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FEBRUARY 2015

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airBaltic is extremely proud to have been ranked as the world's most punctual airline for 2014. We had already been among the strongest carriers in on-time performance for many years, but now – with 95 flights out of 100 arriving on or ahead of schedule – we have made it to the very top. This achievement is the result of smooth cooperation among the airline's operational teams and reflects the priority that we place on your valuable time as you complete your check-in, security clearance and boarding to reach your destination on or ahead of schedule.

Smooth operations are also key in our role as the official airline of the Latvian presidency of the Council of the European Union. For the first half of this year, *airBaltic* will serve as the main bridge between Riga and Brussels – the two national capitals that will be hosting numerous meetings, work groups and events.

airBaltic already links 26 European and Eastern capitals with its home market in the Baltic region. We will go even further and launch additional routes from Tallinn to Vienna and Berlin in the upcoming summer season. The new connectivity of Estonia with the capitals of Austria and Germany, in combination with the same cities served from Riga, will generate business and leisure opportunities that did not exist before, facilitating travel between the Baltic and other regions and creating new jobs.

Did you know that Latvia's coastline spreads for 494 km along the Baltic Sea, and that it consists mainly of white sandy beaches? These are very popular for summer vacation trips but also attract thousands of visitors in the coldest winter months for cross-country skiing, jogging and leisurely walks along the seashore.

Thank you for flying *airBaltic* and have a great trip!

Yours,
Martin Alexander Gauss

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baltic outlook

Editorial Staff
Chief Editor: Ilze Pole / e: ilze@frankshouse.lv
Deputy editor: Zane Nikodemusa /
e: zane.nikodemusa@frankshouse.lv
Copy editor: Kārlis Roberts Freibergs
Design: Marika Kossatz
Layout: Inta Kraukle
Cover: Corbis

Frank's House

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Stabu 17, Riga, LV 1011, Latvia
ph: (+371) 67293970 / ⓘ frankshouse.lv
franks@frankshouse.lv
Director: Eva Dandzberga
eva@frankshouse.lv
Advertising managers:
Indra Indraše
indra@frankshouse.lv / (+371) 29496966
Ieva Birzniece
ieva.birzniece@frankshouse.lv /
(+371) 26416866
Inta Veinšteina
inta.veinsteina@frankshouse.lv /
(+371) 29263692
Overseas advertising manager:
Naseem Ullah
naseem@frankshouse.lv

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Lex Interior, Krasta str. 89, Riga, Latvia, ph: +371 67356422, www.lexinterior.lv
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Text by **EDMUNDS VALDEMĀRS BUNKŠE,**
professor emeritus and geographer
Photo courtesy of **EDMUNDS VALDEMĀRS BUNKŠE**

Celebrating our Paris

Last autumn, I stayed at a familiar flat in Paris together with a dear companion. It is located in a 19th-century apartment building with a mansard roof. The elevator to the sixth floor is extremely tiny. Even with only hand luggage, we had to ride up separately. However, a number of things had changed since our previous visit. Quiet classical music was playing in the cubicle and a soft woman's voice announced each floor in French.

A beautifully finished oakwood staircase led to our domicile in the roof. Inside was a modern, white magical world: a tiny kitchen with a bar and high stools; a fold-down bed and a few small paintings on the walls. The *pièce de résistance* lay behind the curtains: rooftops with round clay chimneys and the Panthéon in close proximity, this year wrapped in white plastic for repairs. To the left of it stood the majestic dome of Les Invalides. Off to the right was the tip of "La tour", or Eiffel Tower, lit up brightly at night. No need to go there.

After quietly admiring "the most beautiful city in the world", we went to our favourite café at the end of a short street and ordered some good *vin ordinaire*. Then at the small local shops we picked up food for a late afternoon lunch: baguettes, croissants, brie, a bottle of wine and milk for coffee. Back at the flat we celebrated our Paris. Well after dark we found a good local restaurant that suited our mood.

The author in Paris, autumn 2014

> Well after dark we found a good local restaurant that suited our mood

Paris is always surprising. This time the surprise was in the kindness of the French wherever we went. Neither of us speaks the local language, but after many visits to Paris and elsewhere in France, I have learned some standard phrases. I have also adopted a trick that I used when learning English as a teenager: find the most difficult sound to pronounce and practice it. It took me many years to master "the" in English. In French the "r" sound is very difficult for foreigners. So now I do well with *très* (very) and *merci*. I'm pretty proud of my r's. The French, just like Latvians, like it when a foreigner tries to speak their language. We met friendliness and consideration at every step.

Another surprise was that the ancient *Hôtel Esméralda* (dating from 1640) had been reopened on the charmingly named Rue St.-Julien le Pauvre (St. Julian the Poor Street), right across the river from the Notre Dame Cathedral. My sister-in-law had been the concierge there during my student days. I remember sitting on a windowsill of the hotel on a warm summer day and drinking a glass of wine while admiring the landmark. Around the corner was the *Shakespeare and Company* bookstore where James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway often met up with owner Sylvia Beech; and a café, now gone, where I had my first cup of dark French coffee in a ceramic cup. All of Paris was in that cup. It still is. **BO**

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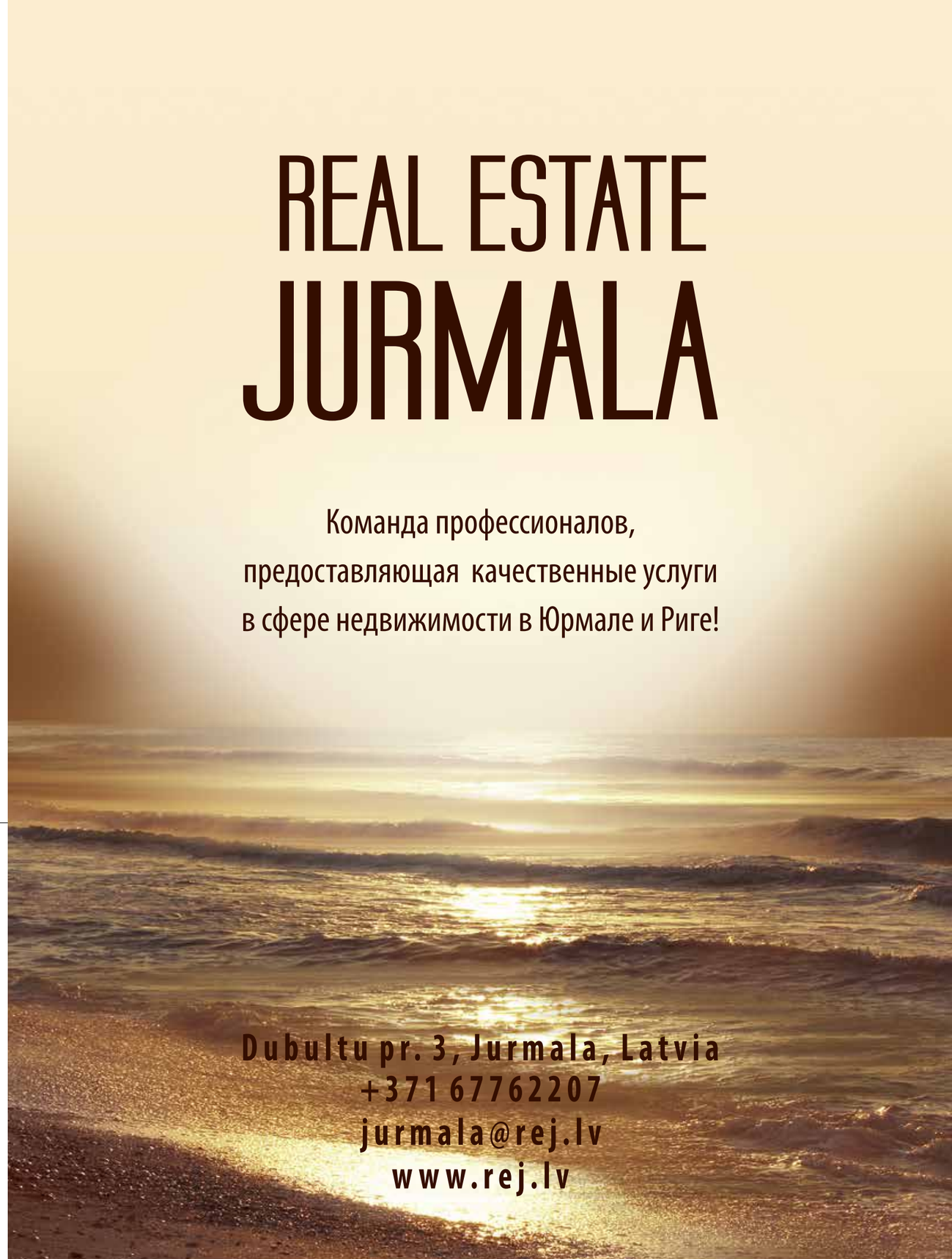

SPOTLIGHT ON THE WINTER

Five things that you should do in Latvia in February

1/ Observe the formations of ice flowers on the windows of old wooden houses.
2/ Refresh your cross-country skiing skills.
3/ Enjoy a Balkan music performance by *Emir Kusturica and the No Smoking Orchestra* at the *Palladium* concert hall in Riga on February 24.
4/ Attend a modern fitness training session under the new *CrossFit* method.
5/ Try a blood-barley sausage with lingonberry sauce.

ON THIS MONTH'S MENU

Celebrate life in all of its splendour with some tips from *Baltic Outlook*

Beauty *Yves Saint Laurent* is presenting its new *Black Opium* fragrance as a rock-and-roll interpretation of the classic *Opium* perfume and as a manifestation of a darker and more mysterious side of the French fashion brand. Notes of coffee dominate the scent, with additional accords of pink pepper, orange blossom, jasmine, vanilla, patchouli and cedar.

THE TREND:

Design Latvian jewellery maker *Anita Sondore* was chosen as one of ten top designers at the prestigious *Jewellers of America New York Summer Show*, which was hosted last year by the *New Designer Gallery*. The works by *Anita Sondore* are ornate and expressive, involving the use of precious metals and gemstones to highlight geometric shapes, which are inspired by both ancient Latvian symbols and more modern architectural motifs.

Music *She & Him*, the collaborative outfit of singer and actress Zooey Deschanel and guitarist and producer M. Ward, has reunited for the fifth time to release *Classics*, an all-cover collection of well-known vocal tunes. The smooth, sweet and retro-chic album is just perfect for those chilly winter evenings.

THE POWER OF **NATURE**

Latvia has a strong *pirts* (sauna) tradition, with some *pirts* users placing great emphasis on the types of switches used to stimulate the skin and blood circulation during the almost sacred heating ritual. The branches of many different plants can be employed (from bird-cherry, lilac and black currant to juniper and nettle), each with its own particular effect. Birch switches are said to be among the most versatile, being suitable for both men and women, and for both healing and relaxation purposes.

Text by **ZANE NIKODEMUSA** and **ROGER NORUM**
Photos by **LAURIS VĪKSNE, ANITA VAIVODE** (*F64*) and publicity

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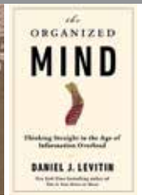

James Hoffmann. ***The World Atlas of Coffee: From Beans to Brewing – Coffees Explored, Explained and Enjoyed***
A caffeine addict's and café snob's dream book, this information-packed volume covers everything that you would ever want to know about coffee, including its varieties, tastes, ways to drink it and production, as well as brewing and roasting techniques. The most interesting bits explain the specific characteristics of coffee production in 35 different countries.
EUR 25, ⓘ octopusbooks.co.uk

Daniel J. Levitin. ***The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload***
In this readable pocket tome, neuroscientist Levitin guides us through the deluge of data that we all experience today, showing readers how to overcome being bombarded by e-mails, advertisements, closet collecting and obligations. He profiles how certain members of society (business execs, artists and athletes, to name a few) have maximised their creativity and efficiency by doing away with the mundane. No small task, but certainly worth a try.
EUR 21, ⓘ penguin.com

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Text by **ZANE NIKODEMUSA**
Publicity photos

© Guiliano Bekor

MACY GRAY CONCERT

Palladium concert hall
February 27

The owner of an inimitable voice, American singer Macy Gray will perform her best songs and all of the compositions from her most famous album, *On How Life Is*, at a concert in Riga. This album heralded the beginning of a brilliant career, during which the singer has won the prestigious *Grammy* award and sold more than 25 million recordings.

Tickets at ticketpro.lv
Price: EUR 29-35
Marijas iela 21, Riga

EXHIBITION **TWO CENTURIES OF ITALIAN PORTRAIT PAINTING. 1580-1780**

Giuseppe Maria Crespi (1665-1747). *Woman with Rose and Cat*. 1709-1715. Oil on canvas. From the collection of the National Pinacoteca of Bologna.

Alessandro Tiarini (1577-1668). *Dame with Dog (Orsina Leoni Castelli)*. Circa 1618. Oil on canvas. From the collection of the National Pinacoteca of Bologna.

Art Museum Riga Bourse
February 7 - April 19

With Latvia taking over the presidency of the Council of the EU for six months, treasures from museums in Bologna will be shown as a greeting from Italy, the previous presiding country. This exhibition demonstrates the special and innovative character of portrait painting and follows the evolution of this genre in Italy over the course of several generations.

More information at rigasbirza.lv
Doma laukums 6, Riga

ED SHEERAN CONCERT

Arēna Rīga
February 16

Ed Sheeran is currently one of the most popular young English solo artists and composers. This month, he will perform for at least an hour-and-a-half in Riga to promote his latest album *X*. Sir Elton John has referred to Sheeran as a new jewel in British music and Elton's management company now manages Sheeran's career. Influential producer and musician Pharrell Williams, for his part, approached Sheeran and offered to produce his latest album, *X*, an offer that Sheeran accepted.

Tickets at bilesuserviss.lv
Price: EUR 34-39
Skanstes iela 21, Riga

FEBRUARY 2015

RALLY LIEPĀJA

Roads in the Kurzeme region
February 6-8

© fiaerc.com

For the third year in a row, *Rally Liepāja* will host the Latvian segment of the *FIA European Rally Championship*, which will take place on roads in the Kurzeme region in the western part of the country. The organisers have received official applications from 21 teams, including two from the *Peugeot Rally Academy*, which will be represented by Craig Breen from Ireland and Diogu Gagu from Portugal. Many notable local drivers will also be taking part, including the 2014 Latvian rally champion Jānis Vorobjovs.

