



Weekly Briefing

Latvia economy briefing:

Latvia is an increasingly popular destination for health tourism

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Latvia is an increasingly popular destination for health tourism

Latvia is an ideal place to pay a visit for medical and well-being tourism. It offers a wide range of affordable medical services. Users of this service in Latvia have not only the opportunity to obtain high-quality services for improving health but also, receive a unique opportunity to gain insight into Latvia's glorious nature and cultural and historical heritage. Every year around 10 thousand visitors travel to Latvia in health tourism to improve their well-being. According to data, representatives of various countries from around the world have traveled to Latvia in medical tourism: Germany, China, Britain, Finland, Ukraine, Sweden, Lithuania, Norway, Estonia, Canada, Ireland, Israel, Russia, France, Azerbaijan, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and other countries.[\[1\]](#)

In the last years, health tourism has become a growing industry. Between 2017 and 2023, the average growth in this sector is projected to reach around 15% annually.[\[2\]](#) This is due to the increasing number of opportunities for customers to improve their current health at friendly prices, as well as at the same time, in cooperation with the tourism sector and local authorities, tourists are given the opportunity to explore the cultures of different countries. The greatest demand for medical tourism is shown by people from countries such as Sweden, Ireland.[\[3\]](#) There are different reasons for the consumers why they choose to carry out different procedures abroad. One explanation is that, in both Western and Nordic countries, price levels are much higher than in Eastern European countries.[\[4\]](#) Consequently, people choose to perform some medical procedures that tend to be high-priced, elsewhere. In addition, consumers choose to go to medical tourism to carry out manipulations that are not available in their own country or because of faster service abroad as well.

The most popular healthcare services of foreigners in Latvia are dentistry, gynecology, and urology, beauty, as well as general medicine. According to the survey, people choose to go in medical tourism to Latvia because of technology, as well as low costs.[\[5\]](#)

The 2018 summary of comparisons of medical manipulation costs with other countries shows that medical services in Latvia are 5 to 10 times cheaper than in the United States. However, comparing the costs of medical treatment with Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom, the cost of medical services in Latvia is 2 to 3 times lower.[\[6\]](#) Latvian clinics are

characterized by a well-thought price policy without hidden premiums. Service prices in Latvia are competitive in the Baltic Sea region, lower than in Western and Scandinavian countries, which allows patients to save between 50 and 70% of costs.

These days, Latvia's health centers – rehabilitation complexes, clinics – are high-level. By combining professional knowledge of Latvian doctors, as well as modern medical treatment facilities, an effective result of the improvement in patient health is expected. Latvia is a popular destination not only for medical tourists but also for future doctors from different countries around the world who choose to study medicine in Latvia.[\[7\]](#) In order to qualify as a doctor in Latvia, students must acquire internationally recognized education, as well as constantly learn newer, more effective medical treatment methods. Most often, Latvian doctors supplement their qualifications in foreign training, as well as in the exchange of experience programs. The most knowledgeable and noteworthy doctors have also carried out international exemplary operations. Only competent specialists work with medical tourists. It should be noted that due to the geographical situation, doctors manage both English and Russian, thereby ensuring a mutual understanding between the doctor and the patient. If necessary, interpreter services shall also be provided.

The proposed health care in Latvia meets the standards of the world's leading clinics while improving the level of prices for consumers. In work with medical tourists, they are offered only equipment in accordance with international quality standards. Every year Latvian doctors, together with medical specialists from other countries, develop a variety of scientific studies, thereby promoting operational disease diagnostics, as well as effective patient therapy.

Specialists in the Latvian medical sector want to ensure the best possible quality of service for their patients in order to promote a high level of wellbeing. For this reason, Latvian health authorities maintain close cooperation relations with the leaders of the world's medical equipment manufacturers. Medical equipment is regularly updated to ensure compliance with international standards. One of the reasons why people choose to travel to Latvia is modern medical equipment, thus quickly and painlessly obtaining fast and accurate results of the medical testing. Innovative testing methods are available in Latvia, some of the methods are unique in the Baltic and Eastern Europe.

For example, in May 2019 the only PET/CT equipment was introduced in Latvia, which allows receiving more accurate results of testing for patients with oncological, neurological,

cardiac, and other diseases to be obtained at an early stage. This technology provides early detection of cancer disease and patient safety during the examination. This procedure is one of the most accurate methods of cancer diagnosis that combines the images, thereby obtaining a quick and accurate insight into the spread of the disease process.^[8] It is important to note that this technology is currently the only one in Central and Eastern Europe.

