

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

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



New! Finland's Winter Wilderness: Northern Lights
& Lapland Discoveries

2026

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 customize 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

CONTENTS

FINLAND'S WINTER WILDERNESS: NORTHERN LIGHTS & LAPLAND DISCOVERIES

Your Adventure at a Glance:

Where You're Going, What it Costs,
and What's Included **4**

Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary **6**

Pre-Trip Extension **10**

Post-Trip Extension **13**

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements... **13**

Rigors, Vaccines & General Health **15**

Money Matters: Local Currency &
Tipping Guidelines..... **18**

Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch **21**

Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits... **24**

Climate & Average Temperatures **30**

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Nordic and Sami Culture **32**

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs,
Shipping & More **35**

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Finland **37**

Estonia **38**

Latvia **40**

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading **43**

Suggested Films & Videos **44**

Useful Websites **46**

Useful Apps **47**



Helsinki

New! Finland's Winter Wilderness: Northern Lights & Lapland Discoveries Small Group Adventure

Finland: Helsinki, Ivalo, Rovaniemi

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

8 days starting from \$5,795

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/sww2026pricing

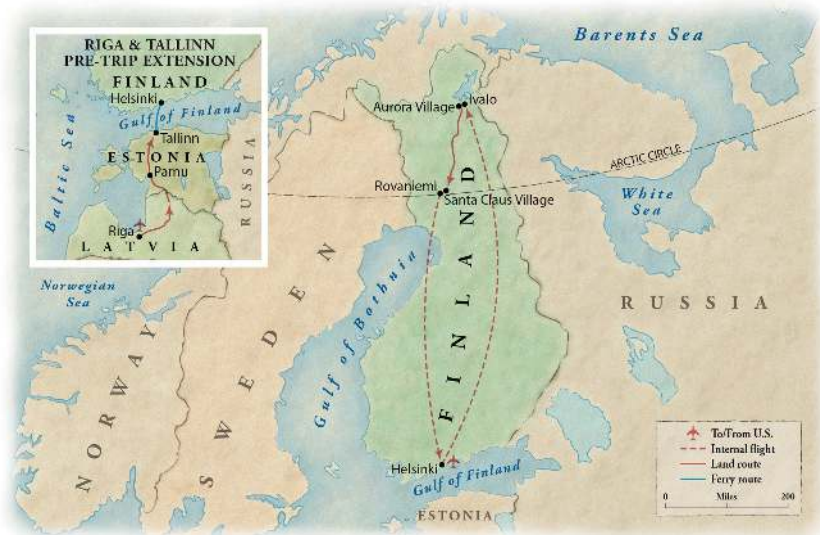
Join O.A.T. in Finland to witness the elusive Northern Lights and explore Finland, known as the "Daughter of the Baltic." Immerse yourself in Finnish culture with a guided tour of Helsinki. Experience the wild Lapland, home to the Sami people, with a visit to a local reindeer farm. Spend three nights in a glass igloo under the Northern Lights. Explore a husky farm and gain insights into the world of sled dog racing.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 5 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
- 10 meals—4 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 3 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 7 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.

Finland's Winter Wilderness: Northern Lights & Lapland Discoveries



WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 2 locations in 7 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/sww

FINLAND: 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 the Finnish Lapland as we enjoy a hands-on encounter with a reindeer herd and a husky village to discover their importance to the Sami people's way of life.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Experience the Finnish Lapland to see what life is like for the local Sami community and see how they dedicate their time to raising reindeers. We'll also join members of the Sami community during a **Home-Hosted**

Dinner for a taste of a home-cooked Finnish cuisine and cultural exchanges as we share stories around the table.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Depart U.S.
2	Helsinki
3-5	Helsinki • Transfer to Inari Municipality
6	Helsinki • Return to U.S.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Baltic Capitals: Riga, Latvia & Tallinn, Estonia

PRE-TRIP: 4 nights from **\$1,595**

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 **\$110** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Helsinki** before your main adventure from **\$130** per room, per night

Finland's Winter Wilderness: Northern Lights & Lapland Discoveries

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

4 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 • Discover Parnu, Estonia

• Explore Tallinn • Song Festival
Grounds visit

Day 5 Explore Tallinn • Medieval Tallinn
Tour & Feast

Day 6 Tallinn • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Travel to the Nordic region today as you depart on your flight to Helsinki, Finland. Please refer to your individual air itinerary for exact departure and arrival times.

