

Thriving in Riga



Military Family Services Europe (MFS(E))

www.cafconnection.ca

<https://www.cafconnection.ca/Europe>

MFSP
MILITARY FAMILY
SERVICES PROGRAM
EUROPE



PSFM
PROGRAMME DES SERVICES
AUX FAMILLES DES MILITAIRES
EUROPE

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Greetings from your Military Family Services Europe/MFS(E) UK/Remote Team!

Your Military Family Services Europe / MFS(E) team wishes to congratulate you and your family on your OUTCAN posting. We would like to be the first to welcome you all to Europe! Did you know that your MFS(E) UK / Remote team supports more than **530 members, spouses, and children posted to 15 countries** throughout Europe?

MFS(E) is here to facilitate a smooth integration for you and your family into your new posting, whatever your family unit may look like. We serve everyone from single members to blended families, so please make sure to ask us how we can best help you.

As you and your family begin the transition to Europe, MFS(E) is here to assist you along the way. Throughout your posting, you can expect phone calls, e-mails, virtual programming, as well as workshops for your spouse and children. We also send crafts and packages in the mail!

This Thriving in Guide is a living and dynamic document. Once you are settled, we would welcome your input in order to keep it relevant and current. We would like to extend our sincerest THANK YOU to DET Riga, for providing us with most of the information, as well as to the current Riga CAF families for sharing their experiences and suggestions as to how to make the guide as complete as possible.

Our website (www.cafconnection.ca) can be a useful resource for your transition overseas, as it provides information that is location and country specific and provides links to current MFS(E) newsletters, programming, and even overseas job postings for spouses.

Current MFS(E) programs include, but are not limited to:

- Crafts for Kids Mailings
- Birthday Cards for Children
- Youth Employment Program (YEP)
- Family Separation & Reunion Services
- Host Language Training,
- Virtual Workshops, (including Community Demo and Virtual Travel Forum),
- Book Clubs
- Virtual Coffee Mornings; and our
- Friends on a Journey Program.

This is your opportunity to connect with other Canadian families going through a similar transition to Europe. If there is any wisdom we can pass along to you from the get go, is we encourage you and your family to build a strong support network while you are in Europe. MFS (E) is your key resource to getting in contact with others and to share your experiences and your insight.

Once you have arrived and settled at your new location, MFS(E) will provide you with a welcome package containing information specific to your location and to your unique family

dynamic. Your package can be picked up in person if you are clearing in at CFSU (E) Det. Riga or delivered by mail once you have secured living accommodations. Please let us know when you are settled and ready to receive mail. If you have ready access to a Canadian Embassy, we can also send you your welcome packages there (please make sure it is approved by the Embassy first!). Also, please make sure you keep us informed of your contact information, an updated telephone number and e-mail address is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions about living in Europe or if you wish to know what your MFS(E) team can do to help you and your family, in all shapes and forms, please contact one of our staff members bellow, or e-mail us directly at: MFSE.UKRemote@cfmws.com

We look forward to hearing about your adventures and new experiences in the near future. Help us serve you better, don't be a stranger!

Best Regards,
Your MFS(E) UK/Remote Team

WHO ARE WE?



Lisa Parker (Kearns)
Community Services Manager
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1805

Lisa oversees the day to day operations and administration of MFS(E) for UK and various remotely located families. She is always available to meet with community members concerning their needs and suggestions for improved program and service offerings. She works closely with the Community Service Providers to provide valuable services to the families. Lisa also provides referral facilitation and confidential communications with the MFS(E) Family Separation and Reunion Coordinator and the Social Worker.



Amanda Ager
Community Service Provider -
Remote Outreach
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Amanda is currently posted to Bucharest, Romania and she oversees the communication efforts and can support the promotion of your community projects. She participates in the development of community engagement, outreach and volunteer opportunities. She is available if you have any ideas you would like to share in the MFS(E) newsletters and Mid-Month Bulletins. She provides community resource information and support for participation in community engagement opportunities for families located remotely throughout Europe.



Rokšana Cylupa
Community Service Provider -
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Rokšana is readily available to provide information related to ongoing virtual programs and services as she facilitates a number of virtual sessions. She participates in the development of events, community engagement, outreach and volunteer opportunities in the UK and can support the promotion of your community projects. She provides community resource information and support for participation in community engagement opportunities for families located remotely in the UK and throughout Europe.

Some helpful resources!

Please be sure to visit our website often for the latest programs and services being offered.
Visit www.cafconnection.ca/

Like us on Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/ MFSEurope/](https://www.facebook.com/MFSEurope/) to stay informed on programs & resources available to you.

Did you know that we have a **YouTube channel**? Check us out and listen to some helpful information sessions!

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbQXCBqcVYvLZhDj0a37h8Q>

Do you have something you would like to share? Please join the conversation #MyVoiceMaVoix
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MyVoiceMaVoix/>

Canadian Armed Forces Morale and Welfare Services

<https://www.cfmws.com/Pages/splash.aspx>

Employment Opportunities while in Europe

<https://www.cafconnection.ca/Europe/Programs-Services/Employment.aspx>

Canada Revenue Agency Webinar EN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdhu-mECXeg&t=345s>

Canada Revenue Agency Webinar FR

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-y1HTAuQY4>

MAPS

Baltic Sea



Latvia Latvija



OVERVIEW OF RIGA, LATVIA

Geography/Politics

Latvia is located on the Baltic Sea between Estonia and Lithuania, bordering Russia to the East and Belarus to the Southeast. It is relatively flat and forested with lots of sandy beaches on an unspoiled coastline (roughly 500 km long).

Latvia has a population of 2 million people. Riga is the capital with a population of 750,000. Latvia was under Soviet control until 1991. Russians pulled out in 1994 and it now has an elected parliament. Latvia joined the EU in 2004 and has been a Schengen member since 2007.

Climate

Latvia has a maritime climate, temperate and wet. The January average temperature is -5 degrees C and the July average temperature is 17 degrees C.

Days are very long in the summer with almost 21 hours of sunlight so black out drapes are a must. Winter days are very dark and when it is rainy, it can feel like night around the clock.

Residents recommend getting a SAD lamp to stave off Seasonal Affective Disorder. Because of the lack of light / sunlight exposition in the winter months it is recommended that people (especially children) take a daily dose of vitamin D as a supplement. It would be prudent to regularly check your vitamin D and B12 levels with your physician.

Languages

The primary languages spoken in Latvia are Latvian (63%) and Russian (30%), with a 99% literacy rate. Latvian is one of the oldest languages in Europe and is related to Sanskrit. Latvian is a difficult language to learn and the pronunciation of some of the sounds takes practice.

Latvians are proud and will be impressed and more helpful when an attempt is made to speak the language. Most people speak some (limited) English although older people are less likely to. Latvians do not use a lot of pleasantries such as please; thank you, welcome etc as we do. They are very succinct.

Here are a couple of basic language guides or self-learning links:

http://wikitravel.org/en/Latvian_phrasebook

www.loecsen.com/en/learn-latvian (there is an APP as well as the website)

<https://www.languagehelpers.com/words/latvian/alphabet.html>

<http://tilde.lv/> is a better guide and translation tool than Google.

