

Best sights of



Riga



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01 — Riga Castle

📍 Pils iela 1/3

In 1201, a new city was founded on the banks of the Daugava River - Riga. A little over a hundred years later, the Livonian Order, a branch of the Teutonic Order, began building its residence on this site. Over the centuries, the castle has survived various rulers and wars and been destroyed several times but was always rebuilt. Since 1922, Riga Castle is the residence of the President of Latvia, except for 50 years during Soviet rule, when the Pioneer Palace was established on its premises. The castle is currently under careful renovation to retrieve its former glory. The flag of the Republic of Latvia always flies above the Holy Spirit Tower, as well as the flag of the President if the President is present at the time.



02 — The Three Brothers

📍 Mazā Pils
iela 17, 19, 21

The name of group of historical residential buildings, The Three Brothers, is very similar to the Three Sisters of Tallinn – former warehouse buildings in the Old Towns of both cities. This is the oldest residential building complex in Riga. Each building was constructed in a different century, the oldest of them, or the „older brother” with Gothic niches and steps, was built around 1490. The buildings currently house the Museum of Architecture and it is possible to visit the exhibition hall.



03 — Dome Square

The square was created amid densely built Old Riga when several old buildings were demolished in the 1930s. On the edge of the square is the impressive Riga Cathedral, which's construction began around 1211. The cathedral building acquired its current shape over the centuries, combining Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque and Art Nouveau features. The cathedral is notable for its organ, built in 1884. It is an example of the highest achievements of organ building in the late Romanticism period, for which it is difficult to find an equivalent elsewhere in Europe. The grandiose instrument has four manuals or keyboards, 124 registers and 6,718 wooden and metal pipes of different sizes. World-class musicians perform organ concerts in the cathedral regularly.



04 — Riga Bourse Art Museum

📍 Doma laukums 6

The Riga Bourse Art Museum is one of the city's most popular museums. It has a special aura created by the luxurious, historical interior and the harmony of high-quality classical works of art. The museum building was built in the middle of the 19th century, imitating the architectural forms of Venetian Renaissance-era palazzos, symbolizing wealth and abundance. The museum has six permanent exhibitions: Antique Art Cabinet, Egyptian Cabinet, European and Asian Art Galleries, Silver Cabinet, Nicholas Roerich Painting Gallery. In addition, the museum currently hosts regular international exhibition projects and cultural and artistic events, including educational programs and creative workshops.



05 — Riga Museum of History and Navigation

📍 Palasta iela 4

The museum, whose origins can be traced back to 1773, is the oldest public museum in Latvia and one of the oldest in Europe. The museum is part of the Riga Cathedral ensemble (constructed between the 13th-20th centuries), which consists of the church, a Gothic cross-vaulted gallery cloister and a museum, the pride of which is the 18th-century Classicist-style Column Hall, built on the site of the former monastery. In the 16 halls of the museum's exposition, visitors can follow the story of the city of Riga over more than 800 years, allowing them to look at the history and traditions of shipping in the town.



06 — Powder Tower

📍 Smilšu iela 20

The tower's history dates back to 1330, and it is the only free-standing tower out of 28 towers of what was once the fortification wall of Riga. It was originally called the Sand Tower, which probably originated from the sandhills opposite the tower. It got its current name in the 16th century when gunpowder was allegedly stored there or from unbearable powder smoke when all 11 cannons fired simultaneously. The Latvian War Museum resides in the tower since 1919, while in 1937, an additional building was added to it, where most of the exposition is currently located.



07 — Freedom Monument

The Freedom Monument symbolizes Latvia's independence, freedom, and national unity, unveiled on November 18, 1935. The monument was built entirely through donations from the people. During the independence of the first republic, the response of the people of Latvia was terrific. In total, about 3 million lats were donated. The monument is dedicated to the soldiers who died in the battles for Latvia's independence, and its composition consists of thirteen groups of sculptures and bas-reliefs depicting symbols of Latvia's history and culture.



08 — Līvu Square

Līvu Square was created after the Second World War at the meeting point of eight streets, and it is surrounded by an attractive complex of 18th-century residential buildings. Next to the square is the Great Guild (brotherhood of merchants) and the Small Guild (brotherhood of craftsmen), built in the second half of the 19th century in the luxurious Tudor style, as well as the oldest Russian drama theater outside of Russia - Mikhail Chekhov's Riga Russian Theater. In the middle of the square, both flower beds and the pavement have been created in a wavy pattern, thus symbolizing the Rīdzene River, which used to flow here until the 18th century. The name of the city of Riga comes from the name of the Rīdzene River.



