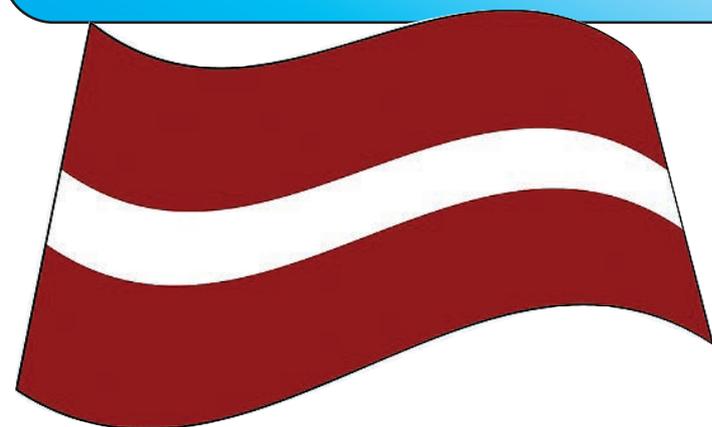




Travel With Us!



Republic of Latvia



- Latvia is a “Baltic state” along with Lithuania and Estonia. They are located along the Baltic Sea and Russia. Latvia is in the middle of the Baltic states, with Estonia above and Lithuania below. Latvia is smaller than Lithuania and larger than Estonia.

- The weather is mild, but it has seasons much like Michigan. The summer’s average around 60 degrees, and the winter averages around 24 degrees. The warmest month is July and the coldest is January.

- The official language is Latvian, but Russian, English, and some Lithuanian are also spoken.

- The capital city is Riga, and also the largest Baltic city. It is located near the Gulf of Riga in the region Vidzeme. Vidzeme is one of four regions in Latvia, along with Kurzeme, Zemgale, and Latgale. Riga was founded in 1201 and is now one of the oldest medieval cities in Europe. Today, more than one third of Latvia’s population lives there. It is a distinct cultural and art site.

- The currency of Latvia is the Latvian Lat. One Latvian Lat is about \$1.79 US dollars. It was reintroduced in Europe in 1993 and is one of the most stable and secure currencies in Europe.

- The literacy rate in Latvia is an outstanding 99.8%, placing them 4th in the Literacy rate list in 2011.

- A traditional summer festival is held for three days called Jani, and celebrates the summer solstice. It is one of their oldest holidays and many people leave the cities to have bonfires with friends and family. There is also folk singing, polka dancing and wreath making for the young and old. Flowers for the ladies and oak leaves for the men. The flower and oak wreaths are placed everywhere including around houses and on animals! This mid-summer event is all about communing with nature.



To the left is Turaida Museum Reserve, located close to Riga. The name Turaida means “God’s garden” in Livonian, the language of its oldest inhabitants. The name matches its beautiful surroundings.

- The government is a democratic, parliamentary republic. This means they have a president, like the US, and also a prime minister that the president chooses.

- Wood and metal products, machinery, electrical equipment and mineral products are Latvia’s main exports.

- Grey peas with bacon is a traditional dish, along with a rye bread unique to Latvia. Latvian rye bread has been a staple in their diet for many years.

- November 18th, 1918 was their Independence Day. This day they declared independence after the armistice of World War 1.

- Famous people from Latvia include: Jacob Davis at right, the inventor of riveted jeans. He worked with Levi Strauss in Nevada to create the kind of jeans you wear today. Another famous person is Wilhelm Ostwald, a chemist, and winner of a Nobel Peace Prize and Juris Upatnieks who developed 3-D holography and opened a new world for scientific discovery.

