

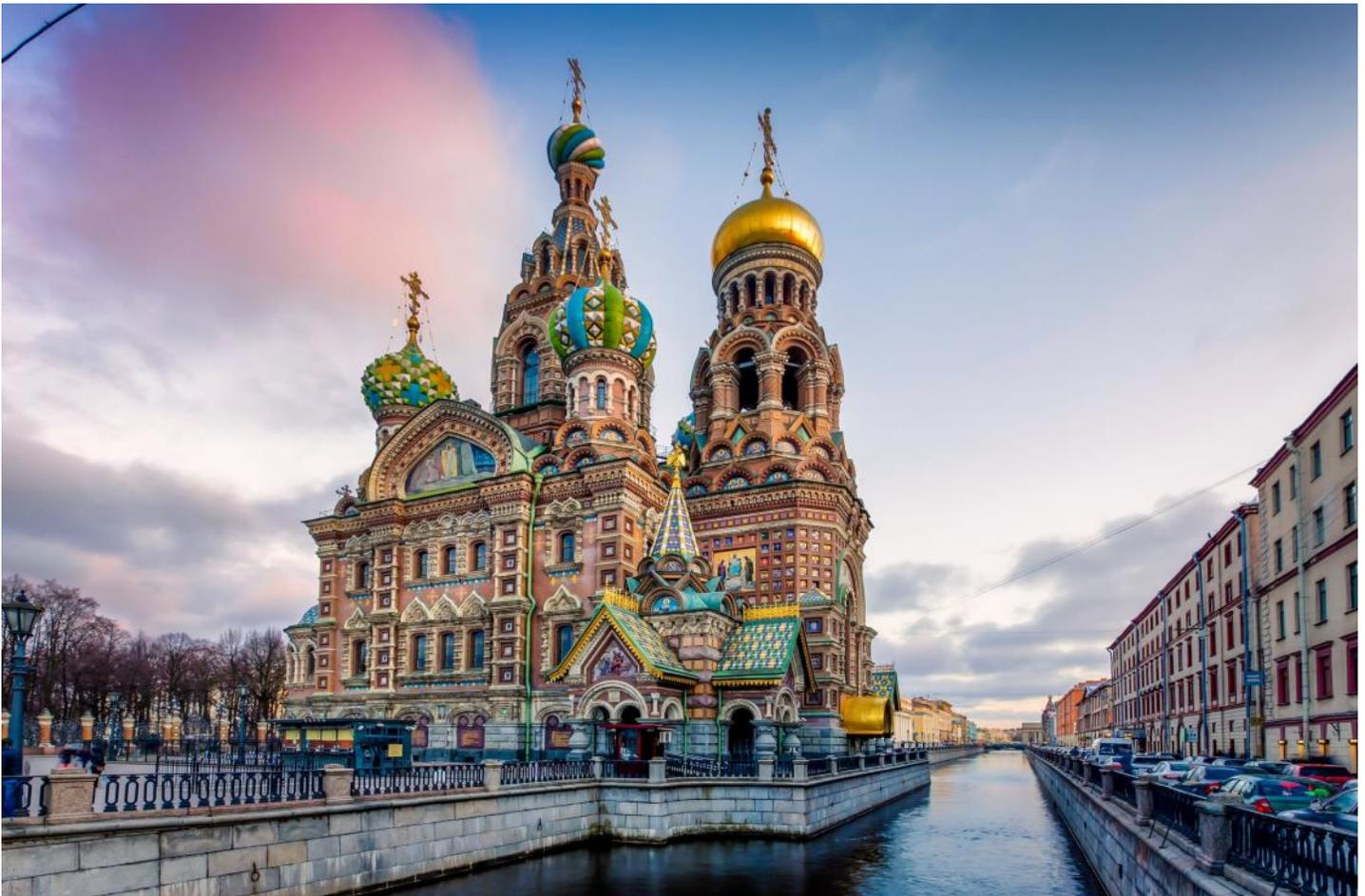
*Please join us on our fifth international adventure as . . . . .*



# *AARCH GOES TO THE BALTICS & ST. PETERSBURG*

SEPTEMBER 17-27, 2020

*Please join us for an eleven day guided adventure exploring the rich cultural heritage, architectural marvels, and fascinating history of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and St. Petersburg. Led by our fabulous guide, Peter Blazicek, with help from the intrepid AARCH staff.*



Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood , St. Petersburg

**September 17 - 27, 2020**

**\$3,850.00 per person (based on double occupancy)**

**Please add an additional \$700.00 for single occupancy**

**PLEASE NOTE: This cost does NOT include round-trip airfare.**

## Introduction

We can't fully explain why our international tours have so far drawn us to former Soviet republics (Armenia and Slovakia) and satellites (Cuba) but all of these places have fascinating histories, architecture, food, and culture, are less traveled than many other parts of the world, and each have a compelling story of renewal since the collapse of the Soviet Union. So once again, we're off on an adventure to explore the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia (all former Soviet republics), and visit the regal and magical Russian city of St. Petersburg where, over 11 days, we'll see and enjoy the rich cultural heritage, architectural marvels, food, music, art, and fascinating history of this part of the world. We are delighted to once again be traveling with Peter Blazicek, the excellent guide we engaged for our Slovakia tour and, making this an even more special trip, we'll have the good company of fellow AARCH members and friends.

## ITINERARY

### Thursday, September 17 —Arrival Day in Lithuania

Arrival by late morning at the **Vilnius airport**, then group transport by bus to our hotel, the Hilton Garden Inn in the city center. Free time to explore the Old City, late afternoon wine and cheese reception, then dinner on our own.

**Although Vilnius is the capital of Lithuania, it feels more like an overgrown village, with its vast green spaces, an intimate historic city center dotted by church spires and rife with cobblestone streets. But Vilnius doesn't hide its battle scars, as seen in its Holocaust museum, preserved KGB torture chambers, and cemeteries filled with war dead. Add to this a lively arts, food, and punk community, it all makes Vilnius a fascinating destination.**

### Friday, September 18 —Vilnius

Following breakfast, we'll take a guided walking tour of the magnificent Old Town with a local guide to explore Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture, including a 16<sup>th</sup> century Bishop's palace, the University – the oldest in the Baltics, Baroque church of St. Peter & St. Paul, and walk to the Gates of Dawn, the Carmelite Church of St. Theresa and former Jewish Ghetto.

After lunch in the Old Town, we'll travel by bus to **Trakai** to see its enchanting lakeside castle, formerly the main center of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. On returning to the city center, we'll enjoy a welcome dinner with traditional Lithuanian food and folk music.

### Saturday, September 19—Siauliai

From Vilnius, we'll travel about three hours to Siauliai where we'll have lunch and then see the world-famous **Hill of Crosses**, an emotional and provocative place where some two million crosses were placed by ordinary people in defiance of the Russian and Soviet occupational regimes. It became a symbol of Lithuania's non-violent struggle for freedom and is a powerful work of art. Then it's on to Riga, the Latvian capital with dinner in the Old Town and overnight at the Hotel Radisson Blu Latvia.

### Sunday, September 20—Riga

**Riga was founded as a port town in 1201 and was one of the key centers of the Hanseatic League in Eastern Europe from the 13th to the 15th century. The urban fabric of its medieval core reflects**



Top to bottom: Vilnius city center, Trakai, and the Hill of Crosses

**the prosperity of those times. In the 17th century, Riga became the largest provincial town of Sweden. In the 19th century, it experienced rapid industrial development and newly developed sections of the city now boast an array of neoclassical and Art Nouveau style buildings, including 50 Art Nouveau buildings in the medieval part of the town and more than 300 in the rest of the historic city center.**

*In the morning we'll have a guided walking tour through the Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to explore the world's finest collection of Art Nouveau buildings, its rich Hanseatic trade heritage, St. Peter's Church, the Three Brothers, and the Riga cathedral. After lunch, we'll visit the **Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum**, one of the oldest and largest open-air museums in Europe, where we'll see traditional farmsteads and dwelling houses of farmers, craftsmen, fishermen, view everyday objects used during the time, and see how people lived and decorated their properties.*

### **Monday, September 21—Gauja National Park**

*In the morning, we'll visit **Gauja National Park**, the largest and oldest in Latvia to see its variety of landforms, natural springs, sandstone outcroppings, picturesque views and unique cultural and historical sites within the park. After lunch, we'll return to Riga for a free late afternoon on our own.*

