



**visits4u itineraries:**  
**History and Heritage Route**  
**Riga, Latvia**

## Riga, Latvia: History and Heritage Route

### Description of the town

Riga, capital of Latvia is located on the shore of Baltic Sea, on the creek of Daugava river and with almost 700,000 inhabitants and 18 different districts is the biggest metropolis in the Baltics.

Riga was founded in 1201 and is a former Hanseatic League member. Riga's historical center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, noted for its Art Nouveau/Jugendstil architecture and 19th century wooden architecture. Over the centuries, the city has developed as a center for trade, transit and later became an industrial center.

Riga is also known for being a green and blooming city - large and well-kept parks, romantic squares, beautiful gardens. Already since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Rigan's have taken great interest in the art of gardening, creating lush public parks and picturesque squares. Unhurried walks, colourful flowerbeds, leisurely sitting in benches or lawns in a park, bird songs and leaves rustling in the wind - this is Riga where city meets Nature.



Landscape of Old Riga featuring Dome Cathedral in the center

Riga's territory covers 307,17 square kilometers but the most exciting area is the city centre where the majority of touristic attractions are located. For wheelchair users and people with other mobility impairments, the historical part of the city can be challenging due to uneven surfaces and extensive areas of cobbled surfaces on pavements and roads.

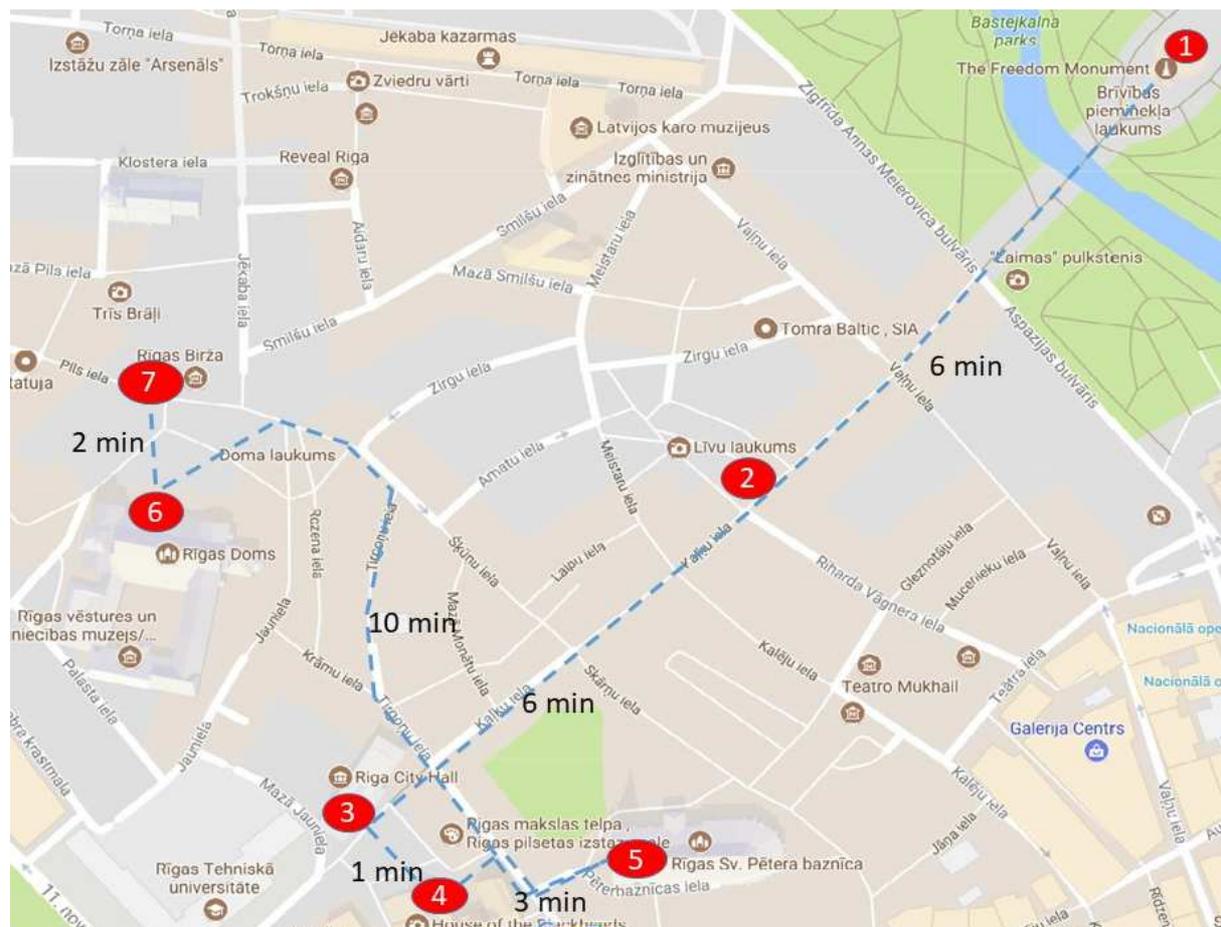
The map below shows the center of Riga and some districts. Klusais centrs (Silent center) where most of the Art Nouveau buildings are located, Vecriga (Old Riga) which is the historical part of Riga and Daugava River which is also known by Latvians as River of Destiny.



