

APRIL /
MAY 2021
airBaltic
Inflight magazine

baltic

outlook

CĒSIS
RECHARGING IN LATVIA

NATURAL WONDERS
OF ICELAND

HIDDEN GEMS OF MILAN

DIGITAL NOMAD
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ARCHITECTURE, AND RESPECT FOR
THE CITY'S HISTORY.

The HOFT project is a combination of historical architecture, nature, technology and art. An absolutely unique hovering oasis is positioned over the carefully preserved and restored historic façade like a glass showcase built for design objects, but the nature itself is its creator. HOFT is located in the "quiet centre" in Riga, at the most picturesque intersection of the Quiet Centre, on the crossroads of Strelnieku and Alberta streets.

WWW.HOFT.LV

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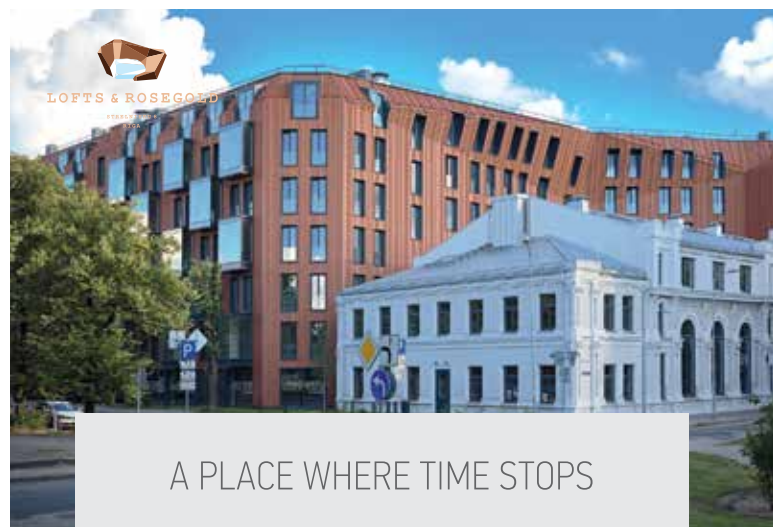
Sales Department: +371 67885028, info@rvlc.lv, www.rvlc.lv



PHILOSOPHY IS THE ART OF LIVING

The Philosophers Residence is a dedication to future tenants, each of whom follows their own philosophy of life and makes their own choices. The main task the project developers set themselves was to create an ambience that supports the tenants in walking their chosen paths and helps them open up new opportunities and search for new ideas. To achieve that, there are libraries in the lobbies of the houses, basketball and sports grounds, ping-pong and Novuss terraces, a children's playground, and spaces for meditative rest.

WWW.PHRESIDENCE.LV



A PLACE WHERE TIME STOPS

The residential quarter Lofts&Rosegold is an example of architectural interaction between two epochs: the historic building, the beautiful Lofts, can be likened to a gemstone surrounded by the metallic-blush setting of the new and luxurious Rosegold building. The project in itself combines apartments, luxurious two-level lofts and working spaces. The main lobby serves as both the gravitational centre and communal centre for the inhabitants of the Lofts&Rosegold Quarter.

WWW.LOFTANDROSEGOLD.LV



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MARTIN ALEXANDER GAUSS
Chief Executive Officer, airBaltic

Dear guests of airBaltic,
Welcome on board the safest mode of transportation today! The health and safety of our passengers stand above all. That's why our aircraft are regularly disinfected, our crew members wear personal protective equipment, and we have implemented dozens of other procedures, only some of which passengers can notice. We have been recognised by *Skytrax* as one of only very few airlines in the world to have a five-star Covid-19 safety rating.

In March, *ch-aviation* recognised *airBaltic* as having the youngest aircraft fleet in Europe. This is a remarkable achievement that's based on our decision last year to concentrate solely on the *Airbus A220-300*, the most modern and efficient aircraft around. By the end of 2021, we plan to have 32 of these aircraft in our fleet. Each of them saves up to 20% in fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions compared to previous-generation jets.

Our commitment to reducing our impact on the environment doesn't end with modern aircraft. Over the years, we've carried out various

projects to increase the efficiency of *airBaltic* operations. Recently we introduced electronic flight plans for our pilots. More than seven years ago, our pilots at *airBaltic* traded in their 10–15 kilograms of flight manuals for *iPads*. Now, we've taken another significant step forward, eliminating one of the last documentation items that pilots had to print out. We are thus saving not only vast amounts of paper but also fuel burn. A few kilograms of weight may not seem like a lot, but when you do 60,000 flights a year, the impact adds up.

While people in Europe are still in the process of receiving their Covid-19 vaccines, this currently remains the age of essential travel. But as the process progresses, we expect that leisure travel will again be possible in the upcoming summer season and that many of you will be interested in safe holiday getaways.

As the largest carrier in the Baltics, we've done our part in preparing for the summer. We're ready to once again connect Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius with over 70 direct destinations. Recently we also resumed flights from the Baltics to key destinations outside the European Union, such as Kyiv, Moscow, and Tbilisi. We will provide more travel opportunities as soon as leisure travel is once again possible.

Connectivity is essential, and we promise that when the world opens up again, we'll be here, stronger than ever to keep carrying you safely.

Hope to see you again on an *airBaltic* flight soon!



Yours,
Martin Alexander Gauss



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baltic outlook

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Please follow all of the safety measures and restrictions at each *airBaltic* destination, and stay updated on what, if any, actions are required upon returning from them. Also, before attending any event, confirm the time and place as well as any special conditions that may apply. Some photos in this magazine may be only of an informative nature.

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L'ANGA

Photo by @anti_glossy

www.langa.studio



GET SOME FOREST THERAPY

Research shows that aromatherapy is one of the most potent ways to ease the mind and body. While we may primarily associate the method with essential oils, diffusers, and scented candles, the outdoors has much more to offer, specifically in terms of mindfulness.

Japanese researchers have long focused on forest therapy, or forest bathing, known as *shinrin-yoku* in Japan. During the pandemic, forest therapy has again come to the fore all around the world. According to the Forest Therapy Institute, getting out into the forest, especially a pine forest, works wonders for the mind, body, and spirit. Experts say that a walk in the forest should ideally last between two and four hours. This allows enough time for your mind and body to slow down and relax. And definitely remember to at some point just sit down and observe your surroundings for a while. The longer you sit, the more you'll notice.



MUSIC

The sound of the Baltics

The artistic output of Imants Kalniņš (b. 1941), one of Latvia's most illustrious contemporary composers, ranges from classical music to rock and film music. His Symphony No. 4 is included in the Latvian Culture Canon. In honour of Kalniņš' 80th birthday, the *Skani* national record label has released a five-CD set featuring his most significant works of symphonic music: seven symphonies and three concertos. This comprehensive project reveals the very refined sense of melody and dramatic abilities of this composer.

lmic.lv

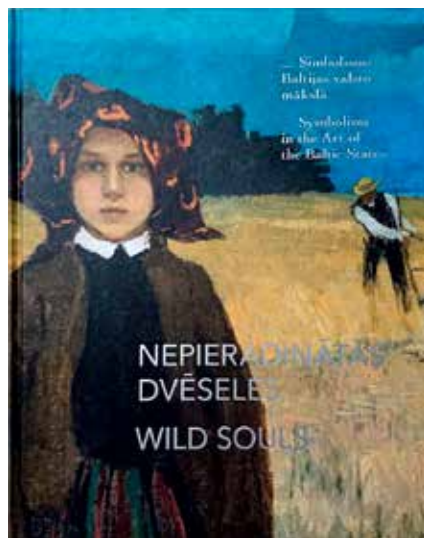


DESIGN

Bold and colourful

Last year, *The New York Times* included the work of talented Latvian illustrator Roberts Rūrāns (b. 1990) among its most memorable illustrations of the year. Experts praise his combination of visual simplicity and traditional painting technique, which results in playful characters, bright colours, and sharp-witted compositions. These qualities also appear in *Riga City*, one of the newest works by Rūrāns. Printed on fine paper, it's an excellent choice if you're looking for a stylish souvenir.

robertsurans.com



READING

Wild souls

One of the headlining events marking the centenaries of all three Baltic states was the international exhibition *Wild Souls: Symbolism in the Baltic States*. It featured the most prominent works of art from the Baltic states relating to Baltic Symbolism, a movement that lasted from the 1890s until the end of the 1920s. In 2018, *Wild Souls* was on show at the legendary Musée d'Orsay in Paris. This significant event has now been published in an extensive catalogue, in which the works of art are supplemented with artist biographies and other interesting information. A must-have for art lovers!

neputns.lv

Words by Zane Nikodemusa

Publicity photos and by iStock

BIRKENFELDS GALLERY AND AUCTION HOUSE

For an insight into Latvian art, both old and new, check out Birkenfelds, one of the country's oldest galleries. Its exhibitions, auctions, and website feature impressionistic landscapes, abstract art, drawings, and much more by some of Latvia's finest artists. Birkenfelds focuses particularly on photography and represents the well-known photographers Antanas Sutkus (Lithuania, b. 1939) and Ulvis Alberts (United States/Latvia, b. 1942).

birkenfelds.lv



Ilmārs Blumbergs (1943–2016).
Van Gogh's Two Chairs. 1996.

IIHF ICE HOCKEY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

The 2021 IIHF Men's World Championship will take place in Riga from May 21 to June 6, and many of the world's best players have confirmed their participation. The contest will feature two eight-team groups with Russia, Sweden, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Slovakia, Denmark, Belarus, and Great Britain forming Group A. Group B will consist of hosts Latvia, Canada, Finland, the United States, Germany, Norway, Italy, and Kazakhstan. The epidemiological situation will determine whether spectators will be allowed in the arena, but emotions will be running high even if we have to watch on television!

iihf.com

Quote of the month

Spring won't let me stay in this house any longer! I must get out and breathe the air deeply again.

Gustav Mahler (1860–1911), an Austrian composer and master of the symphony. May his quote serve as inspiration when seeking out new and exciting experiences this spring.

RIGA
April / May 2021

MANGAĻSALA JETTY

The jetty at Mangaļsala, also referred to as the 'eastern jetty', is arguably one of the most romantic spots in Riga. Built between 1850 and 1861 at the mouth of the Daugava River, it is 2240 metres long. The Mangaļsala area was long inhabited by fishermen, but nowadays it's better known for the remains of military structures left here by various powers, from Tsarist Russia to the Soviet army. In the spring, the Mangaļsala jetty is a favourite spot for bird watchers, who flock here to see rare waterfowl and songbirds.



Did you know?

Spikeri Quarter, Riga's warehouse neighbourhood, was designed by the best architects in the Baltic states. Its simple but striking red brick buildings are more than 150 years old.

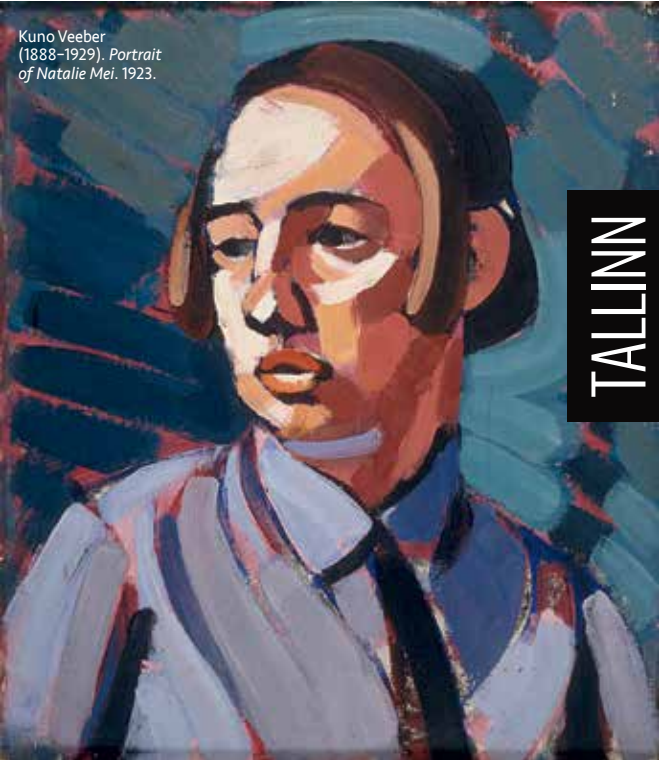
liveriga.com



TECHCHILL CONFERENCE

This year, the popular Baltic startup and technology event will take place virtually from May 7–21. It will focus on issues related to the green new world, knowledge for growth, and digital transformation. Having grown from a small grassroots movement of like-minded tech enthusiasts, TechChill brings together the fastest-growing startups, the most innovative corporations, investors active in the region, and talented tech enthusiasts. But the speakers and workshops are just as exciting for anyone interested in personal growth.

techchill.co



TALLINN

KUMU ART MUSEUM

A must-see for culture aficionados, Kumu, the main building of Art Museum of Estonia, serves both as Estonia’s national gallery and as a centre for contemporary art. The complex itself is a work of art. It opened in 2006 after nearly a decade of planning and construction and is considered a masterpiece of modern architecture. The new permanent exhibition at Kumu tells the story of Estonian art as it has evolved over the centuries and grown into a heritage that blends Estonian, Baltic German, and Russian traditions.

kumu.ekm.ee

PIRITA PROMENADE

A long-time favourite of pedestrians, cyclists, and skaters, this paved pathway stretches along the waterfront from Kadriorg to Pirita. It offers by far the most spectacular views of Tallinn’s rocky shoreline with the Old Town cityscape in the distance. There are also playgrounds and comfortable seating areas along the road, making it a great place for a picnic. Pirita’s two-kilometre-long sandy beach is the city’s most famous beach in summer.



Did you know?
Danish King’s Garden – an open, garden-like area on the slopes of Toompea Hill in Tallinn – happens to be the legendary birthplace of the Danish flag. visittallinn.ee



THE BEST VIEWS

Some of the most prominent features of Tallinn’s skyline are also the best places for great views. Tallinn’s Old Town is most renowned for its city wall and towers. The limestone defensive wall was originally nearly four kilometres long and had eight gates and 46 towers. Today, about half of the wall and towers are still standing. The best views are from Kiek in de K  k and Fat Margaret Tower, both of which also operate as museums.



BOG TOUR

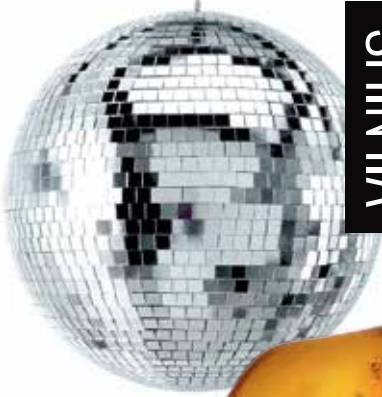
There are various ways to get acquainted with the outskirts of Tallinn, from nearby islands to national parks and quirky small towns. But one of the most impressive experiences is visiting a bog at sunrise. Bogs are found throughout Estonia, with those nearest to Tallinn located in Lahemaa National Park and K  rvemaa Nature Reserve. We suggest hiring a guide or even joining a bogshoeing tour. 360.ee

CHURCH OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul is one of the most beautiful Catholic churches in the world. It is without a doubt the most famous Baroque church in Vilnius. Constructed between 1668 and 1676, its special interior is filled with about 2000 pure-white statues. Intense and dramatic, this sanctuary is an absolute must-see!

OPEN-AIR DISCOTHEQUE

The mayor of Vilnius has made a daring promise to host an open-air discotheque if Lithuania wins the Eurovision Song Contest this year. So, if you love Eurovision as much as Lithuanians do and think that an open-air discotheque sounds like an unmissable party, make sure to support the Lithuanian band The Roop in its quest to win at Eurovision this year. The contest will take place in Rotterdam on May 18–22.



Did you know?

The Lithuanian National Philharmonic has organised a series of performances especially for the quarantine conditions, and the recordings are of exceptional quality. The concerts are also completely free of charge. govilnius.lt

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BOTANICAL GARDEN

Sprawling over 199 hectares and featuring more than 10,000 plant varieties, the Vilnius University Botanical Garden is the largest and most diverse garden in Lithuania. Located on the grounds of an old manor, in spring the garden comes to life with the amazing colours and scents of flowers and blossoming trees. Come here to enjoy hundreds of species and cultivars of magnolias, lilacs, rhododendrons, peonies, and tulips. botanikos-sodas.vu.lt



VILNIUS



ART CENTRE OF BALTIC AMBER

Amber is a precious gift from the Baltic Sea. Drops of pine resin washed into the sea via rivers transformed into amber millions of years later. The processing of amber into jewellery and other crafts is a part of the Lithuanian national heritage that has survived through the centuries to the present day. Visit the Art Centre of Baltic Amber to learn about the history of this most popular souvenir from Lithuania. In the centre’s modern workshop you can see how amber is processed and even make your own pendant. ambergallery.lt



Words by Olga Dolina
Publicity photos



© EDDA

Jean-Michel Jarre
in O3 studio

PARIS



Photo by Benoît Linero

Hôtel Les Deux Gares



Photo by Benoît Linero

Hôtel Les Deux Gares

World-famous pioneer of electronic music Jean-Michel Jarre has recorded a 52-minute soundtrack for the immersive exhibition **Salgado Amazônia** (until August 22; 221, Avenue Jean Jaurès; philharmoniedeparis.fr). Created by award-winning photographer and filmmaker Sebastião Salgado, it launches at the Philharmonie de Paris on April 7. Six years of Salgado's travels through the wild and breathtaking forests, rivers, and mountains of the Brazilian Amazon and his encounters with locals have resulted in this series of more than 200 vivid photographs. Jarre highlights the visual effect of powerful black-and-white imagery by combining electronic and orchestral instruments with real-life nature sounds and indigenous voices, songs, and instruments. Recorded in binaural audio format, it packs an extra-immersive punch.

A splash of exuberant patterns, vivid prints, contrasting colours, and Art Deco furniture meets guests at the new **Hotel Les Deux Gares** (2, Rue des Deux Gares; hoteldeuxgares.com). As the name suggests, it's located between two iconic train stations, the Gare du Nord and the Gare de l'Est. Spread across five floors of a historic building, the hotel's gripping appearance uniting 'English chic with French soul' is the brainchild of British interior designer Luke Edward Hall. Retro-chic bathrooms clad in glazed tiles in bold primary colours invite guests to an energising repose, while the romantic bedrooms with patterned headboards and walls in contrasting pastels and bright shades look out across the Parisian roofs.

At 16,000 square feet, the **Kith Paris Flagship** store is the American lifestyle brand's largest retail space in Europe (49 Rue Pierre Charron; to visit, book a time slot at rendezvous.kith.com). Three floors of the historic Pershing Hall building in the heart of the classy Golden Triangle area invite shoppers into a modern retail experience and a universe of street fashion. The boutique's monochrome design echoing typical features of Parisian architecture was created by *Snarkitecture*. An assemblage of plaster *Nike Air Max 1* sneakers – the signature installation at *Kith* – adorns the vaulted ceiling of the marble-tiled entryway, while the glass-roofed courtyard with a floor-to-ceiling green wall serves *Kith's* own ice cream and an exclusive brunch menu by New York-based restaurant *Sadelle's*. The first floor offers men's, women's, and children's apparel and footwear.



Photo by Keukenhof

Keukenhof Gardens

AMSTERDAM



© Tomasz Markowski, Poland

Tour of Poland Cycling Crash



Hotel nhow Amsterdam RAI

Springtime in Amsterdam means an explosion of blooming flowers. As the national symbol of the Netherlands, tulips steal the show all around the Dutch capital and beyond. Every year, a grand flower festival in the historical **Keukenhof Gardens** takes places in April until May 9 (Stationsweg 166a, Lisse; keukenhof.nl; tulpfestival.com). Located in Lisse, less than an hour's ride from Amsterdam, seven million tulip bulbs bloom over 32 hectares of fields, gardens, greenhouses, and picturesque labyrinths of canals and ponds. Against the colourful backdrop of tulips featuring nearly every shade of the rainbow, visitors can also explore the surroundings on bicycles. Keukenhof will welcome visitors again as soon as pandemic restrictions allow. In the meantime, the Tulip Festival invites aficionados to admire more than 40 public spaces in Amsterdam that are adorned with tulips and are open free of charge.

World Press Photo 2021 holds its traditional exhibition in De Nieuwe Kerk, a 15th-century church in the heart of Amsterdam (April 17 – July 25; Dam Square; worldpressphoto.org). This year, a record number of 74,470 images were submitted to the 64th edition of the renowned annual photo competition. With the final participation of 45 photographers from 28 countries, 150 award-winning photographs representing eight categories (news, portraits, sports, nature and the environment, etc.) will be on display as well as films from the 11th Digital Storytelling Contest. Showcasing the best of visual journalism, the exhibition celebrates gripping personal and social stories and important social issues of the tough, life-changing year we've just had, reminding us of the unconditional power of the art of photography.

Hotel nhow Amsterdam RAI stands apart from the rest with its striking architecture by award-winning practice *OMA* and Reinier de Graaf, as well as its state-of-the-art interior design (Europaboulevard 2b; nhow-hotels.com). The RAI Amsterdam exhibition complex located in the Zuidas business district has gained a new, contemporary face with the 91-metre-high hotel building consisting of overlapping triangular volumes inspired by the iconic local advertising column known as Het Signaal. *nhow Amsterdam RAI* has 650 city-facing rooms and extra-spacious suites on the higher floors. The six different room designs with a colourful, eclectic, patterned twist were inspired by the cardinal directions in which they face.



The **Sokos Hotel Vaakuna**, a landmark of the Nordic functionalist era, has been meticulously updated by the local design studio *Fyra* (Asema-Aukio 2; sokoshotels.fi). The Vaakuna building formerly housed the *Sokos* department store and was completed in 1952 for the Summer Olympics in Helsinki. Over the decades, the partly protected edifice had undergone several changes, and thus the main goal of the interior architects was to visually unite and renovate its key parts: the lobby areas, rooms, corridors, and the panoramic 10th-floor restaurant, called *10. Kerros*, which stands out with its curved shapes and wooden details. The hotel's original design was updated with brass numbering on the doors, reupholstered armchairs, a bird motif in the rooms and lobby area, and more, yet the establishment has lost none of its glory or 1950s charm. *Sokos* provides an elegant, urban nostalgic experience with 430 cosy and stylish guest rooms.

As the first sunrays appear in spring, sea rides around the Helsinki Archipelago become more pleasant for seekers of both extreme fun and romantic seclusion. High-speed rigid inflatable boat tours by **Redrib Experience** begin the new season with a series of exciting adventures (redrib.fi). If you want an early swim but aren't ready for the ice-cold waters of the Gulf of Finland, *Redrib* offers a survival-suit experience. Relax and float in the water while staying completely dry and warm inside a special, bright orange suit. Tailor-made tours explore scenic landscapes at high speed, combined with relaxing picnics in the wild. And for special occasions, book an evening boat ride to a remote rocky island to enjoy the sunset and nature while lounging in reclining chairs with a bottle of champagne.

