

# BEST OF THE BALTICS

Lithuania – Latvia – Estonia – Finland  
with optional Stockholm & Oslo

September 20–October 4/8, 2023 (15/19 days)



## Highlights:

- Discover charming cities, traditional villages, uniquely beautiful countryside and the fascinating history of the Baltic countries, through the period of Russian occupation up to their more recent independence and incorporation into the European Union.
- Visit the old towns of the three Baltic capitals – Baroque Vilnius, Art Nouveau Riga and medieval Tallinn – all of them UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and enjoy a day trip to the vibrant seaside city of Helsinki.
- Discover the region's surviving castles of Trakai, Kaunas, Turaida, Cēsis, Kuressaare, as well as the grand palaces of Rundāle and Kadriorg.
- Enjoy unrivalled natural beauty as you explore the Curonian Spit with its huge sand dunes crushed by the waves of the Baltic Sea, Gauja National Park and the unspoilt islands of Saaremaa and Muhu.
- Optional extension to Stockholm, Sweden and the sophisticated Norwegian capital, Oslo.



**SPECIAL  
TRAVEL  
INTERNATIONAL**

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4603 Main Street, Vancouver, BC V5V 3R6, Canada

Tel: 604-291-1332 or 1800-665-0998 Fax: 604-291-1378

Email: [sti@sticanada.com](mailto:sti@sticanada.com) website: [www.sticanada.com](http://www.sticanada.com)

# BEST OF THE BALTICS

## Day 1 / Wed, Sep 20: DEPART CANADA

Depart for Lithuania.

## Day 2 / Thu, Sep 21: ARRIVE VILNIUS

After arrival in **Vilnius, Lithuania**, transfer to your hotel. Free time to relax until dinner. (D)

## Day 3 / Fri, Sep 22: VILNIUS – TRAKAI – VILNIUS

Start your exploration of Vilnius with a tour of the **Old Town**, a maze of narrow cobblestone streets lined with historic monuments. See the stunning Gothic Church of St. Anne, the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, the cathedral, the Jesuit University, the Gates of Dawn and Gediminas' Tower.

This afternoon discover **Trakai Castle**, the former capital of Lithuania. Dramatically situated on an island in Lake Galvė, the iconic 14th-century red brick castle is now home to the History Museum. Return to Vilnius for a special folklore dinner at a local restaurant. (B,D)

## Day 4 / Sat, Sep 23: VILNIUS – KAUNAS – KLAIPEDA

This morning proceed to **Kaunas**, the second largest city in the country, strategically wedged at the confluence of the Nemunas and Neris rivers. Spared in World War II, its old town is a concentration of monuments.

On a city tour, see the 13th-century castle, the town hall, nicknamed the "White Swan", the cathedral-basilica, the Baroque church of St. Francis Xavier and Jesuit monastery, the House of Perkūnas and Vytautas Church. Late afternoon arrival in **Klaipėda**. (B,D)

## Day 5 / Sun, Sep 24: KLAIPEDA – NIDA – KLAIPEDA

Morning city tour of **Klaipėda**, formerly known as Memel and part of the Prussian Kingdom until the region wrestled to autonomy in 1923. Lithuania's main seaport, dubbed the "Gateway to the Sea", has a distinctly German flavour. Highlights include the old post office and Theatre Square.

Take the ferry to Neringa and explore the **Curonian Spit**, a thin stretch of land between the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon with small fishing villages, pine forests and pristine sand dunes. Visit the scenic fisherman's village of Nida and Thomas Mann's summer house. Return to Klaipėda for dinner. (B,D)



## Day 6 / Mon, Sep 25: KLAIPEDA – SIAULIAI – RUNDALE – RIGA

Depart Klaipėda and stop at **Siauliai's** amazing Hill of Crosses, one of the holiest sites of Catholic Lithuania.

Continue to **Latvia**. Discover the most magnificent Baroque jewel in the Baltic States – **Rundāle Palace**. Built in the first part of the 18th century by the Italian architect Rastrelli, whose genius created the Hermitage and set the style for St. Petersburg and many of Europe's finest buildings of that era. The palace boasts a beautiful French-style park and rooms restored with authentic 18th-century furnishings. Late afternoon arrival in **Riga**, the Latvian capital. (B,D)

## Day 7 / Tue, Sep 26: RIGA

This morning explore **Riga**, the largest of the three Baltics capitals. A medieval Hanseatic town, Riga displays Europe's greatest concentration of Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) buildings. The style dominated European architecture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and an architectural historian will highlight details of the finest city facades. See St. Peter's Cathedral, Riga Castle, the cathedral and the old guild houses.

