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INTRODUCTION TO RIGA

Do you know what's the one question about Riga visitors to the city most often ask? No, it's not about the current economic situation or what time of year is best to visit Riga. In fact, it's more of an observation than a question: "It feels like Riga is bubbling over with life and has become something like the creative epicentre of the Baltics. There's so much going on, especially in culture. Why exactly Riga, and why right now?"

Historically, Riga has always been a crossroads, a melting pot of various nations and cultures. But the unique patina in this city of more than 600,000 inhabitants has in large part also been formed by the proximity of water – the Daugava River and the Gulf of Riga. The city has always lived in close cooperation with nature, which is still an important part of its residents' daily lives – the many public parks, forests, squares, lakes and city canal. Riga has hills and islands as well as beaches. Nesting birds and even beavers call the city home. In addition, considering the relatively compactness of the city, many of its sites are within walking distance: special urban pulse points and green relaxation zones, a dynamic city atmosphere and the romance of rural idylls. In the springtime, the air in Riga is full of the heady aroma of lilacs; in the autumn, it exudes the melancholy of falling yellow and red leaves; in the winter, it sparkles with a feeling of wonder after a fresh, white layer of snow.

Today the most accurate witnesses to the multi-faceted face of the city are its architecture and culture. These are eclectic and surprising in their diversity, with each era and trend leaving its mark – from Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Classicism to Art Nouveau, modernism and vernacular wooden architecture.

The magic of Riga is found precisely in its diversity, in its many layers and personalities, which do not lack for classic values or paradoxes. But its most vivid characteristic has always been its openness. Openness to new ideas, trends, experiments.

Today, Riga is a cradle for innovative start-ups, and it prides itself in an excellent music and contemporary art scene, the Song Festival (which culminates in an open-air concert with 18,000 choir singers) and a dynamic gastronomy milieu, in which local chefs compete in their search for "the flavour of Latvia" and thus bring an appreciative smile to the face of many a gourmet traveller. Riga has a glamorous city centre as well as a hipster republic. It's possible to arrive in Riga via all three classic means of transportation – air, land and water – and the city can be observed both from above and from a SUP board on the water. Even though geographically Riga can be considered a Nordic city, its multinational character makes it both adventurous and passionate. And yet, also ambitious. Like any city full of creative energy, it vibrates, pulsates and astonishes at any time of year.



Riga's diverse architectural heritage spans almost the entire range of the city's 800-year history, from the 13th century to the present. With over 4000 magnificent buildings representing a variety of artistic styles, Riga's historic centre was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997.

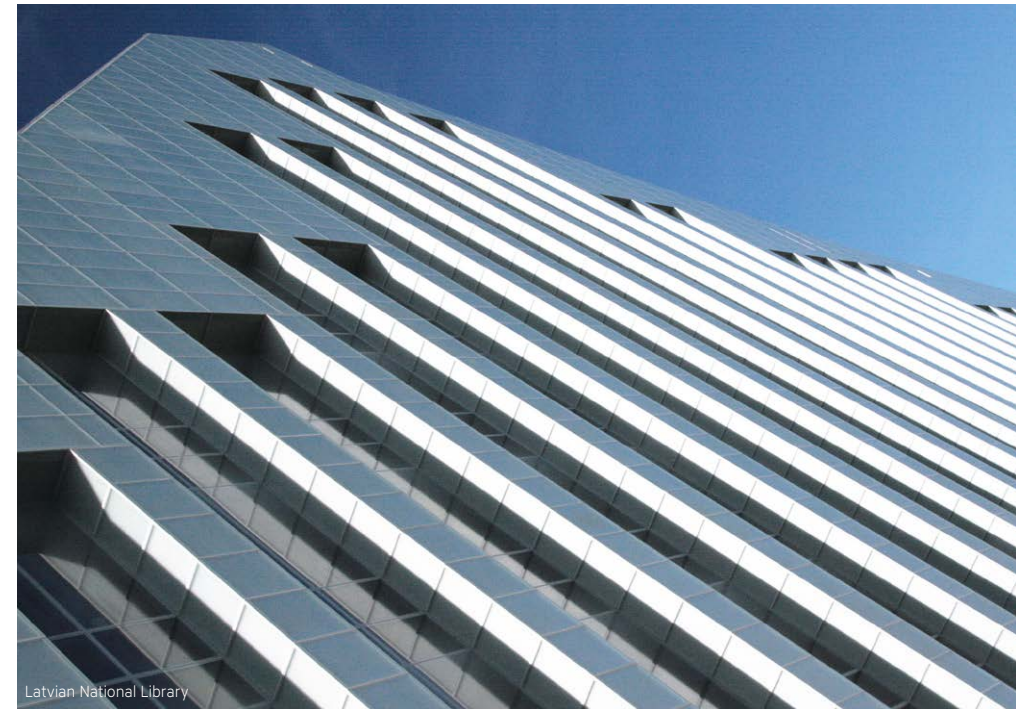
OLD TOWN'S CLASSIC SKYLINE

Old Town lies at the heart of the city and is the best place to see how every historical era has left its mark. The oldest surviving buildings were built as houses of worship in the Gothic and Romanesque traditions, with subsequent renovations conducted in Baroque and other styles.

