Overall Crime and Safety Situation
U.S. Embassy Riga does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The ACS Unit cannot recommend a particular individual or location and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided. THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED RIGA AS BEING A MEDIUM-THREAT LOCATION FOR CRIME DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.
Please review OSAC’s Latvia-specific webpage for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.
Latvia is a relatively safe country in which the overall crime and safety situation has remained static for several years. Riga enjoys many public parks and a boisterous Old Town.
Crime Threats
Crime statistics tend to trend higher during the summer due to increases in tourism and associated crimes of opportunity. Non-confrontational property crimes of opportunity (pickpocketing, swindling, bag snatching) occur during daylight hours. The central market and the Old Town are popular areas with pickpockets. The underground tunnels linking Old Town to the bus station and nearby shopping mall are also particularly attractive to opportunistic criminals. Most incidents affecting U.S. citizens involve property crime and occur in public parks or Old Town Riga. These hubs of activity often contain large numbers of intoxicated visitors and locals as well as others intent on taking advantage of them, especially at night. Extra care should be taken to safeguard wallets and purses in Old Town and the underground tunnels. Avoid dimly illuminated parks and streets at night. If possible, travel in a group.
Residential and commercial burglaries are also traditionally non-confrontational crimes of opportunity. These crimes occur mostly during evening hours. Burglars will not hesitate to
enter unlocked/unalarmed dwellings where they believe occupants are either inattentive or asleep.
Latvia’s relatively safe environment should not mislead travelers to believe they are immune from crimes of opportunity. Use caution when using ATMs on the street, especially in Old Town. Latvia is not immune from credit card fraud, yet concerted efforts by law enforcement have helped reduce the number of incidents. Prostitution occurs on a small, localized scale. Be aware of individuals, particularly young, attractive women, asking visitors to buy them drinks. Scams sometimes occur in less reputable establishments, in which the visitor is presented with an exorbitant bill based on a separate menu and is detained until the bill is paid, sometimes through physical intimidation. Local authorities have cracked down on notorious establishments. As a result, incidents of scams and fraud at these places have decreased over the years. Eastern European organized crime syndicates are active in cybercrime, narcotics, prostitution, and other illicit enterprises.

**Transportation-Safety Situation**

*Road Safety and Road Conditions*

Roads in the cities are well-maintained, and drivers are generally courteous. Road conditions in rural areas vary from good to poor. In the cities, the streets are often narrow but are generally illuminated. Major highways are in good repair; however, road conditions change quickly due to extreme weather (snow, ice, severe cold). Secondary roads may suffer disrepair with potholes, poor lighting, and a lack of proper signage. Visitors should exercise extra caution while driving during the winter, as snow accumulation and long periods of darkness make it difficult to see other vehicles and pedestrians, especially at intersections and crosswalks. For more information on self-driving, please review OSAC’s Report “Driving Overseas: Best Practices.”

Speeding and drunk driving are often contributing factors in vehicle accidents.

*Public Transportation Conditions*

Public transportation is relatively safe and widely available in the cities. Visitors are recommended to use radio-dispatched and metered taxi cabs (Red Cab Taxi, Baltic Taxi).

*Aviation/Airport Conditions*

Riga International Airport (RIX) is the main airport in Latvia and serves as the regional hub for
the Baltics. It is a modern and secure facility.

Other Travel Conditions
During the winter, extreme weather makes seeing pedestrians difficult. It is recommended that pedestrians use reflectors and reflective clothing, which are available in all major supermarkets, especially during the dark winter. Pedestrians should walk on sidewalks and cross streets at crosswalks or intersections whenever possible.

Terrorism Threat
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED RIGA AS BEING A LOW-THREAT LOCATION FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITY DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns
There are no known indigenous terrorist organizations present in Latvia. With its inclusion in the Schengen Zone, the ease with which undesirable elements can enter Latvia has increased, and the country’s terrorism threat is consistent with most of Europe.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED RIGA AS BEING A LOW-THREAT LOCATION FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Civil Unrest
Demonstrations relating to particularly sensitive social topics have occasionally turned violent, resulting in arrests and disruption.

