

# EXPLORE!

## Adventure Around The Baltic Sea 22 days

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Kaliningrad, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Sweden - Trip code BSE

## Adventure Around The Baltic Sea

On this epic three-week journey around the Baltic Sea we'll experience nine different countries, as we travel from Helsinki down through the Baltics to coastal Poland, Kaliningrad and Germany then back into Scandinavia and finish up in Stockholm. We'll see many highlights along the way from fairy tale old towns to scenic islands and from Soviet war relics to alternative hippy communities. We'll get to appreciate first-hand how the scenery, culture and cuisine changes and see areas that few tourists normally visit, as we work our way around this fascinating coastal region.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Ligatne Secret Soviet Bunker** - Experience this Cold War relic including a shot of vodka and a true-to-era canteen style lunch
- ★ **Gotland Island** - Explore this beautiful Swedish island including the best preserved city walls in Northern Europe at Visby
- ★ **Gdansk** - Walking tour of this charming city including the Free City of Danzig, which was its own state back in the 1920-30's
- ★ **National Parks** - Go bog walking in Lahemaa and walk among the sand dunes on the Curonian Spit
- ★ **Copenhagen** - Visit the iconic Nyhavn and the alternative hippy community of Christiania, which is like walking through an open gallery

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:**

**Full on**

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

**GROUP SIZE:**

**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join trip in Finland's capital, Helsinki

Our epic 22-day adventure around the Baltic Sea begins in Helsinki, Finland's capital city where we spend the next two nights. Known as the 'daughter of the Baltics' it was founded back in 1550, but was entirely rebuilt by the Russian Tsars to resemble a mini St. Petersburg in 1812. Much of Helsinki is centred around its harbour and it is alive with cutting edge designer shops, bustling cafes, outdoor bars and fine dining tasting restaurants. Helsinki has a very Scandinavian identity with many museums preserving its Finnish heritage, and also iconic old Art Nouveau architecture.

Finnish cuisine is focused around fresh and natural ingredients that change with the seasons and you'll find many traditional restaurants where little appears to have changed since the 1930s. Possible dining options for tonight include Cafe Bar No. 9, which is in the trendy designer district, normally busy with locals and is good for lighter meals in a relaxed setting. A common local tippie is called koskenkorva, a clear spirit made from barley that comes in a range of flavours including vanilla and salted liquorice, or there's lakka which is made by soaking cloudberries in alcohol for a few months so it infuses.



**Accommodation: Cumulus Hakaniemi** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Tour of Helsinki on foot and by tram; visit to Suomenlinna Fortress

This morning we will go on an orientation tour of Helsinki on foot and by local tram. Along the way we will hopefully see icebreaker ships moored near the Merikasarmi building, the glass wave like structure of the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Uspenski Cathedral (the biggest Russian Orthodox Church in Northern Europe), Helsinki Cathedral, Senate Square, Hakaniemi Market Hall and the Tori Quarters in the heart of the old town.

This afternoon we will discover more of Helsinki's history in its key strategic position on a narrow section of the Baltic Sea, by taking the short water bus crossing (around 15 minutes each way) to the UNESCO listed Suomenlinna. Known as the Fortress of Finland this is a cluster of islands connected by bridges. It was built by the Swedes in the mid-18th century to defend the city and its valuable port location and was once the greatest sea fortress in the Baltics. Today the islands are like taking a step back in time, with only a few cars and less than 1,000 people living here. We can see old fortifications, cannons, catacombs and many old houses that are now restaurants, cafes, theatres and museums. Later this afternoon we return to Helsinki where we have the evening free.



**Accommodation: Cumulus Hakaniemi** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Ferry to Tallinn, Estonia; visit to the Maritime Museum and city tour

Today we will take the ferry to Estonia's capital city, Tallinn, which takes about two and a half hours. The city is less than 100 kilometres across the water from Helsinki and midway between St. Petersburg and Stockholm. Tallinn has come under several different cultural influences since the first stronghold was built here in the 10th century. Linguistically and economically, Estonia's closest ties are to Finland, despite the best efforts of other nations.

On arrival we visit the Estonian Maritime Museum at Seaplane Harbour. This is a relatively new museum that has opened in the former sea plane hangar. There are a range of interactive exhibits that take you through Estonia's sea faring past and a number of large boats on display including a real life submarine called Lembit, which you can step aboard.

This evening our Explore Leader will take us on an orientation tour of the city. It's nice to be able to explore at this time when there are less tourists around and when the towers, city walls and colourful old houses along crooked streets are lit up; it helps to capture our imagine as to what the city would have been like to live in in times gone by. Perched on a hill overlooking the sea, we'll explore the cobbled Old Town on foot. We walk through the quarter where merchants once traded and take in the historical and architectural highlights. Along the way we stop off at a few local bars where we get a feel for Tallinn's both bewitching and more bohemian past. A popular local drink is the liquor Vana Tallinn, which is a dark rum based drink flavoured with cinnamon.



**Accommodation: Hotel Go Schnelli** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Visit the Bastion Tunnels; free afternoon in Tallinn

This morning we'll go into the Bastion Tunnels beneath the city. They were constructed in the 1670s and were used by the military as part of the defences under the city walls and buildings above. The tunnels lay unused for many years, but at the start of World War II they were renovated to be used as bomb shelters and then during Soviet rule they were installed with electricity, ventilation, water and telephones. During our excursion we'll get to see the tunnels in their medieval state through to those that have been

modernised in the 20th century.

The rest of today has been left free for you to explore Tallinn at your own pace and perhaps to go back and visit inside the castle and cathedral that we saw last night or to enjoy a spot of shopping. Estonia is well known for its traditional handicrafts and keen shoppers can browse for knitted mittens, lacy woollen shawls and colourful hand embroidered linen products. Tallinn is a great city for strolling or relaxing in the many bars and restaurants.

