotel, which is conveniently located near Tallinn's Old Town. Enjoy some free time to settle in before dinner.

Dinner: We will enjoy dinner together at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—you are free to explore Tallinn, the northernmost of the Baltic capitals, on your own or retire to your room to rest after a long day of travel.

Day 11 Explore Tallinn

- Destination: Tallinn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hestia Hotel Europa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We begin our day in the Upper Town of Tallinn, where we'll set out on a guided walking tour of the historical Old Town. During our tour, we'll explore notable sites and wander Tallinn's ancient, cobbled streets. Estonia's capital and largest city, Tallinn, sits on the Bay of Finland, directly across from Helsinki. Due to its history and geographic location, we'll find Scandinavian influences in the language and culture here. We'll begin our explorations in the

city's UNESCO World Heritage–designated Old Town, a tangled warren of historic streets lined with outdoor cafés and wonderfully preserved 14th- and 15th-century buildings. Our tour will end in the Town Hall Square.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, enjoy some free time to explore. Perhaps you'd like to visit the Marzipan Room to learn about Tallinn's affinity for the confection, which your Trip Experience Leader will be glad to assist with.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide suggestions.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries.

Day 12 Tallinn • Conversation about Estonia—Now and Then • Optional *Olde Hansa Medieval Feast*

- Destination: Tallinn
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hestia Hotel Europa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin our morning with an enlightening talk on Estonia—Now and Then. We'll meet with a local resident and learn about the country's struggle for independence and the changes that have taken place in recent years. Afterwards, we'll enjoy a guided tour of the Kumu Art Museum, which features collections of Estonian art from the 18th century to the present day.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: The remainder of the day free to explore on their own.

Later, you may join our optional *Olde Hansa Medieval Feast* tour, which features dinner at Olde Hansa, a restaurant that recreates life

during medieval times. You'll be seated at a long candle-lit table and enjoy typical dishes of the period prepared from original recipes and cooking methods.

Dinner: On your own for travelers not on the optional tour.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like, whether that's retiring early or seeking out local nightlife in Tallinn.

Day 13 Tallinn • Ferry to Helsinki, Finland

- Destination: Helsinki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Clarion Collection Hotel Katajanokka or similar

Activity Note: Today will include a ferry ride to Helsinki, Finland, of approximately two hours.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll take a quick bus ride to the Tallinn ferry terminal. There, we'll board a ferry for a 50-mile journey across the Baltic Sea to Helsinki, Finland.

Lunch: On your own in Helsinki. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Afternoon: Check in to your hotel and enjoy some free time to relax and settle in, or begin exploring Helsinki on your own.

Later, our Trip Experience Leader will take us on an orientation walk around the area of our hotel.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You are free to enjoy the facilities of our hotel, retire to your room, or take in the nightlife of Helsinki.

Day 14 Explore Helsinki

- Destination: Helsinki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Clarion Collection Hotel Katajanokka or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Built along a series of peninsulas and islands jutting into the Baltic coast along the Gulf of Finland, Helsinki was founded in 1550. It became Finland's capital in 1812, when it was rebuilt by the tsars of Russia. With most of its attractions and architectural gems located in a relatively compact historic center, this will be the focus of our walking tour this morning. As we explore the streets and squares of this beautiful coastal city, we'll see how it has emerged as a masterpiece of modern urban design while still maintaining a small-town feel.

We'll wrap up our tour in Helsinki's Market Square in the city center. Adjacent to Market Square is Helsinki's famous Old Market Hall. Built in the late 1800s, the covered mall is home to a variety of cafés, bakeries, fishmongers, fresh produce stalls, and more. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead you into the market and around some of the stalls, perhaps introducing you to some of the vendors and pointing out the uniquely Finnish wares.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: You have the remainder of the day to explore on your own. Helsinki is filled with world-class museums, trendy shops and cafés, and inviting green spaces. You could even take a steaming sauna or relax in one of the many parks at Suomenlinna, the sprawling fortress (and UNESCO World Heritage Site) located on an island just off the coast.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: On your own. If you're in the mood for cocktails, you may want to visit one of Helsinki's many rooftop bars.

Day 15 Helsinki • Visit Porvoo • Discover Malmgård Manor

- Destination: Helsinki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Clarion Collection Hotel Katajanokka or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive into the countryside outside of Helsinki to visit Finland's second-oldest town, Porvoo. Established in 1380, Porvoo has multi-colored wooden houses lining its quaint, cobbled streets. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead an orientation walk to point out places of interest as we wander.

Next, we'll drive to Malmgård Manor for a tour of this aristocratic estate. The manor's history dates back to the 17th century, and has been owned by the Creutz family, a lineage of Swedish nobles, for 13 generations. Today, the estate specializes in organic farming and brewing, which we'll learn about as we explore the house and its grounds on a guided tour.

Lunch: A light lunch will be included at Malmgård Manor, featuring a sampling of locally made products.

Afternoon: We'll return to Helsinki after lunch, stopping along the way back to our hotel for a look at the Sibelius Monument, a work of abstract art dedicated to the composer Jean Sibelius, one of Finland's most cherished great musicians. The sculpture was built in 1967, and takes the form of undulating steel organ pipes, accompanied by a bust of Sibelius' face (the latter element was added after critics pointed out that Sibelius was not known for his work with the pipe organ, generating questions about the sculpture's quality as an homage).

Then, enjoy a free afternoon to explore Helsinki until dinner.

Dinner: Enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant in Helsinki.

Evening: On your own. You can begin packing for tomorrow's flight or go out on the town to celebrate your final night in Helsinki.

Day 16 Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

• Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Head to the airport for your flight to the U.S. or to Rovaniemi to begin your post-trip extension to *Lapland, Finland*.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Lapland, Finland*

Day 1 Fly to Rovaniemi, Finland • Overland to Inari

Day 2 Inari • Visit Siida museum • Sámi husky farm visit

Day 3 Tankavaara gold panning village • Visit reindeer farm

Day 4 Fly to Helsinki • Farewell Dinner

Day 5 Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Olde Hansa Medieval Feast

(Day 12 \$100 per person)

This immersion into Hanseatic times features dinner at Olde Hansa, a restaurant that recreates life during medieval times located in the former home of a wealthy merchant. We'll be seated by staff in period costumes at a long candle-lit table, and then share family-style platters of typical dishes of the period prepared from original recipes and cooking methods. After dinner, we'll walk back to our hotel.

PRE-TRIP

Poland: Krakow, Auschwitz & Warsaw

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 3 nights accommodation
- » Air transportation from Warsaw to Vilnius, Lithuania
- » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 4 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

Please note: Travelers purchasing their own international flights will be responsible for additional internal flight costs.

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Before you travel to the Baltic capitals, discover two of Poland's historic and cultural epicenters—Krakow and Warsaw. Explore the centuries-old streets of Krakow with its stunning architecture, experience an emotionally-charged tour of the Auschwitz concentration camp, and venture through rebuilt Warsaw, Poland's energetic capital city.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Afternoon/Evening: Today, you'll depart on your overnight flight from the U.S. to Krakow, Poland.

Day 2 Arrive in Krakow, Poland

- Destination: Krakow
- Accommodations: Golden Tulip Kazimierz or similar

Afternoon: Arrive in Krakow, Poland, this afternoon. You'll be greeted at the airport by an O.A.T. representative, who will assist with your transfer to the hotel. After checking in, enjoy some free time to relax and settle in, or begin getting acquainted with Krakow on your own.

Later, join your Trip Experience Leader for an optional orientation walk of the area, including shops, restaurants, and ATMs.

Dinner: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions on where to find authentic Polish cuisine.

Evening: You're free to relax at the hotel after your flight or continue celebrating the kickoff of your journey with your fellow travelers.

Day 3 Explore Krakow

- Destination: Krakow
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Golden Tulip Kazimierz or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Our group will come together for the first time for Welcome Briefing. During this briefing, we'll review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur).

Then, we begin our discoveries of Krakow with a city tour, first walking and later riding through its lovely streets in golf carts—which, in recent years, has become a popular way of seeing the sights. While Poland moved its capital to Warsaw in 1596, Krakow remains the country's cultural and intellectual epicenter, teeming with avant garde art, jazz music, and students. Unlike many of the surrounding cities, Krakow managed to escape significant damage during World War II, making it a historical hub and giving it a reputation as one of the most beautiful cities in central Europe. Krakow's Old Town—or *Stare Miasto*—in particular offers seven centuries of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque architecture, all surrounded by a ring of parkland known as the Planty.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, you have the rest of the day to do as you'd like. Or, you can explore the medieval splendors of Krakow independently. Perhaps you'll mingle with the many jazz musicians, students, and street artists that bring the city to life. You may also care to visit the Krakow Underground Museum, an exhibit which illuminates the close connection between medieval Krakow and other European cities during the same time period.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant, toasting to our arrival in this historic city.

Evening: On your own—you may retire to your room to rest before tomorrow's explorations. Or, you may choose to venture out to discover

Krakow's nightlife. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations of the best bars and restaurants in the area.

Day 4 Explore Auschwitz

- Destination: Krakow
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Golden Tulip Kazimierz or similar

Activity Note: Today, we'll visit the Auschwitz concentration camp which may be a particularly emotional experience.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll visit Auschwitz, the infamous Nazi concentration camp. Here, we'll delve deep into the camp's controversial history and role in the Holocaust during a two-hour tour led by a local guide.

