





The Port Briefing Series

# Landfall

# Riga

The grand capital of the Baltics - a UNESCO old town of guild halls and spires, wrapped in the world's finest Art Nouveau



## Riga in a Nutshell

A Hanseatic river-port that grew rich on Baltic trade and was ruled in turn by German, Swedish and Russian masters - now the proud, elegant capital of a free Latvia, and a flat, easy walk from the ship



Port Day

**Monday 27 July 2026**

A short orientation before you step ashore

# Provisional Timings for the Day



**0830**  
Alongside

>



**0900**  
Gangway Open

>



**1730**  
All Aboard

>



**1800**  
Departure



**1.5 km to Town**  
**A Flat Riverside Walk**  
about 15 minutes into the old town - no transport needed



**About 8 Hours**  
**Time Ashore**  
a generous day - ample for the old town and more



**One Compact Core**  
**Walkable Sights**  
the medieval old town packs its best into a small grid



**The Euro**  
**No Change Needed**  
Latvia is in the eurozone - cards taken almost everywhere



**Watch For - As You Walk In**



The Daugava - the broad river the city was built to command, your companion on the walk in



The spires - St Peter's, the Cathedral and the castle rise as a skyline over the red roofs



Art Nouveau - once past the old town, whole streets bloom with ornate, sculpted facades



**Time Ashore**

**About 8 Hours**

a full, unhurried day - the old town, the market and the Art Nouveau quarter all fit comfortably



**Next Port of Call** **Copenhagen**  
Wed 29 Jul, 0900 - a relaxed sea day follows before the Danish capital



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Orientation

# Where in the World



## The Biggest Baltic City

About 600,000 people - the largest city in all three Baltic states, and a former Hanseatic trading power



## A Crossroads of Empires

Founded by Germans, ruled in turn by Swedes and Russians, and now the free and elegant capital of Latvia



## Local Time - Eastern European

Two hours ahead of the UK - follow the ship's daily programme for all-aboard

**+3h**

vs GMT

**+2h**

vs UK

**+7h**

vs New York



# The Facts at a Glance



## 1.9 Million People

in Latvia, one of the EU's smaller nations - and Riga holds nearly a third of them



## The Euro

Latvia adopted the euro in 2014 - no need to change money on the ship



## An Ancient Tongue

Latvian is one of only two surviving Baltic languages, among the oldest in Europe



## Baltic Amber

The Baltic gold - fossil resin washed onto these shores and worked here for millennia



## Free Since 1991

Occupied by the USSR for fifty years - now proudly in the EU and NATO



## Storks and Forests

Half of Latvia is woodland, and it holds one of Europe's largest stork populations



**The Latvian Flag**  
truth and freedom

one of the world's oldest - deep carmine red for the blood of Latvia's warriors, cut by a white band for honour,



# What Latvia Is Known For



## Art Nouveau

Riga holds the world's grandest concentration of ornate, sculpted Jugendstil facades



## The Baltic Language

Latvian is ancient and musical - one of only two Baltic tongues still spoken



## The Song Festival

A vast choral gathering, held since 1873, that helped sing the nation to freedom



## Baltic Amber

Golden fossil resin, gathered and carved along this coast since antiquity



## Storks and Forests

Deep woods and wetlands, with more nesting white storks than almost anywhere



## Ice Hockey

The runaway national sporting passion - able to bring the whole country to a halt



# What Riga Is Known For



## The Old Town

A UNESCO-listed medieval maze of guild halls, churches and cobbled lanes



## House of the Blackheads

The fairytale merchants' guildhall presiding over Town Hall Square



## St Peter's Spire

The soaring church whose lift-served platform gives the finest view in Riga



## The Art Nouveau Quarter

Alberta iela and beyond - a riot of sculpted faces, beasts and flowers



## The Central Market

One of Europe's largest, set in a row of giant former Zeppelin hangars



## The Freedom Monument

Milda, the beloved 1935 figure who stands for Latvian independence



# A Famous Son of the City



## Baryshnikov

**Born 1948**

Born in Riga in 1948, Mikhail Baryshnikov became the finest male ballet dancer of his age. He defected from the Soviet Union in 1974 to dance freely in the West - and in 2017 a free Latvia granted him citizenship for extraordinary merit



