



**October 2026**

*Open to writers, poets,  
playwrights and  
screenwriters*

**Application deadline:  
30 June 2026**



# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

**Tukums UNESCO  
City of Literature**

**Writer-in-Residence Programme**

*Jaunpils Rakstnieku Pils (Jaunpils Writers' Castle)*



## About Tukums — A City Built on Words

Tukums is a charming town of approximately 18,000 inhabitants located around 65 km west of Riga, the capital of Latvia, and just 15 km from the Baltic Sea coast. In 2023, it was designated a UNESCO City of Literature — a recognition that reflects centuries of genuine literary tradition rather than a recent ambition.

The region is widely regarded as the birthplace of original Latvian literature. The town currently boasts the highest concentration of active writers per 1,000 inhabitants in the entire country and is home to the second most significant art collection in Latvia.

Literature in Tukums extends far beyond libraries and bookshops. Fairy tales, myths, legends and local stories have been woven into parks, forests and the very fabric of the urban environment. The town's Werewolf Trail — laid out in the shape of a wolf's head through a suburban forest — invites visitors to walk through the mystical places described in regional werewolf legends. The developing Ziedonis Garden brings poetry into the landscape.

The Tukums Writers' Association, founded in 1963, is the oldest continuously active literary association in Latvia. It drives the town's rich literary programme, which includes The Poetry Initiative "Sirds uz perona" (*Heart on the Platform*), which originated in Tukums, is now held in many places around the world, and the annual "Tukuma prozas fermentācija" (*Tukums Prose Fermentation*) short story competition and a range of festivals and readings.

## About the Residency

The "Jaunpils Rakstnieku pils" (*Jaunpils Writers' Castle*) residency is located in the Jaunpils village, in the Tukums region — the third-largest administrative region in Latvia. The village, home to around 800 inhabitants, is 30 km from Tukums and 22 km from the town Dobeles. The setting is peaceful, unhurried and deeply inspiring.

The residency is housed within a listed cultural heritage site: the building of the medieval castle started in 1301 by the Livonian Order. It celebrated 725th anniversary in 2026. The castle remains well preserved. Its towers, vaulted passages and ancient stones provide a singular atmosphere for creative work. The castle also hosts various cultural events and serves as a hotel.

The castle's most famous literary resident was Elisa von der Recke (Elisabeth Charlotte Constanzia von der Recke, 1754–1833) — a Baltic German writer, poet and thinker of the Enlightenment who lived at Jaunpils Castle after her marriage to its owner. It was here, in relative isolation, that she began to develop her own voice and become one of the most celebrated female writers of the Enlightenment era, renowned in the world for her literary work — exposé of the occultist Cagliostro.

The surroundings of the castle are equally inspiring: a Lutheran church, a landscaped park ideal for walks, a lake with a swimming spot, and several heritage trails nearby — including the scenic Kārtavkalns nature path (1,6 km) and the legend-shrouded Elles kalns (Hell's Hill) with its ancient bunkers and picnic area (6,5 km). In 2025, the World Newcastle gathering took place at Jaunpils, further establishing the castle's place in the international creative landscape.

## The Residency Apartment

The residency occupies the third floor of the castle's quietest wing — the east wing. Two elegantly appointed apartments, "Elīzas ausma" (Eliza's Dawn) and "Elīzas gaisma" (Eliza's Light), can accommodate two to four writers simultaneously. Each apartment is spacious and furnished with care, combining historical character with comfortable working conditions. The resident will be staying in two-room apartment "Elīzas ausma".

Each apartment includes:

- A large writing desk and workspace
- A well equipped kitchen
- A private bathroom
- A comfortable second bed
- A High-speed internet
- Thoughtfully designed, varied lighting for both work and relaxation
- Access to a shared printer and photocopier

Residents are included in the castle's daily lunch offer at the medieval tavern on-site (5 euros per meal). Within a few hundred metres of the castle, you will find a library, bus stop, grocery shops, an ATM, parcel lockers, a café, and a local brewery with a bar. The bus to and from town Tukums commutes 6 times a day and to town Dobele 4 times a day.

**Note:** During your residency, a Latvian author will be in residence in the second apartment, offering an opportunity for informal literary exchange.