The stately, church steeples of these landmark buildings are the most prominent features of Riga's classic skyline, along with the stalwart Riga Castle by the riverfront. You can catch a breathtaking, bird's-eye view of the city's rooftops from the spire of St Peter's Church, which for nearly two centuries was the tallest wooden structure in Europe.

As you stroll through the Old Town's winding cobblestone streets, you will discover numerous other elegant buildings – including the Three Brother's Building Complex on M. Pils iela, the Neiburgs Hotel on Jauniela and the recently rebuilt House of Blackheads on Rātslaukums – reflecting traces of Baroque, Renaissance, Classicist, Art Nouveau, and other architectural styles.

The building of the Art Museum "Riga Bourse" is an architectural monument of national



importance. It was built from 1852 to 1855, following Venetian renaissance palaco forms symbolising wealth and abundance. The building was completely restored and now houses the Art Museum. Splendid interior with plenty of gilded surfaces and artificial marble makes the Art Museum "Riga Bourse" one of the must see sites in Riga.

Old Town is enclosed on one side by the Daugava River, and on the other by the city canal, with its ring of parks and green boulevards. Beyond the canal lie various, eclectically-built neighbourhoods dating from the 19th century to the present.

WOODEN ARCHITECTURE GEMS

Wood is a plentiful resource in Latvia and other Northern European countries, which is why a considerable number of buildings in Riga were built of this material during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although many wooden structures have not withstood the ravages of time and have since been torn down, some neighbourhoods outside of the historic city centre (notably in Pārdaugava, on the left bank of the Daugava River) have retained the unique atmosphere conveyed by thoughtfully constructed wooden residences.

A number of wooden buildings in Ķīpsala and on Kalnciema iela have been painstakingly restored to their former splendour, as a shining indication that the simple, wooden houses of yesteryear can still be put to practical use in the current era.

ART NOUVEAU PEARLS

Riga stands out as one of the most prominent Art Nouveau (Jugendstil) centres in the world, with over 800 buildings erected in that style at the turn of the 20th century. It would probably not be an exaggeration to say that one can spot at least three noteworthy Art Nouveau buildings from any place in the city's historic centre.

Here one can see shining examples of different branches of this architectural style, starting with the splendidly ornate building facades on Alberta iela and ending with unique, National Romanticism pearls designed by the first generation of Latvian architects.

Riga is also known for its eclectically-constructed buildings, many of them are residential apartment houses, which encompass elements from several architectural styles. Among the prominent edifices built in a single style are the Latvian National Museum of Art (built in Neo-Baroque style) and the red-brick Latvian Academy of Arts right beside it (built in Neo-Gothic style).

THE MODERN ERA

Riga has retained certain vestiges of its turn-of-the-century industrial heritage. The busy Central Market complex is housed in former zeppelin hangars dating from the First World War. Nearby, a group of formerly neglected warehouses by the riverfront was recently turned into the Spīķeri creative quarter, which has now become a vibrant business and cultural centre.

During the 1920's and 1930's, modern functionalist architecture made its lasting mark upon the city. It was during this period that such nationally significant sculptural complexes as the Freedom Monument and the Brethren Cemetery came into being.

The buildings that were constructed in Latvia's capital city after the Second World War were of varying quality and artistic merit. Nevertheless, some of these edifices have been skilfully refurbished, generating a renewed interest in the city's Soviet-era architecture. Among the most illustrious examples are the Daile Theatre, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia and the Latvian Academy of Sciences building.

The National Library building designed by the renowned architect Gunnar Birkerts is an excellent example of contemporary architecture. The distinctive 68 meters high pyramidal construction creates impressive 21st century skyline on the left bank of the river. The total area of the building is 44 000 m² where 6,5 million printed works will be stored. After the opening in 2014, the National Library has become one of the most important cultural centres in Riga.





