

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

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



New! Nordic Countries & the Arctic Circle: Finland,
Sweden's Sami Lapland & Norway

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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Porvoo, Finland

New! Nordic Countries & the Arctic Circle: Finland, Sweden's Sami Lapland & Norway

Small Group Adventure

Finland: Helsinki | **Sweden:** Tarendo, Kiruna | **Norway:** Harstad, Svolvær, Bergen

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

17 days starting from \$8,695

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/fsn2025pricing

Journey to the top of the world with O.A.T. on a three-nation adventure to lands of the Midnight Sun. Explore stylish Helsinki, meet the Sami people of Swedish Lapland—where one of Europe's last indigenous cultures fights to preserve its ancient traditions—cruise the deep blue fjords of Norway's Lofoten Archipelago, and more, on this discovery-rich adventure to the Arctic Circle and beyond.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 15 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
- 35 meals—15 breakfasts, 11 lunches, and 9 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 17 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

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

Nordic Countries & the Arctic Circle: Finland, Sweden's Sami Lapland & Norway



WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 6 locations in 16 days.

Physical requirements: You must be able to walk 2-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2 hours of physical activities each day.

Flight Time: Travel time will be 8-20 hours and will most likely have one to two connections.

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

FINLAND, SWEDEN, & NORWAY: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

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

People-to-People Experiences: Immerse yourself in the indigenous traditions of the Sami people in Swedish Lapland as we enjoy a hands-on encounter with a reindeer herd to discover their importance to the Sami people's way of life. And in Norway, we'll learn about the **Controversial Topic** of whaling, a traditional and hotly contested practice.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Spend **A Day in the Life** of a community in Swedish Lapland and see how they dedicate their time to raising huskies, enjoying hands-on activities such as feeding the friendly dogs in their kennel, and joining them for a walk in the surrounding taiga forest. We'll also join a Swedish family in the mining town of Kiruna for a **Home-Hosted Dinner** for a taste of home-cooked cuisine and cultural exchange as we share stories around the table.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Helsinki, Finland
2-4	Helsinki
5-6	Tärnö, Sweden
7-9	Kiruna
10-11	Harstad, Norway
12-14	Svolvær
15-16	Bergen
17	Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Baltic Capitals: Riga, Latvia & Tallinn, Estonia

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,795**

Copenhagen, Denmark

POST-TRIP: 4 nights from **\$2,295**

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 **Riga** before your Baltic Capitals pre-trip extension from **\$140** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Helsinki** before your main adventure from **\$220** per room, per night

Nordic Countries & the Arctic Circle: Finland, Sweden's Sami Lapland & Norway

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Baltic Capitals: Riga, Latvia & Tallinn, Estonia*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Riga, Latvia

Day 3 Explore Riga

Day 4 Riga • Latvian politics conversation
• Explore Rundale Palace

Day 5 Riga • Discover Parnu, Estonia
• Explore Tallinn • Song Festival
Grounds visit

Day 6 Explore Tallinn • Optional *Olde Hansa Medieval Feast*

Day 7 Tallinn • Estonian independence
conversation • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart from the U.S. to Helsinki, Finland.

Day 2 Arrive Helsinki, Finland

- Destination: Helsinki
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Klaus K Hotel or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Helsinki and transfer to your hotel. Here, you'll meet your fellow travelers, including those who took our optional pre-trip extension to the *Baltic Capitals: Riga, Latvia & Tallinn, Estonia*, and those who arrived early in Helsinki before the main adventure. Later today, you'll join your Trip Experience Leader for a discovery walk of the neighborhood surrounding your hotel.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: The evening is yours to explore independently or rest after your international flight. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for exploration options.

Day 3 Explore Helsinki

- Destination: Helsinki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Klaus K Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Join your fellow travelers for a Welcome Briefing in the hotel led by your Trip Experience Leader, which will outline what is in store for the next few days on your adventure and give you the chance to ask questions and go over any itinerary changes.

Then, we explore Helsinki on an included walking tour, including a visit to Oodi Helsinki Central Library—a popular meeting space and social hub located in the heart of the city. More than just a book repository, the library offers a variety of diversions and activities; amongst its varied services, visitors can find recording studios, maker spaces, film theaters, and a café.

We'll wrap up our tour in Helsinki's Market Square in the city center, a lively area full of boutique and souvenir shops, vendors selling fresh produce and traditional Finnish fare, and colorful stands displaying artisan crafts. Our Trip Experience Leader may introduce us to some of the shopkeepers for a conversation about daily life in the city.

Lunch: On your own—Market Square has many tantalizing choices, and your Trip Experience Leader will happily recommend an option to suit your preferences.

Afternoon: The afternoon is free to explore independently. You'll be given a card to use to take full advantage of the city's public transportation network.

Dinner: A Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 4 Helsinki • Visit Porvoo • Local farm

- Destination: Helsinki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Klaus K Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's farm visit may have to be adjusted due to family obligations or celebrations.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We begin the day by visiting Finland's second-oldest town, Porvoo, established in 1380. Old warehouses dot the riverside and multi-colored wooden houses line the quaint, cobbled streets. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead an orientation walk to point out places of interest, then we'll explore on our own.

Next, we drive to Norrkulla Gard farm in the countryside outside of Helsinki. Since 1912, the Lundstrom family has owned and operated this farm. Then, we'll head to the family's traditional farmhouse, where we'll engage in a conversation with our hosts about their heritage over lunch. The Lundstrom family is of Swedish descent and has lived in Finland for over four generations.

Lunch: At the farm. Enjoy an afternoon of farm-fresh cuisine and an informative conversation about what life is like for people of Swedish descent in rural Finland.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll join a few members of the family for a tour of the grounds, including the surrounding forest. Then, we'll drive back to Helsinki, where the rest of the day is free to do as you please. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend the best ways for you to make use of your public transportation card, and to find an activity that suits your interests.

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

Evening: The evening is yours to explore independently.

Day 5 Fly to Rovaniemi • Overland to Tarendo, Sweden

- Destination: Tarendo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Arctic River Lodge or similar

Activity Note: As we cross the Swedish border today, please be aware of the time change (1 hour back).

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel this morning and transfer to the airport, where we'll board our flight to Rovaniemi in northern Finland.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll drive across the Swedish border to Tarendo, a journey of about 3 hours. We'll check into our lodge late this afternoon, which is located in the wilderness of Swedish Lapland, surrounded by the pines of the taiga, set on the edge of the Tarendo River. We'll have some time free to rest and freshen up before dinner.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 6 Tarendo • *A Day in the Life* of a local community & husky kennel

- Destination: Tarendo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Arctic River Lodge or similar

Breakfast: At the lodge.

Morning: We'll wake up this morning in Tarendo, a village just above the Arctic Circle with a population of around 200. This remote setting amidst the pristine taiga forest will

be our introduction to Lapland, the northern region of Sweden, Finland, and Norway that has been home to the indigenous Sami people for at least 5,000 years. O.A.T. is one of the few travel companies to take travelers to this region of Swedish Lapland, allowing you and your small group to take in the stunning scenery and unique local culture undisturbed by the large crowds that frequent the more heavily-touristed resort towns elsewhere in Lapland. Depending on the time of year, we might also be treated to a glimpse of the Midnight Sun—the period of time between the middle of May and mid-July in which the sun never sets on the top of the world.

We'll begin our introduction to local culture with *A Day in the Life* of a local community and husky kennel. Upon arrival, we'll meet a local community leader, as well as the energetic dogs that the community has dedicated itself to raising. We'll learn about the important role that these friendly creatures play in the local lifestyle of this region, then head to the kennel for some hands-on activities to get a sense of the daily routine that keeps the community running. We'll help feed the dogs and clean out their kennels, then join them outside for a nature walk in the taiga forest that surrounds the lodge.

Lunch: We'll share a meal with members of the community to learn more about local life in the region.

Afternoon: Return to the lodge, where the afternoon is free to rest or take advantage of the amenities until dinner. You might choose to go for a stroll in the great outdoors, or relax like a local in the hotel's sauna.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: You are free to rest this evening, or explore independently.

Day 7 Overland to Kiruna • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Kiruna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Scandic Kiruna Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the lodge.

Morning: We'll check out of our lodge this morning and begin our transfer to Kiruna, our next destination.

Lunch: At a local restaurant en route to Kiruna.

Afternoon: We continue traveling westward to Kiruna, a mining town in northern Swedish Lapland with a population of around 17,000, arriving at our hotel in the mid-afternoon. We'll have time to unpack and stretch our legs after our journey, before joining our Trip Experience Leader for a short orientation walk of the neighborhood surrounding our hotel.

Dinner: We'll split into smaller groups to visit local families for a **Home-Hosted Dinner**. We'll sit around the table for a memorable evening of home-cooked cuisine and Swedish hospitality as we learn about daily life in Kiruna from a typical family. Our shared meal will be another opportunity to get a candid opinion about how local people feel about Kiruna's big move, and how families and businesses are preparing for it.

Evening: Your evening is free to spend as you please.

Day 8 Visit LKAB iron ore mine • Visit Nutti Sami Siida (Sami cultural museum) & reindeer experience

- Destination: Kiruna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Scandic Kiruna Hotel or similar

Activity note: Reindeers may not be available to visit at the museum between June and September due to grazing in the wild.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll drive to the Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara AB ("LKAB" for short) iron ore mine for a guided tour of this underground engineering marvel. We'll descend around 1,500 feet below the earth to one of the mine's old chambers, which has been converted into a visitor's center, featuring both modern and historical mining equipment. Here, a local guide will tell us more about the mine's history, operations, and its central role in the region's economy. We'll hear how active mining operations take place more than 4,500 feet underground, where every day enough ore is gathered to build up to six Eiffel Towers.

This enormous output comes at a cost, however; much of the mining takes place beneath Kiruna's town center, and the hollowing of the earth will soon render the area uninhabitable. To prepare for this eventuality, LKAB and Kiruna's authorities hatched an ambitious plan in 2004 to demolish the current town and rebuild it in another location about two miles to the east (taking care to preserve some of the town's most historic buildings). We'll learn more about this plan, and about the population's divided attitudes about it, during our tour.

