

## easy-to-use sections

### PLAN YOUR TRIP

#### Your planning tool kit

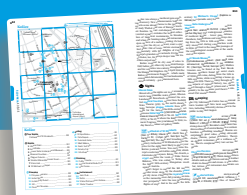
Photos & suggestions to help you create the perfect trip.



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#### Your complete guide

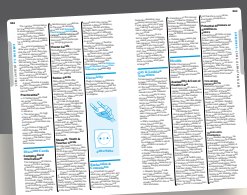
Expert reviews, easy-to-use maps and insider tips.



### SURVIVAL GUIDE

#### Your at-a-glance reference

Vital practical information for a smooth trip.



## How to Use This Book

**Look for these symbols to quickly identify listings:**

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Sights</b>                 | <b>Sleeping</b>                    |
| <b>Beaches</b>                | <b>Eating</b>                      |
| <b>Activities</b>             | <b>Drinking</b>                    |
| <b>Courses</b>                | <b>Entertainment</b>               |
| <b>Tours</b>                  | <b>Shopping</b>                    |
| <b>Festivals &amp; Events</b> | <b>Information &amp; Transport</b> |

**All reviews** are ordered in our authors' preference, starting with their most preferred option. Additionally:

**Sights** are arranged in the geographic order that we suggest you visit them and, within this order, by author preference.

**These symbols give vital information for each listing:**

- Our author's recommendation**
- No payment required**
- A green or sustainable option**

- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Telephone number     | English-language menu |
| Opening hours        | Family-friendly       |
| Parking              | Pet-friendly          |
| Nonsmoking           | Bus                   |
| Air-conditioning     | Ferry                 |
| Internet access      | Metro                 |
| Wi-fi access         | Subway                |
| Swimming pool        | Tram                  |
| Vegetarian selection | Train                 |