BERGA BAZĀRS

Berga Bazārs is like a small, self-sufficient city within a city. The network of small pedestrian streets hidden from the larger thoroughfares around it harbours a kind of secret, inner life of shops, cafés and arcades.

One of the city's most unique architectural projects, Berga Bazārs was built in the late 19th century and is the largest and only shopping passage of its kind in Riga. When the "bazaar" opened in 1900, it quickly became a centre of activity, attracting both urban and rural dwellers and people of many different ethnicities. Berga Bazārs later suffered considerable damage during the two world wars and the Soviet era.

But today, thanks to Bergs' descendants, it has been restored to its former form and is one of the most exciting examples of Riga's 21st-century pride. In addition to stores and cafés, Berga Bazārs is also home to the Hotel Bergs, beside which stands a fountain created by well-known Latvian artist Ilmārs Blumbergs.



KALNCIEMA QUARTER

The many wooden buildings along Kalnciema Street in the Pārdaugava district of Riga – but especially those around the intersection with Melsila Street – are part of one of the best-known and most creative areas of the city.

These buildings have been carefully restored, and their owners have invested much energy in creating an environment like none other. The buildings are home to an exclusive design salon, architecture offices, cafés and other creative businesses.

The neighbourhood also enjoys an active cultural life, with regular concerts, art exhibitions and poetry readings. The weekly farmer's market that takes place at the intersection of Kalnciema and Melsila streets has become very popular in recent years. Every Saturday, local farmers and artisans arrive here to sell their produce and wares – the atmosphere is colourful, the emotions are genuine, and air is full of enticing aromas, freshness and energy.



PĀRDAUGAVA

Riga's left bank, known as Pārdaugava (literally, "across the Daugava"), has always cardinally differed from the historical centre of the city. Due to the Daugava River, which forms the border between these two halves, Pārdaugava developed at a different pace than the other side of the river, and in many places it still retains the charm of a small town. Perhaps slightly time-worn, but nevertheless fascinating. Here you can still discover small streets forgotten by time and where automobiles don't even really venture, peek into the courtyards between old wooden buildings, or lose yourself in the meditative romance of the public parks.

Practically every street in Pārdaugava has its own unique character and story. For example, a stroll along Mazā Nometņu Street becomes a lesson in the history of architecture, where eclecticism lives next to the rationalism of the 1920s–1930s and Art Nouveau stands next to classicism, the style it rejected. Nearby, Meža Street prides itself in the building that takes up the entire block between Meža, Tīrgus and Puķu streets. Built in the Gothic Eclectic style, it was designed by Latvian architect Konstantīns Pēkšēns.

Pārdaugava is ideal for wanderers and those who wish to see "a different Riga" in concentrated form, right on the other side of the Daugava River. It's a district that for centuries watched as Riga developed, until it became a part of Riga itself.



MIERA STREET REPUBLIC

Even though "Peace Street" (Miera iela in Latvian) was named after the road established here in the mid-19th century that led to the new city cemetery, today it has made an existential U-turn and bubbles with life and the energy of various creative initiatives. Miera Street is the epicentre of Riga's hipster culture and has even been recognised by Skyscanner as the hippest neighbourhood in the world.

But the area's original peaceful feeling has not been lost, either. In the mornings, Miera Street wakes up slowly. But once it's awake, the atmosphere is enthusiastic. This is a place for all sorts of people who "work with their hands" – baking cakes, sewing, cooking healthy food, growing, fixing, recycling, etc. In other words, this is a street of cafés, small shops run by passionate owners, workshops and other creative initiatives. Among the best-known residents on this street are the M50 design, clothing and accessory store, the Walters un Grapa bar, the Rocket Bean Roastery oasis for coffee lovers, the Mierā bakery famous for its harmony and homemade cakes, the Mr. Page bookstore, and the Astronauts store featuring 20th-century furniture, lamps and home accessories.

The tram that rolls along Miera Street gives the neighbourhood a special charm, and a special aroma is provided by the Laima confectionery's chocolate museum.



ART AND CULTURE

LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART

In May 2016, after several years of major renovation, the main building of the Latvian National Museum of Art (LNMM; lnmm.lv), located at 1 Jaņa Rozentāla Square, was opened again to visitors. The exterior of the building, originally built in 1905, remains untouched. But an organic synergy of two different eras is revealed behind the Historicism-style façade. Inside, the historical core of the museum has been preserved, with many once-forgotten elements given new life; at the same time, contemporary architectural features have also become an integral part of the overall form. A gleaming, golden staircase connects the old part of the building with the new museum spaces, where minimalist concrete dominates. When heading to the main exhibition hall, which hosts changing expositions, visitors get a glimpse of the glass-covered museum warehouse, which holds a part of the museum's collection. The collection covers art from the early 19th century to the late 20th century.

