

This day we started on the return journey home, but first we had planned to visit the Baltic countries. First in line was Riga.



**Riga** is the capital in Latvia. It lies at the Riga bay in the Baltic sea. The city has about 720 000 inhabitants (2006). It is the biggest city in the Baltic states. Latvia's national assembly *Saeima*, government and president are here.

The river Daugava flows through the City. The city is relatively flat, and over the roofs tower the spires on the many churches, included the 368,5 meter high TV tower, the highest construction in the city and the third highest tower in Europe.

The suburbs are dominated by broad street and apartment buildings from the Soviet times.

Riga centre is now on UNESCO's world heritage list.

Riga was founded in 1201 by the German bishop Albert of Livland as a cathedral city and a point of support for further German conquest and commerce. Archbishop residence from 1255, Hanseatic town from 1282. The city became one of the most important commercial towns at the Baltic sea. From 1330 subjugated the German order. After the order's dissolution in 1561, Riga was a free town to 1581, when the city came under Poland (the surrounding area already in 1561). The city was conquered by Sweden in 1621 and was one of the most important cities in the Swedish kingdom until the big Nordic war, when Riga in 1710 came under Russia (formally given up in 1721). From about 1850, Riga, which still had a distinct German character, went forward as Russia's most important Baltic seaport, became a considerable industrial town and centre of Latvian cultural life and politics. Capital in the independant Latvia 1918–40, in the Latvian Soviet republic 1940–91 (German-occupied 1941–44), and again in the independant Latvia from 1991. Under Russian and Soviet government, the city got a Russian majority in the population; at the independance in 1991 only a third of Riga's population were Latvians.



Latvia's flag



Latvia's coat of arms



Latvia's position in Europe

**Latvia** is historically divided in Livland, Latgale, Zemgalen and Kurland. After the German bishop Albert went ashore in 1201 and founded Riga, then the area was dominated by The German Order until the 1500s. After that The grand duchy of Poland-Lithuania got more influence.

In 1621 Livland was conquered by the Swedish king Gustav II Adolf, and it became Swedish in 1629.

The duchy Kurland stayed independant. In the end of the 1600s, Kurland operated the mines in Eidsvoll and Kongsberg and leased Flekkerøya at Kristiansand. All these places in Norway.

After the battle at Poltava in 1709 Livland became Russian, and Kurland followed in 1795.

18. November 1918, Latvia pronounced itself independant from Russia and got its freedom 11. August 1920. 17. June 1940 the country was occupied by Russian forces and it became a Russian republic. 58 000 Latvians were mass deported to Sibiria in 1941 and 1949.

6. September 1991, Latvia gained its independancy from the Soviet Union.

In 2004 Latvia became a member of both EU and NATO.



When we arrived with the plane in Riga, there was a terrible thunderstorm and an enormeous turbulence, so the plane was thrown here and there. The passengers cried and screamed and vomited. We circled around the airport in about one hour before the pilot was able to land the plane.

Next to Anne Berit there was sitting a lady, who was so afraid that she clung to her all the time. Nevertheless, it ended well.

We had booked at a hotel named Riga Backpackers. It was simple and cheap but OK. Here we can see the entrance.



Here we are in the room and Kjell is planning the sightseeing round the next day.



This was the view through the window



Out for dinner in the evening. The food was very good everywhere in Riga.



The next day we started the sightseeing by walking straight down to the river where there is a statue in remembrance of a Latvian revolution in 1905 against the Russian government.



A statue in remembrance of the Latvian rifle men, who fought in the first world war.



The city hall



A statue of St. Roland, who died a martyrdom during the battle at Roncesvals in 778



House of the Blackheads is a great Gothic building, originally from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and was the headquarter of a group of unmarried merchants (Blackheads).



A street with the cathedral in the background



A lot of streamers outside a restaurant



The cathedral is perhaps the most known religious building in Riga. The base of the cathedral was started year 1211, and in the 1880s it got one of the worlds largest and most known church organs.



There are many restaurants on the cathedral square.



In this restaurant they were so original that they used old Singer sewing machine frames as tables.



Here we are passing a church before arriving the palace



Riga palace is now the residence of the president, and the republic's flag is always waving on the top.



The three brothers are three especially well preserved houses in the street Maza Pils. The name means "the street of the small palaces". The houses are from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.



The Swedish gate in the city wall from 1689. The history says that the building once was owned by a rich Swedish trader. He didn't want to pay taxes each time he transported goods in and out of the city. He therefore made his own entrance to the city. This is the only gate into the historical centre that has kept its original look.





This is the old and original city wall



Pulvertornis from the 1300s. If we look closer, there shall still be nine canon balls in the wall from when the Russians attacked the Sweds. It was Sweden that ruled in Riga in the 1600s.



Original street lamp. Looks like an hourglass.



Decoration in a park



The cat house



The name comes from the cat figure on the top of the roof.



There a bit green in the centre, and a lot of cafés



Another café



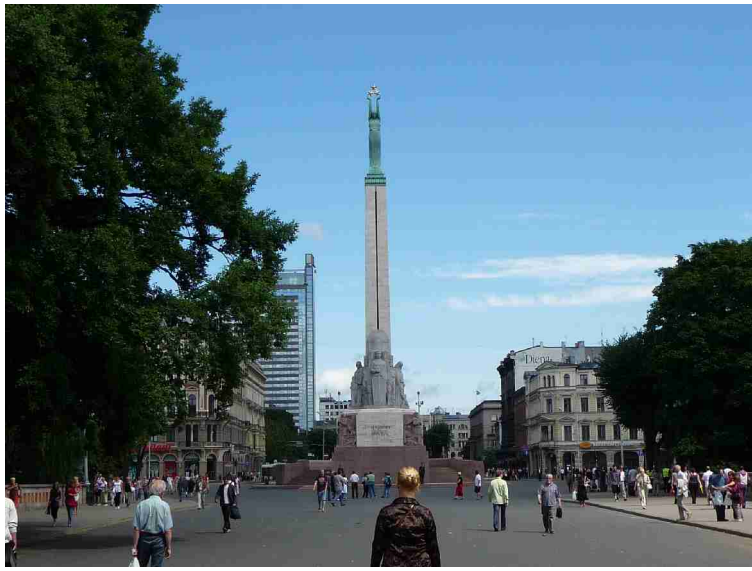
She has rigged a radio and dances after the music. The hat is ready, so it is just to put the money in.



The lady, who was so afraid on the plane and clung to Anne Berit, works in this bank. We got the address and telephon number, so if we needed any help, we should just phone. We will send this photo to her.



The Laima Clock has been Riga's natural meeting point since 1924, when the workers met here to get to the job in time.



The freedom monument. It has a unique position for people in Riga and Latvia. The monument is made in 1935, and is the biggest of its kind in Europe. The monument is important, both as a symbol and as a meeting place for the youth.



Right beside the freedom monument there is a big park, and we sat there for a while. There were many people in the park. There were also many rowing in small boats on the channel.



Those who get engaged or get married write their names or initials on the padlocks and chain them together on this bridge in the park.



Kjell is waiting for a beer



The cathedral again



Funny animal monument

hen – cat – dog – donkey

This is the animals in the tale of the Grimm brothers: The town musicians in Bremen

The original statue stands outside the city hall in Bremen