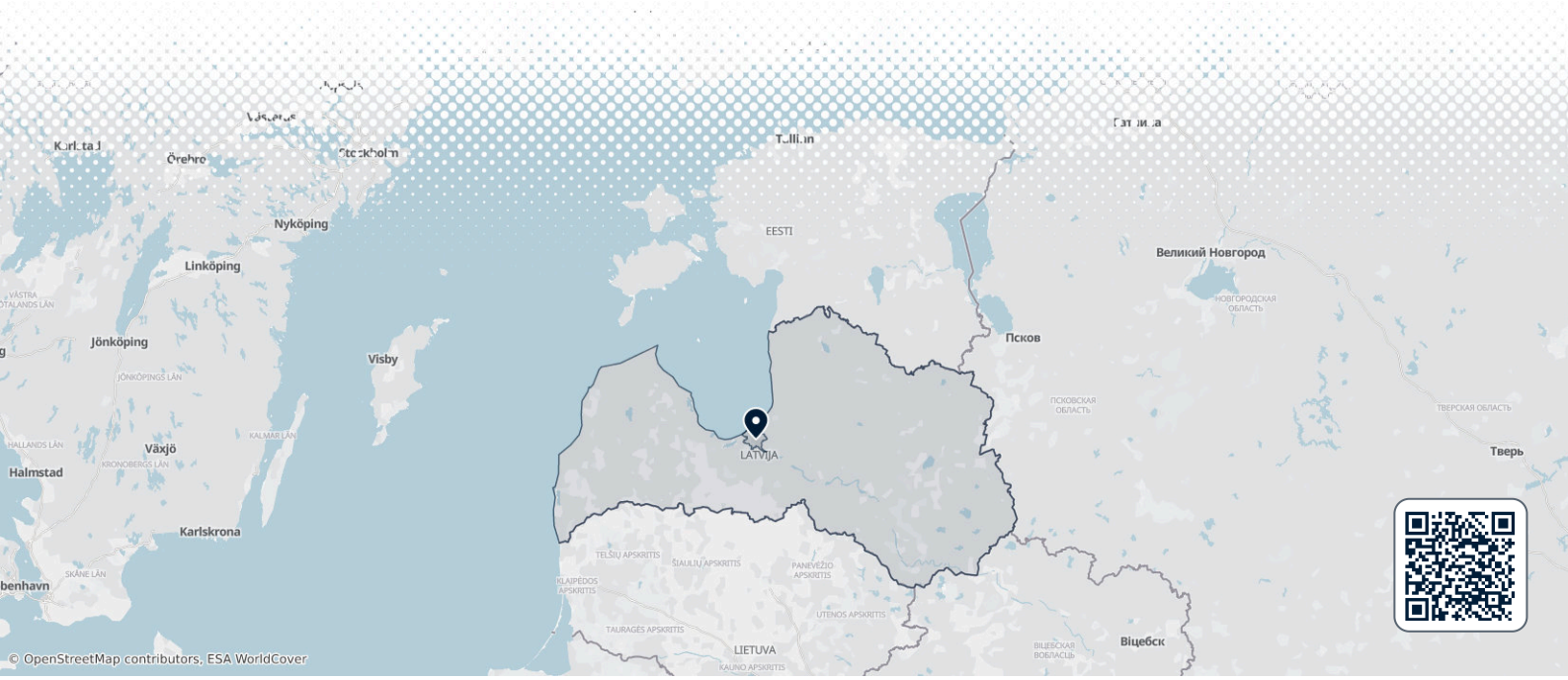


Riga

Latvia

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Riga is Latvia's capital and the country's largest city, spread along the banks of the Daugava River a few kilometers from the Gulf of Riga. Its old town packs medieval church spires, Hanseatic merchant houses, and the largest collection of Art Nouveau buildings in Europe into a compact, walkable core. Founded over 800 years ago as a Hanseatic trading center, Riga still combines that mix of commerce and craft with a lively modern food and design scene.

Riga suits travelers who want a European capital that feels manageable in a long weekend: enough history and architecture to fill several days, but small enough to cover mostly on foot. It also works well as a base for short trips into the forests, rivers, and small towns of the surrounding countryside.

