

# STOCKHOLM TO HELSINKI: A BALTIC JOURNEY

with Dr Matthew Laing



*Discover a shared history of Vikings, Teutonic knights,  
Hanseatic traders and empire, on this Baltic journey*

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit Viking archaeological sites in Sweden and admire Viking treasures in museums
- Stroll beautifully preserved medieval towns of the Hanseatic League, such as Visby and Tallinn
- Marvel at the Vasa Ship Museum and other sites linked to the powerful Swedish Empire
- Clamber through the castles of the Teutonic knights in Latvia and Estonia, and appreciate world-class architecture and design in Helsinki
- Enjoy the renowned musical traditions of the region, such as the choirs of Estonia and the music of Jean Sibelius in Finland
- Experience the rugged and pristine landscapes of the Baltic coast and Nordic forests, and an overnight ferry crossing

## IN A NUTSHELL

**DATES:** 26 August – 10  
September 2024

### ITINERARY:

Visby (3n), Uppsala (2n), Riga  
(3n), Tallinn (3n), Helsinki (4n)

**PRICE:** \$12,850pp twinshare

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:** \$2,170  
for sole use of a double room

**FITNESS:** Moderate: walking  
tours on most days; some  
transfers by boat and domestic  
flight; ability to move your own  
bag up to 100m if required

**GROUP SIZE:** max. 20 places



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## OVERVIEW

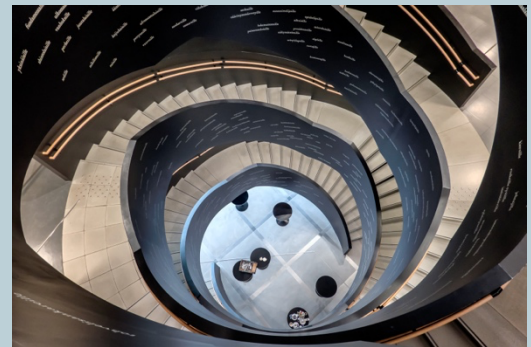
The nations nestled around the shores of the Baltic Sea on the northern edge of Europe are a patchwork of distinctive peoples and cultures. Yet their history is a shared one, created by groups of Vikings, Teutonic knights, Hanseatic traders, and then the Swedish and Russian Empires who criss-crossed the sea, seeking fame and fortune.

This carefully considered journey from Sweden, across the Baltic to Latvia then Estonia and north to Finland, offers a kaleidoscope of experiences which encapsulate nearly 2,000 years of history, art and culture. We begin on the island of Gotland, exploring Viking and Hanseatic sites before visiting Sweden's medieval capital of Uppsala, north of Stockholm. A journey across the Baltic takes us to Riga, the elegant and ancient capital of Latvia. Here we get a sense of the millennial struggle between Germany and Russia for control and influence in the Baltic region. We then head to Tallinn, capital of Estonia, with its impressive walled old town. The final leg of our journey takes us to fiercely independent Finland, whose identity was created at the beginning of the twentieth century and whose forward-looking culture is a feast for lovers of contemporary architecture and design.

We visit archaeological sites from the Viking era, stroll through medieval cities, explore stunning private and public art collections and experience the strong musical culture through which national identity is expressed. The tour takes place at the end of the summer, when the days are still long and the weather mild, and is complemented by the expertise of your tour leader Dr Matthew Laing.

## TOUR LEADER

**Dr Matthew Laing** is a historian and political scientist, with a PhD from the Australian National University. An experienced tour leader, Matthew has led small group cultural tours to the United States of America, Canada, Scandinavia and Western Europe, and he is a national lecturer for the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society (ADFAS). A passionate communicator, Dr Matthew Laing is also a Senior Content Producer at Wondrium, The Teaching Company responsible for The Great Courses.



*Above, from top: Visby, in Sweden; the distinctive Blackheads House in Riga; striking contemporary designs in Helsinki's Public Library*

*Below, the Stockholm archipelago*



## DETAILED ITINERARY

### MONDAY 26 AUGUST – ARRIVAL (D)

After individual check-in, we meet in Terminal 5 at Stockholm Arlanda Airport at the departure gate for our mid-afternoon flight to Visby on the island of Gotland, south of Stockholm. We check into our hotel this afternoon before reconvening for dinner. Overnight Visby.