In the district of Pirita, which is outside of the old city walls you can wander along the waterfront promenade or spend time on the sandy beach. In 1980 this spot was chosen to host the sailing event of the Moscow Olympic Games and remnants can still be seen like a large hotel that looks like a cruise ship, which was in the heart of the Olympic Village. In this area you'll find a number of restaurants and bars, the TV Tower, which is home to the highest viewpoint in Estonia and Tallinn's Botanical Gardens aren't far from here.



**Accommodation: Hotel Go Schnelli** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Bog shoe walk in Lahemaa and meet Old Believers at Lake Peipsi

This morning we leave the city and head into the countryside to Estonia's largest national park, Lahemaa. Here we have the unusual experience of learning to bog walk using special bog shoes. Traditionally used by local villagers, these specially adapted clip-on shoes, which resemble snow shoes, allow us to hike through this fascinating ecosystem.

After time for a picnic lunch we continue our drive to Lake Peipsi, which is ginormous and straddles the border between Estonia and Russia. Near Mustvee we will visit the Old Believers community where we learn about their plight fleeing religious persecution in Russia in the 17th and 18th centuries. There will be the opportunity to try on traditional dress and taste herbal tea prepared in a samovar and also the sweet krendel bread.

From here we drive to Tartu where we spend the night. If you still have the energy this evening after a busy day exploring then we recommend taking a walk up to Tartu Cathedral, which is partially ruined and flood lit at night, so forms an eerie landmark above the city.



**Accommodation: Tartu Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Visit to a Secret Soviet Bunker and Turaida Castle

Today we will drive across the border to Riga in Latvia and experience a number of exciting places along the way. The first being the

Secret Soviet War Bunker at Ligatne. Built during the Cold War, the bunkers existence was so guarded that even the patients and staff in the rehabilitation centre above it (which was built to disguise the locations true purpose), didn't even know what was beneath their feet. The bunker is wonderfully preserved with all the original furnishings still in place and the guides really bring the stories from the time and the bunker to life. We have the opportunity to try on gas masks, eat a traditional Soviet canteen lunch and wash it down with a toast of vodka.

Next we drive onto Sigulda where we visit the red bricked medieval Turaida Castle. From here we drive to Latvia's capital Riga where we spend the next two nights.

Riga is an old Hanseatic city on the banks of the Daugava River and is arguably the most beautiful in the Baltics. Its skyline is pierced with spires, towers and weather vanes, making the streets a joy to amble through. There are plenty of choices for dinner this evening and your Explore Leader can help to recommend somewhere serving local cuisine. Cheese and meat filled pastries served with wild berry preserves are popular, especially when washed down with a Latvian beer or perhaps a glass of Riga Black Balsam, a traditional herbal liqueur and an acquired taste!



**Accommodation: Hanza Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 7 - Walking tour of Riga including views from the Academy of Science

This morning we will go on an orientation tour of the city. Most of the important sights in Riga are concentrated in a small area, so walking is the most effective way to explore. We will take in the Freedom Monument, Gunpowder Tower, Saint Jacob's Church and the city's cathedral. Buildings have been painstakingly restored over the last twenty years and commanding Gothic structures sit adjacent to Baroque and lavish Art Nouveau architecture. As part of our tour we will travel up to the observation deck on top of the Academy of Science, which affords great views back down over the city below. The building itself was constructed during Soviet times and is the same design as the 'Seven Sisters' skyscrapers found in Moscow. They were built during Stalin's era to prove the might of Russia, but also that they were still capable of building elaborate architecture rather than plain Soviet blocks. Back down below we go into the Central Market, which is located in large old zeppelin hangers and sells a variety of traditional produce, such as smoked fish, sauerkraut, pickled garlic and crusty cheeses.

This afternoon is free for you to discover more of the city. You might like to join a guided tour of the KGB Museum or go shopping in the 130 year old Bergs Bazaar, which is home to around 140 small shops and restaurants. If you fancy some pampering then Riga also has a budding spa culture with a number of different places and styles of treatment on offer.



**Accommodation: Hanza Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Discover the Liepaja Forts and Cold War Museum

Today we leave Riga and start our journey towards Klaipeda in Lithuania. Our first stop along the way will be at Liepaja on Latvia's coast, which in the past has played an important part as an ice free port. It's a very windy spot and as such is known as the 'city where the wind is born', so we recommend taking a jumper with you even on a summer's day. In the 1800s Alexander 3rd deepened the harbour and built a naval port here. Since then it was home to the first Baltic fleet of Russian submarines and sustained heavy bombing in World War II. The Soviets occupied what was left and once again used it as a strategic naval base.

Today it is home to historic red bricked military buildings and a training centre for collecting sea mines off the ocean floor, as the sea around here is still littered with them. We will visit the old military town and also the abandoned seafront forts situated on some of Latvia's most beautiful sandy beaches. We also go into Karosta Prison, which is the only military prison in Europe that's open to the public. Originally built as a hospital in 1900, before construction was even finished, the decision had been made to change its purpose to be a prison and it operated as one right up until 1997. Imprisoned here were military personnel that had broken the rules or displeased the authorities in some way. We learn why people would have been imprisoned and how they would have been treated.

Following some free time to have lunch we will continue our drive across the border into Lithuania and to the Cold War Museum in Zemaitija National Park. This modern museum is housed underground within a former Soviet nuclear missile base surrounded by dense forests. The base was built in secret at around the time of the Cuban missile crisis and had the firepower to destroy most of Europe. The exhibits here tell the story of this tense period in history.

We drive on to our overnight stop at Klaipeda, which is the gateway to the Curonian Spit National Park. We are free this evening and you'll find most of the city's restaurants on the main street, Manto, and also into the Old Town on Tiltu Street. You might like to try the local beer from the Svyturys Lighthouse Brewery. Pork, potatoes, cheese and rye bread are the main staples of Lithuanian cuisine and they love soup. The most well-known dish is probably cepelinai, which are named after zeppelin air shapes as they're similar in shape. They are large stuffed potato dumpling, that are very filling, so be sure not to fill up on too much soup and bread beforehand if you're going to give these try. For after dinner viryta is a popular Lithuanian honey liqueur.



