



From  
**£8,006** GBP

Single Room

£9,093 GBP

Twin Room

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Prices valid until  
 30th December 2023

21 days

Duration

Estonia, Finland

Destination

Level 2 - Moderate

Activity

# Baltics Small Group Escorted Tour: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania

May 11 2023 to May 31 2023

## Small Group Tour of the Baltic states

This Baltic small group tour for senior and mature travellers examines how Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania have developed historically and culturally since the 1980s. The Baltic tours group formed for each guided tour is typically made up of senior travellers, be they couples or solo travellers who are interested in learning as they explore the Baltic countries. The adoption of change and integration into Europe and Scandinavia has been an important transition. This small group tour

explores the way our destinations flex their economic muscles,



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continuing to become a focus of interest for the rest of the world. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of Germany bound the region into the engine of the European economy. Rarely, though, have any places been comprised of so many differing ideologies, peoples, and languages: German, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, and Finn. It is this diversity that makes the Baltic nations small group tour so fascinating.

## Baltics Small Group Tour Itinerary & Highlights

The Baltic small group escorted tour explores the diverse histories of the Baltic countries, and influences on, the countries that make up the Baltic state. During this fully escorted tour you study how each of the Baltic republics is making the most of its different form of independence. This group tour with a tour leader covers the history of the Baltic region, seeking to show how it has developed since the 1980s. We also recognise the events and significant places associated with the Second World War and the Baltic nation relationship with the former Soviet union and Moscow. We visit many significant places following the seaboard of Northern Europe that contributes to our overall understanding of world history in the last century.

We stop in 8 places and 7 countries over the 21 days. We travel through Germany , Poland , Latvia , Estonia , Lithuania , Finland and Russia . This Baltic tours group has some 16 days on a escorted tour with local guides who share their knowledge of each of our destinations with the group often as part of a managed walking tour through the cobbled streets of the old town of the Baltic capitals and significant places along our way.

### Germany

Germany is one of Europe's largest countries and the second most populous European state after Russia. The country is now known as an economic powerhouse and the biggest force in the European Union,

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but it has a turbulent and complex history: from tribes to loosely connected sovereign states, monarchs, a short lived republic, the Third Reich, the divide of East and West Germany and reunification after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This rich history is especially on display in [Berlin](#), the starting point for our Baltic tours group. We'll spend a day learning about the modern history of the city and Nazi Germany, as well as visiting the Reichstag, the Brandenburg Gate, remnants of the Berlin Wall and more.

## Poland

Poland lies at the heart of the European continent, between Western and Eastern Europe, and because of that, the country's history is full of wars, invasions, occupations, partitions, and ever-changing borders. They finally gained independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union and was the first post-communist country to reach its pre-1989 GDP levels thanks to a booming economy. Memories of the turbulent history are visible all over the country, but Poland also made great efforts to preserve and restore its monuments. Our tour takes us to [Warsaw](#) and its Old Town, which is listed as a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) thanks to its unique architectural style.

## Lithuania

Melding pristine nature and historic cities, Lithuania is a nation with a truly unique history and culture. The Baltics region has always been a clash zone between Russia, Western Europe and Scandinavia, and the country often struggled to maintain its independence. Finally being able to leave the Soviet Union in 1991, the country successfully converted to a market economy, joined the EU and the Schengen Area and adopted the Euro as its currency. The capital city, [Vilnius](#), is a baroque masterpiece, dotted with churches and cathedrals, while the power of medieval Lithuania is tangible at the looming Trakai Castle. And Lithuania is also a natural wonderland, home to pristine beaches on the Baltic coastline and a lakeland seemingly designed for summer boating, kayaking, and berrying, and we'll be able to see the best of the country during the next leg of our trip, as we stay in Vilnius and make daytrips

to nearby attractions and monuments.

## Latvia

Latvia is one of Europe's hidden gems, despite the fact that the history of the country has been one of centuries of foreign rule, invaded by Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland-Lithuania and Russia through the years. Latvia finally declared its independence in 1991 (just as all the other Baltic countries) and been on the rise since then, successfully converting to a market economy, and joining the EU to strengthen their Western ties rather than Russians. We pause in Latvia in the second of the Baltic capitals, Riga. The capital city, Riga has a cosmopolitan atmosphere with a distinct and well-preserved historic quarter. It is home to architectural jewels both medieval and modern, including the 13th century RigaCathedral and the world's most extensive collection of Art Nouveau architecture, and we all get to see it often on a walking tour with a local guide through the old town as we continue to make our way North. Outside the capital, Latvian claim some of Europe's most pristine landscapes, including dense forests contrasted with beautiful sandy beaches.

