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Having historically developed at the crossroads between the East, the West, and the North, Latvia’s cultural landscape is an intricate and unique composition of local traditions and foreign influences. In the country’s towns and cities you will find architecture ranging from robust medieval castles to adorable wooden cottages, from the plasticity of Art Nouveau to slick glass surfaces. The museums in Latvia will tell you stories about Hanseatic trade routes, the conquests of Swedish and Polish kings, and life behind the Iron Curtain. Art galleries and festivals will guide you through all shades of Latvian painting and bend spaces and objects with the help of sound, light, and imagination. Nothing compares to the Latvian Song and Dance Festival when over 16 000 singers gather in a united choir and as many dancers twirl in elaborate patterns. This special event takes place only once every five years, but the countless other musical events, the orchestra and opera performances, and the pop and jazz festivals that can be enjoyed both in high-level concert venues and in the open air will not leave you disappointed. Traditional crafts that are long-lost in other countries thrive in Latvia, and are even incorporated into modern design practices. Visit a weavers’, potters’ or blacksmiths’ workshop to learn about each trade or try your hand at creating something yourself!

With such rich and diverse cultural traditions, it is no wonder that Latvia has gifted the world so many outstanding cultural personalities – violinist Gidon Kremer, conductor Andris Nelsons, opera soloist Elīna Garanča, architect Gunnar Birkerts, painter Vija Celmiņš, ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov, and many other stars call Latvia their homeland.

In this booklet you will find twelve hand-picked destinations in all four regions of Latvia, representing both cherished heritage as well as contemporary culture. In addition, there are twelve must-see cultural events in the insert. Welcome to Latvia!
Latvian National Museum of Art

Latvian National Museum of Art
Jaņa Rozentāla laukums 1, Rīga (D3)

Art Museum Riga Bourse
Doma laukums 6, Rīga (D4)

Museum of Decorative Arts and Design
Skārņu iela 10, Rīga (D4)
The Latvian National Museum of Art is the largest and most important depository of art in the country. The museum’s permanent exposition provides a comprehensive overview of Latvian painting in the 19th and 20th centuries, while temporary exhibitions feature works of recognised contemporary artists. Opened in 1905, the neo-Baroque building of the museum is a prominent landmark of the city centre. Its author was the German architect and art historian Wilhelm Neumann who also served as the museum’s first director. In 2016, the building reopened after a major renovation that significantly expanded the exhibition halls and restored its majestic beauty.

Three other museums and one exhibition hall belong to the family of the Latvian National Museum of Art. The Art Museum Riga Bourse holds a collection of Western European paintings from the 16th to the 19th century, as well as a selection of traditional art from various Asian countries. The museum is located in the former Riga Bourse and is designed to liken a Venetian palazzo.

The collection of the Museum of Decorative Arts and Design encompasses applied arts, crafts, and design items from the end of the 19th century to the present day, while the Romans Suta and Aleksandra Beļcova Museum is dedicated to two outstanding representatives of classical modernism in Latvian art history. The museum is housed in the artists’ memorial apartment, and is most notable for the hand-painted porcelain from the legendary Baltars workshop.

The Arsenāls Exhibition Hall occupies an early 19th-century customs warehouse that served various military needs until the mid-1980s. Arsenāls embraces conceptual art — immersive audio-visual works, playful installations, and provocative experiments.

Romans Suta and Aleksandra Beļcova Museum
Elizabetes iela 57a–26, Rīga (E3)

Arsenāls Exhibition Hall
Torņa iela 1, Rīga (D3)

→ lnmm.lv
Across Akmens Tilts (the Stone Bridge) on the left bank of river Daugava, a building resembling a mountain rises over the water. It is the new National Library of Latvia, or Gaismas Pils (The Castle of Light) as it is also called. Completed in 2014 it is deeply meaningful to the nation. The structure is the brain-child of the internationally acclaimed Latvian-born American architect Gunnar Birkerts. One of the most impressive features of the library’s atrium is the People’s Bookshelf — a five-storey-high composition of books donated to the National Library.

