



Liden & Denz

Intercultural Institute of Languages

Student Handbook
2024 Riga Edition

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Добро пожаловать!

Dear learner of Russian,

Welcome to the Liden & Denz Intercultural Institute of Languages!

It is not an understatement to say that times are challenging. That you have chosen to immerse yourself into Russian, shows that you share our passion for the language of Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy.

No matter how you are studying, offline or online, do not forget that language learning involves discipline and hard work. We ask you to attend classes regularly, to be punctual and to do your homework – these are all essential steps to making progress in your target language. All our teachers are qualified and experienced. Although tuition is conducted in Russian, most of our teachers also speak a foreign language. If you do not understand something, or would like to know the exact translation of a word, please don't hesitate to ask your teacher.

We hope your studies with us will be pleasant and worthwhile. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your teacher or one of our members of staff, who will be happy to help you.

I wish you every success in your studies!

Walter Denz, M.Sc.
CEO

Our Riga centre

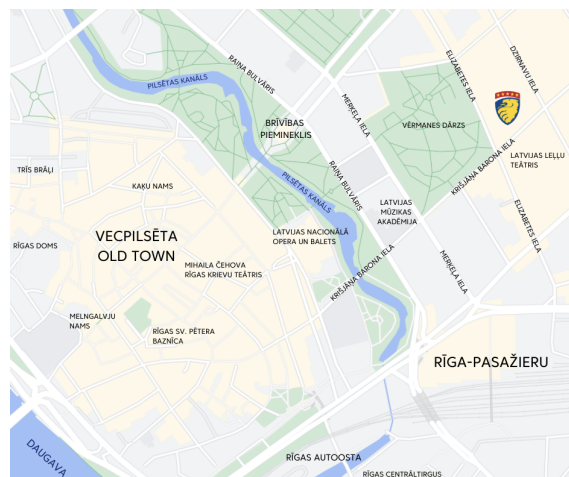
The new Liden & Denz Riga campus is located in the city centre on Krišjāņa Barona iela 5 in a recently renovated landmark Art Nouveau building, less than 10 minutes walking distance to Vecrīga (Old Medieval Town). Vermane Public Gardens are just around the corner as are a number of coffee shops and bars, and two of the best lunch places in Riga are in the same block. The train station is an 8 minute walk away (commuter trains to the seaside), and the tram stop is 100 m away.

Liden & Denz Riga features 7 classrooms with a total seating capacity of 68. All classrooms are naturally lit. The facilities include a small lounge area. And of course, there is a fast and free Wi-Fi network available.

Postal address:

SIA Liden & Denz Riga
Krišjāņa Barona iela 5
LV-1050, Riga
Latvia

Tel (office + emergency): +371 28 743 572



Administrative Information

Discipline

Both teachers and students must attend classes punctually. We may refuse to issue a course certificate to students who consistently arrive late. Absences cannot be compensated for with extra classes later on. Our teachers expect students to arrive for tuition rested and alert.

No smoking/no drugs

Our schools enforce a strict no smoking policy. Smoking (including the smoking of e-cigarettes) is only allowed outdoors. Use of soft and hard drugs is strictly forbidden and constitutes a serious criminal offence in Latvia.

Arrival day

You must arrive on a Sunday as all courses start on a Monday. Private accommodation (host family or shared flat) is always booked from Sunday to Sunday. Extra days can only be booked at homestays on request beforehand and will be charged according to our price list. Important: before your trip, thoroughly check the specific regulations for travelling from your country to Latvia. If you travel on a visa and you book your own accommodation, please make sure you arrive within your visa validity period.

Onboarding/group placement

In order to get a preliminary idea of the distribution of students between groups, we test all non-beginners in advance: an online test on the website is optional, providing a rough outline of your language competences. It is an oral test (placement session) which is mandatory: it is conducted in Zoom. You will receive a link in your booking confirmation and are supposed to join a session no later than 2 weeks before the start, or immediately if enrolling later. Please do not miss this opportunity to be accurately assessed and placed into a group suited to your level.