Apotek, a vibrant new wine bar, attracts guests with a laidback atmosphere that already begins on the corner terrace, where locals catch the evening sun (Lapinlahdenkatu 1; viinibaariapotek.fi). Situated next to the nearly century-old Cinema Orion in artsy Kamppi district, *Apotek* is located in the former *Swan Pharmacy* that dates back to 1918. Within the captivating and respectfully renovated Art Nouveau interior, the design of the bar catches the eye with original artefacts such as the old cash machine and the wooden shelving and counters. A diverse selection of artisan wines from small family-owned European wineries pair perfectly with the innovative entrées and small bites from chef Ville Rainio.



A developer with strong roots

Vastint Latvia is one of the leading real estate developers in Latvia. Since 2003, the company has excelled in the management of portfolio properties and development of commercial real estate, including residential development and sales.

Vastint Latvia is part of the Vastint Group — an international real estate organisation with more than 30 years experience in Europe.

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MY BARCELONA

Maria Åstrand is the creator of *Barcelona Food Experience* (barcelonafoodexperience.com), one of the most popular food blogs in Barcelona. Originally from Finland, Åstrand moved to Barcelona 13 years ago, where she first began her *Instagram* page @barcelonafoodexperience. Sharing stunning photos of her favourite restaurants, cafés, and bars from across the city, it quickly became one of the most influential foodie accounts in Barcelona. Today, Åstrand continues to scour the city for the latest openings and hidden gems, publishing what she finds on her *Instagram* account and website. We sat down with her to hear about some of her favourite places in Barcelona.

Words by James Taylor
Publicity photos and
by Maria Åstrand



Parc dels Tres Turons

Behind the famous Parc Güell, I recently discovered a trail that takes you into a lovely forest with a beautiful viewpoint, the Mirador de Joan Sales. After taking in the view, continue along the path towards Parc dels Tres Turons and you'll find the most fantastic scenery: a hill that in spring is covered with blossoming almond trees and 360-degree views over Barcelona. It's absolutely breathtaking. There's even a swing where you can sit and enjoy the views! Only locals know about this place, so sometimes you can have it all to yourself. I enjoy coming here for a breath of fresh air and some peace and quiet.
Camí de Can Móra 1, Horta-Guinardó

La Cova Fumada

For a truly authentic tapas experience in Barcelona, I head to *La Cova Fumada*. This tapas bar hasn't changed in the last 60 years or so, which is a part of its charm. Early in the morning, older gentlemen from the neighbourhood flock to start their day with fresh seafood and tapas, and most days the bar closes in the early afternoon after running out of ingredients. The bar doesn't even have a sign outside, so make sure to look it up in advance. The menu is hand-written on a blackboard, but the staff will help you choose and advise you on daily specials. I love going here to indulge in the tasty tapas, the busy atmosphere, and the lovely staff.
Carrer del Baluard 56, Barceloneta;
lacovafumada.com



The Chai Guy

If you're out and about on the weekend, make sure to look for The Chai Guy. Bahram, who is the man behind this venture, pours his heart and soul into a masala chai that's guaranteed to be nothing like you've ever tasted before. It's wonderfully balanced and surprising in its complexity. The chai is vegan, and Bahram uses black tea from Assam, the tea capital in India. He uses a secret mix of spices that he has been perfecting for a long, long time. You can check his *Instagram* account @chaiguybcn to see where he'll be located each weekend. He sells out quickly, so make sure to go early!

Weekend popup announced
via *Instagram*: @chaiguybcn

Besta

The Mediterranean and the Atlantic meet in a union of two chefs at *Besta*, bringing together delicious dishes and ingredients from both Catalunya and Galicia. The menu frequently changes with seasonal ingredients, and the dishes are fun and innovative, with delicate Nordic brushstrokes. This is a place where you want to do wine pairings: *Besta* has an excellent sommelier who will make the experience a journey in flavours and sensations. I find *Besta* unique in the way it plays with a diner's emotions, letting one revisit memories through the various dishes. It's an extraordinary place.
Carrer de Aribau 106, Eixample;
bestabarcelona.com



Words by Ilze Vitola
Photo by iStock



Fly to
Bergen
from
€195
roundtrip

Colours everywhere

Let us introduce you to one of the most photogenic destinations in Europe.

Slim, stately, colourful wooden houses lining the docks – it's this idyllic view of Bryggen that first comes to mind when one thinks of the Norwegian city of Bergen. And while today Bergen's postcard-perfect old wharf looks completely unblemished, its history hasn't been all plain sailing.

Bryggen traces its history as far back as the Viking Age, yet its fame began in the 14th century, when the Hanseatic League established an outpost here. The buildings were taken over by Hanseatic merchants and used to house salted cod and goods such as salt and clothing arriving from Europe. This area became the main trading hub of the North and a vital yet secluded part of the city for hundreds of years until Hanseatic operations gradually ceased in the 18th century and the properties were turned over to Norwegian citizens.

A devastating fire struck in 1702, burning the entire city to the ground. Bryggen was completely rebuilt after the fire, but a number of subsequent fires kept

challenging its existence. The last fire, in 1955, left locals wondering whether it was worth reviving the doomed area again. But extensive archaeological excavations lasting 13 years uncovered thousands of objects that helped reimagine Bryggen as it was in the Middle Ages and convinced the locals that the area needed to be recovered.

Thanks to meticulous reconstruction, the Bryggen we see today is the same as it was in the Middle Ages, when German merchants strolled the streets. The 62 buildings that make up the area have been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1979. Today Bryggen is Bergen's main cultural draw, gathering locals and visitors alike. The narrow streets between the wooden structures are filled with charming cafés and a number of museums as well as workshops and stores run by potters, leather craftsmen, and other artisans. The Hanseatic Museum is also located here and gives an insight into what it was like to live in Bryggen in medieval times.

Manchester IN 24 HOURS

As the city where the Industrial Revolution started and many musical genres and political movements have emerged, Manchester's innovative and creative spirit can be felt on every corner.

A CLASSIC NOT TO MISS

The recently renovated Manchester Central Library will amaze even those who aren't architecture buffs. First opened in 1934, today the library's interior fuses 21st-century comforts with lush historical details. Make sure to pop into the magnificent Wolfson Reading Room. As for the exterior, the form of the building was inspired by the Pantheon in Rome.

St. Peter's Square



Photo by Jody Hartley

WHY NOT

After a 15 million pound refurbishment, the Whitworth Gallery reopened in 2015 and won the Museum of the Year prize. The extensive collection of fine art, modern art, textiles, and prints is complemented by exciting temporary exhibits. Located in Whitworth Park, with a sculpture terrace and orchard garden, it's a fine destination for a stroll.

Oxford Road | whitworth.manchester.ac.uk



Words by **Ilze Vitola**
Publicity photos and
by *iStock*

WHERE TO STAY

Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants has just opened its latest outpost, the *Kimpton Clocktower Hotel* (formerly the *Principal Hotel*). *Kimpton* is known for elegantly reviving historical properties, and this 270-room hotel housed in a 19th-century building with a grandiose clock tower is no exception. Launched in late 2020, the hotel balances between modern comforts and bygone charm complemented by sincere Mancunian hospitality. Prices from EUR 160.

Oxford Street | kimptonclocktowerhotel.com



WHERE TO DINE

The *Bay Horse Tavern* is a stylish take on a Victorian pub serving British classics in a fine yet laid-back atmosphere. Expect perfectly executed sausage and mash, world-class sandwiches, and a sophisticated take on classic British pies. Come here on Sundays for the special Sunday Roast menu.

35-37 Thomas Street | thebayhorsetavern.co.uk

WHERE TO SHOP

A short distance from Manchester, the old English market town of Altrincham dates back to 1290 and has much more recently been the winner of the *Observer Food Monthly* Best Market Award. The market is divided into three areas: the outdoor covered market features typical market stalls selling everything from crafts to fresh produce, the Market House boasts ten specially selected eateries, and New Market Square highlights new, fresh food concepts.

Greenwood Street | instagram.com/altymarket



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Point of view

Where to go in Malaga, according to travel expert Joanna Karońska.



My secret spot
‘I love Malaga for its numerous points with wonderful views of the capital of the Costa del Sol, and in this sense the cathedral plays a leading role. Another of my favourite places with a great view is the Mirador de Gibralfaro, and I just recently discovered the path in the park right next to the Mirador that led me to my secret place. It’s located under Gibralfaro Castle and is part of the route called Sendero la Malagueta. As you walk through the park, you suddenly see a cliff with a breathtaking view of the bull ring, the Muelle Uno port, and the Mediterranean Sea. The Sendero la Malagueta has become my favourite place for jogging, watching the sunset, and romantic walks.’

Words by Līga Vālko
Photos courtesy of Joanna Karońska



Joanna Karońska
instagram.com/mymalaga
Number of followers: 24.2k
Joanna Karońska is originally from Poland and works as a manager at an international corporation. Although she admits that she did not love Malaga at first sight,

she changed her mind for good after moving to Spain in 2013, and now she cannot imagine her life without this city. The fascination of Andalusia inspired her to create her own business, *MyMalaga.pl*, which serves as a source of useful information for tourists and offers event organisation and private tours. Karońska uses her *Instagram* account to share her genuine love for Malaga, the Andalusian lifestyle, the sun, and life in general, and over time she has developed a passion for photography. Her motto is ‘you are where you need to be’, and she wants to inspire others to feel the same way about Malaga.



Other locations to check out:
• Start your day with a Spanish breakfast at *Café Central* and coffee, which is served here in nine different ways.
• Try traditional *espetos de sardines* for lunch, which are roasted over a fire on the beach. They’re best served at the *chirinkitos* in the El Palo and Pedregalejo districts.
• End your day by enjoying the sunset on the terrace at the *AC Hotel Málaga Palacio* and traditional tapas at *El Pimpi* restaurant, where Antonio Banderas is one of the shareholders and a regular visitor.

Words by Lana Jūra
Photo by Ilze Pole

Hidden gems in Milan

History, art, and nature merge harmoniously at these ornate villas, making them the perfect places to enjoy spring.

The history of Milan’s villas stretches back to the Roman imperial era, although construction truly burgeoned in the Renaissance period. Villa construction also took inspiration from the hunting-lodge tradition of the 15th and 16th centuries and the development of residences for wealthy land owners. The trend reached dizzying heights along with Milan’s might as a financial centre and the second industrial revolution.

The industrial elite and aristocracy traditionally built their villas as summer residences or, in other words, pleasure palaces (*ville di delizia*) in which to relax and enjoy the good life. For Milan’s wealthy classes, however, villas were not only a status symbol. Their investments in the aesthetic qualities of these buildings also reveal a deep commitment to the arts, excellence, and good taste. They employed some of the most talented and technically skilled architects, who, together with highly skilled artists and decorators, created true masterpieces. The villas are known for their high level of construction, innovative solutions, ornate decoration, and, above all, superb landscape design.

The development of these green embellishments in the city particularly flourished during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and also that of Napoleon.

While most of the historical villas are located in a broad area around the city – such as Brianza, Monza, and the beautiful shores of Lakes Como and Maggiore – several are part of the urban landscape of Milan itself. Representing a wide range of architectural styles, from Baroque, Neoclassicism and Neo-Gothic to Art Nouveau and Rationalism, the villas are a vivid part of Lombardy’s cultural heritage.



ITALIAN HISTORICAL VILLAS AND GARDENS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR TRAVEL PLANS

Villa Necchi Campiglio

Described as a work of art and an architectural sign of its time, this villa designed by the renowned architect Piero Portaluppi and built in 1935 is located right in the middle of the city. Built on an unlimited budget, the former residence was designed for the Necchi Campiglio family of Italian industrialists. The elegant villa boasted Milan’s first private swimming pool. It also has tennis courts and a unique garden featuring camellias, ferns, and hydrangeas. The art film *I Am Love* (2009) by Italian director Luca Guadagnino, with Tilda Swinton in the main role, was filmed in this luxury location.

Via Mozart, 14

Casa degli Atellani and Vigna di Leonardo

Don’t miss this 15th-century Renaissance gem hidden behind an unassuming façade. It was originally given to the knight dell’Atella and his family for his loyal service to his lord. The residence is located just a few steps from the Santa Maria delle Grazie Church, known for the famous depiction of the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci. As a sign of thanks, Duke Ludovico Sforza of Milan gave Leonardo a small vineyard in 1498. That vineyard is located at the back of the Atellani garden, and Leonardo cared for the grapes there in hope of eventually becoming a citizen of Milan.

Corso Magenta, 65

Villa Clerici

This *ville di delizia* designed by architect Francesco Croce and built in the Neoclassical style between 1722 and 1733 is located north of central Milan in the Niguarda district. Its owner, Giorgio Clerici, and his family had become wealthy in the silk and banking businesses as well as by serving in various political positions. A highlight of the villa is its large Italian-style garden, or *giardino all’italiana*, complete with statues of saints, ornate chapels, and two amphitheatres. In addition to other activities, the villa now also houses the Gallery of Contemporary Sacred Art (GASC) and its impressive collection of artwork.

Via Giovanni Terruggia, 8/14

Take your friends TO THE SAUSAGE STAND IN VIENNA

A late-night sausage with bread and mustard is a Viennese tradition.



Words by Ilze Vitola
Photos by
WienTourismus/
Peter Rigaud



With its imperial history and Baroque masterpieces, Austria's capital is not the first to come to mind when thinking about indulging in street food. However, snooty coffee culture and bedsheet-sized Schnitzel are not the only staples of Viennese cuisine. Peppered across the city's 23 districts, humble sausage stands, or *Würstelstands*, have been a part of Vienna's cityscape since the imperial days, when they served as the main source of income for war veterans.

Even today, these humble kiosks have a social significance, gathering everyone from well-coiffed white collars to the common folk. Except for vegetarians, of course, because the stands serve little else apart from a wide variety of sausages. The absolute favourite is *Käsekrainer*, a large sausage with chunks of Emmentaler cheese inside that melts blissfully when heated. In fact, the sausage stems from a region that is today a part of Slovenia. Another legacy of the Habsburg Empire winning fans on Vienna's streets is the *Debreziner* – a sausage made of shredded pork and beef infused with smoked red pepper flavour that was born in the Hungarian town of Debrecen. The sausages are usually served on paper plates, sliced in large chunks, and accompanied by a white bread roll or a slice of dark bread and a sunny dollop of mustard or ketchup. You can also often ask to have it served in a hotdog bun.

Sausage stands are usually located near U-Bahn stations, but some addresses are worth keeping in mind, such as *Bitzinger* in front of the Albertina Museum. Although it's part of a chain of kiosks, this location is somewhat iconic – maybe the gigantic rabbit sitting on its roof has something to do with that. You can even sip a glass of champagne with your *Käsekrainer* here. Another well-known establishment is *Würstelstand am Hohen Markt*, its gleaming red sign attracting hungry night owls from all corners of the city. Like its peers, *Würstelstand am Hohen Markt* appeases sausage cravings almost round the clock. Who knows, maybe sausage stands are one of the reasons why Vienna keeps appearing in the top spots on lists for best quality of life?

LOCATION. QUALITY. SECURITY.



* The International School of Latvia, the Exupéry International School, Kings College Latvia, and local municipal schools Babīte Secondary School and Babīte Music School.



Le Jardin des Muses (Pinki) - a village of ten homes and a club house with a common area, with one entry gate and separate exit gates that form a secure area which kids can enjoy and be safe in.
The living community was built with the most modern, internationally accepted living standards and features concierge service and 24-hour security patrols. Architect - Dipl. Lic. Ing. Architect Martin Edler von Schiffer

Style by Ieva Čecina
Publicity photos

Peace and harmony

The essence of the refined Provençal interior style lies in its ability to elegantly combine the ornateness of French ‘vintage’ style with the relaxed, slightly worn simplicity of rural life, thus creating the feeling of a light, peaceful, comfortable home. Choose soft pastel colours that reflect the blue waters of the Mediterranean and the golden sands of its beaches.



Elizabeth Barrett Browning armchair, Nina Campbell, EUR 2575



Ornate 5-light crystal chandelier, Lafayette, EUR 250



Woven flower pot, Arket, EUR 15



Classic table lamp, Cubi, Yoox.com, EUR 374



Embroidered Graham cushion, Bloomingville, EUR 67.90



Light blue linen bedding, Finlayson, 150x210 cm duvet cover and 50x60 cm pillowcase, EUR 99.95



Crystal wine glass with hobstar pattern, Libbey, 300 ml, EUR 8.90



French Garden plate, Villeroy and Boch, 21 cm, EUR 32.90



Light blue linen napkins, H&M, 2 pc. EUR 9.99



Elegant vintage-style Arcadia sofa, Poltrona Frau, EUR 6222



Woven basket, H&M, EUR 39.99



Rattan Amira chair for the terrace, Bloomingville, EUR 369



Gold-coloured cutlery, Pintinox, fork EUR 8.90, knife EUR 11.90

Taste of life



ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS HARMFUL TO ONE'S HEALTH. THE SALE, SUPPLY AND PROCUREMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES TO MINORS ARE AGAINST THE LAW.



More Munch than ever before

A brand-new museum on Oslo's waterfront is tailor-made for great art experiences.

Words by Olga Dolina
Publicity photo

It's one of the most awaited museum openings of the year, yet it keeps getting postponed. Bringing its powerful presence into Oslo's cityscape and specially designed to display the world's largest collection of work by celebrated master of expressionist painting Edvard Munch (1863–1944), the new Munch Museum will contain more than 42,000 works of art and objects, including two versions and six lithographs of the iconic *The Scream*. The foundation stone for the new building in the revitalised Bjørvika port district was laid in 2016. Yet the history of the institution itself reaches several decades back in time.

The new Munch Museum designed by the team at Spanish-based *Estudio Herreros*, led by architects Juan Herreros and Jens Richter, spreads the legacy of Munch across 26,300 square metres of space. It will be one of the world's largest museums devoted to a single artist. Alongside preserving, archiving, studying, and displaying the life and works of Munch, the new museum also intends to become an urban magnet and meeting point for Oslo's citizens and guests to the city, an interactive hub blending art, culture, and leisure.

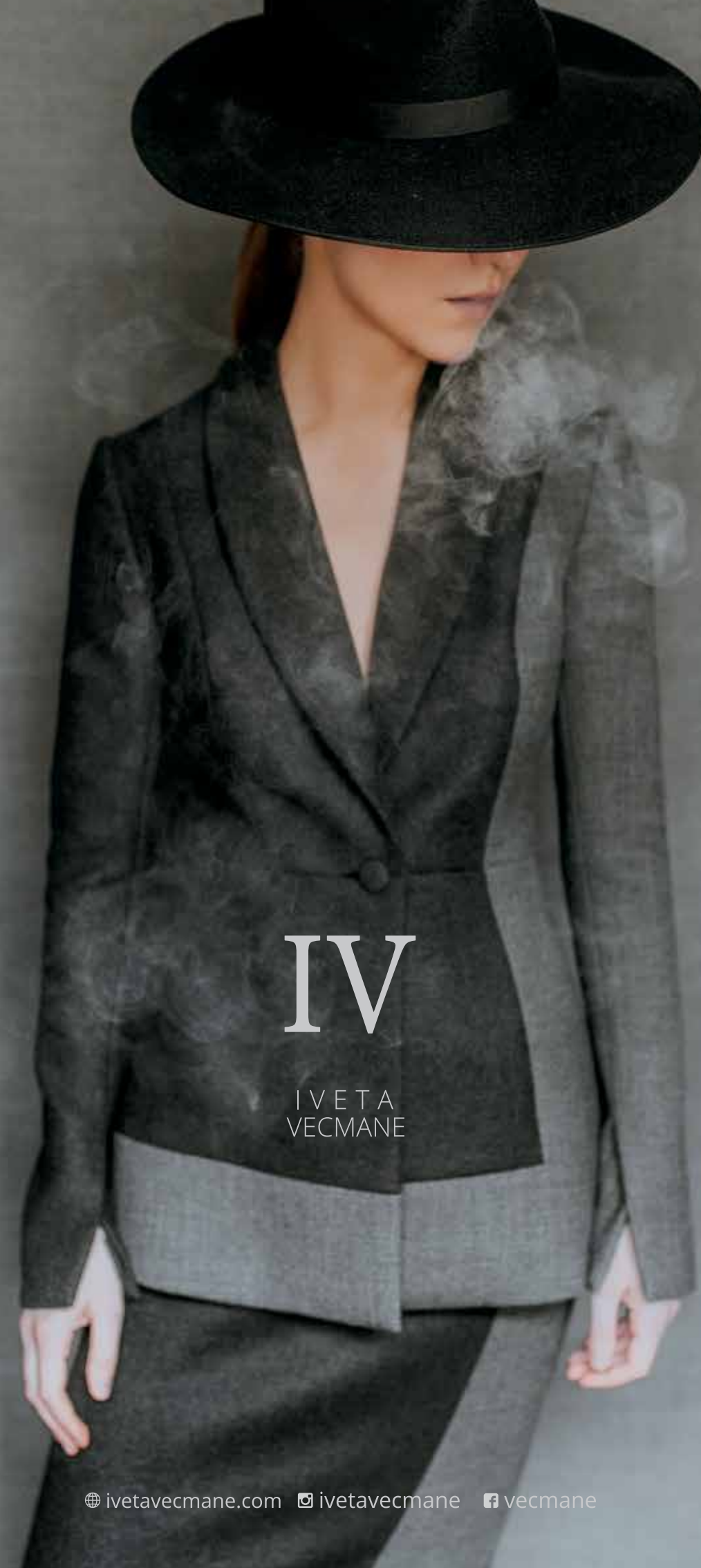
As if reflecting Munch's enigmatic and deeply artistic personal universe, the façade

clad in perforated recycled aluminium panels with different levels of transparency creates a constantly changing dialogue of light and shadow depending on the weather and light conditions. The panels also effectively reflect sunlight to avoid excessive temperature fluctuations. With a slightly leaning tower, the 60-metre-high building features galleries of varying height and size for permanent and temporary exhibitions.

The most obvious feature of the architecture is its demonstratively vertical form. This shape gradually connects the public and commercial spaces starting from the lobby with the spectacular rooftop and viewpoint. The journey between the two will offer an exciting exploration of the world of Munch as well as the historical layers of Oslo.

Many of the architectonic decisions made by *Estudio Herreros* have focused on sustainability, the climate, and optimising energy consumption. They include partially natural ventilation and the use of low-carbon concrete and recycled steel. One smart detail: no visitor or staff car parking will be provided at the Munch Museum in an effort to encourage bicycle use and enjoying Oslo on foot.

munchmuseet.no



Words by Viesturs Kundziņš
Publicity photos

Travel accessories



As the world changes, so do our travel habits. But that doesn't mean we can't enjoy a nice vacation. Here are a few travel accessories for your next trip.



