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Message from the ISL Parent Teacher Organization (ISL-PTO)

This guide was generated by the ISL-PTO. The information compiled here is from the recommendations and experiences of parents/families in the ISL community. By no means is this guide considered to be a complete picture of resources in Latvia, but rather to serve as a starting point for new families.

This is the first edition of the *Family Guide*. The hope is that through continued feedback and additional information from ISL families, this handbook will become more comprehensive and grow to contain more recommendations, advice, and suggestions based on real-life experiences when moving to Latvia. The ISL-PTO looks forward to hearing about your experiences and suggestions for the guide. Please contact the ISL –PTO at PTORocks@isl.edu.lv with any additions to the guide.

Thank you.

ISL-PTO

What to do on arrival

Mobile phones and Phone cards

If you need to purchase a mobile phone you can look in the online yellow pages (www.1188.lv) under mobile phones and find a list of places to purchase a phone and/or get a service contract. In many of the shopping centers mobile phone service providers have shops where you can get a phone and sign up for service.

If you already have a phone that will work in Latvia, you can buy a pre-paid phone card. Small groceries (partika) sell cards, but in Riga you will easily spot the 'Narvesen' kiosks to buy them. Cards have various fees / load. In Latvia, landline phone numbers start with "6" and mobile phone numbers start with "2".

Immigration and Personal Code (Persona Kods)

If you need to acquire a temporary residence permit, this is done through the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/). Usually an employer assists new families with this process and additional advice may be obtained from your embassy.

A personal code is an identification code you receive after registering with the Latvian government through immigration. Your Persona Kods will be needed whenever you fill out documents: open a bank account, get an insurance contract, file a power of attorney, access health structure etc.

Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
Ciekurkalna 1 linija 1, K-3, LV-1026 Riga
Tel: 67829750

Registering your vehicle

The Road Traffic Safety Office (CSDD) is the place you go to register and have a technical inspection for a vehicle. The CSDD website (www.csdd.lv) does have an English translation and specifies the time frames for registering a vehicle. There are CSDD locations throughout Latvia. Please note that if you live in Jurmala and need to purchase a Jurmala pass, you will need to have your technical inspection paperwork with you.

Jurmala Pass

Any vehicle entering the Jurmala territory must pay 1 LVL at the toll before the bridge on the Lielupe River. The ticket allows you to stay 24hrs in Jurmala, however you can only come and go between Jurmala and Riga for 1 hour (starting Jan. 2011). If you live in Jurmala or regularly drive into Jurmala, you can purchase a Jurmala Pass from the

Majori Municipality in Jurmala. Make sure you fill-out the right form, as it differs for private car / company car, and residents / non-residents in Jurmala. The Pass is a sticker placed on the front window inside your car. If possible, it might be helpful to go there with a Latvian-speaking person, and remember to bring your house renting contract and resident card / passport for proof of residence.

Drinking Water

Water in Jurmala has a high percentage of iron and calcium. Sometimes it may smell like sulphur, so you may opt for bottled water. One water provider is VENDEN (+371. 67344444). Still water can be delivered to your house in 19-liter bottles and you can purchase a water dispenser from them (home deliveries on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). You have to call at least a day ahead to arrange delivery. The same bottled water is also available at STATOIL gas stations. You simply bring in your empty bottles, pay for the water and exchange them for full bottles.

Another option is to buy bottled water in grocery stores or small, local shops. If you don't need large quantities of bottled water, this may work better.

Winterizing your car

In Latvia, 4 snow tires are compulsory from October 1st to March 31st. Many people change their tires to those with metal studs for driving in snow and ice. If you have "all-season" tires they may suffice, so check with a mechanic first.

Websites that might be useful before arrival or upon arrival in Latvia

- Weather forecast:

<http://www.weather-forecast.com/locations/jurmala1/forecasts/latest>

- Lexicon English-Latvian and Latvian-English

<http://www.letonika.lv/groups/default.aspx?q=samsana&s=0&g=2&r=10621033>

- Air Baltic (national airways) :

<http://www.airbaltic.com/public/index.html>

- Dell (computers) Agents :

<http://www1.euro.dell.com/content/topics/topic.aspx/emea/contact/edb/latvia?c=lv&l=en&cs=lvdhs1>

- To find an itinerary/timetable in Riga (train, bus, tram):

<http://www.saraksti.rigassatiksmel.lv>

- To find anything (from timetables to shops, etc)-Latvian Yellow Pages Directory - and it has English version !

<http://www.1188.lv>

- International Women's Club in Riga (IWCR):

<http://www.iwcr.lv/>

Moving with Pets

While moving is a very exciting time for a family, it can be a stressful time for the family pets. Often pets, especially older pets have difficulty dealing with change and travel. This section offers some tips for traveling with a pet and caring for them once in Latvia.

If relocating to Latvia with pets, it is very important to check with your local veterinarian about necessary forms and procedures in regards to taking a pet to another country.

These links gives detailed information about requirements for bringing a pet to Latvia:

<http://www.petrelocation.com/resources/international-regulations/latvia>

<http://www.latvia-usa.org/reqtowdogand.html>

It is essential to check the airline restrictions for pet carrier size. The airlines are very particular about the size of pet carriers used for transporting pets. Not all airports have carriers available for purchase so if yours is the wrong size and you cannot buy one at the airport, they will not let you take the pet. A little extra time measuring the pet carrier and checking with the airlines could save a lot of headaches.

