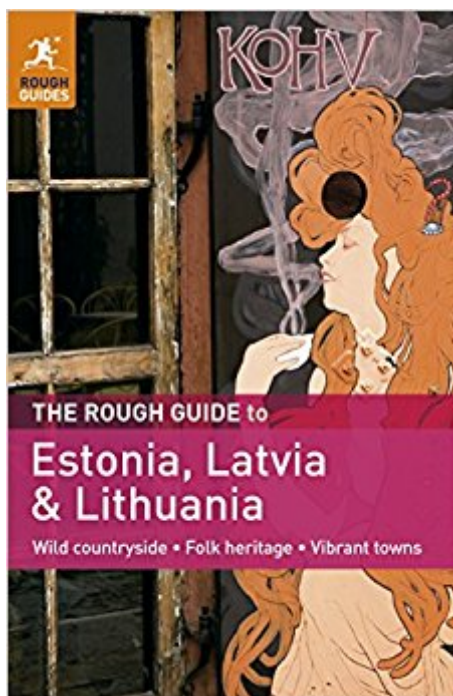


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The Rough Guide To Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania



Synopsis

The Rough Guide to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania is your ultimate travel guide to the Baltic States. Whether you're looking for inspiring accommodation or great places to eat, in-the-know advice will help you find the very best places to go. It includes comprehensive coverage of the historic capital cities, the dramatic rural regions dotted with lakes and wetlands, the lost-in-time medieval villages, the unique festivals and the long, dune-backed beaches. The guide's handy events calendar will help you plan your trip across the Baltics to coincide with the best events – everything from jazz, folk and horror movie festivals to ballet, medieval feasts and crafts fairs. Plus, there's expert background on musical traditions, from the birth of Lithuanian free jazz to Estonia's first punk rock concert. Accurate maps and comprehensive practical information help you get under the skin of the Baltic States, while stunning photography and a full-color introduction make this your ultimate traveling companion to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Make the most of your trip with The Rough Guide to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The holiday-makers' favourite guidebook series The Sunday Times Travel Magazine

We use Rough Guides for all our trips, along with Michelin Green Guides. No Michelin available for these countries, though. Rough Guides are the best for young people and those traveling by public transport. We'll have a rental car, but like to go to out-of-the-way sights, which are well covered.

Would like a new edition, as Latvia & Lithuania are now using the Euro; this book has prices in the old currencies. I expect a new edition will be printed, just after our trip.

Ok

I bought this primary for the maps. I love the way they are presented. Good information here.

This review is of the latest revision of this book published in 2011. It is bang up to date, for example, in Estonia all prices are shown in Euros which reflects Estonia adopting the Euro shortly before publication. The book adopts the normal format of rough guides, giving the general background and overview of each country, including travel to and around each country, major events and festivals, outdoor activities, accommodation, food and travel essentials comprising topics such as safety, visa requirements, health, insurance etc. We visited Tallinn, capital of Estonia and so had the opportunity to assess the accuracy and usefulness of the information given for that city. Generally the main sights of the Old Town were summarised, though I did think that the information given was somewhat brief and as it is a very interesting area, could have included more to look out for - we saw a number of things we would have liked to know more about which were not mentioned. The listings of hotels and restaurants appeared to be up to date as far as I could assess. Generally, however, we use rough guides to find out what we should be looking at rather than for an assessment of accommodation etc. Tripadvisor and similar resources are fine for the latter, and as this is not a particularly lengthy book I would have thought there was scope for the sightseeing aspect to be more comprehensive. Unfortunately we did pick up an inaccuracy in the map of the central area which showed two Cathedrals of St Mary the Virgin which was quite confusing. We eventually worked out that the northern most one was, in fact, the Convent of St Michael which, whilst being very worthy of a visit with a fairly incredible illustrated screen in front of the alter, was not mentioned in the book at all. In the 3rd Edition of this book I would have expected this sort of inaccuracy to have been ironed out unless this is a gremlin which has just crept into the latest version but I am mindful that the budget given to the unfortunate editor to do an update is not generous and hence new editions tend to be titivations of previous versions rather than a proper root and branch job. So a reasonably adequate general guide of the Baltic republics, but if you are visiting a particular area as opposed to travelling about, you may consider investing in a more specific and comprehensive guide to that particular city or area which is what we should have done in advance of our visit to Tallinn.

This guide up to this year was titled "The Rough Guide to The Baltic States", which of course was highly offensive and ignorant to the people who live in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Calling these countries Baltic States is pretty much the only time, these extremely friendly people will start to get a bit narky, and understandably so when it refers to their previous terrifying years of being occupied by the Soviets and the torture, genocide and misery associated with that. All of these countries have been independent for at least 10 years now and really don't need to be insulted by that kind of ignorance. When I was there last year and backpackers carrying the old covered books would pull them out to ask for directions while buying lunch or something you just cringed as you could see the insult on the faces of the locals. So at least The Rough Guide has changed the cover (although putting an old brothel scene is probably pretty offensive too). However even with the new brothel cover, you open the book to the first section Basics - Getting There and the first line shows the editors still haven't learnt a thing, with "From the UK and Ireland the most convenient way of getting to the Baltic States is to fly". The fact that they aren't aware of how taboo referring the Baltic Countries as Baltic States is, which is equivalent, well actually a lot worse to calling Canadians Americans, New Zealanders Australians, or Irish people British, does make you question just how many years ago did the writers actually go to these three countries. And therefore, how current and relevant is the information inside. The information inside is a bit more current than the pre Berlin Wall coming down years, there's places to eat, places to stay but like all these sorts of guides, there's a heap more better places than listed inside. If you can't come across any other guide for this region, this book would be helpful in planning your trip and working out just which towns and national parks you want to visit. I would however get a copy of "Lonely Planet Estonia Latvia & Lithuania (Multi Country Guide)" instead as it does have a bit more information, and even though the latest was published in 2009, I don't really notice much more up to date stuff in this Rough Guide. The Lonely planet guide also has chapters on Helsinki Finland, which is a short ferry ride from Tallinn, and Kalingrad Russia, which is also an easy day trip from Klaipeda. I didn't go to Kalingrad but found the Helsinki chapters very useful when I went to these countries in 2010. The maps of the towns and cities are pretty much on par with Lonely Planet's. I wouldn't rely on either guidebook for hostel bookings, I'd go to Hostelling International, BUG and Hostelworld and other hostel booking websites to choose, read reviews by previous travellers and book your hostels before arriving. If you're thinking of going to these countries but don't know if you should, definitely do so. The people are some of the best and most friendly locals you will ever meet. There's heaps of great towns to visit in each country but if asked to name two must see destinations in each country my recommendations

of the best places are, in Latvia Riga with its great parks, old town and people. As well as the small town of Kuldiga with Latvia's widest waterfall next to a nice relaxing old town. In Estonia you have to see Tallinn, especially its medieval old town area, where again like Riga, the local people are so friendly. As is the picturesque southern town of Viljandi which is pretty much the only place the trains from Tallinn go. Viljandi has great castle ruins, a nice lake and is again just a really nice relaxing small town. Note you can't catch a train from Riga to Tallinn, you'll be bussing it on Eurolines or a more expensive company. In Lithuania you have to visit Juodakrante and the numerous highly detailed wooden witch, goblin and other creatures huge wooden monuments in the hills behind the Curonian Spit town (you can do it as a day trip from Klaipeda but there's nothing much to see in Klaipeda). Kanaus is the best of the Lithuanian big cities, much better than the overrated Vilnius.

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