



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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Andy Symington

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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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SURVIVAL GUIDE

VITAL PRACTICAL INFORMATION TO
HELP YOU HAVE A SMOOTH TRIP

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➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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› Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania

Top Experiences ›



Tallinn

Magical, fairy-tale
Old Town (p46)

Pärnu

Estonia's most popular
beachside resort (p122)

Saaremaa

Forested coastlines and
languid lifestyle (p132)

Kurzeme Coast

Constellation of villages and
haunting sea stacks (p224)

Jūrmala

The former Russian Empire's
ultimate spa centre (p218)

Riga

Ethereal — almost eerie —
art nouveau facades (p185)

Lahemaa National Park
One-stop shop for all of
Estonia's ecosystems (p79)

Tartu

Engage in the clichés
of undergraduate life (p94)

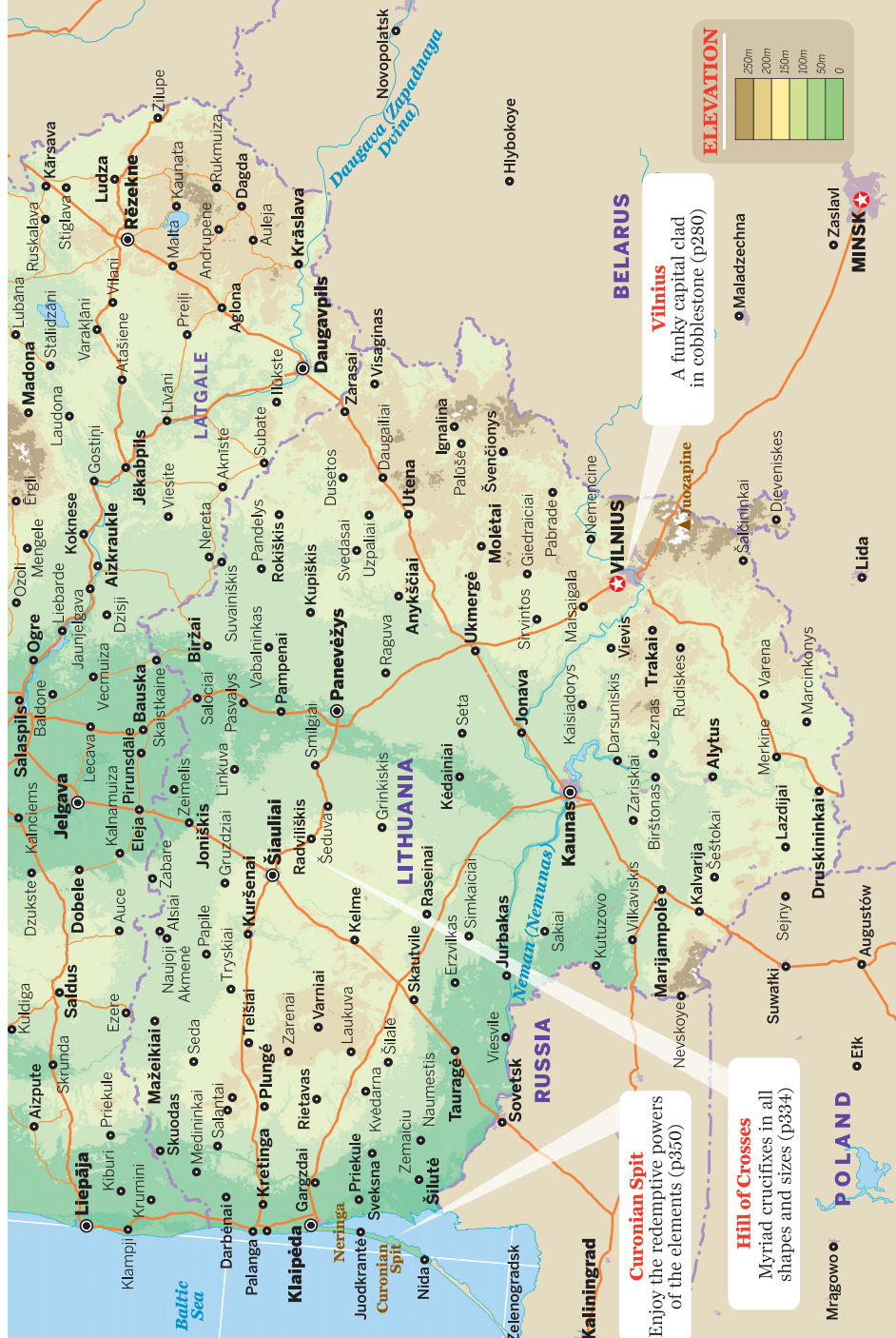
Gauja Manor Houses

Crumbling castle ruins and
pine-peppered terrain (p252)