## Riga's History and Heritage Route:

### One-day route

Freedom Monument (1) - Līvu square (2) - Town Hall (3) - Blackheads House (4) - Riga St. Peter's Church (5) - Dome Square and Cathedral (6) - The Art Museum Riga Bourse (7)



The map above indicates how long it takes to go from one place to other. Please note that it is the average time, for each person the walking speed and pace are different.

Distances between places:

- Freedom monument to Līvu square - 350 meters
- Līvu square to Town hall - 350 meters
- Town hall to Blackheads House - 80 meters
- Blackheads House to Riga St. Peter's Church - 200 meters
- Riga St. Peter's Church to Dome square and cathedral - 500 meters
- Dome cathedral to Art Museum Riga Bourse - 80 meters

## General access information

Navigating the streets of Riga can be difficult for anyone who uses a wheelchair, pushchair, has wheeled luggage or has a mobility impairment.

You can get to the entrance of most places with a taxi or car. Please note that not all taxis are accessible for wheelchair users. If you want to order a taxi with a ramp, we recommend to order it with the “red cab” company, they have vans with ramps, more information in their homepage [redcab.lv](http://redcab.lv).

Check before you travel and contact the venue and hotel to verify and confirm the access available.

Contact Apeirons and check their ‘Mapeirons’ application

Also note that:

- Some museums and visitor attractions in Riga provide different access choices: videos, audio information, audio description tours, induction loop, tactile maps. Go to the website for each place you want to visit to see what they can offer.
- Many hotels have adapted rooms. You need to contact them beforehand to ask for details.
- Some places (such as the Livu square) and buildings might be challenging to navigate for people with visual impairments, as there are is no tactile guidance on the floor or the street. We recommend that you find out further information in advance or ask for a guide or companion.

## 1. Freedom Monument



The monument was funded entirely by donations from residents and constructed as a memorial to those who fell in Latvia's struggle for independence. It was unveiled on November 18, 1935 as part of sculptor Karlis Zale's project "*Mirdzi kā zvaigzne!*" (Shine Like a Star).

The Freedom Monument symbolizes the idea of independence

The 42.7 meter high monument is made up of 56 sculptures, divided into 13 sculptural groups on four levels, which depict Latvian history and culture. At the base of the monument, the motto "For Fatherland and Freedom" is inscribed.

At the top of the monument's obelisk is the nine-meter symbol of freedom - a young woman holding three stars above her head, which symbolize the three historic provinces of Latvia, and national unity.

Today, a two-man honor guard stands at the base of the monument, symbolizing Latvia's sovereignty.

From the place where the monument is you can view the National Opera and Ballet house. The Opera is accessible and if you have time and can get tickets in the evening you can attend a concert.

After viewing the monument, following the route, you should go to Old part side. That is on that side where you will see the Laima clock - that is very popular meeting point.