09 — House of the Blackheads

📍 Rātslaukums 7

The House of the Blackheads was built in 1334 as a meeting place for various public organizations in Riga, and at that time, it was the most luxurious and prestigious building in the entire city. The Blackheads, an association of young, unmarried merchants, goldsmiths, and ship captains, became the tenants of this building at the end of the 15th century. Unfortunately, the building was destroyed during the Second World War, but in 1999 the House of the Blackheads was rebuilt and regained its former glory. Today, a visit to the building is a journey through the centuries, including the building's architecturally glorious façade, newly built halls, and banquet rooms, as well as the preserved historic cellars of the original building.



10 — Town Hall Square

Town Hall Square was the leading trading site in Riga for many centuries. During the Second World War, the square and its historic buildings were destroyed, but many historic buildings and other objects have been completely restored today. The central building of the court – the Town Hall – was rebuilt in 2003 and currently houses the Riga City Council. In the middle of the square is a statue of St. Roland, which symbolizes justice and the city's independence. Overlooking the Daugava, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia also sits on Town Hall Square. Founded in 1993, the museum tells the story and fate of the Latvian state, its people, and its land during successive occupations by various powers from 1940 to 1991.





11 — St Peter's Church

Reformācijas laukums 1

St. Peter's Church was first mentioned in writings in 1209. In the 15th century, the church was significantly expanded, acquiring a distinct Gothic appearance. One of the symbols of Riga is the church's pointed baroque tower, which has suffered several times over the centuries, especially from lightning - the tower of St. Peter's Church has been struck by lightning six times. Until the Second World War, the tower of St. Peter's Church was the tallest wooden tower in Europe. During World War II, the church burned down, so it was rebuilt. When the last reconstruction works were completed in 1973, an elevator was installed in the church tower, which takes visitors to a panoramic platform, which offers a beautiful view of the red roofs of the Old Town and the Daugava River.



12 — Convent Courtyard

The Convent Courtyard is located in the oldest part of the city. Initially, the castle of Order the Brothers of the Sword was situated in this place. The castle was built in the 13th century but was destroyed at the end of the same century. The name of the Convent Courtyard comes from the Convent of the Holy Spirit, which settled here in the 14th century. Today, the Riga Porcelain Museum is located in the Convent Courtyard, where visitors can learn about Riga's history of porcelain production. The Museum of Decorative Arts and Design resides on the Skārņu Street side of the courtyard. Its exposition reflects the work of Latvia's leading decorative art and design artists.



13 — St John's Courtyard

The name of St. John's Courtyard comes from the nearby St. John's Church in Old Riga. In the courtyard of this former Dominican monastery, you can see a part of the Riga fortification wall, which had been on average 9 meters high and 1.30 meters wide over the centuries. This part of the fortification wall was first uncovered in 1937 when the building attached to it was demolished, and one fragment of the wall was later reconstructed. The adjacent St. John's Church was built at the beginning of the 16th century, with a luxurious Gothic stepped pedestal facing the Convent Courtyard, while the church premises have decorations with elegant net vaults. At the end of the 16th century, St. John's Church was expanded with a new altar extension.



14 — Latvian National Opera

Aspazijas bulvāris 3

Next to the city canal is the opera house, the pride of Latvian music and cultural life. The building was erected in 1863 as the Riga German Theater. The impressive edifice reflects the traditional European idea of the first half of the 19th century for the image of a theater building as a temple of art. The opera hall has excellent acoustics, which allows the audience to enjoy world-class opera and ballet performances, and various concerts. The Latvian National Opera and Ballet honors the traditional values of classical and romantic opera and ballet, but it is also no stranger to contemporary forms of performing arts.



15 — Art Nouveau

📍 Alberta, Elizabetes iela

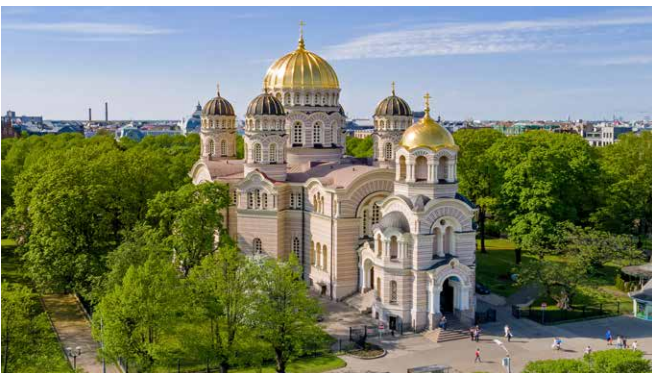
The newborn art style that permeated Europe at the beginning of the 20th century became especially widespread and expressive in Riga. The period from 1898 to 1915 in Riga can be called the Art Nouveau period. The development of Art Nouveau in Riga coincided with a time of economic prosperity unprecedented in the city's history. During the Art Nouveau period, about a third of the buildings in the center of Riga were constructed in this style, thus making the city the main Art Nouveau destination in Europe. Many of the brightest examples of these buildings are located in the area of Elizabetes and Alberta streets, but spectacular buildings can also be found in many other areas in the center of Riga. The most famous architects of this style in Latvia were Konstantīns Pēkšēns, Mihails Eizenšteins, and Eižens Laube.



