Latvia
University of
Agriculture

Successful career
START HERE

STUDENT GUIDE TO LLU

2018/2019

Latvia
University of
Agriculture

Latvia University of Agriculture
2 Liela Street, Jelgava, LV-3001, Latvia
Phone: +371 630 22584
E-mail: admission@llu.lv
Website: http://www.llu.lv/en

TABLE OF CONTENT

WELCOME TO LLU 5
ABOUT LLU 6
TRAVELLING AND GETTING THERE 7
- Travelling to Latvia & Rīga 7
- Travelling from Rīga to Jelgava 8
- Student dormitory 9

ACCOMODATION 9
- Utilities 9
- Electricity 10
- Planning your budget 10
- Health Insurance 11
- Residence permit (non-EU / EEA citizens) 11

IMMIGRATION 11
STUDIES 12
- Credit points 12
- Grading system 13
- Academic debts 13
- Academic calendar 14
- Exchange studies 14
- Library 15
- Webpage and social networks 15
- Student card (ISIC) 15
- Wi-fi 15
- LLU IS 15
- E-learning environment 15

WELCOME WEEK 16
- Student Union 17
- Erasmus Student Network (ESN) in Jelgava 17
- Sports 17

STUDENT LIFE 17
LIVING IN JELGAVA 18
- Shopping 18
- Cafes & Restaurants 20
- Leisure & Entertainment 20
- Smoking 21
- Drinking 21
- Weather and Clothing 22

LIVING IN LATVIA 22
- National holidays in Latvia 22
- Religion 22
- Personal security 22
- Communication 23
- Working in Latvia 23
- Currency exchange 23
- ATMS and Payments 23
- Bank services 24
- Food 24
- Drinks 27
- Places to discover 27
- The single emergency 30
- Medical help 30

USEFUL INFORMATION 30
- Information Hotline 30
- Immigration 31
- Survival phrases in Latvian 31

WELCOME TO LLU

With roots in Jelgava, the future – all over the world

The most valuable commodity in this world is new knowledge. It is like an expensive jug that fills us but never leaves itself empty. The more we have it, the richer we are. We are proud that you have chosen our University for your studies and professional growth and we are awaiting your arrival with great enthusiasm. International students contribute to the vitality of our institution by sharing their diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Use the opportunity and make the best out of your study abroad experience, both from professional and social perspective. We believe that every student here acquire education with added value, e. g. knowledge, skills and competences that make him not only a better professional but, above all, better person. The time spent in lectures will be just as valuable as any other experience you will encounter. Fulfil your knowledge jug with new experience and skills acquired in LLU and Latvia!

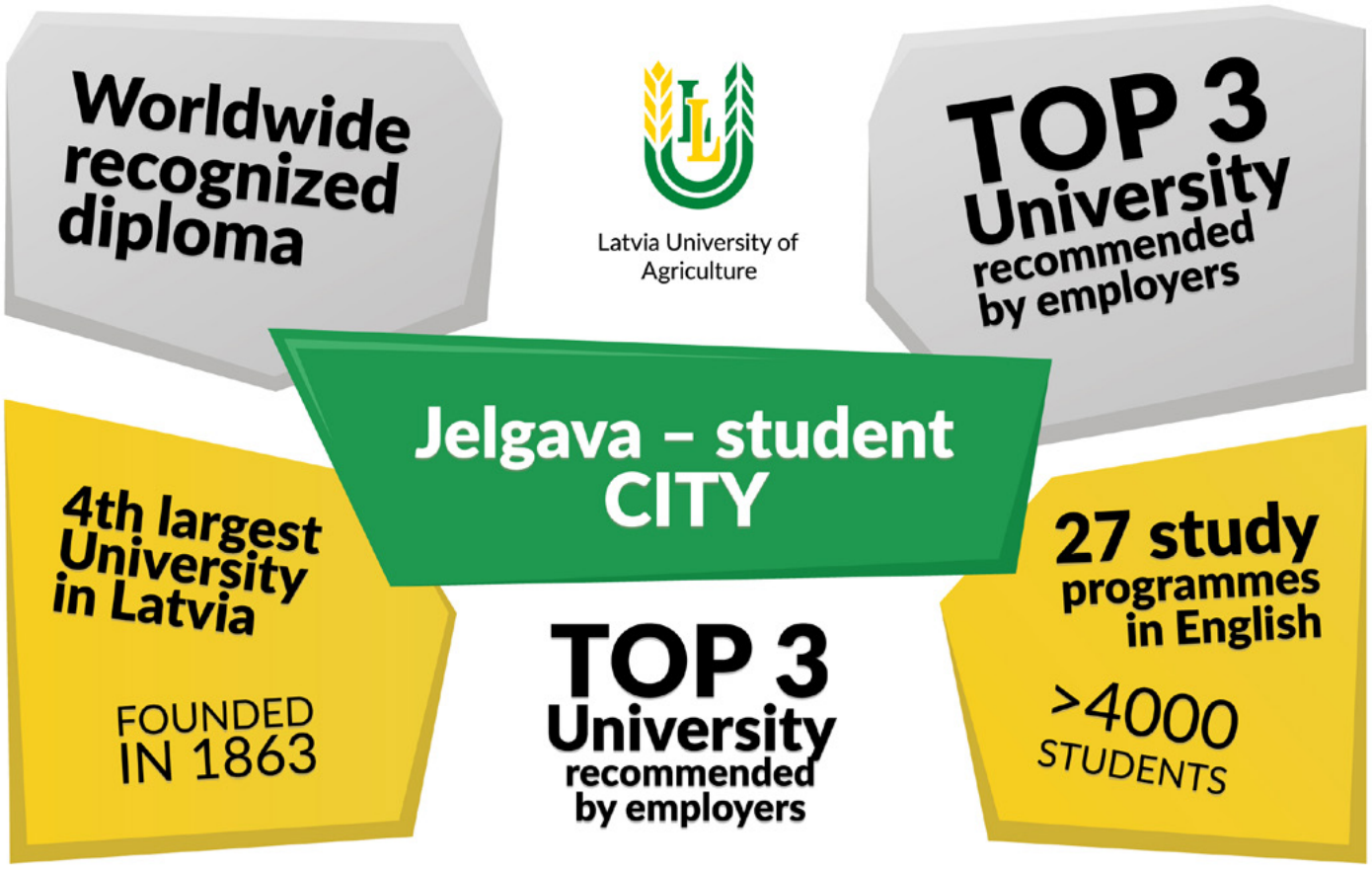
We hope your studies at LLU will be an exciting and fulfilling experience and a true story of your professional and personal success with add value.