What to expect upon arrival at the airport in Riga

If your pets travelled with you on the plane (in cabin or in cargo) they will likely be in the baggage claim area with your bags when you get off the plane. As you leave baggage claim, you may be stopped by customs officials, so it is a good idea to have the pet's paperwork handy.

“We brought a medium size dog and 2 cats with us from the U.S. when we moved to Latvia. The pets all travelled in the cargo hold for the overseas part of the trip. When we arrived in Riga and went to baggage claim, we were not quite sure how we were supposed to claim the pets. Then we saw the kennels coming out on the conveyor belt with the luggage. We just picked them up, put them on baggage carts, and wheeled them out. All the effort to get the paperwork and arrange transportation for the pets was well worth it. We are so happy to have them with us.”

-ISL family 2010

Caring for your pets once in Latvia

In and around the Riga area, there are many veterinary clinics/hospitals and there are also kennels for dogs and cats. There are pet stores located in many of the shopping malls and the central market as well. These pet stores carry a variety of well-known pet food brands, pet beds, treats, carriers, leashes, etc.

The following is a list of veterinarians and kennels. This list in no way is a complete listing of all services but rather a list compiled from people who have used these services and it is meant to serve as a starting point for someone new to Latvia.

Veterinarian Services

Dzivnieku Veselibas Centrs Fr. Candra St. 4 Tel: 67500494 Hours: Weekdays 9:00-18:00 Weekends 9:00-16:00 www.petnet.lv (this is in Latvian but you can use Google Chrome to translate) (English speaking doctors on staff)	Veterinary clinic (Dr. Janis Beinards) Gertrudes iela 101 Tel:67288539 (English speaking)
Mazo Bralu Hospital Kalnciema 46 Tel: 67619061 (5 veterinarians and speak some English)	KAVET Veterinary Clinic & Pharmacy Brivibas gatve 333a Tel: 67543421 Hours: 9:00-21:00
Ainars Kokarevics Tel: 67436060 Email: felcan@inbox.lv (Speaks Latvian and Russian, does home visits)	

Kennels

Sunu Viesnica Contact: Natalija Livmane Tel: 67990747 Kennel in Baltezers (about 30-45 min from Riga)	"Kart" SIA Krustpils 40a iela Tel: 67703538
Rutinas Contact: Edite Tel: 29269614 (speaks English)	

Note about leaving Latvia with your pets

There are additional requirements to depart Latvia with a pet that. You have to have the rabies vaccine 30 days before departure and not more than 12 months before departure. You have to take the animal to a vet and have it certified as healthy (that certification is valid for 3 days) and then take the certification to the Latvian authorities (www.pvd.gov.lv) for approval. You then have 10 days to depart the country with the animal.

Medical/ Health Services

Preventive Medical Services:

There are many highly-trained, English-speaking family doctors here in Latvia, most of whom work within Riga. Routine physicals, updating of vaccinations and other preventative healthcare services can all be done by the family doctor. Information regarding vaccinations for traveling to Latvia can be found on the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention website (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/latvia.aspx>). Please note that the Latvian immunization calendar (www.vakcina.lv) requires vaccinations very similar to other countries, with the addition of tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) vaccine. Because this vaccine is difficult to get in most other countries, this vaccine is typically given once here in Latvia.

Adults:

Dr. Anda Karina, Family Practice Skolas iela 2, Riga Tel. 67240202
Premium Medical Center Dunties iela 11, 6 th floor, Riga Tel: 66011160 www.premiummedical.lv
Dr. Livija Caune Elizabetes iela 2 / WTC, Riga Tel: 67321980

Pediatrics:

Dr. Anda Karina, Family Practice Skolas iela 2, Riga Tel. 67240202
Premium Medical Center Dunties iela 11, 6 th floor, Riga Tel: 66011160 www.premiummedical.lv
Dr. Guna Deksnē Bruninieku iela 10a, Riga Tel: 29467836

Emergency Medical Services:

In the event of a medical emergency where an ambulance is needed, dial **113 or 112!** There are 2 major hospitals (*slimnīca*) that have Emergency Rooms (*Neatliekamas palīdzības nodala*) and are equipped to deal with trauma and major medical problems.

Adult ER:

Paul Stradins Clinical University Hospital (<i>Paula Stradina kliniska universitātes slimnīca</i>) Pilsonu iela 13 ER = Korpusa #32 Tel. 67069600 www.stradini.lv
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Pediatric ER:

Children's University Hospital (<i>Bērnu klīniskā universitātes slimnīca</i>) Vienības gatve 45 Tel. 67064400 / 67064498 www.bkus.lv

Ambulatory Clinics:

There are several private clinics in Riga staffed with a wide variety of specialists (i.e. ENT, GI, dermatology) that are equipped to perform minor procedures, in-house lab testing and x-rays; some are even equipped to handle non-acute emergency care.