The museum's permanent exhibition, displayed in the old part of the building, traces the development of Latvian fine art. But the museum is also notable for being the only place in Riga to see a permanent exhibition presenting local art processes of the late 20th century.



ART INSTITUTIONS

The Kim? Contemporary Art Centre has established a home for itself in a former candy factory at 2 Sporta Street (kim.lv) in Riga. In Latvian the name is an abbreviation for the rhetorical question "kas ir māksla?", or "what is art?". Since it began in 2009, Kim? has focussed not only on organising exhibitions of Latvian and foreign artists but also on defining and interpreting the essence of art through discussions, lectures and educational programmes for children and youth.

One of the oldest non-governmental cultural and art institutions in Latvia is Noass, or Noah in English (www.noass.lv), which is located on a débarcadère, or landing stage, moored to the AB Dambis jetty in the Daugava River. Noass' focus is on the moving image, and its extensive archive of video art is particularly valuable. Noass' video art festival, titled Ūdensgabali, is popular among art circles and is the only such event in the Baltics.

Riga Art Space (Rīgas mākslas telpa; makslastelpa.lv), a multifunctional centre for art and culture located under Town Hall Square in Old Riga, collaborates with other art institutions to regularly hold a wide range of contemporary art events.

Based on the private collection of Dina and Jānis Zuzāns, who are well-known patrons of the arts in Latvia, the Mūkusala Art Salon (www.mmsalons.lv) is the only private exhibition space in Riga. The couple strives to create a portrait of Latvian art, so, logically, their space hosts regular art exhibitions focussing on vivid, compelling phenomena in Latvian art.



ETHNOGRAPHIC OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

A visit to the Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum is like a trip back to a world long before the invention of the automobile, when only food and drink from one's own land was put on the table and each farmstead wove its own sheets and blankets. The museum was founded in 1924 and covers 87 hectares. Here visitors can wander the seemingly endless network of paths, stroll along the banks of Jugla Lake, or easily find a quiet corner to have a picnic under the pines without being bothered by other people.

The museum contains 118 old buildings from all regions of Latvia (Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, Latgale) that have been recognised as superb examples of the country's cultural and historical heritage. They have been disassembled, transported to the museum and then painstakingly reassembled to form a number of authentic farmsteads. Here you'll find typical peasant houses and barns, craftsmen's workshops, windmills, smithies, potters' kilns and tar kilns. In some of the buildings it is also possible to observe craftsmen creating wonderful objects according to old, traditional techniques.



RIGA MOTOR MUSEUM

The Riga Motor Museum, located at 6 Sergeja Eizenšteina Street, is the largest antique car museum in the Baltics. It contains over 146 exhibits in a space covering 4,000 square meters. The exhibits are grouped together in 11 different categories and form a multi-layered narrative that allows visitors to follow the history of cars not only in Latvia but worldwide and discover how the automobile became an integral part of everyday life. The museum's greatest treasure is a car that has survived for more than a century – it was manufactured in the United States in 1903 by Latvian-born carmaker August Krastin (Augusts Krastiņš).

Another of the museum's highlights is its own so-called "Kremlin collection", which includes, among other things, former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow and the ZIS-115S that Joseph Stalin used to ride in. The museum also has a Auto Union V16. This car, used in hill-climb racing in the 1930s, provided one of the main impulses for founding the Riga Motor Museum.

