

instant

# JŪRMALA

## inyourpocket

Summer 2009



### Introducing Jūrmala

For over a century Jūrmala has been Riga's playground, from the elegant days of the 1930s to the years of occupation. Jūrmala was the ultimate destination for the USSR's holiday-makers and countless tourists from across the union descended on this small peninsula from Lielupe to Vaivari each summer.

Today, much of the Soviet flavour has faded, but enough has remained to make it interesting. Many of the hotels have been upgraded to Western standards and the dining scene has improved by leaps and bounds. You too can explore beautiful beaches, soothing spas and seafood restaurants on the Latvian Riviera.

**For other guides to Latvia including the capital Riga and the seaside city of Liepāja visit:**

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## Alcohol

Latvia has the dubious honour of holding the record for the world's drunkest person. A few years ago an unnamed vagrant was found unconscious by the police and rushed to hospital where his blood test revealed an astounding 7.22 parts per mille of alcohol. Before this man was saved by law enforcement, the medical community had agreed that 4 parts per mille was a lethal dose for any human. Although we don't suggest you attempt to break any records, we do hope you enjoy a local drink in moderation while in Latvia. *Užavas*, *Bauskas*, *Tērvetes* and the hard to find *Valmiermuižas* are among the nation's best beers and the infamous Riga Black Balsam is a potent liquor that Latvians enjoy inflicting on tourists. Although bars are open at all hours, alcoholic beverages are only sold in shops from 08:00 - 22:00. ▶

## Money

The national currency is the lat (Ls). There are 100 santīmi to the lat, with 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 santīmi and 1 and 2 lat coins. Bank notes come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 lats. There are currency exchange booths everywhere accepting a wide range of foreign bank notes, but always check rates before exchanging money. Major hotels, restaurants and shops accept Visa, Euro- and MasterCard. There are numerous ATMs around town as well. ▶

## Roads

Latvia has some of the world's worst drivers. Passing on blind curves is shockingly common, red lights are ignored by most BMWs and pedestrians on crosswalks tend to become targets for wannabe F1 drivers in tricked out Mercedes Jeeps. If, like many locals, you enjoy operating an automobile while intoxicated, you should bear in mind that all perpetrators, including foreigners, face a mandatory ten-day jail sentence and a 500Ls fine. The speed limit is 50km/h in towns, 90km/h on the open road and it is strictly enforced. Speed traps are prevalent and bribes are almost a thing of the past. ▶

## Smoking

Latvians love to smoke and until recently you could see them lighting up almost anywhere, from barstools to hospital beds. But all that has changed. As of July 1, 2006, smoking is banned in most public places including restaurants. The few places that have built separate smoking sections with proper ventilation systems have been assigned a ☞ symbol. Ironically, the government has largely ignored the root causes of smoking, but a new tax on cigarettes has brought the price of a pack of Marlboros up to around €2.50. ▶

## Arrival & Transport

**By train** The first train service between Riga and Jūrmala started in 1877. Over a century later the electricħka, electrical commuter train, is still slow and takes 40 minutes from the central train station to Majori. Trains leave frequently from platforms 3 and 4.

**By minibus** Minibuses depart from the Minibus Station (opposite the Central Train Station) frequently from 06:00 - 24:00. Take the Riga - Sloka, Riga - Dubulti or Riga - Jaunķemeri minibus and ask the driver let you out at Majori. The ride takes 30 minutes and costs about 1Ls.

**By car** Drive along the well-kept 15km long highway from Riga, which is the best stretch of highway in Latvia. All motorists have to stop at the control point to pay a 1Ls/day toll.

## Tourist information

**Jūrmala Tourist Information Centre Majori, Lienes 5, tel. 67 14 79 00, fax 67 14 79 01, info@jurmala.lv, www.jurmala.lv.** If you can't find what you're looking for in our guide, the friendly staff here will be happy to help. Free maps, hotel reservation, tours, internet access and much more. ▶ Open 09:00 - 19:00, Sat 10:00 - 17:00, Sun 10:00 - 15:00.

## Visas

Citizens from Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, EU countries, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Macao, Malaysia, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, San Marino, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, Uruguay, USA, Vatican City and Venezuela do not require a visa to enter Latvia and may stay up to 90 days within a period of six months to one year depending on nationality. If you wish to stay in Latvia for more than 90 days you need a residency permit or risk the threat of becoming persona non grata. For assistance obtaining residency permits or special visas contact the Foreigners' Service Centre of the Citizenship and Migration Board, www.pmlp.gov.lv. ▶

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ESSENTIAL CITY GUIDES

### Instant Jūrmala

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Jūrmala offers anything from Latvian pork chops and Armenian shashlik to sushi bars and upmarket dining. In the summertime many of the restaurants listed in this chapter are open until 'the last client leaves,' but in the autumn and winter most places don't stay open much later than 22:00.

