



**Latvia**

**Latvia - our home, our life, our future.**

Latvia's capital is Riga and the total population is slightly above 2 million.

The national language is Latvian, currency – euro (before 2014 – lats). The total area of Latvia, which includes sea territory, is 64,6 square kilometers.

### Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum



Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum is a place where you can go for a leisurely walk and see the history and development of ancient Latvian crafts, technologies and traditions. Visitors can observe the old crafts and try them out themselves, as well as taste traditional Latvian food. The nearby lake shore with a pine forest is beautiful in all seasons, including winter, when the museum has a skiing area. There is also an annual applied folk art fair on the first weekend of June.

### Kalneciems Quarter



Kalneciems Quarter in Riga is a part of unique European wooden architecture heritage. It is a bustling center of social life, which regularly hosts series of cultural and business events, such as farmers' markets, artisan goods sales, artist galleries, concerts and other similar events.

### Riga Festival



Riga Festival is an annual musical event organised in June. The festival programme is expanded every year and currently includes various theatrical performances, art exhibitions, multimedia and open-air events, as well as events for children. It is also common that during the festival the restaurants and cafes in Old Riga participate in the making of various cultural activities.

### Festival of Light "Staro Riga"



Festival of Light "Staro Riga" is the largest festival of lights in Northern Europe. It has gained huge popularity among Riga residents and visitors alike. "Staro Riga" was first organised in 2008 and has since become an annual traditional festival. The event usually lasts 4-5 days, and the timing coincides with the Latvian Independence anniversary celebrations. The festival allows city residents and visitors to have a look at unique light art objects. Just for a few nights in the streets, parks, squares and especially the illuminated façades people can view different techniques, art objects and light shows encouraging to sightsee around the city of Riga in a new light.

### Latvian Song and Dance Festival



Latvian Song and Dance Festival is a traditional cultural event in Latvia. This festival is part of Latvian national identity and it usually takes place every 5 years. This festival has happened 25 times since 1873. Usually, on the last day of the festival, in the morning all participants go on a festive procession, while in the evening the final concert is held on the Mežaparks large stage. Usually approximately 30,000 members participate, including choirs, dance groups, brass bands, folk groups, folk dancers, traditional music ensembles, harpist ensembles, decorative and fine arts studios, vocal ensembles, amateur theater and foreign groups. The festival was included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2008.

## Riga

### 11th November Quay



11<sup>th</sup> November Quay is the main street of Riga near the Old Town and Central neighborhoods. The total street length is 1,185 meters and it consists of 4-6 lanes. There is Waterfront promenade, the view of the Old Town and the Latvia's longest river Daugava, which splits Riga into two parts. On the waterfront is a venue for events such as the Riga Festival, Independence Day military parade, motorcycle season opening and "Staro Riga" light festival.

## Riga

### November 18



In November 18, 1918, Latvia's independence was proclaimed at the Latvian National Theatre. This day is a holiday in Latvia for those employed in the government institutions and most private companies. Different activities take place throughout the day. The celebration begins in the morning with a ceremonial procession and laying of flowers at the Freedom Monument, in which the president and other top state officials participate. In the afternoon the National Armed Forces march on the 11<sup>th</sup> November waterfront, and in the evening there is a torch parade. The holiday ends with a magnificent firework display over the Daugava river.

## Riga

### 1991 Barricades Museum



The 1991 Barricades Museum was established in 2001 on the basis of historical items collected by the association of participants of the barricades of 1991. The museum is located in the heart of Riga's Old Town, on Krāmu Street, where those participating in the barricades used to eat and relax. Its mission is to realize, preserve, study and communicate the spirit and the material evidence about the events of January and August 1991 in Latvia and hold dear the memory of the victims.



### Art Museum "Riga Bourse"



The museum was opened in 2011 and is located in the historical centre of Riga. It represents a new type of museums. The museum offers to experience interrelation between East and West, as well as a dialogue between the classics and modernity. An important aspect of the new museum is harmony between the acquisition of knowledge and recreation, as well as the breaking down of barriers between various forms of culture.

### The Latvian National Museum of Art



The Latvian National Museum of Art is the largest collection of national art in Latvia. The museum building on K.Valdemāra iela, designed by German architect Wilhelm Neumann and built in 1905, is one of the most impressive historicism buildings in the Park and Boulevard Circle area of Riga. It was the first building in the Baltics to be built for the purpose of being a museum.

