



Survival Guide

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Directory

A-Z

This chapter contains the nuts and bolts of travelling in the Baltic. Country-specific information can be found in the directories for Estonia (p167), Latvia (p272) and Lithuania (p380).

Accommodation

In the Baltic, the Eastern Bloc bedtime blues are now largely a thing of the past. There are still a few grey Soviet monsters lurking about (mostly in Latvia), but many have been renovated and nowadays there are plenty of other options available. The capitals tend to have the best range – from hostels to international hotel chains – but things can get tight on summer weekends.

In this book, accommodation is ordered according to the author's preference, with their favourite options listed first under each town or neighbourhood heading. Beside each property name you'll find a price indicator, enabling you to quickly locate budget (€), midrange (€€) or top-end (€€€) options. The price bands for each country differ slightly,

due to the disparity in currencies and prices (Estonia tends to be more expensive than the others), so you'll need to refer to the individual country chapters for the breakdowns. Generally speaking, hostels, camp sites and cheaper guesthouses fall into the budget category; most of the guesthouses and the less expensive hotels are rated midrange; while top-end places include the ritzier hotels and boutique properties.

The peak tourist season is from June to August (the ski resorts have a second peak in winter). If you come then, you should book well in advance. This is essential in Tallinn, Vilnius and Riga – and in popular summer-lovin' destinations, including the Estonian islands and all the coastal resorts.

Rates published in this guide reflect high-season prices. From October to April (and to a lesser extent September and May), room prices typically drop by about 30% – sometimes substantially more, depending on your powers of persuasion. Also keep in mind that popular seaside spots and other weekend getaway destinations (including Tallinn) are pricier on Friday and Saturday than during the week.

Camping

Many Baltic campgrounds are beautifully located by lakes or within forests, but most are difficult to reach unless you have a private vehicle. Some have permanent wooden cottages or, occasionally, brick bungalows. Cabins vary in shape and size but are usually small one-room affairs with three or four beds. Showers and toilets are nearly always communal and vary dramatically in cleanliness.

Campgrounds usually open in May or June and close in mid- to late September. A night in a wooden cottage typically costs €7 to €30 per person, while tent sites range from €2 to €10 per person.

Estonia, in particular, has an extremely well-organised outfit overseeing camping. **RMK** (☎676 7500; www.rmkk.ee) maintains dozens of free basic camp sites in forests all over the country.

Farmstays

The term 'farmstay' can vary widely and isn't always the

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