**Important:** The residency apartment is on the third floor. There is no lift/elevator. The residency is not suitable for applicants with mobility needs that preclude stair access.

## Residency Dates — October 2026

Applicants may apply for one of the following residency periods:

Period	Dates (incl. arrival/departure)
Four-week residency	1–28 October 2026
Two-week residency (first half)	1–15 October 2026
Two-week residency (second half)	17–31 October 2026

*The proposed dates are preferred but flexible by a few days where flight availability from your country makes exact dates impractical. Please contact us to discuss possible arrangements.*

*Note: for two-week residencies, date adjustments are not possible, but extended stays at your own cost in the castle hotel can be arranged.*

## What We Offer

- A 2–4 week stay at the Jaunpils Rakstnieku Pils, in a private, fully equipped apartment within a medieval castle.
- A scholarship of €800 for a four-week residency, or €400 for a two-week residency (travel costs, insurance and visa fees are not covered).
- Transport to and from Riga International Airport.
- A dedicated contact person who coordinates accommodation, events, meetings, tours and helps connect you to the local and national literary scene.
- The opportunity to engage with Tukums region's active cultural life and to participate in readings, festivals and other literary events.
- An immersive encounter with one of Europe's most storied literary landscapes.

## Eligibility Criteria

We welcome applications from writers, poets, playwrights and screenwriters worldwide. To be eligible, applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

### Language

- Upper-intermediate spoken English (at least B2) and/or elementary Latvian (at least A2)

### Publication Record

- At least two published works in traditional publishing: fiction or non-fiction books, screenplays, theatre plays, and/or translations from Latvian into another language.
- Self-published works are not eligible.

### Project

- The applicant plans to work during the residency on a project in one of the following categories: historical novel, horror novel, fantasy novel, mystery or detective novel, poetry collection, screenplay, or theatre play.

### Connection

- The applicant lives and/or works within a UNESCO City of Literature.
- The applicant expresses genuine interest in Latvian culture, history and/or literature.

### Commitments

- Readiness to participate actively in local literary life: events, meetings, interviews, readings, festivals.
- Agreement to share a short excerpt from work created during the residency (a passage from the larger project and/or a short story, poem, or piece of short prose) with the Tukums City of Literature.

#### Please note:

Children and pets are not permitted in the residency apartment.

Spouses, muses as creative partners (one person) are welcome with prior agreement; however, the scholarship amount remains fixed regardless of the number of guests (€800 per month / €400 per two weeks).

Entry visas are the sole responsibility of the selected resident. The Tukums City of Literature Office will provide an official support letter for visa applications but cannot issue visas or guarantee outcomes.

## How to Apply

Complete the Application Form and upload the required documents. The form is available [here](#).

Your application should include:

- A completed Application Form.
- A brief bio and list of published works.
- A description of the project you plan to work on during the residency (up to 500 words).
- A writing sample: an excerpt of up to 5 pages from a published or forthcoming work (in English or Latvian, or with an English translation).
- Confirmation of your connection to a UNESCO City of Literature.

**The deadline for applications is 30 June 2026. Selected residents will be notified at the beginning of August 2026.**

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Do I need to arrive and depart on the exact dates listed?**

The dates above are preferred start and end points. We can accommodate adjustments of one or two days where flight availability from your country makes the exact dates impractical — please contact us in advance. For two-week residencies, date adjustments are not possible, but extended stays can be arranged at your own cost in the castle hotel.

### **Can I travel around Latvia during the residency?**

Yes — we encourage residents to discover the whole country. You may spend time travelling or staying in other cities. Travel costs outside the programme are your own responsibility.

### **Can I bring my partner or family?**

The residency is designed as dedicated, uninterrupted creative time for the author. As a general rule, family members are not supported. In exceptional cases where a spouse or partner is also a practising writer who will devote time to their own creative work, both may share one apartment. In this case, the scholarship remains €800 (four weeks) or €400 (two weeks) — it does not increase for additional guests. Children and pets are not permitted under any circumstances.

### **Is the apartment accessible?**

The residency apartment is on the third floor and there is no lift. The programme is not suitable for applicants with mobility needs that preclude stair access. We are happy to discuss any queries.