Next, we'll drive to Jukkasjarvi, a town of just 600 residents, where we'll get a closer look at indigenous culture.

Lunch: We'll enjoy an included lunch in a traditional Sami *lavvu* (a conical tent, similar in design to a Native American *tipi*).

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll visit the Nutti Sami Siida open air museum, dedicated to preserving the 5,000-year-old culture and traditions of the region's indigenous Sami people. The Sami are the only indigenous people in the European Union, with a population of around 80,000. They inhabit the region around the Arctic Circle across Finland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden. Collectively, these regions are termed Sami. The Swedish Sami make up around 20,000 of the total Sami population—a small percentage of Sweden's 10 million people—and, like the rest of their people, live apart in extremely rural areas. Traditionally, most Sami people have supported themselves through fishing, livestock farming, hunting, and reindeer herding.

During a guided tour of the museum, we'll be introduced to a local reindeer herd, and learn about the important role that these creatures play in Sami life. Out of the traditional Sami livelihoods, reindeer herding still functions as one of the important cornerstones of the Sami culture by offering a space for using Sami language, material for traditional clothing and other Sami handicrafts, and is the base of their food culture.

After our reindeer experience, we'll have free time to wander the museum on our own, observing displays that showcase traditional Sami architecture, handicrafts, and cuisine.

We'll then return to Kiruna.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: After dinner, we return to the hotel, where the night is free to spend as you like.

Day 9 Scenic drive to Narvik, Norway • Overland to Harstad

- Destination: Harstad
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Thon Hotel Harstad or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll check out of our hotel and begin our scenic 3-hour drive westward across the Norwegian border to Narvik. Sit back and take in the stunning scenery of the Arctic as we ride past snowcapped alpine peaks, thick taiga forests, and deep blue fjords.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Narvik.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll drive to the town of Harstad. We'll check in to our hotel in the mid-afternoon, then have some time to rest and unpack before joining our Trip Experience Leader on an orientation walk of the neighborhood around our hotel. The rest of the day is free to spend as you please.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can point out restaurants you might be interested in during your orientation walk.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 10 Harstad • Horse farm visit

- Destination: Harstad
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Thon Hotel Harstad or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll drive to a local horse farm owned by a psychologist specializing in equine-assisted therapy to treat alcoholism and substance abuse, learning disorders, physical

challenges, and other disabilities. Although Norway is widely lauded for its robust social programs, the people who live here are still prone to the same mental and emotional health struggles as anyone else. Today we'll get a firsthand perspective on the problems that locals in this region tend to suffer from, and how therapists like our host have dedicated their lives to helping address them.

During our visit, we'll sit down with the owner for a light refreshment of coffee and *lefse* (traditional Norwegian potato flatbread). We'll enjoy a conversation about how she came to specialize in the unique fields of equine therapy or animal therapy.

We'll next walk around the farm, meeting the horses, sheep, and other friendly creatures who live here.

Lunch: At the farm.

Afternoon: Spend a free afternoon in Harstad at leisure. Or, weather permitting, you can choose to join your Trip Experience Leader on an elective, approximately two-mile discovery walk northward along the coast to visit Trondenes Church, the northernmost medieval stone church in the world. Built around 1250, the church was restored in the 1950s to offer visitors a glimpse of what medieval worshippers might have experienced centuries ago.

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

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 11 Overland to Svolvær • **Controversial Topic: Whaling in Norway**

- Destination: Harstad
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Thon Lofoten Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel this morning and drive to Svolvær, our next destination—a journey of around 4 hours, including breaks. Our drive will take us past craggy mountainsides and small fishing villages, with glimpses of the sparkling fjords beyond.

We'll stop briefly along the way in Livland. This rural seaside town has long been known for the Norwegian tradition of fishermen farmers—families who make their living from both fishing and agriculture. We'll visit one of these fisherman farms, and during our time here we'll discuss the **Controversial Topic** of whaling in Norway. One of the last countries on Earth that still hunts whales, the people of Norway remain divided on the practice. Advocates for whaling claim it is an important part of Norway's culture and a link to its Viking roots, while those opposed cite whaling's cruelty, waste, and negative impact on the environment.

Lunch: At the fisherman farm.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Svolvær, where we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for a short orientation walk before checking in to our hotel. We'll then have time to rest and unpack before dinner.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 12 Svolvaer • Trollfjord cruise • Lofoten World War II Museum

- Destination: Svolvaer
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Thon Lofoten Hotel or similar

Activity Note: The Trollfjord cruise is only available on May–September departures and is subject to local weather conditions. On April and October departures, an alternative activity will be offered, also subject to local weather conditions. On all departures, an alternative activity will be included in the event of inclement weather.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We awake this morning on the Lofoten Archipelago, where towering mountain peaks rise sharply from the sea to form dramatic vistas in the Arctic light. This is one of Scandinavia's scenic highlights, which has inspired generations of artists.

We'll discover Lofoten's legendary beauty from a unique perspective when we board an electric catamaran for a scenic cruise. We'll sail the crystal blue waters, weaving through the islands and passing by snowcapped peaks, sandy white shores, and small fishing villages. As we ride, we'll be treated to commentary from onboard experts, who can point out scenic highlights and tell us about the history of these islands.

We'll also sail into Trollfjord, a narrow inlet flanked by towering mountains that stretch into the sky. In addition to its scenic beauty, Trollfjord is home to a large population of sea eagles; if you're lucky, you might be treated

to the sight of these majestic birds swooping by your boat as they hunt for fish in the waters below.

Lunch: Served onboard during your Trollfjord cruise.

Afternoon: We return to Svolvaer, where you have the freedom to spend the afternoon exploring independently.

Later this afternoon, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for a visit to the Lofoten War Museum in town. While quite small, this private museum features an extensive collection of uniforms and other artifacts from World War II which tell the story of the Nazi invasion and occupation of northern Norway from 1940–1945. We'll meet the owner, William Hakvaag, who will tell us about his passion for World War II history, and show us his favorite items from his collection.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 13 Visit Lofotr Viking Museum

- Destination: Svolvaer
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Thon Lofoten Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Bøstad this morning, enjoying more views of stunning fjord scenery along the way.

Upon arrival, we'll visit the Lofotr Viking Museum, home to the world's longest reconstructed longhouse, where we'll travel back in time to the Viking Age. After a short orientation walk with a local guide, you'll

have the opportunity to explore this “living museum” independently. Listen to traditional Norse stories, learn about Viking arts and crafts, and experience what life was like in Norway a thousand years ago.

Lunch: At the museum’s restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we’ll return to our hotel in Svolvær. We’ll arrive in the mid-afternoon; the remainder of the day is at your leisure.

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

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 14 Fly to Bergen

- Destination: Bergen
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Thon Hotel Bristol Bergen or similar

Activity Note: The timing of today’s internal flight schedule is subject to change. Your Trip Experience Leader will keep you informed of any deviations from the itinerary below.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depending on the available flight schedule, you will depart to the airport at some time today. Your journey will involve one or more transfer flights, with an estimated arrival in Bergen late this afternoon.

Lunch: Depending on your flight schedule, you will have lunch on your own in an airport during our air transfer.

Afternoon: Once we land in Bergen, we’ll drive to our hotel, where our Trip Experience Leader will lead us on an orientation walk.

Dinner: On your own. You might ask your Trip Leader for restaurant recommendations during your orientation walk.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 15 Explore Bergen

- Destination: Bergen
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Thon Hotel Bristol Bergen or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we’ll discover Bergen, Norway’s second-largest city, sometimes called “the heart of the fjords.” We’ll discover how old and new blend seamlessly together in modern Bergen. Stylish youths and students share the streets with fishermen and sailors; glass-and-concrete condos and commercial buildings stand side-by-side with trendy cafés and old wooden houses; Bergen is a lively modern city that remains in touch with its roots.

We’ll explore one of its most iconic neighborhoods when we join a local guide for a walking tour of the Bryggen (Wharf) area which contains the fascinating historical buildings that inspired UNESCO to declare the city a World Heritage Site. Built after the Great Fire of 1702, these old wooden counting houses and warehouses with their stately gables stretch along the harbor and narrow alleyway and once served as the headquarters for the Hanseatic League.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant.

Afternoon: The rest of the afternoon is free to explore Bergen independently. You might choose to learn more about local marine life at the Bergen Aquarium, featuring 500 fascinating

species, including Gentoo penguins and sea lions. Art lovers may decide to stop by the KODE Art Museums, a four-building complex featuring art throughout the centuries.

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

Evening: Free to explore independently.

Day 16 Bergen • Fish farm visit

- Destination: Bergen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Thon Hotel Bristol Bergen or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Oygarden salmon farm and museum, where you'll learn firsthand about Bergen's agricultural staple. Norwegian fishing traditions date back centuries, and fish farming has become one of the largest industries in the country. We'll take part in a conversation with a local farmer in which you'll get the chance to ask questions about the intricacies of this occupation, and how it has changed over the years.

Around 70% of Norway's fish exports are farmed as opposed to wild-caught, and many health enthusiasts in Norway and beyond have questioned whether farmed salmon holds the same nutritional value as wild-caught salmon, as farming often includes administering medications to fish to avoid bacterial infections. You might discuss with these local farmers how they combat stereotypes surrounding the "safety" of farmed fish, and how they are trying to change the world's outlook on the practice.

Lunch: Enjoy a freshly prepared lunch in the on-site restaurant.

Afternoon: Next, we'll take a boat ride with the fisherman and chat about his work and daily life. Along the way, see if you can spot fish dancing in the water. After, we'll have time to explore the museum on our own.

Upon returning to Bergen, the rest of the afternoon is free to explore independently. You might choose to learn more about local marine life at the Bergen Aquarium, featuring 500 fascinating species, including Gentoo penguins and sea lions. Art lovers may decide to stop by the KODE Art Museums, a four-building complex featuring art throughout the centuries.

Dinner: A Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 17 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Travelers will transfer to the airport for the flight back to the U.S., or begin the post-trip extension to *Copenhagen, Denmark*.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Copenhagen, Denmark*

Day 1 Fly to Copenhagen, Denmark •
Explore Copenhagen

Day 2 Explore Copenhagen •
Canal boat ride

Day 3 Copenhagen • Explore Roskilde &
Viking Ship Museum

Day 4 Copenhagen • Explore Christiania

Day 5 Copenhagen • Return to U.S.

