

# LATVIA

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Euro 2024 Qualifier  
Latvia v Cymru  
Skonto stadium, Riga  
Monday September 11th 2023  
Kick off 21:45

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**Welcome to issue 65 of our FSA Cymru Welsh fan Embassy information booklets. The fifth match of our qualifying campaign for Euro 2024 sees us drawn against bottom of the table Latvia. We will be hoping to do the double over them to rekindle any hopes we have of qualifying from this group following two defeats in the summer. All is not yet lost, and the Red Wall will be out in force again during this trip to Riga. It's a shame more tickets were not available to the Welsh fans at this tiny venue.**

Enjoy the game and if you have any issues, please contact us **+44 7479 203205**

The Latvian FA were confident that the home fans would buy in good numbers, therefore additional tickets for Welsh supporters would not be an option, however the FAW were able to secure some additional Cat one tickets to push our allocation to around 1,000, meaning we have nearly 15% of the 6,700 capacity. UEFA regulations state we were only entitled to 5% plus 200 Cat One tickets.

The loyalty scheme meant that every Red Wall member who had been to at least six of the last eleven away games managed to get a ticket, but those with just five aways had a limited chance and they soon sold out, leaving hundreds of Welsh fans without tickets.

Loads will still travel enjoy the beautiful city of Riga, it has plenty to offer Welsh fans and we are sure they will try to make the most of it.

FSA Cymru volunteers are available to help for any eventuality and we operate a 24-hour hot line throughout the few days our fans are expected to be in Riga , If you would prefer to speak to a female volunteer, we can facilitate this, we also have excellent contacts with the Welsh and local police agencies, the FAW, and the FCDO area consulate.

### **Top Tip**

Keep a copy of your passport and a list of important phone numbers in a place that can be easily accessed if needed. A good idea would be to scan your passport and email it to yourself.

# FSA CYMRU MISSION STATEMENT

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To help and support Welsh fans who travel away. Our role is to provide accurate and objective information, including a Risk Assessment: we convey what other agencies, such as police forces, government departments, and football authorities are recommending: we publish a comprehensive guide which is distributed free of charge to all travelling supporters: we operate and publicise a 24 hour Hotline for fans in difficulties: we arrange a Football fan embassy operation, at venues abroad, where we can offer advice, guidance and support as necessary.

We do not tolerate discrimination of any individuals on any grounds including the following: ethnic origin, ability, religion and belief, gender, sexual orientation and age We reject violence, both verbal and physical We stand up for the empowerment of grassroots football supporters We want to promote a positive football and supporters' culture,

including values such as fair play and good governance We work with the Football Association of Wales in all aspects affecting the fans, to ensure that the supporters voice is heard. A continuous, running dialogue is held with Mr Mark Evans, Head of International Affairs, and his staff including our new fan engagement executive Macsen Jones.

We take supporters complaints, views to the FAW for discussion and try to involve Welsh fans to participate in these meetings. One of our main objectives is to take every possible action to eradicate any inter club rivalry when fans are following the Welsh national team.

# LATVIA

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Latvia borders Estonia in the north, Lithuania in the south, the Baltic Sea with the Gulf of Riga in the west, Russia in the east, and Belarus in the southeast. Latvia is largely a fertile lowland with numerous lakes and hills to the east. The country has a declining population and in 2023 was estimated to be 1,830,000. The capital city is Riga, and an estimated 620,000 people live there.

Latvia is one of Europe's greenest countries – around 54 per cent of it is forest and is home to many rivers. There are in fact over 12,000 rivers in the country, However, only 17 of these measure over 100km in length.

The country was originally settled by the ancient people known as Balts. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, Latvia declared its independence on November 18, 1918, after being under control of Nazi Germany during the war before being retaken by the red army and incorporated into the Soviet Union. Latvia

declared restoration of its independence in May 1990 and attained full independence from the Soviet Union on August 21, 1991.

Latvia became a member of the European Union in 2004 and the currency is the Euro which replaced the Latvian Lats in 2014. It is also a member of the Schengen area, which allows people to travel without border checks, this will not apply to Welsh fans, the UK is no longer part of this agreement.