## The Dancer of the Age

Soaring and precise, the preeminent male ballet star of the 1970s and 80s



## A Leap to Freedom

He defected while on tour in Canada in 1974, and never returned to the USSR



## Beyond the Stage

An Oscar-nominated actor too - from The Turning Point to Sex and the City



# Three Things They Will Not Tell You

## 1



### It's an Easy Walk In

The terminal is barely 1.5 km from the old town along a flat riverfront - skip the taxis, which have a name for overcharging, and simply stroll in

## 2



### Look Beyond the Core

The real surprise is the Art Nouveau quarter just north of the old town - most visitors never leave the medieval streets and miss the city's finest facades

## 3



### A Hard-Won Freedom

Latvia was occupied within living memory - the past is real here, and the Occupation Museum tells it with unflinching honesty



**Don't Mention...** that Latvia is 'basically Russia' - it is a proud, separate nation with its own ancient language, and the Soviet decades are remembered here as occupation, not nostalgia



# Money - What It Buys



## The Euro

Latvia adopted the euro in 2014 - the same notes and coins as much of Europe

**£1** buys about **€1.18**

**£1** buys about **\$1.35**

Riga is fair value - eating and drinking cost less than in much of western Europe



Cards are taken almost everywhere - carry a little cash for the market and small stalls

Indicative mid-market rates, late July 2026

## What You Might Reasonably Pay



Coffee

**€3.50**

about £3.00



Water

**€1.50**

about £1.30



Black Balsam

**€5.00**

about £4.30



St Peter's Tower

**€9.00**

about £7.75



## Top Tips to Save



Wandering the whole UNESCO old town costs nothing at all



The Freedom Monument and the lovely Bastejkalns park are free



The Central Market is free to roam - and the cheapest lunch in town



The Art Nouveau facades on Alberta iela are a free open-air gallery



# Why Here? The Founding



## 1201

### A Crusader's River-Port

In 1201 the German bishop Albert founded Riga at the mouth of the Daugava, as a base for the crusade to Christianise the pagan Baltic. Its deep river harbour soon made it a great Hanseatic trading city