PRE-TRIP

Baltic Capitals: Riga, Latvia & Tallinn, Estonia

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- | | |
|--|---|
| » Ferry from Tallinn to Helsinki | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader |
| » 5 nights accommodation | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 9 meals—5 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 2 dinners | » All transfers |
| » 7 small group activities | |

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Experience the history and culture of two Baltic capitals. Explore Riga—a thriving Baltic port city that has been a key cultural and economic hub since its founding more than 700 years ago. Now the capital of Latvia, Riga is rich with beautifully preserved classic architecture, fascinating museums, and stirring monuments commemorating the city’s dynamic history. Then discover Tallinn’s rich historic legacy in its churches and merchants’ houses, and immaculately-preserved medieval old town. Plus, learn about how these Baltic nations bloodlessly separated from the Soviet Union as you learn about the history of the “Singing Revolution.”

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Evening: Depart the U.S. today on your flight to Riga.

Day 2 Arrive Riga, Latvia

- Destination: Riga
- Accommodations: Metropole Hotel by Semarah or similar

Afternoon: Arrive throughout the day in Riga, Latvia. You’ll be met at the airport and accompanied to your hotel, where you are invited to join your Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk of the area around your hotel.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Evening: The evening is yours to explore independently.

Day 3 Explore Riga

- Destination: Riga
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Metropole Hotel by Semarah or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We join our Trip Experience Leader in the hotel this morning for a short Welcome Briefing to get acquainted with each other, and to enjoy a preview of the discoveries we can expect from the days to come.

Then, we set out for a panoramic city tour of Riga. Set close to the mouth of the Daugava River, which travels from the Baltic Sea into

Russia, 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 Russia, 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 Soviet ballet. Mikhail Baryshnikov, arguably the most famous male ballet dancer in the world, was actually born in Riga when it was under Soviet rule.

Our tour begins in Riga's Art Nouveau district where we'll see how the architectural style influences the city today. Riga contains one of the highest concentrations 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. We'll then drive to Riga's Old Town, a dizzying collection of cobbled lanes, gargoyle-adorned buildings, and lovingly restored 17th-century architectural treasures under UNESCO World Heritage Site protection.

Next, we'll visit the Central Market, one of the largest indoor markets in Europe and a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in former Zeppelin hangars. Here, our Trip Experience Leader will help us sample local produce and mingle with vendors to learn about the local cuisine and everyday life in Riga. Perhaps you'll sample fresh pickles and sauerkraut at one of the market's many colorful stalls.

Lunch: On your own. The market has a cornucopia of delicious cuisine to choose from, or your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant or café.

Afternoon: After lunch, our Trip Experience Leader will lead us on a discovery walk through Kipsala Island. We'll cross the Vansu Bridge over the Daugava River and explore this quiet, charming neighborhood. Once the domain of fishermen, Kipsala Island today is a peaceful enclave of restored wooden buildings, ideal for wandering and admiring views of the Old Town skyline across the river.

The rest of the afternoon is free to explore independently.

Dinner: A Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 4 Riga • Latvian politics conversation

• Explore Rundale Palace

- Destination: Riga
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Metropole Hotel by Semarah or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We begin the day by meeting with a local expert for a conversation about what it's like for a small country to be part of the European Union, as well as the relationship Latvia maintains with Russia. Over the centuries, Latvia has had a complex relationship with Russia, and spent the latter half of the 20th century as an annexed Soviet republic. Today, independent Latvia has joined its western European neighbors as part of the European Union—a diplomatic relationship that sometimes causes tension with Russia,

who sees the move as an encroachment on its sphere of influence, as well as with its sizeable Latvian Russian ethnic minority within its borders.

We'll learn about how this dynamic affects contemporary Latvian politics, and the divided attitudes about it within the population, during a with our local expert. We'll also have the opportunity to ask questions to further our understanding of this complicated issue.

Then, we'll drive to Rundale Palace. Upon arrival, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for a guided tour of this sprawling Baroque palace originally constructed for the Dukes of Courland. We'll learn the history behind the rooms adorned with period furnishings and take in the vast grounds. We'll have time to explore the manicured rose garden located on both sides of the landscape, home to 52 rose circles blooming with varieties from different countries.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We return to Riga where the rest of the day is free to explore independently. You might choose to visit the Latvian Academy of Sciences, a rare piece of Soviet architecture known as "Stalin's birthday cake" to the locals. Or relax in a café and, if you dare, order a beverage with Riga Black Balsam—an herbal liqueur that Latvians celebrate as an invigorating cure—all for whatever ails you.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Evening: The evening is yours to explore independently.

Day 5 Riga • Discover Parnu, Estonia

• Explore Tallinn • Song Festival Grounds visit

- Destination: Tallinn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Tallink City Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today will be a 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 depart for Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. Our first stop is Parnu. Here, we'll have a chance to stretch our legs and catch a glimpse of Estonia's premier seaside resort during a walk led by our Trip Experience Leader.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Parnu.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Tallinn. Upon arrival, we'll stop to discover 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 our visit here, we'll depart for the city's upper town, where we'll get panoramic views of our new surroundings from a viewing platform. We'll then drive to our hotel, concluding our journey.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: The evening is yours to explore independently. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Day 6 Explore Tallinn • Optional *Olde Hansa Medieval Feast*

- Destination: Tallinn
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Tallink City Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll discover more of Tallinn today on an included tour of its Old Town with our Trip Experience Leader. We'll begin our walking portion of the tour in the city's UNESCO World Heritage-designated Old Town, a tangled warren of cobbled streets lined with outdoor cafés and wonderfully preserved 14th- and 15th-century buildings. We'll also discover its historic highlights, such as the Fat Margaret Tower—listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the tower houses exhibits about maritime trade, agencies, and navigation in the Middle Ages, as well as in the era of sailing, steam, and motor ships. From here, we'll embark on a 2-hour walking tour of the city, exploring notable sites and wandering Tallinn's ancient streets. Estonia's capital and largest city, Tallinn, sits on the Bay of Finland, directly across from Helsinki.

We'll find both Scandinavian and Russian influences in the language and culture here. As with most major Baltic cities, Tallinn was occupied by the Soviets, then the Nazis, and then the Soviets again, who forced Estonia into the U.S.S.R. Our tour will end in the Town Hall Square, then we'll enjoy free time from 11:45am onward. You may choose to continue strolling through the Old Town.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: Continue to explore on your own. Later, you may choose to join an optional *Olde Hansa Medieval Feast* in Tallinn's Old Town.

Dinner: On your own. For those on our optional tour, sit down to a feast at a local medieval restaurant housed in a former 15th-century merchant's home.

Evening: After dinner, those who have joined our optional tour will return to the hotel. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 7 Tallinn • Estonian independence conversation • Join main trip

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel

Morning: We'll join a local expert this morning for a conversation about Estonian independence. Estonia first became a sovereign nation in 1918, when it split from the Russian Empire following the chaos of the end of World War I. The small republic enjoyed independence for 22 years until the outbreak of World War II, when it found itself caught in a tug of war between the Soviet and Nazi regimes. At the war's end, Estonia became a Soviet Republic, and remained so until the final years of the USSR. In 1988, Estonia began its bid for independence during the "Singing Revolution;" four years of protest and defiance which resulted in the country's bloodless separation from the Soviet Union in 1991.

During our conversation, our local expert will discuss the details of the revolution and the choral traditions of Estonia, including the "five patriotic songs" series sung at the Old Town Festival, produced by composer Alo Mattiisen in 1988.

The rest of the morning is free to explore independently, or to prepare for your transfer to Finland.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant or café.

Afternoon: We drive to Tallinn's ferry terminal, and board the ferry which will take us to Helsinki. Upon arrival, we'll disembark and drive to our hotel to begin our New! *Nordic Countries & the Arctic Circle: Finland, Sweden's Sami Lapland & Norway* adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Olde Hansa Medieval Feast

(Day 6 \$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.

POST-TRIP

Copenhagen, Denmark

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- | | |
|--|---|
| » Air transportation from Bergen to Copenhagen | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader |
| » 4 nights accommodation | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 8 meals—4 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 2 dinners | » All transfers |
| » 7 small group activities | |
| » Copenhagen Card: Free entrance to more than 60 attractions and free public transportation within the city | |

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

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Discover Copenhagen, the capital of a country that's consistently ranked as one of the happiest places in the world. Ease into the laid-back Danish lifestyle for four nights and enjoy, whether partaking in the amusements of Tivoli Gardens, or ambling past the pastel houses of Nyhavn, the city's famous waterfront district. Plus, enjoy a glimpse into the world of the Vikings on an excursion to Roskilde.

Day 1 Fly to Copenhagen, Denmark • Explore Copenhagen

- Destination: Copenhagen
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Skt Petri Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Details of this day may vary depending on flight times. Your Trip Experience Leader will inform you of any changes.

Morning: We have the morning free to explore Bergen independently or make any last-minute preparations before our flight to Copenhagen this afternoon. If you like, you can join your Trip Experience Leader on a short discovery walk for one last look at Bergen.

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

Afternoon: We drive to the airport this afternoon and board our flight to Copenhagen. After landing, we transfer to our hotel, taking in some of the sights of the city along the way during a panoramic drive. We'll see Christiansborg Palace, formerly a royal building, and currently the seat of Danish government, housing the national parliament, Supreme Court, and Ministry of State.

We'll continue on to see one of the city's signature attractions—the Little Mermaid monument. Unveiled in 1913, the Little Mermaid was designed from bronze and granite by Edvard Eriksen and given as a gift to the city

from Danish brewer Carl Jacobsen of Carlsberg Breweries. The statue marks the influence of fairy tale writer Hans Christian Andersen, who was born in Copenhagen. Andersen published the original story in 1837 in a collection of children's stories, and since then, the journey of a young mermaid willing to risk everything for a human soul has been retold and adapted again and again. A small, but intricately sculpted statue, the Little Mermaid has guarded Copenhagen's harbor for over a century. In 2013, a celebration of the statue's 100th year took place throughout the city.

