

LATVIA

HANDBOOK



Military Family Services (Europe)

<https://cfmws.ca/europe/locations/latvia>

Contact us!

Tel: +317 67556221 / +371 67556220

Community Services Manager (mobile) Tel: +371 23116869

email: MFSE.Riga@cfmws.com

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GREETINGS FROM YOUR MFS(E) RIGA 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 to Europe! Did you know that your MFS(E) Riga team supports more than 50 families posted to Riga?!

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 serve you. Throughout your posting, you can expect quarterly contact from us via email or phone calls, and you will receive our monthly calendars and mid-month bulletins with information about our services and local programming, MFS(E) virtual programming and craft mailout packages, and so much more!

This Guidebook is a living and dynamic document. Once you are settled, we would welcome your input to keep it relevant and current. We would like to extend our sincerest THANK YOU to our volunteers, for providing us with most of the information and for sharing their experiences and suggestions as to how to make the location guides as complete as possible.

Our website <https://cfmws.ca/europe> 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):

- Programs and services in both official languages!
- Virtual presentations ranging from the PSP Chalet Program and Europe Christmas Markets (to name a few)
- Crafts For Kids mailouts (for children 3-9 years old)
- Birthday Cards for Children (up to 18 years old)
- [Youth Employment Preparation \(YEP\) Program](#) (13 to 18 years old)
- Youth Leadership Conference (annually for teens 13 – 18 years old)
- I CAN OUTCAN
- Youth Connect / OUTCAN Connect
- Family Separation & Reunion Services
- Deployment Support to families
- Respite Childcare
- [Host Language Training & Virtual Language Training \(ask us about a Rosetta Stone license for your spouse\)](#)
- Virtual Workshops (Including Community Demo and Virtual Travel Forums)
- [Virtual Book Club through Facebook](#)
- Centre Coffee Meet-ups and Park Meet-ups in Riga!
- Virtual Coffee mornings in French!
- Friends on a Journey program
- ...And so much more!

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, it's this: We encourage you and your family to build a strong support network while you are in Europe. A great way to meet other Canadians and build peer support is to attend MFS(E), PSP and RCCF (Unit Fund) events! You can ask us to connect you with local OUTCAN families, recommend specific programs and services, or refer you to supports that benefit your unique needs.

Once you have arrived and settled into your new home, MFS(E) will provide you with a welcome package containing information specific to Riga and to your unique family dynamic. You will be able to make an appointment to meet with the Community Services Manager (CSM) or Community Services Provider (CSP) at our MFS Centre located at CFSUE Det Riga to receive your welcome bag. We also have a Welcome Coffee Basket program, facilitated by MFS(E) volunteers or one of our CSPs! We can meet you on your move-in date to provide your family with coffee, tea, and some local treats. If you are interested in this, please ask us about this program and let us know when your F&E will arrive! Be sure to also keep us informed of your most current contact information (telephone number and e-mail address is greatly appreciated) as well as your address once you are moved in.

If you have any questions about living in Europe or if you wish to know what your MFS(E) Riga Team can do to assist and support you and your family, email us directly at: MFSE.Riga@cfmws.com We are here to support you throughout your OUTCAN experience!

We look forward to hearing about your adventures, new experiences, and how we can serve you better in the near future. Don't be a stranger!

Best Regards,

Your MFS(E) Riga Team



EUROPEAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Military Family Services (Europe) (MFS(E)) Advisory Committee (AC) is a group of volunteers representing Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families and communities across Europe. The AC works to enhance MFS(E)'s capacity to implement family programs and services to all Canadian military families regardless of location in Europe.

As a group of volunteers, the AC is not authorized to act as decision-makers or policymakers. Their primary role is to provide advice to the Senior Manager MFSP Europe about the needs of the community and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

CAF members (in a non-official capacity), and their civilian spouses/partners and dependents (18 years or older) are eligible to volunteer for the AC. Fifty-one (51) percent of the voting membership must be civilian family members of CAF members. Members representing a particular region must reside in that region at the time of recruitment and must have the support of their local CAF Commander.

The MFS(E) AC meets on site at the Canadian Forces Support Unit (Europe) in Geilenkirchen, Germany once a year, usually in the winter. All other meetings, usually held every second month, are conducted on-line. No special computer equipment or program required but reliable internet is required. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this opportunity further, please see the [website](#).

USING THIS GUIDE

Moving around in the guide:

- *To go to a Table of Contents entry or a website link, simply click on it*
- *To search for a specific word, use the Find tool by pressing "Ctrl" then F*

Several of the websites referenced in this guide will be in a language other than English. There are a couple of options to obtain the information in English:

- *You can enter the address of the website directly into <https://translate.google.com/> and it will translate the entire website*
- *If you have Google Chrome, you can right click anywhere on the page, and it will bring up a dialog box which often has a "Translate to English" option. Due to website formatting, this option may not be available for all pages or for all text on the page.*
- *Some sites have the option to change the language. These sites will have either a drop-down menu listing multiple languages or flags symbolizing the language. Simply click on*

the language or flag (typically a British or American flag) to see a translated version of the website. Often this option can be found in the top right corner.

This guide is an ongoing work in progress, and we need your help:

- *Our Handbooks heavily rely on the time, energy and experiences of our families posted to Europe. For that reason, some sections may be more complete than others.*
- *Please let us know of any errors or omissions and we will update them in the next edition.*
- *If there is a topic you'd like added to the next edition, do not hesitate to let us know.*

You can contact us via: MFSE.Riga@cfmws.com

DISCLAIMER: Due to ever-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. Policies and procedures change and could be different from the time this document was last updated.

Thank you for your cooperation and attention in this matter.

SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES

Please be sure to connect with us online for the latest programs and services being offered:

CFMWS Europe

- <https://cfmws.ca/europe>

MFS(E) Facebook Page

- <https://www.facebook.com/MFSEurope/>

MFS(E) YouTube Channel

- <https://www.youtube.com/@MFSE-SFME>

Employment Opportunities while OUTCAN

- <https://cfmws.ca/europe/civilian-employment-in-europe>

My Voice/Ma Voix

- *MyVoice is a closed Facebook group open only to the Canadian military community. MyVoice is a place for you to communicate with Military Family Services (MFS). The group is a safe place to discuss your experiences as a military family and offer feedback about your military lifestyle. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MyVoiceMaVoix/>*

Family Information Line (FIL)

The Family Information (FIL) is a confidential, personal, bilingual and free service offering information, support, referrals, reassurance and crisis management to the military community. We serve Canadian Armed Forces members, Veterans and their families- immediate and extended. **Family Information Line: 1-800-866-4546, (613) 995-5234 or toll free in Europe 00800 7711 7722**

OVERVIEW OF RIGA, LATVIA

MAPS

Baltic Sea



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 1.884 million people, and Riga is the capital with a population of 621,369 people (2023). Latvia declared independence in 1990, although the Soviet Union did not recognize this until 1991 and did not pull out until 1994. Since then, the country has operated with an elected parliament. Latvia joined the EU in 2004 and have been a Schengen member since 2007.

CLIMATE

Latvia is in the temperate climate zone and therefore has four pronounced seasons. Some people consider the climate similar to the Canadian maritime climate. Summers are typically warm and dry with heavy rains in the fall, and snowfall varies between years and areas. The January average temperature is -5 degrees C (can go below -20) and the July average temperature is 17 degrees C (can go above 30).

Days are very long in the summer with almost 18 hours of sunlight so black out drapes are suggested for bedrooms. The shortest day in the winter is 6.5 hours of sunlight, and thick cloud cover in the winter can last for weeks at a time. As a result, many people suffer from varying degrees of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

There are a few products on the market that can assist with SAD. For example, you can use vitamin D supplement, or many people like to use a SAD lamp. It would be prudent to regularly check your vitamin D and B12 levels with your physician.

LANGUAGES

Latvian is the primary language in Latvia, and is spoken by 60.8% of the population, Russian is the second most common used language with 36%, and 3.2% of the population having another language listed as their mother tongue. (Official marriage statistics indicate that 37% of marriages in Latvia are registered by Latvians who have a spouse of a different nationality.)

Latvian is one of the oldest languages in Europe and is related to Sanskrit. It 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 their language. Most people speak some (limited) English, although older people are less likely to because schools only started teaching English after Latvia declared independence in 1990. Latvians do not overly use pleasantries such as "please", "thank

you”, “you’re welcome” like Canadians do. They are very direct and succinct in communication.

Here are a couple of basic language guide 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.

<https://utalk.com/en> (there is also an app as well as the website)

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

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

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

<https://utalk.com/en> (There is also an app [free and paid versions] as well as the website.)

CDs are available to be borrowed via the MFS(E) Riga loan closet at CFSUE Det Riga to learn Russian.

It is useful to have a smartphone with an application like tilde.lv for everyday activities, such as purchasing groceries and banking. *Tilde.lv is sometimes better than Google Translate for Latvian translation.*

The ability to speak and understand the language of your host country will make your posting to Europe as rewarding as possible. It helps facilitate daily life and assists with making connections to ensure that your cultural experiences are more enriching.

Rosetta Stone is the best language training program in the world. MFS(E) offer licenses for the Rosetta Stone software for military spouses of the Canadian Armed Forces. *Currently only Russian is available. If you are interested in language training in the host nation language, contact the Programs, Employment, Education and Training Coordinator for Military Family Services Europe at: MFSE.EmploymentEducationTraining@cfmws.com

Learn more here: <https://cfmws.ca/support-services/education/second-language-training>

RELIGION

Latvia is a multid denominational Christian nation, with 64% identifying as Christian, though only about 7% of the population regularly attend religious services (2019). Most Latvians are Lutheran or Roman Catholic. The largest non-Christian faiths are **Jewish** and **Muslim**

as well as neo-Pagan **Dievturi** (each less than 0.05% of the population).

Under Soviet occupation, atheism was imposed by the state. Churches and synagogues were taken over and made into secular buildings. This affected some religious communities more than others, and religious followings were significantly reduced. In total, about 20% of the Latvian population now considers themselves unaffiliated with a religion.

