Baltics Small Group Escorted Tour: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania

01 Oct 19 to 21 Oct 19

Small Group Tour of the Baltic states.

The Baltic small group escorted tour examines how over the last 30 years Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania have developed historically and culturally since the 1980s. The adoption of change and integration into Europe and Scandinavia has been an important transition. This small group tour explores the way they flex their economic muscles, 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, has any geographical region 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.

**Small group Baltics Tour Itinerary**

The Baltic small group tour explores the diverse histories of, and influences on, these states. During this fully escorted tour you study how each of them is making the most of its different form of independence. The tour covers a balance of the region’s historic and recent history, seeking to show how it has developed since the 1980s. We also recognise the events and significant places associated with the Second World War. We visit many significant places that contribute to our overall understanding of world history in the last century.

We stop in 8 places and 6 countries over the 21 days. We travel through Germany, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Finland and Russia. We have some 16 days with local guides who share their knowledge with the group.

The tour begins in Berlin. We take a walking tour of the city and learn how its standing grew with the rise of the national socialist party until Berlin was the capital of Nazi Germany. Defeat and the Russian occupation of eastern Germany meant that Berlin became a divided city. It is now remembered by many for the wall that ran through the city’s heart and the many, often suicidal, attempts to escape from
east to west. In the post-communist era, Berlin is once again the capital of a united and democratic Germany.

From Berlin, we travel to Poland, then up to Finland, via Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, and Latvia.

**Highlights of this tour of the Baltics:**

In Berlin we visit the Reichstag, Brandenburg Gate and remnants of the Berlin wall. Other highlights of the Baltic Nations small group tour include exploring Warsaw and its Old Town. With its unique architectural style, it is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius we marvel at the amazing differences in three capitals so close in geographical proximity but so far apart in architecture and religion.

In St. Petersburg, our small group tours the Imperial Palace and visits the world’s greatest museum, the Hermitage. In Helsinki, we enjoy a city tour and a visit to the Sibelius Museum.

This program has one scheduled departure a year. This tour is fully escorted and is designed for the senior or mature couple, or solo traveller.

**Rise of the Baltic Nations.**

This [link](#) provides a short online essay about the Baltic Nations.

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.

**Top 5**

2. In Berlin visit the Reichstag, Brandenberg 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 a tour orientation, before enjoying a welcome dinner. 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:** Ibis Styles Berlin Alexander platz 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 Willhelm 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:** Ibis Styles Berlin Alexander platz or similar

### Day 3

**Locations:** Berlin

**Overview:** Today we spend the morning in Berlin. We visit the Communism Museum, and take a short ride in an iconic Trabant car (an East German vehicle). In the afternoon, we travel to Potsdam to have our local guide 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:** Ibis Styles Berlin Alexander platz 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 Radisson Blu Sobieski Hotel similar.

**Day 5**

**Locations:** Warsaw

**Overview:** This morning we visit 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. We also travel past the Royal Castle, a shell of a building made from
contributions from the Polish people around the world. During the afternoon, you may explore the city at your leisure. We have dinner together at the hotel.

**Accommodation:** Radisson Blu Sobieski Hotel similar.

### Day 6

**Locations:** Warsaw

**Overview:** We visit the Historical Museum and learn about Poland's greatest cultural hero, the composer Chopin. We enjoy a recital in which the folklore music of the Polish people is reflected. This afternoon we visit Wilanow palace and gardens. The palace feels more 'real' than Warsaw castle visited the previous day. We also visit the poster museum. This museum opened in 1968 and is an unusual place. It provides a great contrast to the morning visit, reflecting popular culture.

**Accommodation:** Radisson Blu Sobieski Hotel 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 short cruise on 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, this afternoon we continue to Ketryzn to the Wolf’s Lair, hidden in the forest – the ruins are substantial. 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 Hotel 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 will experience the heritage of Lithuania with a visit to the 13th century castle of Trakai. And learn of Lithuania’s more recent past with a fascinating visit to Vilnius’s KGB Museum. We also 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. This even took place in 1989. It stretched from Tallinn to Vilnius, and represented the locals’ protest for their freedom. We enjoy dinner at the hotel.

**Accommodation:** 3 nights at the Novotel Hotel or similar.

### Day 11

**Locations:** Vilnius

**Overview:** We will take a full day tour of the Kaunas, 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:** 3 nights at the Novotel Hotel or similar.

### Day 12

**Locations:** Riga

**Overview:** En route to Riga, we will pause at the Hill of the Crosses in Sauliai and visit the fine 18th century Baroque Palace of Rundale. 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:** We will visit the Baltic Sea resort of Jurmala with its mixture of Art Nouveau and “nouveau riche” districts. We will learn about Latvia’s history and culture, as well as its economic and political situation, with an introductory lecture on the country and its capital. We experience the history and architecture of Latvia with a guided walk of the city, a visit to St. Peters Church, and a visit to the Blackheads House, a 14th century guild hall which was recently renovated.

**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 at Rocca Al Mare. We enjoy dinner as a group this evening.

Accommodation: Radisson Blue Olympia or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Tallinn

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

Accommodation: Radisson 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: Holiday inn or similar

Day 18
Locations: St. Petersburg

Overview: 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, fortunately little harmed by Stalinist
reconstruction. We travel by train from Helsinki to St Petersburg. 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:** Radisson 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

**Accommodation:**

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**Inclusions / Exclusions**

**What's included in our Tour**

- 20 nights accommodation.
- 20 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 10 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.

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