**Accommodation: Amberton Klaipeda** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - See the Curonian Spit sand dunes; arrive in Kaliningrad, Russia

This morning we head into the UNESCO-Listed Curonian Spit National Park. This 98 kilometre long, curved spit separates the Curonian Lagoon and the Baltic Sea and is half Lithuanian and half Russian. The park is probably best known for its large and beautiful sand dunes, which are scarcely found in other parts of Europe. During our visit we will cross the border into the Russian side, explore the trails and footpaths amongst the dunes and discover more about the area at the Thomas Mann Museum. After time for a picnic lunch we drive on to visit Fort 5 on the outskirts of Kaliningrad and go into the tunnels beneath it (we would recommend bringing a torch with you as it can be dark in the tunnels).

We then drive the short distance into Kaliningrad where we spend the next two nights. Founded in 1255 by the Teutonic Knights, Kaliningrad (then Konigsberg) went through periods of Germanisation and colonisation until its, almost total, destruction by the British and Soviets in World War II. Post war Konigsberg became part of the Soviet Union and was renamed Kaliningrad after

Mikhail Kalinin, one of the original Bolsheviks. It was an area of great strategic importance during the Cold War, being the most western province of the USSR, and was closed to foreign visitors for several years. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Kaliningrad Oblast became a Russian exclave - still a part of Russia but separated geographically from the rest of the country.

Please note that the border crossing today can take quite a bit of time.



**Accommodation: Hotel Moskva** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Explore the exclave of Kaliningrad and visit the Museum of Oceans

This morning we will take an orientation walking tour of Kaliningrad's main attractions; the cathedral, Symbol of Kaliningrad and the Immanuel Kant Museum - one of the city's most famous former residents. In the Central Square we will be able to see the exterior of the 'Dom Sovietov', House of Soviets. Built on the site of a magnificent Germanic fortress, which unfortunately was badly damaged during the war, the Soviets in the 1960's decided to destroy what was left and build a giant H shaped block instead. It took 10 years to construct, yet was never used, as the ground below it is riddled with ancient flooded passageways. It certainly isn't the most beautiful of buildings. Throughout the city there's an interesting mix of historical and modern architecture from the restored pre-war Konigsberg Cathedral through to the much more recent Cathedral of Christ the Saviour situated in Victory Square.

Following our tour we will visit the Museum of the Oceans where you can see the only pre-atomic era B-413 submarine left in Russia. Located on the banks of the Pregolya River, as well as the submarine there are several other ships including the scientific expedition ship, Vityaz, and a range of naval machinery and exhibition halls.

This afternoon is free for you to discover more of this unique city. You might like to stroll back to near the cathedral on Kant Island and explore the park dotted with sculptures or relax in the green surroundings. Nearby is the 'Fish Village', which is a row of shops, hotels and restaurants that resemble what the area was like prior to World War II. You could climb up to the lighthouses viewing platform for great views over the city and coastline.



**Accommodation: Hotel Moskva** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 11 - Walking tour of Gdansk, Poland including the Free City of Danzig

Today we leave our Russian exclave and drive to Gdansk, Poland where we will spend the night. Our journey will take approximately three hours and crossing the border can take a bit of additional time. Gdansk is Poland's largest sea port as well as one of its oldest cities. It was at Gdansk Port that the Solidarity movement held strikes in the 1980s, which ultimately helped to bring

an end to communist rule and in 1990 the leader of the Solidarity party, Lech Walesa, became Poland's first post-communist freely elected president.

On arrival we take a walking tour of the city to see the Green Gate, Long Market, the lovely Neptune Fountain and the adjacent City Hall, Saint Mary's Church, the historic old town and also the Free City of Danzig, which was once an independent state. The Green Gate isn't in fact green, but was once part of the Royal Route through the city and is a stunning building inspired by Flemish architecture. Saint Mary's Church is one of the most notable buildings in the city and is believed to be the largest brick-built church in the world and features a 15th century astronomical clock. The Free City of Danzig was its own state from 1920-1939 because after World War I the control of Gdansk became a major sticking point at the Treaty of Versailles negotiations, as both Poland and Germany wanted to keep the city and its valuable port location. Germany were in no position to rebuild the economy or infrastructure, but there was a large German speaking population, so to quell fears of an uprising, a deal was struck to create the Free City State of Danzig. It issued its own passports and had its own parliament, currency and stamps, and the economy grow well, up until the beginning of World War II when the peace it had known was shattered. When Hitler was elected in neighbouring Germany, anti-Polish sentiment spread quickly in Danzig and with most of the police force being German they started keeping close tabs on any Polish residents that they saw as a threat to their ideology. Tensions hit fever pitch when Nazi's dressed in Polish army uniforms staged a fake attack in nearby Gliwice, supposedly against Germany, and this then gave Hitler justification in the eyes of the German people to retaliate. The following day German attacked Poland on the Westerplatte and this was the trigger that started World War II. Whilst in Gdansk we will visit the World War II Museum to learn more about this.

After our tour, the evening is free for you to discover more of this extremely pretty city. The local liqueur is called goldwasser, which is a type of vodka with flecks of 23 karat gold floating in it. You could visit the city's first microbrewery, Brovarnia, where you can sample their lager, wheat and dark beers. Along Ul Długa Street you'll find a wide variety of cafes and restaurants to choose from and being on the coast you'll find a variety of tantalizing fish dishes on the menu.