COST OF LIVING

Internet and cell phones plans are very reasonably priced and reliable, and access to high-speed internet in Latvia is among the best in the EU, according to data published by Eurostat in 2022. Many locally made items and services are quite reasonable, such as locally grown produce, restaurants, the bus/tram system, [Bolt](#) (like Uber), as well as other services such as veterinary services, cleaners, tailors, massage therapists, and salon/spa services. However, if an item must be imported or is considered an extravagant luxury (i.e.; foreign clothing brands or electronics) the prices may be higher. Gas prices can also be higher in the Baltics.

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 must be granted prior to purchase and items can only be purchased after your arrival). Please consult the DET Riga guide/OR for the list of approved furniture and items.

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

CANADIAN/EXPAT COMMUNITY

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 expats or to make Latvian friends. There are Facebook groups for expats, and they hold social events regularly.

CULTURAL NUANCES, ETIQUETTE AND TRADITIONS

Living in a foreign country brings new cultural experiences. Latvia is just like any other country in that it has cultural nuances, etiquette, and traditions that are very important to the local people.

Latvia has little ethnic diversity compared to Canada; and there are more social challenges and discrimination towards Black/Indigenous/People of Colour (BIPOC) and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Latvia. Some Latvians may make inappropriate comments that includes racist slurs or homophobic/transphobic language. Riga has at least six universities that draw international students from around the world, and there is a growing expat community, so it is becoming more common to see diversity in the downtown core. Latvia elected the EU's first openly gay head of state in 2023, so progress is visible here!

Latvians can have a stoic public demeanor and do not invite unsolicited conversation. While walking down the street locals will not often smile at others or make eye contact unless they know the other person. If you approach a local with a broad smile, they may be cautious or assume that you are perhaps trying to trick them. Do not take this to imply that they are unfriendly, as once you get to know some locals you will see they are very lovely people.

If taking public transportation, you will quickly notice that it is almost always completely silent to the point where groups of people traveling together will often pause their conversation for the duration of their ride. Latvians enjoy the silent atmosphere of public transport and it's not uncommon to see people getting visibly annoyed at loud phone conversations or even confront any disturber of the peace.

Pay extra attention to pedestrians! Many crosswalks have lights, but many do not. While crosswalk lights are generally followed, sometimes pedestrians will step out expecting oncoming vehicles to stop for them. It is not uncommon to see pedestrians illegally crossing the busy highway or jaywalking during rush hour, and you will even see families with small children or the elderly with canes doing this. Though locals jaywalk, police may ticket you if caught. Always follow the law and stay safe!

If invited to visit a local's home, you should not arrive empty handed. Flowers are always appreciated; however, unwrap them before giving them over, always give odd number of flowers and avoid even-numbered flowers and red roses (these are given at funerals or memorials, so it is seen as bad luck to give these for other occasions). Wine, chocolate, or homemade treats and preserves (such as jam) are also acceptable gifts.

Customer service standards are very different from Canada. They don't go out of their way to help customers. It is also seen as rude by many to take money from the hand, so many shops have little trays for exchanging money at the register. Do not be surprised if a shopkeeper refuses to take cash from your hand. Purchases aren't always returnable or exchangeable so be sure to ask if you are not clear on the shop's policy.

In parks it is not common for people to sit or walk on the grass (and in some parks it is explicitly not permitted); even in playground areas you may be asked to get off the grass and sit on the park benches instead. If possible, try to remain on the walking paths unless you are in a park that allows you to picnic and sit on the grass. Be aware dogs are not

allowed at all parks and from 10pm to 7am children under 16 are forbidden to be in public places (including parks) unaccompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

- **January 1: New Year's Day**
- **March/April: Good Friday & Easter Monday**
- **May 1: Labour Day**
- **May 4: Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia [If this day lands on a weekend the following Monday will be a holiday in lieu.]**
- **June 23 ("Ligo"[Midsummer Eve]) & June 24 ("Jāni" [Summer Solstice])**
- **November 11 ("Lacplesis Day" [Remembrance Day])**
- **November 18 (Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia [Independence Day])**
- **December 24 - December 26 (Latvian Yule*/Christmas)**
**Yule is celebrated in Latvia from December 21st to January 1st and CFSUE Det Riga as well as the MFS(E) Centre is typically closed during this period.*
- **December 31 (New Year's Eve)**

Due to the Russian population in Latvia many Russian holidays are observed but not officially recognized as Latvian Holidays. Due to Canada's mission in Latvia, it is advised to avoid any involvement in public celebrations for Russian holidays, as well as Remembrance Day of the Latvian Legionnaires [Legionnaire Day] in March when soldiers of the Latvian Legion (Nazi Waffen-SS) are celebrated.

NEWS

LSM is Latvia's unified news portal which broadcasts both on public television and radio. They report on various topics such as weather forecast, politics, culture, and a name day calendar. LSM is also accessible in English via <https://eng.lsm.lv>. They also have an Instagram account in Latvian (but some content translates to English): @lsm.lv

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

Things to Consider/Bring:

- Immunization Records (for school registration – *Do NOT pack in the sea-can!*)
- Long form birth certificates, marriage certificate (this may be required for entry to DoDEA school – to prove dependents are “yours”, a Canadian posting message may not be enough. *Do NOT pack in the sea-can!*)
- If your teens participate in the [Youth Employment Preparation \(YEP\) Program](#), they will require a Social Insurance Number (SIN). Be sure to get this before leaving Canada.
- If you plan on working in a field that may require a Police Check, ensure you have one completed before leaving Canada.
- Your children may need a laptop for school, and electronics are expensive in Latvia, so it would be best to purchase one in Canada before your move.

All documents issued in Canada require certification to be accepted by local authorities. Latvians observe strict protocols in having documents certified and translated. This is important to note for common provincially issued documents such as birth, marriage or death certificates. You can obtain such certification at Global Affairs Canada headquarters in Ottawa or at the Embassy of Canada to Latvia in Riga (note: there is a \$50 fee per document and payment is via credit card only). You must provide original documents (English or French only). You can do any required translation into Latvian after the certification (locally/commercially [not at the Embassy] and you must cover this cost).

Please note that some documents, such as school diplomas, transcripts, Power of Attorney, court orders, require Canadian Notary Public certification prior to GAC or Embassy certification.

It is recommended that you obtain a Certified Criminal Record Check and Vulnerable Sector Check prior to leaving Canada. These items will be required for most employment and volunteer opportunities. You can only obtain a criminal record check [through the RCMP](#). In Latvia, you would encounter an extra step of having your fingerprints digitized.

Bring your cellphone from Canada, as cell phones are expensive in Latvia. (It is recommended to use a VPN while in Europe as well.) However, the cost for internet and phone coverage packages is far more affordable in Latvia than in Canada. If you want to keep your Canadian cell phone number and add it to your Latvian phone this is possible via

services like Line2 (<https://www.line2.com/>), MagicJack (<https://www.magicjack.com/>), or you can get a digital Canadian number via an app like Text Me (<https://go-text.me/>). This will allow friends and family in Canada to call you for free, and you can make free phone calls as well - including calling toll-free numbers that normally cannot be accessed in Europe. *You must port your old number when you cancel your plan in Canada.

You and your family are all representatives of Canada while OUTCAN. You will likely get invited to a neighbour's home, participate in hosting an international night or Canadian social with work colleagues or friends, and those with children may participate in an international day at their school where your children showcase Canada. If you can, it's a good idea to stock up on Canadian goodies as they will be a big hit here!

Christmas decorations are available in Latvia, but not a lot of decorations for other holidays, so if you like to decorate for each holiday that we would typically celebrate in Canada you might want to bring some of these items with you. Flying Tiger will be a great shop in Riga for Halloween decorations and other items, but the selection is not as big in Canada as Halloween and trick or treating is not as popular in Latvia.

Some people really miss their Kraft Peanut Butter, Tim Horton's coffee, Kraft Dinner, Miracle Whip, ketchup chips, and other Canadian food items, so they prefer to bring a small stockpile of comfort food as these items are not as readily available in Europe or you will pay a high premium for them locally/online. (You can get Canadian maple syrup from Rimi or Stockmann, or order this via PSP/NATEX at select times during the year while OUTCAN.) Some common cooking ingredients can also be hard to track down so you can either bring graham wafer crumbs or improvise by crushing up digestives. You may also have a hard time finding brown sugar and may have to make your own using molasses. The choice is yours, and this is part of the OUTCAN experience! You will also get to enjoy a wide variety of new and tasty treats while in Europe.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY

Canadians overall report feeling very safe in Riga, but as anywhere, general precautions should be taken. It is a walkable city and it is common to see children out without their parents (though this is prohibited for children under 16 years of age from 10pm to 7am). Latvian children begin taking public transit to school unaccompanied by age six.

Operational Security is always a serious matter and we never know who may be listening to our conversations. 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 Canadians or expats gather. People will be very curious about why you are living in Latvia, and it is not advised to discuss CAF matters where conversations may be overheard.

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 for pickpocketing or scams. Services like taxis should only be hired from reputable companies or via the app [Bolt](#) (like Uber).

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 afterwards.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS IN RIGA

Police, Fire & Rescue	110 or 112
Medical Emergency	113
TFL Duty Officer	+371 67 071 410
TFL Duty O (After Hours)	+371 234 74021
Duty MP cell	+371 227 24533
CFSU(E) Duty Officer	+49 (0) 172 534 5900
Embassy of Canada	+371 678 13945

GETTING SETTLED

MAKING PHONE CALLS

Calling Within Europe

There is no standard way to write a European phone number, which may lead to confusion. This is the same number, written different ways:

+49 - 89 - 343 80 - 14 +49 (89) 343 80 - 14 0049 (0) 89 343 80 - 14
(089) 343 80 - 14 089 / 343 80 - 14 089 343 80 14

The "+49" at the start is the exit code and German country code. The "89" is the area code and the "3438014" is the phone number. There is no standard length for area codes (2-5 digits) or phone numbers (5-12 digits). If you're dialing within the same area code, you do not need to enter the area code. But it's a good idea to use it just in case!