The collection of the National Library of Latvia includes 4.5 million units and embraces all branches of knowledge. Most of the library’s activities and events are intended to support higher education, research and life-long learning. The building is also a platform for cultural and social events and frequently hosts various exhibitions, concerts, and conventions. A permanent exhibition on the ground floor, Book in Latvia, looks at book publishing as a material heritage as well as a social phenomenon that has the power to transform a society. A national treasure available for viewing at the library is the Dainu Skapis — the legendary file cabinet containing thousands of Latvian folk songs which is listed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

Within a ten minute walk from the library is the Mūkusala Art Salon — a gallery displaying works from the ever-growing collection of the Zuzāns family. It contains hundreds of outstanding works by Latvian 20th century masters as well as the leading painters and graphic artists of today, presented to viewers as solo shows and thematic group exhibitions.

National Library of Latvia

Mūkusala iela 3, Rīga (C5)

lnb.lv

Mūkusala Art Salon

Mūkusala iela 42, Rīga (D6)

mmsalons.lv
Latvian National Opera and Ballet

The Latvian National Opera and Ballet

Freedom Monument
When the Latvian National Opera and Ballet (then — the Riga City Theatre) was being built in the mid-19th century, it was given a prominent place on the ring of boulevards near the City Canal. The Neoclassical building with its gold-and-burgundy Great Hall was inaugurated in 1863. The Latvian National Opera and Ballet presents an average of six new productions per season. While classical and Romantic operas and ballets remain the cornerstones of its repertoire, the Opera continually strives to seek contemporary forms of expression. The Riga Opera is rife with talent — world-renowned soloists like Elīna Garanča, Kristine Opolais, and Aleksandrs Antoņenko started their careers on this stage.

Near the Opera rises the Freedom Monument, a symbol of the Latvian nation’s pursuit for independence. The woman on top of the monument holds up three golden stars that represent Latvia’s three historical regions — Kurzeme, Vidzeme, and Latgale. Designed by the outstanding sculptor Kārlis Zāle, the monument was unveiled in 1935 and was financed entirely by public donations.

Take a short stroll through the Old Town of Riga, Vecrīga, and you’ll come across one of the oldest and most beautiful concert halls in Riga, the Great Guild, which is the home of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra. Its repertoire includes 19th and 20th century orchestral masterpieces, as well as classical and contemporary works by Latvian composers.

**Latvian National Opera and Ballet**
- Aspazijas bulvāris 3, Rīga (D4)
- [opera.lv](http://opera.lv)

**Latvian National Symphonic Orchestra & The Great Guild**
- Amatu iela 6, Rīga (D4)
- [inso.lv](http://inso.lv)
Contemporary art galleries in Riga

ISSP gallery

RIXC
In addition to well-established museums and exhibition halls, there are many independent art spaces in Riga each catering to a different audience. Since 2009, the kim? Contemporary Art Centre has brought up a new generation of confident and widely acclaimed artists by serving as a springboard into the international art scene. Each exhibition opening at kim? is a celebration for the local artist community and draws a stylish and cheerful crowd.

427, or Four to Seven, is an artist-run gallery which, as the name suggests, is open from 4 to 7 in the afternoon. It has defined its mission as “sorting, dismantling, reorganising and taking apart the components of contemporary art.” An hour later, from 5 to 8, the nearby gallery LOW opens its doors. Closely linked to the artist collective Popper Publishing, LOW highlights young talents in graphic arts and illustration. The art gallery Careva Contemporary is based in the Old Town of Riga and features mid-career and emerging artists from Northern and Eastern Europe. Careva also represents Latvian artists abroad by partaking in various international art fairs.

Those working at the intersection of art, science and technology gravitate towards RIXC — the centre for new media culture. In addition to exhibitions that often address political and environmental issues, RIXC holds the annual Art Science Festival and publishes the journal Acoustic Space.