More information at 2015.lvrally.com

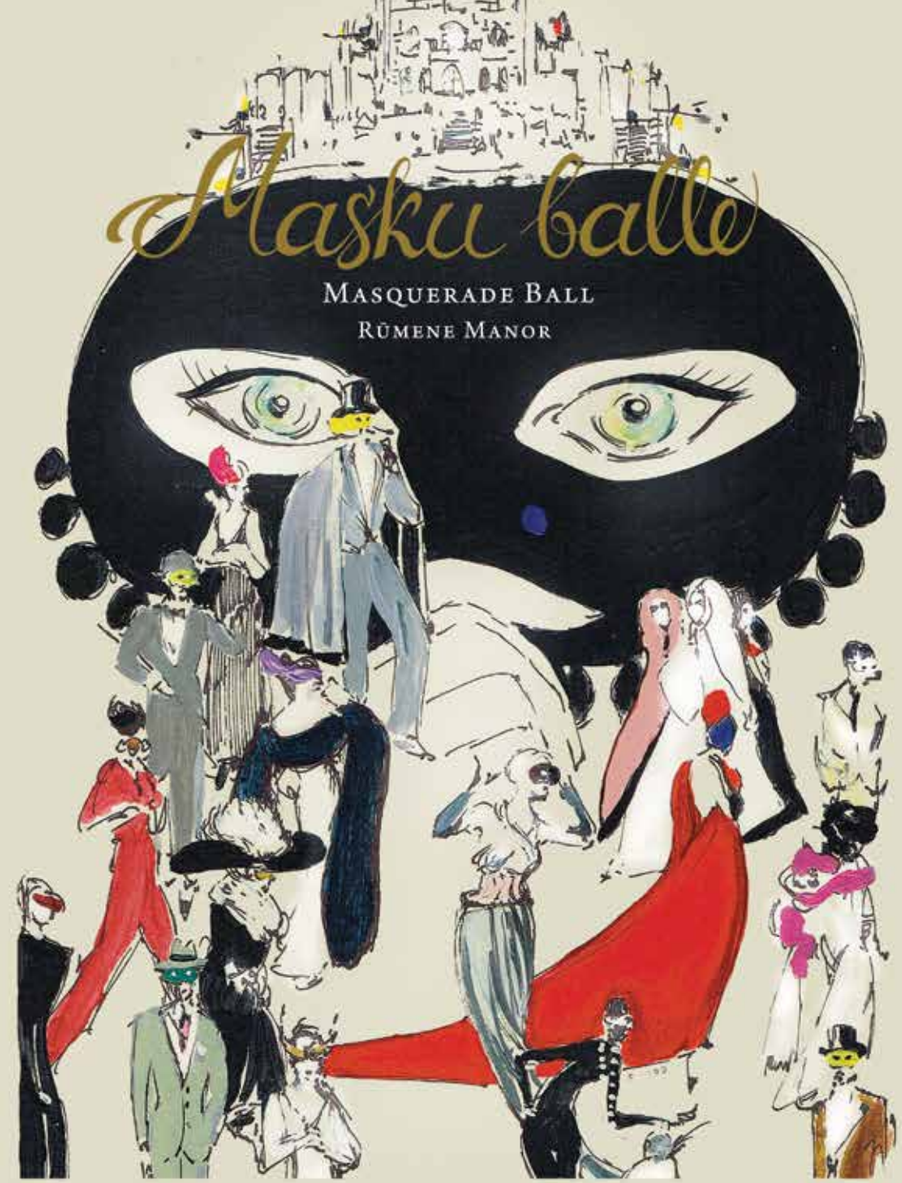
MANON LESCAUT

OPERA BY GIACOMO PUCCINI

Latvian National Opera
February 20, 21 and 22

Manon Lescaut was the third opera by Italian composer Giacomo Puccini and his first major success. In this production by the Latvian National Opera, an ancient story comes alive in contemporary Rome. The Riga premiere will also represent the debut by Latvian fashion designer Keita as an opera costume designer. According to well-placed sources, Keita has pledged to bring high fashion to this production.

More information at opera.lv
Tickets at bilesuparadize.lv
Price: EUR 9-100
Aspazijas bulvāris 3, Riga



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Rome

Text by **UNA MEISTERE**,
anothertravelguide.com
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Model photographed at the Capitoline Museums in front of the hand of the monumental statue of Constantine I, wearing a dress from Fontana Sisters, 1952.

The building that houses the new **D.O.M Hotel** (Via Giulia, 131; domehotelroma.com) has quite a history. At first it was a 17th-century castle, then a monastery, then an office building of the Ministry of Justice and now a new 24-room boutique hotel. The main justice ministry building still stands across the street, while inside the hotel Renaissance influences coexist with contemporary design elements. Admittedly, as is often the case in Rome, the guest rooms aren't very big. However, the hotel's location on the 500-year-old Via Giulia – halfway between St. Peter's Basilica and the Piazza Navona – is practically ideal.

Bellissima. Italy and High Fashion 1945-1968 presents a wonderful journey into the golden age of fashion in the Eternal City, reflecting a time when life was lived as if on a stage and the creative spirit had not yet succumbed to the ravages of corporate marketing. This was the heyday for such designers as Emilio Pucci, Valentino, Simonetta and Roberto Capucci, who helped to turn Italy into a fashion powerhouse. On view at the *Maxxi* museum of 21st-century art until May 3 (Via Guido Reni, 4A; fondazionemaxxi.it), the exhibition features 80 items of clothing previously worn by movie divas both onscreen and at gala events, along with jewellery and accessories.

Try to get a dinner table at **Marzapane** (Via Velletri, 39; marzapaneroma.com). The small restaurant can seat only 20 guests and reservations are usually made far in advance. Heading the kitchen is young French star chef Alba Esteve Ruiz, one of the few women to hold prominence in Rome's gastronomic scene and a veritable master in her craft. She has managed to unite the seemingly impossible – innovative cuisine worthy of a *Michelin* star together with a laid-back atmosphere and friendly prices. Visitors can choose one of four different degustation menus at a cost of only 30 to 55 euros per person. It seems almost too good to be true, so take advantage of the situation while it lasts!

Marzapane

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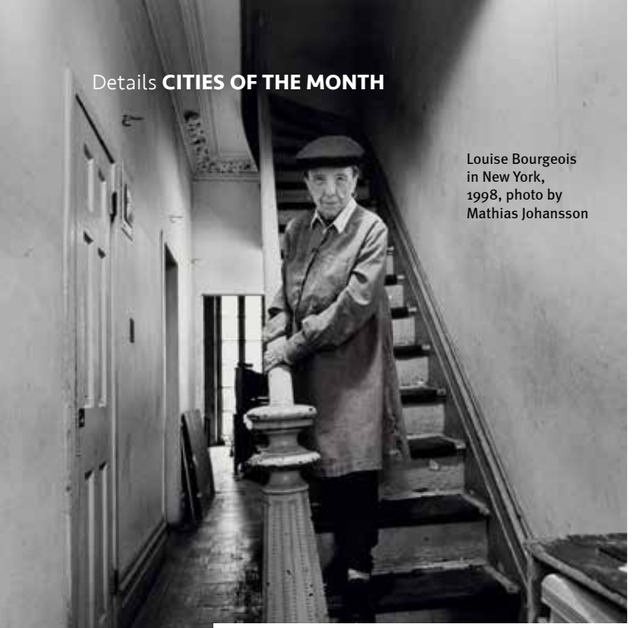

Louise Bourgeois in New York, 1998, photo by Mathias Johansson

Stockholm

Stockholm's *Moderna Museet* (Skeppsholmen; modernamuseet.se) is currently hosting a large-scale retrospective of works by legendary French-American artist and sculptor **Louise Bourgeois** (1911-2010). One her best-known works is a large sculpture of a spider that she named *Maman* (1999) and which gave rise to her nickname as *Spiderwoman* in art circles. Bourgeois' work addressed such themes as loneliness, betrayal and the sense of loss as well as the double standards concerning gender and sexuality in a male-dominated society. For Bourgeois, art was a form of psychotherapy, which she practiced almost until the day of her death at the age of 98. The exhibition of 105 of her works will be on display from February 12 until May 17.

If you are looking for thematically oriented accommodations, then **Miss Clara** (Sveavägen 48; missclarahotel.com) will fit the bill. The boutique hotel can be found in a former girls' school in one of the city's most prominent Art Nouveau buildings, with high ceilings and prominent windows being a characteristic feature. The femininely curved forms of the bed frames in the guest rooms and other thoughtful details remind one of the building's historical past in an interior that tastefully mixes the old with the new. *Miss Clara* has 93 rooms and belongs to the *Nobis* chain of hotels, which is well-established in Scandinavia.

Everybody in Stockholm is talking about Hammarby Sjöstad – the former port and industrial territory that has been transformed into a modern and environmentally friendly neighbourhood, with several cafés and restaurants that have become destinations in themselves. One of the best known is the café/bistro/restaurant **Fine Food Kärlek och Mat** (Hammarby Allé 62; finefood.se). Its décor has been inspired by the plays of light that American photographer Jordan Sullivan captured in a photo series in Death Valley, California. Set up by the Swedish *Note Design Studio*, the minimalistic Scandinavian interior displays the lightness and romanticism of an idyllic desert haze with plays of colour that vary from dark to light green, turquoise, salmon pink and peach. For those who have become a bit weary of the robust industrial design that is customary in many contemporary establishments, *Fine Food Kärlek och Mat* will seem like a welcome breath of fresh air.

Miss Clara, member of Design Hotels™

Fine Food Kärlek och Mat, photo by Cristiano Pigazzini, Note design studio

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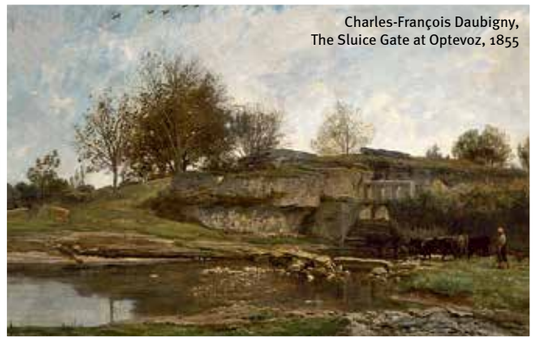
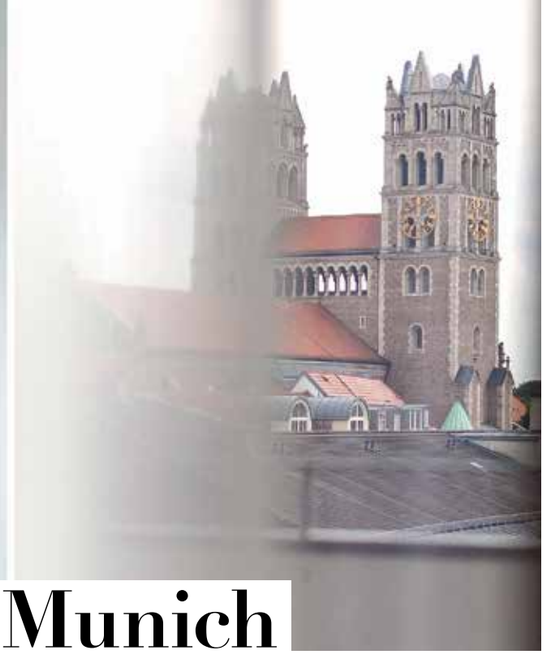


Charles-François Daubigny, The Sluice Gate at Optevoz, 1855

© Musée des Beaux-Arts Rouen



Munich

The art world has also had its fair share of thrillers, and this is one of them. **The Riddle of *The Sluice Gate at Optevoz*** exhibition**,** which can be seen at the *Neue Pinakothek* until March 9, is devoted to the mystery surrounding a single painting that the museum acquired over 100 years ago. Initially thought to be an early landscape by famous French artist Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), the work was restored in 1990, when another signature was discovered underneath the top layer of paint – that of fellow artist Charles François Daubigny (1817-1878). Following another restoration involving the removal of the top layer of paint, the question remains as to whether the work really is a genuine Daubigny that for some reason was transformed into a forged Courbet.

Owing to the fact that this year's Venice Biennial is being curated by Nigerian-born Okwui Enwezor, the director of Munich's *Haus der Kunst*, the Bavarian city's name is being expressed quite often in art and creative circles. In line with the city's current art-loving image, the new **Flushing Meadows Hotel & Bar** (Fraunhoferstrasse 32; flushingmeadowshotel.com) has appeared on the scene. The hotel is housed on the top two floors of an industrial building in the trendy Glockenbach district, and its rooms were designed in cooperation with various creative personalities from music, cinema, sports, design and art circles. Each of the 11 studio-type dwellings and five penthouse suites is different, reminding one more of an apartment space than a classic hotel room. The wide green space on the opposite side of the Isar River was the inspiration for the name of the *Meadows Bar* on the top floor.

There's no point in denying it – with Italy not too far to the south, Munich has always been Germany's citadel of hedonism. Recently the **EssZimmer** restaurant (Am Olympiapark 1; esszimmer-muenchen.de) received its second *Michelin* star. Headed by local star chef Bobby Bräuer, it is located on the third floor of *BMW World*, the presentation centre of the Bavarian car manufacturer whose exterior reminds one of a gigantic tornado. The window view is perfect for a gourmet dinner, whose cost will seem like small change in comparison to the luxury *BMW* models glistening in the lights of the showroom right down by your feet... **BO**

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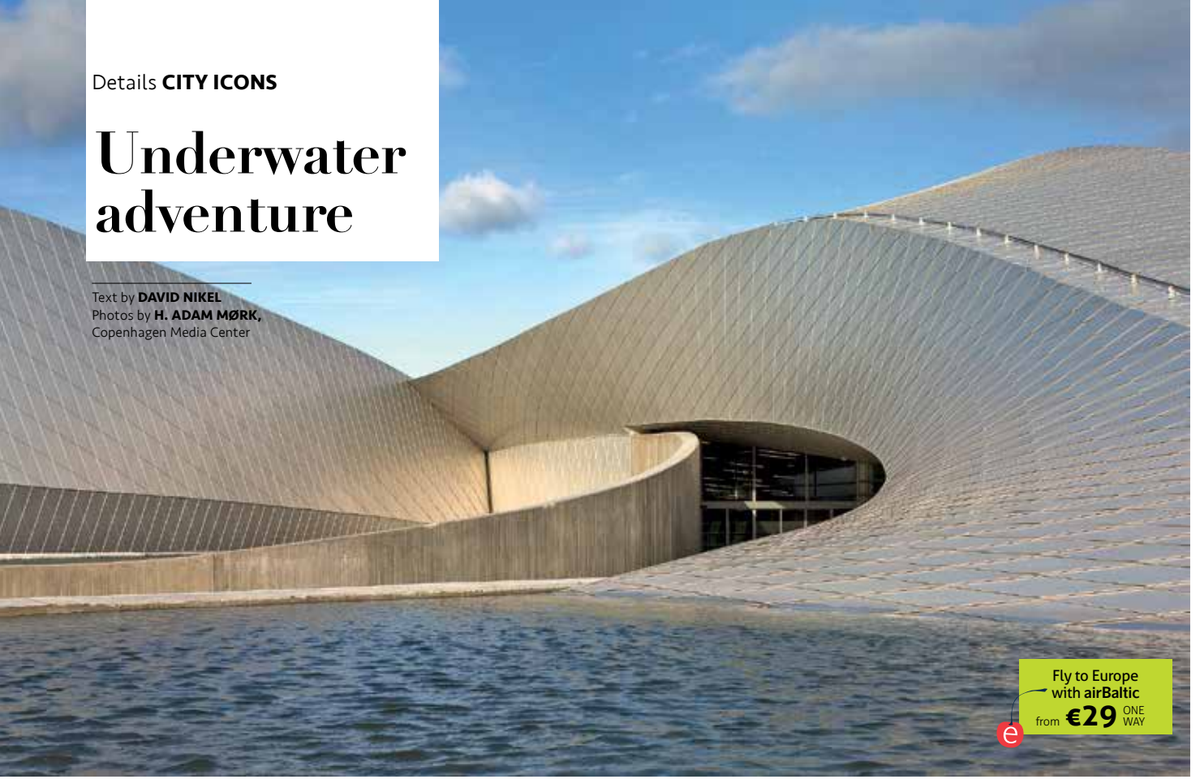
Underwater adventure

Text by **DAVID NIKEL**
Photos by **H. ADAM MØRK,**
Copenhagen Media Center



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If you find yourself in Denmark's capital, then check out the largest aquarium in northern Europe.