Day 2 Arrive Helsinki, Finland

- Destination: Helsinki
- Accommodations: Haven Hotel or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Helsinki, where a driver will meet you at the airport and assist you with the transfer to your hotel, where you'll be joined by your fellow travelers, including those who took our *Baltic Capitals: Riga, Latvia & Tallinn, Estonia* pre-trip extension.

Dinner: On your own.

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: Haven 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.

We'll drive through Esplanadi park to witness the Helsinki Swedish Theater, located in the heart of the city. Then, we'll continue down

Mannerheim, the historic main street, where we'll discover many iconic buildings, including the House of Parliament and Helsinki Central Train Station—commonly known as one of the most beautiful train stations in Europe.

We'll visit the new Oodi public library, known as the “living room of the city.” As we wind our way through the city on an included city tour, we'll notice how the sea is an integral part of Helsinki—the city spreads out onto islands, peninsulas, and along coves among which boats of all types navigate. At the library, we'll explore this uniquely designed building during an included tour. Oodi not only serves as a library, but as a meeting place for Helsinki residents. Take time to observe local life happening around you as you make your way through the building.

Then, we'll visit Senate Square. Here, we'll discover many ornate Empire Neo-classical buildings, including the 19th-century Lutheran Cathedral, whose central tower dominates the city. Like Times Square in New York City, this is the place where residents gather to celebrate special occasions, such as New Year's Eve and Independence Day (December 6th).

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 traditional Finnish fare, and colorful stands displaying artisan crafts.

Lunch: On your own after our walk—you might enjoy lunch at the indoor market, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations for local fare.

Afternoon: At leisure. There is so much of Helsinki to explore—ask your Trip Experience Leader where you might like to go next based on your interests. This would be a great time to head to visit some of the excellent museums or designer shops in the city.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You are free to explore at your leisure.

Day 4 Helsinki • Inari Municipality • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Inari Municipality
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Aurora Village or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for Ivalo in northern Finland, the base of your exploration for the Lapland, the home of the Sami, the indigenous people who have lived in northern Scandinavia since prehistoric times. Lapland, also called Samiland, spans northern parts of Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Although the Sami are a minority of today's population in northern Finland, their cultural traditions endure.

Lunch: Upon arrival at the hotel.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll check into our nature-centric hotel, which features unique cabins that provide an enchanting experience under the starry sky of Finland, showcasing the Northern Lights at their peak during fall and winter.

Dinner: Enjoy another enriching cultural encounter during a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a local Finnish family—an activity that many travelers say is a highlight of their time in the Nordic region. You'll enjoy a taste of Finnish culture and engage in lively conversation over a dinner of freshly-prepared, home-cooked dishes.

This experience offers us a rare opportunity to connect with local culture on a more intimate level: In our hosts' homes, we'll see the family go about their evening routine and witness how Europeans live above the Arctic Circle. As you

get to know your hosts over dinner, consider how their home and lifestyles differ from your own, and how they may be similar. Many people in Ivalo also make their living from the land—the main livelihoods here are reindeer herding, fishing, and forestry.

Evening: Enjoy the quiet and stillness as you drift asleep beneath the Northern Lights.

Day 5 Ivalo • Visit Siida Museum • Reindeer experience

- Destination: Inari Municipality
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Aurora Village or similar

Breakfast: At the lodge.

Morning: Set off after breakfast for our visit to tiny Inari—the gateway to the Lapland and home of the Sami.

We'll begin our discoveries of Sami and northern Lapland culture at the Siida Museum. A local guide will take us through the museum, which houses artifacts that preserve the unique history and culture of the Sami people, from wooden tools to clothing items. Your guide will also provide an enlightening view on the oppression of the Sami people over the centuries. In the 1800s, many of the Sami people were forced to relocate as their lands were taken over by the government and affluent landowners, and they were often treated as half citizens due to their time-honored customs being considered primitive by modern Finns. Today, many Sami are still fighting for their land as woodworking companies threaten to take it over, and their rights as citizens of Finland who are striving to keep their traditions alive.

Lunch: At the museum.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll set off for an experience with the native reindeer, where the locals will discuss life working with these magnificent animals. You may even have a chance to try your hand at reindeer sleighing.

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: Tonight, enjoy searching for the Northern Lights with your Trip Experience Leader.

Day 6 Ivalo • Husky farm visit

- Destination: Inari Municipality
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Aurora Village or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Visit a husky farm in the countryside, where you'll chat with the workers and learn about the part that their friendly dogs play in this pastoral way of life. You'll also learn more about dog sledding during your visit today, as well as how the musher trains and prepares their huskies for sledding. Then, you'll take a short sled ride led by the huskies.

Lunch: Included at the husky farm.