Truly yours,
Irina Pilvere
Rector of Latvia University of Agriculture

ABOUT LLU

Latvia University of Agriculture (LLU) is one of the leading higher educational institutions in the Baltic States that has provided education and carried out researches for more than 150 years, in areas which are significant for every country's economies – agriculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, food production, information technologies, etc. The University's greatest strength and potential lies in the coexistence of all these directions.

The University is located in city of Jelgava, which is considered to be the student capital of Latvia. Additionally, the University's main building is Jelgava palace. Listen to lectures in the largest palace in the Baltic States and get the best experience from your studies at LLU!



TRAVELLING AND GETTING THERE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE:

LATVIAN

POPULATION:

1.9 MILLION

CAPITAL:

RĪGA

CURRENCY:

EURO

Travelling to Latvia & Rīga

Latvia is a Member State of the European Union and adheres to the Schengen Agreement. Rīga can be easily reached by various means of transport – plane, ferry, train or bus. Latvia has land borders with Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia. Travelling to Rīga by aircraft is easy and fast – there are direct flights to Rīga from airports in European capitals and business hubs, as well as from Russia, Israel, Turkey, etc.

Alternatively, you can take a bus – there are buses travelling to Latvia from European countries, Russia, and Belarus. Travellers from Russia and Belarus can also reach Latvia by train. Additionally, there is good ferry traffic across the Baltic sea from Sweden.

Travelling from Rīga to Jelgava

From Rīga International airport

Jelgava is in distance of about 50 km from Rīga International Airport. At arrival, first, you have to choose direct transfer from Airport to the Rīga International Bus Station or Rīga Central Train Station by domestic bus or taxi:

Take a taxi. Price varies between EUR 15 and EUR 20.

Take Public Bus No. 22, which has direct services from the airport to the city centre. Frequency 10-30 minutes, it will take you around 30 minutes to get to the city centre. A single ride ticket from the bus driver costs EUR 2.

Take the Airport Express minibus. The price for a ride is EUR 5. Payments are accepted in cash or by a payment card.

Travelling from Rīga to Jelgava

Second, you have to choose transport to Jelgava:

From Rīga International Bus Station. From there you can choose a direct bus to Jelgava. It will take you about 55 min for EUR 2.30 to reach Jelgava.

From Rīga Central Train Station. In the Rīga Central Train Station you can choose direct electric train to Jelgava. It will take you 50 min for EUR 2.05 to reach Jelgava. If your luggage exceeds the permitted dimensions or weight (40 cm x 60 cm x 20 cm or 20 kg) you need to purchase a luggage ticket.

First steps to take after arrival

You should get settled into the dormitory and relax. Let your relatives and friends know that you have safe and sound reached your destination. Once you have done this, you should go to your Coordinator. Either you are an Exchange student or a Full-time student you can find your Coordinator from Monday to Friday in Jelgava palace, Liela Street 2, Room 195.

ACCOMODATION

Student dormitory

International students have various options where to live during the study period at University. LLU offers a comfortable accommodation possibilities in the city centre in dormitory No. 8. All University facilities are easy reachable on foot and will take only up to 15 minutes. The distance between Jelgava palace (main building) and dormitory No.8 is about 1.1 km or 10-15 minutes on foot. The rooms are in a very good condition and the furniture is new. It is intended for two persons to share the room, but depending on your needs, living alone is also possible (double price will be adjusted).

