



MAGNETIC
LATVIA



DECEMBER 2019
VOLUME 3

LATVIA & RIGA

NEW MICE SPOTS AND EXPERIENTIAL HOSPITALITY

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MEET RIGA

www.MeetRiga.com | www.MeetLatvia.com

ISSUED DATE

December 2019

PHOTO CREDITS

LIAA / MEET RIGA / airBaltic / Hanzas Peron / tmf dialogue
Pixabay / AC Hotel by Marriott / Liepaja Tourism
Rundale Palace / Cesis City Tourism / Villa Santa
Jurmala City Council / Hilton Garden Inn / ATTA centre
Latvia Hall, Ventspils

COVER IMAGE

Great Amber Hall Liepaja, Hanzas Perons Riga

GRAPHIC DESIGN

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NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN 2020



EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional
Development Fund

IMPRESSUM

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EXPERIENTIAL
DESTINATIONS

Experiential Destinations is an online magazine format published by tmf dialogue marketing as part of our multi-channel content projects for international destinations. tmf dialogue marketing is a content marketing specialist for the global meeting and congress industry, creating relevance and context for planners of intl. meetings, congresses and events. [Contact us](#) for more information around innovative PR and content marketing.

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INTRODUCTION

LIAA

Over the years, Latvia's been proud to host such major events as the 19th NATO Summit, the European Choir Games, the Eurovision Song Contest and many more. Recently, the town of Sigulda was a contender for hosting the 2026 Winter Olympics in partnership with Stockholm-Åre. Our impressive national portfolio also proudly includes the Song and Dance Festival, which gathers over 40 000 participants in Riga every five years. Latvians know what it takes to organise an outstanding event and we've got the people, facilities and expertise to pull it off.

Together, we keep working on enhancing Latvia's ability to host international events. Every year sees the opening of new hotels and venues, and the addition of new direct flight connections, which now stands at over 100 from Riga International Airport.

Meet representatives of Latvia's MICE industry at IMEX, IBTM World, The Meetings Show and many other key trade shows. They'll gladly introduce you to your options in Latvia from sleek design hotel meeting rooms to medieval castles and industrial gems in the city and less populated areas. Did you know that 50% of Latvia is forested? We highly recommend extending your stay after the event to switch off and recharge in the wild. Or treat your whole team to a retreat or outdoor teambuilding!

See you soon in Latvia!

INESE SIRAVA

Tourism Department Director
INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF LATVIA



www.MeetRiga.com

INTRODUCTION

MEET RĪGA

According to a Latvian legend, Riga never is and never will be quite "finished", it's always developing and becoming an ever more pleasant city to live in and visit. Every year sees the arrival of new hotels. 2019 brought AC by Marriott and Hilton Garden Inn properties.

Exciting new venues are increasing the number of meeting and function rooms in Riga, which now stands at 350. This year, all eyes are on Hanzas Perons, a former railway cargo warehouse, which has reopened as a stunning, glass-fronted function venue. Indeed, the city's industrial heritage buildings provide a number of opportunities for hosting events, as do its earlier historical masterpieces with their gilded ballrooms and chambers.

The city centre remains compact and the airport is a mere 20-minute drive away allowing organizers to save on transport costs and time. Room rates include breakfast, Wi-Fi and taxes. There are plenty of opportunities to get more value for money compared to major European capitals.

Local service providers have years of experience handling events of different sizes and boast a pleasantly can-do attitude, so you can add amazing features to your event from dinner in the woods to gala night at a baroque palace.

We look forward to welcoming you in Riga - Northern Europe's hidden gem.

AIGARS SMILTANS

Director MEET RĪGA





Future Development of Congress Business in #MagneticLatvia

We like to introduce **Martin Gauss, CEO of airBaltic**, and are happy he has shared some views on the ways the young airline can help to further boost meeting and congress business to Latvia!

Q: Riga, the capital of Latvia, prepares to receive more international congresses and larger events. Two new venues are opening up in 2019 (Hanzas Perons and a Convention Centre) and the Latvian Convention Bureau works on inviting association congresses for the future. How is airBaltic equipped to bringing in attendees for larger international events (1000 plus?)

A: As the leading airline in the Baltics, airBaltic offers more than 70 direct flights from Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius

to the network spanning Europe, Scandinavia, Russia, the CIS and the Middle East, and over 300 destinations with one-stop across the world. Located in the Northeastern part of Europe and being the part of EU, airBaltic is a perfect link between the East and West. Over 4 million passengers travelled with airBaltic in 2018, and this is the highest number of passengers the airline has carried in a year so far.

airBaltic aims to ultimately connect the Baltic capitals with one stop to even more destinations in the world, thus offering convenient travelling to both incoming and outgoing traffic. Our broad offer of convenient connections facilitates the development of the Baltic region as the right place for international events of different scale.

In addition to the network growth, we increase the capacity by introducing the new, most spacious Airbus A220-300 and replacing the Bombardier Q400Next Gen aircraft. Airbus A220-300 offers an excellent flying experience with such benefits for passengers as wider seats, larger windows, more hand luggage space in the cabin, improved lavatories and much more. The new aircraft is also considerably quieter - with a four times smaller noise footprint. Moreover, at the moment it is the greenest commercial aircraft in the world, as it is the first aircraft to have a transparent declaration of the life-cycle environmental impact, helping to reduce CO2 and NOX emissions by 20% and 50% respectively.

To date, we have introduced already 19 Airbus A220-300 aircraft in our fleet moving towards a single type fleet of 50 Airbus A220-300 aircraft by 2022 with an option to execute additional 30 orders. Thus, we will have the youngest jet fleet in Europe, providing additional efficiency any airline is seeking in the highly competitive aviation market. It allows us to keep a competitive price range, maintaining a high-quality service.

Q: Having seen the potential of the secondary cities in Latvia like Liepaja and Daugavpils or Rezekne with some beautiful Venues, are there any plans for a better accessibility to these cities?

A: When evaluating possible destinations which airBaltic could add to its network, many factors have to be taken into account. In case of smaller airfields, it is necessary to evaluate, whether the smaller airfields are able to support scheduled traffic and the successful operations of airBaltic aircraft.

At the moment, there is only Liepaja's airport as an option for domestic air traffic. In 2018, the Latvian airline airBaltic has increased the number of flights between Riga and Liepaja from three to five per week. In this way, we continue to improve Liepaja's connectivity with the world via Riga. Such a domestic service is important for the region's economy. We offer advanced flight options for both business and leisure travelers. airBaltic operates the domestic flights to Liepaja since 2017.

Q: How can you help congress organizers for their easy handling of delegates? What special service do you offer at Air Baltic?

A: Besides good connectivity, airBaltic also offers a very punctual service, which is of high importance for business travelers. airBaltic is the most punctual airline in Europe for 2018 according to OAG analysts, who tracked the performance of a total of over 58 million flight records and achieved a 99.8% flight regularity in 2018. airBaltic has been at the top of the global on-time performance ranking for the past five consecutive years.

airBaltic strives to adapt to travelers' needs as much as possible, finding individual solutions for arranging their visits. We do offer special fares and discounts on our scheduled flights through our website www.airbaltic.com or through dedicated travel agencies. Additional requests can be considered and provided upon request. Event organizers are welcome to submit their requests also to specially dedicated e-mail event@AirBaltic.lv. We will process it and find the most suitable solution.

We continuously work together with tourism authorities in the Baltic countries to promote MICE in our markets.

Q: What are your views and priorities on future development of the international congress and event business for Latvia?

A: airBaltic is very interested in the development of international congress and event business in Latvia as it attracts more and more visitors to our country and the Baltics in general, boosts the economy and promotes the region worldwide. Latvia has a lot to offer to an even very sophisticated traveler, both coming for business and leisure, excellent hotels, speedy internet connection and good food being just some of the benefits. Although the number of international congresses, meetings, exhibitions and other business or cultural events held in Latvia grows with every year, it is still not that well known place, so we appreciate every chance that raises awareness of this beautiful country.



Why “Magnetic Latvia” is a Great Claim for Awesome MICE Experiences

A recent trip throughout Latvia, starting at the Western Coast in Liepaja and covering Kuldiga, Rundale, Daugavpils, Rezekne, Cesis and Riga revealed a range of great products in the small country, quite unknown to the MICE industry and with a lot of charm. Just right for today's trends – looking for authenticity, true experiences and a human scale of offers.

Latvia has all of this and much more. The slogan **Magnetic Latvia** matches very well the way developments come along in this country. Like throwing stones in the water, a circle builds around micro hubs in the different destinations and expands from those central initiatives. These can be smaller cities or reconstructed grand Manor Houses or Art Centres that really work as “magnets” in their local communities – initiating and organizing cultural programs, festivals, co-creation workshops and more initiatives to support and develop the local communities.

These hubs also offer outstanding and creative hotel space and event venues, great food and a stunning nature that is unspoiled and lush, with natural rivers, more storks than I have ever seen somewhere and lots of wildlife.

Both established and upcoming smaller brands are developing everywhere. They produce handcrafted souvenirs, food items from local produce, and there

are many great carpenters and oak wood works to be admired in buildings and shops. Ceramic and pottery artists produce and exhibit contemporary and traditional potteries and in some cases interactive experiences with the artists in their workshops are possible.

Most initiatives are rather small-scale, but driven with passion. Young people learn old techniques and knowledge. Young families and also single professionals move out of the capital to live on the countryside. With Latvia being an IT and service industry minded society, this is easy for them to work from home and enjoy a relaxed lifestyle.

Latvia has over 12 thousand rivers that stretch for 38,000 kilometres, as well as 2,256 lakes with a collective area of 1000 sq.km. Eastern Latvia, where many of these lakes are found, is known as the Land of the Blue Lakes. Nearly all inland waters are ideally suited for swimming and fishing and allow team building and nature experiences. Experiential MICE program designs include reaching out to the fashion and art scene, to well-known architects involved in creative reconstruction projects and to the discovery of an innovative food explorations.

And – best of all – Latvia is affordable and offers true value for money.

Latvia for International Congresses and Conferences

Both the Latvian capital of Riga but also the second-tier cities of the country are very active in organizing cultural and music events and all kinds of interesting festivals. And they are all smart in building nice offers for corporate groups in combination with their locations and events.

The smaller and may be less known cities in Latvia have developed their infrastructure in recent years and outside of Riga there are now 4 halls in different cities ready to welcoming international events or (corporate) groups.

Smaller cities in Latvia are not over-crowded and over-priced as many other destinations. Context between locally existing knowledge and the objectives of corporate programs can easily be created and new ideas and services are blooming – off the usual track and with much inspiration given.