So...when dialing within the country you're in, you do not need the exit code and country code. **The country code for Latvia is +371.**

Calling Outside of Latvia

The exit code for calling out of the country in Europe is 00. You then follow that with the country code, area code, and telephone number. The "+" means to use the exit code for the country you're in – in Europe, that's 00, in Canada, it's 011. You can use the "+" on your mobile phone as the exit code, and your phone should pick up the right exit code, no matter what country you're in!

Calling Canada from Latvia

The country code for Canada and the United States is 1. Dial the exit code (00) then the country code (1) then the number.

00 - 1 - area code - seven-digit number

Calling Latvia from Canada

The exit code in Canada is "011"

011 -

Some Country Codes:

Austria	43
Belgium.....	32
Czech Republic	420
Estonia.....	372
France	33
Italy	39
Germany	49
Latvia	371
Netherlands	31
Spain.....	34
Switzerland.....	41
Turkey	90
United Kingdom	44

Summary:

To dial a number within Latvia		25 123456
To dial a Latvian number from elsewhere in Europe		+371 25 123456
	or	00 371 25 123456
To dial a number outside Latvia		+49 121 1234567
	or	00 49 121 1234567

To dial Canada from Latvia

00 1 613 5551234

To dial Latvia from Canada

011 371 25 123456

Toll Free and Charges for Calls

Per minute charges for calls

Check your phone contract, both land line and cell phone. Many families have been surprised by charges on their bill for calls they thought were “free” or included. Depending on your contract, you may end up paying per minute for local calls. It is common for calls to be free to numbers with the same provider, but not always. Some contracts charge for calls to cell phone numbers, but land lines may be included. The same applies to long distance – if you get a plan that includes calling to Canada, that may only include calls to land lines.

Check the plan for the term “flat”, which means that calls are included – “Germany flat” means you can call anywhere in Germany, where “Vodafone flat” means your calls to other Vodafone customers are included. If you have a landline, you may have to pay to call a cell phone, or vice versa.

0800

0800 is the dialing prefix for Toll Free Calls in most of Europe.

0900 and 0180 calls

0900 numbers are “premium-rate” services, and 0180 numbers are for service-oriented calls and are billed at a per minute or per call. Costs will vary.

WHERE TO LIVE

Many families who are posted to Riga live in or around Centrs. These families enjoy being close to a multitude of amenities like grocery stores, markets, some of the best shops, public transit, Old Town and all the festivities throughout the year, as well as living close to other Canadians currently posted to Riga.

However, there are also many families who chose to live in other communities for various personal reasons – such as proximity to schools or other services. Keep in mind that if you choose to live west of the city (i.e.; in or near Jurmala) the commute to work for the CAF member could be as much as 1.5 hours each way. Your realtor will help you find a good neighbourhood with a home that is right for your family dynamic.

HOUSES AND REALTORS

Homes in Latvia seem to be either quite a bit larger or quite a bit smaller than what you would expect in Canada. The homes are typically built quite solid, but some families living in apartments have complained that they can hear their neighbours above/below or outside street traffic if facing a main road.

The windows don't always have bug screens, but they are available and it's best to ask your landlord to have them installed while you are negotiating your lease agreement. If by chance this step was missed, you can buy screen kits and stick the screens to your window frame with a Velcro strip that's included in the kit.

Homes are heated by radiators, and each room should have at least one radiator with its own dial so you can control the temperature in each room separately. In most cases you will not find a main thermostat to control the whole house. Some homes may have gas or wood fireplaces as well.

Some other things to consider for your new home:

- *Mattress and sheet sizes are not the same as Canada, so consider this if you are bringing your own bed or moving into a furnished apartment.*
- *You may want blackout curtains for the summer, as Latvia has over 17 hours of daylight on the longest day of the year!*
- *European appliances are smaller.*
- *Ensure your electronics coming to Latvia are dual voltage.*

TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

ITEMS YOU SHOULD HAVE IN YOUR CAR

The following items are useful and should be carried in your vehicle:

- o Proof of identity – A certified true copy of passport is always best.
- o Proof of Insurance
- o First aid kit (to include 2 pairs of disposable gloves)
- o Warning triangle
- o Reflective vests for any passengers who leave the vehicle (i.e.; if stranded by the side of the road). One vest per seat is required. MFS(E) will provide one per family in the Welcome Bag to get you started.
- o International Driver's License

Traffic Office in GK:

+CFSUEFE@forces.gc.ca (Traffic Section)

+49 (0) 2451 717 119

+49 (0) 2451 717 136

<http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-benefits/relocation.page>

Registrar of Imported Vehicles: Authorization for importation to Canada. <http://www.riv.ca>

SUBSIDIZED TRAVEL

The Chalet Program offers members of the European fund (EF) accommodation options in various parts of Europe at a subsidy by the European Fund. The Chalet Program also offers Full-Flex vouchers providing EF members the flexibility to choose their holiday destination at a time that is convenient to them. It is open to all European Fund (EF) members and chalets are awarded by draw. For more information please visit: <https://cfmws.ca/europe/chalet-program> *Note: You will also receive emails about this program once we have your Family File and you are added to our Dlists.

NON-UNIT Fund and CANEX/SISIP Grant

As a CAF member of Formation Europe (FE) you and your family are members of the European Fund (EF). EF members who are not part of a Unit Fund due to their geographical location are termed Non-Unit Fund (NUF) members. To ensure equitability across FE, all EF members have the same entitlements; however, certain entitlements are managed differently depending on location. See this link for more information:

[https://www.cafconnection.ca/Europe/Programs-Services/European-Fund/Non-Unit-Fund-\(NUF\)-Member-Personnel.aspx](https://www.cafconnection.ca/Europe/Programs-Services/European-Fund/Non-Unit-Fund-(NUF)-Member-Personnel.aspx)

AIR TRAVEL

The airport is approximately a fifteen-minute drive from the city center and there is an increasing selection of direct flights to other European destinations as well as direct flights to Dubai, UAE and Morocco, Africa. You may want to sign up for a PINS card for traveling with Air Baltic (like Air Miles) which gives you points for parking and shopping at certain stores that are redeemable for products and flights. All family members can get a card that you can link together to maximize points.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Transit within the city is inexpensive and efficient. You can purchase your trolleybus, tram and bus tickets individually at all Narvesen locations (the most common Latvian corner store) or you can get a monthly pass card at the Central Market train station. Single one-way tickets valid for 90 minutes of travel cost €1.50. You can also use the [Mobilly app](#) on the tram or bus to purchase your single ticket by scanning the QR code inside the vehicle, or you can purchase a daily or monthly pass. Information on Riga intercity transport schedules is available at the following webpage: <https://www.rigassatiksmeliv/en/for-riga-quests/public-transport-in-riga/> For longer trips, coach buses seem better than the older train system. Buses are generally clean and have WIFI onboard. More information on public transit can be found via: <http://www.autoosta.lv/?lang=en> You can also purchase bus tickets from Riga to go to Estonia or Lithuania at reasonable prices. Buses typically have amenities, such as televisions with movie selections in English and washrooms. You can compare prices via: <https://www.virail.com/> or purchase via <https://www.omio.com/> or at the Central Market bus depot.

TRAIN

The train is often the cheapest form of public transportation. You can buy tickets either at the ticket booths at each stop online or on your [Mobilly App](#), or on the train itself, although it is slightly more expensive on the train. If you buy the return ticket at the same time as

the first ticket you get a slight discount. For more information or to buy tickets visit <https://www.pv.lv/en/> Note: There are no trains in Latvia for international travel.

TAXIS

Taxi service is generally affordable and good. Most drivers speak some English. Consider downloading the app [Bolt](#) (like Uber) as well – you can select to pay by cash or card linked to your account on the app.

It is recommended to use:

- [BalticTaxi](#) (8500 or +371 20008500)

DO NOT USE REDCAB TAXI SERVICES.

CAR RENTAL

- [Avis](#)
- [Sixt](#)
- [Europcar](#)
- [Budget](#)
- [CityBee](#) (car sharing services)
- [CarGuru](#) (car sharing service)
- [BoltDrive](#) (car sharing services)

HOTELS

Most Canadians stay at the RadissonBlu Latvija Conference & Spa Hotel while on HHT (they are also pet-friendly). If you have questions about other hotels in Riga, contact us at: MFSE.Riga@cfmws.com

TRAVEL ADVISORIES

Remain vigilant and ensure personal belongings, passports, Latvian ID cards, and other travel documents are always secure. 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 in Latvia, your passport may be required to verify your identity.)

Exercise normal safety precautions. 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. Always

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

ADMINISTRATION

BANKING

Local Currency

Latvia and all Baltic states use the Euro currency. Euro currency is easily obtainable through ATM which are readily accessible throughout Latvia and the European Union (EU). 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 Baltics. The EU countries that do not use this currency are; Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Sweden – though many shops or street vendors may accept euros for payment of items.

Bank Accounts and Financial Considerations

It is recommended that you maintain a chequing account in a Canadian financial institution during your time in 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 email or 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 they all provide very similar services.

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 online for an account which may take approximately two days to be 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 online registration, some bank personnel may let you sign up for a bank account, but you will still need to wait a few days for your application to be approved. There will be an opening fee/document verification fee which may vary from €2 to €150 depending on the bank and the type of account.

Online banking is available and widely used. Joint bank accounts do not exist, but you can sign power-of-attorney forms which allow a spouse to have nearly full access to the account. You will be provided with a bank card for your account as well, but there is a small

fee for this. Your bank card will act as a credit 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. You will also receive a code calculator (an electronic authorization device that generates secure codes) for online purchasing and bank transfers – you will pay a small fee for this item.

Main banks CAF members use and that are recommended:

- [SEB](#) (Swedish)
- [Swedbank](#) (Swedish)

Bank Cards & 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 awaiting 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. Also, check with your bank before leaving Canada to ask about potentially switching to credit cards that offer lower exchange rates or other services that will be useful when living abroad.

For utility payment and also many online orders, including purchasing tickets, it is more common in Latvia to use online bank transfers than credit cards. In fact it may not be possible to pay your utility bills by credit card.