At the dormitory, you will have:

- a bathroom and fridge in each room,
- kitchen in combination with lounge on each floor.

There is no need to take your own bed sheets or towels with you as dormitory No. 8 ensures that you'll have bed sheets and towels in your room. Also, you do not need to take any pots or pans or cutlery with you as the dormitory's kitchen is stocked with these items. The dormitory offers an electric iron as well. You just have to ask it to the administration staff.

If you are, or will be registered as an exchange or full-time student at LLU (have submitted all required application documents), we will arrange the accommodation for you. Before your arrival please check if a place at the dormitory is reserved for you by writing to email: admission@llu.lv

Utilities

If you are thinking about renting an apartment, please keep in mind that the utility costs (water, electricity, central heating in winter, etc.) are mostly calculated separately and are not included in the price of rent. Utility costs can be quite high, starting from EUR 70 in summer up to EUR 200 in winter.

Electricity

The electrical voltage in Latvia is 220, and electrical plugs used here are the same as in the rest of continental Europe, meaning, a two-wire plug with two round horizontal prongs (sockets should accept 4.0 – 4.8 mm round contacts on 19 mm centres). Students bringing electrical appliances from countries with different plugs or electrical voltage should buy an adapter.

Planning your budget

The cost of living highly depends on your lifestyle preferences. LLU international students recommend a minimum of EUR 400 per month (including accommodation). Comparative table gives an overview of the cost of living in Jelgava.

	Average low per month	Average high per month
Student dormitory	70	129
Food	200	300
Entertainment & leisure	80	120
Other	50	151
Total	**400**	**700**

You can compare cost of living between Jelgava and your home town at www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Jelgava-Latvia

IMMIGRATION

Health Insurance

If you have not obtained an internationally recognised health insurance policy (such as the European Health Insurance Card) prior to your arrival in Latvia, you should buy a private insurance policy here. Some of the most popular insurance companies are:

- **BTA**
  www.bta.lv/en
- **IF**
  www.if.lv
- **Balta**
  www.balta.lv
- **Seesam**
  www.seesam.lv/en

Residence permit (non-EU / EEA citizens)

Even before arrival to Latvia all non-EU/ EEA students have to apply for a temporary residence permit/visa that both are documents providing a foreigner the rights to reside in the Republic of Latvia for a definite period of time. The residence permit is necessary if you are willing to reside in the Republic of Latvia for a period of time exceeding 90 days within half a year counting from the first day of entrance. This rule applies to all LLU international students from non-EU countries. The documents are prepared with the help of the LLU International Cooperation Centre.

More information:
www.llu.lv/eng > ***Studies*** > ***Before arrival*** > ***Immigration***

STUDIES

Higher education traditions in Jelgava have deep roots, reaching back to the time of the "Academia Petrina" in 1775. These traditions are indirectly inherited by LLU. Nowadays LLU offers wide opportunities for studies in 14 unique fields where half of them can be studied only at LLU – agriculture, food technology, veterinary medicine, food hygiene and landscape architecture. University is offering also widespread study areas such as IT, economics and social sciences, engineering, pedagogy. The study process consists of two major parts – attending classes at the University and learning independently. The study process at the University is organized in the form of lectures, seminars and tutorials. Typically, you will be expected to attend the University on a daily basis, though the number of lectures depends on each faculty, and also your specialisation.

Credit points

Each course is worth a certain amount of credit points (CP). The amount of CP's is determined by the number of classes per week or/and the amount of work necessary to complete the class. The average amount of CP for full time study year is 40CP (20CP per semester). Latvian CP's differ from European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) yet it is compatible with it, which means that credits earned at LLU can be transferred to other higher education institutions in the EU/EEA.

Grading system

The final grade of each course may consist of several components (provided by the teacher at the beginning of the course): midterm exam, course paper, laboratory works, home works (assessment during semester) and final exam.
Latvia's higher education uses a ten-point grading system, the assessments ranging from (10) "with distinction" to (4) "almost satisfactory" and the Pass assessment are considered to be positive. The final assessment may be and exam (graded with a mark from 10-0) or a test (graded with Pass or Fail).

Achievement level	Latvian 10-point system	Assessment	Recommended ECTS grade
Very high	10	With distinction	A
	9	Excellent	A
High	8	Very good	B
	7	Good	C
Medium	6	Almost good	D
	5	Satisfactory	E
	4	Almost satisfactory	E/FX
Low	3-1	Unsatisfactory	Fail

Academic debts

It may happen that due to some reasons you fail to complete a study course. There can be various reasons for that – unsuccessful results of the exam, or you have failed to fulfil the requirements of the course due to illness etc. It is possible to take the exam again and complete the course. First, you have to agree with the teacher about the procedure for completing the course (time, place). Second, full time students have to turn to Dean's office at their Faculty (exchange students to International Cooperation Centre) to receive the individual evaluation sheet of the study course. The staff will inform you if the repeated examination is subject to a fee.

