

This 80-page booklet was written in January, February, and March of 1993 and published as a Rick Steves' Europe Through the Back Door newsletter. I researched and wrote all the material except for the Moscow chapter, where Mike Evans did the footwork and writing. I edited the booklet in Moscow and sent it to Seattle for production and layout.

Looking at the booklet eleven years later what is most interesting to me is that it is a snapshot of the former Soviet Union only a year and a half after its breakdown in the summer of 1991. This was a special time when the rules of social interaction and the ephemera of daily life were changing fast. I don't have any delusions that this booklet is a historical document of any great value but I am putting it up for free distribution on the web in hopes that it might give some pleasure to someone who wants to reexperience the spirit of those times.

I have lightly edited the booklet's format for this web version and updated the fonts. The Cyrillic characters included in the original could not be preserved. The maps, and (unfortunately) the sample train ticket originally printed with the booklet are also not included.

Please note that this book is still under copyright and any for-profit distribution is expressly prohibited.

*Ian Watson
February 2004*

Rick Steves'

The Baltics & Russia

Through the Back Door

by Ian Watson



Your timely Back Door guide to Moscow,
St. Petersburg, Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius.

A Europe Through the Back Door Publication

\$3

Rick Steves'

The Baltics and Russia Through the Back Door

by Ian Watson

Your timely Back Door guide to Moscow, St. Petersburg,
Tallinn and Vilnius. Entirely researched and written in 1993.

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While every effort has been made to provide accurate and up-to-date information, the author and publisher accept no responsibility for loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person adventurous enough to use this book.

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Fresh info, travel thrills and cold, hard cash

We wrote this book to fill several needs. There is very little written on independent budget travel in the Baltics and Russia and most of what is available on this quickly developing region is out of date by the time it hits the bookshelf. The Baltics and Russia offer a world of travel thrills with plenty of hard-working local people eager to develop their entrepreneurial skills in this wide-open frontier of capitalism. They have a long way to go and they could certainly use a few customers (with Western cash) to practice on. We hope this booklet will help give the local economies a much needed boost by giving American travelers confidence, through fresh and clear information, to travel there. We know the area is a great new travel destination. And it will never be more interesting than in 1993.

This book was produced in magazine speed so our traveling readers can use this year's research for this year's trip. In the case of an average guidebook, it takes a full year for the research notes to get to your rucksack. We've done this quick, simple and affordable. Our lean and mean format focuses only on the three Baltic capital cities and Russia's two most important stops. For the average first visit, these five cities are the predictable and best targets.

American newspapers give an over-gloomy impression of life in Russia and the Baltic states, focusing on crime, bad food, unemployment, fuel shortages, and foul-temperedness. In reality, for most locals, life goes on: people buy bread, go to work a bit, ride the subway, get married, dabble in business speculation, visit their grandmothers, and grumble about the hardships of life now as they did about the "system" under Communism. Meanwhile for tourists, life gets better and better. Getting a visa, getting there, getting around, finding a place to stay, eating out, and meeting the natives are all markedly easier than they were even six months ago.

Travel here gives us "first world" travelers a valuable opportunity to watch circumstances force people to move away from an irresponsible system, to one where they must responsibly marshal scarce resources to safeguard the health of society. When Lithuania shut off hot water last winter, they were prioritizing and making hard choices in a way that we in the West can learn from too.

If you've been thinking about going just to Russia and the Baltics by themselves, do it. If you're already planning a trip to Europe this summer, consider swinging through. It'll work fine. It won't even cost very much. You'll have fun, make new friends, and learn how the ex-Evil Empire has become a society where, for better or worse, you can now buy a Snickers 24 hours a day.

We'd love to hear about your trip. We plan to update this book each spring. If you have comments, criticisms, or suggestions, please write to Russia and the Baltics Through the Back Door, 109 Fourth Ave. N., Box 2009, Edmonds, WA 98020 USA.

Happy Travels!
Ian Watson and Rick Steves

Trip planning, visas and general travel tips

Fitting Russia and the Baltics into your itinerary

You can approach Russia and the Baltics from Scandinavia or from Central Europe. Helsinki is the best jumping-off point: you can get to Tallinn by hydrofoil in two hours, and to St. Petersburg by rail on the overnight train. Warsaw is a second choice; you'll have to take a ten-hour bus to Vilnius or a twenty-two hour train ride to Moscow. Stockholm, with overnight ferry service to Tallinn and Riga, is a third option. It may help to think of your trip as an excursion from Helsinki or Warsaw, or as an interesting (if indirect) way to connect Europe and Scandinavia.

Russia and the Baltics make a great extension to a summer European railpass tour. The Eurailpass is not valid in Russia or the Baltics, but since train fares are so cheap, it doesn't matter. If you're flying from America, you could plan an open jaws trip with a return flight from Helsinki, Warsaw, Stockholm, or one of the cities we cover in this booklet. For example, you could use your railpass as far as Helsinki (including a night on the luxurious Stockholm-Helsinki ferry), wend your way south to Warsaw, and fly home from there. Alternatively, take your railpass to Berlin, buy a ticket to Warsaw, and continue to the Baltics, and then fly home from a Scandinavian, Baltic, or Russian airport.

If you want, it makes perfect sense to limit your trip to just Russia, or just the Baltics. If you're just visiting Russia, it's better to go from Helsinki than from Warsaw. For the Baltics, it doesn't matter.

You can also visit Russia and the Baltics on your way to or from Asia via the Trans-Siberian Railway. Buy your Beijing-Moscow ticket from Monkey Business, a company run by a couple of Belgian brothers with offices in Hong Kong (tel. 852/723-1376) and Beijing (tel. 86/1/301-2244, ext. 716). They'll give you a transit visa, extendable in Moscow. Ask Monkey Business to have their contacts in Moscow to arrange an onward ticket to the Baltics or St. Petersburg. It'll be ready when you arrive.

If you are under 26 and already in Europe, call up the airlines before you book your boat or train ticket to Russia or the Baltics. For instance, SAS offers a youth fare, reservable the day before or day of your flight, from Stockholm to Riga for about \$100.

The Helsinki train station allows you to reserve train tickets to St. Petersburg and Moscow in advance by phone. This is a good idea. If you have particular places to stay and particular dates set, it's best to call ahead to reserve. Otherwise, reservations more than a day or two in advance are unnecessary.

Getting your Baltic visa

American travelers need a visa to visit the Baltics. The three Baltic states have very sensibly united into a "common visa space." A visa from any one country is also valid for the other two. You can travel from Moscow to Riga on an Estonian visa, or Warsaw to Vilnius to Tallinn to Helsinki on a Latvian visa. The normal visa is valid for only one entry into the Baltic states, which means you'll need a new visa every time you visit. Sometimes you will have to gently remind Baltic border guards that their country also honors the other two's visas; for instance, a Latvian border guard may not understand your Estonian visa unless you point to it meaningfully. (Those with British passports need no visas here.)

If you plan to arrive in the Baltics by ship or by plane, you can just pick up a single-entry visa at the border. Generally there'll be two lines, one for passengers with visas and one for passengers without. Do not arrive visa-less by train or bus. If you are even allowed to get a visa at that particular border crossing, you'll have to get off at 4am with all your luggage, queue up in the customs shed, and listen to your train rumble off while you wait in line. Instead, get a visa in advance.

This is easy now. While an official invitation is no longer necessary to get a single-entry visa, you should know where you'll be staying. This may simply mean writing down the name, address, and telephone number of the youth hostel or hotel you plan to visit in the space on the visa application labeled "Local Host" or "Contact Person." You'll usually need a photograph. Normal processing takes a couple days and costs about \$10. Same-day service is available for twice the cost. In some cases, Americans can get visas for free. Do some checking around. Rules and prices are usually comparable among the three consulates in any one country, but not always.

If you're in Russia and don't have a visa, but you absolutely have to get into the Baltics from Russia right away, one good way is to buy a train ticket from Moscow or St. Petersburg just across the border to Narva, Estonia; get off and get your visa in the train station there, then catch the next train or bus to Tallinn.

Baltic visas in the USA. **Estonian** consulate, 630 Fifth Ave. Suite 2415, New York, NY 10111, tel. (212) 247-1450. (Open Monday-Friday 10:00-13:00.) Well-organized and no processing fee - call them first. **Latvian** consulate, 4325 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20011, tel (202) 726-8213, fax 726-6785. (Open Monday-Friday 10:00-12:00.) \$10 processing fee. **Lithuanian** consulate, 2622 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009, tel. (202) 234-5860, fax 328-0466. \$25 processing fee.

Baltic visas in Helsinki. Crowded but efficient **Estonian** consulate, Kasarmikatu 28, tel. 179 719 or 179 265. (Open Monday-Friday 9:30-12:00). Tiny, deserted **Latvian** consulate is at Bulevardi 5, 6th floor, tel. 605 640. (Open Monday-Friday 10:00-12:00). For 40mk they'll issue you a same-day double transit visa valid for two visits of up to 5 days each, which could be convenient if you want to go, say, from Tallinn to St. Petersburg to Riga. Nearest **Lithuanian** consulate is in Stockholm.

Baltic visas in Moscow. **Estonian** consulate, Kalashnii/llllllll per. 8, tel. 290-5013. Metro: Arbatskaya/llllllllll. Same-day service costs \$10 for everyone, free for Americans: applications received Monday-Friday 10:00-12:00, visas distributed 15:00-16:00. **Latvian** consulate, Chaplygina/llllllllll ul. 3, tel. 925-2707. Metro: Chistye Prudy/llllll lllll. Applications received Monday-Friday 10:00-12:00; visas distributed 15:00-16:00. \$25-40, but free for Americans and Japanese. **Lithuanian** consulate, Pisemskovo/llllllllll ul. 10, tel. 291-1698. Metro: Arbatskaya/llllllllll. (Open Monday-Friday 9:30-12:30.) Two-day processing. \$10, free for Americans, Japanese, Swedes, and Finns.

Baltic visas in St. Petersburg. **Estonian** consulate, ul. Skorokhodova/ lllllllllll 14, tel. 233-5548. Metro: Petrogradskaya/llllll-llllllllll. Open Tuesday-Friday 10:00-12:00. For some dumb reason they still require an invitation. The St. Petersburg Youth Hostel can help with this, but try to get your visa elsewhere.

Baltic visas in Warsaw. Visit the **Lithuanian** consulate at al. Ujazdowskie 13.

Getting your Russian visa

American tourists still need a Russian visa and while Russia has loosened up quite a bit for foreign independent travelers, getting a visa is still a necessary and unavoidable pain which requires some pre-trip planning.

Russian visas are not a stamp in your passport, but rather a piece of colored paper folded into three sections. The first section is your entry (lllll) visa, which is torn off by the border guard as you enter the country. The middle section is blank-backed for registration stamps and visa extensions. The last section is your exit (lllll)

visa, which, together with the middle page, is taken away by the guard as you leave the country (leaving your passport with no Russian souvenir).

A normal single-entry visa is valid for one entry and one exit at any time between the dates listed on it. You can now travel almost anywhere in Russia on any kind of visa. Think about the freedom this gives you: you can take the Trans-Siberian, go up to the Arctic Circle, visit Lake Baikal and Central Asia - and train tickets are dirt cheap. (This guidebook covers only Moscow and St. Petersburg.)

You'll be issued one of four main types of visas, depending upon your supporting documentation. For a **business visa**, the most common and most extendable type, you need an official stamped letter of invitation from a Russian organization - a company, a friend's company, or whatever. (The organization is technically supposed to be licensed for "foreign economic activities," but in practice - depending on the consulate - anything with an official-looking letterhead and stamp often works.) For a **tourist visa**, you need a confirmation letter from the travel agency that arranged your trip, including the agency's Russian accreditation number, or from the hotel you'll be staying in. For a **private visa**, you need a notification slip (*izveshchenie*) which your Russian host gets from the municipal authorities. A **transit visa** is issued on presentation of a train ticket through Russia, or in some cases into Russia (e.g., a Beijing-Moscow ticket). Business, tourist, and private visa support documentation needs to include your full name, passport number, and birthdate.

With the proper documentation, you can get your visa from any Russian consulate in the world. Try to go through the consulate in your home country, well before you leave. It's best to come in person, but you can do it by mail (call or fax the consulate for instructions). The application procedure is roughly similar all over the world, though every consulate has peculiar mutations (like not requiring an application form, or charging an extra fee). You will need three photographs, a completed application form (available from the consulate or many travel agencies), your passport (if applying by mail, a photocopy will do), the visa fee (usually cash or certified check), and your visa support documentation.

Why do you need an invitation, you ask? How can Russia develop a normal, competitive tourist industry if people can only visit through pre-approved organizations? Welcome to Russian bureaucracy, which stifles the free market, wastes thousands of peoples' time, and freezes up without constant screaming and bribery.

Invitation sources for Russian visas

Gray-market invitations. You can pay certain official Russian organizations to issue you a business invitation letter. This is probably not illegal, but it's certainly not what the system was set up for. Don't pay more than \$25 for a single-entry support letter. Make sure that the organization promises to register you when you arrive in Russia, and try not to pay them until they do so. Do not let them tell you that "the person who you're staying with has to register you." If they invited you, they have to register you. Visa services in major capitals can refer you to these organizations. We've heard that some even advertise at the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators. You can work through travel agencies which will prebook your entire stay in Russia, or directly through the hotels you plan to stay in. They will take care of your tourist visa support. Their prices are usually ridiculously high.

Transit visas. For a transit visa from Beijing, you just need to show the Russian consulate your Trans-Siberian ticket, not an invitation. See below for information on extensions. Other consulates, such as the one in London, are not so generous and may demand an invitation.

Our accommodations listings in Moscow. Both of the hostels we list in Moscow are set up to give foreigners official invitations, though only for the days you plan to stay there. Although we have no first-hand experience of this, it should probably work smoothly.

The St. Petersburg Youth Hostel. This is far and away the best simple and reliable option. Nobody else in Russia is so well set-up and so able to combine a low per-night price with efficient visa support. If you're in the USA or Canada, the St. Petersburg Hostel office in Redondo Beach will take your reservations and will get your visa for you. If you are anywhere else, either the hostel in St. Petersburg or the Redondo Beach office can make your arrangements by fax, and provide you with the proper visa support documentation so you can get the visa yourself at the nearest Russian consulate or embassy.

The hostel's American office is at 409 N Pacific Coast Highway, Bldg. #106, Suite 390, Redondo Beach, CA 90277, tel. (310) 379-4316, fax 379-8420. If you're in Finland or Eastern Europe, you can also work directly through the hostel itself at tel. 7/812/277-0569, fax 7/812/277-5102. The hostel usually issues tourist visas, but can issue business visas if you ask.

Call, write, or fax the California office and they will mail you an information package. To get your Russian visa, they charge a \$10 reservation fee, a \$30 visa service fee and as little as \$20 for your visa (more if you need it quickly). You'll also pay \$16 for each night you plan to stay at the hostel. Believe it or not, this is a good deal. You should work at least four weeks in advance; faster processing is possible but not calm.

From outside the USA or Canada, it helps a lot if you have access to a fax machine. Contact the California office - or the hostel directly from Finland or Eastern Europe - including your full legal name; citizenship; birthdate; passport number and expiration date; dates you plan to stay at the hostel; place, date, and means of entry into Russia; place, date, and means of exit from Russia; Visa or MasterCard number; your name as it is written on the card; card expiration date; and signature. They will then fax you your visa support letter which you can take to any Russian consulate yourself to get your tourist visa. They will charge you \$31, which includes your first night's stay at the hostel, your reservation/visa support fee and a \$5 fax fee.

You can also make reservations and get your visa support letter if you come in person to Eurohostel in Helsinki (Linnankatu 9, tel. 66 44 52, fax 65 50 44, see Gateway Helsinki section below) or the Youth Hostel Association Adventure Travel Shop in London (14, Southampton St., London, WC2E 7H1, tel. 071/836-1036, Tube: Covent Garden or Charing Cross). This means that you can wait to get your Russian visa until you are in Europe if you so choose, but it does take a few days and you lose the benefits of reserving early. Both offices will charge you several dollars to cover fax costs. For example, if you have Eurohostel fax St. Petersburg on Monday night, you should have the invitation on Tuesday, can go to the Russian consulate on Wednesday, and will have your visa on Friday at the latest or the same day if you pay extra.

The major drawback to getting your visa through the St. Petersburg Hostel is that your visa will only be written for the time you plan to stay at the hostel and perhaps a couple days on either end to cover transit. If you plan to stay at the new hostel in Moscow they will probably also issue a visa covering the time you'll be there. If you want to travel elsewhere in Russia you'll have to get a visa from another source, but write the St. Petersburg hostel a note about your travel plans and they will try to accommodate your visa needs within the realms of reason and Russian law.

Russian consulates abroad

Russian visas in America. The **New York** consulate, at 9 E. 91st St., New York, N.Y. 10128 (open Monday-Friday 9:30-12:30), has a very useful information number: (212) 348-0779, fax 831-9162, with an actually helpful recording giving complete details on the visa process. This is a big change. It used to take the embassy in Washington forty rings just to answer the phone. To talk to a real person, call (212) 348-0926. The **Washington** consulate is at 1825 Phelps Place NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 939-8907, fax 483-7579. The **Seattle** consulate is at #2323 Westin Building, 2001 6th Ave, Seattle, WA 98121, tel. (206) 728-1910, fax 728-1871. The **San Francisco** consulate is at 2790 Green St., San Francisco, CA 94123, tel. (202) 638-2954, fax 929-0306. At all consulates, visas by mail cost from \$20 (for service within fourteen days) to \$60 (for 48-hour service). If you don't have an application form, send them an SASE and they'll send you one. If you have an involved question, get their fax number and send it in written down.

Russian visas in Helsinki. The Russian consulate in Helsinki is at Vuorimiehenkatu 6 (tel. 661 449), near the center of town and ferry terminals. By Russian standards it's extremely efficient, and even has an English-speaking window. Opening hours are Monday-Friday 9:30-12:00, but get there at 9:00 for a good spot in line. Two-day processing costs 10mk, next-day processing costs 100mk, same-day processing (about 1 hour) costs 150mk, and on top of this you pay a mysterious "fee" which depends on your nationality (84mk for Americans, 287mk for New Zealanders, nothing for Canadians). Standard paperwork is required. If you want a same-day visa, reach the windows by 11:00.

Russian visas in the Baltics. We don't recommend relying on this, but it is in principle possible to get a Russian visa at the Russian consulate in any of the Baltic capitals. In Tallinn, it's at Pikk tn. 19 in the middle of the old town. When we visited the staff was friendly, spoke English, and had English forms. Visa applications are accepted only on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10:00-12:00. They cost \$10 and take a week to process; if you pay \$30 they'll be ready after lunch. In Riga, less recommendable than Tallinn, the consulate will probably be in the new Russian embassy building at L. Paegles iela 2. The Russian consulate is barely set up in Vilnius. Get your visa elsewhere.

Russian visas in Warsaw. Visit the Russian embassy at 49 Belwederska Street (tel. 21 34 53 or 21 55 75; fax 49 40 85).

Registering and extending your Russian visa

Once you arrive in Russia, you will need to have your visa registered (unless you're on a transit visa) and you may want to have your visa extended. All such matters are handled by the government organization called OVIR (ווויר, which rhymes with severe, and stands for the Visa and Registration Authority). Your visa will say on it that you must register within 24 hours of arrival, but no one seems to care anymore. Since restrictions on internal travel for foreigners were eliminated, registration has become an entirely pointless bureaucratic exercise. If you ignore it, however, you may have to pay a "fine" (read: bribe) when you leave Russia if the border guard notices you have no registration stamp.

Regulations and fees differ from one OVIR to the next and from one month to the next. Currently, business, tourist, and private tourists must be registered by their hosts or inviting organizations in Russia. The same goes for visa extensions. In both cases, your host will have to write an official letter and bring your passport to OVIR. You cannot do this OVIR work yourself. As far as OVIR is concerned, registration and extension are free, but your host organization may charge for the trouble of standing in line. In St. Petersburg, the hostel staff will register your visa with the authorities (who charge about a \$1 fee).

Trans-Siberian travelers will usually have a ten-day transit visa, enough for the trip time plus a couple of extra days. You can extend your transit visa in Moscow for free in person at OVIR (try for a ten-day extension). This is the only situation where OVIR allows foreigners to take care of their own paperwork. Don't wait to get to St. Petersburg to extend a transit visa: OVIR there will only give you three extra days.

OVIR in Moscow (where it is officially called UVIR): ul. Chernyshevskaya/וורנישעווסקאא 42, about a fifteen-minute walk from Metro: Kurskaya/קורסקאא. Exit the station, take the tunnel across the main street, walk north (i.e., to the right), and ul. Chernyshevskaya will be several blocks up but the first major street. Turn left passing a small movie theater on your right, and OVIR will be the green pastel building on your left just before the Hotel Ural. Go in the front door, then in the door on your left. They are only open Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 10:00-13:00 and 15:00-18:00, and Friday from 10:00-13:00 and 15:00-17:00.

OVIR in St. Petersburg is at ul. Saltykova-Shchedrina/סאלטיקווא-שעדרינא 4, near Metro: Chernyshevskaya/וורנישעווסקאא and the American Embassy.

Border posts between Russia and the Baltics are now almost fully in place. You can, however, enter Russia on a visa from Ukraine, Byelorussia, or many of the other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), since there are no border controls, for instance, on Moscow-Kiev trains. In fact, we know one person who traveled throughout Ukraine and Russia on a Moldovan transit visa obtained in Bucharest. We don't recommend planning on this. If you do enter Russia from another CIS state which has no passport control on its Russian border, play it safe and leave Russia the way you came. If you leave Russia through a controlled border the guards may see your missing visa as an excuse to demand the mother of all bribes.

Remember that once you leave Russia, for example, to go to the Baltic states, you will need a new entry visa to return to Moscow or St. Petersburg. If you don't have one, you'll be unceremoniously thrown off the train in the middle of the night.

Border crossings should go smoothly. Once in a while customs officers will look through your baggage. By train, you will usually stop for forty-five minutes or an hour on one side of the border, then cross and go through the same routine on the other side.

Itinerary planning

Shape your itinerary with these points in mind:

- * Make one pass through the Baltics, and one pass through Russia. This way you will only have to get one Baltic visa and one Russian visa.
- * Visit St. Petersburg before you go to Moscow. (It's smaller, prettier, the hostel is a safe base, and you can get an idea from it whether you like Russia and really want to take the plunge and go to Moscow.)
- * Budget travelers can save lots of money if they avoid traveling by bus or train directly from Moscow to Poland or Finland, or vice versa. It costs \$121, second-class, to take the train from Moscow to Helsinki. It costs less than

\$25 to take the train from Moscow to Tallinn and then the boat from Tallinn to Helsinki. Similarly, the train ride from Moscow to Warsaw is cheaper if you buy a ticket to Riga or Vilnius first and then continue on with a ticket to Poland bought in the Baltics.

