

Lithuania & Latvia: The Baltics

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Ancient and modern history unfurl before you as you explore two contrasting countries on this Baltic bike tour. The eclectic capitals of Lithuania and Latvia frame your discoveries, as you venture from the storied Curonian Spit—a UNESCO World Heritage site—and along the Baltic coast into a bucolic countryside. Along the way, you'll probe each distinctive culture as you explore the Amber Museum and an amber craftsman's workshop, visit an organic herb farm, embark on guided walking tours of parks and cities, cruise the canals of Riga's Old Town, and discover the lasting influences of the Soviet era at a former missile site. Special meals including an authentic Lithuanian barbecue and overnights at some of the region's finest accommodations round out this amazing experience.

Cultural Highlights

An Underground Look at the Cold War: At the end of World War II, tensions between former allies the United States and the Soviet Union erupted into a Cold War arms race. Both nations developed and stockpiled atomic weapons until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. You will explore one of the Soviet Union's underground missile sites during your tour.

Admire the view as you cycle through a bucolic countryside and along the Baltic coast.

Delve into the region's Soviet history on a tour of the Cold War Museum, located in a former underground missile site.

Discover ancient herbal and medicinal tea recipes dating back to Pagan times on a visit to an organic herb farm.

What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain on bike paths and roads through both urban and rural areas. You will encounter traffic, especially in urban areas. Some of the bike paths are unpaved and the terrain can lack shelter from the wind. Our VBT support shuttle is available every day at designated points for those who need assistance.

Tour Duration: 10 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 10 - 27

Average Cycling Time: 01:00 - 03:30

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 61°/45°, Jun 68°/52°, Jul 70°/55°, Aug 68°/55°, Sep 59°/48°, Oct 52°/41°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 1.7, Jun 2.4, Jul 3.1, Aug 3.1, Sep 3.0, Oct 2.4

DAY 1: Depart home / Fly overnight to Vilnius

Depart home for Lithuania. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

DAY 2: Arrive in Vilnius

Upon arrival at the Vilnius International Airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. If your luggage is lost, fill in a PIR form before leaving the customs area—VBT representatives are not allowed into the customs area. (Please note: Also make certain your VBT luggage tags are affixed to your bag so your VBT representative can identify you.)

After exiting customs, enter the arrival hall and look for your VBT representative, who will be holding a VBT sign and will make arrangements for your transfer via private car or minibus to your Vilnius hotel (transfer time is approximately 15-20 minutes, depending on traffic).

Please note: The hotel check-in time is 2:00 p.m., and your room may not be available prior to this time. If you arrive early, you may store your luggage with the reception desk.

After checking in, you have free time to explore Vilnius. VBT provides you with City Information that includes recommendations on what to see and do in Vilnius.

Try one of Vilnius's wonderful restaurants for dinner on your own.

Accommodation: Grand Hotel Kempinski Vilnius, Vilnius, Lithuania

DAY 3: Transfer to the Baltic Coast / Warm-up Ride / Welcome Dinner

Prior to breakfast, please place your luggage outside your rooms (no later than 7:30 a.m.) so it can be loaded onto the bus. At 8:15 a.m., meet your local VBT representative in the hotel lobby for the transfer (approximately four hours) to the port city of Klaipeda, where you will meet your VBT trip leaders. Please have your riding gear readily available in your day pack or carry-on bag, as you will have an opportunity to change into it prior to the warm-up ride. Your other luggage will be delivered to your hotel in Klaipeda and will not be accessible until you arrive at your room later in the day.

Departing Lithuania's capital of Vilnius, you will shuttle approximately four hours to the port city of Klaipeda, Lithuania's gateway to the Baltic Sea. From Klaipeda's busy port, you will have a short boat transfer (5-10 minutes) to the Curonian Spit, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Here, you will meet your trip leaders for an included lunch. Afterward, your trip leaders will conduct a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride on a lovely designated bike path just a short distance from the Baltic shore. After your ride, you will ferry to Klaipeda and walk approximately 15-20 minutes to your hotel.

This evening, gather with your trip leaders and fellow travelers for a welcome reception and dinner.

Please note regarding Ride with GPS: VBT recommends that you download your VBT Maps & Route Notes from a WiFi zone prior to your trip if you wish to use Ride with GPS on your smartphone. During your vacation, you will be able to follow these route notes on your smartphone with turn-by-turn voice navigation as you ride. This option is in addition to VBT's traditional printed maps and route notes available on tour.

Accommodation: Radisson Blu Hotel Klaipeda, Klaipeda, Lithuania

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 km (10 miles)

Afternoon

Warm-up Loop: 16 km (10 miles)

What to Expect: The easy warm-up ride follows a level paved designated bike path through pine forests bordering the Baltic Sea. The bike path may have leaves and pine needles on it after inclement weather but should not hamper your ride. The bike path may also become busy at times with local weekend cyclists.

