





## PLACES OF INTEREST

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**Old Town** of Riga was a center of commerce during the middle Ages. The wealthy merchants in an effort to out do one another, left the city with many architectural treasures. Some of the most famous monuments include; St. Peter's Church with its famed spire, St. George's Church, St. John's Church, a part of restored city wall and the medieval John's yard. The Old Town has exceptionally beautiful examples of Art Nouveau architecture of late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**1 Dome Square** is the very heart of Old Riga. The massive 13th century red-brick Dome Cathedral is situated on the square. The interior walls are covered with memorabilia commemorating the accomplishments of former parishioners. The Cathedral is home to the famous 19th century Dome organ containing over 6 thousands pipes making it one of the largest in Europe.

**2 "Three Brothers"** are the oldest stone residential buildings in Riga. The Three Brothers represent different stages in the architectural development from medieval to Baroque. The oldest of the three buildings dates back to the 15th century. The other two were built in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Riga Museum of Architecture is located in Building #19.

**3 "House of Cats"** is situated near Dome Square and is famous for the cat sculptures perched on the roof as well as the story that is associated with them.

**4 Powder Tower** dates back to the 14th century. The structure is the only surviving defense tower of the old city walls. The Powder Tower is now the home of the Museum of War which has exhibits of weapons and artifacts spanning 700 years.

**5 Riga Castle** dates from the 14th century. Built for the German Knights, it was destroyed and then rebuilt again several times. The castle is now home to the president of Latvia.

**6 The Freedom Monument** was dedicated in 1935 and symbolizes the struggle of the Latvian people for independence. The monument was designed by Latvia's most famous sculptor and became the hub of the Latvian independence movement in the late 1980s.

### Beyond Riga

**Big Choral Synagogue** was built in 1868 and was the biggest and most beautiful synagogue in Riga. It was famous for its singers, both cantors and the choir. On July 4th, 1941, the Synagogue was burned down with 300 people inside. On July 4th, 1988 a memorial stone was inaugurated on the site.

**Riga Motor Museum** is the biggest antique vehicle museum in the Baltic countries. The museum has on display more than 100 unique vehicles. Curiosities are wax life-size figures of Stalin in his armored Tchaika and Brezhnev at the wheel of his crashed car.

**Rumbula** is located on the outskirts of Riga. Approximately 25 thousand Jews from across Europe were massacred during World War II in the pine forest of Rumbula. In late 1960's a tombstone was placed on the mass grave of victims of Nazi terror.

**Latvian Ethnography Open-Air Museum** was founded in 1924 and lies in the outskirts of Riga on the coast of Lake Jugla. The museum presents an opportunity to learn about the history and life in Latvia in authentic surroundings. The museum is divided into four regions according to the territorial division of Latvia's provinces – Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Zemgale and Latgale. The museum is home to peasants' farmsteads, windmills, wooden churches and pubs from the 16th through the 20th centuries.

**Sigulda Castle** dates from the 13th century. The castle was constructed by Teutonic invaders and was destroyed in the 18th century. Some of the ruins have been partially restored.

**Turaida Castle** is located about 50 km northeast of Riga and is one of the most visited medieval castles in Latvia. Dating from the 12th century it was once the residence of the Archbishops of Riga. Here one can find the grave of Turaida Rose located under an old linden tree. She was the heroine of a true love story from the 17th century.

**SHORE EXCURSIONS** To make the most of your visit to Riga and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take with you only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

**LOCAL CUSTOMS** Bargaining: Prices in large stores are fixed. Bargaining may take place in smaller owner-managed shops, and some local street vendors.

**Tipping:** Generally a service charge will be included on the bill; otherwise 10-15% is a good guideline.

**Local Cuisine:** Latvian recipes typically contain fresh local ingredients commonly available such as pork, bacon, fish, potatoes, cabbage, onions and pickles. Often served are Piragi, a pastry made from wheat flour filled with a meat stuffing, Borshch, a soup made from beets and sauerkraut. Bread is very important on a Latvian table. Dark rye breads are popular but there are many different wheat and barley breads to be found as well.

**Kimenu siers** is a traditional Latvian cheese often served at celebrations. Pickled mushrooms are a Latvian specialty.

**Drink Specialties:** Latvia has been producing many fine quality beers for centuries. Among the some of the popular local brands are Aldaris,

Cesis and Lacplesis. One of the best selling spirits is Kristala dzidrais, a well liked Latvian-produced vodka. In the whiskey category, Zverkavis has an interesting taste. The national Liqueur is Riga's Melnais Balzams. The thick, dark drink is made from a complicated recipe and is said to be an acquired taste. For a cold weather climate, Latvia has some very good local wines. Bottled water is recommended.

**SHOPPING FACILITIES** There are many shopping opportunities in Riga especially in the Old City district. There are quaint specialty stores as well as shopping malls. The "Galerija Centrs" is one of Riga's best known department stores and has undergone extensive renovations to create a modern shopping experience. The Central Market is a chaotic and fascinating place to explore. Located southwest of the Old City next to the main train station, the Central Market is one of the largest of its kind in Europe. Shopping hours are generally from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday thru Saturday. There may be some tourist-oriented shops that stay open later. Most small shops are closed on Sunday.

Items of interest are; Latvian made Laima Candies, Riga Black Balsam, jewelry, Baltic amber, leather items, linen, antiques, music, handicrafts and souvenir items. There are of course varying degrees of quality but it is possible to obtain some real bargains as well as some unique souvenirs.

**LOCAL CURRENCY** The official unit of currency is the Latvian Lat (LVL). The Lat is subdivided into 100 Santims. The new notes are in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 Lats. Coins can be found in denominations of 1 and 2 Lats and 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 Santims.

Most major shops and restaurants accept major credit cards.

**POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES** The main Riga Postal Centre "SAKTA" is located 32 Brivibas bulv..

Public Telephones are easy to use. The phones are activated with a Lattelecom calling card. Phone cards can be purchased at post offices or from newspaper kiosks. To make an International call you must purchase an International phone card. You can also place calls with your personal calling card using the following access codes:

AT&T: 800.2.288

MCI: 800.8.888

**TOURIST INFORMATION** There are two Tourism Information Offices in Riga. One is located in the Old City in the House of Blackheads complex at Ratslaukums 6 (I-2).

The second is located at the bus terminal at Pragas 1.

**TRANSPORTATION** Taxis are in limited supply in the pier area. Fares should be negotiated prior to entering the cab and departing.

### USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Yes • Ja

No • Ne

Hello • Labdien

Farewell • Uz Redzesanos

Thank You • Paldies

You're Welcome • Ludzu