Academic calendar

The academic year is divided into two 20-week semesters, the autumn and spring semesters.

Autumn semester

28 August to 1 September	*Welcome Week*
4 September to 22 December	*Studies*
27 December to 19 January	*Period for individual studies and exams*
22 January to 28 January	*Holidays*

Spring semester

28 January to 1 February	*Welcome Week*
29 January to 20 May	*Studies*
21 May to 17 June	*Period for individual studies and exams*

Lecture schedule

Lecture	Time
1.	8.30 a.m. – 9.15 a.m.
2.	9.30 a.m. – 10.15 a.m.
3.	10.30 a.m. – 11.15 a.m.
4.	11.30 a.m. – 12.15 a.m.
5.	12.30 a.m. – 13.15 p.m.
6.	13.30 p.m. – 14.15 p.m.
7.	14.30 p.m. – 15.15 p.m.
8.	15.30 p.m.– 16.15 p.m.
9.	16.30 p.m.– 17.15 p.m.

Exchange studies

Students have opportunity to take a part in international exchange programme for studies or internship. Within Erasmus+ programme students can go for exchange for one or two semesters to one of 150 partner universities of LLU.
Participating in any exchange program student will receive full credits for all academic work successfully carried out at LLU and will be able to transfer these academic credits on the bases of a formal agreement between LLU and home university.

When the student has successfully completed the study programme previously agreed between the home and the host institutions and returns to the home institution, credit transfer will take place, and the student will continue the study course at the home institution without any loss of theme or credit. Apply for Erasmus+ studies or internship *http://www.llu.lv/en/application-procedure*

Library

The Fundamental library of the LLU is an accredited library of state significance. It is not only the biggest library of agricultural literature in Latvia, but also the deposit library of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and the national centre of the information systems AGRIS and CARIS. All the publications in the stock of the library are available to public.

- Spacious reading hall with shelf arrangement for open access available for readers.
- Access to wi-fi.
- Various data bases and other electronic publications available.
- Copying self-service which is available by using the University ID where you can deposit some money for copying (you can deposit money onto your ID in the copy room which is on the first floor of library).

Open hours of the library are regularly 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during working days.
The library is closed on Saturday and Sunday.
More information and access: *http://llufb.llu.lv/index_en.html*

Webpage and social networks

The University webpage *www.llu.lv/en/* contains a lot of useful information, for example, contacts of teachers and administrative staff, information on study and practical issues, useful links etc.

Follow us in Facebook:
www.facebook.com/LLU.international/

Student card (ISIC)

As most other universities, the LLU has its own student card. The student card will allow you to receive various benefits inside and outside of the University. You can make LLU ISIC card in Jelgava palace, Room 298. You need one photo (3 x 4 cm) and it will take approximately 5 minutes to make it.

Wi-fi

Wireless internet is provided in all University buildings including student dormitory. Firstly, you will have to sign an agreement with the University about the use of the Wi-Fi, then you will be given an access code which you will be able to use on all of your devices. You can receive user account in Jelgava Palace, Room 112 room every day from 9.00 am to 4.00 pm. The received user account will be valid also for e-learning environment, LLU e-mail, Internet in University and dormitories.

LLU IS

In this system, you will be able to view the details for lectures, instructions, as well as other topical themes. You can receive user account in Jelgava Palace, Room 112 room every day from 9.00 am to 4.00 pm.

E-learning environment

University has its own e-learning system *https://estudijas.llu.lv/?lang=en*. In the e-learning system you can find lecture materials posted by teachers, send your assignments, communicate with the teacher and your course mates etc. The teachers will inform you if they use the e-learning support in their courses and they will also add you to the respective course in the e-learning system.

WELCOME WEEK

Every semester a Welcome Week is held for all international and Erasmus+ students before the beginning of studies. Welcome Week is designed to help international students settle and get acquainted with life in Jelgava and studies at LLU. Welcome Week consists of sessions concerning academic and practical issues, library, Student Union, life in Jelgava, as well as social events and trips. Usually Welcome Week is held during the week before the semester while regular courses and studies will start from the first week of the semester. The programme for the Welcome week will be emailed to all international students before their arrival.

Student Union

Primary representative student organisation at the University. It participates in the governance of the University. New members and activists are admitted every year, so if you are active and full of energy, and if you have great ideas and suggestions on how to improve life at LLU, you are welcome to join the Student Union! Just write to *llusp@llu.lv*

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) in Jelgava

ESN is the biggest student association in Europe which works for the creation of a more mobile and flexible education environment by supporting and developing the student exchange from different levels. ESN in Latvia involves around 40.000 young people offering its services to around 220.000 international students every year.

Get in touch with ESN Jelgava by writing team-jelgava@esn.lv or joint their Facebook group https://www.facebook.com/Erasmusjelgava/

Sports

University provides wide opportunities to participate in sports. The University has two sport halls, a swimming pool, space for aerobics, martial arts, fitness equipment, as well as a sports ground and horse-riding sports centre. Sport classes are available: basketball, volley-ball, ping-pong, track-and-field athletics, Greek-Roman wrestling, judo, aerobics, floorball, orienteering, football, weight lifting, badminton and horse-riding.