**For symbols used on maps, see the Map Legend.**

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# Eastern Europe



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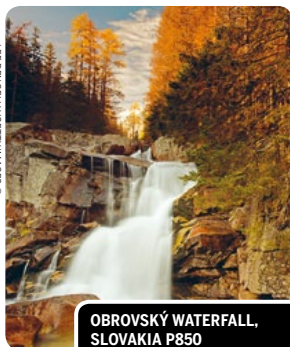
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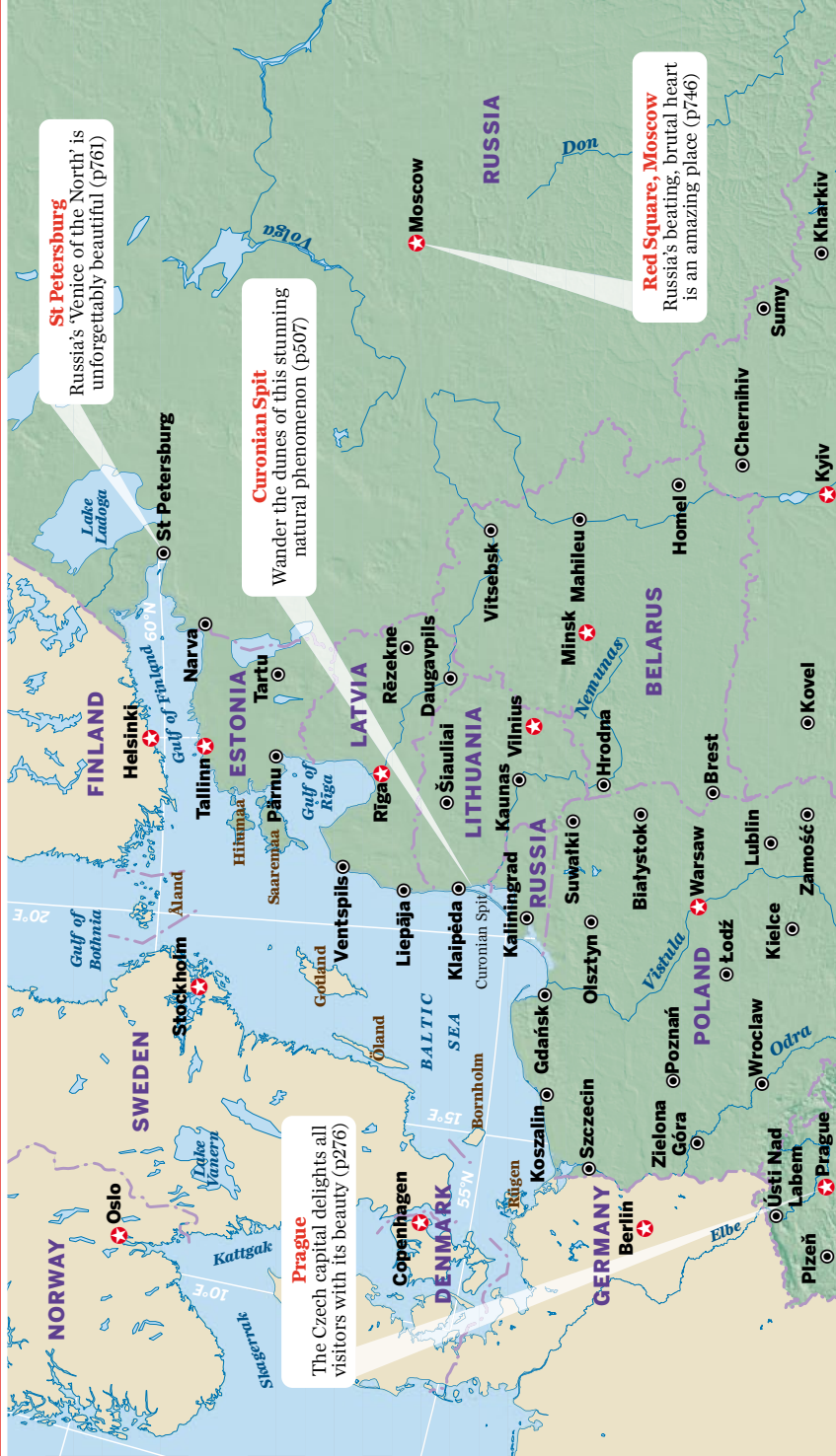
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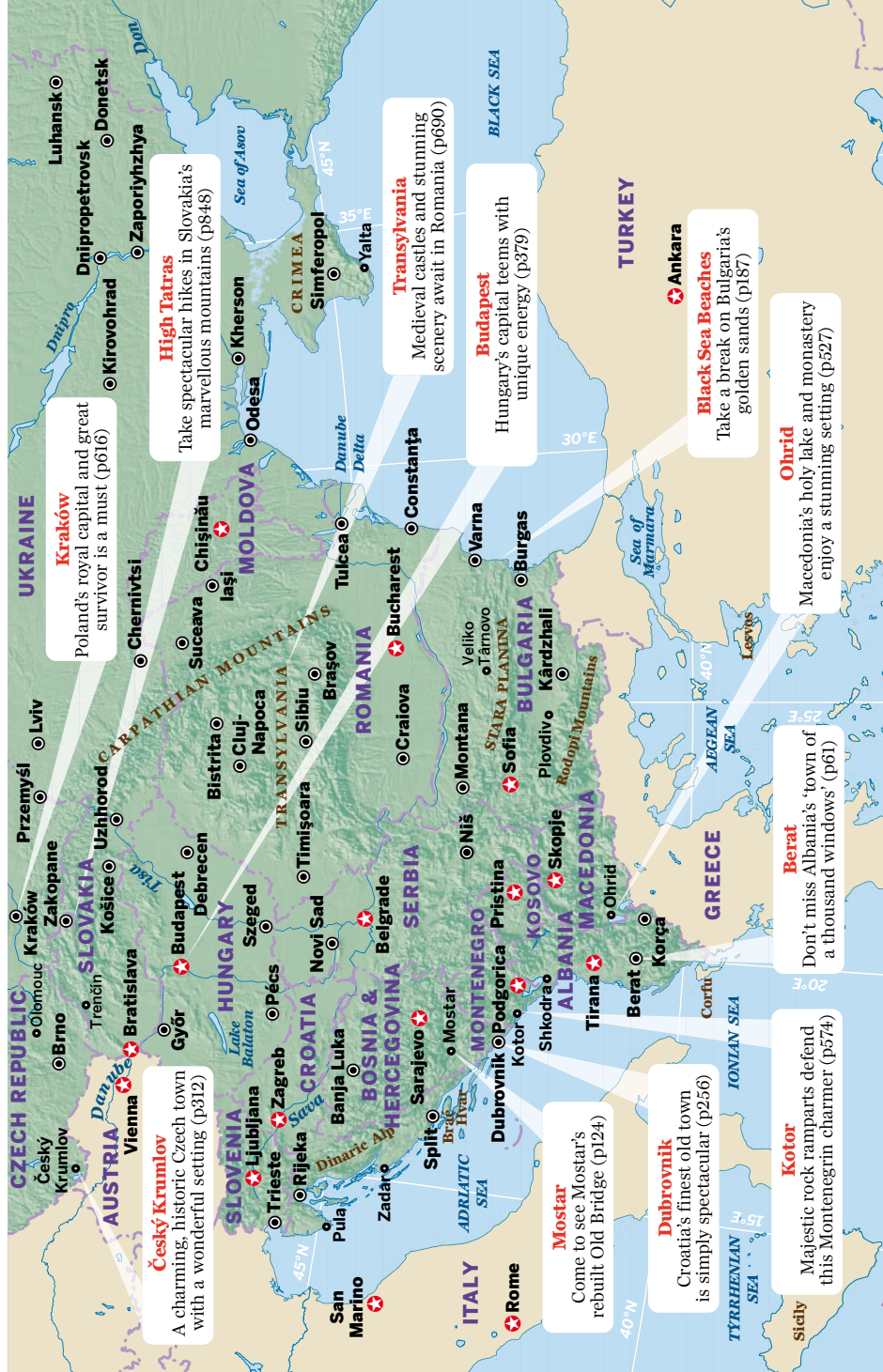
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# › Eastern Europe