After checking in to our hotel early this evening, we'll set off on an orientation walk to discover the nearby sights with our Trip Experience Leader. Denmark is considered a forerunner in green energy and waste management, and your Trip Experience Leader will provide some perspective on the history of the industry in Copenhagen and how it has affected residents' daily lives. The waste-to-energy plant, in fact, includes a year-round ski slope climbing wall, so visitors can experience a blend of education and recreation.

Of course, you'll also walk past colorful houses as well as the many nearby grocery stores, pharmacies, and ATMs surrounding your hotel. You can explore Copenhagen on a deeper level with a number of suggested free time activities. If time allows today, you might take a canal ride around the city.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 2 Explore Copenhagen •

Canal boat ride

- Destination: Copenhagen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Skt Petri Hotel or similar

Activity Note: In order to use the Copenhagen Card, you will need to have a smartphone to download it, as it is a digital card. Your Trip Experience Leader will inform you of the app you will need prior to your arrival and assist you with activating your card. Once the card is downloaded and activated, you do not need access to Wifi to use it.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We explore Copenhagen on a walking tour this morning, which will conclude with a gentle ride on a canal boat, taking us on a scenic ride through the city's harbor and waterways, with a local guide onboard to provide expert commentary. This canal boat ride is included in your 72-hour Copenhagen Card, which allows entry to 60 of the city's attractions and free transport on the bus, metro, and train lines. This card will also be your passport to exploring the city during your free time over the next few days, allowing you to follow your interests to the activities and destinations that most appeal to you.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: You can spend the rest of the day exploring independently. You might also choose to join your Trip Experience Leader for a discovery walk to see one of Copenhagen's many historic sights.

Dinner: Dinner is on your own tonight. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant, or you can join them to discover Tivoli Gardens—entrance is included with

your Copenhagen Card, and with three dozen restaurants to choose from, you'll have your choice of fine Danish or international cuisine.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. If you've chosen to join your Trip Experience Leader at Tivoli Gardens, you'll find ample entertainment, including 25 amusement park rides, an open-air performance space, an aquarium, concert halls, and theaters.

Day 3 Copenhagen • Explore Roskilde & Viking Ship Museum

- Destination: Copenhagen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Skt Petri Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll travel by local train to Roskilde, a city about 20 miles west of Copenhagen and the one-time capital city of Denmark. Established in the 980s, Roskilde was the epicenter of the Danish Viking world thanks to its location on an island near a fjord; today, the city's rich Viking legacy lives on, as we'll see during a walking tour this morning with our Trip Experience Leader. As we get acquainted with Roskilde, you'll also learn about modern life in the city, including the famous Roskilde Rock Festival.

Our walk finishes at the Roskilde Cathedral. Known as the first Gothic-style cathedral to be built of brick, the Roskilde Cathedral was an incredibly influential site, starting the brick Gothic trend throughout northern Europe. More than 40 kings and queens have been buried in the cathedral over the past 1,000 years—the most royal cathedral burials in the world. The Cathedral also sits atop a hill, granting visitors panoramic views of the city and fjord laid out below.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Roskilde.

Afternoon: We'll delve further into Roskilde's Viking heritage during a visit to the Viking Ship Museum. As the name suggests, this museum is dedicated to studying and preserving the boat-building and seafaring techniques of Denmark's ancient and medieval people. The centerpiece of the museum is a collection of five restored Viking ships, excavated from Roskilde Fjord in 1962. The museum also specializes in reconstruction, where visitors can watch as workers reconstruct new vessels in the on-site shipyard.

We'll tour the museum and meet with some of the workers to learn about their passion for this unique field of study, and watch as they build ships as the Vikings did, using historic tools and instruments.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant recommendations.

Evening: The evening is yours to explore independently.

Day 4 Copenhagen • Explore Christiania

- Destination: Copenhagen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Skt Petri Hotel or similar

Activity Note: A visit to Christiania is not always possible due to local activities and scheduled events. Your Trip Experience Leader will keep you informed if this is the case, and an alternate activity will be provided.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll discover the Christiania district of Copenhagen today, where we'll enjoy a walking tour with a local guide. Also known as "Freetown Christiania," this unique enclave of the city was established in 1971 by a counterculture group who inhabited an

abandoned military barracks and developed their own set of societal rules, completely independent from the Danish government. While it has since accepted some adherence to Danish law, it is still semi-autonomous today, and a haven for artists, musicians, and those seeking an alternative lifestyle.

We'll tour Christiania with a member of the community, and learn about how it is a controversial subject in Danish society. Some view it as a grand social experiment, an idealized vision of how self-governed life could be; others view it as a chaotic place, a flimsy pretext for the sale of drugs and other unlawful behavior.

After our tour, we'll have some time to wander around Christiania independently. The district is a mix of workshops, homemade houses, art galleries, music venues, organic restaurants, and green spaces. While the neighborhood is perfectly safe, be aware that cameras are prohibited in Christiania to protect Freetown's alternative nature.

Lunch: On your own—we'll walk together to a nearby local market, or your Trip Experience Leader can offer suggestions if you'd prefer to go on your own.

Afternoon: The afternoon is free to explore independently. Perhaps you'll stroll through the city's colorful Botanical Garden. Located in the heart of Copenhagen, this garden famously features the largest collection of living plants in the world, covering more than 10 hectares with complex glasshouses dating back to 1874. The garden serves as both a recreational space and a place for research as it is part of the University of Copenhagen Faculty of Science. There are more than 13,000 species housed in the garden, which are all arranged for easy viewing. Visitors will find 600 species of Danish plants, 1,100 species of perennial plants, 1,100 species of annual plants, and rock gardens including

plants from mountainous areas in Central and Southern Europe and Conifer Hill. The garden is perfect for those wishing to escape the bustling city and enjoy a peaceful afternoon surrounded by nature.

Dinner: A Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 5 Copenhagen • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight back to the U.S.

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 3 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Latvia and Estonia:** No additional pages are needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Denmark:** No additional pages are needed.

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 (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia):** 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.

GROUP SIZE

- This adventure has a maximum group size of 16 travelers with a local Trip Experience Leader exclusive to O.A.T.

PACING

- 6 locations in 16 days
- 2 internal flights of 2–3 hours

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 2–3 miles continuously and unassisted, and participate in 2 hours of physical activities each day
- Agility and balance are required for embarking a small boat
- 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

- Daytime temperatures range from 35–80°F during the travel season
- June–August are the warmest months
- May and October weather can be unpredictable and change quickly

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 30-seat coach, ferry, subway, and public bus
- Travel by small boat for a total of 3 hours

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 8–20 hours and will most likely have one to two connections

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.

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 is safe in Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Estonia, and Latvia. You may wish to bring a reusable bottle from home to fill up before heading out for the day.
- However, if you prefer bottled water, it is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.
- Never drink from a mountain stream, fjord, or river, regardless of how clean it might appear.

Food

- Food is very safe here.
- The only time you might want to be careful is with street food—look for a stall/cart/truck that appears clean and that the locals frequent.

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. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **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 (€)

Sweden: Swedish Krona (kr., SEK)

Norway: Norwegian Krone (NOK)

Denmark: Danish *krone* (Kr., DKK)

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 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 can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2014) 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.

Nordic Countries: Most Nordic countries are cashless. In response, ATMs are less widely available and cash is not accepted in many places.

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.

Nordic Countries: Credit and debit cards are readily accepted in Nordic countries. Some cafes, restaurants, and attractions will only accept credit cards. Visa is the most widely accepted credit card in most Nordic countries, followed by MasterCard and then American Express.

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.*
- **Hotel Housekeeping:** Many travelers will leave the equivalent of \$1–\$2 per day, per room for the hotel housekeeping staff.
- **Waiters:** There is no need to tip at included meals. When dining on your own, a service charge may be included, but it is customary to leave an additional tip of around 10% of the bill.
- **Taxi drivers:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change.
- **Public Restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Scandinavia are pay toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance, the attendant, or put a coin into the stall door. Costs vary from 0.5–1 euro or 5–10 kroner, so be sure that you have coins available.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and optional tours operated by O.A.T.

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, as the alternative, buying a SIM card onsite, is only available if you are a Norwegian resident with a Norwegian personnumber.

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.

Most hotels offer free WiFi, so you will be able to utilize your phone apps while at your accommodations.

Calling Cards & 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.

Receiving Calls from Home

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one is to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

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.

Finland: +358

Denmark: +45

Sweden: +46

Estonia: +372

Norway: +47

Latvia: +371

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Due to domestic flights within Finland and Norway, the current standard for this trip is 44 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>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.</p>	

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:** Consider a 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. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **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, medication, a small change of clothes, 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

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits. For more packing and luggage tips, you might want to visit www.travelite.org.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Warm clothes & rain gear—needed year-round:** Temperatures in Lapland are cold all year, plus the weather can be fickle. Regardless of your travel season, bring long sleeves, warm socks and pants, and items to layer up with—a heavy sweatshirt, fleece top or wool sweater, waterproof jacket with a hood, hat, and gloves. Waterproof boots and a heavy-duty parka are also recommended, except in peak summer. Dress in layers, so you can easily adjust to sudden weather shifts. For possible showers, take a folding travel umbrella and/or rain hat.

- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes.

Style Hints

- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome or Farewell Dinner, but it’s completely up to you.

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 to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap

- ☐ Compact umbrella
- ☐ Insect repellent (there are mosquitoes in the north, especially from mid-May to August)
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Rubber or waterproof shoes
- ☐ Electrical plug adapter
- ☐ Optional: Wash cloths
- ☐ Optional: Travel-size hair dryer (Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version.)

Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- ☐ Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- ☐ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- ☐ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin
- ☐ Motion sickness medication

Home-Hosted Visits

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 countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all of our 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 Scandinavia, Estonia, and Latvia 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. Although you’ll only need one adapter on this trip (Type C plugs work in Type F receptacles), 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:

Note that a C plug will fit into an E or F socket.