## Estonia

Estonia is often labelled as the 'most Scandinavian' Baltic state as it is the northernmost and culturally the closest to Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. It is also the smallest of the three Baltic republics, but it embraced modern times the best: faced with the struggle of adapting economically after the fall of the Soviet Union, Estonian leaders saw the fledgling internet as an opportunity for a small country to make a mark, and put considerable resources into getting Estonia online. The country became a tech hot spot when Skype was invented here, and anyone can become an e-resident of the country to found a 100% paperless e-company within minutes. The capital, Tallinn itself will take visitors on an amazing journey through time: the Old Town with its castles, domes and spires mixing with cafés, restaurants and start-

up hubs, and we'll have plenty of time to explore this blend.

## Finland

Influenced by Russia and Scandinavia, yet maintaining its own distinct culture, Finland is one of Europe's most intriguing countries though sits outside the Baltic tour. Even though they're sharing 700 years of history with Sweden, Finns often pride themselves in not being Scandinavian due to their different origins, and most notably, their distinctively different language that is only one of the 6 in Europe not part of the Indo-European language family. They are also the only Nordic country to join the Euro zone. After World War 2 Finland managed to maintain its independence and have a market economy despite some very strong ties to the Soviet Union, and achieved rapid growth, building one of the most extensive welfare states. Finnish education is also world-famous and often cited as a role model by other countries. The capital, Helsinki, is a showcase for architecture both old and new. Under the Russian rule, it was built in a neoclassical style, modelled off the then Russian capital, St. Petersburg. At the turn of the 20th century, Finnish architects inspired by the nationalist movement designed in art nouveau style, incorporating influences from Finnish folklore and nature into the ornate style. And we'll spend a day exploring the best of this mix.

## Russia

We finish our Baltic tour in Russia, the world's largest country, spanning 11 time zones and bordering 16 countries, spread over a vast expanse of eastern Europe and northern Asia. It extends from the Baltic Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east. To the north is the Arctic Ocean, and down south is the Black Sea and the Caucasus. Russia's huge territory incorporates a wide range of environments and landscapes, evident on a ride on the Trans-Siberian Railway: the landscapes change as the train moves across Siberia. If Siberia were a country in itself, it would be the largest country by area at 13.1 million square kilometres (5,100,000 sq mi), and it accounts for 77% of Russia's total land area.

We'll take the train from Helsinki to St. Petersburg, labelled as Russia's most European city. In Saint Petersburg and have plenty of time to view

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the most famous iconic sights and attractions, such as the Hermitage Museum, Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Isaac's Cathedral, and Catherine's Palace and enjoy a canal cruise as well. This small group spends the last 3 nights in Saint Petersburg, our tour guide will ensure we see city's iconic sights as part of the city tour program. The tour concludes with a farewell dinner in one of the Saint Petersburg restaurants chosen.

If you're interested in learning more about the Baltics and this classic Baltic tour, we prepared a [Baltics State Guide](#), and the article on their [history](#). You can learn more about each country this tour visit with our profiles: [Germany](#), [Poland](#), [Latvia](#), [Estonia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Finland](#) and [Russia](#).

**For more details about this Odyssey Traveller tour, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.**

## Tour Notes

- Group size is limited to a maximum of 12 participants.

## Highlights

1. Tour Warsaw and the Old Town, with its unique architectural style. A UNESCO World Heritage site.
2. In Berlin visit the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate, and remnants of the Berlin Wall.
3. Visit Russia's old Imperial Capital of St. Petersburg. Tour the Imperial Palace, and see the Hermitage Museum.

4. In Vilnius, explore the remnants of the Communist era including the KGB museum.
5. Tour includes some 16 days with local guides sharing their knowledge as we visit some 40 places together.