## Top Experiences ›





**Ukraine**  
**Kraków**  
Poland's royal capital and great survivor is a must (p616)

**Český Krumlov**  
A charming, historic Czech town with a wonderful setting (p312)

**High Tatras**  
Take spectacular hikes in Slovakia's marvellous mountains (p848)

**Transylvania**  
Medieval castles and stunning scenery await in Romania (p690)

**Budapest**  
Hungary's capital teems with unique energy (p379)

**Dubrovnik**  
Croatia's finest old town is simply spectacular (p256)

**Mostar**  
Come to see Mostar's rebuilt Old Bridge (p124)

**Black Sea Beaches**  
Take a break on Bulgaria's golden sands (p187)

**Ohrid**  
Macedonia's holy lake and monastery enjoy a stunning setting (p527)

**Berat**  
Don't miss Albania's 'town of a thousand windows' (p61)

**Kotor**  
Majestic rock ramparts defend this Montenegrin charmer (p574)

# itineraries

*Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travellers.*



Two Weeks

## Essential Eastern Europe

Begin your trip in **Prague**, spending several days absorbing the Old Town, Malá Strana and the magnificent Prague Castle. Don't miss nearby towns such as beer lovers' mecca **Plzeň** and beautiful **Kutná Hora**.

On day five head by train into Poland and regal **Kraków**, with its gobsmacking Old Town and the vast Rynek Główny (Main Market Sq). Spending three nights here allows you to get to know the Wawel Castle complex, off-beat Kazimierz and a day trip to harrowing **Oświęcim** (Auschwitz).

On day eight head south to Slovakia, where you'll pass through magnificent scenery in the High Tatras before arriving in **Bratislava**, with its grand castle and wonderful Danube views.

On day 10 take a boat down the Danube to **Budapest**, where you can spend hours in luxurious sulphur baths, explore the famous coffee houses and take in the dazzling art and architecture of the forward-looking Hungarian capital. From here visit the Hungarian countryside – try the baroque city of **Eger**, or **Pécs**, full of relics from the Turkish occupation.



## Three Weeks East of East Tour

Begin in bustling **Warsaw**, where you can see the reconstructed Old Town and learn about its dark history. From here, head by train to **Lviv**, Ukraine's most beautiful city, and spend a day enjoying the Old Town's churches and the undeniable beauty of a city that is yet to be discovered by the tour-group crowd. From Lviv, continue by train to fascinating and historic **Kyiv**, the Jerusalem of East Slavonic culture.

After a few days enjoying the sights in the Ukrainian capital, including the awesome Caves Monastery Complex, take the sleeper train to the megalopolis **Moscow**, Europe's biggest city and a place of striking extremes, dazzling wealth and gridlocked traffic. Drink in the history of the Kremlin, see Lenin's Mausoleum, St Basil's Cathedral and Red Sq, and sample the nightlife and fashion for which the city is now rightly famous.