LIVING IN JELGAVA

Jelgava is one of the oldest Latvian cities, the city rights were granted in 1573. It is situated on the banks of the River Lielupe, only 40 km from Rīga. With 66 000 inhabitants and total area of 60 km^2 Jelgava ranks fourth among the largest cities of Latvia. Jelgava is called also as a Students' City and is considered as one of the greenest cities in Latvia. It has architectural, cultural, historical and natural monuments as well as contemporary buildings and attractive recreation facilities.

There are a number of activities offered in the city that you can explore – cafes, clubs, sports activities, theatre etc.

More information:
visit.jelgava.lv/en/

Shopping

You will find a wide variety of places to do your shopping in Jelgava:

The City Arcade (Pilsētas Pasāža)

Trading centre is designed as a pedestrian street with lanterns, which makes shopping process feel like a walk in a leisurely atmosphere. Geographically convenient location of the building provides easy access to its visitors.

VIVO shopping mall

One of the most popular shopping centre in Jelgava and its surrounding.

Trade centre „KANCLERA NAMS"

There is offered a wide range of stationery, household goods, books, school appliances and bags, clothes, sports goods, bicycles, furniture, toys, curtains and household appliances.

Shopping mall "Valdeka"

Arriving Jelgava from Rīga side, you are welcome to shop in the "Valdeka".

For food products, many people prefer organic food from Latvian farmers at market. Also, there are supermarket chains where you can buy food:

Rimi

Rimi is one of the leading retailers of food and fast movement goods in the Baltics. Rimi hypermarkets are usually recommended by foreign students.

Elvi

The Elvi company buys products from local farmers, thus ensuring good quality and reasonable prices.

Maxima

Irrespective of the number of Xs added to the end of the name, the quality of products varies. Pay extra attention to expiry dates on food products!

Super Netto

This is similar to what many Europeans know as Aldi – basically, a discount supermarket chain.

In addition to the above-mentioned supermarkets some smaller food store chains are also available. Out of these the most popular ones are:

and some others.

Cafes & Restaurants

Jelgava offers a variety of places to eat out, from American fast food, pizzerias to expensive restaurants with contemporary Latvian and international cuisines. Lunch at cafeteria will cost from EUR 2.50 to EUR 3.50, lunch at restaurant from EUR 7 to EUR 10.

- **Fast food & pizzerias:** McDonald's, Hesburger, pizzeria "Čili Pica", pizzeria "Picu Darbnīca", etc.
- **Cafes:** "Silva", pub "Melno cepurīšu balerija", etc.
- **Restaurants:** "Hercogs", "Pilsētas elpa", "Chocolate & Pepper", etc.

Leisure & Entertainment

Nightlife.

Nightlife in Jelgava is always vibrant. There are several bars and night clubs.

Pub "Melno cepurīšu balerija" (Black Hat Ballery)

A cozy bar-gallery intended for people who respect culture and arts. This is the only place in Jelgava where you can enjoy alternative music.

Performing groups range from hip hop, reggae and hardcore, metal and experimental music. It is highly recommended place from our international students.

Music club "Jelgavas krekli"

A venue for joyful student events. Group performances are carried out on Wednesdays and Fridays, on Saturdays – themed events and parties. If you want to experience a genuine student atmosphere and a party atmosphere typical only for Jelgava, Wednesdays and Saturdays are the "real" days. On Fridays, you can enjoy 100% Latvian music.

Music club "Tonuss"

The modern nightclub is one of the most popular attractions in Jelgava. "Tonuss" is actively cooperating with the best Latvian and foreign DJ and music groups, enjoying the club's visitors with large-scale concerts and thematic events.

Entertainment and leisure

In Jelgava, there are also other opportunities for your free time – bowling "Zemgale" and "A-Z Boulings", skatepark "Zemgale", public ice rink, beach volleyball, hockey arena "Zemgale", etc.

Smoking

In public, you are only allowed to smoke in places specially designated for this purpose. It is forbidden to smoke in parks and at bus stops, as well as closer than 10 metres from the entrance of any governmental and public building. Smoking on University premises is prohibited!

Drinking

The sale of alcoholic beverages in stores is prohibited from 22.00 until 8.00. However, if you are over 18 years of age, you can buy alcohol in bars, cafés and clubs without any limitation on time. You may be asked to present a document of identification to verify your age. Also, it's not allowed to be in public places (street, park) with an open bottle of strong drinks (incl. beer).

Weather and Clothing

Latvia has a moderate maritime climate, with mild summers, with an average temperature of 20°C. Typical summer months are June to August, although May and September can be rather pleasant, mild and warm too. Winters are considered moderate as well, with snowfall (often sleet) and temperatures ranging from -5 to -20°C. Occasionally, in February, the temperatures may drop to -25°C. Each year can be different and it is difficult to predict, but you have be ready for a winter experience with snow and very cold temperatures, so clothing and footwear such as boots, gloves, scarfs, hats, winter jackets is a must! These things can be bought here too.

