

Prolog:

The Baltic States had always fascinated me, not the least because part of my family part of my family has origins in the neighboring lands formerly known as *Eastern Prussia*.

In an era now long gone, this corner of Northeastern Europe used to be a part of Eurasia where multiculturalism was an integral part of a vibrant, daily lived reality.

Here countless cultures inspired one another to create some of the greatest stories ever told in the cultural history of humanity.

The Baltic nations are situated to the North of Poland, wedged in between the Russian behemoth and a rough coast chastised by relentless onslaught of the Eastern Sea - itself a peculiar sight, as it is an inland ocean, young by geological terms yet encircled by the land masses of over half a dozen old nations with ancient histories.

Nature shaped the shores along the Baltic Sea with a heavy hand, and indeed the forces of wind and rain, winter ice and summer heat leave their mark on the land as well as on the people.

Even in May an average day might start out with the biting arctic cold of vanishing night, only to climax at noon with the stymy heat of Transcaucasia.

The Baltic States: ¹

The term **Baltic states** (aka *the Baltics*, *Baltic nations*, *Baltic countries*) refers to a group of nations situated east of Baltic Sea, which in modern days first gained independence after the collapse of the Russian Empire, in the vaning days of World War I.

The groups is nowadays comprised of the contiguous trio of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; Finland used to considered part that group from the 1920s to 1939.

Yet the term *Baltic peoples* only refer to the indigenous populations of Latvia and Lithuania, while the indigenous populations of Estonia and Finland are of Finnic origin.

During the historical era of the Middle Ages the region was partly dominated by the Teutonic Knights of the German Order, which established the independent national identity of the Baltic Germans (aka *the Livonian Crusade*).

Names and Flags		Estonia Latvia Lithuania
Capitals		Tallinn; Riga; Vilnius
Languages		Estonian; Latvian; Lithuanian; Minorities: Polish & Russian
Area		
-	Total	175,015 km ² (91 st) 67,523 square miles
-	Water (%)	2.23% (3,909 km ²)
Population		
-	2010	6,607,400 (100 th) estimate
-	Density	39.5/km ² (172 nd) 102.4/square miles
GDP (PPP)		2011 estimate
-	Total	\$119.567 billion (62 nd)
-	Per Capita	\$17,465 (50 th)
GDP (nominal)		2011 estimate
-	Total	\$86.799 billion (65 th)
-	Per Capita	\$12,679 (47 th)

Legend: ¹ Part of this information has been sourced from Wikipedia.

Lithuania:

Political & Legal:

- Official Name: Republic of Lithuania
- Area: 65,300 km²
- Population: 3.254 million ²
- Population density: 52 people per km² (European average is 70/km²)
- Political System:
 - Parliamentary, representative Democracy;
 - Presidential Head of State (President),
 - Executive Power (Government),
 - Legislature (Seimas Parliament)
- President: Dalia Grybauskaitė (until 2013)
- Alliances: Member of European Union and Nato, member of *Schengen Treaty* since 2007.
- Time Zone: GMT+2
- Capital: Vilnius (population of 548,835 ²).
- Largest Cities:
 - Kaunas (population of 348,624),
 - Klaipėda (population of 182,752),
 - Šiauliai (population of 125,453),
 - Panevėžys (population of 111,959)
- Coat of Arms: White Vytis (the ancient knight) on red background.
- National Flag: Three equal, horizontal stripes: Yellow, Green, Red

Ethnic & Cultural:

- Ethnic Groups:
 - 83.1% Lithuanian
 - 6% Polish
 - 4.8% Russian
 - 1.1% Belorussian
 - 5% Ukrainian, Hebrew, Latvian, Tartar, etc.
- Baltic Statehood:
 - Lithuania, highest population of all Baltic States.
 - The first nation to gain independence was Lithuania.
 - Day of Restitution and Independence is *11th March 1990*
- Languages: Lithuanian (official), Russian, English & Polish
- Religion:
 - 79% Roman Catholics
 - Orthodox Christians
 - Evangelical Reformers
 - Old Believers
 - Jews
 - Muslims
 - a.o.