* Try to avoid traveling from Vilnius to Moscow or St. Petersburg. Tickets are hard to get.

Now, decide whether you want to see just St. Petersburg and Tallinn, or whether you want to add Moscow, Riga, or Vilnius. If you just want to see St. Petersburg and Tallinn, start and finish in Helsinki. You'll probably find that Tallinn is easiest to appreciate when it follows St. Petersburg on your itinerary. But if you go to Tallinn first, you can get a Baltic visa as you come off the ferry.

If you want to see more than St. Petersburg and Tallinn, decide where you want to start and finish. (Choose among Helsinki, Stockholm, Warsaw, and flying directly into and out of the five cities covered in this booklet).

Some suggested itineraries:

Helsinki-St. Petersburg-(Moscow-)Tallinn-Riga-Vilnius-Warsaw

Helsinki-Tallinn-Vilnius-Riga-St. Petersburg-Moscow-Warsaw

Helsinki-Tallinn-Vilnius-Riga-St. Petersburg-(Moscow-St. Petersburg-)Helsinki

Helsinki-St. Petersburg-(Moscow-)Vilnius-Riga-Tallinn-Helsinki

Warsaw-Vilnius-Riga-Tallinn-St. Petersburg-(Moscow-St. Petersburg-)Helsinki

Warsaw-Vilnius-Riga-Tallinn-St. Petersburg-Moscow-Warsaw

Stockholm-Riga-Vilnius-Tallinn-St. Petersburg-Moscow-Warsaw or vice versa.

Stockholm-Riga-Tallinn-St. Petersburg-Helsinki or vice versa.

Stockholm-Tallinn-Vilnius-Riga-St. Petersburg-(Moscow-St. Petersburg-)Helsinki or vice versa.

Ideal transportation connections:

from	to (or vice versa)	mode	hours	rough cost in \$US
Helsinki	Tallinn	hydrofoil	2	\$20
Helsinki	St. Petersburg	day train	7	50
St. Petersburg	Moscow	night train	8	5
Tallinn	St. Petersburg	night train	9	4
Tallinn	Riga	night train	10	3
Riga	Vilnius	night train	9	3
Vilnius	Warsaw	day bus	10	14
Warsaw	Moscow	night train	22	50
Warsaw	Berlin	night train	10	20

Ideally, try to spend at least three full days apiece in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Tallinn, and two full days in both Riga and Vilnius. This means at least two or three overnight train rides. Add a day to take the bus from Vilnius to Warsaw, and you can cover everywhere in this booklet in two weeks flat.

Trains (and buses)

Overnight trains are an institution in Russia and the Baltics. Soviet sleeper compartments were, and remain, the most comfortable in Europe. Available only on certain trains, two-bed compartments called *lyuks*, *лѹк*, or *л* are an affordable luxury. Always ask for them. Four-bed "kupe" compartments are still much roomier than Western Europe's six-bunk couchettes. Trains are usually on time. Groups of three will find the trip more pleasant if they buy out an entire four-person kupe compartment. Note that in the ex-USSR, express trains carry people almost exclusively from the first station to the last (for instance, almost everyone on a Moscow-St. Petersburg train got on at Moscow and will get off in St. Petersburg).

Take as many night trains as you can. The beauty of this region is that each of the five cities in this book is an easy, eight to fifteen-hour overnight train ride from each of the other cities. You miss the scenery at night, but it's really nothing to lose sleep over. You'll board sometime in the evening, perhaps after an early dinner. Bring a late-night snack, a banana for breakfast, and enough to drink. Car doors open twenty or thirty minutes before departure. Armed with your train number, locate your platform on the announcement board in the station; show your ticket to

the conductress as you step onto your car. She'll return as soon as you get underway to collect your ticket (she'll give it back before you arrive), to demand a few rubles (about \$0.35 worth) of payment for your clean sheets, and (in luxury compartments) to bring you tea on request. A few hours later, the lights go out, and you can sleep - until you hit the border and the customs guards knock on your door.

Your biggest hassle, then, will be buying train tickets. The Baltic states still use Soviet train ticket forms. We've reproduced and translated one in this chapter.

We have also listed schedules for each city, which are unlikely to change much during the lifetime of this booklet. Times are all local. Try to remember the word *vokzal* (вокзал), which means station.

In Tallinn and Riga, buying tickets is pretty straightforward. Foreigners and locals are treated the same, and the lines are reasonable. There are separate windows for buying tickets in advance, and buying tickets for trains that leave the same day.

In Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Vilnius, the old, annoying system doggedly persists. Not only are there separate windows for advance and same-day tickets, there are also separate windows for foreign and domestic tickets. Often these "windows" are in entirely different parts of the city. In addition, these regular windows do not have access to all seats. The best tickets are sold only through privileged agencies (Intourist or its descendants) which formerly reserved them for foreign tourists (with dollars) or high officials (with connections). These days, these agencies sell foreigners tickets for the regular price in rubles plus a small ruble or dollar fee for "service." Use these agencies whenever possible; it's worth a few dollars for shorter lines, less hassle, and a better choice of seats. You can, of course, try to go to the regular ticket windows; you may get lucky and get a good seat, but you may stand in a long line just to be told, if the clerk is in a bad mood, that "foreigners aren't allowed to buy tickets here, you have to go to the Intourist window."

The base ticket price for overnight trains between our five cities is \$1-2. A luxury compartment will cost \$2-3, not including Intourist surcharges. Tickets in Estonia and Latvia are a little more expensive, but there are no surcharges. Still, since ticket prices are way below the actual market value of a train ride, a ticket mafia sprang up in 1992 in Vilnius, Moscow, and St. Petersburg. Sleazy characters bought up huge blocks of tickets to resell at a higher price, then stood in the station in front of the sold-out ticket windows murmuring the names of cities they had tickets to. Now, every ticket must now bear the last name of its owner, making it effectively non-transferable since conductors can (and often do) check your ticket against your passport. Although sometimes the ticket clerk will just ask you to tell them your last name, more often they will want to copy it from your passport. The mafia now boast that they can get you a ticket with your name on it too, for the right price. Riga and Tallinn as smaller rail hubs, have less of a mafia presence and no ticket name-requirement.

Keep hassles to a minimum by handing the clerk a sheet of paper with your destination, date of travel, preferred train number or departure time, the number of seats you want, your desired class (write a K for four-bed kupes, or a Russian *2* or *22* for luxury two-bed compartments), and your last name. On night trains, avoid tickets in the less comfortable *2* or *2* classes.

Just as we went to press, the ticket offices in St. Petersburg announced that they plan to raise first- and second-class ticket prices to Moscow for foreigners to \$43 and \$23 (from the ruble equivalent of about \$2 and \$1), and that all foreigners will have to present their passports and visas when buying tickets. There were no similar plans in Moscow. Whether or not these increases take effect, they illustrate the kind of changes in the ticket system that can and probably will happen without warning over the course of the summer.

Buses are useful between Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, and Warsaw, and between St. Petersburg and Helsinki. Ticket buying is generally simpler, and you don't need to show up as far in advance. It's probably not worth flying within Russia and the Baltics since planes are unreliable and a taxi to the airport will cost more than the train would have.

Getting around cities

Try to walk. The only place where you absolutely have to take public transportation is Moscow. In every city you can either buy single tickets (punch them on board) from kiosks and metro tokens from booths inside the entrances, or for about a dollar, you can buy a card good for unlimited public transportation for one calendar month.

Taxis are very cheap, but drivers never use the meter and will try to rip you off. You'll have to haggle, or else keep silent about the fare until the end and then refuse to pay more than a fair price. Don't expect official drivers all the time; private citizens may pick you up too, and this is considered normal. Don't be shy about refusing a ride

if you don't trust the driver or if he asks too much money. A ride around the center of town should not cost more than the local equivalent of a dollar. Rides out to the suburbs shouldn't be over two dollars. In Moscow, fares may run \$1-2 higher. Pay in local currency.

Arriving and departing from airports, you will always find it cheaper to take the bus into the center of town. If you take a taxi, prepare to get ripped off. A fair taxi price (consider yourself lucky to get it) from airport to city center in Vilnius and Tallinn would be the equivalent of \$2-3, in Riga \$3-4, in St. Petersburg \$5 and in Moscow \$10. If you take the bus into town and then a taxi, you'll have a better chance of getting an honest deal.

Money

Of the four countries we cover, only Estonia has a stable, permanent currency, the kroon. Latvia's transitional currency, the Latvian ruble, has been fairly stable; its permanent replacement, the lat, was released this March. Lithuania's transitional banknotes, called talonai, are as inflation-racked as the Russian ruble. Their new currency, the litas, probably won't be in place by summer. In Russia, Latvia, and Lithuania, American dollars circulate as a second currency.

It's theoretically possible to exchange travelers' checks in all five cities in this booklet. However, commissions are a rip-off. We recommend taking cash in U.S. dollars. (You don't need a lot, and you can carry it safely in a moneybelt.) Make sure to bring smaller bills: twenties, tens, and plenty of fives and ones since people who deal with hard currency often don't have exact change. Wear a moneybelt (see the Back Door catalog near the end of this book).

Official exchange booths are common in the Baltics. They are less common in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and more likely to give you a bad rate. Although, in another testimony to Russian inertia, it's still technically illegal and people do get detained, many people in Moscow and St. Petersburg change money ten or twenty dollars at a time at kiosks which post a dollar bill in the window. We've done this dozens of times, and while no kiosk owner has ever tried to slip us paper towels or Yugoslavian dinars, they always do try to give a bad rate of exchange. Come informed about the current rate, and ask at a few different kiosks, preferably in different parts of the city, before you make a deal.

March 1993 exchange rates

One US dollar = approximately...	13 Estonian kroons
0.85 Latvian lats	170 Latvian rubles
430 Lithuanian talonai	640 Russian rubles
16,000 Polish zloty	6 Finnish marks

Post and telephones

The Baltic mail systems are pretty good; mail to America is a little cheaper and not much slower than from Finland. Mail from Russia usually gets to its destination, but can take weeks. Send stuff from elsewhere.

Fundamentally both Russia and the Baltics use the old Soviet telephone system. The country code is 7. To make long-distance calls within Russia and the Baltics you dial 8, wait for a tone, and then dial the city code and local number. To make international calls, you dial 8, wait for a tone, and then dial 10 followed by the country code. City codes (never drop the first number) are: Moscow 095; St. Petersburg 812; Tallinn 0142; Riga 0132; and Vilnius 0122.

Thus, to call number 123-4567 in Moscow from the US (international access code 011), you would dial 011-7-095-123-4567. To reach this number from St. Petersburg or the Baltics, dial 8-095-123-4567. To reach number 987 654 in Tallinn from America, you dial 011-7-0142-987-654. To call number (212) 345-6789 in the US (country code 1) from Moscow, dial 8, wait for the steady tone, then dial 10-1-212-345-6789.

In the spring of 1993 the Baltic states received their own country codes. Estonia is 372, Latvia is 371, and Lithuania is 370. The city codes for Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius are 2 in each case (taken from the last digit of their former Soviet city codes). These are being used only for dialing into the Baltics from outside the former Soviet Union. Although they were supposed to take effect by March 1, not every country's phone system has programmed in the new codes. As soon as they are working from the USA, you will be able to reach number 987 654 in Tallinn

by dialing 011-372-2-987-654. The access codes for dialing between the Baltics and from the Baltics to other countries have not, so far, changed.

Using the telephone in the Baltics and Russia is getting easier. You can make any kind of call from a private phone. If you don't have access to one, you'll have to make local calls from phone booths, and long-distance and international calls from telephone offices in the center of each city. It will often take you five or ten tries to get through on long-distance calls.

The only place that has USA Direct service is Moscow. From other cities you can reach Moscow USA Direct by dialing 8-095-155-5042, but you'll have to pay for the long-distance call to Moscow.

Food

It's a myth that people in Russia are starving. In fact, many of them are very overweight, and the new taste sensation in Moscow this winter has been Ultra Slim-Fast. The selection of food available has never been better. (In January, you could buy pomegranates and starfruit.) But the prices have never been worse. Whereas a basic Moscow food basket used to cost maybe a twentieth the Western price, now it's more like one-fourth the price. Many people now spend most of their salary on food. (Before you gasp, remember that rent and transport cost virtually nothing, and that it's a healthy economic adjustment for prices to rise to equilibrium with world markets.) The situation in the Baltics is similar but not as bad.

The people hurting most are the elderly, subsisting on a monthly inflation-squeezed pension check, their savings soaked away by the ruble's swift decline. They are offended at the pornography on sale in stacks at street stands, and bewildered by nouveau riche businessmen blazing by in BMWs. Pensioners do have the time to stand in line for low-priced state-produced goods, but the range and quality of these continues to deteriorate: dirty carrots, moldy potatoes, fatty cheese, withered spices, and gristly sausage make for an imbalanced, deficient diet, which is one of the main sources of Russian obesity. Private farmer's markets have better supplies, but higher prices. Hard-currency stores selling imported goods have sprung up everywhere, but only foreigners and the local rich can afford them. Many Russians are lucky enough to own or have access to a *dacha* (country home), where they spend warm weekends planting, picking, canning and preserving fruit and vegetables to hoard through the long winters.

Despite rising prices, you can eat out at a subsidized workplace cafeteria or a cheap caf_ for thirty cents; at McDonalds' in Moscow, for two dollars; and in a nice restaurant for five or six dollars. Most restaurants will add a service charge of 5-20% to the bill. You can then pay the exact amount, although it is common to round things up. If your bill is for 1167 rubles, for example, leave 1200.

Finding good restaurants is the big problem. It is still easy to stand in a long line and pay pennies' worth of rubles to eat gagging, lukewarm food at stand-up tables in a dimly-lit, filthy caf_ with puddles of tracked-in rainwater on the floor. It's also easy to eat mediocre twenty-dollar meals at proudly exclusive restaurants with offensive doormen, sleazy variety shows, thick-walleted customers with dark glasses, and waiters who pretend it's absolutely natural to pay twenty bucks for dinner in this part of the world. Our goal in this book is to find and list honest places serving satisfying food for \$1-5.

Picnics are a fine option. Bread is best bought from state stores, which you should visit at least once to experience the long lines and the Byzantine payment system. Find the price of whatever you're buying, go over to a cashier to pay that amount and get a receipt, and then present the receipt at the bread counter. Look for the dark, heavy brown loaves which Russians call black bread. Say *chorny* (чoрны) and they'll understand what you want. Head next for a farmer's market for the best selection of cheese, sausage, and fresh fruits and vegetables. As a foreigner, even on a budget, the price of oranges and bananas isn't bad, but for a local, this is a real splurge. For Western staples like peanut butter, raspberry yogurt, or Cadbury chocolate, head to a hard-currency store.

To experience an authentic Russian meal, you must get invited to somebody's apartment. Russians themselves almost never go out to eat, but they love having guests for dinner. The best Russian food is served on rickety tables in their cramped living rooms: beet and potato salads with heaps of sour cream, bread and butter, fresh cucumbers and tomatoes, skewered chunks of meat and onion, fruit compote, tea, cakes, and vodka.

If you want to stay absolutely on the safe side, drink only boiled water, soft drinks, tea, and juice in Russia and the Baltics. This is especially true in St. Petersburg, where a parasite called giardia infests the water system. It causes stomach upset and diarrhea, but can be eradicated with a prescription drug called Flagyl (metronidazole). Boiling your water will kill the parasites. Most visitors to St. Petersburg don't get sick, and if you avoid unboiled

St. Petersburg water you should be okay too. We brush our teeth with St. Petersburg water and just don't swallow. If you are worried, get a doctor's prescription for Flagyl filled in advance.

Health and safety

Despite the recent vast increase in crime, Russia and the Baltics are still far safer than New York. Crime here is coarser, cruder, and less professional than in America, often just a fight picked on the street or the drunken thuggery of unemployed young men. Gypsy children can be a problem, especially at train stations. Use the same precautions you would at home or anywhere else in Europe: don't flaunt wealth, keep valuables in your moneybelt, avoid dark alleys, and don't talk back to drunks. Don't speak English loudly in public and try not to draw attention to your foreignness. Women traveling by train can buy out an entire compartment, or ask the conductor for permission to switch seats into a compartment with women. You can lock the metal flip lock on your train compartment door. For extra security, stuff a wad of paper into the cavity of the lock so that it can't be jimmied from the outside. Then you can go to sleep. Ultimately, you are more at risk from dilapidation and decay--falling glass, open manholes, and the like--than from criminals. This is fortunate, since the local police are not renowned for their quick response or helpfulness. Emergency numbers in Russia and the Baltics are: 01 for fire, 02 for the police, 03 for an ambulance.

As for health, elementary precautions are in order, but paranoia is unnecessary. Watch what you eat and drink. Avoid dubious meat and be careful about eating street food. Make sure your shots are up-to-date. If you're going to be in Eastern Europe for a few months, it might be worth getting a gamma globulin shot to guard against hepatitis. Get advice from your doctor. Take a basic first-aid kit and any special medicines you may need. Distrust local hospitals; if you have serious problems, head for Finland.

Recommended supplemental books and maps

While no book is as up-to-date for Baltic and Russian travel in 1993 as the one you're holding, we recommend considering some more information. Your local travel bookstore will have these books in stock and more recommendations.

Europe Through the Back Door (1993, JMP, by Rick Steves) covers the general skills of budget independent travel. It's worthwhile for those interested in learning from someone else's mistakes rather than their own.

2 to 22 Days in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark (1993, JMP, by Rick Steves). This Baltics and Russia booklet is designed like Rick's 2 to 22 Days series. If you wish this booklet covered Helsinki, Stockholm and Copenhagen, this guidebook is for you.

Let's Go: Europe 1993. Ian is a former editor of this "Bible of the Budget Traveler." Rick has worshiped it for 20 years. The chapters on the Baltics and Russia are already outdated, but the solid coverage of Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, and Scandinavia should help.

Scandinavian and Baltic Europe on a Shoestring (published by Lonely Planet), with about 24 pages on each of the Baltic states, is the only adequate guidebook to this region that we've found. Unfortunately, its Baltic information is already outdated. Lonely Planet also publishes an adequate guide to Eastern Europe and to what was the USSR.

Maps of the Baltic capitals are easy to get. However, it's worth it to pick up maps of Moscow and St. Petersburg in the west (try to get a recent map with street names in both Cyrillic and Roman) since there are periodic shortages in Russia.

Baltic timeline

1200-1300: German merchants and clerics attempt to respectively colonize the Baltic states and Christianize their native populations. A German class of land-owning nobles emerges in Estonia and Latvia. Lithuania resists.

1386: Preferring the Poles to the Germans, the Prince of Lithuania marries the Princess of Poland, and unites the two countries. Catholicism becomes the state religion.

1520s: The Reformation reaches Estonia and Latvia.
 1629: Sweden acquires most of Estonia and Latvia.
 1710-1721: Russia wins Estonia and Latvia from Sweden in the Great Northern War.
 1795: Lithuania becomes part of the Russian Empire in the third partition of Poland.
 1850-1890: Independence movements start to roll. Ethnic and national consciousness grows in the Baltics.
 1918-1921: The Baltics gain independence in the wake of the Russian Revolution and the First World War, but have to fight both the Germans and the Red Army for it. Ethnic Germans start leaving Estonia and Latvia.
 1939: The secret Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia declares the Baltic states part of Russia's sphere of influence.
 1940-1945: The Baltics become a political football between Russia and Germany. Net result: Mass deportations of Balts to Siberia and of Jews to the Nazi concentration camps, and the Soviet annexation of all three Baltic states.
 1945-1989: Sovietization. Ethnic Russians move into the Baltics to take military and civilian jobs.
 1989-1991: Under *glasnost*, a mass movement for an end to Soviet occupation and the restoration of independence gains steam. Lithuania declares independence first; Moscow's armed reprisals leave 13 dead in Vilnius.
 Aug. 1991: World recognition of Baltic independence comes in the wake of the failed coup in Moscow.

Russian timeline

800s: Spurred by Viking trade along Russia's rivers, states form around the cities of Novgorod and Kiev. ("Russia" comes from a Viking word.)
 988: Kiev converts to Christianity and becomes part of the Eastern Orthodox world.
 1224-1242: The Mongol hordes invade Russia, conquer, and exact tribute. Russia, however, keeps the Germans out where the Baltics failed.
 1465-1557: The Russian czars consolidate power in Moscow, drive away the Mongols, and form a unified Russian state.
 1613: Foundation of the Romanov dynasty, which lasts until 1917.
 1703: Czar Peter the Great founds St. Petersburg as Russia's "window on the West." Major phase of southward and eastward Russian expansion under Peter and his successor Catherine.
 1812: Napoleon burns Moscow, but loses an army on the way home.
 1855-1861: Russia loses Crimean War and decides to modernize, including freeing the serfs.
 1905: Russia loses a war with the Japanese, contributing to a failed revolution later glorified by the Communists as a manifestation of worker's consciousness.
 Mar. 1917: The czar is ousted by a Provisional Government led by Joseph Kerensky.
 Nov. 1917: The Provisional Government is ousted by the Bolsheviks (Communists), led by Lenin.
 1924-1939: Stalin purges the government and the army, and forced collectivization causes famine and tens of millions of deaths in Ukraine.
 1939-1945: World War II. Russia loses another twenty million to the Germans, but winds up with control over a sizable chunk of Eastern Europe.
 1945-1962: Peak of the Cold War. Russia acquires the atom bomb, and launches the first satellite and the first manned space mission.
 1970s: The "time of stagnation" under Leonid Brezhnev. The failure of the Communist economy becomes more and more apparent.
 1985: Mikhail Gorbachev comes to power and declares the beginning of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring).
 Aug. 1991: Reactionaries try to topple Gorbachev. They fail to keep power, but so does Gorbachev. Boris Yeltsin takes control of the government and starts reforms.
 1993: Stay tuned...

Language

Latvian and Lithuanian are Baltic languages. They are similar but not mutually intelligible--like Spanish and Italian. Russian is a Slavic language. The Slavic languages, the Baltic languages, and English all descend from Indo-European. Estonian, on the other hand, is a Finno-Ugric language, completely unrelated to the others. (Look

at the words for one, two, and three; the similarities and differences jump right out.) Estonian is a lot like Finnish (with the last letter of every word cut off).

