

Spotter Guide to Riga Intl Airport (RIX/EVRA)



Page 1 – information on spotting points, Page 2 – how to get there, Page 3 and 4 – sample pictures

Frequencies

121.200	Riga Info (ATIS)	133.200	Enroute sector E
118.800	Riga Ground	134.125	Enroute sector E, N, S
118.100	Riga Tower	134.750	Enroute sector S
131.600	Riga Transit	135.100	Enroute sector N, S
127.300	Riga Approach		

General

There are quite a few spotting places around EVRA and some of them quite good. Except the few points (5 – 8) near the terminals (bus #22), and Skulte (1 & 11, bus #43) others are not reachable by public transportation and they are too far for going there by feet to be feasible. Therefore a car or at least bike is recommended.

For most of the spots a ladder is recommended, otherwise you can spot the ground movements only through a fence. Certainly, you can step on the car (if its strong enough). The exception to this is point 4, where ladder is **required** and you cannot park the car close enough to use it instead of ladder.

Authorities will not be of much trouble if you use some common sense like not putting a ladder against the fence etc. If you are close to the fence when their white van is closing in, its recommended that you get off the ladder or step back to some 5m from fence, in that case you will most likely be trouble free.

Prevailing winds in Latvia are from south and southwest (latter especially in summer) so statistically there is bigger chance that RWY18 is in use. But the average wind rose is quite even around the center, so the RWY36 gets quite some deal of use as well. Another point is that RWY36 has better lighting system and is preferred in low ceiling/low visibility conditions.

Due to runway orientation, its easy to judge that western spots are better in afternoon and eastern ones in the morning.

Traffic. What to expect at EVRA? Mostly you will see 733 and 735's of airBaltic, 738 of Ryanair and Fokker-50's of airBaltic. Also an occasional ATR by Danu Oro Transportas operating for airBaltic, as well as Eurorot can be seen, occasional 733/735 by Lufthansa, 733 by Norwegian, 738 by Turkish, Embraer 170/190 by Finnair. Different sorts of A320 family by Latcharter (now SmartLynx), CSA and others. During evenings you may catch some An-26 by RAF Avia. As for the bigger ones – some of two airBaltic 752's and 767-300ER by Uzbekistan enroute from Almaty to JFK and back, twice a week. Unfortunately, for the latter only one appearance in week is during the daytime. 747's are very rare, AirForce One has been here 3 times and a few other visitors one of which is seen at the top of the page. I have never heard of DC-10/MD-11, A330 or A340 here. Also sometimes you can spot a C-130 or other NATO related aircraft here, and sure all sorts of bizjets and -props.

Important note

In late 2008 the runway extension works have been finished – runway was extended from 2550 to 3200 meters in south direction and corresponding taxiways were added. Note that these changes are not seen on most maps, including Google Earth/Maps and map you see on this page. To see latest layout, take a look at <http://www.lv-vacc.org/CHARTS/EVRA/EVRA%20ADGNDGMMVT%20A0808.pdf>

EVRA facts

Year	2007	2008
Movements	47347	57232
Passengers	3160000	3691000
Freight (t)	8130	7668

Source – <http://www.riga-airport.com>



Spotter sites

1 Skulte

This is by no doubt the most popular spot because it is easily accessible and provides good views for both takeoffs and landings regardless of runway in use. Also most of the apron area (except the northern part) is visible from here. In good weather expect at least few cars there, place is also popular for Skulte locals.

2 North end

Very good spot and very deserted of the occasional goers-by because its not so easy to reach (might be problematic after prolonged rainfall etc). Best used when RWY18 is in use – you can get nice landing shots although the ILS equipment might come into view on touchdown. Good closeups of aircraft taxiing/lining up for takeoff can be got here. Also usable for after-takeoff shots for RWY36. Northern part of Apron1 and Apron3 visible from here as well. All the area until 2a is available so there is plenty of space to choose from.