## Cafés

### **Bookmark Café Majori, Tirgoņu 29, tel. 29 40 63 48.**

Located in the modern white building that houses the Jūrmala City Museum, this small café serves all of the usual suspects such as cappuccino, tea and cocktails as well as pastries, soups and hot sandwiches. You don't need to go out of your way to get here, but if you're in the area it's a pleasant pit stop and it also offers magazines, books and wireless internet.


► Open 11:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon. (2 - 4Ls).   


### **Double Coffee Majori, Jomas 65/67, tel. 67 76 31 50, www.doublecoffee.lv.**


Latvia's biggest chain of coffee shops has also opened a cappuccino bar in Jūrmala. You can expect the same wide selection of coffee, food and cocktails that's available at the other dozen or so locations in Rīga as well as the same interior, prices, sullen wait staff, menus and pretty much everything else. Decent, but boring. ► Open 11:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 23:00. (3 - 5Ls).   

## Ethnic











**Al Tohme Majori, Pilsõņu 2, tel. 67 75 57 55.** Although the beautiful view of the beach may not conjure up visions of the Lebanese coast, the sweet smell of tobacco from water pipes mingling with the sea air certainly puts one in mind of Arabian nights, and days. Eat kebabs or authentic Middle Eastern mezze off of beautifully decorated mosaic tabletops. Unfortunately, a Lāčplēšis beer will set you back a whopping 3Ls here!

► Open 11:00 - 02:00. (5 - 10Ls). 

**Gan Bei Majori, Jomas 72, tel. 67 74 01 38.** It was only a matter of time before this popular chain of Asian-style restaurants opened in Jūrmala. Located on the main drag, Gan Bei offers delicious Chinese dishes as well as sushi and sashimi on a pleasant summer terrace. The loud pop music was not to our taste, but unfortunately that's to be expected on Jomas iela. Smoking section available outside. ► Open 12:00 - 01:00. (4 - 8Ls). 

**Habibi Majori, Jomas 75, tel. 29 80 65 26.** Owned by a jolly Egyptian man, this small chain of authentic hookah bars has expanded as far as Jūrmala. Located in an historic wooden house on the strip, this Habibi is of a more elegant variety and although it does sport a few Persian carpets here and there it's not as overwhelmingly Middle Eastern as its other bars in Rīga. Smoke a wide variety of exotic tobaccos on two floors or hit the pipe outside on the terrace. ► Open 12:00 - 04:00. (5 - 10Ls). 


## Symbol key

 Air conditioning	 Credit cards accepted
 Live music	 Take away
 Child friendly	 Fireplace
 Smoking section	 Facilities for the disabled
 Free wireless internet	 Outside seating

## Shashlik anyone?

When considering the Soviet occupation of Latvia and other republics in the region, one is hard-pressed to find something positive, but we've found a single aspect. Close ties between far off lands lead to the discovery of Caucasian cuisine. One of the most beloved dishes is Eastern Europe's answer to barbecue, the shashlik, which most Westerners know as the shish kebab. In short, if it's beef, pork, lamb, fish or vegetables cooked on a skewer then it's a shashlik.



### **Kabuki Lounge Majori, Jomas 61, tel. 27 89 71 35.**

This popular chain of trendy sushi restaurants also has a venue on Jūrmala's main strip. Unlike its other incarnations this Kabuki boasts an interior of light pinewood walls that actually puts one more in mind of Finnish saunas than Asian design. All of the usual sushi and sashimi is available as well as a decent selection of hot Japanese dishes. DJs attract the cocktail crowd at the weekend. ► Open 12:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 02:00. (5 - 10Ls). 

### **Klondaika Tex-Mex Kauguri, Talsu šoseja 31, tel. 67 74 06 88, www.klondaika.lv.**

This popular chain of restaurants and gaming halls not surprisingly has an outpost in Jūrmala. The atmosphere is kitschy and the Tex-Mex food is just shy of authentic but the servings are huge and good value for money. With the cash you save on your south of the border cuisine you can hit the slots and possibly hit the jackpot. An outdoor grill bar is available in the summer as well as a children's playground. ► Open 11:00 - 02:00. (4 - 6Ls).  


### **Muca Lielupe, Vienības prospekts 25, tel. 29 69 60 80.**

This funky little bar and grill has a rustic interior of wooden beams and hanging vines that puts one in mind of a ski chalet, but in the Caucasus Mountains, not St. Moritz. The inexpensive grilled meat dishes and laid-back atmosphere are a good antidote to the more upmarket restaurants in the area and you can also smoke hookahs here. ► Open 11:00 - 24:00. (3 - 6Ls).  




## Pizza & Pasta

**Bulduri, Vienības prosp. 6, tel. 67 75 23 99, www.piz-zapasta.lv.** If you've got a mind to avoid the crowds on Jomas iela and the high street prices as well, you might consider this cosy, yellow pizzeria situated in a quiet neighbourhood in Bulduri not far from the beach. Enjoy a wide variety of thin crust pizzas and simple pastas and perhaps a mug of Czech Budweiser. Best of all, during the summer months it's open all night! ► Open 11:00 - 22:00. (3 - 6Ls).