Finland: C and F

Sweden: C and F

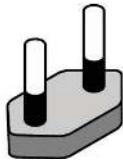
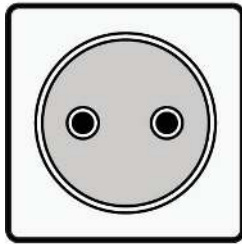
Norway: C and F

Denmark: C and F

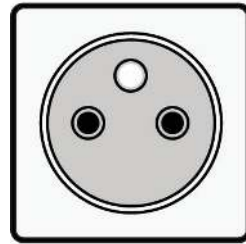
Estonia: C and F

Latvia: C and F

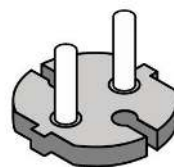
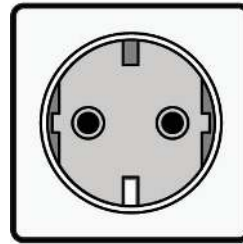
Type C



Type E



Type F



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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.

Kiruna, Sweden: Kiruna is north of the Polar Circle and experiences midnight sun during the freezing winters. The temperature does not reach higher than the low 60s. The town also experiences midnight sun and mild summers.

Svalvaer, Norway: Svalvaer has a subpolar climate—think long, cold, dark winters and very cool summers. Because of its northern location, the sun does not rise in December and January (polar night) and doesn't set in June and July (midnight sun). The town gets over 28 inches of precipitation a year, both rain and snow. The mildest season is June through August, but even then it will be chilly, with highs only in the upper 50s. Spring and fall are generally in the 30-40 degree range, and in winter, the temperatures stay below freezing all day.

Bergen, Norway: Bergen enjoys an oceanic climate, with mild winters, cool summers, and plenty of rainfall all year round. It rains so often in Bergen, it is considered the rainiest city in Europe! While there is also snow in the winter, it is usually intermittent and quick to melt.

Copenhagen, Denmark: The weather in Copenhagen is mild through all the four seasons—with highs usually in the 60s and lows usually in the 50s—although temperatures in winter can drop down into the 30s and 40s. On the other end of the scale, summertime highs rarely go above 80 °F despite the occasional heat wave. Rainfall is moderate too, but spread throughout the year, so showers are possible in any season. Grey skies are the norm rather than the exception in Copenhagen.

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.

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.

Scandinavia

Mid May to August: During late spring and summer, temperatures can be surprisingly high, comparable to Maine or Vermont; and the sea is generally much warmer than you might expect, largely as a result of the Gulf Stream and the shallowness of the Baltic. The low humidity, too, makes it feel warmer than temperatures may indicate. If you are traveling at this time of year,

you're likely to encounter comfortably warm days and enjoy gloriously long hours of sun during your travels. The Midnight Sun will be shining over the northern parts (above the Arctic Circle) of Finland, Norway, and Sweden from mid May to the end of July. However, you should also be prepared for variable weather, temperature drops, and mosquitos. The climate and weather along coastlines, in particular, is very much influenced by fluctuations in the sea's condition and is changeable throughout the year. Winds, rain, and clouds are common occurrences, though extended spells of fine settled weather are also likely.

April to mid May/September to October: During early spring and autumn, the weather can turn from warm, sunny, and mild to rainy, misty, and miserable within an hour or so. Be prepared for intermittent spells of wet, cloudy weather. Autumn comes early in this region of the world; summer typically ends at the close of August, and peak fall foliage is in September. If you travel on the shoulder season, come prepared for snow and very cold weather.

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	HELSINKI, FINLAND			KIRUNA, SWEDEN		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	26 to 16	88 to 87	16	17 to 2	81	1
FEB	27 to 15	89 to 82	11	18 to 4	79	1
MAR	34 to 23	89 to 74	12	25 to 10	74	1
APR	45 to 31	87 to 59	13	34 to 20	70	5
MAY	59 to 41	84 to 51	14	45 to 32	66	11
JUN	66 to 49	85 to 55	17	55 to 41	63	16
JUL	70 to 53	90 to 59	15	61 to 46	68	16
AUG	66 to 51	93 to 66	17	57 to 42	74	17
SEP	56 to 43	93 to 72	15	47 to 35	78	13
OCT	46 to 36	91 to 80	20	35 to 24	84	8
NOV	36 to 28	90 to 88	17	24 to 12	86	3
DEC	30 to 20	89 to 88	16	19 to 6	83	2

MONTH	SVOLVAER, NORWAY			BERGEN, NORWAY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	34 to 26	80	14	39 to 31	82 to 79	21
FEB	33 to 24	80	11	39 to 31	82 to 72	16
MAR	34 to 26	77	11	43 to 34	82 to 68	20
APR	36 to 30	78	12	48 to 37	82 to 62	19
MAY	41 to 35	78	16	57 to 45	80 to 60	20
JUN	50 to 44	82	19	62 to 50	82 to 63	19
JUL	58 to 49	76	12	64 to 53	85 to 66	21
AUG	58 to 51	81	17	64 to 53	87 to 69	22
SEP	50 to 43	74	20	58 to 48	85 to 70	24
OCT	41 to 34	72	18	52 to 44	82 to 72	25
NOV	34 to 26	75	8	44 to 37	82 to 78	23
DEC	35 to 28	81	14	41 to 33	83 to 81	22

MONTH	COPENHAGEN, DENMARK			RIGA, LATVIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	37 to 30	89 to 85	18	29 to 22	87 to 83	1.3
FEB	36 to 28	89 to 80	15	29 to 21	86 to 78	0.9
MAR	41 to 32	89 to 74	15	37 to 28	87 to 70	1.0
APR	49 to 36	84 to 63	15	48 to 35	86 to 61	1.4
MAY	60 to 45	76 to 57	14	60 to 45	83 to 56	1.7
JUN	66 to 52	76 to 59	16	66 to 52	88 to 61	2.3
JUL	69 to 55	78 to 60	15	69 to 56	90 to 65	2.8
AUG	69 to 54	82 to 60	16	68 to 55	91 to 65	2.7
SEP	61 to 50	86 to 67	15	59 to 48	90 to 69	2.6
OCT	53 to 44	87 to 76	19	50 to 41	88 to 74	2.1
NOV	44 to 37	87 to 82	19	39 to 33	88 to 83	2.0
DEC	39 to 32	88 to 85	18	32 to 25	88 to 85	1.5

MONTH	TALLINN, ESTONIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	30 to 20	87 to 85	2.0
FEB	29 to 19	87 to 80	1.3
MAR	36 to 24	88 to 73	1.4
APR	47 to 32	86 to 64	1.4
MAY	59 to 41	84 to 55	1.5
JUN	66 to 50	87 to 59	2.4
JUL	70 to 54	91 to 63	3.0
AUG	68 to 53	92 to 67	3.3
SEP	58 to 45	92 to 72	3.0
OCT	48 to 38	89 to 76	3.0
NOV	38 to 30	89 to 85	2.7
DEC	33 to 24	88 to 86	2.4

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.

Scandinavian and Sami Culture

Does Scandinavia even have a common culture? And how does it differ from Nordic culture? First off, Scandinavia refers to the lands originally occupied by the Vikings—which would be Norway, Sweden and Denmark. When referring to Nordic countries, it would be Norway, Sweden and Denmark, with Finland and Iceland added to the mix. While these northern lands differ in language and geography, their shared history and religion have given rise to several cultural similarities.

A belief that Scandinavians are sullen or aloof, however, is one of the most common cultural misunderstandings. If you are unable to engage in a conversation with a local, you might interpret it as someone being standoffish or even rude. But a Scandinavian would perceive it as being polite by not bothering a stranger with small talk. Broadly speaking, Scandinavians place a high value on being polite and do not wish to speak to anyone unnecessarily or even ask for help unless it's absolutely necessary.

A common thread woven throughout Scandinavian culture may be its focus on the wellbeing of the group rather than of the individual. While Americans admire even the most extreme efforts of individuals to achieve success, Scandinavians strive for moderation—in themselves, the community, and the workplace—to achieve a sense of balance. There are reasons why they always make the lists of the “happiest people on earth.” Scandinavians attribute it to their focus on life/work balance—while they do pay high taxes, the generous social programs they get in return take all the fear out of losing their livelihood or growing broke. This allows them to focus on enjoying life. Scandinavia's concern for group wellbeing expresses itself in a variety of ways. The Danes have the centuries-old concept of “*hygge*,” which is a general state of mind that embraces life. The Finns have their saunas, whose bonding rituals are intertwined in national culture. And the Swedes consider “*fika*,” a type of mandatory coffee hour, to be an essential part of each day in order to bond with friends and colleagues.

Workplace culture is far less stressful in Scandinavian countries, too. Everyone expects everyone else to perform to the same standard. Since it's a common practice among Scandinavians to say what they mean, no one has to search for hidden meanings. And dealing with fewer office politics makes for a far more relaxed and comfortable workplace environment. Scandinavian culture discourages those seen as aiming too high or being too ambitious. In an attempt to make society

as homogenous as possible, measures like private schools using the same curriculum as public schools are put in place to ensure equal opportunities for all. And Scandinavians believe that wealth should have no bearing on how you are treated.

Further north in the Lapland region, the Sami people continue to keep their 9,000-year-old traditions alive into the modern age. They are the only indigenous people in the European Union, with a population of around 80,000. They inhabit the region around the Arctic Circle across Finland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden. Collectively these regions are termed Sami.

Traditionally, most Sami people have supported themselves through fishing, livestock farming, hunting, and reindeer herding. Out of the traditional Sami livelihoods, reindeer herding still functions as one of the important cornerstones of the Sami culture by offering a space for using Sami language, material for traditional clothing and other Sami handicrafts, and is the base of their food culture.

The Sami people also embody a great spirit of resiliency in the face of adversity. Beyond cold winters, they have endured attempts by the Norwegian and Finnish governments to suppress their heritage and cultural traditions, from forbidding *joik*—the folk music of the Sami—from being used in public schools in the 1950s, to bans on speaking Sami languages (of which there are nine) in the 1990s. Through hard work and perseverance, the Sami have preserved many of their cultural traditions and *joik* has actually regained some popularity in recent years. Fans of Disney's *Frozen* may recognize the Nordic influences in the film's opening song, composed by a Norwegian musician with Sami roots.

