

EXPLORE!

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BEST SELLER

Baltic Capital Cities

ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA - TRIP CODE BAT

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

This trip is the perfect introduction for first time visitors to the Baltic States. Explore the three capital cities, and enjoy a beer tasting and overnight stay at the historic Pakruojis country manor estate.

- **Vilnius** - Explore the city on foot and learn about Lithuania's troubled Soviet past at the KGB Museum
- **Riga** - Discover the old town and shop for food specialties at the huge Central Market
- **Tallinn** - See the stunning medieval architecture and go under the city walls in the Bastion Tunnels.



INCLUDED MEALS
Breakfast: 7
Dinner: 4



TRIP STAFF
Explore Tour
Leader
Driver(s)



TRANSPORT
Bus



ACCOMMODATION
7 nights
comfortable hotel



TRIP PACE:
Full on



GROUP SIZE:
12 - 18

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip in Vilnius, Lithuania

Arrive in Vilnius, Lithuania's capital city, where you can get a first taste of the city's vibrant cafe and restaurant scene.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 7pm for the welcome meeting and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Vilnius at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Vilnius International Airport (VNO), which is about 10 minutes' drive. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to explore the compact old town area on foot.

The majority of visitors to the Baltic States will be surprised by the quality, variety and value of food and drink on offer. The majority is locally sourced and part of the regions heritage is being able to forage for food and make local brews. Walking through the forests you will see locals passing the time picking mushrooms and gathering berries. There are a lot of traditional restaurants, with influences from Germany and Russia. There's a wide variety on the menu including soups, casseroles, salads, meat and fish dishes. Beer is locally brewed and you can find light and dark beers, filtered or unfiltered all for a reasonable price. You can also find flavoured wines such as raspberry and cherry wine and each country has its own herbal liquor which is a popular after dinner tittle.



ACCOMMODATION:
Panorama Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



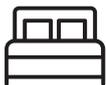
MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Walking tour of Vilnius, visit to the KGB Museum and Christmas Market

The Catholic influence on Vilnius is very evident from the numerous Baroque churches. By the turn of the last century, Vilnius also had an 80,000-strong Jewish community. However, by the end of World War II, it had been completely decimated. During our morning orientation walking tour of the capital, we'll visit the ancient university founded by the Jesuits - a centre of the Counter Reformation and a source of Lithuanian culture. We'll also see the cathedral and Church of the Dawn. In the newer part of Vilnius lies the main shopping street with the opera house, parliament building and a number of cafes. During our city tour we'll visit and enjoy the festive atmosphere at the biggest Christmas Market in the city, which is centred around the large Christmas tree in Cathedral Square. Here you can browse for traditional gifts and sample seasonal staples like herbal tea, mulled wine and pastries.

This afternoon we'll visit the KGB Museum, which is located in the former KGB Headquarters and has exhibits documenting the crimes that were planned and committed from this very spot during Soviet rule. The displays show how the Lithuanians fought back to re-claim their independence and we'll be able to see the inner prison cell that has been preserved in the same condition as when the headquarters closed in 1991.

As the perfect end to a day spent exploring the city we'll go to the Dziugas Cheese House for a tasting of a few typical Lithuanian cheeses accompanied by honey, jam and biscuits along with a glass of wine.



ACCOMMODATION:
Panorama Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Drive to Pakruojis Manor via Trakai Castle and Kaunas

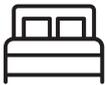
Our first stop this morning on our full day's journey will be at Trakai Castle set on an island in Lake Galve. Trakai is the former capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and this splendid red brick castle dates back

to the 14th century. You'll have the opportunity to go inside to view some of the interesting museum exhibits that it houses including one on pre-war Lithuania.

On some departures due to functions taking place it may not be possible to go inside Trakai Castle, so instead we will make an additional stop at Rundale Palace. Built in the 18th century by Anna Empress of Russia for her lover Count Biron. The architect, Bartholomeo Rastrelli, also built the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. The 138 room palace is richly decorated and is an example of the fusion of German and Russian society.