Online Banking Payments – IBANs, BICs, and TANs

Bank accounts in Europe have an “IBAN” (International Bank Account Number) and a “BIC” (Bank Identifier Code). You will use these for making payments and receiving money. If you are paying a bill, you will typically find their IBAN on the bill and you can use that in your online banking to make the payment. You will also provide your IBAN to companies to pay your bills (insurance, gym payments, cell phone, etc). The orderly room and claims section at CFSU(E) will use your IBAN to deposit pay and claims into your bank account.

To make a payment, you will often need a TAN (Transaction Authorization Number). This can be a complex thing to get used to in Europe. You will likely get a sheet of TANs when you initially get your bank account, but then through your mobile banking you can use mobile TANs (a number sent to your phone) or photo TANs with an app on your phone. To

use mobile or photo TANS, you will need to register your mobile number in the online banking.

Note: You can use Western Union for international money transfers, otherwise you can transfer from your Canadian account to your European account via your Latvian bank account.

CRA AND RESIDENCY STATUS FOR SPOUSES/DEPENDENTS

Completing and submitting an income tax return from OUTCAN can be even more fun than doing it in Canada. In the past, there has been significant confusion regarding the residency status of spouses. Unfortunately, some CAF families have found out that choosing incorrectly can have a major financial impact. Many have found this issue confusing and have sought professional tax advice.

The following information regarding residency status has been provided to us by the CRA:

Spouses of Canadian Government Employees on Foreign Assignment – Residency Status for Tax Purposes

The purpose of this document is to provide general residency information for the spouses of employees of the Department of National Defence (“DND”)/members of the Canadian Armed Forces (“CAF”) and Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (“DFATD”) Canada that are sent on foreign assignments. This document does not address all possible situations that may require more analysis when determining the tax implications.

Please note that our reference to a spouse in this document includes a common-law partner.

Spouses that Intend to Return to Canada and expect to Maintain their Canadian Residency

Where you are the spouse of a Canadian Government employee and are moving with your spouse and family to another country for your spouse to carry out a foreign assignment for the Government of Canada and it is your intention to return to Canada following the assignment, then you will be considered a factual resident of Canada. This factual residency is based on your intention to return to Canada as well as your secondary residential ties maintained with Canada, as described in paragraph 1.14 of Folio S5-F1-C1.

Please do not complete a Form NR73, Determination of Residency Status (Leaving Canada).

As a factual resident, you will have to complete and file your Canadian Personal Income Tax Return and you will meet the residency requirement for Canadian benefits administered by the CRA.

Spouses that do not expect to Maintain their Canadian Residency

If you believe that you will be a non-resident of Canada when you leave with your spouse and family for the foreign assignment because your intention, primary ties and secondary ties support your status as a non-resident of Canada, then you should complete Form NR73, Determination of Residency Status (Leaving Canada). The Canada Revenue Agency will review the information provided in your completed Form NR73 to determine whether or not you will be considered a non-resident of Canada.

If it is determined that you will be a non-resident of Canada, you should know the tax implications, which include:

- 1. You will be deemed to have disposed of certain properties that may give rise to capital gains (taxes on gains can be deferred by using Form T1244, Election , Under Subsection 220(4.5) of the Information Sheet Income Tax Act, to Defer the Payment of Tax on Income Relating to the Deemed Disposition of Property);*
- 2. You will only be able to create additional RRSP room if you have earned income in Canada;*
- 3. You will not be able to contribute to a Tax Free Savings Account; and*
- 4. You will be subject to tax of up to 25% on certain payments from Canadian sources, such as investment income (Part XIII tax).*

For further information with respect to the determination of an individual's residence status, please consult CRA's Income Tax Folio S5-F1-C1 available at: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/tchncl/ncmtx/fls/s5/f1/s5-f1-c1-eng.html>

Further information on how income tax rules apply to Canadian residents that leave the country can be found in <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/nrsdnts/ndvdl/nrs-eng.html>

Should you have any further questions or require additional information regarding this, please do not hesitate to communicate with the International and Ottawa Tax Services Office. Child Benefits

CHILD BENEFITS

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.

Did you know that MFS(E) provides short-term emergency or respite childcare?

To learn more about it, please visit: www.cfmws.com/europe

For a complete list of MFS(E) Child & Youth programs and resources please consult our website: <https://cfmws.ca/support-services/families/children-youth>

Children's Education Allowances: +49(0) 2451-717-138

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.

The requirements pertain to the following areas:

- Pet Microchip;
- *Vaccinations;
- Rabies Titer Test (if coming from high risk country);
- Tapeworm Treatment (dogs only);
- Health certificate;
- Travelling with more than 5 pets;
- Entering Latvia by air;
- Puppies and kittens; and
- Banned breeds. **At this time there are no known banned breeds in Latvia.**

*Rabies vaccination MUST be administered after the pet has been microchipped or CFIA will not sign off on the paperwork. The rabies vaccination takes 21 days to be effective, and CFIA will not sign off prior to the vaccination taking effect.

There are 3 ways you can move with your pet depending on size and cost: Cargo, Fly with (oversized baggage), or private service. Make sure to do our own research to figure out what is best for you and your furry friend. If you are interested in private services some popular ones are:

- <https://www.animaltravel.com>
- <https://www.shiplly.com/ca/pet-transport>
- <http://www.petflightinc.com/index.html>

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>

For more information on moving with you pets visit: <http://inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/imports/policies/live-animals/pets/eng/1326600389775/1326600500578>

Note: If you are travelling with a cat, please note that there have been families who have had a difficult time bringing food and airline-approved cat litter/boxes on the plane with them. It would be advised to travel with some pee pads in the carrier for this reason.

The OR will also have information on relocating with pets, you can email them via: cfsuedetriga@forces.gc.ca

POSTAL SERVICES

PERSONAL MAIL

Two options are available to the CAF member and dependents.

- 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. 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.
- If you work out of Adazi you can pick up your mail there.

Canadian Forces Post Office

Your postal address in Belleville will be:

(name)

RP

PO Box 5004 Stn Forces

Belleville, ON K8N 5W6

If you need a physical address, either for banking or for a signature on delivery, the address is:

(name)

RP xx, CFPO 5004

15 Westwin Ave Bldg 348

CFB Trenton

Astra, Ontario K0K 3W0

If mail or a package is being sent to the 15 Westwin address, it is recommended that you email postal@forces.gc.ca to inform them when and what to expect.

Latvian Postal Services

Latvijas Pasts is Latvia's Postal Service. Postal services are inexpensive compared to Canada's postal service.

While at the post office, there are separate desks for picking up or mailing items. You will need to take a number and wait. You may not be able to process different transactions at the same desk (picking up and mailing a package for example). Have patience, and give yourself plenty of time. For more information visit <https://www.pasts.lv/en/>

HEALTH SERVICES

GENERAL

As a CAF member posted to a remote location in Europe, you are able to consult the medical services offered at the medical Geilenkirchen (GK) in Germany.

The Health team at CFSU(E) is able to provide support, education, and resources to the CAF community, including remote families. You can contact them at:

+49 2451 717 301

GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/GKMedicalClinic/?ref=br_rs

Social Workers

- *Capt Martin Laferrière-Simard - Social Worker (Military Members)*
martin.laferrieresimard@forces.gc.ca
- *Myriam Chebat - Social Worker (Family members / dependents)* chebat.myriam@cfmws.com or Myriam.Chebat@Forces.gc.ca

Immunizations For an up to date list of required immunizations for your location, please contact Tel: +49 2451 717 305

Pharmacy Services Tel: +49 2451717 308

I Dental Unit Detachment Geilenkirchen

Canadian Forces Support Unit (Europe), Selfkant-Kaseme

Quimperlestrasse I 00, 5251 I Geilenkirchen, Germany

Clinic Phone Number: +49 (0) 2451 717 330 (leave voicemail if no answer).

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 utmost 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. Always have your passport when attending any health-related appointment. You also have access to the pharmacy and medical clinic in GK

Walk-in-type clinics are available. Clinics are very nicely appointed, clean and modern. Health care is affordable, and you are expected to pay for each visit. Cash, debit or credit cards are widely accepted for payment in medical clinics.

Like most of Europe, ticks in Latvia may carry Lyme disease, but they can also carry Tick-borne encephalitis, this is the most common neurological infection in Latvia. Adult and children can be vaccinated against tick-borne encephalitis, and is conducted in a series of shots. The second shot is given two weeks after the first shot, and then the third shot is done 6-12 months after the second. Check for ticks after hiking or spending time in long grass or forests.

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>

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

- c. Other Hospitals include:

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

Specialized Pediatric Multi-Profile Medical Treatment Facilities

[Children's Clinical University Hospital](#)

General Info line: +371 2932 4868, or info@healthtravellatvia.lv

[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.

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

PRIVATE CLINICS

Capital Clinic (or [VC4](#)) is the primary clinic system used by CAF members and their families in Riga. VC4 is comprised of approximately 18 different private medical clinics across Latvia, providing a full spectrum of primary care services. They have a dedicated local contact for Canadian families (official title: Head of Medical Tourism and Public Relations), Lana Kutiščeva, who will arrange services for Members or Dependents. You can contact Lana via lane.kutisceva@vc4.lv or on WhatsApp via: +371 26342853

*If members or dependents receive a quote for a medical service in excess of \$200 (Canadian Dollars, roughly 140 EUR) they can request an advance from the local orderly room. The quote can be emailed to cfsudetriga@forces.gc.ca for approval and processing.

ARS Clinic ([Medicīnas sabiedrība ARS](#)) is a clinic is 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.

Latvian Military Specialist Clinic is co-located in the Latvian Defense Academy, a CAF member can present there for Sick Parade. This clinic is not for dependents. 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.

Other private clinics (not yet surveyed by CF H Svcs Gp dental staff).

- [Diplomatic Service Medical Centre; and](#)
- [Rīga 1st hospital.](#)

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. Hold on to standing prescriptions as pharmacies do not track your prescriptions for you.

The main pharmacies include

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

- [Saules aptieka](#)

Should a situation arise where a member or a dependent find themselves in need of a medication that is not available in Latvia commercially, please contact the National Medical Liaison Officer, who will endeavor to find a solution.

