

Stay the night: Rumene Manor, Latvia

This 19th-century manor house is in the vanguard of Latvia's hotel revolution, says Adrian Mourby

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PRESS PICTURE

The 10-room retreat's interior design maximises the light with a blend of wood and white with hints of grey

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The country-house hotel is a new phenomenon in Latvia, a Baltic state that saw many of its old German-owned manor houses fall into disrepair under the Soviet regime.

Now, in the Courland region west of Riga, a number of these old properties have been bought up and restored. Possibly the best is Rumene, a 10-room neo-Gothic country retreat that has been completely refurbished by the architect Zaiga Gaile.

Gaile, the wife of a former prime minister of Latvia, previously worked on Bergs, one of the most stylish hotels in Riga. At Rumene, she started off by rebuilding a derelict country house for the Karlsons, owners of Bergs Hotel, then found that they wanted to open their exclusive retreat to the public.

The craftsmanship at Rumene has redefined what can be done with these old buildings, which were nationalised and then left to rot after 1921. Huge marble sink tops from Carrara in Italy, recycled bricks and parquet from other manor houses, reclaimed tile stoves, rare gypsum panelling by Latvian artist Gustavs Skilteris, Oriental prints, and a piano designed by Richard Wagner have been assembled in a delicate, uncluttered manner giving Rumene a spacious, relaxing feel.

The manor sits in its own grounds, an hour's drive from Riga. It was built in 1876 by the von Düsterlohe family on land originally settled by Teutonic knights. Gaile has not re-created the 19th-century manor house – something that can be seen in colourful detail at nearby Kuksas manor – but rather has reinvented it for the 21st century.

The rooms

The colour scheme throughout Rumene is a blend of wood and white with occasional hints of grey from the Dolomite floor tiles, quarried on the Estonian island of Saaremaa. It's ideal for maximising winter light and delivering a serene glow on long summer evenings.

There are currently 10 spacious suites, including three in the main house that have sun terraces. Each has enormous Dutch Linteloo sofas that can be pushed together to create extra sleeping areas. The beds themselves are by Orizzonti in Italy, with Latvian mattresses and Belgian linen. At the request of the Karlsons, long tables have been provided in each room.

Bathrooms continue the white theme with heated floors in Estonian Dolomite. The bathtubs are spacious as are the separate shower cubicles and his-and-her sinks. The toiletries are specially created for the Bergs enterprise by La Bottega of Italy.

The food and drink

There is a permanent staff of five, which includes chef Kaspars Jansons. Breakfast is served in a huge kitchen extension cleverly reworked to appear like part of the house, that is, until you look up and see light streaming in through the glass roof. The dining room offers a number of tables that can be joined together for baronial-style feasts or separated for a more intimate experience. Jansons and his team actually work in an industrial kitchen hidden beneath the house. Dinner is by prior arrangement from a menu that mixes international fare with modern Latvian cuisine. Expect to pay €150 per person for gourmet dining, excluding wine.

The extras

A billiard table in the basement is coming soon and tastings can be arranged in the adjacent and highly stylish wine cellar. Riding stables are 15 minutes away and hunting of wild boar and deer can also be arranged. Wi-Fi is free throughout the hotel.

The access

Children welcome. Advance notice needed with pets. There is a ramp, two lifts and a toilet with access for guests with disabilities, plus good access throughout.

The bill

Double rooms from €480 per night including breakfast. Air Baltic offers limousine transfers to Rumene for £250. Contact ldt@airbaltic.lv to arrange.

The address

Rumene Manor, Rumene, Kandava district, LV – 3120, Latvia (00 371 6777 0900; rumenesmuiza.lv).

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