### **Tuesday, September 22—Estonia**

*From Riga we'll travel along the Gulf of Riga into Estonia, stopping for lunch at the seaside beach resort at Parnu. After lunch we'll continue to Tallinn, check in at the Hotel Nordic Forum and have a free afternoon to explore the Old Town.*

### **Wednesday, September 23—Tallinn**

***We love how Lonely Planet describes Tallinn: "Once the plaything of greater powers – Danish, Swedish, Polish, German and Soviet – Tallinn is now a proud European capital with an allure all of its own. It's lively yet peaceful, absurdly photogenic and bursting with wonderful sights – ancient churches, medieval streetscapes and noble merchants' houses. Throw in delightful food and vibrant modern culture and it's no wonder Tallinn seems in danger of being loved to death."***

*In the morning, we'll have a walking tour of the Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to see its 13<sup>th</sup> century medieval walls and buildings, the city's Hanseatic League era gabled houses and hidden courtyards, the Lühike Jalg gate and the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral – a symbol of Russian power with its magnificent gold-plated dome. After lunch in the Old Town, we'll have time on our own to further explore the Old Town.*

### **Thursday, September 24—Lahema and St. Petersburg**

*On our way to St. Petersburg, we'll stop at **Lahema National Park** with its rich mix of 7000 year old bogs, 18th century manor houses, dense forests, and the famous Jagala waterfalls. We'll have lunch at the picturesque seaside fishing village of Altja and then proceed to St. Petersburg (Hotel Solo Sokos Vasilievsky).*



Top to bottom: Riga, the Latvian Ethnographic Museum, Gauja National Park, and Tallinn buildings.

## Friday, September 25—St. Petersburg

*St. Petersburg, the second largest city in Russia, was established by the Russian Tsar Peter the Great to create a city that would rival other European capitals in sophistication. With nicknames like “Window to the West” and the “Venice of the North,” St. Petersburg is truly a remarkable and vibrant city replete with palaces, churches, museums, great food and nightlife, canals, and endlessly fascinating architecture and streetscapes.*

*In the morning we meet our local guide to explore some of the city's iconic sights including the **Tsar's Winter Palace**, Nevsky Prospekt, St. Isaac's Cathedral, and the statue of Peter the Great, whose inspired vision for this city saw it evolve into an elegant metropolis to rival even the most sophisticated of European capitals. After lunch, we'll continue to explore the city by seeing the **Peter and Paul Fortress**, built to protect the city against invading forces in the 18th century, and the spectacular **Hermitage Museum** to see one of the world's largest and most valuable art collections, including exquisite works by da Vinci, Rembrandt, Vermeer and our very own Rockwell Kent which hang proudly on its magnificent Baroque and Rococo walls. Evening activities (music, ballet) may also be arranged.*



Top to bottom: Peterhof, Kazan Cathedral, and a map of our journey.

## Saturday, September 26—St. Petersburg

*On our second full day in St. Petersburg, we'll have the day on our own to explore but will be given lots of suggestions for what to see and how to see them. These could include the **Peterhof Palace**, the **Nicholas Naval Cathedral**, visits to the **Faberge** or **Russian State** museums, or a boat ride on city's canals. Farewell dinner in the evening.*

## Sunday, September 27—Departure

*After breakfast, participants will be transported to the St. Petersburg airport for their departure flights.*

**What Is Included?** The tour cost includes: ten hotel overnights, 10 breakfasts, 7 lunches, and 6 dinners, all in-country transportation, admission fees, tips (for drivers, guides, bellboys, housekeepers, and wait staff), taxes, and special events. The tour cost does not include air transportation to Vilnius (arrival) and from St. Petersburg (departure), meals not specified, and other personal expenses.

**How Do I Register?** Please confirm your interest in this trip by emailing [info@aarch.org](mailto:info@aarch.org) or by mail by **Friday, February 28, 2020**. Within your response please include a paragraph or two expressing why you are interested in this trip, along with any previous international travel experience. If you have traveled with us in the past to Cuba, Armenia, or Slovakia there is no need to include your past travel history. The trip is limited to 23 participants (plus AARCH staff members). If we have more than 23 interested participants, we will choose participants through a lottery process.

