





LATVIA ...

Latvia, the pearl of the Baltic States, is one of the European Union member states and is situated in the North of Europe – on the shores of the Baltic Sea.



BEST ENJOYED SLOWLY ...

The best things in life should be savoured and enjoyed slowly. Latvia offers visitors a remarkable array of experiences that make time spent here truly unforgettable. Delight in Latvia's magnificent architecture, culture and music. Taste delicious naturally produced Slow Food. Enjoy unique seasonal celebrations, festivals and sporting events. Relax on pristine white sand beaches and stroll through untouched nature reserves. Experience four distinct seasons and something truly extraordinary.



DELIGHT ...

Delight your senses with an enlightening journey of the mind through Latvia's castles, manor houses, churches and architectural masterpieces. Allow your eyes to see and admire stunning works of art and explore fascinating museums. Feast your ears on the sounds of world-class classical music and opera.

... YOUR MIND



Allow your mind to delve into the fading secrets of yesteryear as you discover and explore Latvia's remarkable collection of ancient castles and churches, enchanting manor houses and its unrivalled ensemble of stunning **Art Nouveau architecture**. With more than 30 castles and medieval fortresses, the vast majority dating back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, you will feel the spirit of chivalry and the mystique of the middle-ages with every thoughtful step you take. **Charming manor houses and palaces** dot the rural Latvian landscape while centuries-old Lutheran, Orthodox and Catholic churches can be found in virtually every Latvian town and village. Uncover the largest and certainly the finest collection of Art Nouveau buildings in all of Europe, most dating from the 1890s to just before the outbreak of WWI. Now is the time to unlock your mind and discover all of these secrets.

... YOUR EYES



Seeing is believing and experiencing. Admire the texture, shades, colours and contours of Latvia's premier art works. Take your time exploring art galleries showcasing the very best of the nation's and the region's **classical works of art**. Stand in silent contemplation and allow your eyes to admire the unique creativity in Latvia's **contemporary modern art**, or wander the cobbled streets of any Latvian town and search out their independent, free-spirited galleries. There are dozens of museums in Riga to be discovered on literally every other street corner, while visitors are often surprised to learn that most Latvian towns and sizeable villages have their own museums dedicated to local history, art, culture and craft. Such is the Latvian love of culture and the aesthetically pleasing visual.

... YOUR EARS



It is often said that Latvia is the land that sings. Indeed, it is a nation where approximately half of its **music-loving population** has attended music school, sings in a choir, or can play a musical instrument. Open your ears and discover a place where **opera** is the domain not of the rich but of the music-adoring masses; where you can hear the melancholic and thundering classical tunes of the National Symphony Orchestra, while nearby choir groups meet and whispering **ancient traditional music** fills the air of medieval churches. Latvia is truly a musical paradise where classical and ancient music can be heard, while the contemporary music scene is the envy of many nations. Whether it is the **powerful rock music** of Pete Anderson, the anthemic pop tunes of Brainstorm, or the Memphis-inspired songs of the truly excellent Latvian Blues Band, your ears will delight in the musical journey that awaits them in Latvia.



TASTE ...

Latvian food is delicious, fresh and, most importantly of all, it is natural and organic, with meals lovingly prepared with Slow Food principles in mind. Riga is home to the biggest market in all of Europe, where the continent's largest selection of natural produce can be purchased. It is also a city that boasts hundreds of restaurants offering fine international cuisine from all corners of the globe.

... NATURAL LATVIAN PRODUCTS



Food at its very best is both traditional and regional, grown slowly and naturally just as Mother Nature always intended. While much of the world pursues a policy of mass food production, the **Slow Food** concept becomes ever more popular in Latvia. Blessed by four distinct seasons and one of the smallest population densities in Europe, the Latvian countryside is a natural haven for **organic food** enthusiasts tired of the short-sighted world of poor nutrition that is microwaved meals and factory-farmed food produce in other parts of Europe. Taste delicious local fruit and vegetables, untainted by chemicals and pesticides; pay witness to the Latvian rural idyll where small family-run farms continue to operate much in the same way as they have done for centuries, maintaining the **traditional rural way of life** for this ecologically-minded nation's next generation.

... FRESH GROCERIES



If, unfortunately, you don't have enough time to visit the beautiful Latvian countryside and to discover its traditional rural way of life and bountiful supply of natural vegetables, fruit, meat, fish and dairy products, then fear not! These natural wonders can be encountered at the **Riga Central Market**, the biggest outdoor and indoor market complex in all of Europe. Riga Central Market, which is partly comprised of five of the world's nine remaining Zeppelin hangars, celebrated its 80th birthday in 2010. As well as hundreds of outdoor market stalls Riga Central Market offers shoppers and curious visitors the opportunity to slowly explore its five gigantic **UNESCO-protected** Zeppelin hangars, which are each home to dedicated food pavilions offering delicious fresh produce. The Meat-, Fish-, Dairy-, Grocery- and Greengrocery pavilions are open seven days per week and, as well as offering the continent's biggest selection of natural organic produce, they are also a fascinating window on the lives of those living and working in today's Latvia.