The ISSP gallery is a buzzing hive of contemporary photography. Hardly an evening passes by without an artist talk, workshop or portfolio review, and the exhibitions sometimes reach into spheres beyond photography.

kim?
□ Sporta iela 2, Rīga (E2)
→ kim.lv

427
□ Stabu iela 70, Rīga (F3)
→ fourtoseven.info

LOW
□ Ģertrūdes iela 115, Rīga (F4)
→ lowgallery

Careva
□ Kaļķu iela 24, Rīga (D4)
→ carevacontemporary.com

RIXC
□ Lenču iela 2, Rīga (D2)
→ rixc.org

ISSP
□ Marijas iela 13–k3, Berga Bazārs, Rīga (E4)
→ issp.lv
Pārdaugava

Kālniema Quarter

Žanis Lipke Memorial
Grass is greener and life has a more relaxed pace on the left bank of the river Daugava, or Pārdaugava as it is called in Latvian. Riga has retained more wooden architecture than any other European city, and a significant part of it can be found here. The cluster of six wooden buildings known as the Kalnciema Quarter is a fine example. It is particularly famous for its farmers’ and artisan market on Saturdays as well as for its intimate evening concerts and film nights held in the garden. For those curious about the renovation and upkeep of such buildings, the Wooden Architecture Centre has all the answers.

The Kalnciema Quarter is a part of the Āgenskalns neighbourhood. In the very heart of it stands the Āgenskalns’ Market — a remarkable brick building, designed by architect Reinhold Schmaeling in the 1920s. While the hall awaits renovation, market activities have moved to the courtyard. Fresh farm produce is sold here every day, complemented by a weekly flea market, monthly street food festivals, and seasonal festivities.

The island Ķīpsala has evolved from a fishermen’s village to an upscale neighbourhood with beautifully restored wooden mansions. A significant number of them are the work of the renowned architect Zaiga Gaile, a vocal advocate of the city’s heritage. At the end of a small cul-de-sac you’ll find the discreet museum Žanis Lipke Memorial which is a tribute to a dock worker who selflessly helped dozens of Jews escape the Riga Ghetto and hid them in a bunker under his woodshed. A visit to the small museum is not only enlightening but also a sensory experience due to its ambient scenography.

Kalnciema Quarter
- Corner of Kalnciema iela and Melnsila iela, Rīga (A5)
  → kalnciemaiela.lv

Āgenskalns’ Market
- Nometņu iela 64, Rīga (A5)
  → Atirgus

Žanis Lipke Memorial
- Mazais Balasta dambis 9, Rīga (B3)
  → lipke.lv

Dirty Deal Teatro
- Talsu iela 1, Rīga (A5)
  → dirtydealteatro.lv
Urban subcultures and nightlife in Riga

Miera iela

Mr. Page
☐ Miera iela 4, Rīga (F2)
→ mrpage.lv

M50
☐ Miera iela 17, Rīga (F2)
→ m50.lv

Rocket Bean Roastery
☐ Miera iela 29/31, Rīga (F2)
→ rocketbean.lv

Illuseum
☐ Miera iela 19, Rīga (F2)
⇨ exGoija

Taka
☐ Miera iela 10, Rīga (F2)
⇨ takabars

New Riga Theatre
☐ Miera iela 58a, Rīga (F1)
→ jrt.lv

Aristīda Briāna iela

Labietis
☐ Aristīda Briāna iela 9a, Rīga (F2)
→ labietis.lv

Piens
☐ Aristīda Briāna iela 9a–2, Rīga (F2)

One One
☑ Šarlotes iela 18a, Rīga (F2)
→ oneoneriga.lv

K.K. fon Stricka villa
☐ Aristīda Briāna iela 9, Rīga (F2)
⇨ strickavilla

Tallinn Street Creative Quarter
☐ Miera iela 34, Rīga (F2)
☐ Tallinas iela 10, Rīga (F2)
⇨ Tallinasielaskvartals
Miera Iela has held the title of the hippest street in Riga for a decade, and it hasn’t lost an ounce of its vibrancy or shabby charm. Specialty stores, cosy cafés, and creative studios compose the quirky image of Miera Iela. At Mr. Page you’ll find a carefully curated selection of books while M50 carries clothing, accessories, and other items by local designers. Enjoy fragrant coffee at Rocket Bean Roastery, sip tea at Illuseum or try locally-brewed beer at Taka or Labietis.

Several creative hubs have sprouted up in the vicinity of Miera Iela. Colourful graffiti and neon signs mark the emerging Tallinn Street Creative Quarter, while Aristīda Briāna Iela is notable for its nightlife cluster surrounding the bar Piens. The bar shares a courtyard with electronic music club One One and K.K. fon Stricka Villa — a splendid 19th century mansion reborn as a unique event venue. Further along Miera Iela you’ll find the New Riga Theatre in its temporary premises under the leadership of internationally acclaimed director Alvis Hermanis.