### **Planēta Sushi - Il Patio Majori, Jomas 63, tel. 26 42 48 00, www.planetasushi.lv.**



If you've got a hankering for sushi and sashimi or maybe pizza and pasta in Jūrmala then look no further than this multitasking restaurant on three floors on Jomas iela. Each floor has its own summer terrace and you can even dine on the rooftop high above the bustling street below. ► Open 12:00 - 23:00. (5 - 10Ls). 

### **Slāvu Restorāns Majori, Jomas 57, tel. 67 76 14 01, www.slavu.lv.**

Unlike its cousin in Rīga, this Slavic restaurant has a much more modern feel, a fantastic location on the main pedestrian street and some of the best al fresco dining in the area. Russian favourites from caviar and simple dumplings to grilled sturgeon and crabs from Kamchatka are all on offer here. Live music after 20:00. ► Open 12:00 - 23:00. (5 - 12Ls).   


**Sue's Asia Majori, Jomas 74, tel. 67 75 59 00, www.suesasia.lv.** After passing the bronze deity at the door, a daunting menu of delicacies awaits. Sip spicy Thai soups, mop up delicious Indian curries with steaming naan and put out the fire in your belly with fried bananas and ice cream. A wide variety of Chinese and Nepalese cuisine are also available. ▶ Open 12:00 - 23:00. (5 - 8Ls).  

**Zangezur Majori, Jomas 80, tel. 67 76 11 88.** When you smell grilled meat and hear middle eastern music, have a seat and choose a shish kebab with lamb, chicken, trout, pikeperch or pork. If food cooked over an open flame doesn't do it for you try the hinkale - extra large, spicy meat dumplings and don't forget to order a side of some of the best adžika (Armenian hot sauce) we've had in a long time.

▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00. (5Ls).  



## Cheap & Quick

**Dukāts Dubulti, Baznīcas 12/14, tel. 67 76 42 67, www.dukats.lv.** If you're looking for inexpensive local food or homemade cakes and pastries, Dukāts is a good place to start. Eat a soup and a main course for about 3Ls in the bistro or take home chocolate éclairs and other delicious sweets from the shop. ▶ Open 08:00 - 20:00.  



**Hesburger Lielupe, Viestura 21, tel. 67 75 10 01.** In the mood for Finnish fast food? This two-storey glass building offers all of the usual Hesburger 'cuisine' including big mega-burgers, salmon-burgers, chicken-burgers, salads and kids' meals for the little ones. If you're in a hurry, you can also hit the drive-through window. Conveniently located on the Jūrmala side of the bridge in Lielupe near Līvu akvaparks. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:30, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 23:30. (2 - 4Ls).  

**Zem Burām Bulduri, Vidus prosp. 38/7, tel. 67 75 51 27.** 'Below the Sails' is a cosy café and bar serving cheap local Latvian food like pork chops and potatoes and the nation's best beer, Užavas. You can dine alfresco but there really isn't much of a view apart from the hustle and bustle of the busy intersection. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. (2 - 4Ls). 

## International

**Alus krodziņš Majori, Jomas 64a, tel. 67 76 44 56.** Although many of the cafés on Jomas at least try to be trendy, this charming yellow house with a beer mug atop its weathervane is unpretentious and thoroughly Latvian. Enjoy inexpensive Latvian beer like Tērvetes, Brengļu or Latgales on draught and order a pork chop or a shashlik with fries while local oom-pa-pa music plays in the background of its shady summer terrace. A playground is also available for the kids. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00. (2 - 5Ls).  


**Amber Sea Hotel Dzintari, Dzintaru prosp. 68, tel. 67 75 12 97.** If you're looking for peace and quiet you might try this stylish restaurant housed in a new hotel built in the pine forests of Dzintari. Although the menu is of a standard international variety with typical salads and main courses, it also offers vegetarian dishes as well as some local favourites like grilled trout. ▶ Open 12:00 - 23:00. (4 - 8Ls). 

**Café 53 Majori, Jomas 53, tel. 67 81 17 71, www.cafe53.lv.** With a prime location on the strip, Café 53 will never be short of customers. Choose from a wide selection of local fish dishes and Caucasian cuisine served in ceramic pots, not to mention plenty of meat barbecued on the grill. If you're looking for something more affordable try one its inexpensive pizzas or just order a tasty Užavas draught. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00. (4 - 9Ls).  

**Eiropa Majori, Jūras 56 (Eiropa Hotel), tel. 67 76 22 11, www.elropahotel.lv.** This stylish restaurant offers a unique, almost Mediterranean interior and an excellent selection of European cuisine from inexpensive pastas and breakfast food to top-end dishes like sturgeon steaks and ostrich fillet not to mention caviar. Its summer terrace, only a stone's throw from the beach, is also a popular place to enjoy an afternoon beer or cocktail. ▶ Open 08:00 - 24:00. (5 - 10Ls). 