Afternoon tour of the **Open-Air Museum of Latvia** on the banks of Lake Jugla. This stretch of forest contains more than 100 wooden buildings, such as churches, windmills and farmhouses from each of Latvia's four cultural regions. Started in 1924, it is one of the oldest open-air museums in Europe. Folklore show and dinner at a local restaurant. (B,D)

## Day 8 / Wed, Sep 27: RIGA – SIGULDA – CESIS

Today explore **Gauja National Park**, also known as the "Switzerland of Latvia". Visit the historical centre of **Turaida**, which comprises a museum of art and archeological artifacts dating back to the 11th century. Melt back into the Middle Ages of heroes and romantic legends in **Sigulda** as you visit the ruins of the 13th-century Crusader Castle and 19th-century Kropotkin's Palace. Drive along the scenic river valley and walk to the sandstone grottoes by the ancient river bank.

Continue on to **Cēsis**, one of the best-preserved medieval towns in the Baltics, for a tour. Built in the 13th century, Cēsis Castle was the seat of the Livonian Order and one of its greatest strongholds. Its surrounding park was established in 1812 and is a popular place for locals and visitors alike. (B,D)





#### Day 9 / Thu, Sep 28: CESIS – VALMIERA – TARTU

Today make a stop at **Valmiera**. High above the banks of the Gauja River, Valmiera is a former member of the Hanseatic League. The city was destroyed by wars and fires, and was rebuilt from scratch a total of eleven times during its existence.

Continue to **Tartu**, the second largest city in **Estonia**, often referred to as the "Athens on the Emajõgi". The Neoclassical style in which central Tartu was reconstructed in the 18th century, combined with an ancient university founded in 1632 inspires this comparison. Take a walking tour of the charming old town including the university, Tartu Art Museum, the observatory, St. John's Church, the quiet, leafy Toome Hill and the ruins of the old Dome Church. (B,D)

#### Day 10 / Fri, Sep 29: TARTU – KURESSAARE

This morning proceed to **Virtsu** and take the ferry to Muhu Island. Continue on to **Saaremaa**, Estonia's largest island. Saaremaa has retained its historic character and is a world apart where beautiful national costumes and local dialects are still in use. The island is still substantially covered in forests of pine, spruce and juniper. Unspoilt nature, unique dolomite formations, windmills, lighthouses and houses with thatched roofs are typical of the island, which is also known for its handcrafted beer. Late afternoon arrival in **Kuressaare**. (B,D)

#### Day 11 / Sat, Sep 30: KURESSAARE

Travel back in time during a walking tour of the small town of **Kuressaare**. Discover the outstanding 13th-century castle fortifications and surrounding park, the picturesque triangular squares of the old town and the 1663 Weighhouse from the Swedish era.

On the north coast of Saaremaa, see the dramatic **Panga cliff**, a place of worship and sacrifice for the ancient Saarländers. It is known that until well into the 19th century, local fishermen poured libations of beer and whisky over the edge of the cliff to ensure good catches and calm seas. Then proceed to the village of **Angla**, site of the largest and most photogenic grouping of windmills on the islands. In 1925, when the village consisted of thirteen farms, this windy hilltop held as many as nine different mills. (B,D)



#### Day 12 / Sun, Oct 1: KURESSAARE – TALLINN

Today return to the mainland by ferry and drive to **Tallinn**, the capital. Embark on a tour of the picturesque old town, where entire districts have preserved their medieval glory. Walk along its quaint narrow streets and see beautiful Gothic merchants' houses, Toompea Castle, the 13th-century Dome Church, the Russian Orthodox Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Town Hall Square, the Great Guild, built to celebrate Tallinn's membership in the Hanseatic League, and St. Olaf's Church. (B,D)

#### Day 13 / Mon, Oct 2: TALLINN

Morning visit to the extravagant **Kadriorg Palace**, built as a gift by Peter the Great to his wife Catherine I in the 1720s and an excellent example of Baroque architecture. The palace currently houses an art museum displaying foreign art from the 16th to 20th centuries. Continue to the cutting-edge **KUMU Art Museum**, which serves both as Estonia's national gallery and as a centre for contemporary art.