In recent years the free spirit of Miera Iela has spilled over into Avotu Iela and the surrounding neighbourhood. While the ground floors of buildings on this street are still dominated by bridal salons, various subcultures have managed to find their own nooks and crannies. Latvian writers, artists, and musicians frequent the bookstore/bar Bolderāja and the well-hidden Aleponija. Brave new theatre and dance concepts are born at the independent Ģertrūde Street Theatre. The design brand Miesai produces limited-edition clothing, posters and cups featuring modern Latvian typography, and restaurant Terapija offers the most delicious vegan lunches and brunches.

**Avotu iela**
- [avotukvartali](#)

**Bolderāja**
- Avotu iela 27, Rīga (F3)
- [bolderaja27](#)

**Aleponija**
- Ernesta Birznieka-Upīša iela 22, Rīga (F4)
- [aleponija](#)

**Ģertrūde Street Theatre**
- Ģertrūdes iela 101a, Rīga (F4)
- [git.lv](#)

**Miesai**
- Ģertrūdes iela 121, Rīga (F4)
- [miesai.com](#)

**Terapija**
- Bruņinieku iela 69, Rīga (F3)
- [auguterapija](#)
Baroque and Art Nouveau architecture

Riga Art Nouveau Museum

Alberta Iela

Rundāle Palace
The rapid growth of Riga in the beginning of the 20th century coincided with the influx of a new architectural style — Art Nouveau. The whole historical centre of Riga is dotted with eye-catching examples of this expressive, richly decorated architectural style, and the greatest concentration of Art Nouveau buildings can be found in the so-called Quiet Centre. Go for a stroll along Elizabetes, Alberta, Rūpniecības, and Vilandes Iela to view the most magnificent examples. Some of the most intricately ornamented buildings here were designed by engineer Mikhail Eisenstein, father of the world-famous film director Sergei Eisenstein. On the corner of Alberta Iela and Strēlnieku Iela you’ll find the Art Nouveau Museum which occupies the apartment where the outstanding Latvian architect Konstantīns Pēkšēns lived until 1907. The building features a breathtaking spiral staircase with ornamental ceiling paintings, quite possibly by the prominent Latvian artist Janis Rozentāls. The museum’s display shows the characteristic furnishings of a wealthy residence in the beginning of the 20th century, authentic down to the smallest detail.

A local variation of Art Nouveau is National Romanticism that bears visible influences of Finnish architecture of the same era. Its asymmetrical facades, steep roofs, and ethnographic patterns were an attempt to find an intrinsically Latvian architectural language. One of the most prolific architects of this style was Eižens Laube. Spot his designs on location at Alberta Iela 11 as well as on Brīvības Iela 37, 47, and 62.

History has blessed Latvia with a lot of unique architecture, including some Baroque gems. The majestic Rundāle Palace was built in the 18th century as a summer residence for the Duke of Courland. Designed by the court architect of Russia, Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, the estate consists of 16 buildings, an elaborate French garden, and a forest park. The palace’s ornate Rococo interiors have been masterfully restored complete with silk wall coverings, gold-plated decorations, and porcelain vases of the era.

Riga Art Nouveau Museum
Alberta iela 12, Rīga (D2)
→ jugendstils.riga.lv/eng

The Rundāle Palace
Pilsrundāle, 12km from Bauska
→ rundale.net
Cēsis

St. John’s Church

Cēsis Art Festival

Cīrulīši Nature Trails
Over 800 years old, the medieval Old Town of Cēsis has many charming streets and courtyards to discover. The pride and symbol of Cēsis is the well-preserved Medieval Castle, once the mightiest stronghold in Livonia. Together with the adjoining 18th century manor house of Count Sievers they provide a captivating historical exhibition and an exciting opportunity to explore. In the summer season you can try your hand at medieval games or crafts, or walk around in the castle’s fragrant herb garden. Just steps from the castle the exhibition Burning Conscience introduces visitors to a more recent history. The exhibition has collected stories of courageous acts of resistance to the Soviet and Nazi totalitarian regimes that are on display in a former KGB holding cell block.