When to visit

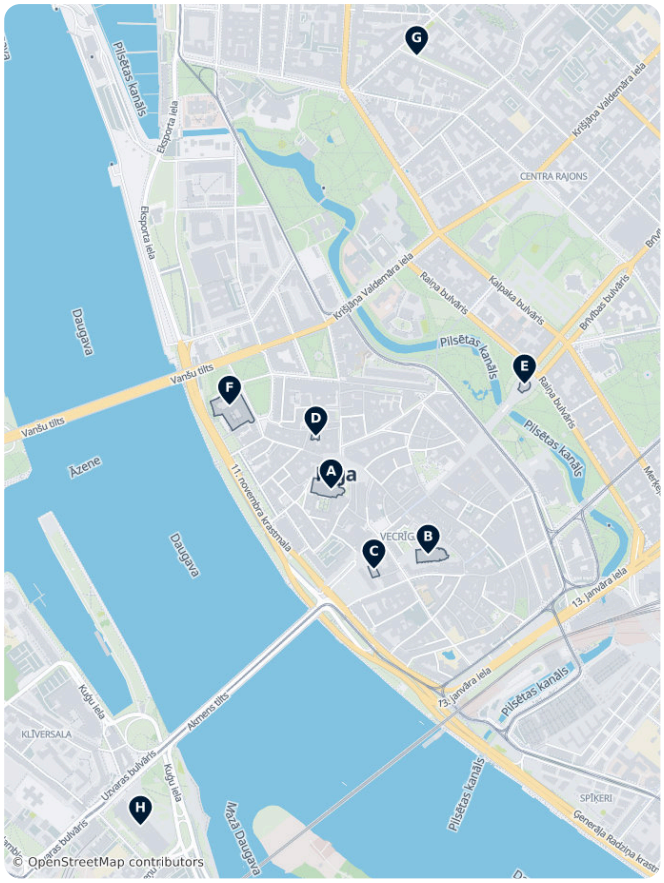
Late spring through early autumn is the most pleasant time to visit, with long daylight hours and mild temperatures; winters are cold and dark but bring Christmas markets and ice skating in the old town. Plan around **Jāņi**, Latvia's Midsummer festival on 23–24 June, when the whole country lights bonfires, sings, and celebrates outdoors — Riga empties out a little as locals head to the countryside, but the city's own celebrations are still worth catching.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	-2° / 4° Feels like -9°	-7° / -18°	15 rainy days · Dry air
February	Poor Poor for sightseeing	-2° / 4° Feels like -8°	-7° / -19°	12 rainy days · Dry air
March	Poor Poor for sightseeing	3° / 10° Feels like -3°	-4° / -12°	Dry air
April	Poor Poor for sightseeing	10° / 18° Feels like 5°	2° / -3°	Dry air
May	Good Good for sightseeing	16° / 23° Feels like 12°	7° / 1°	Dry air
June	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 26°	11° / 7°	14 rainy days · Dry air
July	Good Good for sightseeing	22° / 27°	14° / 11°	16 rainy days
August	Good Good for sightseeing	21° / 26°	14° / 10°	15 rainy days
September	Good Good for sightseeing	17° / 23° Feels like 14°	10° / 5°	Dry air
October	Poor Poor for sightseeing	10° / 16° Feels like 5°	5° / -1°	15 rainy days · Dry air
November	Poor Poor for sightseeing	4° / 10° Feels like -2°	1° / -7°	15 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	0° / 6° Feels like -7°	-4° / -14°	16 rainy days · Dry air

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Summer days regularly reach the low-to-mid 20s °C, while winter afternoons often stay below freezing with several hours of snow cover.

Top sights



A Riga Cathedral anchors the old town's main square; despite its name, the building has no dome, but its Lutheran and Catholic history and a huge 19th-century organ inside still make it one of the old town's biggest draws.

Climb the tower of B St. Peter's Church for one of the best views over the old town's red rooftops.

C House of the Black Heads is a lavish 14th-century guild hall, painstakingly rebuilt after wartime destruction; its ornate façade is one of the most photographed spots in the city.

D Three Brothers is a row of three adjoining houses spanning several centuries of architecture, from a plain Gothic front to a Baroque neighbor — a quick lesson in how the old town evolved.

E Freedom Monument honors soldiers who died in Latvia's War of Independence and remains the city's most important gathering point on national holidays.

F Riga Castle, on the bank of the Daugava, has served as the seat of Latvia's president since the country regained independence.

Walk along G Alberta iela to see the dense concentration of Art Nouveau facades that helped earn Riga its UNESCO listing — many designed by the architect *Mikhail Eisenstein*.

H National Library of Latvia, nicknamed the "Castle of Light," is a striking glass-and-steel landmark across the river, built to hold the nation's books and, symbolically, its culture.

