Rīga was officially founded in 1201 by Bishop Albert for the Teutonic Knights, but the history of Rīga goes back to the 2nd century as initial settlers moved to the area. Soon after it was settled by Livs and Curonians, and became an important trading city during the Middle Ages. Rīga’s prominence grew after 1282 when it joined the Hanseatic League. Due to its strategic location by the Baltic Sea, between Russia and the Nordic countries, as well as its port, Rīga was desired by many foreign powers for centuries to come. Following initial German rule, during the 16th century Rīga was largely ruled by the Polish, in the 17th by the Swedes, in the 18th by the Russians.

Foreign dominance went hand in hand with the growth of nationalism and the development of an idea of an independent nation, which Latvia achieved in 1918, with Rīga as its capital. In 1940 Rīga was occupied by Soviet forces, and in 1941 by the German army until 1945, when Soviet Occupation resumed. In 1991 Rīga was the heart of the Singing Revolution and turned into a city of barricades before Latvia regained its independence.

History

Admire Art Nouveau and wooden architecture
• Be creative, in one of its numerous creative quarters
• Enjoy a wide variety of culture, ranging from world-class opera and classical music, to contemporary and traditional art exhibitions, from traditional folk culture to fusions of the genres of the arts, numerous bands playing a variety of music styles, countless theatre performances, street festivals, cultural days, and much, much more
• Learn to walk on cobblestones
• Ride your bike on the pavement
• Learn to love a multitude of street cats
• Taste delightfully delicious meals at numerous high-quality restaurants run by well-known chefs
• Take a walk, nothing is far away

Rīga is a place to...

Rīga is Bigger on the Inside

The Latvian Institute deals with promoting awareness and providing a wide range of information about Latvia.

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Not for sale
Rīga is a city where centuries meet, where Art Nouveau grandeur contrasts soviet practicality, where wooden buildings are reflected on the walls of new high rises. Rīga is a cultural hub, where all forms of culture are part of everyday life; it is a European metropolis with a unique, and historical feel.

Rīga is bigger on the inside. Once you are here, it will take you by surprise.

**Basic Facts**

- **Rīga** was founded in 1201 by Bishop Albert.
- **Rīga** is the biggest city, and the key economic centre of the Baltic States.
- **Rīga** has the biggest concentration of Art Nouveau buildings (40%) and 19th century wooden buildings (around 4000) in Europe.
- **Central Rīga** is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **Rīga** generates more than 50% of Latvia’s GDP.
- **Rīga’s ice-free port** is the biggest in the Baltics, and handles over 36 M tonnes of cargo a year.
- **Rīga** is home to 1/3 of Latvia’s population, about 670,000 people.
- **Rīga** is 6751 km from New York (10 hr flight), 1674 km from London (2.5 hr flight), 485 km from St. Petersburg.
- **Rīga** is 10 km from the city center, and the Rīga Airport has direct flights to over 80 destinations.