


## Feedback on social media from the FAM trip participants 10.-13.06.2024

Link:

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**John Coles**  
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Managing Director, Kew Bridge Travel | Create Inspiring Jou...  
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This week I travelled to Latvia as a guest of Baltic Nature Tourism. The association aims to promote travel to Latvia; to encourage tourists to stay longer to explore the countryside and discover the nature.

Riga was founded in 1201 as a trading port at the mouth of the Daugava which flows into the Baltic Sea, a member of the Hansenic League.

The Old Town preserves the medieval pattern of narrow streets. Centuries of conflict have destroyed many of the original buildings, but some churches and merchant houses have survived or been rebuilt. A pleasant historical centre.

Riga's architectural treasures are outside of the Old Town, in the newer districts built in the early years of the nineteenth century. A period of prosperity for Riga because it was a major port of Tsarist Russia located at the end of the railway line from St Petersburg. New boulevards were laid out and many buildings were constructed in the popular art nouveau style.

At the end of a day exploring on foot, it was fun to paddle a kayak along the Riga canal, which runs around the Old Town, through the city centre.

The following morning, I took a walk through a bog. Almost 10% of Latvia is covered by bog. Krameris National Park is twenty minutes' drive from Riga. Walking on the bog requires a special plastic shoe which spreads the weight over a wider surface area. I soon got used to the sensation of walking on a "sponge".

After the hike it was time for a drink. Fortunately just outside the National Park is the excellent Sabiles Cidery.

Next stop was the pretty and rather sleepy town of Kuldiga. Once an important administrative centre in the Duchy of Courland, a semi-independent duchy that

Next stop was the pretty and rather sleepy town of Kuldiga. Once an important administrative centre in the Duchy of Courland, a semi-independent duchy that existed from 1561 until 1795.

The duchy was one of the smallest European countries to establish overseas colonies; in The Gambia and on Tobago.

Last day in Latvia was a trip to the seaside, not a crowded overdeveloped resort, but mile upon mile of unspoilt coastline.



We started at Cape Kolka, where Riga Bay meets the Baltic Sea, a nature reserve for the migratory birds which pass this point in the spring and autumn.

Then made our way along the coastal road towards Jurmala, stopping along the way for a stroll on a beach, a walk through a village meadow, and afternoon tea of smoked fish, fruit and homemade cakes.

Jurmala is a beach resort just forty minutes by train from Riga. The town stretches more than 20km along Riga Bay and very few buildings are visible from the long sandy beach. Back from the beach, beyond the pine trees, Jurmala combines pretty century-old wooden houses with modern apartments.

I spent four days in Latvia and enjoyed so much: Riga's medieval old town; the world best art nouveau; kayaking; bog walking; bird watching; historic towns; pretty villages; deserted beaches.

Despite the packed itinerary I feel remarkably relaxed. It's the open spaces, the lack of traffic and the absence of crowds. Latvia is a fantastic antidote to the stress of life in the U.K.



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**John Coles**  
June 13 at 12:14 PM · 🌐

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My last day in Latvia and it's a trip to the sea side.  
Being Latvia, it's not a crowded overdeveloped resort, but mile upon mile of unspoilt coastline.  
We started at Cape Kolka, where Riga Bay meets the Baltic Sea. This is a nature reserve for the migratory birds which pass this point in the spring and autumn....  
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**John Coles**  
June 12 at 8:21 AM · 🌐

Good morning from Kuldīga.

Today this pretty and rather sleepy town was an important administrative centre in the Duchy of Courland, a semi-independent duchy that existed from 1561 until 1795, when it became part of the Russian empire.

The duchy was one of the smallest European countries to establish overseas colonies; in The Gambia and on Tobago. On my recent trip to Tobago I remember visiting the Bay of Courland on the West of the island.... [See more](#)

**John Coles**  
June 11 at 5:14 PM · 🌐

This morning I took a walk through a bog.


Almost 10% of Latvia is covered by bog. A bog is an inland body of stagnant water, upon which a layer of moss grows.

Only the top inch or two of moss receives enough oxygen to stay alive, so over millennia the moss below the surface forms a think sponge-like layer of decaying vegetation, which can be many feet deep.... [See more](#)










**Danny Sperling**  
Project Manager and Business Development Consultant

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Latvia, you were truly delightful.