FOR A RAINY DAY

Earthpak Summit Dry Bag

If you opt for outdoor travel, then it's vital to have your belongings in a safe and dry bag while hitting that mountain trail, for example. These comfortable, waterproof backpacks come in 35- or 55-litre size – ideal for hikers, campers, and even everyday commuters. They also include a waterproof case for your phone.

earthpak.com
USD 59.97 (approximately EUR 51)



PORTABLE HOTEL

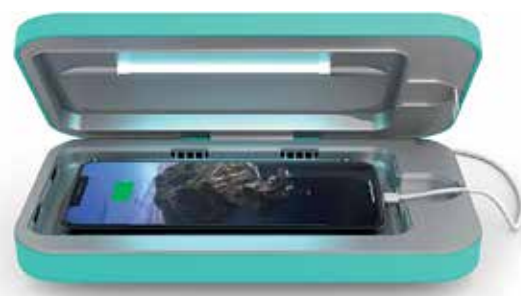
Wise Owl Outfitters Single Owl Hammock

Hotel rooms or even camping huts are not for everyone. If you like being out in 'real' nature as well as enjoying some alone time, then this hammock is just what you need. Compact, light, and easy to set up anywhere, use it to take a nap during your hike or spend a night in the glorious, million-star accommodation.

wiseowloutfitters.com
From USD 28.95 (approximately EUR 24)

KEEPING IT CLEAN

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We're constantly touching our phones with our hands, but even though we wash our hands regularly, how often do we clean our phones? This small device uses UV light to disinfect your phone from germs and viruses. Just place your phone in the sanitiser, and a few short moments later it'll be clean again.

phonesoap.eu
EUR 96.74

DON'T MISS A THING

GoPro Max

People love to take pictures and videos while travelling, but what if you're in a place that's so overwhelming you don't even know where to start filming? This compact, durable 360-degree camera will capture everything.

Then use the *GoPro* app to do an easy edit of your experiences.

gopro.com
EUR 429.98

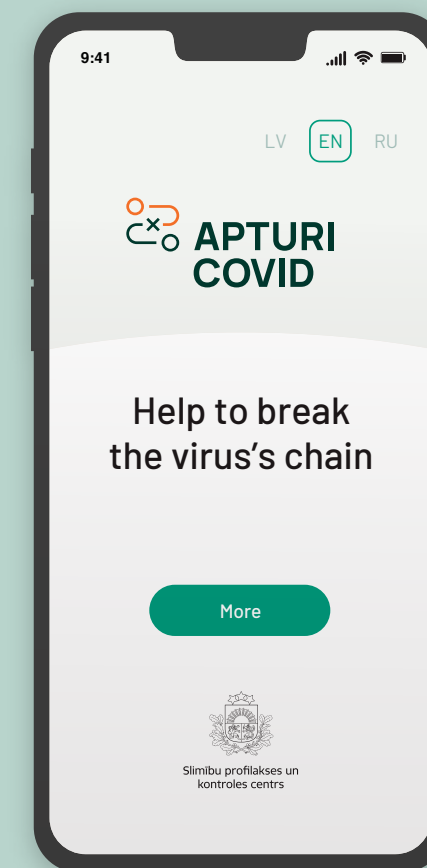
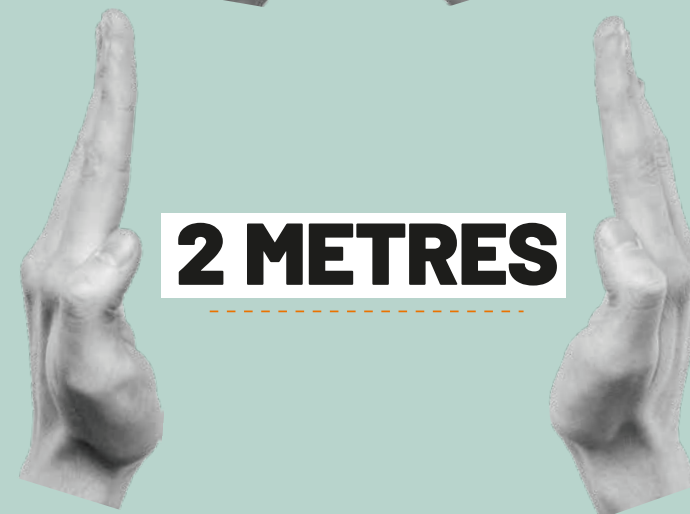


THE NEW ESSENTIAL

Maskfone

Phone, wallet, keys – the three essentials without which we don't leave our house. Now there's a fourth one – the face mask. Although they come in many designs and variations, there's only one mask that comes with a built-in entertainment system. The *Maskfone* protects you with changeable N95 filters and provides convenience with built-in earbuds, microphone, and audio controls on the mask itself.

maskfone.com
USD 49.99
(approximately EUR 42)



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What's in season?

Nothing tastes better than the first few springtime meals of the year. So we've collated a list of must-have foodie experiences for spring.



Seeing as pandemic lockdowns brought a lot of pasta, burgers, and cheese-covered casseroles into our homes, springtime with its fresh, local, seasonable greens and vegetables brings a very welcome change.

We all know what a positive impact spring greens and vegetables have on our health. Fascinating research led by the Stanford University School of Medicine shows that the gut microbiomes of hunter-gatherer tribes eating only foods that are in season at any given time actually change in sync with how their diet changes throughout the year, suggesting that seasonal eating could impact gut health. 'Our own microbiota can change significantly from day to day, or even within a matter of hours, in response to what we've been eating,' says Justin Sonnenburg, PhD, an associate professor of microbiology and immunology at Stanford and one of the co-authors of the study.

Likewise, studies seem to indicate that what we eat may affect not just our physical health but also our mental health and wellbeing. And they all mention eating spring greens and vegetables as a potential way to drastically change your mood and improve your way of life.

The world is full of great spring greens and vegetables. Which ones should you definitely try to include in your travel plans? Here we take a look at a few foods that enjoy near iconic status in certain countries.

What we eat may affect our mental health

Words by Zane Nikodemusa
Photo by iStock

FOOD WORTH TRAVELLING FOR

Rhubarb in Iceland

Although Icelanders say that increases in food imports have led to rhubarb losing its stable place on the Icelandic table, it still grows on practically every farm and rural home in the country. That's mainly because it can stand the weather and requires very little until the moment you're ready to process it into jam or other delicacies. Rhubarb has recently also found a new role in cuisine, namely, as a side dish or spice in all kinds of dishes as well as in wines. But don't ignore tradition – the locals highly recommend trying a roasted leg of lamb with rhubarb jam.

Asparagus in Germany

'Asparagus inspires gentle thoughts,' said English essayist Charles Lamb. Tender, sweet stalks of asparagus are indeed delicious at their prime. As spring blooms in Germany, locals excitedly count the days until they can eat their favourite vegetable. They prefer the white variety, which is harvested from about mid-April until the end of June. From Baden-Württemberg to Brandenburg, certain rural areas in Germany take special pride in being prime asparagus-growing regions. Here, asparagus is traditionally served with melted butter and potatoes, ham, and/or hollandaise sauce.

Artichokes in Italy

Whether stuffed, steamed, fried, or marinated, artichokes are something of a favourite in Italian cuisine. Many Italians have a soft place in their hearts for the vegetable with a tender heart, especially Romans, who prepare it in a particularly unique and delicious way. The best variety is considered the Romanesco artichoke, which is mainly grown on the coast north of Rome near Ladispoli and Cerveteri and is only available in the spring, from March to May. Locals say that the Romanesco artichoke is also excellent raw, served with olive oil, lemon, and flaked Parmesan.

Liepāja

Port Paradox – Liepāja

Plan your destination!



ON THAT DAY IN CĒSIS



With time I've realised that, for me, travel has never been about the destination. The autumnal aroma of roasted chestnuts in Rome, the salty air of the Judean Desert, or the Hudson River piers have only served as backdrops to the exhilarating relationships and connections I've experienced in those moments and that have allowed me to lose a certain sense of time and space. Because life is people, and my best memories have been created by people, even those whom I've met only once.

But I've known Helēna almost half of my life. Even though it took changed circumstances and a second meeting to actually become friends. To realise that we have similar tastes and we both believe in the beauty of things long gone. As well as in truth, hidden in Burgundy reds.

On that day I picked her up around 12 o'clock. It was a hot Sunday in August. We had also spent the previous day together, meeting old friends in town, and had decided to take a short trip to Cēsis, which is just over an hour's drive from Riga. The town is located in Vidzeme, a region of Latvia that is famous for its beautiful, hilly, almost ever-green landscape.

Helēna and I went to university together, and now she lives in southern France. Usually it's the other way around, that she comes to pick me up. At the hotel on the Quai Rauba Capeu in Nice, where I hide from the world and count airplanes from my terrace. I love our day trips together. Our last one on the Côte d'Azur was a couple of years ago. Because of a traffic jam in Monaco, we missed a guided tour of E-1027, a modernist villa in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin we wanted to see. Instead, we stayed on the beach, took off our shoes, and had a cappuccino in a small Italian café. The radio was playing in Italian, Helēna spoke to the owner in Italian, and we had plenty of time to converse. Later, Helēna drove me almost to the Italian border for lunch. She had booked a table in a restaurant in a village whose name I don't remember. This was no ordinary table, set on so small of a roof terrace that there was room for nothing else. The view merged with the red-tile roofs and the clouds floating by – it was so high above the ground! – and the blue waters of the Mediterranean on the horizon.

Words by Ilze Pole
Publicity photos
Illustration by Agnese Tauriņa



Rožu (Rose) Square across from St. John's Church served as the town's market square from the 13th century until the 1920s. This is also where the pillory, or whipping post, stood.



Podnieku iela, a street in the Old Town of Cēsis.

Because life is people, and people make everything alive

We reminisced about that day on our way to Cēsis. We remembered the food and the heat while Helēna fidgeted with the air conditioner. Having left the car in a parking lot, we felt a bit stunned: where was everybody? We walked up Rīgas iela in the hope of finding some people. But the street felt lazy, hot, and bothered – with still no sign of people, although closer to Vienības laukums the restaurants were open. When we curiously checked out *Bekko*, the local Italian joint, we finally found everybody... outside on the wooden terrace in the restaurant's courtyard. We were lucky to get a table.

Italian radio was playing again. Our food arrived – the *gnocco fritto* and ravioli with chanterelles were perfect. The sun was still high in the sky, and we asked for ice. I popped one piece into my glass of water and held another to my neck, letting it melt. The swelter did not let up, but our conversation still sparkled. Helēna suggested *affogato* for a desert, but we didn't find it on the menu. We went inside and asked the owner whether she could make a couple for us. Of course, she could. I left Helēna at the counter to choose from the homemade gelati and sat down on a brown vintage couch next to the window. I heard them laughing, and a minute later Helēna returned with two cups of *affogato* – classic *fior di latte* gelato

melting under a shot of black espresso. Across the street, the pizzeria was open, people now coming and going, picking up their orders or sitting at the tables outside. A few minutes later we walked through the buzz that had suddenly taken over the town.

St. John's Church, which we visited, is almost right next to *Bekko*. Built in the second part of the 13th century, it's one of the country's oldest Gothic churches outside Riga and known for the major role it played during the Reformation in the 16th century. In the so-called Icon Riots, residents of the town vandalised the church, mercilessly destroying the icons and statues of the saints that are so characteristic of Catholic churches. Cēsis was one of the first places in Latvia that embraced the Reformation. Later, during the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits were active in St. John's Church. But it reverted to Lutheranism in 1629 along with the rest of this region.

Over the centuries, the church has suffered several fires, pillaging, and wartime bombing. It has also been renovated and reconstructed several times, the most recent work having been completed only a year ago. The church stubbornly continues to stand. Its threshold stands approximately 100 metres above sea level. Climb to the viewing platform, which starts at a height of 25 metres, and you'll be at one of the highest points in Latvia.

In the Middle Ages, the church and Cēsis Castle were surrounded by a network of small, meandering streets with the homes of craftsmen and merchants. Unfortunately, the medieval buildings have not survived to the present day, but the layout of streets remains largely unchanged. In fact, the entire old

part of Cēsis has been granted national architectural heritage status. On this hot day, some of the windows stood open, televisions blaring from the historical buildings. The old houses are gradually being restored – some by the owners themselves, others with co-financing from the city council. The residents would like for the renovation to take place much more quickly, but there's nothing else to blame but a lack of funds.

Helēna and I headed towards the former premises of the Cēsis Society for the Blind, where special workshops for the blind were established during the Soviet era. A part of the Cēsis Art Festival exhibitions were held in one of the buildings. The festival was founded in 2007 by locals who began bringing a variety of cultural activities to the town, thus creating a tradition that put Cēsis on the cultural map of Latvia. We wandered around the space and looked at the installations on the roof as well as the breathtaking view of the town. Cēsis slumbered soundly among its gentle hills, wrapped in Sunday serenity as we headed back to the car park. We had reservations for dinner at *Pavāru Māja* (Chefs' House) in Līgatne, on our way back to Riga.

When I returned to Cēsis last month to write about it for *Baltic Outlook*, I made *Pavāru Māja* my first stop. And I knew that this story would be about people in Cēsis. Because life is people, and people make everything alive. I was reminded of that in every single encounter I had.

IT'S STILL EARLY MORNING ON A GREY DAY IN MARCH, BUT I ENJOY MY DRIVE,



Almost 4000 infants were born in the Līgatne maternity hospital, which is now the home of the *Pavāru Māja* restaurant.

ESPECIALLY THE PART LEADING UP TO PAVĀRU MĀJA. The hilly, curvy road leads through deep, dark green forest. I walk the last part of the way across a bridge over a swift stream and along a gravel path past a garden up to *Pavāru Māja*. Last summer the garden was overflowing with hydrangeas.

I'm here to meet Ēriks Dreibants, who is a very well-known chef in Latvia and one of the first who brought the concept of slow food to Latvia, using and emphasising local, seasonal produce in his restaurants in Riga. Now he co-owns *Pavāru Māja* in Līgatne. He must have seen me coming and opens the door to greet me. The restaurant was closed over the winter season, and he warned me that the temperature inside would be no higher than 12°C, but there's hot coffee on the table and a Tracy Chapman album playing in the background. I remember that Sunday evening last summer: Helēna and I laughing, groups of friends at the tables, the evening sun so hot that we had to close the curtains, delicious food, the sound of wine bottles being opened.

The village of Līgatne flourished in the 19th century. A paper mill was established here in 1815 and continued to operate until 2014. At the time, its workers enjoyed some of the best living conditions in Europe. They were allocated separate apartments heated by wood that the mill provided; likewise, they did not have to pay for water or electricity. The workers' houses, built in the early 20th century, are still inhabited today and are the oldest surviving wooden rowhouses in Latvia.



With houses for insects and birds, the *Pavāru Māja* garden is made for nature lovers.

Pavāru Māja evolved from the garden and its menu features many wild and seasonal foods

The historical centre of the town is a unique ensemble of buildings that was the winning Latvian entry to the European Destination of Excellence competition in 2011. Līgatne had its own school, hospital, and club building (built in 1897 and which now serves as the local cultural centre) as well as a maternity hospital. And it is the transformation of the maternity hospital that is actually at the core of this story.

In 2016, Dreibants bought the abandoned building that had witnessed the birth of almost 4000 infants. He had already sold his apartment in Riga and moved to a place nearby. ‘I’ve always liked Līgatne,’ he says. ‘I learned about this place when I was in the area many years ago to do a count of bats hibernating in the nearby sandstone caves. My hobby is ornithology, and I was assigned to monitor this area. I think Līgatne is one of the most beautiful villages in Vidzeme.’

Dreibants’ first job was to renovate the building. ‘I knew I wanted to develop a restaurant here, and I also knew that the specific ideas about how it would all look would come to me eventually. And that’s exactly what happened.’ As he began renovating, he realised that he actually needed to begin with the environment around the building: ‘I think it’s very strange how people build a house, hang pretty lamps in it, and then look out the window and see



Green peas, red currants, herb pesto, and Soira ash cheese – typical summer ingredients that *Pavāru Māja* uses in its seasonal summer menus.

the disorder all around. Then they remember that they should probably plant a flower or two. But the environment is in fact very important.’

Dreibants tells me that the garden was developed with nature lovers in mind. The plants and flowers attract lots of butterflies and insects. There’s even a special insect house and bird feeders. *Pavāru Māja* evolved from the garden and, accordingly, its menu features many wild and seasonal foods.

Last summer was the first season that the restaurant offered a set menu and set meal times. ‘I had long played with the idea of a set menu, but the pandemic last spring imposed a new set of rules: limits on the number of guests, social distancing, reservations. We adapted, and by offering specific meal times, a set menu, and an electronic reservation system, we solved those issues quite easily. Honestly, I don’t know how we would have managed it under normal circumstances,’ Dreibants admits.

Initially, the menu changed every week, but guests couldn’t manage the trip to Līgatne that often to taste the new menus. So a decision was made to change the menu every three weeks, which also gave the restaurant a chance to respond to guests’ recommendations and thus perfect the menus. Dreibants is a member of the Slow Food movement. He knows many slow food farmers in the nearby area, especially in the Pārgauja district, and buys basic produce from growers living within a 50-kilometre radius of Līgatne. But he also uses products from further afield. For example, *Pavāru Māja* has a grower in Italy who provides truffles. The fish generally comes from abroad, although Dreibants says that some very good charr is raised not far away in the village of Dzērbene, and trout in Brasla. The restaurant buys venison from a nearby



Photo by Emīls Ozoliņš

The Kest restaurant is located in the former fire station in Cēsis, built in 1936.

deer farm. ‘And when the foods in the forest start to ripen, I post an announcement in our local *Facebook* group about which foods we need, whether it’s mushrooms or cloudberry or raspberries or whatever. The locals forage for these and sell them to us,’ explains Dreibants.

At first, all four co-owners worked at the restaurant. Dreibants continues: ‘The first month we did everything ourselves. We prepared the food, we waited on the tables, we washed the dishes and the floors, and we liked it very much! As we started receiving more guests, we realised that we just physically couldn’t do everything ourselves. We hired a few employees, but we also came up with a schedule so that at least one owner would be on site at all times. That’s important for us as well as our guests.’ *Pavāru Māja* has even served guests who were born in this very same building. Babies were delivered here until the early 1970s, when the building became the village clinic.

When I ask what he loves most about the restaurant industry, Dreibants says that restaurant food culture is kind of like pop culture. ‘People crave new experiences, and that’s interesting for me as well. I enjoy thinking about and keeping my food and my restaurant current. I really like the process. I like thinking about tomorrow and never stopping in my development.’ As we talk, I notice that the sky has changed from grey to bright blue.

THE FIRST TIME I VISITED *KEST* WAS LAST AUTUMN. MY ‘FAR-AWAY’ FAMILY – MY FRIENDS FROM TEL AVIV – TOOK ME THERE FOR A LATE BIRTHDAY DINNER. Outside the window, a strong wind was blowing the trees around and darkness set in very early at that time of year. I knew my friends would be leaving soon and that

I would miss them greatly, but for the moment we were celebrating this special time together. The five-course meal, also a set menu, was excellent, with the chef himself, Māris Jansons, presenting each course as we enjoyed new flavour after new flavour. After the meal we were kindly asked to relocate to the lounge for coffee and digestifs. I sat on a brown leather sofa and ordered a glass of Grand Marnier. The lounge had a slightly retro touch, the music and lighting from the old cinema lamps erasing any remaining boundaries set by time or space.

Kest has completely transformed the old fire station in Cēsis, which dates to 1936. In fact, hardly anyone would ever imagine the restaurant’s home was once a fire station. Last month, I visited *Kest* again, and this time Jansons invited me inside from the other side. I slipped past the kitchen door on the ground floor, spotting a poster of fish species found in Latvia. We sat at the bar, and I asked him how it happened that one of the best chefs in Riga decided to move to Cēsis. For five years in a row, his *Bibliotēka* restaurant in Vērmanes Garden was voted the second-best in the country... naturally, after the seemingly permanent first-place winner *Vincentis*.

‘Already six or seven years ago I noticed that a trend was emerging in Scandinavia of opening great restaurants away from the big cities. The world was changing,’ says Jansons. ‘We had no knowledge of the coronavirus back then, but I knew that this trend would eventually reach Latvia as well. The situation that there was no place outside Riga to spend more than eight euros on a restaurant meal could not last forever. In normal circumstances, this development would have taken place much more slowly. But the virus forced us to change quickly, and I think it’s a very good trend for dispersing the economy beyond the capital.’



▲ The Lademacher Tower of Cēsis New Castle, from which the maroon-white-maroon flag of Latvia has flown continually since 1988. First mentioned in 1279 in the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle, when a knight and 100 warriors marched from Cēsis to Riga under a red flag with a white stripe across the middle, the flag is believed to have originated in Cēsis.

Cēsis Castle is the most notable and best preserved medieval castle in Latvia

But Jansons also tells me that he became burned out at his previous job and knew something had to change. As a native of Cēsis, he and his business partner decided to open a restaurant there. ‘Our original idea was to open a fairly typical restaurant for Cēsis, offering ribs and trout and a beer garden. But about a year later, during an interview with a Ukrainian journalist, I realised that we needed to do something completely different. He asked me what was the thing that would draw people here. And I realised that no one would come all the way to Cēsis just for a trout and ribs. That’s not what I ought to be doing, no matter how well known my name is. We decided to go the difficult route and thus also set a precedent by offering only a set menu with five courses.’

Even before the pandemic, it was clear that the restaurant would be open from Thursday to Sunday only. It has seating for only 25 guests, which meant that it needed to offer at least two meal times in order to accommodate at least 50 guests. The biggest challenge was how to announce to people that only two time slots were available at the restaurant. And then the pandemic hit and solved the problem. ‘But still last summer we had people calling and asking when we would resume normal restaurant hours,’ Jansons remembers with a smile.

‘When they’re here, we want people to concentrate not on the details in the interior, but on the food and on the conversations, because that’s the most important thing,’ he continues. ‘That’s also why *Kest* is one of the rare restaurants nowadays to have white tablecloths and white plates, fine cutlery and classic wine glasses. We don’t have anything *Instagrammable* here, no colourful plates, no flowers, no attention-seeking details. We decided on that at the very beginning, to be classic.’

The idea about a lounge arose through an attempt to ensure adequate distance between diners, a place to route people so that they don’t come into contact with the next guests. The lounge concept turned into a success story and asset for *Kest*. It’s the only restaurant bar of its kind in the Baltics.

Kest was approximately two and a half years in the making. After finally opening, the pandemic forced it to close only six months later. However, the restaurant has offered delivery service ever since it opened. ‘We deliver what we call food boxes,’ says Jansons. ‘At first, customers didn’t even have a choice in what we put in the boxes – they trusted us. But we later developed a kind of store in which they select foods, because people have different habits, and different tastes, too. That’s how *Kest At Home* was born. It’s a very individualised service, and, seeing as it’s also relatively expensive for the local market – order a box of food for 100 euros or more to qualify for a delivery – the approach towards every client is very personal. I try to call each of them myself and ask about their wishes. We send out reminders every Monday. Nor have we forgotten about little gifts. It’s a challenge in the creative sense as well, because every week we need to come up with something new so that our clients who regularly order a box also have some pleasant surprises.’

The Cēsis Castle complex is located in the very centre of town and was one of the most important outposts of the Teutonic Order in the Baltic region. The adjacent Riekstukalns Hill, for its part, was an ancient Wendish hillfort and likely marks the actual origins of the town.

The restaurant has begun including a *Kest Challenge* with the home service, in which clients can follow instructions to prepare a dish from the produce included in the box. Jansons even sends them a video showing how the dish is prepared. Another new service, *Kest Juicery*, offers more than 15 different kinds of juices and drinks, including red cabbage juice, white grapefruit juice, pomegranate juice, and a detox juice called Hulk. Its smoothie with chocolate, cacao, cinnamon, and turmeric is also currently very popular.