But one thing that Scandinavians and the Sami people have in common is their love of the outdoors. Sami traditions are rooted in their connection to nature and the Scandinavian people take full advantage of the breathtaking beauty of their landscapes by escaping into nature and enjoying the solitude at every opportunity. Come to think of it, no wonder they're so happy.

Laundry Service

Laundry service is available through your hotels, although it is expensive. Your Trip Experience Leader will help you make arrangements for these services if you need them.

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

In both Norway and Finland smoking is prohibited in public areas and restaurants.

Hotels

With an emphasis on minimalism and functional design, you'll discover that hotel rooms in this region are traditionally much smaller than in the United States, and tend to feature a sleek, modern look. Rooms are comfortable, clean, and well-equipped, but you should expect to experience how locals make use of limited space, which may mean that the bathrooms are smaller, or the beds are closer together, than you'd find at home.

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.

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 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.

Swedish Cuisine

Like other Scandinavian countries, cuisine in Sweden focuses on fresh ingredients and simple preparations—food without fuss. But that doesn't mean it lacks personality as the spare approach lets the local fish and produce (like lingonberries) shine through. Some dishes to try are:

- **Kanelbullar:** Cinnamon buns with a sticky glaze. During holidays like Christmas, you may also see *saffransbullar* (saffron buns).
- **Toast skagen:** Shrimp, whitefish roe, Dijon mustard, mayo, and fresh dill on toasted bread served as an elegant appetizer or snack. Also popular as starter/snack is *gubbroa*, an open-faced egg salad sandwich with anchovies.
- **Smorgasbord:** Swedish buffet of meatballs, mini-sausages, salmon, pickled herring, and sides like *knackebrod* (crisp bread)
- **Gul artsoppa:** Yellow pea soup, a variant on split-pea soup
- **Kottbullar:** Swedish meatballs, cooked in a cream-based gravy
- **Princess cake:** If you watch *Great British Bakeoff*, you may remember the *prinsesstarta* challenge, where contestants had to bake this elaborate layer cake topped with a dome of whipped cream and a layer of green marzipan.

Norwegian Cuisine

Most modern Norwegian households eat much as we do in the States, enjoying simple but easy to prepare traditional favorites; the occasional ethnic treat like tacos or Asian stir-fry; or even a fast-food meal like the phenomenally popular *Grandiosa*, Norway's best-selling frozen pizza.

And in case you haven't heard, since the early 2000s, the Scandinavian (and worldwide) restaurant scene has been utterly transformed by the rise of **New Nordic cuisine**, a cooking style that stresses sustainability, freshness, and extremely local and seasonal ingredients. In practice,

that means celebrating unique flavors that might previously have been overlooked. So yes, you might find carefully composed plates of grilled duck hearts on a bed of moss, but you'll also find creative reinterpretations of traditional Nordic classics, like these:

- **Røkelaks:** Norwegian smoked salmon served with a dollop of creamy dill sauce.
- **Sursild:** Herring that has been pickled, just one of the many methods used to preserve fish.
- **Rakfisk:** A trout that is covered with spruce branches and fermented in barrels. The smell is pungent, but the taste is not.
- **Lutefisk:** Dried cod that's preserved in lye, and then triple washed and steamed (all of the caustic lye is gone by the time you're served it). If you're from Minnesota or Wisconsin, you may have seen this at your state fair or in restaurants, so you already know it's better with butter or sauce. In Norway, it is often paired with bacon, mashed peas, boiled potatoes, and golden syrup.
- **Finnbiff:** Sautéed reindeer stew.
- **Fårikål:** Boiled dinner of mutton or lamb, whole black pepper, cabbage, and potatoes. This is the national dish of Norway.
- **Pinnekjøtt:** A Christmas Eve classic, a hearty meal of salted, air-dried sheep ribs. They are rehydrated by steaming them over birch sticks, and eaten with sweet mashed rutabaga.
- **Kjøttkake (or kjøttballer):** A classic Norwegian comfort food. They are balls of minced beef seasoned with onions, nutmeg and ginger, then pan fried and simmered in gravy. (Yes, they are virtually the same as Swedish meatballs, but you won't make Norwegian friends if you call them that.)
- **Lefse:** Crepe-like flatbreads that are slathered with butter, and sugar, then rolled up or folded for eating on the go.
- **Krumkake:** A delicate, waffle-like cookie, shaped like an ice cream cone and filled with cream or fruit.
- **Lingonberry:** A ubiquitous fruit that tastes similar to cranberries and is used in compotes, juices, and preserves. As a jam, it's a great accompaniment to **brunost**, a family of brown goat's milk cheeses (like **gjetost**) that have the consistency (and a little of the sweetness) of fudge. Or just go straight to dessert heaven and order some fluffy **trollkrem**—a meringue of lingonberries whipped with sugar, vanilla, and egg whites.

Danish Cuisine

Twenty years ago one might've described Danish food as peasant cooking—hearty, stick-to-your-ribs Viking fare that would get you through a long day of farming, fishing, or raiding. Today, Denmark is the epicenter of the New Nordic cuisine, a movement begun by Danish chefs René Redzepi and Claus Meyer, who helmed Copenhagen's Noma restaurant (considered the

world's best) and influenced chefs everywhere with their philosophy that celebrates sustainable, locavore, and seasonal ingredients—many of which are foraged and were previously forgotten. It has inspired many cooks to revisit and refine some of the classics of Danish cuisine, like these:

- **Smørrebrød:** These best-known Danish delights are open-faced sandwiches built on a base of buttered *rugbrød*, a dense, dark rye bread. These are not random sandwiches, they are artfully composed, so the dish is colorful and the garnishes are complementary. Toppings might include *syltede sild* (pickled herring) with micro greens; shrimp and egg with dill; or roast beef with pickles, onions, and horseradish. A favorite is *dyrlægens natmad*, which translates as “veterinarian’s midnight snack” and includes corned beef, sky (Danish meat aspic), and *leverpostej* (liver pâté) topped with slivered red onions, sprouts, and parsley or dill.
- **Stegt flæsk:** The national dish of Denmark. Crispy pork belly chunks served with boiled potatoes and parsley sauce.
- **Brændendekærlighed:** So many Danes have a “burning love” for bacon, they named this dish after this affliction. This dish is mashed potatoes topped with oven-roasted cubes of bacon, caramelized onions, and butter.
- **Forloren hare:** A Danish meatloaf made with ground pork, leeks, and egg. Bacon strips are woven around the loaf, which is then baked till it looks like an elegant brown basket.
- **Rødspættefilet:** A filet of plaice (a mild white fish) that is breaded and fried. It can be eaten as an entrée, or as the *stjernesked* (“shooting star”) of a *smørrebrød* topped with shrimp, lettuce and caviar from the Limfjord.
- **Tarteletter:** These are flaky pastry tartlets filled with chicken and asparagus in a creamy béchamel sauce.
- **Andesteg:** This dish is a holiday favorite. A roast duck stuffed with apples and prunes, then roasted until golden-brown and served with a sauce made with reserved duck fat, whiskey, and wine.
- **Wienerbrød:** For something sweet to go with your coffee (*bica*), order a Danish but call it by its proper name, *wienerbrød*, which means “Vienna bread” and is a more accurate reflection of its provenance. Even though Danes did not invent them, they love these flaky, croissant-like glazed pastries filled with cream or fruit.
- **Kransekake:** The cake that literally towers above them all. It’s a cone of concentric almond cake rings bound together with a white icing glaze, and sometimes decorated with berries or nuts. They are served at festive occasions (especially New Year’s), and the center of the tower might hold candies, chocolates, and even champagne or wine bottles.

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.

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

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.

Sweden

Swedish artisans create wonderful handmade glass and crystal (including Orrefors), which will make collectors proud. Swedish designer jewelry is also popular. Other traditional arts and crafts of the region include hand painted wooden Dalecarlian (Dala) horses, Viking and troll figures. If you have a sweet tooth, try Marabou chocolate, or try Glogg – an alcoholic drink served hot.

Norway

Popular items include trolls, jewelry, woolen items, glass, wood and leather goods, local brews, furniture, carpets, and other decor.

VAT: Although prices are inflated by a hefty 25% Value-Added Tax, non-European Union citizens can receive about an 18% refund. For more details and a list of all tax-free shops, ask at the tourist office for a copy of the Tax-Free Shopping Guide.

Denmark

A showcase for world-famous Danish design and craftsmanship, Copenhagen seems to have been designed with shoppers in mind. The best buys are such luxury items as crystal, porcelain, silver, and furs. Look for offers and sales (tilbud or udsalg in Danish) and check antiques and secondhand shops for classics at cut-rate prices.

VAT: Although prices are inflated by a hefty 25% Value-Added Tax (Danes call it MOMS), non-European Union citizens can receive about an 18% refund. For more details and a list of all tax-free shops, ask at the tourist office for a copy of the Tax-Free Shopping Guide.

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.

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

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.

Sweden

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 173,860 square miles
- **Capital:** Stockholm.
- **Government:** Constitutional monarchy

- **Geography:** The countryside of Sweden slopes eastward and southward from the Kjolen Mountains along the Norwegian border, where the peak elevation is Kebnekaise at 6,965 feet in Lapland. In the north are mountains and many lakes. To the south and east are central lowlands and south of them are fertile areas of forest, valley, and plain. Along Sweden's rocky coast, chopped up by bays and inlets, are many islands, the largest of which are Gotland and Oland.
- **Languages:** Swedish
- **Location:** Sweden is situated on the Scandinavian Peninsula, between Norway and Finland. The north of Sweden falls within the Arctic Circle.
- **Population:** 9,960,487 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Lutheran 63%, other (includes Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and none) 17%
- **Time zones:** Sweden is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time.

National Holidays: Sweden

In addition to the holidays listed below, Sweden celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. 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

06/06 National Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Sweden: A Brief History

Sweden's history began at the end of the last Ice Age, when tribes from central Europe began settling in Sweden's southern regions and the ancestors of the Sami people coming from Siberia, settled in the north. By the 7th century AD, the Svea people would gain supremacy in the region and their kingdom gave the country its name of Sweden. Like in Norway and Denmark, Sweden flourished and expanded through trade and colonization during the 300 years of the Viking Age, ending by the middle of the 11th century, a period that also saw Sweden converting to Christianity.

