

Cycling Safaris

LITHUANIA – LATVIA 7Overnight Vilnius to Riga/Sigulda Guided Tour 2010



This tour explores the unique countryside, coastline and towns that make up this fascinating region that was formerly part of the USSR. It includes visiting two capital cities - Vilnius (capital of Lithuania) and Riga (capital of Latvia) - with their old towns designated by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. The biking is leisurely, as we cycle on asphalt bicycle paths along the newly reconstructed Lithuanian Seaside Cycle Route; enjoy breathtaking views of the colossal sand dunes on the Curonian Spit; visit the memorable Hill of Crosses near Siauliai and experience more than 500 years of authentic culture and architecture - on a bicycle it's all within your reach!

TOUR ITINERARY

(cycling approximately 190 km)

DAY 1 **Sunday** **Arrival in Vilnius**

Arrival in Vilnius. Individual transfer/check-in to your hotel (transfer to the hotel is not included in the tour price). At 7:00 p.m. there is a welcome meeting at the hotel where you will be greeted by your tour guide. At this meeting you will be given an information package containing maps and detailed route descriptions. Over dinner there is a chance to meet up with your fellow cyclists and discuss the week ahead.

DAY 2 **Monday** **Vilnius - Trakai - Kaunas (cycling approx. 30 km, driving 110 km)**

We start the day on foot with a walking tour around the old town of Vilnius, capital of Lithuania for more than 600 years. The tour includes the Cathedral Square and Town Hall Square, Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit and Vilnius University (founded in 1579). In the afternoon we transfer to Trakai, a former capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, to visit a 14th century castle on a small island in Lake Galve. We stretch our legs with a cycle along picturesque hilly country roads before taking a coach transfer to our evening destination of Kaunas.

DAY 3 Tuesday Kaunas - Žemaitkiemis - Ventė - Nida (cycling approx. 30 km, driving 200 kms)

Morning transfer along the Nemunas River to the seaside region. En route passing by Veliuona mound hill and impressive 16th-17th century castles of Raudonė and Panemunė. Bicycling from Žemaitkiemis to the Ventė Horn where visit the ornithological station and the 19th century lighthouse that was active for more than 100 years. Take a boat across the Curonian Lagoon to Nida and enjoy a beautiful view to sand dunes of the Curonian Spit separating the Baltic Sea from the Curonian Lagoon. Arrival in Nida, check-in and optional dinner at the hotel.

DAY 4 Wednesday Nida - Juodkrante - Klaipėda (cycling approx. 60 km)

Nida justifiably has the reputation as one of the most beautiful resorts in Lithuania. We cycle on the Seaside Cycle Route which takes you along the Curonian Spit to Klaipėda. En route we will stop at "Dead" sand dunes, view colonies of grey herons and cormorants, and visit the Hill of Witches which houses a hundred fanciful and folksy wooden sculptures scattered along a forest path. Upon our arrival in Smiltynė, we take a ferry to the Old Town of Klaipėda, the main seaport of Lithuania.

DAY 5 Thursday Klaipėda - Palanga - Riga (cycling approx. 25 km, driving 350 kms)

Early morning ride to Palanga through the Seaside Regional Park, a former soviet military polygon area. Arrival in Palanga, the biggest seaside resort of Lithuania. City tour including the visit to the Botanical Garden and Amber Museum in the Palace of Count Tyszkiewicz, with over 25000 pieces of amber and 15000 inclusions of insects on display. Afternoon transfer to Riga (Latvia). Stop at the Hill of Crosses (16 km from Šiauliai), the unforgettable place with thousands of crosses on two small hills. Further drive to Riga, the capital city of Latvia.

DAY 6 Friday Riga - Jurmala - Riga (cycling approx. 25 km, driving 30 km)

A city tour of Riga, visiting medieval Hanseatic town, Riga castle, St.Peter`s Church, Dome Cathedral and the Old Guild Houses. In the afternoon cycling to Jurmala, the largest resort in the Baltic States well known for its long white sand beaches, curative mud and mineral waters. Transfer back by coach to the hotel in Riga.

DAY 7 Saturday Riga - Saulkrasti - Turaida - Sigulda (cycling approx 40km, Driving 50 Km)

Morning transfer to the Baltic Coast in Saulkrasti where get ready for cycling to Ragana and further through the Gauja National Park to Sigulda, the most popular resort in Latvia, situated in the Gauja River Valley. En route visit Turaida Castle and Krimulda church, the oldest one in Latvia (built in 1205), enjoy spectacular views of the Gauja River valley with Gutmana Cave and explore ruins of the 13th century Crusaders Castle in Sigulda. Check-in and optional dinner at the hotel.