New conference venues in the capital Riga are opened in 2019/2020 (information will soon follow here) and the 4 largest venues/halls in Latvia are also equipped for all kinds of events. They are in Liepaja on the West Coast (with own airport), in Rezekne and in Cesis – both cities are well accessible from the capital Riga. The 4th just opened end of July- the concert hall “Latvia” in Ventspils in the North-western part of Kurzeme in Latvia.

The new Latvian Convention Bureau is building up a program with local knowledge ambassadors in the main fields of research and business in the country and to connect with international associations. First international congress business has been confirmed!

So the destination Magnetic Latvia is ready to work with international congresses – it is very conveniently located between East and West, easily accessible through Air Baltic from many international destinations.



MEET RiGA - Smart Website and Updates for the Latvian Capital

www.MeetRiga.com - A SMART AND HELPFUL WEBSITE!

Riga's Convention Bureau offers some very thoughtful service to meeting planners. Their website is continuously improved and the latest features are an enhanced search engine, where planners can check on one glimpse, how many flights a week and from which airports in their country provide access to Riga. Just use the filter given at <https://www.MeetRiga.com/en/1014-reachability>

Also, new is a feature to search for restaurants, depending on number of persons in a group. <https://www.MeetRiga.com/en/1023-restaurants-catering?>

The new main search engine, which helps to find venues and hotel meeting space by the required set-up of the meetings or events (e.g. classroom or theatre...) also provides the possibilities to mail RFP via web page and receive an offer directly from suppliers.

MEET RiGA is furthermore working on DMC profile improvements, adding social media content and connections, companies logo, etc.

What is not so new, but nevertheless remarkable, is the "macro" view, MEET RiGA provides to meeting planners. The platform has included information about Jurmala (which is the Baltic seaside city just half an hour away from Riga and a perfect match to combine capital city with outdoor and team building options in the nature) – please see <https://www.MeetRiga.com/en/7555-meet-jurmala> and on tmf-dialogue.net – but also refer to the rest of Latvia via the Magnetic Latvia website. <https://www.MeetRiga.com/en/7606-meet-latvia>

Capacity At Hotel Conference Facilities - Up To 1200

A mix of international chain and independent properties offer contemporary event spaces with on-site accommodation and catering. Riga's hotels provide full AV service and technical support.

For any RFP, it is reasonable to use the hustle & commission free MEET RiGA website - without extra charges and offering direct access to its partners through www.MeetRiga.com



Choice Of Academic Settings For Events

The new Academic Centre of the University of Latvia boasts impressive architecture, state-of-the-art facilities and views across the River Daugava towards Riga old town. It is made for scientific conferences.

Also, right across the river is the Riga Technical University campus with easy access from the airport and port, and with Park Inn, Radisson and other hotels in its vicinity. With strong academic teams, the universities can be a fantastic source for local speakers.

In Riga, Catering Becomes A Highlight Of Your Event

Riga is fast gaining ground as a top Nordic foodie destination. Creative chefs with years of international experience transform humble local ingredients such as wild mushrooms, Baltic Sea fish and game meat into mouthwatering dishes.

Catering can be a real highlight of your conference in Riga. Hotels offer on-site catering while most venues will extend the flexibility to choose your preferred external supplier.

The staff will be happy to advise. Many of Riga's top restaurants offer also external catering.

Evening Events At Food Markets, Former Industrial Spaces And Soviet Era Social Clubs

Should you wish to continue with a foodie theme for your evening event, the former Zeppelin hangars housing Riga Central Market can serve as an exclusive location for your party. Looking for a historical ballroom to host a gala dinner or award ceremony? The glitzy and glamorous Riga Latvian Society House, the House of Black Heads or Small Guild could be exactly what you're after.

For something completely different, consider Riga's former industrial spaces such as the Hanzas Perons (Hanza Platform) cargo station or Gas Tower, or the recently restored Soviet era VEF Culture Palace, which used to function as a social venue for factory workers.

Shaped by history, Riga has a truly exciting range of stand-out venues for the social programme of your conference. With the help of third-party services from AV suppliers to caterers, these spaces can be adapted to very specific individual needs.

MEETRiga.com is the ideal first stop on your search for conference spaces in Riga. Browse the list of venues and send an RFP to receive an offer direct from the supplier.



Riga - The Right Choice for Association Meetings and Congresses

When seeking where to host the next open association congress or conference, organisers often opt for destinations with subvention and support systems without considering the cost of participation for each delegate. In Riga, delegates can benefit from very reasonable room rates during conference season from October to May. The competitive overall costs of hosting an event in Riga plus the added perk for individuals make for a very interesting deal.

Thanks to over 80 direct flight connections via AirBaltic, Lufthansa, Finnair and other trusted airlines, Riga is perfectly accessible from destinations worldwide, so it is no problem flying in and attract a truly international group of attendees. Flight time from Frankfurt is just 2 hours 5 minutes, and 2 hours 15 minutes from Amsterdam. Riga sits conveniently between the East and the West.

Besides, Riga has the added bonus of being a relative newcomer to the association conference and congress scene. Delegates may choose to attend for the destination alone. With plenty to do in the city for both delegates and accompanying persons, we suggest to add an extension to the meeting or congress and stay to explore Riga Central Market, indulge in an affordable spa day or attend a world class opera performance for as little as 10 EUR!

Hotel rates include breakfast, VAT and free WiFi

It's standard practice for Riga room rates to include breakfast, high speed wifi and all taxes.

Benefit from local expertise

Being the largest city in the Baltics, Riga is home to some of the region's top universities with many students from around the globe taking their education there. The University of Latvia is currently developing a state-of-the-art campus with two buildings already open and available for hosting events. This is just a ten minute drive from the city centre and most major hotels. The Riga Technical University benefits from a superb location on Ķīpsala island between the old town and the airport. Right next to it is the biggest specialised exhibition complex in the Baltics. Handy!

Latvia's universities prepare specialists in numerous fields from languages to engineering, so organisers can also tap into the local pool of academics to source speakers, experts and local hosts.

Getting the help you need to organise your event in Riga

Should you need a helping hand, MEET RĪGA can serve as your first port of call when considering Riga as a host destination for your association congress or conference, providing free-of-charge advice on venue and supplier selection, local DMCs and PCOs and academic resources. MEET RĪGA is a member of the ICCA. Let us know about your upcoming conference or congress to be featured in the MEET RĪGA.com events calendar and raise additional awareness for your event.

www.MeetRiga.com/associations

New Venues in Riga for International Congresses

HANZAS PERONS

From now a new great venue for all events of all kinds is available— cultural, music, art and corporate gatherings find a new platform here! Hanzas Perons, a former Riga cargo railway warehouse in New Hanza neighbourhood (very close to the city centre – only about 10 minutes walking distance), has been rebuilt into a contemporary space with an industrial character. The historical image of the building is kept and the architectural concept protects the original character by integrating the industrial elements into an expanded space, a shell of glass and steel.

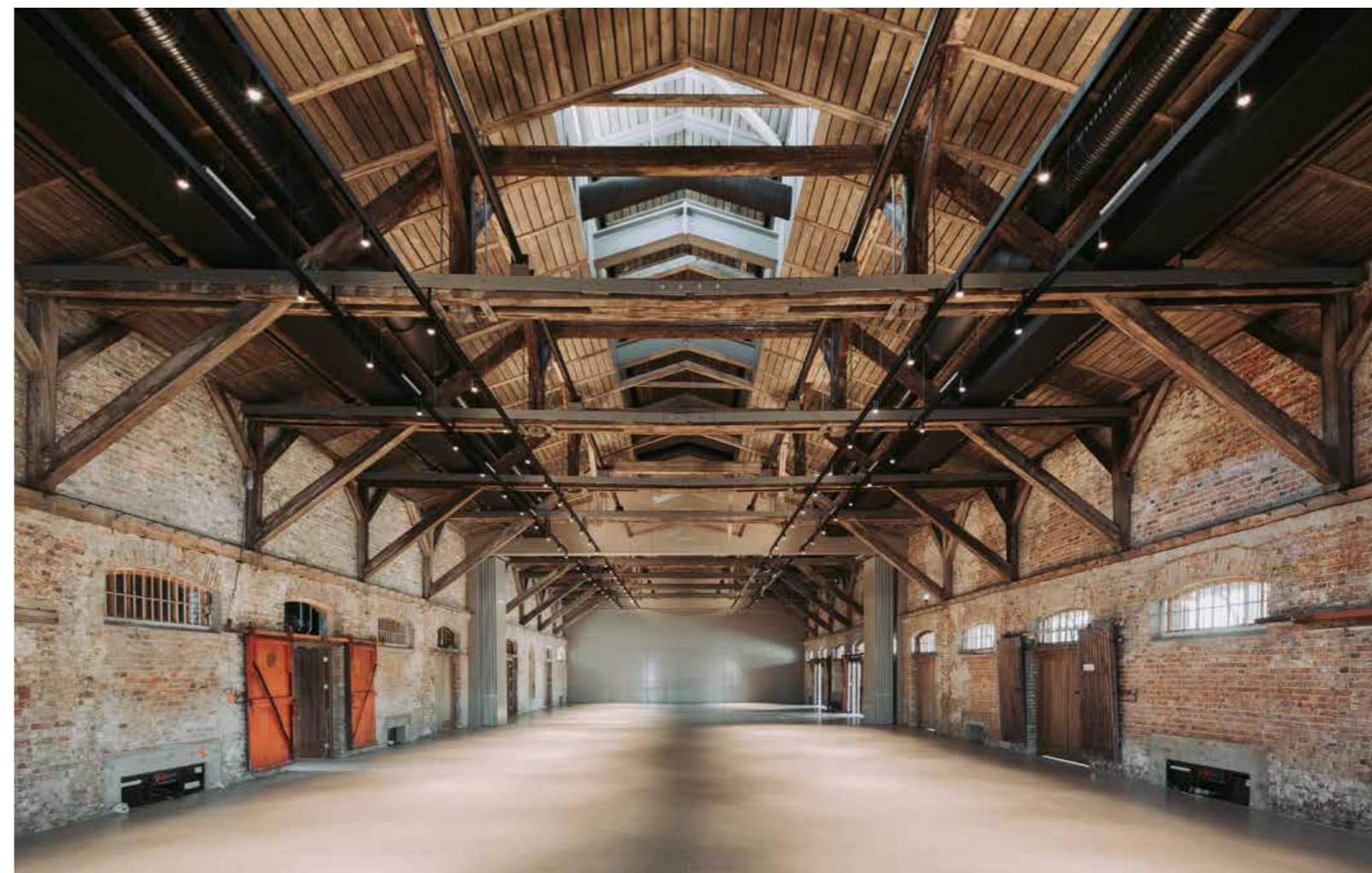
The architect Reinis Liepiņš from Sudraba Arhitektūra architecture firm has developed this vision for the reconstruction, with the new venue being bound to become a landmark in Riga's event ecosystem. It covers a total space of 4,396 m², including public space of 2,800 m², with just the big hall offering a surface of 1,230 m².