### TUESDAY 27 AUGUST – MEDIEVAL VISBY (B, L)

The walled medieval city of Visby was a Viking site on the island before it came under the control of the German Hanseatic League, prized for its strategic position on the Baltic Sea. This morning on a **walking tour**, we explore the ruined churches, historic buildings and well-preserved walls, towers and gates which encircle the old town. After a **welcome lunch** we examine unique pre-Viking stones, medieval armour, wooden sculptures and legendary Viking silver hordes at the **Gotland Museum**. This evening is at leisure. Overnight Visby.

### WEDNESDAY 28 AUGUST – FROM THE BRONZE AGE TO THE HANSA (B)

After a talk this morning, we explore a few of Gotland's more than 200 archaeological sites, ranging from Bronze Age burial grounds to ruined medieval monasteries. Our circuit around the island includes the 'stone boat' burial site at **Gnisvärd** and **Stavgard**, a reconstructed village where the remains of a great hall of an important chieftain or king were discovered. Overnight Visby.

### THURSDAY 29 AUGUST – TO UPPSALA (B, D)

There is a talk in the hotel before we check out and transfer to the port and board a ferry for the scenic **crossing of the Stockholm archipelago** to Nynäshamn. On arrival we travel by coach to the historic university town of **Uppsala** north of Stockholm, the spiritual and intellectual heartland of the Swedish Empire. Although its heritage stretches back to the Iron Age, Uppsala is particularly associated with the reign of Gustav Vasa, arguably Sweden's most remarkable ruler. After checking into our hotel, there is dinner in a local restaurant tonight. Overnight Uppsala.



## FRIDAY 30 AUGUST – UPPSALA (B)

As one of Sweden's oldest cities Uppsala has played a significant role in the political, historical and intellectual development of the country. This morning we embark on a **guided walking tour** of the town and visit the impressive **Uppsala Cathedral**, built in the thirteenth century and brimming with artworks and monuments of historical interest. As the seat of the archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, it has hosted the coronations of the Swedish monarch since the Protestant Reformation. We explore the fine collection in the **cathedral's treasury**, housed in galleries high above the cathedral floor. Next, we visit the house and garden of botanist and physician **Carl Linnaeus**, an important Enlightenment scholar whose taxonomic system of classifying plants revolutionised biology. In the afternoon we head to **Old Uppsala** to view the Viking burial mounds dating back to the sixth century. Afterwards, we return to the hotel by coach for an evening at leisure. Overnight Uppsala.

## SATURDAY 31 AUGUST – STOCKHOLM TO RIGA (B, L)

After a relaxed morning, we check out and travel the short distance back to Stockholm. We visit the **Swedish History Museum** to view its stunning 'gold rooms' and its excellent medieval galleries. After lunch, we walk through the cobblestone streets of **Gamla Stan**, the old town, where we can admire colourful sixteenth- and seventeenth-century townhouses and squares. A panoramic coach tour takes us past some remarkable architectural treasures, such as the **City Hall**, a fine example of the National Romantic style of architecture. Later this afternoon we visit the **Vasa Museum**, where the painstakingly restored seventeenth-century ship salvaged from Stockholm Harbour is on display. This evening we fly across the Baltic to Riga, the capital of Latvia. Upon arrival we transfer to the hotel and check in. Overnight Riga.

## SUNDAY 1 SEPTEMBER – HISTORIC RIGA (B, L)

In the late morning your tour leader will provide an overview of Latvia's history before we explore the World Heritage-listed Old Town on a **guided walking tour**. Highlights include the Gothic style **St Peter's Church**, Riga Castle and the guild houses of the merchants and craftsmen, who flourished when Riga was a Hanseatic trading centre. After free time for lunch, we explore the comprehensive collection of Latvian art at the **Latvian National Museum of Art**. Tonight, schedules permitting, we attend a performance at the highly regarded Riga Opera, whose musical directors have included Richard Wagner. Overnight Riga.