Like Latin or Greek (to which they are also related), Latvian and Lithuanian tend to end lots of words in "s." In Riga, after you visit the Latvijas Mākslas Valsts Muzejs (art museum) and the Rīgas Pils (castle) and shop at the Centrālais Tirgus (central market), you can head over to Stacijas Laukums (the train station square) and head off to Cēsis, Daugavpils, Kaunas, or Vilnius for more travel adventures.

Many young people in the Baltics and Russia have studied English and can communicate basic phrases. In Estonia in particular, most young people speak enough to deal with basic service questions. In Estonia and Latvia, many people over sixty speak some German. Just about everyone in the Baltic states speaks Russian. Sensationalists warn that Balts will practically spit in your face if you speak Russian to them. This is only true of a very small minority of militant anti-Russian nationalists. If you speak Russian, use it, hopefully speaking badly enough to make it clear it's your second language too.

In addition to our favorite survival phrases on the back cover, we've included the Cyrillic alphabet and some pronunciation tips and near the end of the book. Those who make a point to memorize these things will travel smoother.

Miscellaneous tips

Hot water. Many municipal hot water heating systems shut down for maintenance for a few weeks each summer, when entire towns (except for a few hotels with their own hot water heaters) go without hot water.

Bathrooms. A downward-pointing triangle means "men," an upwards-pointing triangle means "women." (Think "missionary position.")

Tunnels (~~~~~). There are no crosswalks on many busy streets; use the underground passages instead.

The three-line system. At many stores in Russia and the Baltics you must stand in three lines: first, at the counter, to decide what you want and total up the price; second, to pay the cashier and get a slip; and third, to present the slip at the counter and get the goods. If you're buying food, you have to go through this once at the meat counter, once at the cheese counter, and so on. The Western system of selecting your own goods from the shelf and paying for them at one central location has only arrived in the most expensive stores.

Opening hours. It's common for Russian shops to open on Sundays--the legacy of atheism. In the Baltics, it's rare. Especially in Russia and at state-run shops, there's an hour-long break for lunch, either from 13:00 to 14:00 or 14:00 to 15:00.

Time. The Baltics are on Eastern European time, the same as Helsinki. Moscow and St. Petersburg are one hour ahead of the Baltics and Helsinki. So, if it's 9am in California and noon in New York, it's 5pm in London, 6pm in Warsaw and Stockholm, 7pm in Helsinki and the Baltics, and 8pm in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Jobs. There are a lot of young Westerners working in Russia and the Baltics. The pay is low, but this wild frontier of capitalism offers many rough and tumble business opportunities.

Capitalists. Many new business people in Russia and the Baltics think that capitalism means "Make lots of money now, and get a black Mercedes, slick clothes, and the right to look down my nose at the sludge of everyday society." You can smell these folks a mile away. You can hear the scorn and moneylust in their voices and see it in the cool way they stare out their liquor-kiosk window or exhale a lungful of Marlboro smoke. Do your best to encourage and patronize businesses whose idea of capitalism and freedom is, instead, rejoicing in the chance for anybody to work freely towards their own goals and dreams, charging fairly and with a smile and an open door, and thinking of the quality of society as well as the thickness of their wallets.

Weather. Summers are cool in the Baltics and Russia. Most days will be warm enough to wear just a T-shirt, but pack a sweater for the evenings. Summers in Moscow bring thunderstorms like clockwork at about 4:00 or 5:00 pm. Don't trust the blue sky when you wake up; bring that umbrella.

Average daily highs/lows (F), and average rainy days per month

City	Jan	Mar	May	July	Sept	Nov
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	Riga (Vilnius)	25/14	35/20	61/42	71/52	63/47	39/30
		19	16	13	12	17	19
	St. Petersburg	19/8	32/18	59/42	70/55	60/47	35/28
		21	14	13	13	17	18
	Moscow	15/3	32/18	66/46	73/55	61/45	35/26
		18	15	13	15	13	15
	Helsinki (Tallinn)	26/17	32/20	56/40	71/55	59/46	37/30
		20	14	12	14	15	19
	Warsaw	32/22	42/28	67/48	75/58	66/49	42/33
		15	11	11	16	12	12

Gifts to bring? These days you can get anything in the hard currency stores so the best sure-fire pleaser is Western cash. Top quality duty-free candy and chocolate, always easy to get on the ferry from Scandinavia, are much appreciated. Postcards, stickers, pins, T-shirts and decals from the USA, the more Western-looking the better, are also a hit.

Our sophisticated * rating system for sights covered in this book:**

- *** Don't miss
- ** Try hard to see
- * Worthwhile if you can make it

Gateways: Helsinki, Stockholm, and Warsaw

When visiting the region, unless you fly directly into one of the capitals, you'll probably be using Helsinki, Stockholm or Warsaw as a gateway. Here are some tips to help you make it smoothly through the transportation and bureaucratic hoops you'll encounter.

Gateway Helsinki

Helsinki is a compact and convenient city, and an excellent gateway to the five cities in this book. The Russian Empire-era architecture and the Orthodox church in the center of town will prepare you for St. Petersburg. For a rundown on sightseeing and budget sleeping, see *Let's Go: Europe* or Rick Steves' Helsinki chapter in his *2 to 22 Days in Norway, Sweden and Denmark* guidebook.

Two places to stay in Helsinki are especially cheap and convenient for travelers to Russia and the Baltics. **Eurohostel**, a block from the Viking Line ferry terminal and about a 20-minute walk from the Baltic ferry terminals at Linnankatu 9, is an upscale hostel (rates start at 80-95mk, about \$15, per night) with immaculate double and triple rooms and a free sauna every morning (tel. 358/0/66 44 52, fax 65 50 44). They enjoy being helpful and are a great grapevine for the latest on travel to and through the Baltics. **Matkakoti Pilvilinna** is a guesthouse one block from the train station and about fifteen minutes from the port, at Vilhonkatu 6 (tel. 630 260 or 607 072). It looks like it should be in Southern Europe, with a rough-hewn feel, creaky floors, and an old elevator in the center of the stairway. Its virtues are convenience and variable luxury, from a 12-bed hostel-style dorm room for 65mk per person to a bright double room for 125mk per person. A convenient travel agency specializing in ferry reservations out of Helsinki is **Merelle/Till Havs**, Kluuvikatu 6, tel. 658 733 or 651 011 (open Monday-Friday 9:00-17:00).

Helsinki To St. Petersburg By Boat: From April 22 to November 4, 1993, the **M/S Konstantin Simonov** will sail twice a week from Helsinki to St. Petersburg and back. The ship leaves Helsinki's Makasiinterminaali on Mondays and Thursdays at 16:00, arriving in St. Petersburg the following morning at 9:30. It returns from St. Petersburg on Thursdays and Sundays at five minutes past midnight, arriving back in Helsinki on Thursdays and Sundays at 14:00. Bookings are through Merelle/Till Havs (see address above). They will want you to book an entire four-day visa-free cruise package including land sightseeing. Tell them you've arranged your own visa and you want a one-way ticket (270mk). This is a better deal than the train or the bus since it includes meals on board and a bed in a cabin with shower. Tickets may sell out early.

Helsinki To St. Petersburg By Bus: The Helsinki bus station is across Mannerheimintie from the post office and train station. The **St. Petersburg ExpressBus** leaves daily at 12:00, arriving at the Grand Hotel Europe in St. Petersburg at 21:00. Return buses leave the Grand Hotel Europe daily at 9:00, arriving Helsinki at 16:05. Each way costs 250mk, 10% off for students. **Finnord** plans to start direct daily service from Helsinki to St. Petersburg this summer, leaving at 9:00 and arriving at 17:00, with return buses leaving St. Petersburg at 15:00 and arriving back in Helsinki at 22:00. Their regular prices are higher but their student prices are lower than the St. Petersburg ExpressBus. Bookings for both buses can be made at the Helsinki bus station or by phone (tel. 607 718).

Helsinki To St. Petersburg (and Moscow) By Train: Helsinki's train station is right downtown, within walking distance of most ferries. There are two trains a day in each direction between Helsinki and St. Petersburg, and one between Helsinki and Moscow:

Name of train:	Sibelius	Repin	Tolstoi
Run by:	Finnish railways	Russian railways	Russian railways
Leaves Helsinki:	6:26	15:06	17:08

Arrives:	St. Petersburg 13:50	St. Petersburg 23:15	Moscow 8:50
Leaves:	St. Petersburg 15:55	St. Petersburg 6:20	Moscow 18:17
Arrives Helsinki:	21:26	12:26	9:00

Tickets to St. Petersburg cost 294mk each way, to Moscow 562mk each way. The St. Petersburg trains are worth the price. The few marks you save by buying a ticket only from Helsinki to Vyborg, then continuing to St. Petersburg on a ruble ticket, are not worth the delay and hassle of standing in line in Vyborg. Travelers to Moscow, though, will find it considerably cheaper to take the ferry to Tallinn and there buy a ticket to Moscow. Going to St. Petersburg first (either from Helsinki or Tallinn), then to Moscow, also works out cheaper. There is a separate Russian department in the Helsinki train station (open Monday-Friday 8:30-17:00, Saturday-Sunday 11:00-16:30), in a little room next to the entrance to the main ticket hall. They take advance reservations (they say three to four days ahead is enough) on tel. 707 3411 or 625 216 and on fax 707 4240.

Helsinki To Tallinn By Boat: From April to October, Estonian New Line's hydrofoils are the fastest way to Tallinn--two hours or less. Tickets cost 100mk, 180mk round-trip, and vessels leave from Helsinki's Makasiiniterминаali. There are four trips a day from June 1 to August 15, two in May, late August, and September, and one per day in April and October. Book tickets at the port or at the Estonian New Line office at Fabianinkatu 12 (tel. 680 2499; open Monday-Friday 8:30-16:30).

Ferries, which run year-round, are cheaper but slower. The two main companies are **Estonian New Line** and **Tallink**. Both leave from the Olympiaterминаali on the western side of the Helsinki harbor, along tram lines 1A, 3B, and 3T. Both companies have one morning sailing and one evening sailing in each direction, every day. The trip takes about four hours. Estonian New Line charges 70mk each way. Tallink charges 100-120mk each way. Estonian New Line's ships leave Helsinki at 8:00 and 20:00, arriving in Tallinn at 11:30 and 23:30. (The Sunday morning boat leaves at 11:30 and arrives at 14:30.) Return trips leave Tallinn at 8:00 and 17:30, reaching Helsinki at 12:00 and 21:00. You can stay overnight on the ferry that arrives in Tallinn at 23:30 for an extra 50mk.

Gateway Stockholm

To Tallinn By Boat: Estline runs a ferry called the M/S Estonia connecting Stockholm and Tallinn, with departures on alternating days. Stockholm departures are at 17:30, arriving in Tallinn at 9:00 the next morning; Tallinn departures are at 19:00, arriving Stockholm at 9:30 (all times local; Stockholm is an hour earlier than Tallinn.) The basic price is \$50, or \$70 on Friday departures from Stockholm and Saturday departures from Tallinn. Students get about 25% off with an ISIC card. Cabins are extra. In Stockholm, reserve by calling 08/667 0001 (this is the office at the port; you can pick up the tickets when you arrive). Free buses meet both arriving and departing passengers in Stockholm, connecting Estline's Tallinnterminalen at the Frihamnen harbor to Stockholm's Cityterminalen (central bus station, next to the train station). Buses to departing ferries leave Cityterminalen at 15:00, 15:20, 15:40, and 16:00. The only problem for the traveler is to figure out which days the ferry leaves from Stockholm and which days from Tallinn. In June, July, and September 1993, ferries will leave Stockholm on odd-numbered evenings and Tallinn on even-numbered evenings. In April, May, and August, ferries will leave Stockholm on even-numbered evenings and Tallinn on odd-numbered evenings. Call 08/66 65 79 (or fax 08/44 12 19) in Stockholm to confirm.

To Riga and St. Petersburg By Boat: Taking the M/S Fennia from Norrköping (south of Stockholm) to Riga is not a bad deal: prices start at about \$60 per person each way, including cabin, dinner and breakfast. Ferries leave Norrköping every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 15:00, arriving in Riga on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 11:00, leaving Riga at 18:00, and arriving back in Norrköping on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday at 12:00. You can also take Baltic Line ferries direct from Stockholm to Riga (leaves Stockholm on Tuesday, Riga on Wednesday) from Stockholm to St. Petersburg (leaves Stockholm on Thursday, St. Petersburg on Monday), and from Nynäshamn, south of Stockholm, to St. Petersburg (leaves Nynäshamn on Sunday, leaves St. Petersburg on Wednesday), but prices for these ferries are about \$100-150 one-way. Baltic Line arranges connecting buses from Stockholm's bus station to Norrköping and Nynäshamn (less than \$5). Call Baltic Line in Sweden at 46/20/290 029 or 725 050; the cheaper cabins sell out early.

Gateway Warsaw

Getting a Polish Visa: U.S. and British citizens do not need a visa for Poland, but citizens of many other Western countries do. Getting a Polish visa is easy: you don't need an invitation and can get same-day or mail service from your country's Polish embassy. In Vilnius, the Polish embassy is at Aušros Vartų g. 7 (through the arch and to the right; tel. 22 44 44; open Monday-Friday, 9:00-13:00). They'll issue you a visa in an hour or so for \$25 (regular) or \$14 (48-hour transit visa). Canadians, for some reason, pay \$42 and \$21. You need two photos. Similar conditions should prevail at the Polish consulates in Riga (Elizabetes iela 2), Helsinki (Armas Lindgrenintie 21), Moscow (ul. Klimashkina 4), or St. Petersburg (5th Sovetskaya ul. 12).

From Warsaw To the Baltics By Train: Direct trains to Vilnius cut across a corner of Byelorussia on their way from Warsaw. This wasn't a problem when Lithuania was part of the USSR. Now, however, passengers on the train enter and leave Russian visa-space in the course of a few hours...and must surrender their visa forever. This means that you need an extra Russian visa to take this route. Since the Byelorussian embassy in Washington has started issuing visas, the time may come when a Byelorussian visa is required for this trip. In Warsaw, the Russian Embassy is at 49 Belwederska Street (tel. 21 34 53 or 21 55 75, fax 49 40 85).

The reopened rail link across the Polish-Lithuanian border avoids this multiple visa problem, but with a ridiculous series of connections (Warsaw-Suwalki-Šeštokai-Kaunas-Vilnius) that take 24 hours. For now, take the bus. Starting May 22, Estonian Railways will begin a new "Baltic Express" train that will run from Warsaw to Tallinn, using the reopened Polish-Lithuanian link, and stopping also in Kaunas and Riga. Departures will be from Warsaw daily at 14:32, arriving in Tallinn the following day at 13:10. The only train change will be at Šeštokai. Tickets, at least on the Estonian end, will cost about \$30. Tickets should be available at Warszawa Centralna station (domestic info tel. 20 03 61, international info tel. 20 45 12, to order domestic tickets tel. 25 60 33, to order international tickets tel. 36 57 20).

From Warsaw To Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn By Bus: The bus beats the train. Two daily buses run from Warszawa Zachodnia bus station (near the train station of the same name, along aleje Jerozolimskie to the west of Warszawa Centralna) to Vilnius, one leaving at 8:00 and arriving at 20:00, the other leaving at 12:25 and arriving at 23:25. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, an overnight bus leaves Warszawa Wschodnia

station (across the river, to the east of the city center) at 19:00, arriving in Vilnius at 7:10 the following morning. Tickets on these buses cost about \$20. On Fridays only, a bus leaves Copenhagen at 6:30, Berlin at 13:30, and Warszawa Zachodnia at 23:00, arriving in Vilnius Saturdays at 8:30. Call 45/33 91 91 15 in Copenhagen for information. On Wednesdays and Sundays, an Estonian bus leaves Warszawa Zachodnia at 7:00, arriving in Riga at 21:30 that evening and Tallinn at 2:30 late that night. Tickets to Tallinn cost about \$30. The bus information and ticket sales office in Warsaw is at 26 Zurawia St. (tel. 21 34 69 or 628 23 56).

Don't Cross the Polish-Lithuanian Border by Private Car: The Polish-Lithuanian road border at Lazdijai is unbelievably crowded. Waiting time can be up to forty hours! The Vilnius-Warsaw buses don't have to wait. We've heard that foreigners are also sometimes waved to the front of the line, but don't count on it. Obviously, hitching a cross-border ride with the locals is not a good idea.

From Warsaw To Moscow and St. Petersburg By Train: While you should be able to buy tickets to Moscow (two 22-hour trains daily) from the international windows on the top floor of Warszawa Centralna for about \$50, it's cheaper and easier to get tickets if you tour the Baltics first and then go to Moscow via Tallinn, Riga, or St. Petersburg. If you do take the Warsaw-Moscow train, your Russian visa should be valid for transiting Byelorussia on the way.

While there is a daily train from Warsaw to St. Petersburg, you'll need extra Russian or Byelorussian and Baltic visas to transit Byelorussia, Lithuania, and Latvia on your way north. Go to the Baltics first across the Polish-Lithuanian border and then go to St. Petersburg.

Moscow, Russia

Moscow encapsulates both all that's good and all that's bad about Russia. Like the country, the city is huge. Rides around the center can take an hour. It's easy to get overwhelmed and swallowed up by Moscow. You constantly feel insignificant under the press of its weighty buildings, starchy food, grime and pollution. Among the sprawling tenement buildings and "Stalin Gothic" skyscrapers one can still find brilliant golden domes and reminders of Czarist days. But the Soviet penchant for gigantism forces the visitor to search out these glimpses of Russia's glorious past like flowers in a field of tall grass.

Even though it may not possess the inherent beauty that St. Petersburgers claim as their own, visitors to Moscow will feel as though they are in a place where things are happening furiously. Some days Moscow will leave you mentally and physically exhausted, wondering why you decided to go there and when the plane is leaving. Other days, though, you almost like it.

The contradictions that pervade society take you on an emotional roller coaster. Russians will bump, shove and yell at you in a bakery line and then smile and offer you everything they have in their kitchen when you dine at their apartments. The cramped and crumbling apartments constructed by Brezhnev are so unattractive that even the simplest church seems incredibly beautiful. Moscow's nouveau riche streak around in their mud-splattered Mercedes and BMWs, while young mothers stand alongside babushki selling everything from a used pair of boots to a bottle of milk. For many Russians, life is a game of survival and during these awkward first steps towards a market economy, the rules seem to change every day.

Russophiles are evenly split between those who prefer Moscow and those who would choose nowhere else but St. Petersburg. Regardless of how, or if, the city charms you, Moscow is an exciting city to visit.

A two-day Moscow sightseeing plan

Day 1

- 10:00 Arrive in Red Square by metro, see St. Basil's, visit Lenin, and wander through the GUM department store.
- 11:30 Follow our tour of state stores up ul. Tverskaya.
- 13:00 Grab a quick lunch at McDonald's or at Baku Liban.
- 14:00 Depending on the weather and your interests, head to Gorky Park, the Izmailovskii Park flea market, or the Tretyakov or Pushkin museums.
- 18:00 Have dinner at Kombi's before heading home.

Day 2

- 10:00 Go back downtown and tour the Kremlin.
- 13:00 Walk up to Iberia for lunch.
- 14:00 Spend the afternoon exploring downtown Moscow; stroll down the Arbat and then return to the center along the almost-parallel Novii Arbat.
- 19:00 Walk or take the metro up to Cafe Margarita for dinner.

Moscow orientation

Moscow is enormous. It can be daunting to the uninitiated. The city is organized in concentric circles. The outer ring road marks the city limits while most of the important sights are contained within the inner Garden Ring. At the bullseye is the Kremlin and Red Square. The Moscow river cuts an arc through the center of the city, with its peak touching the Kremlin.

Moscow's size makes it difficult to identify specific landmarks. The best guideposts are metro stops (identifiable by a glowing red M) which are never much more than a ten minute walk away inside the Garden Ring road. If you do not see one, just ask any passerby "Gdye stantsiya metro?" (or show them this: *iiiiiiiiiiiiiiii?*) and you will likely be answered by "Vot" and an outstretched arm pointing the way. Tokens for the metro are available inside the entrances. The latest price should be posted near the ticket window. Just go to the window, hold up the requisite number of fingers and say the number of tickets you want. For trams and buses you need to buy tickets which the drivers sell in strips of ten. They're also sold in and around metro ticket windows. Month-passes (*iiiiiiiiiiiiiiii*), available only the last and first few days of the month, cost less than a dollar and allow unlimited access to all modes of transportation.

The *Moscow Times*, which comes out Tuesday through Saturday, will keep you up to date on events in the capital and elsewhere in Russia. Also check out the *Moscow Tribune* Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. The *Moscow Guardian*, a colorful magazine with lighter features, comes out every Friday and, along with the *Moscow Times'* Friday edition, has a comprehensive calendar of arts and entertainment for the upcoming week. All these papers are free at hard-currency stores and hotels. Open Radio, at AM 918 and 102.3 FM, broadcasts the BBC and the VOA daily from 6:00 to 17:00 and midnight to 2:00. Their live local show from 7:00-9:00 (10:00-12:00 on weekends) will tell you what's going on around town. Look for a bilingual map of Moscow before you get here, or stop by Stockmann's (see under Hard-Currency Supermarkets) which carries a good map in English for \$7.50.

Moscow: What to see

*** **Red Square, Lenin's Mausoleum and St. Basil's Cathedral.** Any tour of Moscow should begin in the center of the city, on Red Square in front of St. Basil's Cathedral. Surrounded on one side by the Kremlin Walls and Lenin's Mausoleum and on the other by GUM (*iii*), the largest department store in the country, you'll rightly feel at the administrative heart of a grand empire. The hourly changing of the guard in front of Lenin's resting place, though a much less sinister show than it was before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, is nevertheless impressive. You can go inside the mausoleum and decide for yourself whether Lenin is wax or flesh (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 10:00-13:00, and Sunday 10:00-14:00). The line forms at the entrance to Alexander's Garden. Large bags and cameras must be checked in the cloak room on the side of the maroon-colored Historical Museum.

** **GUM.** This is the best-stocked department store in the country. Since 1992, hard currency stores such as Benetton, Galeries Lafayette and Samsonite have slowly begun to take over more and more space in GUM. There are three corridors; enter at either end. Climb up to the top floor at either end of the building where there are no stores and treat yourself to a spectacular view and an amazing vantage point for photographing ordinary Russians as they go about their shopping unawares. The natural light from the skylights is especially pretty on bright days.