Sigulda

Gateway to the Gauja (p245)





Hill of Crosses

Myriad crucifixes in all shapes and sizes (p334)



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Brandon Presser

Coordinating Author, Latvia His wanderlust always bigger than his wallet, Brandon earned his backpacker stripes after an epic overland adventure from Morocco to Finland. He then joined the glamorous ranks of eternal nomadism as a fulltime travel writer, and has since contributed to more than 40 guidebooks. He co-authored *Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania 5* and was delighted to return to the Baltic where he put his Harvard art history degree to good use while checking out Rīga's surplus of

evocative art nouveau architecture.

Read more about Brandon Presser at:
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Mark Baker

Lithuania Though this was Mark's first foray into Lithuania, he'd been intrigued by the country since the mid-1980s when he was a grad student in Eastern European studies at New York's Columbia University. Mark is the co-author of Lonely Planet's *Poland* and was keen to see what Polish influence, if any, remained from the long period when the two nations formed a united country. In addition to Lithuania and Poland, Mark has also written for the Lonely Planet *Prague* and *Romania* guides. When he's not on the road, he teaches Central European History at Anglo-American University in his home city of Prague.

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Peter Dragicevich

Estonia It's been 20 years since Peter first started writing reviews for a variety of publications. Among the two dozen or so books that he's co-authored for Lonely Planet are the last three editions of the *Eastern Europe* guide. He rates Tallinn as one of his favourite European cities and strongly suggests you allocate ample time for eating your way around the restaurants lurking in forgotten corners of the Old Town.

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Simon Richmond

Kaliningrad Excursion Simon's first visit to Russia was in 1994 when he wandered goggle-eyed around gorgeous St Petersburg, and peeked at Lenin's mummified corpse in Red Sq. He's since travelled the breadth of the nation on many trips, visiting Kaliningrad three times in recent years. An award-winning writer and photographer, Simon is the co-author of Lonely Planet's *Trans-Siberian Railway* (editions 1–3) and *Russia* (editions 3–6). Read more about

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MORE WRITERS

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itineraries

Whether you've got three days or 30, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Two Weeks Best of the Baltic

Inaugurate your tour in **Tallinn** amid the Estonian capital's Old Town parade of polished medieval abodes. Don't miss the city's treasure trove of gastronomic delights before trekking out to **Lahemaa National Park**. The electric university town of **Tartu** awaits, then skip south into Latvia to take in the duo of crumbling castles in **Sigulda** and **Cēsis**. Spend the night at one of the posh **manor houses** (*muižas*) nearby, then plough through **Gauja National Park** to reach **Riga**, home to a dizzying array of decorated facades. Next, head south to **Rundāle** to visit its opulent palace – the Baltic's version of Versailles, built by the architect responsible for St Petersburg's Winter Palace. From Rundāle, hop the border into Lithuania and stop at the **Hill of Crosses** in Šiauliai. Shoot west to **Curonian Spit** and spend a few days amid quaint cottages, shifting sand dunes and roving boar. End your trip in **Vilnius**, with its flamboyant baroque style.



Three Weeks The Grand Tour

Start your journey in Lithuania's beautifully baroque **Vilnius**, spending a couple of days wandering the cobblestone streets, checking out **Gediminas Hill** and taking in the city's historical charms. Make a stop at **Trakai Island Castle** before heading west towards the sea. Stop at **Žemaitija National Park** for a quick lesson in Soviet missile tactics, then reward yourself with several days of uninterrupted relaxation along the dune-filled shores of the **Curonian Spit**. Follow the black Baltic Sea up through the Lithuanian port city of **Klaipėda** and family-friendly **Palanga** to reach the Latvian border. Over the border the first stop is **Liepāja**, famous for its gilded cathedrals and rectangular Soviet tenements that scar the landscape. Don't miss a tour of the red-brick Karosta Prison. From Liepāja you can either follow the desolate coast as it traces a snaking line past quiet villages and haunting sea stacks, or you can venture inland for a more direct route to the capital. Those who choose the seaside route will pass surfside **Pāvilosta**, oil-rich **Ventspils**, silent **Cape Kolka** and the spa retreat of **Jūrmala** – a hotspot for Russian tycoons. Inland treasures include the picturesque village of **Kuldīga** and the engaging open-air art museum at **Pedvāle** in the Abava River Valley. In **Rīga**, devote a day to exploring the ancient Old Town, then wander the grand boulevards just beyond while taking in the gorgeous **art nouveau facades** and bustling **Central Market**. After several days in Rīga, cruise through **Gauja National Park**, stopping in **Sigulda** for a side of bobsledding and bungee jumping, and **Cēsis** to wander among the fortress ruins. Then jump the border into Estonia for a few days of beach bliss in **Pärnu**. Move west to play hopscootch among the forested islands of **Muhu**, **Saaremaa** and **Hiiumaa** before returning to the mainland to take in **Tallinn's** treasures, including the **City Museum**, the **Estonian History Museum** and any of the city's trendy corners, such as the **Rotermann Quarter**. Before completing the Baltic trifecta, hit up **Lahemaa National Park** nearby and – if time permits – jump on one of the ferries bound for **Helsinki**.