**Accommodation: Hotel Focus Gdansk** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Chance to enjoy a spa treatment in Kolobrzeg; arrive in Miedzyzdroje

This morning we drive further along the coast to Kolobrzeg where we have a few hours to relax in the city known for its spa culture. Whilst here you might like to try a spa treatment, as the city is blessed with salty springs that are said to contain minerals that are very good for your skin. If this isn't your type thing then you could go to see the large Gothic Church of Saint Mary, the fortress-like Town Hall which houses a modern art gallery or Kolobrzeg Pier, which affords views back over the waterside promenade and the nearby 17th century lighthouse, which was reconstructed after bombing during World War II. You'll also find beautiful sandy beaches that are a very popular swimming spot in summer.

We continue our drive to Miedzyzdroje where we spend the next two nights. The town isn't on the normal tourist trail, apart from Germans heading for the coast for their summer holidays. It's best known for its wide sandy beaches, rolling cliffs and surrounding wildlife rich forests.



**Accommodation: Vienna House Amber Baltic Miedzyzdroje** (or similar)



Standard Hotel





Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 13 - Boat trip in the Swinoujscie, the Land of 44 Islands

This morning we drive to nearby Swinoujscie, known as the 'Land of 44 Islands' where we take a relaxing boat excursion around the islands and stop-off at a bird watching tower to take in the views. This is one of the most attractive parts of the Polish coastline and out of the many islands and islets found here only three are inhabited. There are a lot of trees and shrubs that have been registered as natural monuments and an impressive array of more exotic plants here too. Along the Przytowski Peninsula you can find sand dunes and the Caspian willow, sea-buckthorn and Siberian peashrub amongst other flora. The Swina River Delta covers 30 square kilometres of marshy islands and fens that are inhabited by around 240 different bird species, many of which choose to nest here including a number of Poland's sea eagle population. Other birds you may spot include the Northern shoveler, ruff and black stork, so be sure to bring your camera and binoculars with you today.

This afternoon is free for you to further explore the islands on foot or perhaps by bicycle. Swinoujscie is a popular cycling spot with plenty of well-marked routes, which connect the city centre with the harbour, seaboard district and health resort area. Alternatively you may just like to sit back and relax on the beach or take a dip in the Baltic Sea. Later this afternoon we'll drive back to Miedzyzdroje.



**Accommodation: Vienna House Amber Baltic Miedzyzdroje** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - Discover Berlin, Germany including Check Point Charlie

Before leaving Poland this morning we make a brief stop in the lively student city of Szczecin. There's a mixture of architectural styles reflecting its varied history. Many of the older buildings have fallen on hard time and you'll be able to see crumbling Art Nouveau mansions and overgrown gardens not far from the centre of the city. Most buildings on the main roads have been renovated and gaps filled with modern glass fronted shops.

We cross the border into Germany and head to the capital Berlin. On arrival we will have an orientation walking tour of the city and use public transport to see the city's highlights, which include the Rotes Rathaus City Hall and the Nikolai Quarter, which is the oldest residential area in the city. We also see the TV Tower and Berlin's largest city square, Alexanderplatz. Around this square are buildings constructed by the German Democratic Republic in East Berlin as part of their vision of a 'new socialist utopia'. We will come across reminders of Germany's war history as we walk down the Grand Avenue, Unter den Linden, to see the Baroque buildings from the Prussian era and the famous Brandenburg Gate, the former SS Head Quarters and Checkpoint Charlie, which used to be the crossing point between East and West Berlin. We will stop at the moving Holocaust Memorial where we pick up audio guides that explain the history and thought behind this present day monument.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 Auguststrasse was able to establish itself as a trendy gallery district and here you'll find a variety of restaurants in historic buildings that you might like to dine in this evening.



**Accommodation: Amano Grand Central** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 15 - Free day in Berlin with the chance to shop at Markethalle Neun

Today is free for you to discover more of this large and bustling city. It's easy to get around using the metro and public buses. Berlin is a great place for shopping, there are many cafes and bars to enjoy, and of course tons of history and cultural attractions.

You may like to visit the East Side Gallery, which is 1.3 kilometre long section of the Berlin Wall that has been kept as a monument to peace, or perhaps the Berlin Wall Memorial. Or you might prefer to sit back and watch the world go by in Germany's most beautiful square, the Gendarmenmarkt.

Charlottenburg Palace is one of the few places left in the city where you can witness the grandeur of the Hohenzollern family who ruled from 1415-1918. The palace was expanded over the years, but the oldest part is the Altes Schloss and the most flamboyant are the private chambers of Frederick the Great including the White Hall banquet room and gilded Golden Gallery. Also here are lovely manicured gardens and the Neo-Classical mausoleum that houses the sarcophagi of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Alternatively, if you'd like to discover something even older then the Pergamon Museum gives you an insight into the ancient world with Classical sculptures and other artefacts from Greece, Rome, Babylon and the Middle East. The bombed-out Neues Museum has been restored and is now home to an Ancient Egyptian Museum packed with mummies, sculptures and antiquities.

At the traditional Markethalle Neun dating from 1891 you can admire the iron beamed ceiling and Saturday is market day, so you can shop for a range of goodies and try delicious local foods and there's even a craft brewery, Heidenpeters, on site where you can try the Thirsty Lady Pale Ale.

Volkspark Friedrichshain is Berlin's oldest park and has provided a tranquil green space for city residents since 1840, but the two hills have only been there since the 1940s when the wartime debris was piled up to create them. There are also a number of memorial sites within the park including a tribute, which honours the joint efforts of the Polish army and German resistance fighters against the Nazis.

Germany is of course well known for beer, sausages including the spicy currywurst, schnitzel and pretzels and there are no shortage of these in the city's many restaurants, but you'll also find good steak, a range of Asian cuisine and the Big Stuff Smoked Barbeque Kitchen in the Markethalle Neun, which is a popular choice with the locals for pulled pork, pork belly and delicious beef brisket.



