

OM's A-Z OF THE BALTIC STATES

A

ACIU

Lithuanians have chosen 'ACIU' (thank you) as the most beautiful word in their native language. The word was selected from a list of words proposed by visitors of Internet websites. It beat the word Lietuva (Lithuania) into second place.

AIRLINES

flyLAL-Lithuanian Airlines and Air Baltic are the main air carriers of the region.

Many other airlines service the Baltics, including:

Arriving at Vilnius Airport

Aerlingus, Aeroflot, Austrian Airlines, Czech Airlines CSA, EasyJet, Finnair, LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa, Norwegian Air, Ryanair (at Kaunas Airport), SAS Scandinavian Airlines, UtAir.

Arriving at Riga Airport

Aerlingus, Aeroflot, Armavia, Austrian Airlines, Czech Airlines CSA, Estonian Air, Finnair, Germanwings, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa, Norwegian Air, Ryanair, SAS Scandinavian Airlines, Turkish Airlines.

Arriving at Tallinn Airport

Czech Airlines CSA, EasyJet, Finnair, Finncom Airlines, flyNordic, LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa, Norwegian Air, SAS Scandinavian Airlines.



AREA

The three Baltic States are located in north-central Europe, on the eastern edge of the Baltic Sea, and along the western border of the Russian Federation and Belarus.

Lithuania is the Southern one with 65,300 sq. km. Nearly one third of its territory is covered by forests.

Latvia is 64,589 sq. km and is in the heart of the Baltics. **Estonia** is the northern one with 45226 sq. km.

Their capital cities, often called "three pearls of the North", are located within easy reach of each other and offer a range of attractions that appeal to both tourists and business travelers.



AMBER

Amber, the fossilized resin with the beautifully preserved inclusions of plant-structures and remains of insects, is very often called the "Lithuanian gold". It is used for the manufacture of ornamental objects and amazing jewellery. It is still believed to possess a certain healing virtue.

B

BASKETBALL

There is only ONE sport in Lithuania ... **BASKETBALL!** It becomes the second religion when an important match is taking place and the sport has a long and great history in Lithuania. This most passionate basketball-loving nation in Europe can boast such stars of the orange ball as Arvydas Sabonis, Sarunas Marciulionis and the today-star Sarunas Jasikevicius.



BEER

Not many know that Lithuania has about 300 beer brands and that the Lithuanian beer has received lots of awards at international beer competitions.

BREAD

One of the oldest and most fundamental Lithuanian food products was and is rye bread. Lithuanians link many beliefs and magic with bread. One of them is the protective characteristics of bread, protection from fire and help in putting out fires.



C CLIMATE

The climate in the Baltics is midway between maritime and continental - wet moderate winters and summers. Average temperature in July is +19°C, in January – -4.9°C. However, temperatures can soar up to +33°C in summer, and drop down to -32°C in winter. Summers here are pleasantly mild, whereas not every winter offers abundance of snow.

CONFERENCES, CONVENTIONS, MEETINGS AND EVENTS

OM Destination Management will deliver an event program that not only addresses all your requirements, but also incorporates additional innovative touches. By arranging everything from airport transfers, accommodation and venues, to activities, tours and unforgettable dining experiences, OM makes perfection look effortless.

CULTURE

The Baltic States are thriving after numerous wars of conquest, different invaders and fifty years of Soviet occupation. Their cultures have survived through a conscious effort to sustain many of their most ancient customs and traditions.

Being very similar, these three nations are at the same time they are very distinctive. Lithuania is the most cultural and tolerant with Vilnius which was a thriving centre of Jewish culture until the Nazi years. Latvia is the most ethnically diverse and Russian-influenced. Estonia sees itself as a very Scandinavian country.



CURRENCY

Each of the three countries has its own currency:

1 EUR = 3.4528 Lithuanian Litas (LTL)

1 EUR = 0.7 Latvian Lats (LVL)

1 EUR = 15.65 Estonia Krone (EEK)

D DISTANCES

Distances in km and miles (approx.) between major cities:

	VILNIUS (Lithuania)		RIGA (Latvia)		TALLINN (Estonia)	
	km		km		km	
VILNIUS	---	---	300	186	580	360
RIGA	300	186	---	---	280	173
TALLINN	580	360	280	173	--	---

DRIVING

Travelling between major cities is easy due to relatively short distances and very pleasant because of the numerous lakes, thick forests and white storks (the national bird) elegantly walking on green fields.