You can check local weather at www.meteo.lv/en/

National holidays in Latvia

18 November Independence Day of Latvia

24 – 26 December Christmas

March / April Easter (from Good Friday to Easter Monday)

1 May Convocation of the Constituent Assembly

4 May Restoration of Independence of Latvia

23-24 June Midsummer celebrations Līgo

On national holidays the University, as well as other institutions in Latvia are closed.

Religion

Western, Central and Northern parts of Latvia are mostly Lutheran, whereas the Eastern part of Latvia is mostly Roman Catholic. Orthodox community can be found in all major cities in Latvia and the Eastern part of the country.

Personal security

Jelgava and Latvia, in general, are fairly safe. Violent street crimes are rare and most security problems are associated with petty theft, such as pick-pocketing. Take care of your personal belongings and avoid unlit streets late at night.
In an emergency situation call the toll-free number 112, as this is the general contact number for the emergency service. This number can be used to contact police, fire brigade, ambulance, and gas emergency services. Operators can take calls in Latvian, Russian, English and German.

Communication

Mobile phones.

It is possible to buy different pre-payment phone cards for mobile phones – the costs vary and prices are from EUR 2 and up. The pre-paid cards can be bought in Narvessen Shops and other places. You can choose from several operators listed below:

- **LMT**
  www.lmt.lv
- **Amigo**
  www.amigo.lv
- **BITE**
  www.bite.lv
- **TELE2**
  www.tele2.lv
- **Zelta Zivtiņa**
  www.zeltazivtina.lv

Postal Services.

Latvijas Pasts provides postal services, including express delivery services, Western Union services, bill payments etc. The central post office in Jelgava is located at Katoļu Street 2B (near shopping centre Pilsētas pasāža). To receive packages and shipments, make sure you know your postal code (pasta indekss). If you live in Jelgava it will always start with LV-30xx, so find out what the last two digits are for your address!

Working in Latvia

In order to work in Latvia, no work permit is required for the citizens of EU/EEA countries and Switzerland or their family members who have free access to the labour market in Latvia.
A third-country national has the right to request a work permit if the working hours specified in the employment contract do not exceed 20 hours per week.

Currency exchange

Since 2014, the official currency in Latvia is Euro (EUR). If necessary, you can exchange your currency in banks or private currency exchange offices. Check and compare rates before undertaking any transactions. You can check the official rates at the Bank of Latvia (*www.bank.lv/en/*).

ATMS and Payments

There is no shortage of ATMs (bankomāts) – most banks have them in shopping malls, in branch offices of banks, on street corners, near office buildings and gas stations. ATMs are available 24/7. Credit cards and debit cards are widely accepted for making payments. In addition, Internet banking is widely used for paying bills, recharging phones, topping up e-tickets, shopping on the Internet and using many other services.

Bank services

To open a bank account, take your passport or ID card and go to any branch office of a bank of your choice. File an application and choose the type of services you would like to receive from the bank. The usual opening hours for the banks is 9.00 - 17.00 on working days. Some of the most popular banks in Latvia are:

Swedbank
www.swedbank.lv

SEB
www.seb.lv

Nordea
www.nordea.lv

DNB
www.dnb.lv

Citadele
www.citadele.lv

Food

Latvian national cuisine has been formed under the influence of cuisines from the neighbouring countries and the meals served today are particularly rich in other nationality dishes. Most restaurants and canteens in Jelgava offer a variety of nice meals for reasonable prices. If you prefer to cook for yourself, the ingredients for various meals can be found in the local supermarkets.

The typical Latvian meal is a vegetable soup, potatoes with meat, vegetable stews and fish dishes, different kind of salads, various kinds of bread, nice and interesting desserts and pastry. The traditional and very popular drink is beer. It is common in Latvia to have a warm meal for lunch, as well as for dinner.

Kartupeļi (potatoes) are served with nearly all Latvian food and they're usually either boiled, fried, boiled and then fried or mashed. Sometimes, traditional restaurants or canteens will also offer ***griķi*** (boiled buckwheat) instead of potatoes.

Meat is present in most main courses. Nevertheless, ***fish*** is also commonly consumed due to Latvia's wealth of water reservoirs: smoked and raw fish are quite common. Herring (salted or marinated) is particularly popular and it is served cold.

Latvia is rich in ***milk products.*** *Biezpiens* (cottage cheese), *skābais krējums* (sour cream), *rūgušpiens* (soured milk) and a lot of various cheeses like *Jāņu siers* (caraway cheese) is traditionally served on the Latvian Midsummer festival *Jāņi*.

Kāposti (cabbage) also plays a major role in most Latvian meals. Sometimes it's served cold as a salad or hot as a side dish like *skābie kāposti* (sauerkraut). Latvians eat also *šķovētie* or *štovētie kāposti*, which is like sauerkraut but sweeter and darker in colour as it's stewed longer with sugar.

