



# Latvia

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ International (p219)
- ➔ Istaba (p219)
- ➔ 36.Line (p222)
- ➔ Vincents (p219)
- ➔ Mr Biskvīts (p223)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Dome Hotel (p218)
- ➔ Neiburgs (p218)
- ➔ Hotel MaMa (p221)
- ➔ Ekes Konvents (p217)
- ➔ Naughty Squirrel (p217)

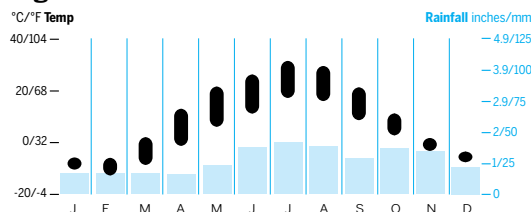
## Why Go?

Tucked between Estonia to the north and Lithuania to the south, Latvia is the meat of the Baltic sandwich. We're not implying that the neighbouring nations are slices of white bread, but Latvia is the savoury middle, loaded with interesting fillings. Rīga is the main ingredient and the country's cosmopolitan nexus; the Gauja Valley pines provide a thick layer of greens; onion-domed cathedrals sprout above regional towns; cheesy Euro-pop blares along coastal beaches; and the whole thing is peppered with Baltic-German, Swedish, Tsarist Russian and Soviet spice.

Travelling here is easy, language difficulties rarely arise and the simple allure of beaches, forests, castles and history-steeped streets holds plenty of appeal. Latvia may not provide the all-you-can-eat feast of other, more high-profile destinations, but it makes a tasty addition to any European menu.

## When to Go

### Rīga



**Jun–Aug** Summer starts with an all-night solstice romp; then it's off to the beach.

**Sep** Refusing to let summer go, Rīgans sip lattes under heat lamps at alfresco cafes.

**Dec** Celebrate the festive season in the birthplace of the Christmas tree.

# Latvia Highlights

- 1 Admire the menagerie of gargoyles, beasts, goddesses and twisting vines that inhabits Riga's **art nouveau architecture** (p737).
- 2 Clatter along cobblestones, climb church spires and generally enjoy the gingerbread trim that is **Old Riga** (p218).
- 3 Explore the castle by candlelight and then stroll amid the forested surrounds of **Sigulda** (p222).
- 4 Trek from castle to castle among the historic streets of **Cēsis** (p223).
- 5 Indulge in aristocratic decadence as you wander the intricate interiors and gorgeous gardens of **Rundāle Palace** (p741).
- 6 Case out the castle, then laze on the long and glorious stretch of beach at **Ventspils** (p224).
- 7 Hobnob with Russian jet-setters in the swanky beachside spa town of **Jurmala** (p221).