On day 10 get out of Moscow and visit picturesque **Veliky Novgorod** en route to the beautiful baroque and neoclassical architecture of mind-blowing **St Petersburg**. You can easily spend three or four days in the city itself, although there are abundant sights outside it as well, such as the tsarist palaces of Petrodvorets or Tsarskoe Selo.

From Russia take the train to Estonia's magical capital, **Tallinn**, where you can soak up the medieval Old Town and the rural delights of **Saaremaa** before heading south to Latvia. The Latvian capital **Riga** boasts Europe's finest collection of art nouveau architecture and is a delightful place to spend a few days. Latvia has plenty of other highlights to offer though, such as the caves and medieval castles of **Sigulda** and the breathtaking Baltic coastline around **Ventspils**. Finally, cross into Lithuania, where a couple of nights in charming **Vilnius** will reveal the Baltic's least known and most underrated capital. From Vilnius make a trip to the huge sand dunes and fragile ecological environment of the amazing **Curonian Spit**. Those who have made the effort to get a visa can then take the train to the isolated republic of Belarus and its Stalinist-style capital **Minsk** before re-entering Poland and heading back to Warsaw.





## Four Weeks The Balkans & Beyond

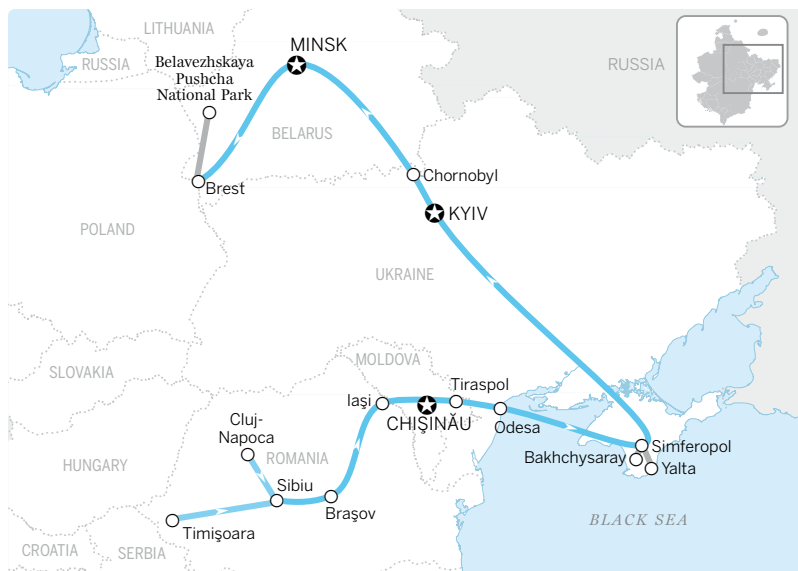
Begin in lively little Slovenia, with a cheap flight to charming **Ljubljana**. Indulge in superb scenery and adrenaline-rush mountain sports in the **Julian Alps** before heading south to the Croatian coast and working your way through the beaches along the **Dalmatian coast**. Stop in **Dubrovnik** to explore the Old Town, its vast ramparts and the surrounding islands, which shouldn't be missed. Take a side trip to Bosnia – perhaps a day trip to **Mostar** to see the legendary bridge and the interesting multi-ethnic community that has enjoyed rejuvenation since the Balkan War, or a night or two in the bustling capital of **Sarajevo**.

Continue south into Montenegro, one of Europe's youngest countries. Visit the historic walled city of **Kotor**, see the wonderful coastline and surrounding hills, and enjoy some of the country's beautiful beaches around **Sveti Stefan** before heading into Albania.

From the northern city of **Shkodra** take a bus straight on to **Tirana**, a mountain-shrouded ramshackle capital on the rise. Make an excursion to historic **Kruja** and the gorgeous Unesco-listed heritage town of **Berat** before taking a bus through the mountains into little-explored Macedonia, ending up in beautiful **Ohrid**. Spend at least two days here, enjoying the wonderful monastery and swimming in the eponymous lake. Make your way to **Skopje**, Macedonia's fun capital, from where you can head overland into Bulgaria.

Your obvious first stop is **Sofia**, one of Europe's best value capitals and a little-known gem. But there's more good stuff to come once you continue east to **Veliko Târnovo**, the awesome ancient capital and a university town with a dramatic setting over a fast-flowing river. From here it's an easy bus to the beach at **Varna**, complete with marvellous museums, Roman ruins and open-air nightclubs.