16 — Latvian National Museum of Art

📍 Jāņa Rozentāla laukums 1

The museum was built in 1905, and it is the first building in the Baltics created primarily as an art museum. The museum's exposition provides a significant insight into the history of Latvian art from the middle of the 18th century to the present day, mainly reflecting the development of art throughout the 20th century. The museum's collection comprises works of more than 52,000 painters and sculptors from Latvia, the Baltics, and Russia. In 2016, extensive restoration process and construction of an underground extension took place. The museum also operates as a cultural and educational center, hosting regular art exhibitions, educational activities, and cultural events.



17 — Cathedral of the Nativity of Christ

📍 Brīvības bulvāris 23

The Cathedral of the Nativity of Christ is the largest Orthodox church in Riga. The church's interior is very luxurious and artistically rich, with the walls decorated with Byzantine-style frescoes with ancient Christian ornaments. During the Soviet era, the cathedral was turned into a planetarium and a café but was rededicated in 2000, once again becoming an iconic sacral building with regular Orthodox church services.



18 — Bergs Bazaar

📍 Elizabetes iela between K. Barona iela and Marijas iela

The elegant Berga Bazaar has historically been a shopping arcade, a complex of pedestrian streets built by businessman Kristaps Bergs between 1887 and 1900. In a short time, the district became a significant part of the city with several innovations, such as the first fuel pump in the city and the first sewerage and water supply system. Visitors to the Bergs Bazaar can shop at the many small boutiques, as well as visit some of the favorite restaurants and cafés of Riga residents, or take a stroll through the peaceful oasis in the heart of the city.



19 — Riga Central Market

Riga Central Market is one of the largest and oldest markets in Europe. From two historical zeppelin hangars, five pavilions were created to suit the needs of the food market. From 1930, when the market was ready to receive visitors, Rigans could boast the most modern and largest market in Europe. Nowadays, Riga Central Market is an extremely colorful place, invariably popular among both residents and tourists. The wide offer from local producers and the historical aura and a bouquet of tastes and sounds create the special atmosphere, which delights every visitor to the market.



20 — National Library of Latvia

📍 Mūkusalas iela 3

Opposite the Old Town, on the left bank of the Daugava, rises the new Latvian National Library building, which is one of the most significant cultural and scientific buildings in Latvia. Its form includes metaphors and references to an essential Latvian folk tale called the Golden Horse (Zelta Zirgs), depicting a glass mountain or a symbolic Castle of Light. Visitors to the National Library have the opportunity to visit a variety of themed reading rooms, which offer books, periodicals, audio and video recordings, some of them very rare. Thus, the functions of a classical library in this building are combined with the operation of a modern cultural and information center, which also hosts conferences, festivals, and various thematic exhibitions.



21 — Ķīpsala

Ķīpsala is located between the Zunda canal and the Daugava River. The island is almost 200 ha in size, 2.7 km long, and 500 m wide. Historically, the activities of the island's inhabitants were mainly related to the sea and the waters of the Daugava. Žanis Lipke, a man who saved the lives of dozens of people during the Second World War, also used to live there. The Žanis Lipke Memorial (Mazais Balasta dambis 8) is hidden among the narrow streets of Ķīpsala, symbolically reconstructing the environment in which the rescued Jews hid during the war. The ascetic wooden building resembles a boat pulled ashore and overturned - like a ferryman's boat that has completed its task.



22 — Kalnciems Quarter

📍 Kalnciema iela 35, 37

The charming Kalnciems Quarter is located in Pārdaugava. The complex of renovated wooden buildings of the quarter at the intersection of Kalnciema and Melnsila streets is a legacy of 19th-century wooden architecture in late European Classicism. The revival of the quarter's wooden buildings began in 2001, and renovation started as a private initiative. Today, everyone can see the five restored wooden buildings that surround a courtyard with a small apple orchard and enjoy an art exhibition in the gallery or spend a leisurely afternoon in the wine café. On Saturdays, Kalnciems Quarter hosts weekly fairs, regular art exhibitions, events for families and children, workshops, and open-air music concerts in summer.

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