3 North centerline

Good for the "belly shots" – aircraft crosses the A10 highway at pretty low altitude when landing on 18. Due to forests they come into view quite suddenly so radio is recommended to help get ready on time. 3a is the same, its located at the fence and have more obscured view which on the other hand helps get some nice framing for your shots (see samples). 3b is pedestrian bridge over A10 near ZSK shop, café "Vērdiņš" and Riga letters, some side shots backdropped against the highway can be got here.

4 Mukupurvs

Good spot for RWY18 (also takeoffs on 36, with 300+ mm lens). You can have good closeups for a/c taxiing to 18, also it is almost on the taxiway centerline, so nice opportunities for interesting shots (see samples again). Also good for landings on 18. **Ladder required** – there is concrete fence about 2.5m in height. Generally you will find yourself using 200 or more mm of lens here so keep it in mind.

5 Aviation museum

Lots of interesting stuff inside. Some apron action might be caught from there but will most likely be obstructed. There is an entry fee. Visit their webpage at <http://aviamuseum.org/EN/index.html>

6 Gate at the Tower

Not really good place, but some north Apron1 action can be caught through the gate just next to ATC tower.

7 "Lido" restaurant

In the 3rd floor of the terminal building the "Lido" restaurant has windows to the apron just south of the Terminal B. More suitable for observation than photography as you are looking through a tinted window. There also is one window just south, next to the restaurant.

8 VIP gate

Not really good place but some south Apron1 action can be seen through VIP gate. It has holes big enough to get most of the lenses through.

9 Southeast area

Good spots all the way from 9a to 9b. At spot 9 there is small hill which helps you see over the fence, so no need for ladder there (note the 11.8m elevation mark on the map). Perfect for a/c taxiing to 36 (just note that a/c smaller than 737 often do not taxi to the very end of runway and use TWY B or C instead). Good for all movements on 36. Also can be used for post-takeoff pics of takeoffs on 18. The only problem is a nasty RFFS building near exit of TWY B, it often comes into view just at the rotation moment.

10 South centerline

Again a place for overhead shots, this time for RWY36. Near the fence there is small pile of sand which helps you see over the fence. 10a is the same, just located at the bigger road and easily accessed.

11 Southwest area

Starting with the centerline, up to the spot 1, the fence is available for choosing a position. South end could mostly be usable for movements on 36, while north end is pretty much the same as spot 1. Also north end can be used for some views to Apron2. Note that there is new road just next to the fence, approximately where yellow line goes. But it might be bad in poor weather, so if unsure, better go around, as seen on the map.

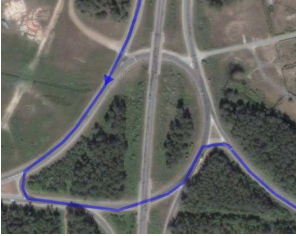
Driving directions

In some of the descriptions there will be places marked with numbers like this: **[1]** – those will be used as reference points not to repeat the same in other point's descriptions.

Spot 1

Easy to reach. From the airport, go back to A10 highway, where you have to go to the left. That means go over the bridge and take the ramp down to the right. On A10, after 6 km in the next junction, follow the signs to Liepaja (left on A5). **[1]**

After 2.8 km another junction is approaching, keep right as to Liepaja, but when you reach the junction take left turn on the roundabout and take 2nd exit to Skulte:



Continue straight ahead and voila! After 3 km you are at the airport fence. Spot 1 is on the left ahead, cars are normally parked near the fence and there are two entrances to that area, one is where the road almost meets the fence and other is a bit back. Watch out for broken glass – as this is popular place, there is unfortunately also quite a lot of trash lying around.