In the 13th century, the Swedes conquered Finland, but Russia would continue to battle Sweden for control of Finland. By 1323 Finland was firmly in Swedish hands and would remain a province of Sweden until 1809. In 1397, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway were united under a single monarch by the Union of Kalmar. But with Denmark emerging as the dominant power, there was constant infighting between Sweden and Denmark, which came to a head in 1520 when

Denmark invaded Sweden. Sweden would then leave the union that brought the three nations together resulting in the beginning of the Vasa Dynasty and the creation of the first true Swedish nation-state.

Remaining neutral during both World War I and II, Sweden would not have to rebuild from the ground up as many other European nations did. The ruling Social Democrats began implementing welfare protection measures, the economy grew steadily, and Swedes achieved a high standard of living. In the 1970s, Sweden's economy went into a decline, however, and wouldn't stabilize again until the late 1990s. Sweden joined the EU in 1995 and has seen steady improvements to its economy.

With the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022, Sweden, a country who has previously worked with NATO as a non-aligned military, applied to join the coalition. In October 2022, all NATO members (except for Hungary and Turkey) ratified Sweden's assentation. Sweden formally became a full member of NATO in March 7th, 2024.

Norway

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 125,049 square miles
- **Capital:** Oslo
- **Geography:** Nearly 70% of Norway is uninhabitable and covered by mountains, glaciers, moors, and rivers. It has a 1,700-mile coastline on the North Atlantic, raggedly indented with inlets, fjords, peninsulas, and islands. Because the coast is so well sheltered, and most of the country's land area is so rocky and mountainous, Norwegians have taken to the sea since prehistoric times.
- **Languages:** Two official forms of Norwegian: Bokmal and Nynorsk
- **Location:** The Kingdom of Norway stretches along the western edge of the Scandinavian Peninsula, bordering Sweden, Finland, and Russia to the east. It extends about 1,100 miles from the North Sea to more than 300 miles above the Arctic Circle. That makes it the farthest north of any European country.
- **Population:** 5,320,045 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Church of Norway (Lutheran) 71.5%, other Christian 3.9%, Muslim 2.8%, Roman Catholic 2.8%, other 2.4%, unspecified 7.5%
- **Time zone:** Norway is 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time during daylight saving time, 6 hours ahead of Eastern Time. Daylight Saving Time is in effect in Norway from the end of March until the end of September.

National Holidays: Norway

In addition to the holidays listed below, Norway celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. 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 May Day
05/17 Constitution Day
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 Boxing Day

Norway: A Brief History

In spite of its extreme geography and climate, Norway has been inhabited for about 10,000 years, starting when the last great ice sheets retreated. Migrations of the Nøstvet-Økser people of central Europe began arriving along the southern Norwegian coast, and by 5,000 BC, agricultural settlements appeared around the Oslofjord, and spread across southern Norway, then migrating north. The real story of Norway begins with the Vikings, dauntless seafarers who emerged from southern Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Sailing their advanced longboats, they developed new trade routes from Newfoundland to Russia to Baghdad and beyond. The Viking Age was short, spanning about 300 years starting in 793.

Throughout history, the Vikings have been romanticized and vilified. Today, archeologists have constructed a more balanced picture. The Vikings certainly terrorized, murdered, and enslaved many people they overran; but they also often assimilated with them, rarely destroyed the native cultures, expanded the flow of goods and ideas, and left progressive legal codes. It can be argued that they were no more ruthless than their contemporaries, just more successful. Their legacy includes the first unification of Norway in 872; and the adoption of Christianity.

After 1066, a declining Norway became increasingly beholden to Sweden, Denmark, and the merchant cities of the Hanseatic League. In 1349, the Black Death killed more than 50% of the population. Norway entered a union with Denmark and for the next 200 years, most of its commerce was taken over by the Hanseatic League. Various disputes between the Danish Union and Sweden dragged Norway into the Seven Years War (1563–70), followed by the Kalmar War (1611–14). Up until 1720, Norway lost a good portion of its territory to Sweden.

Nationalist sentiments began growing in Norway during the waning years of the Napoleonic Wars, when the kingdom of Denmark–Norway and Sweden were once again on opposing sides. By the end of 1814, Norway was a constitutional monarchy in a union with Sweden. But while Norway had adopted its own constitution and chosen its own king, it would only achieve full independence after severing ties with Sweden as a result of a popular referendum in 1905.

Norway remained neutral during World War I, and its economy and confidence grew with the development of industry, hydroelectric power, and exports; and the enfranchisement of women. But when Norway stated its neutrality during World War II, Germany invaded anyway and occupied Norway from 1940 until the end of the war. The Norwegian Resistance was strong,

and the Germans took revenge up until the end, retreating with a scorched earth policy that obliterated farms, forests, and entire towns. Norway joined NATO 1949 and became a founder member of the United Nations. Still, it remained one of Europe's poorest nations.

This changed when crude oil was discovered here in 1969. The standard of living and per capita wealth rose dramatically, and the windfalls (coupled with high taxes) enabled the government to develop one of the world's most comprehensive social welfare systems. Citizens enjoy free medical care; free higher education; generous family leave; childcare and eldercare supports; generous pensions; and more. Norway is arguably Europe's most egalitarian social democracy.

Norway has a strong presence on the international stage; has participated in peacekeeping missions; and plays a leading role in refugee assistance. But Norway has remained wary of joining the European Union.

Denmark

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 16,640 square miles
- **Capital:** Copenhagen
- **Government:** Constitutional monarchy
- **Geography:** Denmark is the smallest of the Scandinavian countries (it's about half the size of Maine). The country occupies the Jutland peninsula, a lowland area, where the highest elevation is only 565 feet above sea level. But that doesn't mean that the country is entirely flat. Most of its terrain consists of folds, undulations, small, often steep hills, and long, low rises. There are also forests, rivers, lakes, and beaches, many of which are excellent for swimming, though the water may be too cold for some people.
- **Languages:** Danish, Faeroese, Greenlandic (an Inuit dialect), and a small German-speaking minority
- **Location:** Denmark consists of the peninsula of Jutland and a group of islands at the entrance to the Baltic Sea, between Sweden and Germany. The two largest islands are Sjaelland, site of Copenhagen, and Fyn. Denmark also has two self-governing dependencies—Greenland and the Faroe Islands.
- **Population:** 5,605,948 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Evangelical Lutheran 76%, Muslim 4%, other 16%
- **Time zone:** Denmark is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time. Daylight Saving Time is in effect in Denmark from the end of March until the end of September.

National Holidays: Denmark

In addition to the holidays listed below, Denmark celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. 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 May Day/Labor Day

05/05 Liberation Day

06/05 Constitution Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 2nd Christmas Day

Denmark: A Brief History

About 10,000 years ago, the glacial ice sheets that covered northern Europe began to retreat, attracting huge herds of reindeer. These in turn attracted hunter-gatherers who arrived from southern and eastern Europe. As the climate further warmed, the reindeer migrated north, but the early Danes remained in this fertile land, establishing farming communities by 3000 BC.

By 1800 BC, these proto-Danes were trading weapons, jewelry, amber and furs with people as far away as Rome. They buried their dead in peat bogs and many of those bodies have been remarkably preserved. The first people identified as Danes came from Sweden around 500 AD. They had a written system of communication based on runes. (The symbol we now use for bluetooth devices is based on the runic signature of Harald Bluetooth, or Harald I, the Danish Viking who became king around 900 AD.)

The Viking Age began in 793 AD with the raid on Lindisfarne, an English island monastery. Sporadic raids had likely occurred before this, by Vikings from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. They were not unified and the Danish Vikings primarily raided northeastern England, which at the time was a collection of warring Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Danish Vikings had established a large settlement in Kent by 850 AD, and as more Danish colonists arrived, all of northeastern England fell under their control. The exception was Wessex, which reached an agreement with the Danes granting Wessex sovereignty, while the rest of the region was ruled as the Danelaw.

The Danish King Harald Bluetooth converted to Christianity in 965 AD, possibly to appease the Franks at Denmark's door. Harald forcibly established the new religion, and elevated the status of the Christian clergy. But Christianity did not bring peace. The Danes continued to fight to maintain and expand their territory, conquering parts of Germany and Estonia. After the Viking Age ended in 1066, Denmark's power declined. In 1397, the Union of Kalmar united Denmark, Sweden, and Norway under a single monarch, with Denmark as the dominant power.

Beginning in the 16th century, Denmark and Sweden began a lengthy rivalry. In 1658, Sweden took the Danish regions of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge, which are still Sweden's southernmost provinces. In the ensuing century, Denmark suffered more defeats: in 1814, it had to cede Norway to Sweden. But there were important domestic gains. . . . As 19th-century Europe was swept by nationalist fervor and revolution, Denmark had already abolished serfdom and established universal public education. By the 1830s, social and agricultural reforms had boosted the economy; there was a peasant landowner class; and a free press. In 1849, a new constitution created a legislative democracy, ending the monarchy's previous absolute power.

Denmark remained neutral during World War I, and tried to do the same during World War II. It signed a non-aggression pact with the Third Reich. But Germany invaded in 1940, threatening to bomb Copenhagen. With only a small military, the Danish government yielded. The Nazis at first allowed the Danes some autonomy. But when it began pressuring officials to comply with anti-Semitic policies, the Danish government resigned in protest. The Nazis took over in earnest, and the resistance movement grew. Tipped off by a Nazi diplomat that Germany was about to deport Denmark's Jews to concentration camps, the Resistance and many citizens managed to evacuate 7,220 of Denmark's 7,800 Jews to safety in Sweden.

After Germany's defeat, Denmark joined the United Nations in 1945, and became a founding member of NATO in 1949. The latter half of the 20th century saw Denmark's emergence as a prosperous, stable social democracy with one of the world's highest standards of living. In 2000, Denmark voted by referendum not to adopt the euro. It is one of only 5 countries in the world that meets the UN goal for wealthy nations to provide 0.7% of its gross national income for international development assistance. In addition, Denmark has established Danida, Danish Development Assistance, to fight poverty and improve education in developing countries. The current Prime Minister, Mette Fredericksen, is the second woman and youngest person (at 44) to hold that office. She is the leader of the center-left Socialist Democratic Party.

