

Riga's visitors are happy to stroll through its medieval old town and admire its stunning art nouveau city centre, but seldom do they cross over to the River Daugava's left bank, unless of course they're on their way to the airport. An odd combination of wide-open green spaces, Soviet housing estates, charming 19th-century neighbourhoods and aging factories, Pārdaugava, as it's known in Latvian, or Over Daugava to translate literally, is often a hard place to get your bearings. However, those intrepid travellers who are brave enough to walk across a bridge or take a short tram ride will discover a town within a city that has its own spirit, history and traditions.

One particularly attractive feature of life on the left bank is the lower cost of living. While trendy cafés in Old Riga empty their patrons pockets with 2.50L mugs of the ubiquitous, mass-produced Aldaris, the quiet bars and bistros on the other side of the river offer up Latvia's better brews for as little as 0.80Ls. So if you're looking for a Riga without the polish or just searching for an affordable pint and a pork chop, Pārdaugava could be the place for you.

Getting there

The best way to get to Pārdaugava is either to walk across the Vanšu or Akmens bridges or to take trams, especially during rush hour. For the Railway Museum, Soviet Victory Monument, Arcadia Park, the Monument to the Repressed and the Riga Luther Church take tram N°10. For the Āgenskalns Market and many of the restaurants and bars concentrated in that neighbourhood take tram N°2.

Sights

Āgenskalns Market (Āgenskalna tirgus) E-1, Nometņu 64, tel. 67 61 15 49.

Although construction of Riga's third largest market began in 1911, due to WWI it wasn't completed until 1923. Since then this red brick building has become the focal point of the local community. It's home to numerous stalls selling anything from pork and poultry to dairy products and fresh vegetables. Unfortunately, the years have not been kind to this historic landmark and a general feeling of depression seems to reside in its halls. Take the stairs to the second floor for great views of the bustle below and cheap food and drink at the café. ▶ Open 07:30 - 19:00.



Arcadia Park (Arkādijas Parks) Between O. Vācleša and F. Brīvzemnieka.

Created at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, this pleasant park is divided by the meandering Mārupīte river which was diverted for the project. A restaurant building and an amphitheatre were part of the original park but were burned down over the years by vandals and never restored. Today, you can follow the course of the river and feed ducks from its banks or take in the view from the top of the hill. Take tram N°10 from Grēcinieku to the Arkādijas parks stop.

Holy Trinity Church of Pārdaugava (Sv. Trījdabības baznīca) D-1, Meža 2, tel. 67 61 20 79.

Although an older church dating back to 1453 once stood here, the current 17th-century Russian baroque-style building was completed in 1893. Designed in the shape of the Orthodox cross, its soaring belfry and blue and green onion domes can be seen from quite a distance. Inside you'll find the smell of incense and hundreds of icons common to Orthodox churches.



Riga Luther Church (Rīgas Lutera baznīca) Torņakalna 3/5, tel. 67 61 53 33, www.rigasluteraadraudze.lv.

Completed in 1891, this neo-gothic church was belatedly built to commemorate the birth of Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) - founder of Latvia's most popular faith. Although its yellow brick façade, soaring steeple and imposing location atop a hill are all impressive, the church's main claim to fame is its beautiful timber ceiling. A cemetery is located next to the church. Take tram N°10 from Grēcinieku to the Torņakalna stacija stop.



Latvian Railway Museum (Latvijas dzelzceļa muzejs) E-2, Uzvaras 2/4, tel. 67 23 28 49, www.railwaymuseum.lv.

Retrace the tracks of rail history in Latvia in this museum run by Latvian Railways (Latvijas dzelzceļš). Inside the brick hangar you'll find old photographs, antiquated machines and a few specimens of old wagons. Outside you can look at restored Soviet diesel and electric locomotives built in Ukraine and Russia as well as a German locomotive built in 1942 that no doubt became a spoil of war. Don't miss the Tsarist era prison car. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sun. Admission: 0.50Ls.



Monument to the Repressed (Represēto pieminēklis) Torņakalna train station.

During the Soviet occupation of Latvia, tens of thousands of men, women and children were ripped from their homes and sent to Siberia as slave labour. The most infamous dates for deportation are June 13 - 14, 1941 and March 25, 1949, when roughly 15,000 and 42,000 people, respectively, were abducted in the middle of the night. They were ordered to pack warm clothes, were driven to train stations and were crammed into cattle cars for the long trip to destinations unknown. Few ever returned. A monument has been erected in memory of these people at the station from which many began their horrible journey. Take tram N°10 from Grēcinieku to the Torņakalna stacija stop. The monument is directly behind the station.



Soviet Victory Monument (Uzvaras piemineklis) E-2, Over the Akmens Bridge in Pārdaugava.

The Soviet war memorial which commemorates the supposed communist 'liberation' of Riga is the place to meet die hard reds on Soviet anniversary days. Built in 1985 to lionise the Red Army and to dishearten and annoy the Latvian populace, the monument consists of a tall concrete obelisk adorned with five golden stars symbolising the five years of WWII. On either side are bronze statues of Mother Russia and soldiers advancing with their weapons raised. Dozens of hectares of parkland surround this shrine to former Soviet glory. Take trams N°5 or 10 from 11. Novembra krastmala to the second stop over the Akmens Bridge.