### Museum of Ancient Baltic Jewellery



The Museum of Ancient Baltic Jewellery was established by two well-known Latvian jewellers - Inita and Vitauts Straupe, who have been studying Baltic and Scandinavian jewellery for more than 20 years, making copies and using traditional motifs and symbols for their up-to-date designs that have already travelled to all continents. The jewellers want to share their enthusiasm for the magnificent jewellery of 2<sup>nd</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### Riga Motor Museum



The Riga Motor Museum is the biggest antique vehicle museum in the Baltic countries. It was founded in 1989 on an initiative from Latvia Antique Automobile club. The list of exhibits includes cars, motorcycles and bicycles made from the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are over 200 exhibits, which include not only civilian vehicles, but also racing cars, firefighter cars, army vehicles etc.

### Pauls Stradiņš museum of the history of medicine



The visitors can see the development of medical history from the times of ethno medicine till the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in thematic or overview excursions, as well as enjoy a unique exhibition concerning outer biology and medicine. The main exhibition spans 4 floors, covering ancient medicine (basement), middle ages and renaissance (1<sup>st</sup> floor), 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century with all the great discoveries of that period (2<sup>nd</sup> floor), and the history of medicine in Latvia (3<sup>rd</sup> floor).

### Natural History Museum



There is enough in the museum to see, study and learn for days without end, because one tour will only cover but a part of what there is in the museum. Human evolution, mounted animals and birds from all over the world, collections of insects, plants and minerals, a journey into the history of Earth, recreation of volcanic eruption, studies of the sky, multiple exhibitions, modern and interactive displays, quizzes and stories - a visit to the museum will be fondly remembered by small and adult visitors alike!

## Riga

### Riga Art Nouveau Museum



Riga is one of the few European cities where Art Nouveau architecture, art and design objects have survived in great numbers. It is even called "the metropolis of Art Nouveau". There are 800 Art Nouveau buildings in Riga, mostly located in the city's centre - particularly on Alberta Street. Riga Art Nouveau Museum can also be found on this street, in the former apartment of the renowned Latvian architect Konstantīns Pēkšēns, who lived and worked here till 1907 and designed this beautiful building.

## Riga

### Night of Museums



Night of Museums is a traditional European event in May, when for one night doors of most of the National Museums are open to all visitors, organizing special events and inviting to visit museums free of charge. Every year more and more people are involved in the campaign by means of exhibition halls, special activities, participation in theaters, and visitors are also invited to the Parliament building and the Presidential Palace. Night of Museums in Latvia has been organised since 2005.

## Jūrmala

### Jūrmala Seaside Resort



Jūrmala is the most popular seaside resort in Latvia and the biggest one in the Baltic States. The resort town is located just 23 km from the capital Riga. The nearly 33 km long and broad beach is covered with white quartz sand and has several "Blue Flags" that guarantee quality, safety and comfort (also for people with special needs). The city boasts its unique 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century wooden and Art Nouveau architecture and the natural resources of Ķemeri National Park. Jūrmala is an excellent place for recreation for the whole family - there are numerous attractions, children playgrounds and the biggest water park in Northern Europe.



## Kurzeme

### Cinema town "Cinevilla"



The town was built for the movie "Guards of Riga". Its environment was made to resemble Riga almost 100 years ago, during the freedom fights of 1919, when both Germans and Russians were trying to invade Latvia.

Various attractions are available, including participating in movie making (both sides of the screen – watch a movie being made or become an actor yourself) and driving around the town on various authentic vehicles of that time as well as horses.

## Kurzeme

### Liepāja Naval Port (Karosta)



The enchanting brutality of Karosta is a unique and rare sight not only in Latvia but also within the historical, architectural and urban construction framework worldwide. It is one of the most unusual sightseeing objects in Latvia.

Liepāja fortress and Karosta is the largest historical military territory in the Baltic. Moreover, Karosta is the highest building with cupolas in the Baltic. One of the most popular destinations for tourists is the Karosta prison - the only military prison in Europe open to tourists.

## Kurzeme

### Venta Rapid



The Venta rapid in Kuldīga is the widest waterfall in Europe – up to 270 metres wide during spring. It is associated with a number of legends and historical events. In old times, due to Duke Jacob's invented devices for catching fish on the Venta waterfall, Kuldīga was considered the place "where salmon were caught in the air". In springtime, flying fish shows (salmon jumping over the rapid) attract visitors to the town.

**Pedvāle open-air art museum**

This open-air art museum in Sabile is part of a cultural monument of State significance and Special protected cultural and historical territory "Abavas ieleja". The museum's concept is the natural landscape, agricultural landscape, cultural heritage and arts integration in a single environment. There are more than 150 works of art in the museum's collection. In 1999 UNESCO gave it an international Melinas Mercouri prize for the preservation and development of the cultural landscape.