**MaMa Majori, Tirgoņu 22, tel. 67 76 12 71, www.hotelmama.lv.** Unique interior design and an excellent Italian chef are just two reasons to visit MaMa. If you still need convincing here are a few more. You can choose from a wide variety of international cuisine from thin-crust pizzas to lamb and even eel steaks and breakfast and children's menus are also available. The staff also claim that the kitchen can whip something up for your pet should you have one with you. ▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00. (5 - 10Ls).  

**Orients - Jūra Dzintari, Dzintaru prosp. 2, tel. 67 76 14 24, www.restoran-orient.lv.** Two floors of nautical kitsch including life preservers, ropes and fake seashell fossils await your perusal across the street from the concert hall. Local fish and seafood as well as a good selection of Caucasian dishes are on offer, but bear in mind that the presentation is of an old-fashioned variety - meat in the middle (covered in dill) surrounded by potatoes (again covered in dill), a pile of cabbage salad, cold canned corn and peas and another cabbage salad. Tasty, but outdated. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00. (4 - 8Ls). 

**Orients - Sultāns Majori, Jomas 33, tel. 67 76 20 82, www.restoran-orient.lv.** The Orient Sultan specialises in Russian, Middle Eastern and Caucasian cuisine. Try the delicious shashliks (grilled meat on a skewer) or the manti which are giant, spicy meat dumplings. Its location on Jūrmala's most popular street and its summer terrace also make it a decent place for people-watching and a cold drink. ▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00. (4 - 8Ls). 

## Upmarket

**Aquarius Bulduri, Bulduru prosp. 33, tel. 67 75 10 71.** Located on the ground floor of a shiny new apartment/office building only a short distance from the beach, Aquarius may well be the best restaurant in Jūrmala. Dark hardwood floors, grey linen draped tables topped with fresh flowers and funky lamps create a relaxing setting for a delicious gourmet meal. If the lemongrass miso soup with scallops doesn't tempt you, perhaps the lightly smoked mussels in Chardonnay sauce will. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00. (15Ls).  

**Caviar Club Majori, Jūras 23/25 (Baltic Beach Hotel), tel. 67 77 14 28, www.balticbeach.lv.** If you're looking for gourmet dining and great views of the sea then look no further than the Caviar Club. Order anything from swordfish springrolls to sea bass or perhaps something more local like goose liver pate with Black Balzāms. It also offers the house speciality - caviar - with potato pancakes, blinis or salmon. ▶ Open 12:00 - 02:00. (10 - 20Ls).  

**Il Sole Majori, Jūras 23/25 (Baltic Beach Hotel), tel. 67 77 14 28.** The location just above the beach is sublime and the upmarket fare is excellent, but bear in mind that, unless you plan on filling up on bread, pastas are meant to be appetisers. Each of the delicious Italian dishes listed on its quadrilingual menu is accompanied by a wine suggestion, but if all you crave is a great view and a cold beer, then take a seat on the terrace and order a Czech Kozel or Pilsner. ▶ Open 12:00 - 23:00. (5 - 15Ls).  

**My Life Bulduri, Meža prosp. 49, tel. 67 75 53 31.** In the summer My Life offers an expansive outdoor terrace, but during the cold months you can take your pick of two rooms - one with bright walls and large windows, the other with cosier, warmer autumnal colours. You can order refined cuisine like grilled sturgeon with couscous and pomegranate sauce or new takes on classic Latvian food, but bear in mind that the menu changes with the seasons to ensure only fresh ingredients are used. A professional mixologist pours unique cocktails like basil-mango martinis and a wide selection of exotic whiskies and wines, not on offer elsewhere in Latvia, are also available here. ▶ Open 12:00 - 23:00. (8 - 15Ls). [CC] [P]

## Jūrmala by night

Jūrmala is hardly a hotbed of nightlife, but in the summer its alfresco cafés often stay open past midnight as long as there's someone willing to hang out. Here are a few other places that are usually open late.

**Kaljāna Bārs (Hookah Bar) Majori, Jūras 23/25, tel. 67 77 14 28, www.balticbeach.lv.** If you're looking for something completely different from the usual Jūrmala seaside bars and cafés, you might consider this slice of Arabian nights at the Baltic Beach Hotel. You can smoke a hookah, sip a strong coffee, sample some Turkish sweets or just relax to the rhythms of Middle Eastern music. Belly dancers gyrate and seduce every Friday and Saturday from 23:00. ▶ Open 18:00 - 06:00. [CC]

**Olympic Casino Majori, Jomas 78, tel. 27 84 35 29, www.olympic-casino.com.** If a dark bar with more slot machines than a Nevada truck stop sounds enticing, than belly up and let it ride. ▶ Open 24hrs. [CC]