Vehicles are driven on the right hand-side of the road in all Baltic States.

E EUROPEAN UNION & NATO

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are members of the EU and NATO since 2004. The adoption of the Euro is planned after 2010.

F FOOD

In the Baltic region, eating habits have developed from ancient times when winters used to be very harsh. Cooking was mainly based on meat, potatoes and other rather substantial dishes. Beer and traditional liquors as mead and balsams were part of traditional feasts.

The dining options in the Baltics are endless – from beer pubs down in basements, country-style taverns and lodges to gourmet restaurants in retro style or with trendy interiors.



G GENOCIDE MUSEUM

The Museum of Genocide in Vilnius is the only museum of its kind in the former Soviet republics. The main part of the exposition is the KGB Internal Jail equipped in autumn of 1940, immediately after the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania.

H HEALTH

Health standards in the Baltic States compare favourably with those of developed countries.

HISTORY

The Baltic States for centuries have been under constant change in leadership. During the 18th century the region was under the control of the Russian Empire, which folded during the 1917 Revolution. The land gained independence for a short time, from the end of the Revolution in 1917 to the 1940's. The Soviet Union forcibly made the Baltic States join the USSR as a part of the constituent republic in 1940. The Soviet influence reshaped the settlement ways of the Baltic people, by adapting the economic and political ways of the USSR. It was not until 1990 that under the initiative of Lithuania the Baltic States gained recognizable independence and now boast an impressively fast growth and development.

I INNOVATIVE INCENTIVES

OM offers a widest range of original and exciting activities to ensure the group takes away life-long memories of their Baltic visit. OM incentives include soviet 4x4 challenges, local folk nights, hardcore shooting, hot air ballooning, sailing regatta, tasting and a so much more.



INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

OM's experienced team is also in Cyprus, Greece and Croatia.

J JUNE and JULY

For those who wish to enjoy most sunshine, June and July are the hottest months of the year, when people go to the coast for a swim in the Baltic Sea or to a national park to bath in one of the numerous lakes.



JESTERS

Jesters and Medieval knights can still be found in the Baltics. On special occasions, which might be your event in Lithuania, the Medieval Trakai castle on the lake fills with jesters, trumpeters, knights, bowmen and dancers. Are you ready to try your hand at medieval archery?

K KAZIUKO MUGE

Kaziuko muge, the handicrafts market, is held each March in the honour of St Casimir – the patron saint and guardian of Lithuania. It is a festival that welcomes the spring and fills Vilnius' main square with a lively crowd of people from all over the country and from abroad. Hundreds of craftsmen come here to sell all kinds of hand-made crafts, linen and wooden souvenirs, honey cookies decorated with sugar flowers and *verbos*, palms made of colorful dried flowers and herbs.



L LANGUAGES

Lithuania, **Latvia** and **Estonia** have their own state language. **Russian** is widely spoken everywhere just as **English** in bigger towns. **French** and **German** are also spoken in places.

M MUSIC

The Baltic States have a long history of folk, popular and classical musical development. Their folk music and the round dances based around polyphonic played on flutes and zithers have long been a very important part of Baltic folk culture. National song and dance festivals are held every five years with thousands of participants singing as one choir.

The highlight of contemporary music is jazz. Lithuania is the jazziest one: it boasts a considerable number of well-trained musicians and international Kaunas and Vilnius Jazz Festivals held every year.



N NATIONAL IDENTITY

The three Baltic- Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia- very often go together and are perceived as one. However, due to many years of various occupations, there is a persistent attempt to reaffirm their national identity, and this feeling is very strong in each of the countries.



O OLD TOWN

Each of the Baltic capitals, Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn, are very proud of their Old Towns which are on UNESCO's heritage list in recognition of their universal value and originality.

P POPULATION

Lithuania's estimated population is 3.43 million. The capital city Vilnius accounts for 542 200 inhabitants.

Latvia's estimated population is 2.27 million. The capital city Riga accounts for 723 931 inhabitants.

Estonia's estimated population is 1.32 million. The capital city Tallinn accounts for 396 000 inhabitants

Based on 2006 statistics.

Q QUAD BIKING

It is a real challenge to drive the quads on the difficult terrain of Baltic countryside! Lovers of adrenaline will find a perfect combination of speed, adventure and beautiful sceneries.