**Dundaga Castle**

The castle was built in 13<sup>th</sup> century. From 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century it was the centre of the largest private estate in Courland.

Dundaga Castle is connected with many fairy-tales and legends. The most popular tells about a ghost called the Green Maiden.

Once upon a time, the landlord of Dundaga, von Maydell, was on his way to Irbe village, when he met a king of gnomes. The king asked to marry one of von Maydell's daughters in the chapel of the castle and to celebrate the wedding in the Hall of Knights. If no mortals would see it, the landlord would get treasures and a son (he only had daughters). Unfortunately, one of the maids saw the wedding and was cursed. Her ghost is said to still be walking around the castle.

**Dundaga Evangelical Lutheran Church**

The church was built in 1766. Since 1935 it is an architectural monument. In the archives of the church it is possible to find antique religious books as well as cult objects from the past centuries.

Since 1912 the altar piece is "Lieldienu rīts" (Easter morning) painted by Jānis Rozentāls.

There is a memorial plaque in the church to remember those Dundaga parish sons who struggled and fell in the Freedom fights of World War I and in World War II.



## Kurzeme

### Ventspils



Ventspils is a popular tourist center in Latvia, which offers rest on the Baltic Sea, a landscaped "Blue flag" beach and an aquapark. There are two children towns for kids to play in. Tourists have the possibility to visit an open-air museum, Ventspils adventure park, see unique flower sculptures, Ventspils Livonian Order Castle, which is the oldest medieval fortress in Latvia, and the popular Ventspils Cow parade.

## Vidzeme

### Cēsis



Cēsis is one of the oldest and one of the most beautiful towns in Latvia. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the medieval Cēsis Castle has shared its destiny with the town in fights against invader troops and now, together with both parks, the curved streets and the hospitable people, enchants the visitors with its romantic atmosphere.

The castle's ruins are some of the most majestic castle ruins in the Baltic states. Once the most important castles of the Livonian Order, it was the official residence for the masters of the order. It was partly destroyed during the Great Northern War.

## Vidzeme

### Līgatne National Park



The picturesque ancient valley of the Gauja river has been attracting tourists from all over the world for centuries. Everyone wants to enjoy the charms of the primeval nature and return to the mysterious medieval times.

More than 500 cultural and historical monuments are located in the National Park - hill forts, stone castles, churches, manors, watermills and windmills, among others. In the Līgatne nature trails one can see all sorts of wild animals and more than 300 sandstone caves. For those who are interested in the past it is advised to visit the Līgatne secret underground bunker which was built to be used in the case of a nuclear war.

## Vidzeme

### Āraiši Archaeological Museum Park



Āraiši Museum Park is a cultural historical monument situated in the Cēsis region. It consists of reconstructed buildings from the Stone and Bronze Ages, ancient Latgalian settlements from the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as castle ruins from the Livonian period. Āraiši Lake Castle is presently the most extensively studied site of this kind in the whole of northeast Europe.

## Vidzeme

### Sigulda



Sigulda is situated on a picturesque stretch of the Gauja river valley. Because of the reddish Devonian sandstone which forms steep rocks and caves on both banks of the river, Sigulda has been called the "Switzerland of Vidzeme".

A traditional Opera Festival takes place in an open-air music hall in the castle ruins each summer. A Town Festival is celebrated in May when cherry trees blossom, while Sigulda is known for the colors of its trees in autumn. Sports such as skiing, bobsledding, and the luge are popular in wintertime and bungee jumping is practiced during the rest of the year.

The largest cave in the Baltics, the Gutmanis Cave is located in Sigulda. The cave still bears inscriptions from as early as the 17th century.

## Vidzeme

### Gaiziņkalns



Gaiziņkalns, at 312 m above sea level, constitutes the highest point in Latvia. It is situated a short distance to the west of the town of Madona, central Vidzeme.

Although only of relatively small elevation, Gaiziņkalns has been developed as a skiing destination including three slopes and several guesthouses.

### Aglona Basilica



Aglona Basilica is among major centres of Baltic catholicism. Aglona Basilica was built in the late baroque style and it is decorated with two 60 m high towers. Every year on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, pilgrims congregate in Aglona to mark the day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. As such, this is one of the best known sacred sites in the world.

### Daugavpils Fortress



The only early 19th century fortress in Eastern Europe that has remained virtually unchanged. Each detail of the fortress was developed using the construction experience of the best architectural schools of Tsarist Russia and Europe. The territory of the fortress is open for observing and visiting at any time and entrance is free of charge, except when visiting certain culture institutions and events.

