

GROUP TOURS

AGRICULTURAL STUDY TOURS IN LATVIA

TOURS ARE DESIGNED INDIVIDUALLY FOR EACH CLIENT AND IN TERMS OF HIS OR HER NEEDS, INTERESTS AND TIMEFRAME. WE OFFER PROFESSIONAL TOURS, AND MEETINGS WITH EXPERTS ARE A PART OF EACH ONE. WE ALSO OFFER TOURS AND VISITS IN LITHUANIA AND ESTONIA.



AGRICULTURAL IN LATVIA (2015)

Latvia, in comparison to the rest of Europe, is a high-quality, ecologically pure and not overpopulated territory, with a moderate climate and much environmental diversity.

Agriculture is a component of the Latvian economy that is important and rich with traditions. Agricultural output, including food processing, provide 5.3% of gross domestic product and 10% of the country's exports. The sector includes crop, vegetable, fruit and livestock farming, starting with the traditional production of grains and milk and ending with innovative products such as bush blackberries, sea buckthorn, snails, etc.

Latvia's average vegetation period is 180-190 days a year. July is the hottest month, with the average air temperature reaching +17°C. The coldest months are January and February, with an average air temperature of -4.7°C. Of particular importance for ag-

riculture in Latvia is the fact that average precipitation exceeds summery evaporation by 250 mm each year. To ensure normal conditions, land reclamation systems are needed to drain unnecessary water.

Latvia is small, but there are different weather conditions, soil conditions and terrains in the country's various regions. This means that there are also differences in the dominant agricultural output sectors in those regions.

Latvia's main resources include a clean environment, an appropriate climate, and people who are open to new ideas and are the foundation for sustainable development of Latvia's countryside, also making it possible to add value to our products and to strengthen our competitiveness at the global level.

Tourism information:
www.countryholidays.lv,
www.latvia.travel



CROP FARMING TOUR



More than 23,000 farms of various sizes engage in crop farming in Latvia, mostly producing wheat, rapeseed, rye, barley, triticale, oats and groats. In 2014, there were 655,200 hectares of sown crops, or 12% more than the previous year, and total grain output in 2014 amounted to more than 2 million tonnes. Of great importance in the sector are farm co-operatives which make it possible to buy manufacturing resources, as well as to store and sell output. There is a malt-house to process barley from Latvia which is the only facility of its kind in the country at the time.

In olden days, Latvian cuisine largely consisted of grain-based foods and vegetables. Rye bread that is very nutritious and healthy has been traditional and is a high-quality export product at this time. Latvia exports grains and rapeseed to many countries in the world.

DURATION: 4 days
LENGTH: ~300 km
REGION: Southern Latvia, Zemgale
ROUTE: Rīga-Jelgava-Tērvete-Bauska-Grenctāle-Rīga

Participants in this tour will learn about Latvia's most modern crop farms that are typical in Zemgale. During the first day, participants will meet with specialists from the Latvian Agriculture Ministry and agricultural NGOs. They will also tour Rīga, which is part of the UNESCO List of World Heritage, and the Rīga Central Market, which is one of the largest closed markets of its type in Europe. Participants will visit a health food store and have dinner to enjoy traditional Latvian foods and beers. The next day we will go to Jelgava, where the 18th-century castle of the Duchy of Courland and Zemgale will host a meeting with faculty members from the Latvian Agricultural University, which is housed in the palace. We will visit a biologic bakery, as well as a farm that engages in crop farming, livestock breeding and manufacturing of biogas. An artificial wetland is used to purify runoff water. Dinner will be served at a modern leisure complex. On the third day, we will visit one of the largest multi-sectoral farms in Zemgale. It specialises in plant farming, livestock breeding, horse breeding, biogas manufacturing and beer brewing. During the afternoon, we will visit the largest and



technologically most modern grain farm in the region, after which we will tour the most outstanding castle in the Baltic States – the Rundāle Castle. Built as a summer residence for Duke Ernst Johann Bieron, the castle was designed by the distinguished Italian architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli. Dinner will be served at a venue that has an historical windmill and an exhibition related to grain farming. On the morning of the fourth day, we will visit a farm that grows grains for seed, and then a biological farm that produces wheat, barley, peas, beans, rapeseed, herbs and herbal teas. Lunch will be served at a farm that will offer dishes made of home-grown grains and rough-milled flour. Then we will return to Rīga.