Kest delivers boxes to Riga as well as other towns and cities in Latvia. With preparation taking two and a half days, Jansons admits that it’s hard work. Everything must be fresh; *Kest* uses no food preservatives or pasteurisation. But it’s thanks to this home service that the restaurant has not had to let go any of its employees during the pandemic.

‘We’re a small business and able to adapt quickly,’ says Jansons. ‘But I really want to open up the restaurant again. Both types of service are very good products, but I’m afraid of losing my touch. Like a musician – I’ve studied classical music, and it’s fun to play a bit of rock ‘n’ roll once in a while! But I want to play a sonata. I want to concentrate on gastronomy again, on that small miracle, and see people in my restaurant.’

During this challenging time, Jansons has gained strength in nature: ‘Ten minutes, and I’m out of the city and in the forest. I swim every day, even in winter. We need to put to use everything we can to get through a time like this. Even if it’s a dose of solitude.’

CĒSIS CASTLE IS JUST A FEW MINUTES’ WALK FROM *KEST*. LIKE EVERYTHING IN CĒSIS...

For decades, the medieval castle has been a popular destination for school trips, and all schoolchildren in Latvia learn the name of Master of the Livonian Order Wolter von Plettenberg in history class. As I am later told by historian Tālis Pumpuriņš, although the Livonian Order was a Catholic religious order, Plettenberg did not stand in the way of the Reformation and allowed Cēsis to become a centre of the movement.

Cēsis Castle is the most notable and best preserved medieval castle in Latvia. Construction was begun by the Order of the Brothers of the Sword sometime before 1218, but the fortress truly blossomed under the Teutonic Order. In 1577, about 300 locals took refuge in the castle when it was besieged by the forces of Russian tsar Ivan the Terrible during the Livonian War. Instead of falling captive to the enemy, they decided to ignite the gunpowder in the castle, destroying it and themselves. Cēsis Castle was never rebuilt after the war.

In fact, interest in the structure only appeared again in the 19th century. In 1903, donations collected by the Riga Society for Researchers of History and Antiquity allowed a temporary roof to be erected over the castle’s Western Tower, which threatened to collapse and thus ruin the ornate vaulted ceiling of the Master’s Hall. The roof did not last long, in fact, visitors to the castle tore it off, but another roof was built in 1914, again paid for by donations.

Extensive preservation and restoration work has taken place in the castle in recent years, although up until the early 20th century the people of Cēsis continued to take rocks from the ruins to build their own houses. As local history enthusiast Līga Eglīte



◀ As you enter St. John's Church in Cēsis, download the Cēsu sirds app. It contains a few dozen audio stories and various tools that let you experience the church at various periods of history.

tell about how the people back then lived. You can't really undertake anything within the walls of the castle, in the historical monument itself – but it can be done out here. And, no matter whether you're talking about crafts and trades or eating habits, it's easier to show how people lived at that time through a garden.' That garden contains only plants and vegetables that research has confirmed to have grown in this area during the castle's heyday.

Because pollen and seeds are best preserved in moist, anaerobic conditions, researchers came to the conclusion that the most promising site for excavations could be the former moat. A deep pit was dug next to the bridge to obtain soil samples, which were then carefully analysed and studied, separating out the pollen and seeds. Some could no longer be recognised, but experts in paleobotany were nevertheless able to begin compiling a list of weeds and cultivated plants upon which the present castle garden is based. It is one of very few such gardens in Europe.

Although local peasants produced much of the food consumed by the castle inhabitants, many plants used for cooking, medicine, and other household uses – especially those that did not keep well – were grown right next to the castle. Eglite grows cucumbers, lettuces, kale, sorrel, and chicory in the castle garden as well as turnips, parsnips, and carrots, which were used to make stews, the main dish in the medieval era. While lentils also thrived here up until the 14th century, with the onset of the Little Ice Age, which lasted until the 17th century, they began to be imported from Poland and parts of Germany. The castle garden contains various kinds of onions, garlic, chives, and leeks, which were used in place of salt to add flavour to dishes.

St. John's wort was used in the past as a seasoning. An infusion of the herb with wine was said to ease depression. Lovage, in turn, helps digestion and greatly improves the flavour of a dish, especially masking the unpleasant odours that can emanate from aged meats. Of course, coriander, caraway, peppermint, savory, and various other herbs grow in the castle garden. There are also a few berry bushes, including red currants, as well as apple trees. Dewberries and raspberries grow along the stone wall. In all, the garden contains about 60 different kinds of plants.

But learning about appropriate plants was only the first step. In order to find seeds, Eglite did not just go to the local garden centre. Instead, she wanted to grow the oldest possible varieties of the plants, including the trees and bushes. And so she began corresponding with collectors of historical cultivars throughout Europe. Her initial interest in history, however, was not so much in horticulture but in how people in the past dealt with and treated various illnesses, diseases, and plagues.

An infusion of the St. John's wort with wine was said to ease depression

likes to say, the town of Cēsis is built of rocks from the castle. Luckily, there are several dolomite pits in the surrounding area that have provided appropriate material for the restoration, and the work has been done very skilfully.

I meet Eglite in the castle museum, and we head to the kitchen garden in the former outer bailey of the castle. This was once a loud and active place with craftsmen's workshops and stables. Now it contains an authentic medieval kitchen garden. 'The idea for the garden arose while we were thinking about how to fill the outer bailey. This is where the Cēsis City Festival takes place, but otherwise it usually stands empty,' says Eglite, who cares for the garden. 'In order to understand the Middle Ages, one needs to



A summer evening at Mala, which resides in the old brewery.

Together with other history enthusiasts, she has spoken at festivals about this topic, and she tells me about a few of the methods on our way back to the museum. For example, the castle was fumigated with incense, which most likely consisted of expensive acacia gum and myrrh imported along with spices. The simple folk in the outer bailey fumigated their homes with juniper. This wasn't just a creative idea the people had at the time; they truly believed that incense disinfected the air.

THE CREATIVE SCENE IN CĒSIS HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN THE PAST TEN YEARS – starting with the Cēsis Art Festival and continuing with the founding of the Skola6 creative industries centre and the Mala art space, which is currently based in the town's old brewery.

The building was built in 1878 and long housed the offices of *Cēsu alus*, the largest brewery in Latvia. The brewery itself, however, probably dates back to 1590, when the brewing of beer was first mentioned in documents related to Cēsis Castle and the brewery was located in the castle. This makes it not only Latvia's but also northern Europe's oldest brewery. When *Cēsu alus* moved to a new space in 2000, the old building stood empty for more than a decade. It was later acquired by the Institute for Environmental Solutions, a centre for innovative science based in nearby Priekuļi, which envisioned developing it into a science and culture centre. For a long time, it also housed Cēsis Art Festival exhibitions.

Mala was established by artist and painter Līva Graudiņa in 2013 as a café and shop in an old wooden house near the brewery. A few years later, Graudiņa passed the initiative on to Kristīne Auniņa and her partner, Alberto Di Gennaro. When their rental contract was up, they began

looking for a new space and realised that the old brewery best reflected the concept they wished to develop with Mala. They received the brewery's keys in early 2019 and opened to the public half a year later. Auniņa remembers the clean-up campaigns they hosted on Sundays. They welcomed anybody who was interested – friends as well as residents of Cēsis – and gradually a place for culture emerged.

'We had two festivals already in our first week, the Baltic Sketching Festival and the TaDaa! street art festival,' says Di Gennaro. 'We also collaborate with other organisations and institutions, such as the Homo Novus festival, which is a very well-known theatre festival in Latvia. We hosted one of the Homo Novus performances, which I co-curated with a team of theatre and education professionals together with youngsters from the Cēsis juvenile detention centre.'

The detention centre, also known as the Cēsis Colony, has always been a kind of invisible place. 'Everyone knows it's here, but no one talks about it. They mostly just ignore it,' says Auniņa.

'Six years ago we approached the detention centre with the idea of establishing a theatre workshop. The institution was very open to it. We had to find our own funding, though, which we did, and then we organised some quite intense theatre workshops within the colony,' continues Di Gennaro. 'The team consisted of both of us and some educators from other fields, because, of course, working with boys from the colony was not only about theatre; we also needed specific psychological and social skills.' Their work resulted in three projects, the first of which was a theatre show called *Viss normāli*, or 'Everything's normal' – a typical answer if you ask a local how things are going.



◀ ▼ Built as summer homes for the families of Russian aristocrats, these villas now house the elegant *Villa Santa Hotel*. Photos courtesy of *Villa Santa Hotel*

‘This was the case for us as well. Every time I went to the detention centre and asked the boys how they were doing, they would answer with “viss normāli”. So it became the title for our first project,’ says Di Gennaro. The second project was a theatrical concept together with three artists from the Dirty Deal Audio studio, among them Latvian rapper ansis, who produced a CD that the project released. The boys made the songs themselves, writing their own lyrics and producing the beats.

The third project, funded by the Magic Carpets platform and done in collaboration with the Homo Novus festival, was called *Svidanka*. Translated from Russian, it means a meeting place in prison, which the curators recreated in a shipping container in the old brewery’s courtyard. ‘It was about the boys’ personal stories and touched upon various different themes. As a team, we just asked questions, and the boys built up all the material later used in the videos,’ Di Gennaro explains. ‘The container represented the svidanka. We invited audience members inside one by one for about 25 minutes to watch the boys talking about different topics. Audience members could also ask questions, write down comments, and have a kind of svidanka experience themselves. The original idea was a bit different – the container was a result of the pandemic situation, but it produced very good results.’

Covid-19 formed part of the context for the project, but it actually proved very valuable in connecting with people who are isolated for different reasons. As part of the preparation work, the *Svidanka* team had one-on-one *Skype* conversations with the boys in the detention centre, which Di Gennaro says provided very deep, even intimate insights into the boys’ lives. It’s something that probably wouldn’t have happened under normal conditions. The team is currently trying to figure out how it can continue these workshops in the colony. They also want to follow up with young men they’ve already worked with but who have since been released from the centre.

Asked why Di Gennaro decided to approach the colony, he says it began with his own interest and experience in theatre in general. Plus, when he was studying theatre and visual arts in Italy, he had come across similar projects with unique, positive results, which he found encouraging.

Mala’s plans for the summer are ready, and they’re bigger than ever. ‘During this pause in activity, we realised that we need to open up Mala even more. We want to invite people to come to us with their ideas,’ says Auniņa. ‘We’re happy to provide the space for events, which will in turn attract an even greater variety of people. Likewise, we really want to develop the outside space of the brewery. Last year proved that the huge premises we have is an excellent gathering place for people. It’s spread out and safe, bearing in mind the circumstances.’



USEFUL ADDRESSES

WHERE TO EAT H. E. Vanadziņš Ziemeļu Restaurant

As befits an establishment whose name translates to *Northern Restaurant*, here chef Edgars Rubenis offers meals inspired by Nordic cuisine. The menu includes venison and fish as well as special meals for children. There’s even a children’s corner, meaning that families are welcome. It’s located in a tastefully restored building in the Old Town, right next to the *Vanadziņa Māja* hotel.

Rīgas iela 15
vanadzinarestorans.lv

Tayo Suši

It would be a bit of an exaggeration to say that people from Riga go to Cēsis specifically to eat at *Tayo Suši*, but not much of one. This place is as authentic as can be and the sushi is magnificent, justifying all the four- and five-star reviews.

Plavas iela 5 | FB/ Tayo Suši

Melnais Gulbis (Black Swan Café)

This small coffee shop in the heart of the Old Town offers delicious coffees, teas, and hot cocoa. After realising he needed to make a change in his life, owner Kaspars Lapsa decided to follow his dream. So he opened *Melnais Gulbis*, and the passion and sincerity is evident at every step. The title of friendliest coffee shop owner is definitely his.

Rīgas iela 20-14 | FB/ melnaisgulbis

WHERE TO STAY Cēsis Boulevard Apartments

For those who value privacy: homey and tastefully designed apartments in the centre of Cēsis with views of the ‘Cēsis’ Vidzeme Concert Hall. This accommodation is only a five-minute walk from the Old Town, castle, and parks as well as the best cafés, restaurants, grocery stores, and town market.

Uzvaras bulvāris 12
FB/ cesisboulevardapartments

Hotel Province

Located on the edge of the Old Town, this hotel offers four cosy rooms and possibly the best breakfast in town. With a private playground in the yard and a skatepark as well as the central municipal playground across the street, it’s also great for families.

Niniera iela 6 | booking.com

Zeit Hotel

A small, tastefully decorated hotel in Līgatne that welcomes travellers with pets as well as guests with special needs. It also has special family rooms for those travelling with young children. Outdoors, Zeit offers several viewing terraces and grill sites. Check out the adjoining Zeit Apartments, all of which have fully equipped kitchens. Gaujas iela 4, Līgatne; Gaujas iela 2A, Līgatne | zeit.lv

WHERE TO SHOP June9 footwear, clothing, and accessories

This family business focusing on the ancient craft of shoemaking has found a home in the former

vocational school dormitory. Owners Kristīne and Andris Runcis moved to Cēsis several years ago. Although Andris started out as a self-taught shoemaker, *June9* is now one of the best and most visible footwear brands in Latvia.

Rīgas iela 39 | June9.eu

Tili Studio

Founded by Inese Osīte, a mother of three daughters, *Tili* is a children’s clothing brand aimed at girls age 12 and under. Each piece is handmade by a single seamstress. Some of the garments are adorned with flowers made in a French technique from the 1930s. The studio is located in the historical centre of Cēsis and also offers dolls, accessories, children’s books, and interior items.

Rīgas iela 12 | tilicouture.com

Cēsu Maize bakery and Milti store

Next to St. John’s Church is a bakery that makes natural sourdough breads from Latvian-grown stoneground organic spelt, buckwheat, oat, and barley flours. And next to the bakery is a shop that sells organic flours, grains, peas, seeds, nuts, sourdough starter, and many other wonderful products. Rīgas iela 18 (entry to bakery from Lielā Skolas iela) | cesumaize.lv

WHAT TO DO ‘Cēsis’ Vidzeme Concert Hall

Unveiled in 2014, this new concert hall is in fact the reconstructed Cēsis Social Society building built in 1915. The interior features lots of natural

wood, and the acoustics have been highly praised internationally – the reverberation time using amplification equipment can be reduced to 1.5 seconds. Check out the latest updates about opening times, and don’t miss a show! Raunas iela 12 | cesukonzertzale.lv

Burning Conscience

The permanent exposition in the former short-term state security detention centre in Cēsis tells about the local resistance movement to Latvia’s occupations by the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. An interactive map indicates 189 locations linked with the movement and the commemoration of the politically repressed and victims of the occupying regimes. Designed by artists Krista and Reinis Dzudzilo, the exhibition has been recognised by the Europa Nostra cultural heritage awards. The site is temporarily closed due to the pandemic, but keep checking for opening times. Pils iela 12 | sirdsapzinasugunsurs.lv

Take a hike

Cēsis is located in a very beautiful area – within the borders of Gauja National Park. The nature trails begin just ten minutes beyond the town limits. The ancient Gauja River valley formed as the glaciers from the last ice age melted, leaving behind a beautiful landscape including outcrops of bedrock. So if you’re a nature lover, explore the surroundings with Roberts Līcis, an experienced outdoor and endurance event organiser. pretspeks.lv | roberts@pretspeks.lv

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Alise Ķinasta

Born and raised in Cēsis, **Alise Ķinasta** moved back to her native town five years ago. She is an artist, graphic designer, and the co-creator of the *Aplusb.Design* brand. She is also actively involved with Skola6, a space for creative entrepreneurs where she has met new friends and business partners. This initiative of the local government that's based in a 200-year-old building right behind St. John's Church in the very centre of Cēsis currently provides work spaces and services to about 40 people.

In recent years, Cēsis has become a popular destination within Latvia and also among tourists from abroad. Many Rigans have even moved to Cēsis. What's the attraction? Cēsis is a town that's full of culture and history – it's more than 800 years old – and it really does have a special kind of charm. It's located in the middle of Gauja National Park, yet it's just an hour's drive from Riga. So, location and nature are two obvious advantages.

In the past ten years, the town has also developed in a very contemporary direction. It's got an excellent concert hall, good schools, and community-based cultural policy. There's a feeling here that, if you've got an idea and ambition, anything is possible. That's why, after spending time wandering the world, many creative professionals from a variety of fields have discovered Cēsis as the place to settle down. As my husband and I like to say, Cēsis is 'small big', and with the help of all the digital technology nowadays, we can be like Berlin in the middle of the forest. We can work internationally but at the same time enjoy the tranquil yet exciting aspects of living in a small town.

Your suggestions for visitors?

Stay for more than one day to get a feel for the real rhythm of the town and its possibilities. I'd suggest first wandering the streets, exploring the courtyards, and catching the feeling of small-town genuineness in the old doorknobs, the gaps in fences, and the patterns left by layers of paint from the past.

Of course, one must also visit the Cēsis Castle complex, which is where the town

began all those centuries ago. I'm a fan of museums and exhibitions, so even as a local I visit the castle now and then. Despite having seen it hundreds of times, I always learn something new! And a visit to the castle should definitely conclude with a stroll through its beautiful park.

Nearby, in the old brewery, is the Mala art space, which is a very special place for me. There you can have a cup of coffee and some soup or cake or, better yet, enjoy a cultural event. Everything that happens at Mala is artistic, free, unforced, and with lots of added value, no matter whether it's a concert, a flea market, or a circus festival.

If you visit Cēsis in the summer, I can recommend several festivals, including Pionieris and the Cēsis Art Festival. Cēsis is also the home of the Baltic Sketching Festival, an event organised by the urban sketching community.

And your suggestions for food?

For coffee, head to *Cafe 7 Bar* under the huge old maple tree or *Melnais Gulbis* for a coffee to go. For a meal, try the creative and delicious food at *Jāņoga*, the beautiful interior at *H. E. Vanadzīņš Ziemeļu Restaurant*, the courtyard terrace at the *Bekko* Italian trattoria, or the famed burgers at *Zaļa Zāle*. For drinks, go to *Trimpus Craft Brewery* or the Mala art space.

Right now, Cēsis is actively working towards earning the title of European Capital of Culture in 2027. What are its advantages over the other candidate cities?

Of course, no place is ideal, including Cēsis. But as we've often heard said, Cēsis simply can't afford to *not* run for the Capital of Culture designation. Do check out cesis2027.lv. In honour of the past and the future, we are responsible for our actions and choices today.

There are currently big plans here for the Creative and Digital Centre, in which art and analogue skills will meet technology. We're also the site of Cēsis Pluriversity, the world's first truly 21st-century school. It's an experimental education project that considers the entire town as a place to learn. Right now, a global community is forming that meets online for monthly lectures and once a year for a summer-school session. There are also grand plans in place for the old brewery, which is set to become an arts and science centre, and construction on the Cēsis Cosmos Centre has begun near Žagarkalns Hill. Likewise, for the past five years, our town has hosted the Lampa Conversation Festival, which is a unique event that brings together a variety of opinions and truths to exist in respectful harmony with each other. And that's not all.

I don't want to compare Cēsis with other towns, all of which are wonderful, strong, and interesting. But Cēsis is my town through and through, so maybe it's difficult for me to describe what I feel with my heart. All I can suggest is coming to visit, or moving here. Because this is a fantastic place to study, raise children, and realise one's dreams without losing all the very valuable things that a small town can teach us.

Auniņa says that Cēsis has a very diverse cultural and creative scene with many private initiatives supported and even encouraged by the local municipality. This gives locals as well as visitors plenty to choose from.

'Life in Cēsis feels more balanced, and I love it,' says Di Gennaro when I ask what he likes about this town. 'For me, it holds one of the keys to the future – moving to places that have this balance, revitalizing them, and creating a community that's reachable. We have a lot of friends in Riga, but the community there is more dispersed. Here, you call someone up, and they're right there – it's just a five-minute walk. Everything is reachable.'

I BEGIN WRITING THIS PIECE IN MY HOTEL ROOM. It's late and I can't sleep.

Anyway, writing down first impressions always helps. And funnily enough, my hotel is also a place about recreating – reinventing the aura it had almost a hundred years ago. Today, the *Villa Santa Hotel* offers guests 30 rooms in three different villas, but at the turn of the 20th century the three buildings nestled in a pine forest along the banks of the Gauja River were built by Russian aristocrats as summer homes for their families. They were also rented out to Latvian poets, artists, and actors.

When the villas were nationalised following the First World War, they were turned into medical facilities – initially for injured soldiers, later as a tuberculosis rehabilitation hospital. Patients were treated not only with medicines and physical therapy but were also offered culture, such as books, cinema, picnics, and strolls in the forest. In 2014, the villas were acquired by *Santa*, Latvia's leading publishing house, and extensively restored and reconstructed. The rooms are light and airy with the ever-present spirit of the summer homes they were in the past. The hotel also features a spa that offers a variety of facial and body treatments using *GMT* and *Norden* professional cosmetics, both of which are Latvian brands.

