

## Itinerary for 8D/7N Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

### Day 1 Helsinki

Welcome to Finland!

Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6pm on Day 1.

You can arrive at any time during the day as there are no activities planned until this important meeting; please check with the hotel reception where and when it will take place, or check the reception notice boards. If you can't arrange a flight that will have you arrive at the hotel by early evening, you may wish to arrive a day early so you're able to attend. We'll be happy to book additional accommodation for you (subject to availability). If you're going to be late, please inform the hotel reception. We'll be collecting your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting, so please ensure you have all these details to provide to your leader.

Surrounded by the sea, Helsinki is a modern European city that offers an endless array of options. Throughout its 450-year history, Helsinki has often been the buffer between the East and West. The hallmarks of history can be seen everywhere, from the magnificent Suomenlinna Sea Fortress to the cutting-edge architecture of the 21st century.

For those who arrive early, we recommend purchasing the Helsinki Card - an economical way to travel on Helsinki City Transport (HKL) services as well as free admission to the main Helsinki sights and nearly 50 museums (EUR36 for 24 hours, EUR46 for 48 hours).

As there are no included activities here, we recommend you arrive a few days early to enjoy the sights of the Finnish capital. Make time to see the highlights such as the Senate Square, the Russian Orthodox Church, Kaisaniemi Park, the National Theatre and Helsinki Railway Station. You can take a local ferry out to the islands and the imposing Suomenlinna Sea Fortress - a World Heritage-listed site. Optional Activities

- Helsinki Ateneum Art Museum - EUR8
- Cathedral - Free
- City Museum - Free
- Design Museum - EUR8
- Museum Mannerheim - EUR10
- Helsinki Museum of Cultures - EUR5
- Museum Seurasaari - EUR8
- National Museum of Finland - EUR8
- Suomenlinna Sea Fortress - EUR6

Accommodation

Hotel (1 nt)

### **Days 2-3 Tallinn**

Catch a ferry across the Gulf of Finland to the Estonian capital of Tallinn (approx 3 hrs).

With its steep red roofs, spires, pastel-coloured buildings and new restaurants and bars, Estonia's capital is a real treat to explore. Seeing the vibrant streets of Tallinn now, it's difficult to fathom that Soviet occupation only ended 19 years ago.

Start our time here with a short walk through the city centre to get oriented.

You have a free day here and an exploration of the Old Town is a must. You'll see the last remaining gothic town hall in northern Europe, Old Thomas; the Rääpatek which has housed a pharmacy since the 15th century; and St Olaf Church, a major landmark of Tallinn.

You can head towards Upper Tallinn, home to the noble families, to see the amazing views of Lower Tallinn and the medieval spires of the town walls. The 13th-century Toompea Castle, where the Estonian Parliament sits, and the 19th-century Alexander Nevsky Cathedral are some of the main attractions of Upper Tallinn. Alternatively, you could go to Pirita to chill out at Tallinn's most popular beach.

#### **Included Activities**

- Orientation Walk
- Optional Activities
- Estonian History Museum - EUR3
- Kadriorg Palace - EUR5
- Old Town Audioguide - EUR13
- Peter the Great Museum - EUR2
- City Bike Tour - EUR16
- City Museum - EUR4
- Kiek in de Kok Tower (Tower Museum) - EUR4
- TV Tower - EUR7

#### **Accommodation**

Hotel (2 nts)

### **Days 4-5 Riga**

Cross the border by local bus and travel to Riga (approx 5.5 hrs).

Latvia's capital rests on the Daugava River and is a living museum of architectural eras. Riga is particularly famous for its art nouveau heritage, with many fine examples dotted around town.

Take a walk around town to see some of the sights such as the Doma Cathedral, St Peter's Basilica, House of Blackheads, the Swedish Gate, Mentzendorff's House, Riga Castle, The Great Guild & Small Guild and the Cat House.

The Museum of Occupation gives a very thorough and fascinating insight into the hardships suffered by Latvians during its occupation by, first, the Germans and, later, the Soviets. It's highly recommended.

The Old Town in Riga is just as charming as the one in Tallinn, with St Peter's Church as its centrepiece. You can catch the elevator to the top for fine views of the Old Town and its surroundings. Visit the Latvian Open Air Ethnographical Museum.

You might want to head to Riga's colourful Central Market, which dates back to 1201, to pick up supplies for a picnic.

#### Included Activities

- Riga Orientation Walk
- Optional Activities
- Latvian Photography Museum - LVL2
- Mentzendorff's House - LVL1
- History Museum - LVL3
- Riga Museum of Pharmacy - LVL3
- National Art Museum - LVL2
- Riverboat Cruise - LVL5
- St Peter's Tower - LVL4
- The Museum of Occupation of Latvia - Free

#### Accommodation

Hotel (2 nts)

#### **Days 6-7 Curonian Spit**

Set off by bus to the former Prussian capital of Klaipeda.

Formerly known as Memel, Klaipeda used to be a member of the Hanseatic League and is the gateway to the Curonian Spit - a long, narrow sand dune peninsula separating the Curonian Lagoon from the Baltic Sea.

Take a trip to explore the unique World Heritage-listed Curonian Spit National Park - a real Baltic beach experience. For the more energetic there's the option to ride a bike along the shores.