ARS Clinic Skolas iela 5 Tel. 67201006 www.ars-med.lv	Premium Medical Center Duntes iela 11, 6 th floor, Riga Tel: 66011160 www.premiummedical.lv
Wellness Center 4 (Veselibas Centrs 4) K. Barona iela 117 Tel. 67847120 www.vc4.lv	EDK – dermatology, podiatry, cosmetic surg Skanstes iela 13 Tel. 67847102 www.edk.lv

Women's Health (OB/GYN, Prenatal, Infertility) Specialists:

KZS Clinic Dr. Natalija Kalasnikova Brivibas iela 84-6, 4 th fl., Riga Tel: 67290311 Email: kzsklinika@inbox.lv www.kzsklinika.lv	Drs. Matule, Melke & Ligere Practice Stabu iela 52a-3, Riga Tel: 67299896 www.ginekologi.lv
Dubulti Doktorata Strelnieku iela 16, Jurmala Tel: 67755055 Neretas iela 2-104, Riga Tel: 67615757 www.arsti.lv	AVA Infertility Clinic Vilandes iela 3, Riga Tel: 67001007 www.infertility-treatment-clinic.com

Dentists (Adult & Kids):

Adenta Dental Clinic Skanstes iela 13, Riga Tel: 67339300 www.adenta.lv	ARS Dental Clinic Skolas iela 5, Riga Tel: 67201006, 67201007 Email: info@arsdentalclinic.lv www.ars-med.lv
Sirowa Dental Clinic Katrinas dambis 16 Tel. 67098260 www.sirowaclinic.lv	

Other Children's Specialists:

Dr. Antra Treija – ophthalmologist Veselības Maja Olīva Olīvu iela 5a Tel. 67611031	Dr. Sandra Kuske – audiologist Children's Hearing Center (Bernu Dzirdes centrs) Lielvārdes iela 68/1 Tel. 67577694
Dr. Maija Ozolina – psychotherapist 11. novembra krastmalā 35 Tel. 28206721	ORTO – sports doctors Duntes iela 23a Tel. 67144013 www.orto.lv

Restaurants and Groceries

Restaurants

Riga and the surrounding areas have many excellent restaurants, bakeries, cafes, and coffee shops. The restaurants listed under resources are just a sampling of restaurants that were noted by ISL families. At the website www.1188.lv (Latvian yellow pages website) you can search for restaurants and just about anything else. But one of the best ways to find a good restaurant is to ask people or just try something new when walking around Riga.

Restaurants and recommendations from ISL families:

<p>Rossini Restaurant Address: Pumpura iela 6, Riga Tel: 67334497 Email: Rossini@rossini.lv www.rossini.lv Recommendation: Excellent Italian food, reasonable prices, very popular, reservations needed during peak meal time.</p>	<p>Ostasskati Restaurant Address: Matrozu iela 15, Riga (Kipsala) Tel: +371 20009045 Email: info@restoransostasskati.lv www.restoransostasskati.lv Recommendation: Good food, fair prices, on the water in Kipsala with a view of Old Town.</p>
<p>Vincents Address: Elizabetes iela 19, Riga Tel: +371 67332830 www.restorans.lv</p>	<p>Kid (2 locations) Address: Pulkveza Brieza iela 2, Riga Tel" +371 20222424 Address: Terbatas iela 41/43, Riga Tel: +371 20268686 www.restaurantkid.lv</p>
<p>Da Antonio Address: Pulkveza Brieza iela 11, Riga Tel: +371 7631790 www.antonio.lv</p>	<p>La Boheme Address: J. Alunana iela 2A, Riga Tel: +371 673221938 www.laboHEME.lv</p>
<p>Neighbors Address: Jauniela 25/27, Riga Tel: +371 67115522 www.neiburgs.com Recommendation: Good food and excellent service. Menu not so child friendly.</p>	<p>Le Paon Bleu Tirgonu 4, Riga +371 67211004 Recommendation: French bakery and catering</p>
<p>Aragats Address: Miera 15, Riga Tel: +371 7373445 Recommendation: Armenian food</p>	<p>Carleston's Address: Blaumana 38/40, Riga Tel: +371 67770572 www.restaurant-riga.com</p>

Osiris Address: Barona 31, Riga Tel: +371 67243002	Istaba Barona 31a Tel: +371 67281141
Ze Donats (The Donuts) Valdemara 18 Tel: +371 67332331 www.virtulis.lv	Indian Raja Vecpilsetas 3, Riga Tel: +371 67221617 www.indianraja.lv
Trattoria del Popolo Jana 8, Riga Tel: +371 67350559 www.delpopolo.lv	Sue's Asia Address: Jomas iela 74 , Jurmala Tel: +371 677559009 www.suesasia.lv Recommendation: Thai, Chinese and Indian cuisine. Quiet atmosphere, large menu and good service.
Iguana restaurant Address: Elizabetes 83/85, Riga (In Berga Bazaars) Tel: +371 67285004 www.bergabazars.lv	Brown Sugar Riga Address: on Baznica iela 1/3 Jurmala Address : Bulduru prospekts 33 (they have some take away salads and the best cakes)

Groceries

While you might not be able to find every ingredient you want to make your favorite dishes from home, Riga has a number of local markets and super or “hyper” markets and specialty shops all around the city and surrounding area. Often times the food you are looking for is available but you just need to figure out what it is called in Latvian. Many of the large shopping malls also have a chain grocery store, like Rimi, Maxima, Stockmann and specialty food shops.

In addition to the chain grocery stores and small specialty food shops, there are local markets where you can buy a wide variety of foods. The Central Market (behind Stockmann department store) has meat, fish, produce, dairy products, and many, many other items inside the buildings (the large airplane hangars). During the warmer seasons, food is also sold at outside stalls along with crafts, clothing, and household items. In many neighborhoods around Riga, especially in warmer weather, there are smaller local markets similar to the central market. If interested in these markets, ask your neighbors or landlord if there is a local market and where it is.

