



Latvia in Brief

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The **Republic of Latvia** was founded on **November 18, 1918**.

It has been continuously recognised as a sovereign state since **1920** despite occupations and rule by the ***Soviet Union (1940-1941, 1945-1991)*** and ***Nazi Germany (1941-1945)***.

On **August 21, 1991** Latvia declared the restoration of its **de facto independence**, re-established international diplomatic ties, and joined the **United Nations**.

Latvija Eiropā



The Latvian region map



Geography

Latvia is the central country of the **Baltic States** (*Estonia, Latvia* and *Lithuania*) and is located in North-eastern Europe on the east coast of the **Baltic Sea**.

Its geographic coordinates are 57°00'N latitude and 25°00'E longitude. It consists of fertile lowland plains and moderate hills, with most of its territory less than 100 metres above sea level. It has an extensive network of rivers, thousands of lakes and hundreds of kilometres of undeveloped seashore lined by pine forests, dunes, and continuous white sand beaches.

Latvia - officially the **Republic of Latvia**

(Latvian: ***Latvijas Republika***)

is a country in the Baltic region of Northern Europe.

The territory of Latvia covers 64,589 km² (24,938 sq mi) and it has a temperate seasonal climate.

It is bordered to the north by ***Estonia*** (border length 343 km), to the south by ***Lithuania*** (588 km), to the east by the ***Russian Federation*** (276 km), and to the southeast by ***Belarus*** (141 km).

Across the Baltic Sea to the west lies ***Sweden***

Area:64,589 sq.km or 24,937 sq.miles.

Regions:Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, Latgale.

Total national border length:1,862 km.

Length of Latvia's Baltic coastline:494 km.

Largest lake:Lubāns, 80.7 sq.km.

Deepest lake:Drīdzis, 65.1 metres.

Longest river within Latvian territory:the Gauja, 452 km.

Largest river to flow through Latvian territory:the Daugava,
total length 1,005 km, of which 352 km within Latvian territory.

Highest point: Gaiziņkalns, 311.6 metres.

Latvian language having many similarities with Lithuanian

The modern name of Latvia is thought to originate from the ancient Latvian name ***Latvji***

The country is also the home of a large Russian minority of whom many are non-citizens

Latvia is a unitary parliamentary republic and is divided into 118 municipalities (109 counties and 9 cities).

The capital and largest city is Riga.

Following a period of being part of the Soviet Union after World War II

Latvia declared its **independence in 1991**.

Latvia has been a member of the **United Nations** since September 17, 1991;

of the **European Union** since May 1, 2004;

and of the **NATO** since March 29, 2004.

Ethnic composition:

59.4% Latvian,

27.6% Russian,

3.6% Belorussian,

2.5% Ukrainian,

2.3% Polish,

1.3% Lithuanian,

3.3% other nationalities.

Official Language: Latvian

Hi - ***Sveiks!***

Good-bye - ***Uz redzēšanos***

Yes - ***Jā***

No - ***Nē***

Thank you - ***Paldies***

Please - ***Lūdzu***

Sorry - ***Atvaino***

Largest Religious Confessions:

Evangelist Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Russian Orthodox.

Since the 16th century Reformation, the **Lutheran church** has played a leading role in Latvia.

Government

Latvia is a democratic, parliamentary republic.

Legislative power is in the hands of the single chamber **Saeima** , which has **100 deputies**.

Parliamentary elections are held **every 4 years**.

Latvia's head of state, the **President**, is elected by the Saeima for a period of 4 years. The President signs laws, chooses the Prime Minister (who heads the government) and performs representative functions.

Today, **77 towns and cities** are located in the relatively small Republic of Latvia.

Riga - the Capital City of Latvia

Latvia's political, economic and culture centre is in Rīga, where more than one third of Latvia's population lives and works.

Smallest Latvian town is **Durbe** (population 648)

Madona population are $\approx 12\ 000$

Education in Latvia

Nine-year basic education

Basic education in Latvia is compulsory. Basic education lasts nine years, consisting of four years at elementary school and five years at primary school.