Prior to going to medical treatment institutions in Latvia, close cooperation is established with the patients, and personalized medical treatment is created for them. In addition, on request, services such as welcome at the airport, escorts, interpreters shall be provided to ensure as much comfort as possible. Treatment methods have been developed in Latvia for patients of any age, both adults and children, starting from the age of the infant. During the visit, patients may stay in hotels or sheltered hotel-type rooms with all amenities.

The most popular destinations for health tourism are the resort city Jurmala, as well as the capital city Riga. Several sanatoria, rehabilitation centers are available in Jurmala, which offers a wide range of services – water procedures, massages, readjustments, arts treatments, and other procedures. People choose to travel to sanatoria from abroad most often in summer because most of the sanatoria are on a 5-minute walk from the Baltic Sea, where people can spend time after treatment procedures in a peaceful climate of seaside and pine forests. In Jurmala, there are also a lot of concerts and events with artists from around the world during the summer period. Health tourists have the opportunity not only to improve their health status but also to enjoy the Latvian climate, visit cultural events and explore Latvia's cultural and historical heritage.

Riga is chosen by those health tourists who have to undergo medical manipulation. There are many high-class clinics in Riga that provide services in sectors such as dentistry, reconstructive, and plastic surgery, aesthetic medicine, ophthalmology, neurology, and the treatment of psychiatric neuroses. After performing clinical manipulation, it is possible for patients to become acquainted with Riga – the capital of Latvia. Riga is one of the oldest cities in Latvia. There are very well-preserved Art Nouveau buildings in this city, a glorious old town where buildings of different ages can be seen. To add Riga's residents are very kind and caring to tourists because they manage both Russian and English languages.

Latvia is an increasingly popular destination for health tourism. This is mainly due to the range of various benefits - the availability of modern medical equipment, low costs, professional doctors, providing maximum comfort to their patients.

Foreigners choose to travel to Latvia not only because of the beneficial supply of medical services but also in order to improve their well-being and physical state by participating in various sports activities. In recent years, marathons of different popular sports have become more popular in Latvia, gathering participants from different countries around the world. The most popular public marathons in Latvia are the cycling marathon and the running marathon, which have already become a traditional event for Latvia's largest cities.

One of the most familiar and brightest examples is the Riga Marathon, which gathers several tens of thousands of runners from more than 80 countries annually. [9]The Riga marathon has become a tradition for the most active citizens of Riga in recent years, as well as a great opportunity for tourists to get to know Riga by running. The marathon involves a number of running distances that are suited to both professionals and families with children.

The Riga marathon is internationally recognized as one of the planet's top-class marathons. The World Athletics Association has recognized the Riga marathon as a noteworthy marathon, regrating the Golden Label nomination annually. This high assessment, which was given only to the Riga marathon in Northern Europe, attracts more and more tourists and sports enthusiasts from different countries around the world every year. This nomination has secured the status of the most important marathon for the Riga marathon in Northern Europe. In addition, the Riga marathon is included as one of the 175 best marathons in the world, in which runners can qualify for the World's Championship in a marathon in different age groups.

[1] <https://healthtravellatvia.lv/medicinas-turisms-latvija/>

[2] Allied Analytics LLP. Medical Tourism Market by Treatment Type – Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, 2017-2023 September 2017

[3] Eurobarometer

[4] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/price-levels-2018>

[5] Dr. Juris Hāzners, Dr. Ņina Linde: TIRGUS PĒTĪJUMS PAR LATVIJAS VESELĪBAS TŪRISMA ATTĪSTĪBAS PERSPEKTĪVĀM ĀRVALSTU IEDZĪVOTĀJIEM, SIA “Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmijas Ekonomikas institūts”, 2018

[6] https://healthtravellatvia.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/proceduru_cenas_tabula-en.jpg

[7] The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia “Report on Latvia's higher education in 2018”

[8] <https://arsmed.lv/2019/05/ars-diaagnostikas-klinika-iepazistina-ar-baltija-pirimo-digitalo-pet-ct-iekartu/>

[9] <http://rimirigamarathon.com/lv/par-maratonu/world-athletics-gold-label/>