#### Included Activities

- Day trip on the Curonian Spit
- Optional Activities
- Bike Hire - LTL30

#### Accommodation

Guesthouse (2 nts)

#### **Days 8-9 Vilnius**

Continue by bus or train to Vilnius (approx 4 hrs).

Lithuania's capital has at different times been occupied by Sweden, Poland, France and Russia, each leaving its mark in some way on this lovely city. Vilnius offers a different picture of the Baltics than Riga and Tallinn, but it's every bit as interesting. Its lovely parks and gardens offer a break from historic monuments.

Your leader will show you the highlights of the city on a walk that covers Cathedral Square and the famous chapel of Saint Kazimieras, Gediminas Tower and the Gates of Dawn, one of the original gates giving access to the city.

Take a trip to Trakai (approx 40 mins by bus), the former capital of Lithuania. It's situated on lakes with two castles dating from the 14th century, which were built to defend the capital from German knights. Trakai has a small population of Karaim people who were brought here in the 14th century and who still hold their traditional Jewish services in the Kinessa, built in 1812.

#### Included Activities

- Orientation Walk
- Optional Activities
- Higher Castle Museum - LTL5
- KGB Museum - LTL6
- KGB Museum Tour - LTL40
- National Museum - LTL5
- Trakai day trip - LTL16

#### Accommodation

Guesthouse (2 nts)

### **Days 10-11 Aukstaitija National Park**

Travel by local train to Aukstaitija ('Owk-sty-chee-ah') National Park (approx 2 hrs).

This is a land of lakes, waterways, hills and woods. One of the most delightful national parks in the Baltic States, Aukstaitija has 126 lakes.

Transfer to the charming village of Ginuciai.

Take a canoe ride (weather permitting) through the lakes to a viewpoint with a wishing tree. Then transfer back to our accommodation - the whole journey takes about 3 hours.

You'll have a free day to visit some of the local attractions such as nearby villages that date from the 14th century, traditional wooden houses and farmsteads. The 19th-century Ginuciai Watermill operated till 1968 and is another point of interest. Or you can hike to some glorious lookouts, do some fishing, enjoy a sauna, swim in the lake or just relax.

#### Included Activities

- Guided canoe trip
- Optional Activities
- Sauna - LTL10

#### Accommodation

Guesthouse (2 nts)

### **Days 12-13 Warsaw**

Make the long journey by train to Warsaw (approx 12 hrs, unfortunately there's no faster way)

Warsaw is Poland's large, bustling capital. It's remarkable to see the achievements of the Polish people who rebuilt their city from mere rubble at the end of World War II. The city folk are lovers of culture and art, as well as entertainment. There are numerous theatrical and musical venues including the prestigious National Opera, the Chamber Opera and the National Theatre.

Visit the Uprising Museum. Opened on the 60th anniversary of the Uprising, this museum recounts the events which saw the people of Warsaw fighting against the Nazi occupation. The museum is a moving tribute to those who fought and died for independence.

## Included Activities

- Uprising Museum
- Optional Activities
- Palace of Science and Culture Observation Deck - PLN20
- Pawiak Prison Memorial - Free
- Warsaw Ethnographic Museum - PLN8
- Jewish Cemetery - PLN4
- Warsaw Katyn Museum - Free
- Marie Curie Museum - PLN11
- National Museum - PLN15
- Warsaw Natural History Museum - Free
- Royal Castle - PLN22

## Accommodation

Hotel (2 nts)

## Days 14-15 Berlin

Travel by train to Berlin, the heart of modern Germany (approx 6 hrs).

Berlin is a vivacious city where fast-paced modern development is overlaid on a history familiar to everyone. Surviving pre-World War I attractions include the Schloss Charlottenburg, the Prussian Queen's Summer Palace, and the Prussian Victory Column. The Tiergarten, Berlin's largest green space with 23 kilometres of pathways, is also home to the world famous Berlin Zoo.

There are countless unique memorials and sites holding significance in Berlin's more recent history, all designed to provoke thought as well as commemorate, such as the Jewish Memorial, the empty shelves of Bebelplatz or the confronting Topography of Terror. The Reichstag holds a special and symbolic meaning, outside its role once again as the home of Parliament, and the great glass dome that today crowns the building offers sweeping views over Berlin. At the very heart of Berlin stands the Brandenburg Gate, once a symbol of a divided city, and the crumbling remnants of the Berlin Wall that can still be seen.

Don't miss out on Berlin's up-beat nightlife. Consider spending an evening celebrating life as the locals do - at a bar, lounge, nightclub or embracing some live music.

There are no activities planned for the final day and you are able to depart the accommodation at any time.

## Optional Activities

- Museum pass, 3 day ticket - EUR19
- Bike tour - EUR20
- Jewish Museum - EUR5
- National History Museum - EUR6
- Pergamon Museum - EUR13
- River sightseeing tour - EUR16
- Walking tour - EUR30
- Berlin Zoo and Aquarium - EUR20
- Berliner Dom - EUR7
- Berlin TV Tower - EUR12
- Checkpoint Charlie Museum - EUR12

- German History Museum - EUR8
- Kulturforum Potsdamer Platz - EUR8
- Reichstag - Free
- Schloss Charlottenburg - EUR15
- Accommodation
- Hotel (1 nt)