General secondary education

Including basic education, secondary education lasts for 12 years

Vocational education

Basic vocational education and Secondary vocational education

Higher education

Latvia has two sorts of higher education programs – academic and professional. Academic higher education programs include bachelor's and master's degree programs. A bachelor's degree is awarded after three or four years of study, while a master's degree is obtained on successful completion of a second phase of academic higher education, lasting one or two years.

Doctoral studies

Only graduates holding a master's degree or equivalent higher education diploma may take up doctoral studies.

Sports in Latvia

Basketball: excellent in the past, interesting in the present

Football: more and less brilliant surprises

Ice Hockey: a hot game both for players and viewers

15 seasons in the world championship elite group,
participation in 4 Olympic tournaments

Olympic Record

1936 - Finished tied in 13th place

2002 - Finished in 9th place

2006 - Finished in 12th place

2010 - Finished in 12th place

Ice hockey

World Championship Record

1997 - Finished in the 7th place

9; 11; 8; 13; 11; 9; 7; 9; 10; 13; 11; 7; 11; 13

2012 - finished in 10th place

Athletics: the queen and her court

Javelin throwers are the pride of Latvian athletics.

In **1956** in Melbourne, **Inese Jaunzeme** won the **first Olympic gold** for Latvia (actually, under the USSR flag).

In 1968 in Mexico Jānis Lūsis - **Olympic champion**

In 1980 in Moscow Dainis Kūla - **Olympic champion**

In 2004 in Athens Vadims Vasiļevskis – **Olympic silver**

In 2008 in Beijing Ainārs Kovals - **Olympic silver**

Cycling

Māris Štrombergs, won the inaugural **Olympic gold** in the new Olympic discipline of **BMX** (*bicycle moto-cross*).
London – Olimpic champion

Dainis Ozols – Olympic silver in the group race

Pjotrs Ugrjumovs - won the second place in the prestigious multi-day races, the ***Tour de France (1994)*** and ***Giro d'Italia (1993)***.

In **2000**, **Romāns Vainšteins** became **world champion** in the group race

Bobsleigh

Latvian sportsmen were the core of USSR national team. In the **Sarajevo Olympic Games**, **Zintis Ekmanis** won the **bronze** in the 2-man event.

in **Calgary Jānis Ķipurs** became the **Olympic champions**.

Vera Zozuļa is probably the best ever Soviet **luger** and she was the first Latvian athlete to win gold at the **Winter Olympics**. As of 2009, she is the only non-German speaking winner of any Olympic luge event.

Mārtiņš Rubenis – 3rd place in Torino

Andris and Juris Šici – 2nd place in Calgary

Martins Dukurs – 2nd place in Calgary (skeleton)

Latvian sport stars

Afanasijs Kuzmins

Ivans Klementjevs

Uljana Semjonova

Valdis Valters

Viktors Ščerbatihs

Aigars Fadejevs

Igors Vihrovs

Vsevolods Zeļonijs

Kristers Serģis and Artis Rasmanis

Ernests Gulbis

Māris Štrombergs

Mārtiņš Pļaviņš

Jānis Šmēdiņš

Currency

Name: **Lats**

Code: **LVL**

Symbol: **Ls**

Latvia's national currency is the **lats** consisting of 100 *santims*.

Banknotes have nominal values of **5, 10, 20, 50, 100** and **500** lats, while coins have nominal values of **1, 2, 5, 10, 20** and **50** santims, and **1,2** and **100** lats.

The lats was reintroduced in **1993** and has been one of Europe's most stable and secure currencies.