Finally plunge into Romania. Start off in **Bucharest** for excellent food and nightlife and a taste of megalomaniac architecture before heading to mythic Transylvania. Use **Cluj-Napoca** as your base for visiting the region of Maramures, then head for the medieval superlatives of **Sibiu** and **Braşov** before reaching the **Danube Delta**, where you can ogle birds, dine on fish and enjoy some of the quietest beaches in Europe.



## Four Weeks On The Edge

Begin with a cheap flight from Western Europe to **Timișoara** or **Cluj-Napoca** in Romania before getting medieval in **Sibiu** and/or **Brașov** and making a run to lively **Iasi**, near the Moldovan border.

Here the real adventure starts – cross into Moldova and head for the entertaining capital, **Chișinău**, where partying is a way of life and the excellent local wine is plentiful and cheap, including that from the must-visit vineyards of Cricova. Travel into Transdnestr, a country that doesn't officially exist and where the clock has resolutely stopped somewhere in the mid-1980s. In the fascinating 'capital' **Tiraspol** you'll feel as if time has stood still since the Soviet era, though change is slowly happening even here.

Entering Ukraine, make a beeline for the ethnic melting pot at **Odesa** and enjoy the relaxed pace of the Black Sea and its raucous nightlife during the summer months. If you want to check out the rest of the Crimea, head to **Simferopol**, the area's capital and transport hub. From here you can make a loop around the peninsula to admire the mountainous landscapes, the tsarist-era palaces near **Yalta**, and the fantastic Khan's Palace and monastery at **Bakhchysaray**.

When you have had your fill of sun and sea, head north to **Kyiv**, which demands several days' attention. This modern capital city is at once the ancient seat of Slavic and Orthodox culture and a modern, industrial Soviet city. Don't miss the Caves Monastery Complex and St Sophia's Cathedral. If you dare, book a tour to **Chornobyl** and become one of the few people in the world to visit the towns nearby to the ill-fated reactor No 4.

The final stop on this tour through the most remote parts of the region is Belarus, Europe's so-called 'last dictatorship'. Have a blast in monolithic **Minsk** and find a surprising amount going on in a city dominated by huge Stalinist avenues and Soviet memorials. Heading southwest, stop at **Brest** on the border and use it as a base to visit **Belavezhsкая Pushcha National Park**, where you'll be able to see Europe's largest mammal, the *zoobr* (European bison) as well as a host of other wild beauties before crossing back into the EU.





Four Weeks

## The Ionian to the Baltic

This trip takes you from Eastern Europe's south to its northern tip. Arrive in mountainous Albania by ferry from Corfu at the busy port of **Saranda**, then stay the night and try to see the glorious ruins of Butrint right on the Greek border. Afterwards, travel up through Albania to **Tiranë** via either **Gjirokastra** or **Berat** – two of Albania's loveliest old towns. Spend a day or two exploring the Albanian capital before taking the bus to **Shkodra** and journeying on to Montenegro.

Don't miss lovely **Kotor** and its spectacular setting and old town, before picking up an overnight sleeper train to Belgrade from **Bar**, 60km southeast of Kotor. The scenery en route is spectacular, especially around the **Morača Canyon**.

Arriving the next morning in **Belgrade** you'll be struck by how vibrant and rejuvenated the Serbian capital is – it's definitely worth giving it a couple of days. Continue north to **Novi Sad** – if you come in July you might catch the EXIT Festival, held annually in the city's historic hilltop fortress.

Cross into Hungary at pretty **Szeged** and head for **Lake Balaton** for some sublime swimming. Keep surging north into Slovakia, aiming for plucky traveller favourite **Bratislava**, where it's perfectly acceptable to kick back and enjoy the good food and nightlife for a few days before going on to the incredible scenery of **Slovenský Raj National Park**.

Crossing the Tatra Mountains into Poland, travel via **Kraków** to unsung gem **Wrocław**, spending a few days in both before dropping in on beautifully restored **Poznań**. From here, the Baltic is yours. Try any of the towns along the coast: **Hel** and **Leba** are both recommended for beaches, wildlife and water sports; **Malbork** is famed for Europe's biggest Gothic castle; while bustling Hanseatic **Gdansk** (formerly the German Free City of Danzig) is the thriving port city where WWII broke out and the Solidarity social movement was born. Next up is the plucky Russian Baltic enclave of **Kaliningrad** – remember to have sorted your visa ahead of your arrival – spend some time in the decidedly German city and venture out to see the **Curonian Spit** as well. Fly on to **St Petersburg**, the most northern city in this book, for several days spent in Eastern Europe's most beautiful architectural ensemble.