Religious/Ethnic Violence
Latvia has a large ethnic Russian population. Though tension between ethnic Russian and ethnic Latvian residents is sometimes visible in news media and political debate, it rarely results in violence.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards
Spring floods regularly impact the southeast region along the Daugava river basin. The long hours of darkness and harsh winter weather can create hazardous driving conditions.

Critical Infrastructure

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The worst accident in Latvia’s recent history occurred when the roof of a shopping center collapsed in Riga on November 21, 2013. Scores were injured, and more than 50 people were killed, including several firefighters who were assisting in rescue efforts.

**Personal Identity Concerns**
Travelers with disabilities may encounter difficulties accessing some establishments in Old Town Riga, as wheelchair accessible entrances are uncommon.

**Drug-related Crimes**
The most frequently seized illegal drugs entering Latvia and/or transiting to Russia are cocaine, heroin, and synthetic drugs. Drug cartels have used Baltic banks for money laundering operations. Officials are working closely with U.S. and international law enforcement to curb the flow of illegal narcotics and its proceeds into and through Latvia.

**Police Response**
The police force is proficient and capable, though response times can be lengthy. Senior officers benefit from training abroad in areas of community policing and racial sensitivity. Municipal police officers are high-profile and abundant throughout the public parks and in Old Town Riga. Camera technology is used to reduce police response times and identify potential criminal incidents. Riga’s tourist police unit, comprised of specially trained officers skilled in a variety of languages, has reduced the number of criminal incidents reported against foreign visitors in Old Town Riga.

**How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment**
In the unlikely event that a foreign visitor is detained or harassed by the police, the individual should comply with police instructions. However, a request for an interpreter and to contact the individual’s respective embassy should be made immediately.

The 24/7 Embassy phone number is +371 6710 7000. The Embassy duty officer can be reached after working hours at: +371 2920 5708.

**Crime Victim Assistance**
For all emergencies, dial “112.” English-speaking operators are available.

In addition, a special 24-hour tourist hotline has been established by the tourist police unit at +371-6718-1818. The operator can advise where the victim may file a police report.

**Police/Security Agencies**
Latvia’s Ministry of Interior police forces include the State Police, Security Police, and Riga Port Police.

The State Police are generally responsible for community policing, traffic, criminal
investigations, and public order.

The Security Police focus on counterterrorism, protection, and intelligence.

The Port Police control the port. Municipal police agencies, including the City of Riga, operate within their jurisdictions similar to the State Police.

**Medical Emergencies**
For medical emergencies, dial “113” to reach the Emergency Medical Services Agency directly.

**Contact Information for Available Medical Services**
Clinic “Gailezers” (Part of “Riga Eastern Clinical University Hospital and Clinic)
2 Hipokrata Iela
Riga, LV-1038
Tel: +371-6704-1001, +371-6704-1002

Pauls Stradins Clinical University Hospital
13 Pilsonu Iela
Riga, LV-1002
Tel: +371-6706-9600

Children’s Hospital (BKUS)
Vientbias Gatve 45
Riga, LV-1004
Tel: +371-6706-4400

**Available Air Ambulance Services**
Latvia’s Emergency Medical Services Agency provides air ambulance capability and can be reached at: +371-6733-7000.

**Insurance Guidance**
Foreign visitors are advised to maintain private health and medevac insurance.

**Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance**
The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Latvia.

**OSAC Country Council Information**
There is currently no active Country Council in Latvia. Please contact OSAC’s Europe team if you are interested in private-sector engagement in Riga or have questions about OSAC’s Country Council programs.

**U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information**

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation
1 Samnera Velsa iela

Riga, LV-1510

Hours of Operation: Mon-Fri, 0830-1700
The Consular Section provides U.S. Citizen Services weekdays between 1400-1600. Appointments are recommended, except for emergency services (arrest, serious illness, injury, destitution, or death of a U.S. citizen). Individual requests for morning appointments may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Embassy Contact Numbers
Regional Security Office: +371-6710-7267
Embassy Operator: +371-6710-7000
Duty Officer: +371-2920-5708 (After hours only)
Website: http://riga.usembassy.gov/index.html

Embassy Guidance
Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) so we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements.

Additional Resources
Latvia Country Information Sheet