### Bishop Albert, 1201

The German crusader-bishop who founded the city and raised its first cathedral



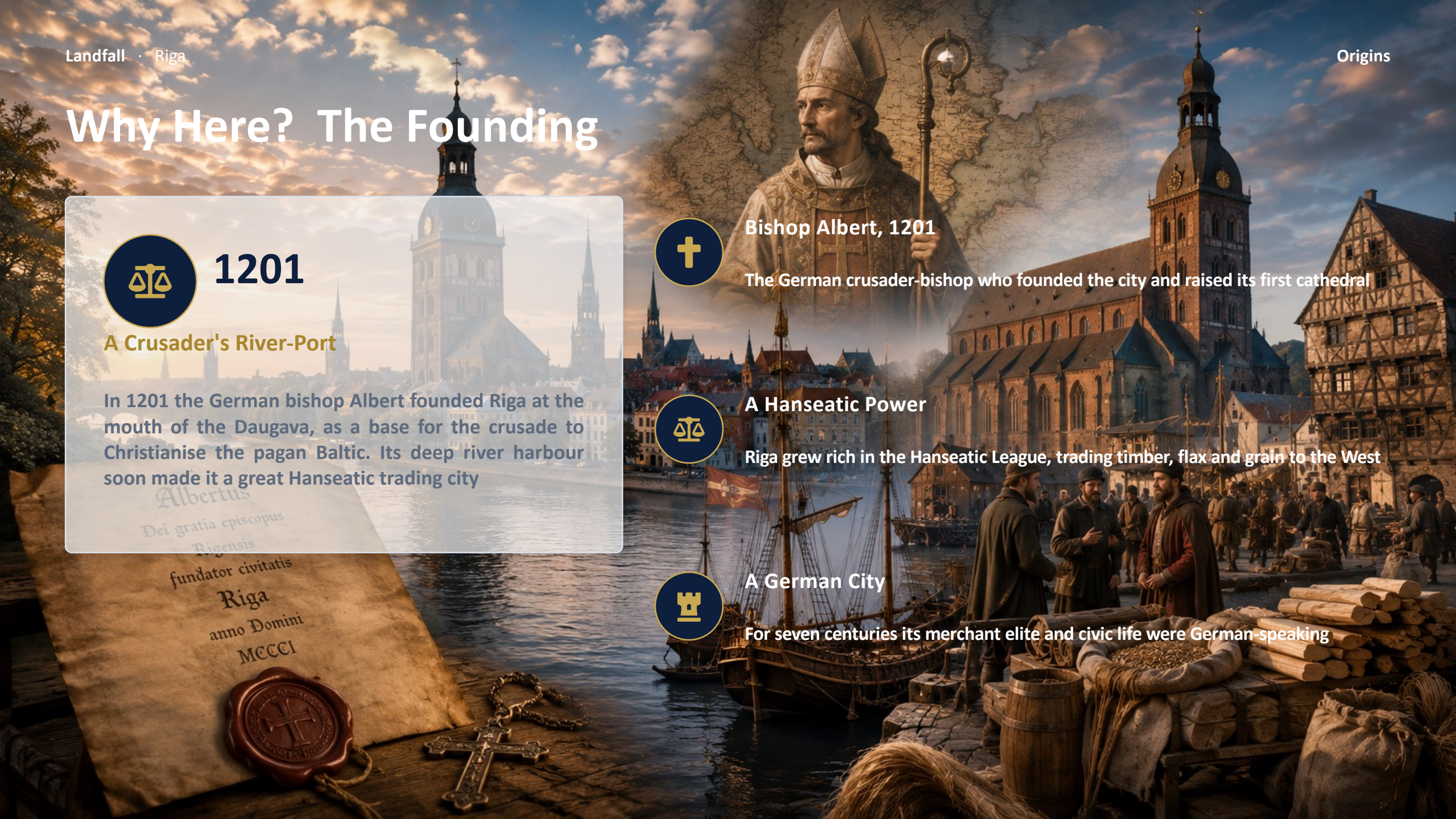
### A Hanseatic Power

Riga grew rich in the Hanseatic League, trading timber, flax and grain to the West



### A German City

For seven centuries its merchant elite and civic life were German-speaking





# The Baltic Way, 1989

## Two Million Hands, One Chain

On 23 August 1989 some two million people joined hands in an unbroken human chain 600 km - 370 miles - long, linking Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. A silent, peaceful protest against Soviet rule, with Riga at its very heart. Within three years, all three Baltic nations were free



It fell on the 50th anniversary of the secret Nazi-Soviet pact that had condemned the Baltics to occupation



# Two Hundred Years Ago



## 1820s

### An Imperial Trading City

Two centuries ago Riga was one of the Russian Empire's busiest Baltic ports, shipping timber, flax and grain to the West - yet still walled, and still ruled in trade and culture by its old German merchant families

#### Imperial port

Riga boomed as a western gateway of the Tsar's empire, its harbour thick with masts

#### German counting-house

The Baltic German elite still ran the trade, the guilds and the affairs of the city

#### Behind its walls

The medieval ramparts stood until the 1850s, then gave way to parks and boulevards



# A Century to Now



1918

## A Free Latvia

The republic is proclaimed on 18 November, born from the collapse of empires after the Great War



1940-91

## Occupation

Soviet, then Nazi, then Soviet again - war, mass deportations and fifty years behind the Iron Curtain



1991

## Freedom Restored

After the Baltic Way and the 1991 barricades in Riga, Latvia is independent once more



Today

## Reborn

A confident EU and NATO capital, its old town and Art Nouveau gloriously restored



# Where You Berth - Central



## Alongside and Central

We tie up at the Riga Passenger Terminal on the Daugava, right beside the city - one of the most central berths in the Baltics



## Simply Walk In

A flat 15-minute stroll along the riverfront brings you into the old town - no shuttle, no taxi, just keep the river on your side



# The Best View - and the Walk



## The Best View

### St Peter's Tower

A lift carries you 72 m up the great church spire to a platform with the finest 360-degree view over Riga's red roofs and the Daugava (about 9 euros, at the church)



**St Peter's Tower** - 72 m up by lift for the classic panorama of red roofs and river



**Castle and River** - the presidential castle and the wide Daugava, seen from the Vansu bridge



**Freedom Monument** - Milda above the boulevard, with the ceremonial changing of the guard



## The Old Town Circuit

### Terminal to Town Hall Square

1.3 km / 0.8 mi · 15 min · flat riverside

### The old town core

Blackheads, cathedrals · wander · cobbled lanes

### Three Brothers and Swedish Gate

quiet corners · short · medieval Riga

### Freedom Monument and the park

0.6 km / 0.4 mi · 8 min · leafy, canal-side

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Riga's old town is compact and flat - you can loop its highlights in a couple of unhurried hours, then push north into the Art Nouveau streets