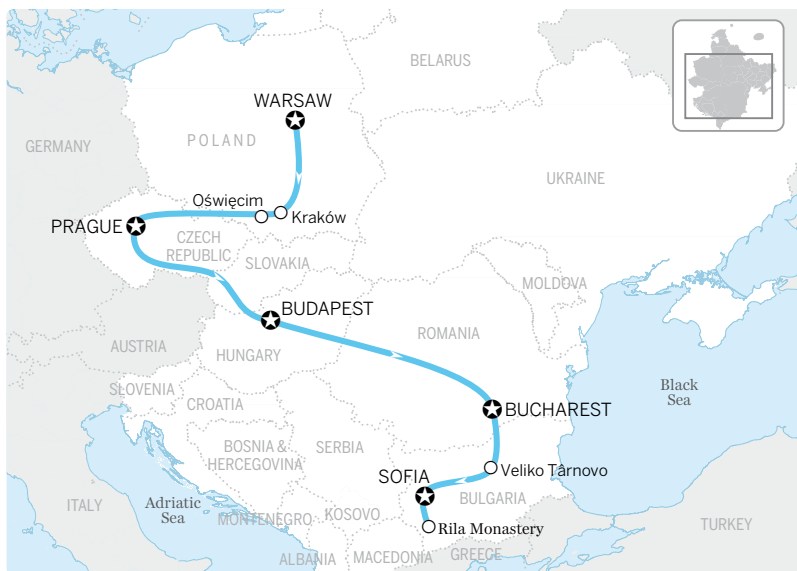
## Two Weeks Baltic Blast

This trip along the Baltic coast takes you through four very different countries and across a region that few travellers ever get to know beyond the universally loved capital cities of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. Beginning in the gloriously beautiful Baltic city of **St Petersburg** for three nights, see the Hermitage, the Admiralty and vast Nevsky Prospekt's mansions and palatial residences. For a real palace, head to the superbly restored out-of-town **Petrodvorets**, which belonged to Peter the Great and is positioned with glorious views over the Baltic.

Travel across the border to **Narva**, walking across the long bridge connecting Russia and Estonia while soaking up great views of the castle. Carry on to the Estonian capital **Tallinn** for two days and wander the charmingly chocolate-box streets of the 14th- and 15th-century Old Town before heading to the beautiful, remote and pine-forest-clad island of **Saaremaa** for a day or two's exploration. From Saaremaa, head to the inviting Estonian beach resort of **Pärnu** for a slice of Eastern European holidaymaking (think mud baths, Bacchanalian youth and golden-sand beaches) before continuing south into Latvia.

Stop off in cheerful, castle-rich **Sigulda** and spend a day or two walking in tranquil landscapes and thick forests of the **Gauja National Park** before going to **Riga** for a couple of nights. Latvia's delightful capital, where you can soak up the fantastic architecture, the Old Town and friendly atmosphere, has plenty to keep you interested for several days. Lithuania is next up – and it greets you straight away with its astounding hill of crosses in **Šiauliai**, a must-see even if there's no reason to dawdle. Charming university town **Kaunas** is Lithuania's second city and boasts a leafy old centre and friendly locals, as well as being just a short distance away from the chilling Ninth Fort concentration camp.

Finally, end your journey in beautiful **Vilnius**, the country's crowning glory, which boasts the biggest Old Town in the Baltic and is still relatively undiscovered by tour groups. To add to its quirky kudos, don't miss the Frank Zappa memorial or the wonderfully idiosyncratic Užupis Republic, a kernal of counter culture at the city's heart.



## Two Weeks Eastern Europe 101

Only got two weeks and want to see the most you can in such a limited time? This itinerary is for you. Start off by flying to the Polish capital **Warsaw** for one night, seeing the beautifully restored Old Town and eating delicious *pierogi* (dumplings) before taking the train south to **Kraków** for two nights, giving you time to see the Old Town, Wawel Castle and Kazimierz, and to do a day trip to **Oświęcim** (Auschwitz) before taking the overnight train to **Prague** for two days of intensive sightseeing – Prague Castle, Charles Bridge, wandering the Malá Strana and the Old Town and tasting genuine Czech Beer in a local brewery.