While the Auschwitz concentration camp complex was used to contain the diverse enemies of the Nazi regime, it is infamous for its shocking treatment of the 1.1 million Jews who were deported there from European countries occupied by or allied with Germany. The Jews who were sent to Auschwitz often faced starvation, extreme cold, hard labor, constant abuse, and in some cases, death upon arrival. In total, at least 960,000 Jews were killed in Auschwitz, in addition to thousands of Roma, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, disabled people, as well as members of the LGBTQ community. Today, the complex stands as a stark reminder of one of the darkest periods in history. As we discover different historic buildings and areas of the concentration camp, we'll learn stories of the brave and resilient individuals who endured this brutal period in history.

Lunch: On your own anytime back in Krakow. Perhaps you might seek out *pierogis*, warm dumplings typically filled with potato and cheese.

Afternoon: Your afternoon is free to spend as you wish.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader can recommend an interesting, local restaurant for you to try. A popular dish you may want to seek out is *golabki*, boiled cabbage leaves stuffed with minced pork or beef, chopped onions, and rice or barley.

Evening: You are free to make your own discoveries in Krakow, spend time with your fellow travelers at the hotel, or retire to your room to rest.

Day 5 Depart for Warsaw • Explore Podgorze and Kazimierz

- Destination: Warsaw
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Polonia Palace Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We begin our day in Podgorze, a neighborhood of Krakow that was once home to the Jewish ghetto during the Nazi regime. Here, a local guide will lead us through this historic central square before we leave to visit Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum. Upon arrival, a local guide will lead us through the museum. Once an enamel factory where Schindler employed Jews to save them from concentration camps, this museum provides a unique perspective on life in Krakow from 1939–1945, displaying 45 meticulously-assembled rooms designed to show what streets, hair salons, train stations, and more looked like in Krakow during this contentious period in history.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on the best locales for whatever your preferences are. Try to find *pierogi*—hearty, Polish dumplings. Or seek out *bigos*, or “Hunter's Soup,” made of sausage, sauerkraut, mushrooms, and onions.

Afternoon: We'll head to the train station to catch our train to Warsaw. When we arrive in the Polish capital, we'll check into our hotel and you'll have some free time to freshen up and settle in.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Enjoy the freedom to explore Warsaw this evening. Stroll through the city at night or enjoy a beer at the hotel bar with your fellow travelers and take in the spirit of the city.

Day 6 Explore Warsaw • Optional Chopin recital

- Destination: Warsaw
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Polonia Palace Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll set out by bus for a city tour of Poland's flourishing capital, Warsaw. Unlike Krakow, much of Warsaw was destroyed in World War II, and since then, the city has used its vivacious spirit to rebuild. In Warsaw's Old Town, we'll see a fusion of Renaissance, Baroque, and Gothic architecture, designed to make the area look as it did in the 17th and 18th centuries. On top of colorful open-air cafés and art stalls, the Old Town houses the Royal Castle—or Zamek Królewski—built in the 1740s as a precise recreation of the 14th-century original. Also in the Old Town is Warsaw's monument of a sword-wielding mermaid—the beloved symbol of the city—as well as St. John's Archcathedral, one of the oldest churches in Warsaw.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in the Old Town.

Afternoon: The remainder of the day is yours to explore the city on your own. Perhaps you'll stroll the cobbled streets or relax in one of the many charming cafés. Or, you might take local transportation back to the hotel and explore the surrounding area.

As the evening approaches, you can join us for an optional Chopin recital at Warsaw's concert hall. This is an exclusive opportunity to have a special evening with the romantic compositions of Fryderyk Chopin. Enjoy a welcome drink before taking your seat with the general audience for the music performance.

Dinner: On your own for those who do not attend the optional Chopin recital. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend their favorite local restaurant. Explore Warsaw's thriving culinary scene and try a hearty,

traditional meal at a local restaurant. For those who do join the optional tour, dinner is at a local restaurant.

Evening: You are free to explore more of this historic city, return to your room to rest before your explorations tomorrow, or join fellow travelers in the main hotel area for a nightcap to discuss the day's activities.

Day 7 Depart for Vilnius, Lithuania • Join main trip

- Destination: Vilnius
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight to Vilnius, Lithuania, where we'll join our fellow travelers to begin our discoveries of *The Baltic Capitals*.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Chopin recital

(Day 6 \$125 per person)

On this optional tour, join a general audience at Warsaw's concert hall for a Chopin recital. Enjoy a welcome drink before taking your seat for an evening of classical music as the instruments fill the space with their melodies. After the concert, gather with the group for an included dinner.

POST-TRIP

Lapland, Finland

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 3 nights accommodation
 - » Air transportation from Helsinki to Rovaniemi; and Ivalo to Helsinki
 - » 10 meals—4 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 4 dinners
 - » 5 small group activities
 - » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
 - » Gratuitions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
 - » All transfers
- Please note:** Travelers purchasing their own international flights will be responsible for additional internal flight costs.

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly to Rovaniemi, Finland • Overland to Inari

- Destination: Inari
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Wilderness Hotel Inari or similar

Activity Note: Depending on your departure, you may have an early morning flight. Boxed breakfasts will be available instead of the buffet breakfast on these departures. Today's transfer from Helsinki to Lapland may take a total of up to 5 hours.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can help provide options.

Afternoon: Fly to Rovaniemi, Lapland's capital, and then transfer to Inari.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: Free to relax and settle in.

Day 2 Inari • Visit Siida museum • Sámi husky farm visit

- Destination: Inari
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Wilderness Hotel Inari or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Visit Siida, an Arctic museum and nature center that preserves the culture of the Sámi people. In the 1800s, many of the Sámi people were forced to relocate as their lands were taken over by the government and affluent landowners. Today, many Sámi are still fighting for their rights as citizens of Finland who are striving to keep their traditions alive. We'll learn about the struggles of the Sámi people during a guided tour of the museum and will have a chance to visit the craft stalls just

outside the center, which are the only place where Sámi people can buy the traditional materials used to make their handicrafts.

Lunch: At the Siida Museum.

Afternoon: You'll have time to explore Inari on your own before regrouping for a visit to a nearby farm for rescued husky dogs to delve even more deeply into Sámi life. Upon arrival, we'll meet the owners and learn what life is like out here in the Lapland countryside. Then, we'll head outside for a stroll on the farm to meet some of the husky dogs who play such an important role in Sámi culture.

For the Sámi, huskies are more than just loyal companions, they're also a form of transportation. We'll observe the dogs' individual personalities—and how some are born leaders that are always striving to take the lead position, while others are happy to simply be part of the team.

Dinner: We'll enjoy dinner on the farm. Weather-permitting, we'll dine Sámi-style, gathered outdoors around a bonfire.

Evening: The rest of your evening is free.

Day 3 Tankavaara gold panning village • Visit reindeer farm

- Destination: Inari
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Wilderness Hotel Inari or similar

Activity Note: The visit to the Tankavaara gold panning village may not always be available due to changing opening and closing times, weather conditions, and other factors. If unavailable, an alternate activity will be provided for travelers.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we'll visit Tankavaara, a village at the edge of Finland's gold fields. For years, gold prospectors have sought their fortunes in Tankavaara—and now, they are teaching their gold panning methods to visitors.

Then, we'll visit a reindeer farm owned by members of a local Sámi community or a private Sámi home. Meet the family and learn about the importance of reindeer and their role in Sámi peoples' daily lives—how they herd and care for their reindeer and how their farm functions day to day. Then we'll join the family for coffee or tea and a light lunch.

Lunch: At the farm.

Afternoon: After returning to our hotel, you'll have some free time.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: The remainder of the evening is at leisure.

Day 4 Fly to Helsinki • Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Helsinki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Clarion Collection Hotel Katajanokka or similar

Activity Note: Depending on your departure, today's flight to Helsinki may be in the early morning or early afternoon. Today's transfer from Lapland to Helsinki may take a total of up to 5 hours.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Fly to Helsinki this morning.

Lunch: On your own in Helsinki's city center.

Afternoon: You'll have some free time in the city center.

Dinner: Enjoy a Farewell Dinner at our hotel's restaurant.

Evening: You're free to rest or begin packing for tomorrow's flight.

Day 5 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your return flights home.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 5 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip to Krakow and Warsaw, Poland:** You will need an additional passport page, for a total of 6 blank pages.
- **Post trip to Finland:** This extension does not need any additional pages beyond the 5 needed for the main trip.
- **Stopover in Barcelona, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Helsinki, Paris, or Munich:** No additional passport pages needed.
- **Stopover in Istanbul or London:** You will need to add an additional page to the applicable total listed above.

Visa Required

We’ll be sending you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Finland):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.
- **Turkey (optional stopover only): No visa required.**
- **Europe Stopovers (The Netherlands, Spain, England, Germany, and France):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 5 locations in 15 days
- A long overland drive of up to 9 hours on Day 10; a two-hour ferry ride on Day 13

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You should be able to walk 2–5 miles unassisted over the course of each day, and over cobblestone city streets in Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn, and participate in 6–8 hours of daily physical activity
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

CLIMATE

- Due to the varied geography of the destinations, you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel over city streets and paved roads
- Go for several walking tours along cobblestone streets in Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn, which includes going up and down many stairs; an uphill hike on the Curonian Spit
- Travel by 30-passenger air-conditioned coach; tram; train; small boat; ferry; airplane

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotels feature a variety of Western-style amenities and personal services
- All accommodations feature private baths

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **www.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- A pain medication. You might need this in the unlikely event of an injury in a location where medical attention would be delayed.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.

- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water in the region is safe to drink, and it is OK to brush your teeth or wash fruit with tap water.
- We recommend that you bring a reusable water bottle from home and fill it up at the hotel before setting out for the day.
- Or if you prefer bottled water, it is readily available and inexpensive. (Bottled water is not included in the price of your tour.)

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked foods.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need local currency instead.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like **www.xe.com/currencyconverter**, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

Poland: Polish Zloty (zł)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

The Baltics: Much of the Baltics is cashless. In response, ATMs are less widely available and cash is not accepted in many places.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

The Baltics: Credit cards are widely accepted in this region, especially Visa and MasterCard. American Express is not widely accepted in the Baltics.

Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1–\$2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** When dining as a group, your tip is included—there is no need for you to leave an additional tip. When dining on your own, remember that tips are usually not included in the bill. The VAT, which may be listed on the bill, is a sales tax. It is customary to leave about 10% of the check as a tip.
- **Taxi drivers:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change.

Please Note: Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Most hotels in the countries visited during the course of this itinerary offer complimentary wireless internet in each room. Please feel free to bring your own device(s) on the trip if you plan on using Wi-Fi where it is available.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Estonia: +372

Poland: +48

Latvia: +371

Finland: +358

Lithuania: +370

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (<i>length+width+depth</i>). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches .
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Extension to Poland: Checked luggage is limited to 44 lbs; carry-ons are limited to 15 lbs.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction.

Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual. You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at nicer restaurants or for the Farewell Dinner, but that is completely up to you.
- In many Orthodox churches, local women will cover their hair with a scarf. Female travelers are not usually required to do this, but covering your hair inside the church would be a nice gesture of respect. Your Trip Experience Leader will remind you about upcoming visits to these churches the day before so that you can plan your outfit accordingly.

Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don't forget a reusable water bottle—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ **Shirts:** A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.

- ☐ Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best. Avoid tight-fitting jeans for comfort and ease of movement.
- ☐ Light wool or fleece sweater; vest or another layer for warmth, like a warm jacket.
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking/ running shoes or low-cut hiking shoes, with arch support. Bring at least a couple pairs of medium- to heavy-weight socks for hiking.
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat
- ☐ Swimsuit for hotel pools or saunas

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

For summer departures:

- ☐ If you wear shorts even in cool weather, you could bring a pair or two for summer departures. But if you view highs in the 60s as chilly, then you should bring long trousers.
- ☐ Sleeveless tops are socially acceptable, but considering the summer temperatures, you might not need/want them.

For spring and early fall departures:

- ☐ Light sweater and/or a warm jacket
- ☐ Gloves, and a scarf

For late fall and winter departures:

- ☐ Winter coat, hat, warm gloves, scarf, and long underwear

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses
- ☐ Sunglasses, 100% UV block

- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Cold-water hand-wash laundry soap such as Woolite and plastic hang-up clothespins
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Packets of pocket-size tissues or small roll of toilet paper
- ☐ Moist towelettes (not individual packets) and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Water bottle (narrow-mouth)
- ☐ Electrical converter & plug adapters

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes
- ☐ Optional: motion sickness medication (for long bus rides, if you are prone to motion sickness)

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the

local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim communities because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity in this region is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

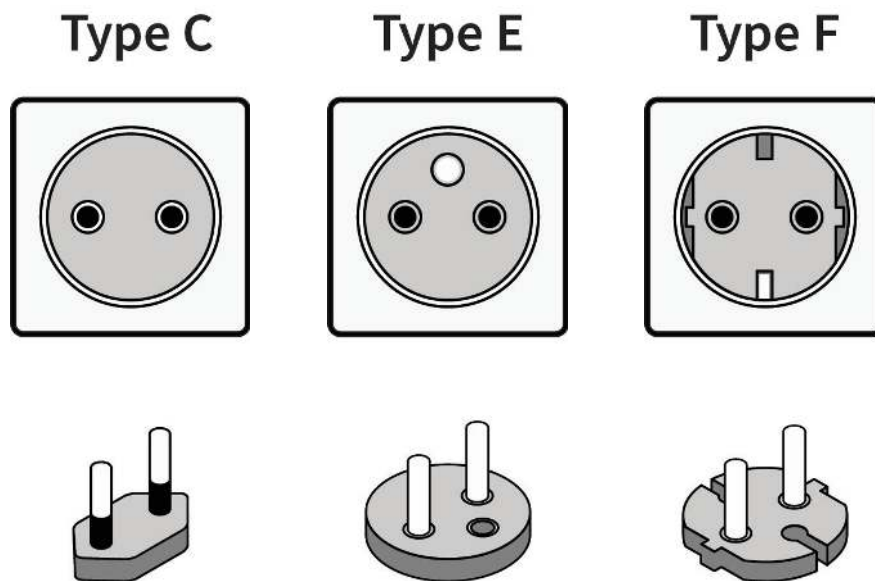
Estonia: C and F

Latvia: C and F

Lithuania: C and F

Poland: C and E

Finland: C and F



Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Tallinn, Estonia: The climate in northerly Tallinn is tempered by its location on the Baltic Sea. In summer, the city gets cooling sea breezes; in winter the same sea air keeps the snowfall in check. That's not to say that Tallinn doesn't get snow—a couple feet a year—but it's considerably less than in nearby Finland or Russia. Spring and fall bring mild temperatures but can also feature sea fog and/or sudden rain. In summer, high temperatures rarely top the low 80s.

Riga, Latvia: Summers in Riga tend to be short and cool with cloud cover; highs are generally in the 60s or 70s in July, but can sometimes go up to the 80s. Winters are usually dark and cold, with heavy snowfall from mid-December to mid-March. The city is overcast for roughly 40 percent of the year.

Vilnius, Lithuania: Vilnius has bigger extremes between summer and winter than Tallinn or Riga. Summer highs can easily be in the high 80s, although usually it's a few degrees cooler. In contrast most of winter is below freezing. Rainy days are possible all year round, but most rain falls during summer.

Poland: Poland has a long border with the Czech and Slovak Republics in the south and a coastline on the Baltic Sea in the north. Most of Poland has a very similar climate and the same sequence of weather throughout the year. Winter cold increases towards the east and in the southern mountains, while the coastlands of the Baltic Sea have slightly milder winters and cooler summers. Precipitation is well distributed around the year with a summer maximum of rain, often heavy and accompanied by thunder. Much of the winter precipitation is snow. Summer temperatures do not differ very much over the country. It rarely gets excessively hot but fine, sunny spells of weather and occasional droughts occur. Winters are distinctly cold and the length of really cold spells varies considerably from year to year.

Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki boasts a humid continental climate, due in part to the Baltic Sea and the North Atlantic Current, allowing for an average winter temperature around the mid-20s. As Helsinki is situated at the southern tip of Finland, it's weather is significantly warmer than the northern end of the country, with a shorter snow season. In the summer, the temperature does not reach higher than the low 70s and the city experiences frequent thunderstorms.

The Baltics

The Baltic climate might be more temperate than you'd expect. Even though Estonia is on the same latitude as parts of Alaska, the climate is closer to that of New England or the Canadian seaboard (due to the influence of the shallow Baltic Sea). During spring and fall, high temperatures tend to be in the 50s. In summer, highs are generally in the 60s or 70s—despite the extra hours of daylight during the “White Nights”. Sometimes, however, the summer months will exhibit heat up to 90–95 degrees as well. Rain showers are more frequent in summer and early fall. Be aware however, that late fall (October & November) and winter can bring snow, dark (daylight hours are brief), and can be very cold, with temperatures below freezing, strong winds and freezing rains.

One intriguing climate phenomenon experienced in many cities throughout the region is the “White Nights”, a term used to describe the unusually long hours of daylight around the summer solstice. In Latvia or Lithuania the sun might not set until 10 pm, and in parts of Finland and Estonia, daylight can last until 10:30 pm!