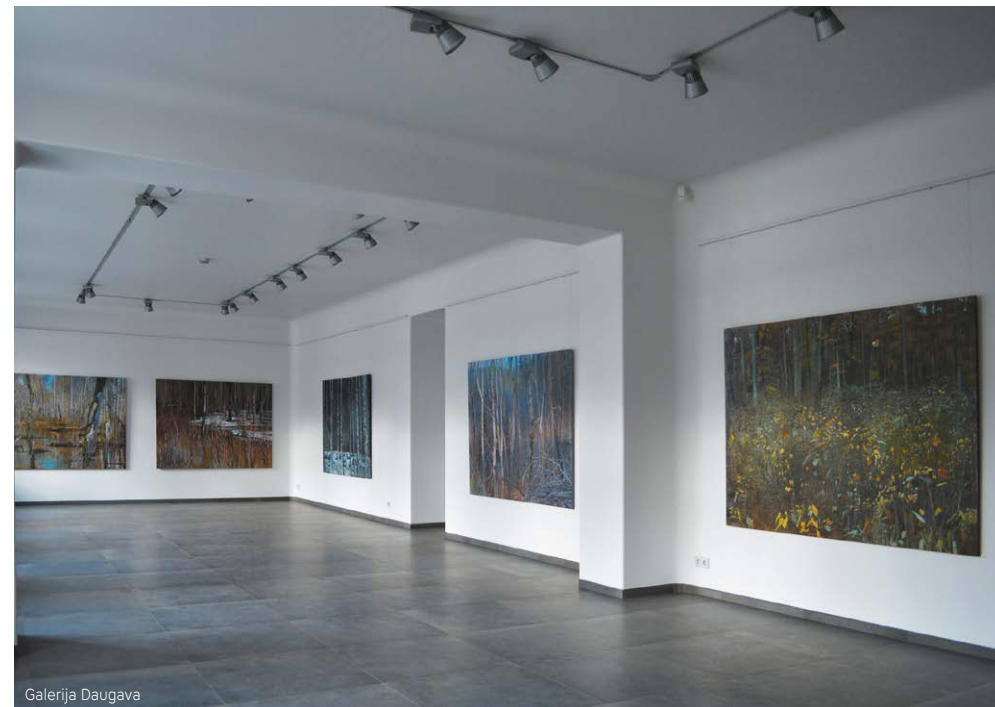
The museum's multimedia expositions invite visitors to take active part and make a visit to the museum particularly exciting.



ŽANIS LIPKE MEMORIAL

The Žanis Lipke Memorial, located at 8 Mazais Balasta Dambis on the island of Ķīpsala, is one of the most hidden museums in Riga. The small street is sometimes even forgotten to be included on maps. But incognito status suits this place, where during the Second World War the dock-worker Žanis Lipke hid 55 Jews in a three-metre-deep pit under his woodshed and thus saved their lives.

Just a few metres from where Lipke's woodshed was located, the author of this museum project, Latvian architect Zaiga Gaile, has created an emotional and visually impressive memorial. Unveiled in 2012, it's a space with a strong aura at the end of a dimly lit tunnel – a place for reflection, meditation and contemplation. The visitors' path leads through a dusky labyrinth reminiscent of the woodshed to the central memorial hall in the building's attic – this is the heart of the three-storey building.



ART GALLERIES

Art galleries are significant "way points" to current art processes in Riga, and the solo and group exhibitions they host allow visitors to become acquainted with significant personalities, trends and current events on the local cultural scene.

The two oldest art galleries in Riga are the Daugava Gallery (at 1 Ausekļa Street in the Quiet Centre, in a building designed by Jānis Frīdrihs Baumanis, the first Latvian educated as an architect; www.galerijadaugava.lv) and the Bastejs Gallery (at 7 Alksnāja Street in Old Riga; www.bastejs.lv). The Daugava Gallery focusses on a very broad range of Latvian art; it regularly holds exhibitions of contemporary art as well as expositions dedicated to the grand old names of Latvian art history. The Bastejs Gallery, for its part, includes in its programme exhibitions of artists from abroad, especially reviews of artists from the Baltic region.

The Māksla XO Gallery (14 Elizabetes Street; www.makslaxogalerija.lv) and Alma Gallery (www.galerija-alma.lv) are institutions that actively seek to represent art not only domestically but also on the international stage, by regularly participating in international art fairs.



FOOD SCENE

GOURMET DINING

Riga's gastronomy scene has managed to surprise more than a few gourmand travellers. On the one hand, menus at the city's best restaurants echo the current trend for Nordic cuisine and seasonal eating; on the other hand, the city's multicultural soul is also definitely present. It's the combination of these two aspects that makes for the sometimes surprising bouquet of flavours that can be found in Riga. The prestigious White Guide Nordic restaurant guide named the Riga restaurant Vincents as a top-rank establishment in the Baltics. Locals, however, have long known Vincents to be a legendary fine-dining classic.

THE FLAVOUR OF CONTEMPORARY LATVIA

Searching for the flavour of contemporary Latvia has become one of the most exciting activities and topics of study on Riga's gastronomy scene.

Menus at the members of the "Contemporary Latvian Cuisine" club – that is, the restaurants led by the country's most outstanding culinary masters, such as Entresol (Elizabetes iela 22; entresol.lv), Kolonāde: Mūsu stāsti (Brīvības bulvāris 26; kolonade.lv), Ferma (Valkas iela 7; fermarestorans.lv) and Muusu (Skārņu iela 6; muusu.lv) – prove that local Latvian products and produce can be used in very original and unusual ways.