*** **The Kremlin,** the walled enclosure containing Russia's top government offices as well as several beautiful Orthodox churches, is a must-see. The entrance is through Alexander's Garden; from Red Square, go into the garden and past the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and you'll come to the Kremlin ticket office (*iiii*), a small brown kiosk to the right of the Kremlin rampart and across from a metro exit (open 10:00-16:30). In February 1993 the entrance fee for foreigners was \$10. Resident foreigners with "accreditation" (whatever that is) got in for 1,000 R (\$1.70) and foreign students paid 500 R (\$.75). Russians paid twelve rubles. Your best bet is to try holding up one or two fingers and thrusting the Russian price in rubles at the cashier, or having a Russian friend buy the tickets for you. Don't forget to buy tickets for the churches inside as well (about ten rubles apiece).

****State stores.** To get a real feel for the difficulties Russians face (and the smells they encounter) in the simple task of finding food for their family, a tour of a few state stores is in order. *Produkty* stores sell staples such as milk, sugar and flour. A *bulochnaya* is a bakery selling bread, biscuits and gingerbread. *Moloko* stores sell dairy products. *Gastronom* stores combine all of the above under one roof. Since prices were liberalized, stores have been relatively well stocked and one can find many imported goods, but the prices are a major pain in the pocketbook for average Russians. If you are already in the city center, the following route is a good one to sample the pickings in state stores. Begin in front of the Intourist Hotel at the end of ul. Tverskaya/*iiiiiiiiiiii* near Red Square. Walk away from Red Square. At the first corner you'll find a bakery (*iiiiiiiiiiii*). Bread is sold on the right,

condiments and crackers are straight ahead. Continue along Tverskaya one block until you get to the corner in front of Central Telegraph, the building with the huge revolving globe on its front. Cross the side-street and go in the large maroon building (#9) with the square blue and white sign that says *Сувениры Москвы*. This is a much more representative department store than GUM.

Backtrack slightly, cross the street using the underpass in front of Central Telegraph, and continue along the other side of the street. The store with the red neon *Сувениры* sign, across the street from a huge arch, is a well stocked *Сувениры*. Walk through it lengthwise and out the other end. Continue up Tverskaya past the bookstore (*Сувениры*) and the Pizza Hut take-out window (slices cost about fifty cents). The food store at #14 is the grandest in the city and probably one of the best stocked. Go in the main door and then the door on the right; the huge chandeliers and grand columns won this store a spot in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. To the left side of the entrance is a more modest meat section. If you continue walking up Tverskaya from here, you'll soon reach Pushkin Square and McDonald's.

**** Gorky Park, (*Сувениры Сувениры*).** This is the best place to escape the noise and grime of Moscow without leaving the center. More than 10 million people a year come here to stroll down the tree-lined paths, ride a paddle boat, or snack at one of the many stands to the tune of rock music blared over loudspeakers. You'll be able to feel the pulse of Russian youth, whose attitudes towards money and morals are defining what the new Russia will be like. The Cafe Viktoria, better known by locals as the Hard Rock Cafe, is in the very back of the park. Perhaps the best reason to go is the view from atop the enormous rickety ferris wheel in the center of the 300-acre park. Gorky Park hosts numerous concerts, festivals and demonstrations throughout the year.

To get there, take the metro to the Oktyabrskaya/*Сувениры Сувениры* ring line station, exit to the street through the right-hand doors, go left around the corner, and walk alongside the park's fence about 400 meters to the huge colonnaded entrance. Tickets are sold at the windows to the left and right for about \$0.05. Consider going back downtown on a riverboat, which you can catch at the terminal on the river side of the park. Gorky Park is open daily from 10:00 to 22:30.

***** Izmailovskii Park weekend flea market.** This is *the* place to buy your souvenirs. Whereas the matryoshka-sellers on the Arbat are mostly greedy young middlemen, at Izmailovskii Park you most often are dealing with the original artists who are more than willing to describe their goods in any language they can (including gestures if all else fails). The atmosphere is much less sleazy but bargaining is still a must. Pick up a thirteen-piece matryoshka doll for \$22 or beautifully hand-carved chess sets, scarves and patchwork quilts. To get there, take the dark blue metro line four stops north-east of the ring line to Izmailovskii Park (*Сувениры Сувениры Сувениры*). Exit, turn left and walk towards the stadium and smokestacks in the distance. Notice the Intourist propaganda posters on the right along the way. Open only on weekends and holidays, from morning till evening.

*** The Arbat (*Сувениры*).** If you're stuck in Moscow during mid-week and need to buy presents for friends back home, visit this street-turned-pedestrian-mall just west of downtown. Once a prestigious address for Russia's eminent writers, young Russian souvenir-pushers now come here to fulminate at tourists from behind their small tables. The goods are the same as you'll find at Izmailovskii Park, but the prices are significantly higher and the selection is not as extensive. More English here, though, and more pickpockets too. Take a moment to imagine the original grandeur of this historic street without all of the crowds and tables. The closest metro is the Arbatskaya (*Сувениры Сувениры*) station on the light blue line, directly across from the beginning of the Arbat. The Arbatskaya station on the dark blue line is also convenient: exit, turn left and walk through the crowds for about 250 meters.

**** Farmer's markets.** A trip here will show you the true scope of Russia's agricultural richness (and fill your picnic basket). Downtown Moscow's largest and best market is the Danilovskii Rynok (*Сувениры Сувениры Сувениры*). Take the metro

one stop south of the ring on the grey line to Tulsкая (*Сувениры Сувениры*). Exit to the left and make your way to the large circular building with the white dome-like top behind you. First you'll pass babushki selling plastic bags, then Georgians shouting "*Molodoi chelovyek!*" (young man) and "*Devushka!*" (young lady) as they try to entice you towards their piles of oranges, tomatoes, cucumbers, and pears. Another, smaller market is at Metro: Tsvetnoi Bulvar (*Сувениры Сувениры Сувениры*), also on the grey line, one stop inside the northern arc of the ring line. Exit and go 30 meters to the right.

****Pushkin and Tretyakov Museums.** The Pushkin Museum (Пушкинский музей)--Moscow's best fine arts museum-- is at ul. Volkhonka/Волхонка 12, near Metro Kropotkinskaya/Кропоткинская, one stop inside the ring on the red line. Exiting the Metro, follow the sign saying *Музей*. It's across the street and to the right of the exit. The ticket office and coat check are downstairs. (Open Tuesday 10:00-21:00, Wednesday-Sunday 10:00-20:00.) To get to the Tretyakov Gallery, which has the world's best collection of Russian icons, take the orange line metro to Tretyakovskaya/Третьяковская. Turn left at the top of the stairs, cross the street, and walk down the brick road about 100 meters to the large red and white building on the right.

* **Zagorsk**, now called Sergiev Posad (Сергиев Посад), is a living medieval monastery 60 km outside of Moscow. This orgy of onion domes and icons, one of the most beautiful churches in all Russia, is 90 minutes by train from Moscow's Yaroslavskii Station (Metro: Komsomolskaya/Комсомольская). Coming out from the Metro, go in the glassed-in building under the large *Спас* sign and buy an 8-zone *obratny* (return) ticket from any of the ticket windows (about \$0.10), then hop on any of the trains marked Sergiev Posad or Alexandrov (Александров), which leave every 10-30 minutes. Zagorsk is open 10:00-18:00 but closed on Mondays.

**** Classical Music or Ballet.** Scout out posters and ask whoever you're staying with for advice on music, opera, and ballet performances. Getting into the Bolshoi Ballet usually requires paying hard currency to scalpers these days, but it's still possible to hear great classical concerts for pennies, for instance, at the Tchaikovskii Concert Hall at Metro: Mayakovskaya, or at the Tchaikovskii Conservatory on ul. Gertsena.

Moscow: Where to eat

The first thing that should be said about restaurants in Moscow is that you will find few average locals at them, as the prices are prohibitive to all but the wealthiest. Most Muscovites only dine outside their homes on weddings. Secondly, restaurant character changes frequently. The clientele has a way of quickly transforming from clean-cut youth to mafiosi, and quality often lapses over time. A restaurant that serves good food cheaply and does so over a period of years is rare. Here are the latest best values:

McDonald's, Pushkin Square. Located directly across from the statue of Russia's beloved national poet, Aleksandr Pushkin, the Golden Arches attracts Muscovites and foreigners alike with its cleanliness, efficiency, relatively cheap prices, and predictably edible food. Indeed, this is the place to go when a quick lunch must be squeezed in among a full day's sightseeing or when dinner plans fall through. In the best tradition of Soviet gigantism and American capitalism, Mickey D's boasts 27 cash registers, 1,500 employees, seating for over 700 and nearly 40,000 customers a day. It even has its own farm to ensure an adequate supply of all the sesame seeds and special sauce required to make the Big Mac you try here taste like the one you last ate back in the States. The employees' beaming smiles will make you wonder whether you are still in Moscow. McDonald's is accessible and visible from Metro: Pushkinskaya/Пушкинская.

Iberia (Иберия), ul. Rozhdestvenka/Рождественка 5/7. Just around the corner from Kuznetskii Most/Кузнецкий мост, the old shopping street of Moscow, Iberia is a Georgian restaurant serving up tasty, though somewhat heavy cuisine with a southern flair. This is an excellent choice for vegetarians. The young waiters are pleasant and attentive and the food a nice change from the typical Russian fare. Iberia is best for lunch when it is nearly empty and reservations unnecessary. Dinner tends to be more expensive since the management insists on setting the table with all of the dishes (which you pay for even if you don't want them). Tell them you don't eat meat and you'll cut down the size of the bill and still get the best dishes. For lunch, order *chicken*, *beef* and *salad* (one portion per person). One *chicken* will do for two or even three people and for a main dish try the *beef*. If you don't like meat, just order more appetizers. The drinks will cost you hard currency; get a pitcher of *juice*. All of the above should run about \$2 to \$3 per person. From Metro: Kuznetskii Most, exit and go through the arches to the street. Iberia is across the street and slightly to the left. Look for the gold sign on the door. (Open daily 12:00-17:00 and 18:00-23:00. For reservations, call 928-2672; they speak English.)

Kombi's is a Western-style subway sandwich shop directly across from the orange line metro exit at Prospekt Mira (Мира) 48. Ask for the English menu. We like the Formula, the Hot-Ham, and the Oreo milkshakes--each cost a little over a dollar. (Open daily 11:00-22:00.)

Baku Liban (Баку) ul. Tverskaya/Тверская 24. For a

place that is frequented by locals, try this stand-up Lebanese restaurant. Dine on shaved beef and chicken prepared in front of you (about \$0.50) or falafel (about \$0.40). They also have hamburgers and more traditional rice and potato dishes. For dessert try a honey-drenched *makaron* (макароны) pastry. If language is a barrier just point to what you want. From Metro: Mayakovskaya/майковская, exit up to ul. Tverskaya across from the statue of Mayakovskii. Walk right about 50 meters. The restaurant is next to the Hotel Minsk. (Open daily 10:00-21:00.)

Cafe Margarita (кафе маргарита), Malaya Bronnaya/бронная ul. 28. Named after Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita* and located across from the corner of Patriarch's Pond where the novel begins, this is the hangout for Moscow's artsy set. Don't be put off if the decorative steel door on the corner is locked; ring the doorbell. Though poorly marked and uninviting from the outside, you will feel like you're part of the happening crowd once in. Lanterns ring the walls, which are covered with original paintings and photographs. The dress and setting is informal--wooden stools and benches. The service is friendly and relaxed. At night you will probably be asked to pay about a dollar (in rubles) on entry for the piano player. Tomatoes stuffed with cheese and garlic (закуска) are the specialty. For the main course try the pancakes with assorted fillings (блины) or the *beef stew*, which is similar to a beef stew. The menu is in both Russian and English though, so ordering should not be a problem. A 20% service charge is included. (Open 14:00-16:00, 18:00-02:00.)

Hard-currency supermarkets. The Moscow government has forced these Western stores to accept rubles. They do so at rip-off rates--sometimes 33% higher than the going exchange rate. For reliability, good Western currency prices (credit cards only), variety and convenience, try **Stockmann's** at Zatspepskii/затsepский Val 4/8. Most of the goods are Finnish but there are English signs to clue you in. From Metro: Paveletskaya/павелецкий, standing across the street from the Paveletskii railroad station, walk left for about three minutes. Stockmann's is on the left just past a *stand*; with the parking lot full of cars with red (diplomatic) and orange (foreign business) plates. (Open daily 10:00-20:00).

The **Arbat Irish House** takes hard Western cash and is closer to the tourist sights (Novii Arbat/новый арбат 21). There's a grocery store, a clothing and appliance department, and the Shamrock Bar. From Metro: Arbatskaya/арбатская, walk about three minutes down Novii Arbat, the street with the monstrous grey Soviet architecture that radiates from the same point as the Arbat pedestrian mall. It's on your left; watch for the green sign. Sneak a look inside the huge Russian grocery store underneath, which is supported partly by the Irish House. If you're willing to wait in lines you can get many of the same products as they have upstairs, but for rubles.

Moscow: Where to sleep

With the break-up of the state travel agency, Intourist, hotels have "westernized" themselves by raising their prices to Western levels without any change in the quality of the service. The Slavjanskaya (tel. 941-8020) and the Marco Polo (tel. 202-0381) are safe and clean but charge \$250 a night...hard Western money only. Medium-priced hotels do exist (for instance, the centrally located Hotel Budapest, tel. 921-1060, has \$50 doubles if you reserve in advance), and short-term apartment rentals are available through ads in the *Times*, *Tribune*, and *Guardian* for as little as \$100 a week. Unfortunately, these are good options only if your visa is already taken care of, since neither apartment agencies nor low-end hotels are consistently able to organize visa invitations.

As we went to press, Moscow's first real hostel, the **Travelers' Guest House**, was just opening up. It will be working both with the St. Petersburg Hostel and with Monkey Business, the Trans-Siberian agents in Beijing and Hong Kong. It can also provide visa support on its own. The 60-bed hostel is at Bolshaya Pereslavskaia/большая переславская ul. 50 (tel. 971-4059). From Metro: Prospekt Mira/проспект мира, walk north about three blocks, turn right after the building with the red arch painted on it (you should see four smokestacks in the distance), walk one block to the end of the street, turn left, and the hostel is in the tall white building on your right with red signs on either side of the door. Go in and take the elevator up to the tenth floor. The hostel is within walking distance of the Rizhskii, Leningradskii, and Yaroslavskii Stations and thus also of trains to Latvia, Estonia and St. Petersburg as well as the Trans-Siberian. A bed in a 3-4 person room will cost the ruble equivalent of \$10; doubles with and without private facilities will cost \$13-15 per person.

RA Tour Agency. Started up by three young, energetic Russians, this agency can offer rooms a ten minute walk from Metro: Botanicheskii Sad/ботанический сад (orange line). For only \$5 you get a bed in a double-occupancy room located on a quiet floor in a dorm-style building. There's a lounge with couches and a TV on the floor. Toilets and bathrooms are shared and located on the floor. RA also offers two-room suites in the Textile Institute dormitory four bus stops away from Metro: *Textile Institute*. The 2-5 bed suites come with a toilet and bathroom,

sometimes a fridge, sometimes a sitting room; prices range from \$26 to \$36 per suite, and include breakfast. Advance reservations are strongly recommended for all locations. RA Tours will also be happy to provide visa support for you for \$15 payable upon arrival. The office is at Bolshaya Gruzinskaya/улицы Грозинская ул. 52, next to the Belorusskii train station (tel. 254-0745, 254-7020, or 254-5711, fax 254-3297).

Leaving Moscow

Buying tickets in Moscow to points elsewhere is never as simple as going up to the ticket window in the respective train station. And rules for foreigners trying to buy train tickets change often and without warning in the capital. In February 1993, the situation was as follows:

The easiest (if not cheapest) way for those traveling to Tallinn or St. Petersburg is **Intourtrans** at ul. Petrovka/улицы Петровка 13/15 (Metro: Teatralnaya/улицы Театральная; open daily 9:00-12:00, 13:00-20:30). Walk up the street that runs by the right of the Bolshoi Theater. The entrance to Intourtrans is hidden behind a long arch-covered passageway. The offices are to the right on the second floor. Intourist has done an admirable job of creating a Western-style travel agency complete with computers and polished wood counters. The lines here are nearly non-existent and, even if they hit you with a high hard-currency service fee, it's the easiest place to buy tickets to Tallinn or St. Petersburg. The counter for train tickets is directly in front of the entrance.

For cheaper prices and additional destinations, go to the **Advance Ticket Office** at ul. Griboyedova/улицы Грибоедова 6/11. From Metro: Chistye Prudy/улицы Чистые Пруды, walk northeast on ul. Myasnitskaya/улицы Мясницкая, and make your second right onto Griboyedova. (Open daily 8:00-13:00; 14:00-19:00.) You can buy train tickets for any destination in the former Soviet Union from *corpus* 1 (building 1) on the right in the fenced-in yard, but only at least one day in advance. Foreigners may only use windows 1 and 2 in the room to the right of the entrance. Remember to bring your passport. This is a good place to meet African and Asian students who are studying in Moscow. See how many different languages you can identify. Tickets to **Warsaw** are available on the first floor of the other corpus (to the left as you come in the gate) for about \$50. If you are trying to go from Moscow to Warsaw quickly and cannot buy a direct train ticket, buy a ticket to Vilnius instead on trains 5 or 87 (you'll need a visa for the Baltics). When you arrive in Vilnius in the morning, go straight to the bus station and try to get on the 10:00 bus to Warsaw (see the Vilnius section for more details). This route is more hassle than the direct train, but it costs about \$25 less and doesn't take any longer.

For tickets to Tallinn and St. Petersburg on the spur of the moment, visit the Intourist window at **Leningradskii Station** (улицы Ленинградская; Metro: Komsomolskaya/улицы Комсомольская. Go to the end of the main hall, up the right-hand stairs, through the door on the right and then to the left. They charge an extortionary \$4 service fee. Just pay it. Remember you can only get tickets for same-day or next-day trains here.

Tickets to **Helsinki** are available for \$121 on the first floor of Leningradskii Station at the special Intourist office on the left as you walk into the station's main hall. Go to the window on the left which says "Finland" (Open daily 8:00-13:00, 14:00- 18:30.) It is wisest to take the train to Tallinn (\$8 max.) and then the boat to Helsinki (about \$15).

For general **tickets abroad** go to the ticket office at Leningradskii/улицы Ленинградский Prospekt 1 (Metro: Belorusskaya/улицы Белорусская). It's to the left of the Belorusskii train station, on the far side of the bridge. Both Russians and foreigners buy their tickets to Europe here. Go to one of the windows that says "\$ DM £" on it.

For **Trans-Siberian tickets** try going to the Intourist office at Yaroslavskii Station (улицы Ярославский), the one right next to Leningradskii Station. The Intourist office is across the driveway on the east side of the station. Tickets on the thrice-weekly trains to Beijing go on sale a month before departure, sell out within ten days to two weeks, and cost \$150 (second class) to \$240 (first). The St. Petersburg Youth Hostel can try to get tickets if you give them advance notice. For visas to China, visit the consulate at ul. Druzhby/улицы Дружбы 6 (tel. 143-1543; Metro: Universitet/улицы Университет on the Red Line); to Mongolia, at Spasopesovskii/улицы Спасо-Песочный per. 7 (Metro: Smolenskaya/улицы Смоленская on the dark blue line).

Trains out of Moscow

Train number	Departs Moscow	Arrives
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To St. Petersburg (iiiiiiiiiiii)

*10	00:10	9:11
*20	1:05	9:16
*30	1:56	10:45
**652	2:30	14:53
***158	12:21	17:20
48	12:26	20:10
24	13:30	22:36
160	17:18	23:10
*14	20:35	5:05
28	22:00	5:48
26	23:00	7:10
*6	23:10	7:33
*2	23:55	8:25
*4	23:59	8:29

To Tallinn (iiiiii)

**176	16:00	12:20
*34	18:27	10:00
68	20:25	12:10

To Riga (iiii)

*1	19:56	10:55
*3	21:15	11:50
31	15:20	9:30

To Vilnius (iiiiii)

*5	19:26	8:00
87	17:06	7:12

To Warsaw (iiiiii)

*9	15:20	Trip lasts
125	10:50	about 22 hours

To Helsinki (iiiiiiiiii)

*32	18:17	8:08
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* These trains have two-person compartments available

** Slow trains. Don't take it!!

*** Special express, runs Fridays only.

Flights out of Moscow

Taxi fares from Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport are a rip-off. The following airline numbers may help for reconfirmations and bookings; remember that you can also reach them from St. Petersburg or the Baltics by dialing 8-095 for Moscow first:

Air France, Korovii Val 7, tel. 237-2325, 237-3344

Austrian Airlines, Krasnopresnenskaya nab. 12 #1805, tel. 253-1670

British Airways, Krasnopresnenskaya nab. 12, #1905, tel. 253-2492

Delta Airlines, Krasnopresnenskaya nab. 12 #1102a, tel.: 253-2658/59

Finnair, Proyezd Khudozhestvennovo Teatra 6, tel. 292-8788, 292-3337

Lufthansa, Olymic Penata Hotel, Olympiski Prospekt 18/1, tel. 975-2501

SAS, Kuznetskii Most 3, tel. 925-4747

Swissair, Krasnopresnenskaya Nab. 12, Office 2005, tel. 253-8988, 253-1859

Moscow nitty gritty

American embassy, Novinskii/iiiiiiii bulvar 19/23, tel. 252-2451. Metro: Barrikadnaya/iiiiiiii (Pink Line).

Laundry. Ceylon Tea Laundromat, ul. Krasikova/iiiiiiii 10. Metro: Profsoyuznaya/iiiiiiii. Ul. Krasikova begins at the metro exit; follow it up about 300 meters. (Open Tuesday-Friday, 7:30-21:00, Saturday and Monday 9:00-18:00).

Post and telephones. You can do everything at the **Central Telegraph Office** at ul. Tverskaya/iiiiii 7 (Metro: Okhotnii Ryad/iiiiii iii). The post office hall is on the right as you enter. If you want to send a postcard, go to the window in the back left corner of the hall. It will take anywhere from a week to two months. If you actually want to communicate with someone, your best bet for value and speed is **Global Sprint Fax**. Go to window #15 on the left-hand side. You leave your document; they notify you by phone if it goes through. One page to the US costs \$0.90 (in rubles). It's \$0.60 a page to Europe.

To send a telegram, get a form from one of the tables in the center of the room and fill it out according to the posted examples; take it to window #12 or #13 on the left. Telegrams get through internationally in a day or two; within Moscow they're useful for communicating with people who don't have a phone.

For **local calls** you may use almost any public phone (there's no difference between a iiiiii and a iiiiii). There are plans to introduce tokens for public phones but until then you must find a 15 kopek coin, the value of which has soared to nearly 30 or 40 times its face value! For **long-distance calls** you can go to the little room to the left in the vestibule of Central Telegraph or to any post office, but the best option is just to use a private phone.