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	TALLINN, ESTONIA			RIGA, LATVIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	30 to 20	87 to 85	2.0	29 to 22	87 to 83	1.3
FEB	29 to 19	87 to 80	1.3	29 to 21	86 to 78	0.9
MAR	36 to 24	88 to 73	1.4	37 to 28	87 to 70	1.0
APR	47 to 32	86 to 64	1.4	48 to 35	86 to 61	1.4
MAY	59 to 41	84 to 55	1.5	60 to 45	83 to 56	1.7
JUN	66 to 50	87 to 59	2.4	66 to 52	88 to 61	2.3
JUL	70 to 54	91 to 63	3.0	69 to 56	90 to 65	2.8
AUG	68 to 53	92 to 67	3.3	68 to 55	91 to 65	2.7
SEP	58 to 45	92 to 72	3.0	59 to 48	90 to 69	2.6
OCT	48 to 38	89 to 76	3.0	50 to 41	88 to 74	2.1
NOV	38 to 30	89 to 85	2.7	39 to 33	88 to 83	2.0
DEC	33 to 24	88 to 86	2.4	32 to 25	88 to 85	1.5

MONTH	VILNIUS, LITHUANIA			WARSAW, POLAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	26 to 17	87	1.5	33 to 24	88 to 84	15
FEB	28 to 17	84	1.4	34 to 24	89 to 79	13
MAR	35 to 24	81	1.5	44 to 31	88 to 67	15
APR	50 to 33	76	1.8	54 to 37	83 to 58	15
MAY	64 to 44	75	2.0	65 to 47	79 to 56	15
JUN	69 to 50	71	2.9	70 to 52	80 to 60	16
JUL	71 to 53	77	3.1	73 to 55	83 to 60	15
AUG	69 to 51	82	3.0	73 to 54	86 to 58	13
SEP	60 to 44	84	2.6	64 to 47	91 to 66	14
OCT	50 to 37	89	2.0	54 to 40	92 to 75	15
NOV	37 to 30	89	2.0	42 to 33	91 to 85	16
DEC	30 to 23	87	1.9	36 to 27	90 to 87	15

MONTH	KRAKOW, POLAND			HELSINKI, FINLAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	33 to 22	88 to 82	1.2	26 to 16	88 to 87	16
FEB	35 to 24	88 to 76	1.2	27 to 15	89 to 82	11
MAR	45 to 31	89 to 66	1.2	34 to 23	89 to 74	12
APR	54 to 38	85 to 58	1.6	45 to 31	87 to 59	13
MAY	64 to 46	84 to 58	2.4	59 to 41	84 to 51	14
JUN	69 to 52	85 to 61	3.1	66 to 49	85 to 55	17
JUL	71 to 55	86 to 60	2.4	70 to 53	90 to 59	15
AUG	71 to 54	90 to 61	2.8	66 to 51	93 to 66	17
SEP	64 to 48	92 to 67	2.0	56 to 43	93 to 72	15
OCT	55 to 40	92 to 71	1.6	46 to 36	91 to 80	20
NOV	42 to 32	90 to 82	1.6	36 to 28	90 to 88	17
DEC	36 to 26	89 to 84	1.6	30 to 20	89 to 88	16

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Baltic Culture

On August 23, 1989, two million people joined hands and formed a human chain stretching for 420 miles from Tallinn, Estonia; through Riga, Latvia; and into Vilnius, Lithuania. Known as "The Baltic Way," it gave powerful expression to the yearning of the Baltic people for freedom from Soviet oppression. It also remains an indelible image of their solidarity. The people of these three states have endured the same historical challenges, and have built a remarkable symbiotic relationship based on mutual cooperation, shared values, and similar societies.

Still, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically distinct. Latvians and Lithuanians descend from the ancient Balts. Their languages are similar but still not mutually intelligible. Estonians are a separate Finnic ethnic group, with a language that is close to Finnish but unrelated to all other European tongues. There are large minorities in all three countries: mostly Poles in Lithuania, and Russians in Latvia and Estonia. After World War II, many ethnic Russians were purposely transplanted here as part of the Soviet agenda of Russification. Since independence, the Baltics have struggled to better integrate these second or third generation Baltic Russians, most of whom have never known another home.

There are also religious differences. Lithuania is Catholic, whereas Latvia and Estonia are Lutheran and Orthodox. This was the last corner of Europe to be Christianized, and today there is a growing neo-pagan religious movement. It is tolerated and even celebrated by non-believers because it focuses on a reverence for nature and one's ancestry; and is bound up in national myths, customs, folk art, and songs. Song, in particular, is a revered art form in all three Baltic States. Children learn singing and dancing at an early age, often becoming part of folk ensembles that perform publicly. The importance of these art forms has been recognized by UNESCO, which declared them Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Not all religions were benignly tolerated. Historically, Latvia and Lithuania had thriving Jewish populations dating to the Middle Ages. (Estonia's Jewish community was smaller.) In the mid-18th century, Lithuania had the world's largest Jewish community. Vilnius (known as Vilna in Yiddish) was at one point about 30% Jewish, with more than 100 synagogues. Riga, Latvia was also a flourishing center of Jewish artistic, commercial, and intellectual life. But tragically, more

than 94% of the Baltic Jews were exterminated during the Holocaust, ending a long history of cultural contributions. Today, the small Jewish communities in all three Baltic capitals are not remnants but new: They re-emerged due to the influx of Soviet Jewry after the war.

The stereotype of the Baltic people as being polite but reserved (or in the case of Latvia, introverted) is just that: a stereotype based more on outward manners than any ingrained mentality. Ask a Lithuanian how they spent the midsummer Joninės holiday, ask an Estonian about Skype (they invented it), or ask a Latvian about their favorite basketball team, and you will be engaged in animated conversation for hours.

Religion and Religious Observances

Nominally, Estonia and Latvia are considered Lutheran countries, but there are also sizeable Catholic and Russian Orthodox communities. However, in actual practice, church attendance is low, and (especially in Estonia), many people describe themselves as secular or not religious. Catholicism is the predominant religion in Lithuania (75%), but people are generally less observant than their highly devout Polish neighbors.

In all three countries, the celebrations of many popular holidays, even Christian ones, include customs derived from old pagan beliefs. For instance, in Lithuania on Christmas Eve (called *Kucios*), deceased ancestors are honored, the table is decorated with pagan agricultural symbols, and it is said that animals can talk. One of the most popular celebrations across all three countries is St. John's Eve, which coincides with the summer solstice. It is celebrated with bonfires, feasting, folk songs, and games such as woodland flower foraging for young couples (which may involve frolics of the amorous sort). It is all derived from pagan fertility celebrations.

Language

Each of the three Baltic nations has its own titular, official language that is spoken by the vast majority of people: **Estonian**, **Latvian**, and **Lithuanian**. The second most widely spoken language is Russian, thanks to nearly 50 years of Soviet occupation when it was compulsory to teach it in schools. Many people also speak German, but today, especially among young people and in cities, English is the most popular foreign language. About 46% of Estonians speak it, with smaller but still sizeable numbers of English speakers in Latvia and Lithuania.

The vast majority of Poles speak the national language, **Polish**. But in a country that has historically been very ethnically diverse, there are also many recognized minority languages including Kashubian, Silesian, German, Romany, and Yiddish. English is the most popular foreign language spoken by an impressive 30% of the people. The number of English speakers is a little higher in cities like Warsaw.

Finland is a country with two official language, **Finnish** and **Swedish**. The Sami languages are also recognized as minority languages, including Northern, Inari, and Skolt. English is the most popular 2nd language spoken by an impressive 70% of the people.

Personal Space

Our Trip Experience Leaders have remarked that personal space seems to be bigger in the Baltics than the U.S., especially in the countryside. Kissing, hugging, and touching in general is usually not done unless you know the other person.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Baltic Cuisine

The cuisines of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are all rooted in the region's shared climate and coastal and agricultural resources—not to mention the influences of their common invaders. Baltic food is very hearty, but can also be very delicately seasoned. Meat figures prominently, as do potatoes, dark rye bread, and all manner of pickled vegetables. For the dishes below, while some ingredients may vary from country to country, often the difference is in name only.

Estonian Cuisine

Traditionally, Estonian cuisine was heavily dependent on the season, with fresh fruits and vegetables common in the spring and summer, and jams, preserves, and pickled products common in the cold winter. Today, the year-round staples of Estonian cuisine include dairy product, black rye bread, potatoes, and pork.

- **Kiluvõileib:** A ubiquitous sandwich of smoked sprats, buttered dark rye bread, hard-boiled egg and topped with dill or scallions.
- **Verivorst:** A blood sausage accented with barley, onions, allspice, and marjoram, the national dish of Estonia.
- **Mulgipuder:** A dish made from mashed potatoes and groats mixed with lots of butter and a bacon-based sauce.
- **Aspics:** Jellyed meat (or seafood) and vegetable loaves, sliced and served on dark bread.
- **Rosolj:** A delicious Estonian potato and beet salad with chopped onions, pickles, and a creamy mustard dressing.
- **Vastlakukkel:** A cream puff dessert that was once reserved as a pre-Lenten delicacy, but is now happily indulged in year round.
- **Kohuke:** A candy bar of sweet cheese curd covered with caramel or chocolate.
- **Vana Tallinn:** A rum-based liqueur served in coffee or over crushed ice or ice cream.
- **Kvass:** A drink that tastes like a cross between beer and soda, and is made from fermented dark rye bread.

Latvian Cuisine

Latvia is close to the Baltic Sea; therefore, you will find a lot of fish included with your meal. The cuisine also consists of foods high in butter and fat and a lot of the food is based on the crops that grow in Latvia. Some popular dishes are:

- **Piradzini:** A Latvian national specialty that looks like a plain yeast roll—until you bite into it and find that it is filled with onions, minced meat, bacon, cabbage, or creamy cheese.
- **Karbonade:** A breaded and fried pork schnitzel with a creamy mushroom sauce.
- **Rasol:** A potato and beet salad with layers of meat or fish (typically herring), hard-boiled eggs, and other vegetables, bound with mayonnaise and sour cream.
- **Maizes zupa:** A rye bread pudding made with apples, cinnamon, raisins, plums, cranberries, and whipped cream.
- **Black Balsam:** A vodka liqueur made with pepper, ginger, linden flower, raspberry, and bilberry.