Restaurants

Babür Kebab D-1, Kalnciema 32a, tel. 26 26 36 42. Although there's no reason to go out of your way to eat here, if you're admiring the 19th-century wooden architecture on Kalnciema iela it might be worth stopping for a quick bite. There are no seats or soft drinks available and only two kebabs on offer - large for 2Ls and small for 1.60Ls - so you'll have to take it with you. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00. (2Ls).

Bellevue E-1, Slokas 1 (Maritim Park Hotel Riga), tel. 67 06 90 00. Seeing Riga from the other side of the river and the 11th floor of the hotel makes the city look so innocent. Just as innocent as the lamb that is now served with Mediterranean vegetables. As another one of the city's premier eating destinations, Bellevue has much to offer, including seafood delicacies and chocolate desserts so sinful they ought to be illegal. ▶ Open 13:00 - 23:00. (10 - 15Ls). [CC]

Fabrikas restorāns B-2, Balasta dambis 70, tel. 67 87 38 04. Amid cobble stone streets and restored 19th-century houses and factories you'll find this chic restaurant run by the same people who brought you that staple of fine dining, Melnī Mūki. The menu is excellent and were it not for the spectacular views of the harbour and Old Riga's spires, one might think they've stumbled into a quaint Scandinavian fishing village. Patrons often arrive here in Italian sports cars or in yachts which can moor at its floating summer terrace. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00. (6 - 12Ls). [CC]

Mūkene (The Nun) E-1, Nometņu 58, tel. 67 61 83 80. Come inside the Nun for faux rock walls, chunky wooden tables and a good selection of incredibly cheap local beer. The illustrated menu offers Armenian and Latvian cuisine from succulent meats grilled outside under a canopy of smoke to pork knuckle, herring and grey peas with bacon. If you're enjoying a night out on the town try the 'appetiser platter for real men' consisting of smoked meat, pork fat, onions, gherkins and two shots of vodka. ▶ Open 09:00 - 23:00. (2 - 5Ls). [CC] [A] [F]

Pastarella E-1, Mārupes 3, tel. 67 42 03 72, www.valraksales.lv. This small Mediterranean-style bistro located near the Āgenskalns Market is part of the Vairāk Saules chain of restaurants. The menu is similar to its other establishments but places a larger emphasis on pastas and vegetable dishes including an excellent salad bar. The staff is friendly and the whitewashed walls, tile floor and blue and white wooden furniture is the perfect antidote to a dreary, grey Riga day. Extras include a good selection of Italian wines and take away coffee. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00. (3 - 5Ls). [CC] [F]

Reykjavík C-2, Ķīpsalas 20 (Hotel Islande), tel. 67 60 80 00. Its minimalist, Scandinavian-style interior of hardwood floors and subtle grey and white tones is only occasionally broken up by illuminated photographs of melting glaciers and rosy arctic sunsets. Icelandic cuisine is curiously absent from the international menu, but perhaps we should be thankful for small mercies. Order anything from healthy salads to steaks and grilled salmon. ▶ Open 12:00 - 23:00. (6 - 10Ls). [CC]

Vinoga (The Grape) E-1, Mazā Nometņu 34a, tel. 67 45 52 22. Housed in a renovated 18th-century building near the Āgenskalns Market, this popular restaurant on two floors has a rustic interior reminiscent of a country inn and serves a wide variety of international cuisine. The Grape is among a handful of establishments on this side of the river that often requires reservations at lunch and dinnertime and it prides itself on its excellent wine selection. ▶ Open 10:00 - 23:00, Sun 11:00 - 22:00. [CC]



Fairytale castles in Āgenskalns

M.Zaprauskis

Bars

Barcelona E-3, Mūkusalas 41, tel. 26 30 26 73. Not as rough and tumble as its other venue next to the football stadium, this Barcelona has a tan and orange interior with matching suede couches at each table as well as views of the river just across the street. Order relatively cheap beer and cocktails or soups, salads and mains from steaks and seafood to pasta and kebabs. Take the wooden stairs to the smoking lounge that offers another dozen tables and flat screen TVs. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 21:00. (3 - 7Ls). [CC] [A]

Trīs pakāpieni (Three Steps) E-1, Lapu 12, tel. 26 15 00 36. Three Steps is about as far away from a 12-step programme as you can get. Although imported whisky doesn't seem to be a popular drink here - the pretty waitress had to climb the bar to reach the dusty top shelf - pretty much any drink, including the good stuff, can be had for about 1 - 1.50Ls. Cheap Latvian food, beer and spirits draw a steady clientele of students and pensioners who gather round a small fireplace for warmth. ▶ Open 09:00 - 02:00. Closed Sun. [A]

Things to do in Pārdaugava

Regro S C-1, Daugavgrīvas 31, tel. 67 60 17 05. Shooting with real guns in an underground Soviet fallout shelter. Choose from a wide variety of pistols and even automatic weapons from old Lugers to Uzis. Remember you're charged for ammunition so a few seconds with an AK-47 could cost you dearly. ▶ Open 10:00 - 19:00. Sundays by appointment only.

Zelta boulinga centrs E-2, Uzvaras 2/4, tel. 67 61 07 07, www.zelta.lv. 22 bowling lanes for 5.50 - 9.90Ls/hour, four squash courts, one tennis court, 11 pool tables, indoor mini-football and table curling, not to mention arcade games and a bar/restaurant. To reserve a court call tel. 67 61 87 78. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00, Mon 15:00 - 24:00, Fri 12:00 - 02:00, Sat 10:00 - 02:00, Sun 10:00 - 24:00.



Āgenskalns Market

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