As you approach to land at Copenhagen's Kastrup Airport, take a look along the coastline and you should spot the city's newest tourist attraction. Thanks to its location less than two kilometres from the airport, the *Blue Planet* aquarium complex is an ideal way to start or end a visit to the Danish capital.

The largest aquarium in northern Europe has already become an architectural icon despite being open for less than two years. The swirling design of its exterior is similar to that of a whirlpool. To reach the entrance, visitors must follow the first whirl as if they are being sucked inside. As striking as the exterior is, to appreciate the real draw of the aquarium you must venture inside, where kids and adults alike will be entertained. The *Blue Planet* is surrounded by water on all sides, intended to give visitors the feeling of being underwater.

The compact building is split into five themed zones. See the exotic fish, crocodiles and predatory Nile perch of the African Great Lakes zone before heading to the Evolution and Adaption section, which houses Australian lungfish (the oldest fish in the aquarium) along with snapping turtles and a mangrove aquarium.

The highlight of the Cold Ocean zone is a large North Atlantic aquarium with a 15-metre-tall seabird cliff for puffins. Its newest residents are Mojoe and Agnes, two rescued Alaskan sea otters. Meet them three times a day during their feeding and training times.

The Warm Ocean hosts the *Blue Planet's* largest aquarium, with a whopping four million litres of sea water. There you will see hammerhead sharks swim together with rays and moray eels, as well as a colourful yet fragile coral reef. Butterflies and birds fly around the Amazon zone, where anacondas and thousands of piranhas swim under the waterfall. Finish your day off with a fright during piranha feeding time! Although the weekends are busy, they are the best time to bring children thanks to special shows that include a shark theatre and ocean-themed storytelling, during which kids try to discern fact from fiction. **BO**

> Anacondas and thousands of piranhas swim under the waterfall

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The right way to brag

Move over selfie. It's braggie time!

Text by **DAVID NIKEL**
Photos by **SCOTT SPORLEDER** and **SVERRE HJØRNEVIK,** Fjord Norge AS

While selfies have become the butt of quite a few jokes, these instant self-portraits are having a major impact on the way that we communicate. They are affecting our body language, self-awareness, privacy and perception of others, to name a few. Now, the travel industry is next.

Selfies are indeed big business. *Snapchat*, the app allowing short-term self-destructing image-sharing, has grown out of the selfie's popularity and is valued in excess of USD 10 billion. Now a new trend is emerging based on the selfie's popularity: the braggie. Whereas a selfie features a head-shot taken from a high angle and typically with a "duck face" pout, a braggie is more concerned with letting everyone know where you are – and where they are not.

Typical braggies might include your plush hotel room, enjoying a cocktail at a tiki bar or an ocean view taken from your sunbed. Just make sure that your feet are also in the shot! Share the pictures in the social network of your choice – *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Snapchat* – or preferably all of them, and you're done. The key to the success of your braggie is timing. Show off your destination within a few minutes of your arrival, then put away your smartphone and relax.

The travel business is adapting to this emerging trend. The *Marriott* chain is known to reward customers who share pictures of their hotel experience on social media with upgrades and other perks through an incentive program. I have even experienced this myself. On a recent trip to Bergen, Norway, I shared the awesome runway view from the *Clarion Airport Hotel* with my 2,000 *Twitter* followers. When I returned to my room that night, a platter of fresh fruit and chocolates was waiting for me.

Assuming that you're reading this article on an *airBaltic* flight, I challenge you to take your first braggie right now. Hold up the cover of this magazine, make sure that the aircraft window or seat is in the shot, make a thumbs-up sign, take the picture and *voilà*, you have your very own braggie to share and make your family and friends jealous. **BO**

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Silver skates

Behold some historical relics from the time when even seasoned winter athletes trained only on frozen lakes, rivers and canals.

Text by **LIENE PĀLĒNA**
Photos by *Corbis* and **GATIS GIERTS,** *F64*

In centuries past, gliding along the ice of frozen bodies of water was one of the fastest ways to get around during the winter months. Originally, sharpened and flattened pieces of bone, wood or metal were strapped to the bottom of the foot, later leading to what we now know as skates.

Fast forward to the second half of the 19th century, with the arrival of American ballet dancer Jackson Haines (1840–1875) onto the scene. He is widely regarded as the father of modern figure skating and is credited for turning the sport into an art form as well.

Inspired by his new manner of skating, which was less rigid and formal than the prevailing "English style", sports enthusiasts began to create figure skating clubs in various larger cities. They also adopted Haines' practice of screwing the metal blades directly into the boots, rather than strapping them on, and of incorporating ballet elements into a performance together with accompanying music.

However, by the early 20th century, modern-day skates had spread both far and wide, with the popularity of speed and figure skating rising quickly and with both forms of skating becoming respectable and widely watched sports. The Latvian Sports Museum houses some fine artefacts from the dawn of the modern skating era, some of which are shown here. **BO**

1/ **WHITE** SWANS
Manufactured shortly after the end of the Second World War at the *4 GP3* factory in the Soviet city of Samara (named Kuibyshev at the time), this pair of skates was worn by Latvian figure skater and pianist Zinaida Šteinberga-Bērziņa (1916-1996). The factory's engineer fashioned this series of skates based on an English skate model that was coveted by Soviet athletes at the time.

2/ **CHAMPIONSHIP** SKATES
This pair of skates was owned by Alfons Bērziņš (1916-1987), Latvia's most accomplished speed skater and 1939 European champion. Made in the 1930s in Norway, these *Oscar Mathisens Model. Oslo* skates look quite elegant and remain very well-preserved, thanks to the fact that Bērziņš took scrupulous care of them.

3/ **BLACK** SWANS
These *Stille Sweden* figure skates once belonged to Latvian figure skater and scientist Līza Biķe (1900-1996). She bought them in the early 1930s for 100 lats, a considerable sum at the time.

4/ **OLYMPIC** SKATES
The skates shown in this photograph were worn by Latvian speed skater Alberts Rumba (1892-1962) at the first ever Olympic Winter Games, which were held in Chamonix in 1924 at the foot of Mont Blanc and in Haute Savoie, France. Rumba carried the Latvian flag at the opening ceremonies and finished 10th in the 1,500 metre distance. The blades of Rumba's skates were specially crafted by hand to fit a specific pair of boots and are slightly rough, which can also be seen visually.

The author expresses her sincere thanks to the Latvian Sports Museum and to senior researcher Rita Apine.

Выделяющийся из ряда юрмальских жилых проектов, этот островок уюта и гармонии предлагает совершенно новую концепцию комфортной жизни, чему соответствуют уникальное месторасположение, архитектура комплекса, оригинальные дизайнерские решения и высококачественные строительные материалы.

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Corviglia

Zurich

Fashion on the slopes

Text by **DACE VAIVARA**
Publicity photos and by **EDMUNDS BRENCIS**, *F64*

Downhill skiing has been practiced as a winter sport since the mid-19th century, when the appropriate equipment began to be made. In 1924, skiing was included in the official Olympic program, exposing the sport to a wider public and increasing its popularity. The creation of functional clothing that was suitable for skiing developed in tandem.

At first, women wore skirts while skiing but then opted for pants, which made them look more like their male counterparts on the slopes but were much more practical to wear. During the 1930s, ski outfits were tailored from heavy wool fabrics, which were replaced at the end of the 1940s by fast-drying nylon.

Incidentally, Italian fashion designer Emilio Pucci began his career by presenting a colourful collection of skiwear in 1949, while the German *Bogner* brand came forth with stretch ski pants in 1953. During the 1950s and 1960s, skiwear gradually became lighter and closer fitting.

If you decide to visit a Swiss ski resort this winter, then get ready for a fashion show on the slopes, where you will rub shoulders with skiers wearing outfits by such prestigious skiwear manufacturers as *Kjus*, *Spyder*, *Bogner* and *Toni Sailer* as well as by fashion brands *Armani*, *Fendi* and *Pucci*. Here you are unlikely to spot jovial pensioners wearing old-fashioned vintage ski suits, as you would on Italian ski runs.

Current skiwear is made with the most modern fabrics, which protect the wearer from the elements, while 3D prints and bright colour patches provide fashionable accents. The hi-tech materials let the skin breathe but keep out the wind, water and snow. In addition, they are super light. For example, a ski jacket by the leading Swiss skiwear brand *Kjus* weighs only 888 grams! This company was founded in 2000 by legendary Norwegian Olympic downhill champion Lasse Kjus, who set out to manufacture the world's best skiwear. The French luxury brand *Moncler*, for its part, is known for its natural goose down jackets, which are worn with pride not only on the ski slopes but also on big city streets. **BO**

Armani EA7

SHOPPING IN ZURICH

Kjus Flagship Store
The largest store by the prestigious Swiss brand *Kjus* is located 30 km from Zurich and offers a premium range of skiwear. The brand's high-tech and ergonomic clothes are flexible and comfortable, and its exclusive four-way stretch fabric has made quite a splash in the industry.
Rothusstrasse 24, Hünenberg

Moncler
This high-end boutique offers a wide choice of skiwear by various top brands, including the basic collection by *Moncler* as well as the *Moncler Gamme Rouge* line for women by Italian designer Giambattista Valli, the *Moncler Gamme Bleu* assortment for men by American designer Thom Browne and the *Moncler Grenoble* skiwear collection.
Storchengasse 8
ⓘ moncler.com

Friday Tower - Freitag Flagship Store
It will be hard to miss this 26-metre-high landmark, which is made of 17 rusty cargo containers and which houses the flagship store by the Swiss *Freitag* brand of bags and accessories. Here you will find the largest assortment of *Individual Recycled Freeway Bags* in the world, or approximately 1,600 bags of different colours and sizes made from spare tires, seat belts, truck tarpaulin, airbags and other used car parts.
Geroldstrasse 17
ⓘ freitag.ch

Ski jacket by *Emilio Pucci*, EUR 990, *net-a-porter.com*

Men's down jacket by *Moncler*, EUR 1020, *moncler.com*

Ski goggles by *Electric*, EUR 199, *boards.lv*

Helmet by *Poc*, EUR 179, *Skibox Lux*

Boots by *Moon Boot*, EUR 184.43, *Skibox Lux*

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Style by **KATRĪNA REMESA-VANAGA**
Photo by **GATIS GIERTS**, *F64*

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Pillow, *Nest Studija*, EUR 60
Apron, *Otilie*, EUR 19.95
Glass vessel, *Alan Deko*, EUR 23.50
Metal canister, *The Pier*, EUR 39
Pillows in canister, *The Pier*, EUR 11.37 each
Decorative boxes, *Alan Deko*, EUR 2.13 and 2.84

Alan Deko, Nest Studija furniture salon and *The Pier: Spice Home* shopping centre, Jaunmoku iela 13, Riga | *Otilie,* Tērbatas iela 5, Riga

* Leatrice Eiseman, Executive Director, *Pantone Color Institute®*

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Text by **ROGER NORUM**
Publicity photos

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Text by **KRISTĪNE BUDŽE**, *Pastaiga*
Photos courtesy of *Asketic*

Inspired by a previous generation

Early 20th-century works by a renowned Latvian artist continue to inspire contemporary young designers.

ANSIS CĪRULIS THEN...

During the 1920s and 1930s, artist and designer Ansis Cīrulis helped to create an official visual identity for the newly established Latvian state. He set the proportions for the division of colours in the new Latvian flag, drew up coats of arms for the nascent Republic of Latvia and several Latvian cities, and designed the first Latvian postage stamp. Cīrulis generated a particular vision of what it meant to be Latvian in the objects that he created and in the building interiors that he designed. His style was imitated during his lifetime and lives on today, sometimes as a clichéd stereotype.

Cīrulis' tremendous artistic influence covered such fields as ceramics, tapestry weaving, furniture design, monumental panels and carpets. Perhaps he is best known for his design and furnishing of the Envoy Accreditation Hall at the Riga Castle – the official workplace of the President – during the 1920s. For this project he drew inspiration from Latvian folk tales and from the Art Deco style that was prevalent in Europe at the time. Today the interior of the Envoy Accreditation Hall is an officially designated Latvian cultural site.

...AND NOW

Continuing along the path that Ansis Cīrulis took in the formation of a Latvian sense of aesthetics, a group of young Latvian artists from the *Asketic* graphic design studio have undertaken a landmark project. Their goal is to ask 12 contemporary Latvian designers to create new 21st-century design objects inspired by Cīrulis' works. The idea came to Miķelis Baštiks, the leading designer at *Asketic*, when he was working on the graphic layout for a book about Cīrulis. Based on Cīrulis' handwriting and other renditions of letters, Baštiks eventually created a new font, which he appropriately named *Cīrulis*.

The first of the 12 planned projects was implemented by *Asketic's* own designers, who created a set of four wooden panels, each depicting one of four letters of the alphabet inspired by Cīrulis' artistic style. Together, the four letters L, A, R and K spell out the word LARK, which is the English translation of Cīrulis' last name.

The second project was assigned to graphic designer Edgars Zvirgzdiņš , the head of the *Associates, Partners et Sons* design bureau. Based on a WWI-era battle flag that Cīrulis designed for a company of Latvian riflemen from Riga, Zvirgzdiņš made a foil screen-printed poster with the words *No Victory Without a Battle* (*Bez cīņas nav uzvaras*) in the font depicted on the original flag. According to Zvirgzdiņš, nowadays as well, any victory consists of many larger and smaller battles.

The third work, *Dinner With Cīrulis* (*Vakariņas ar Cīruli*), is a set of plates adorned with letters in the *Cīrulis* font. This set was created by Madara Krieviņa, the founder of the *Zai* brand and designer of *Modernists* magazine. Meanwhile, work on the next nine post-Cīrulis projects continues.