... INTERNATIONAL CUISINE



Latvian cuisine is best enjoyed slowly with a glass of local beer or a soothing cup of herbal tea. But, if you are feeling homesick, or wish to try something new and different, Latvia's town and cities, and the capital **Riga** in particular, are home to an amazing array of restaurants offering international cuisine to suit every palette. The sweet, sour and spicy food from all four corners of the globe available in Latvia's international restaurants reflects the truly cosmopolitan nature of the millions of overseas visitors who make Latvia their holiday and short break destination of choice each year. As well as enjoying the very best of Latvian cuisine, come to Latvia to enjoy Mexican burritos, Armenian shashliks, Middle-Eastern falafel, Russian dumplings, Italian pizza, Indian curries and, of course, one of the most popular dishes of the moment – Japanese sushi.



ENJOY ...

Escape from it all and enjoy unique festivals, colourful seasonal celebrations and top international sporting events. In Latvia the visitor is encouraged to experience something new; something unique and unforgettable. And most of all, to enjoy it slowly.

... SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS



Latvians have always been in harmony with the passing of the seasons. As the Earth's seasonal cycle sees snowy winters turn into the bright fresh rebirth of Spring, and the warm white nights of midsummer slowly pass to give way to the autumn time of harvest, Latvians mark and appreciate each of these changes with traditional seasonal celebrations and colourful **city festivals**. Meteni marks the end of winter, while Latvia's traditional Easter, 'Lieldienas', when for the first time the day is longer than the night, is celebrated in much the same way as it has been for centuries. The most important seasonal event of all is the **midsummer celebration**, known as Ligo and Jani, when, it seems, the entire population sets off to light bonfires and enjoy traditional song, dance and food in the Latvian countryside on a night when women wear flowers in their hair and it never truly gets dark. Mikeli is the time to harvest and store for the winter, while **Christmas** is celebrated with atmospheric Christmas markets selling hearty food, mulled wine, and handmade textiles, linen, amber, jewellery and woodcrafts.

... UNUSUAL FESTIVALS



Latvia is quite unlike anywhere else you will have been before. Fittingly, unusual festivals complement the traditional centuries-old seasonal feasts that so set Latvia apart from other European nations. See Riga in a 'different light' during the annual **Staro Riga Festival of Light**, held each November, when the historic part of the city is bathed in unusual and imaginative patterns of light that give whole new perspectives to Riga's parks and historical monuments. Each season is characterised by unusual festivals such as the Cesis Medieval Festival in May, the **Riga Opera Festival** in June, July's fisherman and sea festivals and the unforgettable Sacred Music Festival in the autumn. As well as the Winter Ice Sculpture festival, some of the more unusual festivities include the Old Sports Car Racing, Sand Sculpture and Schlager Music festivals that run at various times of the year, while nobody should miss the truly unforgettable **Go Blonde festival**, held in May next to Riga's river Daugava, when you are invited to a day of unadulterated feminine fun at Europe's blondest party.

... SPORTS EVENTS



We all love sport, but Latvians hold a particular affection for both spectator and participation sport. In a country where the majority of the population is used to the outdoor life, Latvians embrace every outdoor sport imaginable such as beach volleyball, cross-country skiing, motor racing and fishing. Sport does not stop in deep winter. Latvia's biggest passion is for **ice hockey**. Supporters of the Latvian National Ice Hockey team are regarded as the most passionate in all of world ice hockey, and the nation's leading club side, Dinamo Riga, regularly plays to sold out crowds of 11,000, who excitedly pack inside the brand new state-of-the-art **Arena Riga**, a nation united, to watch the claret and whites compete in the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL). Latvian basketball and football teams also compete at the highest levels of their sports, both at the national and European club level, with supporters from foreign countries regularly coming to Latvia to cheer on their teams as they compete against their hospitable Latvian hosts.



RELAX ...

Relaxation is the key to a good life balance, ongoing health and a sense of well being. With its hundreds of kilometres of pristine white sand beaches, countless untouched nature reserves and world-class spa resorts, Latvia is the destination of choice for those who wish to truly unwind.

... ON WHITE SANDY BEACHES



In Latvia there is a beach for everyone. Relax and enjoy 530 kilometres of pristine **white sand beaches**, where the sea breeze is always fresh and the fragrant smell of pine forests never far off. Slow the pace of life right down, lie back and let the hours drift away on clean and well kept blue-flag beaches, as sea birds squawk overhead and the waves gently lap on the shoreline. Latvia's popular white sand beach resorts offer bright summer living with all-day beach bars, sandy volleyball courts and exciting water sports for all the family. Undeveloped. **Undiscovered**. Much of Latvia's coastline remains as it has been since time immemorial, untouched and subject only to the changing seasons. Discover deserted lonely beaches, peaceful and secluded, where the crashing of the waves is the sole distraction from your silent reflection, and only the upturned hulls of wooden fishing boats and the glistening lantern rooms of old lighthouses are there to remind you of man's presence. Enjoy a wild fish picnic on the deserted **Baltic Sea coast** or sit and watch children playing on the shores of the Gulf of Riga.