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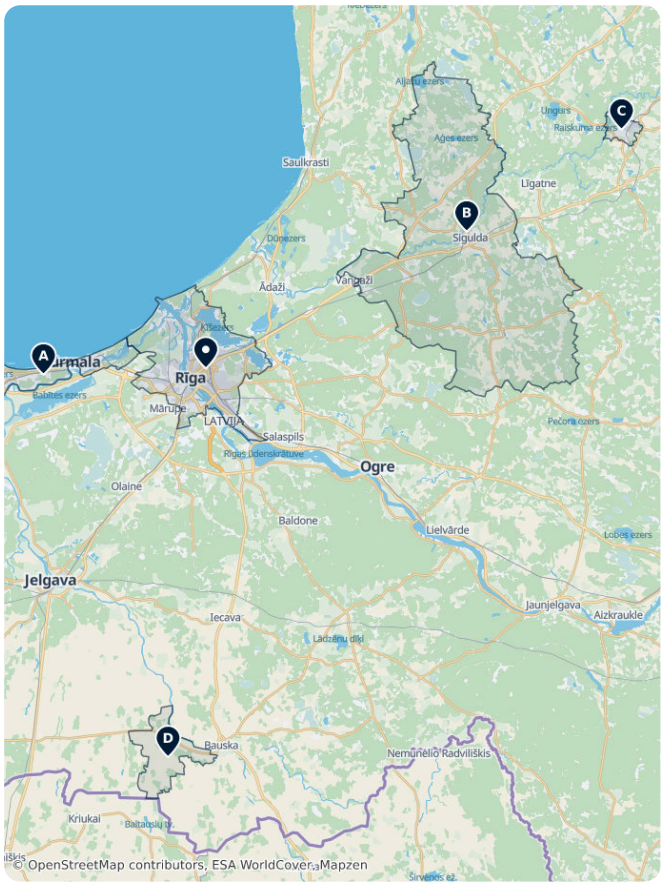
What to experience

A few things worth doing rather than just seeing:

- Take a boat trip along the historic city canal that loops around the old town through Bastejkalns park — a relaxed way to see the city from the water, running spring through autumn.
- Catch sunset from the observation deck of Riga TV Tower, the tallest tower in the European Union.
- Time your visit to the top of the hour at Freedom Monument to watch the changing of the honor guard.
- In December, browse the Christmas market and skate on the rink in Cathedral Square, right beside Riga Cathedral.

Day trips

Several worthwhile destinations sit within a couple of hours of Riga by train, bus, or car.



- A Jurmala — about 30 minutes by train. A strip of seaside resort towns with a long sandy beach, 19th-century wooden villas, and spa hotels; also the gateway to the boardwalks and bogs of Ķemeri National Park.
- B Sigulda — about 1 hour by train. The heart of the Gauja River valley, with hiking trails, a cable car over the gorge, and Turaida Castle, a red-brick medieval castle with sweeping valley views.
- C Cēsis — about 1.5 hours by train or car. A small medieval town with a well-preserved castle ruin and cobbled streets, quieter and less visited than Sigulda.
- Rundāle Palace, near D Rundāle — about 1.5 hours by car or direct bus (longer with a transfer). Latvia's grandest Baroque palace, designed by the same architect as the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, with formal gardens best seen in summer.

Where to explore

Riga makes a good base for exploring the rest of Latvia, most of which is within a couple of hours by public transport.

- **Coast**: Jurmala is Latvia's classic beach getaway, a short hop from the capital.
- **Nature and castles**: Sigulda anchors the Gauja River valley, dotted with medieval castles and hiking trails.
- **Historic towns**: Cēsis is one of the best-preserved small towns in the country, built around its own castle ruins.