Sergio Grice, RN - Medical Liaison Officer
Sergio.grice2@forces.gc.ca, Tel +371 63 902 317

The following link will allow you to search for a medication through the website of the State Agency of Medicines of the Republic of Latvia and provide information on its availability in Latvia and if a prescription is required or not.

<https://www.zva.gov.lv/zvais/zalu-registrs/?lang=en>

DENTAL CLINICS

Dental work is of good quality and much less expensive than in Canada. If you need glasses or an Eye test you can try Optical.

In order to be reimbursed by Great West Life, you will need an itemized bill with the amount of time spent on each service included.

Adenta Zobarstniecibas klinika is a large-sized private dental practice that can provide 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 in close proximity to Arena Riga. Unfortunately, they no longer have an orthodontist.

Address: Ganību dambis 4, Rīga, LV-1045

Phone: +371 67 339 300

Email: adenta@adenta.lv

Website: [Adenta](#)

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 like 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](#).

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 have surveyed this practice and have recommended use of this facility for routine care for CAF member's dependants. 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

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

- [Dental clinic Maxilla, and](#)
- [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).

HEALTH & WELLNESS SUPPORTS

The following are available to CAF members and their families:

Social Worker

You can reach the MFS(E) Social Workers via MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com

Chaplaincy Team

There are three Padres serving the families in Europe, and they are also available for consultation. You can find contacts here: <https://cfmws.ca/europe/your-posting-to-europe/emergency-contacts>

CAF Member Assistance Program

Military members and their families can also contact the CAF Member Assistance Program at +1 800 268 7708. This is a voluntary and confidential service that allows callers to speak with a professional counsellor and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Please note that Canadian toll-free numbers are not free when calling from another country, but the CAF Member Assistance Program will also accept collect calls at +1 613 941 5842.

Family Information Line (FIL)

The Family Information Line offers confidential assistance and supportive counselling 24/7. When you call you will be connected to one of their experienced professionals who can connect you with local and national resources. The Family Information Line can be called toll free, from Europe, at 00 800 7711 7722.

Local Resources

Military families can also access resources in their community, as recommended by their doctor or other sources, but they should ensure with their Public Service Health Care Plan that they will be covered for the services they are considering. For their services, military members are required to go through their medical system or the CAF Member Assistance Program.

A. A. Meetings

Information on Alcoholic Anonymous meetings in Europe or online is available at <https://alcoholics-anonymous.eu/>

Dental Claims

Unless you are served by a CAF Dental Clinic, dental claims will need to be sent to Great-West Life, using the paper form. Log into your account on the Great-West Life website and print a claim form. Claims and original receipts need to be mailed to the following address:

Great-West Life Health and Dental Benefits
Foreign Benefit Payments
PO Box 6000
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3A5

Be sure to keep copies of your receipts!

Medical Claims

MSH International is the new out-of-province and out-of-country health care provider. Members who have supplementary coverage and are travelling outside of their province of residence and members who have comprehensive coverage and are living outside Canada can submit claims on the MSH International online portal or by mail.

To submit out-of-province or out-of-country claims, plan members must have:

- *completed positive enrolment with Canada Life*
- *provided consent to the release of their personal information.*

For more information on MSH International, visit

<https://www.welcome.canadalife.com/pshcp/msh.html>

For a list of FAQs about the new plan administrator, visit

<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/benefit-plans/health-care-plan/frequently-asked-questions/new-pshcp-faq.html>

Be sure to keep copies of your receipts.

ON THE ROAD

GENERAL

You must be 18 or over to drive a private motor vehicle in Latvia. 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. <http://www.adcidl.com/pdf/Latvian-Road-Traffic-Signs.pdf>

Driving in Latvia will take some getting used to, especially with narrow streets and cobbled roads. If you move to Riga was a SUV, you may find some difficulty on certain roads due to the size of your vehicle. Latvia has a poorer record of driving safety; you must be extra attentive and assertive on the road. Local drivers can be aggressive, and many treat the rules of the road as suggestions rather than laws. Road quality can vary greatly across Riga and Latvia.

Note: It is NOT allowed to make a right turn on a red traffic light.

DRIVER'S LICENCE

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 online prior to expiry. If your Canadian license expires in Latvia, you must arrange for renewal at your own expense.

In the absence of a Canadian driver's 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 several 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 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 and can be claimed. Keep in mind they are only good for one year. <http://www.caaneo.on.ca/travel/you-go/international-driving-permit>

INFORMATION ON DRIVER'S LICENCE IN CANADA AND RENEWAL

Make sure you keep your information current. Renew earlier.

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/re ference.html?d=details&progr am_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/drive rs.html

Province	Mailing Address	Phone Number	Internet Site
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 300 Horseshoe Lake drive Bayers Lake Business Park Halifax, NS B3S 0B7	(902) 424-5851 Toll Free in NA: (800) 898-7668	http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/access/drivers.asp
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 Depart. 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

Province	Mailing Address	Phone Number	Internet Site
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

ROADWORTHINESS TEST/SAFETY

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. All Vehicles 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 always required by law to have the following equipment: first aid kit, fire extinguisher, 2 warning triangles, a reflective vest, spare light bulbs, driver's license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance. In addition, headlights must always be on 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.

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:

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

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](#).

EMISSION STICKER

European Green Zones

Germany (58 zones), France (28 zones), Belgium (3 zones), Denmark (5 zones), and Austria (6 zones) have Green Zones and corresponding stickers. If you will be driving in the Green Zones of those countries, you may need a sticker for your car. You can order a sticker for your vehicle from the links in this website:

<https://www.green-zones.eu/en.html>

FUEL CARD

Fuel cards are convenient ways to save money and get your name on the bill. Some gas stations such as Neste also use the fuel cards as a form of payment.

ITEMS IN YOUR CAR

It is compulsory to always carry the following documents in your car:

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

You are also required by law to carry the following items in your vehicle. Hefty on-the-spot fines can be issued for failing to comply:

- *A first-aid kit & fire extinguisher*
- *Warning triangle (Any motor vehicle travelling in Latvia, regardless of country of registration, must carry 2 warning triangles)*
- *Reflective Jacket/Vest (for use when walking on the road at night or daytime)*

BIKING/MOPEDS/MOTORCYCLES

Bicycles

Biking is an increasingly popular mode of transportation and anyone over the age of 10 needs a bicycle license (see: csnt.csdd.lv for sample tests). When there are no bike lanes it is OK to use pedestrian walkways if 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.

Mopeds and Scooters

The law requires helmets be worn while operating mopeds.

Motorcycles

The law requires helmets be worn while operating motorcycles.

PARKING

Parking in the city center is can be expensive and difficult to find during busy times but is generally OK. 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. If a curb is painted yellow, you cannot park there. Handicapped parking is marked very differently in Latvia. They do not paint the ground, instead signs are placed at either end of the handicapped parking zone. If you are not intending to park in Handicapped parking do not park in between the signs.

You can install the app called Mobility 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.

TOLLS

When traveling, be aware of toll costs. To drive on the autoroutes in Switzerland, for example, you require a sticker (called a *vignette*) on your windshield. The vignette is only available as an annual purchase. For Austria, you can purchase a 10-day, 2-month or annual vignette. In France, you will find toll booths on the autoroute. For some you pay a toll to go through the booth, for others you take a ticket and pay when you exit the toll road. The website <https://www.viamichelin.com/> is an excellent resource for calculating toll costs before a trip.

REST STOPS

Rest stops are few and far between in Latvia and don't always have food. Some gas stations will sell some small snacks or have a small restaurant or fast-food attached but for any other options you'll have to head into the nearest town. If you are planning on taking road trips you are better off packing your own snacks and meals.

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.

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 can be paid online.

Speed Cameras

Speed cameras are common in Latvia, and often are announced by road signs.

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>

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 vehicles 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 DRUGS

Police are permitted to pull drivers over and test for alcohol and drugs 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. Cannabis is illegal for all purposes in Latvia.

IF INVOLVED IN A CAR ACCIDENT

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 the event of an accident, contact the military police locally. Emergency translators are available through HQ if you require them as well as MPs.

In Latvia the internationally recognized European Accident Statement form is used, and 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.

BUYING OR SELLING A CAR

If you are planning on buying a car in Latvia keep in mind that it can be very difficult to meet Canadian standards. Do your research as you may not be able to bring it back to Canada. For more information visit <https://www.tc.gc.ca/en/services/road/importing-vehicle/countries-other-united-states.html>

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICES IN THE AREA

With over 30 different churches in Riga some offer some services in many different languages. Some churches that actively advertise services in English are:

- *St. Saviour's Anglican Church, Anglikāņu iela 2 (see: <https://anglicanriga.lv>),*
- *Communitas International Baptist Church of Riga, Krāslavas iela 27 (see: <http://communitas.lv/#>),*
- *St Mary Magdeline Catholic Church, 2 Kloстера St. (see: <http://katolis.lv/en/church-in-latvia/dioceses-and-parishes/information-for-catholics-visiting-or-living-in-riga.html>)*

English services may be available in other churches as well.

The Jewish population is very small in Latvia and there are only two Synagogues in all of Latvia. One of which is located in Riga's Old Town.

AROUND THE HOUSE

INTERNET/TELEVISION/MOBILE PHONE

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) Phones

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 popular local internet service providers are:

- [LMT 4G](#)
- [TET](#)

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.

The most common TV service providers are:

- [BaltCom](#)
- [Viasat](#)

You can also get TV services via LMT and TET (linked above).

People also use Amazon FireStick, Apple TV, Chromecast, and cinemaHD to access Canadian shows and channels.

The three largest mobile phone service providers are:

- [LMT \(most commonly used by CAF\)](#)
- [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.

Several Canadian families have used a VoIP phone, and this is worth investigating **before leaving Canada** (so you can keep your number).

With a VoIP phone, you can keep a Canadian phone number. This has a few benefits. Your family and friends can call you, and you can call them, without overseas long-distance charges. Besides cost, it is also less confusing for people who may not be used to European calling (like elderly parents). Keeping a Canadian phone number also can help when completing online forms, banking, registering on Canadian websites etc. And finally, if you want to keep a phone number for continuity, you can move a number to a VoIP provider when you move OUTCAN, then move the same number back to a Canadian provider when you return.

