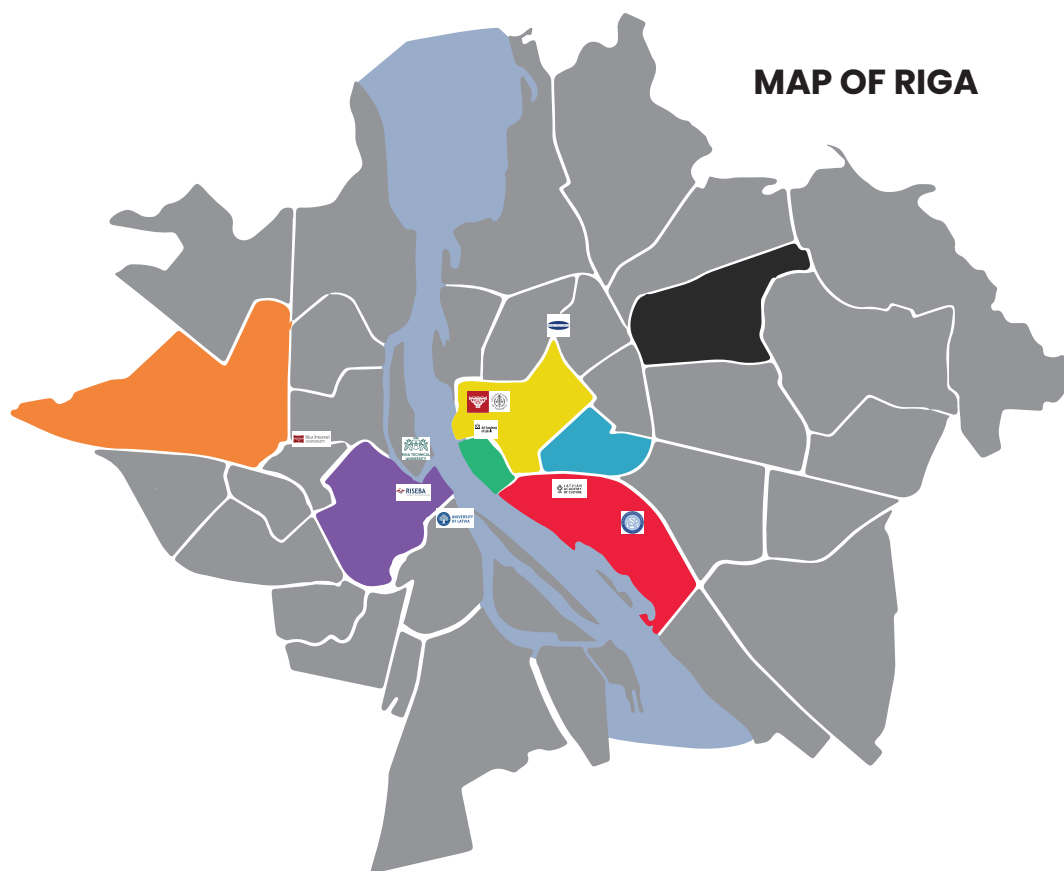


Student Housing Guide



Welcome to your new academic journey!

This guide is designed to ensure your housing experience is secure and hassle-free, offering essential insights and tips to navigate student accommodations smoothly throughout your studies.



The most popular neighborhoods amongst students:

Green – Vecriga: safe, great connection to all Higher Education Institutions, very expensive

Yellow – Centra district: very safe, central location, great connection to all Higher Education Institutions, quite expensive.

Blue – Avoti: safe, relatively central, good connection to all Higher Education Institutions, expensive.

Black - Teika: safe, relatively central, average connection to all Higher Education Institutions, affordable

Purple – Zemgale/ Āgenskalns: safe, relatively central, average connection to all Higher Education Institutions, affordable.

Orange – Imanta: semi-safe, not central, average connection to all Higher Education Institutions, affordable.

Red – Latgale district: not very safe, not central, average connection to all Higher Education Institutions, affordable.

* It is not recommended to rent housing in semi-safe and not very safe districts on minimum the first floor. Keep in mind that in Latvia the first floor is considered the ground floor. Hence, when checking for housing, it is recommended to choose housing that is on the 2nd Latvian floor.

Caution: This information may be subjective and based on personal experience, and should be followed with caution!

Things to consider when looking for housing

- Familiarise yourself with the neighbourhood (e.g., grocery stores, social places, bus and tram connections, connection to the airport, etc.)
- Sharing an apartment with other students not only cuts down housing costs but also helps to make new contacts and aids in integration into the new environment.
- Latvia has a longer heating period, than most other European countries due to its northeastern location. The heating period is usually between October to April (7 to 8 months).