## Itinerary

### Day 1

**Locations:** Berlin

**Overview:**

Upon arrival in Berlin, we will transfer to our hotel individually. Suggested arrival at our hotel is no later than 16:00 pm. In the evening, we have an orientation tour of central Berlin, before enjoying a welcome dinner with complementary wine.

Berlin was founded as a small provincial town, but became the militaristic capital of the Prussian state. Its standing grew with the rise of the national socialist party, until Berlin was the much-maligned capital of Nazi Germany. Defeat meant that Berlin became a divided city and it is remembered by many for the wall that ran through the city's heart. It also conjures up the many, often suicidal, attempts to escape from east to west. In the post-communist era, Berlin is now the new capital of the united and democratic Germany.

**Accommodation:**

Abba Berlin or similar

### Day 2

**Locations:** Berlin

**Overview:**

We will see icons and monuments in Berlin today, including the Reichstag dome, Checkpoint Charlie, the victorious Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag, and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, which was left as a bombed ruin to remind people of the ravages of the Second World War. We also see the site of the former Democratic Republic's

Parliament and the city's ancient cathedral. With our local guide we also visit Alexanderplatz. We enjoy a group dinner in the evening.

**Accommodation:**

Abba Berlin or similar

**Day 3**

**Locations:** Berlin

**Overview:**

Today we will travel to Potsdam, where a our local guide will take us through the Prussian Palace of Sanssouci as well as Cecilienhof palace. We stop to view the Russian and Dutch villages as well as the Gleinicke bridge (a site of spy exchanges during the Cold War). We enjoy dinner in a local restaurant.

**Accommodation:**

Abba Berlin or similar

**Day 4**

**Locations:** Warsaw

**Overview:**

After breakfast, we take the train from Berlin to Warsaw. After arriving in Warsaw in the afternoon, the rest of your day is at leisure. We meet again for dinner at the hotel. Poland has long suffered from the vicissitudes of war as its geographical location on the flat northern European Plain means that it has acted as a thoroughfare for great armies of Europe. From Swedish invasions to the north, to Napoleonic armies from the west, the Grand Duchy, and later Kingdom of Poland, never benefited from great periods of peace. The latest occupation by the Soviets followed an almost complete destruction of the city of Warsaw by bombing raids. It took the efforts of Solidarity to commence the removal of the Soviet forces from Polish territory. Warsaw, therefore, is a completely reconstructed city rebuilt from medieval plans



and follows the painstaking paintings of the Italian artist Canaletto.

**Accommodation:**

3 nights at Hotel Leonardo Royal or similar.

**Day 5**

**Locations:** Warsaw

**Overview:**

After breakfast, a local guide will take us on a tour of Warsaw. We will visit the main sites of the city, including the Palace of Culture and Science, a gift to the city from Stalin. During De-Stalinisation in the 1950s, after the dictator's death, any reference to Stalin (including his name in the title) was removed from the building. We take time to visit the Warsaw Uprising Museum that focuses on events of 1944, followed by a trip to the regal Wilanow palace and gardens. During the afternoon, you may explore the city at your leisure. We have dinner together at the hotel.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Leonardo Royal similar.

**Day 6**

**Locations:** Warsaw

**Overview:**

For our third day in Warsaw we will first travel to the Royal Castle, a shell of a building made from contributions from the Polish people around the world, which stands in contrast to the the Wilanow palace viewed the day before. We will then visit the Historical Museum and learn about Poland's greatest cultural hero, the composer Chopin. We enjoy a recital of his most famous works at the Archdiocese museum, which will offer a unique insight into Poland's cultural history.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Leonardo Royal or similar.

## Day 7

**Locations:** Mikolajki

**Overview:**

As we journey across Poland to the Baltic states, we stop along the way to view historical sites and natural wonders of regional Poland. The first stop is at the Treblinka memorial, on the site of the infamous concentration camp. We then travel to the Polish lake district to the very pretty town of Mikolajki. We take a cruise around the lake. Tonight, we stay in a hotel overlooking the lake. Mikolajki is a very small place, but it is beautiful and the perfect place for a pleasant stroll.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Mikolajki or similar.

