

## Lithuania: Discovering the Hidden Gem of the Baltics

August 20-29, 2016

Day 1: (D) Upon arrival into Vilnius International Airport (VNO) you will be met by our representative who will assist you with arrival formalities and transfer to your hotel. We recommend you arrive by 3 pm. Relax after your flight before meeting your fellow Ethical Travelers at our hotel for our **Orientation Meeting** facilitated by our Ethical Traveler journey facilitator and Altruvistas in country guide. **Welcome Dinner** tonight is traditional Lithuanian food.

Day 2:

(B, L)

This morning we start our day exploring **the "History of Lithuania**" (requested speaker is Dr Aida Macerinskiene from Vilnius University. After we start our guided **City Tour of this beautiful UNESCO World Heritage Site.** The tour includes the following; St. Peter and Paul's Church, Cathedral Square with St. Stanislaw Cathedral and Bell tower, St. Ann's and St Bernadine's Church, Amber gallery-museum, Užupis -one of the oldest districts of Vilnius, mentioned in the historical sources as far back as the 16th century, novo days the artists' "republic", which has its own constitution, national anthem, calendar and map, the Gates of Dawn with a holy image of the Virgin Mary, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit, Town Hall Square, Vilnius University (founded in 1579) and St. John's Church. During the day we will have lunch in the old town. Next we are off to relax and learn about the **craft of beer making** at a local brewery and beer tasting (request Snekucio Alaus Psaulis). Our evening is free to enjoy local dining and cultural events.

Day 3Vilnius.(B, L)At 9 am we will be briefed by a specialist or Lithuania's Tourism. After an<br/>engaging discussion about sustainable tourism, we learn why Lithuania was for<br/>years an Ethical Traveler's "Top 10 Ethical Destination." After our tour of modern<br/>Vilnius continues. Highlights today include: touring of murals, a visit to an<br/>artist studio and the National Museum. Our evening is free to enjoy local<br/>dining and cultural events.

Day 4- Vilnius-Nida (B, D) This morning we check out of the hotel then we are off to start our day meeting with the **Lithuanian Center for Non-formal Education** and their coordinator (Ingrida Meskinye **Baltic Sea Project** > <u>http://www.b-s-</u> <u>p.org/home/programmes/</u> Visit to the **Gediminas Castle.** Here we will have a guided historical tour of this medieval castle with Neolithic roots. We will have free time to wander, photograph and enjoy time for lunch on our own. Then we are off to the beautiful Curonian Spit, along the Baltic Sea coast. After checking into our hotel in Nida we will enjoy a dinner.

Day 5- Nida (B, L) Curonian Spit was declared a world UNESCO Heritage site in 2000, we'll meet with a **local specialist** to share with us the history of this area and how a shared heritage site is managed; in this case Russia and Lithuania. Then we start our walking tour of Nida, visiting the **Fisherman's House**, the house of the famous German writer Thomas Mann, **The Ethnographic Museum**, lunch and the **Agila Cultural Center.** Enjoy a free afternoon for ecotourism and cultural activities. Enjoy a 2 k walk and visit dunes, relax by the for beach or rent a bike.

Day 6, Nida-Minija-Vente-Klaipeda (B, L) Today we check out and depart by boat from Nida to the Nemunas River Delta Regional Park. Continue to Kintai settlement passing Minija village, called the "Lithuanian Venice", where the Minija River serves as the main street. Lunch will be provided at Kintai, tasting local dishes made from fish. We are then off for Klaipeda with a stop at Vente Horn to see the ornithological station and the 19th century lighthouse that was active for more than 100 years. We will then learn about the what inspires contemporary Lithuanian artists at the Klaipeda Culture Communication Center. In Klaipeda we will Check into our hotel. Dinner and evening free.

Day 7 -Klaipeda-Palanga-Klaipeda(B, L)We start our morning in Klaipeda with a walking tour to the TheaterSquare, the Old Post Office and around the old part of town. Continue toPalanga, the biggest seaside resort in Lithuania (25 km from Klaipeda). This citytour includes a visit to the Botanical Garden and Amber Museum in thePalace of Count Tyszkiewicz. This museum houses over 25 000 pieces ofamber and 15 000 inclusions of insects. We will request a local docent togive us a lecture on amber. Free time to indulge at the Amber Spa.Tonight we will walk by the Birute Hill along the sea coast on the sea bridge andBasanavičiaus street, which is famous for its cafes and restaurants with livemusic. On option on our own may be the Kurpiai jazz club. Return to Klaipedain the evening.

Day 8 -Klaipeda- Kaunus-Vilnius(B, L)We check out of our hotel and begin our day with a tour of Kaunas, Lithuania's<br/>second largest city. We will explore the 13th century Kaunas Castle and<br/>Fortress, Town Hall Square and Cathedral Basilica and have lunch. Here we

will learn about the role this area played in World War II, with an afternoon visit to this museum and memorial, and the **Kaunas Choral Synagogue**. We then leave to return to Vilnius to engage with a representative of **Missing Persons Families Support Center** for a discussion of human trafficking in the area and their advocacy and educational efforts.

http://www.ecpat.net/sites/default/files/Factsheet\_Baltic\_States.pdf Check in to our hotel. Dinner is free for us to explore local venues.

Day 9 -Vilnius(B, D)This morning we will meet with a representative **Department of CulturalHeritage** under the Ministry of Culture for a discussion on the direction of socialand cultural development in the country. Lunch and some free time in the oldtown. We end our afternoon exploring the vibrant Contemporary Art Centrein Vilnius, known locally as Šiuolaikinio Meno Centras, it is one of the leading artinstitutions in the Baltic region. Its focus is on displaying the latest internationaltrends by organizing up to six large-scale ehibitions per year, in addition to manysmaller projects. Then we have time to refresh before enjoying our FarewellDinner .

<u>Day 10 - (B)</u> We check out of the hotel after breakfast and are off to enjoy our last few hours in Lithuania strolling and shopping. Then we will have a group transfer to the International Airport of Vilnius (VNO) for our flights home.

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