

The American Latvian Association *Hello, Latvia! / Sveika, Dzimtene* travel program offers two unique heritage tours for adults and families that offer an opportunity to connect to cultural identity, history and, traditions.

The tours are a perfect introduction for family and friends to a vibrant 21st C. European country renowned for its beautiful shoreline, majestic forests, ancient customs, historic castles, and Art Nouveau architecture.



Summer Solstice Tour

June 17 - 27

Celebrate both the Summer Solstice and the most ancient and meaningful Latvian celebration - Jāņi!

As the longest day and shortest night of the year, the solstice and Jāņi are welcomed with ancient rituals, folk songs, flower and oak wreaths, bonfires, and celebrations that last until sunrise. To be in Latvia during this extraordinary season is a joyful, immersive cultural experience that blends history, folklore, and the magic of midsummer.

Experience the magic on this 9-day and 10-night tour of Riga and the states of Vidzeme, Zemgale and Kurzeme. Relax in 4-star accommodations and enjoy thoughtfully chosen tours and excursions highlighting the beauty of Latvia, its history and ancient cultural traditions.

Tour accommodates those who do not speak

- Duration: 9 Days / 10 Nights

Participants should plan to arrive in Riga no later than June 17 to check into the hotel and meet the group for dinner that evening. Return flights should be on the June 28.

- Price: \$3,000.00 per person double occupancy
*Price does not include flight.

Includes: 4-star accommodations, all tours, admission fees, transport, breakfast, 7 lunch and 5 dinner meals.
Reserve private room for an additional fee (See registration form).

Additional nights and transportation to/from airport can be arranged for an additional fee.

Register no later than March 17.

www.alausa.org

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June 17 - Riga

18:00 - welcome dinner

After checking in and getting settled, meet the group for a Welcome dinner at the hotel.

Dinner included.

Overnight - *Neiburgs Hotel*, Riga

June 18 - Riga

9:00 – 12:00 - walking tour of *Riga*

Founded in 1201, Riga the capital of Latvia is situated on the Daugava River. Enjoy this intimate and captivating medieval city's cobbled and narrow streets.

12:00 – 14:00 - lunch

Riga Central Market. Europe's largest market and bazaar include 5 pavilions and was built in 1924.

Lunch included.

14:00 -16:00 - visit

Museum of the Occupation of Latvia. The museum Documents the 51-year period in the 20th century when Latvia was occupied by the USSR in 1940, then by Nazi Germany in 1941, and then again by the USSR in 1944.

16:30 – free

Enjoy the evening to relax or explore.

Dinner is on your own at a restaurant of your choice.

Overnight - *Neiburgs Hotel*, Riga

June 19 - Kemerī and Jūrmala

9:00 – 10:30 – drive to *Kemerī*

10:30 - 12:00 - walking

The Great Kemerī Bog Boardwalk crosses a world of moss, small pine trees, deep pools, tiny dark lakes, and the smell of wild rosemary. Those who prefer shorter strolls can take the small boardwalk arc (~3/4 mi), while those who choose the great arc (~2 mi) will be rewarded with the opportunity to climb an observation platform that offers a magnificent view of the bog from above.



12:00 - 12:30 - travel to *Jurmala*

12:30 – 14:00 – lunch

Dine in the seaside town of Jurmala.

Lunch included.

14:00 - 16:00 - explore

Explore Latvia's premier seaside resort city on the Gulf of Riga, famous for its long, sandy beaches, healing mineral waters, pine forests, interesting shops and unique wooden Art Nouveau architecture.

16:00 – return to Riga

Enjoy a free evening to relax or explore.

Dinner is on your own at a restaurant of your choice.

Overnight - *Neiburgs Hotel*, Riga



June 20 – Riga and Sigulda

10:00 – 12:00 – tour

The Ethnographic Open-Air Museum. The museum is one of the oldest outdoor museums in Europe. Homesteads from all four regions of Latvia were relocated to the museum which opened in 1932. Step into past for an immersive tour to understand how Latvians lived and worked for centuries.

12:00 – 13:00 - lunch

The Ethnographic Open-Air museum

Lunch included

13:00 - travel to *Sigulda*

14:00 – 17:00 - visit

The Sigulda Castle of the Livonian Order was founded in 1207 by the Livonian Brothers of the Sword who were later incorporated into the Teutonic Order. These German crusader monks arrived starting in 1195 to Christianize the pagan Baltic, Finnic and West Slavic peoples around the shores of the Baltic Sea.

Gutman's Cave. Considered the oldest tourist attraction in Latvia based on the engravings on the walls of the cave. Inside the cave are coats-of-arms and the names of various barons and estate owners. As a protected site, writing on the cave walls is no longer permitted. Gutman's Cave was a place of ancient worship.



19:00 – dinner at the Senleja Hotel

Dinner included

Overnight - *Senleja Hotel*, Sigulda

June 21 Midsummer Celebration

All day - celebration

Celebrate the longest day and the shortest night of the year at *Turaida Castle* built in 1214 for the Archbishop of Riga. This stunning location is the perfect setting to experience the magic of the solstice that survives in ancient traditions including creating wreaths, making cheese, singing, dancing, and a bonfire. For those young at heart await the first rays of dawn to wash your face in the morning dew!