If you are looking for organic food items, you may have luck at some of the large grocery store chains which now carry a limited range of organic foods (packaged and

fresh). There are some specialty shops that carry only “eco” products. These “eco” shops often also sell household products and personal care products (lotion, soap, etc) that are made with all natural and organic ingredients.

Grocery Stores and Markets:

Rimi has various locations, including Barona Centrs, Origo (next to the Central Station), Olympia (shopping centre over the bridge) and Galleria Centrs in Old Town. A western-style grocery store which has almost all necessary ingredients, even a small Asian and Mexican section.

www.rimi.lv

Some of the Rimi Hypermarkets

Rimi "Alfa" Brivibas iela 372	Phone: 67076430
Rimi "Damme" Kurzeme prospectus 1a	Phone: 67076300
Rimi "Galerija Azur" Rencēnu Street 1	Phone: 67828900
Rimi Mīlgrāvis " Milgravja Street 6	Phone: 67388133
Rimi "Mols" Krasta iela 46	Phone: 67030353
Rimi "Olimpia" Azenes 5 (Kipsala area)	Phone: 67065655
P. Brieza iela 33a	Phone: 67065655
Rimi "Spice" Lielirbes iela 29	Phone: 67804504
Valdemara street 112	Phone: 67519851
Anņīmuižas Boulevard 40a	Phone: 67607870
Rimi "Barona centrs" Barona street 46	Phone: 67240853
Rimi "children" Mathies Street 25	Phone: 67506921
Rimi "Centre" Audeju iela 16	Phone: 67018023

Maxima is similar to Rimi and has food as well as household items. Maxima also has large and small stores, the size is indicated by the number of “XXX” after the name.

www.maxima.lv

Stockmann department store has a grocery store connected on the first floor of the building.

Address: 13 Janvara 8, Riga

Tel:+371 67071222

www.stockmann.lv

Sky is located on Ulmana gatve on the way to Jurmala, Biķernieku iela 120^b Dunties 19a (in shopping centre Sky&More)

Prisma is situated in the distant shopping centre *Domina* (Ieriku street 3c) as well as the brand new *Riga Plaza* across the river (Mukusalas 71); similar to *Maxima*.

Organic/Eco Products

Ekovirtuve (Eco kitchen)

Address: Rupniecibas street 11.

www.ekovirtuve.lv

Recommendation: In this shop they offer local organic food. It is certified by local authorities and labeled with trademark "Latvijas Ekoprodukts". There you can buy almost everything that is organically produced in Latvia. You can also sit in a café where they are using only healthy recipes based on whole foods.

Eco food fair farmers market

Address: Elizabetes 83/85 Berga bazaars

www.bergabazars.lv

Recommendation: Takes place every 2nd and 4th Saturday. The best farmers gather there to sell their best products.

Bioteka

Addresses: Cesu street 12, Skunu street 12/14, Slokas street 12

www.bioteka.lv

Recommendations: You can buy ecologically cultivated food, products for vegetarians and vegans, natural cosmetics and nature friendly detergents.

The Central Market

Address: Behind Stockmann department store, near Centrala Stacija (central train station)

www.centraltirgus.lv

Recommendations: Indoor and outdoor market stalls. They sell all types of meat, produce, and dairy products. Also sell household items and many, many other items. Keep your purses and bags close to you or hidden, especially if the market is crowded. Open 8am – 5pm Tues-Sat, 8am-4pm Sun-Mon.

Vidzemes Market

Address: Matīsa 2, on the corner of Brīvības and Matisa

Recommendations: It is smaller and easier to get around than the Central Market. Latvian is the primary language spoken here. Open 8am – 7pm, Sunday 8am – 4pm.

Gastronome

High quality food. You can find there cheese; bread; cakes; buffet of cooked or prepared food; treats (chocolates, candied fruits, etc.); Italian grocer shop; Gastronome has some very good fresh fish arriving on Monday evening and Thursday evening; two locations :

- in the shopping Arcade on the side of The Radisson Blue on Elizabetes iela
- on Krasta iela in MC² mall, www.mc2.lv/gastronome

No Francu Delicatessen

Antonijas Iela 21, Riga (French cheese, wine, saucisson and other)

Shopping for Clothes and Shoes

There are many options for buying clothes and shoes for the whole family in Riga and the surrounding areas. Riga has several shopping centers or malls with shops that sell clothes and shoes for people of all ages. Prices of clothes and shoes will also vary greatly depending on what you want and where you shop.

Weather conditions partially dictate what people wear for clothes and shoes in Latvia. There are certain items of clothing that are useful. In the Spring and Autumn, there can be quite a bit of rain therefore, rain boots are worn by most people at this time. You can find rain boots in a wide variety of colors and patterns. Rain pants for children are important for outside play during these seasons. Adults mostly carry umbrellas. You can buy rain pants, jackets, umbrellas and rain boots in Latvia. Depending on where you are moving from, the prices may seem high for these items, so you may want to check out some of the store websites and try to compare prices.

Winter is another season requiring special clothing. Warm clothes are available for purchase in Latvia. You can buy snow suits and pants, ski jackets, wool coats, and snow boots at shops, but remember that depending on where you are moving from, the prices may or may not seem high here in Latvia. In some cases, it might make sense to bring these items with you.