Lithuanian Cuisine

As a moist coastal country, Lithuanian cuisine often shares similarities with the nearby Scandinavia, with fish and dairy a common staple. Barley, mushrooms, potatoes, rye, and beets appear in many dishes as well, with rye bread being one of the fundamentals of the cuisine, included on the side for most meals.

- **Cepelinai:** The national dish of Lithuania, *cepelinai* are potato dumplings stuffed with meat and served with sour cream, *spirgai* (cracklings), or mushrooms.
- **Balandėliai** (little doves): Stuffed cabbage rolls filled with meat or pearl barley and served with a tomato or sour cream sauce.
- **Kugelis:** A crusty, grated potato casserole baked with eggs, milk, onions, and herbs, served with dollops of sour cream. Served pancake-style, they are called *bulviniai blynai*.
- **Šaltibarščiai:** A cold pink soup of hard-boiled eggs, beets, cucumbers, dill, and scallions with yogurt-like kefir.
- **Kepta duona:** A deep-fried dark rye bread seasoned with salt and garlic, served with a cheese sauce.
- **Grybukai:** Spicy mushroom-shaped cookies.
- **Sakotis:** A hollow cake made by dripping batter over a spit. The spiky-looking tube is drizzled with chocolate and sliced into halo-like servings—the crowning glory of your Baltic repast.

Polish Cuisine

As with many European countries, Polish cuisine feels the influence of many cultures: Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Hungarian, German, etc., as well as a pinch of Russian, Italian, and Turkish. The focus is on meat, especially chicken and pork, and winter vegetables (such as cabbage) and spices, as well as different kinds of noodles. Traditionally, Poles take their festive meals seriously, and feast days — like Christmas Eve or Easter Breakfast — can involve days of preparation.

- **Barszcz:** The Polish variation to borscht, *barszcz* is a clear red borscht, made with meat and vegetable stock with mushroom broth and beets. It often includes smoked meats and the tart taste is enhanced with the inclusion of lemon juice, pickle brine, or dry red wine.
- **Pierogi:** A dumpling that can be filled with sweet or savory products, such as fruits, mushrooms, ground meat, cabbage, cheese, or mashed potatoes. The dumplings are cooked in boiling water and then pan fried.
- **Bigos:** Also called hunter's stew. A dish made with chopped meats stewed with cabbage and sauerkraut.
- **Oscypek:** A smoked cheese made from salted goat's milk, only cultivated in the Tatra Mountains. The cheese is often served pan fried with cranberry sauce.

- **Surówka:** A dish of shredded root vegetables with lemon and sugar (carrot, celeriac, beetroot) or fermented cabbage.
- **Makowiec:** A poppy seed dessert pastry.

Finnish Cuisine

Finnish cuisine forgoes the fancy for simple, hearty, and comforting. The emphasis is on natural ingredients and fresh local produce, with fish and meat also playing a prominent role in traditional Finnish dishes—including pork, beef, elk and reindeer. The country is also known for its fresh-picked mushrooms and berries, such as bilberries and lingonberries, used in cooking and baking. Here are some dishes to try:

- **Ruisleopä:** Part of the Finnish diet for thousands of years, *ruisleipä* is a dense and dark rye bread using sourdough and Finnish yeast that can be enjoyed at any time of day. Varieties of this healthy and hearty staple include *reikäleipa*, meaning “bread with a hole,” *jälkiuunileipä*, a harder bread baked at a low temperature, and several dry and flat versions (like the popular Finn Crisps).
- **Karjalanpiirakka:** Originally from the Karelia region of eastern Finland, this tasty pastry with a rye crust is traditionally filled with rice porridge and topped with egg butter. *Karjalanpiirakka* are favorites for breakfast or anytime as a snack.
- **Kalakukko:** This fish pie from the Finnish region of Savonia is traditionally prepared using rye flour and filled with a small herring-like fish combined with a little pork and bacon.
- **Graavilohi:** A true Finn favorite, *graavilohi* is a Nordic specialty made from raw salmon cured in salt, sugar, and dill. Thinly sliced, it’s often served as an appetizer with a dill sauce on bread or with boiled potatoes.
- **Mustikkapiirakka:** When you’re looking for something sweet and delicious in the summer months, go for the “blueberry pie”—although it’s actually made bilberries, the healthier Nordic cousin of blueberries.
- **Salmiakki:** You could also soothe your sweet tooth with some *salmiakki*, or salty licorice. This Finland favorite of black licorice with ammonium chloride added to give it a salty sourness, might be an acquired taste for some.

Krakow in Brief

Krakow, for centuries the capital of royal Poland, is today recognized as a valid competitor to the historic charms you’ll discover in Vienna, Budapest and Prague. Having escaped serious damage in World War II, and come through the Communist years with minimal impact. The beautifully restored Old Town, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, retains its original Medieval form, and serves as a lovely setting for Wawel Castle. Surrounded by charming streets, a plethora of Catholic churches, and classic examples of historic architecture the formal Rynek Główny is the huge

central square. The Old Town bustles constantly, vibrant with visitors and locals admiring the square, picking up flowers at one of the many florists, stopping for a snack at the bagel cart or perhaps sitting in one of the restaurants.

Local Transportation

Krakow's center is mostly closed to traffic, and is quite compact: with many attractions centrally located, walking in Krakow is both easy and a pleasure. Trams are most convenient for distance travel, and they run from early morning to around 11:00 pm, though it's best to avoid the trams at rush hour. Buses and taxis are economical, efficient, and simple to use and though more expensive than the trams, are relatively economical.

Helsinki in Brief

City Layout and Details

Established 450 years ago on the order of the Swedish King Vasa, Helsinki is a youngster of a city by European standards, and it's still the smallest in the world to host the Olympic Games. But its ideal location on lovely peninsulas that jut into the Baltic Sea, its compact size and efficient design, and its stunning architectural variety combine to make a city that is easy to explore on leisurely walks and that holds wonders around every corner.

The bustling Market Square, located on South Harbor, is the charming site of wooden stands and colorful awnings that springs to life every morning. Only a few blocks away is the Helsinki Cathedral, a distinctive landmark with its tall, green dome surrounded by four smaller domes, done in the neoclassical style. It was designed by Carl Ludvig Engel as the climax of his Senate Square layout, and is surrounded by other buildings designed by him.

Another reason for Helsinki's distinctive small-town ambience is the absence of high-rise buildings. No structure here stands more than 12 stories. Nestled near the harbor is the Esplanade, a broad expanse of trees and gardens in the middle of a boulevard that runs from Market Square west to the Swedish Theater. This is the beginning of Mannerheimintie, the city's main thoroughfare. With small shops, large department stores, churches, and outdoor cafes, Mannerheimintie is a visitor's delight. Alive with motion and color from the start of day, Helsinki is no less invigorating at night. The Esplanade was the 1999 winner of the Edison Award for excellence in lighting design, offering a stunning combination of architecture and illumination.

Equally vivid is the work of the internationally honored Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, whose genius sprouts in structures all over Helsinki, from the winged, white marble facade of Finlandia Hall to the cooper-clad curtains of the Academic Bookshop.

Local Transportation

You can purchase a one-day “Transportation Card,” providing free travel on the city’s buses, trams, metro, and local trains. You will receive further information on specific routes and times of operation during your trip. You may want to take a ride on the tram, which passes some of the principal sights of the city. If you want to hire a taxi, you can signal one from the street. Taxis have an illuminated yellow sign taksi/taxi. When the sign is lit, the taxi is vacant.

Warsaw in Brief

Bisected by the Vistula River Warsaw – the modern capital of Poland – is a very different animal from Krakow. World War II dealt Warsaw a particularly devastating hand – only 15% of the city emerged still standing after being razed by the German occupiers and nearly 60% of the population was either dead or missing. The Postwar years saw Soviet-style city planners, with a blank slate, design and build to their Socialist-Realist palette

Local Transportation

Warsaw is quite large, so you can expect to become familiar with the public transportation system. It’s complex, and you should probably seek destination specifics before you set out. Trams are most convenient for distance travel, and they run from early morning to around 11:00 pm, though it’s best to avoid the trams at rush hour. Buses and taxis are economical, efficient, and simple to use and though more expensive than the trams, are relatively economical.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor’s terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop’s contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don’t assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

The Baltics

Specialties of the Baltics include amber, CDs of traditional music, ceramics, knit goods, lace, leather-bound books, linen, local liquors such as Vana Tallinn and Black Balzam, silverware, and woodcarvings. You can also pick up candies, vodka, glass and woodwork, artwork, vintage items, and USSR-era knickknacks throughout the region in shops and at flea markets.

Poland

Polish folk objects make good mementos and are an excellent value. Some interesting possibilities include embroidery, lace, dolls in folk costumes, prints and engravings, amber, pottery, and woodcarvings. The wide range of chain stores specializing in different local wares makes shopping in Poland relatively easy. Desa stores carry tapestries, painting, sculptures, and porcelain.

Finland

While in Finland, we recommend you take the time to pick up some unique traditional souvenirs, including local handicrafts, Kalevala jewelry, hand-woven colorful ryijy rugs or takana wall hangings, furniture, Iittala glassware, ceramics, furs, puukko hunting knives, textiles, and Moomin paraphernalia are some of the world-renowned specialties.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Estonia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 17,462 square miles
- **Capital:** Tallinn
- **Language:** Estonian is the official language, with some Russian, Ukrainian, and Finnish also spoken.
- **Location:** Estonia is bordered on the east by Russia and on the west by the Baltic Sea. To the south is Latvia and to the north is the Gulf of Finland. Estonia has numerous lakes and forests and many rivers, most of which drain northward into the Gulf of Finland or eastward into Lake Peipus.
- **Population:** 1,265,420 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Lutheran 9.9%, Orthodox 16.2%, other Christian (including Methodis, Seventh-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal) 2.2%, other 0.9%, none 54.1%, unspecified 16.7%
- **Time zone:** Estonia is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, 7 hours ahead of Eastern Time. The country observes daylight savings time from late March until late September.