Settling disputes and complaints regarding group placement

Although we trust our placement procedure and believe it is credible, transparent, and efficient in securing the most accurate group placement, it is not absolutely flawless. Placement can be stressful for new students. Some may have rehearsed statements and perform better in the oral test than they would have in other circumstances.

Please also be aware that non-beginners will often join a group that has been running for some weeks beforehand and it can take some time to settle in. However, if you feel that the group is too challenging or too slow for you, you should talk to your school's Director of Studies (DoS) about changing the group.

If you feel your group is too challenging: you might notice this yourself, or your teacher will notice and discuss it with you and the DoS. You may need a bit of time to revise and revive your passive knowledge, or you might be lacking some essential vocabulary, or have some grammar gaps. Perhaps you simply feel it is hard to keep up with the pace of the class. Another important indicator is the weekly progress test - if you score less than 65%, your teacher will suggest you talk to the DoS. An obvious solution would be to switch to a group one step below your current level for a bit of consolidation. There are other options as well, such as buying some extra individual lessons or joining an intensive mini group, but in any case, your academic wellbeing is our primary concern.

If your level is more advanced than that of your group: please talk to your teacher and/or DoS and analyse your written placement test together. It is possible that you have covered the current topic and feel confident about it but have gaps in other areas. Alternatively, your school/university may have a syllabus very different from ours. We aim to place you in a group that will teach you new things without ignoring the basics. If you strongly believe that you'll benefit from a more advanced group, you may be required to do our end-of-level test, an assessment tool we use to transfer students to a higher group. You may also have another interview with the teachers of the group you want to join.

Changing groups is possible; however, the group placement decisions are made at the DoS's discretion. The school in general and the groups in particular follow the school's syllabus and study plan and there are a number of academic and non-academic criteria for each placement decision. Although the school and its academic management intend to do the utmost to meet every student's needs and expectations, we adhere to the highest academic standards for all participants.

First day at school

It is important that you arrive on time on your first day at school (normally Monday). Any delay will affect the whole day and interrupt the normal tuition schedule. Everyone, including beginners and students who have booked individual tuition, should be present for an introduction.

On your first day, someone from your host family will accompany you to the school (students sharing a flat or staying elsewhere should come on their own using the directions from the map sent together with the booking confirmation). Before tuition starts, you will be given a tour around the school and will be introduced to the key school staff. On the same afternoon, or second day at the latest, you will be taken on a guided tour of the city (free of charge). Unless otherwise stated, you should be at school on the first day at 8:30.

General Timetable Riga (Standard Group Course):

09:00 - 12:40 or
13:30 - 17:10

Group courses in Riga start either at 09:00 in the morning or at 13:30 noon. As a rule of thumb, lower levels will be taught in the morning, higher levels in the afternoon.

Afternoon shift (Intensive Course Supplement, Language Plus or Additional One-to-One Modules) starts at 13:30 or at 17:30 - to be confirmed on your first day at school.

Teaching materials

Textbooks are included in the course fees. Additional material can be obtained either at the school library, or at a specialised bookstore.

Course Certificate

At the end of your course, you will receive a graded certificate in Russian, issued by the school. Your certificate will state your course type, course dates, number of hours and level of Russian achieved according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Course extensions

Provided you have a valid visa (if you need one), you may extend your programme after you arrive. Staying with a host family without extending your course is possible only in exceptional cases.

Hybrid lessons

It is possible for one or more learners in your group to join the Russian classes online. Hybrid lessons are not recorded.

Mid-course crisis

Russian is not an easy language to learn. If you compare it to, say, Spanish or English, many more hours of tuition are needed to reach an equivalent level. Students from outside the Slavic region find it far more difficult to remember words, since the stems of words (other than loan words) are completely unfamiliar. This can sometimes have a demotivating effect. If your course lasts more than four weeks, you will undoubtedly go through a crisis or two. There will be days when you are convinced that you are making no progress at all. You will feel unable to learn anymore or sort out what you have already learned in your head. We know from experience that these crises pass as quickly as they arrive, and that you should not blindly trust your own subjective perception of your lack of learning success. Every crisis ends with something new learned. Never give up!