CDs have been provided by MFS(E) to the Riga DET and can be borrowed in order to learn either Latvian or Russian.

It is useful to have a smartphone with an application like **tilde.lv** for the everyday activities, groceries, etc. **Tilde.lv** is a lot better than google translate for Latvian translation.

Religion

The Latvian population is mostly Roman Catholic and Lutheran, although there is an Anglican Church which offers services in English (see St. Saviour's Anglican Church: <https://anglicanriga.lv>). The Jewish population is very small in Riga.

Family life and recreation

Latvia, in general, is a family-focused culture and Riga is a family-friendly city with lots of activities, recreational and park spaces for children. Outdoor recreational activities are a part of life in Riga and widely enjoyed. Forested areas are common, safe, peaceful and open to explore. Festivals are very common and are held both in Riga and in the smaller towns in the country. There is always something cultural to do.

While hockey is the most popular sport, ice skating, basketball and soccer are also very popular. Sports can be expensive, so it is recommended that parents request a trial session (of at least 3-4 practices and/or games) before paying fees. Latvians take sports seriously and are highly competitive.

It is somewhat difficult to find an English-speaking piano teacher or ice skating lessons, but there are lots of activities to choose from that are taught in Latvian or Russian.

Netflix is available in Latvia. Most cinemas have movies in English, but if taking smaller children to an animated feature ensure that it is not dubbed into Latvian before buying tickets.

Cost of Living

Internet and cell phones plans are very reasonably priced and reliable. Latvia boasts the fourth fastest internet service in the world. Expats report that the following are expensive in Latvia: toasters, Christmas lights, electronics, appliances and toys.

Canadian military families posted to Latvia with their F&E are also entitled to be PARTIALLY reimbursed for the cost of purchasing some essential pieces of furniture once you are in Latvia (approval has to be granted prior to purchase and items can only be purchased after arrival in the country). Please consult the DET Riga booklet for the list of approved furniture and items.

For more information on the cost of living see: <https://www.expatistan.com/cost-of-living/riga>

Water Quality

CAF Health Services recommends not consuming Riga's municipal water supply because the water is not consistently treated. The inconsistent chemical disinfection of water exposes the municipal water system to bacteriological contamination and is the main reason why it should not be consumed. As well, the presence of major ions exceeds aesthetic objectives making the water less palatable.

You can rent a water distributor and get water delivery to your house. (Venden, edensprings) the cost of water is approximatively 4.50 Eur for an 18L bottle (+ consign). Delivery is free of charge and bill is often paid by bank transfer. Municipal water testing results published in reports accessible online have shown the presence of coliforms in some instances due to inconsistent chemical disinfection.

Expat Communities

There is an increasing population of Latvian born Canadians, Brits and Americans who have moved back to Latvia. North Americans in Riga report that it is not very difficult to meet other ex-pats or to make Latvian friends. There are Facebook groups for ex-pats and they hold social events such as breakfasts regularly.

Before You Come

Ensure that you have originals of all important documents such as degrees and birth certificates. Latvians observe strict protocols in having documents translated and certified (the Canadian Embassy can stamp them for 35€).

It is recommended that you obtain a Certified Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Check prior to leaving Canada. This will be required for most employment and volunteer opportunities and are difficult and sometimes impossible to get once you have left Canada.

Bring your cellphone from Canada as cell phones are expensive in Latvia. However, the cost for internet and phone coverage packages is cheap. If you want to keep your Canadian cell phone number and add it to your Latvian phone (need a cell package locally) see a service called Line2. This allows people at home to call you like you were still close by and allows you to call landlines at home for free, including toll-free numbers that normally cannot be accessed in Europe. You must port your old number when you cancel your plan in Canada.

Public holidays

- January 1 (New Year's Day)
- March – April (in accordance with the Western Church Calendar) Easter
- May 1 (Convocation of the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Latvia / Labour Day)
- May 4 (Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia)
- June 23 – June 24 (Midsummer)
- November 18 (Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia (Independence Day))
- December 24 - December 26 (Christmas)
- December 31 (New Year's Eve)

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Public safety and security

Canadians report feeling safe in Riga, but as anywhere, general precautions should be taken. The general sentiment is that the police can be trusted but there are plenty of stories of people having to pay bribes or small money in order to not get a penalty.

It is a walkable city and it is common to see children out without their parents. Latvian children begin taking public transit to school unaccompanied by age six. Canadian residents report that the greatest danger in Riga is as a pedestrian. Cars always seem to have the right-of-way and will hit you if you do not try to avoid them. Public drunkenness is common in the city although this does not seem to make the city dangerous.

A directive issued by the National Military Representative states that CAF members will maintain a very low level of CAF visibility outside garrison bases. This means that all members must travel to and from work in civilian attire and change at their place of work.

Operations Security is always a serious matter and we never know who may be listening to our conversations. It is always smart to keep a low profile and not direct too much attention to yourself individually or as part of a group of Canadians. Be aware of the conversations you are having and if they might be of interest to someone attempting to collect intelligence or information about our whereabouts, operations and places that EXPATS gather. People will be very curious about why you are living there as there is not a large Canadian community. It is not advised to be open about why you are here or talk about CAF matters where your conversations can be overheard. This cannot be stressed enough, specifically regarding dependants.

Canadians will always be viewed as tourists. The way we dress and speak always gets the attention of the locals, which may result in being a target. You should be wary of people who are trying to take advantage of that. Services like taxis should only be hired from reputable sources.

Should you have an issue where the local police have been contacted, please inform the

CFSU(E)MP Det. If you experience a break and entry to your home or car, it is important to contact local police and then the CFSU(E) MP Det shortly after. If you have had military issued equipment or kit stolen, the MP will conduct a police report for your records and loss repo

Emergency contacts

- Rescue service (police, fire-fighters, medicas), 24 hours Hotline – 112
- State Police – 110 or 112
 - The State Police (Embassies and Special Objects Protection Unit) 24 Hours Hotline - +371 67219931 or +371 29706363; outside Riga – 110 or 112
- State Emergency Medical Service, 24 Hours Hotline – 113 or 112
- Gas Emergency Service, 24 Hour hotline – 114 or 112
- Latvia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 Hour Hotline - +371 67016201
- Canadian Embassy – +371 678 13945
- NAF JHQ 24/7 Duty Office
 - +371 67071000
 - +371 29438145
 - nafcp@mil.lv

TRANSPORTATION

Public Transit

Transit within the city is inexpensive and efficient. You can purchase your tram and bus tickets at all Narvesen – the Latvian most common corner store. For those of you who may wish to use an app on your mobile devices; https://www.inyourpocket.com/riga/narvesen_111527v

Single one way tickets cost 1,15 euros. Tickets that are sold by public transport drivers cost 2,00 euros. Information on the intercity transport schedules is available at the following webpage: 1188.lv

Public Transport system of Rīga (trolleybuses, buses, trams)

For longer trips, coach buses seem better than the older train system. Buses are generally clean and have WIFI onboard.