Afternoon at leisure to further explore Tallinn on your own. (B,D)

#### Day 14 / Tue, Oct 3: TALLINN – HELSINKI – TALLINN

Today take a ferry to **Helsinki, Finland**. During your orientation tour through the historic centre, see Senate Square, the Presidential Palace, City Hall, the imposing Parliament House, Finlandia Hall – one of Alvar Aalto's most famous works and home to the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, and the opera house. Make stops at the Sibelius Monument and, if services permit, at the spectacular Temppeliaukio Church – the Church in the Rock. Designed by Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen and consecrated in 1969, the church was built directly into the rock and crowned with a solid copper dome. Enjoy some free time in the city before returning to **Tallinn** by ferry. (B,D)

#### Day 15 / Wed, Oct 4: DEPART TALLINN – ARRIVE CANADA

Transfer to Tallinn Airport for your flight(s) home. Those joining the optional extension will take the 90-min flight to the Swedish capital, Stockholm. (B)



## OPTIONAL STOCKHOLM & OSLO

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### Day 15 / Wed, Oct 4: TALLINN – STOCKHOLM

After arrival in **Stockholm, Sweden** transfer to the hotel.

Afternoon tour of the city through the picturesque, cobble-stone streets of Gamla Stan, the old town, before an evening at leisure. (B)

### Day 16 / Thu, Oct 5: STOCKHOLM

Full day at leisure in **Stockholm** to take in the sights of the "Venice of the north". You may wish to visit the Vasa Museum, home to an ancient warship that sank in 1628 on its maiden voyage and was raised to the surface only in 1961, or Skansen Open-Air Museum, beautifully located on Royal Djurgården and where 150 farms and dwellings from different parts of the country were disassembled and transported. (B)

### Day 17 / Fri, Oct 6: STOCKHOLM – OSLO

Today travel from Sweden to Norway by train. Departing Stockholm, the route, mostly flat, passes beautiful lakes, chief among them the spectacular Lake Vänern, the largest in the European Union, and lush landscapes dotted with traditional wooden houses, many painted bright red. More than half the total land area of Sweden is covered in forest, and especially on the approach to Norway, you will pass farmland and woodland that give an idea of why "friluftsliv" (outdoor life), is a cornerstone of the Scandinavian lifestyle. Afternoon arrival in **Oslo, Norway**. (B)

### Day 18 / Sat, Oct 7: OSLO

Morning tour of **Oslo** including Akershus Fortress, dating from 1299, the Nobel Peace Centre and the striking opera house.

Afternoon at leisure to further explore the Viking capital or perhaps visit the Vigeland Sculpture Park – the life work of Gustav Vigeland with more than 200 sculptures in bronze, granite and cast iron. You may also take a ferry to Thor Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki Museum, or to the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History. (B)

### Day 19 / Sun, Oct 8: DEPART OSLO – ARRIVE CANADA

Transfer to Oslo Airport for your flight(s) home. (B)



## TOUR COSTS in CAD\*

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\*based on a group size of 20 travellers (max. group size 25 approx.)

**Per person, twin-share** **\$4,390**

**Single supplement** **\$990**

### Optional Stockholm & Oslo:

**Per person, twin-share** **\$1,300-\$1,600**

*(approximate cost, depending on final group size)*

## INCLUDED

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- Accommodation in comfortable superior tourist hotels
- Meals as per itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Private air-conditioned coach transportation
- Comprehensive sightseeing incl. local guides and admission fees as per itinerary
- Economy airfare & taxes Tallinn – Stockholm and train ticket Stockholm – Oslo (optional extension)

## NOT INCLUDED

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- International airfare  
Canada – Vilnius and Tallinn/Oslo – Canada
- Travel insurance (please contact our office for a quote)
- Hotel portage
- Drinks with meals
- Gratuities for drivers and guides
- Items of a personal nature

## AIR OPTIONS in CAD

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Please contact our office for a quote.

You may also purchase your own flights (book on points etc.) and meet us at the hotel.

## TOUR PACE and FITNESS TO PARTICIPATE

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This itinerary includes some walking through historic city centres and to/from sites – easily accomplished if you are comfortable walking a few kilometres at a standard pace.

Travellers with restricted mobility are welcome but may be unable to enjoy all of the walking tour portions or may require taxis.