VEGETABLE FARMING TOUR



More than 480 farms grow vegetables in Latvia on ~3,800 hectares of land. These include cabbage, cauliflower, carrots, onions, beets, pumpkins, courgettes, radishes, turnips and rutabagas. Greenhouses cover some 38 hectares of land and have output of around 13,000 tonnes of vegetables (cucumbers and tomatoes) per year. Potatoes are grown on 27,000 hectares of land, with total output in 2014 of 493,000 tonnes.

DURATION: 4 days
LENGTH: ~600 km
REGION: Central Latvia (Vidzeme) and Eastern Latvia (Latgale)
ROUTE: Rīga-Ikšķīle-Koknese-Plaviņas-Madona-Kārsava-Rīga

A tour of professional farms to offer a look at modern and technologically developed farms. During the introductory day, participants will tour Rīga, which is part of the UNESCO List of World Heritage, and the Rīga Central Market, which is one of the largest closed markets of its type in Europe. The next day there will be a meeting



with specialists from the Latvian Agriculture Ministry and agricultural NGOs. Next we will tour an ecological facility for farm waste, which is a pan-European initiative in the context of which heat that is manufactured is used to heat greenhouses, thus ensuring an ideal environment for farming (flowers and tomatoes). We will visit innovative farms that collect birch juice for products such as biological birch juice wine (rose, semi-sec), biological birch juice foaming wine, birch juice lemonade, and syrup. The next morning will begin with a visit to a farm that produces high-quality vegetables and potatoes, successfully dealing with the storage and sale

of it produce, as well as with logistical aspects of the process. Along the way, we will visit the ruins of the Koknese castle, which is on the banks of Latvia's legendary Daugava River. We will also visit a farm that grows hemp for various food products. We will spend the night at an aristocratic estate that is now a complex for accommodations and spa treatments. The next morning, we will be off to one of Latvia's newest beer breweries for a tour and tastings. Around noon, we will visit a farm that manufactures co-generated biomass head during the winter and heats greenhouses. We will return to Rīga in the evening.



FRUIT FARMING TOUR



Fruits and berries in Latvia have a special and specific taste that is typical of this climactic zone. Apples are grown on 1,230 ha of land, with other fruits and berries including pears (120 ha), sour cherries (62 ha), plums (52 ha), sweet cherries (25 ha), black currants (230 ha), raspberries (200 ha), strawberries (150 ha), blueberries (130 ha), sea buckthorn (110 ha), red currants (85 ha), cranberries (70 ha), gooseberries (16 ha), quince (12 ha), grapes (10 ha) and blackberries (4 ha). Fruits and berries are used to produce juices, jams, compotes, sour candy and other products. Production of ciders and wines is also developing. Cranberries are a health food for Latvia, have a great amount of Vitamin C, and are exported. Black currants and raspberries are traditionally used to produce jam for the winter season.

DURATION: 4 days

LENGTH: ~600 km

REGION: Kurzeme, Central Latvia (Vidzeme)