## **MONDAY 2 SEPTEMBER – ART NOUVEAU IN RIGA (B)**

This morning we visit a neighbourhood just near the old town to admire some of Riga's impressive Art Nouveau buildings, mostly constructed between 1901 to 1906. We continue to the vast Neo-Byzantine **Nativity of Christ Orthodox Cathedral**, an emblem of Latvia's long and complex relationship with Russia. In the afternoon there is an optional excursion to the **Riga Central Market**, which operates from reconstructed German Zeppelin hangars, or you may wish to see the wonderful range of antique cars on display at the Riga Motor Museum on the outskirts of town. Overnight Riga.

## **TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER – TO TALLINN VIA SIGULDA (B, L, D)**

Today we depart and travel by coach to the picturesque village of Sigulda, north of Riga, to visit the **Castle of the Livonian Order**. The castle was built in 1207 by a military order of monks, the Livonian Brothers of the Sword, who sought not only to convert the Latvians to Christianity but also to defend the borders of the Hanseatic-controlled territories in the Baltic. Crossing the border into Estonia, we stop in **Pärnu**, a picturesque town on the Gulf of Finland, before continuing to Tallinn. Tonight we dine in a local restaurant. Overnight Tallinn.

## **WEDNESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER – TALLINN (B)**

After a brief talk on Estonia's history, a local guide shows us through the courtyards, spired churches and merchant houses of the walled **Lower Town**, and then on to **Toompea Castle** overlooking the city. The castle is the birthplace of Tallinn, built by the Knights of the Sword as a fortress in 1229, while the current building with its baroque façade of 1773 is home to the Estonian parliament. Also on Castle Square is the grand **Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral**, a nineteenth-century symbol of the tsar's power in Estonia. The remainder of the afternoon and evening is at leisure. Overnight Tallinn.

## **THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER – MODERN ART AND THE MUSIC OF ARVO PÄRT (B)**

This morning we visit two important art sites in Tallinn. **Kadriorg Palace** was commissioned by Peter the Great as a summer residence for his second wife Catherine I. Surrounded by a garden of fountains, hedges and flowerbeds and modelled on Versailles, it exhibits paintings from Russia and Western Europe. Close by is the striking contemporary architecture of the **Kumu Art Museum**, which houses Estonian art from the eighteenth century to the present. This afternoon we journey to a forest on the shores of the Baltic west of Tallinn, to visit the **Arvo Pärt Centre**. Pärt is one of the most important 'contemporary classical' composers of our times, celebrated for his mesmeric 'holy minimalism' style. Overnight Tallinn.



## FRIDAY 6 SEPTEMBER – TO HELSINKI (B, D)

We depart Estonia today, crossing the Baltic on a **ferry to Helsinki**, a journey of just a few hours. After lunch in a local restaurant in Helsinki's charming Esplanade, we commence an **orientation tour** of Helsinki by coach. Our stops include **Senate Square**, an exceptional example of neo-classical architecture, created when Finland was a grand duchy of the Russian Empire. Nearby is the **Katajanokka peninsula**, with fine examples of Art Nouveau architecture and the Tsarist **Uspenski Cathedral**, whose bricks come from a Swedish fortress destroyed by the Russians in the Crimean War. Later, we admire another of Helsinki's architectural gems, the **Helsinki railway station** designed by Eliel Saarinen. Overnight Helsinki.

## SATURDAY 7 SEPTEMBER – ART AND ARCHITECTURE (B)

There will be an overview of Finland's modern art and architecture this morning before we stroll to the nearby **Ateneum Art Museum**. As well as Finnish art, the Ateneum holds significant works by Chagall, Cézanne, van Gogh and Munch. We continue to the **Alvar Aalto Museum** for a guided tour of the celebrated architect and designer's home and studio. After free time for lunch, we visit the **Didrichsen Art Museum**, a unique combination of seaside villa and gallery. Private collectors Marie-Louise and Gunnar Didrichsen amassed a wealth of modernist Finnish and international art, including a substantial number of sculptures by Henry Moore. A brief stop on **Seurasaari Island** allows us to stroll through an outdoor museum of traditional Finnish architecture, with historic wooden buildings from all around the country. Schedules permitting, this evening we hope to attend a performance of orchestral music by one of Finland's renowned orchestras. Overnight Helsinki.