Afternoon: Return to the hotel for free time, or join your Trip Experience Leader on an included hike (weather permitting).

Dinner: At the lodge.

Evening: Free to spend as you wish.

Day 7 Ivalo • Visit Santa's Village • Transfer to Helsinki

- Destination: Helsinki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Haven Hotel

Activity Note: Depending on the day, we may have an early morning or evening flight from Rovaniemi to Helsinki. The day's activities will depend on your flight's departure time.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Rovaniemi through the snow and ice landscapes of Norther Finland to visit Santa Claus' Village in Rovaniemi, the official hometown of Santa. You'll have some free time to explore here on your own.

Lunch: At Santa's Village.

Afternoon: We'll say farewell to the Clauses and then begin our short transfer to the airport for our flight to Helsinki. Upon arriving in Helsinki, we'll transfer to the hotel. Take some time to relax after your flight.

Dinner: Enjoy a Farewell Dinner at the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. You might enjoy a nightcap in the hotel bar or take your final evening stroll along Helsinki's lively streets.

Day 8 Helsinki • Return to U.S.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the Helsinki airport for your flight home.

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 |
| » 4 nights accommodation | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 8 meals—4 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 3 dinners | » All transfers |
| » 4 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.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on your flight to Riga, Latvia.

Day 2 Arrive Riga, Latvia

- Destination: Riga
- Accommodations: Hotel in Riga or similar

Afternoon: Arrive throughout the day in Riga, Latvia. You’ll be met at the airport by an O.A.T. representative who will assist with the transfer to your hotel. Upon arrival, you will receive your room assignments, and check in.

Based on your arrival time, your Trip Experience Leader will offer multiple opportunities to join an orientation walk to get acquainted with the area.

Dinner: On your own—your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to suggest a traditional cuisine, such as pelmeni dumplings (often described as a cross between Polish pierogi and Italian tortellini) and *karbonade*—a type of pork that’s flattened and fried.

Evening: Your evening is free. You might choose to rest in your room after your journey, or continue exploring Riga on your own.

Day 3 Explore Riga

- Destination: Riga
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Riga or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, join your Trip Experience Leader for a short Welcome Briefing to get acquainted with our day. Then, we’ll drive to the Art Nouveau district of Riga.

Situated near the mouth of the Daugava River, which travels from the Baltic Sea into Russia, Riga served as an important trade port for centuries. Its prosperity also made it a target for conquest: 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: Free to explore. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide suggestions.

Dinner: Enjoy 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 • Discover Parnu, Estonia **• Explore Tallinn • Song Festival** **Grounds visit**

- Destination: Tallinn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Tallinn

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.

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.

We'll then drive to our hotel, concluding our journey.

Dinner: At a local restaurant or hotel.

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

Day 5 Explore Tallinn • Medieval Tallinn Tour & Feast

- Destination: Tallinn
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Tallinn or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart for Tallinn's upper town, where we'll get panoramic views of our new surroundings from a viewing platform.

Lunch: On your own.

Afternoon: Join your fellow travelers on a walk in Tallinn's Lower 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, boasting ancient churches, medieval palaces, and landmarks. 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 explore notable sites and wander through 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. You may choose to continue strolling through the Old Town.

Dinner: Then, we'll sit down to a feast at a local medieval restaurant housed in a former 15th-century merchant's home. Dine on dishes prepared according to 700-year-old recipes and participate in traditional medieval feast traditions, such as a ritual handwashing and breaking of the bread.

Evening: You are free to return to the hotel or explore on your own.

Day 6 Tallinn • Join main trip

- Destination: Tallinn
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: 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! Finland's Winter Wilderness: Northern Lights & Lapland Discoveries* adventure.

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.

No Visas Required

Travelers with a U.S. passport do not need any visas for this adventure, including the optional trip extensions.

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).

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

- 2 locations in 7 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
- You must be able to walk in the deep snow and get in and out of the sleighs
- 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 28°F-50°F during the travel season

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 30-seat coach

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 Finland, 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, 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 (€)

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 2004) are best.

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

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. 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. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

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. We suggest that you bring one or two, 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, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

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

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 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 & Customized 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 Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization 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.

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

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

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

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

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

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

Optional Tours

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

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

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

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home 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

Latvia: +371

Estonia: +372

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 50 lbs for checked bags and 17.5 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.

- **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. We suggest you bring winter boots able to accommodate the snow and rain.

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.

