

BALTIC CAPITALS

Lithuania-Latvia-Estonia

June 9-17, 2023
9 Days / 7 Nights



WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL
OF GREATER HOUSTON
Global Perspectives, Local Conversations



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ITINERARY

DAY 1	Leave USA for Vilnius, Lithuania
DAY 2	Arrival in Vilnius / Vilnius
DAY 3	Vilnius sightseeing / Vilnius
DAY 4	Drive to Riga with visits on the way / Riga, Latvia
DAY 5	Excursion to Sigulda, Turaida, Salaspils / Riga
DAY 6	Riga sightseeing / Riga
DAY 7	Drive to Tallinn, visiting Parnu / Tallinn, Estonia
DAY 8	Tallinn sightseeing / Tallinn
DAY 9	Departure

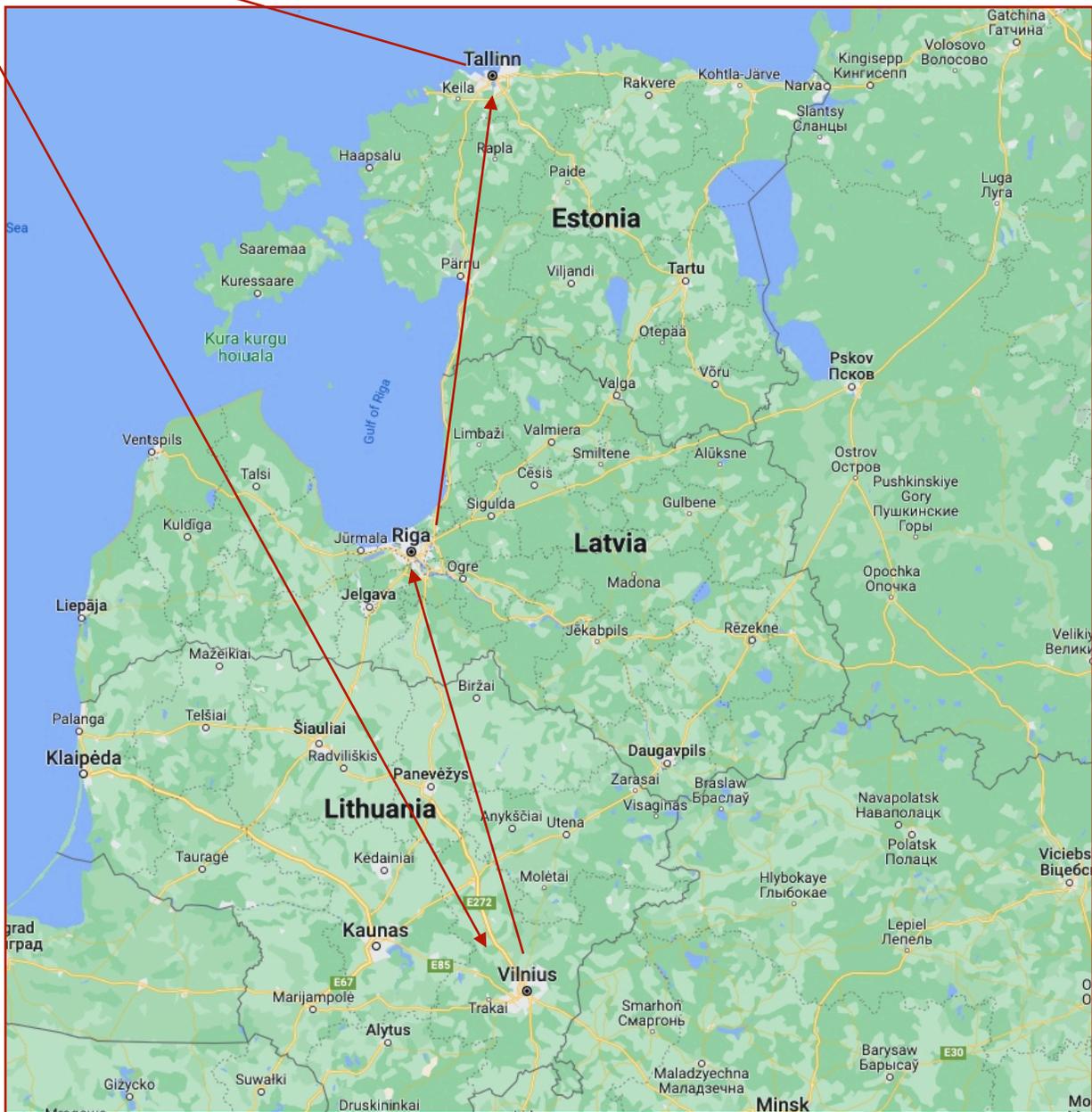
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MAP TRAJECTORY





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HIGHLIGHTS

Vilnius Old Town.