DAY 4: Curonian Lagoon / Curonian Spit National Park / Nida / Klaipeda

After breakfast, you will stroll to the city's port and embark a privately chartered boat for a cruise (approximately two hours) to the Curonian Spit, a narrow strip of land separating the Baltic Sea from the Curonian Lagoon, and Lithuania's mainland from Russia. The lagoon's tranquil waters are part of a migration route for millions of birds each year. Disembark in the small village of Juadkrante, where today's bike journey will begin.

You will cycle an easy asphalt bike path through the Nagliai Natural Reserve, known for its Grey Dunes

(also called the Dead Dunes), rare plants, and four villages excavated from sand. As you ride, inhale the heavy scent of the pine forests bordering the Baltic Sea. If you wish, you may take a short detour to a viewing point where you can see the Russian border.

Then, cycle to the quaint fishing village of Nida for lunch on your own. You might consider one of the small restaurants known for their locally smoked fish.

Amber from the Baltic Sea is among the most prized, and Lithuania is a leading producer. After your ride, you will have the opportunity to meet a local craftsman and learn how he creates jewelry from Baltic amber. Later in the afternoon, you will shuttle by coach (approximately one hour) to a ferry for the five-minute crossing to Klaipeda.

Get better acquainted with Klaipeda's medieval Old Town this evening, as you meet a local guide for a short walking tour. Afterward, enjoy dinner on your own in one of the city's numerous restaurants.

Accommodation: Radisson Blu Hotel Klaipeda, Klaipeda, Lithuania

Included Meals: Breakfast

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 32 – 38 km (20 – 24 miles)

Morning

Juodkrante to Nida: 32 km (20 miles)

Extra Loop to the Russian border: 6 km (4 miles)

What to Expect: Today's ride is an easy one with little elevation gain. It starts in the small village of Juodkrante. First, trace a designated bike path along the town's streets before joining the bike path through the forests of the Curonian Spit National Park. The park is mainly pine forest, and the asphalt bike path winds through the forest before rejoining streets leading to the village of Nida. Prior to cycling to Nida, you may opt to ride on the main road to the Russian border before looping back to Nida. There could be heavy traffic and trucks at times, as this is a main road into Russia.

DAY 5: Palanga / Amber Museum / Žemaitija National Park

This morning, you'll leave Klaipeda behind and begin cycling north to the seaside resort town of Palanga. With its miles of bike routes, Palanga is a haven for cyclists.

En route, you will ride through Birute Park, one of the loveliest and best-preserved parks in northern

Europe. The park was the vision of Count Feliks Tyszkiewicz, who also built his palace here in 1897. Today, the Count's palace is home to Lithuania's Amber Museum. Enjoy an included tour in which your guide will introduce you to the formation of amber, the extraction process, and amber's historical significance. The museum houses one of the largest collections of unique amber objects, including the Sun Stone—at 6.6 pounds (3 kg), it is one of the largest pieces of amber in the world.

Afterward, enjoy some free time to explore Lithuania's prime summer resort town of Palanga with its lovely sand beaches, dunes, and aromatic pine forests. Once a fishing village and source of amber production, Palanga was transformed into a health resort during the 19th century and today is an artistic and cultural center. With its numerous international cafés, Palanga's main street, J. Basanaviciaus Street, is an excellent place for lunch on your own.

Later this afternoon, you will leave the Baltic coast and shuttle (one hour) inland through Lithuania's rural agricultural landscapes to the Samogitian Highlands and Žemaitija National Park. Samogitia (Žemaitija) is one of the ethnographic regions of the country, with a proud cultural heritage dating to the pagan era.

Settle into your lovely lakeside spa resort. This boutique hotel is so intimate, your small group will have almost exclusive access to its four-star amenities, including the lovely spa.

This evening, gather with your travel mates and trip leaders for an included dinner at the resort.

Accommodation: SALA Plateliai Resort, Paežeres Rudaiciu, Lithuania

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 km (20 miles)

Morning

Klaipeda to Palanga: 33 km (20 miles)

What to Expect: Ride out of the city of Klaipeda following designated bike paths along the city's streets and sidewalks. The bike routes to Palanga follow designated bike paths along country roads with some traffic. In Palanga, you will ride mostly on designated paved bike paths that pass through coastal pine forests and Birute's Park. Today's ride is an easy ride with very little elevation gain.

