

## CLASSIC BALTICS

### ITINERARY: VILNIUS- TRAKAI-KAUNAS-HILL OF CROSSES-RUNDALE-RIGA-JURMALA-PARNU-TALLINN

**DURATION: 8 days / 7 nights**

#### Day 1 Vilnius

Arrival in Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania



Transfer from the airport to the hotel

Check in at the hotel

Overnight in Vilnius

#### Day 2 Vilnius – Trakai

Breakfast at the hotel.

**Vilnius city tour 3h**



Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania was founded in 1323 when Grand Duke Gediminas built a castle there, nowadays bustling city with one of the oldest and most charming Old Towns in Europe. The splendid architectural blend of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles makes this a wonderful city to explore. During sightseeing tour you will visit Old town, which is included to the UNESCO World Heritage. Visit Cathedral and Cathedral Square and pass by Gediminas Avenue, the Parliament and President's Palace, Vilnius University and Town Hall. Continue walking narrow old streets, visit St. Anna's Church - a gem of Gothic architecture, Gates of Dawn and St. Peter-Paul Church.



Further way to Trakai. **Visiting Trakai castle 2h**



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**Trakai**, the former capital of Lithuania, which is situated on an island in the middle of a lake. The 14th century red brick castle now houses the Art Museum. The castles of Trakai are the best known works of defensive architecture in Lithuania. The old town of Trakai, which includes the Island and the Peninsula Castles, surrounded by lakes, is one of the most impressive and most picturesque locations in Europe. Here still reside small national minority of Karaites, which is confessing Judaism. It is believed they were brought from the Crimea by the Grand Lithuanian Duke Vytautas.



Overnight in Vilnius

### Day 3 Vilnius – Kaunas

Breakfast at the hotel.

Way to Kaunas. By the way visiting **Open-Air Museum of Lithuania**

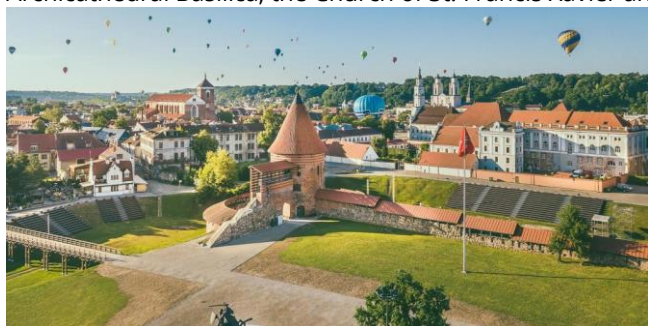
#### Open-Air Museum of Lithuania 2h

The Open-Air Museum of Lithuania is one of the largest ethnographic open-air museums in Europe that stretches across the area of 195 ha. The museum was established on the picturesque shores of Kaunas Lagoon in Rumšiškės in 1966. The exhibitions at the museum are intended to introduce the ethnographic regions of Lithuania, i.e. Dzūkija (Dainava), Aukštaitija (Highlands), Suvalkija (Sudovia), Žemaitija (Samogitia) and Lithuania Minor, as they looked at the end of the 18th century and the first half of the 20th century.



#### Kaunas City Tour 2h

Lying on the confluence of the rivers Nemunas and Neris, Kaunas with its population of 430 000 inhabitants is the second largest city in Lithuania. Kaunas is the city, which was not destroyed during the Second World War; thus now it has a number of ancient architecture monuments. The Old Town is a concentration of the most important, ancient city architectural monuments: the 13th century Castle, the Old Town Hall, nicknamed the “White Swan”, the Archicathedral Basilica, the Church of St. Francis Xavier and the Jesuit monastery.



Overnight in Kaunas

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## Day 4 Kaunas – Hill of Crosses – Rundale - Riga

Breakfast at the hotel.

Transfer to Hill Of Crosses-Rundale Palace – Riga

### Hill of Crosses 30 min



The Hill of Crosses, near Siauliai, is an unforgettable, emotional site. It is located 12 km north of Siauliai on the road to Meskuciai. Despite the Soviets attempt to destroy the site, thousands of crosses stand on this sacred spot. The crosses, with their handwritten messages, reveal much about the history of the Lithuanian people and testify to their strong will and faith. Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass at the site in 1993.