14th century Trakai Castle in Lithuania.

18th century Rundale Palace in Latvia.

Discover medieval Latvia.

Art Nouveau architecture of Riga.

Ethnographical Open Air Museum of Latvia.

Coastal town of Parnu and Baltic Sea coast.

Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn.

Charming old town of Tallinn.

Local meals, local music.



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INCLUDED

7 Nights hotel accommodation with daily breakfast.

Lunches and dinners as indicated in the itinerary.

One bottle of water per person during all included meals.

Porterage at hotels.

English speaking professional tour guides in each country.

Transportation with private vehicles.

Arrival and departure transfers - only for suggested flight arrival & departures.

Two small bottles of water per person per day on the bus everyday.

All the sightseeing and entry fees to places mentioned in the itinerary.

Tips for meals and accommodations.

Gratuities for guides & drivers.

NOT INCLUDED

International airfare.

Drinks with included meals, except tea or coffee for breakfast.

Personal expenditures like phone calls, laundry, medical expenses.

Travel insurance.



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SUGGESTED FLIGHTS

Suggested flights are on Lufthansa:

9 June Houston to Frankfurt
LH 441 dep: 3:45 pm / arr: 8:20 am on 10 June

10 June Frankfurt to Vilnius
LH 886 dep: 10:10 am / arr: 1:10 pm

17 June Tallinn to Frankfurt
LH 885 dep: 6:05 am / arr: 7:35 am

17 June Frankfurt to Houston
LH 440 dep: 10:00 am / arr: 1:45 pm

Economy class: \$1716
Premium Economy: \$2981
Business class: \$4961

Fares are per person, including taxes, surcharges and fees as of July 22, 2022. Fares can change based on availability.



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ACCOMMODATIONS

Vilnius - Vilnia Hotel (2 nights)



Riga - Pullman Riga Old Town (3 nights)



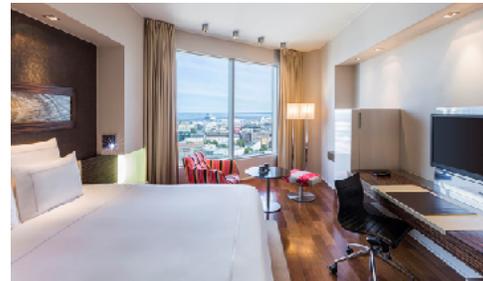
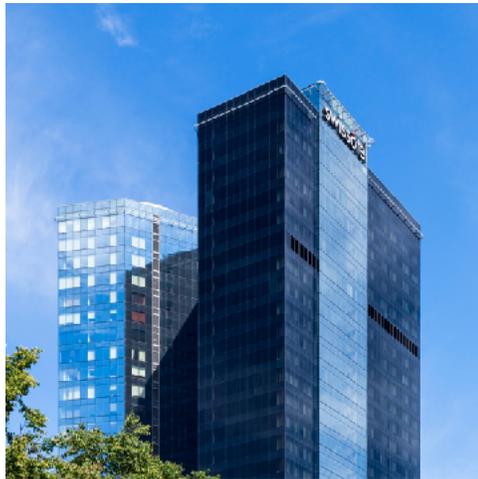
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ACCOMMODATIONS

Tallinn - **Swissotel Tallinn (2 nights)**





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PROGRAM DETAILS

DAY 1

Fri, June 9 - Leave USA

We will leave USA for Vilnius, Lithuania.

DAY 2

Sat, June 10 - Vilnius

Upon arrival at Vilnius airport, our guide will meet us and transfer us to our hotel in the city center. Rest of the day at leisure. We will have our dinner at the hotel.