Hanzas Perons is a multifunctional space for culture and art that can be transformed in a variety of ways: a concert hall with seating capacity of ~1,200 and standing capacity of ~2,100, art and exhibition gallery, a venue for corporate events, etc.

In the roof, the designers have retained the original wooden beams and added new metal framework, which will both serve as a decoration and a load-bearing frame for setting art pieces and event equipment.

The interior features the warehouse image through the restored brick walls and looks very contemporary. All practical issues are considered which are needed for a smooth and comfortable workflow in an event space: so all backstage areas are designed with the comfort of event organizers in mind. The kitchen part is generously spaced and equipped with all items for a seamless catering service. Delivery areas and doors allow straight access for heavy material, there is plenty of parking space around and some new hotels like the AC Marriott are in direct vicinity.

hanzasperons.lv





ATTA CONFERENCE CENTRE

Atta Conference Centre will be the name for a new conference venue in Riga, which is planned to open already in the first quarter of 2020. Atta means Anthill – and thus symbolizes a busy place with a total of 7 conference halls for 3.300 delegates maximum and an attached Workspace office centre. The conference centre is located in one of the busiest places in the city – on Krasta Street 60, with shopping centres, universities and car dealerships all located nearby.

With Krasta street also being one of the city's major connecting axis, the conference centre is easy to reach from anywhere in Riga. The Atta conference exhibition complex covers an area of 5500 square meters on the first floor of the building and allows to hold a variety of events here: exhibitions, conferences, banquets, as well

as cultural, artistic and sports events of any format. The high-tech multi-modal system can change the layout of the entire first floor without the loss of the sound insulation quality.

Atta makes sure to support the local manufacturers for the construction: high-quality finishing materials, comfortable furniture, stylish decor and other interior items are exclusively of Latvian origin and Latvian manufacturers are known to provide fine craftsmanship!

The adjoined Atta workspace is an office centre and occupies 2000 square meters on the second floor of the building. It includes individual workplaces in a shared space, meeting rooms, as well as isolated offices. Modern office equipment, high-speed Internet, lounge area, food court, and parking are available for co-working guests.

attacentre.com



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MEET
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www.MeetRiga.com

New Hotels and Restaurants Add to Riga's Value as a Congress City

Together with the new venues and halls increasingly more new hotel rooms are offered – organizers have a good choice of different concepts and styles now across Riga and Latvia. The find everywhere affordable and functional hotel space, with many meeting rooms and facilities.

Recent additions to the Riga hotel scene include the [AC Hotel by Marriott](#) with 239 guest rooms. The top floor meeting spaces look out over the roofs of the city's famed Art Nouveau district. They offer a unique relaxation concept to delegates who need to unwind in the conference breaks: they have a range of bee hives outside in front of the glass doors and windows. If you are lucky enough, the beekeeper is there to check the hives and harvest the honey. It is nice to have such touch with nature in the 11th floor of a very contemporary hotel. Together with the bees' experience, the AC Hotel by Marriott Riga offers 4 multi-functional conference rooms situated on the hotel's upper floor, with the capacity of the largest meeting room being 160 guests.

The conference rooms are flooded with day light and are cutting-edge stylish and pleasant. The hotel is in midst of new restaurants, cozy cafes and gourmet stores, museums and art galleries, Art Nouveau buildings, a beautiful park, sports facilities, concert and event venues.

The AC Hotel by Marriott is within walking distance to the new great venue for events of all kinds – the **Hanzas Perons**, a former Riga cargo railway warehouse in New Hanza neighbourhood (very close to the city centre – only about 10 minutes walking distance), which has been rebuilt into a contemporary space with an industrial character and opened recently.

In the old town area, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, 2019 welcomes the [Garden Inn by Hilton](#) adding an extra 100 rooms to Riga's offering. The Hilton Garden Inn Riga Old Town sits in the very centre, next to Riga's most photographed building – the House of Black Heads.

An old town location means most of the city's major attractions and numerous venues are within walking distance. Growth is set to continue with the arrival of the Holiday Inn and Radisson RED brand properties in coming years. Radisson RED is the group's new lifestyle brand for the "millennial mindset traveler" The hotel will be located on Elizabetes iela, in the heart of the city. The 220 room.

Radisson RED Riga is expected to open its doors by 2020. Radisson RED Riga will be situated in close proximity to the railway station, and just ten kilometers from the largest international airport in the Baltic States. Within five minutes of walking from the hotel, there is Riga's historic center.

Riga's existing hotel portfolio includes the Radisson Blu Latvija Conference & Spa Hotel, able to host up to 1200 delegates - going through major renovation, including brand new lobby, refreshed restaurants and other public areas - the Pullman Riga Old Town with a maximum capacity of 200 people and the Grand Hotel Kempinski Riga with space for up to 360 people in its conference suite. Many hotels are within walking distance of Riga's major attractions, transport hubs and venues. Most properties are new or recently renovated and many, such as the Grand Poet Hotel, Pullman Riga Old Town Hotel and Grand Hotel Kempinski Riga, are located in historical buildings.

www.MeetRiga.com/associations

Recent additions to the Riga hotel scene are also the **Park Inn Riga Valdemara** just across the bridge from the old town and conveniently located between two university campuses.

All in all, Riga offers 13.500 beds and 350 meeting rooms in all sizes, choices are in the range of small executive meetings to large scale congresses with a few thousand delegates. Most 4-star properties in the city have experience and are familiar with compliance and regulations for healthcare events. Rooms in 5-star category have expanded and the growing hotel infrastructure supports the development of conference business in Latvia.



“Inside the Aperol Spritz”: The Great Amber Hall in Liepāja

“Now I know how it feels to be inside the Aperol Spritz” was the comment of a visitor in the multifunction and concert hall of Liepāja, as the colour of the tilted transparent panels of the cone-shaped hall symbolizes “Amber” does look, well, similar to the drink! **Amber from the Sea** – chosen as a name and as the iconic panel colour points out the location of the city of Liepāja and the hall.

Amber Hall was opened in 2015 and serves as a concert hall and cultural centre for Liepāja and the country. Latvian people love to go to concerts of all kinds, so they do not mind travelling for 2 hours on a bus to get to Liepāja for example from Riga to see a special artist or performance. The pretty city is situated on the Western Coast of Latvia and is accessible by air. Air Baltic connects from Riga Airport, but also travelling by car or bus it is not a big distance.

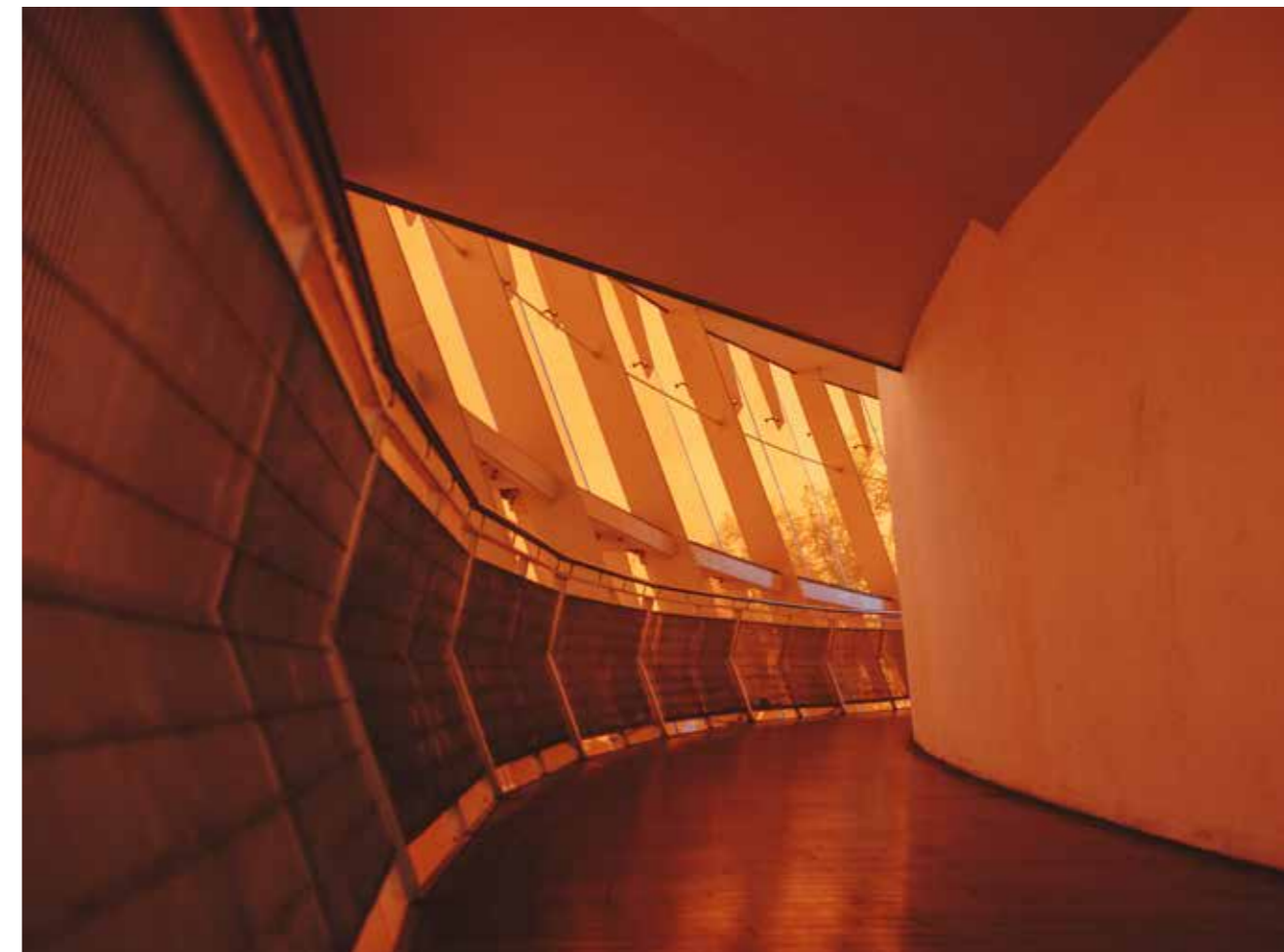
The venue can conveniently be used for meetings, ideally for a size up to 150 delegates, in the Chamber Hall. Own

catering and kitchen are available and it can very easily and flexibly change into a meeting room.

The local community benefits in many ways from the new hall – Great Amber has brought educational, musical and cultural benefits for Liepāja and also a new cultural identity.

Hotel and restaurant business have picked up a lot since the opening of the hall. For concerts and festivals, the hotels can be fully booked. In total the tourism offer has grown and regional tourist data show increases in domestic and international visitors of 39 and 24 % respectively, with Lithuania, Germany and Russia being the main countries of origin.