# RESERVATION FORM

BEST OF THE BALTICS

Sep 20-Oct 4, 2023

STOCKHOLM & OSLO (optional extension)

Oct 4-8, 2023

Please complete this form and return it to us with your deposit of \$600.00 per person. Please write name(s) exactly as listed in passport (e.g.: William, not 'Bill'). Travel insurance is optional but strongly recommended.

|                                     | TRAVELLER #1 | TRAVELLER #2<br><small>(if different address/payment method than Traveller #1, please fill out a separate booking form)</small> |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Title (Mr / Mrs / Ms etc.)          |              |   |
| First name                          |              |   |
| Middle name(s)                      |              |   |
| Last name                           |              |   |
| Date of birth (dd/mmm/yyyy)         |              |   |
| City + country of birth             |              |   |
| Passport #                          |              |   |
| Passport expiry (dd/mmm/yyyy)       |              |   |
| Passport issuing country            |              |   |
| Preferred first name (for name tag) |              |   |
| Dietary restrictions                |              |   |

## ADDRESS

Street:

City:

Province/State:

Postal code:

Country:

Cell #:

Home #:

Email:

## TRAVEL PREFERENCES

Accommodation:  Single\*  Double  Twin  Sharing with:

\*Please contact us if you would like to be paired up with another traveller and we will do our best to assist. If we are unable to arrange a twin-share, you will be accommodated in a single room and invoiced accordingly.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT

Next of kin's name:

Next of kin's phone #:

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

I/we would like to receive a travel insurance quote.  I/we have arranged my/our own travel insurance.

## PAYMENT

Please make cheques payable to: **SPECIAL TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL**

Send an e-transfer to: **sti@sticanada.com**

Visa / MasterCard / American Express (a 2% service fee applies to payments made by credit card)

Card #:

Expiry date:

Name on card:

Amount to be charged: \$

I/we acknowledge that I/we have read and agree to the terms and conditions outlined in the brochure.

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



# FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

## RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENT:

\$600 pp deposit due at time of booking

2nd installment of \$800 pp due by April 18, 2023

Balance due by July 18, 2023

Tour documents will be sent to you approximately 14 days prior to your trip departure, provided full payment has been received.

## TOUR PRICES:

All tour prices for land arrangements are based on rates effective at the time of printing and are expected to be in effect at the time of departure. Should these rates change, it may be necessary to surcharge the price of your vacation. Should the tour price increase by more than 10%, the passenger shall have the right to cancel within seven days of notification without penalty.

## CANCELLATION AND REFUNDS:

Notice of cancellation must be made in writing. The effective cancellation date is the date when written notification is received by Special Travel International (hereafter called STI). **Deposits are non-refundable.** The following scale of charges will apply when cancellation is received prior to departure:

Until May 17, 2023                      \$600

May 18 – July 17, 2023                \$1,400

From July 18, 2023                      100%

*NB: different payment/cancellation policies apply to airline tickets; you will be advised at time of booking.*

## TRAVEL INSURANCE:

STI strongly recommends that each tour participant has health, cancellation, interruption, accident and baggage insurance for the duration of his/her travels.

## RESPONSIBILITY AND LIABILITY:

STI acts only as an agent in securing all services related to the tours described in this brochure, including transportation, sightseeing and accommodation. STI shall not be responsible or liable for any loss, cost, damage, injury, delay or expense arising from the use of any conveyance, accommodation or service or from acts of God, strikes, weather, quarantine, accidents, sickness, government regulations, insufficient documents and any loss expense resulting from the above contingencies shall be borne by the tour member. In the event it becomes necessary or advisable for the comfort of the passenger, or for any reason whatsoever, to alter the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to the operators. Additional expense, if any, shall be borne by the passenger. The right is reserved to withdraw any or all tours should conditions warrant, and also to decline to accept or retain any passenger as a member of the tour. In such instances, full or equitable amounts will be refunded.

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS, VISAS AND VACCINES:

It is entirely the passenger's responsibility to possess whatever documents, visas and vaccines are required by the law of the countries visited on the tour.

## AIRLINE RESPONSIBILITY:

Any air carrier providing transportation in connection with these tours is not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time the passenger is not on board its planes. The passenger contract in use by the airlines concerned, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airline and the purchase of these tours and/or passenger. Similar responsibility as noted applies to all types of carriers, including car rental companies.



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