Staying in a Russian speaking family

All host families where we accommodate our students are directly contracted by us. We operate a system of transparent selection criteria in terms of geographical location, cleanliness, room size, bathroom, etc. Our accommodation officer then visits the family and fills out a checklist. We interview the family members and inspect the apartment (with yearly re-inspections). While all our families live in clean and cosy apartments, the common areas (staircase, lift and yard) of most of the buildings are sometimes in need of repair.

The maximum travel time from home to school and vice versa is 50 minutes.

We pay special attention to social integration and ask our families to communicate with our students in Russian only.

You will be provided with your own room in your host family's flat. Bed linen is changed every 2 weeks. You will receive your own set of flat keys. Please note that if you lose the keys, the host will have to change the lock at your expense.

Bathroom and laundry

If there is no private bathroom available in your host family, please don't forget that all family members use the same bathroom. Check with the other family members for a convenient bathroom time slot (especially in the mornings!).

Your host family may do your washing for an extra fee (5 EUR per load), provided they have a washing machine. Alternatively, you can take your laundry to one of the many laundrettes/dry cleaning services in the city. Our secretaries will be happy to provide more information.

Food

You should be prepared to eat local cuisine every day. It contains little you are not already familiar with. However, be aware that locals eat potatoes, beetroot, and cabbage and buckwheat more than you probably would and, as a rule, have less green salad or fruits, especially in winter and spring. Ask what time your family eats and try not to be late. Tell your host what you like and what you don't like. Let your host know if you are planning to eat out. You will also get your own space in the fridge where you can keep your own food - don't use the rest of the food in the fridge without permission of the host. If you have booked breakfasts only and wish to cook dinners yourself in the kitchen, this should be settled with the host family before your arrival. The water and electricity/gas in Riga are quite expensive and therefore the hosts will require an extra charge for that.

Guests

It is unusual to invite your friends over whilst staying with a host family, but if you really need to have a friend over to stay, please ask your host for explicit permission.

Drinking water

The tap water in Riga is perfectly safe to drink.

Staying out

If you are planning to come home late or spend the night somewhere else, please inform your host family in advance. If you are not back by next morning, your host will inform the school and our accommodation officer will notify your consulate, the police and your emergency contact.

Internet

All our host-families will share their internet connection with you.

The safety of your belongings

We ask you not to keep large amounts of cash at home. We trust our host families but we cannot guarantee the decency of people who visit the host family as guests or hired workers.

Problems with your host family

If you feel uncomfortable in your host family and you think you cannot discuss this with your host, please address your issue to our accommodation officer without delay. If you have serious reasons to ask for a change of host family, we will try to find another family for you as soon as possible. Please understand that you can only change families on the weekend. If this is not possible, we will have to charge you the equivalent of one week's accommodation fees. Please also refer to our refund policy at <https://lidenz.com/procedure-terms/>, replicated partly in the Refund Policy section of this handbook.

Specific information for closed groups

This section applies only if you are organising a group trip to study Russian at Liden & Denz or if you are part of that group!

Rooming list

The rooming list must be done by the sending institution. The assignment of students to hosts will be done by Liden & Denz two weeks before arrival and must be accepted by the sending institution as final.

Host families for closed groups

Students can be placed in single, double or triple rooms, up to 6 students per family. Liden and Denz reserves the right to place other school students to the host family with closed group students. We will do our best to ensure that the other students' mother tongue is different from the closed group's and all communication in the family is in Russian.

Booked services

Our hosts are paid to offer meal services as booked and to communicate with our students regularly. Our hosts must not be used for sightseeing, excursions, organising of weekend activities, transfers or other services. Meals not taken cannot be compensated at a later date.

Group activity programme

Dates, timings and content of the activities scheduled are finalised one week before arrival. The confirmed activity programme can be adapted after arrival only if school resources allow for such changes. Any change will incur an admin fee of EUR 150.

Staying in a Shared Flat

If you prefer independent living but at the same time wish to experience a student atmosphere, you can choose our shared flat option. Our flats have single bedrooms (there are usually around 2 to 4 bedrooms in each flat), one or two shared bathrooms and a kitchen. Bed linen, cutlery and dishes are provided. All our flats are equipped with dishwashers, washing machines, microwave, iron and vacuum cleaner. The shared flat option is no more expensive than staying with a host family, but no meals are provided.