The next day, a lazy, sunny morning greets me and reminds me of some days in late May a couple of years ago when I stayed here with a few friends. We had a late lunch in the hotel's restaurant and then moved to the terrace, where we ordered drinks and stayed put. The pines were so close we felt we could touch them. The sky slowly clouded over, and we heard the first clap of thunder in the distance. The air smelled of ozone. Summer had begun. **bo**

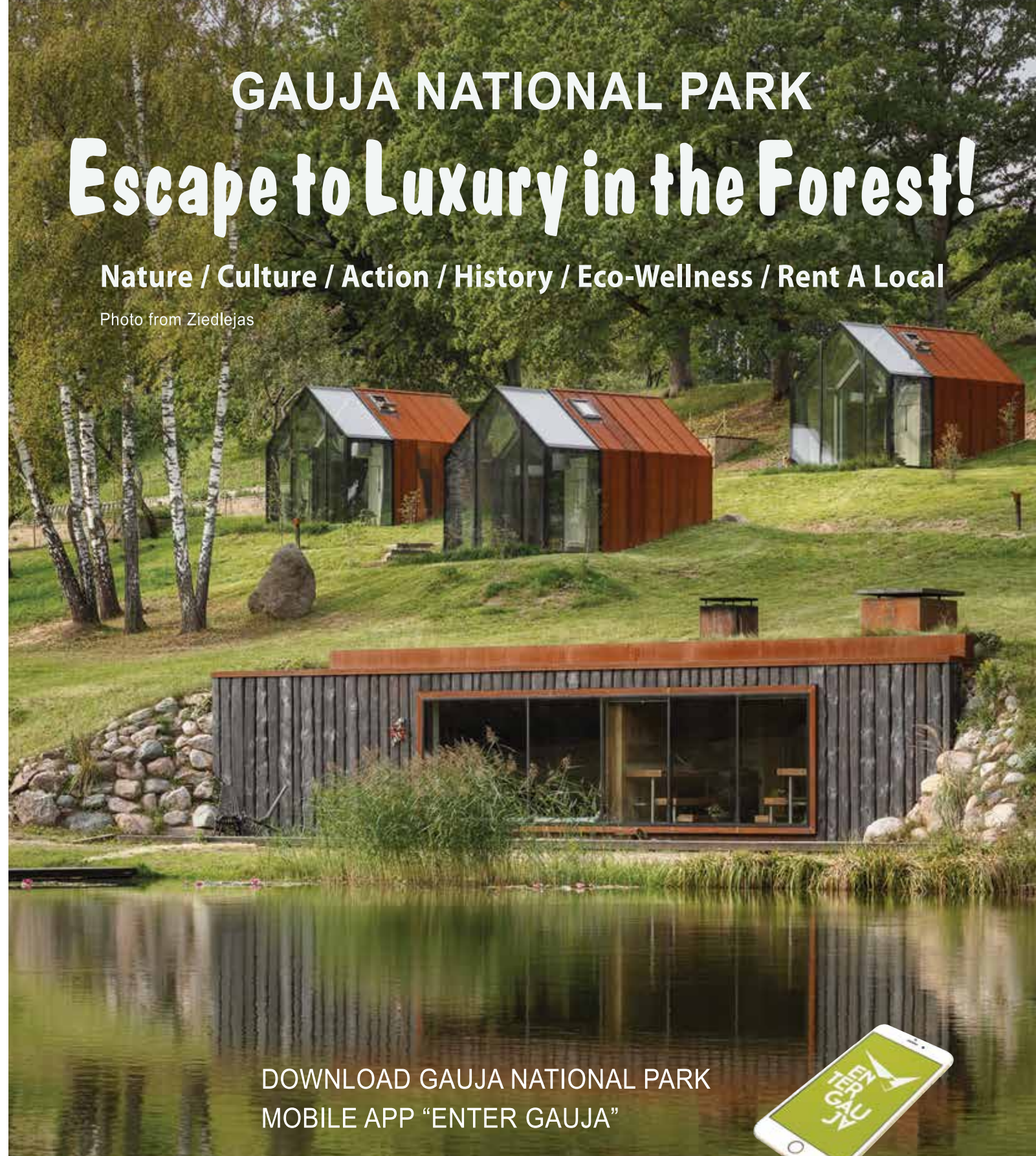
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THE FUTURE IS HERE

Stewart Rogers is one of the most influential people in marketing technology globally. He is best known for his speeches and work on mental health in the tech industry. In this conversation with *Baltic Outlook*, he spoke about his conviction that the pandemic will change our work culture, how big a role artificial intelligence (AI) already plays in our daily lives, and what it's like to live with information overload.

Meet technology industry veteran Stewart Rogers. He's a journalist, analyst, author, and public speaker who has led several successful programming companies and held significant positions as a marketing and sales specialist in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain.

As a digital nomad with no permanent residence, but always a powerful internet connection, Rogers is currently the editor-in-chief at the data science and AI publication *Dataconomy*, the editor-in-chief at the digital nomad lifestyle portal *Badass Times*, and the managing editor at *Grit Daily*, an online magazine for contemporary culture, technology, finance, and entrepreneurship. His analytical studies and publications in the field of technology appear regularly on websites such as *Hacker Noon*, and he hosts events and webinars for *VentureBeat*.

Rogers' areas of expertise include marketing technology, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, blockchain technologies, and many other current topics, while his trademark has become the ability to remain grounded in the reality outside the virtual world. Rogers feels perfectly at ease in the ocean of technology yet knows how to maintain a healthy perspective towards current processes as well as those that are still only on the horizon, just a future click away. Nor do the side effects of digital reality, such as mental health and disorientation in the vast information space, go unnoticed by his observant eye.

Rogers regularly speaks at the most important technology events around the world. He exudes charisma and competence, and he wears great jackets with a different lapel pin every time. He's skilled at finding the right keys to open up his conversation partners and to open the doors to his audience's interests.

For his current workaway dwelling, Rogers has selected Berlin. Our conversation took place in an online meeting room, with each of us speaking from our own living rooms in different countries.

In 2019, you spoke at the TechChill conference – a popular Baltic startup and technology event in Riga, on the subject of mental health in the tech industry. Your presentation was followed by loud applause, and your statements were quoted on social networks. What aroused your interest in this issue?

I've been in the tech industry for a long time. When I was younger, I was quite interested in studying psychology, neuroscience, and neurology. Then, as I was working in tech, I noticed that my mental health was being put to the test. I had a couple of nervous breakdowns, from which I managed to recover, but in 2018 I lost eleven friends to suicide. They were all founders of tech companies. I realised that somebody needs to figure out why we have such a problem and what we can do about it.

So I did a lot of research and developed a keynote speech that's split up into three parts. The first part states why we have such a problem in the first place and why people in tech have more problems than regular citizens. The second part talks about natural coping mechanisms we can put in place to make sure we stay on the right side of the track. And the third part calls for change in the industry. There are actually lots of things we can do to support each other, but we need changes at the systemic level.

The time we spend at home and at work has now converged. This has created new mental health challenges for employees in a variety of fields all over the world. There's increased workload, longer work hours, fatigue from long online meetings that require extra focus, etc. You're right. Because people are working from home now, they're not taking regular breaks

I think people don't really understand how long it takes to recover from burnout

between tasks. They're just pushing through. They're working for longer hours, and they're working harder, which is great for productivity but not so great for mental health. The latest study, which came out recently, pointed to the fact that we now have a much higher rate of burnout than ever before. I think people don't really understand how long it takes to recover from burnout. The truth is that once you experience burnout, it could take a year or two before you get back on track again. So, we do have a major issue there now.

What can managers do to support their team members during these times? Perhaps there are some good examples of how companies have taken responsibility?

There are a lot of different collaborative tools available, but the majority of those tools are used just for work tasks. We should also use them for team-building exercises, for just bringing everyone together to *not* talk about work. We can also make sure that people are taking regular breaks during the day. There are quite a few companies, including *Microsoft* in Japan, that have tried the four-day week. What they found was that productivity and results went up considerably. There was about 30% improvement just by allowing people to have an extra free day.



Photo by Dan Taylor Photography

Quite a few countries have embraced the idea of digital nomads and want us to come and stay

What's an essential thing everyone can practise on a personal level to maintain their mental health?

A good thing is to take a break between work tasks. Even if it's just ten minutes in which you do something interesting or fun, or childish, or distracting – it can make a huge difference. You work better if your mind is clearer and if your mental health is stronger. When we do something like play or exercise, the brain goes into the same fight-flight-freeze response that it does when we're scared. What's interesting is that when you go into fight-flight-freeze mode, you create a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which actually clears your mind and allows you to think clearer. So when you eventually return to your work, you're probably going to do better work. This pause helps you to be more creative, accurate, and inspired.

How would you describe your own work discipline?

I do practise what I preach. But that became a bit of a struggle when we were running the Data Natives Unlimited conference, Europe's biggest data science and AI event. You know, I have nothing but respect for anybody who runs events, because organising events is one of the hardest jobs in our industry. When you're pushing to get more than 5000 attendees to your online event and you're having to manage more than 120 speakers as well as all the content, and all the logistics, and all the promotion, and all the sponsorships, and all the

volunteers... Even with a big team, it's a huge job! And yes, we pushed really, really hard. As a result, once that was over, I needed to take a break from everything. I took several days off to completely get away from everything, because I needed to fully recover from that experience. But it was worth it!

That has been the only time recently when I had to do something a little bit extraordinary to recover. Most of the time, I work a bit and play a bit, work a bit and play a bit. Another important thing to do is make sure you're single-tasking and not multi-tasking. Not only are our brains not wired for multitasking, but studies show that multitasking actually damages our brain.

How will the work culture change after the pandemic?

Culture is an important aspect. It's something that founders and that executives of startups, businesses, and organisations really need to focus on. I fear that our company cultures are being eroded, but it's not too late to change that. Those non-work sessions, team building, and culture settings I talked about earlier are really important. It's difficult if you're just joining a company but have never seen any of your colleagues in 3D – you've only seen them on the screen. It's hard to get across what the company culture is, and it's hard to become a proper teammate, because that usually requires an actual social interaction. But it's not impossible. We can fix that.

Turning now to those who worked remotely already before the pandemic. Your article "How I make money as a digital nomad, and how you can, too" was published on *Badass Empire* in 2019. How has our year of the pandemic changed the situation?

Everything I put in that article still stands true. It's funny actually, because just before the pandemic started, I was in Barcelona and within 48 hours my entire event calendar got cancelled. All of my speaking gigs ran away, and the entire conference industry fell to pieces. So I had to think of new ways to make money. One of those ways was that I started advising startups. I had already run many successful startups and companies myself, so I became a paid advisor for several companies to help them with their strategy, their marketing communications, their product launches, their press, etc. That was an important thing for me to do, because I lost a lot of money due to cancelled speaking engagements, and I needed to replace it.

I think a lot of people are doing many of the things I mention in that article: lots of online courses, lots of drop-shipping, etc. Also, writers in particular have a lot of places where they can list their talents and then sell their writing on an article basis. And if you have the expertise, it's possible to get it out there and invite people to sign up for your courses or webinar series. In addition to that, people are getting sponsorships, grants, and funding for their own startup ideas. Of course, the pandemic is a

perfect time for people to take that passion project they've always had and make something out of it. But another thing I would stress is that it's really hard in 2021 to be unique and come up with a brand-new idea.

Technology is common; new thinking is rare.

I see a lot of startups that are effectively the 700th version of the same idea. That's the reason why over 95% of startups fail in the first year, because they don't have anything original. So think hard about why you should be starting up your project, whether it hasn't already been done a thousand times before. But if it's something original and unique, there's a huge amount of grants that you can get access to build your product.

What are the best places to live for a digital nomad?

In fact, we have an article in *Badass Times* about countries that have put together digital nomad visas to help nomads stay in places. It includes places like Estonia and Costa Rica. It's really interesting to see that quite a few countries have embraced the idea of digital nomads and want us to come and stay.

Certainly, the tech community in Berlin is very strong. Lisbon is fantastic, Porto is upcoming. There are a lot of places around Europe that are pretty good. Tulum and Mexico in general have been pretty good, but Tulum is now finding itself in a bit of a problem because the infection rate went really high there. But there are a lot of quiet places around the same area. Costa Rica is also good. And of course, Bali is a good destination, but be aware of recent movement restrictions. Always check the constantly changing landscape, wherever you choose to move to.

At the start of the pandemic I was in Barcelona, and then I came back to Berlin before going on to Austin. Then I had to isolate myself in the United Kingdom, then I managed to go to Portugal, Greece, and the Greek island of Syros. Then I came back to Berlin. Berlin had been trying to catch me for a long time and it finally did, so I decided to stay, because travelling became a little bit too difficult.

What are the things a digital nomad looks for in a country?

They're always the same things. First of all, you need to work, and therefore the internet has to be strong. Obviously, it's a bonus if accommodation is not too expensive. A lot of people I know are still living in places like Chiang Mai in Thailand. What's nice about Chiang Mai or places like Bali is that if you make a few thousand euros from your work, you'll have a lot of money to put away in savings because you can live like a king or queen there for 400 euros a month. All expenses included. People look for good connections, good transport options, and the weather does come into play – it's a bonus if the weather is really nice.

I enjoy Berlin. Even though now in lockdown we've got quite a few restrictions, it's still not bad here.

WORKING NOMAD

Stewart Rogers has been a digital nomad for many years, moving from country to country and relying on digital technology to work remotely. Here are his own photos of some of the places he's been to.



New York City, United States



Nazaré, Portugal



Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, United States



'It's difficult if you're just joining a company but have never seen any of your colleagues in 3D - you've only seen them on the screen. It's hard to become a proper teammate, because that usually requires an actual social interaction,' says Roger regarding one consequence of the pandemic.

The idea of being followed by photorealistic AI-generated women was just too much for me

You were recently followed on *Instagram* by an AI-generated woman. As you reported in your stories, you blocked her immediately. What were your reasons?

First of all, I want to be followed by real human beings. I've got no interest in being followed by a robot. Especially if it starts talking to me – that's really annoying!

I also just inherently don't agree with this current trend of human-like characters that have been created by using artificial intelligence. I speak and write about artificial intelligence all the time on *Dataconomy*, but I want people to realise that artificial intelligence is just a tool. It's neither good nor bad. Actually, whether artificial intelligence is going to take your job depends on who employs you – if it's a bad person,

they're going to replace you; if it's a good person, they're going to augment you by using artificial intelligence.

There's a lot of really good, amazing work being done now in terms of natural language processing. For example, chatbots and smart speakers – they're super helpful! Artificial intelligence assistance is great! But I want my artificial intelligence assistance to look like a robot; I don't want it to look like a human being. I don't want to be wondering whether I'm talking to a real person or not.

So yeah, the idea of being followed by photorealistic AI-generated women was just too much for me. It's not my thing!

Let's address the topic of information overload. How has so-called 'infoxication' affected people's understanding of topical issues?

Yes, we're producing information at a faster rate than we've ever done before in human history. The problem is that too much screen time can also lead to mental issues and burnout. The other issue we have in the internet jungle is that we've seen a lot of simplification.

People have seemingly lost their ability to debate and discuss things in a way that doesn't antagonise the other side. We turn everything into a coin toss – you're either 'team blue' or you're 'team red'; you're either 'team *Android*' or 'team *Apple*'. The fact is that many issues and situations have so many more options than just two sides of a coin. We do need to get back to respectful debate and understanding of an issue. The way journalists report stories depending on whether their publication is left-leaning or right-leaning doesn't help the situation. Also, people need to fact-check what they read. Too often now we're seeing people just accept what they see on the internet.

Personally, I have multiple anonymous *Twitter* accounts. For example, one of my accounts follows left media and the other follows right media, and then I compare the same news story and see what both have written about it. That helps me to have a much more informed opinion on what's actually happening.

Online communication, surveillance, and data collection also create new ways of how we experience space. I'd like to ask you about smart cities and their impact on mental health and wellbeing. What are the biggest concerns?

The problem with smart cities is that with all the beacons everywhere, with all of the smartphone products, with all the devices currently listening to what we're saying and then basically serving us very cleverly and targeted advertising – or even worse, selecting just the right news stories that are written in just the right way to change our perception on a topic, which is famously what happened with *Cambridge Analytica* and the



Seattle, United States



Lisbon, Portugal

United States elections – we have to be very careful of the choices we're making. Artificial intelligence is amazing, I'm a big fan. But we have to stay on the right side of the ethical debate and make sure we're using it appropriately. In a lot of places right now, we are not using it appropriately, and the more data we feed into it, the more likely that people misuse it. We're now at the point where artificial intelligence can completely affect our choices and behaviours.

How do you personally maintain your 'information and tech hygiene'?

I try very hard to make sure that I'm feeding my brain with high-quality information. I try very hard not to get caught up in the information overload. And I'm very blessed in having an amazing array of friends – literally thousands of them all around the world. They keep me grounded, they keep me informed, they educate me, we support each other, and that's very important. Even now, stuck in lockdown and isolation, we shouldn't always just turn to the internet for brain food. Make sure that you surround yourself with good people who can help to improve your life in some way, and you should be doing the same for them. We all can lift each other up! **bo**

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The secret garden of the Musée de la Vie Romantique in Paris.

WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

If you really want to get to know a city like a local, your best bet is to look for the neighbourhoods where the young, creative, hip crowds spend their days and nights hanging out. Here are four that are flourishing right now.

Words by Līga Vāļko
Publicity photos, by *Alamy*
and *iStock*

KØDBYEN IN COPENHAGEN

The former butchers' district

Just a few minutes from Copenhagen Central Station lies Kødbyen, the city's meatpacking district. Created to modernise slaughterhouses and meat production in the 1870s, the average Copenhagener most likely didn't set foot in Kødbyen before the 2000s. But inspired by Manhattan's Meatpacking District, Kødbyen began to flourish in 2007 and soon became a cultural melting pot with many quirky cafés, art galleries, and design shops, making it one of the hippest neighbourhoods in the world.

The district is split into three parts: Brown Meat City, White Meat City, and Grey Meat City. The buildings of White Meat City have been turned into

Fly to
Copenhagen
from
€89
one way



Photo by Martin Heiberg © VisitCopenhagen

Kødbyen began to flourish in 2007 and soon became a cultural melting pot.



Photo by Oscar Haumann

Dine at one of the many restaurants and then check out a few art galleries.



If you're into fresh seafood, try the legendary Kødbyens Fiskebar.

Spend the whole evening in this district of Copenhagen!



Photo by Mads Eneqvist

a creative cluster that boasts creative industries, galleries, co-working spaces, restaurants, and nightlife venues. When strolling around Kødbyen, you can still feel the rawness that exists alongside the hip hangouts. Unlike New York's Meatpacking District, Copenhagen has made sure to preserve not only its pre-war buildings but also their traditional businesses. That means that if you come here in the morning, you'll see butchers

in white coats walking around the district, who are replaced later in the day by stylish crowds and young celebrities.

The best thing about this district of Copenhagen is that you can spend all evening or even all weekend here. Dine at one of the many restaurants, and then check out a few art galleries or go clubbing and sip some cocktails in the district's underground clubs.

The variety of restaurants here is huge,

Worth checking out

Are you ready to solve a puzzle and explore charismatic Kødbyen on a fun walk? Just gather some friends and family and take the self-guided scavenger hunt (1.5 to two hours long) offered by the Institute of Wonder. instituteofwonder.dk

from Italian and classic Danish food to Indian cuisine and a Thai supermarket. *Gorilla* is a beast of a restaurant residing in an old industrial building. If you're into fresh seafood, head to the legendary *Kødbyens Fiskebar*. For takeout, stop by *Tommi's Burger Joint*, the Icelandic version of *Shake Shack*. And *Noho*, with its laid-back dining experience and kickass cocktails, is great for a perfect night out.

For art enthusiasts, Kødbyen offers Galleri Bo Bjerggaard, one of the most established art galleries in town. It features international contemporary art by Per Kirkeby, Georg Baselitz, Jannis Kounellis, and more. Just around the corner from White Meat City you'll find Gallery Poulsen, a colourful art gallery offering a taste of New York in the middle of Copenhagen and presenting a strong team of contemporary American artists.

SOUTH PIGALLE IN PARIS

Catch the bohemian spirit

South Pigalle was once a quiet quarter in the City of Light. In recent years, however, thanks to bobos (bourgeois bohemians) and an influx of *dernier cri* (the very latest fashion) bars, restaurants, and boutiques, the area has become the newest trendsetter in Paris, even earning its own nickname, SoPi.

For years, the area between South Pigalle and Sacré-Coeur was beloved by some of the most famous artists of the 19th century, including Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Van Gogh. Just a couple of years ago, the 9th arrondissement

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€105
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For off-the-radar galleries, take a peek at Amelie Maison d'Art.

The Musée de la Vie Romantique is hidden away from the hustle and bustle.



Photo by Pierre Antoine



Café Marlette

was famous for *Galleries Lafayette* and the Opéra National de Paris. Today, creative entrepreneurs have brought an international vibe to the quiet, residential area that in the past was also known as La Nouvelle-Athènes for its monumental architecture. It now boasts vibrant nightlife and contemporary café culture, with new places springing up every month. But South Pigalle also remains a genuine neighbourhood in which Parisians involved in creative pursuits actually live, shop, and eat.

The Rue des Martyrs is the life and soul of South Pigalle, acting as the district's main attraction and bringing increasing numbers of tourists to the neighbourhood. As you stroll along the street and check out its countless shops, grab a coffee and some gluten-free bread or pastries at the café-boutique *Café Marlette* or stop by *Arnaud Delmontel* for a glass of champagne and passion fruit



Arnaud Delmontel is the perfect place for a glass of champagne and passion fruit macarons.

macarons. Located on the other side of the block, one of the trendiest restaurants in South Pigalle is *Buvette Gastrothèque*, which was opened by American chef Jody Williams and combines French menu classics with a Brooklynish interior and decor.

When it's time for some culture, visit the Musée de la Vie Romantique hidden away from the hustle and bustle of the

Worth checking out

Fans of vintage posters should head to *Galerie AM* or *Galerie Estampe Moderne et Sportive* to look through their extensive collections. masterposters.fr

district. The townhouse was once a rendezvous for such famous people as George Sand and Frédéric Chopin. For off-the-radar galleries, take a peek into Amelie Maison d'Art, which has made the experience of shopping for art less intimidating. The gallery is styled like an apartment, with the gorgeous pieces for sale displayed in a home-like setting.

When evening sets in, curious tourists mingle with local artists and hipsters in search of the bobo side of South Pigalle. Whether it's nightlife at hotspots like *Le Carmen* (a club that used to be the home of composer Georges Bizet) or *Chez Mounne* (the former 'feminine' cabaret of Pigalle), there's a very special late-night ambiance here in this quartier below Montmartre. However, the one place not to miss is the outrageous tiki bar called *Dirty Dick*. Adorned with unusual decor, a wicked atmosphere, and cocktails served in tiki mugs, the bar is every hipster's dream.

SÖDERMALM IN STOCKHOLM

Where hip meets historic

While Gamla Stan is full of historic attractions, sprawling Södermalm has a strong urban feel.

Known locally as Söder, the working-class district has become a thrilling creative destination. It's also the home of the oldest theatre in Stockholm (Södra Teatern) and the birthplace of Greta Garbo. Nowadays, the artistic character of Södermalm is more design-driven and bolder than ever before.

With its wide boulevards, historic townhouses, and creative crowds, Södermalm enchants locals and tourists

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Find favourite Swedish cult fashion labels at *Grandpa*, a quintessential Scandinavian lifestyle boutique.



Meatballs for the People is one of Stockholm's most popular new restaurants.

Worth checking out

On the last Thursday of each month, also known as SoFo Night, late-evening shopping in the Södermalm area often evolves into a night out with live music, drinks, and Swedish snacks.



Hermans Trädgårdscafé even has its own magic garden.

alike. One of the reasons why the area attracts so many tourists is that the Swedish crime thriller *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is set here. But there's also no shortage of indie fashion boutiques, vintage stores, art galleries, bars, coffee shops, and music venues in Södermalm.

Start exploring the neighbourhood on Götgatan, the street that passes right by central Medborgarplatsen (Citizen Square). But don't forget to also look for places tucked away on the smaller side streets. There's a cluster of design stores on the Åsögatan, Götgatan, and Kocksgatan streets. Maybe you'll even stumble across *Grandpa*, a quintessential Scandinavian lifestyle boutique selling favourite Swedish cult fashion labels such as *Rodebjer*, *Brixtol Textiles*, and *ATP Atelier*. For simple but chic home essentials, head to *Granit*.

Nearby in a very impressive Art Nouveau building is Fotografiska, one of the world's largest meeting places for contemporary photography. Go to the top floor for a great view over Stockholm as well as the world's best museum restaurant (headed by chef Paul Svensson), which recently won the prestigious Gulddraken (Golden Dragon) Award. After shopping, you might also consider recharging at *Hermans Trädgårdscafé*, a popular vegetarian buffet. Carnivores should seek out *Meatballs for the People*, one of Stockholm's most popular new restaurants. For first-timers, we recommend the classic meatballs or reindeer or elk meatballs with creamy mushrooms.

For a night out, there's Södra Teatern tucked away in a corner of Södermalm. The historic cultural venue is more than just a nightclub. It also has a restaurant and several bars in which to dine, dance, and get to know some locals. If you're a solo diner, head to the old-school Hammarby football fan hang-out at *Kvarnen* established in 1908 or get a seat by the bar at *Woodstockholm* and enjoy a bit of bohemia.