The real reason for the Hill's existence lies buried in Lithuania's history. Over the centuries, the place has come to signify the peaceful endurance of Lithuanian Catholicism despite the threats it has faced throughout history. Invaded by Russia during the 1795 partition of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth Lithuania disappeared altogether from the map of Europe. When the old political structure of Eastern Europe fell apart in 1918, Lithuania once again declared its independence. Throughout this time, the Hill of Crosses was used as a place for Lithuanians to pray for peace, for their country, and for the loved ones they had lost.

Most recently, the site took on a special significance during the years 1944-1990, when Lithuania was officially part of the USSR. Continuing to travel to the Hill and leave their tributes, Lithuanians used it to demonstrate their allegiance to their original identity, religion and heritage. Although the Soviets worked hard to remove new crosses, and bulldozed the site at least three times, the new crosses continued to appear and by 1985 the authorities had given up.

On September 7, 1993, Pope John Paul II visited the Hill of Crosses, declaring it a place for hope, peace, love and sacrifice.

Transfer to Bauska

### Rundale Palace Sightseeing tour 2h



Located at a distance of 76 km from Riga, Rundale Palace is a pearl of Baroque architecture in Latvia, standing proud in its original splendour in a fertile plain surrounded by forests. It is Latvia's version of Versailles and Sans Soucis. Today this place is subtly restored, and it is hard to believe that the Germans used the palace as a granary in World War II. Now the 138 rooms are open to visitors in all their splendour and it is the most significant masterpiece of Baroque architecture in the Baltic States.

A French park also designed by F.B.Rastrelli lies in the southern part of the palace territory. It is newly made according to the original design of the 18th century.

You have different tour opportunities in Rundale Palace. The short route includes the staterooms (the White Hall, Gold Hall, Grand Gallery), the Duke's staterooms and the second study of the Duke. The Duke's former living quarters and the Duchess' apartments ARE NOT included.

The long route includes the staterooms (the White Hall, Gold Hall, and Grand Gallery), the Duke's former living quarters and staterooms, the Duchess' apartments and exhibition "Seventeenth to Nineteenth Century Fashion in Latvia".

Transfer to Riga, the capital city of Latvia

Overnight in Riga

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## Day 5 Riga

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today enjoy **Riga city tour 3h**



Sightseeing Tour begins with driving along the central boulevards of Riga, enjoying the view of the City Canal parks, the Bastion Hill, the Powder Tower, the Latvian National Theatre, the Fine Arts Museum, the Art Nouveau buildings of the beginning of the century, the Freedom Monument erected in 1935 to celebrate Latvia's independence, University of Latvia, the Opera House, and Daugava River with its bridges.



During the walking part of the tour you will enjoy the beauty of the ancient Hanseatic city, while strolling through the cobble-stone, picturesque streets of the Old Town. In Old Riga you will see the Dome Cathedral which boasts one of the world's largest pipe organs, St. Peter's Church with magnificent views of the city from its steeple, the old Guild Houses, the Swedish Gate, the architectural ensemble Three Brothers, St. Jacob's Church, the Parliament House, Old Riga Castle, and view the many wonderfully restored buildings, now housing cozy restaurants, cafes, bars and souvenir shops.



Continue to Art Nouveau area, once home to many of Latvia's most famous artists, writers, and scholars. You will see why Riga came to be known as one of Europe's leading exponents of the late 19th and early 20th century architectural style of Art Nouveau. Riga boasts greatest concentration of Art Nouveau buildings in Europe, which are among the finest and best-preserved in the world.



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Afternoon **Jurmala excursion 2h**  
Enjoy best Latvian beach resort.



**Jurmala**, a resort town possessing 150-year-old resort traditions, occupies approximately one-tenth part of the coastal line. Jurmala is the place for a city dweller tired of life to reacquire the feeling of being the Nature's child. Here fresh sea wind will fill people's lungs and make them dizzy with the smell of pines, the eyes will rest in the blue of the sea, the feet will sink in the soft golden sand...Now, after the 50-year-long isolation again various generations from various countries may enjoy the special gentle charm, curative waters and mud baths of Jurmala... Jurmala with its romantic wooden houses in art nouveau (Jugendstil), its spacious beaches, forests, and calmly flowing Lielupe river is especially attractive in the modern world of standards, for it has not lost its singularity.



