



# **GUADEC 2020 Bid**

Riga, Latvia

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## About Riga

Riga is the capital of Latvia, a European Union country in Northeastern Europe. Founded in 1201, throughout the centuries Riga has been influenced by German, Polish-Lithuanian, Swedish, Russian, Soviet and, of course, Latvian culture. Currently it has about 700,000 inhabitants, which makes it the largest city in the three Baltic states.

Riga is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and city visitors like to see its famous Art Nouveau architecture, as it is believed that Riga has the most Art Nouveau buildings in one city in the world. Both guests and locals enjoy walks in Old Riga (Vecrīga), the historical center of Riga, with its many churches and cathedrals. Close to the Old Town there is another popular attraction – the Central Market, where you can discover the flavors of local cuisine and zeppelin hangars built in the 1920s.

The climate of Riga is humid continental, relatively mild due to the proximity of the Baltic Sea. The summers can have dry and rainy spells. On average the temperature is a little above 20°C, but there can be occasional heat waves, when it rises above 30°C.



Photo 1: Old Riga and river Daugava

As Riga is close to the sea, it offers easily reachable beaches of fine white sand, where locals and visitors spend their summer days. One of such beaches is in the sea-side resort town Jurmala (meaning “Seaside”), which stretches 32 kilometers along the sea, and takes 20-30 minutes to reach from Riga using public transport or by car.

Many people visiting Riga or Latvia also take the opportunity to see the other two Baltic countries, Lithuania to the south and Estonia to the north, in the same trip. The capitals of these neighboring countries can be reached in 4 hours by bus or car or in 1 hour by plane.

## Local team

Organized by a local open source activist group, “Latvijas Atvērtā Koda asociācija” (LAKA). The active organizing members are:

- Rūdolfs Mazurs – GNOME and open source translator, has mentored in Google Code-In, has helped organize local user group meetups. Participated in Google Summer of Code, volunteered in GUADEC 2018.
- Aija Jauntēva – software engineer, long time GNOME and other free and open source user. Supports LAKA by managing its server with self-hosted

services. Outreachy 2018 summer alumna, regular FOSDEM volunteer, attended GUADEC in 2013.

- Pēteris Krišjānis – GNOME translator, user and coder for 20 years, taken part in GSoC several times, and contributed to several GNOME projects in various ways. One of the founders of LAKA, Latvian open source and free software activist organization holding events and informing people about FLOSS software. Currently returning back to contributing to GNOME with porting Jokosher to the newest GNOME technologies and exploring how to improve audio tools landscape within GNOME project/Linux desktop. Have attended GUADEC in 2013 and 2019.
- Anita Reitere – GNOME user and translator, mentored in Google Code-In, volunteered in the Desktop Summit 2011, has helped organize local students' debating competitions.
- Ingmārs Dīriņš – developer, long-time user and promoter of free and open source software. Translator of LibreOffice, VLC, Geany and Pidgin. Supports LAKA by managing its accounting, legal things and press releases. Takes part in organizing local events about actualities in FOSS world.
- Dr. sc. comp. Leo Trukšāns – lecturer and educator at University of Latvia and researcher of Linux-based cloud systems at The Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science, lead of Linux Center of UL, also Linux, open source and free software advocate.

## **Local support**

The University of Latvia (UL) is willing to provide us with free BoF spaces and to give us a discount on the conference rooms.

## **Sponsorship**

Neil estimates that GNOME could raise 55'000€ from tickets and sponsorship. We cannot promise any local sponsors.

## Venue



Photo 2: Conference venue: Dabas māja

The venue for the conference days is located 2 km from the Old Town, across the river Daugava. The venue is part of a new campus of the University of Latvia, where other parts are still being built. It is accessible by public transport from all around the city, and there are accommodations available nearby within walking distance.

A package of one 300-person auditorium and one 50-person auditorium for 3 days will cost €4000.