## Day 8

**Locations:** Mikolajki

**Overview:**

Now an excursion in the area, first to the marvellous baroque church at Swieta Lipka – the interior is astonishing. Additionally, the Roman Catholic church was an important part of the people's resistance to communism. Then, in the afternoon we continue to Ketryzn and a trip to the infamous Wolf's Lair. Now a collection of ruins hidden away in the forest, Hitler spent more time here than in Germany during WWII. We enjoy dinner together at the hotel tonight

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Mikolajki or similar.

## Day 9

**Locations:** Vilnius

**Overview:**

We continue our journey across the countryside to Vilnius. We make a couple of stops to break the journey. One of these stops today is at the Grutas park – it has lots of old Soviet era statues and other memorabilia. The owner made his fortune in the post-Soviet era, but

wanted to create something to remind people of the repressive past. We enjoy dinner as a group this evening.

**Accommodation:**

3 nights at the Novotel Vilnius or similar.

**Day 10****Locations:** Vilnius**Overview:**

Lithuania is the southernmost Baltic state and in some ways the most vibrant. Along with its neighbour, Poland, it once shared an empire stretching to the Black Sea. Like Poland, it harnessed the devout faith in Roman Catholicism to strive for independence from the Soviet Union. Vilnius is the historic and lively capital of Lithuania and is often regarded as the greenest of the Baltic capitals. It has winding medieval streets and many fine Baroque and classical buildings. We will learn about Lithuania's history and culture, as well as its economic and political situation, with an introductory lecture on the country and its capital. We take time out to stand on the Stebuklas (Miracle) paving slab near the cathedral – this site marks the end of a two million person, hand-to-hand human chain that spanned 650 kms, from Tallinn to Vilnius. This remarkable event took place in 1989, and represented the locals' protest for their freedom from the Soviet Union. We will follow up with a visit to Vilnius's KGB Museum, to further understand the country's fascinating but complex relationship with its own past. We will then head out of the city center, and sample Lithuania's rich heritage with a guided tour of the 13th century castle of Trakai. We enjoy dinner at a local restaurant.

**Accommodation:**

Novotel Vilnius or similar.

## Day 11

**Locations:** Vilnius

**Overview:**

We will take a full day tour of Kaunas, a city which includes a former Nazi Camp. Kaunas is the former Lithuanian capital (founded in the 13th century) and it is often considered to be more “Lithuanian” than Vilnius.

**Accommodation:**

Novotel Vilnius or similar.

## Day 12

**Locations:** Riga

**Overview:**

En route to Riga, we will stop off at the Hill of the Crosses in Sauliai. We then cross over into Latvia, where our first stop will be a guided tour of the fine 18th century Baroque Palace of Rundale and its famous gardens. From Rundale we head straight to Riga. Latvia lacks Estonia’s close proximity to Western Europe, and Lithuania’s fame achieved on its path to independence. But Riga has always been the Baltic States’ major metropolis. In lieu of the picture postcard appeal of Tallinn or Vilnius, it has a distinctive cosmopolitan atmosphere, and a well-preserved Historic Quarter. During the 1930s, the city was the West’s major post for listening in to “the Russian Bear” to the east. It was a thrumming mix of diplomats, traders and intrigues, earning it the accolade, “the Paris of the East.” Later, we enjoy dinner at the hotel.

**Accommodation:**

Radisson Blu Elizabete Hotel or similar.

## Day 13

**Locations:** Riga

**Overview:**

In the morning we will visit some of Riga’s most iconic sites. We will see the facade of the Blackheads House, a 14th century guild hall which

was recently renovated, before visiting St. Peter's church and the iconic Cathedral. We will finish at the Art Nouveau museum, which offers some context to Riga's iconic architecture, most of which dates to the decade before world war one. We will then visit the Baltic Sea resort of Jurmala, where we will have lunch at a local restaurant and a guided tour of the city, before returning to Riga in the evening.

**Accommodation:**

Radisson Blu Elizabete Hotel or similar.

**Day 14****Locations:** Tallinn**Overview:**

Today we travel onto to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia. En route, we visit Sigulda Castle and Turaida castle, before heading on to Tallinn. We have dinner together at the hotel.

**Accommodation:**

Radisson Blue Olympia or similar.