Near the clock you will need to cross road, That crosswalk is 30 m wide and is safe to cross.

## Access information

The base of the monument is accessible to everyone. There is a public park on both sides with plenty of benches to rest and standard design public toilets, but there is not an accessible toilet. There is no accessible public toilet nearby, s but there are more hotels and cafes around and you can go there to ask for facilities, usually no one would refuse.

### 2. Līvu square



It is hard to believe that the Square once was the site of the Riga River, which was a shipping route for transporting Latvian grain up to the 16th century. Later it was called the Rīdzene River and even Rīdziņa as it gradually became narrower. Today, along the old route of the river, pavement wears away the shoes of countless Rigans and visitors to the city, and beautiful flower-beds remind one of the past times.

Līvu Square is situated between Zirgu, Meistaru and Kaļķu Street. It was built after the World War II, when several buildings were destroyed. In 1950, a square named Philharmonic Square was set up here bringing new features to the city's architecture. The concert hall of the Latvian Philharmonic has been known since 1941 as the Great Guild Hall housing musical performances also nowadays.

The Small Guild, Cat House, and Riga Russian Drama Theatre also surround Līvu Square. In summertime, the Square features outdoor cafes and beautiful flowerbeds that are designed like waves to remind of the lost river after whom Riga was once named.

In wintertime, this Old Town square offers a skating rink. This is the place in Riga that never sleeps – like in the song about New York City. Līvu Square is the centre of Riga's youthful life.

### Access information

The Livu square is covered with uneven cobblestones. There are benches on the square where it is possible to rest. There are public toilets as well. Accessible toilet facilities can be available, but because those toilets are removable sometimes they may not be available after all. There are no guidelines for visual impaired persons, therefore it can be difficult to orientate in the square so a companion is recommended.

### 3. Town Hall Square



The Town Hall Square was formed of a market square and up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was the economic and administrative centre of Riga. One of the major structures of the Town Hall square is the Town hall - a three-storied building with a tower and a clock on it. In this building till 1889 was Riga Town hall, later it was replaced by the selected municipal

council. It was destroyed during World War II and rebuilt in 2003 and again is a Riga Town hall.

### **Access information**

The square is covered with uneven cobblestones. There is no guidelines for visual impaired persons, therefore it can be difficult to orientate in the square so a companion is recommended.

#### 4. Blackheads house

Located on Ratslaukums 7, Riga

Phone: +371 67043678

Webpage: <http://www.melngalvjunams.lv/en>



The second considerable building on the Town Hall square is Blackheads House. It is mentioned for the first time in sources in 1334, as the new house of the Big Guild. Originally, it was rented by merchants of the Big Guild and later - by unmarried merchants - a Blackheads' brotherhood. Blackheads were an association formed by young, unmarried merchants and captains of the ships. The building was destroyed during World War II, and restored in 1999.

#### Access information

For wheelchair users Blackhead house is accessible, only it is difficult to get to ground level because there is steep ramp from lift to ground level. There is an accessible toilet suitable for people with disabilities.

For people with visual impairment is companion recommended to go through building.

## 5. Riga St. Peter's Church

Located on Reformation square 1, Riga

Phone: +371 67181430

Webpage: <http://peterbaznica.riga.lv/en/news/>



Riga St. Peter's Church is one of the oldest and most valuable monuments of medieval architecture in the Baltic States. In 1997 it was included among the UNESCO World Heritage sites. Riga St. Peter's Church is first mentioned in documents in 1209. Then it was a small hall-type three aisle building with an aloof standing church tower. In 15<sup>th</sup> century, the current basilica formed because of several reconstructions performed according to the design of master builder Johannes Rumeschotte from Rostock. The tower of the church and church itself has been destroyed and reconstructed several times during the centuries. Last time it was destroyed by artillery during World War II, the tower and roof burnt down and the church interior was entirely destructed. In 1970 the newly built tower was unveiled in an official ceremony and a wind cone - a golden rooster, was placed atop the steeple. The tower restoration was completed in 1973 and now it is 123metres high.

Today the church hall is used for exhibitions and concerts.