The Latvian Language. Also known as Lettish, is the official language of Latvia, English is widely spoken and replaced Russian as the most common foreign language in 1990 after independence. Their language is recognised as one of the oldest in Europe and their flag is one of the oldest in the world, only the flag of Denmark is older. Ice hockey is the National sport, but Basketball, football and athletics are also very popular. A fun fact is that Jacob W. Davis who was born in Riga, invented jeans The



trousers he had designed became so popular that he approached Levi Strauss, who was then supplying his fabric, for financial backing. The pair patented the product and added the distinctive orange seam to differentiate from competitors. Look at those Levis today and you'll spot the seam.

# ARRIVING INTO LATVIA

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## **Riga international Airport (RIX)**

It is the largest airport in the Baltic states and has direct flights to over 70 international destinations.

There are flights to Riga (RIX) from airports throughout the UK. Ryanair flies from Manchester, Stansted, Leeds Bradford, Glasgow and the East Midlands. Wizz Air flies from London Luton and Doncaster, and Air Baltic departs from Gatwick and Aberdeen. Flights take around two and a half hours from the UK.

The airport is small to medium size, and you can get through customs quickly. On departure there are plenty of duty-free shops, cafés and restaurants to choose from. There is also free Wi-Fi availability.

## **Getting into the City**

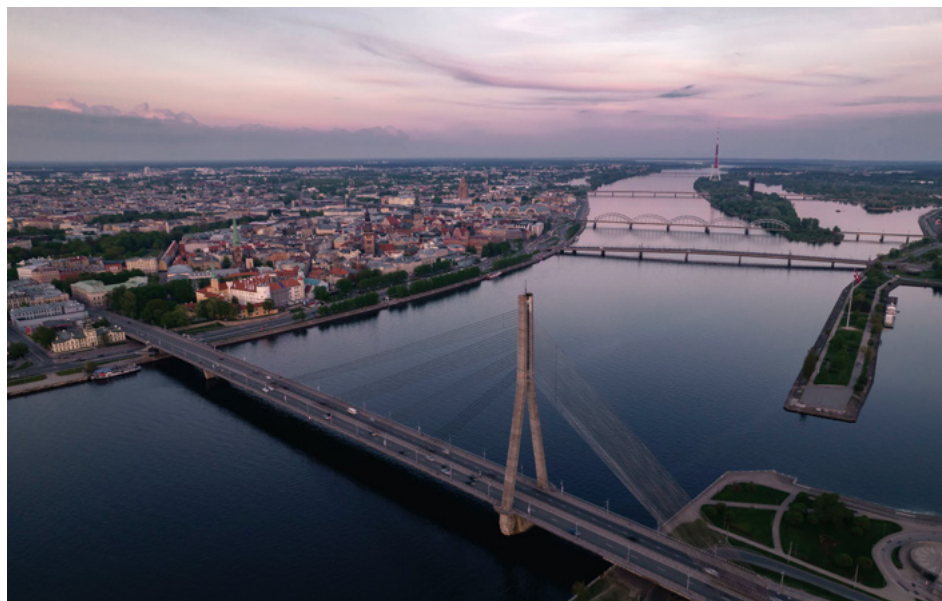
The cheapest option to get to the city centre from the airport in Riga is using the public transport. you can take a bus or a van, ran by Riga Satiksme which is the

public transport operator in the Latvian capital.

As you exit the arrivals area at the airport, first you will see an area for taxis, and then if you will cross the road and walk a little bit left after the parking lot, you will find the bus stop. The bus number 22 takes you to the city centre and a single ticket costs 1.15 Euro, however, if you buy it from the driver, it will cost you 2 Euros. This number 22 bus will take you to the main railway station which is a short walk to old town and most hotels.

Taxis are available outside the terminal, but they can be expensive, and some will charge 50 Euro to the City centre, whilst others 30 Euro. Best bet is to download the “bolt” taxi app. This will benefit you throughout the trip especially on your return to the airport where you can pay less than 10 Euro from most areas of Riga. Most city centre trips cost less than 5 Euros.





## City Centre

The majority of the city centre, in particular the famous “old town” area is best viewed on foot. It's very well served by cheap public transport if you want to explore more of the city and there is an extensive network of 7 tram routes, 18 trolleybus routes and 51 bus routes. Public transport runs from 5am until just before midnight and You can use the ticket on all forms of public transport. You can buy €1.15 tickets at designated Riga Transport (Riga's Satiksme) ticket offices, at public transport ticket machines or at Narvesen newsstands, post offices and Rimi

supermarkets. You can also buy a ticket from the driver (on old trams) but it will cost you €2. New trams offer ticket machines on board a day ticket costs just 5 Euro, a three-day ticket 8 Euros or a five-day ticket for 10 Euros.