Business Information

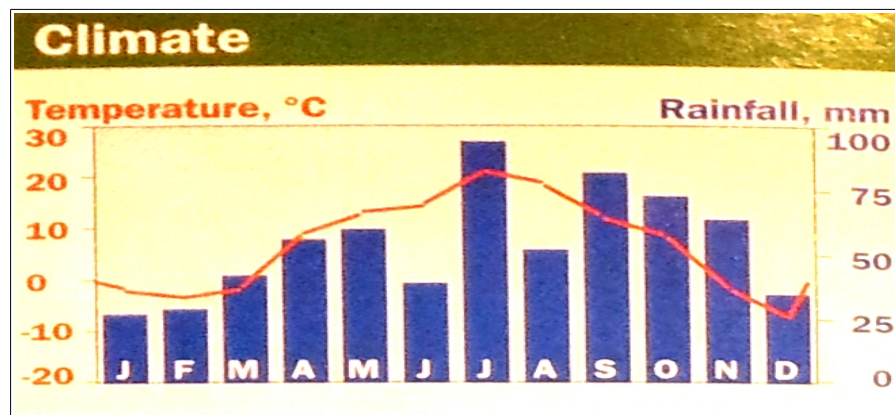
- Currency: Litas (Lt) - with 1 = 3.4528 Lt (2010)
- Telecommunications:
 - Phone Country Code: +370
 - GSM Service Providers: Omnitel, Bite, Tele2 a.o
 - Internet Coverage: 59.3% of the population has Internet access. WiFi Hotspots are available at most supermarkets, cafes and hotels of larger cities (often for free).
 - Information Service #: 118
 - Emergency Service #: 112
- Tourism: 3 *Blue Flag* beaches along the Baltic Shores ²
- Airports:
 - Vilnius (<http://www.vilnius-airport.lt>)
 - Distance to town ~8 km
 - Kaunas (<http://www.kaunasair.lt>)
 - Distance to town ~15 km
 - Palanga (<http://www.palanga-airport.lt>)
 - Distance to town ~8 km
 - The ~20 min. taxi ride to town costs 20-40 litas
- Taxi Service:
 - Phone:
 - Vilnius:
 - Ekipazas: 1446
 - Martono Taksi: 1422
 - Merseros Taksi: 1421
 - M-taksi/Viptak: 1435
 - Roberta: 1420
 - Kaunas:
 - Miesto Taksi: +370 (373) 38-888
 - Milrasa ir Ko: +370 (377) 77-333
 - Taxi Kaunas: +370 (372) 02-020
 - Zaibiskas Greitis: +370 (670) 33-333
 - Internet: <http://www.etaksi.lt> (largest cities)
- Ferry Service:
 - Seaport of Klaipeda:
 - <http://www.lisco.lt>
 - <http://www.scandlines.lt>
 - Curonian Spit:
 - <http://www.keltas.lt>
- Train Service: <http://www.litrail.lt>
- Overland Bus: Service available to more than 100 European cities.
 - <http://www.eurolines.lt>
 - <http://www.ecolines.lt>

- Roads & Highways:
 - 6 Cross-European axes.
 - Driving speeds:
 - Towns & Villages: 50 km/h
 - Outside Settled Areas: 90 km/h
 - Highways:
 - 1st November - 31st March: 110 km/h
 - 1st April - 31st October: 130 km/h
 - Roadside Assistance: 1888 (24/7)
- Public Holidays:
 - 1st of January - New Year's Day
 - 16th of February - Reestablishment day for Lithuania
 - 11th of March - Independence day of Lithuania
 - 24+25th of April - Easter ¹
 - 1st of May - International Labor Day & Mother's Day
 - 24th of June - St. John's Day / Day of Dew
 - 6th of July - Statehood / Coronation Day of Mindaugas
 - 15th of August - Assumption Day / Day of Grass
 - 1st of November - All Saint's Day
 - 24th of December - Christmas Eve
 - 25+26th of December - Christmas

Geography:

- Coastline: 90km of shoreline along the Baltic Sea
- Highest Spot: The "High Mountain" at 293.8 meters.
- Longest River: Nemunas at 937 km (475 km run through Lithuania)
- Landscape: Plains & forests. Flats comprise ~75%, Forests ~31%
- Climate: Maritime/Northern-Continental, with averages in July at +18°C; in January at -5°C
- Lakes:
 - 2830 lakes with combined area exceeding 0.5 hectare.
 - Largest Lake: Druksiai with 4,479 hectare
 - Deepest Lake: Tauragnas with 60.6 meters

- **Yearly climate according to government statistics:**



- **Legend:** ² Based on figures from 2010