## Access information

There are steps immediately inside the church and no lift option from entry level. The church tower viewing platform itself is very narrow and therefore inaccessible for wheelchairs or pushchairs and impracticable for anyone with walking aids as crutches.

There are steps up to second floor and thereafter a managed lift to the viewing platform on the church tower. The platform is narrow so there is no seating but it is possible to hold the perimeter rails for support. Typical viewing time is up to 10 minutes so it should be manageable even for people unable to stand for long.

The lift is managed by a member of staff so there is no requirement for voice annunciation. There is no audio description or tactile interpretation at the current time.

No induction loop or hearing enhancement systems appear to be available.

## 6. Dome Square and Cathedral

Dom church Located on Palasta street 2

Phone: +371 29499097

Webpage: <http://www.doms.lv/index/?lang=eng>



**Dome Square** is the largest square in the Old Town. It is deemed to be the heart of the city as all activities meet here, flowing in from seven streets like seven arteries. The square has seen many events significant to Latvia in the past 20 years. The square has a marked point where you can stand and see all three golden roosters on top of the Old Town's churches. The square itself is surrounded by buildings from 19th and early 20th century except Dom church (Riga Cathedral).

### Access information

Dome square is covered with uneven cobblestones.

There is no guidelines for visual impaired persons, therefore it can be difficult to orientate in the square so a companion is recommended.

If you want to find a place where to sit on summer time it is easy, because there is several cafes with outdoors cafes. On winter time it is more difficult, because not all cafes are accessible and you need go inside.

There are no public toilets, unless there is a measure. But if you need to find accessible facilities you can go to Museum Bourse. Below is information on the museum.

## Dom church/cathedral

Built near River Daugava in 1211 by Livonian Bishop Albert of Riga it is considered the largest medieval church in the Baltic states and one of the most important landmarks of Riga. During the Soviet occupation from 1959 to 1989 the cathedral was used as a concert hall. Riga Cathedral organ is considered to be one of the world's most valuable historic organs. It was built in 1883- 1884 by a famous German organ building company E. F. Walcker & Co.

### Access information

Step free entry is possible from the “back yard” just around the corner from the main entrance of the cathedral. Ask in advance or send in somebody to request access as this may need to be unlocked.

## 7. The Arte Museum Riga Bourse

Art Museum “Riga Bourse” located on Dome square 6, Riga

Phone: +371 67357534

Webpage: <http://www.lnmm.lv/en/mmr/b/>



The Art Museum “Riga Bourse” is an architectural monument of national importance. It was built between 1852 and 1855 in the style of a Venetian renaissance palazzo symbolising wealth and plenitude. The design was by the St. Petersburg architect of German origin Harald Julius Bosse (1812-1894) and for the first time in its history, all the rooms are open to the public.

The starting grounds of Art Museum “Riga Bourse” are the collections of the former Foreign Art museum. The new museum has overtaken the international collaboration experience of the Foreign Art museum, gained over the many years of its existence.

The Painting Gallery of the museum is a classical exhibition of Western European paintings which, in terms of visual impression, are close to the 19th century understanding of the structure and placement of artworks. The museum also has the Western Gallery where the artworks of porcelain and glass are exhibited and the Silver Room can be found. Oriental Gallery of the museum is home to a major collection of art from Far and Middle East.

## Accessibility:

The pavement before the entrance is covered with uneven cobblestones. The museum has two entrances from Dome square and Mazas pils street. It is recommended to use the entrance from Doma square because there the pavement is wider. The museum has several floors, but you can easily get everywhere by lift. Guided tours are available. Guides are trained to explain artwork for partially sighted and blind people. At each floor to entering the galleries there is an interactive monitor with audio visual information on the artworks. Information is not provided in sign language.

There are accessible toilets on the ground floor.

## More places to visit in Riga



### A. Latvian National Museum of Art

Latvian national museum of art located on Janis Rozentāls square 1, Riga

Phone: +371 67324461

Webpage: <http://www.lnmm.lv/en/lnma/>



The **Latvian National Museum of Art** is the largest depository of professional art in Latvia and takes an important place in collecting, preserving and popularizing the cultural values in Latvia and foreign

countries. It regularly organizes art exhibitions, educational activities and cultural events.