EMBAJADORES IN MADRID

An authentic taste of the city

Once you're all Prado-ed out, hit the Embajadores district in the very centre of Madrid. The barrio is a must-visit to get a taste of local life, including the city's old-style *corralas* buildings and their balconies overlooking a central courtyard.

With more than 90 different nationalities living here, no neighbourhood in Madrid is as lively and diverse as Embajadores. The barrio

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La Casa Encendida hosts a variety of exhibitions, festivals, and concerts.



Head to century-old *Restaurante Malacatin* for local cuisine.



The Rastro is Madrid's most famous flea market.

has plenty of creative energy that has attracted graffiti artists from around the world to create huge street art murals. The steep streets of Lavapiés, the old Jewish Quarter, feature bustling cultural life, diverse cuisine, and excellent nightlife. When in Embajadores, there's no chance you'll miss La Casa Encendida, which hosts a variety of exhibitions, festivals, and concerts. In summer, La Casa Encendida opens an outdoor terrace for performances and outdoor film screenings.

But Embajadores is best known for its weekly flea market. The Rastro, held every Sunday from 9 am to 3 pm, is Madrid's biggest and best place to



Photo by Juxio Davila

The *Ciriaco Brown* cocktail bar features local flair and retro furniture.

Worth checking out

If you're after classic vinyl records, stop by the best record store in Madrid. *Bajo el Volcán* has a great selection of soul and jazz as well as many other records. bajoelvolcan.es

residents. Make sure to stop by the little *La Casquería* stall, where books are sold by weight. And just around the corner is *La Siempre Llena*, which specialises in local, natural wines from small growers and also sells those wines in bulk. The other market in Embajadores is the Mercado de Antón Martín. Established in 1941, it continues to sell just about everything, from organic produce and regional specialties to clothing and cutlery.

A great night out in Embajadores is guaranteed. There's *Medias Puri*, a subterranean club with a secret entrance hiding under the appearance of a typical haberdashery. *Ciriaco Brown*, for its part, is a classic cocktail bar with local flair and antique furniture. If you're on the lookout for an authentic hangout tucked away in the narrow streets of Embajadores, head to century-old *Restaurante Malacatin* for local cuisine, *cocido* (a traditional stew), and tapas. **bo**

ENDLESS NATURAL WONDERS

Having spent three years living, working, and writing in Iceland, *Baltic Outlook* travel writer James Taylor has travelled extensively across the entire country and explored all of its remotest regions. He is currently updating the new edition of the award-winning *Bradt Travel Guide to Iceland*, which will be released later this year. In the meantime, he tells us about his favourite places in this magical land.

Words and photos by James Taylor



Travel writer
James Taylor

As spring arrives in Iceland, the country stirs to life. After a long and dark winter slumber, the sun finally starts to linger long into the evening, bringing with it the sound of bird song, rushing waterfalls, and crisp winds whistling over mountain passes. It's a time to experience all of Iceland's natural wonders in their full splendour.

And the best way to do that is via a road trip. There's something about the freedom of being able to explore, discover, and experience things as you wish that perfectly suits this time of year. The longer days also come with their own freedom: the privilege to lose track of time and continue exploring long after everyone else has gone to bed. There's a magical quality to these bright evenings that is so uniquely Icelandic.

These photos were taken over several years of living in and travelling around the country for work as an author and updater of Iceland guidebooks. But what they don't convey is the sensory experience of being *in* Iceland. A biting wind, the roar of a waterfall, creaking glaciers, the sulphurous stink of a geothermal field. Iceland isn't just a feast for your eyes, but your senses as well. Embrace it all, and you're left with one of the most memorable trips you'll ever take.

◀ The Vestrahorn mountain is one of Iceland's most dramatic and beautiful locations. Located in the southeast corner of the country, this windswept peninsula was also used by the British as a military base in the Second World War and later became a NATO radar station.



◀ A boiling geothermal pool in the Haukadalur geothermal area on Iceland's Golden Circle. Minerals in the ground and water mix to create some fascinating colours. This is also the location of Iceland's famous erupting Geysir.



▲ Þórsmörk Nature Reserve is one of the most rewarding hiking areas in the entire country. Nestled between three glaciers in the south of Iceland, it's a heady mix of black sand, silvery glacial rivers, birch forests, and volcanic mountains. It's a location only accessible via public bus or on foot.

► A field of lupines bursts to life in front of a mountain in southwestern Iceland. This plant was first introduced to the country in 1945 to help the Icelandic countryside rejuvenate, as the lack of trees means the strong winds blow away most of the fertile soil.



▼ Sunrise at Reynisfjara Black Sand Beach. Fierce waves and strong undercurrents make this the most dangerous beach in Iceland. Puffins nest in the cliffs above, while beautiful hexagonal basalt columns rise from the sand.



◀ Hörghlíðarlaug, a small hot spring in the Westfjords. Nestled away near the bottom of Mjóifjörður, it's an excellent setting for a relaxing soak in some hot water. You'll find plenty of outdoor hot springs on a journey around the country.

► Icelandic horses graze in a pasture in front of Hekla volcano, one of the most active in the country. It has erupted 20 times since the year 2000 and is long overdue for its next eruption.



Golden light falls across Vik, Iceland's southernmost town. The sea stacks in the ocean are said to be former trolls turned to stone after being caught by the rising sun. Icelandic folklore adds a touch of the supernatural to the alluring landscapes. **bo**

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from Riga
from **€179**
roundtrip

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WELCOME ABOARD airBaltic



Dubai seaside skyline and Burj Al Arab view at sunrise

NEW FLIGHTS BETWEEN RIGA AND DUBAI

From September 1, we will open a new flight between Riga and **Dubai**, which is the most populous city in the United Arab Emirates.

The city is famous for its world-class architecture, beautiful arts and culture, innovative landscapes, and outdoor performances. Explore a desert safari. See the Dubai Frame, the largest picture frame in the world. Or witness unforgettable views over Dubai from the iconic Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building.

Flights will operate four times per week.

SUMMER SCHEDULE NEWS

We've published our 2021 summer flight schedule and want to share some exciting news.

In April we resume flights outside the European Union from Riga to **Tbilisi, Tel Aviv, Kyiv, Odessa, Moscow, St. Petersburg** and **Minsk**.

From May onwards, our flight schedule will see the return of popular Mediterranean destinations such as **Palma de Mallorca, Dubrovnik, Malaga, Olbia, Venice**, and many others.

In June, we start flying from Riga to **Trondheim, Bergen, Yerevan**, and **Manchester**.

When it comes to direct flights from Tallinn, in April we start flying to sunny **Malaga** and in May to **Munich**. *airBaltic* operates a total of 13 direct flights from Tallinn.

Flights from Vilnius to **Kyiv** will continue into summer. Beginning in June, we are planning to fly from the Lithuanian capital to **Dubrovnik**. There are 11 direct flight destinations served from Vilnius.

Flights from Tallinn and Vilnius to Riga run three times per day to ensure convenient transit connections for travellers from Estonia and Lithuania.



Rena Bianca beach, North Sardinia

CATCH THE SUN

While only essential travel is allowed, let's dream about the places we will visit when the world gets back to normal again!

Nice is a place to enjoy life and soak up the vibrant Mediterranean atmosphere. Flights begin from Riga on April 24.

Lisbon is known for world-class restaurants and a reputation for style and rich history, but **Larnaca** – for year-round sunshine. Fly from Riga to Lisbon from April 2 and to Larnaca from April 3.

Visit **Dubrovnik**, a beautiful mix of an ancient town and turquoise waters in **Croatia**. Flights will start from Riga on May 1 and from Vilnius on June 4. Walk down the palm-lined Riva promenade in **Split** and wander around in **Rijeka's** old streets. Fly from Riga to Split from May 3 and to Rijeka from July 1.

Delicious pasta, beautiful villages, and epic beaches – there are enough places to visit in Italy to last a lifetime. Catch rays of sun in **Catania** and explore **Olbia**, the gateway to pearly white beaches.

Fly from Riga to Catania from April 24 and to Olbia from May 22. Enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime experience by riding in a gondola through the romantic canals of **Venice**. Flights will begin from Riga on July 1.

With more than 200 beaches along the coastline, **Palma de Mallorca** is a paradise for lovers of the outdoors. **Malaga** truly has it all: scenic yellow-sand beaches, centuries-old castles, stylish ports and marinas, and excellent restaurants. And with sun-soaked beaches, art galleries, and incredible food, it's easy to fall for **Barcelona**. Flights from Riga to Palma de Mallorca will start on May 2 and to Barcelona on April 1. Flights from Riga to Malaga will start on June 2 and from Tallinn on April 17.

Do not miss the amazing views in Greece and the clean beaches in **Rhodes**. Take a step back in time and visit **Athens** – one of the world's oldest cities. Enjoy street art and vibrant markets in **Thessaloniki**. Flights from Riga to Rhodes will begin on April 24, to Athens on May 1 and to Thessaloniki on May 11.

EUROPE'S YOUNGEST AIRCRAFT FLEET AWARD

ch-aviation has awarded *airBaltic*, which has an average aircraft age of 2.41 years, the 2021 award for Europe's Youngest Aircraft Fleet.

ch-aviation maintains and researches an extensive aircraft fleet database consisting of more than 5000 operators and more than 65,000 aircraft worldwide. To determine the award's winners, *ch-aviation* looked at active commercial operators, both passenger and cargo aircraft, with five or more aircraft and used consolidated Air Operator Certificate lists for airline groups with multiple AOCs.

LUFTHANSA CODESHARE



airBaltic and *Lufthansa* are starting codeshare cooperation that will open new travel opportunities.

As of March 28, *Lufthansa* put its marketing codes on routes operated by *airBaltic* between Munich and Riga as well as Munich and Vilnius. *airBaltic* customers will thus benefit from convenient access to *Lufthansa's* worldwide network. At the same time, *Lufthansa* passengers will have more possibilities to travel from Munich to the Baltic states.

In cooperation with *Lufthansa*, on the *airBaltic* website you can now easily book flights via Munich or Frankfurt to many cities in Germany, such as Nuremberg, Hanover, and Cologne, as well as to destinations in Great Britain, France, the Balkans, etc. A single booking will include an *airBaltic* and a *Lufthansa* flight. Both airlines will be responsible for delivering you to your destination, so you won't have to worry about possible delays or transferring your luggage from one flight to another.

Your health and well-being are our top priority

To minimise the potential spread of viruses, we have introduced new health measures on board and at airports. We kindly ask you to act responsibly and follow the new rules, because only together can we ensure that travel is safe and healthy.



BEFORE THE FLIGHT

Only travel if you are in good health. Your body temperature will be measured at the airport, and you will be allowed on board only if it does not exceed 37.8°C.

Check in and order your inflight meal and other services online to minimise physical contact.



AT THE AIRPORT

Wear a protective face mask during the whole trip – from the moment you enter the terminal until you walk out of the airport at your destination. Children under six years of age and people with certain medical conditions are exempt from wearing face masks.

Try to keep your distance from other people and use the hand disinfectants available throughout the airport.

Check-in and bag drop counters are equipped with protective barriers. All airport staff wear protective face masks and gloves.

BOARDING

To minimise physical contact between passengers, boarding starts from the rear part of the aircraft. Self-scan your boarding pass and show your travel document to the boarding agent.

As long as there are enough free seats, we try to leave an empty seat next to each passenger. If this is not possible for all passengers, families and groups are seated together. Please be aware that last-minute seat changes may apply due to distancing reasons.

ON BOARD

During the whole flight face masks must be worn by all passengers and our crew, which also wears protective gloves.

Choose food and drinks from the disposable menu cards that the cabin crew hand out to Economy class passengers. Meal service is included with Business class tickets. All meals are prepared and packed separately in our kitchen under strict hygiene standards. Payment is possible by card only.

CLEAN AIR INSIDE THE CABIN



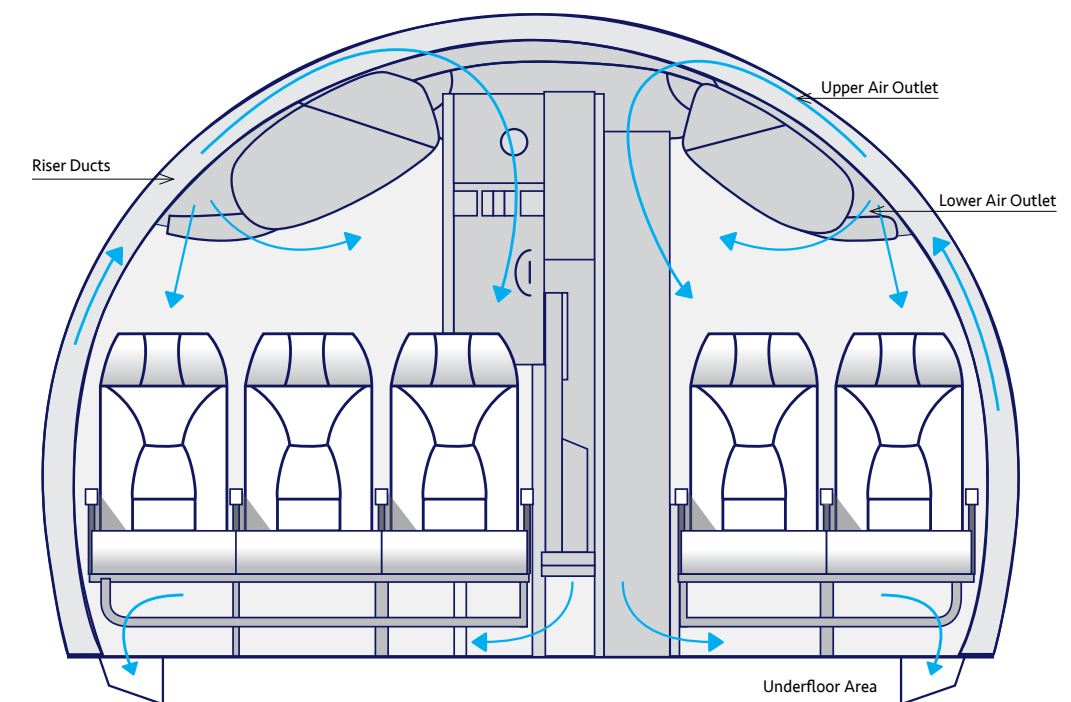
Our *Airbus A220-300* aircraft are equipped with a modern environmental control system using HEPA filters to eliminate all viruses and bacteria. Airflow is routed down towards the floor, thus minimising air transmission amongst passengers.

AIRCRAFT DISINFECTION

After each return flight, we carefully clean all commonly used surfaces inside the aircraft, such as armrests, backrests, meal tray tables, seatbelt latches, air and light gaspers, and other equipment. Every night we perform a more in-depth disinfection, and a full cabin disinfection is done twice a week.

The science behind keeping cabin air clean

Words by Līga Vaļko



According to a recent survey by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), 37% of passengers are concerned about breathing the air on an airplane. Because there is a lack of knowledge about how air is filtered and supplied in aircraft, most consider it a threat. But with its modern environmental control system, *airBaltic* has set a high standard for minimising the potential of spreading viruses.

The *Airbus A220-300* fleet is equipped with cutting-edge technologies, making flying as worry-free as possible. For the production of *Airbus A220-300* aircraft, the manufacturer has used a cabin air recirculation system and High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters that provide better performance compared to those used in any other type of public transportation.

Cabin air is continuously replenished with fresh air from the moment the aircraft engines or auxiliary power unit is turned on. The air is collected from outside the aircraft through the engine. For your comfort and wellbeing, it is mixed with filtered air from the cabin. The ratio between filtered air and fresh air from outside is 25:75, which sets a high benchmark among jetliners used by other carriers across Europe.

75% of the fresh air is taken from the engine compressor and passed through the air cycle machine at a temperature well above 100°C to ensure aseptic air quality. The rest of the cabin air consists of the HEPA-filtered and recirculated cabin air. The HEPA filters

are very effective at trapping microscopic particles as small as bacteria and viruses when the air passes through the system. In such conditions, airborne pathogens from the cabin air are captured and eliminated with 99.99% efficiency, making our aircraft cabin air exceptionally clean.

Inside the passenger cabin, the airflow is supplied from above the overhead compartment and flows directed towards the floor, eliminating airflow along the cabin and minimising lateral air transmission amongst passenger rows. According to IATA, the air circulation in planes is many times better than in classrooms, supermarkets, conference rooms, and offices. In fact, the risk associated with viruses on jets is probably lower than in any other confined space thanks to next-generation cabin air filtration systems equipped with HEPA filters.

In addition to the modern environmental control system, other preliminary steps also help to ensure a safe environment inside *airBaltic* aircraft. 'We are taking care to keep our passengers and aircraft safe while travelling. The airline has introduced measures following the recommendations of the local government and healthcare agencies, the aircraft manufacturer, and IATA,' says Lauris Miķelsons, VP Compliance and Safety at *airBaltic*.

'*airBaltic* is doing its utmost, and the team comes together to ensure safe flights for travellers and the crew,' concludes Miķelsons.



VIKTORIJA KAZAKOVA,
Call Centre Team Leader

Delivering excellence

Last autumn, *airBaltic* defined its brand’s new values: ‘We deliver’, ‘We care’, and ‘We grow’. The appreciation and feedback culture is important at *airBaltic*, and employees were invited to recognise and nominate colleagues who best demonstrate each of *airBaltic*’s values. These are employees with a unique perspective and who serve as amazing role models, who use remarkable skills to fuel our mutual efforts, and who lift the airline and the people around them to ever greater achievements.

Words by Ieva Šmite
Publicity photo

Viktorija Kazakova was chosen by her colleagues via an internal vote as the ambassador for the ‘We deliver’ value. This value means that *airBaltic* strives for consistent excellence every day and in every aspect of its business and is strongly committed to delivering top-notch quality in all areas of the airline’s operations. Kazakova’s job, her team, and her dedication to her work proved especially important a year ago, when it was up to *airBaltic*’s customer service department, including its Call Centre, to take care of the airline’s customers who faced countless problems after the state of emergency regarding the pandemic was declared.

Why do you think your colleagues chose precisely you as the ambassador for this value?

First of all, it was a huge surprise to me, really! *airBaltic* is a big company and I didn’t think I was that well known (*laughs*). But I’m truly happy that not only my own work but that of our entire team has been appreciated, and it was especially delightful to receive this appreciation from my colleagues. That was our job – to deliver the best possible customer service to all of *airBaltic*’s clients who found themselves in this unenviable situation when the emergency regarding the pandemic was declared. My main task at the Call Centre was to keep abreast of everything and support the supervisors and agents.

The most intense period for your department was one year ago.

Actually all of last year. The time went by very, very quickly, because we had so much work. It started when the crisis began in March. We remember the few days before Latvia closed its borders very well. Those were the last days when people could still manage to return to Latvia, or leave the country. As long as I’ve worked at *airBaltic*, we had never had as many calls as we did then.

What was your role during that time?

My main task was to keep my team motivated. As leaders, we set an example for our team; we cannot show our fatigue, and we need to keep an open and positive attitude. We need to motivate and help our team in all possible ways. I was also very involved in the work of the agents, helping them find solutions to special situations and so on.

Throughout April, we all worked non-stop, with no days off or vacation time, because we understood that this was an emergency situation and we needed as many agents working as possible. We had full teams working, everyone. Clients mostly asked about changing flight dates or cancelling flights and receiving their money back.

The situations that people found themselves in were very diverse.

Plus, they were scattered all around the world. But we always try to find the very best solution for each

and every client. In April we ran repatriation flights. The borders were closed, but many people found themselves outside our country’s borders, sometimes even beyond Europe. They needed to somehow first fly to Europe in order to then continue on to Latvia. Mostly, that meant having to make it to one of two points: Amsterdam or Frankfurt. But that wasn’t always possible, because all kinds of flights were being cancelled. In those cases, we transferred tickets for missed flights in order to help however we could.

As of July 1, 2020, *airBaltic* changed its ticket tariffs. According to the new rules, date change is now available for all ticket types, and that eventually really relieved our work and our relationship with our clients. At such an unstable time, it’s important to have more flexible rules for passengers.

From your perspective, what was the situation like this past autumn?

Now we’re dealing with other difficulties. Travel is possible, but the rules and regulations for travel have changed and continue to change. Almost every country has its own set of rules. Some require that Covid-19 tests be done no more than 24 hours before a flight, but for others that test can be done up to 72 hours before. Some countries have prohibited all travel without a valid reason.

Right now we’re getting a lot of calls and questions about travel rules and regulations and about the documents needed to travel. We’re working very closely with other departments at the airline; our colleagues are doing very difficult but also very good work, and they always help us with the difficult issues.

None of this has been easy for you or for *airBaltic*’s customers.

Most of our clients, however, have been very understanding. It was really nice to see that people understood that cancelled flights were not the personal fault of an agent, nor the fault of the airline – it was simply the situation we were all in. They expressed lots of support and appreciation to us, which helped the agents immensely in their work and motivated us to keep working. We felt like we were doing good work and that our efforts were meaningful. Not long ago a customer got in touch with us. She was stuck in Russia after undergoing medical treatment there and needed to get back home to Sweden. I cannot describe how distraught she was at first, but after we helped her get home, she was so grateful and overjoyed.

Today, during our interview, we’re the only ones present in the Call Centre. That’s because all of the other employees are working from home, as required by local regulations.

Yes, the company has organised our work so that we can work remotely from home. Last spring, we

In 2020, *airBaltic* handled more than 997,000 passenger inquiries made via the Call Centre, e-mail, and social media.

For a few months in 2020, the average call duration exceeded 14 minutes, up from the previous average of 3:30 minutes. At the same time, *airBaltic* managed to maintain the average waiting time in the queue to less than one minute.

During that same period, the number of incoming calls and e-mails increased by 23% and 26%, respectively, while the number of conversations on social media doubled.

all moved to working from home in about one day’s time. At first it seemed like it would be hard. Would it even be possible? Sitting at home all alone, no colleagues around whom you could ask for help or to answer a question. But we adjusted quickly. We have an internal communication channel where agents can ask questions and through which shift supervisors and more experienced agents can help solve problem situations. It seems like everything’s working quickly and effectively.

How did you begin working at *airBaltic*?

I began working here five years ago as a Call Centre agent. To be honest, when I saw the advertisement, I didn’t even really know exactly what the job would entail – I only learned about that at my interview (*laughs*). But I wanted to try it, and I enjoyed the

We always try to find the very best solution for each and every client

work. I liked that the work was interesting; our passengers have such different situations and needs. One call might be about products, while the next might be about changes to a ticket or cancelling a ticket. *airBaltic* also offers a range of other services. Two and a half years later I became a shift supervisor. And another year and a half later I became a team leader. There are about 65 people in total working at the Call Centre and two of us team leaders. Right now, I’m responsible for supervising and organising the efficient work of the Call Centre. I also do a lot of work with new employees who’ve only recently joined us.

And yet, the main thing is...

To deliver the best possible customer service, especially at a time like this. To find the best solutions for our customers. Very often what helps is trying to put oneself in the customer’s shoes, trying to imagine what their situation feels like.