# Two Sides of Riga



## The Medieval Core

### Vecrīga, the UNESCO Old Town

- Town Hall Square and the House of the Blackheads
- Riga Cathedral and the spire of St Peter's
- The Three Brothers and the Swedish Gate
- Cobble lanes, guild halls and easy cafes



## The Art Nouveau Quarter

### The World's Grandest, Just North

- Alberta iela, a street of sculpted facades
- The flamboyant work of Mikhail Eisenstein
- The Art Nouveau Museum at Alberta iela 12
- Elizabetes and Strelnieku streets close by



# Riga on a Budget



## The Old Town

Wandering the whole UNESCO-listed medieval core costs nothing at all



## Freedom Monument

Free to visit - time it for the changing of the guard, on the hour



## The Central Market

Free to roam the Zeppelin hangars - and the cheapest, tastiest lunch in Riga



## Art Nouveau Streets

Alberta iela and its neighbours are a free open-air architectural gallery



## Bastejkalns Park

The canal, bridges and lawns beside the old town are open and free



## The Churches

Most cost little or nothing to step inside - only the towers charge



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# For the Cultured



## Riga Cathedral

The largest medieval church in the Baltics, famed for its mighty organ (about 10 euros)



## St Peter's Church

The great spire, with the finest viewing tower in the city (about 9 euros)



## House of the Blackheads

The sumptuously restored merchants' guildhall interior (about 7 euros)



## Art Nouveau Museum

A restored 1903 apartment on Alberta iela, in full period dress (about 9 euros)



## National Museum of Art

The grandest collection of Latvian painting, in a palatial setting



## Occupation Museum

Latvia's Soviet and Nazi years, told with unflinching honesty (by donation)



If You Do One Thing

# Lose Yourself in the Old Town

Simply wander Vecriga (VETS-ree-gah), the UNESCO old town. In a compact web of cobbled lanes sit the House of the Blackheads, the great Cathedral, the soaring spire of St Peter's and the Three Brothers, all a few minutes apart - Riga's beating medieval heart



Climb St Peter's tower for the view that ties it all together - about 9 euros, by lift



# One Drink, and One Dish



If You Have One Drink

## Black Balsam

Riga Black Balsam (Melnais balzams) is a jet-black herbal bitter, brewed to a secret recipe since 1752 and near 45 per cent strong. Sip it neat, stir it into coffee, or soften it with blackcurrant - the taste of Riga in a glass



If You Eat One Thing

## Grey Peas and Bacon

Latvia's national dish - grey peas simmered with onion and fatty bacon (peleekie zirni, PEH-leh-kee-eh ZEER-nee) - is hearty country fare. Have it with dark rye bread, the staple of every Latvian table