Equipment

You can use all the equipment provided for you in the apartment. Please use it carefully and only for the purpose intended and do not cause any damage. Please report any damage, losses or necessary repairs to the accommodation manager immediately. If you fail to do so, you could be held liable for any damages even if the original defect was not caused by you.

Cleaning

You are responsible for the tidiness of our room and - jointly with your flatmates - for the common areas. You must keep communal areas clean and tidy; clean the fridges and bathrooms regularly and clean cookers and surfaces immediately after use. Please look carefully through the instructions of each of the electrical devices in order to ensure their safe use. Take out the trash regularly, both from your room and the common areas.

We provide a second set of bed linen and towels for each room, so please wash and change your bed linen and towels regularly.

On your last day, please take off the bed linen and place it together with used towels on your bed. Our cleaner will wash them and prepare your room for new arrivals. Make sure to take all trash out on your last day and leave the flat in the same state as it was when you arrived. Do not forget to report anything broken or not in a working order to the school.

Guests

You are allowed to invite guests to the shared flat (but not for overnight stays). We reserve the right to charge a full week's rent as a fine if you have an overnight guest. Please keep in mind that according to local laws, no excessive noise is to be made after 22:00, so keep the noise after that time to a minimum.

Non-smoking policy

Smoking is NOT allowed in our shared flats, on balconies in the shared flats and in the staircase..

Security

When leaving the apartment at any time, please switch off lights and electrical items, and close and lock the windows and outside doors.

Damage deposit

A deposit of €200 is secured on arrival at the school by freezing that amount on your credit card or paid in cash. Upon your departure, after inspecting your apartment, we will unblock the deposit on the next working day or make a refund, if the amount was collected in cash. Costs incurred by damage, breakage or loss will be deducted from your deposit.

Please make sure you are able to provide a credit card with sufficient funds to cover the damage deposit. Please note that AMEX and Maestro cards are not accepted for this operation.

Handover

Before the end of your stay in the shared flat, please contact the accommodation manager, who will inform you about the handover procedure. Please hand over your room cleared of any personal belongings, in a clean and tidy state and together with all keys.

Keys

For your stay in a shared flat you will receive your own set of keys. Please take care of them, do not lend them to other people, and in case of loss or damage contact the accommodation manager. Please bear in mind that for each lost key, €40 will be deducted from your deposit.

Complaints Procedure

Not happy with your classes?

All students are placed in groups according to the language level determined following the written and oral evaluation test. Given the different backgrounds and different native languages of our students, it is impossible to create completely homogeneous groups. But our relatively small group size should ensure that all our course participants receive the appropriate attention. If you are not happy with the level of your group, please wait until the end of the second day of the course, and then discuss this with your teacher. If you and your teacher cannot reach an agreement about moving you to another group/level, please talk to the director of studies, or the centre director.

Not happy with your accommodation?

Please start by talking to your host. Many of our hosts have been working with us for years and are very experienced in hosting foreign guests. If you have difficulties communicating or experience any kind of problems, please discuss this with our accommodation officer. Should you feel it is necessary to change accommodation, please inform us immediately. Please understand that you can only change accommodation on the weekend. If this is not possible, we will have to charge you the equivalent of one week's accommodation fees.

Not happy with your stay?

You will notice very quickly that many things abroad are quite different from life at home.

If you are generally unhappy with your stay in a particular Liden & Denz destination, please talk to the centre director.

Refund policy

If for any reason you need to cut short your course and return home earlier than planned, please note the following:

Bookings made through an agency

If you have booked your course through an appointed agent, the refund policy of your agent applies and your fees will be repaid to you by the agent and NOT by Liden & Denz. You will need to check the booking conditions of your agent and we recommend you contact the agent immediately. Please also check your travel insurance policy.

Direct bookings

Liden & Denz will retain course fees and (if applicable) accommodation fees for 3 full weeks from the Monday following receipt of written notification of course termination at reservations@lidenz.ru. Any other payments received by us will be refunded in full within 30 days, less any applicable transfer fees.