HOW DOES CĪRULIS' SENSE OF AESTHETICS FIT INTO CONTEMPORARY INTERIORS?

The products from the first three Cīrulis-inspired projects stand out with their superior quality, thanks to the diligent work of some of Latvia's best artisans. They have become popular among young Rigans and can be seen in the home interiors of the city's so-called hipsters, who consider the tasteful wooden panels with letters and the poster with the slogan *No Victory Without a Battle* as qualitative alternatives to artists' oil paintings. **BO**

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Text by **ILZE POLE**
Photos by **GATIS GIERTS,** *F64*

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THREE THINGS THAT I NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT

My *Breitling Emergency* edition watch, my wedding ring and an old Scandinavian amulet of Thor. About five years ago, I was browsing the Internet and spotted it on a website. I ordered it and since then the amulet has always been with me, not only on the flight deck.

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For the last eight years, it has been the runway at the Riga airport, but I like all of the runways I have landed on. I would also like to say many thanks to all of the people who built them, so that we can safely take off and land and bring passengers to the places they'd like to be.

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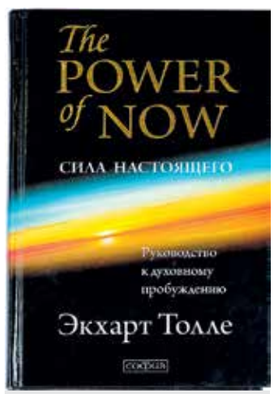

FAVOURITE **BOOK**

Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now*. I believe that if you have questions, you will get the answers. They might come with the help of various books or in your meetings with different people. From the very first page of this extraordinary book, you ascend rapidly to a significantly higher altitude, where you breathe a lighter air, figuratively speaking

SNAPSHOT TO SHARE

On flight to Milan, November 2014

FAVOURITE **RESTAURANT**

My home kitchen with my wife as a chef. She is a cabin crew member at *airBaltic*, but previously she worked in a very good restaurant.

LAST DESTINATION FLOWN TO AS A PASSENGER

It flew to Tallinn in November of last year. The most beautiful place that I've been to is Santorini Island in Greece. I would really recommend it to everyone who loves travelling and unforgettable views.

HOBBIES

I've got a lot of hobbies. The one that I love most is mountaineering, even though I don't get to practice it very often. I have a small boy now, and almost every day there is something new to learn and to do.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

With a look into the flight deck [*i.e. cockpit – ed.*] of a *Tupolev 124* when I was four years old. We were getting off an airplane in Tallinn with my mom. The door of the flight deck was slightly open and I had a quick look inside. My mom said, "Come on, let's go! We can't go in there!" But a lady from the cabin crew said that I could look inside if I want. All of those instruments, switches and lights; the bright sunny day outside the windows – it all left an indelible impression on me. I decided to become a pilot straight away.

In 1991 I graduated from the Tambov Higher Military Aviation School of Pilots in Russia, but I switched to civilian flights immediately after. I have been with *airBaltic* for the past ten years, of which I spent the first two in Vilnius.

THINGS THAT MIGHT SURPRISE A PASSENGER WHO STEPS INTO THE PILOT'S CABIN

The view through the flight deck windows, especially the sunrise over the horizon. It's beyond any words to describe it.

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Citified glam

NARCISS making waves in the fashion world

Text by **LIENE PĀLĒNA**
Publicity photos

3 SPRING FASHION MUST-HAVES

Make a splash during the spring season, says Alise Trautmane.

1970s inspiration. The designs and styles from the 1970s are experiencing a revival, including wide flare pants in pastel tones and *flower power* ornaments.

Effortless look. Look as natural as possible in minimal makeup and wind-blown hair. Forget about carefully fashioned curls for a while.

Orange is the new black, while stripes are a timeless classic that has become trendier than ever.

Alise Trautmane, the creator and designer of the Latvian fashion brand *NARCISS*, believes that anything is possible, and is saying so from personal experience. Following a successful international career in economics and law, Trautmane decided to become a fashion designer, even though she had no prior experience in the field. A couple of years later, her brand *NARCISS* had practically become a household name in the Baltic States and Russia. The brand's collections stand out with their refined femininity, which is why they are greatly appreciated by women who have grown tired of the pervasive androgynous look that is currently in vogue. Trautmane readily admits that when she started out in the business, she wanted to make clothes that would not only be elegant and feminine, but also commercially successful.

WHAT DOES THE NAME *NARCISS* STAND FOR?

The name of the brand stems from the Ancient Greek myth about a handsome young lad named Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection. *NARCISS* is the Latvian version of Narcissus. However, I certainly don't want to encourage people to be unhealthily narcissistic and to be obsessed with themselves. Instead, I would like women to feel more self-confident and to love themselves more.

WHAT KIND OF WOMEN WEAR THE CLOTHES THAT YOU DESIGN?

Many different types, but all of them share a common desire to look feminine and simultaneously to assume a slight fashion risk. Along with a taste for natural elegance, they are not afraid to be different and to be more colourful and individualistic.

AT WHAT POINT DOES FASHION BECOME A BUSINESS?

Russian composer Peter Tchaikovsky once said that "inspiration is a guest that doesn't like to visit lazy people." I also abide by this motto. The fashion industry has changed radically since the early 1990s, when it was transformed from a craft into a business. What do you need to set up your own new fashion brand nowadays? Talent? Yes. The will and the ability to work hard? Yes. Connections? Yes. But more than anything else, you need to have enough money to cover the operations of your fashion brand a couple of seasons in advance. If you decide to found your own fashion brand, then be advised that you will have to work very hard, with long hours and sleepless nights, and with the stress of not knowing whether you will be able to fulfil your financial obligations. On the other hand, you experience a sense of indescribable joy with the knowledge that clothes created in Latvia are gracing store shelves and fashionista wardrobes from New York to Kuwait and from Moscow to Paris. Anything is possible! **BO**

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66047077, 27709909
brivibas@gaismasmagija.lv
www.gaismasmagija.lv

GAISMAS MAĢIJA

February is chocolate month

With love in the air and Valentine's Day fast approaching, this is a perfect time for chocolate sorbet in crunchy ice-cream cones.

Recipe, style and photo by
ZANE JANSONE,
gatavoza.lv

Chocolate sorbet

Ingredients
1 1/2 cup water
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup cocoa powder
1 pinch sea salt
100 g dark chocolate (at least 70% cacao content), broken into pieces
1/2 tsp. vanilla sugar

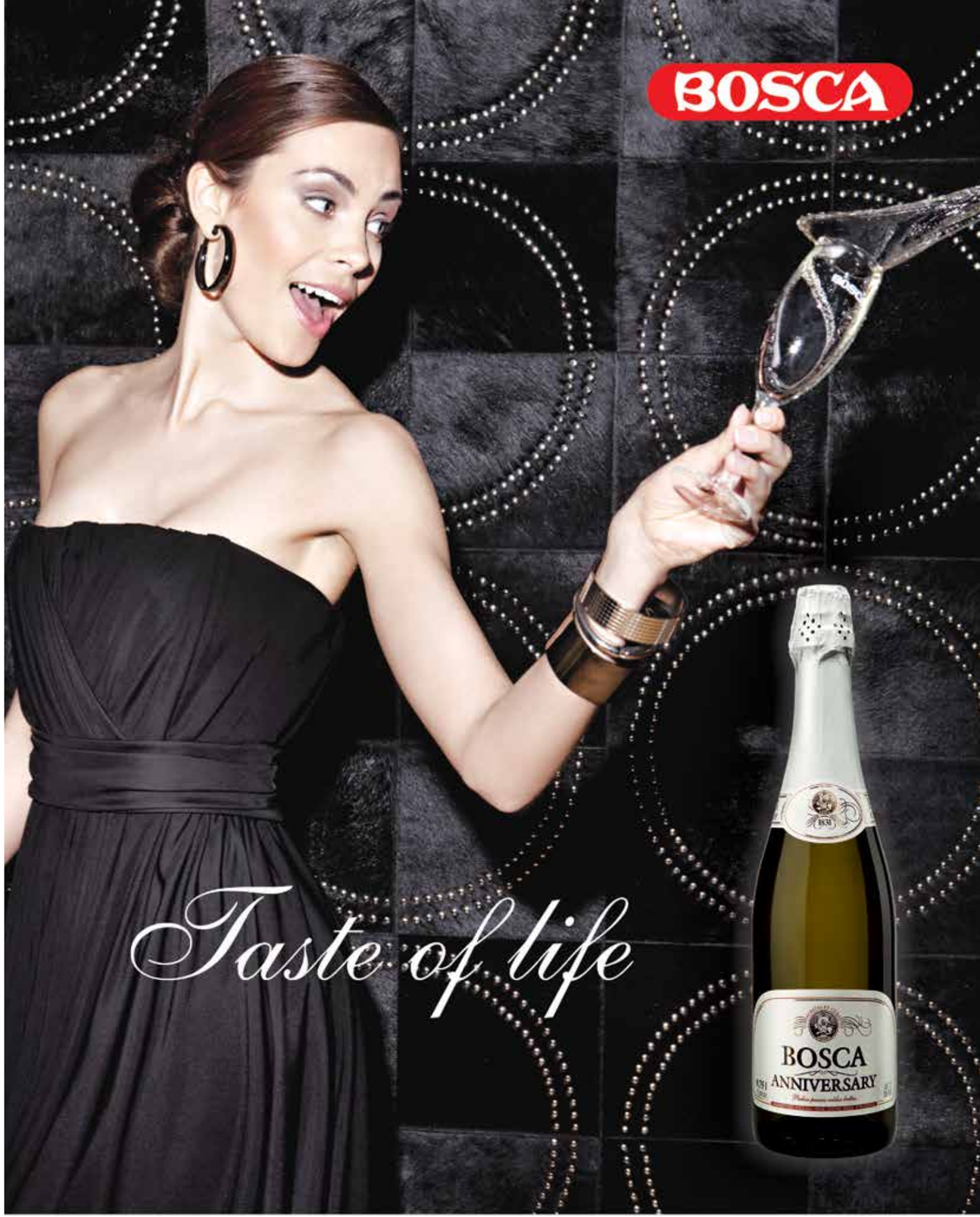
Preparation
Put the cocoa powder, brown sugar and sea salt into a kettle. Add a small amount of water and stir until the mixture acquires a uniform and creamy consistency. Pour in the rest of the water and mix it in. Place the kettle over a flame and heat the mixture to a boil. Remove from heat once the mixture has started to bubble. Add the chocolate and vanilla sugar and mix in lightly. After the chocolate has melted, beat the mixture with a whisk. Place into a freezer or ice-cream machine until the sorbet becomes firm.

Almond and orange-flavoured ice-cream cones

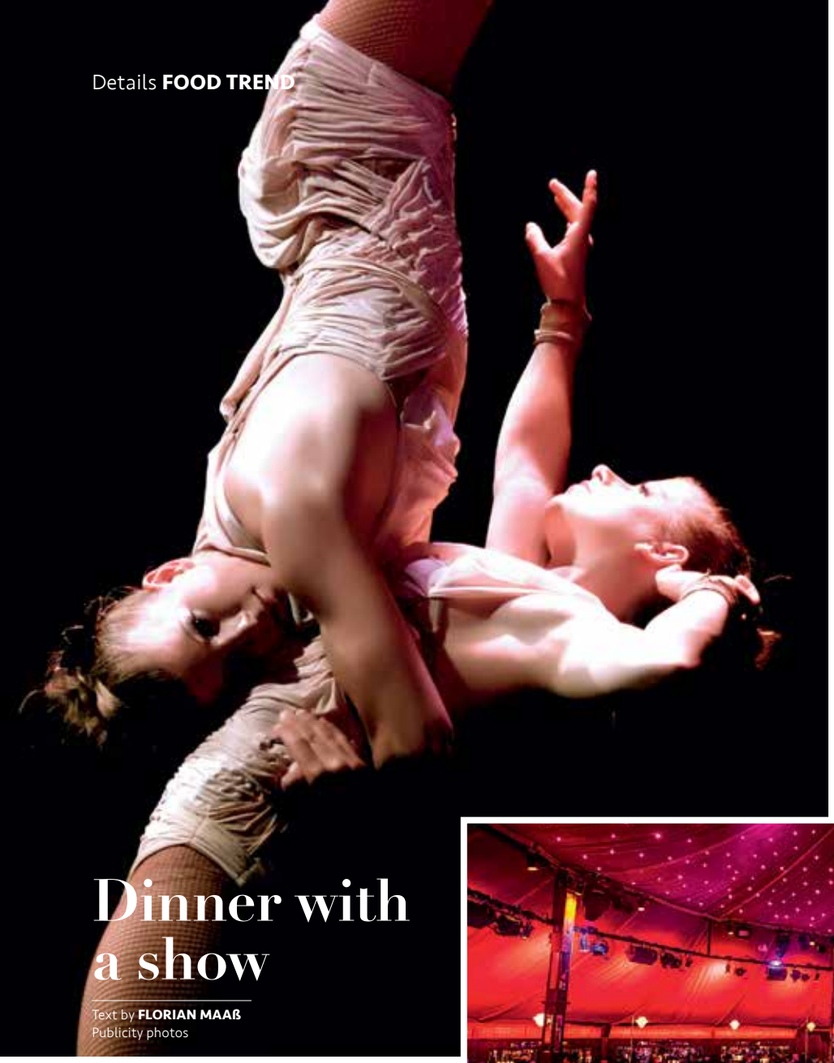
Ingredients
1/2 cup ground almonds or almond flour
1/2 cup wheat flour
1 orange peel, finely grated
1 pinch sea salt
1/3 cup brown sugar
2 eggs
1/3 cup butter, melted and cooled
1 tsp. potato or corn starch
1/4 cup milk

Preparation
Place the almonds and wheat flour into a bowl and mix in the orange peel, sea salt and sugar. Break the eggs into the mixture, add the melted butter and starch, then slowly pour in the milk. Mix everything together so that the ingredients acquire the same uniform consistency as crepe pancake batter.

For each ice cream cone, pour about 1 tbsp. batter onto the surface of a hot electric ice-cream wafer / cone-maker. Heat each portion until the batter hardens and turns golden brown. Roll each hot wafer into an ice-cream cone immediately after removing from the heat. Fill the ice-cream cones with chocolate sorbet once they have cooled to room temperature.



ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION MAY HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS



Dinner with a show

Text by **FLORIAN MAAß**
Publicity photos

The comeback of the gourmet theatre tent

Now is a good time to pamper your loved ones and yourself with a wonderful city break, as one of the latest trends has been to travel more often over the year but for a shorter period. However, staying for only one or two nights in a city can make it hard to choose the right entertainment program. Should you go out to a gourmet restaurant, attend a jazz or pop concert, or see a world-class acrobatic or juggling show? Well, the comeback of another trend might help out, as gourmet theatre tents combine all of the above in the charming ambience of a 1920s-style mirror palace.