For a town of such a modest size, Cēsis has a remarkable cultural scene. Its Concert Hall is the musical centre of the Vidzeme region and regularly hosts classical and pop music concerts as well as theatre and dance performances. In September it holds the festival Cello Cēsis, and in April, the Pēteris Vasks Festival dedicated to the prominent Latvian composer. Every July art connoisseurs gather at the annual Cēsis Art Festival — a month-long celebration of visual arts, music, theatre, and cinema held at locations throughout the town and its scenic surroundings.

Cēsis sits on the edge of Gauja National Park, the biggest nature preserve in the country. The beautiful River Gauja with its steep cliffs, hidden caves, and serene oxbow lakes is within walking distance from the city centre. Walking along the scenic Čirulīši Dabas Takas (Čirulīši Nature Trails) is the perfect introduction to the natural beauty of the ancient Gauja Valley.
Daugavpils

Church Hill

Mark Rothko Art Centre
Daugavpils is the second largest city in Latvia and the centre of the Latgale region. This part of the country is known for its own distinctive language, blue lakes, and strong religious traditions. Baznīcu Kalns (Church Hill) in the Jaunbūve neighbourhood of Daugavpils is where the region’s religious diversity can be witnessed first-hand: a Lutheran, a Roman Catholic, an Orthodox, and an Old Believers’ church all coexist in this rather small area. The city has been ruled by various powers and changed its name many times over the years: founded as Dinaburg in the 13th century, it was later renamed Borisoglebsk, then Dvinsk, then finally, in 1920, it received its current name.

One of the main attractions in Daugavpils is the Daugavpils Cietoksnis — a bastion-type fortress that has survived almost intact since the early 19th century. It is an orthogonal military settlement with parade grounds in the centre, and covers nearly 150 hectares. The highlights of the fortress are the Nicholai Gate, the Water Tower, and the Artillery Arsenal that has been transformed into the Daugavpils Mark Rothko Art Centre. Mark Rothko, one of the world’s most famous abstract expressionists, was born in Daugavpils in 1903. He emigrated to the USA when he was just 10 years old. Six original paintings and several reproductions can be viewed here along with an interactive exhibition on the artist’s life and career.

With the support of Mark Rothko’s children, the Daugavpils Synagogue has been fully restored and now houses the Jews of Daugavpils and Latgale Museum. Its exhibition shows the life and traditions of the Jewish community in the region since 1935.

Daugavpils Mark Rothko Art Centre
Mihaila iela 3, Daugavpils
→ rothkocenter.com

Daugavpils Synagogue
Cietokšņa iela 38, Daugavpils
→ jewishlatgale.lv

→ visitdaugavpils.lv
Jūrmala is a seaside resort with sandy beaches, slender pine trees, and charming wooden architecture. Holidaymakers began flocking to Jūrmala in the middle of the 19th century, and their summer houses display the ornate aesthetics of Neoclassicism, Art Nouveau, and National Romanticism. A splendid example is the summer cottage of the prominent Latvian writers and public figures Rainis and Aspazija who spent their later years in Jūrmala. Today the cottage accommodates a small museum that introduces visitors to their lifelong love and immense body of work.

Nature is omnipresent in Jūrmala — a third of the city’s area is forested, and in most places the beach is hidden behind pine-covered dunes. Take in the fresh air at Dzintaru Mežaparks (Dzintari Forest Park) where you can climb a 33.5-metre-high lookout tower.

In addition to its natural and architectural assets, Jūrmala also prides itself on its rich programme of culture and entertainment. The Dzintari Concert Hall is an elegant wooden heritage building that draws top symphony, opera, pop and jazz acts, and is one of the main venues for the Riga Jurmala Music Festival. Be sure not to miss the remarkable Art Station Dubulti — a functioning railway station that has recently become a venue for contemporary art.

Jomas Iela, Jūrmala’s kilometre-long pedestrian boulevard, offers an array of bars, cafés and restaurants to choose from. For an overnight stay, check into one of the city’s spa hotels — medicinal mud baths and mineral water treatments are part of Jūrmala’s historical appeal.