For more information on public transit see: <http://www.autoosta.lv/?lang=en> (choose English option)

Air Travel

The airport is about a twelve-minute drive from the city centre and there is an increasing selection of direct flights to other European destinations. It is recommended that you get a PINS card for traveling with Air Baltic (it is like Airmiles) which gives you points for parking and

shopping at certain stores and redeem for products and flights. All family members can get a card then they can be linked together to maximize points.

Taxis

Taxis service is generally affordable and good. Drivers speak some English. Consider downloading the app 'Taxify' or "Yandex taxi" as it is widely used to order cabs. Uber doesn't exist here yet.

- [RedCab Taxi](#) (+371 8383)
- [BalticTaxi](#) (8500 or +371 20008500)
- [LadyTaxi](#) (8855 or +371 27800900)

CAR RENTAL COMPANIES

- [Avis](#)
- [Sixt](#)
- [Europcar](#)
- [Budget](#)

ADMINISTRATION

Banking

Latvia and all Baltic regions use the Euro currency. Euro currency is easily obtainable through ATMs which are readily accessible throughout Latvia and Europe. It is not recommended to bring any Canadian currency since it may be difficult to exchange it at any bank in Latvia or in the Baltic.

Bank Accounts and Financial considerations

It is recommended that you maintain a chequing account in a Canadian financial institution during your time in the Latvia, where the account is accessible by mail, telephone, or internet. Additionally, it is recommended that you confirm that your bank will accept banking transactions via FAX if necessary.

Banking in Latvia is very similar to banking elsewhere once you have the account set up. Each bank will have differences in fees and account options but ultimately, they all provide very similar service.

To open a bank account in Latvia, you will need your passport and a copy of your posting message. In most recommended banks you will need to register on-line for an account which takes approximately two days to get accepted. Once acceptance is received you can go to the bank and sign all of the paperwork to open your account. If you show up at the bank without completing the on-line registration, some bank personnel may let you sign up for a bank account, but you will still need to wait two days for your application to be approved. There will be an opening fee which may vary from 2 to 50 € depending on the bank and the type of account.

On-line banking is available and the establishment of co-owner of bank account is also possible. You will be provided with a bank card for your account as well, but there is a fee. Your bank card will act as a credit card and debit card but any purchase made on this card will be like a debit card where the money is automatically deducted from your account.

Main banks:

- [SEB](#) (Swedish)
- [Swedbank](#) (Swedish)
- [DNB](#) (Norwegian)
- [Nordea](#) (Nordic)
- [Citadele](#) (Latvian)

Credit Cards

Both credit and debit cards are widely accepted.

You are advised to keep your Canadian credit cards while in Latvia. Canadian credit cards are useful for travel to Canada, as well as for maintaining a credit history for your eventual return to Canada. A major credit card will be required to secure a rental car and hotel on your house hunting trip and to reserve interim lodgings while waiting for your furniture. It is highly recommended to check with your current bank and credit card company to advise them that you will be in Latvia for a period of time so they do not block your credit card or your bank account.

CRA and Residency Status for Spouses/Dependents

Declaring the correct residency status is very important when completing your annual income tax return. When a CAF member is posted out of Canada, he/she is automatically assumed to be either a “Deemed” or “Factual” Resident of Canada for taxation purposes. That is not the case for spouses and dependents. If the spouse or dependent intends to return to Canada after the posting, their status is “factual” resident. As a factual resident, you will need to complete and file your Canadian Personal Income Tax Return and you will meet the residency requirement for Canadian benefits administered by the CRA. Check (put in link to the CRA bulletins on our

website) for a more detailed explanation.

For more information, watch this CRA brief, from our YouTube channel:

In English:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdh-mECXeg&t=404s>

In French:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-y1HTAuQY4&t=10s>

Child Benefit

The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) may be paid directly through Direct Deposit to a Canadian bank account. If you are eligible to receive CCB, you will continue to receive the CCB during your absence from Canada. However, to make sure your payments are not interrupted, you must file an income tax return each year, so your CCB can be calculated. Any inquiries regarding the CCB should be directed to the CRA.

Declaring the Place of Residence

All residents of Latvia must declare their place of residence at the respective local government. For military members and their families, this is optional however, it is recommended as it may help in everyday life as some organizations and services (also schools and kindergartens) may request proof of the declared address. This is normally requested by the state or local authorities for the purposes of being able to send official correspondence or provide notification to the declared address.

The law prescribes that all residents have to declare their place of residence within one month after changing of their place of residence. You can declare your place of residence at:

- a. The local government in whose territory you live (in Rīga you have to declare at the Population Residence Registration Department of the Executive Directorate of the relevant borough or urban district of Rīga);
- b. Electronically, using e-signature or verification means provided by internet banks (Swedbank, SEB Banka) in portal Latvija.lv (in Latvian); or
- c. The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

More information is available at the website of the [Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs](#).

Pets

Requirements regarding the import and export of dogs, cats and other pets into Latvia have been determined by the European Union. The European Union requirements 998/2003 define the

general rules of moving animals within the European Union, though the individual member states can stipulate their own rules. As such travelers are advised to check the regulations of the individual states.

For your move to Latvia, there will be no quarantine imposed on your pet as long as the following requirements are met. Detailed information about the requirements listed below can be found at: <http://www.pettravel.com/immigration/latvia.cfm>.

The requirements pertain to the following areas:

- Pet Microchip;
- Vaccinations;
- Rabies Titer Test;
- Tapeworm Treatment (dogs only);
- Health certificate;
- Travelling with more than 5 pets;
- Entering Latvia by air;
- Puppies and kittens; and
- Banned breeds.

Unless otherwise stated, the regulations above apply to domestic dogs, cats and ferrets. Regulations also apply to service and emotional support dogs and cats.

If you are bringing pets from Canada or outside of the European Union see:

<https://www.zm.gov.lv/en/partikas-un-veterinarais-dienests/statiskas-lapas/travelling-from-third-countries-to-latvia?id=7874#jump>

If you are moving within European Union see: <https://www.zm.gov.lv/en/partikas-un-veterinarais-dienests/statiskas-lapas/travelling-with-pet-animals-between-eu-member-states?id=7873#jump>

POSTAL SERVICES

Personal mail

Two options are available to the CAF member and dependants.

- Mail is delivered directly to the home address without any involvement from the DET; and
- The Canadian Forces Post Office will redirect mail free from Canada to your posted location. All families will need a slot number. Shipments or mail should be addressed

as below and will arrive at Det Riga and you will need to go pick it up in the Det Riga's mailroom.

Belleville mailing address:

Rank, Name
TFL HQ
PO Box 5004 STN FORCES
Belleville ON K8N 5W6

ON THE ROAD

Driver's license

Military members may operate a CAF vehicle in Latvia, for official purposes, using their DND 404 license. However, in all other circumstances, a valid Canadian or Latvian driver's license is required. It is essential that you arrive in Latvia with a Canadian provincial driver's license that will be valid for the longest possible period, and that you take all reasonable steps to facilitate subsequent online renewal. Provincial driving licenses may be renewed on line prior to expiry. If your Canadian license expires in Latvia, you will make arrangements for renewal at your own expense.