The Latvian National Museum of Art is the first museum in Baltic States, that was built for exhibiting art and it was opened in 1905. The structure, as well as the parameters of the exhibition rooms, corresponded to the required standard for an art museum in that period.

After an extensive restoration and reconstruction, the Latvian National Museum of Art announces the reopening for visitors on 4 May 2016.

The new permanent display *Latvian art. 19th - 20th Century* for the first time covers two centuries of the evolution of art in Latvia. The main objective was to create a visual, emotional story of Latvian art development and its social, geopolitical and historical context. In the display, the most important authors and art works from each period are selected. The reconstruction project is both symbolically and functionally opening the museum for the public, making it more accessible and comfortable for everyone including disabled persons.

### **Access information**

For wheelchair users the entrance is located on the right next to the main entrance, to open doors and get in it is necessary to press the call button. On the other side of the museum there are other accessible entrances for wheelchair users, where is possible to get in without obstacles.

A wardrobe is located between floors without lift, therefore for wheelchair users if they are alone and want to leave a jacket or other things it is advised to ask help from the museum's friendly staff.

Museum does provide guide tours.

Induction loops are installed in the museum.

Accessible toilet facilities are available in the museum.

## B. Alberta street



Albert Street (Latvian: Alberta iela) is a street in Riga known for its Art Nouveau buildings. It is named after Bishop Albert who founded Riga in 1201. Many of the apartment buildings along the street were designed by the Russian architect Mikhail Eisenstein who was particularly active in Riga at the beginning of the twentieth century. The architectural style makes use of structural and decorative elements of romantic nationalism common to northern Europe at the time.

### Access information

Reasonably accessible surfaces are provided although many pavements do not have dropped kerbs on both sides of the road for crossing.

There is no guidelines for visual impaired persons, therefore it can be difficult to orientate in the square so a companion is recommended.

## C. Riga Central Market

Riga Central Market located on Nēģu street 7, Riga

Phone: +371 67229985

Webpage: <https://www.rct.lv/en/>



When the Riga Central Market was first opened in 1930, it was the largest and most progressive marketplace in Europe. Through different times, “Riga Central Market” has kept its place in the heart of Riga, providing variety, personal service, vivid conversations and heartfelt stories, light hearted haggling and bright colours.

Since 1995, the Central Market has been a joint stock company with 100% of its shares owned by Riga City Council. It occupies 72.3 thousand square metres of space and has over 3000 trade stands, each 1 to 100 square metres in size. The market has five pavilions in the historical buildings - they were originally used as Zeppelin hangars. Every day the Central Market - vegetables, dairy produce, meat, fish and grocery pavilions, open areas, manufactured goods market, night market and Farmer’s day-and-night market.

## Accessibility:

All of the markets can be reached via step free routes but these are not clearly signed. The markets can be busy and seating/rest areas are generally not provided within the market.

Some entrances are not wheelchair accessible, but each pavilion has several and one of them is barrier free.

Aisles are wide, although the area can be busy. Display counters offer a good view for wheelchair users. Background noise levels, acoustics can make communication difficult at busy time, especially for people with hearing and visual impairments.

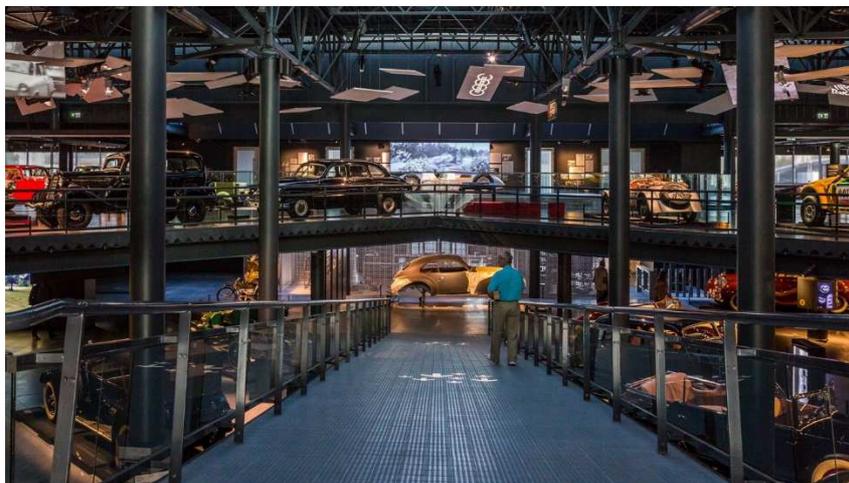
The route to the markets is likely to require transportation for people with mobility impairments and a companion is recommended for anyone with a visual impairment, as there is moving traffic across the area. The markets themselves are large and quite busy and due to hard finishes they can be noisy at busy times.