The hall is used for meetings by local businesses and companies, with the strongest local industry being the textile industry and is open to receive international corporate meetings.



ADDED KNOWLEDGE: Fields of Excellence in Latvia - the Textile Industry

The Textile Industry is an important part of Latvian industry, combining the best of traditional know-how with industrial and technological knowledge. This expertise has led to the creation of high value-added products such as silver and amber threads.

Around 11160 people are employed in more than 2000 Latvian textile companies, mostly small and medium. In 2017 the sector’s contribution to total manufacturing output is 3.3 %. The main textile industry sub-sectors

are lingerie manufacturing, sewing, weaving, technical textile manufacturing, and artisan textile production. The competitive advantages for cooperation with Latvian textile companies are numerous, including short lead times, small and diversified production volumes, as well as price and quality ratio. Reliability and long-term mutually beneficial partnerships have allowed the sector to maintain its positions in the currently highly volatile market.

The new “Latvia” Hall in Ventspils

The most recent add-on to Latvia’s music and entertainment ecosystem is the new “Latvia” Hall in Ventspils. Ventspils is the largest city in northwestern Latvia and less than 200 km away from Riga. Ventspils’s approach in facilitating growth of its economy has been recognised both in Latvia and internationally and the city’s foreign direct investment strategy was considered the second best amongst European micro-cities in recent years. The new concert hall and music school opened its doors in July 2019 and is a gift to the people to celebrate Latvia’s centenary birthday.

One of the most ambitious cultural projects of recent years will unite the acoustic concert hall “Latvija” with the Great and Small Hall, Ventspils Music High School and Children’s Music School, as well as the Music Library and sound recording studio.

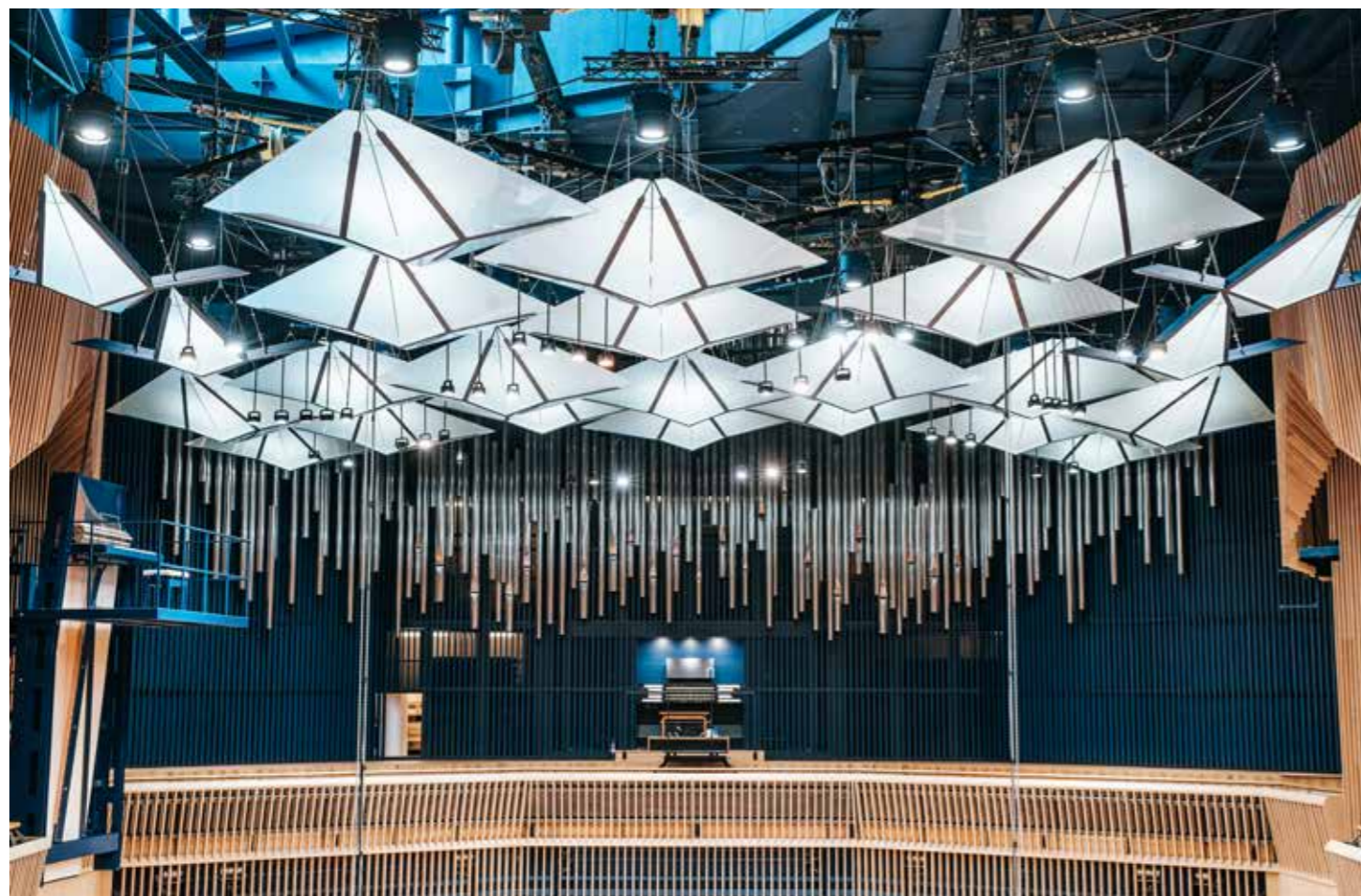
On July 27, 2019 a solo concert on the pipe organ was performed by the famous Latvian organist Iveta Apkalna – as the concert hall is particularly proud of two world-class unique musical instruments – a manual acoustic concert organ and vertical concert piano. The concert organ was created in the company “Johannes Klais Orgelbau GmbH

& Co. KG” in Germany. Whereas the second is currently the world’s largest vertical concert piano “470i”, made in the company “Klavins Piano Manufaktura Kft” by piano builder David Klavins who is of Latvian origin.

The Great Hall features 578 seats for spectators. The Small Hall has a special significance as well, it is built according to the so-called “black box” principle, which is meant for chamber music events and can be transformed in summer – one of the facades of the building opens as a gate and an open-air stage is created, which is easy for visitors to watch from the spectator slope or from the seats set up if necessary in the Big Square.

The author of Ventspils Big Square and the concert hall project is the office of German architects “Haascookzemmrich Studio 2050” and David Cook. Thinking about the building’s maintenance and green solutions, 13 different energy-efficient technologies were used. The construction works began in February 2017, and concluded in this year’s July.

[Images & Details](#) | [Architects’ Website](#)



The GORS Concert Hall in the City of Rēzekne in Latgale Region

A modern and futuristic spaceship on what was an empty space before in an undeveloped city in the East of Latvia and a brave political step to build this spacious concert and culture hall there, this is the first modern acoustic concert hall in Latvia, 240 km from the capital city of Riga, in Rēzekne in the province of Latgale.

The Latgale GORS Concert Hall was purpose-built as a hall with perfect acoustics, tiered seating, high-quality lights and fine in-house technical equipment.

Funded by 80 % European and 20 % local money, the 20 Mio Euro investment created one of the Latvian Magnets, acting as a hub for development in Latgale. Created by mainly Latvian architects and companies, it was made sure that also 80 % of the construction materials are of Latvian origin.

The hall emphasizes the openness of the region and wants all visitors and guests to feel comfortable and welcome. It was built in 2013 and designed by architect Uldis Balodis, who says: “The character of GORS reflects the impression of the artistic nature and practical approach that is characteristic among Latgalians. It is like a kiln in which the flames of the creative spirit are manifested. The flames attract and warm up a traveller during a winter night, and GORS is a place to experience art that is always welcoming and true irrespective of whether it is large or small.”

[Venue Plans](#)

The Cēsis Concert Hall

The Cēsis Concert Hall opened its doors in May 2014, and it features concerts by top-level musicians, professional theatrical performances, art exhibitions and film screenings. It has welcomed universally renowned musicians such as Gideon Kremer, Martha Argerich, Nicolas Alstaedt, Didier Lockwood and Marko Ylonen to appear at the centre. The hall is a multifunctional building that also houses a music high school, premises for groups of hobbyists, and offices for the regional culture and tourism administration.

A specific aspect of the hall is that it was built with local materials – wood and ceramics, but in a modern way. The Great Auditorium can boast a unique one-of-a-kind balcony that encircles the whole auditorium and the stage, forming a complete oval. Decorative light wood shields give the auditorium a special character and ambience. It can host concerts, theatre and dance performances, as well as conferences and social events and comfortably seats 805: 504 in the stalls and 301 in the balcony, but the number of seats can be changed and adjusted to suit the character of the event.

The stalls feature a conveniently and quickly configurable floor: transforming it from terraced rows of seats to a completely level floor will take only 30 minutes. The latter type of configuration will ideally suit banquets and balls and the orchestra pit can also be used.

A unique multi-functional cultural centre of national and regional significance, the Cēsis Concert Hall is situated in Cēsis, one of the most beautiful cities in Latvia. The visual image of the concert hall was created by restoring the old Cēsis Community Building and adding some contemporary architectural forms to it.

The schedule at the concert hall is quite busy and features appearances by top-level musicians, performances of professional theatre companies, art exhibitions and film screenings; the concert hall is available to host regional and international conferences, seminars and meetings. It has already welcomed and co-hosted a number of international forums and conferences.

[More Details](#)



The Dzintari Hall in Jūrmala

One of the most popular venues in Jūrmala is the Dzintari Concert Hall which is a perfect example of synergy between nature and architecture and a landmark of Jūrmala.

After renovation the Dzintari complex hosts an elegant, neo-eclectic style indoor concert hall, the Small Concert Hall, in the style of the thirties (built in 1036) with 500 seats and an acoustically perfect outdoor summer concert hall, the Great Concert Hall, with 2100 seats, surrounded by a garden next to the coast of the Baltic Sea plus a restaurant with 70 seats.

The Famous Great Concert Hall is a true architectural pearl of Jūrmala, is all also available for the conferences, private concerts or gala dinners for more than 500 persons.

The historical Small Hall (Chamber Hall) covers 400 m² with a stage adding a space of 80 m². The usual concert setup has the floor inclined towards the stage. But it can be adjusted for any other event by leveling it with the surrounding floor and having all the chairs hidden under the stage.

The Small Hall renovation project was finished in May 2015 and it was opened after the addition of extra premises. The complex is suitable for festive activities, business meetings, conferences, concerts and other events.

If you look for a festive venue for a wedding celebration or a gala-dinner, please note that the best option is the Small Hall, which recently underwent restoration and which is truly enchanting. The Small Hall is one of the most beautiful examples of wooden architecture in Jūrmala and is available year-round.