In the absence of a Canadian license, it would be possible to operate a non-CAF vehicle using a Latvian driver's license. However, it must be noted that there are a number of practical obstacles to obtaining such a license including the fact that driving school and theory classes are not available in English. The Latvian driving exam may be undertaken if a person has held a permit for at least 6 months and has a declared address, also at least for months.

A Canadian drivers' license may also be exchanged for a Latvian driver's license after a 6 month of residence in Latvia. Individuals wishing to exchange their Canadian driver's license se must pass the Latvian driving test after having presented the following several documents;

- a. Residence permit;
- b. Certificated address declaration that was issued at least 6 months before application date; and
- c. Medical certificate;

It is compulsory to carry the following documents in the car at all times:

- a. Valid driving license (can be a valid Canadian provincial license);
- b. Vehicle registration documents; and
- c. Compulsory third-party motor vehicle insurance (forbidden to drive without it).

It is recommended that you obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) prior to your arrival in Latvia. Those can be used and will be requested when you travel to other countries and you wish to rent a car. IDP can be obtained through CAA at your own cost.

<http://www.caaneo.on.ca/travel/you-go/international-driving-permit>

It is essential that you sufficiently familiarize yourself with Latvian and EU regulations (including the standard traffic control signs) before you drive. You are subject to Latvian law for traffic violations and in the case of accidents.

Information on Driver's License in Canada and Renewal

Province	Mailing Address	Phone Number	Internet Site
Alberta	Alberta Transportation Main Floor- Twin Atria 4999-98 Ave Edmonton, AB T6B 2X3	(780) 310-0000 Outside AB: (780) 427-8230	Government of Alberta Ministry of Transportation: Drivers & Vehicles
British Columbia	ICBC Licensing Driver Services Centre 151 West Esplanade North Vancouver, BC V7M 3H9	From Lower BC: (604) 661-2800 Toll Free in NA: (800) 663-3051	http://www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/Pages/default.aspx
Manitoba	Manitoba Transportation Driver & Vehicle Licensing 234 Donald St, Box 6300 Winnipeg, NB R3C 4A4	(204) 985-7000 Fax: (204) 954-5338 or Toll Free in NA: (800) 665-2410	http://residents.gov.mb.ca/reference.html?d=details&program_id=304
New Brunswick	NB Department of Transportation 364 Argyle St Fredericton, NB E3B 1T9	DPS- MSP.Information @gnb.ca	http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/driving_and_vehicles.html
Newfoundland & Labrador	Motor Registration Division Department of Government Services PO Box 8710 St. John's NF A1B 4J5	(709) 729-4834	http://www.gs.gov.nl.ca/drivers.html
North West Territories	Government of NWT Department of Transport 5003 – 49th Street, Yellowknife NWT X1A 2L9	(867) 873-7487 Fax: (867) 669-9094	http://www.dot.gov.nt.ca/live/pages/wpPages/issuingoffices.aspx
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Registry of Motor Vehicles	(902) 424-5851 Toll Free in NA:	http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/access/drivers.asp

	300 Horseshoe Lake drive Bayers Lake Business Park Halifax, NS B3S 0B7	(800) 898-7668	
Nunavut	Motor Vehicles Division Department of Economic Development & Transportation Box 1000 Station 1575 Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0	Toll Free: (867) 975-7800	http://www.gov.nu.ca/programs-services/vehicle-registration
Ontario	Ministry of Transportation Licensing Admin. Office 77 Wellesley Street West Ferguson Block, 3rd Floor Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8	(416) 235-2999 Toll Free: (800) 387-3445 Fax: (416) 235-4414	http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv
Prince Edward Island	Prince Edward Island Dept. of Transportation & Public Works PO Box 2000 Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8	(902) 368-5228 Fax: (902) 368-5236	http://www.gov.pe.ca/tir/index.php3?number=20138&lang=E
Quebec	Societe de l'Assurance Automobile de Quebec P.O. Box 19600, Terminus 333 blvd. Jean- Lesage Quebec, PQ G1K 8J6	Quebec, PQ: (418) 643-7620 Montreal, PQ: (514) 873-7620 Toll Free in PQ: 1 (800) 361-7620	http://www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca/en/index.php
Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI), Licensing and Registration Services 2260 11th Avenue Regina, SK S4P 0J9	(306) 775-6900 Toll Free: (800) 667-9868	http://www.sgi.sk.ca/individuals/index.html
Yukon	Gold Creek Building (Old Rogers Video Building) Unit A, 2251-2nd Avenue Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5W1	(867) 667-5315 Fax: (867) 393-6220 Toll Free: (800) 661-0408 ext. 5315	http://www.hpw.gov.yk.ca/mv/mvdrlic.html
Transport Canada	Transport Canada Tower C, Place de Ville 330 Sparks St Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5	(613) 990-2309 Toll Free: (866) 995-9737	http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/road-menu.htm

Vehicle Registration

Vehicle registration is done by the Road Traffic Safety Directorate (RTSD) The address of main office: Bauskas street 86, Rīga. The registration can be done at any of the 26 offices located around Latvia. Contact details: Phone No: +371 67025777, e-mail: csdd@csdd.gov.lv

The vehicle registration fee depends on the vehicle type and also includes registration certificate and registration number plates – more specific information can be viewed at the webpage of [RTSD](#).

Car Insurance

There are two types of car insurance:

- **OCTA** (compulsory third-party motor vehicle insurance), which is **obligatory** for all vehicles participating in traffic; and
- **KASKO** , a voluntary land vehicle insurance, which is intended to compensate losses that occur when a vehicle has been damaged, stolen or robbed.

Main insurance companies:

- [ERGO](#)
- [Seesam](#)
- [BTA](#)
- [Gjensidige](#)

Roadworthiness Test

All passenger cars, buses, goods vehicles and their trailers registered in Latvia and that are intended to be used on public roads are subject to an annual roadworthiness testing each year, Motorcycles, tricycles and quadricycles, must undergo roadworthiness testing once every two years. Mopeds, snowmobiles and small size watercrafts are not subject to roadworthiness test/technical inspection.

New vehicles not exceeding 3500 kg, motorcycles, tricycles and quadricycles must undergo the roadworthiness testing no later than two years after the date of the first registration.

Vehicle Safety Requirements

All cars in Riga are required to have the following equipment at all times: first aid kit, fire extinguisher, 2 warning triangles, a reflective vest, spare light bulbs, driver's licence, vehicle registration and proof of insurance.

Headlights must be on at all times day and night.

Penalty points for Violations of Traffic Rules

A penalty points system is applied in Latvia, in addition to penalties listed in the Administrative Code for Violation of Traffic Rules. These points are assigned by the Road Police. The aim of this system is to discriminate between occasional and ill-intentioned drivers. The essence of the penalty points system is as follows: points are assigned in addition to fines for different violations, which may cause an accident, up to 8 penalty points per violation. Points are not assigned for failing to adhere to good driving practices like not having documents with you or, forgetting to use daytime running lights. Penalty points remain in force for 2 years. Those assigned for driving under the influence of alcohol remain in force for 5 years.