## SUNDAY 8 SEPTEMBER – MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN HELSINKI (B)

Ever since Finnish independence in 1918, Helsinki has been the showcase of the country's forward-looking aspirations, with stunning modern and contemporary architecture a key form of expression. Our architectural walking tour includes modernist classics such as Aalto's **Academic bookstore**, as well as an array of fine buildings created in the last 20 years, such as the birch-wood **Chapel of Silence**, the light-filled **Helsinki University Library** and the curved lines of **Oodi Library**. The afternoon and evening are at leisure or there is the option to take a ferry to stroll the ramparts of **Soumenlinna Sea Fortress**, located on islands facing the Baltic. Overnight Helsinki.





## **MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER – ART NOUVEAU IN THE COUNTRYSIDE (B, L, D)**

In the first decades of the twentieth century, a small circle of painters, musicians and architects led Finland's cultural revival, while WWI, a struggle for independence from Russia and then a civil war caused immense social upheaval. Today we explore some of their haunts away from the city. Our first stop is **Hvitträsk**, the former studio and home of architects Eliel Saarinen, Herman Gesellius and Armas Lindgren, situated above an iconic tree-lined lake and designed throughout in a consistent Nordic Art Nouveau style. After lunch at Hvitträsk, we continue to Lake Tuusula for a guided tour of **Ainola**, the home of composer Jean Sibelius, who sought musical inspiration from the traditional scenery of his homeland. Later, we visit **Halosenniemi**, the atelier of Pekka Halonen, a fine portraitist and landscape artist of the early twentieth century. Back in Helsinki, we gather for our farewell dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Helsinki.

## **TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER – DEPARTURE (B)**

Our tour arrangements conclude after breakfast in the hotel. Our partner Mary Rossi Travel would be pleased to assist in your onward travel arrangements, including flights and international travel insurance (a condition of joining the tour).



## INCLUSIONS

- 15 nights' accommodation at 4\* and 4\* Superior hotels
- All breakfasts and 10 lunches or dinners
- All ground transport, local ferry transport, guided tours and entrance fees to sites as mentioned in the itinerary, and tipping
- Two one-way flights in Economy class, Stockholm-Visby and Stockholm-Riga
- Tickets for ferry travel in Comfort Lounge (refreshments included) from Tallinn-Helsinki
- Expertise of and commentary by Australian tour leader throughout
- Best available tickets to 2 x performances (pending release of schedules)
- Expertise and assistance of a tour manager, throughout

## HOTELS

**Donners Hotell 4\* Visby, 3 nights**

<https://donnershotell.se/en/>

**Grand Hotell Hörnan 4\* Uppsala, 2 nights**

<https://www.grandhotellhornan.com/>

**Hotel Neiburgs 4\* Riga, 3 nights**

<https://neiburgs.com/>

**Hotel Telegraaf 4\* Superior Tallinn, 3 nights**

<https://www.telegraafhotel.com/>

**Radisson Blu Plaza 4\* Superior Helsinki, 4 nights**

<https://www.radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-blu-helsinki>

*NB: hotels of a similar standard may be substituted.*

## TOUR DETAILS

### DATES

26 August – 10 September 2024

### TOUR LEADER

Dr Matthew Laing

### ITINERARY

Visby – 3 nights

Uppsala – 2 nights

Riga – 3 nights

Tallinn – 3 nights

Helsinki – 4 nights

### PRICE

\$12,850pp twinshare

### SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$2,170 for sole use of a double room

### FITNESS

Moderate: walking tours on most days; ability to stand in museums for over an hour; ability to move your own bag up to 100m if required

### GROUP SIZE

Maximum 20 places

### DEPOSIT

\$1,500pp at the time of booking

### FINAL PAYMENT DUE

12 June 2024

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By booking on this tour, you accept our terms and conditions, which can be found on our website:

<https://www.limelight-arts-travel.com.au/terms-and-conditions-tours>



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