## D. Riga Motor museum

Riga Motor Museum located on S. Eizenšteina street 8, Riga

Telephone: +371 67025856

Webpage: <http://www.motormuzejs.lv/index.php/en/>



Riga Motor Museum was opened after a large-scale reconstruction on the 2nd of July 2016. The museum has gained broader and modernized

exhibition space, a comfortable and enjoyable environment for visitors, as well as step free access.

The new exhibition tells fascinating stories about unique vehicles, renowned individuals and important milestones that helped to shape world's automotive history. Visitors explore and engage with the story using modern and diverse multimedia and design features, as well as participating in several interactivities.

The museum showcases more than a hundred unique antique vehicles and the collection is enriched with several significant acquisitions. The museum's café, kids fun zone, hands-on exhibits, temporary exhibition hall, educational workshops and other entertaining events ensure a day well spent in the new Riga Motor Museum.

The museum is located around 14 kilometres from city center you can get there by public transport, but stil you will need to walk a little bit.

### **Access information**

Next to the museum there is an accessible parking place.

Between first and second floor, there is steep and long ramp, but there is also a lift, therefore for those who use wheelchair or who have walking difficulty we recommend to use passenger lift.

Some exhibits can be touched. Some information is provided in audio through wall mounted earphones which are available in a few locations.

There are accessible toilets.

## Where to stay

### 1. Tallink hotel Riga

Tallink hotel Riga is located on Elizabetes street 24.

Phone: +371 67099760

Webpage: <https://www.tallinkhotels.com/tallink-hotel-riga>



Opened in 2010, Tallink Hotel Riga was designed to summon the architectural spirit of the Alhambra, that “pearl set in emeralds” gracing the hillsides of Andalusia. With its location in the center of Riga, the hotel affords easy access to the Latvian capital’s cultural attractions, business district and shopping areas, including the historic Old Town.

#### Access information

Next to the Hotel are accessible parking places. The hotel can offer 4 accessible rooms within movable twin beds and level access facilities with freestanding shower chair.

## 2. Radisson Blu Latvija

Radisson Blu Latvija hotel is located on Elizabetes street 55, Riga

Phone: +371 67772222

Webpage: <https://www.radissonblu.com/en/latvijahotel-riga>



The largest conference hotel in the Baltic States, the Radisson Blu Latvija Conference & Spa Hotel dominates the Riga skyline, providing the best views of the city from its Skyline Bar. Situated in the city center puts you in close proximity to the best of the Latvian capital and is conveniently situated just 15 minutes from Riga International Airport (RIX) and only a few hundred meters from public transport. Enjoy easy access to Riga's Old Town, fabulous shops and a vibrant nightlife, all within walking distance.

### Access information

Hotel offer several accessible rooms. The dining area near reception is on a raised floor but has a timber steep ramp for access.

### 3. Albert Hotel

Located on Dzirnavu street 33, Riga

Phone: +371 6733 1717

Webpage: <https://www.alberthotel.lv/>



Albert Hotel is located in the fashionable heart of the city. It is within easy walking distance to nearby embassies, major bank headquarters, companies, state ministries, major exhibition centres and sport halls. The medieval Riga Old Town is easily accessible from the Albert Hotel.