THE FLAVOURS OF NATURE

In addition to following the current trend of creating menus that contain only seasonal produce grown in Latvia, a host of chefs has chosen to take it one step further, by turning to products that grow wild in nature, without human intervention. If you know what it's like to snack on a handful of cloudberries fresh from the marsh or are familiar with the taste of wood sorrel picked from a forest glade, now you can also experience these flavours at a number of restaurants in Riga.

For instance the chefs at Restorāns 3 (3 Kalēju Street; restaurant3.lv), have demonstrated the amazing diversity of dishes that can be created from birch juice syrup, cloudberries, forest mushrooms or even beaver tail.

The menu created by chef of Valtera restorāns (8 Miesnieku Street; valterarestorans.lv) is as changeable as the seasons. Although it includes a certain amount of creative improvisation, the natural flavours of chanterelles or summer squash, eel or pike perch, guinea fowl or game is always present. Enjoy the riches of the Baltic Sea and local freshwater waterways at the Dome (4 Miesnieku Street; zivjarestorans.lv) fish restaurant. Whether preparing Latvian sturgeon caviar or turbot, chef is a virtuoso working in his niche.



WATERSIDE RESTAURANTS

Riga is blessed with lots of waterfront access – the Daugava River runs through the middle of the city, and there are lakes around the edges of the city. Visiting each body of water is like a journey within a journey, because each has a different character and a vastly different feel.

One of the most built-up waterfront areas in Riga is Andrejosta, to the north of the city centre. Here you'll find a cluster of restaurants, cafés and clubs. The oldest of these institutions is Koya (Andrejostas iela 4; koyarestaurant.com). Other well-known names are the restaurant, bar and lounge Aqua Luna (Andrejostas iela 4; aqualuna.lv) and Muusu Terasē (Eksporta iela 1A; muusu.lv/muusu-terase), which serves contemporary Latvian cuisine. Modern design and seagulls in the air, yachts passing by and a time-worn industrial ambience, graffiti and innovative gastronomy – Andrejosta is an urban romantic experience full of contrasts.



WINE BARS

For several years already, the popular bar/restaurant Vīna Studija (vinastudija.lv), which boasts a collection of several hundred wines from various regions around the world, has helped to guide wine culture in Riga. It has several locations throughout the city, but all of them are united by a stylish yet democratic interior design.

Well-known architect and wine aficionado Mārtiņš Pīlēns participated in the creation of Vīna Studija, but he has since moved on to a new project, Modernists (K. Barona 31; modernists.lv). The modernist Bauhaus-style boutique bar and store focuses on so-called grower champagnes, or champagne made by small producers. Definitely a must visit place while in Riga.

The drinks menu in Garage wine bar (Elizabetes iela 83/85; www.vinabars.lv) features wines from Argentina, Germany, Italy and France, which can be enjoyed together with some wonderful food as well – all in an environment inspired by the garage. Meanwhile, the passion at another wine space in Riga, Tinto (Elizabetes iela 61; tinto.lv), is cinema. The bar and restaurant is located next to Splendid Palace, Riga's oldest and most ornate movie theatre, and features a wine collection representing 20 countries around the world as well as Spanish-inspired snacks.

The Easy Wine bar (Audēju iela 4; easywine.lv) offers a different concept – service according to the no pre-payment wine-card principle. Just place the card in the wine dispenser, and your glass will be filled with one of 60 different wines on offer.



BEST BEER SPOTS

Riga is an intriguing destination for beer lovers. In addition to the traditional pubs, it's worth paying attention to the places that brew their own beer, most often in a special space at the back of the bar or pub. One such place is the Labietis brewery (9a-2 A. Briāna Street; labietis.lv), which offers a number of beer varieties divided into "families", depending on the strength of beer.

For over a decade now, Valmiermuižas alus (9 A. Briāna Street; valmiermuiza.lv) has been considered one of the best breweries in Latvia. You'll find almost its entire range of beers available at the brewery's so-called "embassy in Riga", which also features a restaurant presenting Valmiermuiža's own vision of the perfect beer and food combinations.

Meanwhile, the beer bar Taka (10 Miera Street; facebook.com/takabars), where music, culture and board games live together harmoniously, is notable for its very unique range of beers, focussing mainly on the truly small breweries of Latvia and their individual flavours.

If you are a craft beer lover, check out Riga Beer District for some good quality Latvian and Baltic craft beer www.beerdistrict.lv or take a tour through several breweries and pubs.



BARS AND NIGHTLIFE

Years ago Riga was the most lively of all the Baltic capitals in terms of its nightclub scene and many professional DJs. Today the city's bars and nightclubs have each focussed on creating their own unique image and atmosphere that best suits their intended audience, so local club-goers know more or less what they can expect from each club.