Getting there

- **By air**: Riga International Airport (RIX) is the main gateway to the Baltics, about 10 km southwest of the center. Bus 22 runs to downtown in about 30 minutes; a taxi or ride-hailing app takes about 20 minutes.
- **By train**: Riga Central Station serves regional trains to Jurmala, Sigulda, and Cēsis, plus a growing international network as the Rail Baltica line is built out.
- **By bus**: The Riga International Coach Terminal, next to the Central Market, has long-distance coaches to Tallinn, Vilnius, Warsaw, and other regional cities — often faster and cheaper than the train for cross-border trips.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: An extensive network of trams, trolleybuses, and buses covers the whole city. Buy tickets through the Rīgas Satiksme mobile app, from ticket machines, or from kiosks. Rīgas Satiksme
- **Taxi and ride-hailing**: Bolt is widely used and generally cheaper and more reliable than hailing a cab on the street.
- **On foot**: The old town and city center are compact and easy to explore on foot; cycling is workable along the river and in parks but less developed than in some other European capitals.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old town and city center are flat and compact, with most sights within a 15-20 minute walk of each other.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Riga has bike paths along the river and through parks, plus bike-share options, but cycling infrastructure is less extensive than in some other European capitals.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: No for the city itself — the old town is largely pedestrian and best explored on foot. A car becomes useful for day trips to Sigulda, Cēsis, or Rundāle, where public transport runs less frequently.
- **Parking**: Paid zones cover most of the center; look for marked spaces and pay by app or at a nearby machine. Park-and-ride lots near outer tram stops are a cheaper option if you're just passing through.
- **Restrictions**: Much of the old town is closed to general traffic or accessible only for deliveries and residents; check signage before driving in.

Food & drink

Riga's food scene mixes hearty Latvian classics with a growing crop of modern Nordic-influenced restaurants. Look for smoked fish, rye bread, and seasonal foraged ingredients like mushrooms and berries on menus across the city.

For a single stop that captures the city's food culture, head to the Central Market in the old Zeppelin hangars beside Riga Central Station — one of the largest market complexes in Europe, and part of the UNESCO-listed historic center. Stalls sell everything from smoked fish and cheese to fresh produce, and it's as much a local institution as a tourist stop.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Smoked Fish · Kūpināta zivs
Smoked sprats, herring, or eel are a Baltic coast staple, often eaten with rye bread.

DINNER

Grey Peas with Bacon · Pelēkie zirņi ar speķi
Grey peas stewed with fried bacon and onion, a hearty traditional winter dish.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Dark Rye Bread · Rupjmaize
Dense, slightly sour dark rye bread that anchors most Latvian meals and even appears in desserts.

Bacon Pastries · Speķa pīrāgi
Small yeasted pastries filled with chopped bacon and onion, a classic snack and party food.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Curd Cheese Snack · Biezpiena sieriņi
Sweet glazed curd-cheese bars, a popular everyday treat similar to Estonia's kohuke.

DRINKS

Riga Black Balsam · Rīgas Melnais Balzāms
A dark, bitter herbal liqueur made to a centuries-old recipe, often mixed with coffee or blackcurrant juice.

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Safety & health

Riga is a safe city for travelers by European standards. The most common issues are pickpocketing in crowded tourist areas and overcharging at unlicensed taxis or bars near the old town's nightlife strip — stick to licensed ride-hailing apps and check bar menus before ordering.

History

Riga was founded in 1201 by the German bishop *Albert of Buxhoeveden*, who used it as a base to Christianize the region and quickly turned it into a Hanseatic League trading hub. Wealth from that trade built the guild halls and churches — including House of the Black Heads and Riga Cathedral — that still define the old town today.

Centuries of Swedish, then Russian imperial rule followed, interrupted by a 19th-century national awakening that gave Riga its Art Nouveau boom, visible along Alberta iela. Latvia declared independence in 1918, was occupied by Soviet and Nazi forces during World War II, and spent nearly five decades under Soviet control before peacefully regaining independence in 1991 — a period locals still refer to as the Singing Revolution, after the mass gatherings where people sang banned national songs in defiance. Freedom Monument became the symbolic rallying point during that struggle and remains one today.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Latvia at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