# With Fair Winds

## Riga in a Slide



**Wander Vecriga** - the UNESCO old town's heart



**Marvel at the Art Nouveau** - the world's grandest, just north



**Raise a Black Balsam** - the taste of Riga in a glass



**All Aboard 1700 - Sail 1730** the walk back is only 15 minutes - then a sea day to Copenhagen





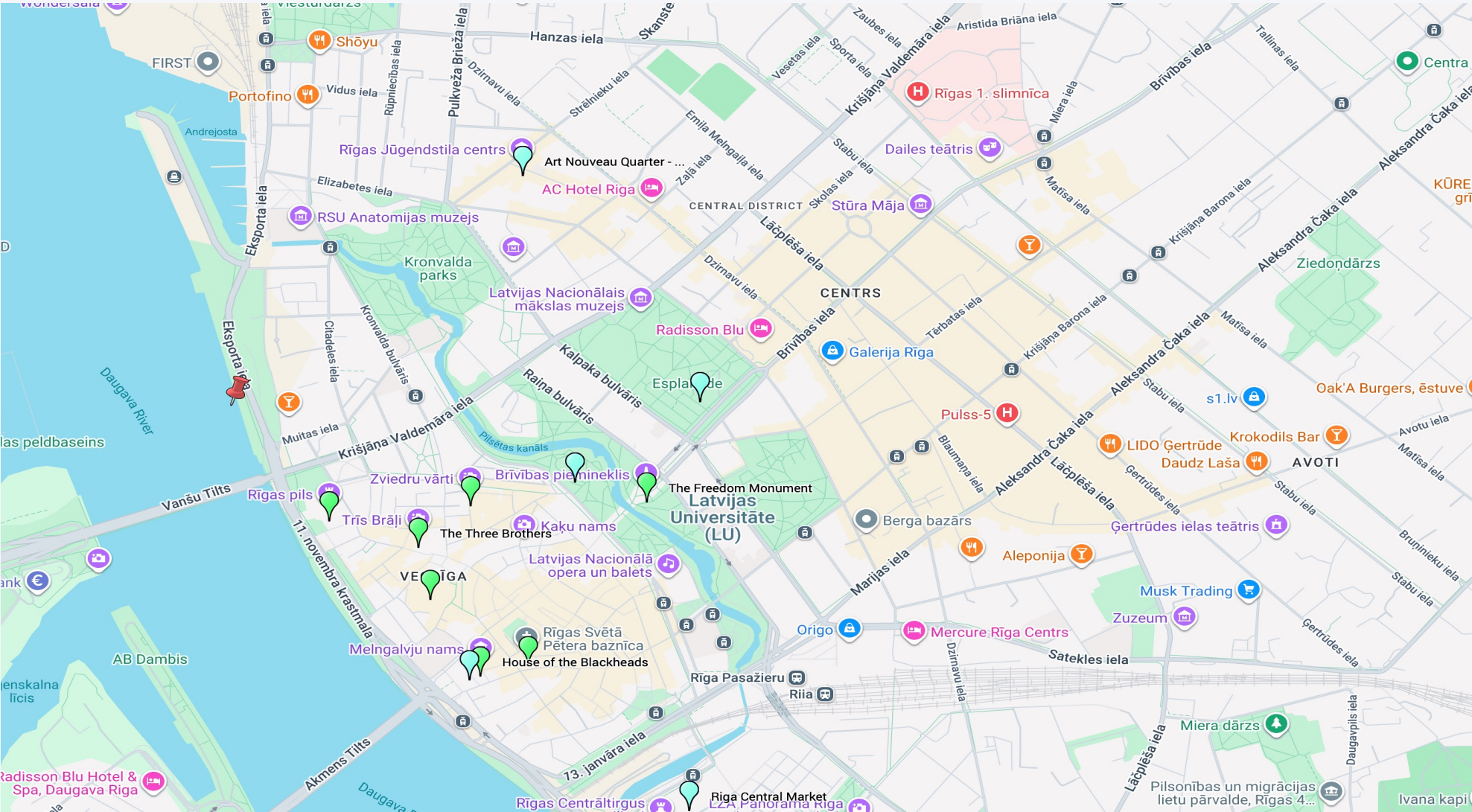
# Riga in Motion



[10-Minutes Travel's Why You Need to Visit Riga in 2026](#)