### **Can my partner use the castle's lunch offer?**

Yes — any accompanying companion may also use the castle's daily lunch at the medieval tavern (5 euros per meal). The scholarship amount is not affected.

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## Contact & Further Information

Tukums UNESCO City\* of Literature Office

Email address: [unescojaunpils@gmail.com](mailto:unescojaunpils@gmail.com)

[Website](#)

[Application form](#)

*\*Tukums has been a UNESCO City of Literature since 2023. The Tukums Writers' Association has been active since 1963 and is the oldest continuously running literary association in Latvia.*

## "Elīzas ausma"



photo by Guna Roze-Tamule

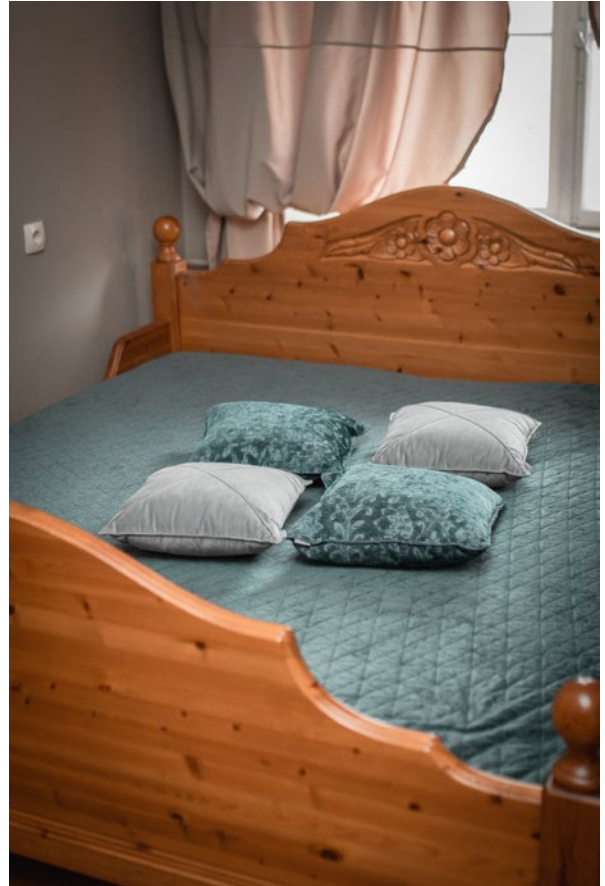


photo by Vīneta Zelča-Barone



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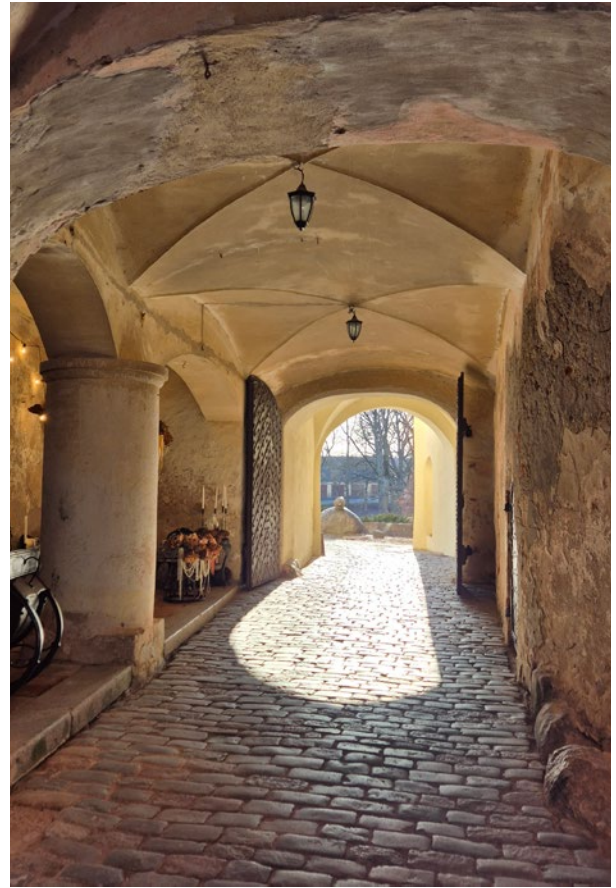


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