The concept of a gourmet theatre spectacle in a tent – in which acrobats, jugglers, comedians, musicians and magicians entertain you while you enjoy a meal prepared by top chefs – was developed in the late 1980s and became an international success from Berlin to New York during the following decade. The idea then gradually petered out.

This winter, however, the tradition has seen a strong revival, including at the entertainment hotspot Hamburg, where local chef and TV star Cornelia Poletto has created a five-course menu at the *Palazzo Poletto*. The meal starts with mild smoked salmon and caviar, followed by a main course of Holstein veal with braised shallots, celery mousseline and king oyster mushrooms.

In Mannheim and Stuttgart, nobody less than Germany's best chef Harald Wohlfarth is responsible for the culinary delights. Back in Hamburg, a football juggler, tap and pole dancers, hand-on-hand-acrobats and a funny ventriloquist entertain the audience between courses. Word has it that twin sisters Julia and Ele Janke's *Duo Elja* has stolen the show with their elegant and breath-taking trapeze performance.

The result is a good dinner mixed with classy entertainment. The only drawback is that with all of the noise onstage, you might have trouble communicating with the company at your table. However, for estranged couples that have grown distant from each other, this might just be the icing on the cake. **BO**

ⓘ palazzo.org offers daily shows until the beginning of March at tents in Berlin, Hamburg, Vienna, Stuttgart, Mannheim and Nuremberg.

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Text by **AGRA LIEGE**
Photos courtesy of **DIANE HENDRIKX** and **RONALD VAN DER HILST**

Living amid art and design gems

Dutch-born artist, designer and landscape architect Ronald van der Hilst gives *Baltic Outlook* a tour of his gorgeous apartment in Antwerp.

Ronald van der Hilst is perhaps best-known for his work with tulip designs in vases and wall tiles. He moved to Antwerp, Belgium, in 1993 upon receiving a job offer and planned to stay for only a year, then move on to travel the world. However, life had other plans for him. At the end of that year he met Marcel Vissers, who became his partner and is now Ronald's husband. Thus, the one year has been extended to 21 – so far.

Marcel already lived on the 2nd and 3rd floors of their current domicile, with his office taking up the ground floor. The house turned out to be a little too small for both of them, and after a few years the couple were able to buy another house right next to theirs. The second house was in a rather run-down state when Ronald and Marcel took over – a café had continually occupied the ground level since 1900.

The two former houses are now joined together as one, with the ground floors hosting Ronald's showroom, the 2nd floors housing his atelier and both of their offices, and the 3rd floors serving as their living area.

HISTORIC **NEIGHBOURHOOD**

The neighbourhood where Ronald and Marcel's houses are located has always had a special role to play in Antwerp's history – it is where the Spanish nobles lived in the 16th and 17th centuries and where Saint George's Gate can be found. This gate was previously used by royalty to enter the city, with colourful parades accompanying the kings and queens whenever they arrived on visits.

The first of the two houses, which Marcel already owned when he met Ronald, once belonged to the head coachman of Antwerp, and all coaches going to Mechelen and back left from this area. At the time, the territory behind the house was occupied by horse stables and a waiting room/café for travellers. The old city wall stood at the end of the short street until the end of the 19th century.

Facing the houses of Ronald and Marcel is Saint George's Church, one of the very first Neo-Gothic houses of worship ever built. Its construction started in the mid-19th century, and during this period many of the houses in the neighbourhood were also being renovated in the style of that time.

The basements of both houses and the walls at the ground level, which formed part of what Ronald calls "a weird floor plan with no parallel walls," date back to the 16th century. However, the façades, ceilings and fireplaces are from the 19th century.

The façade of the first house that Marcel already inhabited is a sober Neoclassical, but the interior is more detailed and ornate. The house that they bought later on, for its part, has a beautiful and detailed Neo-Renaissance façade with a more reserved interior. Both houses were restored this year and new ornaments, designed by Ronald himself, were installed on top of the second house.

DESIGN AND DECISIONS

"We didn't really start with a particular concept," says Ronald when asked about the interior design of the houses. "I started stripping things down and as I did so, the houses slowly unveiled their true beauty."

The colours of some of the original wall paints had remained well-preserved, hidden doors that had been boarded up were rediscovered, and beautiful wooden floors were freed from layers and layers of carpeting "and even tar in some places," Ronald says with a laugh.

Ronald van der Hilst

"Fireplaces had been sealed off and covered but were in perfect condition. We had many great surprises while renovating and decorating these houses."

Ronald then made his own chalk paints, using natural pigments to fit with the decorations found in the renovation process, and painted them on walls where the original paint had been lost.

"Once in a while, I included my own kind of twist when painting to make things more exciting," Ronald adds.

"The colour choice for the wall paint in the dining room is intended to make a visual connection with the sandstone façade of the church across the street. I also painted the large white tulips on the wall." The rooms in the first house, for their part, were all painted green.

"In those places where I managed to strip the many layers of paint and get to the original colour, I found green," says Ronald. "So now the green is back and often in a shade of my own making. It fits in well with the atmosphere of the house as well as with the whites and sandstone shades elsewhere inside."

GIFT FROM RONALD'S PARENTS

Near the entrance to the dining room stands a tulip vase designed by Ronald for *Mobach Ceramics* of Utrecht. Also worth noting are the house's window shutters, part of which have been moved and placed next to the vase. Ronald painted them in a colour invented by his great grandfather, who had made a recipe for stand green with stand oil. The oak dining table in the living room was a gift from Ronald's parents.

"My brothers got their wedding presents from our parents," says Ronald. "But at the time Marcel and I couldn't marry officially. My parents, however, decided to give us a kind of a wedding gift anyway!"

"We have a vegetable garden outside of Antwerp and we like to cook with all the fresh greens (and flowers for the salads), so the dining table is very important for us. We love inviting people for dinners and make beautiful table sets for these occasions," Ronald mentions.

The chandelier is the first tulip vase that Ronald designed, specifically for the large French tulips that bloom in spring.

"But in other seasons I use different seasonal flowers. I don't like the idea of year-round flowers."

MARBLE **CHIMNEY**

The marble chimney comes from another room in the house.

"It was originally in one of the back rooms, somewhat hidden," Ronald notes, while the fireplace was redone in a 1970s style, with wooden beams.

"The fireplace was closed when we arrived, but fully functional, and we installed the marble pieces underneath. They fitted in extraordinarily well! The rare marble that we used is named *Rouge Belge*."

The terra cotta pot in the corner comes from Spain, but Ronald coloured it with chalk paint to make it better fit the interior.

"The walls in the room and the ceiling were painted with my own paints," Ronald adds. "We use this room for reading, listening to music, having a cup of tea or a glass of wine."

COLLECTION OF **OPALINES**

"Marcel collects opaline vases. He's got hundreds! You can see some of Marcel's opalines in the kitchen," says Ronald. "And I've put the big chandelier in there. I think the proportion of it is what makes the kitchen attractive."

The walls of the kitchen are also painted with Ronald's homemade chalk paint.

"The natural light that we get in the kitchen makes me feel like what you see in Vermeer's paintings," Ronald says with an apt poetic comparison.

TEACUP WONDERLAND

"Some of the tableware in the cabinet is from my grandparents, some has been collected and some of it is new," says Ronald. The teacups are a collection of *sammeltassen* from the 1950s. All are in the same shape, but each teacup has a different décor.

More gorgeous apartments can be found in 18 photo reports of eccentric and colourful interiors in Belgium, exquisitely presented together in a coffee table book named *Eccentric Homes*. (EUR 39.95, lusterweb.com).

PAINTING FROM SPAIN

The cabinet with a *trompe l'oeil* painting comes from Spain.

"In the first years when I started working independently, I ran a gallery and shop downstairs," Ronald recalls. "I was selling Spanish terra cotta and some furniture, too."

The beam in the background of the hall is an axle from the house's original roll-down shutters. "I converted that into a chandelier," says Ronald. **BO**

PARIS' NEWEST DESTINATIONS

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© Musée Picasso Paris / Béatrice Hatala

Bad luck, somebody has already taken the Anothertravelguide brochure about Paris, but don't worry, all the information is also available at ANOTHERTRAVELGUIDE.COM in cooperation with airBaltic.

ANOTHERTRAVELGUIDE.COM

Text by **UNA MEISTERE**, *anothertravelguide.com*
Publicity photos and by **AINĀRS ĒRGLIS, ĢIRTS MUIŽNIEKS**

Even though the tragic events in Paris this past January have momentarily cast a pall over the city, once again acutely reminding us of the fragility of our own lives, they are certainly not the only reason why everybody's been talking about Paris over the past few months. Two of Europe's most extravagant cultural projects have opened in the French capital just weeks apart from each other. Paris has now got a new museum – the *Louis Vuitton Foundation* – as well as a new concert hall, the *Philharmonie de Paris*.

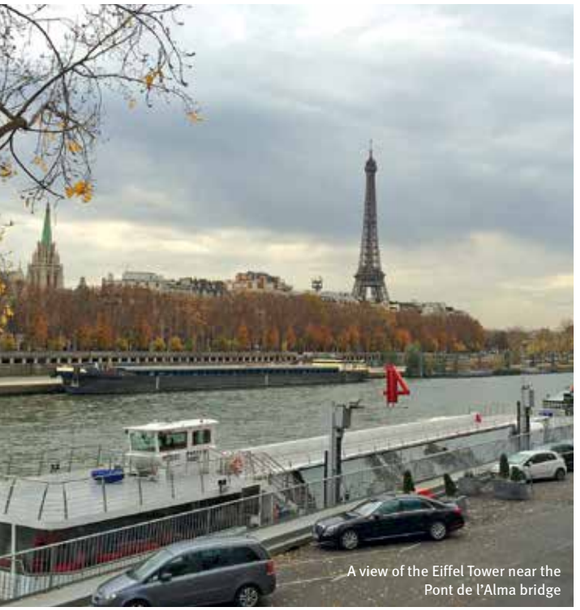
The former can definitely be considered as the most ambitious and most expensive museum project so far this century. Similarly, the latter is currently the most ambitious and most expensive concert hall in the world. Both edifices have been designed by star architects, namely Frank Gehry for the museum and Jean Nouvel for the concert hall. And, as is usual in cases like these, both projects have been the focus of heated debate.

The new *Philharmonie*

The idea of constructing a new concert hall in Paris had been around since the 1970s and 1980s and was part of former French president François Mitterrand's grand plans for cultural buildings. However, for a variety of reasons, real work only began in 2006. Construction on the *Philharmonie* commenced in 2010, and the building was opened to the public on January 15 of this year. The project cost a total of 381 million euros, which was considerably higher than planned.

This is not the first concert hall that Nouvel has designed; his work includes performance venues in Lucerne and Copenhagen as well. Seen from one side, the new *Philharmonie de Paris* looks like a gigantic, irregular pile of steel and aluminium plates that have overheated and deformed in the sunlight and now droop over each other. From another side, however, the building resembles a huge alien bird, its beak ajar, that has landed in

Your **NEXT DESTINATION**



A view of the Eiffel Tower near the Pont de l'Alma bridge

Book stalls along the Seine River

© Bouygues Construction

A new Paris concert hall, the *Philharmonie de Paris*

Olafur Eliasson, photo by Luc Castel

Olafur Eliasson, *Bridge from the Future*, 2014, photo by Iwan Baan

Two of Europe's most extravagant cultural projects have opened in the French capital just weeks apart

the Parc de Villette. And it is precisely the concert hall's location in a park in Paris' northeastern 19th arrondissement that was the most disputed aspect of the *Philharmonie*.

Many conservative Parisians wondered whether elite classical music-lovers would travel to a concert hall in a relatively remote suburb – a 45-minute metro ride or 30-euro taxi trip from the centre of the city. In addition, the Parc de Villette – albeit one of Paris' most extraordinary parks – has never been a classic tourist destination, if simply for the reason that it contains nothing historical. However, the park was intentionally chosen precisely due to its character.

Once the site of a meat market and slaughterhouse, the Parc de Villette was created from 1984-1987 during the aforementioned period of Mitterrand's mega-visions. It had been the president's vision to create a 21st-century park and entrust its realisation to Bernard Tschumi, a post-modern French architect of Swiss ancestry. Having been inspired by French philosopher Jacques Derrida's ideas of deconstructivism, Tschumi completely ignored classic notions of a park as an aesthetically beautiful oasis of relaxation. Instead, he created a space of architectural experiments that invites, provokes and encourages both adults and children to collaborate.

From the very beginning, the Parc de Villette has served as the home of various cultural institutions, each designed by a different architect. The park's central object is undeniably the *La Géode* IMAX theatre, which was built in the shape of a large glass ball, reflecting the world around it. *La Géode* is a part of Europe's biggest science museum, the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie*.

Also in the park is the *Le Zénith* concert hall, where many of the biggest pop stars have performed, along with the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse* (National Conservatory of Music and Dance) and the *Cité de la Musique*, a concert hall and museum of historical musical instruments that has now come under the tutelage of the new *Philharmonie* and has been renamed *Philharmonie 2*. Next month, it will host an exhibition in honour of the 90th birthday of the illustrious French composer and conductor Pierre Boulez.

The much-debated location of the *Philharmonie* may actually turn out to be an advantage, considering that one of its goals is to bring up a new generation of classical music listeners.

Hence, the new *Philharmonie's* concept is similar to that of London's *Southbank Centre*, uniting a great variety of musical genres under one roof, including jazz, pop, world music and so on. From March 3 to May 31, for example, the *Philharmonie* will present a retrospective of David Bowie that has already met with much success in London and Berlin. Of the 270 concerts planned during its first six months, slightly more than half, or 150, will feature classical music. The centre also promises that tickets will cost 15% less than at other prestigious Parisian institutions such as *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* and *Salle Pleyel*.

The *Philharmonie's* 2,400-seat main auditorium is compared to that of Berlin's *Philharmonie* and the *Walt Disney Concert Hall* in Los Angeles. It was designed in the vineyard style, which means that the seating is arranged like the sloping terraces that its name implies. The *Orchestre de Paris* conducted by Paavo Järvi is now based in the *Philharmonie*; its previous home was the 1920s Art-Deco-style *Salle Pleyel* near the Arc de Triomphe.

Like the *Oslo Opera House*, the *Philharmonie de Paris'* roof is designed as a public space and might – considering that rooftop living has never been very prominent in Paris – become one of the most popular new attractions in the city. From here, one can see *Sacré Coeur* basilica and many other prominent historical buildings of central Paris.

The Vuitton iceberg

In terms of panoramas, the new *Louis Vuitton Foundation* building also provides a wonderful view. It is located in the Bois de Boulogne, a children's amusement park and zoo created in 1860 by Napoleon III. The Eiffel Tower and the *La Défense* skyscrapers can be seen in the distance. The new *Louis Vuitton Foundation* museum has been compared with everything, from an iceberg or tulip to a ghostly imaginary ship. Like all crazy projects, everyone seems to have an opinion about it, and it has spurred endless discussions about whether this temple to art is not in fact really just a monument to all types of human excess. Or, rather, the folly and ambitions of two people: 85-year-old architect Frank Gehry and 65-year-old Bernard Arnault, CEO of the *LVMH* luxury group and one of the most influential art collectors in the world.