International calls are also easiest from a private phone (direct dial from 21:00 to 9:00 on weekdays and all day on weekends). Rates are about \$0.30/minute though they are continuously rising. The second-best option is to go to Central Telegraph, into the room on the left and to the door in the very back of the room. It's the one with the huge line leading up to it. This room is open 24 hours a day; you will be assigned a booth and may make as many calls as you like in succession, then must pay before you leave. (You may be asked to leave a deposit.) The third, and most dreaded option is to order a call, which can be done at windows 7-9 in Central Telegraph or from a private phone (dial 8-194 or 8-196); you may have to wait several hours. You can avoid all the hassles with newly activated **AT&T USA Direct** service. It's not cheap, however, at nearly \$6 for the first minute and \$2 after that (more for collect calls). The access number is 155-5042. Though you may find it hard to believe after experiencing Moscow's communications infrastructure, it's actually the easiest city in Russia from which to contact the outside world.

Currency exchange. The only legal way to get rubles for your dollars is by changing at a bank or one of the ever more numerous official exchange booths throughout the city (look for signs saying iiiii iiiiii). Rates are affected by numerous factors, though the most influential are the twice-weekly auctions held at the Moscow and St. Petersburg Exchanges which take place every Tuesday and Thursday.

In early 1993, the best legal rates in town (often equaling or surpassing kiosk rates by 5-10 rubles) were at **Kuznetskii Most**/iiiiiiii iiiii 18, right around the corner from the restaurant Iberia. Look for the white iiiii sign above the door. (Open daily 10:00-19:00.) Kuznetskii Most is Moscow's bookstore street; browse the tables out front for Russian books or visit Zwemmers, a hard-currency English-language bookstore next door.

The most convenient places to change money are the banks inside the **Central Telegraph Office** (see the address above). There are two banks located in the post office hall to the right when you come in the door. Credit Bank Moscow in the back of the room offers the better rate. Be careful to factor in the 3% commission though. After-commission rates here are competitive with kiosks' rates, though perhaps 10 rubles lower. The bank immediately to the right of the entrance (windows 48-9) offers a lower commission, but the exchange rate is nearly 10% lower than Credit Bank Moscow. Both of these banks are unusual in that they will usually buy not only dollars but also other major European currencies.

Boris Yeltsin's 1992 decree legalizing street trading did not legalize hard-currency street sales. Nevertheless, changing money at **kiosks** is common and indeed often offers the best rates. However, if you don't speak Russian well, the risk of being cheated or detained by police is not worth the slightly better rate. In 1992, over two thousand people were detained for illegally changing money; in February, 1993, the police announced a new

crackdown on the hard-currency trade on the Arbat. We, however, still do it all the time. Kiosks willing to change money generally have a dollar taped to the window or a sign reading *иностранная валюта*.

One of the worst places in Moscow to change money is **American Express**, ul. Sadovaya-Kudrinskaya/*Садовая-Кудринская* 21a, tel. 254-4305. (Metro: Mayakovskaya/*Маяковская*.) The Moscow branch provides the usual menu of services--including an express cash machine dispensing travelers' checks--but at higher-than-usual commissions (3% on personal check cashing for card holders, 5% to change travelers' checks into dollars). Don't change your dollars into rubles here. The rate is the worst in town. If you have to cash a travelers' check, go to the Arbat Irish House (see Moscow: Where to Eat), buy something small, pay with a large denomination check, and they will give you change in cash. If you have to go to AmEx, exit the Mayakovskaya metro and cross the street to the tower with the blue clock on it. Walk about three blocks and you're there. (Open Monday-Friday 9:00-17:00).

St. Petersburg, Russia

Once a swamp, then an imperial capital, and now a showpiece of vanished aristocratic opulence shot through with the grimy ruins of socialism, St. Petersburg is Russia's most accessible and most tourist-worthy city. Standing in Palace Square cannot but make you shiver and think "The revolution started *here*." Palaces, gardens, statues, and arched bridges over graceful canals bring back the time of the czars. One of the world's greatest art museums tops it off. Amid such artistic and historical splendor, modern Russia and its problems seem terribly out of place, but here they are: streets of legless beggars, mafia-controlled kiosks, wheezing buses, shabby bread stores, broken signs, exhaust-stained facades, pornography dealers, and ice-cream stands.

Compared to Moscow, St. Petersburg is compact, walkable, friendly, manageable, and architecturally intact. Don't get overly uptight about timing your visit to the summer solstice for St. Petersburg's much-banded "White Nights." You'll be able to enjoy bright evenings here all summer long. If you want the real midnight sun, go to Finland.

Save a sunny day just to walk. Keep your head up: ugly Soviet shops mar the first floor of nearly every building, but the upper facades are sun-warmed and untouched by street grime. Make sure to get off Nevsky Prospekt to explore the back streets along the canals. Visit the Summer Gardens and the small palace there, which is open only in summer. Climb St. Isaac's Cathedral for the view. The next day, when the Baltic brings clouds and drizzle, plunge into the Hermitage or the Russian Museum.

A two-day St Petersburg sightseeing plan

Day 1

- 10:00 After breakfast, take a leisurely walk down Nevsky Prospekt to acquaint yourself with the city.
- 11:00 Climb up St. Isaac's Cathedral and peek inside afterwards.
- 12:00 See if Shanghai will serve you lunch for rubles. If not, go to Sadko's.
- 13:30 Lose yourself in the Hermitage all afternoon.
- 18:00 Head for Sadko's or the Bagdad Cafe for dinner.

Day 2

- 10:00 Head across the river to the Peter and Paul Fortress.
- 12:00 Have lunch at the Grand Cafe Antwerpen or at Hebei.
- 14:00 Cross back across the river to the Russian Museum.
- 17:30 Head over to the Korean House for dinner.

Day 3 (optional)

Spend more time in the Hermitage, or go to Petrodvorets for the day.

St. Petersburg orientation

Tourist office? Forget it. You're on your own. It can even be hard to find a good map. (St. Petersburg streets have just undergone another round of name-changing, and perhaps when the dust settles new maps will come out.) Get to know **Nevsky Prospekt** (涅夫斯基大街), St. Petersburg's main street. Almost everything you'll want to see is either along Nevsky or between it and the river. A few spots, like the Finland train station and the Peter and Paul Fortress, are just across the river.

Nevsky starts at the slender-spined Admiralty, next to the river and the Winter Palace. Running outwards from the city it crosses three canals: first the Moika (莫伊卡), then Kanal Griboyedova (格里博耶多夫运河), and finally the Fontanka (方坦卡). A little farther out is Ploshchad Vosstaniya (Uprising Square, 起义广场), home to the Moskovskii Station and near the St. Petersburg Youth Hostel.

Walking distances are manageable (from Ploshchad Vosstaniya all the way to the Admiralty only takes 30-45 minutes). The Metro is not very helpful for getting around the center of the city, and you're probably not going to be in town long enough to make figuring out the bus system worthwhile.

St. Petersburg: What to see

*** **The Hermitage** (Лувр) is in the czars' old Winter Palace, the blue-and-white building between Palace Square and the river. Ranking up there with the Louvre in Paris and the Prado in Madrid, the Hermitage's vast collection of European masters makes it one of the world's top art museums...an incredible deal for the entry price of 12 rubles (about 2 cents). Students and pensioners get a 75% discount. Foreigners are officially charged 200 rubles (\$0.30), plus extra for photography. Given the museum's huge size and microscopic cost, you may want to come twice: once to scope out the general scheme of the place, and again to home in on your favorite parts. Modern art is on the top floor, antiquities at ground level, and everything in between on the second floor.

The attraction of the Hermitage is not only the art, but also the begilded, bedraped, and bejeweled rooms themselves. In 1917, the Provisional Government met for the very last time in the green-pillared Malachite Hall, before being arrested in the adjacent dining room. The building faces Palace Square, where Bolshevik forces assembled before storming in. The entrance is on the other, riverfront side of the building.

The number of people employed at the Hermitage is also amazing--practically each of the hundreds of rooms has an attendant, and there are at least a dozen people working in the coat-check department. (Open Tuesday-Sunday 10:30-18:00. Ticket windows open until 17:00, 16:00 on Sundays. The museum actually closes in stages from 17:20 to 18:00, starting with the top floor.)

*** **Russian Museum** (Музей Востока), Inzhenernaya/Литейный ул. 4, a block off Nevsky past the Grand Hotel Europe and Gostinii Dvor. Here's a fascinating collection of prerevolutionary Russian art, particularly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painting and portraiture. People who complain that the Hermitage is just more Monets and Rembrandts love the Russian Museum, since the artists are less well-known in the West. Much of the work reveals Russians exploring their own landscape: marshes, birch stands, muddy village streets, the conquest of Siberia, firelit scenes in family huts, and Repin's portrait of Tolstoy standing barefoot in the woods. You may not be familiar with Rerikh, an early 20th-century Russian artist who painted startling, imaginary, Himalayan landscapes in icy blue colors. Entrance to the museum is currently through an unmarked door to the right of the main staircase. Admission cost 30 rubles in February, 1200 rubles for "foreign tourists." (Open Wednesday-Sunday 10:00-18:00, Monday 10:00-17:00. Ticket window closes an hour before the museum.)

** **St. Isaac's Cathedral** (Исаакиевский собор), down ul. Gogolya from Nevsky Prospekt. The view from the rooftop and the church's massive 19th-century interior are worth a half-hour of your time, and there's no foreigner price. There are separate tickets and separate entrances for the inside and for the spiral stairway up the colonnade. The cathedral is currently the center of a dispute between the church, which wants to return it to active use, and the St. Petersburg city government, which wants to keep it a museum. (Open Thursday-Tuesday 11:00-19:00, colonnade stairway closes at 17:00.)

* **Peter and Paul Fortress** (Петропавловская крепость), on an island in the Neva. Founded by Peter the Great in 1703 during the Great Northern War with Sweden, the fortress was the birthplace of the city of St. Petersburg. With its gold steeple catching the sunlight and its blank brick walls facing the Winter Palace across the river, the place is nicer to look at than to visit. You can wander through and climb the bastions for free. Your ticket lets you into the church (where Peter is entombed), the jail (which housed numerous 19th-century revolutionaries including Lenin's older brother), and a few other exhibits. Buy your ticket from an unmarked office just inside the main entrance. Foreigners are officially charged the ruble equivalent of two dollars, almost forty times the price for Russians. The main entrance is through the park from Metro: Gorkovskaya/Литейный. (Open Thursday-Monday 11:00-18:00, Tuesday 11:00-17:00. Ticket window closes an hour before the fortress. Also closed the last Tuesday of each month.)

Moored in the river along Petrogradskaya nab. not far from the fortress is the **Cruiser Aurora** (Крейсер "Аврора"), where the blank shot that started the Russian Revolution was fired from. Now a museum, it's worth visiting if you are a history buff or Bolshevik. (Free, open Tuesday-Thursday and Saturday-Sunday 10:30-16:00, no English descriptions.)

* **Dostoevskii Museum** (Ленинградский музей Достоевского), Kuznechii/Ленинский пр. 5, a block from Metro: Vladimirskaya. Although much of the furnishings are gone, you can get some feel for how the famous writer lived from visiting the six-room apartment where he wrote *The Brothers Karamazov*. Captions are in English. The babushki who run the place put out a new half-cup of tea on Dostoevskii's desk every morning. Foreigners are officially charged about a dollar, sixty times the price for Russians--which about matches our relative incomes. (Open Tuesday-Sunday, 10:30-18:30, last entry 17:30. Closed the last Wednesday of every month.)

** **Petrodvorets (Peterhof)**. If you have time for a daytrip, consider Peter the Great's lavish palace at Petrodvorets (Петродворец, also called Peterhof), along the Gulf of Finland west of the city. This is Russia's Versailles and the target of many tour groups and travel poster photographers. In summer, hydrofoils leave for the palace every half-hour during the daytime from in front of the entrance to the Hermitage. The window for return tickets is by the palace, not by the dock. The palace is closed on Mondays.

* **Piskaryovskoe Cemetery** (Пискаревское кладбище) is a memorial to the hundreds of thousands killed in the German siege of Leningrad during World War II. The cemetery, with its eternal flame, series of mass grave sites, moving statue of Mother Russia, and many pilgrims bringing flowers to remember lost loved ones, is an awe-inspiring experience even for an American tourist to whom the siege of Leningrad is just another page from the history books. It's an inconvenient bus ride east from Metro: Plushchad Muzhestva (Плещадь Мучеников). The only easy way to get there is by a day tour (ask at a big hotel) or by taxi.

** **A musical evening**. Keep an eye out for **ballet** and **opera** performances. The Kirov Ballet (now the Marinskii Ballet) performs in Teatralnaya Plushchad (Плещадь Театральная). The Malii Opera is on Italiyskaya/Ленинский пр. ul. by the Russian Museum. Go to the theater 30-45 min. before the show and stand in line with everyone else for balcony seats (less than \$1 in rubles). If that fails, scalpers sell tickets for about ten dollars. Summertime means tours and infrequent performances.

St. Petersburg: Where to eat

The listings below are your best bet for good food served honestly for \$2-5 a meal. Since St. Petersburg water is so bad and since your time here may be limited, we suggest you spend extra money on safe, reliable restaurants that use filtered water rather than extra time looking for bargains. For pastries and coffee, the cafe at the corner of Nevsky Prospekt and ul. Rubinshteina/Ленинский пр., a block out from the Fontanka canal, is better than most.

Picnic: If you're doing your own shopping or trying to put together a picnic, there's an indoor market on Kuznechii pr. at Metro: Vladimirskaya, right across the street from the Dostoevskii museum (look for the big Ленинский sign). The Express Market is a hard-currency store with competitively priced Finnish groceries, convenient to the St. Petersburg Youth Hostel, and open daily from 10:00 to 22:00. It's across the street from Nevsky Prospekt 150 (look for the sign on the corner; the entrance is on a side street), a couple blocks from Plushchad Vosstaniya going away from the center of town.

Restoran "Koreiskii Domik" (Корейский домик, i.e., Korea House), through the archway at nab. Reki Fontanki/Ленинский пр. 20, along the Fontanka canal between the Summer Garden and Nevsky Prospekt. Soup, rice, kimchi, kuksu (noodles), pelmeni (dumplings), and tea will cost you about \$2 per person (in rubles). It'll be a little more if you want spicy Korean-style meat cooked on a burner on your table. The food suffers from Russification, but could be much worse. Quick service. Too bad there are only 30 seats (half of them Asian-style on cushions on the floor); try to reserve by phone at tel. 275-7203. (Open daily 13:00-21:00).

Grand Cafe Antwerpen, right at Metro: Gorkovskaya/Ленинский пр. on the other side of the river from Nevsky Prospekt. Convenient to the Peter and Paul Fortress and the *Aurora*. Western comfort and quality at sub-Western prices; entrees start at \$2. With careful ordering you can get an entire meal for less than \$4, but you could spend much more. Among the cheaper dishes, the *shchi* (cabbage soup) is well above average and comes with great rolls, while the *forel* (trout) is excellent. Open daily 12:00-24:00. If you want to come after 16:00, call early in the afternoon for reservations (tel. 233-9746).

Hebei (Хейбей), Bolshoi/Ленинский пр. 61, at the corner of Barmaleevskaya ul., about three blocks from Metro: Petrogradskaya/ Ленинский пр. and within long walking distance of the Peter and Paul Fortress. Authentic Chinese food served by a half-Russian, half-Chinese staff. Almost up to the standard of a Chinese restaurant in America.

There's no English menu, but #26 (chicken with peanuts) is reliably good (order rice too). Full meals about \$4. Open daily 13:00-23:00, last orders at 22:00. Express cafe downstairs open daily 10:00-19:00. Reservations at tel 233-2046.

Bagdad (iiiiii), Furshadtskaya/iiiiiiiiiiii ul. (formerly ul. Petra Lavrova) 35. Metro: Chernyshevskaya/iiiiiiiiiiii. A couple blocks down from the U.S. Embassy, and downstairs from the street. Slow service, but you can get a filling bowl of *lagman* (soup with meat, vegetables, beans, and noodles), a flat, round *kul'cha* roll, and *plov* (meat pilaf) or *manty* (dumplings) for about a dollar. There are only four tables, though. Open daily 11:00-23:00.

Sadko's, the cheapest of the three restaurants in the Grand Hotel Europe at the corner of Nevsky Prospekt and ul. Mikhailovskaya/iiiiiiiiiiii (formerly ul. Brodskovo), almost across the street from Gostinii Dvor, is an excellent Swedish-run hard-currency restaurant with fair prices. The menu, which changes daily, is posted on blackboards: a choice of appetizers cost \$3, of entrees \$6, tax is 20%, and tips are not included. AmEx and MasterCard accepted, but not Visa. Reserve for dinner at least on weekends. (Open daily 12:00-24:00, last orders at 22:45, tel. 312-0072 for reservations.)

Shanghai, Sadovaya/iiiiiii ul. 12, a couple doors riverwards from the Nevsky Prospekt pedestrian underpass by Gostinii Dvor. The food is better at Hebei, but Shanghai is convenient and coming here is an amusing exercise in Soviet restaurant protocol. The doorman will really want you to eat in the (way overpriced) hard-currency first-floor room. You want to eat on the second floor, for rubles, and you want to order off the menu that's in Chinese (*po-kitaiskii*) and Russian. (The English menu has higher prices. You can tell the monoglot Russian waiters that you studied Chinese at college.) Now you can simply order by the numbers, unless they've outfoxed us by changing them around. Entrees, all fairly good, are numbered from the 200s to the 500s; 502 is decent sweet-and-sour fish, 703 is excellent hot-and-sour soup, 705 is egg-drop soup, 808 is fried rice, 931 is Pepsi, 941 is tea, and 952 is plain rice. The bad service is part of the fun. Once one particularly sour waiter gave us his pad and pen and made us write out our order ourselves. Entrees are about \$2 and a full meal should not be more than \$5. (Open daily 12:00-24:00, tel. 311-5320 for reservations.)

St. Petersburg: Where to sleep

St. Petersburg Youth Hostel, 3rd Sovetskaya/3i iiiiiiiii ul. 28, tel. 277-0569, fax 812/227-5102. The street is due to be renamed 3rd Rozhdestvenskaya/3i iiiiiiiii ul. The hostel is about a ten-minute walk from Ploshchad Vosstaniya and the Moskovskii Vokzal (train station). Coming out the front door of the train station, walk right, heading into the major street (with overhead trolley wires) that runs between the two electronic billboards. Take your first left off this street onto Suvorovskii/iiiiiiiiii pr. Walk two blocks (past the blue signs for the Philips housewares store) and then turn right onto 3rd Rozhdestvenskaya ul. The hostel is the remodeled white-and-magenta building a half a block down on your left. Look for the sign. It has 54 beds, and in the summertime will have extra space in an adjacent building. This is in all respects a normal hostel like those in Western Europe, with clean 3-5 bed rooms, clean showers, a members' kitchen for those who'd like to cook their own meals, a small shop, and a small fine for coming in after the midnight curfew. \$16 a night includes breakfast. Mailing address: P.O. Box 57, St. Petersburg, 193312, Russia. This hostel (as explained above in the visas chapter) has a California office. It is easy to make a reservation by writing, calling or faxing there: 409 N Pacific Coast Highway, Bldg #106, Suite 390, Redondo Beach, CA 90277, tel. 310/379-4316, fax 310/379-8420.

Other places to sleep: The youth hostel is really it. St. Petersburg does have clean and safe first world fortresses (the Grand Hotel Europe, tel. 312-0072, and the Astoria, tel. 210-5020) but they cost \$175 a night and wouldn't recognize much less accept a local ruble.

Leaving St. Petersburg

By Train to Moscow, the Baltics, and Poland: Trains to Moscow leave St. Petersburg from the Moskovskii Vokzal (Moscow Station), on Ploshchad Vosstaniya, by the metro station of the same name, and a few blocks from the St. Petersburg Youth Hostel. Trains to the Baltics and Poland leave from Varshavskii Vokzal, which requires a short ride on the metro from Ploshchad Vosstaniya to Metro: Baltiiskaya/iiiiiiiiii and the Baltiiskii Vokzal (the local-train station a block down the street from Varshavskii Vokzal).

If you're going to Moscow or the Baltics by train, we heartily suggest that you get the St. Petersburg Youth Hostel to buy your tickets. You will have to pay a \$3-4 surcharge, but it's worth it for better seat availability, not to mention the fact that someone else is standing in line for you. If you want to buy tickets yourself, foreigners can make advance bookings in the Central Railway Booking Office at Kanal Griboyedova/канал Грибоедова 24, across the canal from the Kazan Cathedral, a few doors from Nevsky Prospekt (open Monday-Saturday 8:00-20:00, Sunday 8:00-16:00). Look for the steam engine sign above the building. Foreigners are not officially allowed to buy tickets from the windows in the main hall. Instead, go in the door, to the right, and up the stairs next to the women's bathroom (follow the Intourist signs) to windows 100-104 on the second floor, which are reserved for foreigners making bookings on trains within the former USSR. In February, ticket prices here included a small ruble surcharge. For tickets to international destinations, go to windows 90-99.

Foreigners are sporadically allowed to buy tickets without a surcharge at the regular advance ticket windows at Moskovskii Vokzal (go in the side-building door at the base of platform 5, then up the stairs and wait at windows 4-14) and at Baltiiskii Vokzal (windows 1-7). However, the selection may be terrible: when we tried, they told us that the only available seats to Moscow even one week in advance were on the slow train from Murmansk.

If you absolutely have to get a ticket for a train leaving the same day, you must buy it at the station; there are special same-day ticket windows at Moskovskii Vokzal (numbered 15-18) and at Varshavskii Vokzal.

There are daily direct trains from St. Petersburg to Warsaw and Berlin, but since these transit Latvia, Lithuania, and then Byelorussia before entering Poland, we recommend against them unless you have an extra Baltic visa for the Latvian and Lithuanian segments and an extra Russian visa for the Byelorussian part. (If you do, visit the Intourist windows at Kanal Griboyedova 24 or Baltiiskii Vokzal for advance tickets, at Varshavskii Vokzal for same-day tickets.) Get to Poland instead via the train to Vilnius and then the bus to Warsaw, which is cheaper and requires only a Baltic visa.