**Accommodation: Amano Grand Central** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 16 - Day travelling by road and ferry to Copenhagen, Denmark

This morning we bid farewell to Germany and head off on our journey back into Scandinavia. We drive to the port at Rostock to board the ferry for the two hour crossing to Gedser. From here we continue our drive to Copenhagen, where we spend the next two nights. We arrive later this afternoon and have the rest of the day free to settle in to our new surroundings.

Copenhagen is a compact city, which is easy to discover on foot and is said to be the happiest city on earth. Its cobbled streets are fronted by colourful townhouses, church spires, quirky boutiques, modern architecture and the beautiful facades and boats that line the harbour. The city was original a Viking settlement, but it truly started to grow in the 18th century when the Rococo area of Frederikssten was constructed with Amalienborg Palace and Frederik's Church at its heart. It's also during this period that the Royal Theatre and Royal Academy of Fine Arts first opened. It grow again during the Danish Golden Age when its Neo-Classical buildings sprung up.

In term of local cuisine smorrebrod open-faced sandwiches are a popular lighter option. They are usually on dark rye bread with heaped toppings such as boiled eggs, smoked salmon, cucumber, cheese, radishes, pickle and more. The most widespread local liqueur is akvavit, which has been distilled in Denmark for hundreds of years and is flavoured from a range of herbs and spices. Its name is derived from the Latin saying 'aqua vitae' meaning 'the water of life'. If you'd like to try a range of less costly foods then the indoor Copenhagen Street Food warehouse is full of mobile kitchens and could be the place for you. Here you can sample not just Danish but also Cuban, Mexican, Italian cuisine and more. In order to keep the prices reasonable each stall must offer at least one meal for between 50-75 Danish Kroner.



**Accommodation: Grand Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 17 - Tour of Copenhagen including the hippy Christiania Freetown

This morning we will take a walking tour to see the city's main sights including Christiansborg Palace, the Nyhavn (new harbour) and old town, 17th century Round Tower, Rosenborg Castle, Amalienborg Palace, City Hall and the famed Little Mermaid statue. We stroll down Stroget, which is one of Europe's longest pedestrian shopping streets. Nyhavn is probably the city's most iconic spot and was the home of H.C. Andersen.

We also visit the alternative hippy community of Christiania Freetown, which is a green and car-free neighbourhood with around 850 residents. Founded in 1971 on the site of a former military barracks, we will find a range of colourful building and characters here. Fredens Ark is the largest building in Christiania and also the largest half-timbered house in Northern Europe. It's a protected structure that used to be the main section of the barracks and today 80 people live here. Christiania's houses are a wide assortment of weird and wonderful shapes, sizes and colours with many being self-built by the occupants. The neighbourhood has a thriving art and music scene and we can find a variety of unique handicrafts and pieces of art on sale as well as organic restaurants and quirky cafes.

This afternoon you have free time to enjoy the city's attractions or perhaps to visit the famed Tivoli Gardens amusement park and pleasure gardens, which opened its doors in 1843.



**Accommodation: Grand Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 18 - Visit to Malmo, Sweden and beautiful Lund en route to Kalmar

Today we leave Denmark and head to the third largest city in Sweden, Malmo. Here we see Oresund Bridge that has been made famous by the TV show The Bridge and have time to grab a coffee in one of its many coffee bars, which the city is known for.

We then drive onto Lund and our Explore Leader will take us on a walk around Kulturen. It covers two blocks and contains over 30 historic and very pretty houses and gardens. We also go to see Lund Cathedral. After a couple of hours here we continue our drive to Kalmar where we stay overnight and where we have free time this evening.

Tonight you might like to try an authentic Swedish meatball or perhaps a bag of the chewy fish shaped sweets that the country is known for, but there's also a wide selection of other tasty food to choose from. Why not try pancakes with lingonberry jam, pickled herring, fresh crayfish, and the green princess cake called prinsesstarta or a cinnamon bun kanelnullen with a freshly brewed coffee. A popular local tippel is brannvin, which translates as 'burnt-wine' and is a type of vodka.



**Accommodation: Calmar Stadshotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 19 - Discover Kalmar's old town; ferry to Gotland Island

Kalmar is probably best known for its Renaissance-style castle complete with ornate turrets and a drawbridge. In the old town you can wander through the cobbled streets and admire the well-preserved 17th and 18th century buildings. This morning we will explore these best known areas, as well as seeing the cathedral and Oland Bridge. We'll have a little free time to have lunch and perhaps visit contemporary art exhibits in the Kalmar Art Museum.

We will then go across onto Oland Island and here we will see the Stone Ship burial ground. This is a great example of the early Viking burial custom of shaping the gravestones to resemble the bow of a ship. Along the coast of the island we may also be able to spot a number of different seabirds and seals.

This evening we drive to Oskarshamn where we board the ferry to Visby on Gotland Island. The crossing takes about three hours and we will arrive at around midnight and head straight to our hotel to check-in.



**Accommodation: Hotel Scandic, Visby** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 20 - See Visby's city walls and sea stack fields on Gotland Island

We spend today on Gotland Island, which was originally a Viking trading settlement. We start our discoveries in the main medieval walled town of Visby. It is UNESCO listed and its walls are the best preserved in Northern Europe and it's possible to walk along the two kilometre length of them. We wander down the towns cobbled streets to see old world shops, quaint little cottages and the tall spires of Saint Mary's Cathedral.

This afternoon is free for you to relax in the picturesque surroundings of Visby or on the 800-kilometre-long coastline that surrounds the island. Alternatively you may prefer to join an excursion to see more of the nearby sights. You could visit the Blase Lime Works Museum where you can take a train ride to the old quarry. Alternatively, on the smaller Faro Island, just off the tip of northern Gotland, you can see giant natural limestone sea stacks, stroll along sandy beaches and visit Kutens Bensin with its rusty old classic cars and rock n' roll music history.

A Gotland's food speciality you might want to try whilst you're here is saffranspannkaka, a saffron flavoured pancake served with berries and cream.