Biking/Mopeds/Motorcycles

Biking is an increasingly popular mode of transportation and anyone over the age of 10 needs a bicycle licence (see: csnt.csdd.lv for sample tests). When there are no bike lanes it is OK to use pedestrian walkways as long as you do not interfere with pedestrians. You must ride on the right-hand side of the road. Children under 12 must wear a helmet by law

The law requires helmets be worn while operating mopeds or motorcycles.

Parking

Parking in the city centre is expensive and difficult to find. Parking at the side of the road against the traffic flow is permitted on roads with only one lane of traffic in each direction and without a tram line in the middle. You can install the app called Mobilly <https://www.mobilly.lv/pub/en/> on a smartphone to pay for street parking with your phone / credit card and get notification of time left. This free app is convenient and there is with no service charge to use it.

Parking disks are cards with a moveable wheel that you can set to indicate what time you parked. They must be put in view on your dashboard. These are used where you do not need to purchase a ticket for parking so that parking enforcement knows how long you have been parked.

While Riga is a safe city, property theft is common. Try to leave your car in a supervised lot and hide valuables from plain sight.

Driving Speed

Speed limits are 50 km/hr; on open roads in built up areas, and 90 to 110 km/hr; on the highways. Drivers who have held their driving permits for less than two years are not permitted to exceed 80 km/h. Photo radar is very common and radar detectors are illegal. More information is available on the website of the State Police: <http://www.vp.gov.lv/?id=634&said=634>

If you are pulled over by the police you must stay in the car unless asked to by the officer to exit the vehicle. Fines may be issued on the spot and police may demand immediate payment.

Safety Belts and Child Seats

Seat belts must be worn by the driver and all passengers in both front and back seats; Children under 1.5 meters must be transported in appropriate child seats or on an appropriate support device in the back seat

Mobile Phones

Drivers are not allowed to use mobile phones while driving unless a hands-free system is used.

Winter Tires

Tires intended for use in winter must be used from December 1st until March 1st on all vehicles and buses having gross vehicle mass up to 3500 kg. Use of studded tires is prohibited from May 1st to October 1st.

If driving a diesel vehicle consider using winter diesel which is commonly available in colder months

Alcohol and Narcotics

Police are permitted to pull drivers over and test for drugs and alcohol at their discretion. The blood alcohol limit in Riga is 0.05% or 0.02% if you have less than 2 years as a licensed driver. You cannot legally refuse a breathalyzer test and doing so will result in severe penalties.

IF INVOLVED IN A CAR ACCIDENT

Latvia has a really poor record of driving safety, you have to be assertive on the road and be extra attentive, the roads are not as large as we are used to and the space between cars is very limited.

Act according to road traffic safety rules. Check the medical condition of all persons involved. If necessary, call medical emergency (112 or 113 – medical specific). Warn others about the accident – turn on emergency lights, put on a safety vest and place an emergency triangle on the road. Contact police, and do not change vehicle(s) position(s) as a result of a car crash without a police officer's permission.

In Latvia the internationally recognized European Accident Statement form is used. The form can be obtained at gas stations. One can use the European Accident Statement in cases when:

- There are only 2 vehicles involved and damaged;
- No injured persons (even slightly);
- No damage to other third party property;
- No serious damage to vehicles (they can or are permitted by regulations to continue driving); and
- Involved drivers agree on the relevant circumstances of the accident.

HEALTH SERVICES

It should be noted that although Latvia has a number of high quality healthcare facilities, there can be differences in the level of care and resources that are available in country, in comparison to the healthcare services available within Canada. It is very important that the medical and dental professionals conducting your OUTCAN screening are made fully aware of all health matters that relate to you and your accompanying dependents.

Your health and the health of your family members are of the outmost importance and the healthcare staff, assisting you with your OUTCAN preparations, require full disclosure of your healthcare concerns to ensure that the proper care is available for your welfare.

Many doctors in Riga have been educated abroad and speak English. Some even speak French. Most doctors will treat with soft medicine or homeopathic options before prescribing pharmaceuticals such as antibiotics, although they are readily available in pharmacies.

Walk-in-type clinics are available. Clinics are very nicely appointed, clean and modern. Health care is affordable and for about 70€ you can have an English speaking doctor make a house call. Credit cards are widely accepted for payment in medical clinics.

Dental work is of good quality and much less expensive than in Canada. For example, orthodontic braces cost about 1500€

Military Family Services and CAF Social Workers will visit and be available by telephone, but it is not difficult to find an English speaking psychologist in Riga.

Like most of Europe, ticks in Latvia may carry Lyme disease. Tick- borne encephalitis is the most common neurological infection in Latvia. Adult and children can be vaccinated against tick born disease. Available vaccine totally protects from the disease. Check children after hiking or spending time in the forest.

Emergency Numbers

In the event that individuals require emergency medical care, the emergency response (911 equivalent) in Latvia is 112, and the emergency medical response (Ambulance only) is 113. Either number will activate the Latvian emergency medical services.

Hospitals

There are two University level hospitals in Latvia, both of which are in Rīga. The Latvian EMS service is integrated with the hospitals and the ambulance will determine to which hospital it will take you based on factors that will be assessed at that time. It is recommended the following hospital addresses and contact information be added to your car GPS and/or cellular phone(s):

- a. Rīga East University Hospital is a consolidated public healthcare organization that unites several clinics and hospitals. This hospital is closest to the NAF JHQ and Camp Ādaži and accepts Medavie Blue Cross.

Address: Vidzemes priekšpilsēta, Rīga, LV-1079, Latvia,
Phone: +371 26 448 632, and
Website: [Rīga East University Hospital](#).

- b. Paul Stradins University Hospital is the highest level hospital in Latvia. This hospital is located on the western side of the River Daugava and in relative proximity to Old Town Rīga and accepts Medavie Blue Cross.

Address: Pilsoņu iela 13, Zemgales priekšpilsēta, Rīga, LV-1002, Latvia
Phone: +371 67 069 280
Website: [Pauls Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital](#); and

- a. Other Hospitals include:

- (1) [Traumatology and Orthopaedics Hospital](#);
- (2) [Latvian Center of Infectious Diseases](#); and
- (3) [Rīga 1st hospital](#).

Private Clinics

- a. VC4 clinic ([VC4](#)) is a clinic system comprised of approximately 18 different private medical clinics across Rīga, providing a full spectrum of primary care services. They accept Medavie Blue Cross.
- b. ARS Clinic ([Medicīnas sabiedrība ARS](#)) is a clinic located directly in downtown Rīga. There services are provided primarily out of one location, with some additional diagnostic capabilities in another building. They provide full spectrum primary care services and accept Medavie Blue Cross.
- c. Latvian Military Specialist Clinic is co-located in the Latvian Defence Academy, a CAF member can present there for Sick Parade. This clinic is not for dependants. The clinic has limited primary care, and is not recommended for care beyond initial minor treatment. There are no costs incurred for treatment CAF member treatment; and
- d.. Other private clinics (not yet surveyed by CF H Svcs Gp dental staff).
- (1) [Diplomatic Service Medical Centre](#); and
 - (2) [Rīga 1st hospital](#).