Trains out of St. Petersburg

Train number	Leaves St. Petersburg	Arrives
To Tallinn (L L L L L L L)		
17*	22:17	5:55
648	23:53	8:50
To Riga (L L L L)		
35*	19:22	6:20
37*	21:53	9:29
To Vilnius (L L L L L L L L)		
191	20:55	11:28
To Moscow (L L L L L L L)		
47	8:30	16:45
157***	12:15	17:14
23	12:56	21:02
159	15:50	21:40
29*	20:20	4:48
19*	21:55	6:22
27	22:30	6:35
9*	22:45	7:10
25	23:11	7:19
5*	23:33	7:43
1*	23:55	8:25
3	23:59	8:30

it). The bookstore at Nevsky Prospekt 13, between ul. Gertsena and ul. Gogolya, has an exchange desk with fair rates open Monday-Friday 10:00-14:00 and 15:00-16:30. (The bookstore itself still has some bargain art books, CDs, and calendars.) At odd hours and on Sundays, your only option may be changing with a kiosk owner.

Post and telephones. The central telephone office is at ul. Gertsena/../../../../ 5, between Palace Square and Nevsky Prospekt on the street with the big arches. There are telephones for calling Moscow and other cities in the former USSR, operated by tokens that they sell. International calls are also possible from booth 22, with special tokens available from window 13. (Open 24 hrs.) The central post office is at Pochtamtskaya/../../../../ ul. 9, under the arch a couple blocks down from St. Isaac's Cathedral. Send international mail from window #25. (Open Monday-Saturday 9:00-20:00, Sunday 10:00-18:00.)

Tallinn, Estonia

Visiting Tallinn fills us with hope for the future of the ex-Soviet Union. If only everyone in Russia could learn from the Estonians, a renaissance of economic efficiency would be just around the corner. Tallinners, after years of watching Finnish television beamed across the gulf from Helsinki, knew exactly what a Western economy should look like. Since 1991 they've been putting one together as fast as possible.

Tallinn has real grocery stores now, where you pick food off the shelves yourself instead of asking clerks behind a counter to do it. Estonian design has recovered from Sovietism: colorful, simple, Scandinavian-type layout is showing up in yogurt packaging, monthly bus-pass design, and window displays. Estonia is producing goods that actually look competitive on the world market. Expensive Tallinn food stores (whose Moscow counterparts would snort at carrying Russian-made products) are proud to carry Estonian butter and cheese. Pharmacies carry attractively presented, Estonian-made shampoo and soap alongside the imported tubes of Colgate. One of the first things you see as you head into town from Tallinn's port will be a colorful new Statoil gas station complete with a 24-hour *pood-shop* (they don't have Hostess Twinkies yet, but wait till next edition).

Of course, things like this look perfectly normal if you come to Tallinn on the boat from Helsinki. This is why we suggest that you arrive in Tallinn from Russia or one of the other Baltic capitals. You'll feel like you're back in the West already. Arriving straight from Helsinki, Tallinn looks dilapidated. Remember that it gets worse, and enjoy Tallinn while you can.

A possible reason for this economic precociousness is that Estonians consider their country a Nordic nation of solid, hard-working Protestant folk like those that made Scandinavia a showcase of order, propriety, and comfort. They're quick to point out that Finland and Estonia both gained independence from Russia after World War I, that as late as 1938, Estonia's living standard was equal to Finland's, and that Estonians would have kept pace had it not been for a couple hundred Russian tanks. Not surprisingly, anti-Russian resentment is stronger in Estonia than elsewhere in the Baltics. And not surprisingly, Estonian government policy towards Russians in Estonia has been sharply criticized.

As with most stories coming out of Russia and the Baltics, the international news media has blown the Russians-in-Estonia problem way out of proportion. In actual fact the Estonian citizenship law is more lenient than the American one: a rather short residency requirement and a rather basic Estonian-proficiency requirement.

In one sense the problem is economic: Russians, who were employed at Soviet establishments that are now largely irrelevant and bankrupt, are economically disenfranchised by the patriotic pride of the new Estonian business culture, and their homeland, Russia, has nothing better to offer.

In another sense Estonia simply suffers from messy demographics. If the Russians had moved into Estonia any earlier, there would be few people alive now who could remember an Estonia without them. If they had come any later, it would be easier to say that they are just occupiers who should go home, and there wouldn't be any Estonian-born Russians. Similarly, if there were any more Russians in Estonia (like, say, in Latvia) there would be no question that they would be enough of a presence to require a dual-language state. If there were any fewer Russians (like, say, in Lithuania) their numbers might be small enough to assimilate. Estonia is in an awkward fuzzy zone between all of these more comfortable options.

It's a little disingenuous of us to suggest that Estonia's economy is going to turn a profit anytime soon. Eighty percent of Estonians make less than seventy-five dollars a month. Prices have risen by 8,260% since 1990, but wages by only 2,800%. Life is improving, but it's got a long way to go. Still, we always leave Estonia convinced that this little country will succeed.

A two-day Tallinn sightseeing plan

Day 1

- | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------------|
| 9:00 | Climb the stairs from Nunne tn. up to tour the fortified hill, Toompea. | |
| 10:30 | Tour the exhibition in Kiek in de K ok. Stop by the Virgin Tower cafe and think about a | good time to come back. |
| 12:00 | Head down to the Lower Town. Grab lunch at Peetri Pizza, Pegasus, or the department | store cafe. |
| 13:00 | Leave the rest of the afternoon free for shopping, buying ice cream, wandering aimlessly | around the old town, and |
| | perhaps exploring the 19th- and 20th-century sections of town to the south of P rnu mnt. | |
| 18:00 | Dinner at Eesli Tall. | |

20:00 Retire to the Eesli Tall cellar bar.

Day 2

9:00 Coffee and pastries at Maiasmokk.

10:00 Check out the Holy Ghost Church, the Tallinn Town Museum, and the Estonian History Museum.

12:00 Wander back down to assemble picnic fixings from the food stores near the Hotel Viru and along Narva maantee.

Take the tram out to Kadriorg.

13:30 Picnic and walk through the Kadriorg park and palace grounds.

18:00 Plenty of time for a nice dinner and concert in the old town, mulled wine at the Virgin Tower, or an overnight train.

Tallinn orientation

Tallinn owes its existence to **Toompea**, the precipitous hill on which the city's **Upper Town** stands. Fortified by the Danes after they captured Tallinn in 1219, Toompea turned into Tallinn's aristocratic neighborhood during the later Middle Ages--Toompea Castle still houses the Estonian government. Merchants and artisans, meanwhile, built the other half of old Tallinn, the **Lower Town**, beneath Toompea. Three narrow streets and a steep stairway connect the two towns, while the intact city wall counts twenty-nine watchtowers, each topped by a pointy red roof. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century architects circled the old town, putting up broad streets of public buildings, low Scandinavian-style apartment buildings, and single-family wooden houses. Soviet planners then ringed this with endless stands of crumbling concrete high-rises where many of Tallinn's Russian immigrants settled.

Town Hall Square (Raekoja plats) is the center of the Lower Town and a good reference point. Inside the well-shined windows at the northwest corner of the square is Tallinn's new **tourist office** (tel. 666 959 or 448 886). They give out advice and free brochures, they sell maps and more brochures, they speak English, they post concert listings in the window, and they're open Monday-Friday from 9:00-17:00, Saturday 10:00-15:00, Sunday closed. Make sure to pick up a copy of *Tallinn This Week* here for 3kr. Map prices are a little lower at the Viruvärava Raamatukauplus bookstore on Viru tn., smack between the mighty Hotel Viru and the twin Viru towers (open Monday-Friday, 9:00-18:30, Saturday 10:00-17:00). This same bookstore is full of other bargains.

Unless you're staying far from town, you should be able to get around Tallinn solely by foot and the occasional tram ride. Tallinn's trams are very simple and convenient. Check the map for route and stop locations. All trams meet in the center, by the Hotel Viru. From there, trams 1 and 2 go west to the train station, 3 and 4 go west along Pärnu maantee, 1 and 3 go east to Kadriorg, and 2 and 4 go south to the bus station. Buy tickets (either singles for 40 senti or a month-card--*kuupilet*--for 14kr) from the kiosks by tram stops that say *sõidupiletid* in the window. (There's a convenient one across from the Penguin ice-cream parlor at the train station.)

Tallinn: What to see

Tallinn has no Eiffel Tower, no Colosseum, no incredible sights which demand to be seen. Rather it steadily delivers small and pleasing towers, museums, ramparts, facades, churches, and shops. While Paris or Rome may be the turkey dinners of European sightseeing, Tallinn is more like an ample spread of well-chosen hors d'oeuvres. Wander through the old town, duck down every street and into every shop that looks interesting, and peer up at the Hanseatic facades and medieval towers. It will help to stop by the tourist office first to pick up a map and a copy of their brochure *See Tallinn on Foot*, and to note that most museums are closed on Mondays. Admission is never more than 2kr, and students get half off.

*** **Toompea** is the fortified hill where Tallinn was founded in the 13th century and the Upper Town was built. The most thrilling way to reach it is to walk up Nunne tn., the street that leads from the train station to the old town, then to cut off to the right and climb up the stairs. The ramparts at the top reward you with a perfect photo opportunity of the Lower Town's red roofs and steeples. Wandering will bring you to the **Dome Church** (Toomkirik) and eventually out to the square by the colorful **Russian Orthodox Church**, a plump, out-of-place onion-domed edifice planted here after the Russian takeover of Tallinn in 1710. The interior is worth a peek.

Downhill from the church you'll see two towers: the square one is the **Virgin Tower** (Neitsitorn--see Places to sit). The round one is **Kiek in de Kök** ("Peek in the Kitchen"), so named because one could supposedly spy on the Lower Town's residents from its heights. It's now a worthwhile museum; the top floor and the bottom two floors house changing exhibits of the latest in Estonian photography, while in the middle you can see medieval cannons and charts left over from the Livonian wars. (Open Tuesday-Friday 10:30-17:30, Saturday-Sunday 11:00-16:30.) If you head back down to the Lower Town from here you'll pass by **St. Nicholas's Church** (Niguliste kirik) and the WWII ruins behind it left untouched as a war memorial.

** **Holy Ghost Church** (Pühavaimu kirik), at Pühavaimu tn. and Pikk tn. across from Maiasmokk. Though modest, this fourteenth-century church has a well-worn charm and a fantastic old outdoor clock.

** **Tallinn Town Museum** (Tallinna Linnamuseum), Vene tn. 17 at Pühavaimu tn. The upstairs exhibit on Tallinn from 1900-1917 is especially good, with English captions showing how the shocks of the 1905 and 1917 Russian revolutions swept through the town. The mixture of Russian, German, and Estonian reminds us that the ethnic situation here was once even more complicated than it now is. (Open Wednesday-Friday 10:30-17:30, Saturday-Sunday 10:30-16:30).

** **Tallinn Department Store** (Tallinna Kaubamaja), behind the Hotel Viru--you can't miss the neon sign. Coming directly from Helsinki, you may not see anything special about joining Tallinn's housewives here in the showpiece of Estonian consumer renewal. But coming from the shoppers' graveyards of Russia or elsewhere in the Baltics, a walk through this brimming, colorful three-floor complex will make you optimistic about the chances for free-market economic recovery in Estonia. You may find some bargains yourself. It's getting harder to distinguish the cheaper, Estonian-produced goods from the expensive imports. The cafeteria on the second floor is a convenient place to pick up a Coke and a sausage roll, but don't make a special trip. (Open Monday-Friday 9:00-20:00, Saturday 9:00-18:00. Cafe open Monday-Friday 10:00-18:00, Saturday 10:00-14:00.)

** **Kadriorg**. This seaside park and summer residence was built by Peter the Great for Catherine after Russia took over Tallinn in 1710. Admire the outside of the residence, which has been closed for renovations for several years. The park, which runs down to the sea to the north, is the perfect spot for your picnic. Trams #1 or #3 go east from the center of town (passing a few Estonian Republic art deco houses from the 1930s just before the terminus) to Kadriorg at the end of the line. It's an easy ride out and back.

* **Estonian History Museum** (Eesti Ajaloomuuseum) is at Pikk tn. 17 across from Maiasmokk and the church. The museum occupies Tallinn's 15th-century Great Guildhall, and displays everything from Iron Age bracelets to medieval swords and armor to Peter the Great's declarations to \$1000 Estonian Government bonds issued in New York in 1927. (Open Thursday-Tuesday, 11:00-18:00.)

* **Estonian Maritime Museum** (Eesti Meremuuseum) is at Pikk tn. 70, in the Paks Margareta ("Fat Margaret") tower. It still has Lenin quotes and exhibits of Soviet shipping, and doesn't have English captions, but you can go out the wooden door on the top floor and up to the tower roof for a good view of Tallinn's port. It's scary to think that anyone might have ever used the suit of copper diving armor, built by a Tallinner in the 1920s, that stands in a corner of the bottom floor. (Open Wednesday-Sunday, 10:00-18:00.)

*** **Estonian Music**. Tallinn probably has a denser per capita schedule of baroque, Renaissance, and choral music performances than any other Northern European capital. Estonian choral music got its first push from the long German Lutheran presence in Tallinn, and then became intimately bound up with the struggle for independence after the first **Estonian Song Festival** in 1869. The Song Festival now has its own outdoor clamshell theater, the Lauluväljak, near Kadriorg, and has grown so big that it's been split into a children's choir festival (1993) and an adult section (1994). The children's festival will take place from June 15-20, 1993, and you can get more information from the Estonian Song Festival Managing Board (Väike-Karja tn. 12, tel. 449 262). Other summer 1993 events will include the Old Town Festival (mostly open-air concerts) on June 5-6, the annual Midsummer Holiday on June 23-24, a rock festival from July 9-12, and the International Organ Festival from July 30 to August 8. Even outside of festival times, it's a rare week in which there aren't four or five excellent

performances in Tallinn's churches and concert halls. Look for posters, especially for the name Hortus Musicus (Estonia's Renaissance music performance group). Tickets are dirt cheap.

Daytrips: Tartu and Saaremaa

The obvious daytrip from Tallinn is to Tartu, Estonia's university town. Tartu's old city is built in a newer, classical style no less pleasing than Tallinn's Hanseatic center. Tartu has not managed Tallinn's commercial boom, although there is now a Peetri Pizza and a slew of Pinguin ice cream parlors. You can put together a picnic at the Tartu Turg (market) in the center of town, then eat it on the banks of the Emajõgi river, which runs along the east side of the old town. Or head to the west, above the old town, to the set of bluffs where Tartu's ruined cathedral (partly rebuilt into an excellent museum) and early university buildings stand. The peeling paint of the 19th-century wooden houses that ring the old city, the ravines that cut through the bluffs, and the smell of coal-fired heating makes parts of Tartu resemble a Massachusetts mill town.

The best way to take in Tartu is via the 8:00 train from Tallinn, which gets to Tartu at 11:17. The best return train leaves Tartu at 18:20, arriving back in Tallinn at 21:57 (about 10kr each way). Walk straight out the front door of the Tartu train station and up the street several blocks until you see the ravine that leads to the city's central square. Buses between Tartu and Tallinn, which run more frequently and take the same amount of time as the train, cost 18-20kr each way.

If you have time for a one- or two-night trip out of Tallinn and want to see the countryside, go to one of Estonia's big islands--Saaremaa or Hiiumaa. Buses take you from Tallinn to the coast at Virtsu, and then by ferry to Kuressaare, the main village on Saaremaa, for about 30kr. The Tallinn tourist office can give you advice on booking accommodations there.

Tallinn: Where to eat

Tallinn's old town has hardly a block without a good restaurant. You should be able to get great food for \$5 and acceptable food for \$2. The most expensive restaurants in town run about \$10 per person. Estonian food is generic Northern European: filling meat, potatoes, vegetables, and soups. There's also good seafood, and you can order local Värskä mineral water for about 4kr a bottle. For picnic fixings, try the food stores along Narva mnt. near the Hotel Viru and Hostel Agnes. The **Lembitukauplus**, across the bus lot from the Hotel Viru, is a Western-style grocery store (you fill your basket yourself and pay the cashier afterwards) open every day from 10:00 to 23:00.

Restaurants

Eesli Tall, Dunkri tn. 4/6, just uphill from the Town Hall. The ground-level restaurant (open daily noon to 2am) is so clean and refined, the crystal so sparkling, that we were amazed to look in the dictionary and find that its name means "Donkey Stable." Everything on the menu, which is in English, is good--especially the mushroom soup. A wonderfully satisfying Estonian meal with attentive, English-speaking service should cost about 50kr. Stop by or call 448 033 for reservations, unnecessary in winter but probably a good idea during the summer tourist season. The bar downstairs (open 16:00-4:00) is the absolute best nightspot in town, a good place to meet young Estonians and young foreigners. Dungeon-walled, whitewashed, and bathed in colored lights, it's a maze of tunnels, archways, and hidden rooms. You can swirl with the lights by the bar and the band, or retreat into a quiet nook to talk. Finnish beer goes for 19kr. Juice (*mahk*) costs 5kr.

Peetri Pizza. This chain now has six branches in Tallinn, and franchises elsewhere in Estonia. The Franciscana is good (11.80kr per one-person pizza). The branch at Kopli tn. 2c is small and bare but right across the tram tracks from the train station (open 11:00-23:30), the one on Lai tn. 4 is also tiny but just steps from the town hall square (open 10:00-20:30), while the takeout-only branch by the tram stop at Pärnu maantee 22, between the advance bus ticket office and the Hotel Palace, is open from 10:00 to 3:00 in the morning, and takes phone orders at 666 711 (your pizza'll be ready for pickup in 30 minutes). Afterwards, avail yourself of the only chain with more market penetration in Estonia than Peetri Pizza: there's a **Pinguin** ice-cream stand on virtually every corner (1.70kr per scoop).

Pegasus is at Harju tn. 1, above the bookstore and across from the World War II ruins. Knock if the door's locked. Officially, this is the Estonian writer's union club. But you're allowed too. The interior is tacky but spacious, with that artist's feel. Most people just come for coffee. You can get whatever they have for lunch (Estonian-only menu) for less than 20kr. (Open daily 10:00-23:00.)

Places to sit

Maiasmokk, Pikk tn. 16, around the corner from the Pühavaimu Church's old clock and across the street from the Russian embassy (look for the flag). Go to this coffee-and-pastry shop for breakfast, or while you wait for your Russian visa. Founded in 1864 but austere and Sovietized only a year ago, Maiasmokk's service and selection is again starting to match its wood paneling and patterned ceilings, which recall a *fin-de-siècle* Viennese cafe. The marzipan is back, and you can stuff yourself on pastries and coffee and write postcards all morning for less than a dollar. (Open Monday-Saturday 8:00-19:00, Sunday 10:00-18:00.)

Neitsitorn (Virgin Tower), in the square, many-windowed tower next to Kiek in de Kõk. The bottom floor (go down the spiral staircase) and the ground level floor serve the trademark mulled wine (*hõõgvein*) out of wooden casks for 4kr per 100g (about half a glass). The top two floors have a view over the Lower Town and are better for light sandwiches, pastries and mineral water. In summer there's sometimes live classical music on the outdoor terrace. (Open daily 11:00-22:00, 3kr entrance fee after 16:00.)

Hotel Viru, 22nd floor restaurant (open daily until midnight). What are we doing recommending a tacky, touristy hotel restaurant which plays elevator music over the loudspeakers? Ordinarily we wouldn't touch this place with a ten-foot Hungarian. But, but--it's actually really pretty to sit so high up and watch the sun set over Tallinn over a long dinner on a long summer night. The food and the prices are OK. No directions necessary--if you're in Tallinn, the mighty Viru is probably in view already.

Tallinn: Where to sleep

Finding somewhere to stay in Tallinn isn't a problem anymore, although the situation could still use improvement. The Estonian Youth Hostel Association, founded last year, has been struggling to start an association-owned, central, reliable hostel in Tallinn. They have a new building in mind, but almost certainly won't have it ready by summer 1993.

A year ago the **Hostel Agnes**, at Narva mnt. 7, was the best thing going in cheap accommodations in Tallinn. Loosely affiliated with the hostel association, the hostel is large enough so that there's usually space, has comfortable 2- and 4-bed rooms with sheets provided, and is only a couple minutes' walk from the old town. Trams 1 and 3 stop right in front of the building; if you take tram 2 or 4, walk back to the corner. Go through the passage under the green sign saying "Pajunen," then look for the door on the right. Standards have slipped a little--in February, all of the shower-head hooks were broken and the hot water wasn't working in a couple of the

bathrooms. Still, Agnes is the best choice in town and better than a lot of Western European hostels. If your hot water isn't working, use the next bathroom down the hall. In February, one night cost exactly 94.40kr--the arbitrarily precise pricing is a Soviet relic. Breakfast is available for about 10kr. Call 438 870 for reservations; most staff speak some English.

If Agnes is full but you can only afford hostel accommodations, try the dorm, also affiliated with the hostel association, at **Kuramaa tn. 15** (tel. 327 781 or 327 715; some staff speak English). Take any of buses 19, 31, and 44 from the beginning of their route (the parking lot next to the Hotel Viru) to their final turnaround point (about 15-20 minutes out into the suburbs). From there, Kuramaa tn. is the first cross-street as you walk into the apartment blocks, and the hostel office is in room 14B, but bring a map, especially after dark. Try to have someone call ahead to make sure Kuramaa has room.

An excellent option is the **Family Hotel Service**, at Mere puiestee 6, around the corner from the Hotel Viru (follow the signs up the driveway and in the building across the lot to the left). This company, owned by a Chinese named Yang Jian who moved to Estonia after studying in Finland for five years, and run by an English-speaking Estonian woman named Urve Ansmann, rents out whole apartments and rooms in private homes for \$8-15 per person per night, depending on location and size. Rooms in the Old Town cost most, medium-price rooms are usually a few minutes away by tram, while the cheapest rooms are a fair bus ride from the center. You can call the office (tel. 441 187) before you get to Tallinn, for instance from Helsinki, or you can just show up (open daily 10:00-17:30). Ask them about their accommodations connections in Riga and Vilnius.

The **Hotel Viitamin**, in the same complex as Hostel Agnes, differs from Agnes basically in that the shower-head hooks are still intact, the hallway is carpeted, and the cafe is a little more active. For this you pay 180-200kr. The hotel's entrance is hard to see from the street; look for the "Hotel Viitamin" sign above the door, then go up to the second floor. For reservations, call 439 585.

The **Hotel Viru** towers over Tallinn like a mighty Indian god, and if you want large-hotel prices and standards, you might as well stay here. Singles go for 800kr and doubles for 1040kr (tel. 652 093). The **Hotel Tallinn** (tel. 604 332) is old and a little bleak, but it's close to Toompea and has adequate singles (330kr) and doubles (500kr).