## Bolt

Download the “Bolt” taxi app on your phone and it will ensure you are using the cheapest option other than public transport.

They are plentiful and never far away. You have options of Economy, Bolt, comfort all for up to 4 people, or XL for up to 6. Uber was not available in Riga.

# RIGA OLD TOWN

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The crowning jewel of Latvia, Riga is home to a UNESCO-awarded Old Town brimming with chocolate-box architecture, cobblestone streets, and something to please everyone.

Whilst Riga isn't always hailed amongst the most obvious destinations for visitors, it should certainly be up there with the greats. A stunning blend of buildings plucked from different eras exist harmoniously here along the scenic Daugava River, and there is a huge variety of cafes, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs that will keep the Red Wall happy throughout the trip.

There is plenty to discover on your doorstep here in Riga. A stroll around the Old Town is essential, revealing countless gems such as the Romanesque cathedral, the snaking medieval moat, and Riga Central Market - full of local produce and plenty of souvenirs for Welsh fans to take home. Shoppers and adventurous types will love Bergs Bazaar, with its quirky little shops and excellent cafes and bars.

One of the best places we found was called the Kiwi bar, though it bills itself as a New Zealander bar, it is better-known as one of the Old Town's best sports bars.





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Tucked away in a corner just opposite Saint Peter's church, it can be quite difficult to find despite its central location. It is nevertheless absolutely packed on Friday and Saturday nights. Like the Aussie Backpackers' Pub, it's a favourite for expats and it's not rare to hear more English spoken than Latvian here. The main draw is the high number of TV screens with great visibility from just about anywhere in the bar and the friendly enthusiasm of sports fans during matches. Food can be very affordable in Riga, but you'll want to do a little research to find the best quality. However, if you plan on eating in Castle Square, you'll pay a premium. Many places offer "business lunch," which is a fixed-price menu that consists of a starter, a main, and a drink. Expect to pay anywhere from €6-€12. Beer prices can range

from €2-€6 per half litre depending where you are but look around and plenty of choice and great locations to choose from.

Like most Baltic and Eastern European cuisine, traditional Latvian food is heavy on pork, potatoes, and cabbage. Pickled vegetables – mushrooms, cucumbers, and beets – are a common accompaniment to all meals. Of course, for the obligatory "McDonalds" but loads of other fast-food options and the best we found were "Boo, the Burger", "Food box" Kebabs," Big bad bagels" and the famous "Late Night Munchies" which is considered to be one of the best burger houses in Riga, and according to some people, it's also one of the best on the entire Baltic coast.

# TICKET COLLECTIONS

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Ticket collections will take place from the Radisson Blu Ridzene, located in the centre of Riga, between 11am and 5pm on Sunday 10th and Monday 11th September. Supporters are advised to collect their tickets at the earliest opportunity. There are 6 Radisson hotels in Riga, this one is the only one with a glass Pyramid outside.

All supporters allocated a ticket will need to collect. **Lead bookers will not be able to collect on behalf of those they have purchased for.**

Supporters who fail to collect will have the ticket removed from their booking history and will be placed in the bottom priority stage for Cymru men's next away fixture regardless of previous away match booking history.

## **Macsen Jones, FAW Fan Engagement Executive**

Macsen Jones is the new Fan Engagement Executive at the FAW. He will work with supporter groups and FSA Cymru to bridge the relationship between

the association and its supporters, encouraging discussions on how we can improve the supporters experience in Wales with regards to supporter initiatives and issues arising in the fan base. Ensuring the fans get the most from the FAW and allowing the unique culture the fans have built to thrive.

Macsen will be out in Latvia; you can meet him at the Ticket collection point but also out on the streets with the FSA Cymru fan embassy volunteers. He is more than happy to have a chat or answer any FAW related questions, you can also follow him on Twitter (X) FawMacsen

The FSA Cymru fan embassy team will be on duty the matchday minus one, match day and matchday plus one and you can contact us any time during this period.

if you have any issues contact us by calling our 24-hour emergency number  
**+44 7479 203205**

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You can also ring for non-urgent queries between 9 am and midnight on the same number. We won't base ourselves in one location. The old town is very compact, and we will spend a lot of time in that area, especially around the popular cathedral in the Dome Square.