Specialized Pediatric Multi-Profile Medical Treatment Facilities

a. [Children's Hospital in Tornakalns](#)

Info phone line of hospital +371 67064400

Emergency assistance +371 67064499

Registry of the Out-patient Clinic of Children's Hospital +371 8866, +371 67064461, +371 67064462.

b. [Children's Hospital in Gailezers](#)

Emergency Assistance and Admissions Department +371 67536758

Registry of the Out-patient Clinic of Children's Hospital +371 8866, +371 67536405

Pharmaceutical Services

In Latvia over-the-counter drugs are available only in a pharmacy. Prescription drugs require a medical prescription from a physician or a physician assistant in order to be dispensed.

The main pharmacies include

- [BENU aptieka;](#)
- [Meness aptieka;](#) and
- [Saules aptieka](#)

Dental Clinics in Latvia

- a. Adenta Zobarstniecibas klinika isa large-sized private dental practice that is capable of providing routine and higher levels of care. It is co-owned by a retired Canadian dentist (Dr. Apse), who previously taught at the University of Toronto and had a longstanding practice in the Greater Toronto Area. Upon retiring to Latvia, he established Adenta, developing the clinic based upon a Canadian model of dental care, while adhering to Latvian dental requirements. The facility resembles a typical Canadian private practice, in terms of reception and waiting areas. The practice is located in close proximity to Arena Rīga.

Address: Ganību dambis 4, Rīga, LV-1045

Phone: +371 67 339 300

Email: adenta@adenta.lv

Website: [Adenta](#)

- b. Rīgas Stradiņa Universitātes Stomatoloģijas Institūts is the main dental teaching facility in Latvia. In addition to routine dental care, they are the primary facility for complicated and higher levels of dental care in Rīga and are often referred patients from other practices. It should be noted that the facility operates similar to a medium-sized hospital,

with some instances of patients taking numbers upon arrival to obtain services. This facility is located on the western side of the River Daugava and in relative proximity to the Pauls Stradins Clinical University Hospital.

Address: Dzirciema, iela 20, Rīga, LV-1007

Phone: +371 67 455 586

Website: [Rīga Stradiņš University Institute of Stomatology](#).

- c. Latvia Dental is a small private practice that focuses on hygiene, aesthetic services, and working with children (in particular those that may be fearful of the dentist). CF H Svcs Gp dental staff has surveyed this practice and have recommended use of this facility for routine care for CAF member's dependents. Of note, the practice would need to refer out for complicated cases or higher levels of care. It is located in the Embassy district.

Address: Antonijas iela, 8-1, Rīga, LV-1010,

Phone: +371 67 280 826,

Email: info@latviadental.eu, and

Website: <http://latviadental.eu/en>, and

- b. Other Dental Practices (not yet surveyed by CF H Svcs Gp dental staff).

(1) [Dental clinic Maxilla](#), and

(2) [Denta clinic](#).

Information on healthcare services can be found on the [National Health Services website](#) or, while in Latvia, by calling the toll-free number: 80001234 (weekdays 0830 – 1700 hrs).

For dependents who fall under the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP), you will require COMPREHENSIVE coverage while you are living outside of Canada. This will need to be actioned before you leave Canada. Make sure you call Sun Life Financial to have this changed.

For more information, consult:

<http://www.pshcp.ca/coverage/comprehensive-coverage.aspx>

EDUCATION

If your school age dependent children are accompanying you on posting, it is of paramount importance that immediately upon receipt of your screening message and prior to commencement of your HHT, you begin the decision making process with regard to your children's educational requirements.

As with your lease negotiation, children education is likely one of the most important aspects

you will address in preparation for your move to Latvia. As such, a thorough screening (Children Education Screening Form) and ample preparation is imperative to ensure a stress-free and successful integration. Recognizing the importance of this aspect, your CFSU(E) Det OR and sponsor will remain available to assist you as you begin addressing these requirements.

You will most likely want to live nearby the available school. This is also consistent with the requirements for education transportation reimbursement under the Children's Education Management (CEM).

Depending on the location, French education may be extremely limited. If your children require exclusive French education, the importance of the screening process and the potential impact of a Europe posting regarding your children's education cannot be taken lightly. Be aware also that funded English tutoring may be available in Canada prior to posting. If your dependents are enrolled in a French Immersion school, but a French Immersion school is not available at the post (other than the Jules Verne, which is a completely French school) a list of acceptable school in Latvia are listed at this web-site: <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/9c3b2ccd-0c79-43ec-8eea-0bc0a903dc95/FSD-34-Education-At-Post-Riga,-Latvia-EN-Dec-2014.aspx>. This list is currently under review, and it is expected that King's College will be added.

You are cautioned not to make any financial commitments prior to thoroughly reviewing the Education Policy. This policy is available via Children Education Management website located at: <https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Programs-Services/Children-s-Education-Management/Outside-Canada/Educational-Allowances.aspx>.

General information about schools

The first day of school in Latvia is a big thing. Students are dressed up and they all bring flowers/gift for the teachers. Uniforms are not common in Latvia, although more and more schools are choosing to adopt them.

Children start school at the average age of 7. The school year commences on September 1st and finishes at the end of May. Students have autumn, Christmas and spring/Easter holidays. There may be a different cut-off date for Kindergarten and Grade 1 registration than in Canada. You need to confirm with your new chosen school. While much effort has gone into establishing agreements with local school boards that mitigate this aspect (that is, exempt Canadian school children from this cut-off date), it is highly advisable that you inquire with your applicable school during or before your HHT to see how this may affect your particular situation.

Sakumskola – elementary school, grades 1 – 6

Pamatskola – middle school, grades 7 – 9

Vidusskola – high school, grades 10 – 12

Some students will need a laptop for school, early in their programs. It is recommended that you check with the school before you arrive in Latvia and purchase it in Canada. Those items (all electronic) sell for prohibitive price in Latvia and in the Baltic in general. Do not bring your school binders here, paper size and hole structure is different than in Canada.

Students are required to take state exams at the end of grades 6, 9 and 12.

Jules Verne Riga French School

Enrolls children of pre-school from 3 years of age and the elementary school up to the 6th grade.

Phone: +371 29141791

Address: Patversmes iela 20, Riga, Latvia, LV-1005.

Distance from NFA JHQ & NFIU location – 6.9 km (11 mins)

International School of Riga

Phone: +371 67624622

Address: Zvejnieku iela 12, Riga, Latvia, LV-1048.

Distance from NFA JHQ & NFIU location – 9.4 km (16 mins)

International School of Latvia

Phone: +371 67755146

Address: Meistaru iela 2a, Pinki, Latvia, LV-2107.

Distance from NAF JHQ & NFIU location – 44 km (43 mins)

The ISL has busing from Jurmala and Riga. The bus has wifi, adult bus supervisor and is a coach style bus. There is a minimum age required for busing which is 6 years old. Children in middle school and higher (grades 6 and up) will need a laptop for school.

ISL swimming and gymnastics programs do not follow any grading programs i.e. Red Cross, SwimKids etc. ISL very receptive to concerns and making changes to better the student experience. Once a “Language B” (second language training) language is chosen it is expected that students stick with that language the entire time they are at that school. As a result, you need to choose wisely. Languages offered are: French, Latvian, Russian, and German.

