

# LATVIA



Latvia officially known as the Republic of Latvia, is a country in the Baltic region of Northern Europe. Since its independence, Latvia has been referred to as one of the Baltic states. It is bordered by Estonia to the north, Lithuania to the south, Russia to the east, Belarus to the southeast, and shares a maritime border with Sweden to the west. Latvia has 1,957,200 inhabitants and a territory of 64,589 km<sup>2</sup> (24,938 sq mi). The country has a temperate seasonal climate. The Baltic Sea moderates climate, although it has four distinct seasons and snowy winters.



*Latvia on the map*



*Coat of arms*

Latvia lies in Northern Europe, on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea and northwestern part of the East European craton. Latvia has a total area of 64,559 km<sup>2</sup> of which 62,157 km<sup>2</sup> land, 18,159 km<sup>2</sup> agricultural land, 34,964 km<sup>2</sup> forest land and 2,402 km<sup>2</sup> inland water. The total length of Latvia's boundary is 1,866 km.

Most of Latvia's territory is less than 100 m above sea level. Its largest lake, Lubāns, has an area of 80.7 km<sup>2</sup>, its deepest lake, Drīdzis, is 65.1 m deep. The longest river on Latvian territory is the Gauja, at 452 km in length. The longest river flowing through Latvian territory is the Daugava, which has a total length of 1,005 km of which 352 km is on Latvian territory. Latvia's highest point is Gaiziņkalns, 311.6 m. The length of Latvia's Baltic coastline is 494 km. An inlet of the Baltic Sea, the shallow Gulf of Riga is situated in the northwest of the country.



## *Climate*

Latvia has a temperate climate that has been described in various sources as either humid continental or oceanic/maritime.

Coastal regions, especially the western coast of Courland Peninsula, possess a more maritime climate with cooler summers and milder winters, while eastern parts exhibit a more continental climate with warmer summers and harsher winters.

Latvia has four pronounced seasons of near-equal length. Winter starts in mid-December and lasts until mid-March. Winters have average temperatures of  $-6\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  and are characterized by stable snow cover, bright sunshine, and short days. Severe spells of winter weather with cold winds, extreme temperatures of around  $-30\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  and heavy snowfalls are common. Summer starts in June and lasts until August. Summers are usually warm and sunny, with cool evenings and nights. Summers have average temperatures of around  $19\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ , with extremes of  $35\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Spring and autumn bring fairly mild weather.

## *Environment*



Latvia has the fifth highest proportion of land covered by forests in the European Union.

Most of the country is composed of fertile lowland plains and moderate hills. In a typical Latvian landscape, a mosaic of vast forests alternates with fields, farmsteads, and pastures. Arable land is spotted with birch groves and wooded clusters, which afford a habitat for numerous plants and animals. Latvia has hundreds of kilometres of undeveloped seashore - lined by pine forests, dunes, and continuous white sand beaches.

Latvia has the 5th highest proportion of land covered by forests in the European Union, after Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Slovenia. Forests account for 3,497,000 ha (8,640,000 acres) or

56% of the total land area.

Latvia has over 12,500 rivers, which stretch for 38,000 km. Major rivers include the Daugava River, Lielupe, Gauja, Venta, and Salaca, the largest spawning ground for salmon in the eastern Baltics. There are 2,256 lakes that are bigger than 1 ha (2.5 acres), with a collective area of 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Mires occupy 9.9% of Latvia's territory. Of these, 42% are raised bogs; 49% are fens; and 9% are transitional mires. 70% of the mires are untouched by civilisation, and they are a refuge for many rare species of plants and animals.



*Venta Rapid in Kuldīga is the widest waterfall in Europe and a natural monument of Latvia.*



*Devonian sandstone cliffs in Gauja National Park, Latvia's largest and oldest national park*