The Rainis and Aspazija Summer House
- J. Pliekšāna iela 5/7, Majori
  - aspazijarainis.lv

Dzintari Concert Hall
- Turaidas iela 1, Dzintari
  - dzintarukoncertzale.lv

Art Station Dubulti
- Dubulti railway station, Dubulti
  - artstationdubulti

Riga Jurmala Music Festival
  - riga-jurmala.com

→ visitjurmala.lv
Kuldīga

Historical centre of Kuldīga

Sklandrauši

Venta Rapid
Visiting Kuldīga feels like travelling back in time. Its romantic cobblestone streets lined with wooden Baroque buildings form an exceptionally well preserved 17th–18th century ensemble — the only one of this kind remaining in the Baltic states. In the early 17th century Kuldīga (then — Goldingen) was the capital of the Duchy of Courland. The town’s long history is explained in an exhibition at the Kuldīga District Museum. One of the museum’s floors is designed as the apartment of a wealthy family from the beginning of the 20th century. The surrounding scenery is impressive too — Kuldīga is built next to Ventas Rumba, Europe’s widest waterfall. Together with the elegant 19th century brick bridge over river Venta, it is a view to remember!

Craftsmanship and tradition are alive and thriving in Kuldīga. At the Varaviksne applied arts studio one can learn about weaving blankets, table cloths, or belts with ethnographic patterns while the Restoration Centre educates on how to carefully preserve and restore wooden windows, doors, and other architectural elements. “Sklandrauši”, traditional sweet carrot and potato pies, are part of the cultural heritage of the Kurzeme region.

The Kuldīga Synagogue, built in 1875 during the reign of Tsar Alexander II, today serves as a library and concert hall with displays commemorating the local Jewish community. The former prayer house has been transformed into the Art House, where various exhibitions and concerts are frequently held. You can also enjoy visual art exhibitions and design workshops at the Kuldīga Artists’ Residence. Every Friday and Saturday evening in the summer, the Goldingen Knight Cinema operates under the night skies in Pilsētas Dārzs (the Town Garden).

Kuldīga District Museum & Goldingen Knight Cinema

- Pils iela 5, Kuldīga
- [kuldigasmuzejs.lv](http://kuldigasmuzejs.lv)

Kuldīga Restoration Centre

- [kuldigasrestauracijascentrs](kalns)

Kuldīga Art House

- 1905. gada iela 6, Kuldīga
- [Makslasnams](kalns)

Kuldīga Artists’ Residence

- Pils iela 2, Kuldīga
- [kuldigaresidence](kalns)

Visit Kuldīga

- [visitkuldiga.com](http://visitkuldiga.com)
Liepāja

Karosta, Old Fort

Liepāja Holy Trinity Cathedral

The Great Amber Concert Hall
Liepāja is a windy port city with an artistic soul on the west coast of Latvia. The city is a patchwork of urban patterns — tall Art Nouveau buildings stand side-by-side with 19th century Imperial style red brick houses, many of them created by the prolific architect Paul Max Bertschy. Cross the unique metal swing bridge over Karostas Kanāls (the Karosta Canal) and you'll find yourself in a formerly restricted military port area with an eerie, yet photogenic, mixture of intricately decorated Russian Empire army barracks and grim Soviet-era apartment blocks. The golden cupolas of the St. Nicholas Orthodox Maritime Cathedral rise above the neighbourhood.

Liepāja’s most recent architectural icon is the Great Amber Concert Hall, designed by Austrian architect Volker Giencke. Clad in orange-tinted glass, the Great Amber comprises eight stories with large open interior spaces reminiscent of a cruise ship. The acoustics of the Great Hall have been praised by world-renowned musicians and the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra alike. The concert hall hosts various classical music, jazz, and pop performances year round, and in September the annual Liepāja Art Forum puts the spotlight on performing arts. Another unforgettable musical experience is the International Organ Music Festival during which sacred music is performed on the world’s largest mechanical organ at the Holy Trinity Cathedral.

The robust character of Liepāja is best enjoyed on the go — stroll down the Ostas Promenāde (the Harbour Promenade) to watch the colourful fishing boats, or cycle through Jūrmalas Parks (the Seaside Park) to take in the view of the open sea, or explore the remnants of Ziemeļu Forti (the Northern Forts) that once protected the mighty naval base in Karosta.