**Olympic Casino Jūrmala Majori, Jomas 47/49 (Hotel Jūrmala Spa), tel. 67 76 44 33, www.olympic-casino.com.** This classy chain of casinos has opened a new location in the elegant Hotel Jūrmala Spa on Jomas iela. Plenty of slots and cocktails all day and all night. ▶ Open 24hrs. [CC] [P]

**Releks Dzintari, Edinburgas prosp. 13, tel. 67 75 19 27, www.releks.lv.** Although its claim to be 'nightclub No. 1 in Latvia' might be a bit of a stretch, if you're in the mood for erotic striptease dancing performed by beautiful local women then sit back on a red couch, order a whiskey, wine or perhaps a cigar from the bar and 'releks' and enjoy the show. Private dances are also available and you can sing karaoke or take advantage of the sauna and hot tub. Releks rents a few rooms above the club in case you're too drained to make it home. ▶ Open 19:00 - 07:00. [CC] [P]

**Seaside Majori, Jomas 47/49 (Hotel Jūrmala Spa), tel. 67 78 44 20.** Take the lift up to the 11th floor of the hotel and be rewarded with a stylish interior of black leather couches and funky white retro chairs not to mention fantastic views of the Baltic Sea. All of the usual cocktails are on offer, but if you're hungry don't pass up the opportunity to try something from its sushi menu. ▶ Open 15:00 - 03:00. [CC] [P]

**Vienos vārtos Majori, Jomas 61, tel. 67 76 44 40.** Just look for its quaint summer terrace on Jomas to find what is in our estimation Jūrmala's only real sports bar. A collection of football shirts and scarves hang from the ceiling and one wall is completely covered in a mural of rowdy fans in a stadium so you won't feel lonely. Sporting events are shown on three TVs and best of all Tērvetes, Franziskaner and Staropramen brews are on draught for very reasonable prices. ▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00. (4 - 7Ls). [CC] [P]

# RELEKS

## NIGHT CLUB

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Although most people come to Jūrmala for its historic spas and pristine beaches, it also has a few interesting sights and a couple of decent museums. Its most noteworthy asset, however, is its beautiful wooden art nouveau architecture. Take a stroll on **Jūras** and **Jomas streets** in Majori for some of the city's finest examples of this early 20th century style.

## Sightseeing

**Antique Car Exhibition (Seno spēkratu izstāde) Dzintari, Turaidas 11, tel. 29 26 33 29.** If you'd sooner hand in your driving licence than look at another weak, economical and environmentally sound automobile, then look no further than this exhibition of classic cars. Major names like Mercedes and Lincoln are here for your perusal as are dozens of motorcycles, some with sidecars a la WWII films. The oldest museum piece is from 1907. ▶ Open May - September 11:00 - 18:00. Admission: donations.

**Dubulti Lutheran Church (Dubultu Luterāņu baznīca) Baznīcas 13.** Like most everything else constructed at the time, this beautiful church was built in Art Nouveau style in 1909. Not unlike most Lutheran churches in Latvia, its interior is a bit plain, but its fantastic spire is visible from the surrounding towns and is definitely its most impressive feature.

**Jūrmala City Museum (Jūrmalas pilsētas muzejs) Majori, Tīrģoņu 29, tel. 67 76 47 46.** This modern building near the train station has all the makings of a fine museum, although they could use some more exhibits. View old postcards from Jūrmala, the largest collection of antique bathing suits in Latvia as well as marine archaeological artefacts. There are also periodic exhibitions of local artists' works that may be of interest. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue. Admission: 0.20 - 0.50Ls. Fridays free.

**Jūrmala Open-air Museum (Jūrmalas brīvdabas muzejs) Lielupe, Tiklu 1a, tel. 67 75 49 09.** Located not far from where the River Lielupe flows into the Gulf of Riga in the Ragakāpa (Horn Dune) Nature Park, this museum was created to illustrate what life was like for Latvian fishermen in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Old wooden homes, anchors, ropes and fishing nets as well as antique boats are all on display for anyone who doesn't mind the hike out this secluded spot. Occasionally, visitors can also taste local smoked fish brought in from the neighbouring village. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon. Admission fee: 0.20 - 0.50Ls.

**Rainis and Aspazija Memorial Summer Cottage Majori, J. Pliekšāna 5/7, tel. 67 76 42 95.** In 1926 Latvia's most famous poet and playwright, Rainis, and Aspazija, one of Latvia's most renowned female writers, bought this house. For some strange reason Rainis preferred to live in the small guest cottage and to rent out the proper house during the summers, although he did occasionally complain that the tenants should turn down the volume on their gramophone. Today you can see where the writers lived and worked and look at some of their personal effects as well as their library which contains over 7,000 books in 11 languages. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon, Tue. Admission: 0.30 - 0.70Ls.

