



COMPASS

ENHANCING MOTIVATION OF
OLDER LEARNERS TO LEARN
THROUGH CULTURE

RIGA - LATVIA



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This work is licensed under Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Riga Tour Guide

The capital of Latvia and the most significant industrial, commercial, cultural, sports, and financial centre in the Baltics is Riga. Thanks to its port, Riga is a vital city across the rest of the country. Riga is the 30th largest city in Europe, after St. Petersburg and Stockholm, with an area of 307.17 km². However, it is the third largest city in the Baltic Sea region regarding the population within city limits.

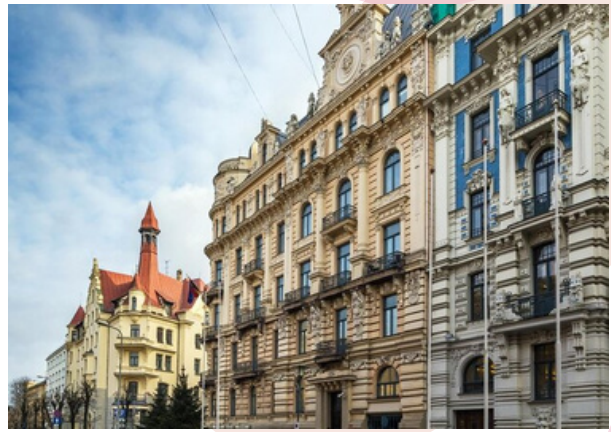
The history of Riga is closely intertwined with the history of the Latvian territory and the Latvian state. Riga itself is more than 800 years old. It is believed that before there was a settlement of the Daugavas' Livs with a harbour on the site of the city, which the Crusaders used as the main support point during the Livonian Crusades. Since 1201, when Bishop Albert of Bremen founded Riga, the Germans have ruled the city for many years, but the locals regularly spoke multiple languages, because the residents came from various nations and lived side by side in Riga.

The city's historic centre with its unique Art Nouveau buildings has been included in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List since 1998. Art Nouveau style is inspired by the natural world, characterized by sinuous, sculptural, organic shapes, arches, curving lines, and sensual ornamentation. Common motifs include stylised versions of leaves, flowers, vines, insects, animals, and other natural elements. And according to UNESCO criteria, there are no similar buildings in the world. Several hundred Art Nouveau buildings in the centre of Riga speak of the preservation of cultural and historical value. Alberta Street is regarded as Riga's Art Nouveau gem since it is full of splendid historical Art Nouveau-style buildings from one end to the other.





Art Nouveau style



Elizabetes Street

Riga was granted city rights in 1225, but in 1282, it signed trade partnership agreements with German cities, setting the foundation for the later Hanseatic League also called Hansa. Hansa was a commercial and defensive alliance of trade guilds and market towns in Central and Northern Europe throughout the Middle Ages. Therefore, Riga became well known commercial city on the Daugava River and, for many centuries, the largest and richest city on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea.

Riga was chosen as Latvia's capital upon the formation of the Republic of Latvia. The city's buildings reflect the country's early years of independence as well as the history of the 1920s and the end of the 1930s. Street names in Riga began to be renamed in Latvian as early as 1918, but by 1936, numerous squares and 336 streets had been renamed. The University of Latvia, the Latvian Academy of Arts, and other educational and cultural organisations began their work. During those years, there have been many stage stars and talents among the graduates of the Latvian State Conservatory, nowadays Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music - who activated music life in other Latvian cities as well, founded music schools and folk conservatories.



The National Opera also called the Riga White House, played a central role in Riga's musical life from the years 1920–1940. The number of new productions in the National Theater reached 27 productions per season, premiering a new release every two weeks.



Jāzeps Vītols Latvian
Academy of Music



National Opera

New monuments were made, and some of them, such as the Freedom Monument (completed in 1935) and the Brothers' Cemetery (honoured in 1936), have come to represent Latvia as a whole. Doma Square took on its current shape in the 1930s with its key structure the Palace of Justice (now the headquarters of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Supreme Court). Other shops were designed the same year as the Army Economic Store (now "Galerija Centrs") and Riga Central Market - the largest market and bazaar in Europe.

After the Republic of Latvia lost its independence in 1940, Riga's role changed as well. No longer the capital of an independent state, the occupation authorities left their stamp on the city's appearance. During Soviet times, a monument to Lenin, the Russian revolution's leader, appeared in the city's centre, and it was only by coincidence that the Freedom Monument was not destroyed.



The Museum of the Latvian Red Archers (now the Museum of the Occupation) and the Latvian Red Archers Monument were built in Riga's Town Hall Square immediately after the war. During the German occupation (at the time of the Second World War), Brivibas Street was renamed Adolf Hitler Street, and during the Soviet occupation, it was renamed Lenin Street. The street regained its real name once again in 1990. Riga began to recover in 1988, with the beginning of the Latvian people's awakening. The most important events and public gatherings were held here.

Riga has been the centre of Latvian political life since the country's foundation. The parliament, the government, the President's Office, ministries, and the Supreme Court all have offices in Old Town. Foreign embassies are situated in Riga, and foreign delegations visit regularly. The capital is Latvia's financial and economic centre, with the Bank of Latvia and several private banks and industrial firms based in the city.

Symbols like guard towers, gates, and gate keys were used to represent the city. These symbols have become part of Riga's coat of arms. Locals in Riga view the Old Riga skyline as the city's primary icon. Other symbols of the capital include the rooster of St. Peter's Church, the Riga coat of arms, the Riga keys, the Riga flag, the Black Cat, and the House of the Blackheads. Riga's landmarks include the Freedom Monument, Dome Church, Central Market, famous meeting place for dates - Laima Clock, and the sculpture "Great Kristaps".


Riga is a cultural and educational centre, with many theatres and museums, the main Latvian universities, and the general Latvian song and dance festival held in the city, among many other important events. It was chosen as the European Capital of Culture in 2014.





Riga now houses more than a third of Latvia's population. Different languages are spoken in the city and people of various nationalities live and work here. A significant number of tourists visit the city every year and it has become a popular tourist destination for both cultural event visitors and those who prefer leisurely rest in a comfortable, clean urban environment.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union 

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This work is licensed under Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>