The characteristic landscape of Latgale with its heights and lowland formed under the impact of a glacier. The highest point of Latgale is 289 m above the sea level – Lielais Liepu kalns (the Great Linden Mountain). Latgale is known as the region of lakes.

Latgale region is characterised by great diversity of nature and climatic conditions, which make it different from other regions of Latvia. It has a typical continental climate, more severe winters with thicker snow cover.

Latgale is a region with very rich and diverse culture. It was formed by many nations and ethnic groups have lived here and mutually influenced each other for centuries.

Cultural heritage of Latgale incorporates brilliant architectural monuments, as well as rural farmsteads, typical settlements and cultural landscapes. Cultural traditions of Latgale – its language, folk songs, dances, craftsmanship (especially pottery) form a significant part of national culture of Latvia.



**Preiļi Doll Museum – “Doll Kingdom”**

Two miniature castles - luxurious towers, bridges, a watermill - a little kingdom decorates the front yard of the museum, attracting the tourists' attention. The castles are not imitations; they are the result of the author's imagination and handiwork, and are made of natural stone. The atmosphere becomes particularly romantic in the dark evening hours when every window in the castles is lightened.

Inside the museum, the dolls pose for various scenes from life and fantasy. All dolls are hand-crafted, their poses, gestures and faces show a wide range of emotion.

**Rēzekne Castle Hill**

From 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries the embattled castle of ancient Latgalians was on the banks of the river.

Today the castle hill is the most remarkable and most visited place in Rezekne. A marvellous sight to the centre of the city and to the trading part of the city opens from the hill.

**Creative Services Centre “Zeimuļš”**

The centre was opened in 2012. It provides informal education services for children and young people up to 25 years of age. There are 86 programmes available, and people can participate in singing, dancing, ceramics, drawing, knitting, chess, checkers and other interest groups.

There is also a Latgalian craftsman shop-saloon and a work skills exhibition hall in the centre.

### Jelgava Palace



Jelgava Palace is the largest Baroque style palace in the Baltic states, work of the famous Russian court architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli and one of the few cultural monuments remaining in Jelgava.

After Courland was absorbed by the Russian Empire in 1795, the palace served as a refuge for French royalty fleeing the French revolution. Louis XVIII lived in the palace between 1797 and 1801.

The Latvia University of Agriculture has been housed in the palace since the 1939.

### Rundāle Palace



The palace is one of the major tourist destinations in Latvia. It is also used for the accommodation of notable guests, such as the leaders of foreign nations.

It was constructed in the 1730s to a design by Bartolomeo Rastrelli as a summer residence of the Duke of Courland. Since then, it has been owned by many royals.

During World War I and II, the palace was used for war needs. In 1923, the palace was renovated, and the Rundāle Primary school was set up in a part of it.

Only in 1972 a permanent Rundāle Palace museum was established.

### Jelgava International Ice Sculpture Festival



The Ice Sculpture festival gathers 30 sculptors from 8 countries who come together to mould sculptures from the fragile material - ice. Thousands of people from all over Latvia and neighboring countries come to Jelgava to see the crystal clear sculptures shine in colourful spotlights to capture a moment of the short life of an ice sculpture.

An ice bar and an ice slide for children have become a tradition for the festival, making it one of the most popular events of the season in Latvia.

## Handicrafts

### Ceramics



The skill to create clay vessels already existed in Latvia thousands of years before the Christian era. Since Latvian potters have acquired techniques of glazing, pottery has become colourful and has been decorated by different ornaments.

Over time, regional Latvian ceramic traditions have been created and preserved. These traditions exist through differences in the form and decoration of pottery. The most spectacular contemporary tradition of regional pottery has been preserved in Latgale.

## Handicrafts

### Woodwork



In densely forested Latvia, our ancestors practiced woodcarving long ago. This craft was essential in a household. From house building to with carving spoons – nearly every man could do it himself. Even furniture was made at home. Furthermore almost every household object was decorated by ornaments and carving in wood.

## Handicrafts

### Basketry



Basketry is one of the original handicrafts, which began in the Neolithic Age and has provided the basis for a number of different handicraft skills. Not surprisingly, weaving from wicker and roots became an ancient craft in all regions.

Today, folk art basketry, thanks to its shapes, structure and diversity, also displays artistic value outside its practical application. Currently amongst folk art studios basketry workshops are the most active.



## Handicrafts

### Adornment Making



Neolithic tribes living on the shores of the Baltic Sea were already creating amber ornaments in various forms - pendants, beads and amber discs. Figurines of birds, fish, snakes, bears and people shaped from bone and horn were found in the settlements of the Lubāna fields from 4 - 3 000 B.C.