More information at  
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Instant **Jūrmala**: Summer 2009

## Learning the language

Latvian is an Indo-European language (not Slavic) as old as Lithuanian. It has six declensions and a lot of funny accents. Although the official language is Latvian, you will easily get around with a command of Russian, as half of the population of Riga is Russian-speaking, and most Latvians do understand Russian. They will, however, avoid it, except to swear, because Russians have more colourful curses than Latvians. Latvians also reshape foreign names to fit their language and add an 's' to the end of all male names, i.e. *Baraks Obama* and *Gordons Brauns*. Females will get an 'a' or an 'e' on the end, as with pop star, *Britnija Spīrsa*. Hilarious!

### Useful phrases

How are you?

Pleased to meet you.

Do you speak English?

Where is the nearest shop, hotel, restaurant, café, bar, toilet?

**Kā jums klājas?**  
**Prieks iepazīties.**  
**Vai jūs runājat angļiski?**

**Kur atrodas tuvākais veikals, viesnīca, restorāns, kafējnīca, bārs, tualete?**

What's your name?

My name is ...

What time is it?

How much does this cost?

Hello

Hi

Good morning

Good evening

Goodnight

Goodbye!

Bye!

Yes

No

Maybe

Cheers!

Thank you

**Kā Jūs/tevi sauc?**

**Mani sauc ...**

**Cik ir pulkstenis?**

**Cik tas maksā?**

**Labdien!**

**Sveiks!**

**Labrīt!**

**Labvakar!**

**Arīlabunaktī!**

**Uz redzēšanos!**

**Čau! Atā!**

**Jā**

**Nē**

**Varbūt**

**Priekā!**

**Paldies**

### Numbers

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

20

21

50

100

1000

**viens**

**divi**

**tris**

**četri**

**pieci**

**seši**

**septiņi**

**astoņi**

**deviņi**

**desmit**

**vienpadsmit**

**divdesmit**

**divdesmit viens**

**piecdesmit**

**simts**

**tūkstošs**

### Street smarts

Street **ielā**

Road **ceļš**

Highway **šoseja**

Boulevard **bulvāris**

Square **laukums**

Market **tirgus**

Airport **lidosta**

Bus station **autoosta**

Train station **stacija**

Taxi **taksis**



There's plenty to do in Jūrmala apart from sitting on the beach, drinking beer at a café or taking a dip in the sea. Consider the following activities. Photo courtesy of Hotel Jūrmala Spa

## Bicycle rental

**Hotel Lielupe** **Bulduri, Bulduru prosp. 64/68, tel. 67 75 27 55, www.lielupe.lv.** This huge hotel and spa centre also rents bicycles.

**Pegasa Pils Dzintari, Jūras 60, tel. 67 76 11 49, www.pegasapils.lv.** This classy hotel near the beach rents bicycles starting at 3Ls/hour.

**Pikniks Melluži, Mellužu prosp. 21, tel. 29 46 88 62.** 'Picnic' rents bicycles, scooters, in-line skates and even barbecues, but only during the summer. ▶ Open 10:00 - 19:00.

## Bowling

**Rio-Rio Bowling Club Bulduri, Meža prosp. 49, tel. 67 75 44 81, www.grateka.lv.** Six Brunswick lanes at 6 - 12Ls/game. Also offers a bar and restaurant. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00, Mon 14:00 - 24:00, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 24:00.

## Spas

Jūrmala has a long tradition as a spa resort. Although nobles from Kurzeme made use of its pristine white sandy beaches as early as the 17th century, the first full-fledged spa wouldn't open until 1838 at the behest of Tsar Nicholas I. Bad Kemmern, now Ķemeri, was the first of many spas to open in the area that now comprises Jūrmala. Soon wealthy city folk from Riga would flock to this narrow spit of land sandwiched between the sea and the River Lielupe. At first they arrived by steamboat, but eventually, in 1877, the railway reached Ķemeri and its popularity soared. Visitors took advantage of mud baths, tried therapeutic mineral and seawater treatments and simply enjoyed the fresh air while taking a stroll along the beach. When swimming finally became fashionable, the sea itself became the impetus for a trip to Jūrmala. The town even allowed men and women to bathe on the same beaches as early as 1881!

Spas and wellness centres mushroomed during the First Latvian Republic and during the Soviet era major hotels and rehabilitation centres tempted holidaymakers from all over the USSR to choose Jūrmala as a vacation destination. Today, many of these outdated buildings have been renovated and modernised to accommodate even the most demanding spa-goers. Have a dietician watch your weight, heal your sinuses in a salt room, take a mud bath or simply pamper yourself with a massage or a dip in a heated swimming pool - all for a fraction of what it would cost in Western Europe.

