

A Custom Designed Itinerary to

The Baltics & St. Petersburg

by

IN QUEST OF THE CLASSICS

IQOTC REF: G709054

DAY 1: VILNIUS (LITHUANIA). Upon arrival at the airport in Vilnius, guests will be met and privately transferred to the 5 star Narutis Hotel for two nights. http://www.summithotels.com/hotel_horizontal.cfm?id=VNOHN&. In a prime position on the main artery of the Old Town, Hotel Narutis is a unique place to stay. An architectural monument dating from the Middle Ages, the hotel has many charming features, including an inner courtyard filled with flowers and flooded by natural daylight. Each of the rooms is individual; original 16th-Century beams, timber-framed floors, Gothic vaults and amazing frescoes all contribute to the character. Rooms look out over beautiful squares and quiet courtyards to Gediminas Castle and the Hill of Three Crosses beyond.

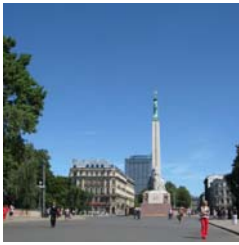
DAY 2: VILNIUS. This morning we meet our local English-speaking for a morning sightseeing tour of the Old Town, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



We will see the open-air market, the Presidential Palace, the Gates of Dawn, St. Anne's Church and Vilnius University. Just 17 miles outside of the capital is Trakai Castle and National Park, and this afternoon we will have a half day guided visit of the Castle, which is located on a small island in the middle of a lake. This is sure to be one of the highlights of our trip. Evening at leisure.

DAY 3: RIGA (LATVIA). After breakfast this morning, we will leave for Riga, capital of Latvia. First we will make a stop at The Hill of the Crosses. The hill is located close to Siauliai. Despite numerous Soviet attempts to destroy the site, tens of thousands of crosses stand on this sacred spot. The crosses, many with hand-written messages, reveal much about the history of the Lithuanian people, and testify to their strong will and faith; it's an emotional sight. Further on we will visit Rundale Palace, an architectural pearl of Latvia created by an outstanding architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, designer of the Winter Palace in St.Petersburg. When we reach Riga, we will check in for two nights in junior suites at the 4 star **Hotel Monika** – www.centrumhotels.com.

DAY 4: RIGA. This morning we will have a half-day guided tour of Riga. Riga as a city was founded in 1201. The Old Town, circled by a park-lined moat, is the most attractive area in the city where numerous interesting sights are located.



We will visit the Dome Cathedral, the largest place of worship in the Baltics with one of the biggest organs in Europe (6,768 pipes!) which was such a marvel in its day that Franz Listz composed a piece of music in its honor; St. Peter's Church, first mentioned in ancient chronicles in 1209 when it was a Catholic church until 1523, when it turned



Lutheran. Its wooden tower, the highest in Europe at that time, was destroyed several times; and Blackheads House, one of the architectural treasures of Riga, recently rebuilt in honor of the city's 800th anniversary in 2001. Afternoon at leisure to continue exploring Riga on our own.

DAY 5: TALLINN (ESTONIA). After breakfast we will depart for Estonia. Along the way we will stop for a visit of Turaida Castle in the Sigulda region, east of Riga. With its lakes and dramatic hillscape, it is known as the Switzerland of Latvia. There are several ruins and restored castles in the area. The best among them is the Turaida Castle. We will continue on to Tallinn, where we check in for two nights at the 4 star **Hotel Barons** located in the Old Town. www.barons.ee. The superb location offers unlimited opportunities to explore the sights and places of entertainment of Old Town and the City.

DAY 6: TALLINN. A full day to explore the city and Old Town. A morning guided walking tour will highlight it. The Old Town is partially surrounded by a wall with gates and guard towers. The roads are cobblestone and twist and wind between well-maintained medieval buildings.



Most date from 11th to the 15th century and the architecture of the Hanseatic League. Exploring this part of Tallinn will take you back to the Middle Ages. Highlights include the Town Hall Square, the Town Hall Pharmacy, the oldest functioning pharmacy in the world, and St. Nicholas' Church. The afternoon is at leisure.

DAY 7: ST. PETERSBURG (RUSSIA). After breakfast a transfer northeast through Narva (visit the Castle here) and into Russia and the amazing city of St. Petersburg, where four nights are included at the historic 5 star **Grand Hotel Europe** – www.grandhoteleurope.com

DAY 8: ST. PETERSBURG. A full day guided tour highlights Nevsky Project, Palace Square and Alexander's Column, St. Isaacs Cathedral and the monument to Nicholas I, the Field of Mars, Peter & Paul Fortress and St. Peter & Paul Cathedral and many other famous sights. An evening at leisure.



DAY 9: ST. PETERSBURG. A full day free for individual activities. Maybe visit Petrodvorets (Peter the Great's summer palace), or maybe take a trip out into the countryside to the village of Pushkin or Lomonosov and Catherine the Great's Palace... Maybe just stay in the city and do some shopping?



DAY 10: ST. PETERSBURG. Special entrance tickets into the Hermitage this morning. Plus a private guide.



The State Hermitage occupies four magnificent buildings situated along the embankment of the River Neva, right in the heart of St Petersburg. The leading role in this unique architectural ensemble is the Winter Palace, the residence of the Russian tsars that was built to the design of Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli in 1754-62. This ensemble, formed in the 18th and 19th centuries, is extended by the eastern wing of the General Staff building, the Menshikov Palace and the recently constructed Repository. Put together throughout two centuries and a half, the Hermitage collections of works of art (over 3,000,000 items) present the development of world culture and art from the Stone Age to the 20th century. Today the Museum is creating its digital self-portrait to be displayed around the world. Computer technologies enable the State Hermitage Museum to provide people from all over the world with wider access to information about the Museum and its treasures. Balance of the day for last-minute individual activities.

DAY 11: DEPART. A transfer to St. Petersburg airport in time for our flight home.

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