... IN WILD NATURE



Escape the mundane and return to wild nature in a land where the seasons and the elements rule. With 4 national parks, 1 biosphere reserve, 4 nature reserves and an incredible 42 nature parks Latvia offers an alternative to the busy industrialised world and the incessant congestion and chaos of the urban nine to five. 42% of this country is covered by forests of Birch, coniferous Norway Spruce and Scots Pine, while hundreds of kilometres of wild coastline remain untouched and undeveloped. Latvia is truly blessed by wild nature and a **natural harmony**, where more wild wolves roam than in all of north western Europe and the biggest beaver population on the continent has taken up residence. More than 200 different bird species nest in Latvia, including the indomitable stork, while nature lovers can immerse themselves in the deep countryside and discover elk, moose, wild boar, red deer and the beautiful wild lynx.

... WITH SPA



Escape the demands of daily life. Pamper your body with a variety of **wellness and beauty treatments** and return home invigorated, refreshed, full of strength and renewed self confidence. Traditionally, spa treatments were the domain of only the rich but today the spa industry is one of the fastest growing leisure sectors in the world, and spa treatments are now a luxury we can all enjoy. Latvia has spa traditions stretching back to the eighteenth century, when visitors first came to its resorts to savour its white sand beaches, the fresh pine-filled air and the region's premier spa facilities. In 2010 **Jurmala** was awarded the coveted European Destination of Excellence Award (EDEN) for Aquatic Sustainable Tourism and it, along with Riga and Latvia's other spa resorts, offer a truly modern spa experience built on traditional principles and high levels of treatment and service. Relax and enjoy soothing massages, indulgent facials, slimming body wraps, and health-boosting medical spa treatments. Afterwards dine in top class restaurants and stroll along white quartz sand beaches before retiring for the evening to your luxury spa hotel.



EXPERIENCE ...

Revel in the slow, gradual changing of the seasons, savouring the transformation from deep winter into the bright, freshness of spring time and the atmospheric white nights of midsummer. Discover previously unknown talents and experience something truly extraordinary as you immerse yourself in the mysteries of the Latvian countryside.

... ALL FOUR SEASONS



Experience four distinct seasons. No matter when you visit Latvia the great changes in its climate make it feel like a strangely familiar but otherwise completely different place from other times of the year.

Spring is a time of revival and optimism, when flowers begin to blossom and the sound of birdsong fills the air. As the winter snows finally disappear it is the perfect time for boating on the rapids of flooded rivers, or to explore the countryside on horseback.

Summers are spent lazing on white sand beaches and socialising on warm white nights in open-air beer tents. Summer also allows us to enjoy a myriad of outdoor activities including cycling, golf, and exciting water sports. September and October in Latvia are marked by dramatic **autumn** colours and a desire to explore Latvia's endless forests and go off in search of mushrooms and ripened cranberries. As the snow and ice of **winter** slowly begin to consume the landscape, treat yourself to weekend escapes at manor houses and spa hotels, discover Riga's atmospheric candlelit bars and restaurants, and try out the endless winter sports Latvia is so famous for including skiing, ice skating, ice fishing and bobsleigh. For Latvia truly is a land of four seasons.

... DISCOVER YOUR TALENT



Each of us has talents we are unaware of. It is often only through experimentation or sheer luck that we discover these previously hidden skills. Come to Latvia and experience something new; discover and learn new talents that you can nurture and develop when you return home. Latvia has craftsmen's open houses and open farms throughout its four regions as well as dedicated **arts and crafts centres** where you can try out and learn a new skill for the first time. Glass blowing and stone masonry, bee-keeping and ceramics are just some of the crafts and trades that you can try for the first time during a visit here. Why not create your own clay pot in Latgale? Make a fishing net in Kurzeme? Milk a cow in Zemgale? Or learn to bake bread in Vidzeme? There is certainly no harm in trying! Life is to be experienced and in Latvia the opportunity awaits you to try out something new for the first time.

... SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY



Latvia is a land where the extraordinary is common place. A country where its people embrace the unusual and celebrate the remarkable. From the unique language and culture of its ancient Liv people to its unparalleled nature and wildlife, where wild wolves still roam, Latvia has something remarkable to offer all visitors. Hidden away deep in the Latvian countryside are secret reminders of **Latvia's Soviet past**. In previously out of bounds underground nuclear bunkers, deserted former missile silos and in the inconspicuous looking buildings that once kept a million different secrets, the mysteries of the Cold War are waiting to be uncovered and discovered by you. Indulge yourself in the unique and enjoy an unforgettable experience that will stay with you long after you have left Latvia and returned home to the more ordinary.

Territory	64.589 km ² - 2 times bigger than Belgium
Population	2.274.700 inhabitants - just as many as in Paris
Population density	36/km ² - one of the smallest in Europe
Capital city	Riga - the biggest city in the Baltic States with the Historic Centre listed by UNESCO
Time zone	GMT+2, +3 (in summer)
Climate	4 distinctive seasons
Forests	45% of the territory covered with rich flora
Nature protection	633 protected nature areas, 336 included in "Natura 2000"
Coast	500 km of white sandy beaches

FACTS ABOUT LATVIA ...





MORE INFORMATION ...

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