ROUTE: Rīga-Sabile-Jūrmala-Rīga-Bīriņi-Valmiera-Dārzciems-Cēsis-Rīga

This professional tour will look at fruit farms that selection, breed and grow breeds that are appropriate for Latvia's weather conditions. During the introductory day, participants will tour Rīga, which is part of the UNESCO List of World Heritage, and also visit a health food store. On the first day, it is off to Kurzeme, where we will visit a farm that has developed a special technology for the processing of sea buckthorn in a way that preserves all of the vitamins and minerals that are in the berries. The next farm is an integrated farm, producing high-quality strawberries, black currants, raspberries, plums, apples and pears. We will visit Wine Hill in Sabile, where grapes have been grown since the 16th or 17th century. Some 15 types of grapes that have been adapted to Latvia's climate are grown here now. Next we will visit the Kukši Estate, which offers a look at the cultural environment of baronial estates in the 18th and 19th century. We will return to Rīga via the Jūrmala spa and have dinner at a Latvian saloon. The next morning we will travel to Vidzeme to look at a former peat swamp where large cranberries are grown now. The farm has its own processing technologies to manufacture candies, syrups, juices and teas. Next we will visit Latvia's first blueberry farm for a tour and tastings. At the end of the day, we will visit a farm that grows cranberries and blackberries, emphasising successful and healthy food products and their marketing. On the morning of the fourth day, we will visit the Medieval Cēsis castle, which was the residence of the masters of the Livonian Order



and one of the most fortified fortresses in the territory of the Baltic States. We will visit an agricultural technical school in Priekulī to meet with faculty members. At the conclusion of the day, we will go to Ungurmuiža Estate, which is one of the most outstanding examples of 18th century Baroque wood construction in Latvia. The mansion (1732) is the only early 18th century wooden building of this type that has been preserved to this very day.



LIVESTOCK FARMING TOUR



Major sectors in livestock farming in Latvia include cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, fowl, rabbits and horses. Latvia has good conditions for dairy farming and meat production. 21,800 farms are involved in the dairy sector with 165,906 dairy cows and average milk output in 2014 of 5,508 kg per cow. Latvia has small and traditional family farms, as well as major operations with 100 or more dairy cows. Meat production has been developing during the past five to seven years. The main breeds of cattle to be bred in Latvia are Charolais, Hereford, Limousin and Angus, but Simmental and Highland breeds are becoming more popular. The meat production sector has developed in a stable way, with a separate herd book for beef cattle and a special oversight system. There are 982 herds of animals that are part of the system.

Many farms in Latvia are successfully multi-sectoral, producing milk, meat, grain and other products.

Dairy products are among Latvia's most important export products. Dairy farms join together in co-operatives to produce milk and high-quality dairy products that are offered in Latvia and abroad.

DURATION: 4 days

LENGTH: ~700 km

REGION: Kurzeme and Vidzeme

ROUTE: Rīga-Saldus-Kuldīga-Rīga-Koknese-Madona-Gulbene-Cēsis-Rīga

This is a professional livestock farming tour to visit farms that breed cows, sheep, goats and pigs. During the introductory day, participants will tour the Latvian capital city of Rīga, which is on the UNESCO List of World Heritage, and meet with representatives of the Latvian Agriculture Ministry and agricultural NGOs. The next morning it's off to Kurzeme to visit a farm that breeds meat cattle. The second farm on the list specialises in the breeding of purebred and mixed breed cattle for siring, fattening and meat production. It sells piglets and offers pork, grains, potatoes and beekeeping products. In the evening we will visit Kuldīga to see Europe's widest waterfall on the Venta River. The next morning we will travel to Vidzeme, where the first farm specialises in livestock breeding and intensive farming, while the second specialises in dairy farming and the production of grains and grasses. We will visit the ruins of the Koknese castle, which stands along the banks of the legendary Daugava River. In the evening, we will visit one of the largest goat farms in Latvia, with some 160 purebred goats (Alpine, Anglo, German White Noble), as well as hogs



for breeding. Several types of cheese will be available for tasting. The next morning, we will visit one of Latvia's largest sheep farms. The biological farm has about 250 head of sheep. The second farm grows grain and grasses and engages in dairy farming and livestock breeding. We will visit the Medieval castle in Cēsis, which was the residence of the masters of the Livonian Order and one of the most fortified fortresses in the territory of the Baltic States. At the conclusion of the day, we will go to Ungurmuiža Estate, which is one of the most outstanding examples of 18th century Baroque wood construction in Latvia.



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