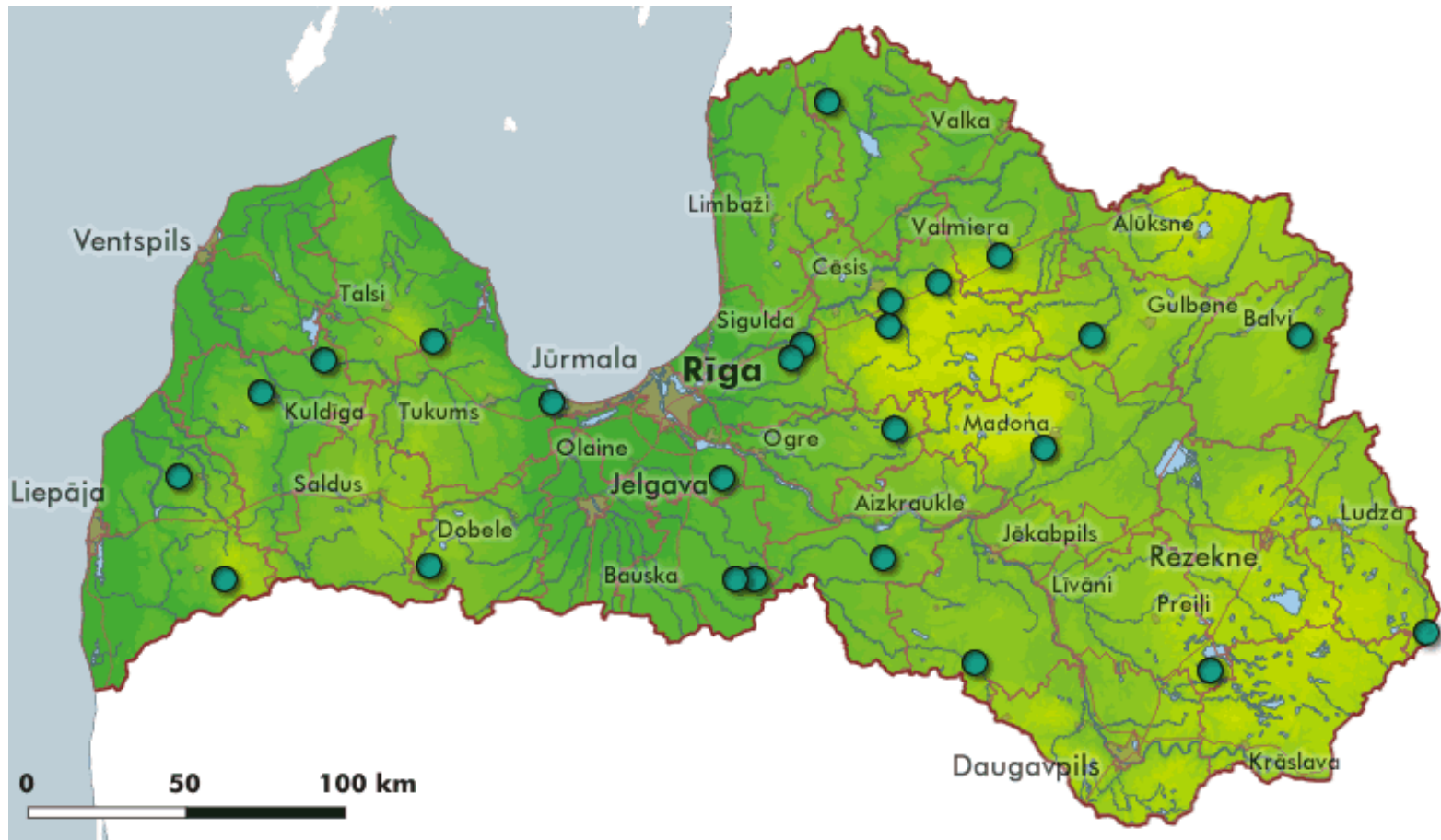
Latvian Foods

Among Latvia's traditionally most popular national foods are ***Caraway (cottage) cheese, grey peas with bacon, bacon-filled pastries*** and a special ***rye bread*** prepared to ancient recipes. Latvian ***rye bread*** is a staple for most of the population and is one of Latvia's most popular food 'souvenirs'.

Riga Black balsam

Jāņi - The Most Important Traditional Festival

In Latvia, celebration of the summer solstice is oldest and most beloved traditional holiday. The nearly three-day long midsummer fest concludes on ***June 24th***, the day known to Latvians as ***'Jāņi'***. Most leave the cities together with family and friends around thousands of bonfires, where special foods, beverages, songs, dances and rituals celebrate the movement of the setting and rising of the midnight sun.





Latvijas administratīvais iedalījums





References

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