We continue our drive to Kaunas where we'll have free time for lunch. Kaunas was the country's temporary capital between 1920 and 1939 when Vilnius was forcibly annexed by the Poles. Situated in the heart of Lithuania, it is often regarded as the most characteristic city in the country. Many of its buildings date back to the 17th century, when the Jesuits bought tracts of land here and built a large monastery. Some buildings are older, with impressive examples of Gothic architecture.

Later this afternoon we arrive at Pakruojis Manor where we will be spending the night. The manor consists of 34 buildings including the main house, a stable block, mill and perfumery all set in a beautiful park setting, which is now a living museum that shows how the residents and staff would have lived and worked in 19th century. You'll have the opportunity to explore these historic buildings before we have a traditional dinner and an included beer tasting - all brewed on site.



ACCOMMODATION:
Manor of Pakruojis (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND DINNER

DAY 4 - Visit the Hill of Crosses en route to Riga, Latvia; walking tour of Riga

Before leaving Lithuania we'll make a stop at the Hill of Crosses near Siauliai where a vast number of rosaries and crosses adorn a small hill. Both German and Soviet troops in the past have tried to crush this symbol of national and religious fervour, but images of the Virgin and literally thousands of crosses always reappeared despite their best efforts to destroy them.

This afternoon we'll arrive in Riga, Latvia's capital, and take an orientation walking tour. 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.





ACCOMMODATION:
Konventa Seta Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Visit to Riga Central Market and the Christmas Market

This morning we'll visit Riga's huge and lively Central Market, which sells traditional produce, such as smoked fish, sauerkraut, pickled garlic and crusty cheeses.

The rest of the day is free for you to discover more of the city. 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. The Latvian Ethnographic Open Air Museum and Riga Castle are well worth a visit or you may choose to enjoy a long lunch in one of the many restaurants. Cheese and meat filled pastries served with wild berry preserves are popular, especially when washed down with a local beer or perhaps a glass of Riga Black Balsam, a traditional herbal liqueur and an acquired taste!

The Christmas spirit really glows in Riga, making it the perfect place for us to spend Christmas Eve. The tradition of decorating Christmas trees began in the city way back in the 16th century and there's nothing quite like going to the exact spot where the first decorated Christmas tree once stood. This evening before dinner our Explore Leader will take us to visit the charming Riga Christmas Market where we can find a variety of local crafts and arts for sale. Here we'll enjoy a hot drink and a traditional sweet treat to keep us warm, as we stroll around the stalls.

Tonight we will have a three course dinner at a local restaurant.



ACCOMMODATION:
Konventa Seta Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



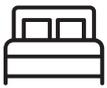
SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



DAY 6 - Drive to Tallinn, Estonia via the seaside city of Parnu

On Christmas Day morning we will bid farewell to Latvia and head for Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia. After we've crossed the border we'll make a stop in the pretty seaside town of Parnu on the Gulf of Livonia. This Baltic coast spa resort has been popular with tourists since the 1830s with people flocking to its clean sand beaches and to revitalise in the Parnu Mud Baths. After time here for lunch we continue our journey to Tallinn; in total today's drive takes us around five hours.

With just half a million citizens, Tallinn is not a sprawling metropolis. This adds to its charm, as it is easy to explore on foot, with minimal traffic. Famed for its medieval architecture, the Old Town is one of the best preserved Hanseatic city centres in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city has a huge range of restaurants, pubs and wine bars and tonight to celebrate Christmas together we will enjoy a three course dinner at a local restaurant.