Some people believe that clothing and shoes are very expensive in Latvia and that there is not much selection. However, it really depends on what you are looking for. Since there are so many individual clothing and shoe stores throughout Riga and the surrounding areas, rather than attempt to list them all, this section includes resources mainly for shopping centers which can be accessed on the internet where you can then see individual shops within the shopping centers. This resource list is not meant to be all inclusive but rather to serve as a starting point for your shopping needs.

Some recommendations from ISL families:

Galleria Riga is a shopping center with themes for each floor. One floor is shoes, another floor is men's clothes, etc.

A shop called "G-Star" in Galleria Center is a good place for teenage clothes.
Piazza Italia is a nice shop for young fashions

Resources:

Shopping Centers/Malls and department stores with clothes and shoes for the whole family

Mols (Krasta 46, Riga): www.mols.lv

Stockmann (Janvara iela 8, Riga): www.stockmann.lv
Olympia Shopping Center (Azenes 5, Riga): www.olimpia.lv
Alfa (Brivibas gatve 372): www.alfaparks.lv
Spice (Lielirbes iela 29, Riga): www.spice.lv
Galerija Centrs (Audeju iela 16, Riga---in Old Town): www.galerijacentrs.lv
Galleria Riga (Dzirnavu iela 67, Riga): www.galleriariga.lv
Central Market (Pragas 1, Riga, Behind Stockmann and across from the central train station)
Origo Mall (Stacijas laukums 2, Riga, Inside Central Train Station): www.origo.lv

There are also many local shops with much cheaper clothing, do not hesitate to go in.

Music Instruction, Tutoring, and Sports

Music instruction and Instruments

If you are interested in music lessons or purchasing an instrument, there are music schools and private instructors available in Riga and surrounding areas. A good place to start is the ISL music teacher. The school music teacher will know (or be able to find out) about local music resources. In addition to the ISL music teacher, other parents at the school are an excellent resource. The following music school information is from ISL parents and can serve as a starting point.

Riga Music School

Piano teacher Solvita Bumbiere (Tel:29234235)

Latvian music school (with some English speaking teachers) : Kronvalda bulv. 8, Riga (the best is to come to the administration office 2nd floor)

Jurmala Music School

Smilsu iela 7, Jurmala, LV-2015

Email: muzikasvsk@edu.jurmala.lv

Website: www.jurmala.lv/page/880

Private Tutoring

If you are looking for a private tutor for your child, you can start by talking to teachers at ISL or the school coordinators (PYP coordinator or MYP/DP coordinator). School staff will be likely to know of people who can tutor in specific subjects.

If you are looking for language instruction, there are a number of language institutes/centers in Latvia that offer individual and group classes. Some of these include:

Berlitz www.berlitz.lv

Russian Language school Durbe www.russian.edu.lv

Baltic International Academy www.bsa.edu.lv

New Horizons Latvia <http://new-horizon-latvia-valodu-centrs.landingpage.zl.lv/>

Sports Lessons

ISL offers a variety of sports and activities as part of their afterschool program (you can contact the athletic director at ISL). In addition, there are many opportunities for lessons and joining sports clubs/teams outside of school. Below are some resources for various sports in Latvia. Once in Latvia, other parents from the school will be an excellent resource for sports instruction.

Tennis

It is quite expensive to rent tennis court (between 10LVL per hour week days working hours to 20LVL during the week-end)

And tennis lessons vary from 15LVL an hour for private lessons (and additional you pay the court fee) to 40LVL per month for kids group 1hr per week.

Ask the nearest club for their coach

Baldones iela, Riga www.ctl.lv

Enri www.ctl.lv next to the airport

Jurmala : Concept www.concept.lv or Lielupe www.tenisslielupe.lv

Jaunmarupe www.marupestenisaskola.lv

Marupe www.acbtenisaklubs.lv

Hockey

club : www.evshockey.com

shop : Hockeja Pasaule at Inbox (Ice Rink at Pinki)

Ice Skating

Inbox Ice Hall

Tel: +371 67147000

Web site: www.inboxledushalle.lv

Address: Pinki, Babites, LV 2107

Fencing

There are several Clubs in Riga, but not all offer classes for children. A very child-friendly is Studija Sport Pluss, in Blaumana iela. The Master is Wladimir (Russian + German speaker) and instructor is Nina (English speaker). Website in English : <http://www.sportspluss.lv/english.html>

Where to live in Latvia

There are quite a few options for housing in Riga and the surrounding areas. A few things to keep in mind when considering a location to live:

- ✓ Where will my work be located –There is commuting traffic into and out of Riga
- ✓ The new ISL school building will be located in Pinki which is between Riga and Jurmala
- ✓ Will you have a car or need to take public transportation?
- ✓ Does your family prefer urban living (Riga) or smaller town, beach community living (Jurmala—although in Summer there are many tourists in Jurmala)
- ✓ Do you want a house or an apartment?

There are real estate websites and agents who can help you locate and look at potential homes. There are also relocation companies which help you find a place to live in addition to helping you find other services you might need.

Some helpful websites:

www.city24.lv

www.ss.lv

www.balticsothebysrealty.com

www.rentinriga.lv

www.rentapartmentinriga.lv

www.latio.lv

www.inteso.lv

www.mpfonds.lv

www.arcoreal.lv

www.ober-haus.lv

www.incity.lv

www.domenika.lv

Living in Riga

Riga is divided up into neighborhoods: Old Town, the quiet center (where most of the embassies are located), the center, outer areas of center (not generally expat areas), Meza Parks (about 15 minutes northeast of the city), Kipsala (a small island on the left bank of the Daugava river and a short distance from the center), Marupe, a suburb of Riga situated midway to the airport) and Jurmala, a long island 20 km from the center.