The standard rate for the 300-person auditorium is €90 per hour, and the rate for each 50-100-person room is €70 per hour, if the organizers require a different number of rooms on different days.



Photo 3: BOFs venue

To host the BoFs, it is intended to use premises of the Department of Computer Science in the main building of the University of Latvia. This building is at the very heart of the city center, 2.5 km from the conference venue, and easily accessible from any part of the city. The head of the department is willing to provide the BoF spaces for us free of charge.

## Dates

University summer holidays are in July and August. There are no public holidays during these months. However, in 2020 there is a traditional song and dance festival from the 6<sup>th</sup> of July until the 12<sup>th</sup> of July.

The previous such event in 2015 had almost 38 000 participants coming from other parts of the country and abroad, and the estimated number of attendees, including the inhabitants of Riga, was 200 000. Although participants generally do not use commercial accommodation, the city will be busier than usual, and we suggest not organizing the conference during this week if there are other options.

## Travel

Riga is a major transport hub in the region, connected by air, rail, bus and ferry transport.

## Visas

Latvia is in the Schengen Area, thus people from the EU or from other Schengen states can enter freely. [Here](#) is a list of other countries and territories

whose citizens may enter Latvia without a visa (please note the comments on the travel IDs considered valid for this).

Visitors from other countries have to apply for a visa at the local embassy (which can be found with the help of this [page](#)).

## **Airports and connections**

Riga has an international airport 20 minutes from the city center that is well connected with other major airports in Europe for intercontinental flights – London (only Gatwick for connected flights, Stansted for local flights), Helsinki, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Paris.

Riga International Airport (RIX) is served by the national airline airBaltic and by other airlines: Finnair, Lufthansa, SAS, Turkish airlines, Ryanair, Wizz Air, Norwegian, LOT and some others (full list available [here](#)). Directly it serves over 70 destinations, which can be checked [here](#) or on the [Wikipedia page](#). The flight schedule is available [here](#).

## **Train**

Generally Riga is not accessible by train internationally. There are few routes that connect Latvia to its eastern neighbors: Moscow, Saint Petersburg (Russia), and through Vilnius (Lithuania) it also goes to Minsk (Belarus) and Kiev (Ukraine).

There is a huge project intended to connect the Baltic region with Berlin and from there to the rest of west of Europe and possibly Helsinki in the north, but that is going to be completed only in 2026.

## **Bus**

International bus routes connect Riga to major regional cities in Eastern and Central Europe, providing cheap travel options. The route map of one such company can be viewed [here](#).

## **Ferry**

There is a daily ferry to and from Stockholm. It can be useful for those who do not want to travel by air or want to bring a car across the Baltic sea. Otherwise coming from Stockholm by airplane is a faster option and most likely also cheaper.

## **Local transport**

To get around Riga there are trams, buses and trolleybuses. Some routes are also served by intercity trains. In 2019 travel by train inside the city zone costs €0.80 per ride. For trams, buses and trolleybuses it costs €1.15 per ride, but there are time and bulk tickets available that are cheaper. If a ticket is bought from the driver, it costs €2. The tickets for city transport can be bought in advance at kiosks and self-service ticket machines.

## Accommodation

Riga has hotels and hostels for any budget. Riga is a compact city, and hotels and hostels in the Old Riga and the city center are close both to the conference venue and the BoF rooms.

3-star hotels start at around €50 per night for 2 persons and 4-star hotels start at €70 per night for 2 persons.

Hostels with bed in shared dormitory start with €10 per night for 1 person.

## Dining

There is a cafeteria available on the premises of the conference venue, which could provide meals for €10 euro + VAT. The cafeteria can also provide snacks and drinks during the breaks.

## Events

### Walking tour

On one of the evenings conference attendees can be entertained with a themed walking tour. The tours have to be split into groups no larger than 30 people and can provide two or three groups if needed. Cost for 1 group is €150. We can decide on a theme for the walking tour, for example, it could be an Old Town tour, which covers the historical city centre with churches, squares, legends and tales. As Riga is popular for its Art Nouveau (Jugendstils) heritage, that is another option. The third option is an “alternative tour”, to experience Riga from a local’s perspective.