Which provider to use? There are several, with varying costs and services. MagicJack and Vonage are two of the big companies, but many other VoIP providers are out there.

Billing and Deposit Caution.

Customers of LMT (cell phones) caution that you are required to pay a deposit (generally about €30) to open your account. This amount must be maintained for the length of your contract – however if you are not careful, the company will apply it against your current bill. In fact, every month, your account statement will show them deducting the deposit paid against your amount owing. ALWAYS pay the full amount. Otherwise, you will find that your account is frozen later in the month, once the system identifies that your deposit has been used up.

VPNs

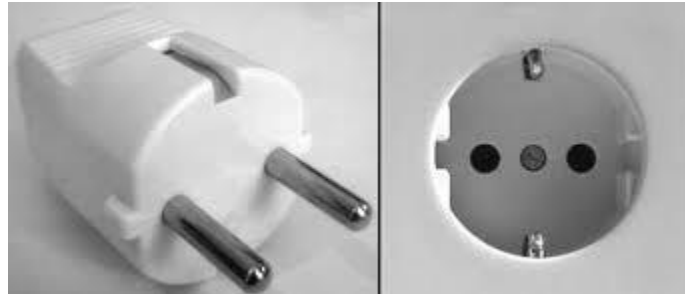
A virtual private network (VPN) is a mechanism for creating a secure connection between a computing device and a computer network, or between two networks (such as your mobile network), using an insecure communication medium such as the public Internet. It is recommended to use [NORD VPN](#) or [Proton VPN](#) for extra protection while in Europe.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity in Europe differs from electricity in Canada, in that the voltage is higher and the frequency is lower. In Canada our electricity is 110V 60Hz, while in Europe, they have 220-230V and 50Hz. Some electronics are not compatible with European power and require transformers, while others are dual voltage and only require a plug adapter.

To find out if an electronic is dual voltage, look for the electronic information on the product. This information is often found on the bottom or back of the product, or on its battery pack. If the input gives a range such as 100-240V 50-60Hz, then the product **is** dual voltage and works with both Canadian and European electricity. If the input does not give a range and only says 110V 60Hz, then it is **not** compatible with European 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".

Dual Voltage

If your product is dual voltage, then all you need is a plug adapter in order to use it. Since the product is already compatible with the local electricity, all the adapter does is allow the prongs to fit the electrical outlets. If you use an adapter with a product that is not dual voltage, you will not only damage your product, but you may also cause electrical damage to the building.

Lamps are considered dual voltage; however, you will need to replace the light bulbs with European lightbulbs.

Single Voltage

If your electronics only says 110V 60Hz, then it is not compatible with European electricity. In order to use it while in Europe, you will need to use a transformer. Transformers convert the local electricity to 110V 60Hz, so you can plug devices into it as if you were plugging them into a wall in Canada.



Most electronic devices have a prominent label that looks like this picture. On this device (a camera battery charger), you can see that after "Input" it says "110 - 240 volt", which means that it can be used with any voltage within that range, including the 110 volt standard in Canada or the 220-230 volt standard in much of Europe. All you'll need is a plug adaptor.



On this next label, you can see that this coffee maker is **NOT** dual voltage. It lists simply "120 volts". Other items may say "110" - anything in this range is a standard North American appliance. If you want to use something like this overseas, it will need to be on a transformer



In this final image, you can see that some appliances have a switch for use between higher and lower voltages. This can be used overseas with only a **plug adaptor**, but don't forget to flip the switch!

Transformers

Transformers are created with different wattage ratings, so you will need to make sure you are using the correct wattage to handle what you are plugging into it.

The total wattage of appliances plugged into the transformer must be less than the wattage rating of the transformer. To find out the wattage of an electronic device, if it's not on the label, you can multiply the voltage of the item by the number of amperes (amps). For example, if the information on an item says 110V 60Hz 1A, you would multiple 110 (voltage) by 1 (amps) to get 110 watts.

There are also websites that have information on the approximate wattage of electronic and household appliances, for example,

- <https://www.wholesalesolar.com/solar-information/how-to-save-energy/power-table>

Research before choosing transformers. If in doubt, buy bigger. Some items (like TVs) need a big surge of power when switched on, so go with three times the wattage (a 500W appliance might need a 1500W transformer). Items that produce heat (iron, hair dryer) will require more wattage.

Transformers that do not have an ON/OFF switch, or have a switch and are turned on, will consume energy while plugged in, even if you do not have an appliance plugged into them. Therefore, you should always keep your transformers off or unplugged when not in use.

As part of your furniture claim, you can purchase and claim 50% of the cost of up to four transformers but you cannot buy before coming.

UTILITIES

Paying and understanding your phone and utility bills in Latvia can be difficult. Bills are generally not provided in English. The format is not the same as you are used to in Canada. Some are easier than others, but talk to your neighbours, co-workers, or the OR if you find you are confused.

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, slower and commonly leak. This can pose problems for washing typical Canadian bedding.

BEDS

You should note that sizes of beds and bedding differ between Canada and Europe, which may also impact your decision of moving into a furnished home. It may be helpful to purchase extra bedding prior to your move, or you may find that you must have it shipped from Canada. If you plan on purchasing a bed while you are in Europe, do your research to ensure you will be able to find bedding that will fit upon your return to Canada.

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, the primary reason why it should not be consumed. Municipal water testing results published in reports accessible online have shown the presence of coliforms in some instances due to inconsistent chemical

disinfection. 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 (ex: Venden, Edensprings). The cost of water is approximately 5 Eur for a 18L bottle (+ consign). Delivery is free of charge and bill is often paid by bank transfer.

You are eligible to be reimbursed for the cost of drinking water – whether delivery to your home, or purchasing bottles in a store. The cost of renting a water cooler is NOT reimbursable, but the water is. Keep invoices and receipts. There is a generous limit per person in your family. More information can be obtained through the Orderly Room or during your welcome brief.

Some homes or apartments may have full system water filtration, allowing for safe drinking of the tap water. Ensure filters are replaced regularly (generally at least 1x month).

GARBAGE AND RECYCLING

Garbage and recycling collection are very different than Canada. Some items we recycle at home cannot be recycled here. Make sure to do your research.

Garbage is collected (unless you are living in an apartment building), but recycling is not (unless your building pays extra for this). Recycling must be sorted out and brought to special areas located in each neighbourhood or residential area. These recycling areas are typically hard to miss as they are labelled brightly coloured bins. If they are not obvious make sure to ask your real estate agent or landlord where to find your nearest recycling location. Or, see <http://www.zalais.lv/en/>

To donate used goods -clothing, furniture, etc. - for reuse, see the following link (in Latvian – you will want to use Tilde.lv to help navigate!): <https://www.ziedot.lv/par-ziedot-lv/kur-ziedot-mantas>.

MFS(E) has also created an ECO Guide for those in Riga, with a lot of resources. Be sure to reach out to us for more info via: MFSE.Riga@cfmws.com

METRIC 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.

Oven Temperature

275 F = 135 C	350 F = 175 C	425 F = 220 C
300 F = 150 C	375 F = 190 C	450 F = 230 C
325 F = 165 C	400 F = 205 C	500 F = 260 C

Cup & Spoon Equivalents

1/4 cup = 60 ml	1/8 tsp = 0.6 ml	1 tbsp = 15 ml
1/3 cup = 80 ml	1/4 tsp = 1.3 ml	2 tbsp = 30 ml
1/2 cup = 120 ml	3/8 tsp = 2 ml	3 tbsp = 45 ml
2/3 cup = 160 ml	1/2 tsp = 2.5 ml	
3/4 cup = 180 ml	1 tsp = 5 ml	
1 cup = 240 ml		
1 1/4 cup = 300 ml		
1 1/2 cup = 360 ml		
2 cup = 480 ml		
3 cup = 720 ml		

EMPLOYMENT

WORKING FOR MILITARY FAMILY SERVICES (MFS) OR PERSONNEL SUPPORT PROGRAMS (PSP)

If you want to work for MFS and PSP while in Europe, you should bring the following information with you. It will be required to process your file to obtain the required security clearance to work in Europe. Having this information at your fingertips will speed-up the hiring process:

- *Copy of passport, SOFA or VISA stamp (some of those, you will get in Europe)*
- *Another form of government (federal or provincial) photo ID (birth certificate, Driver's Licence, etc.). If Government photo ID is not available a 3rd piece of photo ID (such as student ID) must be provided*
- *Five years of resident addresses along with proof (mail, bill, T4, etc.). The dates must be five years from the date of filling out the form back exactly five years from that date (i.e.: 24 Oct 2018 back to 24 Oct 2013)*
- *Proof of relevant education and professional qualifications (transcripts, diplomas, etc.)*
- *Proof of previous employment (back 5 years), (work agreements, T4s, etc.)*
- *Two References (names and addresses at least – reference letters are good to have as well)*

SPOUSAL/DEPENDENT EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE AND 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. 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.

Our Education, Employment and Training Program Coordinator creates and delivers programs such as the Youth Employment Preparation and the Adult Employability Programs. The coordinator also offers employment and training assistance to working age youth and adult family members. These services include; job search information and tools, career related training and programs, and one-on-one employment assistance (resume writing, cover letter, interview skills).

For information regarding education or employment please contact the MFS(E) Education, Employment and Training Programs Coordinator, Caroline Couture at MFSE.EmploymentEducationTraining@cfmws.com.

JOB POSTINGS

Civilian employment opportunities are published regularly on the CAF Connection Website:

- <https://cfmws.ca/europe/employment-opportunities-in-europe>

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 several tools available to help you search job listings, create a resume, choose a career and assess your skills.

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

If you are interested in working for a local employer, your SOFA stamp/dependent status does not confer the right to be employed on the economy. This is entirely a matter for the host nation to decide and it is an individual's responsibility to seek permission from local authorities. The host nation embassy in Canada may be able to assist before departure or upon arrival, consult the appropriate department of the host nation government.