Pelēkie zirņi (grey peas) is another side dish worth trying. Big, grey round peas are boiled and then fried with bacon and usually served with

kefīrs (kefir) or *skābais krējums* (sour cream).

All kinds of ***pickled items*** are also on offer at most Latvian establishments including beets, mushrooms and, of course, cucumbers. If you see the word *marinēts* on a menu it means that something has been marinated in vinegar.

Latvians refer to all salads as ***salāti*** including the classic local staple *rosols*, which is a combination of pickled vegetables, potatoes and meat held together with loads of mayonnaise, mustard and horseradish. Other salads are drenched in sour cream.

Soups are usually hearty like *frikadeļu zupa* (meatball soup), zirņu zupa (pea soup) and the Russian favourite *soļanka* (tangy tomato soup with potatoes, sausage, kidney and pickles). Latvian seasonings seldom stray beyond *dilles* (dill), *ķimenes* (caraway seeds), salt and pepper.

Although Latvians love ice cream, cake and chocolate, ***traditional desserts*** include *maizes zupa* (rye bread pudding) and *ķīselis* (starchy fruit pudding served with milk). Bakeries are also full of sweet and savoury pastries called *pīrāgi* with any number of fillings from bacon and onions to mushrooms and even cherries. Finally, a *sklandrausis* is a delicious sweet pie consisting of mashed carrots and potatoes baked in a rye flour crust. In 2013, the *sklandrausis* became the first Latvian food to be listed in the EU's Traditional Specialties Guaranteed registry meaning that only a pie created according to a specific recipe can be called a *sklandrausis*.

Labu apetīti (bon appetit)!

- **Pīrāgi** – buns filled with bacon and onion

- **Aukstā zupa** – cold beetroot soup

- **Rupjmaize** – dark bread made from rye, and is considered a national staple

- **Kūpināta zivs** – smoked fish

- **Jāņu siers** – caraway cheese

- **Pelēkie zirņi** – grey peas

- **Rupjmaizes kārtojums** – layered rye bread dessert

- **Šašliks** – lamb, pork, beef or poultry. If it's meat and can be put on a skewer, Latvians will call it shashlik.

- **Rasols** – the ultimate universal soldier amongst salads, rasol is a great way to empty the fridge as it will take almost anything you throw at it.

- **Pelmeņi** – meat dumplings made of some minced seasoned meat which is put in small pockets of dough and boiled. The ultimate student food.

- **Soļanka** – soup with ingredients like beef, ham, sausage, potato and cabbage, salted mushrooms, tomatoes, onions, olives and parsley.

Drinks

- **Kefīrs** – kefir (fermented milk drink)

- **Kvass** – drink that is made out of rye bread. Popular choice of drink on hot summer days.

- **Rūgušpiens** – clabber is very refreshing and is enjoyed throughout rural Latvia. Rich in probiotics like its eastern cousin kefir, the drink is highly beneficial for your immune and digestive system.

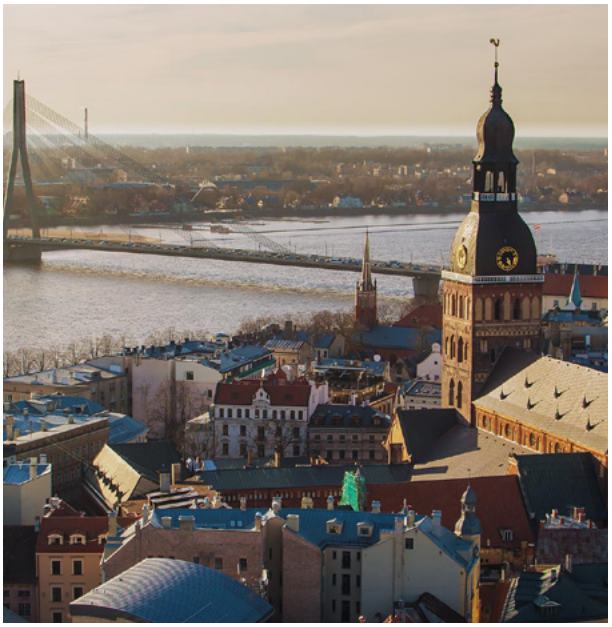
Places to discover

A lot of international students use the possibility to travel around the Baltics and the neighbouring countries during their study period. Lithuania and Estonia can be easily reached by bus or train. Sweden and Finland – also by ferry or by plane (good priced tickets can be bought in advance). Many students also use the possibility to travel to Russia – Moscow or St. Petersburg. Trains go there from Rīga.

We also recommend students to explore the destinations locally – other towns and beautiful places in Latvia:

- **Rīga.** The capital of Latvia, founded in 1201. The largest and most exciting metropolis in the Baltics.

  Places to see – the Old town, Freedom monument, Rīga central market, Rīga Dome cathedral, The house of the blackhead, Līvu square, etc.