National Holidays: Estonia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Estonia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

02/24 Independence Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/23 Victory Day

06/24 Midsummer Day

08/20 Independence Restoration Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Estonia: A Brief History

Life in Estonia must've been pretty good for the Finno-Ugric people who'd arrived there during the third millennium BC. They were nomadic hunters with a nature-centered religion, but they gave up their roaming to mingle with the resident Neolithic people, trading along the Amber Route. They never gave up their pagan religion, though others tried to pry it from them. That happened in 1193, when Celestine III called a crusade. Teutonic knights raided Estonia, aided

by Danish troops, but the Estonians resisted for 30 years. By the mid-1200s Estonia was ruled by Danes in the north and Teutons in the south, including land-owning bishops who still tried to convert the pagans. Though some Estonians professed Christianity, they secretly practiced paganism—and occasionally laid siege to monasteries and bishops’ castles.

The Baltic Germans remained and built thriving cities. Tallinn, Tartu, Viljandi, and Pärnu all became members of the Hanseatic League. In the mid-1500s, Ivan the Terrible came crashing down with his Tatar cavalry. To stop him, Poland, Denmark, and Sweden sent troops to fight in The Livonian War. Half the rural population perished. In the end, Sweden retained power in Estonia, and governed through the 17th century. But by 1700, Denmark, Poland, and Russia rose to reclaim lands lost in the Livonian War. This time Russia won Estonia, and held it for 200 years.

By the late 19th century Estonia was swept up in the romantic nationalism movement. The first Estonian language newspaper was published, native folklore was celebrated, and in 1869 the first Estonian song festival was held. But it wasn’t until after the Russian Revolution of 1917 that Estonia felt confident enough to declare independence. The Soviet Socialist Republic sent their military to overrun Estonia, but ceded their claim with the 1920 Tartu Treaty. Estonia was free.

By 1939, Germany and Russia had signed a secret non-aggression pact (the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact) that carved up most of Europe. Estonia went to Russia, and tens of thousands of Estonians were forced into the army or sent to labor camps. When the Germans marched in in 1941, the Estonians initially welcomed them—until the Nazis began executing communist collaborators and forcibly conscripting citizens. Many Estonians fled to Finland and joined the Finnish Army. In 1941 there were about 2,000 Jews in Estonia. Almost all were killed by the Nazis, who murdered 10,000 more (from elsewhere in Europe) in Estonian camps.

With the end of the war the Soviets returned. Executions began, and 2.5% of the population was deported to Siberia. A program of Russification was set in motion, bringing in thousands of Russian immigrants and attempting to systematically dismantle Estonian culture.

In the 1980s, the era of glasnost rekindled Estonian hopes for freedom. One of Estonia’s most powerful acts of resistance was a song festival held in protest 1988, which drew international attention. On the 50th anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, a human protest chain stretched across the Baltics to Tallinn. Finally in 1991, Estonia gained independence. In 2004, Estonia joined NATO and the European Union. Its expansive economic growth was halted by the 2008 economic downturn, but it rebounded, largely on the strength of its dynamic tech sector.

Today, Estonia is a tech leader. Taxes are done online in under 5 minutes; all public services are available on the web; and voting is done online. In 2007, several Estonian institutions were hit by Russian cyberattacks. The government reported that Russia had instigated a disinformation campaign to split Estonia’s many Russian speakers. With Estonia leading the charge, NATO established the Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn in 2008.

Most recently, Estonia joined the eurozone in 2011 and served as a member of the UN Security Council from 2020 to 2021.

Latvia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 24,938 square miles
- **Capital:** Riga
- **Languages:** Latvian is the official language; Russian and Lithuanian are also spoken.
- **Ethnicities:** Latvian 56.3%, Russian 33.8%, Belarusian 3.5%, Ukrainian 2.3%, Polish 2.2%, Lithuanian 1.3%, other 3.4%
- **Location:** Latvia is bordered by Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, Belarus, and the Baltic Sea.
- **Geography:** Riga, the Latvian capital, is often described as a cultural capital for the entire Baltic region and is home to some of the most elegant and continental architecture in the Baltics. Most of Latvia is rich flat plain, but due to the high water table, only about 28% is arable. Perhaps this explains why nearly 2/3 of the Latvian population is urban.
- **Population:** 2,165, 165
- **Religions:** Lutheran 19.6%, Orthodox 15.3%, other Christian 1%, other 0.4%, unspecified 63.7%
- **Time Zone:** Latvia is seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Riga.

National Holidays: Latvia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Latvia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/04 Independence Restoration Day

06/23 Midsummer Eve

06/24 Midsummer Day

11/18 Republic of Latvia Proclamation Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Second Day of Christmas

12/31 New Year's Eve

Latvia: A Brief History

Modern Latvians descend from the Balts, who arrived around 2000 BC from Belarus, and traded along the Amber Route. By 1000 AD, the Balts had diverged into four tribes, the largest of which, the Latgals, ruled most of Latvia. The Balts were pagans and in 1193, Pope Celestine III asked the Teutonic knights to launch a northern crusade. The knights established a base in Riga, and had some success in converting the Latgals (though many pagan ways continued in secret).

Soon, German settlers arrived and began developing trade. In 1282, Riga joined the Hanseatic League. With its connections to Germany and proximity to Russia, Riga prospered for 300 years. But most of the wealth went to the German overlords, as the Latvians were little more than serfs. From the mid-16th to the early 18th century, Latvia was partitioned between Poland and Sweden, but by 1721 Russia had annexed the whole of Latvia, and held it for the next 200 years.

Forced integration into the Russian empire caused many locals to identify as Latvians for the first time. The move towards a national identity was led by the so-called “Young Latvians” from the 1850s through the 1880s. Also in the late 19th century, the Latvian Jewish community made significant contributions to industry and trade, operating woodworking factories, timber and grain mills, export companies and distilleries. Following the 1917 Russian Revolution, Latvia declared independence. The new nation was recognized by the Soviet Union in 1920.

In 1939 Russia and Germany secretly agreed to a non-aggression pact that carved Europe up between them. Latvia fell into the Russian sphere, and in 1939 the Red Army arrived. During the first year of Soviet occupation, 35,000 Latvians, especially the intelligentsia, were deported to Russia. The terror continued with the Nazi occupation in 1941. Both powers used forced conscriptions, deportations, and executions against the local population. Latvia’s Jews fared worst of all. Prior to the war there were 94,000 of them; in 1944, only a few hundred remained.

Near the end of the war, the Russians returned and annexed Latvia. On top of the devastation of World War II, there were mass deportations that sent 120,000 Latvians to Siberia. At this same time, the Soviets began a process of Russification, resettling thousands of ethnic Russians in Latvia, imposing the Russian language, and instituting a Russian curriculum in schools. By 1989, native Latvians comprised only 52% of the population, as opposed 77% before the war.

The reform of the communist regime under Mikhail Gorbachev inspired Latvia’s independence movement. On August 23, 1989, Latvia joined Estonia and Lithuania in forming a 420-mile, human chain of two million protestors. It was the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact that had carved the Baltics up between Germany and Russia. The movement gained traction as the Baltics launched the so-called “Singing Revolution,” in which millions of people publicly gathered to sing folk songs that became protest anthems. The crumbling Soviet Union was too weak to stop it. Two years later, Latvia declared independence.

Latvia quickly reached major milestones such as joining the European Union and NATO. Many Latvians credit the leadership of Vaira Vike-Friberga, the Baltic’s first female head of state, who was president from 1999 to 2007. While the EU brought tangible benefits, the global economic crisis of 2008 hit Latvia hard. Many young people left to find opportunities elsewhere. Recently, the economy has begun to rebound. In 2015, Raimonds Vejonis of the Green Party became president, campaigning for the environment and national security. While many people are optimistic, given the Russian incursions into Ukraine in 2014 and the recent invasion of Russia into Ukraine in 2022, it is a cautious optimism.

Latvia elected its 11th President, Edgars Rinkēvičs, in May 2023, who is also the European Union’s first openly gay head of state.

Lithuania

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 25,213 square miles
- **Capital:** Vilnius
- **Languages:** Lithuanian (official), Russian, and Polish.
- **Ethnicities:** Lithuanian 84.1%, Polish 6.6%, Russian 5.8%, Belarusian 1.2%, other 1.1%, unspecified 1.2%
- **Location:** Lithuania is bordered by Belarus, Latvia, Russia, and Poland.
- **Geography:** Lithuania is the largest and most populous of the three Baltic states, but only has about 55 miles of coastline. The land is fertile, low-lying, and in many places covered with thick pine forests or sparkling lakes. The country's capital, Vilnius, is known for Baroque beauty, artists, and of course, artists' hangouts—cafes and bars.
- **Population:** 2,884,433 (Estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 77.2%, Russian Orthodox 4.1%, Old Believer 0.8%, Evangelical Lutheran 0.6%, Evangelical Reformist 0.2%, other 0.8%, none 6.1%, unspecified 10.1%
- **Time Zone:** Lithuania is seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Vilnius.