It can be confusing and difficult to know what part of town would be best for your family. It is useful to have a real estate agent or someone who can help guide you through the parts of town and finding what you require in a home. Price and size of apartments can vary across these different parts of Riga. A good relocation

company, agent or “housing guide” can help you know what questions to ask. Knowing previous utility costs (heating fuel, electric, water) is important to know because it gets cold in Latvia and in some buildings, the heating costs may be very high—it’s good to know ahead of time.

Living in Riga proper offers an urban living environment. The pros and cons will be different for each family. There is more traffic in the city, but there is also loads of stuff to do in the city—many restaurants, movies, concerts, shopping, museums, etc. There are also suburbs of Riga which would offer an environment with less traffic and less of the city “feel”.

In Riga, rent can vary and is currently at about 5lv (7 Euro) m² to 7 lv (10 EUR) m².

Quote from ISL family about living in Riga...The best of both worlds. Riga center has beautiful architecture, cultural events year round, museums, churches and monuments, shopping and great bars and restaurants. Riga is a beautiful city with lots of visitors throughout the year, but generally crowded in summer months starting in May to September. Jurmala is a 20 minute drive or 45 minute bicycle ride if one fancies a day at the beach or walk in the forest. Meza parks, which also has good beaches is but 15 minutes by car or 30 minutes on bicycle with lovely trails in the forest and a great zoo.

Living in Jurmala

Jurmala is a beach community with a more relaxed atmosphere than Riga. It is important to remember that in the summer months, Jurmala is packed with crowds of vacationers. However, there are neighborhoods and beach areas that are quiet and not crowded during the summer. Jurmala, like Riga, is divided up into neighborhoods. It can be confusing to know where one ends and another begins, so it can be helpful to talk to a real estate agent familiar with the Jurmala area.

Jurmala has both apartments and houses available for rent in varying stages of restoration. Because Jurmala is a vacation destination for many people in the summer months, the season in which you are looking for a home may affect the rent amount. There are houses in Jurmala that are rented for just the summer months at very high costs. If you are interested in living in Jurmala, don’t be discouraged by the vacation rental prices. Landlords who want year round tenants should have more reasonable rental rates.

As in Riga, it is a good idea to know what previous utility bills were for a given property. Some houses in Jurmala were originally built for summer use and are not well insulated but others have been renovated with many improvements.

Transportation

There are many options for transportation within and between Riga, Jurmala, and the surrounding areas. The prices and schedules vary by mode of transport and the transportation method right for you will depend on things like location, cost, and flexibility in schedule. This section will offer resources and recommendations from the ISL community for the most widely used modes of transport.

- Trains
- Buses
- Trolley Buses
- Trams
- Minibuses
- Taxi
- Car

Train

There is a train route that runs between Riga and Jurmala. There are many stops along the way. There is a website, www.ldz.lv which allows you to enter your departure stop and your destination stop and the date and it gives you the time schedule and cost for that date. There are usually trains leaving every 30 minutes or so, even more often during peak summer months. The train is clean, safe, and usually on time. The price for one-way is under 1lv and there is a discount at certain times of the day. You can buy a train ticket in the train stations, but if they are closed or you are running late, you can get on the train without a ticket and pay the conductor. The ticket onboard the train may cost a little more than at the station. Passes are also available for purchase and you can find the information for these under the train schedule under the cost for tickets.

Buses, Trolley Buses, and Trams

These modes of transportation are used by many people to get around within Riga or Jurmala (buses only). The Riga transportation services website, www.rigassatiksm.lv has detailed information about schedules and routes for each type of service. You can either pay the driver when you get on the bus, trolley bus or tram, or you can purchase a card which allows you to ride for less. The stops around both Riga and Jurmala are marked by signs that identify the route number. The cost for a ride is 0.70 lvi if you pay onboard, otherwise 0.50lvi with a prepaid card. A list of locations where you can buy the prepaid cards can be found on the Riga transportation services website above.

Minibuses

Minibuses are small buses (vans) that take people between Riga and Jurmala and surrounding areas. The cost between Riga and Jurmala is 1.10 lvi. In Riga there are certain parts of town where you will see minibuses typically pick people up (like across from the central train station). In Jurmala, they seem to pick people up around city bus stops. Often times people just flag them down on a busy street. There are signs in the front window that say where the bus goes, but it is a good idea to also ask the driver. Some people don't like taking the minibuses because they sometimes over fill the bus and people are left standing in the aisle or they don't feel the drivers follow safe driving practices.

Taxi

There are many different taxi companies that operate in Riga and the surrounding areas. People seem to have their favorites and those they don't like. The important things to look for are that the car is an official taxi with a lit sign on top and the license plate should be yellow and start with TX. The driver should be using the meter to track the price of your trip. If the meter is "broken", make sure you agree on a price before you take the trip or get a different taxi. You can often find cabs waiting outside large hotels or in heavily populated areas like the Opera House or near the train station, but if you want to arrange for a cab to pick you up, you can call the company directly. You can look up taxi companies at www.1188.lv (yellow pages directory) or call 118 for a phone directory.

