

A note from Daiga.

Welcome to Riga — and thank you for choosing this guide.

I've been showing people around Latvia for years, and Riga's Old Town and Art Nouveau district are the two places I never tire of. Every time I walk these streets I notice something I hadn't seen before. That's not a cliché — it's genuinely true of places with 800 years of stories in a few square kilometres.

This guide gives you what I'd tell a friend: where to go, what to look for, where to eat without paying tourist prices, and the stories behind the things you'll see. Practical, honest, and specific.

You don't need a guide to walk these streets. But I hope this makes you look at them differently.

Daiga

Founder · Barefoot Baltic

Licensed guide, Latvia



Daiga · Your Guide

The Walk — 12 Stops

~2.2 km · Start: Powder Tower, Smilšu iela 20 · Allow 2-4 hours

📍 [Open 12-stop walking route in Google Maps](#) →

maps.google.com — search "Riga Old Town Barefoot Baltic walk" — all stops pre-loaded

Powder Tower

S

Smilšu iela 20

Your starting point. The only surviving medieval round tower from Riga's city walls. Latvian War Museum inside is free. Cannonballs from the 1621

Swedish Gate & Jacob's Barracks

1

Torņa iela 11

Riga's only surviving city gate, built 1698 under Swedish rule. Walk through it. The legend: a soldier who secretly courted a local girl was walled

The Three Brothers

2

Mazā Pils iela 17, 19, 21

Three adjoining medieval houses from the 15th-17th centuries — the oldest surviving residential buildings in Riga. No. 17 (white) is the

Riga Castle

3

Pils laukums 3

Official residence of the President of Latvia. The Presidential flag flies when in residence. Best view from the Daugava embankment. National History

Dome Cathedral & Square

4

Doma laukums 1

Largest church in the Baltics, started 1211. The organ has 6,718 pipes — it was the largest in the world when installed in 1884. Entry €3. Organ

Great Guild & Small Guild

5

Amatu iela 6

Two medieval guild halls facing each other. Great Guild: wealthy German merchants. Small Guild: craftsmen. The Cat House nearby (Meistaru iela

House of Blackheads

6

Rātslaukums 7

Most photographed building in Riga. Built 1334. Bombed in WWII, demolished by the Soviets 1948, meticulously rebuilt in 2001 from historical

Town Hall Square & Roland Statue

7

Rātslaukums

The heart of medieval commercial life. The Roland Statue = a city's right to trade freely. Stand with your back to the House of Blackheads and look

St. Peter's Church Tower

★

Reformācijas laukums 1

Spire 123 m tall — the tallest wooden structure in the world when completed in 1690. Observation deck at 72 m: €9. The single best view in Riga. Do

St. John's Church & Courtyard

9

Jāņa iela 7

Gothic church hidden behind a narrow passage. Jāņa sēta courtyard beside it is one of the finest medieval courtyards in the Baltics. Look for two

Livu Square & Latvian Riflemen

10

Kalku iela / Livu laukums

The controversial Soviet-era Riflemen monument stands at the Old Town edge. Livu laukums fills with café terraces in summer and becomes the

Cat House & Freedom Monument

F

Meistaru iela 19

Finish at the Cat House — two Art Nouveau cats on the roof turrets, still pointing at the Great Guild they were built to insult. From here a short walk

How Long to Allow⚡ **Quick visit****~2 hours**

House of Blackheads, Dome Cathedral, Town Hall Square. Enough to say

★ **Recommended****Half day**

Full 12-stop walk, St. Peter's tower, Dome Cathedral interior. Lunch

📅 **Full day****All day**

Add a museum, wander every courtyard, then walk into the Art

📌 **Daiga's tip:**

"The best version of Old Town is 8am on a weekday in spring. No tour groups. Light on the cobblestones. You can hear your own footsteps."

Key Landmarks — Entry & Hours

House of Blackheads

Rātslaukums 7

€8 Tue-Sun 10-17 ★ Worth it

Built 1334 for the Brotherhood of Blackheads. Destroyed in WWII, demolished 1948, rebuilt 2001. Ornate interior, Hanseatic silverware. The coats of arms of Riga, Hamburg,

St. Peter's Church Tower

Reformācijas laukums 1

€9 Daily 10-18 ★ Best view

123 m spire — the tallest wooden structure in the world in 1690. Burnt and rebuilt multiple times; current spire from 1973. Observation deck at 72 m. The aluminium rooster

The Three Brothers

Mazā Pils iela 17-21

€3 museum Mon-Fri 9-17 Free exterior

Oldest surviving residential buildings in Riga — three houses from different centuries. No. 17 has no ground-floor windows: medieval tax was levied by street frontage width,

Powder Tower

Smilšu iela 20

Free Tue-Sun 10-18 ★ Underrated

Only surviving round tower from Riga's medieval walls. Latvian War Museum inside is free and excellent. Cannonballs from the 1621 Swedish siege are still

Cat House

Meistaru iela 19

Exterior free Always visible Hidden story

Art Nouveau 1909. The owner was refused membership of the Great Guild, so he put cats on the roof turrets with their backsides pointing directly at the Guild hall. He was

Dome Cathedral

Doma laukums 1

€3 Mon-Sat 9-18 Organ concerts

Largest church in the Baltics, started 1211. The organ: 6,718 pipes, the largest in the world when installed in 1884. Regular organ concerts — check the schedule at the box

Old Town Churches — Six in 54 Acres

Dome Cathedral

1211 · Lutheran · €3 · Mon-Sat 9-18

Largest church in the Baltics. Famous 6,718-pipe organ. Cloister one of the finest in northern Europe.