ADULT EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAM

If you will be looking for employment when you return to Canada, MFS(E) can help you to be well prepared through our Adult Employability Program. Through participation in a series of virtual workshops, you can receive help creating a strong resume, cover letter and career portfolio as well as learn and practice interview techniques.

VOLUNTEERING

An OUTCAN posting is a good opportunity to get involved with your community. Volunteer work not only helps support other CAF families and provides social networks and personal satisfaction, but it can help build your skill set and improve your resume.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION PROGRAM

The Youth Employment Preparation (YEP) Program provides real-life workplace training and employment opportunities to the youth of the CAF members and Canadian Forces support personnel posted in Europe. YEP aims to assist youth - between the age of 15 and 24 who are pursuing full-time studies – gain the knowledge, skills and experience to make a successful transition into the labour market. For more information on this program, see:

- <https://cfmws.ca/europe/youth-employment-preparation-program>

EDUCATION

Please note, MFS(E) strongly encourages you to do your own research regarding educational institutions for your children, based on their abilities and needs. The following is a list of international schools in the city of your OUTCAN posting. If you have questions regarding the curriculum, entitlements or other important questions, please contact the school directly or contact the Children's Education Manager for Europe: CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca

Other CEM contacts:

[https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Programs-Services/Children-s-Education-Management/Contact-\(CEM\).aspx](https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Programs-Services/Children-s-Education-Management/Contact-(CEM).aspx)

General information on Education and Training:

<https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Programs-Services/Education-and-Training/Children-s-Education-Management.aspx>

SCHOOLS

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 regards 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 schools. This is also consistent with the requirements for education transportation reimbursement under the Children's Education Management (CEM).

French education is 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).

You are cautioned not to make any financial commitments prior to thoroughly reviewing the Education Policy.

General information about schools

The first day of school in Latvia is a big thing. Students are dressed up and they all bring flowers 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 calendar can vary, some schools commence on September 1st and finishes at the end of May, some start late August and finish at the end of June.** 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*

Children in middle school and higher (grades 6 and up) will need a laptop for school. It is recommended that you check with the school before you arrive in Latvia and purchase it in Canada. Electronic prices are significantly higher in Latvia. Also, note that you cannot get three-ringed binders in Latvia and paper sizes also differ for notebooks.

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

International School

[Jules Verne Riga French School](#)

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

Phone: +371 29141791

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

[International School of Rīga](#)

Phone: +371 67624622

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

[International School of Latvia](#)

Phone: +371 67755146

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

[King's College \(the British School of Latvia\)](#)

Phone: + 371 25759043

Address: Turaidas iela 1, Pinki, Latvia, Lv-2107

The ISL offers 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.

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.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

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 periods, 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 (CEM)

For full information on education OUTCAN, please visit Children's Education Management via: <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/military-families/children-education-outside-canada.html>

New families having issues with schooling registration or CEM questions, should reach out to CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca OR the CEM guidance team via ALISA.HANRAHAN@forces.gc.ca

SCHOLARSHIP AND BURSARY INFORMATION

A variety of scholarships and bursaries are available to serving and former Canadian Armed Forces members and their families. These scholarships and bursaries are funded by educational institutions, government partners and charitable organizations and are not administered by MFS(E). More information can be found here:

- <https://cfmws.ca/support-services/education/education-resources-guide/scholarships-and-grants>

The European Fund (EF) Academic Program is established to recognize the academic accomplishments of students graduating from high school who are dependents of European Fund Members and to encourage students to continue towards post-secondary studies. All students accepted and attending a recognized post-secondary institution will receive €500.

- <https://cfmws.ca/europe/resources/european-fund/european-fund-grant-for-non-unit-fund-members>

POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

An OUTCAN posting can be an ideal time to continue your education, whether through part-time or full-time studies, working towards a degree or certificate, for professional development or taking a special interest course for fun. Studies can be done in person at local colleges and universities or on-line through a variety of institutions.

If you plan on studying with a local university or college, be aware that Canadians may have to pay overseas (international) student fees and these fees can be double or triple what a local student will pay. Check with the institutions to see if part-time studies lower these fees.

Local Institutions

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (<http://cicic.ca>) can provide you with information related to Canadians studying abroad or returning to Canada with foreign credentials.

If you are looking to continue a degree that you started in Canada, transferring credits or studying on a Letter of Permission from your Canadian university can be challenging due to differences in the educational systems. Do some research into programs available at your local universities and colleges, attend open days, and connect with their international admissions department to see what options are available to you. Your Canadian university may also have information about studying abroad.

If you choose to pursue an educational program locally and intend to use it professionally, you must ensure that it is an accredited program and your diploma/degree will be recognized in Canada. If there is a governing body for your line of work in the province you will be returning to (i.e. teaching, nursing, accounting) you should check with them to determine how they view foreign qualifications. If you plan to continue with higher education upon returning to Canada, you may want to contact the Canadian institution you are interested in attending in order to see how they will assess your foreign education.

Distance learning in your local community may be available; however, if distance learning is your desired method, it may be easier (and cheaper) to go through a Canadian institution.

Canadian Institutions

Many Canadian universities and colleges offer distance education programs. The delivery of these programs can vary based on the institution or field of study, for example, some programs are offered completely online, some may require you to have proctored exams, while others may require you to visit the institution in person periodically.

When choosing a program, it is important to make sure that it is offered through a recognized, authorized, registered and/or licensed educational institution.

To check the current status of an institution you can use the following search tool:

- <https://www.cicic.ca/868/Search-the-Directory-of-Educational-Institutions-in-Canada/index.canada>

For more information on this directory please visit:

- <https://www.cicic.ca/871/Read-more-information-about-the-Directory-of-Educational-Institutions-in-Canada/index.canada>

ENTERTAINMENT & LEISURE

For more ideas or information in any of the following sub categories visit

<https://www.latvia.travel/en/article/10-family-friendly-attractions>

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.

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.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Old Riga is over 800 years old and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The Central Market is an enormous open air market just a short walk from Old Town held in and around five old Zeppelin hangers.

Latvian Freedom Monument is hard to miss as it stands in the center of the city.

Open Air Ethnographic Museum is a great place to learn about early Latvian culture as you walk through historical Buildings and costume. Every year the ethnographic museum puts on a traditional handicraft show over a summer weekend.

The Riga Motor Museum is perfect for motoring history enthusiast and families with vehicles owned by Stalin, Model T fords and Interactive displays.

Riga Zoo is also great for families. Kids will love the petting zoo and the Latvian speaking parrot.

Jurmala is just a short 20-minute drive from Riga and is a beautiful summer seaside resort area. While the beach is awesome in the summertime it's also super interesting in the winter as the waves freeze over!

Latvia is also home to many beautiful castles and palaces such as Cesis, Rundale Palace, and Turaida near Sigulda.

CINEMAS

The largest cinema is Forum Cinemas located in the Stockmanns mall complex in city center, but other cinemas include Multikino, Cinamon, Kinogalerija, Kino bize.

Most cinemas have movies in English, but if taking smaller children to an animated feature ensure that it is not dubbed into Latvian or Russian before buying tickets. Theater websites often include the movie language beside the movie title.

Netflix is available in Latvia.

CONCERTS

Art and music is a huge part of Latvian culture so there is no shortage of concerts and shows that you can attend. For information about shows or to buy tickets visit Latvia's top 3 ticket offices which sell ticket for everything from concerts, to operas, to even sporting events.

<https://www.bilesuparadize.lv/en/>

<https://www.bilesuserviss.lv/eng/?&design=bilesuserviss>

<https://www.ekase.lv/en/home/>

For more classical concerts, ballets and opera you can visit the Latvian National Opera and Ballet website <https://www.opera.lv/en/> to see their schedule as well as purchase tickets to their shows. Shows here are very cheap with ticket prices sometimes being as low as 2.50 a piece.

HOBBIES & CLUBS

There is an International Women's Club in Riga which hosts coffee mornings, lunches, clubs, and volunteering events for all members. <http://www.iwcr.lv/>

There is also a large Expat community in Riga that meets regularly, and has many members of wide variety of interests. There are a variety of groups to be found on social media.

SPORTS & ATHLETICS

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.

RECREATION CENTRES & PARKS

Some popular fitness centers used by CAF members and their families;

- [My Fitness](#) (13 locations in Riga)
- [GYM!](#) (4 locations in Riga)
- [Lemon Gym](#) (8 locations in Riga)

Almost 50% of Latvia is forested so there is no shortage of parks. Latvia has 41 nature parks and 4 national parks for nature lovers to roam. Latvia's natural beauty is not lost within the city as Riga is bursting in natural parks. These parks are everywhere in the city and filled with sculptures, monuments, and gardens. Many parks also have playgrounds for children. Viesturdarzs, the park outside the Latvian National Museum of art even has outdoor trampolines.

AMUSEMENT PARKS

Līvu Aquapark in Jurmala is one of the largest water parks in Northern Europe.

<https://www.akvaparks.lv/en/>

AB Park amusement park is a theme park based on a popular Latvian children's cartoon. The park includes a dinosaur trail, an obstacle course, a doll museum, Go-carts and more.

<https://www.abpark.lv/en>

Tarzāns -Sigulda Adventure Park is the largest open-air adventure park in the Baltic States. Tarzāns has something for all ages from a variety of High ropes courses to a roller coaster as well as a children's area.

More Safari Park is a Latvian style safari with over 400 animals. You can even feed some of them. <https://www.safariparks.lv/>

Liepāja Olympic Center has something for everyone with amusement areas for the younger ones and a spa area and jacuzzies for the adults. <https://loc.lv/lv/baseins-spa/>

Ventspils is a great destination for amusement parks as its home to a water park an adventure park and a science center.

DINING OUT

Dining out is affordable and there are plenty of high quality restaurants in a wide variety of styles and ethnicities. Expect to pay much higher prices in and near Old Town than you will in the rest of the city/country.

Watch for events like Riga Restaurant Week, where special offers make dining out even more attractive. <https://www.liveriga.com/en/7979-riga-restaurant-week-1/>

Service is generally good for Europe, but don't expect the very attentive standard of North America. If your planning on splitting the bill, make sure to ask in advance as they prefer not to split bills.