**Accommodation: Hotel Scandic, Visby** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 21 - Ferry to Stockholm with a tour on arrival and a drink in the Ice Bar

This morning we board the ferry for the four-hour journey to Nynashamn and drive from here to Stockholm where we arrive this afternoon. Stockholm is spread over 14 islands and even more islets and each has its own character. In the centre of the city is the spot where Lake Malaren merges with the Baltic Sea. On arrival we will take an orientation tour to many of the main sights including Gamla Stan which is Stockholm's colourful old town area and where the Royal Palace is located. We will also see the waterfront City Hall. Along the way we stop at the Ice Bar for a drink served in ice glasses and at a temperature at -7°C. We travel up to the observation deck on top of the Kaknas TV Tower to admire the beautiful views.



**Accommodation: Clarion Hotel Stockholm** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 22 - Trip ends in Stockholm, Sweden

Trip ends at our hotel in Stockholm after breakfast.

If you are on a flight later this afternoon or you have chosen to extend your stay to see more of Stockholm then we would recommend visiting the Vasa Museum, which is one of the city's best known attractions. The Vasa warship capsized and sank in 1628 and spent over 330 years on the seabed before it was finally salvaged. It is the only preserved 17th century ship in the world and at the museum you can see it and learn about the ships construction and life at the time, as well as the more recent preservation history. Alternatively you might like to take a wander through the Sodermalm District with its array of quirky boutiques, galleries and vintage shops.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast



## Why book this trip

This is our longest single trip in Europe which will visit the nine countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. We see coastal scenery and experience island life. Visit a number of unique cities and take in the different cultures of each. Explore tranquil national parks and an array of old Cold War and World War II historical remnants. This trip certainly offers something for everyone and is the most comprehensive introduction to the region we offer.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 21  
Lunch: 1



### Transport

Bus  
Boat  
Ferry



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



### Accommodation

21 nights standard hotel

## Trip information

### Country information

# Denmark

## Climate

Due to Denmark's location in the middle of several seas, the weather is mild and the climate temperate year-round. Additionally, Denmark's day and night temperatures don't fluctuate that much. Summer time is from May to August with the temperatures often reaching the low 20°C. May is a lovely month to go as spring is at its height. Winter is from December to March with periods of frost and darker days with average temperatures of 0°C.

## Time difference to GMT

+1

## Plugs

3 pin Round

## Religion

Evangelical Lutheran

## Language

Danish

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# Estonia

## Climate

Summer days in Estonia are warm though changeable with the occasional thunderstorm. Temperatures are commonly around 20-25°C, but can reach 30°C or more especially in July. At night temperatures are cooler. Winters can be harsh with very low temperatures, especially in January. Sometimes it drops as low -30°C, but more commonly it'll be around -5°C. Snowfall usually starts in November and lasting through to March. Being a maritime climate it can rain at any time of the year and it can be foggy in the autumn.

## Time difference to GMT

+2

## Plugs

2 Pin Round

## Religion

Evangelical Lutheranism

## Language

Estonian

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# Finland

## Climate

Finland's summer is generally warm and bright, with temperatures often reaching mid-20s. The days are long during the summer months of June and July as Finland is home to the Midnight Sun. The winter is often snowy and very cold with short days. Temperatures can drop well below freezing sometimes getting as low as -20.

## Time difference to GMT

+2

## Plugs

2 Pin Round

## Religion

Evangelical Lutheran

## Language

Finnish

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# Germany

## Climate

Germany has a variable climate with frequent changes of weather from day to day. Expect a contrast of warm summer days with the

possibility of showers at any time.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Christian

**Language**

German

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## Kaliningrad

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### Latvia

**Climate**

Summers in Latvia are generally hot and sunny and less humid than in Central Europe, with temperatures commonly around 18-22°C, but can reach 30°C. Summer is normally the rainiest time of year on a count of the afternoon thunderstorms that occur on some days. It can be windy on the coast at any time of year. Temperatures begin to drop in autumn and September can quite cold with temperatures between 8-15°C. Winters are normally below freezing with the first snows starting in November and lasting to the end of February. Temperatures regularly reach as low as -5°C, but can go down as far as -35°C.

**Time difference to GMT**

+2

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Christian

**Language**

Latvian

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### Lithuania

**Climate**

Summer days in Lithuania are warm though changeable. Temperatures on the coast are usually around 19°C and between 22-23°C further inland, but they can reach over 30°C. At night temperatures are cooler. Winters are cold, with temperatures regularly below freezing, so be prepared for snowy and icy conditions. Temperatures regularly reach as low as -5°C, but can go down as far as -35°C. Snowfall usually starts in November and lasting through to March. Being a maritime climate it can rain at any time of the year.

**Time difference to GMT**

+2

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Roman Catholic

**Language**

Lithuanian

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### Poland

**Climate**

Poland has a temperate, changeable climate. September and October are cooler and gradually become damper until late November when temperatures fall below freezing with snowfall, particularly in mountainous areas. Cold temperatures last through to March, but are tolerable. Snow can lie for up to three months in the mountains.



**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Roman Catholic

**Language**

Polish

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## Russia

**Climate**

In European Russia snows usually start in November and stay till late March/early April, when a great thaw occurs with temperatures ranging from about 5°C in October and April to -15°C in January.

**Time difference to GMT**

+3

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Orthodox Christianit, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism

**Language**

Russian

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## Sweden Holidays & Tours

**Climate**

During the winter, temperatures within Arctic Sweden can reach -45°C, though the average is more like -17°C in January and -8°C in March. Please note that April will be slightly warmer. Most precipitation Dec-Mar will invariably fall as snow, though no more than about 30 mm per month is the norm in winter. Snow will generally be on the ground from October to May. We have restricted our visiting season to try to ensure good snow as far as is reasonably possible.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Christian and Catholic

**Language**

Swedish

## Budgeting and packing

## Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

A selection of optional activities are listed below to help you budget for your holiday. Whilst the trip price you pay before you travel includes a great selection of highlights, we have also built in free time to allow you the flexibility to choose from a carefully selected range of additional excursions and activities or take time to relax, the choice is yours. At certain destinations along the way there may be several options to choose from and it may not be possible to fit all the activities in; your Explore Leader will be able to give

advice on which are the most suitable for you.