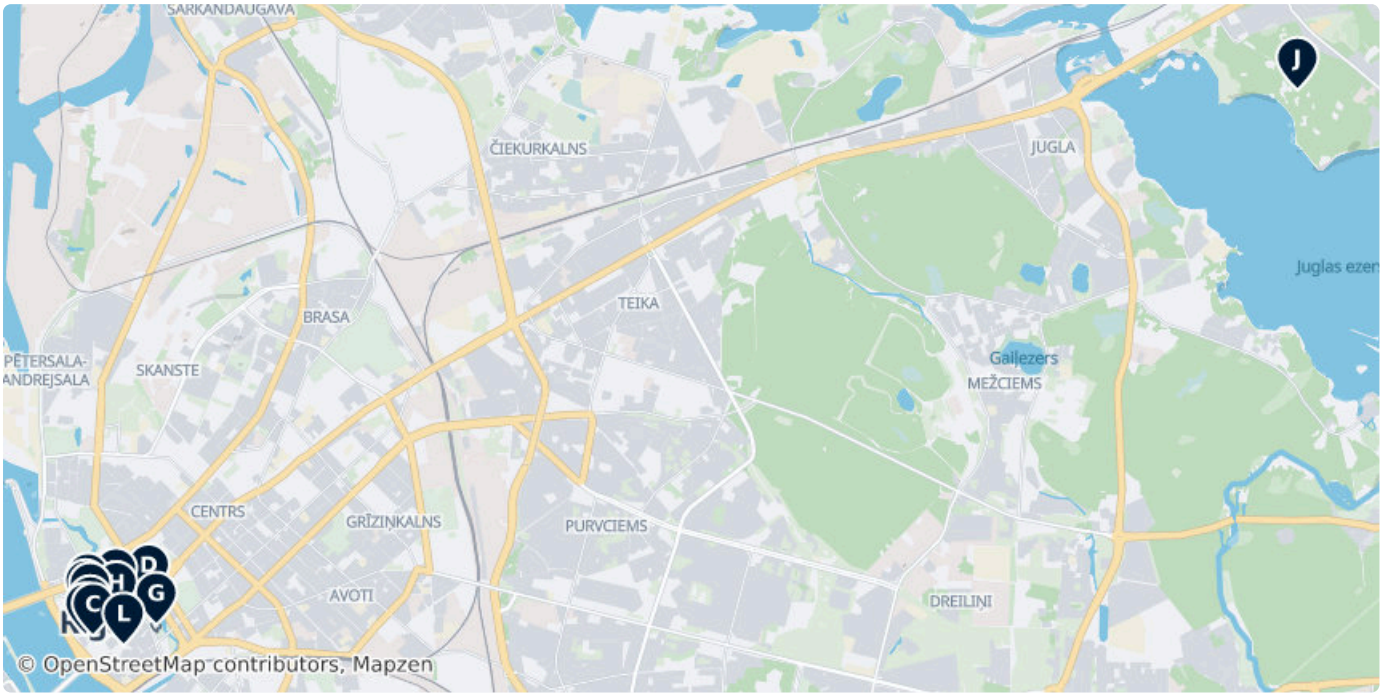
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Latvian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Riga's Essential Highlights

Riga’s historical landscape is defined by its medieval Old Town and distinctive Art Nouveau architecture. This selection covers the city’s major religious sites, including the 13th-century Riga Cathedral and St. James's Cathedral, alongside secular landmarks like the Three Brothers housing complex and the Cat House. Cultural highlights include the Latvian National Opera and the Riga Bourse art museum, while the Freedom Monument and Powder Tower mark significant chapters in Latvia's military and independence history.





A Riga Cathedral

Although known as the Dome Cathedral, there is no dome. Still, it is the most impressive church in the city.

Herdera laukums 6, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.94905, 24.10497)

doms.lv, +371 6722 7573



B Three Brothers

The Three Brothers is a building complex consisting of three houses, situated in Riga, Latvia.

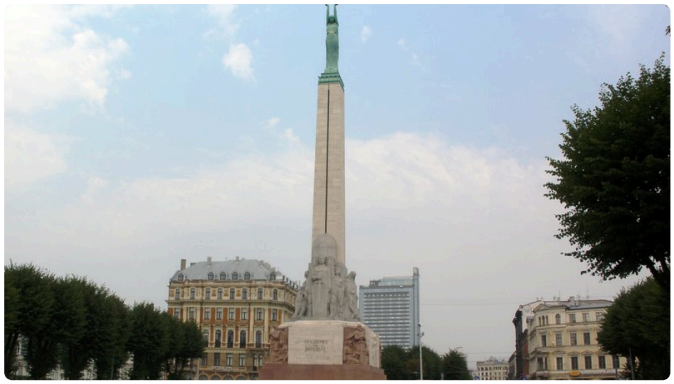
Mazā Pils iela 19, LV-1050 Riga, Latvia (56.95030, 24.10431)



C Jauniela

Riga's most picturesque street surrounded by old colourful buildings in the very heart of the city. A must-see.

Jauniela, LV-1050 Riga, Latvia (56.94847, 24.10536)



D Freedom Monument

The Freedom Monument is a monument located in Riga, Latvia, honouring soldiers killed during the Latvian War of Independence.

Brīvības iela, LV-1050, Riga, Latvia (56.95154, 24.11336)



E Powder Tower

The Powder Tower is situated in Riga, Latvia, and originally a part of the defensive system of the town.