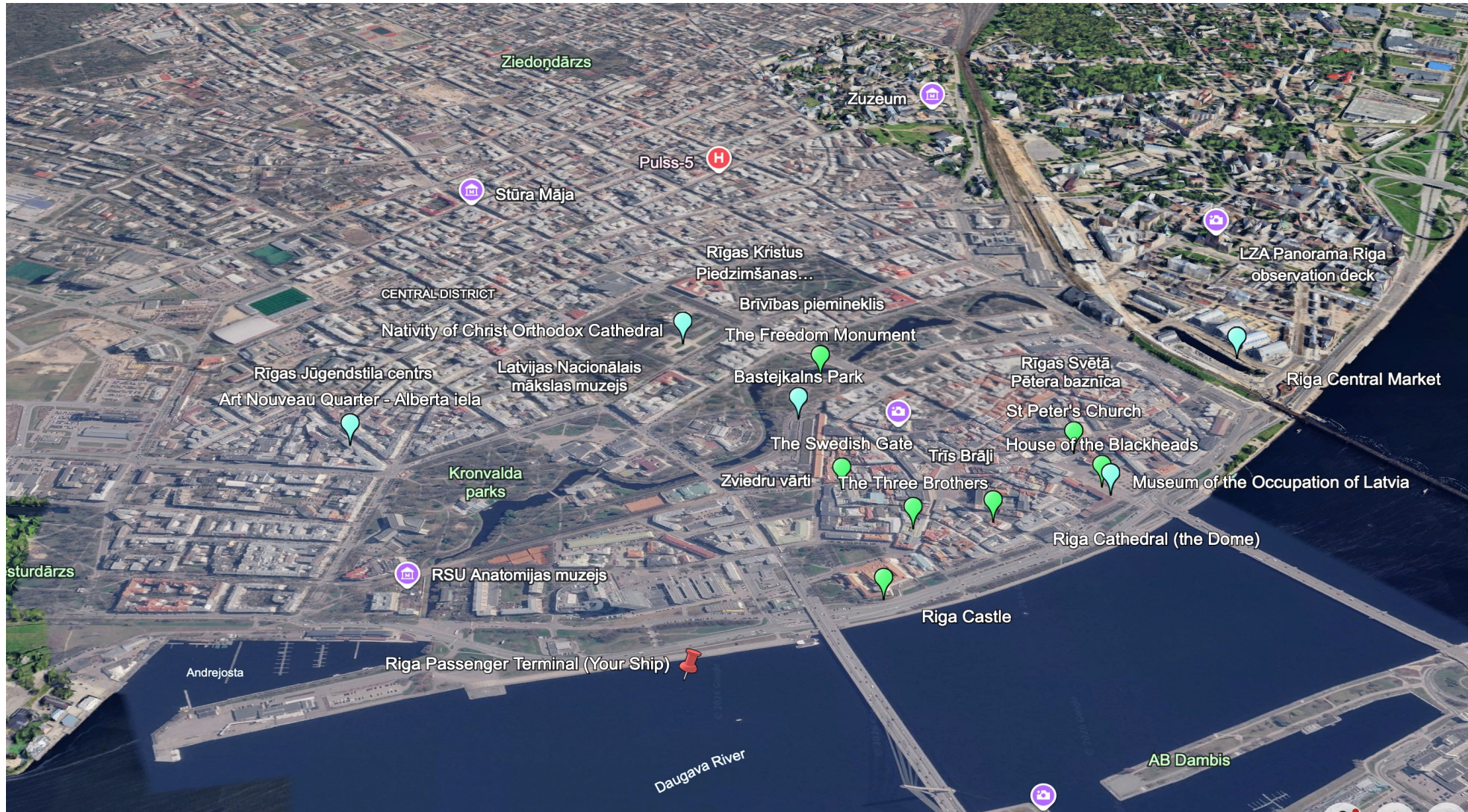


# The Lie of the Land - Riga





# The Lie of the Land - Riga





# Your Options Ashore

## Walk the City, or Range Beyond

Riga rewards those who simply walk, so a guided old-town or Art Nouveau tour is plenty for most. If you would rather range further, the favourites are Jurmala, the elegant seaside resort just west; Rundale, the baroque Baltic Versailles to the south; and Sigulda, castle country in the green Gauja valley



Book at the Shore Excursions Desk



# Apps Worth a Download

A few apps to smooth and enrich your day ashore - grab them on the ship's wi-fi before you step off



## Google Maps

Pin the terminal, the old town and Alberta iela - and save Riga to use offline



## Bolt

The reliable ride app - far fairer than Riga's taxis if your feet tire



## Rigas Satiksme

Trams and buses - a single ticket is about 1.15 euros in the app, against 2 from the driver



## Your Cruise App

The all-aboard time in your pocket - and the walk back is only 15 minutes



# Forecasted Weather

| Local time            | 12 AM | 03 AM | 06 AM | 09 AM | 12 PM | 03 PM | 06 PM | 09 PM |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Wind direction        | ▲     | ↗     | ↘     | ▲     | ↘     | ▼     | ▼     | ▲     |
| Wind speed (kts)      | 4     | 4     | 5     | 4     | 3     | 6     | 2     | 3     |
| Wind gusts (max kts)  | 10    | 11    | 14    | 8     | 7     | 6     | 3     | 4     |
| Cloud cover           | ☁     | ☁     | ☁☀    | ☁     | ☀     | ☁☀    | ☁     | ☁☀    |
| Precipitation type    |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Precipitation (in/3h) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Air temperature (°F)  | 61    | 60    | 59    | 59    | 69    | 72    | 67    | 65    |