Unusual Hardship

The above conditions do not apply if you or your family back home suffers from unexpected and unusual hardship, such as death or a serious medical condition, which require you to fly home immediately. In those circumstances we will refund you for all unused full weeks.

Terms and procedures

Please check <https://lidenz.com/procedure-terms/> for a complete list of our terms and conditions.

Activities (culture and leisure)

We aim to put on an interesting and varied programme every week, so that our students can get to know their destination city and have the chance to relax away from lessons, make friends or simply chill out.

The activities depend on the time of year. In the summer, we try to do as much as possible outside, while cultural activities occupy more of the programme during the colder seasons.

Some activities are free, such as the city tour for new students. Other activities are charged for. The current programme is available at reception and is given to every new student.

Places to mingle with locals

The following list has been compiled by our students. We trust their recommendations! **Please note that no alcohol is served in Latvia to minors (less than 18 years).**

Cartel Bar - This underground bar in Riga's old town is a great place for a night out, and generally packed with locals, Russian natives and well priced drinks.

Piana Vyshnia - Translating as 'The Drunk Cherry' is another great place to meet Russian speakers in particular. It is packed with both native Russian customers and staff, and their speciality (настояйка) is a great way to get involved in Russian culture.

Дядя Ваня - A great restaurant outside of the old-town, specialising in Russian cuisine (hence the name). It's therefore a great opportunity to practise your spoken Russian and food vocabulary.

Laska Bar - A late night bar off Satekeles Iela near the train station, Laska Bar is open late and transforms into a club night but the cocktail prices stay reasonable and ever tasty. A great place for an evening drink, or a whole night out. Remember to try the Чайка sunrise! Plus, their courtyard turns into a great outdoor space when the weather allows.

Laska V21 - Laska's brand new spot further out, open 17:00 - 03:00 on the weekends and specialising in live music. Their Facebook page is packed with upcoming events, so there's something for everyone.

First Mir Klub - One of Riga's trendiest nightclubs, located a bit further out, but right on the Daugava river bank near the harbour. They open at 11, and you can spend your whole night (up to 6am). A good location for a big night.

For more events and nights out, keep an eye on the RA Guide app or check. All event listings can be found here across the above venues and many more. Check also <https://rigathisweek.lv/> for venues and events.

Safety

Although crime has become a problem in some countries in the post-Soviet space, foreign citizens in Latvia have nothing to worry about, provided they behave as they would in any major European city. Common sense is important. Below are some basic safety tips.

Pickpockets

Only carry with you what you need for the day or evening, i.e. enough cash, and credit/debit cards only if you plan to use them. Otherwise, leave them at home. Keep a close eye on your possessions at all times, especially in restaurants and cafés. Bags and mobile phones are stolen even in more upmarket places with security guards.

Taxi rides

Use established services like Bolt.

FAQ about your stay with Liden & Denz

On Booking and Classes

Can I choose to have lessons in the morning or afternoon?

If you book a one-to-one course, you can have your lessons in the afternoon. Group courses usually take place in the morning.

How do I get to school on the first day?

On your first day, you will be brought to the school by someone from your host family. If you live in a shared flat, you can easily find your way to school on the city map, following the instructions sent to you before your departure.

Can I change groups?

Please check the section above on group placement first. But yes, if you feel that you are in the wrong group, please talk to your teacher who will (after consultation with the Director of Studies) suggest you continue your studies in a group of a different level. If we find no suitable group for you, we will offer you an individual course with 75% of your booked group lessons.

What should I do if I do not understand a teacher during the lesson? Can I speak English?

According to our method of teaching, all lessons are taught in Russian only. This immersion into Russian culture will ensure your progress. But please do not worry; if you do not understand something, the teacher will talk slowly and make sure you understand the task. However, if it is important to you to have a teacher with foreign language knowledge, we may arrange individual lessons which meet your special requirements as far as possible.

How do you select your host families?

We operate a system of transparent selection criteria in terms of geographical location, cleanliness, room size, bathroom, etc. Our accommodation officer then visits the family and fills out a checklist. We interview the family members and inspect the apartment (with yearly re-inspections).