Smilšu iela 20, LV-1050 Riga, Latvia (56.95122, 24.10868)



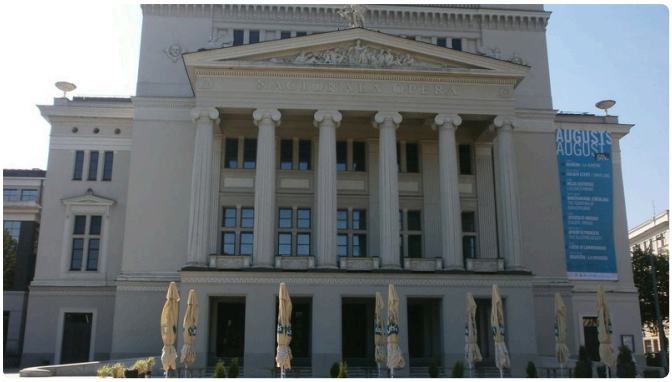
F Art Museum "Riga Bourse"

Art Museum Riga Bourse is a museum in Riga, Latvia. It was established in 1920 and contains the most extensive collection of world art in...

Doma laukums 6, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.95008, 24.10496)

Tu–Th	10:00–18:00
Fr	10:00–20:00
Sa–Su	10:00–18:00

rigasbirza.lv, +371 67 223434



G Latvian National Opera

The Latvian National Opera and Ballet is an opera house and opera company at Aspazijas boulevard 3 in Riga.

Aspazijas bulvāris 3, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.94933, 24.11443)

opera.lv, +371 67 073777



H Cat House

The Cat House is a building situated at 10 Meistaru iela in the old town of Riga, the capital of Latvia.

Meistaru iela 10, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.95015, 24.10872)



I St. James's Cathedral

St James's Cathedral is the Roman Catholic cathedral of Riga in Latvia. The cathedral is dedicated to Saint James the Greater.

Jēkaba iela 9, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.95083, 24.10464)

+371 67 326 419



J Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum

The Ethnographic Open-Air Museum of Latvia is an open-air museum located just outside Riga, the capital of Latvia, on the lightly wooded...

1024, Latvia (56.99112, 24.27813)

Mo–Su 10:00–20:00

brivdabasmuzejs.lv, +371 67994106



K Museum of the history of Riga and navigation

Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation is housed by the Riga Dom Cathedral ensemble in the heart of the Old Riga, Latvia.

Palasta iela 4, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.94850, 24.10431)