## Gŵl Cymru

Gol's most recent donation was before our match against Turkey where they gave £1000 to the Darüşşafaka's Earthquake Support campaign. The campaign was established specially to support children that were victims of the earthquake who are financially disadvantaged and who had lost their fathers or mothers.

They were hoping to visit Spriditis orphanage in Jurmala just outside Riga, they went to before Wales last game in Latvia in 2004. If that's not possible they will make a sizeable donation to another children's charitable organisation within Latvia. They value and are grateful for the fantastic support of the Red Wall that makes this work possible.

# BARS

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Unfortunately, due to the size of the stadium, the great demand and low allocation of tickets, many Welsh fans will be looking for places to watch the game in Riga. The old town is the best option and as mentioned elsewhere in the booklet “Kiwi’s Bar” is ideal.

Another venue hidden away through some small tunnels is “Two More Beers” they also have plenty of TV screens to view the game on. The city is a great place for football fans and the more you wander around the old streets the more you discover, the only issue is accessibility due to the abundance of cobbled streets, they are very picturesque but also make for an uneven surface for walking.

If you want to enjoy Riga's nightlife, old Riga is the place to be! There are many fantastic bars and clubs within walking distance of each other, so you will have the opportunity to experience a diverse atmosphere during the evening.

From the offer of Old Riga bars, go and experience what Armoury, Sidrērija, Thirsty Bulldog, Distillers Republic, Clayton McNamara's Drinking Emporium. Piana Vyshnia, Miezijs offer. If you want to do some dancing and have a good time, go to Cuba Cafe, Sinners club, Pandemonium, folk-club Ala Pagrabs and B Bar.

The list is endless really and there is really something to suit all budgets and tastes. Gentlemen clubs had a terrible reputation for ripping people off but that has seen an improvement after a clampdown on them but always be careful when you visit one of these type of establishments.



# SKONTO STADIUM

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Upon opening the Skonto Stadium was the largest stadium in Latvia and possibly the best across Baltic states. It was the home of Skonto FC, who won the Latvian championship in the first 14 seasons of the league's resumption (15 in total). Skonto FC often provided the core of the Latvia national football team and with those 14 national championships in a row, they set a European record.

The stadium once held over 9,000 fans for a 2003 playoff game versus Turkey.

During Skonto's heyday there also used to be a fourth grandstand in the southeast, smallest of all. However, it was eventually removed in 2012 to be replaced by additional parking spaces. As Skonto began falling into trouble, so did the stadium. From 2011 the club could no longer meet financial obligations and eventually the stadium was auctioned in 2014. At present it's the home of Riga FC. The stadium is currently licenced to hold 8,087

(concerts), and 6,747 for football matches. The stadium has three stands and an open end behind one of the goals where no spectators are allowed. The Latvia FA said they expect to sell their home allocation, that meant the FAW were given just under a 1,000 tickets (well over the regulation 5% UEFA requirement). The FAW did try to secure additional tickets but due to high Latvian sales this was not possible which is disappointing for many "Red Wall" members who failed to acquire a ticket and we expect many hundreds to still travel ticketless.

The stadium is known to be one of Latvia's most memorable concert venues. Over the years it saw gigs by some of the greatest artists, including Elton John, Depeche Mode, Aerosmith, and Metallica.

Getting to the stadium is very easy and walkable from the "old town" or you can order a "Bolt" taxi for under 5 Euros from most parts of the City. Category one tickets are





in Block E. this is where we advised supporters with accessibility issues to buy tickets, whilst most Welsh fans will be in the caged section of the stadium in blocks T, U, and V on the opposite side of the pitch. Accessibly is ok in both sections for Ambulant supporters, although there are some steps.

# SKONTO STADIUM

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The majority of the Red Wall will enter the stadium from the back, coming through a gate and down a few steps to an open area. This is also used has a smoking and toilet area just outside Blocks T, U, and V mostly “Portaloos” type toilets. There are refreshment areas just inside the concourse and a female toilet facility. There is also a small medical room there, but they advised us that they also have ambulances and medical staff available for our game if required.

Alcohol will be available there as well as the normal snacks and drinks.