19:00 - dinner at the Senleja Hotel

Dinner included

Overnight - *Senleja Hotel*, Sigulda



June 22 – Rundale Palace and Liepaja

9:00 – 12:00 - travel to *Rundale Palace*

12:00 – 14:00 - tour

The Rundale Palace and French Garden. The sumptuous 18th C. Rundale Palace is one of two major baroque palaces built for the Dukes of Courland and Semigallia (Kurzemes Zemgales Hercogs). The palace was built in two periods, from 1736 to 1768.

14:00 – 15:00 - free time and lunch

Enjoy lunch on your own at a restaurant of your choice in the Rundales Palace complex.

15:00 – 18:00 - travel to *Liepaja*

20:00 – free

Enjoy a free evening to relax or explore this Baltic port city.

Dinner is on your own at a restaurant of your choice.

Overnight - *Promenade Hotel*, Liepaja



June 23 – Liepaja

9:00 – 12:00 - tour

Explore the beautiful city of *Liepaja* located on the Baltic Sea. Known throughout Latvia as the “City where the wind is born”.

The Karosta Prison. The “karosta” – naval base, was originally constructed in 1890–1906 for Tsar Alexander III of Russia. The prison housed revolutionaries, sailors of the Tsar’s Navy, German deserters, ‘enemies of the state’ during the Stalin era, soldiers of the Soviet army and of the Latvian army.



cont. Karosta Prison

The prison was closed in 1997 and has not fundamentally changed since the time of the Tsars. And.... no one ever escaped from the prison.

12:00 – 13:00 - lunch

Enjoy a flavorful seafood and fish lunch in the city.

13:00 – free time

Continue to explore the city of Liepaja, enjoy a stroll along the white sandy beach or a swim in the sea.

19:00 – excursion

End the day with a sunset cruise on the Baltic Sea with dinner included.

Overnight *Promenāde Hotel*, Liepaja



June 24 – Alsunga – Jurkalne – Ventspils

9:00 – 10:30 - travel to *Alsunga*

10:30 – 13:00 - tour and concert

Alsunga Manor was built by the Livonian Order in the 14th C. In 1738 the castle came into the possession of the Dukes of Courland and was rebuilt in the Baroque style.

While at the Manor enjoy performance by the *Suitu sievas*. The women are members of a unique cultural group famous for their distinct traditional costumes, unique polychrome singing, and rich cultural heritage.



13:00 – 14:00 - lunch

Enjoy a traditional lunch at the Alsunga Manor
Lunch included.



14:00 – drive to *Jurkalne*

14:30 – 16:00 - explore

The Jurkalne Bluffs are one of the most picturesque parts of Latvia's seashore, with a quiet beach untouched by civilization and bluffs of up to 65 feet high.

16:00 – travel to *Ventspils*

Celebrate the traditional holiday “Jāņi” in the port city of Ventspils.

Explore the city and enjoy a restaurant of your choice.
Overnight - *Jūras Brīže Hotel*, Ventspils



June 25 – Kuldīga

10:00 – 11:00 – travel to *Kuldīga*

11:00 – 13:00 - tour

The ancient city of *Kuldīga* with its distinctive architecture is located on the Venta River. Kuldīga is listed as an UNESCO's World Heritage Site.

13:30 – 15:00 - lunch and tour

Enjoy lunch at *Padure Manor*. Built in 1838 by Scottish merchant John Lewis Balfour, the manor is one of Latvia's finest examples of Classicist architecture.

15:30 – 16:30 - explore

Reizupes Caves are fascinating, man-made sand caves dug by hand over generations to extract fine sand for glassmaking. The caves feature themed rooms like the "Hall of Love", Hall of Faith", and "Hall of Hope". The temperature in the caves is a constant 46°F so bring a sweater!

17:00 – return to Kuldīga

Explore the city on your own and enjoy dinner at a restaurant of your choice.

Overnight *Jekaba Seta Hotel*, Kuldīga



June 26 – Kolka – Riga

9:00 – 11:00 – travel to the *Cape of Kolka*

11:00 – 12:00 - explore

Kolkasrags. The "Kolka Horn" is a unique place not only in Latvia, but also in all of Europe, because the waves of two seas meet - those of the great Baltic Sea and of the smaller Gulf of Rīga.

12:00 – 14:00 - workshop and lunch

Try your hand at making a *Sklandrausis*! This traditional Latvian sweet rye tart features a rye dough crust and a filling of sweetened mashed potatoes and carrots spiced with caraway. This historical dish from the Kurzeme region is protected by the EU for its unique origin.

14:00 – 17:00 – return to Riga

19:00 – farewell dinner

Enjoy one final evening in Riga at the *Ala Folkclub Pagrabs* a traditional pub located in a medieval wine cellar in the heart of Old Town.

Dinner included.

Overnight - *Neiburgs Hotel*, Riga