Photo 4: Old Riga

### Football

Another GUADEC tradition is the football game, and although football is not a national sport in Latvia (that is ice hockey), there are plenty of options for a football on a quiet summer evening. There are fields with grass and synthetic surface, including or excluding shower amenities. The prices vary between €10-€90 per hour.

But just in case someone is wondering, it is possible to rent an ice hockey rink and skates in the summer, too :)



## **Dining & Party**

For dining & party there are also several options, depending on the budget. We have researched a few options involving the river Daugava, which should be pleasant on a summer evening.

### **River cruise boat**

Experience the Riga skyline from the river Daugava. One boat can host 150 people. Rent for 1 hour is €400, and consecutive hours are €350/hour. Additional catering can be organized for €13-€19 euros per person, depending on the choice of food, which includes a three-course meal with a drink.

### **Terrace by a river**

An amazing terrace by the river, with buffet prices €30-€50 per person and a 10% service fee. Drinks are in the price range of €3-€7. It's also possible to organize finger food for a smaller budget.

### **Towed barge**

Close to the conference venue there is a large towed barge on the river Daugava. It is often used for art events, and can host up to 180 people. Renting for an event lasting 5 hours costs €850. Catering can be organized starting at about €35 per person, depending on the choice and amount of food.

## **Other**

Some other options can be considered for activities and parties. A significant area of Latvia is covered by forests, and a walk through the woods can be another way to spend time and be active. Alternative locations for dinner and party could be beaches close to Riga or in Jurmala, or in a city park in Riga. Renting a bus for a longer trip costs around 60€ per hour, the minimum rent time is 3 hours.

# Budget

Item	Low estimate	High estimate
<b>Venue</b>		
Conference rooms with capacity of 300 and 50 people for 3 days	4000€	4000€
Video recording of presentations	2000€	3000€
BoF rooms	-	-
<b>Social events</b>		
Walking tour	300€	450€
River cruise boat	800€	1200€
River boat Food & party	1500€	2250€
Football	100€	150€
<b>Catering</b>		
Lunch in the conference venue	7300€	9000€
Coffee breaks	1200€	2000€
<b>Total</b>	<b>17200€</b>	<b>22000€</b>

Note: The budget doesn't include miscellaneous items like volunteer T-shirts, merchandise, stationery, badges, gifts and props. We are not sure if these things are something that the local team provides. If it does, it would cost about as much as in other European states.

## Appendix

1. Virtual tour of the venue (available only in Latvian), <https://www.akademiskaiscentrs.lu.lv/en/about-us/ekskursijas/virtuature-dabas-maja/>
2. Countries and territories whose citizens may enter Latvia without a visa <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/consular-information/countries-and-territories-whose-citizens-may-enter-latvia-without-a-visa>
3. Latvian missions in the world <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/diplomatic-missions>
4. Airlines serving Riga International Airport <http://riga-airport.com/en/main/flights/airlines>
5. Interactive map to explore destination from Riga International Airport <https://flyfromriga.lv/>
6. List of destinations from Riga International Airport [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Riga\\_International\\_Airport#Airlines\\_and\\_destinations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Riga_International_Airport#Airlines_and_destinations)
7. Flight schedule of Riga International Airport [http://riga-airport.com/en/main/flights/flight\\_schedules](http://riga-airport.com/en/main/flights/flight_schedules)
8. Ecolines bus route map <https://ecolines.net/lv/en/trip/route-map>
9. University of Latvia <https://www.lu.lv/en/>

## Bibliography and credits

1. Title photo By Rūdolfs Mazurs CC BY-SA 4.0
2. Photo 1 By Mārtiņš Vilciņš CC BY-SA 4.0
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