**Day 15****Locations:** Tallinn**Overview:**

This morning, we learn about Estonia's history and culture, as well as its economic and political situation, with an introductory lecture on the country and its capital. Estonia is the most northerly of the three Baltic States, and the most Scandinavian in atmosphere. Ethnically, the Estonians and Finns are cousins, and with Estonia just 80 kilometres across the Gulf of Finland from Helsinki, the country is creeping socially and economically closer week by week to the western-style economy of Finland. Tallinn has an aura of the 14th and 15th centuries, with its jumble of medieval walls and turrets, spires, and winding cobbled streets. We will experience the history and architecture of Tallinn with a guided walk of the city. Our walking tour includes a visit to the Dome Cathedral, views of the Town Hall, and St. Nevsky Russian Cathedral. We also benefit from a fascinating insight into the rural economy of

Estonia, with a visit to the open-air ethnographic museum. We enjoy dinner as a group this evening.

**Accommodation:**

Radisson Blue Olympia or similar.

**Day 16**

**Locations:** Talinn

**Overview:**

Today is set aside as a free day. You may explore beautiful Talinn at your leisure.

**Accommodation:**

Raddisson Blu Olympia or similar.

**Day 17**

**Locations:** Helsinki

**Overview:**

We travel to Helsinki by ferry. Finland is a large country with friendly people, pristine nature, and interesting culture. It is usually considered a Scandinavian country, a categorisation based on geographic proximity that ignores Finland's unique character. Finland has shared almost 700 years of history with Sweden, but the Russian tradition has also been a strong influence in the East. The Finns have one of the longest traceable tenancies and have stubbornly resisted servitude or eviction. However, the blooming of Finnish nationalism was late and delicate. Helsinki is a small and intimate city with buildings designed by C. L. Engel, who had been responsible for much of the work in St. Petersburg. There is a half day tour of Helsinki organised for the group. We take briefly to the water for a short archipelago cruise. We see the Suomenlinna fortress, then, winding through the small islands, glimpse the waterside homes of the more wealthy Finns. Dinner is provided tonight.

**Accommodation:**

Hotel Sokos Helsinki or similar

## Day 18

**Locations:** St. Petersburg

**Overview:**

In the morning we will travel by train from Helsinki to St Petersburg. If Moscow is Europe's most Asiatic capital, St. Petersburg is Russia's most European city. It was created by Peter the Great as his "window on the west", at the only point where traditional Russian territory meets a seaway to northern Europe. It was built with 18th and 19th century pomp and orderliness by mainly European architects. The result is a city that reminds us of Europe's most beautiful metropoleis, relatively untouched by Stalinist reconstruction. A group dinner is provided this evening.

**Accommodation:**

Radisson Sonya hotel or similar or similar.

## Day 19

**Locations:** St Petersburg

**Overview:**

We learn about recent Russian history and culture with an introductory lecture on St. Petersburg. We also experience the extravagance of Russian architecture with a visit to Catherine's Palace. We experience the history and architecture of St. Petersburg with a guided walk of the city, including a visit to the Peter and Paul Fortress, St. Isaac's Cathedral, and Catherine's Palace. We enjoy a group dinner in the hotel this evening.

**Accommodation:**

Raddisson Sonya hotel or similar.

## Day 20

**Locations:** St Petersburg

**Overview:**

Today, we experience a full day tour of St. Petersburg including a short canal cruise. Since St Petersburg is built on many small islands, this

cruise reveals parts of the city that are usually hidden. This makes it a very interesting – and relaxing – travel option in a busy city. This afternoon we visit Peterhof. We travel as the architect intended, across water. The palace was designed to impress those arriving this way and it most certainly does as you walk along the landing and up past all the fountains and waterfalls. The inside of the palace is not so startling, as it was destroyed in WWII, but it is still a great visit. On our return by coach we visit the superb Hermitage Museum. Our group dinner this evening includes a Russian folklore show.

**Accommodation:**

Raddison Sonya or similar

**Day 21**

**Locations:** St Petersburg

**Overview:**

Our tour concludes after breakfast in St Petersburg

## Inclusions / Exclusions

**What's included in our Tour**

- 20 nights accommodation.
- 20 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 15 dinners.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach and rail services.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Services of an Odyssey Tour Leader.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

**What's not included in our Tour**

- International airfares and departure taxes.



- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Meals not specified in the itinerary.
- Items of a personal nature.
- Visa processing fees.

### **Level 2 - Moderate**

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.