DAY 8 Departures

Breakfast at hotel. End of tour

TRAVEL DATES

July 18
August 1
August 15

GROUP TOUR COSTS

€910.00 per person sharing
€1,065.00 per single occupancy

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Vilnius Airport is 7 km (15 minutes driving distance) from the centre of the capital city. By taxi it costs approx. €10.00. Alternatively, we can arrange for a taxi to come and collect you and bring you to the hotel (approximately €13.00 p/p based on a minimum of two persons).

The distance from Riga to Vilnius is approx. 300 kms. There are several departures a day of Eurolines Bus from Riga to Vilnius. Price per person, including reservation fee, is approx. €20.00. Alternatively, a transfer can be organised on your behalf (car up to 3 pax – approx. €245, minibus up to 7 pax – approx. €275).

EXTRA ACCOMMODATION

Hotel in Vilnius TILTO or similar

DBL €76.00 net per room per night, including breakfast

SGL €65.00 net per room per night, including breakfast

Hotel in Sigulda EZERI or similar

DBL €76.00 net per room per night, including breakfast

SGL €65.00 net per room per night, including breakfast

WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- › 7 nights accommodation in hotels
- › Half board (7 Dinners & breakfasts)
- › Cycling with daily excursions
- › Second Guide with a support Van
- › 21 speed hybrid trekking bike with pannier bag
- › Route details and maps

Transfer costs (not included in package):

Arrival in Vilnius - €26

Departure to Riga - €58

Per car (up to 2 persons)

WHAT TO BRING

Cycling gloves; cycling shorts; long pants; waterproof jacket; sunglasses; sun cream; sunhat; stiff-soled shoes suitable for cycling; water bottles. Although it is not compulsory to wear a helmet in the Baltic States, we strongly recommend that you wear one (*please bring your own as these are not provided*).

BIKE AND FITNESS

Here is an example of the type of touring bike used:



- Aluminium frame
- 21 speed
- Choice of a front or rear pannier bag (please note that the pannier is smaller than the one you see on the bike)
- Water bottle carrier
- Back carrier
- Bicycle lock
- Pump
- Repair kit (carried by tour guide)
- Map support

Helmets are not included.

Cycling terrain is generally flat to gently undulating so the riding is not very demanding physically. The majority of the trip is on tarmac; there are a few stretches on unsurfaced tracks, but no technical riding experience is required for this.

GROUPE, GUIDE AND BACKUP SERVICE

Group size will vary between 2 and 15, and will be accompanied by a local Lithuanian tour leader and driver almost all the time when travelling from Vilnius to Riga, and local city guide for sightseeing tour in Vilnius.

Please note there will be no support vehicle when cycling distances from Nida to Klaipeda (60 kms) and from Klaipeda to Palanga (30 kms).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Weather

This itinerary takes place at the same latitude as Scotland, and the area has a continental climate – long cold winters, short hot summers, and it can rain a lot. Daytime temperatures should vary from 20C degrees to 33C degrees, cooler in bad weather. Nights will be cool to warm, never being cold – perhaps chilly in bad weather. There is generally a good amount of sunshine during summer months and the days are very long in June and July.

Passport and Visas

Lithuania and Latvia were among the ten accession countries that joined the EU in May 2004. Most nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay, (the exception being a list of nationalities from EU countries who are only required to produce a personal

identification card). It is your responsibility to have the correct documents and to obtain your own visa, if required. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise and any subsequent effects.

Currency

In Lithuania, the unit of currency is the Litas (LTL), (1 EUR = 3.45 LTL approx.)

In Latvia, the unit of currency is the Lat (LVL), (1 EUR = 0.645 LVL approx.)

Foreign currencies and local currencies (Litas and Lat) can be exchanged at all banks. The Euro and US Dollar are the most popular foreign currencies accepted everywhere in banks. You can use only local currencies for paying in shops and for services, but Euros and US Dollars are accepted by people selling handicrafts in markets. You should bring a mixture of cash and traveller's cheques. Cash machines are available in many places in the two capital cities, larger towns and resorts.

Additional expenses and spending money

All lunches are at your expense. You may order picnic meals for extra charge payable in cash to your tour leader. Your tour leader and driver will prepare the picnic meals.

You should allow \$20-30 per person per day for meals in Vilnius and Riga. The amount you spend will depend on the standard of restaurant chosen.

Local Time

Local time conforms to Eastern European Time which is 2 hours ahead of GMT.