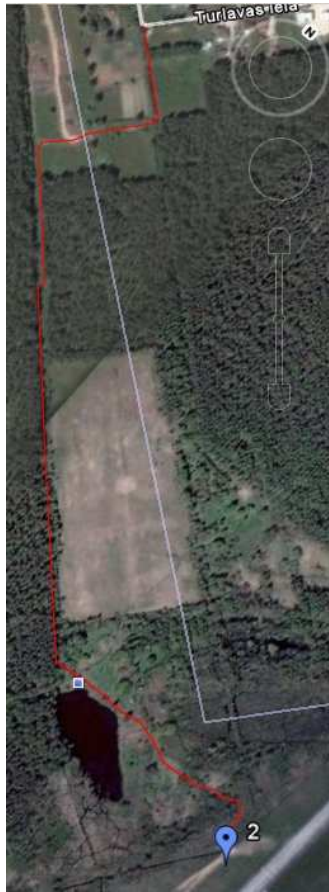
Spot 2 & 2a

The most difficult one to reach but is well worth it. :) Start your journey the same as to Spot 1 until [1]. On the A10/A5 junction take another ramp to get back on A10 in opposite direction (back to Riga). Reset the odometer to zero when rejoining the A10. **[2]**

As you reach the big letters "RĪGA", slow down and right at the 1.5km from [2] exit the highway by turning right near the café (you'll make an almost 180 degree turn again). Continue on the Beberbeku street as it makes left turn just at the big letters. When your odometer reads 2.7 km turn left on the gravel street. If you see sign that reads "Paipal farm", you are at the right place. The street might be somewhat bumpy at places so do not accelerate too much. At the 3.6 km mark you reach a T-intersection with the Turlavas street, continue straight. **[3]**

This is where things are getting difficult, the road gets smaller and rougher, keep slow. A bit more than 100 m from the T-intersection turn 90 degrees right. Some 150m in front of you you will see forest and the ditch on the edge of it. Near the ditch there will be somewhat bigger road going back to the right but you do not need it, you need to go left. The road configuration at this place constantly changes so use your mind to find the correct way to get through. Be aware there are some quite big holes, so choose your path carefully. You need to get almost to the ditch and turn left into the forest parallel to the ditch. For all the rest of the way beware of the holes, they are here and there. After about 200m the road will go over the ditch and continue parallel to it, on the other side. At the ditch crossing, be especially careful. If unsure, get out of the car and explore it first on foot. The good news is that it's the toughest place. :) Continue for almost 500 m from crossing, eventually there will be a meadow on the left behind the tree line, then it will end and soon the road will take to the left. Continue driving on it, there will be a little lake on the right. Some more turns through the bushes and you have arrived just at the fence. This is very deserted area so basically you can leave the car almost anywhere (not that there is plenty of space to choose from though). But if you do not have the ladder and intend to use the car to see above the fence, you might want to get it close to the fence. There is space for two cars so do not park in the middle of it if you are alone – just in case another spotter arrives and wants to do the same. :) Note that Spot 2a is not reachable by car, you can only get to it by foot from Spot 2. If you intend to go to the direction of 2a, leave the car so that the places at the fence are available, just in case. All the area between 2 and 2a is available though ladder is recommended, so pick your favourite spot. :) As for the road condition after [3] – it **might** possibly become "4x4 only" in bad weather but that has not happened so far, the route has been done by vehicles like MB bus, Ford Scorpio, Audi 100, BMW 5xx, Citroen C2 and others, in all sorts of weather conditions. :)

Approximate drawing of the route from [3] to Spot 2 (note that north is **not** up):



Spot 3

How to reach Spot 3 should be quite obvious. It is at the 2.4 km mark from [2]. I am not sure if it is allowed to park on the side of highway (there is plenty of space to do it, but I am speaking of legal terms). So to be on safe side you might consider putting emergency triangle 15 meters behind your car, police should ignore you then. :)

Spot 3a

Initially follow directions to [1] and [2]. When the odometer reads 3.3 km, turn right and then right again. Pass the LPG station and continue on that street (Ciema iela) until the tarmac ends. Here you are just some 200 m from the Spot 3a and have a choice. There is a muddy hole in the road ahead. If the weather is dry and has been so for some time, its not a problem at all, but if it's been wet, you might probably not want to cross it by car, unless it's a 4x4. So, make your choice and either leave the car there or continue some 20 meters on the dirt road. Then it divides into 3 (very small) roads, you have to take the rightmost one. After less than 100 meters it goes a bit uphill and just before that is the hole mentioned earlier. Use common sense when going through it. Just as you are up, turn 90 degrees left (you are now under the glideslope of RWY18) and drive until you reach the fence. Ladder is recommended here or use the car for that (that's if you want touchdown photos, its not necessary for overhead ones). Beware of mosquitoes in summer! It is somewhat swampy place.

