



# Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Peter Dragicevich, Hugh McNaughtan and Leonid Ragozin

## PLAN YOUR TRIP

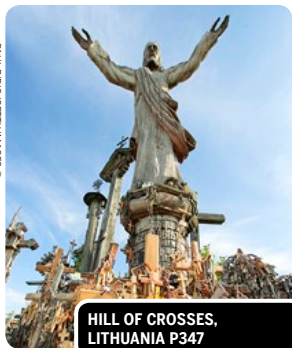
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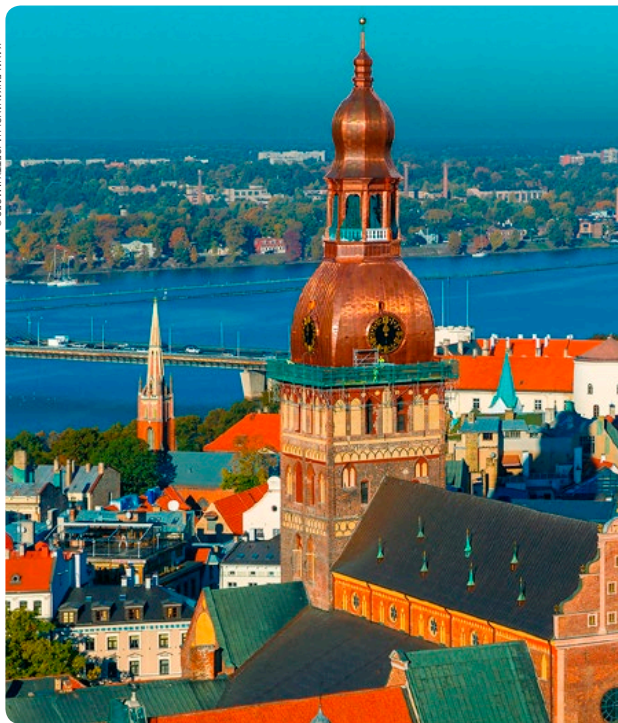
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LAHEMAA NATIONAL PARK,  
ESTONIA P86



HILL OF CROSSES,  
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OLD TOWN, RIGA,  
LATVIA P196

# Itineraries



## 2 WEEKS Best of the Baltic

If you've only got limited time but you're keen on seeing the very best of what each of the Baltic states has to offer, this short itinerary ticks off many of the big-ticket destinations.

Inaugurate your tour in **Tallinn** and roam the magnificent medieval streets of the Estonian capital's **Old Town**. Delve into 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 crumbling castles of **Cēsis** and **Sigulda** in **Gauja National Park**. Spend the night at one of the posh *muižas* (manor houses) nearby, then plough through to reach **Riga**, home to a dizzying array of decorated facades. Next, head south to **Rundāle** to visit the 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 for a quick look at the **Hill of Crosses** in Šiauliai before shooting west to **Curonian Spit**. Spend some time amid the quaint cottages, shifting sand dunes and roving boar before ending your trip in flamboyant, baroque **Vilnius**.



## The Grand Tour

With a month you can roster in beach time, hiking excursions and see much more of the region's quaint little towns – you could even fit in a side trip to Helsinki.

Start in Lithuania's beautiful capital **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 Castle** before heading west towards the sea. Stop at **Zemaitija National Park** for a quick lesson in Soviet missile tactics, then reward yourself with some uninterrupted relaxation along the dune-filled shores of **Curonian Spit**. Follow the Baltic Sea up through the 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 cathedral and hulking Soviet tenements. If the weather's behaving, head north to surfside **Pāvilosta** before detouring inland to the picturesque village of **Kuldīga**. Continue on to the lovely long sands of **Ventspils**, staying overnight before hitting windy and wild **Cape Kolka**. Follow the coast as it traces a snaking line past forests and quiet villages to the spa retreat of **Jūrmala** – a hot spot for Russian tycoons and an excellent pit stop. From here **Rīga** is only a short hop away.

After a couple of days in the Latvian capital, jump the border into Estonia for some beach bliss in **Pärnu**. Move west to play hopscotch between the forested islands of **Muhu**, **Saaremaa** and **Hiiumaa**. Stop for lunch and a castle visit in **Haapsalu** before continuing on to **Tallinn**. Allow at least three days to take in the Estonian capital's treasures before ferrying over to **Helsinki** for a night. Back in Estonia, stop overnight in **Lahemaa National Park** before heading through **Rakvere** and **Mustvee**, on the shores of Lake Peipsi, to **Tartu** for a night or two.

Stop to check out the oddball border town of **Valga/Valka** before continuing on to Latvia's **Gauja National Park**. Stop in charming **Cēsis** to wander among the fortress ruins, and in **Sigulda** for a side of bobsledding and bungee jumping. End your Baltic odyssey back in Rīga or motor on to Vilnius to return your hire car.

