

LATVIA

HOTELS•MOTELS•INNS

**Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): ++371**

Latvia Tourism Development Agency: Pils laukums 4, LV-1050 Riga Tel/Fax: 7229945 E-mail: tbody@latnet.lv Website: www.latviatravel.com

Capital: Riga Time: GMT + 2

Background: After a brief period of independence between the two World Wars, Latvia was annexed by the USSR in 1940. It reestablished its independence in 1991 following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Although the last Russian troops left in 1994, the status of the Russian minority (some 30% of the population) remains of concern to Moscow. Latvia continues to revamp its economy for eventual integration into various Western European political and economic institutions.

Location: Eastern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea, between Estonia and Lithuania

Map References: Europe

Area: total: 64,589 sq km land: 64,589 sq km water: 0 sq km

Climate: maritime; wet, moderate winters

Terrain: low plain

Natural Resources: minimal; amber, peat, limestone, dolomite, hydropower, arable land

Population: 2,404,926 (July 2000 est.)

Nationality: noun: Latvian(s) adjective: Latvian

Ethnic Groups: Latvian 56.5%, Russian 30.4%, Byelorussian 4.3%, Ukrainian 2.8%, Polish 2.6%, other 3.4%

Religions: Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox

Languages: Lettish (official), Lithuanian, Russian, other

Economy: In 1999 Latvia, a transitional economy, experienced zero GDP growth as it continued to feel the impact of the August 1998 Russian financial crisis. Latvia officially joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in February 1999 - the first Baltic state to join - and was invited at the Helsinki EU Summit in December 1999 to begin accession talks in early 2000. Unemployment reached 9.6% in 1999, up from 9.2% in 1998 and 6.7% in 1997. Privatization of large state-owned utilities, especially the energy sector, faced more delays in 1999, but is expected to accelerate in the next two years. Latvia projects 3.5% GDP growth, 3% inflation, and a 2% fiscal deficit in 2000. Preparing for EU membership by 2003 remains a top foreign policy priority.

Industries: buses, vans, street and railroad cars, synthetic fibers, agricultural machinery, fertilizers, washing machines, radios, electronics, pharmaceuticals, processed foods, textiles; dependent on imports for energy, raw materials, and intermediate products

Currency: 1 Latvian lat (LVL) = 100 santims

Railways: total: 2,412 km broad gauge: 2,379 km 1,520-m gauge (271 km electrified) (1992) narrow gauge: 33 km 0.750-m gauge (1994)

Highways: total: 59,178 km paved: 22,843 km unpaved: 36,335 km (1998 est.)

Waterways: 300 km perennially navigable

Ports and Harbors: Daugavpils, Liepāja, Riga, Ventspils

Airports: 50 (1994 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 36 2,438 to 3,047 m: 6 1,524 to 2,437 m: 2 914 to 1,523 m: 1 under 914 m: 27 (1994 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: total: 14 2,438 to 3,047 m: 2 914 to 1,523 m: 2 under 914 m: 10 (1994 est.)

Visa: required by all except nationals of the EU and USA

Duty Free: goods permitted: 200 cigarettes or 20 cigars or 200g of tobacco, 1 litre of alcohol, up to Ls15 of food and Ls225 of goods

Health: no specific precautions

3 Million Facts are listed on our Website

AMATAS NOVADS

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DAUGAVPILS

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JURMALA

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EIROPA HOTEL, Tel:371 67762211, Fax:371 67762299, hotel@eiropahotel.lv, <http://www.goodstayhotels.com/hotels/eiropa>

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RIGA

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