National Holidays: Lithuania

In addition to the holidays listed below, Lithuania celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

02/16 Independence Day/National Day

03/11 Independence Restoration Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/24 St. John's Day/Day of Dew

07/06 King Mindaugas' Coronation Day

08/15 Feast of the Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

Lithuania: A Brief History

Around 2000 BC, the Balts settled in present-day Lithuania, coming from the southeast. They are considered the ancestors of the Lithuanian people. Early on, Lithuanians showed their disdain for outsiders seeking to change their ways. In 1009 AD, an early chronicler tells of one St. Bruno, who was struck dead by a flying brick for attempting to convert the pagan king to Christianity. In 1193, Pope Celestine III bade Teutonic knights to crusade against northern pagans. Their

attacks continued until 1386, when Jogaila became the Grand Duke of Lithuania and married the Polish Princess Jadwiga. He got Lithuanian pagans to convert to Christianity, kicked the Teutonic knights out, and began a Polish-Lithuanian union that was to last 400 years.

The 1400s saw Lithuania's golden age of prosperity. The Polish-Lithuanian empire expanded to include parts of Russia, Ukraine, and Slovakia. Its capital, Vilnius, grew to a population of over 25,000 and experienced a cultural flowering. A university was founded, there was a literary renaissance, and Baroque palaces and churches were built. So were more than 100 synagogues, as Vilnius had become a hub for Lithuania's large Jewish community. Called "Vilna" in Yiddish, it was the "Jerusalem of the North," with thriving yeshivas, theaters, businesses, and more.

Lithuania's Jews (called Litvaks) experienced varying periods of peace and persecution, but by 1772, when Russia partitioned the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, everyone's fortunes declined. Russia cracked down on Polish culture: Books could only be printed in the Cyrillic alphabet, Polish was banned, Catholic churches were closed and replaced with Orthodox ones. They enacted anti-Semitic rules and by 1881, there were regular pogroms against Jews.

Lithuania gained independence (along with Estonia and Latvia) after World War I. But in 1939, an event happened that continues to impact Lithuanian life: Russia and Germany secretly signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which divided Europe into spheres of influence in exchange for non-aggression. Lithuania was originally to go to Germany, but was reassigned to Russia. In 1940, Germany began to advance eastwards, and 150,000 Red Army troops mobilized in Lithuania. Farms, factories and mines were collectivized, and anyone suspected of being anti-communist was purged. When the Nazis arrived, some anti-Soviet Lithuanians welcomed them. Many also participated in the round up and murder of Lithuanian Jews. By the war's end, the entire Jewish population was gone—a scant few to emigration, the majority to extermination.

Lithuania was annexed by the USSR in 1944 and armed guerilla fighters, known as "Forest Brothers," began rebelling. The Soviets retaliated brutally: Between 1944 and 1952, thousands were executed and over 250,000 families were deported to Siberian gulags. The Soviet grip did not loosen until 1988, as a nationalist revival movement arose. Called the "Singing Revolution," it swept the Baltics as people gathered to sing patriotic songs in defiance of the Soviets. The Reform Movement of Lithuania (along with their Estonian and Latvian counterparts) arranged a grand-scale protest to mark the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. On August 23, 1989, two million people joined hands to form a human chain called "The Baltic Way" that stretched across all three nations. By March 11th, 1990, Lithuania declared independence. The Soviets responded by storming of the Vilnius TV tower, but gave in on September 6, 1991.

In 2004 Lithuania joined NATO and the EU, but the country suffered badly in the recession of 2009. The nation's first female president, Dalia Grybauskaitė, was elected in 2009 and re-elected in 2014. She was succeeded by Gitanas Nausėda, who declared a state of emergency in February 2022 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Poland

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 120,728 square miles
- **Capital:** Warsaw
- **Government:** Republic
- **Language:** Polish is the official language. It is a Slavonic language. It uses the familiar Roman alphabet, but with many additional accents. German, English, and French are spoken by most members of the travel industry and in hotels.
- **Location:** Situated in the heart of Europe, Poland's low-lying plains extend from the Baltic shore in the north to the Tatra Mountains on its southern border with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To the east of the Polish border are Lithuania, Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine; to the west is Germany.
- **Population:** 38,562,189 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Catholic 87.2%, Eastern Orthodox 1.3%, Protestant 0.4%, other 0.4%, and unspecified 10.8%
- **Time zone:** The time in Poland is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in New York, it is 6 pm in Warsaw and Krakow.

National Holidays: Poland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Poland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/03 Constitution Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Independence Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Poland: A Brief History

Poland's sovereignty has never been easy or taken for granted. From its earliest incarnation as an independent state in 966, Poland has been occupied by foreign powers, sandwiched between hostile neighbors and even wiped off the world map for 123 years. But through it all, there have been remarkable leaders and a commitment to cultural preservation that continues to inspire.

The first nation builders were the Slavs. Their most prominent clan, the Polanie (“people of the open country”) gave the nation its name, and the Piast dynasty. The most important Piast ruler was Duke Mieszko. In 966, he consolidated power by being baptized a Catholic and marrying Doubravka, a Bohemian princess. Mieszko’s son Boleslaw expanded his dominion to an area roughly equivalent to Poland’s current borders. He became Poland’s first legitimate king in 1025.

Kazimierz III the Great presided over a period of prosperity and expansion from 1333–70. He was a visionary who promoted legal, educational, and civil reforms. Among them was a law providing privileges for Jews, which set the stage for Poland as a haven for a group that made significant cultural contributions for 600 years. He built universities and founded so many new towns it gave rise to a saying that Kazimierz “found Poland built of wood, but left it in stone.”

When Kazimierz died without heir, the Polish Princess Jadwiga married the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Jogaila. Their two states became the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569. It had a central parliament and local assemblies, and an elected king. But a fatal loophole was that in the absence of a serious Polish contender, nobles could elect a foreigner. This opened the door for rampant bribery and a series of kings whose allegiances were not with Poland.

By the beginning of the 17th century, foreign invaders carved up the kingdom. Most devastating was the Swedish invasion of 1655–70, called “The Deluge.” Next came the Ottomans, but Poland had a bright moment when King Jan III Sobieski defeated the Turks at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, preventing their further spread into Europe. He was unable to prevent Poland’s collapse: In 1772, the Commonwealth was partitioned by Prussia, Austria, and Russia. It was divided two more times, despite a revolt led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko, hero of the American Revolution.

In 1795, Poland ceased to exist as a nation, its borders erased for 123 years. But its spirit was kept alive by nationalist societies, and by romantic artists like the composer Frederic Chopin. It wasn’t until after World War in 1918 that an independent Polish state came back into existence. The Second Republic only lasted 20 years before the Nazi occupation of World War II. The Germans first targeted Gdansk, then Warsaw, and met fierce resistance. But the Poles were outnumbered and underarmed. The Nazis intended to make Poland their living room by evicting its inhabitants. A million Poles were murdered in camps; nearly all of the nation’s three million Jews were exterminated; and when the Soviets came in 1944, they continued the genocide. By the end of the war, 20% of the Polish population had died, and Poland became a Soviet satellite.

The postwar years saw various protests, but it wasn’t until the Gdansk shipyard strikes of 1980 that change happened. The workers’ main issue was the right to unionize, but in their “21 Demands” they sought far-reaching changes in areas from food supplies to free speech to maternity leave and more. The Solidarity Strike was joined by workers in mines, factories, and more. Through the leadership of Lech Walesa, the protests remained non-violent, but the struggle lasted till the end of the decade. When the Iron Curtain fell, Walesa was elected President, and Third Polish Republic was born. Poland joined NATO in 1999, the EU in 2004, and the Schengen Area in 2007.

Poland is currently run by President Andrzej Duda, a member of the Law and Order party, a right-wing populist and national-conservative political party, who won re-election in 2020.

Finland

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 130,558 square miles
- **Capital:** Helsinki
- **Geography:** Finland is heavily forested and contains thousands of lakes, numerous rivers, and extensive areas of marshland. Except for a small highland region in the extreme northwest, the country is a lowland less than 600 feet above sea level.
- **Languages:** Finnish, Swedish
- **Location:** Finland is bordered to the north and west by Norway and Sweden, and to the east by Russia.
- **Population:** 5,518,371 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Lutheran 72%, Orthodox 1.1%, other 1.6%, unspecified 25.3%
- **Time zones:** Finland is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, seven hours ahead of EST.

National Holidays: Finland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Finland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Midsummer. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 May Day

12/06 Independence Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Finland: A Brief History

While sharing many cultural traits with its Scandinavian neighbors, Finland's linguistic and historic roots differ than those of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway—which share a common root language and Viking heritage. Finland's early history began with settlements of nomadic Sami people, Tavastians, and others during the first millennium B.C. With Vikings choosing not to establish settlements here, Finland developed into an important center of trade during the Viking Age. But Finland's powerful neighbors, Sweden and Russia, would battle for centuries over regional dominance. While Finland was able to preserve its language, culture, and traditions, Sweden would end up ruling it from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries. And after that, Russia ruled Finland from 1809 to 1917.