Tipping

Tipping for services is not expected although it is appreciated. If you do decide to tip, always tip in cash (sometimes the terminal does not allow you to add a tip) and it's recommended not to exceed 10%.

SHOPPING

GENERAL SHOPPING TIPS

Local Store Hours/Sunday/Holiday Shopping

Store hours are advertised in 24-hour time, with opening hours (“darba laiks”) often on the doors. Stores rarely close and many are even open on Christmas or New Year’s Day; however, if it is a small shop sometimes the store will close during the staff’s break and a notice will be posted on the door. Banks are closed on Sundays and holidays.

Public Washrooms

Washrooms in Latvia are referred to as water closets and are commonly marked with a “WC” sign. Many public washrooms are not free to use and can cost up to €1, so it is always good to have some small change on you. Latvians don’t like paying and if payment is collected electronically, they will just wait for someone leaving to open the door.

Shopping Bags

Latvia has no regulations or laws against plastic bags. Both plastic and paper bags are available at grocery stores for a small fee, so it is recommended to use a reusable bag when shopping. At many grocers you must bag, scale, and tag your vegetables and fruits.

GROCERIES

North Americans report generally very good grocery shopping in Riga with an okay 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. Rimi and Maxima are the most popular grocery stores. Stockmann is more expensive, but you will find many imported and specialty products or produce here. You can sign up for discount cards at these shops (note that you may need to present your passport and Latvian ID card) which will get you special discounted prices. Orange and Promo are grocery stores that require memberships but are good for large families.

Beef tends to be 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 fish and seafood.

Food quality and diversity at the grocery stores are variable. It is usually good, but it might be difficult to get specific North American items or quality imported fruits like avocados. For grocery items that you cannot find in Latvia, you can shop online at [amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca) and have it shipped to you via the Belleville address.

Note: All fresh produce in Latvia will spoil faster, as pesticide and chemical preservatives are not widely used, so plan to visit the grocery store, market, or specialty shops 2-3 times a week for some things such as lettuce.

Cooking and Baking

Baking supplies are very different in Latvia. Items like vanilla extract, chocolate chips, and brown sugar are very hard to find. It might be wise to stock up before you arrive, or to order it from Canada.

GENERAL SHOPPING

It is difficult to do one-stop shopping in Riga. Maxima XXX and Rimi Hypermarkets which are as close as you might come to a Loblaws or Walmart. There is no big box type of stores in Riga and most specialize in one thing.

An IKEA opened in autumn 2018. Depo and K-Senukai are two large home improvement stores similar to a Home Depot. Drogas is similar to a Shoppers Drug Mart as it carries beauty supplies, cleaning supplies and similar items - but it is not a drug store and carries no medications. For prescriptions or over the counter medication, you must go to a pharmacy or Aptieka.

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 poor 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.

AKROPOLE

This huge mall is the newest mall, which opened in 2019. It has a variety of clothing stores that are not offered in other malls, as well as a few common stores that is available in other malls. Unique to this mall, they boast a Ice Area in the center, as well as a cinema and a bowling alley, as well as a wide variety of restaurants. The Maxima XXX located in the Akropole is open from 08:00 - 23:00.

Maskavas Iela 257, Latgales priekspilseta, (+371) 68 304 353, www.akropoleriga.lv/en

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 shopping centre offers high-end shops selling all 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

LOCAL SERVICES

DRY CLEANING

Dry cleaning services are plentiful but the easiest ones to find are in or around shopping centers.

BARBER AND BEAUTY

Barbers and Salons are they same quality wise that you would find in Canada. Many do have online booking systems just make sure that you are understood at your appointment, and it might be wise to bring a picture if you are changing or want a particular hair style.

LIBRARY

The Latvian National Library has a section for Canadian/American literature located in a room dedicated to English books for you to enjoy. Unfortunately, it is less common to find French books.

Pet Care Services In Latvia.



Veterinaries

Little Brother's Hospital



Kalnciema street 19, Rīga, LV-1046
Phone: +37167619061
E-mail: diagnostika@mbh.lv
Home page: www.mbh.lv



Comes Highly recommend among the expat Community

Animal Health Center



Fridriha Candra iela 4, Zemgales priekšpilsēta, Rīga, LV-1046
Phone: 67500494
E-mail: dvc@fl.lv
Home page: [dvc @ fl.lv](http://dvc@fl.lv)



Comes Highly recommend among the expat Community

Dr. Beinerts



Ģertrūdes iela 101, Latgales priekšpilsēta, Rīga, LV-1009
Phone: 67 288 539
Website: <http://www.vet.lv>



Open 24 hours



Dog Parks

Ziedondarzs park

Aleksandra Čaka iela 88, Latgales priekšpilsēta, Rīga, LV-1011

Dog Park

Eksporta iela 6, Centra rajons, Rīga, LV-1010

Grīziņkalns park

Pērnavas iela 54, Latgales priekšpilsēta, Rīga, LV-1009

Groomers



Birma Pets



64 Matisa street, Riga, Latvia, LV-1009
Telephone: (+371) 20 238 238
e-mail: info@birma.lv

Open Monday - Saturday by Appointment only

Will groom all your furry freinds





Dog and Cat Hotel in Riga



Akāciju iela 6, Riga
Phone: 26123019
Email: dodmankepu@inbox.lv
HTTPS://WWW.ZOODRAUGS.LV/EN/

Services Available in English

Will look after all pets

Offers full service pet sitting in Riga, Jūrmala, and Ādaži

Long term or short term care at a "Pet Hotel"
Or at your own home

Dog Walking



Curious Moose Dog School

English training for adult dogs and puppies

Private consultations and trainings available in Riga, Jūrmala and other cities.

Group trainings held at Riga, Fridriha Candra st., 4

<https://www.dogslatvia.com/kopiya-na-glavnuyu>

Telephone: +371 26051462

Email: dogschoollv@gmail.com



Animal Shelters



Want to walk some dogs?
Shelter's are always looking for volunteers and donations of any kind!

Juglas dzīvnieku patversme "Labās Mājas"

Rīgā, Mežapurva ielā 2, LV-1064
Phone: 26617636
Email: info@patversme.lv



Thinking of adoption?

All new members of the family come with all of their vaccinations. Adult pets are already sterilised. Adoption fees are by donation!



Ulubele

Ulubele, Stopiņu novads, Līči,
"Ozolaines" teritorijā
Phone: 20 203 333
Website: <http://www.ulubele.org>



IN CLOSING

Your posting to Europe may be one of the most memorable postings you will experience with the Canadian Armed Forces. This experience comes from a combination of your outlook on life, your specific location and your family dynamics. While some revel in relaxed weekends roaming their local area, others are perpetually traveling to various locations otherwise too far or too expensive to discover from Canada.

Through it all, MFS(E) is here to assist you to maximize the good times and overcome any bumps along the way. Our focus is on virtual programming, email and telephone contact and on informational mailings. This may be different than what you are used to, but support is very much available to you, and we await your arrival with anticipation.

This Handbook is a special tool designed with you in mind. You may be surprised at the cultural differences upon first arrival. This guide is set in place to assist you in understanding some of the differences.

We have a Military Family Services Europe Facebook page so please take a moment to follow and 'like' the page. It helps get everyone in touch and keep up to date on upcoming events and programs. As this is always a working document and every family's experience is different, we welcome any recommendations to improve this guide. It is your input that helps us to better serve you. We wish you a pleasant posting and we look forward to meeting with you at any of our organized events or programs, or online during one of our virtual programs. Remember we, are only a phone call or email away.

Welcome!

MFS(E) Staff, Advisory Committee & Volunteers

***DISCLAIMER: Due to rules and regulations ever changing, 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 as 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.***

USEFUL TRANSLATIONS & PHRASES

BASIC WORDS, PHRASES AND QUESTIONS

English	Latvian
Yes (informal)	Jā
No (informal)	Nē
Hello	Sveiki
Good Bye	Uzredzēšanos
Bye	Atā
Please/You're Welcome	Lūdzu
Thank You	Paldies
Excuse Me	Atvainojiet
My name is...	Mani sauc...
What's your name?	Kā jūs sauc?
Do you speak English?	Vai tu runa angliski?
I don't speak Latvian	Es nerunāju par latviju
How are you?	Kā iet?
Would you help me please?	Vai jūs man, lūdzu, palīdzētu?
What time is it?	Cikos tas ir?
How much does...cost?	Cik maksā?
Where do I find...?	Kur es atrodu...?
Where are the bathrooms?	Kur ir vannas istaba?
Do you have...?	Vai tev ir...
Where is...?	Kur ir...
Could you please talk more slowly?	Vai tu, lūdzu, varētu runāt lēnāk?
Could you repeat that, please?	Vai jūs, lūdzu, varētu to atkārtot?

NUMBERS

English	Latvian	English	Latvian
one	Viens	eleven	Vienpadsmit
two	Divi	twelve	Divpadsmit
three	Tris	thirteen	Trispadsmit
four	Cetri	fourteen	Centrpadsmit
five	Pieci	fifteen	Piecpadsmit
six	Seši	sixteen	Sešpadsmit
seven	Septiņi	seventeen	Septiņpadsmit
eight	Astoni	eighteen	Astonpadsmit
nine	Devīni	nineteen	Deviņpadsmit
ten	Desmit	twenty	Divdesmit

ORDERING IN A RESTAURANT

English	Latvian
The menu, please.	Ēdienkarti, lūdzu
Do you have a menu in English?	Vai jums ir ēdienkarte angļu valodā?
I'd like....	Es gribētu...
Could you recommend something?	Vai jūs varētu kaut ko ieteikt?
Another (beer) please.	Cits (alus), lūdzu.
The check, please.	Rēķinu, lūdzu.
It was delicious.	Tas bija ļoti garšīgi.
Breakfast	Brokastis
Lunch	Lenčs
Dinner	Pudsiņas

PHRASES FOR EMERGENCIES

English	Latvian
Help!	Palīdzība!
Police!	Policija!
Fire!	Liesma!
Get a doctor!	Esi Dakteris!
I am sick.	Man ir nelabi.