But Frank Gehry is, of course, Frank Gehry. His buildings are like a drama theatre. From the perspective of functionality, they are as irrational in their absurdity as the luxury industry itself. For this reason, the "marriage" between these two men is so perfect – the grand master of architecture for architecture's sake and Louis Vuitton, whose logo has long been a symbol of obsessive global excess; not to mention its use as an expletive by the most ardent opponents of consumer culture.

Of course, the new museum indirectly sells completely preposterous handbags (from the perspective of what is necessary for survival) and Paris as the setting to buy them. In a similar manner, Venice's Palazzo Grassi "polishes" the *Gucci*, *Bottega Veneta* and *Yves Saint-Laurent* brands and the *Fondazione Prada* art centre on the outskirts of Milan (designed in collaboration with star architect Rem Koolhaas and his *OMA* office) sees to the well-being of Miuccia Prada's carefully directed anti-fashion campaign.

All that remains is to debate about who does the job most intelligently, considering the nature of each brand. In any case, people have always had a weakness for showy and shiny things and have always wanted to acquire items that they do not need. One can witness this on the faces of visitors to the *Louis Vuitton Foundation* as they, armed with all sorts of gadgets, wander through the many halls, all searching for the perfect photo opportunity.

It's impossible not to chuckle at this spectacle, and not to chuckle at yourself as well, because despite your initial scepticism, you have also landed inside the Gehry/Vuitton web and are likewise impressed. The building is worth visiting for this reason alone. It's a bright 21st-century marketing instrument that, under cover of the illusion of art's added value, sells handbags along with the positively-charged ability to laugh at ourselves as we stand at the epicentre of this process.

Contact, an exhibition by Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, can be viewed at the Vuitton museum until February 23. This is the artist's first solo exhibition in Paris since 2002. Eliasson is one of the most vibrant leaders in the current contemporary art scene, a poetic eccentric who seeks to integrate the viewer into the mystified and yet realistic environment that he creates.

The *Contact* exhibition is a mystical choreography of light and shadow and transports viewers to the depths of the artist's feelings and perceptions.

The ghost of Picasso

Those aren't the only new things in Paris. After a five-year reconstruction, the *Musée Picasso – Paris* reopened this past autumn on the 133rd anniversary of the Spanish genius' birthday. The reconstruction had turned into a real soap opera and was therefore music to the media's ears. There were even rumours that Picasso's inheritors delayed the 52-million-euro project (which was

Huge crowds on the first days following the reopening of the *Picasso Museum – Paris*

© Musée Picasso Paris / Béatrice Hatala

Picasso Museum – Paris

initially meant to take only two years) due to an inability to settle their own personal ambitions in duels with the French state. And on top of it all, a new director for the museum was suddenly announced just a few months before its opening.

Be that as it may, the legendary 17th-century *Hôtel Salé* in the Marais district is now open to visitors again. With three times the exhibition space it used to have, it seems that the number of visitors thirsting to see Picasso's work has increased threefold as well. If you do not wish to stand in line at the front door for a couple of hours (blame the lines on the hullabaloo surrounding the reconstruction), then reserve a ticket beforehand on the museum's website: museepicassoparis.fr.

Although the *Musée Picasso - Paris* is definitely not the only collection of the artist's work in the world, its popularity is due to its outstanding selection of works. The museum has the largest collection of artworks and artefacts from the artist's life, about 5,000 units in total. These cover every stage of Picasso's long life, from his very beginnings as an artist to his last days in southern France.

The core of the museum is formed by a collection of works that the artist bequeathed to his family shortly before his death in 1973. The family, in turn, donated the collection to the French state, which chose an ornate building commissioned by former salt tax collector Pierre Aubert de Fontenay as the most appropriate setting for a museum. Picasso, however, never lived in this building, which has since become one of the most iconic destinations in Paris.

The museum opened in 1985, and the white modernist-style boxes originally designed by architect Roland Simounet as exhibition spaces remain to this day, even after the recent reconstruction. Now the building's basement has also been turned into an exhibition hall, as has the top floor with its exposed wooden beams and panorama of the Marais rooftops. The entry hall (formerly the estate's stable) and the majestic, sculpture-lined staircase have also been grandly renovated.

The opening exhibition at the museum provides a veritable journey through Picasso's creative labyrinths, with paintings shown alongside sculptures, drawings and other items. The exhibition follows a chronological order, beginning with the artist's earliest works, including *Young Girl with Bare Feet*, which Picasso painted at the age of 14 in 1895, and ending with some of his last works of art, made shortly before his death in 1973.

In order to not lose one's way through the dense impressions and information overload while wandering through the museum's rooms – which sometimes seem like small pockets – visitors to the museum are given a small black-and-white guidebook along with their entrance tickets.

Picasso arrived in Paris on his 19th birthday in 1900 and lived there until 1955, when he moved to the French Riviera, already as a famous artist. Despite the passing of time, there are still plenty of places in Europe's most romantic capital where one can feel the ghost of Picasso passing by...or at least the glow that he left behind. One such place is *La Closerie des Lilas*. It is said that in this Art-Deco-style café on the Boulevard du Montparnasse, a 24-year-old Picasso met Leo Stein, an American art collector, and that this meeting significantly changed the artist's financial situation.

Leo Stein was the older brother of Gertrude Stein and one of the most prominent patrons of early 20th-century modernist art. Long before their works began to be exhibited in museums, some of the best talents of the day could be met at Stein's legendary Saturday evening salons. Stein first noticed Picasso at a group exhibition that took place in a furniture store and bought a large gouache painting titled *The Acrobat's Family*. Picasso quickly realised that it was advantageous to befriend Stein and made several portraits of his valued customer.

Tuesdays were known as the days when Paris' most illustrious minds – artists, poets, writers and thinkers – came together at *La Closerie des Lilas* to listen to readings and participate in heated discussions about the avant-garde theories of the time.

As happens with so many sites entwined in legend, the fate of becoming a tourist trap has also befallen *La Closerie des Lilas*. Nevertheless, the old café still feels like a journey back in time. The brass tabletops bear the names of the greats (including Oscar Wilde, Paul Cézanne, Jean-Paul Sartre, Ernest Hemingway and Emile Zola) who once rested their elbows there, their eyes greedily searching for muses of both sexes. In fact, La *Closerie des Lilas* is still a great place to enjoy oysters in a decadent setting. A piano bar next to the restaurant features live jazz music in the evenings.

When Picasso moved to 7 rue des Grands Augustins on Paris' Left Bank in 1937, he used to turn in to *La Palette* for a drink. Established in 1902, *La Palette* is one of those Parisian cafés whose age considerably exceeds that of even its oldest patrons. And it seems that the place hasn't changed at all for ages. The same old tarnished mirrors on the walls have been reflecting visitors for over a century. Left Bank art gallery owners still sit at the time-worn tables and discuss deals. Other regular guests at *La Palette* included the aforementioned Hemingway, painter Georges Braque and *Doors* singer Jim Morrison decades later. The café is still popular with art students from the nearby *École des Beaux-Arts*.

Picasso's former house on the rue des Grands Augustins is now marked by a plaque on the wall. It was here where he created *Guernica*, that famous protest against the absurdity and horror of war. It is said that when the *Gestapo* searched his apartment and found a photograph of the painting, they asked Picasso: "Did you do that?" Picasso answered: "No, you did it."

An integral part of any Picasso tour through Paris is *La Rotonde*, immortalised by Hemingway in his novel *The Sun Also Rises*. Established in 1911, the café was always better known among literary circles (Scott Fitzgerald is said to have read *The Great Gatsby* to Hemingway there), but artists such as Amadeo Modigliani, Edgar Degas, Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp also frequented it, lingering for hours over a single cup of coffee, which cost ten centimes at the time. Mashed potatoes with sausage cost about the equivalent of a dollar.

Of course, the artists who came there often didn't even have that much, so they paid for their dinners with drawings, which were immediately tacked to the café's walls. Any auction house

Le Salon du Pantheon is a great place for secret meetings. It's located on the upper floor of the *Cinéma du Panthéon*. Furnished with retro-style furniture, low tables and lush rugs, the place looks more like a designer lounge than a restaurant. The interior designer is none other than French film diva Catherine Deneuve! It's an unbelievably homey place and, furthermore, it serves great food.

If you wish to experience a different Paris – one that has little to do with the hordes of tourists at the Eiffel Tower or on the Champs-Élysées – then take Line Nine of the Métro in the direction of Auteuil. Geographically, the jumble of streets that compose Auteuil are in the 16th arrondissement, but in many ways this is a city within a city. Time seems to have stopped here – the old Paris is preserved in Art Nouveau buildings with roof gardens and wealthy ladies walking their dogs in a world of almost provincial bourgeois charm.

If you can't pass a single day without shopping, for which in Paris you are not to be

today would give its eye teeth for something like that. The owner of *La Rotonde* was an honest man, and if an artist later earned some money and came back to pay his tab, he could get his drawing back.

"Poverty is a luxury in Montparnasse," wrote Jean Cocteau of the era. Today, however, you will find no original drawings on the walls of *La Rotonde*, only copies of artworks and portraits made by the café's legendary former patrons.

However, despite the fact that nowadays the café knows very well how to turn its prominent ghosts into euro coins, its red Art Deco interior still contains a touch of the old spirit of Paris, which you can sit back and enjoy along with some French onion soup and *escargots*.

Legendary *Les Bains Douches* nightclub

The Picasso museum is not the only site in Paris to have been reborn in a new image. One of Paris' most luxurious hotels, the *Plaza Athénée*, recently reopened after a major reconstruction. The hotel's restaurant, headed by French star chef Alain Ducasse, also received a makeover. In fact, Ducasse announced that he was giving up meat and planned to instead offer his guests a "holy trilogy" of fish, vegetables and grains. In addition, as befits Ducasse's style of doing everything with great scope, the vegetables come from the famous gardens at Versailles.

Les Bains, once Paris' first public baths, will open its doors to the public in the form of a hotel in March of this year. The clientèle at the former baths came from all walks of life, with intellectuals (including Marcel Proust) sweating it out alongside workers from *Les Halles* and the whole process often ending with *café caldas*.

The baths, built in 1885, featured sulphur baths as well as Russian and Turkish saunas. By 1978, however, the baths had been refashioned into the no-less-famous *Les Bains Douches* nightclub, where all of the stars and bohemians of that era partied, from Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Yves Saint-Laurent to Bono, Naomi Campbell, Mick Jagger and David Bowie. The nightclub's interior became a platform for Philippe Starck, then a young *enfant terrible* of French design.

The nightclub was closed in 2011, and French director and producer Jean-Pierre Marois, whose father had acquired *Les Bains* in the 1960s, took on the transformation of the nightclub into a hotel. Paraphrasing Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who once said that "to make a film is like building a house", Marois has said in interviews that creating a hotel is like making a film.

Having appointed himself as the artistic director of the hotel project, Marois gathered a team of true stars to reach that goal, including interior designer Tristan Auer, who counts Mick Jagger and François-Henri Pinault among his clients, and Vincent Bastie, who has created the images of several Parisian hotels. Therefore, it will be no surprise if *Les Bains* also retains its cult status as a hotel. It will have 39 rooms and a special space in the basement for concerts and performances, thereby paying homage to the site's turbulent past.

In autumn of this year, the *Ritz Paris* – the *grande dame* of Paris' hotels – will also reopen after a reconstruction, as will the *Hôtel Biron*, the prominent main building of the *Musée Rodin*, in which the museum featuring Auguste Rodin's work has been housed since 1919. All you need to do is start packing your suitcase!

blamed, then the shops in the *La Gallerie du Carrousel du Louvre* basement are open on Sundays. For more unique gifts you should go to the Marais. Most of the shops on rue Vielle-du-Temple, rue Rambuteau and rue des Francs-Bourgeois are open from noon until 6 or 7 PM.

The *Pâtisserie Viennoise*, a small Viennese-style bakery near the *l'Ecole de Médecine* is almost as old as a human lifetime. The counter at the front of the bakery sells cakes and strudels for take-away that are made right on the premises, in the bakery's basement. Further inside is a small café with tables.

Le Baron Rouge is simultaneously a legendary establishment and a unique degustation spot. The wines are stored in wooden barrels obtained from small and independent producers in the Bordeaux, Loire and Rhône regions of France. The bar space itself is relatively small and much of the activity takes place outside on the sidewalk, where on afternoons men with worn shoes and clothing can be seen sipping glasses of wine side-by-side with well-to-do ladies carrying expensive *Chanel* handbags and leashed lapdogs.

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Text by **ANNA ILTNERE**
Photo by **KARLINA VITOLINA**

FIVE PLACES IN PARIS BY **DIDIER GRUMBACH**

Didier Grumbach has been called the first chair of French fashion more than once. He was the president of the *Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode* (French Federation of Fashion and of Ready-to-Wear Couturiers and Fashion Designers) and the *Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture* (Trade Union of High Fashion) from 1998 to 2014. This is the organisation that determines which fashion houses are eligible to be named haute couture houses, a status protected by law in France, and which names will appear at the prestigious Paris fashion weeks.

Grumbach has been involved with fashion since the 1960s, when he established *Saint-Laurent Rive Gauche*, one of the most prominent fashion houses in the world, with Yves Saint-Laurent and Pierre Bergé. Later on, between 1968 and 1973, Grumbach collaborated with Hubert de Givenchy, working on the ready-to-wear, or *prêt-à-porter*, collection *Givenchy Nouvelle Boutique*. During this period he also founded *Créateurs & Industriels*, a company created to promote relationships between production companies and designers. The company supported such now-famous fashion designers as Jean-Paul Gaultier, Issey Miyake and others.

In addition, Grumbach authored *Histoires de la Mode* in 1993, a comprehensive book on fashion history containing colourful stories from his own and his colleagues' experience. The book has been translated into many languages and reprinted all across the world. Here are five of Grumbach's favourite addresses in Paris, which he is pleased to recommend to the readers of *Baltic Outlook*.

"I would recommend starting a Paris tour by visiting the *Palais de Tokyo* (13 avenue du Président Wilson). It seems tremendously inspiring to me, as it's a new kind of museum, a new type of exhibition tradition. There you will see not only art, but also fashion and design exhibitions. It's a huge place that radiates a very strong energy. And it's an exciting place, too, especially for young people.

"The majority of museums have become something like churches nowadays. In contrast, the *Palais de Tokyo* (palaisdetokyo.com) is literally bursting with life and triggers curiosity. I believe that it's an excellent contribution to the Paris cultural scene. Moreover, it's located opposite the *Musée Galliera*, a fashion and fashion history museum. This whole ensemble is definitely worth visiting.