Dzintari Concert Hall provides light and sound services, video projections, internet connection, consultations in concert and event management as well as all the necessary service staff together with its premises.

The Concert Hall is located in the centre of Jūrmala, a 2-minute walk from beach, a 15-minute walk from the largest hotels and spas, a 15-minute drive from the airport and a 30-minute drive from Riga.

[Website](#) | [Business Presentation](#)

Lovers of fusion design, architecture and enthusiasts for the successful renovation of historical buildings with a contemporary twist find many treasures and inspiration in Latvia – many of them done with great taste and much understanding of old techniques and handcrafts.

Like this, new individual hotel and restaurant projects, but also public buildings or museums are creatively rejuvenated and brought up to international standards. Places like Kuldīga and Liepāja in the East of Latvia are re-flourishing.

New cities are discovered by young families from the capital area who like to move to places with a great quality of life – with the short distances in Latvia, lots of start-up businesses can easily work from home and still have the sea and nature all around, which makes it a fabulous lifestyle for young families!

Reanimated History Creates New Experiences

Due to Latvia's rich history there are and were great palaces, manors, castles and fortresses which are being rebuilt and renovated with great care and responsibility and are open to be used for events. Many of them have new event halls and huge estates and nature around them.

Perfect for high-end meetings and brainstorming as well as for high-end weddings or celebrations.



Art and Architecture in the West of Latvia: Liepāja

Liepāja and Kuldīga in KURZEME – the Western Province of Latvia experience great revival and attract businesses, artists and for rebuilding historic buildings! Following both cities will be introduced.

The landscape here is beautiful, unspoiled, with forests and the Baltic sea all around. It is a region, which makes you think of finding a reason to stay here – and obviously many young Latvians do find such good reason!

The bubbling Latvian capital of Riga grows fast and there are many public and private efforts and initiatives to develop businesses – both in Riga, but also in the provinces and their cities. It is obvious that a digital start-up business can work from anywhere. There is a strong start-up ecosystem in the country, which together with the short distances (only around 200 km between Riga and Liepāja) is one of the reasons, that in all of Latvia these new hubs are springing up.

So Liepāja is a city with centuries of rich history. After being polished by the harsh winds of Courland and the white sand of the beaches for almost nine hundred years, the city still has preserved the unique charm of the old Līva village with a background of maritime fishermen, sailors and travellers.

One of the big cultural “magnets” here is the Amber Concert and Event Hall which was opened in 2015. It is home of the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra and known for its great acoustics. It also is attracting a range of new design hotels in the vicinity which have been built and opened to service the cultural visitors.

One of them is the **Promenade Hotel**, which is located in a historic brick-building on the waterfront of the legendary Trade Canal and only steps away from the Baltic Sea. The Promenade hotel is a five-star property, and the visible focus of the hotel is Art in different appearances.

Both the concept for rooms – and the meeting spaces’ design display an interesting mix of old and new with plenty of visual art everywhere – but also using vintage furniture, lamps and other interior décor. Each room has an individually created interior – and the modern features are combined with classical values and natural materials –



wood, brick, metal, linen. All of it creates a feeling of home and is very individual.

The owner of the hotel is a known collector of local art of Kurzeme – where many young artists are at home – and also a gallery owner. He has recently opened a second hotel in one of the most beautiful inner districts and pedestrian zone of the historic city centre, the **Art Hotel Roma**.

It is a small hotel with 28 rooms – each individually furnished with original artworks. And it is brand-new, just opened in June 2019 and really does not look like a hotel but more like the private house of someone with very good taste. Also, in this hotel a huge art collection has been curated and integrated in the concept – and is part of the hotel space. Please see pictures on Facebook!

The building has a squarish shape with an Italian-style inner courtyard, enclosed by nice shops and a restaurant with a chef coming from London and offering a



contemporary food concept between Latvian and Italian cuisine. The restaurant “ROMA” has a summer terrace, pastry cafe and bakery “ROMAS BEKEREJA”.

In the massive space below the whole complex is a display of the huge collection of local art – the art gallery “GALERIJA ROMAS DĀRZS” and an elegant meeting room “BERČI” – in historic vaults, mixed with modern elements. This is both a museum to be visited and a gallery, where art can be bought.

Varying exhibitions add to the excellent holistic concept. The space is very suited for corporate programs which like to demonstrate a connection with fine arts and lifestyle and good taste, offering their meeting or incentive participants the beauty of what Latvia has to offer as an art’s hub.



There are hundreds of paintings to see, to be used as a motto for a meeting, which can take place also in the cellar rooms of the gallery. Catering can be added from the restaurant and completes the special flavour of the place and the mix of local products and art with international appeal.

If you look for a curated experience integrating Arts and Architecture, both the hotels are suitable!

More cultural experiences like the “LIEPAJA THEATER” and Liepāja concert hall “GREAT AMBER” are all in the vicinity of the Art Hotel Roma!

Experiential Incentive Programs in Liepāja

Textile Industry, Beach Teambuilding and “Hotel” in an Ex-prison!

Following the [previous article](#) introducing art and design hotels, there is yet a lot more to discover in the city of Liepāja at the West coast of Latvia: a wide and powder-sanded beach for team building and sports/outdoor activities, beautiful parks with many restored houses – where the traditional wooden houses of Latvia are turned into stunning villas.

It is the largest city in the Kurzeme Region and the third largest city in the country after Riga and Daugavpils. Being an important ice-free port and a centre of textile industry, it has a population of around 70.000 people. Liepāja is known throughout Latvia as “City where the wind is born”, likely because of the constant sea breeze – which is the reason why the largest wind farm in the country was built (33 Enercon Wind Turbines) nearby. Liepāja is called a mecca of the underwear industry, as more than 50 manufacturers are concentrated in Liepāja and some of them export up to 90% of their production. In 2018 there was an international Show/ Forum (organized by LIAA), and both schools and many dressmakers are to be found in the city.

After Latvia regained independence with the fall of the Soviet Union, Liepāja has worked hard to change from a military city into a modern port city. The commercial port was re-opened in 1991, and in 1994 the last Russian troops left Liepāja. The city also is the location of Latvia’s largest naval flotilla, Liepāja is rich in different architecture styles and the mix of wooden houses, Art Nouveau buildings, Soviet-era flats together with a number of green parks all around, contribute to the character of the city. The main areas of interest for tourists include the city centre with its many churches, the Seaside park with white sandy beaches and the northern suburb of Karosta, a former secret military encampment which is now a major tourist attraction of Liepāja and the Karosta beaches with their picturesque blasted forts.

Karosta prison – indeed a remarkable tourist attraction and certainly not a beauty. It is not re-built, not designed or modernized and it is standing there for a reason: as a memorial for visitors and citizens alike – to remind of lesser fortunate and liberate times, it is looked after by a local group of engaged volunteers. It can be a spine-chilling experience to sensible natures to visit this former prison – it was used to break the will of military soldiers that haven’t behaved well and it seems the feeling of the tortures executed there are still howling through the dark cells.

One of the favourite methods was to lock in the prisoner in a completely dark (!) cell and make them be on their feet for 24 hours or even longer – could the prisoner not fulfil the task of constantly marching loud and thus prove to the guard outside that he did not sit down and rest. When we arrived at the location, we were mustered



and had to stand in line to listen to the commands of a grim looking man. This officer in uniform can shape his commands along the “needs” of groups, and he can make you do strange things. Fortunately we were considered to be good girls and had not to do squats or push-ups or any other nasty gymnastics.

And some more escalation is possible. Besides the chills of a pure visit, the sensation can be further increased by the possibility to stay one night in the cells to experience the loneliness and aura first-hand. Not sure if this is an appropriate element for corporate programs, but who knows!

The Karosta project showcases also a little café and shop and a museum of military equipment and “tools” of the times.



“Liepājā/West Coast a New MICE Spot.”

INTA ŠORIŅA
Board Member, Tourist Office

In order to know Liepājā a bit better, here a few questions to shed light into future plans to the tourism director Inta Šoriņa.

Q. Liepājā has its own airport which is served from Riga through AirBaltic. The airport at present is small, so what is the maximum size of groups which can be handled through there? Are there any plans to expand services?

Yes, Liepājā has its own airport which is served from Riga through AirBaltic. The airport is indeed not very big, the maximum size of group which can be handled through is around 100 passengers. Nevertheless, the airport has served large orchestras, sports teams, leisure and corporate tourist groups, etc. successfully in the past. In the future the city plans to build a new terminal with a capacity for 200 pax in and 200 out. Liepājā airport's expansion plans will include growing the number of passengers through Riga, but also continue to negotiate with other carriers to develop new routes like Stockholm, Billund, Warsaw, Helsinki etc.

Q. We are also very interested in stories about business opportunities to create connections for corporate or association conferences. Does the city offer support to foreign investors?

The city of Liepājā has always been open and friendly toward its people, tourists and businesses. The historical background in manufacturing industries and port-related businesses is a reason that today the city of Liepājā is the hometown for numerous Scandinavian manufacturers and service providers as well as strong Latvian brands, which are working worldwide. Providing the support for the businesses has always been a priority for local authorities, therefore you are always welcome to start your business in this supportive environment.

Q. Lots of art, re-construction of historic buildings, fabulous outdoor, the Soviet background – it all makes an interesting and exciting combination. What is your personal favourite that you like to highlight for meeting planners?

For me the most fascinating time in Liepājā is the off-season, when the summer bustle is over. The range of culture, sports and entertainment events offer something to everyone – to corporate groups as well as to families with children, couples and groups of friends. Even though I live in Liepājā, I sometimes like to get out of my daily routine and stay in one of our charming 3, 4 or 5-star hotels, attend a world-class artist's concert in the “Great Amber” concert hall and enjoy the great selection of restaurants and cafes. And, of course, the beach! Its presence can definitely be felt everywhere in the atmosphere of Liepājā.



Art and Architecture in the West of Latvia: Kuldiga

We expand our reach to the whole region of **Kurzeme**, one of four Latvian regions and covering the Western part of the country - it is an amazing destination in itself.

Just to summarize: Liepaja is the capital, the largest city of Kurzeme and is about 200 km drive from Riga (a nice drive!) or connectd by plane through AirBaltic from Riga airport.

Everything in the Kurzeme region is conveniently distanced. So is Kuldiga only a drive of around 1 hour (87 km) from Liepaja and it is truly worth a discovery. If you look for a unique spot which is probably unknown to your meeting participants, take them out to Kuldiga.

As it was a part of the Hanseatic league in history, Kuldiga's former name was "Goldingen" as all the other places nearby also have a German original name.