Subsequently, bronze and iron neck rings, decorative pins, armbands and rings have been made in Latvia.

## Handicrafts

### Metalwork



Europeans learned to melt and forge iron in the late 2nd and early 1st centuries B.C. The ancient Baltic, Finno-Ugric and Slavic tribes also began to obtain iron around this time.

These days, ancient blacksmithing techniques of bending, stretching and intertwining are seen in elements of Riga's architecture. Exhibitions of applied art demonstrate that recently master blacksmiths have mostly turned to creation of interior decoration candlesticks, fireplace accessories, and metal ornaments for articles of woodwork. These have preserved the historical traditions of manufacture and decoration.

## Textile Art

### Weaving



Fabrics were initially made on hand looms during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., but simple linen and woolen fabrics were woven in Latvia at the beginning of the present era.

Women made clothing for all family by themselves, and used homemade fabrics for that purpose. Towels, coverlets, sheets, curtain, shawls, rugs were also homemade.

## Textile Art

### Knitting



Knitting is one of the most ancient handicrafts. The earliest record of knitting has been dated to 5 000 - 3 000 B.C. In Latvia, given its cold climate, knitting became one of the earliest handicrafts. The first knitted mittens and gloves found here have been dated to the 15th century.

Knitting was the first craft which women could learn. Hand-knitted gloves and socks are still the most traditional textiles, and one of the most esteemed gifts.

## Textile Art

### Lacework



Various types of handmade lace reached their heyday in Europe in the 18th century. A number of lace making techniques have also been popular amongst Latvian handicrafts at various times. Lace has been used to decorate costumes and domestic items.

Nowadays the main emphasis is placed on the production of ethnographic sample folk costumes, edging for towels and other details.

## Kitchen

### Latvian Food & Cuisine

Latvian Food and Cuisine is waiting for you to try when you arrive here in Latvia.

What is Latvian food? This is a question that is asked a lot by visitors and in all honesty it is one of our favourite questions to answer as we are big food fans ourselves.

Latvian food is often considered simple and heavy with Soviet traits, but there is a wide range of diverse ingredients, and Latvian cuisine is moving into the 21st century with some contemporary twists. Here is a list of some of those ingredients that make up this diverse food culture.

## Kitchen

### Meat



Pork is by far the most common meat used in Latvian cuisine, but you will also find some wild meats such as deer, rabbit, moose and wild boar. Chicken, beef and lamb are used in dishes but nowhere near as much as pork. A typical dinner time dish could include a joint of pork, boiled potatoes, fresh vegetables or a cold salad and nice glass of homemade wild berry juice.

## Kitchen

### Fish



Herring, pickled and served cold, is often eaten, especially around lunch time. Smoked fish is a real speciality in the Baltic region, but Latvia and especially the coastal regions have some of the finest choices of smoked fish. In Riga, your best bet is to go to the Central Market to discover the wide range of fish products on offer. Look out for "nēģis".

## Kitchen

### Milk products



Great butter, fresh cheese, fine milk, cottage cheese, sweet cheese delights, and more! Latvia is by far one of the best producers of milk produce in the world. You must try as much as you can here, especially in the cakes and sweets.



## Bread



Latvian black bread is one part of the local diet that you just will not be able to avoid whilst you stay here in Latvia. A heavy, hardy bread that is full of flavour and can sometimes be sweet, sometimes sour, or even both, is great on its own, with butter, or as a sandwich. Do not eat too much though, it will fill you up pretty quickly!

## Cabinet of Folk Songs (Dainu Skapis)



A massive collecting effort of Latvian folk songs took place during late 19th century, coinciding with the period of National awakening in Europe. Carried out by Latvians themselves, it was made the basis for their national identity. Thanks to the lifetime work of Krišjānis Barons, nearly 218,000 song texts were assembled, classified and published. To this day it remains a source of collective self-confidence and inspiration for the Latvian people, revealing their rich cultural heritage that had not been previously recorded, yet had endured through centuries by oral transmission.

Since 2001 Dainu skapis is on the list of UNESCO Memory of the World.

## Suiti Cultural Space



Suiti Cultural Space is a unique example of European intangible cultural heritage which since 2009 has been inscribed on UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

The Suiti are a small Catholic community in the western part of Latvia. The Suiti cultural space is characterized by a number of distinct features, including vocal drone singing performed by Suiti women, wedding traditions, colourful traditional costumes, the Suiti language, local cuisine, religious traditions, celebrations of the annual cycle, and a remarkable number of folk songs, dances and melodies recorded in this community.

**Comenius**



**Europe**