Take another overnight train to **Budapest** for two nights in Hungary. Soak in the city's glorious Gellért Baths, take a cruise on the Danube, see the magnificent Hungarian Parliament building and wander Castle Hill before yet another overnight train to Romania's much underrated capital, **Bucharest**. With a one-night stay you can cover the main sights, including the amazing Palace of Parliament, wander the small historic centre and pick up a sense of the city's energy in its bars and clubs.

Continue by train to wonderful and much-overlooked **Veliko Târnovo** in Northern Bulgaria for one night, a stunning and unusually located university town and a far more 'everyday' Eastern European town than most national capitals. While here, find the time to see the ancient Tsarevets Fortress (and stick around for the nightly summer light show) before finishing up your two weeks by taking the train to **Sofia** for two last nights that will give you a taste of the plucky Bulgarian capital, including the wonderful golden-domed Aleksander Nevski Church. On your last day take a day trip through the Rila Mountains to the unmissable **Rila Monastery**, the country's holiest site and one of the most important monasteries in Eastern Europe. From here you can fly out of Sofia or continue to bigger air hubs such as nearby Athens or İstanbul to get a flight home.

➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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**Anja Mutić**

**Croatia** It's been more than two decades since Anja left her native Croatia. The journey took her to several countries before she made New York City her base 13 years ago. But the roots are calling and she's been returning to Croatia frequently for work and play. She's happy that Croatia's beauties are appreciated worldwide but secretly longs for the time when you could head to Hvar and hear the sound of crickets instead of blasting music. Anja is online at [www.everthenomad.com](http://www.everthenomad.com).

**Brandon Presser**

**Latvia** His wanderlust bigger than his wallet, Brandon earned his backpacker stripes after an epic overland adventure from Morocco to Finland. He then joined the glamorous ranks of eternal nomadism, and has since travelled to over 75 countries and has contributed to roughly 40 Lonely Planet titles. He is the lead author of the *Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania* series, and is always delighted to return to the Baltic where he puts his Harvard art history degree to good use while

checking out Riga's surplus of evocative art nouveau architecture. For more about Brandon, check out [www.brandonpresser.com](http://www.brandonpresser.com).

**Tim Richards**

**Poland** Tim taught English in Kraków in the 1990s, and was fascinated by Poland's post-communist transition. He's returned repeatedly for Lonely Planet, deepening his relationship with this beautiful, complex country. In 2011 Tim released a Kindle ebook collecting his media articles about Poland, *We Have Here the Homicide*. When he's not on the road for Lonely Planet, Tim is a freelance journalist in Melbourne, Australia, writing about travel and the arts. You can find

his blog and social media contacts at [www.iwriter.com.au](http://www.iwriter.com.au).

**Tamara Sheward**

**Serbia** After years of freelance travel writing, rock'n'roll journalism and insalubrious authorhood, Tamara joined the Lonely Planet ranks as the presenter of LPTV's *Roads Less Travelled: Cambodia* documentary. Since then, she's stuck to covering decidedly less leech-infested destinations, including arctic Russia and Serbia. She lives between northern Serbia, a mountain shack in Montenegro and Melbourne with her husband Dušan, whom she never would have met were it not

for some late night 'researching' for the last edition of *Eastern Europe*.

**Luke Waterson**

**Slovakia** Dividing his love affair with Slovakia between the castles, the mountains, *pirohy* (potato dumplings) and (more unexplainably) Soviet architecture, Luke has, besides contributions to 15 Lonely Planet titles, written for BBC Travel, the *Guardian*, Avalon Travel Publishing and a clutch of in-flight magazines (thus keeping you entertained even in mid-air). He lives on the very edge of Bratislava, conveniently located for slurping Small Carpathian wine and his favourite (non-writing) weekend activity is hiking into the hills to a quirky *krčma* (rural pub).

Read more about Luke at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/lukewaterson](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/lukewaterson)

**Chris Deliso**

**Macedonia** Chris Deliso is an American travel writer and journalist who has been based in Macedonia for over a decade, writing considerably about the country since then in a range of world media. In addition to covering Macedonia for the current book, he has written for Lonely Planet guides to Greece, Crete, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria. His original enthusiasm for the region and introduction to its cultures and history came with an MPhil in Byzantine Studies at Oxford University in 1999.

