

# Traditions

Latvia is proud of its rich folklore heritage which is vivid up to nowadays. Although Latvia is a Christian society, pagan traditions and celebrations are still alive, which were called into being by our ancestors many centuries ago. One of the most popular celebrations is the Summer Solstice, celebrated on the 23rd and 24th June, called Līgo and Jāņi. This celebration is just as popular as, for example, New Year's Eve in other parts of the world.

Christmas holds an old Latvian tradition - pulling the log around the house, which calls into being a ritual imitating the pace of the Sun.

In February there is a celebration Meteņi, and in spring - Easter, which also contains pagan traditions such as dying eggs, fighting with them and swinging.

The guests of Latvia are welcome to enjoy the old traditions. Come to the Ethnographic Open Air Museum or elsewhere, experience the traditions and learn the crafts. Before Jāņi, attend the song and tradition studies so you can enjoy the celebration in full and experience the mystery of the shortest night of the year - Summer Solstice. At the Ethnographic Open Air Museum the demonstrations of antique crafts often take place and everybody can obtain a little taste of the old vocations.

A unique value of Latvia's folklore are the folk songs called Dainas. Nothing like them can be found anywhere in the world. Dainas consist of four lines and it is not possible to transfer them to another language. They can be lyric and witty, philosophical and ironic, like aphorisms bringing the ancient wisdom through the thousands of years. At the end of the 19th century a folklorist Krišjānis Barons did an invaluable work to collect the folk songs, to systematize them and arrange the songs written on little pieces of paper into a special closet. Today the Dainas closet, with more than two million folksongs, is the Latvian national heritage - the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO has included it into the list of human oral and intangible culture heritage.

Since 1873 the Latvian National Song and Dance Festival has taken place. The amateur groups from all around Latvia come together every four years in Riga, in order to join their voices in a powerful chorus and dance folk dances. The Song Festival anthem "Sun, Thunder, Daugava" was written by the Latvian composer

Mārtiņš Brauns. Foreigners have admitted - only here at the song festival can one fully see the wonderful and powerful soul of Latvia.

**Video material - *Getting to know the Latvian National Song and Dance Festival (3:05)***

**Video material - *(Re)discover Latvia (3:30)***



*Latvian National Dance Festival*

(source: <http://tangoriga.lv/deju-svetki/>)



### *Latvian National Song Festival*

(source:

<http://apollo.tvnet.lv/zinas/uz-emocionala-paceluma-vilna-beigusies-xxv-dziesmu-un-xv-deju-svetki/575821>)

For several decades there has been a tradition to celebrate the Sea or Fisherman festivals in the middle of summer, where one can enjoy delicious seafood, give honour to Neptune, drink, dance and have fun.