Leaving Tallinn

By Ship: The ferry port in Tallinn is at Sadama tn. 29, a 20-minute walk from the center of town. You can also reach the center via trams 1 or 2, which stop ten minutes' walk from the terminal at the other end of Sadama tn., or by city bus 65, which runs direct from the terminal parking lot. Unless you really have a lot of luggage, avoid taking taxis, which will surely overcharge. Estonian New Line (except some hydrofoils) and Tallink use the main ferry terminal, while Estline has its own terminal off to the side. Complete details about ticketing, prices, and schedules are in the Gateway Helsinki and Stockholm sections. Buying tickets in Tallinn is no problem and there is no extra bureaucracy. Almost any travel agent in town will sell you a ferry ticket, but comparison shopping is easiest at the port. Estonian New Lines' office is at the port (tel. 428 382 or 493 095); Estline's is on the second floor of their separate terminal (tel. 60 20 10).

By Bus: Tallinn's bus station or Autobussijaam is on Tartu maantee, a little too far to walk comfortably (take tram 2 or 4 east from the city center until you see it). Most buses are run by the Estonian state company, **Mootor**. You can buy tickets in advance at the Mootor office at Pärnu maantee 24, just past Peetri Pizza (open daily 8:00-14:00 and 15:00-19:00). On the day of departure, you have to buy tickets at the station. Useful international buses (all daily except the Warsaw bus) include:

Buses out of Tallinn

Leaves Tallinn Arrives

To Riga (Riia) - 38kr (\$3)

7:00	12:55
12:45	18:40

15:00 20:55
23:55 5:15

To Vilnius - 74kr (\$6)
21:30 9:20

To St. Petersburg - 28kr (\$2)
21:45 5:30

To Warsaw (Varssavi) - 429kr (\$33)
11:00 4:50 (Mondays and Thursdays only)

By Train: The Tallinn train station (Balti jaam) is a short walk from the old town along Nunne tn., and a short, simple ride from the Hotel Viru by trams 1 or 2. It has two parts: the smaller hall, at the head of the tracks, is numbered 1 on our map, while the larger hall, which runs along the tracks, is numbered 2. Hall 1 has a decent cafe, as well as advance international ticket purchase windows (numbers 7-12, under the *eelmüügi kassad* sign) and domestic ticket windows (same-day purchase only, from windows 15-20, under the *linnalähedaste rongide kassad* sign). Hall 2 has a left luggage office downstairs (use this instead of the lockers), a telegraph bureau, currency exchange, a non-English speaking information office (under the *Teated* sign) and windows for purchasing tickets for international trains leaving the same day (windows 5-6, under the *ööpaeva kassad* sign). Lines are usually fairly short, and foreigners aren't slapped with a ticket surcharge as in Russia.

Trains out of Tallinn

Train number	Leaves Tallinn	Arrives
To Riga (Riia) - 54kr (\$4)		
K10	6:50	14:24
R100	22:50	8:00
To Vilnius - 95kr (\$7)		
K10	6:50	20:20
To Moscow (Moskva) - 36/100**kr (\$3/\$8)		
IK4*	18:25	11:25
K20	19:50	14:10
K12	16:25	13:17 (slow train via Tartu)
To St. Petersburg - 26/41**kr (\$2/\$3)		
K22*	23:00	8:15
R120	20:10	6:20
To Warsaw (Varssavi) - 400kr (\$31)		
The "Baltic Express"***	17:10	14:17 next day

* These trains have luxury two-bed compartments.

** Second price is for two-bed compartments.

*** The "Baltic Express" is due to begin service on May 22

Tallinn nitty gritty

American consulate: Kentmanni tn. 20, 3rd floor (tel. 45 53 13). American citizen services open Monday-Friday 9:00-11:30, 14:30-16:30.

Currency exchange. Rates are pretty similar and you won't get ripped off too badly anywhere, unless you change at the Hotel Viru or with the shady wad-wavers who hang out in front of exchange booths. The three banks at the train station have average rates, and are open daily from 6:30-22:00. The best rates we've seen in town are at Hansapank, which has a tiny exchange booth at Viru tn. 20 in the old town (open daily 9:00-19:30) and another office at the port. Remember, cash only--except at the Vanalinna Pank at Vene tn. 6, which will change American Express travelers' checks for a 2% commission and a 65kr per transaction fee, and offers VISA cash advances for 2%. (Open Monday-Friday 8:30-14:30.)

Post and telephoning. Tallinn's pay phones are free until the city decides it's worth the money to convert them to take tokens or coins. For long-distance calls, the office on the lower floor of the post office building is open daily from 7:00 to 22:00. Calls within Finland, Russia, and the other Baltics cost 3-4.50kr per minute. Send letters from the second-floor post office (open Monday-Friday 8:00-19:00, Saturday 9:00-17:00). Estonian mail is much cheaper than Finnish mail and almost as reliable and quick.

Riga, Latvia

Tall nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings give Riga a cosmopolitan feel and a vertical accent unique among the Baltic capitals. Riga has always been the Baltics' closest thing to a metropolis. Bishop Albert of Bremen, German merchants, and the Teutonic Knights made Riga the center of Baltic Christianization, commercialization, and colonization when they founded the city in the early 1200s. Under the czars, the city was the Russian Empire's busiest commercial port. Under Soviet rule, Riga became first an important military center and later, because of its high standard of living, one of the favored places for high-ranking military officers to retire to (they were given a choice of anywhere in the USSR except Moscow, Kiev, and St. Petersburg). The Soviets encouraged Russian immigration and the percentage of residents who were Latvian plunged from well over half to about a third today.

The result is that it is impossible to ignore the role of Russians in daily life here. You'll hear Russian on the street just as much as Latvian. Latvia's major newspapers, such as the daily *Diena*, come out in dual Russian and Latvian editions--which would be unthinkable in Estonia or Lithuania. Lutheranism notwithstanding, Riga is in all ways more of a Soviet town than Vilnius or Tallinn. Too far from Helsinki to get Finnish TV, Rigans aren't quite as clear as Tallinners about exactly what capitalism looks and smells like. The gradual merging of the import and locally-produced consumer goods markets, which heralded economic progress in Poland and Czechoslovakia and has already happened in Estonia, has barely started here. Still, Riga is far ahead of most of the ex-USSR on the road to economic viability and stable political independence.

Riga's old town is also surprisingly quiet, having given way to Brīvības iela as the city's commercial heart. Many Riga residents simply don't spend all that much time in it. Hopefully they will return as things warm up, musicians gather on street corners, and outdoor cafes sprout. Aside from the big churches, just a few dozen medieval buildings remain in Riga's old town. Only the moat, the bastion, fragments of the city walls, and the cannonballs embedded in the Powder Tower survive from the Middle Ages. Most of the center, and almost all of the newer parts that immediately ring it, are now particularly fine examples of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century building styles, particularly the Jugendstil that betrays Riga's connections to the German-speaking world. Walk around and keep your head up. The city's grand architecture, and the lingering effects of poor Soviet use of space, give Riga the courtly feeling of an elegant old building which no longer has quite enough warmth and life to fill its high-ceilinged rooms.

A one-day Riga sightseeing plan

- 10:00 Go up St. Peter's Church for a look around Riga.
- 12:00 Lunch at Pie Kristapa.
- 13:00 Visit the Dom. Buy concert tickets if available.
- 14:00 Head via the Freedom Monument to the Art Museum.
- 18:00 Have dinner at Bistro Argentina.

Riga orientation

Riga's old town is on the right bank of the Daugava, which is very wide and crossed by only two bridges. The bus and train stations and most sights, shops, and services are either in the old town or in the 19th-century section of town immediately around it. You should never need to venture across the river, unless you wind up sleeping there.

You should by all means pick up a Riga street map, available erratically from kiosks and the bookstores along Aspazijas bulv. Don't pay more than \$0.25 for it.

As of February 1993, there was no tourist office in Riga and no centralized information source to make tourists' lives easier. In summer, we hope, a good city guidebook on the order of *Tallinn This Week* or *Vilnius In Your Pocket* will be on sale in kiosks. All there is now is *Riga This Week*, a booklet barely worth the \$1 it costs at the Hotel Riga service bureau. The large signboards at the train station and on Brīvības iela, pointing you to a

tourist information office, are actually advertising a private firm. If you arrive by air, go up to the second floor of the airport building where there's a tiny information shack whose lone staffer wields four telephones, sells bus tickets and telephone tokens, and helps with room reservations.

Riga's buses, trams, and trolleybuses are convenient and take paper tickets, sold in strips of five at kiosks. But if you arrive by train or bus and are staying in the center, you can walk everywhere.

Riga: What to see

Mondays and Tuesdays are bad for sightseeing in Riga, as most museums and churches are closed.

*** **Freedom Monument** (Brīvības piemnieklis), on a traffic island in the middle of Brīvības iela. Dedicated in 1935, the monument was strangely left standing by the Soviets. KGB agents, however, apprehended anyone who tried to come near it. Now it is again the symbol of independent Latvia, and locals lay flowers between the two soldiers (wearing Latvian army uniforms from the inter-war period) who stand guard at the base of the monument.

*** **State Museum of Latvian Art** (Latvijas Valsts Mākslas Muzejs), Kr. Valdemāra iela 10. The grand staircase of the museum is reason enough to come, but the best part is the permanent exhibition of Latvian art on the second floor. The collection, almost entirely from 1910-1940, concentrates all the artistic and political influences that stirred Latvia then: French impressionism, German design, and Russian propaganda poster style on the one hand, European internationalism, Latvian nationalism, rural romanticism, and Communism on the other. (Museum open Monday and Wednesday-Friday 11:00-17:00, Saturday-Sunday 11:00-18:00.)

*****St. Peter's Church** (Pēterā baznīca), in the old town. St. Peter's distinctive wooden spire, which used to be the tallest structure in Riga, burned down during World War II. The present steel replica was built during the Soviet period. Take the elevator up to the observation deck: trips leave every half hour from 10:00 to 17:00 (closed on Mondays), and tickets cost about \$0.20. You can visit the inside of the church afterwards for \$0.15.

** **Riga Dom** (Doma baznīca), also in the old town. Riga's most formidable church dates from 1211. You can go inside for \$0.15 (open Tuesday-Friday 13:00-16:00, Saturday 10:00-14:00). The inscriptions recall Latvia's German Lutheran heritage, and in fact the crypt holds what's left of Bishop Albert of Bremen, who started it all. The Dom has a first-class organ; across the street from the front door is the Doma koncertzāles kase, which posts the church's concert programs in the window and sells tickets (under \$1) inside. Just down the street towards the river is a statue of the famous philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, who was born in Riga in 1744.

* **Riga Castle** (Rīgas Pils). At the northwest corner of the old town, by the river, the castle doesn't look that much different from the rest of the buildings in the old town except for its round tower. It's pretty dilapidated, and the three museums inside are rather shabby--though the Latvian History Museum (Latvijas Vēstures Muzejs) may be worth visiting after remodeling finishes sometime this summer. There's a small sculpture garden next door.

The 1993 Latvian Song Festival will take place in Riga from June 27 to July 4. These week-long choral music convocations have ordinarily been held every five years since 1873. Festivities will mostly be at the Mežaparks in the suburbs of Riga (take trolleybus 3 from the Central Market to the other end of the line, then change to trolleybus 2). Expect crowds at restaurants and booked-up hotels; reserve early.

Daytrips from Riga

A sunny summer day might be the time to go to Jūrmala, Riga's seaside resort. You can't swim (too polluted), but you can set up a beach chair. Go to the local-trains waiting room in the station; trains to Jūrmala are posted in red. Tickets to Majori, the most popular section of Jūrmala, cost about \$0.10 and are available from the windows in the same waiting room.

Other popular short trips are to towns like Sigulda, Cēsis, and Valmiera along the Gauja River northeast of Riga. The Latvian University Tourist Club (see Riga: Where to Sleep) can fix you up a spot in one of their cabins

at Valmiera, about two hours by local train from Riga. The cabins are about 2.5km from Valmiera station and cost about \$5 per night; food and hot showers are available on-site. Canoeing, hiking, and biking are nearby and you can catch the train to Tallinn from Valmiera if you're heading that way.

Riga: Where to eat

For picnic fixings, go to the Central Market behind the train station, or to the first floor of the Universālveikals (department store) at Audēju iela 16. Finding a good place for breakfast is a problem. Try buying a banana.

Pie Kristapa, Jauniela 25/29, on the street that runs off the square from the back end of the Doma. This is one of Riga's nicer restaurants, so enjoy it now while it's still cheap. A full meal should cost no more than \$5. Ask to be seated in the downstairs room, where you can order a 2.5-liter pitcher of beer for \$0.50. An inexpensive and very Latvian hot entree worth trying is *zirņi* (black peas) with onions and cream sauce. Reservations necessary for dinner, but not for lunch. (Open daily 12:00-18:00 and 19:00-24:00.)

Bistro Argentina, Smilšu iela 3 at Mazā iela, a block up from the Doma. This is a bright, modern cafe inside tinted windows, with blondwood tables and simple but attractive food. No Latvian necessary: get in line, point to a salad, main dish, dessert, and beverage from the counter, and it'll be on your tray immediately for less than \$3. (Open daily 10:00-20:00.)

Little Johnny's American Pizzeria, at the corner of Elizabeta iela and E. Birznieka-Upīša iela, in the yellow-and-brown building visible around the corner to the right from the train station post-and-telephone-office entrance, is worth visiting just for a laugh. It's decked out in Texas paraphernalia, including water canteens, cowboy boots, headdress feathers, and early '70s cowboy movie posters starring Lee Van Cleef. The staff wear straw hats and red bandannas. Yee-haw. Whole pizzas (four slices) cost about a dollar, and are not half bad. No seating--stand-up tables only. (Open daily from 8:00 to 22:00. The takeout window stays awake until 2:00 in the morning.) The same company also runs Riga's "American Fried Chicken" chain--there's one at Tērbatas iela 33.

The **Pinguin** ice-cream store at Brīvības iela 74 not only has the widest selection of any Pinguin branch in Riga, it also serves subs (half-size sandwiches for \$0.40). (Open Monday-Friday 8:00-21:00, Saturday-Sunday 9:00-21:00).

Riga: Where to sleep

The **Latvian University Tourist Club (LUTK)**, Raiņa bulv. 19, (tel. 223 114 or 225 298, fax 225 039) rents rooms in two student dormitories in Riga. Try for a room in the one at Basteja bulv. 10, which is in the old town and within short walking distance of the train station. A bed in a double or triple room with the bathroom down the hall costs \$9; single and double rooms with private bath cost \$18 and \$30 respectively. If this dorm is full, you can stay in less luxurious quarters about twenty minutes from the center at Burtņieku iela 1b for \$4 per night (reached by taking trolleybus 4 from the stop near the train station, getting off at Aizkraukles iela, and walking about four blocks). **Note:** You must go to the LUTK office before you go to the dormitories. If possible, call the LUTK a few days in advance (they speak English, and someone is usually around on weekends). When you arrive, go to their office: it's about two blocks from the Riga train station in the dark stone university building with a white thermometer on the right side of the main door. On weekends, ring the bell. The LUTK office is in the far right corner of the ground floor of the building.

Hotel Laine, Skolas iela 11 (tel. 287 658 or 288 816). This hotel is the former home of Riga's American Peace Corps volunteers. It's just been remodeled and the facilities are bright and clean. If you were planning on staying in an expensive hotel in Riga, go here instead. You can walk here from the train station or the old town, although it's farther than the LUTK dorm. When you reach Skolas iela 11, go through the rightmost passage into the courtyard (it says "1912" over the arch) and then through the door in the far left corner by the "Latimpeks" and the "RTU Vīesnīca Laine" signs. The rooms are on the fourth floor, the office is on the third. A bed in a single costs \$7, in a double \$6, in a triple \$5, and in a quad \$4. Breakfast costs \$1. Try to call ahead during business hours. If it's full, there's another branch of the hotel across the river at Biešu iela 8, where beds in double rooms cost \$6.

Two organizations in Riga keep lists of private rooms with families. The **Patricia** tour agency, at Elizabetes iela 22-4a (tel. 286 650 or 284 868) speaks English and finds rooms that cost an average of \$10 per person per night. You can call ahead or stop by their office Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 17:00, Saturday and Sunday

from 9:00 to 13:00. The **Latvian Tourist Club**, Skarņu iela 22 behind St. Peter's Church (tel. 223 113, fax 227 680), charges \$15 per person per night. If you call, ask for Aira Andriksone, who speaks English. If you come by, go up the stairs to the second floor and knock on the first door to your right (open Monday-Friday 9:00-18:00). We have never actually stayed in either of these services' rooms and suggest that you book only one night at first and then see if you like it.

Note: The two hostels at Kalnciema iela 10/12 closed partway through the summer of 1992 under complicated circumstances. One may reopen for summer 1993, but plans are still unclear.

Leaving Riga

By Train: Riga's train station, though not overly crowded, is very confusing at first. See the map for help. There are two main halls. The long-distance train departure hall is number 4 on our map. It has ticket windows (numbered 3-8) for trains leaving the same day. If you go up the stairs (rather than through the tunnel) and outside, you get to platforms 1 and 2, where most long-distance trains leave from. The local-train departure hall is number 3 on our map. In its near right corner is a passage leading to the room with advance ticket sales windows (2 on our map; the windows are numbered 25-34). These windows are open only from 8:00 to 19:00, Monday through Saturday. Come here at least one, or better yet, two days before your departure. If you read Russian, a computer screen by the information window (*izzinu birojs*) in the long-distance train departure hall lists four days' worth of upcoming trains with complete seat availability details.

Trains out of Riga

Train number	Departs Riga	Arrives
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To Moscow (Maskava) - \$4/\$7**

2*	17:34	10:30
4*	18:35	11:46
32	19:40	13:52

To St. Petersburg (Sanktpeterburga) - \$3/\$5**

36*	17:52	07:59
38*	21:51	11:45

To Vilnius (Viļņa) - \$3

621	23:00	07:45
75	13:35	21:10

To Tallinn (Tallinna) - \$3

188	16:14	23:45
652	23:40	09:30

* These trains have luxury two-bed compartments.

** Second price is for two-bed compartments.

In late May, the new Baltic Express train will start running daily, overnight, from Riga to Warsaw and vice versa. See the Tallinn and Gateway Warsaw sections for more information.

By Bus: Coming from the train station, Riga's bus station is on the other side of the tracks and a few minutes' walk past the central market towards the river. Buses to both Tallinn and Vilnius leave from stance 10; tickets cost \$4 and can be bought at windows 1-4. Buses to Tallinn leave daily at 7:00, 12:45, 15:00 and 23:55, taking about six hours. Service to Vilnius is overnight only, leaving at twenty minutes past midnight and arriving at 6:20 in the

morning--take the train instead. Buses to Warsaw leave from stance 1 Monday and Thursday at 16:10; tickets cost \$20 (in hard currency) and are available from window 13. Buses to Helsinki (which cross on the ferries from Tallinn) leave from stance 1 on Thursday and Sunday at 7:00 and Friday at 7:00; tickets, which cost about \$30 (in hard currency), are also available from window 13.

By Boat: The ferry port in Riga is a little north of the old town. You can walk, but it's easier to catch a cab or any of the trams that run along Aspazijas bulv. Check in at least two hours in advance of any sailing. Baltic Lines, which runs the ferries from Riga to Sweden, now has an office in the terminal (tel. 329 514, open Monday-Saturday 10:00-13:00 and 14:00-18:00).

There's a weekly ferry from Kiel, Germany to Riga and back (leaves Kiel Friday 23:00, arrives Riga Sunday 16:00, leaves Riga Sunday 22:00, arrives Kiel Tuesday 17:00). One-way tickets cost about \$150; book way in advance through the office at Peldu iela 25 in Riga (tel. 227 349).

Riga nitty gritty

American embassy, Raiņa bulv. 7, tel. 227 045.

Currency exchange. No problem at all--there are small booths with posted rates virtually everywhere (including inside many shops). All of them give fairly similar deals; a spread of about 3% between buying and selling rates was the best you could get in February. The Rīgas Komerc Banka, at Smilšu iela 6, advertises that they change travelers' checks.

Post and telephone. The main post office is in an extension of the train station building. You can use the phone office here or at the main telephone office, catty-corner from the Freedom Monument at Brīvības iela 21 (open 24 hours). Either office will sell you the tokens you need for Latvian pay phones. Local calls demand single-slotted tokens (in February \$0.01 apiece). Long-distance phones take double-slotted tokens (in February \$0.07 apiece)--rates have risen to Western levels and you'll need several per minute to call Tallinn or Moscow.

Vilnius, Lithuania

Sprawling and disorganized, a Catholic church on every corner, Vilnius is the homiest and coziest of the three Baltic capitals, and also the most unsophisticated and run-down. A restful, horizontal city, Vilnius's one- and two-story buildings and its arches and courtyards are more reminiscent of a friendly Polish provincial capital than of the tall German-influenced architecture in Riga or the Hanseatic frosting-cake feel of Tallinn. No wonder, considering Lithuania's centuries-long political and religious ties with Poland, and the fact that Poland occupied Vilnius from 1920 to 1939 while most of the rest of Lithuania was independent.

Vilnius's old town (the buildings date largely from the 17th and 18th centuries) is huge and, unlike Riga's or Tallinn's, amazingly dilapidated: burned-out windows, crumbling wooden shutters, cracked plaster, and bowed roofs cry out for millions of dollars' worth of restoration work (while certain Soviet "improvements," like the central telephone office, cry out for the wrecking ball). The fact that Vilnius is falling apart gives the visitor a heightened sense of possibility. Every paneless window and paintless shutter makes you think of what could be there: a family, a shop, candles on the table, children in the street. Riga and Tallinn, in contrast, are much more accounted for.

Vilnius's disorganization also challenges you to explore. The old town is full of cozy cafes and fascinating galleries and shops. Many of them don't have any signs; you have to duck through archways into courtyards, open gates and doors, and slowly learn your way from nook to cranny. Some streets, such as Totorių g., transport you back to turn-of-the-century Eastern Europe, when Vilnius was an ethnic hodgepodge of Lithuanians, Poles, White Russians, and a booming Jewish community. These days Vilnius is half Lithuanian, half Polish and Russian, and all three languages are very much in evidence on the streets. Lithuania as a whole, however, is eighty percent Lithuanian and less than ten percent Russian. Russian minority rights are not so big an issue here.

Vilnius, as the only inland Baltic capital, was always politically and economically closer to the Slavic nations than to Scandinavia. This will likely continue under Algirdas Brazauskas, a former Gorbachev-era reform Communist who was elected Lithuania's first president in free elections on February 14, 1993. Brazauskas has said he wants tighter economic ties to Russia. It is already evident that Lithuania's economy has not visibly reoriented itself to the West as much as Tallinn's or Riga's. Lithuania has lagged behind Estonia and Latvia in its failure to introduce a stable currency, to bring postal and telephone rates in line with Western market prices, to de-Sovietize the train ticket system, and to bridge the gap between hard- and soft-currency economies. Service personnel only sometimes let you forget that you are in an ex-Soviet country. The cause is not so much the harsh, urban Sovietism that still survives in Riga--but rather the provincial inertia that at the same time makes Vilnius endearing.