R RELIGION

Lithuania- predominantly Roman Catholic

Latvia- predominantly Evangelical Lutheran

Estonia- predominantly Evangelical Lutheran



S SOUVENIRS

The best souvenirs to take home from the Baltic states are various things traditionally made of amber, wood, flax, ceramics, glass, wool, even dried flowers (*verbos*).

Linen tablecloths, amber necklaces or a piece of amber with insects from millions years ago trapped inside could also be a wonderful present to take away home. Those searching for some national drinks can choose "Lithuanian mead" or "Riga Balsam", liqueurs made of honey and herbs.

T TIME

Eastern European (Greenwich Mean Time + 2hrs), daylight saving.

TRANSFERS, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND TAXIS

The public transport service includes buses, trolleybuses, minibuses and, of course, taxis. Alternatively, OM's transfer service from the airport includes a dedicated staff member providing a meet and greet and airport assistance. You may have a traditional folk band or a soviet-style band with snacks to welcome you at the airport. **You will travel in comfort** with either a mini bus, larger luxury coach, private Limo or...a Soviet bus, depending on your group size and specific requirements.

TOURS

OM offers various unique tours to cater all kinds of tastes and needs- from highly cultural and historical, to interactive and top adrenaline.

U UNSPOILED NATURE

For nature lovers, the Baltics are the paradise. Famous for their wavering hills, crystal lakes, wild forests with mushrooms and berries, slow rivers, these countries offer peaceful experience and most pleasant moments in the fresh air.



UNESCO

The Old Town of Vilnius was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994 just because the town "has preserved an impressive complex of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and classical buildings as well as its medieval layout and natural setting".

V VISAS

EU citizens **do not require a visa** for entry to Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia, but they must carry a valid passport or their national identity card provided there is a photo and the citizenship is declared on the card. The passport must be valid at least until the day of departure from here.

The following countries **do not require an entry visa** to enter any of the Baltic States:

A: Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria

B: Belgium, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria

C: Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic

D: Denmark

E: El Salvador, Estonia

F: Finland, France

G: Germany, Greece, Guatemala

H: Honduras, Hungary

I: Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy

J: Japan

K: Korea (Republic of South)

L: Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg

M: Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco

N: Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway

P: Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal

R: Romania

S: San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland

U: United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay

V: Vatican City, Venezuela

And: Special Administrative Regions of the Peoples' Republic of China: Hong Kong, Macao

W WEATHER

The Baltics still have a distinction of seasons: warm, sometimes even hot summer, colourful autumn, white winter and beautiful spring when the whole nature recovers from the winter freeze. However, it is worth noting that the climate warm-up is strongly felt here as well.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURES (in degrees Fahrenheit & Centigrade)

	Average high		Average low	
	F	C	F	C
<u>Spring</u>				
March	37.9	3.3	25.2	-3.8
April	51.3	10.7	34.9	1.6
May	64.8	18.2	45.5	7.5
<u>Summer</u>				
June	70	21.1	54.1	10.8
July	71.8	22.1	72	12.3
August	70.9	21.6	52.7	11.5
<u>Autumn</u>				
September	61.5	16.4	45.9	7.7
October	50.4	10.2	38.1	3.4
November	38.3	3.5	30.4	-0.9
<u>Winter</u>				
December	31.1	-0.5	22.6	-5.2
January	25.7	-3.5	16.3	-8.7
February	28.9	-1.7	18.3	-7.6

WINTER

Winter in the Baltic States is a wonderful season! Its pleasures are limitless: from dog sledding, bobsleigh and snow golf to ice-fishing, sauna and a refreshing jump into a frozen lake.



XYLOPHONE AND SKRABALAI

Each of us has played the xylophone as a child. But only those who come to Lithuania can enjoy the music of an ancient Lithuanian folk instrument *skrabalai* (wooden bells). Its inventor plays all kinds of music with it, starting from folk songs to classical and jazz pieces.

Y YEAR 2009

Year 2009 will be very special for Vilnius - first from the new EU Member States, it will become the EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE!!! All year through, the capital city will be hosting an incredible number of cultural events, attracting loads of visitors both from the Baltic States and from abroad.

YES!

At OM, we have a positive attitude, are focussed on solutions and on making your vision a reality.

Z ZAPAI

Among the various activities OM offers, the guests can go for a bit of adrenaline with the Russian cars ZAPAI. There are cars with the engine in the back and it is a real cultural and adventure experience to drive them.

