

Riga

Overview

Due to its geographical location on the Baltic Sea (where East and West meets), Riga has been an important centre of trade, finance and culture for centuries. Representatives of many nations have lived and worked in Riga apart from local Livs and Latvians, Germans, Swedes, Russians and Poles also considered Riga to be their city.

Riga has unique values due to its rather intact medieval architecture and that of later periods, the urban structure, the richness and quality of Art Nouveau architecture and the 19-th century wooden architecture of the city. Inscribing the historic centre of Riga on the World Heritage List of UNESCO recognized it.

Riga belongs to the cultural space of Western Europe. For the city, dynamic and diverse music and arts activities are typical. Over centuries, the creative atmosphere evolved in Riga and inspired composers, poets and artists.

Riga has hundreds of ways for enticing visitors its rich history, architecture, spacious gardens and parks, museums, art galleries and world-class opera and daily treats like a walk in the enormous colorful central market or going to a cosy café, club or pub.

Impossible not to be loved in Riga, because of its given inspiration to everyone both for them which are delighted with ancient and which craves for new impressions. Amazingly for a city which survived two world wars, the formerly walled section of the Latvian capital city which is known as Old Riga has preserved a glorious range of old, older and very old buildings. From the magnificence of the Riga Dome Cathedral, which dates back the 13th century, and the fantastic Gothic façade of St Peter's Church, to the oldest residential buildings in the city, the so-called Three Brothers, to the small, decorative houses which surround Liv Square, to the newly rebuilt House of the Blackheads and the newly built City Hall, Old Riga is truly a masterpiece of architecture and antiquity. In the 21st century, Old Riga has adapted itself to the stream of tourists who pass through year-round, with cosy hotels, numerous eateries and a variety of attractions, but the ancient spirit of the city is never lost, particularly when the visitor wanders through some of the surprisingly narrow streets and alleyways which crisscross the old city.

When the ornate and fabulous style of Art Nouveau or Jugendstil appeared on the scene in the very late 19th and early 20th century, Riga was well positioned to receive it, because the city was rich, rich, rich! Architects vied with one another in the grandeur of their designs, and despite years of Soviet-era neglect which allowed many grand interiors in particular to go to waste, the area around Elizabetes Street remains a true treasure for fans of the environmentally inspired artistic movement. Many buildings have been renovated and sparkle once again as they were intended by the great luminaries of the architectural world of the turn of the century, Mikhail Eisenstein among them.

When the walls of Medieval Riga came down in the mid-19th century, the city fathers had the outstanding idea of installing parks and gardens in the area which used to feature the ramparts. The result is one of the greenest city centres in all of Europe, with beautiful parks to wander and explore. Alongside the parks visitors will find some of the loveliest and most important buildings in the city. Other parks are scattered all over Riga, and although Latvian custom frowns upon walking or sitting in the grass, there is plenty to see and do, particularly during the summer.

It might perhaps be a slight exaggeration to say that Riga is another of those cities which never sleeps, but the idea is not far from the truth. Particularly in Old Riga, but also in its surrounding area, there are countless restaurants, bars and nightclubs, featuring entertainments that will satisfy most any taste. During the summer, Old Riga bursts

with open-air cafés and beer gardens. In winter, the central Liv Square boasts an ice skating rink. Once again - something for everyone, and a great destination for those whose tourism day does not stop at 6:00 PM. Old Riga in particular is just as alive at midnight as it was six hours earlier.

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Riga Tourism Coordination and Information Centre