- **Liepāja.** Important ice-free port hosting an 1890's naval base. "The city here the wind is born". Latvia's rock-and-roll capital.

- **Cēsis.** Among the oldest cities in Latvia (1206). There are beautiful medieval castle ruins that host open-air cultural events.

- **Kuldīga.** One of the longest brick bridges in Europe overlooks the widest waterfall in Europe "Venta Rapids".

- **Jūrmala.** The largest resort city in the Baltics just 20 minutes' drive from Rīga, famous for its ideal sandy beaches and exclusive spas.

- **Rundāle Palace.** Nicknamed the Baltic Versailles, Rundāle Palace will transport you to an age of splendour. Rundāle palace is one of Latvia's most outstanding architectural landmarks – a baroque period ensemble completes with palace, stables and garden-park.

- **Sigulda.** It is advisable to see Gūtmanis cave near Sigulda and Turaida castle.

- **Gauja National Park.** The perfect place to destress. Wander miles of stunning hiking trails, explore fascinating medieval castles or thrill to bungee jumping, bobsleighing and other adventurous activities.

Ideas for travelling in Latvia
www.latvia.travel/en, www.celotajs.lv/en?lang=en, www.liveriga.com/en/
Ideas for travelling to Estonia
www.visitestonia.com/en
Ideas for travelling to Lithuania
www.lithuania.travel
Ferry trips in Baltic Sea
www.tallink.com
By train to Russia
https://travel.ldz.lv/en/ldz/vilciena-kustibas

Regional and Intercity transport

The Railway Station is located in the centre of Rīga. The bus terminal is close to the Central Railway Station, between Stockmann Shopping Mall and the Central Market. You can conveniently reach major Latvian towns and regional centres. In addition, the Passenger Port provides ferry services from Rīga to Stockholm, Helsinki and Tallinn.

Information about Intercity buses (routes, timetables, prices) can be found www.1188.lv/en/transport

You can buy a ticket online and receive it on your mobile phone or print it at www.bezrindas.lv/en/home

USEFUL INFORMATION

The single emergency

Hotline number 112 will provide information on what to do in certain situations, or connect you to the appropriate service – emergency medical, fire department, natural gas emergency, or the police. The number 112 is toll-free and reachable from land lines as well as from mobile phones.

Medical help

If you are an EU citizen who requires medical attention while in Latvia, use the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). It confirms your right to receive the same services as those offered to Latvian nationals. If you are not an EU citizen and do not have an EHIC card but require emergency medical assistance, you will have to pay full cost of the services.
For non-serious illness and to buy medicines you can ask a pharmacist in the pharmacies in the city.

Information Hotline

The Hotline 1188 provides information about business addresses, hours, service providers, state institutions, public transport timetables, concerts and events, as well as all vital tourist information – accommodations, museums, attractions, restaurants and cafes, and medical centres. The Hotline is reachable 24 hours per day. Information is provided in Latvian, Russian, and English.

There are several medical institutions in Jelgava where you can receive medical services:

- **Jelgava Hospital** (Brīvības bulvāris 6, *http://www.jpslimnica.lv/index.php/kontakti.html*),
- **Zemgale Health Centre** (Zemgales prospekts 15, *http://zvc.lv/lv/kontakti/*),
- **Jelgava Health Centre** (Sudrabu Edžus 10, *http://www.jelgavaspoliklinika.lv/1/par-mums/index.html*).

To receive a treatment, you need to have an appointment with doctor. Call to the medical institution and ask for available time – ask International Cooperation Centre for help if needed. In case of emergency dial 112 or 03 (ambulance).
Many physicians do not speak English, so before visiting a doctor ask the International Cooperation Centre for a recommendation.

Emergency medical service: ***113***

Immigration

Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/

Survival phrases in Latvian

The language used in Latvia is Latvian. It is a separate language group, not similar to Slavic or Germanic languages.

Expressions of politeness

Hi! – Sveiki! / Čau!

Bye! – Atā!

Hello! – Labdien!

Good morning! – Labrīt!

Good evening! – Labvakar!

Good night! – Arlabunakti!

Goodbye! – Uz redzēšanos! (Atā)

Please – Lūdzu!

Thank you – Paldies!

You're welcome – Lūdzu!

Cheers! – Priekā!

Excuse me! – Atvainojiet!

Pleased to meet you! – Prieks iepazīties!

Useful words

Yes – Jā

No – Nē

Where is ...? – Kur atrodas ...?

What time is it? – Cik ir pulkstenis?

How much does this cost? – Cik tas maksā?

I don't speak Latvian – Es nerunāju latviski

I don't understand it – Es nesaprotu

Do you speak English? – Vai tu runā angliski?

My name is ... – Mani sauc...

What's your name? – Kā tevi sauc?

How are you? – Kā tev iet?

Help! – Palīgā!

Taxi – Taksometrs

Bus/coach – Autobuss

Shop – Veikals

Use the following links to learn Latvian easy! maciunmacies.valoda.lv/eng, www.sazinastilts.lv/?lang=en