Here are a couple of taxi services to get you started:

Red Cab- Rigas taksometru parks

Tel:+371-80001313

Smile Taxi

Tel:+371-67262525

AirBaltic Taxi

Tel: 8500 (in Latvia)

www.baltictaxi.com

Car

If you plan to have a car in Latvia, here are a few helpful tips. Parking is at a premium in Riga, especially around Old Town and if you park on the street, you will most likely need to pay for a parking permit.

"In Riga and other major Latvian cities, it is legal to park your car on the street or sidewalk in designated areas only. You must obtain a voucher from an

automated parking machine and clearly display it on you dashboard before leaving the car. If parking is not permitted, there will be a circular blue sign with a red slash through the middle. After a certain time of day, parking will be free, so it is necessary to read the hours of operation on the street sign. You can also leave your car in a garage or underground parking lot. These facilities are clearly marked with large blue signs containing the letter 'P' in white print. To avoid parking violations, only park in areas that are populated with other vehicles. Furthermore, many Latvians can speak English and will most likely offer some advice on proper parking methods.”

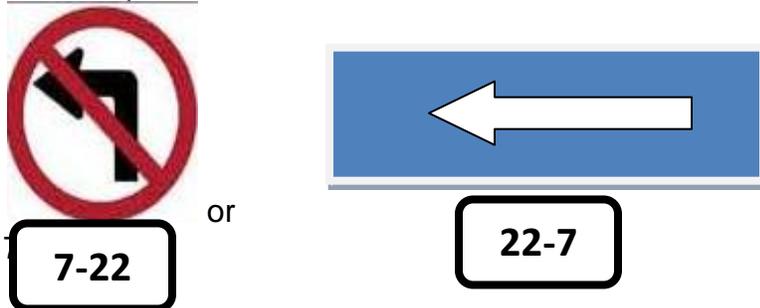
Source: <http://www.decodecarhire.co.uk/car-hire/latvia-driving-rules.html>

For parking garages operated by Europark, you can check their website, <http://www.europark.lv/en/autostavvieta?id=330> to find locations and prices.

Parking is easier in Jurmala. While there are some places near the beach where you must pay to park, there are often small side streets that allow parking for free (just read the street signs).

Remember that trams in Riga have the right of way, so while driving, try not to stop for a prolonged period on the tracks. In Riga, a number of streets are one-way, watch the signs and traffic flow.

Turning left in certain street is only permitted at certain times, check the sign mentioning for example :



And when you see two crossed hammers on a sign it means “working days”.

You should be prepared to change your car tires from summer to winter and back again as the seasons change (mid October/mid April). It is not allowed to keep on summer tires throughout the winter.

Entertainment

Movies

Riga has very large and modern movie theaters which show new movies as well as concerts and operas. English language non-animated movies are usually in English with Russian and Latvian subtitles. Many of the children's animated movies are shown in Latvian and Russian. Below are links to some of the theater websites.

Movie theaters in Riga:

Forum cinema www.forumcinemas.lv (next to Stockmann department store)

Multikino www.multikino.lv (in Riga Plaza shopping center)

Kino Riga www.kino.riga.lv (Elizabetes iela 61, Riga, LV-1050)

The Riga Circus

The history of the Riga Circus is almost 100 years old, and is the only permanent circus in the Baltics. There are performances throughout the year, but the most important are in the winter season, which starts in October and lasts until the end of March. Two to three regular programs run alongside a special Christmas and Easter show during this time. Prices range from 3-7 LVL, depending on your seat.

Contact information:

<http://www.cirks.lv/> (website only works when the circus is performing)

Tel: 67220272 or 67213279

Merkela 4, Riga

Ballet , Opera, and Concerts

Riga has both a National Opera and National Ballet company. Performances are held in the Opera House near Old Town. Riga and surrounding areas also host concerts and other performing arts. Below are links where you can find more information.

Latvian National Opera www.opera.lv

Ticket website www.bilesuparadize.lv

Classical music concerts www.hbf.lv/index.php?&588

Ministry of Culture of Latvia www.eventguide.lv

Riga this week (things to do in Riga) www.rigathisweek.lv

Riga in your pocket (things to do in Riga) www.inyourpocket.com/latvia/riga/culture

During the Summer months, Jurmala also offers concerts and music festivals. You can find Jurmala events at www.jurmala.lv

Travelling in or out Latvia

By Car/Bus

Short distances make travel within the Baltic States easy by car or even buses (special “luxury” buses : www.luxexpress.eu)

Regarding a car, be prepared to change your car tires from summer to winter and back again as the seasons change (mid October/mid April). Keeping summer tires throughout the winter is forbidden.

By Plane

Riga’s airport (www.riga-airport.com/en) is connected to most of the European Capital Cities with direct flights (www.airbaltic.com) or connecting flights (www.lufthansa.com/gr/en; www.finnair.com, www.turkishairlines.com, www.ryanair.com).

By Ferry

There are two ferries in Latvia, one from Riga to Stockholm (www.tallink.lv) and one from Ventspils to Rostock (Germany) or Nynäshamn (Sweden) (www.ventspilsferry.com)

Tavelling in Latvia

While travelling in Latvia you will visit or just stop by many manors (muiza) or small castles; some are hotels, you can then enjoy a luxury stay for a while.

Latvia is all about its beautiful preserved nature: pine forest, lakes, long beaches.

