Wooden Architecture

Latvia is proud to have several thousand wooden buildings - from homesteads to family homes to establishments. Today, wooden architecture is not only an important part of the historic heritage of Latvia, but also the environment for multiple contemporary culture projects.
Wooden architecture in Riga through the centuries

Wooden buildings in Riga are mostly found in Grizinkalns, Sarkandaugava and Kipsala neighbourhoods, as well as the Moscow section of town. However, it is Pardaugava, the part of Riga located on the left bank of the Daugava River, that is considered the centre for the utterly charming wooden architecture – and it all began in the 17th century.

During the wars and periods of unrest, wooden buildings were torched to help protect the city from invaders.

A lengthy period of peace began in Riga halfway through the 18th century, which is when grandiose wooden buildings and manor houses gradually returned to Pardaugava. There was plenty of activity in the quaint fishing villages on the Daugava, and that is when wooden architecture, still characteristic of this part of Riga, was created.

Unlike other European capital cities, wooden architecture in Riga continued to develop up until the start of World War II. Less than a century ago, there were around 12,000 wooden buildings in Riga, of which approximately 4,000 have survived to this day, the oldest of which were built at the end of the 18th century.

Wooden architecture in Riga today

* **Kalnciems Street Quarter in Agenskalns** – A Bohemian style arts & crafts and music centre, a venue for outdoor concerts all year round, as well as a place for contemporary art exhibitions and events for families with children. The Kalnciema Quarter is also known for the
very popular fairs where local craftsmen and farmers sell their products.

- **Wooden Riga in Grizinkalns** – The centre for renovation of wooden buildings hosts regular exhibitions, workshops and seminars. Grizinkalns, formerly a working-class neighbourhood, features many two-storey wooden buildings – both renovated ones as well as buildings in dire need of repair.

- **Wooden architecture in Kipsala** – Through the centuries, Kipsala, formerly an island of fishermen, developed into a posh residential district. The architecture of Kipsala is very eclectic, where beautifully restored wooden houses are interspersed with large, modern buildings.

- **Wooden churches in the Moscow section of town** - The Riga Lutheran Church of Jesus with its 37-metre tower is one of the largest wooden buildings in Latvia. Just a short distance away, there are two more Christian churches – the Annunciation of Our Most Holy Lady Church that also houses the St. Nicholas Church, which features an impressive iconostasis.

### Homesteads – cultural gem of Latvia

Homesteads in Latvia normally mean individual farms, which are considered the cradle of Latvian culture and traditions. Most homesteads were built of wood, with roofs made of straw, planks, woodchips, or reed. These days, many such homesteads have become popular tourist attractions.

- **Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum** – one of the oldest and largest outdoor museums in Europe, just a half-an-hour drive from the centre of Riga.

- **Slutiski Old Believers’ village in Latgale** – example of villages characteristic of Latvia’s eastern regions, which historically evolved from several individual homesteads situated close to each other. The village also offers visitors to see unique spiritual and everyday life materials of the Old Believers in Latvia.

### Wooden architecture in Latvia
• **The historic part of the resort city of Jurmala**, made up of wooden buildings constructed in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, most as summer villas. A characteristic trait of these buildings is ornate and imaginative carvings that decorate window frames, facades, and roofs.

• **Ungurmuiza** – an ensemble from the 18th century – the only wooden baroque building in Latvia, also known for its unique wall paintings inside. Now renovated, the Ungurmuiza Manor is a museum and guesthouse. Every year, the manor hosts an opera music festival, featuring Latvian National Opera stars.

• **Araisi Archaeological Museum Park** – Europe’s only reconstructed fortified settlement of the 9th-10th century that is located on a lake island. The museum park is part of well-preserved cultural and historical scenery, and stands in stark contrast to the urban environment of today.

---

**Kalnciems Street Quarter**

Kalnciems Street Quarter, with its beautifully-restored wooden buildings, is not only an area pleasing to the eye, but a lively arts and...

**Ungurmuiza Manor**

Ungurmuiza Manor complex is a unique ensemble of wooden architecture from the 18th century, centered around the only Baroque-era wooden...
Kuldiga

Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum

One of the oldest and largest open-air museums in Europe is located on the banks of Lake Jugla, just a 30 minute drive from downtown Riga.

Slutišķi Old Believers' Village

Slutišķi village is located in the Naujene rural district of the Daugava county situated at the foot of the Markova Castle Mound on the...
**Seaside Open-air Museum in Ventspils**

The Seaside Open-air Museum in Ventspils offers information about development of the fishing industry and a vast exhibition of different...

**Āraiši Lake Castle Archaeological Park**

Āraiši Lake Castle is the only reconstruction of a 8/9 – 10th century fortified settlement in Europe; a unique object, which this year is...

Source URL: https://www.latvia.travel/en/article/wooden-architecture