Overnight in Riga

**Day 6 Riga-Sigulda-Turaida-Parnu-Tallinn**

Breakfast at the hotel.

**Further travel to Turaida and visit of the castle 3h**



The Turaida Museum Reserve is the historical center of Turaida and comprises archeological, historical and art monuments that tell us about the events that have taken place since the 11th century. The Turaida walled castle, which is a medieval architectural monument, is situated on the Turaida castle mound. The church mound is an ancient site for a church and graveyard. Turaida church, one of the oldest wooden churches built by the local rural craftsmen, is situated here. A graveyard was established here for the first baptized Liivs. Under an old linden tree is the legendary tomb of Roze that commemorates a girl who sacrificed herself in the name of love.



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One of the most picturesque towns in Latvia - **Sigulda**, often called the Latvian Switzerland, is located about 50 km from Riga in the Gauja River valley. Sigulda is situated in the Gauja National Park and is known as the most popular tourist and leisure destination as well as a famous winter sports resort in Latvia because of its bob-sleigh track and the down-hill skiing routes. Experience a genuine whiff of the Middle Ages, a time of romantic legends, castles and heroic figures, visiting the ruins of the 13th cent. Crusader Castle, and the 19th cent. Kropotkin's Palace in the outskirts of Sigulda. By coach you will travel down into the river valley, enjoy the landscape and the walk to the sandstone grottoes on the ancient river bank.

Further travel to Parnu.  
**Parnu Sightseeing tour 2h**



Pärnu is the best known Estonian resort and also a Hanseatic city, a harbour city and a university city. The sleepy rhythm of Pärnu changes completely when the flag of the Estonian summer capital starts flying high on the summer equinox – life on the beach, dozens of festivals, night clubs and the big party crowd that have moved here. The city is very charming and it contains a nice 19th century shopping district. While walking in the city enjoy its parks and the streets.

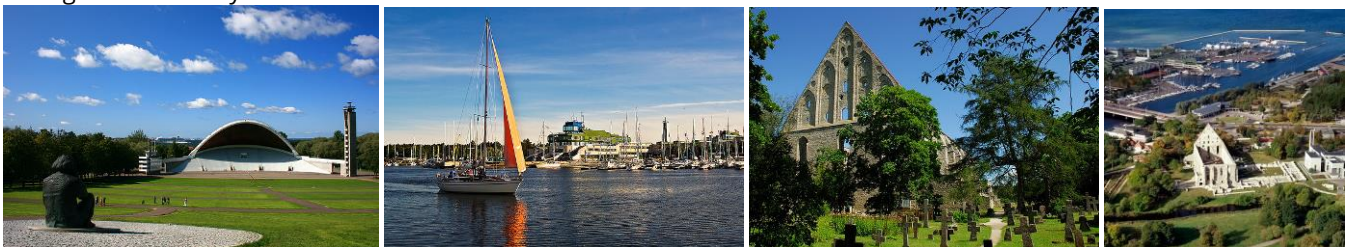
Further travel to Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia  
 Overnight in Tallinn

**Day 7 Tallinn**

Breakfast at the hotel  
**Tallinn Sightseeing tour 3h**



City tour of Tallinn, a picturesque old city, where whole districts date back to the Middle Ages. You will visit the Old Town with its quaint narrow streets and beautiful merchants' houses exemplifying the best of Gothic architecture. The tour includes Toompea Castle, the 13th century Dome church, the 19th century Russian orthodox Cathedral of Alexander Nevskij, the 15th century town Hall square, the Old Guild built to celebrate Tallinn's membership in the Hanseatic League, and St. Olaf's church. Continue tour to Song Festival Grounds, Pirita recreation area, the Yachting Centre and the ruins of St Birgit`s Monastery.



Afternoon visit of **Kadriorg Palace 1h**



The palace, constructed as a gift by Peter the Great to his wife Catherine I in the 1720s, is an excellent example of Baroque architecture. The Foreign Art Museum of the Kadriorg Palace displays paintings, sculptures, graphic art and applied art of Western Europe and the Russia from the 16 -20 century.



Overnight in Tallinn

## Day 8 – Departure

Breakfast at the hotel

Transfer to the airport Departure

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