May-Sep Mo–Su	10:00–17:00
Oct-Apr We–Su	11:00–17:00

rigamuz.lv, + 371 67 356676



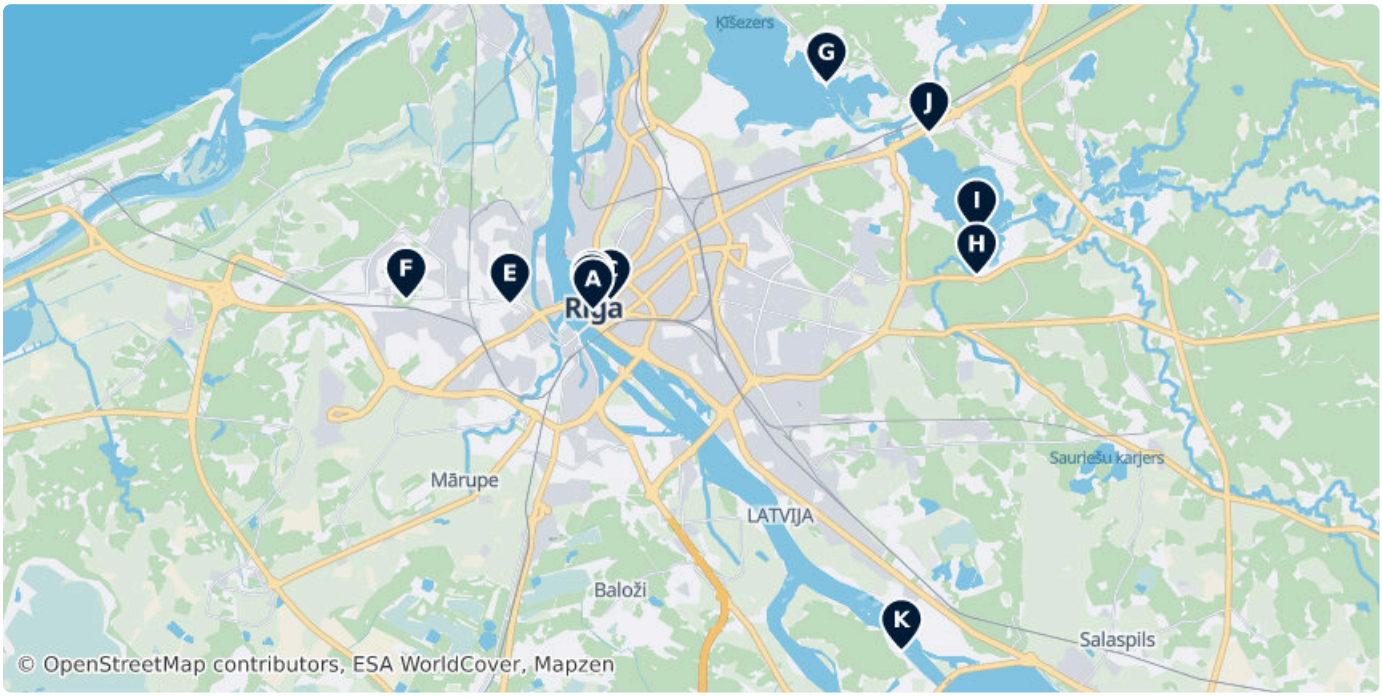
L Bremen Town Musicians

A bronze sculpture gifted by the city of Bremen in 1990, depicting the donkey, dog, cat, and rooster from the Brothers Grimm fairy tale. It is located in the heart of the Old Town near St. Peter's Church.

20 Skārņu iela, Rīga 1050, Latvia (56.94772, 24.10977)

Historic Sites of Latvia

This collection spans centuries of Latvian history, featuring medieval landmarks like the Riga Cathedral and the Three Brothers dwelling complex. It includes significant national monuments, such as the Freedom Monument, alongside 19th-century wooden manor houses like Hāmaņa and Anniņmuiža. The list also highlights archaeological sites, including the stone ruins of Alt-Dole castle and ancient hillforts, providing a concise overview of the region's architectural evolution from medieval fortifications to neo-renaissance estates.





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doms.lv, +371 6722 7573



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Brīvības iela, LV-1050, Riga, Latvia (56.95154, 24.11336)



D House of the Livonian Noble Corporation

The House of the Livonian Noble Corporation is a historical building in Riga, Latvia, constructed to house the Landtag of the Livonian...

Klostera iela, Riga, LV-1010, Latvia (56.95121, 24.10464)



E Hāmaņa muiža

19th-century wooden manor house in the Āgenskalns neighborhood, representing Riga's traditional suburban architecture.

(56.95053, 24.06544)

F Anniņmuiža

Neo-Renaissance manor house from the 19th century, situated within a historic park in the Imanta district.

(56.95180, 24.01604)

G Bulduru pilskalns

Ancient hillfort and fortification site situated near the Lielupe river.

1024, Latvia (57.00781, 24.21606)

H Brekšu muiža

Late 19th-century manor house and estate located on the eastern outskirts of the city.

(56.95814, 24.28750)

I Sudrabkalns

Memorial site honoring the 6th Riga Infantry Regiment for their defense of the city during the 1919 War of Independence.

(56.96943, 24.28757)

J Bonaventura muiža

19th-century manor house complex located near the shores of Lake Jugla.

(56.99496, 24.26485)

Ruins of Alt-Dole castle (AD 1226)