Many a tourist has spent an unforgettable night in one of Old Riga's establishments. The more refined revellers prefer the long-standing B-Bārs (2 Dome Square; bbars.lv), while those who favour a more relaxed and warm atmosphere won't want to miss a night out at Omas Briljants (7 Audēju Street; omasbriljans.lv).

These days, however, the lively bar and nightclub scene has shifted past the boulevard circle, and for the past few years the most prestigious player on the scene has been Bārs XIII (1a Strēlnieku Street; bar13.lv), located in the very heart of Riga's Art Nouveau district. Slightly further out – in the creative quarter known as the Miera Street Republic – many an intellectual, following a stiff and serious meeting or conference, will not hesitate to step into the alternative beer bar Taka (10 Miera Street), only to later head on for some dancing at the city's most fiery rock bar, Nemiers (9a Aristīda Briāna Street; nemiers.lv).



STYLISH SOUVENIRS

The "Rīga" t-shirts designed by Miesai have become something of an urban style icon. The logo contains a reference to the large-scale "Rīga" signs on the side of three major roads leading into Riga, designed in 1980 by artist Valdis Celms. You'll see more than just a couple of locals wearing the popular shirt!

The LNMM Brand Foundation, for its part, is devoted to popularising the Latvian National Museum of Art collection. It regularly creates lines of souvenirs based on reproductions of artwork found in the museum's permanent collection or exhibited in temporary exhibitions. Each souvenir is like a work of art in itself, with its own story and purpose.

If you are looking for more traditional city souvenirs that would be stylish and useful at the same time, visit Riga Tourism Information Centre (Ratslaukums 6).



DESIGN AND LIFESTYLE STORES

The design and lifestyle store RIJJA (Tērbatas iela 6/8; rijja.lv) is the largest platform for contemporary Latvian design. Here you'll find work by internationally recognised Latvian designers as well as the best from local craftsmen, who continue the old traditions yet also incorporate modern solutions into their work. The store sells everything from bed linens, towels and free-flowing garments made of refined, washed linen to original furniture, dishes and lighting objects.

The ETMO gallery (Arsenāla iela 7; etmo.lv) also maintains a close relationship with traditional Latvian crafts, emphasising the use of ethnographic motifs in contemporary design. Textiles made in Latvian weavers' studios form a significant part of the wares for sale at ETMO.

Kolekcionārs (Blaumaņa iela 7; kolekcionars.com), for its part, takes a different approach to Latvian design by combining an art café, a store and a parade of Latvian design all in one. The design objects fulfil their true calling here – they are not only displayed for viewing but are actually tangible and usable. This means that lamps made by Latvian designers hang from the ceiling and hold real lightbulbs, spoons clink on the plates, and hot coffee steams in the cups. In addition, the collection is always being added to and changes along with new trends in Latvian design.



LATVIAN FASHION CONCEPT STORES

Imagehouse (Brīvības iela 40) is the first and largest combined design and concept store in Riga offering interior design, high & contemporary fashion and a café.

This concept store breaks the borders between the different design scenes to offer guests a creative shopping experience. Here you can find a unique selection of internationally known interior fashion brands. You are also very welcome to enjoy a cup of coffee or a glass of wine with gourmet style starters & desserts.

M50 (Miera iela 17; m50.lv) offers a considerably more democratic approach to Latvian fashion design. Many of the things for sale here are handmade and one-of-a-kind. In addition, many artists have chosen M50 to be the sole representative of their work, so their creations cannot be found anywhere else in Riga.

The newest and most ambitious of Riga's fashion stores is BOLD (Tērbatas iela 45a; www.boldconceptstore.lv), whose goal is to become the biggest platform for exclusive Baltic design. Here you'll find the most exciting names in local design as well as clothing from intriguing designers from the two neighbouring Baltic countries.





Riga hosts a number of exciting, annual cultural events. Whatever the season, there is always something to see, hear or do on the Riga's lively culture scene.

RIMI RIGA MARATHON

Riga's annual marathon has become an increasingly popular sports event, drawing thousands of participants from numerous countries. Runners of all ages course past some of Riga's most beautiful tourist spots filling the atmosphere along the 42-kilometre race with a thrilling sense of exhilaration.