Spot 4

To reach it you have to go to the intersection with A10 and take ramp to the right twice to reverse direction (like back to the airport) and as you exit the P133/A10 junction, turn right and then again right to reverse direction once again on Mukupurva street (follow sign that points to "Baltic Motors"). Go back in direction of A10 and then street turns left by almost 90 degrees near the Baltic Motors (Ford & Mazda) buildings. From this point to finish streets are quite bumpy. After 1.3 km turn left at the Gramzdas street (ignore the sign to hotel 50m straight ahead) and after 500 m turn right, then proceed for 200 m until you reach the Mukupurva street where turn left again. Sounds difficult, but those are the biggest roads and obvious choice when you are there. Now proceed for 500 meters and you are almost there. The street ends in nowhere and just before that nowhere there is tiny street to the right which ends at the fence (and Spot 4 at that). Its not possible to turn the car around on that street so either go backwards into it or you will have to go backwards when getting out of it (which I prefer to do) but well, its less than 100

meters. :) Get your ladder, set it up at the very fence, here you can hold it against the fence if needed, authorities will not notice it since its concrete. Watch out for the white van and if it closes in, hide for a moment, they could get somewhat upset if they see someone looking above the fence. :) Be nice to locals and their property in the allotment gardens around.

Spot 5 – 8 will not be covered here as they are within walking distance from the terminal.

Spot 9, 9a & 9b

Take a P133 from the airport and some 500 m after you exited the airport territory at the first traffic light, turn sharp right. 1 km after the intersection turn left on gravel road (might be quite bumpy). Pass the weather radar on the left. After 900 m the road makes sharp right turn followed soon by the sharp left turn where small road continues straight. **[4]**

At first it looks like it goes into the home but actually it does not and is the one we need. After entering the forest you'll eventually reach the Y shaped junction, keep left there (but the correct road will be the most prominent anyway). Continue for nearly 1 km from [4] until you reach the fence and that is where the Spot 9 is. The small hill is just to the right. A few words on road conditions – this road from the [4] to fence used to be very nice and good, but in late 2008 there has been some works in the forest and those vehicles have damaged it to quite an extent. After heavy rainfall or snow meltdown there is a chance that you can get stuck even in 4x4 vehicle so be careful. Don't be lazy and get out of the car and explore the problematic places before you go into them with a car! Should be more or less OK in dry weather though.

Both 9a and 9b can be reached by car as the road goes by the fence and all the area is usable for spotting.

As the day turns into afternoon you will probably want to advance to Spots 10, 11 and 1. From here you can go to Spot 9b where road goes to the left around the "Ulmani" house. Be careful, on 28-Dec-2008 I got stuck there:



Although it should not be a problem in real minus degrees or dry weather. Proceed for some 200 m and turn left in intersection (there is "private property" sign to the right). Proceed for some 800 m and turn sharp right near the house (above 11.3 mark on the map on P.1, smaller of the two roads). **[5]**

Go through the forest, then over the meadow for a total of some 900 m and you are below the glideslope, turn right (it will be obvious as to where to do it) and go to the fence. Nearby is small artificial hill that can be used to get some touchdown photos although a ladder is still recommended (or step on your car).

Spot 10 & 10a

Initially follow the route as for Spot 9 to [4]. Then take the sharp left turn and go for ~600 m until you reach X shaped intersection, turn right there.

If going for **10**, after almost 1 km turn right in T shaped intersection and after 150 m turn left on the smaller of the two roads. Further proceed as described **after** [5] for Spot 9.