DAY 6: Cycle around Lake Plateliai / Žemaitija Visitor's Center tour / Cold War Museum / Lithuanian barbecue

After a hearty Lithuanian breakfast, begin today's ride on Žemaitija National Park's bike path, located right

in front of your hotel. The park was established in 1991 to preserve the unique landscape and cultural heritage of this region of northwest Lithuania. Lakes cover more than 7 percent of its territory, and you will cycle around the largest of them, Lake Plateliai. Pass through the lovely village of Plateliai before stopping at one of the village's typical 100-year-old wooden houses with its sloping Samogitian roof. Located inside is the National Park's visitor center, where you will have a guided tour introducing you to the park's variety of flora and fauna, as well as the history and folklore of the region. You will also have time to explore the village at leisure before hopping on your bike and continuing your ride back to the hotel. On arrival, enjoy a sumptuous picnic lunch, which will be awaiting you lakeside.

After lunch, cycle a flat, easy route to the Cold War Museum, a former, top-secret, Soviet underground missile site. Here, you will have an included walking tour that will introduce you to the Soviet Union's nuclear arms mission during the Cold War era.

Then, pedal back to your lakeside resort, where the rest of the afternoon is at leisure. Perhaps you'll take advantage of the spa or take one of the resort's canoes or kayaks out onto the lake.

This evening (weather permitting), enjoy a hearty Lithuanian barbecue dinner on the resort's patio while watching the sunset.

Accommodation: SALA Plateliai Resort, Paežeres Rudaiciu, Lithuania

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 36 km (15 – 22 miles)

Morning

Loop Ride around Lake Plateliai: 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon

Loop Ride to the Cold War Museum: 12 km (7 miles)

What to Expect: Žemaitija National Park's bike path around Lake Plateliai is paved except for approximately 1.2 miles (2 km) of packed dirt (a paved-road option is available) on the morning ride and a short stretch of dirt path on the afternoon ride to the Cold War Museum. Today's ride is an easy one with very little elevation gain.

DAY 7: Lithuanian Villages / Herbal tea tasting / Hill of Crosses / Riga Canal Cruise

Enjoy another lovely morning ride through the Žemaitija landscape. Today's scenic route traces country

roads to the highlands of the park. Let your gaze sweep around you as you pass through some of the loveliest villages of your tour with their quaint Baltic architecture. You will also notice many stork nests dotting the landscapes.

Back at the resort, gather with your travel mates for lunch before visiting a small farm, where you'll meet a woman who cultivates various herbs. Here, you'll learn about her medicinal concoctions using the herbs and teas. Many of her recipes date back to her pagan ancestry.

You'll then set off for the second Baltic country on your tour: Latvia. Breaking up the afternoon's three-hour transfer is a stop at the historic pilgrimage site of the Hill of Crosses, a mound in northern Lithuania blanketed with crosses adorned with statues, rosaries, and icons. Dating to at least the mid-19th century, this eerie site has been subjected to many efforts to demolish it—including a 1961 Soviet attempt that destroyed more than 5,000 crosses. Yet, this pilgrimage site has been rebuilt numerous times and even expanded. Today, the exact number of crosses is unknown, but estimates put the count at well over 100,000. In 1993, Pope John Paul II visited the site and declared it a place for hope, peace, love, and sacrifice.

Later in the afternoon, you'll arrive in Riga, Latvia's scenic capital and Baltic port. Your five-star "Leading Hotel of the World" is ideally set within Riga's Old Town. After settling into your accommodations, join a local guide for a walking tour of Riga culminating in a cruise on the lovely canal flowing through the town center.

Dinner is on your own tonight at one of the many renowned restaurants in Riga.

Accommodation: Grand Palace Hotel, Riga, Latvia

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 37 km (23 miles)

Morning

Loop ride from the resort: 37 km (23 miles)

What to Expect: Your route today begins on the bike path in front of your resort. After a short stretch, you will leave the paved bike path and follow scenic, two-lane country roads through small villages. Due to rolling hills and winding roads, the traffic is slow and minimal. The return follows the same route, so you will enjoy stunning scenery and beautiful views from both directions.

The first half of the ride is mostly uphill on rolling hills, while the last half is mostly downhill. As always, there will be a support vehicle for the uphill climbs. This will be the most challenging ride of the tour due to the elevation changes—but it will also be one of the most rewarding rides of the week.

DAY 8: Cycle to Jurmala and Gulf of Riga Shore

After breakfast, you will shuttle across the Daugava River to join a bike route to Latvia's Baltic resort town of Jurmala. Originally a cluster of fishing villages, this seaside oasis grew over two centuries to embrace an eclectic architectural mix, as well as an enticing setting of sea and sand. During the Soviet era, it was a favorite summer get-away for high-level Communist Party officials such as Brezhnev and Khrushchev. Today, it is a resort for the Baltic countries and Russia's rich and famous—as witnessed by its luxurious and very expensive villas. You will have ample time to explore the town's romantic wooden houses, Art Nouveau architecture, and beautiful beaches. You might even want to join the locals by cycling on the packed-sand bike trail that follows the edge of the Gulf of Riga. After your free time in Jurmala, either cycle or shuttle back to Riga.

