

Tour
Information



Art Nouveau in Riga





Travel

Passports

Please ensure your 10 year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to the Baltic States.

Visas

Visas are not required for British and EU nationals. For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Latvian Embassy:

45 Nottingham Place, London W1U 5LY.

Tel: (020) 7312 0041. Fax: (020) 7312 0042.

E-mail: consulate.uk@mfa.gov.lv

Website: <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/london/>

Opening hours (visa section): Mon-Fri 1000-1600.



Tickets and Flight Times

Included with your itinerary is an e-ticket which shows your flight reference number for the AirBaltic flight. You must quote/show this at the check-in desk along with your passport and you will be issued with your boarding pass. Online check-in is not available on these flights.

Please note that due to current security restrictions please allow extra time to check-in – we recommend a minimum of two hours.

Seats and Flight

Some airlines have the facility to allow you to pre-book your seat prior to arriving at the airport either by telephone, or online. Please speak to us for further information.

Please note that no meals are served on these flights so you may wish to make arrangements to eat prior to boarding.



Baggage Allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

With Air Baltic your ticket includes one hold bag of up to 20kg plus **one** cabin bag no bigger than 55 x 40 x 20 cm and weighing less than 8kg. Please note that personal bags (such as handbag or computer case) must be stored within you single piece of hand luggage.

Please contact the airline for further information

<https://www.airbaltic.com/en/baggage>

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Departure Tax

The departure tax is included in the price of your flight tickets.

Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



Accommodation

Monika Hotel

The four-star Hotel Monika is located in the cultural and historical centre of Riga, and is encircled by one of Europe's most eminent block of Art Nouveau buildings, close to the Old Town of Riga. The hotel's restaurant 'Sokrats' creates a pleasant atmosphere with excellent cuisine. Bedrooms are comfortable with en-suite bathrooms, Wi-Fi, air-conditioning, minibar, TV, safe, hairdryer and telephone.

For more information visit their website:
<http://www.monika.centrumhotels.com/>



Food

Pork, sauerkraut, potatoes, sour cream (skabs krejums), dark rye-bread, and seasonal, locally grown vegetables are the main ingredients for everyday Latvian cuisine. In the coastal regions, seafood is plentiful – smoked fish (salmon and trout) and herring are the most common.

Delicious, warming soups are favourites – the cabbage skabu kapostu zupa, the meat-ball Frikadelu zupa, and sorrel soup with boiled pork, onions, potatoes and barley. Other local specialities include kotletes (meat patties), piragi (pastry filled with bacon and onions), and Sklandu Rausi (vegetable tarts).

Typical desserts include Alexander Torte (raspberry- or cranberry-filled pastry strips), Debessmanna (berry mousse), Apple pie, and Rupjmaizes Kartojuums (layered rye bread dessert with whipped cream and cranberry jam).

Drink

Local Latvian beers include Aldaris, Līvu, Senču, and you will find plenty of beers produced in the great



number of small microbreweries. Another local drink is Riga's Black Balsam, a thick, black alcoholic herbal drink which has been produced since 1700. Quite a strong drink on its own, it is often mixed in a cocktail, or a few spoons are added to coffee.

For a non-alcoholic drink, try the fresh fruit juices, made from local wild berries.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily

Dinner is included on two nights, one at the hotel and one at the Neiburgs restaurant:

<http://www.neiburgs.com>



Destination

Rīga is the largest, liveliest and most cosmopolitan of the Baltic capitals, with a wide variety of world cuisine. A heady mixture of the medieval and the contemporary, the city has much to offer architecture and history enthusiasts in the narrow cobbled streets of Old Rīga and the wide boulevards of the New Town, where beautiful examples of Jugendstil Art Nouveau architecture – “music in stone” – line Strēlnieku iela and Alberta iela. Riga, is in the middle of a renaissance, the restoration of its many magnificent old buildings and fairy-tale skyline of turrets and steeples making it one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. Riga’s population is roughly 50% Latvian and 50% Russian, the cultures mixing harmoniously to make a delightful and cosmopolitan city.

Details of places of interest included in your tour:

Riga Art Museum

Once the home of Konstantīns Pēkšēns (a local architect responsible for over 250 of the city’s buildings), the interiors have been completely restored to resemble a middle-class apartment from the 1920s. Note the spectacular staircase, geometric stencils, rounded furniture, original stained glass in the dining room and the still-functioning stove in the kitchen. There’s also a free 10-minute video detailing the city’s distinct decor.

For more information visit:

<http://www.jugendstils.riga.lv/eng>

Latvian National Museum of Art

After recent reconstruction, the museum is entirely renovated, restored and enlarged. A modern and accessible infrastructure and environment for visitors is created with innovative services for public learning and recreation following the visitor’s needs and interests.

The new permanent display Latvian art 19th – 20th Century for the first time covers two centuries of the evolution of art in Latvia. The main objective was to create a visual, emotional story of Latvian art development and its social, geopolitical and historical context. In the display, the most

important authors and art works from each period are selected.