**Marc Di Duca**

**Ukraine** Driven by an urge to discover Eastern Europe's wilder side, Marc first hit Kyiv one dark, snow-flecked night in early 1998. Many prolonged stints, countless near misses with Kyiv's metro doors and a few too many overheated bus journeys later, he still never misses a chance to fine-tune his Russian while exploring far-flung nooks of this immense land. Marc has penned guides to Moscow, Siberia's Lake Baikal, Russia and the Trans-Siberian Railway; this is his

23rd Lonely Planet contribution.

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**Peter Dragicevich**

**Montenegro** After a dozen years working for newspapers and magazines in both his native New Zealand and Australia, Peter ditched the desk and hit the road. While it was family ties that first drew him to the Balkans, it's the history, natural beauty and intriguing people that keep bringing him back. He wrote Lonely Planet's first guide to the newly independent Montenegro and has contributed to dozens of other Lonely Planet titles, including four successive editions of this book.

**Mark Elliott**

**Bosnia & Hercegovina** British-born travel writer Mark Elliott was only 11 when his family first dragged him to Sarajevo and stood him in the now defunct concrete footsteps of Gavrilo Princip. Fortunately no Austro-Hungarian emperors were passing at the time. He has since visited virtually every corner of Bosnia and Hercegovina, supping fine Hercegovinian wines with master vintners, talking philosophy with Serb monks and Sufi mystics, and drinking more Bosnian coffee

than any healthy stomach should be subjected to.

**Steve Fallon**

**Hungary** Steve, who has written every edition of the Lonely Planet *Hungary* guidebook, first visited Magyarország in the early 1980s by chance. It was a brief visit but he immediately fell in love with thermal baths, Tokaj wine and *bablevés* (bean soup). Not able to survive on the occasional fleeting fix, he moved to Budapest in 1992, where he could enjoy all three in abundance. Now based in London, Steve returns to Hungary regularly for all these things and more: *pálinka* (fruit-flavoured

brandy), art nouveau and the haunting voice of Marta Sebestyén.

**Anna Kaminski**

**Lithuania** Having been going to Lithuania since it was still part of the Soviet Union, Anna finds a lot to appreciate about the country, from the familiar relics of Communism to the cold beetroot soup – a childhood favourite. Vilnius's cobbled streets aside, she particularly enjoys revisiting the fishing villages and sand dunes of Curonian Spit.



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Tom Masters

**Coordinating Author, Albania, Belarus, Kosovo, Moldova** Tom is a British writer and photographer whose work has taken him to some of the strangest and most challenging countries on earth. Having lived in Russia, travelled to all corners of Eastern Europe and currently residing in East Berlin, he has a good understanding of what makes the former communist world tick. You can find more of Tom's work at [www.tommasters.net](http://www.tommasters.net).



### Carolyn Bain

**Estonia** Melbourne-born Carolyn got her first glimpse behind the Iron Curtain in Poland in early 1989, while a student in Denmark. It was the year communism unravelled throughout Eastern Europe, and thus began her fascination. Since then, on regular visits to the Baltic region she has applauded the renewed independence and flourishing creativity here. Among other destinations, she has covered Sweden, Denmark and Iceland for Lonely Planet. Estonia holds a special place in her heart for combining the best of Eastern Europe and Scandinavia and coming up with something heartwarmingly unique.



### Mark Baker

**Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovenia** Based permanently in Prague, Mark has lived and worked in Eastern Europe for more than 20 years, first as a journalist for The Economist Group and then for Bloomberg News and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He travels frequently throughout the region and counts Bulgaria, Slovenia and Romania among his favourite countries in Europe. In addition to this book, Mark is co-author of the Lonely Planet guides to Prague, Slovenia, and Romania and Bulgaria.



### Greg Bloom

**Russia** Greg cut his teeth in the former Soviet Union as a journalist and later editor-in-chief of the *Kyiv Post*. He left Ukraine in 2003, but returns frequently to the region. In the service of Lonely Planet, he has been detained in Uzbekistan, taken a *shlagbaum* to the head in Kyiv, swam in the dying Aral Sea, snowboarded down volcanoes in Kamchatka and hit 100km/h in a Latvian bobsled. These days Greg lives in Cambodia. Read about his trips at [www.mytripjournal.com/bloomblogs](http://www.mytripjournal.com/bloomblogs).

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[lonelyplanet.com/members/gbloom4](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/gbloom4)

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