**Alve Spa Centre Majori, Jomas 88a, tel. 67 75 59 70, www.alve.lv.** For a complete list of all of the procedures it offers and prices visit its website. ▶ [\[C\]](#)

**Amber Sea Hotel Spa Dzintari, Dzintaru prosp. 68, tel. 67 75 12 97, www.amberhotel.lv.** Get anything from rejuvenating facials and cosmetic treatments to anti-stress, anti-cellulite and even amber massages. It also offers full body wraps, water treatments and waxing. ▶ [\[C\]](#)

**Aque - Triumphus Majori, Pilsõnu 8, tel. 67 14 70 98, www.tbpalace.com.** So exclusive, you might not get in! Call ahead for an appointment. ▶ [\[C\]](#)

**Baltic Beach Hotel Spa Majori, Jūras iela 23/25, tel. 67 77 14 00, www.balticbeach.lv.** Of all of the numerous procedures on offer including underwater massage and mud baths, the 'honey massage' sounded the most intriguing. Give it a try! ▶ Open 09:00 - 21:00. [\[C\]](#)



**Hotel Jūrmala Spa Majori, Jomas 47/49, tel. 67 78 44 30, www.hoteljurmala.com.** The spa has 23 massage rooms, two pools, and five different types of saunas not to mention dozens of special procedure rooms for physical therapy including a room completely covered in salt to soothe the sinuses. ▶ Open 07:00 - 23:00, Sat 08:00 - 23:00, Sun 08:00 - 22:00. [\[C\]](#)

**Hotel Lielupe Spa Bulduri, Bulduru prosp. 64/68, tel. 67 75 27 55, www.lielupe.lv.** This huge hotel spa offers a variety of different massages, two swimming pools, saunas, a fitness centre and a tanning salon for reasonable prices.

**Pegasa Pils Spa Majori, Jūras 60, tel. 67 76 11 49, www.pegasapils.com.** One of Jūrmala's finest hotels not surprisingly also offers an excellent spa only a stone's throw from the beach. Try a variety of different massages including anti-cellulite, volcanic rock, aromatherapy and even chocolate. ▶ [\[C\]](#)

## Tennis courts

**Concept Sports Centre Lielupe, Vienības prospekts 36, tel. 67 14 99 11, www.concept.lv.** Courts cost between 10 - 12Ls/hour depending on the time of day. Call ahead to reserve a court. ▶ Open 08:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 09:00 - 21:00. [\[C\]](#)

**Jūra Tennis Club (Tenisa klubs Jūra) Majori, Jūras 44, tel. 67 76 11 01.**

**Lielupe Tennis Centre (Tenisa centrs Lielupe) Lielupe, Kalpaka posp. 16, tel. 67 75 49 69.**

## Water sports

**Līvu akvaparks Lielupe, Vestura 24, tel. 67 75 56 36, www.akvaparks.lv.** Latvia's largest indoor aqua park charges roughly 15Ls/adult for four hours of fun, but children under six can go for free. A wave pool, children's pool, saunas, water slides and other attractions are all at your disposal as well as poolside bars and a bistro. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 22:00. [\[C\]](#) [\[I\]](#)


**Nemo Valvari, Atbalss iela 1, tel. 67 73 23 50, www.nemo.lv.** This seasonal water park is open May 1 - September 30. It's outdoors, relatively cheap and located right on the beach. You can also hire jet skis here or use its campground offering small cabins and sites for tents and caravans.




Since the 19th century Jūrmala has been a resort town so accommodation, not surprisingly, is in great abundance. Aging concrete testaments to the bygone Soviet era mingle with completely renovated five-star spa hotels, charming bed and breakfasts and humble campgrounds. In short, you can spend less than 20Ls for a modest, Spartan room or splurge on a luxurious suite that costs more than the average Latvian makes in a month.

## Mid-range

**Amber Sea Hotel Dzintari, Dzintaru prosp. 68, tel./fax 67 75 12 97, www.amberhotel.lv.** Built in 2006 on a quiet piece of land off of the main street in a scenic pine forest only a short walk from the beach, Amber Sea Hotel has much to offer. Standard doubles include modern furnishings, satellite TV, wireless internet, phone, writing desk and bathrooms with either bathtub or shower, while suites have the added advantage of more space, huge terraces and views of the sea. A spa centre and a restaurant are also available. ▶ 40 rooms (singles 49 - 59Ls, doubles 59 - 69Ls, suites 99 - 150Ls, junior suite 89 - 105Ls). 

**Baltā Pūce Majori, Pilsoņu 7/9, tel. 67 51 27 21, www.baltapu.lv.** The White Owl offers a good location that's close to the strip, but not close enough to suffer from the café noise in the summer. All rooms are similarly decorated with beige, yellow and brown colours and include cable TV, phone, wireless internet and bathrooms with either showers or bathtubs. Rooms with hardwood floors and skylights are also available on the top floor and a giant communal terrace overlooking the street below serves as a breakfast venue in the summer. ▶ 11 rooms (11 doubles 40 - 45Ls). 

**Eliņa Lienes 43, tel./fax 67 76 16 65, www.elinahotel.lv.** An energetic family man constructed this guesthouse in 2001 so that Jūrmala might provide more than just mainstream hotels. The doubles off the bright hall above the café have private bathrooms, cable TV and phone. For groups, two and four-room apartments are available as well as a luxury cottage for long-term stays. ▶ 24 rooms (singles 20 - 30Ls, doubles 25 - 35Ls, quads 35 - 40Ls, apartments 55 - 130Ls, luxury cottage 150Ls). Breakfast not included. 

