

Best Sights of



# Riga





## 01 — Riga Castle

📍 Pils iela 1/3

In 1201, a new city – Riga – was founded on the banks of the Daugava River. A little over a hundred years later, the Livonian Order, a branch of the Teutonic Order, began constructing its residence on this site. Over the centuries, the castle has endured numerous rulers and wars. It was destroyed several times, but was always rebuilt. Since 1922, Riga Castle has served as the residence of the President of Latvia, with the exception of the fifty-year Soviet rule when it housed the Pioneer Palace. The Latvian National Museum of History is located in the castle complex, with the entrance on Daugavas gāte. The flag of the Republic of Latvia always flies above the Holy Spirit Tower, joined by the flag of the President whenever the President is in the country.



## 02 — The Three Brothers

📍 Mazā Pils iela 17, 19, 21

The name of The Three Brothers, a group of historical residential buildings, is very similar to the Three Sisters of Tallinn – former warehouse buildings in the Tallinn Old Town. 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 a stepped gable, 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 Dome Cathedral, whose 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 — Art Museum Riga Bourse

📍 Doma laukums 6

The Art Museum Riga Bourse has a special aura, defined by its luxurious historical interior and a harmonious collection of high-quality classical art. Constructed in the mid-19th century, the museum building mirrors the architectural grandeur of a Venetian Renaissance-era palazzo, symbolizing wealth and abundance. The museum features six permanent exhibitions: the Antique Art Cabinet, the Egyptian Cabinet, the European and Asian Art Galleries, the Silver Cabinet, and the Nicholas Roerich Painting Gallery. In addition, it currently hosts regular international exhibitions, projects and cultural and artistic events, including educational programs and creative workshops.



## 05 — Museum of the History of Riga 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 Dome 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, as well as learn about the history and traditions of navigation.



## 06 — Powder Tower 📍 Smiļšu iela 20

The tower's history dates back to 1330. It is the only preserved tower out of 28 towers that once formed the fortification wall of Riga. 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 that symbolizes Latvia's independence, freedom, and national unity, was 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. An interesting complex of the 18th century residential buildings on Meistaru Street was constructed next to the former defensive wall of Riga, which lost its importance in the 17th century. 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 — Town Hall Square

For centuries, Town Hall Square was the leading trading site in Riga. Although its historic buildings were destroyed during the Second World War, many of them have been completely restored today. The square's centerpiece, the Town Hall, was rebuilt in 2003 and currently houses the Riga City Council. In the middle of the square stands the statue of St. Roland, symbolizing justice and the city's independence. The first wooden statue of Roland was erected here in the late 15th century; it was replaced by a stone version in 1897, and today, an exact replica marks the site. Overlooking the Daugava River, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia is situated. Founded in 1993 and modernized in 2022, the museum tells the story of the Latvian state, its people, and its land throughout successive occupations by various powers from 1940 to 1991.



## 10 — House of the Black Heads 📍 Rātslaukums 7

The House of the Black Heads was built in 1334 as a meeting place for various public organizations in Riga. At that time, it was the most luxurious and prestigious building in the entire city. The Black Heads, 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 Black Heads 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.



## 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. It 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 the Order of 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 — 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.



## 14 — 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 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 one of the main Art Nouveau destinations 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.



## 15 — Latvian National Museum of Art

Jaņa Rozentāla laukums 1

The museum was built in 1905. It is the first building in the Baltics designed specifically for the needs of 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 the 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.



## 16 — 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 – the walls are decorated with Byzantine-style frescoes with early 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.



## 17 — Bergs Bazaar 📍 Elizabetes iela between K. Barona iela and Marijas iela

The elegant Bergs Bazaar has historically been a shopping arcade, a complex of pedestrian streets built by entrepreneur 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 Riga's residents' most favourite restaurants and cafés, or take a stroll through the peaceful oasis in the heart of the city.



## 18 — 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, the historical aura and a bouquet of tastes and sounds create the special atmosphere, which delights every visitor of the market.



Photo: Reinis Hofmanis

## 19 — 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 a famous Latvian play 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.



## 20 — Agenskalns Market 📍 Nometņu iela 64

Opened since 1898, Agenskalns Market is the largest and oldest market in the neighborhood and has the status of a national cultural monument. From 2018 to 2022, the market's historical pavilion underwent extensive renovation works. During the renovation, its historical character was preserved and the interiors regained their original majesty. On the first floor of the reopened pavilion, farmers and home producers offer fresh vegetables, berries, fruits, dairy products, meat and many other delicious and unique products to visitors. On the second floor one can enjoy a freshly made meal and have drinks in the atmosphere of the market.



## 21 — Kipsala Island

Kipsala 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 Kipsala, 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 — Kalnciema Quarter 📍 Kalnciema iela 35, 37

The charming Kalnciema Quarter is located in Pārdaugava. The complex of renovated wooden buildings of the quarter at the intersection of Kalnciema and Melsila 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, Kalnciema Quarter hosts weekly fairs, regular art exhibitions, events for families and children, workshops, and open-air music concerts in summer.



## 23 — Riga Zoo

📍 Meža prospekts 1

The Riga Zoo was opened in 1912. It is located in the city's greenest district Mežaparks – a pine forest area on the shores of Lake Kīšežers. There are more than 3,000 animals from different continents living at the zoo. It is open all year round and is a perfect place to spend a day off with the family. Every visit to the Zoo brings some sort of surprise and new discovery. In summer it is an ideal leisure and picnic place, while in winter special Riga Zoo winter nights are held.

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04/2026

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