#### Tallinn:

On day 4 you can visit the Kadrioru Art Museum where entrance is €6.50 per person or the Estonian Open Air Museum where entrance is €9.00 per person. Both can be reached using public transport.

#### Riga:

KGB Museum can be visited on day 7 and entrance is €5.00 per person.

#### Kolobrzeg:

At the start of the trip it's possible to book spa treatments for your time in Kolobrzeg on day 12. Your Explore Leader will be able to advise of the treatment options and prices available.

#### Swinoujscie:

On day 13 you might decide to hire a bike for €9.00 per day and you can either bring your own helmet or hire one locally for €1.80 per day.

#### Berlin:

On day 15 you may choose to visit the East Side Gallery which has free admission, the Berlin Wall Memorial which also has free admission and/or the Jewish Museum where entrance is €9.00 per person.

#### Copenhagen:

Tivoli Gardens can be seen on day 17 and entrance is 110.00 Danish Kroner (DDK) per person.

#### Kalmar:

Kalmar Art Museum can be visited on day 19 and entrance is 50.00 Swedish Kroner (SEK) per person.

#### Visby:

On day 20 you can visit the Blase Lime Works Museum where entrance is 60.00 SEK per person plus €60.00 per group for charter bus transportation, which as well as taking you to/from the museum will also take you on a tour of half the island.

Alternatively you could take the public bus to Faro for approximately 75.00 SEK per person per way (the journey takes around 2 hours each way).

#### Stockholm:

On day 22 if you are departing later in the day then you can visit the Vasa Museum; entrance is 130.00 SEK per person.

Please note that all optional excursions listed above are subject to change and availability and they may not all be possible to offer on every departure date.

## Clothing

July and August are the warmest months and lightweight cotton clothing is best. During spring and autumn temperatures can be lower or drop during the evenings and there is also a stronger possibility of rain. You'll need your swimming costume and a towel and light rainwear may be needed at any time of year. A warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings. For the bog shoe walking we recommend older clothes that you don't mind getting dirty.

Ladies should take a headscarf to cover their head when entering religious sites.

## Footwear

We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing.

## Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack for personal items. Remember that you'll have to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

We recommend taking a water bottle for our included walks, sun glasses, sunscreen and a sun hat are all essential, and a torch may be useful. You might also find walking poles helpful and insect repellent. Most importantly don't forget your camera and also binoculars for discovering the birdlife along the way.

## Tipping

## Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

## Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approximately £50.00 for tips.

In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

## Country Information

### Denmark

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£9.00 - 14.00

**Dinner price**

£16.00 - 25.00

**Beer price**

£1.80 - 5.00

**Water price**

£1.70 - 3.00

#### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Danish Kroner.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

GBP or EUR

**Where To Exchange**

The tour leader will advise. We recommend that you take mixture Danish Kroner and Credit Cards with you.

**ATM Availability**

ATM's are widely available usually located outside banks, supermarkets and shopping centres. Most cash machines are available in different major European languages. It is free to withdraw money if you are using a cash machine from your own bank, though you may have to pay a transaction fee if you withdraw cash from a different bank.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

MasterCard or Visa cards accepted except in some supermarkets and small shops. American Express and Diners Club are also accepted, though not as widely as the previous two. With credit card payments made in Denmark you should expect to pay an extra charge.

**Travellers Cheques**

We do not recommend that you use travellers cheques as they can be difficult to exchange.

### Estonia

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£10

**Dinner price**

£15

**Beer price**

£2.4

**Water price**

£0.5

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Euros.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

EUR, GBP or USD

**Where To Exchange**

US Dollars, GBP Sterling and Euros can be changed in most places.

**ATM Availability**

Cash can be drawn from ATM's in most cities.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit cards are generally accepted only in the larger hotels and restaurants.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques are not always easy to exchange.

## Finland

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£10

**Dinner price**

£20

**Beer price**

£6

**Water price**

£1.3

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Euro.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

We recommend that you take Euro cash with you to Finland as on this tour there is little opportunity to change money.

**Where To Exchange**

The tour leader will advise.

**ATM Availability**

ATM machines are available only in Helsinki, Helsinki airport, Kajaani (no ATM in Kajaani airport or in Paljakka). If you need money, it is important to mention this to the Explore Leader/driver at the airport and they will stop at the ATM in Kajaani before driving straight to Paljakka.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Hotels do accept credit cards.

**Travellers Cheques**

We do not recommend that you use travellers cheques as they can be difficult to exchange

## Germany

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Dinner price**

£18

**Beer price**

£3

**Water price**

£1.3

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Euro

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

GBP and USD are readily exchanged.

**Where To Exchange**

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

**ATM Availability**

ATMs are readily available throughout Germany.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Most major credit cards are accepted, but ask first.

**Travellers Cheques**

Can be exchanged at banks and exchange shops.

## Kaliningrad

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

### Foreign Exchange

## Latvia

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£10

**Dinner price**

£15

**Beer price**

£3

**Water price**  
£0.5

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**  
Euro

### Recommended Currency For Exchange

We suggest you take most of your spending money in cash (in small denominations). US Dollars and Euros are more easily converted than Pounds Sterling. N.B. US\$ notes should be in good condition (not torn or marked). Notes prior to 1990 (of any currency) are often not accepted.

### Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

### ATM Availability

Cash can be drawn from ATM's in all major towns.

### Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants and shops.

### Travellers Cheques

Are very difficult to cash on this tour.