Riga boasts the largest concentration of Art Nouveau buildings in Europe and the Albert Hotel is located in this exclusive World Heritage site. You can enjoy sweeping views over the parks and Riga's Art Nouveau architecture from a lounge bar and terrace.

#### Access information

Accessible guest rooms have a power operated door, large single bed and a bathroom with level access shower with freestanding shower chair. Shower chair is not standing in bathroom, when you will arrive you need to ask for chair.

## Where to eat

### 1. Lido Krasta

Krasta Street 76, Riga, <http://lido.lv/eng/>



It is a bistro like restaurant. It might be difficult to carry a tray around. Staff members are very helpful. Before going you might want to check out if the elevator is working, because rest rooms are situated on level - 1

Menu not available. It is a bistro like restaurant.

### 2. Restaurant Avalon

13. Janvara street 19, Riga, <https://hotelavalon.eu/dining/restaurant>



Restaurant Avalon is situated at **Avalon hotel** and there you can select light snacks and a delicious meal after a walk in the Old Town, as the

restaurant is less than five minutes walking from City Hall Square and the House of the Blackheads.

## 2. Astor restaurant

Zigfrida Anna Meirovica boulevard 10, Riga

<http://www.astorrigahotel.lv/restaurants-bar/>



The Astor restaurant - is an elegant restaurant in a historic building in the exclusive part of Riga's old town, with a view to the city park, where you will find the city canal, the Freedom Monument and the National Opera. The chef offers a wide selection of dishes, made from products of highest quality. The restaurant serves from 12:00 to 23:00.

## 4. Tokyo City

Krāmu street 2, Rīga <http://www.tokyocity.lv/adresses.html?lang=lat>



The Tokyo City Restaurant's menu serves traditional Japanese cuisine as well Italian, Chinese and other. A wide variety of dishes (sushi, rolli, pizza, hamburgers, noodle wok, etc.)

## Further information on tourism accessibility in Riga

### Apeirons

A disabled-led organisation of people with disabilities and their friends. Their primary aim is to raise awareness on universal design in the built environment and services. They are actively supporting arts and cultural organisations and business on what they can do to improve their inclusive practices.

[www.apeirons.lv](http://www.apeirons.lv)

### Mapeirons

A mobile application and website. It gives information on about more than 1,500 places and objects in Latvia that are freely accessible to anyone.

<http://mapeirons.lv/en>

### Accessible tourism tour operator

<http://www.accessiblelatvia.lv>

### Travel directory

<http://www.latvia.travel/en/article/people-disabilities>

### Holiday and travel directory

<https://www.riga-guide.com/listing/accessible>

### The Riga Tourism Development Bureau

<http://www.liveriga.com/en/>

## About visits4u

visits4u is an 18 month project that focuses on developing and deliver inclusive tourism training and capacity building to improve user experience and sustain inclusive design in tourism.

[www.visits4u.eu](http://www.visits4u.eu)

## Partners

Centre for Accessible Environments, UK (coordinator)

[www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

Asklipiades South Aegean Regional Social Protection and Solidarity Network, Greece

[www.pwdservices.gr/en](http://www.pwdservices.gr/en)

Dimos Rodou (Municipality of Rhodes), Greece

[www.rhodes.gr](http://www.rhodes.gr)

Domspain Consulting LTD, Spain

[www.domspain.eu](http://www.domspain.eu)

Nikanor LTD, Bulgaria

[www.nikanor.bg](http://www.nikanor.bg)

Istituto dei Sordi di Torino, Italy

[www.istitutosorditorino.org](http://www.istitutosorditorino.org)

Nodibinajums Invalidu un Vinu Draugu Apvieniba Apeirons, Latvia

[www.apeirons.lv](http://www.apeirons.lv)

## About this document

This document has been produced as part of the **visits4u** project. The information on accessibility for each place and the itinerary has been based won access assessment and inspection visits by the partners involved. Although every effort has been taken to provide accurate information for visitors, it is widely recognised that access can vary over time due to changes to the building, the mode of operation or last minute circumstances. For this reason, anyone with specific access needs is advised if possible to contact with the venues, hotels and local tourism authorities prior to their visit to verify that circumstances have not changed.



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