The best way to enjoy this quiet nature is to go for weekends or holidays to the countryside. It is very easy to find country houses for the weekend (around 100LVL for two nights for a family of 5, linen provided, bring your own food), check out www.celotajs.lv .

Nice Walks around Riga

- Riga Zoo www.rigazoo.lv/public/index_en.html (in Mezaparks)
- Latvian Ethnographic Open Air Museum www.ltg.lv/english/brivdabas.muzejs
- Ragaciems beach (north of Jurmala)

Museums in Riga (www.rigalatvia.net/museums):

- Latvijas Dabas Muzejam, K. Barona iela 4, perfect for kids, one topic per level, great for rainy days
- Museum of History and navigation
- Museum of War
- Museum of Occupation
- www.motormuzejs.lv

- National Art Museum, K. Valdemara iela, Riga

Sigulda (45mn drive from Riga Center)

- Turaida castle and park, Gauja river, Tarzan activity, bobsled, skiing
Good restaurant close to Turaida (Sigulda) : Kungu Rija, 29235741/67971473
better to book before; playground for kids.
Reina Café 29674413

Cesis (1h30 drive from Riga Center)

- Lake, castle, Ligatne national reserve, Gauja river (walks along or canoe)

Limbazi

- Stay at www.mezasalas.lv. Many activities offered; possible to have cooking lessons there.

Cesvaine

- Grasi pils (www.grasufonds.lv) hotel that helps the orphanage to raise funds; nice manor, possible to have lunches or dinner; good location to enjoy skiing near Madona at Gaiziņkalns, highest hill in Latvia.

Kemeri

- Walk in the area (watch out lots of mosquitoes at the season)

Kandava

- Very nice small city center; a farm near by to visit
- Two very nice places to stay nearby :
www.rumenesmuiza.lv
www.kuksumuiza.lv (you can book either for overnight stay or only for lunch)

Kuldiga

- Bridge and water fall

Kolka

- Wild beach at the further point of the Baltic Gulf

Jelgava

- Beautiful Palace in the city center (may not visit, just have a look from outside)

Bauska

- Mežotne Manor nearby

Rundale Palace

- Large palace and beautiful gardens, a must see

Tervete (near Dobele)

- www.tervetesparks.lv, a forest full of witches and elves !

OUTSIDE LATVIA

LITHUANIA

- *VILNUS*
- *ŠIAULIAI* : crosses hill
- *NERINGA PENINSULA* : fishermen village of NIDA, charming, nice walks on the nearby spectacular Dune and “Lithuanian desert”; Guesthouse : Vandeja (+469 52 742). Better off-season to avoid summer crowd.

ESTONIA

- *TALLINN* (by plane or possible with express comfortable bus -5hrs)
- *PARNU* : villa Ammende,
- *MUHU island* : Padaste Manor
- *SAREEMA island*: hotel with swimming pool in Kuressare
- *OTEPAA* : ski resort

SWEDEN

- Stockholm through the ferry (www.tallinksilja.com/en/), very easy access if you want to travel within Sweden ; ask for windows cabins (cabin with 4 beds); scenery when arriving in Stockholm’s archipelago worth an early wake up (6am)
- Skiing in Sweden, check www.skiinfo.com, Romme Alpin is only 3hrs drive from Stockholm. On the way, visit some of the Malardalen's Castles on Malaren Lake

RUSSIA

- *MOSCOW*
- *St PETERSBURG* (also by night train direct from Riga to St Petersburg; an experience)
- Visa is mandatory; as it is difficult or long to get it directly from the Russian Embassy in Riga you can ask help to some travel agency.

Charity, Volunteering, and Social Organizations

Charities

www.Ziedot.lv is a charity portal where you can go online to donate money. It is an opportunity for companies and individuals to use the Internet to show their social responsibility to others. By donating money to Ziedot, you help children grow and implement many other charity projects. If you contribute something, you will get a report back telling you what your money went to. Ziedot is supported by Swedbank. Therefore, Swedbank guarantees a quick, safe and easy donating system at their website.

"Save the Children" at www.rnc-rtb.lv has a list of organizations that accept donations (money, clothing, etc.) for children in need here in Latvia. Save the Children is a Children's Rights protection organization, which operates in almost 30 different countries. Latvian Save the Children has approximately 40 branches and supports many different groups.

www.Palidzesim.lv is a website where you can donate money. They help children in Latvia. On their site, you can find stories about different children who might need donations (money or other materials). You can also contact them and get started on any of Palidzesim's projects. They provide assistance to a particular child, a particular family, or a particular child's home. If you donate to them, each donor visiting their web page can see how the donation has changed the child's life.

Volunteering

If you are interested in finding out about places to volunteer, you can contact charity groups directly or try the ISL Community Service Coordinator.

Dzivnieku Draugs is an animal shelter. They always need volunteers to come and walk dogs. You must be a certain age like 13 to walk with the dogs. Smaller kids can only participate if they have a parent to help them walking with the dog.

At the www.charity-charities.org/volunteering/Latvia-volunteers/Riga.html website, people post volunteer opportunities. You can search by location or type of volunteer work.

Social Organizations

International Women's Club of Riga (IWCR) is an organization which provides a social network of activities for its members and supports a number of local charities focused on women and children in Latvia. The club has one major fundraiser a year and several smaller events which support the Club and its charities. Information about the IWCR is at www.iwcr.lv.