"I also like the Place Georges-Pompidou, or Beaubourg, as we Parisians call it (centrepompidou.fr). Yes, it's pretty cool! Liveliness sparkles around these two places – the *Palais de Tokyo* and the Place Georges Pompidou – yet I prefer the *Palais de Tokyo* simply because it's bigger and offers more opportunities for inspiration.

"I suggest visiting a bistro in Paris called *Le Griffonnier* (8 rue des Saussaies), located near the best shops in the city. I have my lunch there when I am insanely busy, and I eat it standing at a counter. It's interesting to watch people around you and notice that they are in a huge hurry, too. They are also eating standing up and devouring their food at incredible speed. It's not like in a restaurant, and I manage to think about 20 other matters at the same time without even noticing the delicious *Le Griffonnier* food I am eating. The food is exceptionally good there, made of natural and simple ingredients and served with good wine. It's a quality that comes with a relatively high price, but it's worth it. I like this place because it's the total opposite of my actual nature – I mean frantic eating like this.

"There is a place in Paris where I purchase my socks. The *Alain Figaret* (figaret.com) chain of stores offers just exactly what I need. All of the items are placed neatly in drawers according to size. I just have to tell the sales clerk what I need, and it's done! I go to these stores when I have to buy socks, although they do offer much more. They also stand out with fine quality and swift service. Since I do not fancy Internet shopping, *Alain Figaret* is a great option for me. The sales clerks are always very kind, yet they never force any advice on the customer. After all, what kind of advice can be given when all they need to know is your shoe size?

I buy my shirts at *Charvet Place Vendôme* (28 place Vendôme, charvet.com), which was the very first specialised shirt store in Paris. It's fantastically convenient that they keep a database containing customers' measurements. It saves you the hassle of re-taking your measurements every time you need a new shirt. All you have to do is phone or drop by, select a fabric, tell them your name, and that's it! And then you just go and pick up your custom-made shirt. They are classic but fit like a glove. I really love that I do not have to wait – I just call them and tell them my name." **BO**

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Text by **FLORIAN MAAß**
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A SENSE OF **DESIGN**

As Stockholm Design Week is set to take place in a matter of days, *Baltic Outlook* caught up with one of todays most influential design experts. Meet Anders Färdig, the founder of *Design House Stockholm* (*DHS*).

Scandinavian and especially Swedish names have become synonymous with good design. The pure, clean and reduced Scandinavian style has become a measuring stick for the design world. Furthermore, Scandinavian design products are ready to use, rather than being mere objects of prestige.

Design House Stockholm has had a large role to play in the worldwide appeal of Scandinavian products. Anders Färdig, who had previously managed the brands *Höganäs* and *Boda Nova*, founded the company in 1992. About 70 designers, among them practically all of the big Scandinavian names, work for *Design House Stockholm*. The *Atelier* collection is sold exclusively at *DHS*'s own stores, while other products are sold exclusively at the Museum of Modern Art, or MoMA, in New York.

I meet Färdig at *DHS*'s impressive office, next to the landmark Katarinahissen passenger elevator at the entrance to the uber-hip Södermalm district. The office is on the highest floor of a multi-storey building and offers an amazing panoramic view of Stockholm. The icing on the cake is the rooftop terrace. Despite being very busy, Anders Färdig is all relaxed and friendly at our meeting.

***Design House Stockholm* refers to itself as a publishing house for design. What was your intention when you founded the company in 1992?**
We are in Scandinavia, where design is like a natural resource. It's something that we just have in our body and mind. We are very good at thinking about how to create good design, which means that we take care of the ergonomic part, the practical part and the price point so that everyone can use a product. It's design for everyone. I founded the *Design House Stockholm* to save this natural resource, because at that time many of the factories for whom designers worked were closing down. We needed someone to take care of all the innovative power in the Scandinavian design world, bundle it and bring it to the world. The designers are authors who come forth with their own personal ideas and we help them to develop these ideas. That's why we see ourselves not as producers, but publishers of design, whatever the product is: jewellery, fashion, mugs. If it is good enough and possible to produce, then we do it.

How do you choose the designers who work for you?
I don't, because we choose products and designs, not designers. It doesn't matter if the designer is famous. Not all of the 70 designers who work for us are Scandinavian. It's more about the Scandinavian sense of design than geography.

Set of Bowls by Claesson Koivisto Rune

Nevertheless, practically all of the famous Scandinavian designers are working for you.
Yes, but not because of their names. We also have a lot of newcomers. We are "product droppers", not "name droppers".

Many of your products have become design classics, such as the *Step* stepladder, the *Block Lamp* and the *Rock Chair*. If you had to choose one favourite, spontaneously, as a good example for the style of your house, which one would it be?
I would select the *Set of Bowls* of our new collection by Claesson Koivisto Rune. It is a set of five bowls. The biggest is made of stainless steel, the second biggest of melamine, the next of oven-safe stoneware, and the smaller ones are of solid wood and glass. Each has a different form, material and size. Each is perfectly functional for a certain use. Together they form a perfect unit. This set combines and connects the ideas of *Design House Stockholm*.

Step stepladder by Karl Malmvall

Journalists often ask: "So Mr. Färdig, which will be next summer's colours?"

I was expecting the *Step* stepladder.
I'm glad you mentioned it. It has become a design classic already.

What is so special about the *Step* stepladder?
Everybody needs a stepladder from time to time. But up until now, they had been so ugly that you had to keep them next to the cleaning supplies in the cubby. Karl Malmvall has designed a stepladder that is both perfectly usable and hardly takes up any space at all. And it is so beautiful that you can hang it in your living room like a sculpture or a painting! Karl has fitted the stepladder to your environment at home and nobody has done that before. You don't need to hide the stepladder any longer. It sells fantastically at the MoMA.

Could you tell us about the background of Swedish design? What made it a natural resource, as you call it? What was the beginning of professional design?
When most of Europe was embroiled in the First and Second World Wars, we were not there. Sweden was lucky. Sometimes a country needs to be under lucky circumstances, and we were. As we didn't have to fight against others, we could concentrate all of our creativity into the civil industry. During this time, from the 1920s to the 1950s, the social democratic movement wanted to use our increasing prosperity to bring a better life for everyone in Sweden. This was the driving force behind Sweden's design development. The designers came into the industry and their credo was "we will make good products for everyday use". There was also a socialist push in architecture to build better houses for everyone.

Wasn't the development of Swedish design also strongly connected to traditional arts and crafts?
Absolutely! That applies to Finland and Norway as well. Compared to Germany, Holland or Czechoslovakia, we were still a poor country in the 1920s, despite not taking part in the First World War. Many people made themselves what they needed and they did it in a way that they could use it every day for a long time. That's why the ergonomic part of design is so important for us, the usability. In wealthier countries like Germany, design was used to make things look more beautiful for the rich people.

So that explains why Scandinavian design in general and especially your products are beautiful in a pure, simplistic way and extremely usable.
Exactly. The best feedback for us is when a customer comes back after five years to tell us: "Now I understand the values of your product development and design". Ah, that's just wonderful! Because we make "silent design". Our design isn't screaming at the customer. We are not adding lots of flowers, ornaments or gold to arouse interest. But we make it interesting enough for you to accept it and to live with it for a long time.

For many people you are a trend guru, but what you just said sounds like your perspective is a longer one than just in terms of trends, isn't it?
That's right. Journalists often ask: "So Mr. Färdig, which will be next summer's colours?" I have no idea.

There goes my next question...
Haha! No, I don't work with trends in that way. You could even say that good design is the opposite of "trendy". Our product should become a part of your life and not just for a summer. More and more people are turning to *Design House Stockholm* because they share our interest in the way our producers are treating their workers. We call it "the call of conduct". They also want to buy good things that they can trust and that they can use for a long time, instead of constantly looking for new things for short-term use. So if the long-term trend is turning in that direction, then we don't mind. You can also see this even in fashion. Fashion houses that used to have six or eight collections every year are now creating shirts to wear for many years. The Japanese label *Uniqlo* is a good example of this. In that respect, we are very trendy.

...and there seems to be a trend towards Swedish design.
Yes. Swedish design has never been as big in the world as it is now. The Internet has helped a lot. That is why we are so successful in South Korea and Japan now.

Isn't that also because of a very similar design philosophy: pure and reduced?
Absolutely. They are used to taking their time to produce good things and to choose carefully. As in Sweden, they don't have lots of things in their homes and they keep them for a long time. That's how Koreans, Japanese and Scandinavians like it. Some people might say that this is boring and I don't blame them.

You said that *Design House Stockholm* chooses its producers very carefully. Some of them are in the Baltic countries.
Yes. Our most important and famous product, Harri Koskinen's *Block Lamp*, was initially produced at a glass factory in Estonia. And the fleece for our fashion collection is produced in Estonia and Lithuania. Currently a fleece jacket selling at the MoMA in New York is being produced in Estonia. It is pleated in Sweden, then sewed in Estonia and shipped directly from the factory to the MoMA in New York.

Pleece fashion collection by Marianne Abelsson

What is your impression of the Baltic design scene, for example in Riga? I think the philosophy is very similar to the Scandinavian way of thinking.
Yes that's true. I see big progress in the region; many nice things are coming from there. I was invited to hold a speech at a design fair in Riga and was very sorry that I didn't have the time to go. A lot of interesting things are coming from the region. The difference with Sweden is that we stopped producing a lot of things that are still produced in the Baltic countries. They have a fantastic knowledge of how

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to produce. The textile industry in particular is doing a very good job.

Your products are sold not only on the Internet, but also at hundreds of retailers around the world, among them *Conran London*, the *Galeries Lafayette*, *Spazio Sette Rome* and in your own eight stores in San Francisco, London, Frankfurt, Oslo and elsewhere, not to mention the MoMA. How are things working out for you?
The interest comes from both directions, in the sense that the MoMA also asks us to develop specific products. This is good not only for our prestige. The MoMA is very strong in the United States. It has a wholesale division, a museum shop and a web shop. It is a big customer for us.

As a design professional, you travel a lot. Which places do you find interesting to visit?
Definitely Japan. I admire that part of the world for many things, starting with the architecture. I go to Paris because I love the city. And I go to London. These two cities have both the contemporary and the classic and in a good combination.

But talking about architecture, I don't have to go far. Look at the *Snøhetta* architecture and landscape design firm from Oslo! I admire what it is doing, coming from a country without a big history in good architecture. I could just go to Oslo and look at the opera house, which was designed by *Snøhetta*. I don't need to go to the most exciting places.

I also like to visit places that many people find less attractive, like Frankfurt. People say it's a terrible city. I don't think so, and some of the buildings there are fantastic.

When you have private guests from abroad, what is the first thing that you show them in Stockholm?
There's no question: I would take them on my boat and show them the archipelago, the hundreds of islands in front of Stockholm. If I went more inland, then I would go to Drottningholm, the royal palace. There are many beautiful small islands around. If I went further out from the centre, then I would take my guests to lunch at Sandhamn Island. With a fast boat you can make it in about 1.5 hours.

It's good to hear that you have a boat that you can actually launch into the sea. I heard about your hobby of renovating an old boat that will never be seaworthy. Where is the fun in that?
Hahaha! Yes, that's true. It's an old boat at my summer house that I have been constantly renovating for years, but it will never be ready. However, I often have a beer and listen to nice music while I work on the boat. It's my meditation centre.

So the boat is your alternative to attending yoga classes, right?
Haha, that's it! And I love it, especially when it's raining and stormy outside. I have a beautiful summer house in the south of Sweden and it's quite big. An American magazine asked me to name my favourite building, architecture-wise, and my answer was: "My summer house".

During the last few years, Swedish cuisine has built up an international reputation. Isn't the approach very similar to that of the design – pure, clear and using sustainably produced materials?
It's really great and interesting that you said that! We are working right now on a book about Swedish design and haute cuisine – exactly what you are talking about. We are making it for *Bonnier*, the biggest book-publishing house in Sweden. You are 100% right, Swedish cuisine has the same background and has really lifted up. Our chefs have been awarded with *Michelin* stars and won international competitions.

Then you have to give us one last piece of advice: what is your favourite restaurant in Stockholm?
Gondolen! It is run by one of the best chefs in the city and it offers a wonderful view. I should know, as my office is right next to it at the upper level of the Katarinahissen lift in Södermalm.

Probably the most beautiful place for an office in town...
Yes, and I always wanted to be exactly here, at this location. Already as a child I loved the lift and the view. **BO**

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Tomsona iela 39/1, Riga, LV-1013,
www.ariba.lv +371 25754787

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Text by **NADJA SAYEJ**
Publicity photos and by *Alamy*

FIVE MUST-SEE

ART GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS IN EUROPE

A quick guide to some of the Old Continent's most exciting exhibition spaces

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© Anders Valde

Frank Benson, *Human Statue*, 2005

ASTRUP FEARNLEY MUSEUM, OSLO

Oslo's shoreline is home to a must-see set of buildings in Tjuvholmen, a neighbourhood in the Frogner borough of the Norwegian capital, not far from the National Academy of Ballet. The bourgeoning art complex – which includes the Astrup Fearnley Museum and the Gallery Haaken – forms part of a mammoth urban renewal project named Fjord City, where developers have built 1,200 apartments since 2012, the same year that the museum reopened in its sparkling new location.

Designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano, the steel-columned Astrup Fearnley Museum is bathed in natural light through a glass roof and offers a stunning view of the nearby fjord, which never fails to impress.

The museum houses a large private collection of contemporary art, including a selection from the *Cremaster* series by American artist Matthew Barney and works by Gilbert & George (UK). When I visited last month, I saw animals in formaldehyde by English artist Damien Hirst and some of his butterfly paintings, such as *I Feel Love*. Among the large-scale pop paintings by Jeff Koons is *Triple Hulk Elvis III* as well as one of his infamous blow-up balloons, the yellow duck *Titi*.

Instead of focusing on art movements or historical periods, the museum collects works by individual artists who have made a mark in contemporary art. Each oeuvre is like a diamond in the rough. Even though it houses a large number of works by Dan Colen, Frank Benson, Paul Chan and other American artists, the museum is not concentrating its sights exclusively on the USA and also collects works from elsewhere.

Among the home-grown talents featured in the collection is Bjarne Melgaard, one of the most famous Norwegian artists since Edvard Munch. There are also rotating exhibitions by locals such as Marianne Heske, a leading conceptual artist whose works can now be seen at the museum until February 20.

Strandpromenaden 2
afmuseet.no

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HANGARBICOCCA, MILAN

The HangarBicocca in uptown Milan is a sprawling and sometimes spooky contemporary arts centre that has gained worldwide fame. Located in a former industrial complex, the 75,600-square-foot space is dark, mysterious and seemingly never-ending. It houses a permanent exhibition by legendary German artist Anselm Kiefer as well as rotating displays by contemporary artists such as Mike Kelley of the United States (whose art has graced the covers of *Sonic Youth* albums), Ragnar Kjartansson of Iceland (who has collaborated with *Sigur Ros*) and Cildo Meireles of Brazil (whose courageous conceptual art responds to political repression). Open since 2004, the space is funded by *Pirelli* and directed by Italian curator Andrea Lissoni.

