

# Welcome to Riga! Useful Basic Information

November 18, 2018 is the centenary of Latvia independence. Lots of preparations are underway. Latvia is a member of the European Union (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004), Schengen area (December 21<sup>st</sup> 2007) and the Euro zone (January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014). Latvia Joined NATO on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2004.

## Latvian Euro coins



The Latvian Maiden, colloquially called as “Milda”, is depicted in the 1 and 2 Euro coins. The Latvian Maiden profile was already used on the 5 lat coin in the late 20’s.

The Latvian Euro coin’s reverse use either the Greater or the Lesser Coat of arms of Latvia according to the denomination.

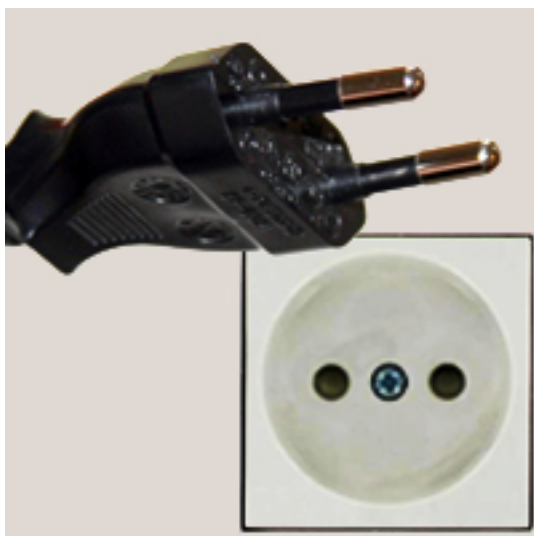
The Latvian 2 Euro coin has the first line of the National Anthem, “Dievs, svētī Latviju!” (God, Bless Latvia!), written in 1873, engraved on the edge.

## Electricity:

The standard **voltage/ frequency** are **220 V / 50 Hz**.

The **plugs** standards are the **C and F**

**Remember to bring your own adaptor and/or frequency converter if needed!**



Type C



Type F

## Weather

The weather in early October is already getting colder, windier and wetter.

Expected temperatures are in the order of +10°C (or colder)

There are in average 16 rainy days and 4.2 foggy days in October.

If we are **very** lucky to have Indian summer weather during the workshop, it could be as hot as in the low 20°C.

Be prepared and bring an umbrella, adequate shoes, and warm clothes for dressing in layers.

You can check the local weather at: <https://www.meteo.lv/en/> or the popular meteorological pages.

## Traffic rules and signalization: European Standards.

Cycling is not as popular as in other parts of Europe; but be careful! normally bicycle riders here **do not ring the bell** when approaching you from behind.

If you are using a wide sidewalk, which is shared with the cyclists, check before abruptly changing your path.

## Internet and WiFi access:

According to many metrics, Riga is one of the places with the highest mean internet connecting speed and WiFi spots density (the highest, according to some metrics).

WiFi access is widely available in Cafes, Restaurants, Hotels and similar places.

Many taxis advertise Free WiFi on board.

Starting with a new batch of recently ordered trams, free WiFi will be gradually introduced on the public transport fleet.



**You can see this sign in many public open places.**

If you use the “Lattelecom-Free” hotspots you'll have to wait 15 seconds and watch ad in a browser until you get the full access.

## Cellphone services, SIM's and tariffs:

Latvia code is +371; if you have an EU SIM, remember that the Intra European Union roaming tariff was abolished this year.

A general overview (from 2015) of the Latvian providers and services is at:

<https://know.lv/en/mobile-phone-networks-and-internet/>

If you want to buy a local SIM, in particular for mobile internet access, one example of the several options available is the ZZ (Zelta Zivtiņa), check at: <https://www.zeltazivtina.lv/en/>

Where to buy it: <https://www.zeltazivtina.lv/en/help/zz-customer-centres/>

Try at the Narvesen kiosks.

## Public Transport:

Unless your stay is at the Elephant Hotel near the airport, you can probably manage all by walking around for the workshop duration.

As a short term visitor, you will use the public transportation disposable e-ticket (e-talon, 1.15€ per trip) with 5-10-20 trips per e-talon. 3 and 5 days and 1 day group options are available.

The e-talons are validated using the readers on board.

e-talons are available at automatic vending machines (instructions in Latvian, Russian, English and German), Narvesen kiosks or at Riga Satikmes or Tourist information centers, ask at your hotel desk.

You can buy a single trip paper ticket directly from the driver (2.00€ **in cash and better have the exact change!**), if you change the vehicle for your trip, then you need to buy a new ticket.

You can enter/exit using any vehicle door.