This evening, join your fellow travelers and trip leaders for a joyous reception and farewell dinner in your lovely hotel's dining room.

Accommodation: Grand Palace Hotel, Riga, Latvia

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 - 44 km (15 - 27 miles)

Morning

Riga to Jurmala: 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon

Jurmala to Riga: 20 km (12 miles)

What to Expect: Today, you will follow designated bike paths that are along city streets and sidewalks or along paved paths through the seaside forests of Jurmala. During the summer months, the bike path can become crowded with cyclists and pedestrians. You will also have the opportunity to cycle with the locals on packed-sand next to the water's edge, depending on weather conditions and how crowded the beach is.

DAY 9: Riga / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

After breakfast, spend the day exploring Riga. VBT provides you with City Information that includes recommendations for what to see and do in Riga. Perhaps you'll browse the Central Market, stroll the tranquil park surrounding the Freedom Monument, or admire the Art Nouveau architecture along Albert Street.

Accommodation: Grand Palace Hotel, Riga, Latvia

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: Depart for home

After breakfast,* meet in the hotel lobby for your transfer to the Riga airport and your flight home.** Be sure that you are waiting at the designated time and transfer location.

*Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available. Please check with the Front Desk to verify the times that breakfast is served.

**VBT recommends that you check your transfer time in your "Transfer Reminder." The transfer is prearranged by VBT and is prepaid. VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Accommodation: N/A

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Schlössle Hotel (Day: 9)

Tucked amid the cobbled streets and 13th-century merchant houses of Tallinn's charming Old Town, the five-star Schlössle Hotel has earned membership among "The Leading Hotels of the World." Antique furniture, wooden beams, and stone walls invite you to step into history, while offering modern amenities such as air conditioning and WiFi. Experience Nordic culinary traditions in the hotel's gourmet restaurant, and retreat to a sumptuous room designed to reflect the town's medieval character.

Grand Hotel Kempinski Vilnius (Day: 2)

The five-star Grand Hotel Kempinski Vilnius is located on Cathedral Square in the heart of Vilnius's Old Town and features breathtaking views over that UNESCO-listed site. Major attractions, such as the Presidential Palace, are within walking distance, as is the main street, Gedimino Boulevard—home to many designer boutiques, galleries, and government institutions. VBT guests will enjoy air-conditioned accommodations in the hotel's Signature rooms overlooking the Old Town. WiFi is available throughout the hotel

Radisson Blu Hotel Klaipeda (Days: 3,4)

Set in the heart of the city, the four-star Radisson Blu Hotel Klaipeda features a maritime theme appropriate for its location, just a few miles from the Baltic Sea and the beaches of the Curonian Spit. Enjoy easy access to the picturesque Old Town and other attractions, or stay onsite and refresh yourself at the bar and restaurant, enjoy a workout in the fitness center, and retire to your comfortable, air-conditioned room. The hotel is a recipient of the Green Key, an internationally recognized eco-label awarded to hotels that meet high standards of excellence in environmental responsibility. WiFi is available throughout.

SALA Plateliai Resort (Days: 5,6)

Set on the shores of Lake Plateliai, the largest lake in Žemaitija National Park, the four-star SALA Plateliai Resort welcomes you with warm hospitality, exquisite décor, magnificent views, and a spirit of relaxation and rejuvenation. The centerpiece of the hotel is its spa, offering a massage parlor, sauna, Turkish bath, lounge, open-air yoga hall, and whirlpool with beautiful lake views. Savor locally sourced cuisine at the restaurant, and gaze out over the lake from the terrace. Lake swimming, fishing, hiking, and tennis are also available. The hotel is not air conditioned but does offer WiFi throughout.

Grand Palace Hotel (Days: 7,8)

Built in 1877 as the Central Bank of Latvia, the Grand Palace Hotel was converted into a five-star superior boutique hotel in the year 2000. Voted Latvia's "Leading Hotel" for many years in the World Travel Awards, this magnificent property offers a place of warmth and comfort, accompanied by attentive and impeccable service. It also offers a prime location: the business, shopping, and sightseeing district of Riga's Old Town. The hotel is the only member of "The Leading Hotels of the World" in Latvia. Dine in elegance in the hotel restaurant, or enjoy a more casual ambiance in the bar or on the summer terrace. Take advantage of the fitness center, sauna, and steam bath. And relax in the sumptuous comfort of your air-conditioned room. WiFi is available throughout the hotel.