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

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-Friberg, 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 Rinkevics, in May 2023, who is also the European Union's first openly gay head of state.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Scandinavia

Smilla's Sense of Snow by Peter Hoeg (1992, Suspense) This superbly constructed atmospheric thriller set in Denmark went on to become required reading for many Scandinavian Studies programs at universities, and was the basis for the 1996 Oscar-nominated movie.

A History of Scandinavia by T. K. Derry (1979, History) Provides a nice overview of the history of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland.

A History of the Vikings by Gwyn Jones (1968, History) Before their defeat at Hastings in 1066, the Vikings' sphere of influence extended from Constantinople to America. Gwyn Jones brings their civilization alive in this portrait of the Viking adventures, based on surviving documents and archaeological finds. Considered the classic for non-scholarly coverage of the Vikings but might be a slog for some.

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.

Sweden

A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman (2014, Fiction). Funny and poignant, this first-time novel by Stockholm native Fredrik Backman about an old curmudgeon who regains a will to live when a young family moves in next door made best seller lists around the world.

The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared by Jonas Jonasson (2012, Fiction). A publishing sensation from another first time Swedish author, this one is the riotous exploits of a centenarian with a backstory better than Forrest Gump's who is desperate to avoid his 100th birthday party. And a sequel was just released: ***The Accidental Further Adventures of the 100-Year-Old Man***.

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl who Played with Fire*, and *The Girl who Kicked the Hornet's Nest by Stieg Larsson (2007, Mystery) A huge hit when *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* was first released in the U.S. in 2008, this series of mysteries set in Sweden became a worldwide phenomenon. Dark and gritty, they are reminiscent of old-time noir films. Sadly, Larsson died in 2004 shortly after delivering the manuscripts of all three books.

A Year in Lapland: Guest of the Reindeer Herders by Hugh Beach (2001, Culture) An American anthropologist's account of a year spent living with the Sami (Lapps) and learning in depth about their way of life. Though set among the Tuorpon Saami in the Jokkmokk District of northern Sweden, this detailed picture of Sami culture says much about the ways of these people across all their homeland in northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

Norway

Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman (2017, Myths) Acclaimed author Neil Gaiman retells stories about the Norse gods Odin, Thor, and Loki in a modern way while still staying true to the originals.

The Winter Fortress: The Epic Mission to Sabotage Hitler's Atomic Bomb by Neal Bascomb (2016, History) It reads like a thriller, but it's the true story of the race to prevent the Nazis from getting heavy water—which was the last piece they needed to create an atomic bomb—an item only produced in a fortress-like plant in Vemork, Norway.

The Bat by Jo Nesbo (1997, Mystery) Norwegian novelist Jo Nesbo published 10 more thrillers featuring Harry Hole, a gifted investigator with the Oslo police. This is the first, introducing our hero who is an alcoholic and prone to depression, but a joy to know.

Growth of the Soil by Knut Hamsun (1920, Fiction) Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Hamsun captures the indomitable human spirit of Norway's early settlers like Steinbeck did for farm families during the Dust Bowl.

A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *The Wild Duck by Henrik Ibsen (Plays) These works by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) changed theater forever with the first realistic dialogue and depictions of love, marriage, and the ills of contemporary society.

Denmark

We, the Drowned by Carsten Jensen (2011, Fiction) An epic seafaring adventure that follows the inhabitants of the Danish town of Marstal from 1848 to World War II, when the men sail the world and the women who are left behind form a community. The book is long (600 plus pages) and deals frankly with war, violence, and cruelty. But it was a runaway international bestseller and lauded for its use of fantastical elements.

Iceland's Bell by Halldor Laxness (2003, Fiction) Nobel Laureate Halldor Laxness reinvents the traditional Icelandic saga and injects it with a modern sensibility and a satirical undercurrent that speaks to our age. The plot pits an impoverished Danish colony – Iceland in the 17th century – against the grand historical workings of Danish and Icelandic history. Three interconnected stories reveal the political and personal conflicts of the day in historical context.

On Tycho's Island: Tycho Brahe and his Assistants, 1570–1601 by John Robert Christianson (1999, Biography/History) Chiefly famed as an astronomer, this book offers a fuller vision of Tycho Brahe as Renaissance man and scientist. From his private island in Denmark, Brahe assembled and manipulated the artists, nobility and the intelligentsia of the age to create breakthroughs in astronomy, science and research.

Winter's Tales and ***Seven Gothic Tales*** by Isak Dinesen (1934, Stories) Best known for *Out Of Africa*, her memoir of 20 years running and living on a coffee plantation in Africa, Karen Blixen (pen name, Isak Dinesen) also wrote short tales based in her homeland, Denmark. *Winter's Tales* and *Seven Gothic Tales* are generally considered the high water marks of her shorter works.

The Complete Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Andersen (1913, Folklore) There are several different anthologies of these fairy tales, written by Denmark's famous poet, novelist, and writer of short stories. Considered a genius for his inventiveness and imagination, his works continue to captivate both children and adults.

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.

Suggested Films & Videos

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.

Sweden

My Life as a Dog (1985, Drama) The story of Ingemar, a 12-year-old Swedish boy sent to live with his childless aunt and uncle in a country village when his mother falls ill, resulting in a Swedish look at the adult world through a child's eyes. A lovely, sometimes intense coming of age story with rural Sweden as backdrop.

Smiles of a Summer Night (1955, Comedy) Ingmar Bergman's idea of a bedroom farce brought him international stardom. A melancholy comedy the film depicts the romantic entanglements of three 19th-century couples during a weekend at a country estate. It's also pure Bergman: sharp, serious, thoughtful, and sobering, though there's an undercurrent of humor that the venerable director of such serious film classics like *The Seventh Seal* is not particularly known for.

Norway

Kissed by Winter (2005, Drama) Set in Norway's snowy wilds, a woman runs from her difficult past and discovers love again. After a horrible accident, the guilt-stricken Victoria leaves her husband and flees to the country. She becomes entangled in an unusual murder investigation, and is pulled into the life of the main suspect.

Kitchen Stories (2003, Comedy) Swedish efficiency researchers come to Norway to study the domestic habits of Norwegian men. But things go awry when Isak, a cranky farmer, decides to amuse himself by impeding the work of his fastidious Swedish researcher, Folke. The kitchen quickly becomes the scene of a sly battle of wits. Inspired by actual research done in the 1940s and 50s, this stylish film charmed audiences.

Kristin Lavransdatter (1995, Historical Drama) An epic love story set in 14th century Norway. The beautiful Kristin dutifully takes herself to a convent to await her arranged marriage, but her beauty and devotion only inspire envy and violence. When she falls in love with young knight, it prompts a family and political crisis. Directed by Liv Ullmann and adapted from a trilogy by the Nobel Laureate Sigrid Undset, this is a clear-eyed depiction of Norse life, love, society, and redemption.

Edvard Munch (1974, Biography) Peter Watkins' experimental biography of Norwegian artist Edvard Munch traces Munch's life between 1884 and 1894, from Christiania (modern Oslo) to Berlin and his relationships with August Strindberg. Watkins' uses sound, montage, close ups and a dark color palette to emulate Munch's stylistic approach to his art.

Song of Norway (1970, Biography) This 1970 film adaptation of the operetta of the same name depicts the early struggles of composer Edvard Grieg and his attempts to develop an authentic Norwegian national music. With an international cast that included Florence Henderson and Edward G. Robinson, the film was an attempt to cash in on the success of *A Sound of Music*. Most critics agreed that it failed miserably—although British audiences liked it.

Denmark

The Danish Girl (2015, Drama) The Danish artist Einar Wegener (later known as Lili Elbe) was one of the first people to undergo sex reassignment surgery. This biopic depicts Elbe's early career and marriage to artist Gerda Gottlieb, and the Bohemian worlds of Copenhagen and Paris in the 20s and early 30s.

A Royal Affair (2012, Historical Drama) The mentally ill King Christian VII comes to rely on his friend and physician, Johann Struensee (Mads Mikkelsen), a radical Enlightenment thinker from Germany. So, too, does the lonely Queen Caroline (Alicia Vikander), who begins a passionate affair with the doctor. The king learns of their liaison, but protects them, and makes Struensee a Royal Advisor who essentially rules in the king's name. But his reforms are cut short when plotting aristocrats use the affair and Struensee's foreign status to bring a tragic end to this true story.

The Danish Solution (2003, Documentary) Filmmakers Karen Cantor and Camilla Kjaerulff, with Garrison Keillor narrating, reveal how the citizens of Denmark protected their Jewish population against Hitler's attempt to impose export his final solution into Denmark.

Pele the Conqueror (1988, Drama) Directed by Billie August, this Danish-Swedish production won the 1989 Oscar for Best Foreign Film, and star Max von Sydow was nominated for Best Actor. It follows the early 19th-century widower Lasse, who emigrates with his 12-year old son Pelle to the Danish island of Bornholm in search of a better life. That is not what they find.

Babette's Feast (1988, Comedy) Set on the rugged coast of 19th century Denmark, this film is from a short story by Isak Dinesen. Two beautiful daughters grow up with a clergyman father, who preaches self-denial. After his death, the sisters uphold his inflexible practices until the arrival of a French refugee, Babette. She cooks and for them, and introduces them to the deep pleasure of a gourmet French meal. Winner of the 1987 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film.

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.

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

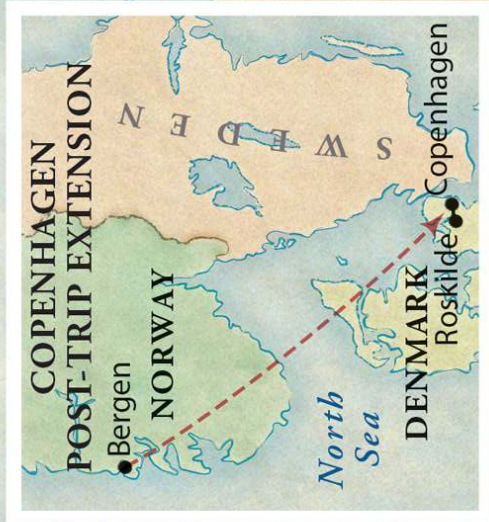
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

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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