Overnight in Vilnius **Meals: D**

Vilnius, Lithuania’s capital, is known for its baroque architecture, seen especially in its medieval Old Town. But the buildings lining this district’s partially cobblestoned streets reflect diverse styles and eras, from the neoclassical Vilnius Cathedral to Gothic St. Anne's Church. The 16th-century Gate of Dawn, containing a shrine with a sacred Virgin Mary icon, once guarded an entrance to the original city.

Vilnius has always been a multi-national city populated with Lithuanians, Poles, Germans, and Slavs from the immemorial time, later on with Jews as well. Although the original city location was lost due to erosion, the present-day Old Town reappeared in the Middle Ages. These inhabitants were forced to settle down there since the heights of a Vilnia river bank made it impossible to live elsewhere.



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DAY 3

Sun, June 11 - Vilnius

Vilnius is known for its more than 1200 medieval buildings and 48 churches.

The morning sightseeing tour includes a panoramic tour of the city and a walking tour of the Old Town with Vilnius Cathedral, Gediminas Tower, Peter and Paul Church, St. Anne's Church, Old University and the Gates of Dawn.

The afternoon offers an excursion to Trakai, the medieval capital of Lithuania, with the well preserved Trakai Castle, beautifully located on an island in Lake Galve.

In the evening we will enjoy a folklore dinner.

Overnight in Vilnius

Meals: B-L-D

Trakai Castle is an island castle located on an island in Lake Galvė. The construction of the stone castle was begun in the 14th century by Kęstutis, and around 1409 major works were completed by his son Vytautas the Great, who died in this castle in 1430.

Trakai was one of the main centers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the castle held great strategic importance. The castle was rebuilt in the 1950s–1960s by Lithuanian initiative, although it had received resistance from Soviet authorities. The Trakai History Museum was established after the reconstruction.

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DAY 4

Mon, June 12 - Vilnius - Riga

This morning we will leave Vilnius for Riga, the capital city of Latvia.

After crossing into Latvia we soon reach the magnificent Rundale Palace, the former summer residence of the Duke of Courland. Following a guided tour of the palace we travel through the rolling hills of Southern Latvia to reach Riga late afternoon.

Overnight in Riga

Meals: B-L-D

Rundāle Palace is one of the two major baroque palaces built for the Dukes of Courland in what is now Latvia, the other being Jelgava Palace.

In 1735 Duke of Courland Ernst Johann von Biron bought land in Rundāle with an old medieval castle in the territory of a planned summer residence. The old castle was demolished and construction after the design of Bartolomeo Rastrelli started in 1736.

Under the supervision of Rastrelli its construction was finished in 1768.

After Duchy of Courland and Semigallia was absorbed by the Russian Empire in 1795, Catherine the Great presented the palace to Count Valerian Zubov, the youngest brother of her lover, Prince Platon Zubov.

During the French invasion of Russia in 1812, the palace was used as a hospital for Napoleon's army.

The palace suffered serious damage in 1919 during the Latvian War of Independence. In 1963, Rundāle Palace became a branch of the Bauska local history museum. In 1965 and also in 1971, the Supreme Soviet of Latvian SSR decided to restore Rundāle Palace. In 1972, Rundāle Palace Museum was established.



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DAY 5

Tue, June 13 - Riga Excursions

Before we get acquainted with Riga we'll have the opportunity of discovering medieval Latvia.

The tour for this morning takes us to the stunning scenery of the Gauja National Park and the town of Sigulda. We'll listen to the medieval Latvian legend of the Rose of Turaida, and see Maja's Tombstone, the ruins of the Episcopal Castle, the ruins of the Castle of the Knights of the Sword - Turaida Castle - Cesis Castle and the mysterious Gutman Cave before we return to Riga.

On the way back we will also visit the Salaspils Memorial.

Overnight in Riga

Meals: B-L-D

Turaida Castle: Construction of the castle was started in 1214 upon directions given by Albert, Archbishop of Riga to his Livonian Brothers of the Sword (soon to merge with the Teutonic Order) at the place where the wooden castle of Livonians had previously stood. A castellum type fortress was built and named Fredeland, which translates as 'Land of Peace,' but became better known locally by the Livonian name of 'Turaida,' which has survived until the present day.

The castle was constructed largely in the classic red-brick construction of the Baltic crusading orders. Improving the castle's defensive system continued in later centuries, and in the 14th century, the tower shaped southern section was built; at the beginning of the 15th century, when firearms were invented, the semi rounded western tower was built. Domestic buildings and living accommodation were also erected in the inner yard of the castle.