One week Absolute Latvia

A full week in Latvia offers plenty of time to explore the nation's treasures beyond the stunning capital. After a few days in **Riga** you can spend the latter half of the journey taking in the castle-clad forests of the east, or the desolate shorelines to the west. Those who are bound for the woods should start at Turaida Castle in **Sigulda** before moving onwards to the secret Soviet bunker at **Līgatne** and the stone fortress of **Cēsis**. Swing through the silent lakelands of **Latgale** to visit **Aglona's** coveted basilica before looping back to **Rundāle** to take in the opulence of the palace. Those who venture west can follow the dramatic coastline through the constellation of lonely seaside villages. Depart Riga for **Jūrmala**, the Baltic's original flavour of resort town. Then it's on to **Kolka** where the Bay of Riga meets the Baltic Sea in a very dramatic fashion. Follow the crashing waves down the coast through wealthy **Ventspils**, **Pāvilosta** – a windsurfer's paradise – and **Liepāja**, home to Latvia's garage-band scene and the strikingly dour **Karosta district**. Swing back towards the capital through **Kuldīga**, one of the country's quaintest towns.

10 Days Capital Drop-in

Ten days in the Baltic is just the right amount of time to get a feel for each of the region's capitals. Start your journey in **Vilnius** (Lithuania) to appreciate the sumptuous baroque architecture amid the curving cobbled streets. Two days will give you plenty of time to snap photos of **Gediminas Hill** and take in the city's rich **Jewish history**. A side trip to the castle at **Trakai** is a must before making tracks to Latvia's capital, **Riga**: the Baltic's largest city. Haggle for your huckleberries at the **Central Market** and crane your neck to take in the glorious **art nouveau architecture** soaring above. You'll be spoilt for choice when it comes to day-tripping detours – cavort with the Russian elite in **Jūrmala**, Latvia's spa centre; or crank up the adrenalin in **Sigulda** with its clutch of adventure sports. Next it's on to Estonia and **Tallinn**, where you'll be treated to a fairy-tale kingdom of gingerbread trim and quaint medieval houses. Snoop around the city's world-class **culinary scene** and finish off the journey with a day at quiet **Lahemaa National Park**. If you have the time it's well worth hopping over to **Helsinki**, just a short boat ride away.



One Week Lithuanian Solo

Compact Lithuania quickly rewards those with the luxury of time. A week's visit is best begun in **Vilnius**, followed by a few days along the jaw-dropping coastline or tucked away betwixt the towering pines of the inland forest. After taking in Vilnius' cathedral and museums, either head to **Trakai** to see the castle or, if your interests tilt toward Jewish heritage, visit the horrific **Paneriai** forest. Beach bums should then head to the Baltic coast, spending one day in the port of **Klaipėda** and the rest on **Curonian Spit**, particularly in the enchanting town of Nida. On your way, consider a stopover at **Žemaitija National Park** to see an abandoned Soviet missile base at the Museum of the Cold War. If it's woods you seek, head east to the **Aukštaitija National Park**, with its lakes and hiking paths. Plan your route via **Labanoras** for an overnight stay. Get your Soviet fix with a visit to **Visaginas**, built in the '70s to house workers at the now-shuttered **Ignalina Nuclear Power Station**.

One Week Essential Estonia

On a week's journey through Estonia, it's best to give **Tallinn** at least half of your time, to be able to fully explore each crooked nook in the charming medieval core while sampling the spoils of the nation's 'new food' movements. **Lahemaa National Park** makes for a lovely day trip, while the university town of **Tartu** awaits those looking for more city life away from the capital. Swing through **Otepää**, Estonia's self-proclaimed 'winter capital', then switch seasons in **Pärnu** where sun worshippers come in droves for a bit of beach-lazing. Round off the week with a few days on one (or more) of Estonia's western islands that languidly float in the Baltic Sea. Try **Muhu** to enjoy time-warped Koguva village, or try **Saaremaa's** forested expanse of whooshing windmills, quiet castle ruins, lonely churches and soaring sea cliffs.

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