Can I get accommodation in the historic city centre?

Shared flats are usually in the centre, close to the school. Host-families live in residential areas further away, maximum 50 minutes door-to-door.

Can I use my laptop in school?

Yes, we provide wireless internet for free.

Do I have to pay for teaching materials?

Textbooks are included in the course fees. Additional material can be obtained either from the school library or specialised bookshops.

What kind of certificate do I receive at the end of my stay?

At the end of your course, you will receive a graded certificate in Russian, issued by the school. Your certificate will state your course type, course dates, number of hours, and level of Russian achieved according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

On Travel and Arrival

Can I travel to Latvia without a visa?

Latvia is a Schengen country: Students from the EU and selected other countries (like UK, USA, Canada...) can travel visa-free to Latvia for up to 90 days. If you do need a visa for Latvia, please check visa policies and costs at your nearest Latvian consulate.

Are there any goods that you are short of in Latvia that you recommend bringing?

The choice in the shops is now similar to what you will have at home, so just pack your luggage as if you were coming to any other European country. Please take any prescribed medication with you!

Is there anything special I should bring?

Slippers: Locals always take their shoes off at home and wear slippers instead.

Small gifts for your host: some souvenirs from your home country, like chocolate etc., are always appreciated. Electrical adapters: sockets in Latvia take two thin pins (the same as European plug sockets).

Will I freeze in Latvia?

We don't think so. Summers in Latvia are extremely favourable and you can enjoy Jurmala beaches and even swim in the sea. However, the temperature can still sometimes suddenly drop to 10-15°C, even during summer, so don't forget to bring a jumper and jacket.

In winter the temperature can fall below -10°C, and in January, it will rarely rise above 0°C. Bring plenty of warm clothes. You should bring heavy-duty shoes, boots and gloves.

How much money should I bring with me?

For your lunch you may need the equivalent of €7 to €15. The excursions organised by the school cost between €10 and €40 (full-day trips). Your personal expenses will range from €50 (going out once a week, no shopping, no souvenirs) to €300 per week.

What kind of transport is best for getting around the city? How do I pay for public transport?

Trams and buses in Riga are efficiently organised. Contactless payments are the rule.

Can I get around by bike?

In Riga it is very common to cycle, but you have to be careful when parking your bike. Don't leave it unlocked anywhere!

Can I buy a local SIM card?

It's a good idea to buy a SIM card to avoid high roaming charges (unless you come from an EU country). Prepaid SIM cards are on open sale pretty much everywhere.

Can I approach the police if I am lost?

Latvian police officers usually speak 3 languages – Latvian, Russian and English and will be ready to help you out.

Discrimination and Bullying Policy

Liden & Denz aims to create a harmonious learning and working environment based on mutual respect and equality.

Liden & Denz does not condone any form of discrimination or bullying from either students, staff or host families. This includes any behaviour where an individual is unfairly treated due to their:

- gender
- marriage or civil partnership
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity leave
- sexual orientation
- disability
- race
- colour
- ethnic background
- nationality
- religion or belief
- age

Unacceptable behaviour can take different forms including:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation
- Cyber-bullying

Some general examples of harassment may include:

- unwanted physical contact
- verbal and written harassment through jokes or gossip
- photos posted on the Internet
- bullying
- verbal or physical intimidation
- isolation or exclusion

Liden & Denz will take disciplinary action against anybody found to be involved in bullying or harassment.

In the case of students:

In the first instance, the class teacher will speak to the student and explain why the behaviour must cease. This will then be reported to the Director of Studies, who will inform the Centre Director. In the case of groups, the group leader will also be informed. The student will be warned that if this unacceptable behaviour continues, further steps will be taken. All of this should be recorded in the student's records.

If the behaviour continues or escalates, it may lead to dismissal or expulsion from the school. This must be made very clear to the student.

In the case of staff:

Discrimination and bullying of another member of staff or students is unacceptable and will be subject to staff disciplinary and grievance procedures.

In the case of host families:

If host families bully or harass students, this will be dealt with by the Accommodation Officer.