Words by Ilze Pole
Photo by Dmitrijs Šulžics (F64)

Pilots out of their office

Baltic Outlook introduces you to some of the most important people at *airBaltic* – its flight crew members, who have some of the most interesting hobbies.



Edgars Burtņieks (32),
first officer on *Airbus A220-300* aircraft,
from Latvia

HOBBY

Edgars Burtņieks arrives at the photo session with a propeller from a *Mignet Pou-du-Ciel* aircraft manufactured in 1936 in France, which he borrowed from his flight instructor, Gatis Panavs. Edgars did a lot of flying with Panavs at the Eriva Flight School while training for his private pilot licence and instrument rating. Edgars still flies small aircraft as a hobby.

‘For many pilots, becoming a commercial pilot and getting a job at an airline is like the final destination,’ he says. ‘They’ve got their profession, they’re on the career track, and their next goal is to become a captain, although all of us have flown single-engine airplanes. They often find other hobbies to occupy themselves outside of work, but I really enjoy flying small aircraft and still keep my certification up to date.’

Every now and then on a day off, Edgars and his friends head to Spilve Airport in Riga and fly to Cēsis or further afield. ‘Before the pandemic, a friend and I flew to Kihnu Island in Estonia. It’s got an airfield, too,’ he says. ‘Then we rented some bicycles, had a nice look at the island, and flew back.’

Working in commercial aviation, pilots get to enjoy the true essence of flying for only a very short time, because most of the flight is done on autopilot. Relatively little actual manual flying is involved. ‘At first, my goal was just to keep my manual flying skills up to date,’ Edgars explains. ‘Later, I realised that when I fly small aircraft, I’m able to forget about all of the things that are stressful at work and concentrate on the part that gives me the greatest joy – flying.’

At the end of last year, Edgars fulfilled a long-held dream of his: he got to fly an L39 military jet. ‘We did some aerobatics and also a few manoeuvres at +6 Gs. They even let me do a couple of manoeuvres myself,’ Edgars says excitedly. Naturally, *Top Gun* was his favourite movie as a child.

HOW DID IT ALL START

Edgars first began working for *airBaltic* in 2007 as a flight attendant. He had been interested in aviation already as a child. In fact, this interest was partially inspired by his father, who had worked as an aviation technician at Spilve Airport.

However, before he committed to making a career in aviation, Edgars wished to try it out first. He needed to know whether he could handle the early-morning alarms and other specifics of this kind of work. After three years as a flight attendant, he left the airline to travel the world. He lived for a while in the United States and in England; he also did a bit of backpacking. And he realised that he wanted to get back into aviation, this time as a pilot.

Edgars began his training at the Cranfield Flying School in Great Britain but eventually moved back to Latvia and continued training at the Eriva Flight School. While he completed most of his training in Latvia, he received his commercial pilot licence in Slovakia. And in October 2017, precisely ten years after he had begun working at *airBaltic* as a flight attendant, he resumed working at the airline... this time as a pilot.

The first plane Edgars flew was the *Dash Q400*. ‘I liked it a lot,’ he says, ‘because the *Dash* is a bit more of a manual airplane. It was good to start out with a more hands-on plane. The *Airbus A220-300* is one of the most modern airplanes in the world and requires a different approach. I enjoy flying it, but I feel that the technological advancements do kill some of the romance of flying. However, I can get that feeling – which is very important for me – by flying small aircraft. This propeller here, which was produced in 1936, is a witness to the era when flying was completely different.’

Words by Ieva Šmite
Photos from the personal archives of Sergejs Kulikovs, Viktors Gromovs, and Vladislavs Vernība

Let’s take a look at where our technicians love to travel and at the fascinating hobbies and talents that they have!

1/ Sergejs Kulikovs, a certified Category BI/ B2 technician on *A220* aircraft types, joined *airBaltic* seven years ago. An interview and discussion followed, and he’s been with *airBaltic* ever since.

2/ A moment captured on a small Vietnamese island. Sergejs tries to split his holiday time between sunny destinations and exploring different cultures, such as Honduras or India.

3/ Sergejs on top of Two Brothers Hill in Rio de Janeiro. It’s not the most popular tourist activity due to the long route through a favela and then about 2.5 hours up in the jungle. But at the end, an amazing view of Rio is guaranteed.

4/ Viktors Gromovs, also a certified Category BI/B2 technician on *A220* aircraft types, has worked at *airBaltic* for more than four years now. He graduated from Riga Technical University, but to become a licensed technician, he needed an additional three-plus years of practical experience as well as to pass 13 EASA Part-66 module exams and complete type training for the *Airbus A220* family.

5/ Viktors in the Dubai Desert last year, where he travelled with his family for a birthday celebration.

6/ Viktors’ hobby is powerlifting, which he began 15 years ago. He has won several Latvian and Baltic state championships and Universiades in the under-82 kg category



9 SNAPSHOTS from the lives of our technicians

Interested in
working for
airBaltic?
Find information
about the latest
vacancies at
careers.airbaltic.com

airBalticTechnics
General Aviation Services

with a best result of 167.5 kg in the bench press.

7/ A certified Category A technician on *A220* aircraft types, **Vladislavs Vernība** joined *airBaltic* in the autumn of 2015 as a third-year TSI engineering science in aviation transport student. He started as a student-apprentice and worked his way up step by step. He says that work helps him build self-discipline as well as develop and improve exactness, precision, and attention to detail.

8/ Vladislavs is a former competitive swimmer. Whenever possible, he now works as a coaching assistant, encouraging children and youths to practise an active and healthy lifestyle.

9/ This photo was taken at Hvítserkur, also known as the Troll of Northwest Iceland, during a road trip around the island in May 2019. Vladislavs is eager to return to Iceland again and again because the country has so many places and activities to discover.

airBaltic's sustainable development goals

Since launching the Sustainability Development Goals calendar in October 2020, *airBaltic* continues to actively work on reaching the set goals.

SUSTAINABILITY CALENDAR

 OCTOBER SDG 16 UN DAY: UNITED NATIONS DAY (24TH OCTOBER) —MONTH OF "PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS"	 NOVEMBER SDG 12 UN WEEK: INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF SCIENCE AND PEACE (6TH –12TH NOVEMBER) —MONTH OF "RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION"	 DECEMBER SDG 9 UN DAY: INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION DAY (7TH DECEMBER) —MONTH OF "INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE"	 JANUARY SDG 8 UN DAY: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION (24TH JANUARY) —MONTH OF "DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH"
 FEBRUARY SDG 16 UN WEEK: WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK (FIRST WEEK OF FEBRUARY) —MONTH OF "PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS"	 MARCH SDG 13 UN DAY: WORLD WILD-LIFE DAY (3RD MARCH) —MONTH OF "CLIMATE ACTION"	 APRIL SDG 8 UN DAY: WORLD HEALTH DAY (7TH APRIL) —MONTH OF "DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH"	 MAY SDG 13 UN DAY: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LIGHT [UNESCO] (16TH MAY) —MONTH OF "CLIMATE ACTION"
 JUNE SDG 13 UN DAY: WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY (5TH JUNE) —MONTH OF "CLIMATE ACTION"	 JULY SDG 12 UN DAY: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FRIENDSHIP (30TH JULY) —MONTH OF "RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION"	 AUGUST SDG 16 UN DAY: WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY (19TH AUGUST) —MONTH OF "PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS"	 SEPTEMBER SDG 9 UN DAY: WORLD TOURISM DAY (27TH SEPTEMBER) —MONTH OF "INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE"

The present situation has strengthened the company's brand values and inspired it to revise its vision, mission, and core values. After carrying out a survey of *airBaltic*'s customers, colleagues, partners, and opinion leaders, *airBaltic* came to the conclusion that its revised brand values are to deliver, to care, and to grow.

In addition to this, at the beginning of this year, the management of *airBaltic* came up with a materiality matrix, which prioritised sustainability as one of the main goals of the company. This encouraged *airBaltic* to explore in detail 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations. Even though *airBaltic* contributes to all of the SDGs, it has decided to focus on the five goals

that are most relevant for its business: decent work and economic growth; industry innovation and infrastructure; responsible consumption and production; climate action; and peace, justice, and strong institutions.

This has also encouraged the company to go further with various creative solutions related to sustainability and corporate responsibility. Therefore, starting October 2020 and for a period of one year, *airBaltic* will highlight and contribute to resolving an issue related to one of the five selected SDGs. Each month *airBaltic* will set a goal in connection with one of the five SDGs and dedicate one specific day or week in that month to implement this particular goal.

Achieved goals in February and March

February at *airBaltic* was the month of 'peace, justice, and strong institutions', in which the main focus was on encouraging employees to practise a more harmonious lifestyle at work and after hours. Currently, when so many things are uncertain, it's very important to remain patient and focus our minds on positive thoughts. In March, *airBaltic* focused on goals to help the environment. For example, it introduced a new system that significantly reduces the airline's use of paper, and it collaborated with the Latvian Fund for Nature to raise awareness of the importance of nature.

WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS AT airBaltic

Earlier this year, *airBaltic* launched its internal Wellness Wednesdays project in order to encourage employees to take better care of their mental health during and after work. The company offered detailed information and suggestions on topics such as setting up a home office and 'deskercise' routines. Seeing as the first week of February was International Harmony Week, *airBaltic* also raised awareness of the meaning and practice of meditation, encouraging employees to try this method of handling stress. Likewise, in the last week of February, employees were introduced to the topic of social well-being and tolerance. These and other aspects of well-being are all important for us to have good relationships with others and enjoy social stability and a sense of peace.

airBaltic PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMME

During February, *airBaltic* introduced the Peer Support Programme (PSP), in which trained volunteer Peer Supporters provide assistance to their fellow colleagues at the airline. Peer Supporters are ready to listen and help people resolve any issues they may be facing. Sometimes all one needs is to talk with a colleague who knows the specifics of the day-to-day routines and can guide one through the challenges that arise.

PSP is an independent service provided in cooperation with a practising



psychoanalytic psychotherapist and a member of the European Association for Aviation Psychology. PSP is funded by *airBaltic*, but it is run independently from the company, the trade unions, and the Latvian Civil Aviation Agency. All volunteer Peer Supporters have signed a confidentiality declaration and are trained on how to ensure confidentiality whilst working within the PSP.

KNOWLEDGE ON airBaltic

After its introduction in January, *airBaltic* continued its 'Knowledge on *airBaltic*' project. Based on the results of an internal survey, five departments were selected that employees expressed most interest in: the Network Planning, Technical, Flight Operations, Human Resources, and Ground Operations departments. Each of these departments prepared detailed information about their team and made a list of their main daily tasks and challenges. This information was then published on the *airBaltic* internal website. Colleagues were encouraged to contact other departments, ask questions, and get to know each other. The project is still ongoing, and departments can now choose which team they would like to discover more about by organising virtual meetings and talking in more detail about the activities of their respective departments.

THE FIRST GEN FAM COURSE

European Union regulations require that personnel performing certain functions in airworthiness checks and technical maintenance must have completed a General Familiarisation (Gen Fam) course, which provides general training on the specific airplane-type design, systems, etc. The course also provides an opportunity for other employees who do not have such a requirement, such as those working in parts procurement, to learn general information about an aircraft type. Seeing as *airBaltic* now performs airworthiness checks and technical maintenance of *Airbus*

A220-300 aircraft, it organised its first Gen Fam course in February.

Following the latest industry trends, the Maintenance Training Organisation has developed paperless courses by designing a new electronic training platform. All the necessary course materials are now available electronically, providing participants easy access whether they use *iPads* or laptops/ computers. After successfully passing the course, a certificate is presented that allows the employee to proceed further with more extensive training.

AIRBUS FUEL EFFICIENCY WEBINAR

Airlines all around the world are trying to reduce their operational costs in every facet of their business. Because fuel consumption is a major cost to any airline, improvements in fuel efficiency are a key focus for all airlines as well as aircraft manufacturers. On February 18, *airBaltic* participated in the *Airbus* Fuel Efficiency webinar along with 350 other participants worldwide: aviation professionals, current and potential customers, *Airbus* aircraft operators, flight operations, and engineering and fuel efficiency specialists. *airBaltic* Chief Operations Officer Pauls Čālitis gave a presentation sharing our experience with *Airbus A220-300* performance over the past few years and promoting *airBaltic* and its innovations.

MAINTAINING GENDER EQUALITY

With one of *airBaltic*'s main sustainability goals being to maintain full gender equality in the number of employees at the airline, it proudly announces that currently 47% of *airBaltic* employees are female. At the same time, more than 40% of employees in *airBaltic*'s top management positions are women. In addition, in 2020 *airBaltic* supported and signed the Latvian Diversity Charter, thus committing to strive to adhere to the basic principles of diversity management and respect for employees and society as a whole.



White-tailed eagle in Durbe,
South Kurzeme region

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND CHALLENGE

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) established a 30-day challenge with the main goal of raising awareness regarding rehabilitation for the earth and climate stabilisation. With the month of March at *airBaltic* devoted to the environment, the airline took part in this challenge and invited all of its employees to participate by paying more attention to and appreciating the benefits we all receive from nature and also reviewing our daily habits to see whether anything can be adjusted to leave a more positive impact on the environment.

A PEEK INTO THE EAGLE'S NEST

With March being the month *airBaltic* focused particularly on the environment, the airline collaborated with the Latvian Fund for Nature to receive the latest news on what's going on in nature at the start of spring.

Lots of activity was spotted in March in the nests of white-tailed eagles in Slitere (northern Kurzeme) and Durbe (southern Kurzeme) along Latvia's western coast. The Latvian Fund for Nature livestreams from webcams set up near bird nests, and thus it was possible to see how the eagles prepared for the new nesting season by adding fresh branches to nests, lining them with spruce and pine needles, and laying dry grass in the cavities of the nests. White-tailed eagles usually lay one to three eggs, but it is rare to have three young birds raised in one nest. Last year, three eaglets hatched in the Durbe nest, but the youngest and weakest one was pushed out of the nest, leaving only two eaglets to fledge.

In late March, the Latvian Fund for Nature launched a new season of livestreams from the nests of birds returning from various wintering locations, among them lesser spotted eagles, black storks, ospreys, and black kites.

This will be the tenth season of Latvian Fund for Nature livestreams from the nests of large birds. Since 2011, millions of people worldwide have enjoyed seeing the lives of white-tailed eagles, black storks, ospreys, and other protected bird species up close. Last year, these views from above – some of the nests are located in trees almost 30 metres above ground – were complemented by the first underwater webcam from a fish migration route in Līgatne. Watch livestreams from Latvian Fund for Nature webcams at: ldf.lv/tiesraides dabasdati.lv/lv/kameras2021 straume.lmt.lv/lv/straumes youtube.com/c/LatvijasDabasfondsOnline

HOW TO BEHAVE IN A FOREST

For birds living in forests, spring is a time of egg laying, incubating, and the rearing of young. This process generally takes place from April to the end of July and requires relative peace and quiet. However, some species start breeding already in March. Therefore, anyone visiting the forest and other nature locations is asked to be careful and quiet.

During this time, the main rule in the forest and nature in general is to not disturb the wildlife. When walking, hiking, or spending time in nature, try to avoid making any noise, be respectful, and enjoy nature carefully. If you come across a nest, please leave it alone – do not try to touch the eggs or linger very long near the nest (for example, staying to take photos). Even large nests located high up in the trees are not immune to disturbances; birds may leave the nest even when noticing humans at quite a distance away. If the birds are disturbed and leave the eggs, there is a risk that the nest will be abandoned or predated on during the absence of the parents.

Filming and photographing with drones, which is currently very popular, is in fact very disturbing to wildlife

and should not be done when in close proximity to birds and other animals. Your perfect *Instagram* picture of flying birds or running animals is in reality a picture of creatures in distress.

Also, do not drive loud vehicles on small forest roads during the nesting period in spring. Remember, the forest is a space of recreation and adventure for us, but for birds it is their home.

If you notice a large nest, do not try to inspect it more closely. Instead, register your observation on the Latvian nature observation portal at dabasdati.lv.

INTRODUCING ELECTRONIC FLIGHT PLANS FOR PILOTS

airBaltic recently introduced a new sustainability project, replacing pilot briefing packages with electronic operational flight plans that pilots can access on their tablets. Even though the company introduced tablets for pilots already back in 2014, this was the next significant step in replacing one of the last documentations that pilots had to print out before each flight with a digital solution. Pilot briefing packages contain the operational flight plan, the weather forecast, and information about the relevant airports as well as other documentation. Pilots used to fill out these forms by hand during the flight and submit them for post-flight processing. Now the entire process is implemented on tablets.

IATA TRAVEL PASS

airBaltic is among the first airlines in the world to express its support for the introduction of the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Travel Pass solution for safer cross-border travel. The IATA Travel Pass is a mobile app that helps passengers manage their travel more easily and securely in line with government requirements for Covid-19 tests and/or vaccines. At the beginning of March, *airBaltic* announced it would trial the IATA Travel Pass on its Riga–Amsterdam and Riga–Oslo flights. The trial ran for three weeks, and *airBaltic* customers on these routes were invited to join the trial.

The IATA Travel Pass is based on a passenger's digital identity. It consists of four independent modules that interact with each other. These modules cover registries for regulatory entry requirements and labs/test centres, verified testing/vaccination certificate issuance, and the option for passengers to share their tests results with involved authorities via their mobile devices. By following the industry's latest trends, *airBaltic* supports its sustainability goal of 'peace, justice, and strong institutions'.

Travel with confidence!





NEW TICKET TYPES ON *airBaltic* FLIGHTS

Since July, whenever you reserve an *airBaltic* flight, you can choose from four different ticket types depending on your needs and wishes: GREEN, GREEN plus, GREEN classic and BUSINESS.

The biggest news is that now the date can be changed for all tickets. This will give our guests extra flexibility and security when planning their trips.

Check out the chart to see what services are included in each ticket type, and choose the one that’s best for you.

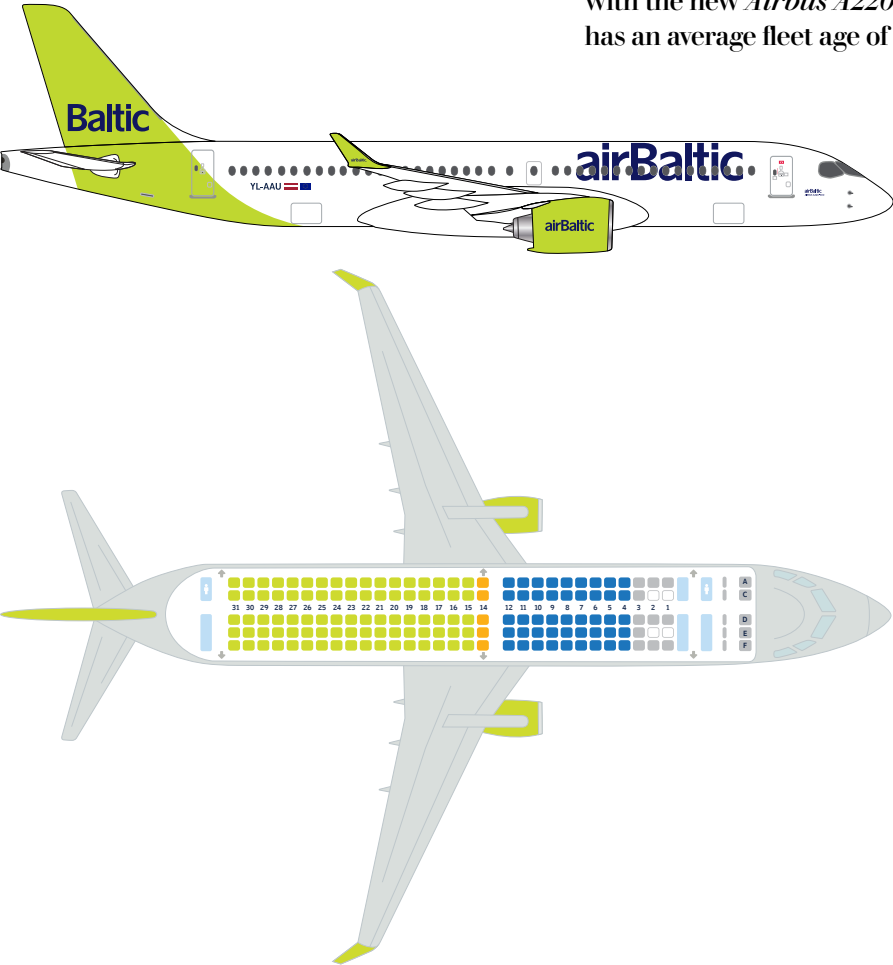
	GREEN	GREEN plus only on <i>airBaltic.com</i>	GREEN classic	BUSINESS
	The simplest ticket for the lowest price – with the option of changing the flight date.	A great price that includes checked baggage and the option of flexibility. Plus regular discounts on different ancillary services.	A smart choice! The most important services plus greater flexibility in changing or cancelling the flight.	Our proven value – enjoy plenty of benefits, sophisticated service and total flexibility.
CABIN BAGGAGE	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHECKED BAGGAGE	from EUR 14.99	✓	✓	✓
SEAT RESERVATION	from EUR 3.99	from EUR 3.99	✓	✓
DATE CHANGE*	EUR 50 per direction	EUR 50 per direction	✓	✓
REFUND	✗**	✗**	EUR 50 per direction, or EUR 25 per direction, if you choose a refund in the form of a gift voucher	✓
NAME CHANGE*	✗**	✗**	EUR 70 per ticket	✓
MEAL	from EUR 9.99	from EUR 9.99	from EUR 9.99	✓
AIRPORT CHECK-IN	EUR 14.99	EUR 14.99	✓	✓
FAST TRACK	✗	✗	✗	✓
BUSINESS LOUNGE	✗	✗	✗	✓
<i>airBaltic Club</i> ***	Earn 1–3 <i>pins</i> per euro spent	Earn 1–3 <i>pins</i> per euro spent + 50 bonus <i>pins</i>	Earn 1–3 <i>pins</i> per euro spent + 100 bonus <i>pins</i>	Earn 1–3 <i>pins</i> per euro spent + 200 bonus <i>pins</i>

* Fare difference may apply.
** A Flight Cancellation option and Name Change option can be added to your tickets by making the reservation on *airBaltic.com*.
*** The number of *pins* earned per each Euro spent on a ticket depends on the tier level within the *airBaltic Club*.