After the 1917 Russian Revolution, Finland declared its independence. But the new state was immediately drawn into a civil war between the social classes—with Bolshevik-leaning “Reds” (factory and farm workers) supported by the new Soviet Union on one side, and the “Whites” (property owners), supported by Imperial Germany, on the other. The Whites emerged victorious and installed a puppet king. After the defeat of Germany in World War I, Germany’s influence disappeared and Finland became a republic, electing its first president in 1919. Relations remained tense between Finland and Soviet Union.

Finland’s role during World War II made perfect sense to the Finns, but it can make everyone else’s head spin. At the war’s outbreak, the Soviet Union attacked Finland, expecting a quick victory. Instead, the Finns fought way above their weight while holding the Soviet army back and humiliating Stalin. The Finns were eventually worn down and ended up ceding some border lands to Stalin, but they preserved their independence and gained the admiration of the world, who viewed it as a tiny democratic nation almost defeating an aggressive bully nation. Known as the “Winter War” of 1939/40, the Finns would then find themselves the “Continuation War,” which began when Germany invaded the USSR in June 1941. Looking at it more as choosing between the lesser of two evils, the Finns allied themselves with Germany—primarily to gain back the territory they had just lost. But the Red Army was much stronger now, and after Germany’s surrender at Stalingrad, Finland entered secret negotiations with Moscow to leave the war. A treaty between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1944 left Finland independent but included a demand that they immediately expel the 200,000 German troops in Finnish Lapland—which led to the “Lapland War,” Finland’s third stage of the war.

While Finland did ally with Hitler, they weren’t looked on as collaborators and refused demands to turn over Finnish Jews. Some say that Finland may have lost World War II, but they won the peace. Other countries bordering the Soviet Union weren’t so lucky, but Finland managed to maintain its autonomy, a democratic government, and market economy. It continued to walk a fine line between the two camps of the Cold War—refusing an American offer to participate in the Marshall plan, developing a trade relationship with the Soviet Union, yet all the while working toward becoming a member of the European Union.

As its war-ravaged agrarian economy transformed into technologically advanced market economy, Finland grew increasingly prosperous and stable. Membership in the EU became a reality in 1995. While the political systems in the Scandinavian neighbors of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are constitutional monarchies, Finland is a republic with a president and parliament system—and on international surveys about nations with the lowest level of political corruption, Finland is often right at the top.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

The Baltics

We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust by Ellen Cassedy (2012, Memoir) A heartfelt and personal investigation into the Lithuanian Holocaust by an American journalist who uses her own family history to illustrate this dark era.

The Baltic: A History of the Region and Its People by Alan Palmer (2006, History) The author includes all nine nations who share a common shore, showing how their histories, cultures, commerce and beliefs have evolved over the centuries.

Tula by Jurgis Kuncinas (1993, Fiction) Considered a classic of Lithuanian literature, this quirky love story is set in the late-Soviet era in the so-called “independent republic of Uzupis,” a bohemian quarter in Vilnius.

The Dogs of Riga by Henning Mankell (1992, Mystery) Fans of the BBC series Wallander will love this book, in which the adroit Swedish detective travels to Riga to solve the mystery of two bodies that have washed up ashore. He becomes immersed in a web of bureaucracy, corruption, and secrecy as he navigates his way around post-independence Latvia.

The Czar’s Madman by Jaan Kross (1978, Historical Fiction) In 1818, a nobleman of Livonia (between modern Latvia and Estonia) is imprisoned for having written a critical letter to the czar. Upon his release, spies in his household must decide if his radical ideas are treasonous or simply insane.

Poland

Lilac Girls by Martha Hall Kelly (2016, Historical fiction) Loosely based on the true story of an American who campaigned for a group of concentration camp survivors known as “the Rabbits”, this novel follows the intersecting lives of three very different women—a New York socialite, a Polish teenager, and a German doctor.

God’s Playground: A History of Poland by Norman Davies (2005, History) Critics regard this work as the best and most exciting history of Poland, covering 1,000 years in two volumes. The author also offers a condensed version—*Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*.

Gimpel the Fool and Other Stories by Isaac Bashevis Singer (1957, Fiction) From the master of Yiddish literature (and Nobel Laureate), this collection vividly depicts Jewish life in a rural shtetl, while mixing magic and reality.

Finland

Finland's War of Choice: The Troubled German-Finnish Coalition in World War II by Henrik Olai Lunde (2011, History). Following the bloody Winter War against Soviet Russia, where thousands died and Finland was forced to cede multiple territories to USSR rule, Finland teamed up with Nazi Germany in the Continuation War, from 1941 to 1944, in hopes of winning back their lost land.

The Year of the Hare by Arto Paasilinna (1975, Fiction). The adventures of journalist Kaarlo Vatanen only started when he nearly runs over a hare. After nursing the injured hare back to health, Vatanen decides to leave his old life, job and wife, behind for the open road and wacky hijinks.

The Unknown Soldier by Vaino Linna (1954, Fiction). A war novel narrating Finnish soldiers during the Continuation War of 1941-1944 between Finland and the Soviet Union, a war fought over nationalism and territory lost to the USSR in the Winter War the previous year.

Seven Brothers by Aleksis Kivi (1870, Historical Fiction). A Finnish classic, *Seven Brothers* follows the lives of seven brothers in rural Finland during the nineteenth century.

Kalevala by Elias Lonnrot (1835, Folklore). *Kalevala* is a collection of 19th century epic poetry of Karelian and Finnish mythology, written down from its traditional oral stories. A national epic of Finland, the *Kalevala* tells the story of the Creation of the Earth, all the way to the integration of Christianity.

Suggested Films & Videos

The Baltics

The Chronicles of Melanie (2016, Drama) In 1941, the Soviets rounded up 40,000 Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians, and executed or deported them to Siberian gulags. This is the true story of Melanija Vanaga, who was separated from her husband and sent east with her eight year-old son. To endure her brutal existence, for 16 years she writes love letters to her husband that can never be sent.

The Invisible Front (2014, Documentary) A documentary about the Lithuanian resistance told through the experience of one of its leaders, Juozas Luksa, and his fellow "Forest Brothers."

The Other Dream Team (2012, Documentary) The 1988 Soviet Olympic basketball team included four Lithuanian starters who never got credit for their contribution. Fast forward to 1992, after Lithuania's independence. The struggling nation could not afford to send their basketball team to the Barcelona Olympics, until some unlikely champions stepped in: the American rock band, the Grateful Dead. A must for sports fans and anyone who loves a feel-good story.

Loss (2008, Drama) This taut thriller concerns a Lithuanian priest who resettles in Ireland. But when another Lithuanian émigré, Valda, arrives, a secret from his past comes along with her, and disrupts the lives of six different people. This film was the first from Lithuania to be submitted for an Academy Award.

The Singing Revolution (2006, Documentary) Can music change the world? Between 1987 and 1991, hundreds of thousands of Estonians gathered publicly to sing forbidden patriotic songs and share protest speeches. Their revolution succeeded without a single loss of life. This film reveals how it happened.

Poland

The Pianist (2002, Drama) Three Oscar wins for this unforgettable, harrowing and true story of Wladyslaw Szpilman, an up and coming classical pianist who hid and survived for five years in the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto after his entire family was deported to Treblinka.

Man of Iron (1981, Drama) A dissolute journalist is sent to report on the Solidarity movement in the Gdansk shipyards, knowing that his information is being funneled to state police. But as he becomes involved in the lives of shipyard workers, activists, and their leader Lech Walesa, things change. From one of Poland's premier *auteurs*, Andrzej Wajda.

Finland

Mother of Mine (2005, War/Drama) Amidst the conflict of World War II, Eero, a Finnish boy, is sent to live with a Swedish foster family by his mother. Eero feels abandoned by his Swedish mother, but unwelcomed by his new foster mother. When Eero returns to Finland following the war, his feelings of abandonment and confusion intensify.

Pelikaanimies (2004, Fantasy) A pelican becomes a gawky young man who learns to speak, thanks to his talent for imitation. He befriends two children who—unlike adults—see that their new neighbor 'Mr Berd' is not a man but a bird in a suit. The Pelican Man lands a job at the opera and falls in love. When adults discover the truth, trouble starts in this unusual and charming film.

Elina: As If I Wasn't There (2002, Drama) In rural Sweden of the early 1950s, Elina returns to school again after an illness. From a Finnish-speaking minority, Elina has conflicts with her biased teacher, and finds consolation wandering on the dangerous marshlands while speaking with her dead father.

The Winter War (1989, Drama) An excellent Finnish war film (original title *Talvisota*) that tells the story of the resistance of a platoon of Ostrobothnian Finns, when Russia attacked Finland in November of '39. The Finns fought hard against overwhelming odds, with meager supplies, and the movie faithfully presents their action in the forbidding snowy landscape.

The Unknown Soldier (1955, Drama) An adaptation of Väinö Linna's novel this is a story about the Continuation War between Finland and the Soviet Union, told from the view of ordinary Finnish soldiers. Gritty and realistic, the film remains the most successful film ever made in Finland, and more than half of Finland's population viewed it in theaters.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

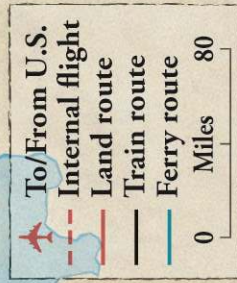
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,
5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,
30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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