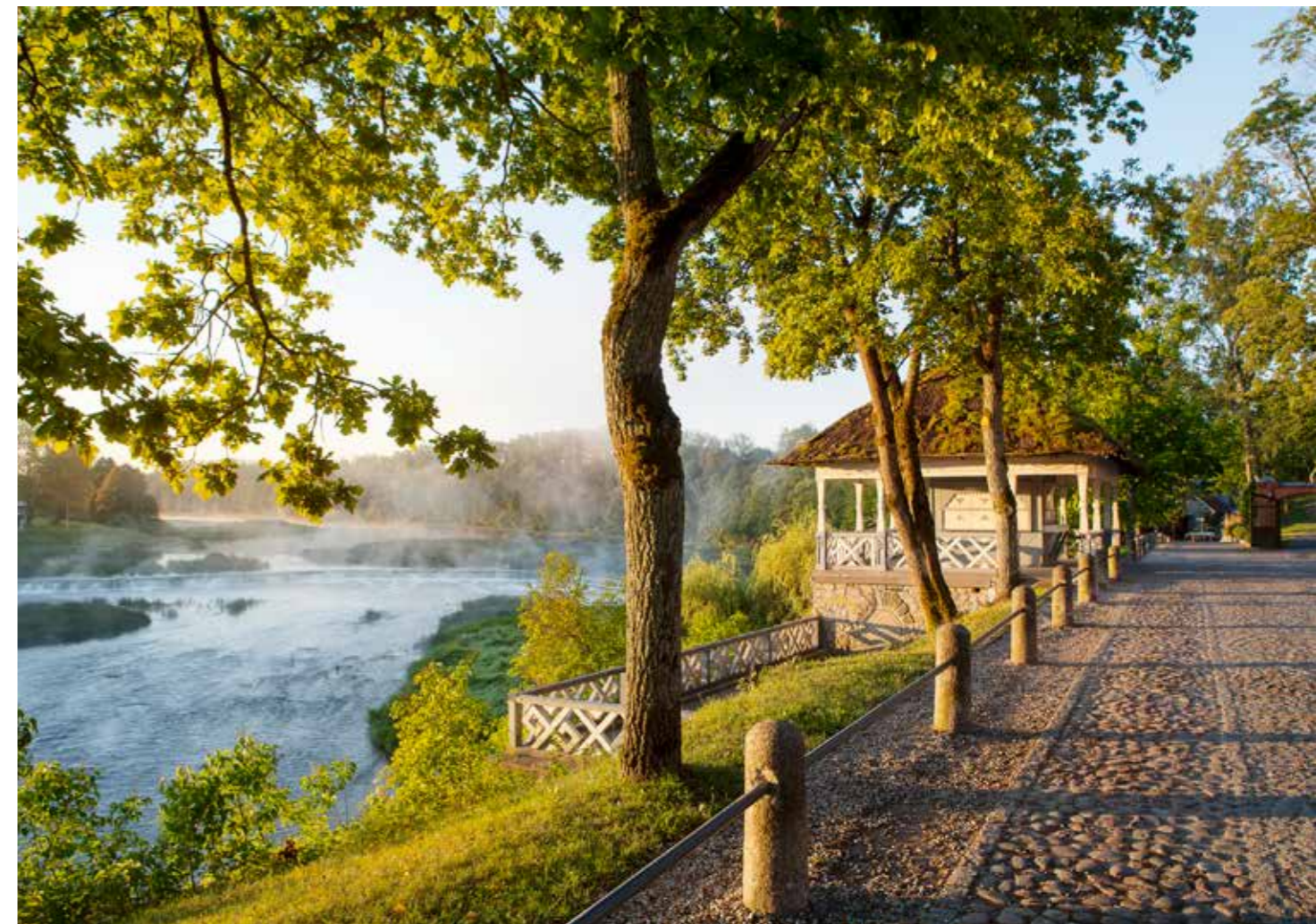
Kuldiga has a historic town centre with well-preserved facades of old houses and many awesome interiors: houses turned into small boutique hotels or flats, they seem like out of a design magazine for hipsters, rather than corresponding to the first – more traditional – impression might indicate. In fact, many young couples and families come here in the weekends or to the many festivals to enjoy the local charm, cool infrastructure and the nature around. Therefore, Kuldiga is also a top spot for weddings and all kinds of cultural events, restaurant weeks and special occasions. It is not suitable for large groups but it is unique for any corporate meeting or incentive program, for a concert or a special presentation for up to 100 attendees.

A total of 11 restaurants – likewise trendy or traditional – cater for any taste, such as the Goldingen Room in the very centre opposite the town hall, which is among the 20 best restaurants in Latvia and is known for its excellent Italian and Kurzeme local specialities.

A few venues like Padure Manor can be rented completely for events.

Padure Manor is the most beautiful building of Classicism architecture in Latvia, which retains a historic park with a hundred-and-90-year-old linden alley and a romantic vase of flowers, perfect for beautiful photos. It is supposed to be the most beautiful sightseeing place in Kuldīga region. The manor house of Padure has never undergone major reconstruction. As it has been preserved in its original form with a very high proportion of original details and interior finishes to this day, the building is considered to be a unique example of the 19th century construction art on a Latvian scale.

A separate barn is both an architectural monument and a venue for events or weddings.



A second option is **Maras Manor** – which as well provides pretty rooms and space for events and weddings. All of these historic manors, castles, halls are sought-after wedding sites and provide unique backdrops for photos of the big day.

Due to the spectacular views and motifs in Kuldiga and surroundings, the area is visited by photographers and is also the site of the International Summer school for photography, which is taking place annually for around 70-80 students and well-known teachers.

Only in Kuldiga to be found are a unique natural monument - the Ventas Rumba waterfall, and the Old Brick Bridge – both has fascinated people over the centuries: it is the widest waterfall in Europe, around 110 m, with a height of only 1,8 - 2 m and people can walk and swim in the waters around the waterfall. In spring and autumn flying fish can be viewed – here is a [video](#) on how that looks.

The Old Brick Bridge is a 164 metre long arched bridge with seven spans of brick arches with boulder abutments – it was not only the largest and most ornate in the territory of Latvia, but also one of the most modern in Europe.

Edole Palace in Kurzeme, West Latvia

Only about 20 km drive from Kuldiga and less than 20 km away from the coast, **Edoles Pils** (Pils standing for Castle in Latvian) is a well-fortified castle like from a picture book. It is hidden away in the forest on a lake and surrounded by a moat, can be rented for various events and has a total of 8 guest rooms for overnight, a restaurant for the house guests and for visitors from outside.

It is a very special site and cultural heritage – looked after a young couple from Kuldiga, experienced in the restaurant and catering business. The bigger part of the construction houses a museum of the Behr Family who lived here for a long time. Edole Castle is a Gothic Revival castle situated on the banks of Ēdole Lake, Ēdole parish, in the historical region of Courland, western Latvia. Originally consisting of two residential buildings linked by a stone wall, the castle is surrounded by landscape park. It is considered an architectural and archaeological monument of national importance.



A SMALL CULTURAL DETOUR: The Suiti Community in Alsunga

In the Alsunga community, near to Kuldiga and Edole, a small catholic community in midst of a predominantly protestant area is at home – the Suiti. Their traditions and culture have endured through religious and other conflicts, and they are still a community with a unique language and culture.

The religious differences and sometimes even violent conflicts resulted in a high degree of self-isolation. This allowed the Suiti community to preserve in this small area unique traditional culture, rich with songs, dances, beliefs, traditions and many other elements – long abandoned and forgotten in other, more modern parts of Latvia.

In the 20th century, Alsunga was the last place where traditional dresses were still used, where traditional music instruments such as bagpipes, kokles and horns were played in normal everyday life of the Suiti community. Attempts are made to preserve Suiti language – an old dialect of Latvian language.

The very specific style of women singing, believed to origin in pre-Christian period, is today used more and more. Altogether 52 813 folk songs and variations have been recorded in this small area.

Suiti have very special marriage traditions, well recorded, elements of which are widely used.

The very uniqueness of this small Catholic enclave has also been recognized by UNESCO in 2009. The Fourth Intergovernmental Committee in Abu Dhabi inscribed Suiti Cultural Space on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. Today only about 3000 people live in the historic Suiti region, two-thirds of whom are of Suiti descendants.



With a special appointment, a tour around the museum can be arranged and wow, that is an unexpected beauty! Wonderfully appointed rooms, full of antiques, paintings, and – typical for all of Latvia – the most beautiful wooden floors! I recommend putting particular attention to all wood craftwork in the country – it is truly amazing. The castle is visited by many German families somehow related to the former owners.

Edole castle is opened for individual overnight guests in the summer months June-July-August. However, the hosts are very flexible, and they open the castle also during restaurant weeks and for Christmas Parties or corporate events – talk to them if you plan to organize a special event or meeting there.

Rundale Palace - a Magnificent Example of Fine Rebuilding and Craftsmanship!

Lovers of fusion design, architecture and of the renovation of historical buildings with a contemporary twist find many treasures and inspiration in Latvia – many of them done with great taste and much understanding of old techniques and handcrafts.

In Latvia, many individual hotel and restaurant projects, but also manors, public buildings or museums are creatively rejuvenated and brought up to international standards. Places like Kuldiga and Liepaja in the West of Latvia are re-flourishing and so are Historic mansions and castles in all regions of the country.

Due to Latvia's rich history there are and were many palaces, manors, castles and fortresses which are now renovated with great care and responsibility and are open to be used for events of all kinds. Many of them have cool event halls and huge estates and nature around them and are perfect for high-end meetings and brainstorming as well as for romantic weddings or celebrations.

One of the greatest rebuilding projects in the country is [Rundale Palace](#), which was in ruins in 1971, the time when the decision was made to restore it.

I would like to quote here from the book "Latvia - 100 snapshot stories" which was published on occasion of the celebrations of Latvia's 100th Anniversary in 2018. It says the following on page 79 about Rundale Palace:

"Try to picture the condition of a grand baroque palace after a few revolutions, two world wars, being used as a school for many years and as a granary, poorly maintained and never properly repaired."

This is hard to imagine, when you see the building today – splendid and in all its greatness, it came out of the restoration process like Phoenix from the ashes. Formerly planned as an elegant architectural masterpiece, designed by Barolomeo Rastrelli and built in mid 1700s as the summer residence for the Duke of Courland in

the plains of Zemgale, one of the regions of Latvia – the works on the reconstruction project were finished in 2015. The Palace complex with 16 buildings and a surface covering 72 hectares is now one of the most beautiful and popular tourism destinations in Latvia and back to it's original elegance.

Many masters of restoration were involved in recreating the rooms and interiors, as well as art pieces which match the style were curated and bought. It was a Latvian painter and art historian, Imants Lancmanis, who has spent most of his lifetime dedicated to lead the revival of this baroque jewel of the Baltics.