What a fantastic variety of experiences in one trip perfectly ...more



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Project Manager and  
Business Development  
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Latvia, you were truly delightful.

What a fantastic variety of experiences in one trip perfectly showcasing the options for a refreshing short break destination.

Thanks so much to [Lauku celotajs](#) & [Baltic Nature Travel](#) for putting together such a super itinerary, [NORDIC TOURISM COLLECTIVE](#) for making it happen and the fabulous places and companies we visited for their kind hospitality.

Shout out also to [Association of Touring & Adventure Suppliers \(ATAS\)](#) and a lovely group of travel industry folk to share it with.

[Latvian Tourism Development Agency](#) [Valdis Čeičs](#) [Asnate Ziemele](#) [John Coles](#) [Sabiles Sidrs](#) [Mark CHAMPAGNE](#) [Danny Sperling](#) [Alex Minnis](#) [Magnetic North Travel](#) [Naturetrek](#) [Holly Wheeler](#) [Baltic Travel Company](#) [Fergus Jones](#) [Regent Holidays](#) [UK Andy Fairburn](#) [Paul Wagner](#) [Eliina Pavljuk](#)



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June 11

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stevenewmantravel Fab to meet the lovely @hollykatewheeler from @naturetrek\_wildlife\_holidays canoeing the canal in Riga Latvia this afternoon with @balticnaturetourism and @nordictravelsolutions . @marketcrossguesthouse Got thoroughly wet and loved it. Great to explore the old city on our way to the restaurant. @latviatravel #latviatravel #balticnaturetourism #naturetrek #naturetrekwildlifeholidays @gillhaynestravel

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stevenewmantravel Fab time canoeing the canal in Riga Latvia this afternoon with @balticnaturetourism and @nordictravelsolutions . @hollykatewheeler @gillhaynestravel @travelwithgt @robinsoncruises @marketcrossguesthouse Got thoroughly wet and loved it. Great to explore the old city on our way to the restaurant. @latviatravel #latviatravel #balticnaturetourism

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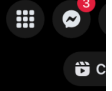
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Mark Champagne  
Public



16



A few days exploring the west of Latvia. Nice forests, food, beaches and buildings. Nice company too.

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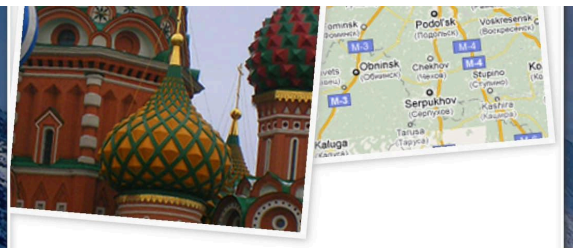
## Ragaciemi Skadini

We stopped here for smoked fish and fresh fruit. The day prior to our visit, the owner had hosted a group of Florists who were sitting the final qualification exam. This meant that there were seasonal flowers everywhere and it felt like we were on a Latvian Film Set. The owner was lovely, and she laid on way too much food for us! Most of the fishing community has gone with modernisation, but there is still a tradition of smoking fish, and we tried cod, salmon, mackerel, and butter fish (a local white fish that was delicious). We also gorged ourselves on local soft fruit like cherries and raspberries.

There are a couple of rooms here that would be great for a fly drive base for a night or two.



Image courtesy of Baltic Nature Tourism



## BALTIC TRAVEL BLOG

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### A short visit to Riga and Latvian countryside

Posted on June 27th, 2024.

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Thanks to several of the Latvian Tourist Boards and Nordic Travel Solutions, I was lucky enough to join a small group of British Travel Specialists and Journalists for a short visit to Riga and Western Latvia. I have visited Scandinavia and the western side of the Baltic many times so this was my taste of the Eastern shore.





If I'm going to give you one piece of advice it's to immerse yourself in the Baltic cuisine – so full of exciting combinations of flavours. We visited Sabile a small, romantic town located at the most beautiful and deepest part of ancient **Abava River Valley**. It's famous for its wine hill the most northerly vineyard in Europe. But also, do visit the Sabile Cidery a small family run business that produces several aromatic ciders in the traditional way.

One of the joys of Latvia is finding reasonably priced superb restaurants in tiny towns and villages serving excellent meals and Sabile has several. Do try the smoked fish tasting at Skadiņi, an old fisherman's homestead in the town of Lapmezciems who are ready to welcome guests for overnight stays or local fish sampling.

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