Flights from RIGA						Flights to RIGA					
Flight No	From/Till	Days	Departure	Arrival		Flight No	From/Till	Days	Departure	Arrival	
ABERDEEN Dyce /RIX-ABZ/						ABERDEEN Dyce /ABZ-RIX/					
BT 659	From May 1	-2--6-	16:40	17:10		BT 660	From May 1	-2--6-	17:50	22:20	
ALMATY /RIX-ALA/						ALMATY /ALA-RIX/					
BT 746	From May 11	-2-4--7	23:15	07:30+1		BT 747	From May 12	1-3-5--	08:30	11:15	
AMSTERDAM Schiphol /RIX-AMS-/						AMSTERDAM Schiphol /AMS-RIX/					
BT 617		123456-	07:45	09:05		BT 618		123456-	10:20	13:35	
BT 619	Till May 2	-----7	16:30	17:50		BT 620	Till May 2	-----7	18:35	21:50	
BT 619	From May 3	12345-7	16:30	17:50		BT 620	From May 3	12345-7	18:35	21:50	
ATHENS /RIX-ATH/						ATHENS /ATH-RIX/					
BT 611	From May 1	-2--6-	07:55	11:05		BT 612	From May 1	-2--6-	11:45	14:55	
BARCELONA /RIX-BCN/						BARCELONA /BCN-RIX/					
BT 683	Till May 1	---4-6-	13:30	16:10		BT 684	Till May 1	---4-6-	17:10	21:45	
BT 683	From May 4	-2-4-6-	13:30	16:10		BT 684	From May 4	-2-4-6-	17:10	21:45	
BERLIN Brandenburg /RIX-BER/						BERLIN Brandenburg /BER-RIX/					
BT 211	Till Apr 28	1-3-5-7	07:35	08:10		BT 212	Till Apr 28	1-3-5-7	08:50	11:25	
BT 211	From Apr 30	1234567	07:35	08:10		BT 212	From Apr 30	1234567	08:50	11:25	
BILLUND /RIX-BLL/						BILLUND /BLL-RIX/					
BT 147	From May 2	1-3-5-7	13:00	13:40		BT 148	From May 2	1-3-5-7	14:20	16:55	
BRUSSELS /RIX-BRU/						BRUSSELS /BRU-RIX/					
BT 601	From May 1	12--6-	07:30	08:55		BT 602	From May 1	12--6-	09:40	13:05	
BT 603	Till May 2	-3-5-7	16:25	17:50		BT 604	Till May 2	-3-5-7	18:30	21:55	
BT 603	From May 3	12345-7	16:25	17:50		BT 604	From May 3	12345-7	18:30	21:55	
BUDAPEST Liszt Ferenc /RIX-BUD/						BUDAPEST Liszt Ferenc /BUD-RIX/					
BT 491	From May 1	-2--6-	12:40	13:35		BT 492	From May 1	-2--6-	14:15	17:15	
CATANIA Fontanarossa /RIX-CTA/						CATANIA Fontanarossa /CTA-RIX/					
BT 639	From Apr 25	-----7	07:15	9:45		BT 640	From Apr 25	-----7	10:35	14:55	
COPENHAGEN Kastrup /RIX-CPH/						COPENHAGEN Kastrup /CPH-RIX/					
BT 131	Till Apr 28	1-3-5-7	07:45	08:15		BT 132	Till Apr 28	1-3-5-7	08:55	11:20	
BT 131	From Apr 30	1234567	07:45	08:15		BT 132	From Apr 30	1234567	08:55	11:20	
BT 139	From May 2	-3-5-7	18:20	18:50		BT 140	From May 2	-3-5-7	19:30	21:55	
DUBLIN /RIX-DUB/						DUBLIN /DUB-RIX/					
BT 661		---5-7	07:25	08:35		BT 662		---5-7	09:15	14:10	
BT 661	From May 5	-3-----	07:25	08:35		BT 662	From May 5	-3-----	09:15	14:10	
DUBROVNIK /RIX-DBV/						DUBROVNIK /DBV-RIX/					
BT 497	From May 1	---4-6-	15:45	17:25		BT 498	From May 1	---4-6-	18:05	21:40	
DUSSELDORF /RIX-DUS/						DUSSELDORF /DUS-RIX/					
BT 233		-3---7	16:25	17:40		BT 234		-3---7	18:25	21:30	
BT 233	From May 7	-----5-	16:25	17:40		BT 234	From May 7	-----5-	18:25	21:30	
FRANKFURT /RIX-FRA/						FRANKFURT /FRA-RIX/					
BT 243	Till Apr 28	-23-5--	07:50	09:10		BT 244	Till Apr 28	-23-5--	09:50	13:00	
BT 243	From Apr 30	123456-	07:50	09:10		BT 244	From Apr 30	123456-	09:50	13:00	
BT 245		-----7	16:35	17:55		BT 246		-----7	18:45	21:55	
GOTHENBURG Landvetter /RIX-GOT/						GOTHENBURG Landvetter /GOT-RIX/					
BT 121	From May 2	-----7	12:15	12:40		BT 122	From May 2	-----7	13:20	15:40	
BT 121	From May 3	1-3-5--	13:15	13:40		BT 122	From May 3	1-3-5--	14:20	16:40	
HAMBURG /RIX-HAM/						HAMBURG /HAM-RIX/					
BT 251	Till May 2	-3-5-7	12:50	13:40		BT 252	Till May 2	-3-5-7	14:20	17:00	
BT 251	From May 3	1-345-7	12:50	13:40		BT 252	From May 3	1-345-7	14:20	17:00	
HELSINKI Vantaa /RIX-HEL/						HELSINKI Vantaa /HEL-RIX/					
BT 301	From May 20	1234567	08:05	09:05		BT 326	From May 2	1234567	05:35	06:35	
BT 303		12345-7	12:10	13:10		BT 302	From May 20	1234567	09:50	10:50	
BT 307	From May 20	1234567	18:40	19:40		BT 304		12345-7	13:50	14:50	
BT 325	From May 1	1234567	23:20	00:20+1		BT 308	From May 20	1234567	20:25	21:25	
KAZAN /RIX-KZN/						KAZAN /KZN-RIX/					
BT 450	From May 10	1-4---	23:35	02:00+1		BT 451	From May 11	-2-5--	03:20	06:00	
KYIV Boryspil /RIX-KBP/						KYIV Boryspil /KBP-RIX/					
BT 400	Till Apr 28	1-3-5-7	07:20	08:55		BT 401	Till Apr 28	1-3-5-7	09:40	11:20	
BT 400	From Apr 30	1234567	07:20	08:55		BT 401	From Apr 30	1234567	09:40	11:20	
BT 404	From May 2	-3-5-7	18:20	19:55		BT 405	From May 2	-3-5-7	20:40	22:20	
LARNACA /RIX-LCA/						LARNACA /LCA-RIX/					
BT 657	Apr 17- May 15	-----6-	14:30	18:10		BT 658	Till Apr 11	-----7	03:10	06:55	
BT 657	Till Apr 10	-----6-	22:50	02:30		BT 658	Apr 28- May 12	-3-----	03:10	06:55	
BT 657	Apr 27- May 11	-2-----	22:50	02:30		BT 658	From May 19	-3---7	03:10	06:55	
BT 657	From May 18	-2---6-	22:50	02:30		BT 658	Apr 17- May 15	-----6-	18:55	22:40	
LIEPAJA /RIX-LPX/						LIEPAJA /LPX-RIX/					
BT 019	From May 2	1-3-5-7	23:40	00:20+1		BT 020	From May 3	12-4-6-	05:45	06:25	
LISBON /RIX-LIS/						LISBON /LIS-RIX/					
BT 675	Till Apr 30	-----5-	12:50	15:25		BT 676	Till Apr 30	-----5-	16:10	22:40	
BT 675	From May 4	-2-5--	12:50	15:25		BT 676	From May 4	-2-5--	16:10	22:40	
LONDON Gatwick /RIX-LGW/						LONDON Gatwick /LGW-RIX/					
BT 651		1-5--	07:50	8:40		BT 652		1-5--	09:25	14:05	
BT 651	From May 5	-3-----	07:50	08:40		BT 654	From May 5	-3-----	09:25	14:05	
BT 653	Till Apr 27	-2---67	15:15	16:05		BT 654	Till Apr 27	-2---67	16:50	21:30	
BT 653	From May 1	1234567	15:50	16:40		BT 654	From May 1	1234567	17:25	22:05	
MADRID Adolfo Suarez Barajas /RIX-MAD/						MADRID Adolfo Suarez Barajas /MAD-RIX/					
BT 685	From May 2	---4-7	13:00	16:10		BT 686	From May 2	---4-7	16:50	21:55	
MILAN Malpensa /RIX-MXP/						MILAN Malpensa /MXP-RIX/					
BT 629	Till May 2	---5-7	08:05	09:50		BT 630	Till May 2	---5-7	10:40	14:20	
BT 629	From May 3	1-3-5-7	08:05	09:50		BT 630	From May 3	1-3-5-7	10:40	14:20	
MINSK /RIX-MSQ/						MINSK /MSQ-RIX/					
BT 412	Till Apr 25	---4-7	13:20	14:20		BT 413	Till Apr 25	---4-7	15:10	16:10	
BT 412	Apr 29 - May 18	-2-4-67	13:20	14:20		BT 413	Apr 29 - May 18	-2-4-67	15:10	16:10	
BT 412	From May 20	1234567	13:20	14:20		BT 413	From May 20	1234567	15:10	16:10	
MOSCOW Sheremetyevo /RIX-SVO/						MOSCOW Sheremetyevo /SVO-RIX/					
BT 424	Till Apr 29	1-4---	07:25	09:00		BT 423	Till Apr 29	1-4---	09:45	11:25	
BT 424	From May 1	1234567	07:25	09:00		BT 423	From May 1	1234567	09:45	11:25	
BT 422	Till Apr 28	-3---7	18:20	19:55		BT 425	Till Apr 28	-3---7	20:40	22:20	
BT 422	From May 1	1234567	18:20	19:55		BT 425	From May 1	1234567	20:40	22:20	
MUNICH /RIX-MUC/						MUNICH /MUC-RIX/					
BT 221	From May 1	1-3-6-	07:40	08:50		BT 222	From May 1	1-3-6-	09:30	12:35	
BT 223	Till May 2	-23-5-7	17:25	18:35		BT 224	Till May 2	-23-5-7	19:15	22:20	
BT 223	From May 3	12345-7	17:25	18:35		BT 224	From May 3	12345-7	19:15	22:20	
NICE Cote d'Azur /RIX-NCE/						NICE Cote d'Azur /NCE-RIX/					
BT 695	Apr 24 - May 1	-----6-	08:05	10:10		BT 696	Apr 24 - May 1	-----6-	10:50	14:45	
BT 695	From May 4	-2-4-6-	08:05	10:10		BT 696	From May 4	-2-4-6-	10:50	14:45	
ODESSA /RIX-ODS/						ODESSA /ODS-RIX/					
BT 410	From Apr 30	1-3-5-7	23:45	01:50		BT 411	From May 1	12-4-6-	04:05	06:10	
OLBIA Costa Smeralda /RIX-OLB						OLBIA Costa Smeralda /OLB-RIX/					
BT 655	From May 22	-----6-	15:20	17:40		BT 656	From May 22	-----6-	18:20	22:30	
OSLO Gardermoen /RIX-OSL/						OSLO Gardermoen /OSL-RIX/					
BT 151	From May 3	1-3-5--	07:55	08:35		BT 152	From May 3	1-3-5--	09:15	11:45	
BT 153	Till May 2	1-4-67	18:00	18:40		BT 154	Till May 2	1-4-67	19:20	21:50	
BT 153	From May 3	1234567	18:00	18:40		BT 154	From May 3	1234567	19:20	21:50	
PALANGA /RIX-PLQ/						PALANGA /PLQ-RIX/					
BT 033	Till Apr 25	---45-7	23:40	00:25+1		BT 032	Till Apr 26	1-56-	05:40	06:25	
BT 033	From Apr 29	1234567	23:40	00:25+1		BT 032	From Apr 30	1234567	05:40	06:25	
PALMA DE MALLORCA /RIX-PMI/						PALMA DE MALLORCA /PMI-RIX/					
BT 687	From May 2	-----7	07:55	10:45		BT 688	From May 2	-----7	11:30	16:10	

Welcome aboard our new *Airbus A220-300*

We are proud to have the Europe’s youngest fleet of aircraft. All *airBaltic* flights are operated with the new *Airbus A220-300* aircraft, which has an average fleet age of two years.



Number of aircraft	25
Number of seats	145
Max take-off weight	67.6 metric tons
Max payload	16.7 metric tons
Length	38.7 m
Wing span	35.1 m
Cruising speed	870 km/h
Commercial range	4575 km
Fuel consumption	2200 l/h
Engine	PW 1521G

- Business class seats
- Priority seats
- Extra legroom seats
- Regular seats

Use of portable electronic devices

	BOARDING	TAXI BEFORE TAKE-OFF	TAKE-OFF	CRUISE	APPROACH AND LANDING	TAXI AFTER LANDING
Connectivity GSM, Bluetooth, Flight Mode						
Handheld devices e.g. tablets, e-readers and mobile phones						
Heavy devices e.g. laptops and notebooks						

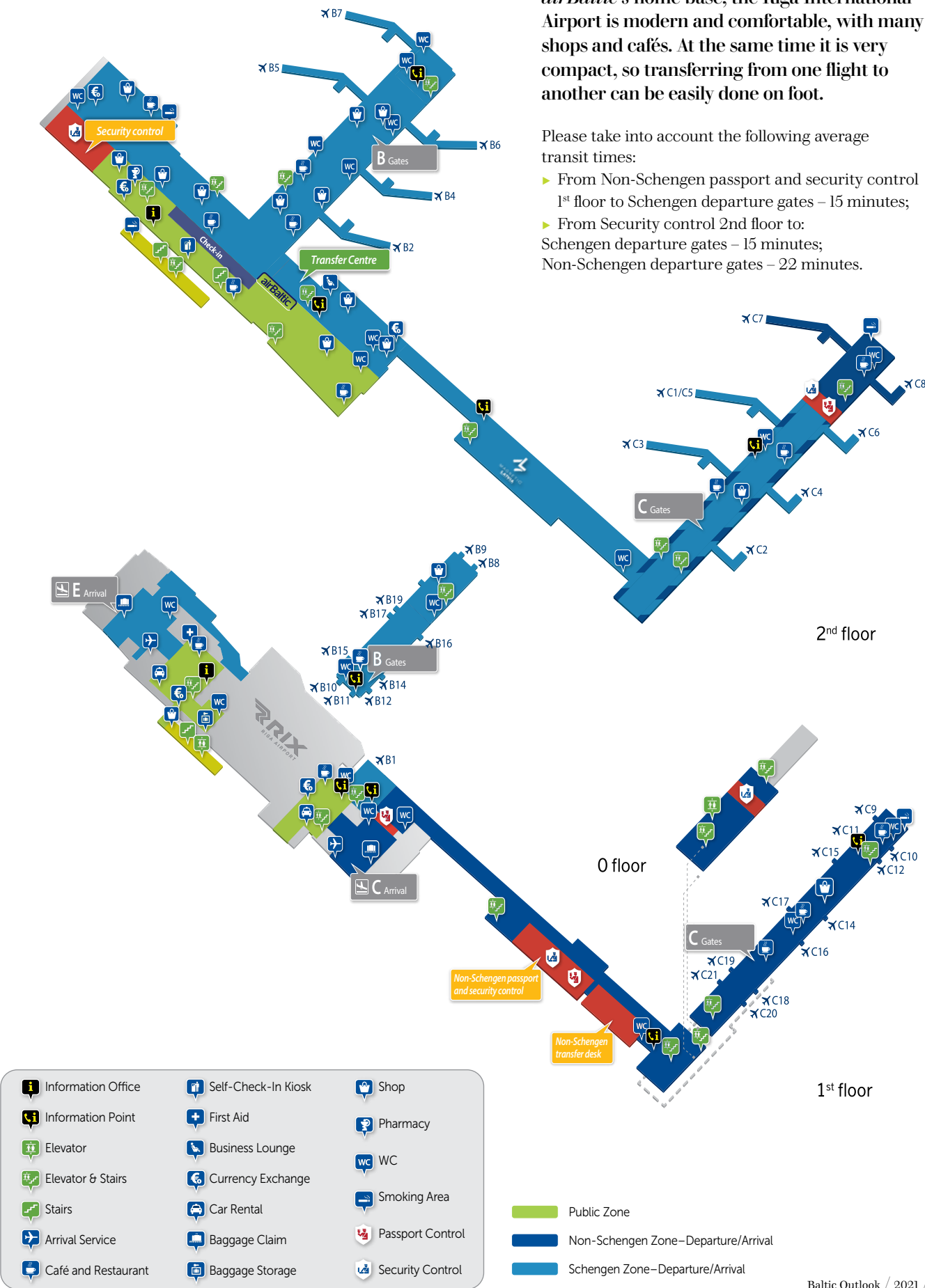
* Shall be stowed in overhead bin or under the front seat inside an appropriate bag.
In case a battery or device is damaged, hot, produces smoke, is lost, or falls into the seat structure, immediately inform the cabin crew.

Welcome to Riga International Airport

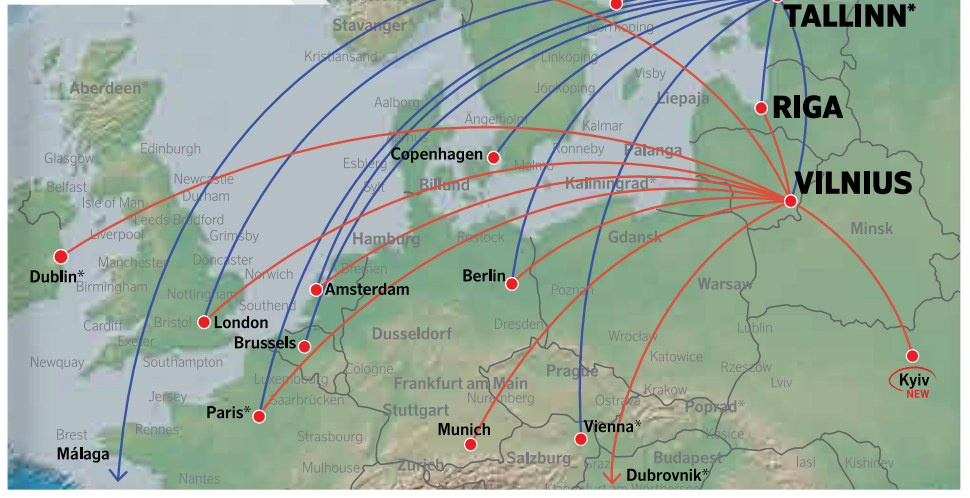
airBaltic’s home base, the Riga International Airport is modern and comfortable, with many shops and cafés. At the same time it is very compact, so transferring from one flight to another can be easily done on foot.

Please take into account the following average transit times:

- From Non-Schengen passport and security control 1st floor to Schengen departure gates – 15 minutes;
- From Security control 2nd floor to: Schengen departure gates – 15 minutes; Non-Schengen departure gates – 22 minutes.



Direct flights
from Tallinn and Vilnius



airBaltic direct flights
* Seasonal flights
● airBaltic code-share partner flights
○ airBaltic interline partner flights

airBaltic codeshare partners

Spice up your trip with our extras!

Book these useful services along with your ticket at airbaltic.com or add them to your booking later on.



Flight cancellation and name change options

For your peace of mind, add the option to cancel your reservation and get a full refund in the form of an *airBaltic* gift card in case your travel plans change. This service costs **EUR 19.99** per passenger per direction.

Or add the option to change the passenger name in your ticket for a fee of **EUR 7.99** per flight segment.

Both services are available only on [airBaltic.com](https://airbaltic.com) when purchasing *GREEN* or *GREEN plus* tickets.



Heavy cabin baggage

You can take on board one cabin bag (55x40x23 cm) and one personal item (30x40x10 cm) with a total weight of eight kilograms free of charge.

However, sometimes you may need to carry more but want to avoid waiting for a checked suitcase at the baggage belt. Now you can **add an extra four kilograms to your cabin baggage from EUR 11.99** and take a total of 12 kilograms on board.

Please note: If you purchase extra cabin baggage weight, your cabin baggage must still remain within the above-mentioned dimensions. Exceeding the allowed cabin baggage weight or size limits will cost EUR 60 at the airport.



Checked baggage

Add checked baggage if you want to take up to **20 kilograms**, including liquids over 100 ml, which are not allowed in cabin baggage. The cheapest option is to book checked baggage along with your ticket at airbaltic.com starting from **EUR 14.99**. You can also add baggage anytime later at a higher price.



Pre-order a meal

Order a meal before your flight and be among the first served on board. Choose our great value meal sets, which include a main course, dessert, and a drink starting from **EUR 9.99**. All meals are freshly prepared and packed separately under strict hygiene standards. Special vegetarian and kids' meals are also available.



Reserve a seat

Are you a window person, or do you favour more legroom? Want to avoid the middle seat or sit together with your family? Or do you want to sit in the front to be the first off the plane?

Whichever it is, you can secure your favourite seat in advance starting from **EUR 3.99**. With a reserved seat you will enjoy an additional bonus – the opportunity to **check in for your flight already five days before departure** (instead of the usual 36 hours).



Fast track in Riga

Add fast-track security check to your booking for only **EUR 9.99** and skip the security lines at Riga Airport.



Special equipment

Whatever your hobby, you don't have to live without it during your trip. Take your bicycle, skis, or golf bag with you from **EUR 29.99**.

*Guitars, cellos, and other fragile musical instruments that do not fit in cabin baggage can be transported on the seat next to the passenger if a special ticket has been purchased for their transportation.



Assistance for children flying alone*

If you are unable to accompany your children, our crew can take care of them from the time they check in to the moment when they meet a parent or guardian at the destination airport. Unaccompanied minor service costs from **EUR 60** and is available for children aged 5 to 17.



Travelling with pets*

Your furry friend can travel in the cabin if its crate fits under the seat in front of you. Larger animals are placed in the cargo hold during the flight.

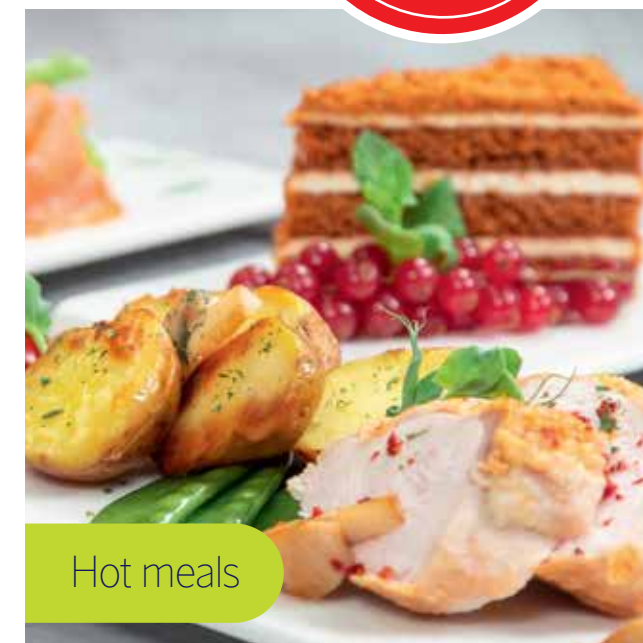


Pre-order online
on **airBaltic.com**

Freshly made before your flight
Choose from over 25 great value meal sets



Breakfast sets



Hot meals



For special occasions



Vegetarian and gluten free

Choose your meal when booking a ticket on airbaltic.com or anytime later up to 24 hours before departure through *My booking* section. You can also order a meal during online check-in from a smaller menu.

Fly one of the world's greenest aircraft, the Airbus A220-300

Think green
Fly green



20% less
CO₂ emissions

50% less
noise

50% less
NO_x emissions



*Compared to previous generation narrow-body aircraft with the same seating capacity