Things to check if the rental is right for you

- Make sure the **full cost of the apartment** (including rent, utilities (e.g., gas, electricity, sewage, waste disposal, etc.), a possible commission fee of the realtor, possible maintenance and cleaning fees, internet, etc.) is within your budget. (See also “Important parts of the rental agreement - must check” within this document).
 - o It is also recommended to request from the real estate agent or landlord the **previous tenant's utility bills**, to get an understanding of how much the additional costs will be.
- Consider some ‘must have’ points the rental needs to provide and make sure the rental provides what is required (e.g., dishwasher, washing machine, furnished or unfurnished rental, disabled access, etc.).
 - o It is also recommended to get information about the type of heating used in the rental (e.g., central heating, firewood, pallet heating, etc.)
- If you get the chance, have a word with the previous tenants and ask them about their experience with the rental and the landlord/ property manager.
- Check similar offers in the same area to avoid overpaying.

Things to look for when renting

Which information should you request from the landlord?

1. Make sure the **rental term is within the period you have requested/ you need** (check when the lease begins and ends in the rental contract) → beginning and end time of the lease can be negotiated and agreed on between the landlord and tenant.
2. Make sure that the agreed or advertised amount of rent and utilities (sometimes the landlord rents the properties all included') is correctly stated in the rental agreement.
 - o The proportion between rent and utility should be between 70:30 and 60:40 depending on the time of year. It is recommended to ask the real estate agent for **previous tenants' utility bills**, to get an idea of expected costs.
3. Make sure to have all kinds of extra negotiations and agreements clearly stated in the rental contract (e.g., special agreement for semester holiday payments, duties of the landlord, duties of the tenant, etc.)
4. Make sure that **rent, utilities, and all other expenses for the apartment are made by an official bank transfer** (safest within Latvia) and avoid making any kind of payments in cash or untraceable wire transfers.
5. Make sure to ask about coverage of property taxes. It is a common trend for landlords to either split the costs or have the tenants cover them. This is usually up for negotiation.
6. Make sure to ask about the coverage of maintenance costs of the property (e.g., repairs of water or gas meters, light bulbs, etc.).

7. Make sure to inform yourself about the type of building itself. Latvia has a great variety of buildings (e.g., pre-war, soviet style, new builds), which will influence things such as utilities, and maintenance costs.
8. Make sure that **all tenants (in the case of shared rental) are listed** in the rental agreement.

Roommates

1. **Where to find one?** There are a lot of Facebook and WhatsApp groups among students, who are looking for a roommate or who are offering rentals to move in with.
2. **To make sure the roommate is a good fit for you, consider the following things:**
 - a. The daily routine of the other person (e.g., job, bathroom times, morning person or a night owl, work/ study from home, etc.).
 - b. Smoking, vaping, alcohol habits.
 - c. Cleaning habits.
 - d. Sharing habits (e.g., foods, household items, etc.).
 - e. Food habits (e.g., cooking habits, allergies, food requirements, etc.).
 - f. Pets.
 - g. Free time habits (e.g., introverted/ extroverted, hobbies, etc.).
 - h. Visitors (e.g., how often do friends come over, dating, overnight visitors, out-of-town visitors, etc.).
 - i. Previous roommate experiences.
 - j. How long is the person planning to stay?

Avoid Rental Fraud

- Choose your apartment search site wisely:
 - o Arco Real Estate (Brokers fee may apply).
 - o rentinriga.com
 - o Estatelatvia.com
 - o cityreal.lv
 - o Used with caution: ss.lv, Facebook Groups that offer rentals.
 - o Student Housing offered by the Higher Education Institution.
 - Riga Stradins University: Student Hostel in Dzirciems, Āgenskalns, Mežciems
 - University of Latvia: "Prima" and "Reznas" Mazā Lubānas iela
 - Riga Technical University: Student Hostel
 - Turība University: Duck Republik: Revolutionary Student Hotel
 - Stockholm School of Economics Residence Hall
 - Banku Augstskola Student Hostel
- View the apartment in person and meet the landlord/ owner there.
- Avoid non-traditional payments
- Pay only after signing the contract using payment methods that provide proof of payment.
- Ask for **the original rental lease** to stay with you, giving the landlord a copy of the agreement. In no case leave both with them!

Signing a Lease Agreement

Types of leases:

- o **Fixed-Term Lease** (most common): provides a fixed term of the lease (usually a year). This kind of lease agreement restricts the landlord from increasing the rent or changing any rules during the term of the rental agreement and provides set conditions for the tenant (e.g., payment dates, tenant obligations, landlord's obligations, etc.)
- o **Month-to-month leases:** usually do not include a specific time limit and continue until either the tenant or landlord requests an end of the contract.
- o **One-way lease:** is uncommon and similar to the month-to-month lease. However, the landlord will charge a termination fee or waive a deposit, if the tenant moves out before a certain number of months is up.

When signing a lease agreement, absolutely make sure to keep a copy (digital or physical) with you at all times. It is strongly recommended, that the copy that stays with you is also signed by the owner of the property.