A two-day Vilnius sightseeing plan

Day 1

- 11:00 Hike up Castle Hill and climb the tower.
- 13:00 Come down, cross the river, and eat lunch at Viola.
- 14:00 Visit the State Museum.
- 15:00 Cross back to the old town, wander, and explore.
- 18:00 Dinner at Medininkai.

Day 2

- 10:00 Visit the Jewish Museum.
- 12:00 Lunch at Geležinis Vilkas or Literatų Svetainė.
- 14:00 Cross back into the old town and visit the Art Museum.
- 18:00 Senas Grafas is nearby and a good bet for dinner.

Vilnius orientation

Vilnius has no tourist office. It does, however, have an incredibly good city guidebooklet called *Vilnius In Your Pocket*, written by a German named Matthias Lüfkens, and on sale everywhere in town for about \$0.40. As soon as you arrive and change money, go to the nearest kiosk and get a copy. In this booklet, we can't possibly hope to better the comprehensive information in *Vilnius In Your Pocket*. We have, however, tried to select the best *few* restaurants, hotels, and sights, and thereby save you having to mow through the masses of detail in *Vilnius In Your Pocket*. You can also stop by the Norwegian Information Office at Didžioji g. 13 (tel. 224 140, fax 221 255). This non-profit organization was chartered to help Scandinavians in Lithuania and Lithuanians who are interested in Scandinavia, but their services are open to anyone. They give advice on practicalities such as transport, accommodations, and making local contacts, and can find you a bed-and-breakfast deal for \$15 a night. (Open Monday-Friday 10:00-18:00.)

Vilnius's old town sprawls from the river and the cathedral all the way up to the train station. Walking from the station down to the river is quite pleasant; going the other way is a hike. Vilnius has trolleybuses (with overhead wires) and regular buses (without wires). The trolleybuses are more convenient since they have fixed stops, listed on a handy map in *Vilnius In Your Pocket*. Tickets, available from kiosks, cost about two cents apiece. Both buses and trolleybuses are crowded beyond belief, the worst of any of the cities covered in this booklet. People literally do hang out the doors. If you are staying in the old town and straying no farther south than the station and no farther north than the sights just on the other side of the river, you'll thankfully never need to take public transportation.

Vilnius: What to see

*** **Castle Hill.** Hike up to the top from the square near the cathedral; if it's a nice day, bring a picnic lunch. Buy a ticket and climb up to the roof of Gedimino Tower, at the top of the hill, to see Vilnius spread out before you (and in the distance, to the west, the TV tower where Soviet troops killed fourteen unarmed Lithuanians in January 1991). The tower (open Wednesday-Monday 11:00-18:00) also houses a small museum.

** **Jewish State Museum,** Pamėnkalnio g. 12, in the green house on the hill. Before World War II, 240,000 Jews lived in Lithuania; 90% of them perished during the war. Vilnius, which was 30% Jewish in 1914, was for many years the intellectual and cultural center of Eastern European Jewry. The exhibit first documents prewar Jewish life in Vilnius (including blowups of powerful documentary photographs by Roman Vishniac), then its extermination by the Nazis, including one German commandant's chilling daily execution record. Admission is free, but donations are gratefully accepted. The staff will be happy to interpret if they're not busy. (Open Monday-Friday 10:00-17:00). Ask them about how to get to Paneriai, outside Vilnius, where the Nazis murdered 100,000 people, 70,000 of them Jews.

** **Lithuanian Art Museum** (Lietuvos Dailės Muziejus), the big building in the square where Didžioji g. and Vokiečių g. meet. The second-floor permanent exhibition of Lithuanian art from 1907-1940 is worth a look, especially as a contrast to the cosmopolitan angst of the similar exhibit in Riga. Here the paintings are mostly on rural and domestic themes, and there are some great woodcuts. Admission costs pennies. (Open Tuesday-Sunday 12:00-18:00.)

****Lithuanian State Museum** (Lietuvos Valstybės Muziejus) is a large, white, Soviet-modern building along the north river-bank past the multi-story Hotel Lietuva. It's worth visiting for two exhibits on the bottom floor: one on the 26 Lithuanians who died at Soviet hands during the 1991 struggle for independence, the other of banners, posters, and pins from the same time. Admission costs about \$0.10. (Open Wednesday-Sunday 11:00-19:00.) After the museum, you may enjoy a wander through the four floors of Vilnius's biggest department store (next to Hotel Lietuva).

* **Lithuanian National Cultural and Historical Museum** is in the long, low building at the northwest base of Castle Hill. The second floor exhibition on inter-war independent Lithuania is the most colorful and thus probably the most interesting to non-Lithuanian speakers. (Open Wednesday-Monday 11:00-18:00.)

Daytrips from Vilnius

The two places to visit are Trakai, a castle a half-hour from Vilnius, and Kaunas, Lithuania's second city, almost two hours away. The castle at Trakai is picture-perfect, on an island in the middle of a lake. Kaunas was Lithuania's inter-war capital while Vilnius was occupied by Poland; it also has a nice old town and more of a Lithuanian feel than Vilnius (which is only half ethnic Lithuanian). Buses and trains go frequently to both Trakai and Kaunas. You can also catch 11-seat minibuses to Kaunas from the bus station.

Vilnius: Where to eat

Picnics: The Vilnius market is just northeast of the train station, in the area bordered by Pylimo g., Bazilijonų g., and Geležinkelio g.

Medininkai, at Aušros Vartų g. 8 (there's a big sign on the archway), offers filling, satisfying, standard meat-and-potatoes fare under medieval arched ceilings with an English menu. It's a big place, so there should almost always be a free table for you. Come for dinner when many other restaurants are full up. A full meal should cost about a dollar. (Open daily 12:00-23:30.)

Senas Grafas, at Šv. Kazimiero g. 3, offers good food, good service, and good prices. An appetizer (try the herring--*silkė*--or the calamari salad) and their excellent spaghetti will cost well under a dollar. It's sometimes hard to get a seat, and it's difficult to find the place: coming off Aušros Vartų g. onto Šv. Kazimiero g., look for the "baras" signs, then go through the archway at #3, then in the door on your right. (Open Thursday-Tuesday 11:00-23:00, Wednesday 11:00-17:00.)

Viola, Kalvarijų g. 3, just across the river from the old town on the right side of the street, on the ground floor of an ugly Soviet apartment building. It's beautifully decorated inside, except perhaps for the huge painting of a dead young nobleman. If you missed or will miss the Georgian food at Iberia in Moscow, try the Armenian food here. Ask for the English menu and order the Armenian dishes: Armenian cheese with bread, Karabakh soup, and an entree like *dolma* (stuffed grape leaves). All this plus tea should cost about \$2. (Open daily 13:00-24:00.)

Literatų Svetainė, at Gedimino pr. 1, across from the cathedral, is a lackluster but reliable choice offering okay food, okay service, comfortable decor, and full meals for about a dollar. (Open Friday-Wednesday 11:00-16:00 and 17:00-23:00, Thursday 11:00-17:00.)

Geležinis Vilkas, Vokiečių g. 2. A slightly pretentious and trendy cafe inside Vilnius's contemporary arts center, right by the art museum and the Hotel Astoria. The arts center is worth a stroll after lunch, which should cost about \$2. (Open daily 11:00-19:00.)

Baltų Ainiai, at Savičiaus g. 12, in the old town, is a dark but modern non-alcoholic cafe which has great poppy-seed cake. (Open Monday-Saturday 10:00-18:00.)

Vilnius: Where to sleep

There was no hot water in Vilnius all fall and winter of 1992-1993, with the exception of a few hotels with their own water heaters. Hopefully in summer, when home heating is turned off, this will free up energy for hot water--but don't count on it.

Hotel Astoria, in the center of the old town at Didžioji g. 35 (tel. 629 914). Five singles (common bathroom and shower) go for \$29 with breakfast. Eight similar doubles cost \$40. The location can't be beat. The management is professional and friendly. The rooms are only slightly shopworn. A good choice for families.

Hotel Narutis, also in the center of the old town at Pilies g. 24 (tel. 622 862). This was Vilnius's backpacker bargain in the summer of 1992, but it is reopening after renovations in May 1993, and the prices are going up. In February 1993 the owner told us that rooms without private facilities will be about \$15 for singles and \$20 for doubles. If he keeps his word, the convenient location will make it worthwhile.

Litinterp, Vokiečių g. 10 (go through the arch, in the door on the right, and to room 15 on your left, tel. 612 040, fax 222 982). Run by the same people who write *Vilnius In Your Pocket*, this agency rents several comfortable apartments in the old town for \$15 single, \$25 double. Call them as soon as you know when you're coming, or stop by the day you arrive (office open only Monday-Friday 9:00-17:00, Saturday 9:00-12:00, Sunday closed).

Youth Hostel BATS, at Geležinio Vilko g. 27 (tel. 661 692, 765 518 after 18:00), consists of four remodeled rooms on the bottom floor of a student dormitory. The rooms are OK, but the price (\$10) is too high,

especially given the remote location, and the bathroom is only half-remodeled. To get there, take the ridiculously crowded tram #16 (from the station) or #4 (from the center) to the "Kaunas" stop, then walk right through the apartment blocks a couple minutes to Geležinio Vilko g. You may want to take a taxi your first time.

Alternative Youth Hostels, (tel. 445 140 or 756 650). In the summer of 1992, the fellow who runs this set up old Russian army tents in Vingis Park, west of the city center, equipped with mattresses and showers. If conditions are the same this year, it should be a good deal for backpackers at around \$5 per night.

Hotel Vilnius, Gedimino pr. 20/1 (tel. 623 665). A last resort, if everything else is full. Run-down singles for \$17, doubles for \$30. Singles in the second building just down the street go for \$14, doubles for \$24 (dollars only). The Soviet-style front desk won't tell you about the cheaper rooms unless you ask.

Leaving Vilnius

By Train to Riga, Tallinn, and Russia: Take our advice--it's fine to *arrive* in Vilnius by train, but do your best to leave by bus. Vilnius, more so than Tallinn, Riga, or even St. Petersburg, is a big train junction. Trains arrive from Riga, Kaunas, Kaliningrad, Warsaw, and Berlin on their way to Kiev, Lvov, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Tallinn. Schedules are exceedingly complex. Vilnius's train station is dim, filthy, damp, malodorous, and crowded with unshaven, overweight travelers carrying even more obese baggage and eating moldy cheese sandwiches. There's nowhere to sit down. Don't picnic here, and hold on to your wallet.

Even worse, it can be very hard to get tickets out of Vilnius even when there are plenty of seats on the train. The factors include official corruption and a ticket mafia, crowds and long lines, decentralization, complex schedules, and the persistence of the old Soviet let's-try-to-get-foreigners-to-pay-dollars system. Officially, foreigners are still supposed to buy inflated-price tickets from the Intourist office at the Hotel Lietuva. In practice, foreigners seem to be able to join the same lines as Lithuanians. This means that advance bookings on trains within the former Soviet Union must be made at the office at Šopeno g. 3, down the street from the train station past the bus station--look for the green sign saying *Geležinkelio kasos* (open Monday-Saturday 9:00-20:00, Sunday 9:00-17:00). Tickets for trains within the former Soviet Union leaving the same day can only be bought from windows 1-6 at the train station.

It's usually easiest to get tickets for trains that originate in Vilnius and for the day train that starts from nearby Minsk.

Trains out of Vilnius

Train number	Leaves Vilnius	Arrives
To Moscow (Maskva) - \$1.50/\$3**		
6*	19:54	10:54
88	20:20	11:42
To St. Petersburg (Sanktpeterburgas) - \$1		
192	19:09	10:48
To Riga (Ryga) - \$1		
621	23:20	8:02
187	10:11	15:57
To Tallinn (Talinās) - \$2		
187	10:11	23:45

*This train has luxury 2-bed compartments.

**The second price is for 2-bed compartments.

You can sometimes get tickets for the trains that pass through Vilnius en route from Kaunas, Kaliningrad, Warsaw, Berlin, or Lvov to Moscow or St. Petersburg.

Vilnius to Warsaw By Train: For both foreigners and locals, advance bookings on international trains must be made at the Hotel Lietuva. Tickets for international trains leaving the same day can only be bought from window 8 at the train station (which is open daily from 8:00-11:00, 15:00-19:30, 20:00-1:00, and 2:00-7:30).

A train leaves Vilnius for Warsaw (Varšuva in Lithuanian) daily at 17:36, arriving in Warsaw at 5:17 the next day. A one-way ticket costs \$29. However, do not take this train (or any other direct train from Vilnius to Warsaw or Berlin) unless you have a multiple-entry or transit visa for Russia or Byelorussia. All these trains pass through a corner of Byelorussia, including the city of Grodno, on the way to Warsaw. By the time you travel, Byelorussia may be requiring its own visa.

If you want to go to Poland by train, you should use the new rail link across the Lithuanian-Polish border between the Lithuanian town of Šeštokai and the Polish city of Suwalki. One direct train per day leaves from Vilnius at 8:10, arriving in Šeštokai at 11:20. Another train leaves Šeštokai at 12:15 and crosses the border to Suwalki. From Suwalki you can take a train at about 15:00 which will get you into Warsaw about 21:00. Since you'll be getting in late, try to call to Poland from the phone office in Vilnius to reserve a place to stay in Warsaw. Window #8 in the Vilnius train station will sell you an all-inclusive ticket covering all three segments of the route for \$21. Remember that they close at 7:30 in the morning, so come early or try the night before. It's cheaper, but more hassle, to buy individual tickets for each segment at each station. You can also make the same trip overnight, but your route will have to be Vilnius-Kaunas-Šeštokai-Suwalki-Warsaw and you probably won't get any sleep. Take the bus instead.

Leaving Vilnius By Bus: Relief. The Vilnius bus station is across the street from the train station. (Look for the "Autobusu stotis" sign.) The ticket windows are in the right half of the building. At the **main windows** (numbers 1-11) you can buy tickets for trips within the old Soviet Union, including Tallinn, Riga, and destinations within Lithuania. There are four buses to Riga per day (\$1.50). Tickets on the 17:10 and 21:45 buses (arriving at 23:40 and 3:30) can be reserved a week in advance. Tickets on the 12:40 and 15:05 buses (arriving 18:20 and 20:30) can only be purchased starting a half-hour before departure, since these buses don't originate in Vilnius. Come forty-five minutes before departure to allow for time in line. The 21:45 bus to Riga continues to Tallinn, getting there at 9:30 the next morning (tickets cost about \$3).

The **international windows** (numbered 13-15) sell tickets to foreign destinations, mostly Poland. These windows are open for advance sales daily 8:00-12:00 and 13:00-17:30, and for same-day tickets 8:00-12:00 and 13:00-23:00. You can try reserving by phone at tel. 635 277. To Warsaw, two comfortable, modern daytime buses leave every day at 10:00 and 14:25, arriving at Warszawa Zachodnia bus station at 20:00 and 23:30 respectively. Tickets cost \$14. A minibus also leaves for Warsaw on Wednesdays and Sundays at 9:00, arriving at 19:00. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, there's an overnight bus to Warszawa Wschodnia station, leaving Vilnius at 21:30 and arriving in Warsaw at 7:00 (\$15). On Saturdays only, a Danish bus leaves Vilnius at 20:00, reaching Warsaw at 3:00 the next morning (\$25), Berlin at 12:15 (\$66), and Copenhagen at 20:30 that evening (\$115). There are also buses to Suwalki, Bialystok, Gdansk, and Poznan in Poland.

Vilnius nitty gritty

American Embassy. Akmenų g. 6, a little west of the old town (tel. 22 30 31).

Currency exchange. There are plenty of places with fair rates on Gedimino Prospekt, including one in the post office and another in the department store at Gedimino 18. Among others, the Vilniaus Bankas at Gedimino pr. 14 will exchange travelers' checks (go to Room 3 on the ground floor; open Monday-Friday 9:00-12:30 and 14:30-17:00); the same bank will issue Visa cash advances next door at Gedimino pr. 12.

Post and telephones. The main post office is at Gedimino pr. 7 (open Monday-Saturday 8:00-20:00, Sunday 11:00-19:00). The main telephone office (always open) is at Islandijos g. and Vilniaus g.; you can book calls here, and also buy tokens from the "informacija" booth for both long-distance calls (one wide groove) and local phones (these are just old 15-kopek coins). In February, Lithuania had markedly cheaper phone and postal rates than Latvia and Estonia, but prices may rise soon.

Tear-out cheat sheet

Basic survival phrases

In the following list, pronounce **a** as in car, **e** as in bet, **i** as in spaghetti, **o** as in more, **u** as in tune. Ä, õ, and ü in Estonian have the same sounds as umlauts in German (ä is like the English **a** in cat; for õ and ü, try to say "e" with your lips rounded). Stressed syllables are italicized.

English	Estonian	Latvian	Lithuanian	Russian
yes	ya	y_	taip	da
no	ei	n_	ne	nyet
hello	tere	<i>labdien</i>	laba diena	<i>zdrastvuytye</i>
goodbye	head aega	<i>visugaishu</i>	viso gero	do svidanya
Please	palun	<i>ludzu</i>	prashom	<i>pazhalsta</i>
thank you	t_nan	<i>paldies</i>	achu	spasiba
excuse me	vabandage	<i>atvainoyiet</i>	atsiprashau	izvintye
one	_ks	viens	vienas	<i>adin</i>
two	kaks	divs	du	dva
three	kolm	tris	tris	tri
Where is...?	Kus on...?	Kur ir...?	Kur...?	Gdye...?
How much?	Kui palyu maksab?	Tsik maks_?	Kiek kainuoya?	<i>Skolka stoyit?</i>
I don't understand	Ma ei sa aru	Es nesaprotu	Ash nesuprantu	Nye ponil
Do you speak English?	Kas teie r_gite inglise keelt?	<i>Vai j_s run_jet-angliski?</i>	Ar kalbates angliskai?	Vi gavaritye pa angliski?

Appendix

Tear-out cheat sheet

The bottom half of this page and the previous page contain tiny-but-handy versions of the Cyrillics list (opposite), and the basic survival phrases (on the back cover). Tear this out and keep it in your pocket for those times when you are separated from your guidebook.

Cyrillic

Cyrillic	English spelling	Sounds like:	Cyrillic	English spelling	Sounds like:
а	a	Rachmaninoff	р	r	Rasputin
б	b	Baryshnikov	с	s	Suvorov
в	v	Uncle Vanya	т	t	Turgenev
г	g	Gogol	у	u	Ustinov
д	d	Dostoevskii	ф	f	Frunze
е	e	Yeltsin	х	kh	as in the Scottish loch
ю	yo	Yossarian	ц	ts	Tsarevich
ж	zh	Brezhnev	ч	ch	Tchaikovsky
з	z	Zamiatin	ш	sh	Pushkin
и	i	Izvestiya	щ	shch	Khrushchev
й	i	Tolstoy	-	-	"hard sign" (ignore it)
к	k	Catherine	ы	y	Solzhenitsyn
л	l	Lenin	-	-	"soft sign" (ignore it)
м	m	Molotov	е	e	Ethelred the Unready
н	n	Nabokov	ю	yu	Yugoslavia
о	o	Oblomov	я	ya	Yalta
п	p	Pasternak			

Learning Cyrillic

Russia uses the Cyrillic alphabet. If you spend fifteen minutes learning it, you will instantly be able to read maps, street signs, food labels, subway directions, train schedules, menus, inscriptions, names of famous people, and Russian graffiti. Ignore Cyrillic, and you'll be completely unable to get around on public transportation, unable even to write the name of a destination for a taxi driver or train ticket seller, unable to read a street sign, and totally reliant on English-speaking (hard cash-hungry) Russians. Tape the rip-out cheat sheet to the inside of your glasses. Chant it before going to sleep. Do whatever you need to do--just learn it.

Cyrillic English spelling *Sounds like:*

а	a	Rachmaninoff
б	b	Baryshnikov
в	v	Uncle Vanya
г	g	Gogol
д	d	Dostoevskii
е	e	Yeltsin
йо	yo	Yossarian
ж	zh	Brezhnev
з	z	Zamiatin
и	i	Izvestiya
и	i	Tolstoy
к	k	Catherine
л	l	Lenin
м	m	Molotov
н	n	Nabokov
о	o	Oblomov
п	p	Pasternak
р	r	Rasputin
с	s	Suvorov
т	t	Turgenev
у	u	Ustinov
ф	f	Frunze
х	kh	as in the Scottish loch
ц	ts	Tsarevich
ч	ch	Tchaikovsky
ш	sh	Pushkin
щ	shch	Khrushchev
-	-	"hard sign" (ignore it)
ы	y	Solzhenitsyn
-	-	"soft sign" (ignore it)
е	e	Ethelred the Unready
ю	yu	Yugoslavia
я	ya	Yalta

Basic survival phrases

In the following list, pronounce *a* as in car, *e* as in bet, *i* as in spaghetti, *o* as in more, *u* as in tune. *_*, *_*, and *_* in Estonian have the same sounds as umlauts in German (*_* is like the English *a* in cat; for *_* and *_*, try to say "e" with your lips rounded). Stressed syllables are italicized.

English	Estonian	Latvian	Lithuanian	Russian
yes	ya	y_	taip	da
no	ei	n_	ne	nyet
hello	tere	<i>labdien</i>	laba diena	<i>zdrastvuytye</i>
goodbye	head aega	<i>visugaishu</i>	viso gero	do svidanya
Please	palun	<i>ludzu</i>	prashom	<i>pazhalsta</i>
thank you	t_nan	<i>paldies</i>	achu	spasiba
excuse me	vabandage	<i>atvainoyiet</i>	atsiprashau	<i>izvintye</i>
one	_ks	viens	vienas	<i>adin</i>
two	kaks	divs	du	dva
three	kolm	tris	tris	tri
Where is...?	Kus on...?	Kur ir...?	Kur...?	Gdye...?
How much?	Kui pafyu maksab?	Tsik maks_?	Kiek kainuoya?	<i>Skolka stoyit?</i>
I don't understand	Ma ei sa aru	Es nesaprotu	Ash nesuprantu	Nye ponil
Do you speak English?	Kas teie r_gite inglise keelt?	<i>Vai j_s run_jet-angliski?</i>	Ar kalbates englishkai?	Vi gavaritye pa angliski?