Use the button near your door to signal that you will go out at the next stop. In the newer models use the outside buttons to open the door.

Full information, including the uses and types of e-ticket (e-talons), transport routes, timetables, etc at: <https://www.rigassatiksmes.lv/en/>

Short useful videos about public transportation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7M1a1aJOvI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VkwEYpd2Ks>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WKjIWEUbnc>

**Important:** There are frequent e-talon inspections, either with a couple of controllers entering and exiting in normal stops, or big teams stopping the vehicle between stops.

Each inspector uses an e-ticket reader. If you bought the 2 euro paper ticket, they will make a small tear on it after checking its validity.

All inspectors wear dark blue uniforms and a clear visible identification with name and photo; they can issue fines in place and can take you out of the transport for this.

**Always validate your e-ticket!** Even in the case you buy a 3 or 5 days ticket (or for locals, a monthly pass or the elderly free pass).

The reason behind this rule is that is the information collected validating the e-talons about how many, when and where the passengers rides on the public transport, is used to optimize the timetables and the vehicles sizes.

**Important:** if you decide to go to/from the airport using the bus 22, being a foreigner is no excuse for not to validate!!

## Airport (Lidosta Riga) arrival and departure:

Two main **taxi companies** are available at the Airport:

RedCab (<http://redcab.lv/redcab-taxi/?lang=en>) and

BalticTaxi (<http://baltictaxi.lv/en/>)

Baltic Taxi offers a City center flat Rate of 15€. Buy the coupon at the BalticTaxi Counter at the Schengen Arrival Hall.

Check with your hotel for the Departure Taxi reservation to the Airport.

**Bus 22:** if your arrival/departure time is at a reasonable time, are traveling light and there is good weather; you can use either the Bus 22 (Lidosta) or the minibus 222.

Going to the city center: use the stop across the parking lot

It takes about 30 minutes from the city center to the airport, stops directly at the departure hall.

Full information about the bus 22 stops to use on the \*.kml and \*.kmz Google Earth files available on the workshop page.

A useful video about the bus 22 route in:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXv9vEMdc-s>

(There is a ticket inspection going on at the bus with blinking lights at 3:09)

The Riga Airport (RIX) page: <http://www.riga-airport.com/> has the information about where to buy e-talons at the airport.

## Tourist information:

The emergency number in Latvia is **112**.

There is plenty of information available at:

<http://www.latvia.travel/en>

<https://www.liveriga.com/en/>

<http://wikitravel.org/en/Riga>

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/latvia/riga>

<https://www.inyourpocket.com/riga> (you can get a courtesy free printed version at the stand outside of the tourism information bureau "Welcome to Riga" at the Airport Schengen Arrival Hall, lots of maps and cultural guides available in several languages too).

There are many interesting places to visit during the workshop free time.

Foreign Languages are not a problem in the Old Riga area.

All the typical security rules for tourists in Europe are valid and recommended here!

## What to take home:

An **absolute must** is the local herbal liqueur “**Riga Black Balsam**” (Rīgas Melnais balzams)

It's a vodka-based recipe using 24 different plants, roots, berries and other components.

Apart of the “Classic” there are the Blackcurrant Juice and Rum-based versions.

You can drink the Balsam as shots, with ice, with tea or coffee in cocktails and use as a topping for Ice Cream!

You can buy also a Rīgas Balzams flavored Ice cream at the supermarkets.

According to tradition, Empress Catherine the Great was ill while visiting Riga and cured by drinking it. What is good for an Empress is good for you!

**Other things to consider:** Amber, linen confections, hand-woven mittens and caps with Latvian folk motives, Latvian Souvenirs. Plenty of shopping opportunities in Old Riga, from street stalls to Shopping complexes.

**Taking foodstuff home:** Check the sanitary rules in your country about what can be imported!

Think about: Latvian Honey, Latvian sweets and chocolates, local breads and cheeses, tins of smoked Riga Sprats (Rīgas Šprotes).

The smoked Šprotes recipe is on the market since 1890 and considered the best of its kind worldwide.

One good place for buying foodstuff is at the Riga Central Market (Rīgas Centrāltirgus) or in small shops in Old Riga, Or check in any big supermarket in the area!

**Note:** Shops open and close relatively late, many are open on Sunday.

## How to say what in Latvian:

Check:

<http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/latvian.php>

<http://www.the-backpacking-site.com/countries/latvia-phrase.html>

<https://www.languagehelpers.com/words/latvian/hello.html>

<http://www.latvia.travel/en/article/useful-words-and-phrases>

<http://www.101languages.net/latvian/most-common-latvian-words/>

**As it is said in Latvian:** Ar vienu valodu nekad nepietiek!

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