The majority of the participants actually choose to run much shorter distances – either the mini marathon (5 km), the 10 km distance, or the half marathon (21 km). This thrilling sports venue has taken place every year on the third Sunday in May since 1991.

www.rimirigamarathon.com

RIGA FESTIVAL

The Riga Festival is a major event that is organised in the Latvian capital city in June each year. Year after year, the organisers of the festival expand on what is a truly splendid cultural programme. A great feature of the Riga Festival is the varied range of time periods, genres, and music trends represented by the most outstanding artists from Latvia and other countries.

www.Rigasfestivals.lv



RIGA OPERA FESTIVAL

The Riga Opera Festival was one of the first large-scale opera festivals to be held in Northern Europe and has become an eagerly awaited, annual event by both Latvian audience and opera-lovers from abroad. Every summer in June, the festival marks the end of the Latvian National Opera's performance season with an overview of the best moments of the previous year, offering fans a chance to relive their favourite scenes or see what they've missed. The high quality of the opera's productions (including its innovative stage design) has been noted outside of the country and has helped the opera to attract brilliant guest conductors and soloists to Riga.

www.opera.lv

LIGO FESTIVITIES AT 11. NOVEMBRA KRASTMALA AND AT DZEGUŽKALNS

In Riga, the Ligo festivities usually take place at the 11. Novembra krastmala where the Līgosim Krastmalā! event offers everyone the chance to enjoy a cultural programme that is replete with folk singers, dancers, Latvian actors, artists, bands and DJs on June 23rd. The entertainment goes on into the wee hours and visitors can enjoy festive foods and bonfires in the heart of the city. Dzegužkalns Park is another setting for traditional all-night Jāņi celebrations. All Rigans and visitors to the city are invited to make their own Jani wreath and take part in the bonfire lighting ritual. Ligo festivities are free of charge.

www.kultura.riga.lv



WHITE NIGHT CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Partly because it is free and accessible to all the White Night (Baltā nakts) is one of the most popular annual cultural events in Riga. Concentrating on contemporary forms of art it unites cultural enthusiasts of all ages, from children to senior citizens.

On this particular night – at the beginning of September – exhibitions and performances to suit all tastes take place in the strangest variety of places, including empty stores and abandoned factories, as well as at more conventional exhibition halls and clubs.

Latvia's White Night is part of the European White Nights international cultural project.

www.baltanakts.lv

RĪGAS RITMI

The International Jazz Festival "Rīgas Ritmi", held annually on the first weekend of July, is one of the most attended and beloved music festivals in Latvia. The festival's stages at a number of locations in Riga feature the performances of world-famous and award-winning musicians, as well as young and undiscovered talent.

www.rigasritmi.lv



RIGA CITY FESTIVAL

Riga City Festival takes place every year on the third weekend of August and involves countless concerts in Riga's concert halls, gardens and parks. There are games, entertainment and sports activities held for grown-ups and children all around the city. The Riga City Festival is a great opportunity to enjoy Riga and its wonderful architecture, as well as to get to know the suburbs. Events are held at Vērmānes Dārzs, Doma Laukums, 11. Novembra krastmala, the Spīķeri Quarter, and other locations. Traditionally, Riga Retro international antique car convention "Riga Retro" takes place during the festival and it is usually opened at Riga Motor Museum, followed by retro parade of over 100 cars and motorcycles through Riga city center.

www.rigassvetki.lv

STARO RIGA LIGHT FESTIVAL

With the help of modern light and video technology the annual festival Staro Rīga around November 18th will present around one hundred outdoor installations – building lights, multimedia projections in parks, on high-rise buildings and monuments. The play of light makes the autumn drabness disappear and opens up a completely different view of the city.

www.staroriga.lv



THE FESTIVAL "CHRISTMAS TREE TRAIL"

This original and artistic festival in an urban environment is an exhibition of traditional or completely avant-garde visions of the Christmas tree. More than 30 outdoor installations are copyright works by students of the Latvian Academy of Art or works by authors selected during the festival's annual competition. The "Christmas Tree Trail" is a way to celebrate the legend of Riga as the capital of the first decorated Christmas Tree every year starting on second week of December and lasting till second week of January.

www.eglufestivals.lv

FESTIVAL EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS

The beautiful time of Advent, Christmas and New Year's Eve goes so well with the most jovial heritage of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Vivaldi and other classics, as well as Gregorian chant music, Christmas songs in vivacious jazz rhythms and the New Year's Eve concerts – splendid as always. World-famous soloists and conductors perform here together with the Riga Dom Cathedral Boys Choir, the Latvian Radio Choir and the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra. European Christmas is ready to delight audiences all through December with splendid concerts at the concert halls and churches in Riga, as well as elsewhere in Latvia.

www.eiropasziemasvetki.lv