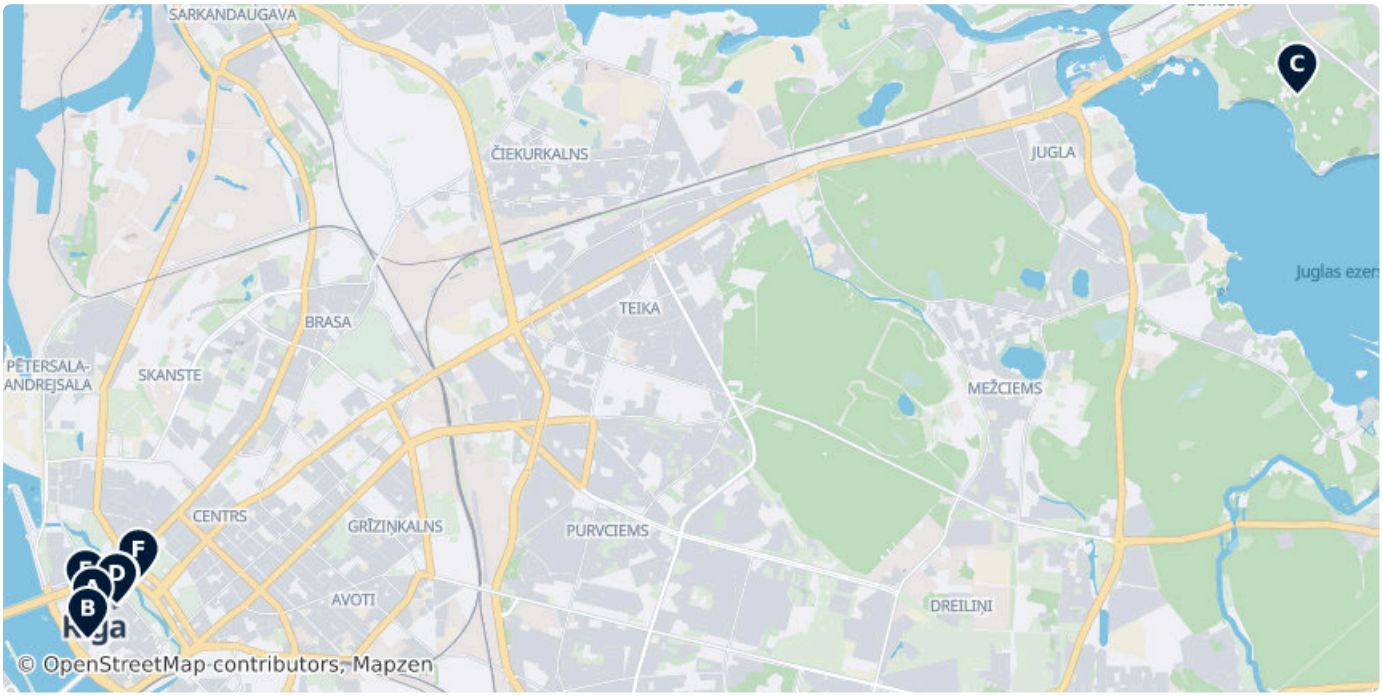
Archaeological site featuring stone foundations of a 13th-century castle built by the Archbishop of Riga.

2121, Latvia (56.86054, 24.25175)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

Riga Museums and Galleries

Riga's cultural landscape spans from the medieval fortifications of the Powder Tower to the 19th-century Venetian Renaissance architecture of the Riga Bourse. The collection includes the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation, located within the 13th-century Riga Cathedral ensemble, and the Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum, which preserves over 100 historic timber buildings. Modern and classic art are showcased in the Arsenāls Exhibition Hall, while the Museum of the Occupation documents the nation's history under foreign rule between 1940 and 1991.





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Tu–Th	10:00–18:00
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Sa–Su	10:00–18:00

rigasbirza.lv, +371 67 223434



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Palasta iela 4, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.94850, 24.10431)

May-Sep Mo–Su	10:00–17:00
Oct-Apr We–Su	11:00–17:00

rigamuz.lv, + 371 67 356676



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1024, Latvia (56.99112, 24.27813)

Mo–Su 10:00–20:00

brivdabasmuzejs.lv, +371 67994106



D Latvian War Museum

The Latvian War Museum is a military museum in Riga, the capital of Latvia.

Smilšu iela 20, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.95121, 24.10847)

Apr-Oct Mo–Su 10:00–18:00
Nov-Mar Mo–Su 10:00–17:00

karamuzejs.lv, +371 67 223743



E Arsenāls Exhibition Hall

Latvia's leading museum in terms of both classic and modern art. A must-see not only for art enthusiasts.

Torņa iela 1, LV-1050 Rīga, LV (56.95148, 24.10401)

Mo–Su Closed

lnmm.lv, +371 67 357527

F Occupation Museum of Latvia

This museum documents the history of Latvia during the Soviet and Nazi occupations from 1940 to 1991. It features exhibits on the Holocaust, deportations to the Gulag, and the national resistance movement, housed in a distinctive modernist building in Old Riga.

Raiņa bulvāris, Riga, LV-1010, Latvia (56.95310, 24.11157)

Mo–Su 11:00–18:00

okupacijasmuzejs.lv, +371 67 212 715



Powder Tower

The Powder Tower is situated in Riga, Latvia, and originally a part of the defensive system of the town.

Smilšu iela 20, LV-1050 Riga, Latvia (56.95122, 24.10868)

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