St. John's Church

1234 · Lutheran · Free · Tue-Sat 10-17

Hidden behind a narrow passage. Gothic interior. Two stone faces in outer wall — said to be walled-in monks.

St. Saviour's

1857 · Anglican · Free · Sun services 10:00

Only English church in the Baltics. Built for the British merchant community. Sunday services in English.

St. Peter's Church

1209 · Lutheran · €9 tower · Daily 10-18

Oldest church in Riga. 72 m observation deck = best viewpoint in the city.

St. James's Cathedral

1226 · Catholic · Free · Daily 7-19

Only Catholic cathedral in Riga. Oldest church tower in the city. Services in Latvian, Polish and English.

Our Lady of Sorrows

18c · Catholic · Free · Daily 8-18

Quiet, off the tourist path. Original 18th-century Baroque ceiling decoration survived Soviet intervention. Worth finding.

Practical Information

☐ Entry Costs

Old Town streets: Free
 St. Peter's Tower: €9 adult, €5 child
 House of Blackheads: €8 adult
 Dome Cathedral: €3 adult
 Latvian War Museum: Free
 Riga Castle museums: €4+

☐ Best Time to Visit

Best hour: Before 9 am (empty, best light)
 Best months: May-June, September
 Avoid: midday Jul-Aug (cruise ships)
 December: Christmas market, Dome Square

☐ Opening Times

St. Peter's: Daily 10:00-18:00
 House of Blackheads: Tue-Sun 10-17
 Dome Cathedral: Mon-Sat 9-18
 Latvian War Museum: Tue-Sun 10-18

☐ Getting There & Money

Currency: Euro (€) · Cards everywhere
 Taxi: Bolt app (avoid street hail)
 Bus 22: Airport → city ~€2
 Free WiFi: Riga_Free_WiFi in squares

Where to Eat & Drink – Honest Picks

Folkklubs Ala Pagrabs

Peldu iela 19

€€ Latvian folk cuisine · Beer cellar

Where Latvians actually go. Grey peas with smoked ribs, hearty soups in a vaulted basement. Folk music some

LIDO

Lāčplēša iela 12 (10 min walk)

€ Latvian self-service canteen

The most Latvian lunch you can have. Long counters: rye bread, cold cuts, grey peas, soups. Almost nothing by Old

Rozengrāls

Rozena iela 1

€€€ Medieval-themed · 13th-century cellar

Theatrical setting is genuinely real — 13th-century vaulted cellar. Food loosely inspired by historical recipes. Book

Dome Square Cafés

Doma laukums

€€ Outdoor terraces · Coffee, cake

Tourist-priced but the location is the point. Sitting outside with the cathedral behind you on a warm day is hard to

Ala Bar

Peldu iela 19

€ Bar · Latvian craft beers

Adjacent to Folkklubs. Good place for a Latvian craft beer or Black Balsam (Rīgas Melnais Balzāms) mixed drink. Fair

Central Market (LIDO detour)

Nēģu iela 7

€ Market · Best breakfast in Riga

Not in Old Town but worth the 15-minute walk. Five Zeppelin hangars, the finest food market in the Baltics.

Must-Try Latvian Food & Drink

Grey Peas

pelēkie zirņi

Rye Bread

rupjmaize

Black Balsam

Melnais Balzāms

Kvass

kvass

Latvian Pronunciation — Say It Like This

LATVIAN	SAY IT LIKE THIS	NOTES
Rīga	REE-ga	The capital. Slight roll on the R. Latvians appreciate the atte...
Vecpilsēta	VETS-pil-se-ta	Old Town. Vecs = old, pilsēta = city.
iela	YEH-la	Street. Follows every street name.
laukums	LAU-kums	Square. As in Doma laukums, Rātslaukums.
Doma laukums	DOH-ma LAU-kums	Cathedral Square. Doms = Cathedral (from German Dom).
Rātslaukums	RATS-lau-kums	Town Hall Square. The main historic square.
Pulvertornis	POOL-ver-tor-nis	Powder Tower. Pulveris = powder.
Trīs brāļi	TREES BRA-lyi	Three Brothers. Trīs = three, brāļi = brothers.
Kaķu māja	KA-kyu MA-ya	Cat House. Kaķis = cat, māja = house.
Melngalvju nams	MEHL-ngal-vyu NAMS	House of Blackheads. Melns = black, galva = head.
baznīca	BAZ-nee-tsa	Church. You'll see it on signs everywhere.
Daugava	DAU-ga-va	The river alongside Old Town. AU as in "cow".
Brīvības piemineklis	BREE-vee-bas pyeh-mi-n...	Freedom Monument. Brīvība = freedom.
Paldies	PAL-dyehs	Thank you. Use this. People genuinely appreciate it.
Sveiki	SVAY-ki	Hello. Informal but friendly.
Priekā!	PRYE-ka	Cheers! For when you have a beer.

What to Look For — Hidden Details

🏰 Medieval wall fragments

About 400 m of Riga's original city walls still visible — integrated into buildings behind Jacob's Barracks, Torņa iela.

⚔ Cannonballs in the Powder Tower

From the 1621 Swedish siege. Still embedded in the lower stonework. Never removed. Latvians call these liecinieki —

🏠 Hidden courtyards

Archways between buildings lead to quiet courtyards invisible from the street. Jāņa sēta, Aldaru iela, behind Dome

😊 The walled-in monks

Two stone faces high in St. John's Church outer wall — said to be monks walled in alive as martyrs. The story is

Barefoot Baltic



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Get in touch with Daiga

Questions, bookings, or just to say hello — Daiga reads every message personally.



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