## Kurši


**Dubulti, Dubultu prosp. 30, tel. 67 87 89 06, www.kurshihotel.lv.** These contemporary brick and stucco cottages are unlike most other options in town. Almost all doubles and suites are set on two floors, with a small kitchen, living room, private bathroom, cable TV and phone. Splurge on the suite with the bar, fireplace, and two extra bedrooms. Kurši also provides a sauna, pub, banquet hall and a playground. ▶ 16 apartments 30 - 100Ls. Breakfast 3 - 5Ls. 

## Sunset Hotel

**Majori, Pilsoņu 7/9, tel. 67 75 53 11, www.sunsethotel.lv.** Housed in an historic building just off of Jomas iela, Sunset's biggest asset is its friendly staff that goes out of its way to make you comfortable. All rooms are slightly different in size and style but offer the same amenities including tasteful wooden furniture and floors, cable TV, mini-bar, wireless internet access and private bathrooms with massage showers. Private balconies and terraces are also available as well as a room for pet owners and a large apartment for families. ▶ 14 rooms (2 singles 35Ls, 6 doubles 45Ls, 3 triples 68Ls, 1 quad 115Ls, 1 suite 100Ls, 1 apartment 135Ls). 

## Upmarket

**Hotel Eiropa Majori, Jūras ielā 56, tel. 67 76 22 11, www.eiropahotel.lv.** This hotel is spread out over three buildings - the main hotel in a charming bright blue wooden house, luxury suites in a small cottage and economy class rooms in a modern structure in the back. All guests can use the gym and sauna, a playroom is available for children and babysitters can also be arranged. You can also sample European-style cuisine in its award-winning restaurant. ▶ 40 rooms (doubles 45 - 80Ls, suites 85 - 125Ls, apartments 245Ls, junior suites 90Ls). 

**Hotel Jūrmala Spa Majori, Jomas 47/49, tel. 67 78 44 00, www.hoteljurmala.com.** Hotel Jūrmala Spa proves that modern lodgings are more than just a place to sleep at night. The spa has dozens of massage rooms, two pools, and five different types of saunas not to mention special rooms for physical therapy. If you actually have time to relax in your room, rest assured that it's stylishly decorated with natural furnishings made of wood and stone and includes satellite TV, phone and great views. A restaurant, top-floor bar, casino and fitness centre are also available as well as free wireless internet access. ▶ 190 rooms (114 doubles 42 - 49Ls, 66 triples 65Ls, 4 suites 239Ls, 6 junior suites 95Ls). 

**Hotel MaMa Majori, Tirgoņu 22, tel. 67 76 12 71, www.hotelmama.lv.** This charming boutique hotel is housed in a lovingly restored wooden cottage. Although its storybook façade almost puts one in mind of a Swiss ski lodge, inside it's completely modern combining 21st-century conveniences with unique interior design. All rooms are similar in style with silver and white interiors that include climate control, flat screen TVs, free wireless internet access, mini-bar and bathrooms with heated floors. Three apartments with full kitchens are also available and an Italian restaurant. ▶ 7 rooms (4 doubles 60 - 80Ls, 3 apartments 100 - 130Ls). 

**Liena Cottages Dzintari, Lienes 40-42, tel. 29 18 21 91, fax 67 33 25 69, www.liena.lv.** Perfect for families who plan on staying in Jūrmala for at least four days, Liena offers four completely renovated houses named Prestige, Romance, Comfort and Tradition. Each offers tastefully decorated bedrooms, modern bathrooms, satellite TV, DVD player, washing machine, internet access and kitchen as well as manicured lawns with garden furniture and barbecue. ▶ 4 cottages (105 - 140Ls/night). 

**Pegasa Pils Majori, Jūras 60, tel. 67 76 11 49, www.hotelpegasapils.com.** It doesn't get much better than this classy hotel housed in an historic, renovated Art Nouveau masterpiece built in 1900. All of the spacious rooms are tastefully decorated with warm colours and comfortable furniture and offer satellite TV, phone, mini-bar, climate control and private balconies. A spa is at your disposal as well as a conference room with adjoining sauna. ▶ 38 rooms (4 singles 50Ls, 14 doubles 55Ls, 4 triples 75Ls, 6 suites 113Ls, 10 junior suites 74Ls). 

**Spa Hotel Alve Majori, Jomas 88a, tel. 67 75 59 70, www.alvespa.lv.** This modern building which looks like a combination of traditional local wood architecture and something built by Frank Lloyd Wright houses a spa hotel. Even if the health programmes with names like 'detox,' 'body cleansing' and 'therapeutic fasting' send a cold shiver down your spine, the hotel is top notch. Unfortunately, none of the healthy procedures mentioned are included in the price of a room. ▶ 10 rooms (1 single 50 - 63Ls, 7 doubles 50 - 80Ls, 2 junior suites 85 - 120Ls). 