Recommended 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. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. 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

- ☐ Warm winter jacket
- ☐ 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
- ☐ 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 Finland, 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:

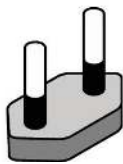
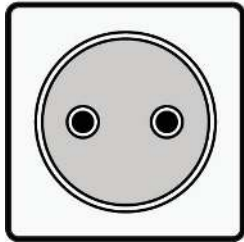
Note that a C plug will fit into an E or F socket.

Finland: C and F

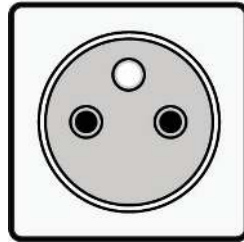
Estonia: C and F

Latvia: C and F

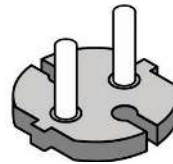
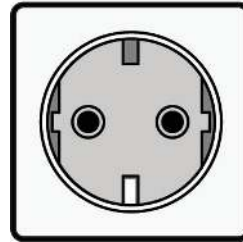
Type C



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.

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.

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			IVALO, FINLAND		
	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	32 to 2	85	4
FEB	27 to 15	89 to 82	11	15 to 1	83	3
MAR	34 to 23	89 to 74	12	25 to 7	77	2
APR	45 to 31	87 to 59	13	36 to 17	71	3
MAY	59 to 41	84 to 51	14	48 to 33	68	5
JUN	66 to 49	85 to 55	17	59 to 43	66	7
JUL	70 to 53	90 to 59	15	65 to 48	68	6
AUG	66 to 51	93 to 66	17	59 to 44	80	8
SEP	56 to 43	93 to 72	15	49 to 37	82	5
OCT	46 to 36	91 to 80	20	36 to 27	87	5
NOV	36 to 28	90 to 88	17	24 to 16	89	4
DEC	30 to 20	89 to 88	16	15 to 5	86	3

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

Nordic and Sami Culture

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.

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.

Sami people love the outdoors. Sami traditions are rooted in their connection to nature and the people take full advantage of the breathtaking beauty of their landscapes by escaping into nature and enjoying the solitude at every opportunity.

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.

Taking Photographs

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. 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.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; 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. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

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.

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:

- **Piradziņi:** 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.

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.

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 Methodist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal) 2.2%, other 0.9%, none 54.1%, unspecified 16.7%
- **Time zone:** Estonia is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, 7 hours ahead of Eastern Time. The country observes daylight savings time from late March until late September.

National Holidays: Estonia

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

01/01 New Year's Day

02/24 Independence Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/23 Victory Day

06/24 Midsummer Day

08/20 Independence Restoration Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Estonia: A Brief History

Life in Estonia must've been pretty good for the Finno-Ugric people who'd arrived there during the third millennium BC. They were nomadic hunters with a nature-centered religion, but they gave up their roaming to mingle with the resident Neolithic people, trading along the Amber Route. They never gave up their pagan religion, though others tried to pry it from them. That happened in 1193, when Celestine III called a crusade. Teutonic knights raided Estonia, aided by Danish troops, but the Estonians resisted for 30 years. By the mid-1200s Estonia was ruled by Danes in the north and Teutons in the south, including land-owning bishops who still tried to convert the pagans. Though some Estonians professed Christianity, they secretly practiced paganism—and occasionally laid siege to monasteries and bishops' castles.

The Baltic Germans remained and built thriving cities. Tallinn, Tartu, Viljandi, and Pärnu all became members of the Hanseatic League. In the mid-1500s, Ivan the Terrible came crashing down with his Tatar cavalry. To stop him, Poland, Denmark, and Sweden sent troops to fight

in The Livonian War. Half the rural population perished. In the end, Sweden retained power in Estonia, and governed through the 17th century. But by 1700, Denmark, Poland, and Russia rose to reclaim lands lost in the Livonian War. This time Russia won Estonia, and held it for 200 years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Latvia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 24,938 square miles
- **Capital:** Riga
- **Languages:** Latvian is the official language; Russian and Lithuanian are also spoken.

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

National Holidays: Latvia

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

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/04 Independence Restoration Day

06/23 Midsummer Eve

06/24 Midsummer Day

11/18 Republic of Latvia Proclamation Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Second Day of Christmas

12/31 New Year's Eve

Latvia: A Brief History

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

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

Forced integration into the Russian empire caused many locals to identify as Latvians for the first time. The move towards a national identity was lead 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 Rinkēvičs, 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 Lönnrot (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.

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.

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 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](http://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

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 or Maps.me

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 or Bolt or Grab

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 or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo or 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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Submitted by Joy and Don Janke,
8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



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



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



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



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



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



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