ACCOMMODATION:
St Olav Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND DINNER

DAY 7 - Walking tour of Tallinn; visit the Dominican Monastery

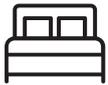
We will spend Boxing Day discovering Tallinn. Less than 100 kilometres across the water from Helsinki and midway between St. Petersburg and Stockholm, Tallinn has come under several different cultural influences since the first stronghold was built in the 10th century. Linguistically and economically, Estonia's closest ties are to Finland, despite the best efforts of other nations. In 1561, as a coveted trading port, it was seized by the Swedes and held for 150 years until the Russians took over and industrialised much of the medieval town. Perched on a hill overlooking the sea, we'll explore the cobbled Old Town on foot this morning. The colourful houses of the crooked streets reflect the German, Scandinavian and Russian periods of Tallinn's history. We'll walk through the quarter where merchants once traded and take in the historical and architectural highlights. The busy town square is a hectic mix of pavement cafes and shops, dominated by the 14th century Gothic Town Hall. The pink Parliament buildings and Toompea Castle lie near the imposing deep yellow Alexander Nevsky Cathedral.

This afternoon we'll take a tour to learn about the secrets of the white monks at the Dominican Monastery. In the Middle Ages the influence of the Dominican religious order was enormous, as the monks were the confessors of the kings. We'll be met by a monk at the monastery who will give us an insight into what it would have been like in the city and to be a monk in medieval times. There is almost no

electricity in the monastery, so our tour will be conducted by candle light and, of course, we will get the chance to try the traditional monastery liqueur.

After exploring the monastery we'll go to a well-known local cafe where we'll be taught how and have the opportunity to paint our own marzipan figure. Marzipan has been made in the city since medieval times and is an especially popular Christmas sweet that comes shaped like everything from bears to elves and from cats to mushrooms.

Before enjoying a three course dinner at a local restaurant we'll go with our Explore Leader to the Christmas Market. Christmas time is wonderful in Tallinn with dozens of festive and seasonal attractions and at the market we can get into the festive spirit. The market is an absolute must-see attraction. It spreads out from the Town Hall Square where we can see the brightly lit Christmas tree that is surrounded by stalls shaped like little houses that are also all shining with Christmas lights and selling a variety of Christmas delicacies and folk craft products.



ACCOMMODATION:
St Olav Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST AND DINNER

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Tallinn, Estonia

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Tallinn.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Tallinn at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from Lennart Meri Tallinn Airport (TLL), which is about 10 minutes' drive.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Country information

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	Plugs	Religion	Language
+2	2 Pin Round	Evangelical Lutheranism	Estonian

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	Plugs	Religion	Language
+2	2 Pin Round	Christian	Latvian

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	Plugs	Religion	Language
+2	2 Pin Round	Roman Catholic	Lithuanian

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

In spring and summer, lightweight clothing is best during the day plus warmer clothing for colder nights. We also recommend taking a lightweight raincoat and an umbrella, as rainfall is possible at any time of year. During autumn and winter layers work best. We recommend taking a hat, gloves, scarf and a fleece/jumper. In winter a thick waterproof and windproof jacket is required and you may also find thermal underwear useful.

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

Footwear

Comfortable shoes for walking and sandals or trainers for relaxing. If you're travelling in winter then it may be slippery underfoot, so please ensure that your footwear is waterproof and that it has a good grip.

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 insect repellent (especially if travelling in summer), a water bottle, sunscreen, sunglasses, a personal first aid kit and a torch in case of emergencies. Most importantly don't forget your camera.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that has done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It is a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we would recommend £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

Local crew

Although 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 £20 of local currency for tipping.

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.

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£10	£15	£2.4	£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency	Recommended Currency For Exchange
Euros.	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.

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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£10	£15	£3	£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 ATMs 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	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£10	£15	£1.5	£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency	Recommended Currency For Exchange
Euros	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.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

Accommodation notes

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

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure. Visa regulations in the Baltics are often subject to frequent change so ensure you check before you travel.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See 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 complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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.

Ability to swim

No

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.

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.

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.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

On this Christmas departure not only will we see the main highlights and lesser visited sights of the three beautiful Baltic capital cities of Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn, but we will also discover their Christmas Markets, go for a cheese tasting and learn how to paint marzipan. We also have four dinners included on this festive departure including one in the largest historical manor estate in Europe, Pakruojis Manor.

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**