## Lithuania

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**  
£10

**Dinner price**  
£15

**Beer price**  
£1.5

**Water price**  
£0.5

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**  
Euros

### Recommended Currency For Exchange

EUR, GBP or USD

### Where To Exchange

US Dollars, GBP Sterling and Euros can be changed in most places.

### ATM Availability

Cash can be drawn from ATM's in most cities.

### Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are generally accepted only in the larger hotels and restaurants.

### Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are not always easy to exchange.

## Poland

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£8

**Dinner price**

£18.00 - 22.00

**Beer price**

£1.50 - 3.00

**Water price**

£0.8

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Polish Zloty2

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

British Pounds Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are all accepted at exchange offices and banks2

**Where To Exchange**

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival

**ATM Availability**

Available in all major cities

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit cards are widely accepted in all major cities

**Travellers Cheques**

Easily exchanged

## Russia

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Dinner price**

£12.00 - 16.00

**Beer price**

£2.00 - 4.00

**Water price**

£1

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Rouble.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

We recommend that you take your money in Euros or US Dollars cash. For US Dollars notes should be in good condition (not torn or marked), issued after 1990 (pre-1990 are often refused) and ideally in small denominations. Euros and Dollars are easily transferable into the local currency, Roubles.

**Where To Exchange**

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

Cash can be withdrawn both in Moscow and St. Petersburg

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Local currency (Russian Roubles) can also be drawn on credit cards from ATM's in both Moscow and St Petersburg.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques are accepted in Moscow and St Petersburg but are very time-consuming to change and attract unfavourable exchange rates

## Sweden Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£25

**Dinner price**

£45

**Beer price**

£5

**Water price**

£1.5

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Swedish Krona.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Please take Swedish Krona. Please note that there is no Bureau de Change at Kiruna Airport, so we recommend you change other currencies into Swedish Krona before departing the UK or whilst in transit at Stockholm.

**Where To Exchange**

Please note that there is no Bureau de Change at Kiruna Airport, so we recommend you change other currencies into Swedish Krona before departing the UK or whilst in transit at Stockholm.

**ATM Availability**

Kiruna has ATMs for cash withdrawal

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit cards are accepted in large stores and restaurants. 'Optional excursions', should be paid for in local currency although the Ice Hotel does take credit cards.

**Travellers Cheques**

Difficult to exchange except in banks now. Cash or cards would be preferable.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Ferry

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

The majority of hotels in Scandinavia are decorated in a plain Scandic style and most accommodation won't have hairdryers or tea and coffee making facilities in the room.



Please note that the majority of hotels in the Baltics don't have air-conditioning.

## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

#### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa and Passport Information

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All nationalities require a single entry Russian visa in order to enter Kaliningrad. As part of the visa requirements you will need to obtain a Russian Travel Voucher and Authorisation from the local Russian authorities. Explore will request this on your behalf approximately eight weeks prior to departure. Please allow a minimum of five working days for the travel voucher and authorisation to be processed. Due to the visa processing times, Explore are unable to accept bookings within one month of travel.

For British passport holders: All applicants must present themselves in person to the Russia Visa Processing Centre in London, Manchester or Edinburgh, on the day of application, to provide biometric information (fingerprints). There is currently no appointment system in place for this process, so applicants will be seen on a first come, first serve basis. This may mean that there are lengthy queues and waiting times. The biometric process is not optional, and any applicant who refuses to provide their fingerprints will automatically be refused a visa. This information is not stored and applicants will therefore need to travel to the Processing Centre each time a visa is required. In the event an application is rejected due to inaccurate or incomplete information, fingerprints must be resubmitted as part of the revised application. For more information regarding this process - we recommend contacting the Russian Embassy directly and their website is <http://rusemb.org.uk/visa/>

It is essential that you provide Explore with the correct passport information at the time of booking, as this will be required in order to request the travel voucher and authorisation, as well as pre-booking any applicable train tickets. Corrections and amendments will incur additional charges, so please double check that the information we have for you is up to date and correct, this includes your passport number, full name as per passport (including middle names), date of birth and place of birth; if customers renew or reissue their passports from the details initially given to Explore, train tickets must be cancelled and purchased again, which involves extra costs and may result in customers being in differing train carriages to the rest of the group. If you intend to renew your passport please let Explore know at the point of booking and please ensure that you have the new passport no later than eight weeks prior to travel.

You will be required to enter a reference number and a confirmation number on your visa application. These can be found at the top of your authorisation letter under the heading 'Voucher Number'. The 6 digit long number is the reference and the 4 digit number is the confirmation number.

Please ensure that your passport has a minimum of six months validity from the date of return to your home country.

All visa information is subject to change, so please check with your local consulate for the most up to date advice for the countries you are visiting. All other nationalities should check with the Russian embassy.

For nationalities that require proof of their travel insurance through Explore as part of their visa application, please contact us for a copy of this.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Included activities

There's no getting away from the fact that Scandinavia is an expensive destination, eating out can be pricey and the standard of accommodation you can get for your money is probably lower than you'd expect in most other European destinations. But having said this Scandinavia is one of our favourite places, as there are so many lively towns and incredible coastal scenery to see, that you come home with amazing memories that tend to eclipse the cost of having gone there in the first place. However, it's important to know what to expect and to budget accordingly so please take note of the food and drink sections of our trip notes.

## Non refundable permits

### Denmark

#### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory though we recommend protection against tetanus. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical

sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Estonia

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus and hepatitis A. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Finland

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory though we recommend protection against tetanus and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Germany

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, polio and hepatitis A. Tickborne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Kaliningrad

## Latvia

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and diphtheria. Consult your travel clinic for further advice. tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Lithuania

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus and hepatitis A. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Poland

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, polio and hepatitis A. Tickborne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements

with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Russia

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and diphtheria. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling. The Russian government advises that certain medications must be declared upon entry into the country, and you may also be required to carry a prescription with you. You should consult your local consulate for up to date information prior to travel.

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## Sweden Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory though we recommend protection against tetanus, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

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