1  
WEEK

## Absolute Latvia

A full week in Latvia offers time to explore a good number of the nation's treasures beyond the attention-stealing capital.

After exploring **Rīga**, visit the castle-clad forests near **Sigulda** before moving on to the secret Soviet bunker at **Līgatne** and the stone fortress of **Cēsis**. Swing through to the peaceful Latgale Lakelands, where you can stay overnight in a guest-house or a camp site on the shores of **Lake Rāzna** and visit the basilica at **Aglona**.

Loop back to **Rundāle** to take in the opulence of the palace before blasting on to the coast at **Liepāja**, home to Latvia's garage-band scene and the strikingly dour Karosta district. Detour inland to **Kuldīga**, one of the country's quaintest towns, then stop overnight in beachy **Ventspils**. Then it's on to **Cape Kolka**, where the Gulf of Rīga meets the Baltic Sea in dramatic fashion.

Follow the coastline through the constellation of lonely seaside villages to **Jūrmala**, the Baltic's most famous resort town, then finish up back in Rīga.

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 visiting Latvia's capital, **Rīga**: the Baltic's largest city. Haggle for 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 with 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 quaint medieval houses. Indulge in the city's world-class culinary scene and finish off the journey with a day at quiet **Lahemaa National Park**.



## Lithuanian Solo

You can jam a lot into a week in compact Lithuania, but if you've got the time, you could easily stretch this itinerary out to a more relaxed 10 days.

After taking in the cathedral and museums of **Vilnius**, drop by **Trakai** to see the island castle and then continue on to vibrant, rough-edged **Kaunas**. Beach bums should then head to the Baltic coast, dropping in to the port city of **Klaipėda** before continuing on to Curonian Spit. The best place to base yourself here is the enchanting town of **Nida**.

Leaving the coast, stop at **Plateliai** in Žemaitija National Park to see the abandoned Soviet missile base, which now houses the Cold War Museum. Break up your journey east with a visit to the **Hill of Crosses** before continuing on your way to **Visaginas**, built in the '70s to house workers at the now-shuttered Ignalina Nuclear Power Station. Continue on to **Aukštaitija National Park**, with its lakes and hiking paths, and stop overnight in **Labanoras**, the centrepiece of Labanoras Regional Park, before heading back to Vilnius.



## Essential Estonia

If you can drag yourself away from the wonderland that is Tallinn, this itinerary covers a little of everything Estonia has to offer: beaches, countryside, castles, historic towns and quaint villages.

On a week's journey through Estonia, it's best to give **Tallinn** at least two days – so you can fully explore each crooked nook in the charming medieval core while sampling the spoils of the nation's foodie scene. **Lahemaa National Park** makes for a lovely day trip, while the university town of **Tartu** awaits those looking for cultured 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 on Estonia's western islands. Stop by time-warped **Koguva village** on Muhu, then base yourself at **Kuressaare** on Saaremaa – Estonia's prettiest spa town, set around an ancient moated castle. From here explore the island's forested expanse of whooshing windmills, lonely churches and soaring sea cliffs. At the end of the week, there are direct flights back to Tallinn.

# Map Legend

## Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

## Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

## Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

## Eating

- Eating

## Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

## Entertainment

- Entertainment

## Shopping

- Shopping

## Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

## Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

## Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

## Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/S-train/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

## Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

## Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

## Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

## Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

*Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book*





## 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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, 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



### Peter Dragicevich

#### Estonia

native New Zealand and Australia, Peter ditched the desk and hit the road. He's since contributed to literally dozens of Lonely Planet titles, including the previous edition of this book, *Scandinavian Europe* and five successive editions of the *Eastern Europe* guidebook. He rates Tallinn as one of his favourite European cities. Peter also contributed the Plan section to this book.



### Hugh McNaughtan

#### Lithuania

A former English lecturer, Hugh decided visa applications beat grant applications, and turned his love of travel into a full-time thing. Having also done a bit of restaurant reviewing in his home town (Melbourne), he's now eaten his way across Europe, and found the best way to work up an appetite for Lithuania's great, gut-busting food is spending all day cycling in its stunning forests. He's never happier than when on the road with his two daughters. Except perhaps on the cricket field...



### Leonid Ragozin

#### Latvia, Helsinki Excursion, Kaliningrad Excursion, Directory A–Z, Transport

Leonid studied beach dynamics at the Moscow State University, but for want of decent beaches in Russia, he switched to journalism and spent 12 years voyaging through different parts of the BBC, with a break for a four-year stint as a foreign correspondent for the Russian Newsweek. Leonid is currently a freelance journalist focusing largely on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (both his Lonely Planet destinations), which prompted him to leave Moscow and find a new home in Riga. The latter turned writing this book into a literally life-changing experience.

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