Immunization

Immunization records must be obtained from your family doctor for any dependent children who will accompany you and will be attending a European school. Ensure the records show the day, month, and year the immunization was given. Again, you are encouraged to contact your applicable school during or before your HHT to determine what immunizations are required.

Most state school boards require pre-school medicals before students are permitted to attend

classes and/or to participate in school sports programs. These medicals include Tuberculosis (TB) testing and may be obtained in Canada prior to departure but should be within 30 days of school registration in Europe.

Distance Education Program with Alberta Distance Learning Centre

The Department has entered into an agreement with the Alberta Distance Learning Centre to provide on-line distance learning for CAF students in Grades 4 to 12. Tutors will not be required, while doing on-line courses with the Alberta Distance Learning Centre, other than during the oral portion of language courses. During these period, the teacher will be on-line at specific times of the day (or evening) for scheduled "chats", which may involve guided tutorials, discussions, or administrative "office hours," where students may address questions or seek clarification/direction regarding course material. Please check the following website: www.adlc.ca.

Children's Education Management

Children's Education Management (CEM) manages the education allowances and oversees the schools for the Department of National Defence personnel to ensure that dependent children obtain the same quality of education regardless of the province or country they may be posted to.

For more information regarding education, please contact:

Children Education Management at Niederheid
www.cafconnection.ca/CEM

Children's Education Management Officer at +49 2451 717 164.

Education Allowance Coordinator at +49 2451 717 212

Spousal Employment Assistance & Education

There is currently no Technical Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding in place in Latvia to permit spouses to work through any civilian or military establishment in Latvia other than work opportunities available within Canadian Forces Support Unit (Europe) and Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare (Military Family Services, Personnel Support Services organizations). These opportunities are limited.

Even if entitled to work in Latvia (if you are an EU citizen), it is very difficult to work in Latvia unless you speak Russian, Latvian and English. The exception may be if you have an information technology background. Deloitte and Accenture have branches in Riga and it is reported that they may hire Anglophones. There are also jobs available for Anglophones or

Francophones at the International schools as teachers, teacher assistants, substitute teachers, etc. visit their websites for more on vacancies. It is recommended that you arrive with a Certified Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Check as they are required for jobs working with children and are slow or difficult to obtain once you are here.

Spouses authorized to accept employment on the economy are required to pay Latvia Federal income tax. Spouses possessing “Canadian Residency Status” may also be required to declare World Income to CRA. For further information, please contact CRA.

An OUTCAN posting is an ideal time for spouses to continue their education whether through part-time or full-time studies working towards a degree or certificate, professional development or taking a special interest course for fun. It would be unreasonable for a spouse to expect to be employed in Latvia during the posting.

Job Postings

Europe: You will find a list of civilian employment opportunities at the Forces Europe website:

<https://www.cafconnection.ca/Europe/Programs-Services/Employment/Civilian-Employment-Opportunities.aspx>

On your return to Canada, if you are searching for a new full-time or part-time job in the private or public sector, Service Canada can help. There are a number of tools available to help you search job listings, create a resume, choose a career and assess your skills.

Resume Review

If you will be looking for employment while you are posted to Europe, or when you return to Canada, a review of your resume is in order. Did you know that resumes are scanned for only 10-30 seconds before they are rejected or set aside for further consideration? It can be a challenge to describe yourself and the positions you have held in a way that will catch the reviewer’s attention quickly. Your space is limited so you need to make every word count. Interviewing for a job is also one of the most stressful things you can do. It is difficult to put yourself out there and face the possibility of rejection. Most of us don’t interview frequently enough to become very skilled at it, but here is an opportunity to practice in a safe and stress free environment. For help creating a strong resume that will increase your chances of getting that all important interview, contact our MFS(E) Education, Employment and Training Programs Coordinator Caroline Couture at: couture.caroline@cfmws.com

SHOPPING

Groceries

North Americans report generally good grocery shopping in Riga with a good selection of lactose and gluten free products. Health food stores are fairly common in Riga. A very popular and economical place to purchase groceries is the Central Market. Most of the food available at the Central Market is local and seasonal so fruits and vegetables are very fresh. Each section of the market is dedicated; one for dairy, one meat, one fish/seafood, one produce/spices. Orange and Promo are grocery stores that require memberships; they are good for large families or to plan large events.

Red meat is expensive and the cuts are different than in Canada. Pork is very common and inexpensive compared to beef. Chicken and turkey are also very good and fresher than in Canadian supermarket. Fish is very popular and the Central Market is a good place to buy a variety of freshly caught fish and seafood.

Food quality and diversity at the groceries are variable. It is usually good but it might be difficult to get specific North American items. For grocery items that you cannot find in Latvia (ranch dressing, peanut butter in large containers, chocolate chips, vanilla and others), you can shop online at walmart.ca or amazon.ca. The order can be shipped to the Belleville address and shipping is free when order is a certain amount. It takes between 18-24 days to get the order in Latvia.

General shopping

It is impossible to do one-stop shopping in Riga. Maxima XXX and Rimi Hypermarkets which are as close as you might come to a Walmart. There are no big box types of stores in Riga and most specialize in one thing. The closest Ikea is a three-hour drive away in Lithuania but Ikea should open in Riga in autumn 2018. Depot and K-Senukai are two large home improvement stores most like Home Depot.

Families often purchase children's clothes online due to limited selection of sizes and brands. Children's clothes in Riga are expensive and often of cheaper quality.

There are several shopping malls including;

ALFA

This huge mall has much the same women's and men's clothing, sports and shoe shops as the other large shopping malls in Riga but it does offer a wide selection of restaurants, a fast food court and a cinema. The Rimi hypermarket located in the ALFA Mall is open from 08:00 - 23:00.

Brīvības 372, tel. (+371) 67 07 65 00, www.alfaparks.lv.
Open 10:00 - 22:00.

ALK DOMINA SHOPPING

Walk down the polished halls of this upmarket mall and enjoy a coffee or maybe a stroll through its fashionable shops.

Ieriķu 3, tel. (+371) 67 63 11 11, www.domina-shopping.lv.

Open 10:00 - 21:00.

ELKOR PLAZA

This huge department store sells everything from name brand fashion and accessories to furniture, electronics and children's toys.

Brīvības 201, tel. (+371) 67 07 07 02, www.elkor.lv.

Open 10:00 - 22:00.

SKY & MORE

This huge shopping centre offers high-end shops selling all of the biggest names in fashion as well as a number of good dining options and an excellent supermarket (09:00 - 22:00, Sun 09:00 - 21:00). You can leave your children in a supervised playground and there's even a special place to 'walk' your dog.

Duntes 19a, tel. (+371) 67 85 34 24, www.skyandmore.lv.

Open 10:00-21:00.

SPICE

This huge shopping has all of the usual shops as well as a supermarket (08:00 - 23:00), a large food court and a huge LIDO cafeteria with a vast indoor children's playground.