Outside the entry gates is a busy main road but it is closed on match days and on

the opposite side of the road is a fantastic bar/restaurant called “Zefirs.” This is huge outside and a great place for Welsh fans to meet pre match and after the game. Very friendly hosts looking forward to welcoming the Red Wall. They said they definitely sell the best Pizzas in Latvia and the best beer. Highly recommended.

Ticket checks and searches will be as normal on entry to stadium, they employ security services rather than stewards to work inside the stadium.

Category one ticket holders enter through the front of the stadium, you have unobstructed views in a central position of the main stand h there are some steps.



# LOST PASSPORTS

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**British Embassy Riga  
Consular Services,  
Jura Alunāna iela 5,  
Centra rajons,  
Riga,  
LV-1010,  
Phone: +371 67 774 700**

Keep your passport safe, we also advise you to keep a digital copy of the photo page on your phone, in case you need to buy an emergency travel document to get you home.

If you lose your passport while you're abroad, or you are unlucky enough to have it stolen, there are a couple of things you should do straight away:

- **Cancel your passport:** Report your missing passport to the Home Office immediately to reduce the risk of someone using your passport or identity
- **Report your missing passport to local police:** If you think your passport has been stolen, you should report it to the police as soon as possible. You may need a crime reference number to give to the local

British embassy or consulate, as well as to make a claim on your travel insurance.

You can apply for an emergency travel document if all the following apply:

- you're a British national
- you're outside the UK
- your passport has been lost, stolen, damaged, is full, has recently expired or is with HM Passport Office or a foreign embassy
- you do not have time to renew or replace your passport before you travel
- you can provide proof of your travel plans, for example booking confirmations (or detailed written travel plans if you cannot book ahead)

Lost passports can cause concern, and add extra expense to your trip, so please do all you can to keep it safe.

You can use an emergency travel document to travel to your destination through a maximum of 5 countries. You can also normally use it to return to the country you're applying from if you live there.

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Your travel plans (countries and dates) will be printed on your emergency travel document. If you change your travel plans once you have your emergency travel document, you'll need to apply for a new one.

If your final destination is the UK, border staff will keep your emergency travel document when you arrive. Border staff at a different final destination might also keep the document.

You can apply online.

It costs £100 to apply for an emergency travel document. The fee is not refundable. You can pay online as part of your application. If you do not, you'll be asked to pay over the phone.

You might need to attend an appointment at your nearest British embassy, high commission or consulate after you apply online. You'll be told after you've submitted your application whether you need an appointment.

You'll need to give a contact telephone number and email address as part of your application.

Your emergency travel document will normally be ready 2 working days after you apply

[LINK HERE](#)

There is no guarantee that your replacement will be available in time to meet your scheduled flight.

**Contact us for assistance:  
+44 7479 203205**

# FCDO INFORMATION

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If you plan to pass through another country to return to the UK, check the travel advice for the country you're transiting.

## **Your passport must be:**

- Issued less than 10 years before the date you enter the country (check the 'date of issue')
  - valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')
- You must check your passport meets these requirements before you travel. If your passport was issued before 1 October 2018, extra months may have been added to its expiry date.

Contact the embassy of the country you are visiting if you think that your passport does not meet both these requirements. Renew your passport if you need to.

## **Healthcare**

You should get a free UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) or European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before leaving the UK. If you already have an EHIC it will still be

valid if it remains in date. The GHIC or EHIC entitles you to state provided medical treatment that may become necessary during your trip. Any treatment provided is on the same terms as Latvian nationals. If you don't have your EHIC with you or you've lost it, you can call the NHS Overseas Healthcare Team on +44 191 218 1999 to get a Provisional Replacement Certificate.

It's important to take out appropriate travel insurance for your needs. A GHIC or EHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance, and you should have both before you travel. It does not cover all health-related costs, for example, medical repatriation, ongoing medical treatment and non-urgent treatment.

## **Crime**

There have been reports of petty theft and robbery. Beware of pickpockets, avoid unlit streets and parks at night, and be extra vigilant if walking alone. Most thefts have been reported



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in Riga Old town, Central Market, central train and bus stations. You should remain particularly vigilant in these areas.

Reports of foreign tourists being charged extortionate prices for drinks or having fraudulent transactions debited against credit/debit cards have fallen considerably. You should, however, remain vigilant. Seek recommendations for bars and clubs from trustworthy sources like your hotel or other holidaymakers. When paying by credit or debit card make sure the transaction is completed in your presence and be wary of attempts to make you re-enter your pin number. Don't leave drinks unattended.