If going for **10a**, ignore the T-intersection, after 2.1 km road turns left and after 550 m you reach P132, turn right there. Go for some 850 m and you are under glideslope. Nearby you will see a place with some construction vehicles. Car can be parked on roadside.

Spot 11

It can be reached either the same as Spot 1 by continuing south along the fence, or through spots 9 and 10 as described above. In the latter case, note that the road by fence might be bad and if you are afraid of it, you might take a detour which is obvious on map on P.1 (by the Mazavas). If you are parking the car on the roadside on the "big" road (from Mazavas to Spot 1) note that there is base for some logistics company and that road is sometimes used by the trucks so make sure you leave enough space to be passed safely.

Sample images

Note that most of the pics are cropped more or less and millimeters just show what was used when taking them.

Spot 1



Turkish 738 taking off RWY18 (300mm)



flyLAL Saab 2000 & RAF Avia An-26 (119mm) h/s for 36



CSA A319 with C-160 in background (119mm). RWY36



airBaltic F50 after touch'n'go RWY18 (149mm)



Uzbekistan 763ER reversing on the wet runway 18 after touchdown from JFK New York. (100mm)

Spot 2



Hellenic Imperial 742 crosswind t/o RWY36 (168mm)



Danu Oro Transportas ATR h/s RWY18 (300mm)



F50, F100 and white van of airport security (100mm)



airBaltic 752 after takeoff RWY36 (90mm)

Spot 3



Uzbekistan 763ER on final RWY18. This is not exactly from spot 3 but a bit back in Riga direction on the highway. (105mm)

Spot 3a



airBaltic F50 on final RWY18 (200mm)

Spot 4



Aeroflot A320 exiting RWY36 while airBaltic 735 goes from parking to terminal in early morning (149mm)



airBaltic F50 taxiing to RWY18 while Aeroflot A320 still taxis to gate (214mm)



Early gear up on early morning by airBaltic 735 on takeoff RWY36 (300mm). RIA VOR in background.

Spot 8



airBaltic 735 taking off with 752 in foreground (110mm)

Spot 9a



Early morning shot while most of airBaltic fleet "sleeps" on Apron 2 (149mm)



Germanwings A319 on TWY C after landing on RWY18. This picture is to illustrate the "nasty RFFS building" described in P.1

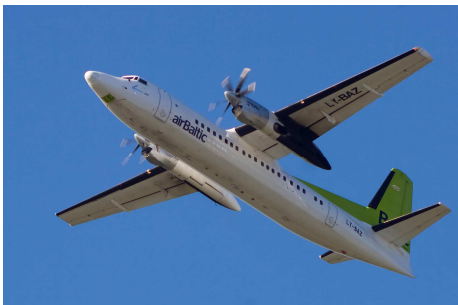
Spot 9



Ryanair 738 taxiing for takeoff RWY36 during heavy snowfall (76mm)



airBaltic 735 taxiing for takeoff RWY36 (70mm)



airBaltic F50 after takeoff RWY18 (300mm)

Spot 9b



Lufthansa 733 on final RWY36 (300mm).



Taxiway action. EuroLOT ATR in front, followed by Turkish 738 and CSA A319. (300mm)



Finnair E170 taxiing to RWY36. (214mm)

Spot 10



Austrian CRJ200 taking off RWY18 (300mm). Note that the newly added runway extension is a bit elevated compared to the rest of the runway (6 feet altitude difference between both ends of the runway).



airBaltic 735 after takeoff RWY18 (190mm). Photo taken just east of Spot 10.

Spot 11

All the pictures are from the north side of the area, close to the Spot 1.



The very first picture of airBaltic 752 YL-BDC after it got the winglets, parked on the Apron 2 (190mm).



C-160 parked at stand 27 and Concors hangar in background. (500mm)



airBaltic 733 taxiing past airBaltic hangar. (214mm)



Finnair E170 after takeoff RWY18 with a moon (70mm)

Pictures by following www.aviofoto.lv members: erv, tjigra, Yuri, Tibsy, eliasson, used with permission.