In 2019, Imants Lancmanis retired after 50 years involvement in Rundale Palaces revival and a new director was appointed, Dr. Laura Lūse, who we met in Rundale Palace in summer and who took us around to show what all had to be considered and taken into account while reconstructing the great palace. Every element of the rooms – from marvellous woodwork and wall panels, tapestry, colours, to furniture, floors and doors and researching the finest suppliers of the glamorous fabrics that fortunately samples were still available.

All items look so fresh and have beautiful colours which makes a big difference to many known decors in castles which tend to give a bit of a dusty appearance – here in Rundale it looks as taken from a sample book for glorious design!

Laura has explained her ideas and visions as of what will be done to transform the Palace into a canvas and platform for cultural festivities, concerts and events for artists and crafts. The beauty needs to be seen and filled with life. There are various options for events and receptions in Rundale Palace which are selected with great care to pay respect to the importance of the place. Also one of the outside stables on the ground is presently transformed into a regular event venue.



A green outdoor auditorium in the amazing park with its famous Rose Garden can be as well used for events – like receptions, performances or presentations. If you are interested in Rundale Palace and its event possibilities please contact us or Dr Lūse and her team, more details on:

[Know More](#)

Mazmežotne Manor - Impossible to Pronounce but a Highlight for Overnight and Events in Latvia

I am still indulging in the memory of the visit there in summer. Trees, fields, the valley of the Lielupe river and orchards, green meadows and peace to calm the eyes and soul.

Mazmežotne Manor is a jewel, a true retreat from noise and speed and a place to rest – or to enjoy an event in one of the barns that have been turned into professional event spaces.

On top of all of these adorable features it is only minutes away from some of Latvia's top visitor attractions – Rundāle Palace and Bauska Castle. Guests can enjoy meals at the on site restaurant, try out the traditional bath house rituals of Latvia and participate in events and seminars. Where could you find a better retreat for important brainstorming or strategy meetings.

It is a manor that has been renovated in the past few years, and it carries its long story and past. Not a story of a former grand palace but rather a story of peasants' hard work in agriculture, of many changes and life in the countryside. It now offers beautiful guest rooms and a lot of options for outdoor activities. The manor itself is part of the little settlement that forms the complex.

There was not much left of the old buildings and the area was completely overgrown with shrubs – two world wars, collectivization time and the fluctuations of politics and economy have swept over the picturesque site and have left heavy traces.

In the reconstruction of the historical building, not only funds of the European Union have been used. It was a private family, Iveta and Aris Burkani, who bought the property in spring of 2007 and started to renovate the site.

From 2007 to 2010 the tidying work of the area which in total consists of about 15 hectares, took place and everything started with the demolition of dilapidated sheds and ruins of buildings, cleaning the trashed

buildings, digging the ground to eliminate the barbed wire, felling bushes and many, many other small but significant clean-up work.

A thorough clean up work was also invested in the weed eradication and in sowing a new lawn. Little by little the planting work took shape and brought new trees, shrubs and flowers to the grounds.

Since then Mazmežotne has evolved and developed with the objective of tourism growth in the Rundāle region to foster quality and comfort for the guests.

Now the Manor complex consists of several buildings, like the Lord's house, the large and small servant houses, 2 barns and the bath house – all of them individually situated, with a small farm museum in the former creamery and beautiful guest rooms.

The distance from Riga, the capital, is around 70 km only, which makes for a one-hour drive.

Mazmežotne as well as Rundale Palace are located in Zemgale, the Southern region of Latvia. This part of the country is flat, which makes it different from the other regions that have both uplands and deep river valleys.

Zemgale boasts one of the most fertile grain fields in Northern Europe, something that has ensured the prosperity of the region for many successive centuries. The castles and manor houses offer an opportunity to see the remaining evidence of luxury and prosperity of..
(Incomplete Text)

[Mazmežotne Manor Website](#) | [Images & Details](#)



Manors in Latvia

Skrunda Manor

Situated in the West of Latvia, between Liepaja and Kuldiga, Skruna Manor complex consists of a manor house with a four-star hotel with 12 well-appointed rooms, a restaurant, a central celebration hall and a conference room. The Manor SPA is a wonderful place to relax after a long week of work. There are 5 more rooms at the SPA building. The manor is located in a scenery park that invites guests to go for walks, enjoy a beautiful environment and admire the mighty oaks planted more than a hundred years ago.

[Website](#) | [Web Link](#) | [Trip Advisor Review](#)



Milk Manor Berghof - Piena Muiza

In the vicinity of Skruna Manor, another beautifully renovated manor is located. The Milk Manor Berghof was initially built as hunting residence of a Courland squire, Baron von Medem. One of the most brilliant Latvian neo-rococo interior examples, used then as a primary school, recreation and training centre of the Liepāja Dairy Plant, it links to the past through its Dairy Industry Museum - with a unique exposition and attractive excursions with practical experiments: milking a cow and making butter.

[Web Link](#)



Mālpils Manor

Surrounded by a beautiful landscape, Mālpils Manor is located in the small town of Mālpils, about 45 km east of Riga. Today Mālpils Manor is not only an outstanding monument of Classicism and a historical museum but also a four-storey luxury design hotel with 24 rooms, a restaurant and premises for celebrating memorable events. The baroque park, the surrounding natural landscape and other buildings included in the manor complex offer various recreational opportunities.

[Website](#) | [Web Link](#) | [More Manors on Latvia Travel](#)



Mārciena Manor

Half way between Rezekne and Cesis, 150 km from Riga. A manor specialized on medical spa treatments. Green certificate.

[Web Link](#) | [Trip Advisor Review](#)



Lūznava Manor House and Ušpeļi Pottery

Luznava Manor

...is a top example for a cultural centre for art, music and social entrepreneurship. Very active in the community, Luznava Manor initiates projects that help local artists and small companies and at the same time enrich the local parish with their initiatives. It is located in the district of Latgale, near the Latgalian Sea - Lake Rāzna and the surrounding national park.

The manor was originally built in the early 20th century as a place for art and music. Over the decades it experienced many changes, becoming a school, military headquarters, then school again, parish administration and library.

From 2011 until 2014, the reconstruction works and revival of Luznava manor took place. Rezekne district municipality implemented the project. At last in 2015 - the manor and park were reborn anew to inspire and become a true home for MUSE - this is what the name means and it is indeed an inspiring concept, organizing concerts, exhibitions and an annual Art Picknick in the park - as you can see on the video link from Art Picknick 2018 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzLuAT-jtDM>

Luznava Manor is an ambassador of the Latvian Social Entrepreneurship Association <https://sua.lv/en/l-sua-eng/> and is cooperating with the LIAA business incubator in Rezekne.

The building itself is an unusual example of romantic Art Nouveau built with an attempt to implement architecture and art tendencies of 20th century Europe. The manor was surrounded by more than a 20 ha large park with an outstanding diversity of trees and shrubs, uncountable variety of roses and phloxes, lovely park paths and seven picturesque ponds, in which fish were bred.

In 1977, the manor acquired the status of architecture monument of national importance. In the main building rooms are available - Luznava muses are gladly willing to inspire guests for longer moments. The residency opportunities are meant for artists to relish the inspiration of the manor and the park, while living and working creatively in Luznava Manor.

Any guest of the manor also has the opportunity to stay for the night at the residencies of Mary, Felicia or Sophia. Luznava manor rooms are given the Kerbedz's family, which has a great importance in the manor's growth and development, women's names - Mary (Stanislav Kerbedz's wife), Sophia (Stanislav Kerbedz's daughter) and Felicia (Stanislav Kerbedz's granddaughter). Common lounge area with fireplace is adjacent to the residencies. If 3 rooms are not enough, there is a guesthouse a

"Ceramic Art is a key craft in the Latgale region. We visited one of the best known artists for creating the unique black ceramic ware, Aivars Ušpelis."

few minutes walk through the park, the guesthouse Svilpaunieki. More info www.svilpaunieki.lv
The website of Luznava Manor: muiza@luznava.lv

In the farmstead you can see a pottery workshop, paintings by the artist's wife and a collection of antiques. The owner is a character, living and working like in ancient times, self-supporting and happily working from his withdrawn place.

He learned the art of making black ceramics from his father and it is fascinating to watch the production process and the baking of the pots and vases and decoration he is doing. The items are beautiful and affordable and make for a great present for any conference delegates in Latvia. It is a unique art - Aivars is one of four members of the "Pūdņiku skūla" (Potters' School) group who build their work on ancient tradition.



Mark Rothko Art and Design in Daugavpils

Daugavpils (Dünaburg) in Latgale region – a booster for art, a historical Shot Factory and Reconstruction of Military History – this is how subjects old and new are combined in Latvia!

What could better express the idea of the “magnetism” in different corners of Latvia, as all these “hubs” or “centres” of different sizes, energies, ideas and schools which flourish everywhere in Latvia and are like those pebble stones, thrown in to a quiet lake and getting wider and wider in their circles. It is through initiatives of visionaries, groups, public organizations or private passion, that the development of the country is driven, and the support of artists and art creation is a very strong driver, as we shall see here.

So far, this year’s stories about Latvia have covered such initiatives as rebuilding and rediscovering old treasures and manors, new music centres and people who love music and who take the effort to travel to places where music is performed, attracting conferences and incentive groups and more. Now, we want to show how art and boundless creativity can turn places into centres of attraction, that make it worth to go all the way there just to experience this creativity!

This story is about a distant corner of Latvia in the South Eastern region of Latgale and it plays in Daugavpils. The town is situated 232 km from Riga, which is about the remotest distance in this small country. It is only 25 km away from the borders to Lithuania and 3 km from Belarus. It has its very own historic background which would lead too far to explain here. The town is divided in half by the River Daugava (which covers the country and flows through Riga as well) and is surrounded by woods and cultivated land. To attract visitors, it needs a strong pull – and in Daugavpils they have succeeded to create such a pull. The city has turned into a hub for art in the country in a very short time. In terms of population, Daugavpils is the second-largest town after Riga which makes it an important economic, cultural and tourism centre and a home for one of the biggest regional universities also.

The origin for this connection to art is the most famous son of the city, Marc Rothko, the American painter who was born in Daugavpils in 1903 – and whose family emigrated to the US when he was only 10.

Here is a quote from the [MoMA website chapter on the artist](#):

“Mark Rothko sought to make paintings that would bring people to tears. “I’m interested only in expressing basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on,” he declared. “And the fact that a lot of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I can communicate those basic human emotions....If you...are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point.” Rothko painted to plumb the depths of himself and the human condition. For him, art was a profound form of communication, and art making was a moral act.”

Moving on to the development of the art center, which also can accommodate conferences and meetings.

The idea and the collection was born in 2002 when the organization of Mark Rothko’s 100th anniversary program began. An International symposium and a sophisticated art residence program now promote the centre to professional contemporary artists and ensure that the collection is supplemented with high-quality works of art.