To report a crime, call the Riga tourism police on +371 67181818 or the national police on 110

### **Local laws and customs**

Don't become involved with drugs. Possession of even very small quantities can lead to lengthy pre-trial detention

and possible custodial sentences.

Drinking alcohol in public is prohibited and may lead to detention and a financial penalty.

For identification purposes, you should always carry a photocopy of your passport. If possible, leave your passport and other important documents in hotel safes.

There are on the spot fines for those found travelling on public transport without a ticket or with a ticket which has not been validated. Tickets can be bought from the driver or from shops/kiosks but must be validated by using machines sited within the bus/tram. Additional tickets should be purchased from drivers for large pieces of luggage and/or pets

### **Money**

Since 1 January 2014, the currency in Latvia is the Euro. All major credit cards are accepted and there are plenty of ATM machines for withdrawing local currency.

# USEFUL INFORMATION

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• You should use a major taxi company such as Baltic Taxi (+371 2000 8500) or Red Cab (+371 661 83 83). They are generally able to tell you the type, colour and number of the car in advance. If you do pick up a taxi on the street or at the airport, make sure you only use official registered vehicles. These display yellow license plates. Even when using official taxis agree the approximate price of the journey before setting off as reports have been received of some taxis using meters which have been adapted to clock up higher rates. Some taxis operating from Riga airport can charge highly inflated prices. We strongly advise you use “Bolt” taxi’s if possible.

• Check with your service provider before using your mobile phone in Latvia. It is an EU country, and most providers have affordable plans. There is extensive WI-FI available, so use that if unsure and disable data roaming.

• You will need a travel adapter for your plugs, Latvia uses the same round two-pin plugs as are in use in the rest of continental Europe.

• Be careful around the central

station area, cases of pick pocketing and robbery have been reported but Riga is a generally safe city to visit.

• Thefts have also been reported from hostels and some smaller cheaper hotels. Keep your belongings in room safes and never leave valuables in vulnerable places, especially passports.

• Latvia is two hours in front of British summer time, so adjust your watches.

A fun fact and something a few of our “Red Wall” may find appealing is the fact that Latvians have a close relationship with beer, they rank amongst the highest per capita consumer. The frothy stuff plays an important cultural role too, mentioned in folk songs, Latvian legends and dedicated events and festivals.

It’s also one of the only places in the world where you can take a beer spa. Promising to ‘restore and recover the skin’, the experience includes a 20-minute plunge in a bath filled with beer, body peeling with brewer’s grain and a body relaxation massage with beer hops.

# USEFUL WORDS & PHRASES

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Most younger Latvians speak very good English and its slowly becoming the second language there replacing Russian, however, It is always polite to try to learn a few words and phrases, so we have added some below.

**0** – Nulle

**1** – Viens

**2** – Divi

**3** –Trīs

**4** Cetri

**5** –Pieci

**6** –Seši

**7** –Septiņi

**8** –Astoņi

**9** -Devīni

**10** –Desmit

**100** –Simts

**Hello** = Sveiki

**Goodbye** = Uz redzēšanos

**Yes** = Jā

**No** = Nē

**Please** = lūdzu

**Thanks** = Paldies

**Bus** = Autobuss

**Airport** = Lidosta

**Ticket** = Bilete

**Bus/train station** = autobusu/

vilcienu stacija

**Bread** = Maize

**Water** = ūdens

**Tea** = tēja

**Coffee** = kafija

**Beer** = Alus

**Wine** = vīns

**Menu** = izvēlne

**Where is the nearest police station?** Kur atrodas tuvākais policijas iecirknis?

**I do not understand**

Es nesaprotu

**Do you speak English?**

Vai jūs runājat angļiski?

**How much does it cost?**

Cik tas maksā?

**Can I have the bill please?**

Vai varu lūdzu rēķinu

**How do I get to the train station?**

Kā es varu nokļūt dzelzceļa stacijā?

**Where are the nearest bars/ restaurants?**

Kur atrodas tuvākie bāri/ restorāni?

**Where can I find a chemist?**

Kur es varu atrast ķīmiku?

**Where is nearest hospital?**

Kur atrodas tuvākā slimnīca?

**Can I book a taxi?**

Vai es varu rezervēt taksometru?

**How far away is the stadium?**

Cik tālu ir Skonto futbola stadions?