For more information visit:

<http://www.lnmm.lv/en/lnma/visit>

Dome Cathedral

Founded in 1211 as the seat of the Rīga diocese, this enormous (once Catholic, now Evangelical Lutheran) cathedral is the largest medieval church in the Baltic. The architecture is an amalgam of styles from the 13th to the 18th centuries: the eastern end, the oldest portion, has Romanesque features; the tower is 18th-century baroque; and much of the rest dates from a 15th-century Gothic rebuilding. During Soviet times services were strictly forbidden and much of the cathedral’s ornate interior decor was stripped away. Surviving highlights include the pulpit (dating from 1641), the huge 6768-pipe organ (completed in 1884) and some beautiful stained-glass windows.

Museum of Decorative Art and Design

The Museum of Decorative Art and Design (MDAD) has been open to the public since 6 July 1989. The museum has seven collections: textile art, ceramics, metal, leather, decorative wood and glass art as well as a design collection. The permanent display introduces visitors to the work of Latvia’s leading artists in decorative art and design. It tells about the dominant styles and movements in the period from the end of the 19th century to the present day. Alongside the permanent display, the museum regularly offers a broad range of exhibitions. Every year there are on average five exhibitions in the museum’s Great Hall. Special thematic shows associated with the permanent display are held in the vestibules on the museum’s upper floors.

The Swedish Gate

Built into the city’s medieval walls in 1698 while the Swedes were in power, this is the only remaining gate to Old Rīga, set in the largest surviving section of the town walls. It leads into Trokšņu iela, Old Rīga’s narrowest and most atmospheric street.

The Small and Big Guild Houses

The 19th-century Gothic exterior of the Great Guild encloses a sumptuous merchants' meeting hall, built during the height of German power in the 1330s. Today, the Great Guild houses the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra. The fairy-tale castle next door is the Small Guild, founded in the 14th century as the meeting place for local artisans.

St Peter's Church

Forming the centrepiece of Rīga's skyline, this Gothic church is thought to be around 800 years old, making it one of the oldest medieval buildings in the Baltic. Its soaring red-brick interior is relatively unadorned, except for heraldic shields mounted on the columns. A colourful contrast is provided by the art exhibitions staged in the side aisles. At the rear of the church, a lift whisks visitors to a viewing platform 72m up the steeple.

The House of Blackheads

Built in 1344 as a veritable fraternity house for the Blackheads guild of unmarried German merchants, the original house was decimated in 1941 and flattened by the Soviets seven years later. Somehow the original blueprints survived and an exact replica was completed in 2001 for Rīga's 800th birthday.

Town Hall Square

Rīga's historic town hall was destroyed in WWII and was rebuilt from scratch in 2003. A statue of St Roland, the city's patron, takes pride of place on the square in front of it. It, too, is a replica of the original, erected in 1897, which now stands in St Peter's.

Your lecturer / guide

Mike Hope will be your guide for this tour.

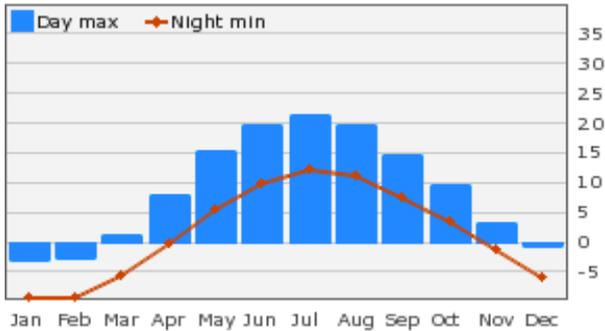
Mike is an author, lecturer, curator and designer, who has spent more than 25 years at four universities (Staffordshire, Portsmouth, Nottingham Trent and Plymouth) and nearly 30 delivering Summer School Programmes. He has lectured around the world and was the founder board member of The European Academy of Design. Alongside an extensive publication list, he has researched, designed and curated many exhibitions, and is specialist advisor on stained glass to the Diocese of Exeter. He specialises in art, architectural and design history, stained glass, churches and cathedrals; the English country house and garden.

Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.

The Basics

Climate – The weather in Latvia at this time of year is likely to be pleasant. However, it can get chilly in the evenings, and there is always the chance of the odd shower, so our best advice is to be prepared.



Time – GMT +3 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 2 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – Latvian

Religion – Lutheran and Catholic

National holidays – **Common to all three states:** New Year's Day (01 Jan); Labour Day (01 May); St John's Day (24 Jun); Christmas Day (25 Dec); Boxing Day (26 Dec). Good Friday; Easter Monday; Declaration of Independence Day (4 May); Ligo (Midsummer's eve) (23 Jun); Independence Day (18 Nov); New Year's Eve (31 Dec).

Currency –

Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe, although it has high mineral content and can be cloudy. Therefore, bottled water is safer and widely available.

Shops and museums – Shops and stores are generally open Mon-Fri 0900-2100. Many are also open at the weekend including Sundays. Please note that most museums are closed on Mondays.

Clothes & Shoes – You may like to bring medium weight clothing and a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – Bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone in the Baltic States, depending on your operator and contract.

Tipping – To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:
<https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 20 7431 8201 or

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Embassy Riga

5, J.Alunana iela

Riga

LV 1010

Latvia

Email: britishembassy.riga@fco.gov.uk

Tel: +371 6777 4700

Fax: +371 6777 4707

Open Mon-Thu 0830-1300 and 1400-1700 and Fri 0830-1330.

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