Since the opening of the Daugavpils Mark Rothko Art Center in 2013, its collection is therefore constantly growing. The art centre displays exhibitions of Latvian and foreign artists in diverse media – painting, graphics, textile, ceramics, photography – as well as showing cultural and historical expositions. The development into a “hub” – a centre of happening – took place only in the past 5-6 years. This is the only place in Eastern Europe where you can view original works of Mark Rothko, world-known as the founder of abstract expressionism.

The Mark Rothko Art Center is located in Daugavpils Fortress – a fortress of the first half of the 19th century in Eastern Europe that has remained almost unchanged until today and is a symbol of Daugavpils city.

So where is the connection with planning any corporate or conference programs? The connection is art and the support and promotion of different art schools and



methods. The centre offers very nice and contemporary event space, catering facilities and the fortress’ large outdoor facilities in the moat (which is place of the [International Festival of the Military History Reconstruction](#) – see the small video clip about this amazing festival).

In a nutshell, the Mark Rothko Art Center is located in a multi-functional contemporary art and culture centre in the Arsenal building of the Daugavpils Fortress where history goes hand in hand with contemporary art, creating a unique and inspiring place for creative expression and experience.

Besides art and military history there is also a context with industrial history – welcome to the ‘Daugavpils Shot Factory’ (Daugavpils skrošu rūpnīca) at Daugavpils in Latvia, a UNESCO industrial monument since 2015! “The Daugavpils shot factory is the oldest ammunition factory in Northern Europe operating since 1885. The Factory’s shot tower is one of the best survived examples in the world and even today is producing lead shots. This lead shot making technology was invented by British plumber William Watts in 1782. By this technology the molten lead falls from the top of tower through a metal

sieve, during a free-fall the lead freezes into spherical balls which are caught into a water basin. The Factory’s tower is 30 m high and it has 19 m deep well under it, in addition to the tower there is a fully equipped shot after-processing department. According to the sustainable tourism development and industrial heritage preservation the Factory is open to tourists all year round with guided tours, the shot tower and the well under it was included in Latvian National Cultural Heritage Register in 2014 as the only such kind object in the Baltic states.”

More context for conferences or meetings can be found in religion (several confessions are united in the city, like a Jewish community and the Old Believers, a very conservative church.)

And any visitor must try the “Schmakovka – the liquor from Latgale region” – Cheers to the future!

[More Reading](#)

Cesis - Medieval Magic and Modern Meetings

As we were talking about many experiential hubs throughout Latvia, we can not forget to introduce the medieval town of Cesis, only some 90 km away from Riga, the Latvian Capital. It is an influential cultural hub with a talent for complementing its ancient heritage with cutting edge creative events. A lot of events are going on there and create an open, friendly and exciting atmosphere.

The new **Cesis Concert Hall** is the musical centre of the Vidzeme region, and the adjacent Insignia gallery offers exhibitions by Latvian and foreign artists. We have covered the [Concert Hall in a separate article with more details.](#)

The famous annual **Cesis Art Festival** is a month-long feast of theatre, cinema, music, visual arts and performance events held at locations throughout the town in July and August. It's program promotes an understanding of the processes behind contemporary culture worldwide. The festival is unique, thanks to its experimental daring to present creative expression by top-notch, recognized

artists. The festival is a celebration of the arts throughout the whole month, which reaches its culmination in the open-air opera performances in Pils Parks (Castle Park).

Cesis' history and beginning relate to the Cesis Castle, around which the town grew from the 13th century. Today, a Medieval Activity Centre offers various medieval-themed events that can enhance delegate programs by a visit to the castle with entertaining and educational activities.

Besides the festivals, concerts, exhibitions the city features a selection of beautiful restaurants - one example being [H.E. Vanadzins Ziemeļu](#), a modern urban place offering creative cross-over dining. Check on Trip Advisor for more recommendations in Cesis, but this one we visited shortly and I liked the design and atmosphere a lot. It also has a beautiful, nice and quiet backyard seating for relaxes al-fresco dining in the summer.

[More information on Cesis on the LIAA website](#)



Villa Santa and Bridge Meeting Space

We would like to showcase a hotel property, an outstanding place for high-end meetings and opened only in 2017. Located at the edge of Cesis, in the forest, it has this magic spell that many manors and renovated buildings in Latvia carry: here we have 3 beautifully renovated Villas - each with several rooms, a magnificent restaurant and [a separate meeting space called the Bridge House](#) because it is literally built over a creek, with big windows to let the green and nature around into the conference. The hotel itself has a long and varied story, you can [read about it here.](#)

It has been bought by a publishing company that was the first to produce a Latvian magazine for women, SANTA, in 1991. It became the cornerstone for the largest national

magazine publishing company, which currently publishes 21 magazines, each of which is the leader in its niche market (IEVA, KLUBS, DEKO, PRIVĀTĀ DŽĪVE, etc.). In 2008, it was awarded the Order of the Three Stars for meritorious service to Latvia.

In 2014, the publishing company bought from the Cesis Municipality the property of the former hospital (which was the last use of the villas) at an auction. It was rebuilt from the ground up, keeping the historical appearance of the two smaller villas. In June 2017 the hotel VILLA SANTA was opened.

Details about rooms and meeting space you find on the [website of Villa Santa.](#)



Freshen up Your Business

An Incentive in Jūrmala will Turn Colleagues into Teammates

A very nice place in Latvia to plan a unique MICE program is Jūrmala - perfectly attributed as "magnetic"! The second largest city in Latvia (after Riga) has around 57.000 inhabitants and offers an enviable quality of life for its inhabitants. Located on a stretch of 24 km along the seaside and hidden away in the pine forests, with charming heritage wooden villas and a pleasant micro climate, it is a place to wake the spirits. Stress effects are healed in a light breeze and it allows both focus and just enough entertainment and culture to keep any group aligned with the purpose of the meeting.

Access is most important and here it is a strong asset – Jūrmala is located at about the same distance from the airport as Riga, just in the opposite direction: from the airport only around 15 minutes to either of the cities. Jūrmala easily stands on its own for hosting a wide choice of events, but it also offers all it needs to balance a busy capital's meeting or congress. Being an official Resort– and Health City, it even adds a remarkable value to any business event that has a health-conscious subject or audience.

In Jūrmala you can breathe freely, it clears the head – a place with an unbelievable 24 km white sand beach, located and hidden away in pine forests and at the river Lielupe, clean and green with several blue flag beaches, electric busses, smart city lights, just to name a few assets.

Together with the good infrastructure for events of all kinds it makes a new and very interesting spot for sustainable and healthy MICE events and can help you to tweak your planned event into a new direction with not much extra effort. Why not combine well-being, health, SPAS and medical programs with a high-level meeting to boost both brain and body of your participants? Or allow an extension with a compact health check and relaxation program as an extra incentive to your group members.

Also, for active sport-addicted delegates, there is hardly any better place – in Jūrmala many options to follow nature trails, go birdwatching, cycle (even on the sand of the flat and wide beach!), water activities like paddle boarding, wakeboarding, yachting and of course yoga, Nordic walking and all kind of outdoor sports activities can create unforgettable team building experiences. You look



for a place for a closed meeting to tackle some difficult decisions? Then Jūrmala is it – no need to travel hours to remote places to find peace and refreshment – here the focus is unblurred and sharp.

"Groups do not live on fresh air and outdoor experiences alone – food and catering experiences are as elementary for any successful event program!"

Jūrmala's restaurants and eateries reflect traditional tastes as well as contemporary culinary fashions and the local residents' daily rituals. The city's 78 diverse restaurants - including bistros, pizzerias, cafés, confectionaries etc. - can be found right in the centre of the city, along Jomas street and in the surroundings, where a variety of live music often accompanies diners well into night during summer. For MICE groups 41 of the restaurants are recommended by the city experts.



WORTH DISCOVERING

A gastronomic experience in Jūrmala can consist of a wonderful meal amongst the dunes or on the banks of the river, with a grand view of nature and yachts calmly sliding by or, in the evening, Europe's most beautiful sunset reflected on your plate.

Many of Jūrmala's restaurants feature local cuisine – both traditional and contemporary interpretations thereof. If you yearn for something a bit more exotic, it's just as easy to find a meal inspired by the Caucasus or the Orient... or savour a bit of Old Europe with Italian and French cooking at the core. **Jūrmala takes pride in being home to some of Latvia's best restaurants.**

Please check the [dining website of Jūrmala](#) and you will find images and descriptions of the restaurants - more "magnets" to urge you to select Jūrmala!

The professional business environment of Jūrmala helps to exchange knowledge with local specialists and to create fresh programs for delegates.

1. The LIAA Jūrmala Business Incubator is one of 15 regional incubators in the country which are administered by the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia. Entrepreneurs from the incubation programs work here regularly, yet the coworking is open to anyone for occasional visits. The co-working space also has meeting rooms available:

2. Jūrmala is – following right after Riga – the second most preferred place to start a business in Latvia – and as an investor, it can be interesting to look into Jūrmala and Latvia. The destination is known to provide great support and a



Jūrmala's Hospitality Infrastructure in a Nutshell

33 Hotels (1774 Rooms, 3500 Beds)	15 Hotels with Conference Halls (1339 Rooms, 59 Conference Rooms, Max Capacity in One Room 800 people)	41 Restaurants
14 Conference Venues (Up to 500 People in One Venue)	4 Beach Cafes	50+ Original Activities for Groups
2 Open-Air Venues (up to 2400 People)	78 Eating Facilities	

very active start-up ecosystem offers good opportunities for building up a business in Europe. Obtain a residence permit in Latvia when purchasing real estate or commercial real estate or invest in a new or existing business to obtain a residence permit based on business investment.

Read about the reasons, why foreign investors have chosen Latvia for their business plans.

The hottest industries and company cases are introduced in the Magnetic Latvia Magazine of LIAA and supplemented by much good information.

The three main clusters for Jūrmala city and the development of tourism are:

Well-being and health: Spas, healing from nature (mineral water baths and pools, Sulphur water, medical mud baths and applications), Horse-riding therapy, healing aspects of the pine forest and sea air.

Nature and Active Tourism

MICE (with programs created from the previous themes – well-being, health, SPAS and medicine, environment, business, education, investments).

For non-profit events, the city of Jūrmala offers a special support: The Jūrmala city council has a regulation "About co-financing conferences, seminars and cross-industry events" where it's possible to get until 70% co-finance. For now, the regulation is only in Latvian because only companies and NGOs registered in Latvia can qualify but the city is working on some changes. Basically, if you will be organizing an international event in Jūrmala and you are spending at least 1 night there you can apply for this support. For up to 70% it is worth a try!

Ms. Ieva Kreile, Senior Expert in Jūrmala city council development department, tourism and business development division, is in charge of MICE and will be able to guide you. Her email address is Ieva.Kreile@jurmala.lv.