Lielirbes 29, tel. (+371) 67 80 72 81, www.spice.lv. Open 10:00 - 22:00

Women's Clothing Sizes

US	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20
UK	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22
Europe	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48

Women's Shoe Sizes

US	5 ½	6	6½	7	7½	8	8½	9	9½	10
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UK	3½	4	4½	5	5½	6	6½	7	7½	8
Europe	37½	38	38½	39	39½	40	40½	41	41½	42

Men's Clothing Sizes

US & UK	36	38	40	42	44
Europe	46	48	50	52	54
Metric (cm)	91	97	102	107	112

Men's Shoe Sizes

US	8	8½	9	9½	10	10½	etc.
UK	7½	8	8½	9	9½	10	etc.
Europe	40-41	42	43	44	45	46	etc.

Men's Sweater Sizes

US	Small	Medium	Large	Extra Large
UK	34	36-38	40	42-44
Europe	44	46-48	50	52-54

Dining Out

Dining out is affordable and there are plenty of good and affordable restaurants. Service is generally good for Europe, but don't expect the very attentive standard of North America. Restaurant tipping is about 10% and generally rounded down. Visa/debit machines will not give you an option to add a tip so you will need to carry a bit of cash. If dining in a big group bill (typically, over 6 people), the tip might already be included in your bill.

Gym Membership and Fitness Centre

NAF Sports Complex offers the opportunity to use the tennis hall, two gyms and sports hall. The Sports Complex has a sauna. Military personnel can use the NAF Sports Complex free of charge according to the schedule (out of use from 1 July – 31st August). NAF Sports Complex facilities are available also to family members in accordance with the price list.

NAF Swimming Pool offers everyone the opportunity to use the 50-meter-long and 12-meter-wide, variable depth pool with five lanes. Children can use the swimming pool from the age of 13 years accompanied by parents. The facility also has a sauna, locker rooms, a large parking lot

and a cafeteria. It is closed from 1 July – 31st August. Military personnel can use the swimming pool free of charge. Families pay 7,06 € for 1.5 hr.

Other fitness centers include;

- [My Fitness](#) (11 locations in the area of Riga)
- [PeopleFitness](#) (2 locations in the area of Riga)

AROUND THE HOUSE

Internet/Television/Mobile Phone

Latvia has one of the fastest internet connections in the world. The average internet speed of 37.5 megabits per second places Latvia in the top four. A lot of places provide free Wi-fi opportunities. There are also good mobile internet opportunities all across the country provided by mobile phone operators.

The most common local internet service providers are:

- [Lattelecom](#)
- [LMT 4G](#)
- [Triatel](#)

There are three types of TV services in Latvia – digital terrestrial TV, internet TV and satellite TV. Most TV providers offer a service packages that include TV, internet and local phone services, likely requiring 24 month contracts.

The most common TV service providers are:

- [Lattelecom](#)
- [Viasat](#)

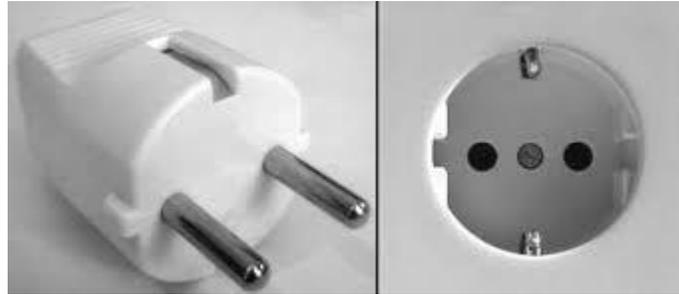
The three largest mobile phone service providers are:

- [LMT](#) (used by NAF)
- [Tele2](#)
- [Bite](#)

Customers can choose between a contract with a mobile phone service provider or a pre-paid card. In order to make international phone calls, you must first dial 00 or +, followed by the country code. Latvia's country code is +371.

Electricity

The Latvian electric system operates on 230 V. Ordinary transformers designated for 110V distribution system can't be used on 230V. Electronic power adapters can be used, if the maximum allowed input voltage is at least 230V.



If a device is dual voltage/hertz it only requires a simple plug adapter. If your device is dual voltage/hertz, its power source will be labeled: “110-240V, 50-60Hz”.

Lamps generally do not need to be dual voltage to work in Europe. Change your 110v lamp's Canadian light bulb to a European bulb and add a plug adapter.

Appliances

You will find that your appliances around your house are often smaller than what you are accustomed to in Canada. As a result, some of your cooking pans may not fit inside the ovens here. The washer and dryer are often much smaller and are often in the kitchen area. This can pose problems for washing typical Canadian bedding. The size of the bedding in Europe is also different, this may be a consideration for you if you are intending to rent a furnished or partially furnished home.

Temperature Conversion

All temperatures in Latvia are in Celsius as opposed to Fahrenheit. You will be provided with a temperature conversion chart in your MFS(E) Welcome Package and the internet is always handy for conversions.

CULTURAL NUANCES AND TRADITIONS

Living in a new country often brings new cultural experiences and some will likely be completely foreign and perhaps even different than your beliefs. Latvia is no different than a lot of countries and does have certain things that are very important to the local people.

Public Etiquette

As Latvia has little ethnic diversity beyond Latvians and Russian Latvians, people of colour might find that they get stared at. There is also no western concept of political correctness in Latvia and residents may use inappropriate language to describe race. Do not construe this to mean that people of colour would find themselves facing open hostility or that they would be unsafe. Riga has at least six universities that draw international students from around the world so it is increasingly common to see more racial diversity, especially from South Asia.

Latvians can have a stoic public demeanour and do not invite unsolicited conversation. Do not take this to imply that they are unfriendly. Canadians are well regarded in general and met with helpful friendliness once the ice has broken.

Latvians can be quite chivalrous when it comes to women; holding doors and giving right of way. As a woman, you must extend your hand to shake first as a Latvian man would consider offering his hand to a woman to be rude. This is a very old etiquette rule in western culture as well, but has faded over time in North America.

If invited to visit someone in their home, you should not arrive empty handed. Flowers are always appreciated but unwrap them before giving them over. Wine and chocolate are also acceptable gifts (always give odd number flowers, as even numbered are given at funerals)

It is not uncommon to be yelled at by shopkeepers if you do something wrong or to hear subordinates being reprimanded by their supervisors.

Tipping for services is always in cash and no more than 10% is expected.

Where there are paths, do not cut across the grass. Latvians view this as laziness.

TRAVEL ADVICE

Remain vigilant and ensure personal belongings, passports and other travel documents are secure at all times.

Carry a valid Canadian passport, whether you are travelling or living in Italy or in any other foreign country. A Canadian passport is the only reliable and universally accepted travel and identification document available to Canadians for the purpose of international travel. When you make purchases with a credit or debit card, your passport will be required to verify your identity.

Exercise normal safety precautions. Ensure that your personal belongings, passport and other travel documents are secure at all times. Keep a copy of your passport identification page, driver's license, train or airline tickets, and credit cards. Safeguard the originals. Be advised that many countries require visas in advance either for official or vacation travel. It is recommended

you research the policy for each country prior to travel. For the most updated information please visit: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>



Due to constantly changing rules and regulations, please ensure you do your own research and consult with the resources provided for the most up-to-date policies and procedures before making any assumptions or relying on information provided here as accurate. Policies and procedures change and could be different from the time this document was created and updated. Thank you for your cooperation and attention in this matter.