Important parts of the rental agreement – must check

1. Make sure the rental contract is provided in **both the Latvian and English language**.
2. Check for accuracy: **double-check all details** (e.g., name, apartment address, rental costs and additional costs, smoking policy, etc.) and ask for clarification in the contract, if uncertainties arise.
3. **Check for charges and penalties** (e.g., charges for late payment, pet rent, cleaning fees at the end of the rental term, penalties for disruptive behaviour, and damages to the property, etc.).
4. Be aware of rules on subletting and having guests (additional policies might have to be checked (e.g., animal policy, noise regulations, etc.), but need to be provided by the landlord prior to signing the agreement).
5. **Security deposit:** Make sure to understand and double check the conditions around the security deposit (esp. if it is refundable in full, in part, or non-refundable).
6. **Escape Clause:** be aware of the conditions under which you can terminate the contract, as well as the deadline to do so (e.g., one month, three months in advance, or more).
7. Be aware: some rental contracts are covered under the 'Residential Tenancy Law', whilst others are covered under 'Arbitrations'. Check within the contract, under which the rental contract goes.
8. Check if the agreement has a legitimate legal basis and if all terms of the contract are in accordance with the Residential Tenancy Law (<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/322216> (in ENG)).

Apartment insurance

Some rental properties are equipped with insurance; however, it is important to know that these insurances usually only apply to the actual structure and dwelling. Meaning that in case of fire, general damage, burglaries, etc., personal belongings are not covered. In other rental properties, landlords require that the tenant have a renter's insurance policy by themselves.

Two types of insurances:

- o **Renter's Insurance Policy:** Protects belongings in case of fire, theft, or damage. But it does not cover damages in case of e.g., earthquakes, or floods.
 - o **Liability Coverage:** Protects against any possible damage caused by negligence at the tenant's end (e.g., flooding the rental). This policy supports the tenant by covering defence costs in case damages are taken to court.
- Insurances can be made by, e.g.: Swedbank, Balcia Insurance, Ergo, etc.

When moving in

Inspect the rental before moving in and/ or at the beginning of the rental period and **document any flaws** that are not stipulated in the contract in written form or in the form of pictures. In case any flaws are noticed when moving in and/ or at the beginning of the rental period, which is not stipulated in the contract, make sure to **take photos with the date and time of the damages and inform your landlord** about them in due time. Inform yourself also in written form about the possibility to make modifications to the premise yourself (e.g. if and how art can be hung). This will avoid issues when moving out.

When moving out

- **Know your rental contract.** It contains a section which outlines how you should give notice, how much notice is required, and possible penalties when leaving before the end of the agreement.
- The notice must (usually) coincide with the rental period, which most commonly runs in a 30-day cycle, if not stipulated otherwise in the contract. If the tenant moved in on the e.g., the 1st, you would need to give notice before the 1st of the month. However, if you moved in, e.g., on the 14th, you would have to give notice before the 14th of the month (unless stipulated otherwise).
- **Have proof of having delivered your notice,** by keeping the receipt of having sent the letter, keeping proof of a sent email, or simply taking a picture with the time and date of handing in the notice to the office of the landlord/ property manager/ owner.
- Make sure to obtain a copy of personal records to avoid any confusion on the landlord or tenant side.

Absolutely DO NOT

- **Do not agree** to any deals or requests that have been made in any other form than written (e.g., via the phone, in a conversation, etc.). Make sure that one copy of the agreement (physical or digital) stays with you and is also signed by the owner of the property you are renting.
- **Do not pay** any amount (including rent, security deposit, etc.) before the rental contract is signed or a contract has been provided with an attached invoice stating the amount and purpose of the sum that matches the one mentioned in the contract. In the latter case, it is advised to include the contract number in the invoice, to avoid issues later.
- **Do not pay** any sum before having viewed the rental in person and are completely satisfied with both the rental and the contract offered.
- **Do not pay** in cash, as you will not have proof of payment.
- **Do not pay** via any online payment service or international wire transfer that cannot be tracked.
- **Do not sign** a contract or any other document unless you have fully understood it and the landlord has provided all the information the tenant needs to make an informed decision.
- **Do not hand** in any proof of payment in the original version to anyone (e.g., landlord, property manager, etc.). Always keep them with you to avoid any problems during or at the end of the rental period.

Useful links:

- Residential Tenancy Law of Latvia – English Version:
<https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/322216>
- <https://www.rentinriga.lv/en/main>
- <https://www.cityreal.lv/en/>
- <https://www.rsu.lv/en/rsu-student-hostels>
- <https://www.lu.lv/en/studies/student-life/accommodation/>
- <https://www.rtu.lv/en/studies/accomodation-1>
- <https://duckrepublik.eu/>
- <https://www.sseriga.edu/education/bachelor/campus>
- <https://www.ba.lv/cooperation/economic-cooperation/student-hostel/>


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