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DAY 6

Wed, June 14 - Riga

Riga, founded in 1201 by the German Bishop Albert, is the largest of the three Baltic capitals and boasts a true kaleidoscope of various architectural styles.

The walking tour of the Old Town includes Riga Castle, Dome Cathedral, St. Peter's Church, Swedish Gates, "Three Brothers", Large and Small Guild House, Freedom Monument and Museum of Occupation.

We will also have time to see a few sites related to Jewish heritage of the city, like Alberta Street--an absolutely stunning street in Riga for Art Nouveau architecture with Latvian Jewish architect Mikhail Eisenstein houses & the Isaiah Berlin house (Latvian / British political philosopher); the Maskavas suburb (former Jewish quarter and Riga ghetto); and the first Jewish Secular School now the Chabad School.

In the evening we will enjoy a Baltic seafood dinner at a nice restaurant in the city center.

Overnight in Riga

Meals: B-L-D

The approximately 640,000 inhabitants of **Riga** make up one-third of the population of Latvia and makes it the largest city in the Baltic States. Riga is famous for its Old Town and city center, in which over 800 buildings are of the Art Nouveau style of architecture. The old town of Riga is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Art Nouveau style involves intricate building facades, with carvings of flowers and mythological creatures, and ornate doorways and windows. Much of the old town was either destroyed by fire or destroyed by the Germans in World War II and remained in ruins until it was rebuilt after the World War II, and further refurbished since Latvia's accession to the EU, to delight of many visitors.



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DAY 7

Thu, June 15 - Riga - Tallinn

Our tour continues along the coastal highway to the Estonian summer resort of Parnu, with a short tour of the resort and a leisurely stroll along the Baltic Sea beach.

On the way, we will stop at Liepupe Manor House, just outside Riga, which was built in 1751 and remains one of the most prominent pieces of baroque architectural heritage in Latvia.

The balance of the day goes through the North Estonian land of forests to Tallinn. Rest of the day at leisure in Tallinn.

Overnight in Tallinn

Meals: B-L-D

The Baltic Sea is one of the seas of the Atlantic Ocean. It is the ocean's 15th largest sea, covering an area of approximately 377,000 km². The sea is approximately 1,600 km long and 193 km wide and has a water volume of about 21,700 km³. The Baltic Sea is connected to the White Sea via the White Sea Canal and to the North Sea's German Bight via Kiel Canal.

The Baltic Sea is often cited as the world's largest brackish inland water body. Its water salinity levels are lower than that of the World Oceans due to the inflow of fresh water from the surrounding land and the sea's shallowness. Its depth averages 55 meters and the deepest part is approximately 459 meters below the sea's surface.



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DAY 8

Fri, June 16 - Tallinn

Tallinn is a charming blend of medieval tranquility and modern urban life. The medieval Old Town is a busy place in the summer with its many shops, galleries, souvenir markets, outdoor cafés and restaurants.

The sightseeing tour takes us around the old medieval city walls and into the Old Town where we see Toompea Castle, the Dome Church, Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and medieval Old Town Hall.

In the afternoon we have an excursion to Kumu Art Museum.

Evening offers a genuine medieval dinner at a nice restaurant in the city center.

Overnight in Tallinn

Meals: B-L-D

Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, lies on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland, only 43 mi. south of Helsinki. At the historical and medieval heart of the city is the hill of Toompea, covered in cobbled streets and filled with medieval houses and alleyways. The lower town spreads out from the foot of the hill, still protected by the remnants of a city wall. Around the city wall is a series of well-maintained green parks, great for strolling.

The city's old town has been astonishingly well preserved and was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997. It is now in better shape than ever, with the bigger roads converted into fashionable shopping streets.

Tallinn has the highest number of start-ups per person among European countries and is the birthplace of many international high-technology companies, including Skype, Bolt and Wise. The city is home to the headquarters of the European Union's IT agency, and to the NATO Cyber Defense Center of Excellence. In 2007, Tallinn was listed among the top-10 digital cities in the world



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DAY 9

Sat, June 17 - Departure

Early in the morning transfer to Tallinn International Airport for our return flight.

Contact Us

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