When it's not having exhibitions, the *HangarBicocca* hosts gala events. Screen stars Sophia Loren and Kevin Spacey attended the 50th anniversary celebrations of the *Pirelli* calendar in 2013, while in November of last year, actor Adrien Brody and songstress Karen Elson feted the launching of the calendar's 2015 edition together with models wearing dresses by *Pucci* and *Alexander McQueen*.

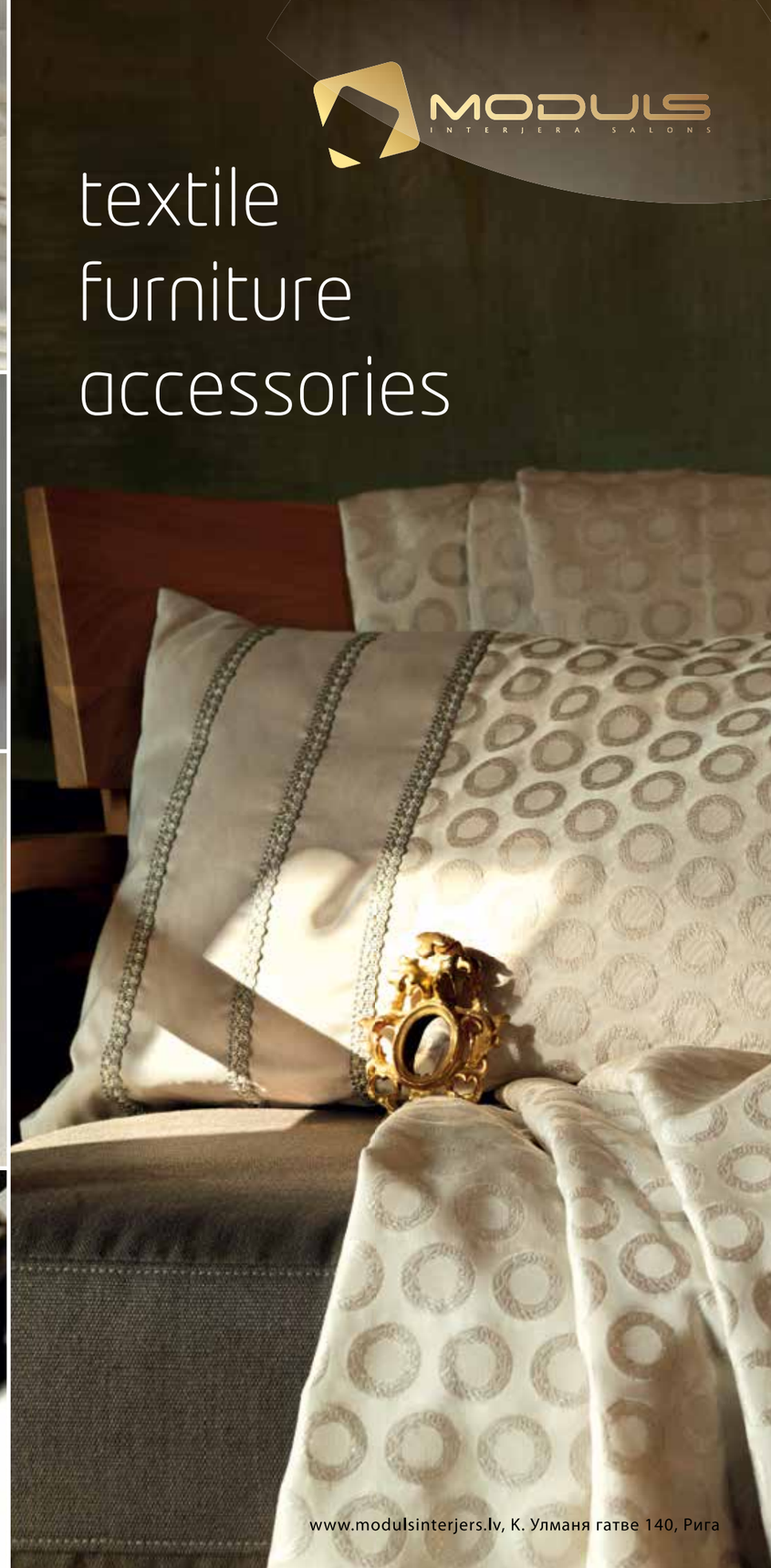
Dating from 1955, the building is on former factory grounds where farm machinery and locomotives were once manufactured by the *Breda* company. The area eventually fell into disuse, but after a cluster of businesses grouped together in the 1980s the district was redeveloped, with a university building and private housing also being constructed.

HangarBicocca has a sumptuous restaurant, the *Dopolavoro Bicocca*, which offers stellar cappuccinos along with gnocchi, cheese-tastings and Mediterranean sandwich rolls, while vegetarians can try the soup-of-the-day and rotating pasta and salad meals. Meanwhile, the *HB Lab* sells art magazines and art history books selected by the curators.

Free entry to all exhibitions.

Via Privata Chiese 2

ⓘ hangarbicocca.org



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BOROS COLLECTION, BERLIN

Step down into a former WWII bunker to view the art collection of Christian and Karen Boros, who bought the concrete structure in 2008. After renovating it, they installed their private collection of contemporary art into the 3000-square-metre premises, which encompass 80 rooms. The German couple has accumulated over 700 pieces of art, of which about 130 have been added since 2012.

"Art is created to be noticed," says Christian Boros, who hails from Wuppertal in the western part of the country. "It should not be allowed to disappear into boxes and storerooms; it should be put on display."

Among the artworks made in the past 15 years are starry astronomical pictures by Thomas Ruff of Germany and photos by his Turner Prize-winning compatriot Wolfgang Tillmans. One must-see is Chinese dissident Ai Weiwei's six-meter-high tree made of found objects, as are the works by Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson.

At times, the place feels like a house of mirrors. You wander through the concrete space to find strange blow-up tube tires, screeching sound art, upside-down trees and even a popcorn machine overflowing with buttered popcorn. All of these pieces have one thing in common.

"The works in our collection were created in Berlin," says Christian Boros. "And it's here that they should go on display. They belong to this city!"

Art lovers should take note that visits to the Boros Collection can be made by appointment only.

Berlin has an abundance of contemporary art in its galleries and museums and hosts a number of annual contemporary art events such as Berlin Art Week in September and Gallery Weekend every April. Of course, visitors can come all year round to take in the Berlin art scene and its aesthetic tendencies towards minimalism, its love of techno and its recurring theme of florescent lights. In one installation, for example, Berlin artist Alicja Kwade recorded the humming sound of florescent tube lighting and amplified it on curved steel plates.

If you'd like to take something home to remind you of your trip, then Christian Boros recently co-founded the *Distanz* publishing house with Uta Grosenick. It publishes colourful art books and exhibition catalogues.

Bunker, Reinhardtstraße 20

ⓘ sammlung-boros.de

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Ai Weiwei, *Tree*, 2009-2010

© NOSHE

Klara Liden, *Teenage Room*, 2009

© Wolfgang Stahr

Art collectors Karen and Christian Boros

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Thomas Ruff, *Stern (Stars)13h 18m/-60°, 1992; Stern 10h 51 m/-20°, 1992; Stern 05h 08m/-65°, 1990*

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Thomas Scheibitz, *Tinte und Zucker (Ink and Sugar)*, 2007

Portofino – the subtle frame for your perfect experience

Portofino – it's gentry, stylish, luxurious. It's hospitality at its' finest, and Portofino's team, who are all ardent and non-compromising enthusiasts for service and food excellence, know the value of a loyal guest. Warm and welcoming, it is a place to return to, tomorrow or in a couple of years. It offers classical Italian cuisine, though thoughtfully adjusted to local dining customs, and is appreciated by those who know themselves to be true gourmets. Perfection is known to be in details, in the little things which come together to create the atmosphere, which at Portofino is so elusive that you are left to purely enjoy. This place is the subtle frame for your perfect experience.

Portofino – изысканное место яркого гастрономического приключения!

Portofino – красочный, изысканный ресторан – пример настоящего гостеприимства. Команда Portofino – мастера поварского искусства и обслуживания, знающие, насколько значимо доверие гостей. Это тот ресторан, в который возвращаются и на следующий день, и через продолжительное время. Portofino предлагает классическую итальянскую кухню, которая продуманно приспособлена к местным гастрономическим традициям, ее способны оценить настоящие гурманы. Истинное удовольствие кроется в деталях особой атмосферы, которая дарит возможность по-настоящему насладиться моментом.

© Helena Schlichting

Simon Denny, *New Management*, 2014

PORTIKUS, FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Frankfurt is more than just "Bankfurt". In fact, it is a vibrant cultural metropolis. There is lots to see at local art galleries such as *Bischoff Projects* and at bigger museums like the *Schirn Kunsthalle* and the *Museum für Moderne Kunst*. Outside the mainstream venues, the *Portikus* centre for experimental art is an off-the-radar charm. It was opened in 1987 by one of Germany's leading curators, Kasper König.

Since 2006, the arts centre and its tall, barn-like tower have been located on an island at the cusp of Frankfurt's river, the Main. These are accessible only through the Alte Brücke, Frankfurt's oldest bridge.

One permanent piece of art at *Portikus* is Olafur Eliasson's *Light Lab*. Standing tall with a pointed roof, it lights up at night. Meant to look like the arc of a setting sun, the light becomes visible at dusk through the northern roof, which reflects a warm glow onto the river.

Inside the centre are sculptures, video art and installations by renowned artists like Carsten Nicolai (Germany), Maurizio Cattelan (Italy) and Jimmie Durham (USA). Students at the *Städelschule* (Frankfurt's Academy of Fine Arts, with which the centre is closely affiliated) work behind-the-scenes to prepare various exhibitions, which pair together established artists (like visiting faculty) and up-and-coming talents (like recent graduates). So far, more than 150 such showings have been held.

"This place is not a standard white cube," says curator Sophie von Olfers, who has worked with artists like Liam Gillick (UK) and Jesper Just (Denmark) and helped to coordinate the German pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2007.

Since the *Städelschule* is an international academy, more than half of its students come from abroad. The exhibition space has the same outlook, bringing together artists from various countries.

Alte Brücke, Frankfurt

ⓘ portikus.de

© Alamy

Portikus exhibition hall is based on an island in the Main River

© Helena Schlichting

Elif Erkan, *Konzentration der Kräfte (Concentration of Forces)*

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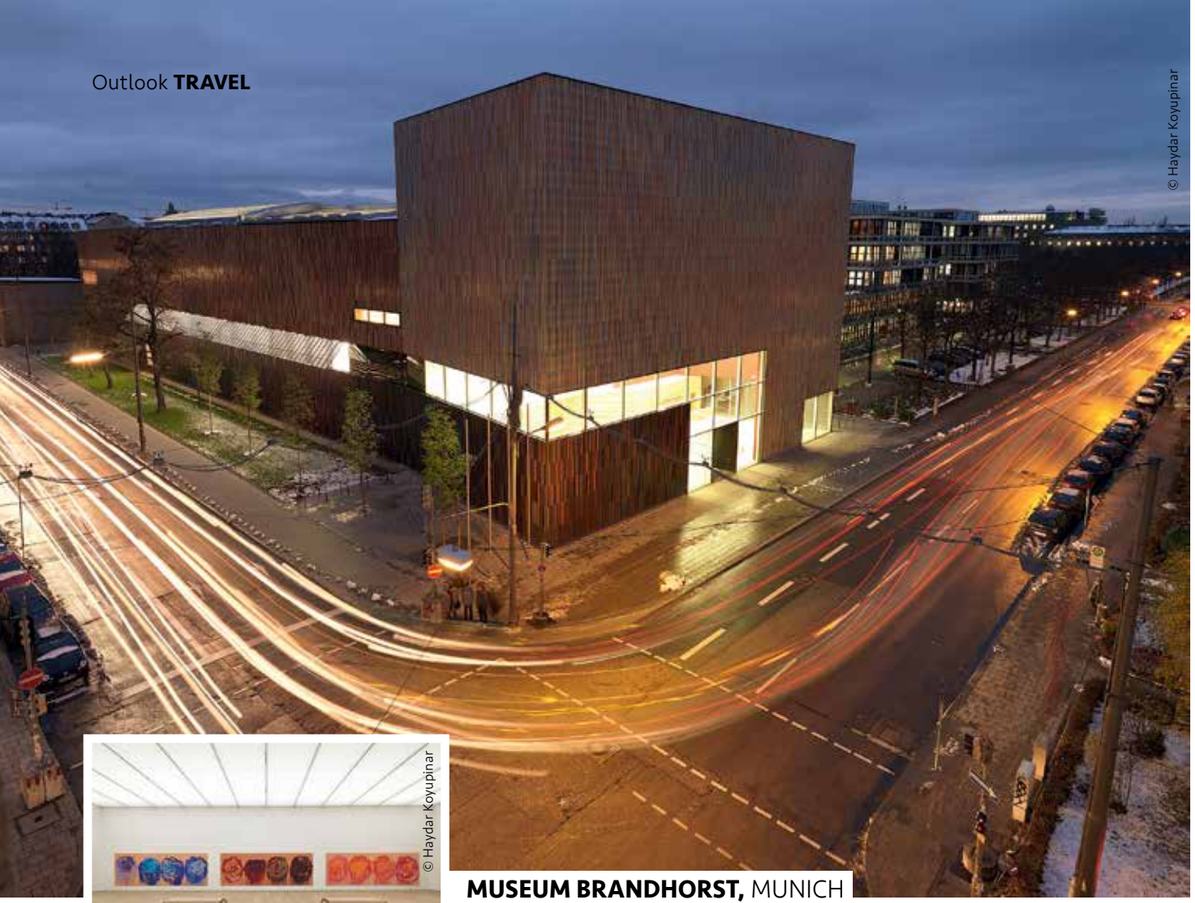
IL Patio restaurant is an ideal spot for connoisseurs of the Italian lifestyle. We offer a wide variety of traditional Italian dishes: real Neapolitan pizza made in a wood-fired oven, various types of pasta, and of course, grilled meat, fish and seafood. Our restaurant is full of bright and vivid colours, and the baroque-style decor and brick masonry help to create a peaceful atmosphere. Benvenuto IL Patio!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MUSEUM BRANDHORST, MUNICH

The Museum Brandhorst is a temple of pop art at the foot of the Bavarian Alps. The architecture created by *Sauerbruch Hutton* is a masterpiece in itself – the building's façade is covered with 36,000 ceramic rods in 23 glazed colours that range from indigo to cherry red. The two-storey rectangular box is hard to miss in Munich's Kunstareal, or museum quarter. This is the place to seek avant-garde works, as the nearby *Alte Pinakothek* focuses on old European masters.

The museum was founded by art collectors Udo and Anette Brandhorst, who have been collecting artworks from the 20th and 21st centuries since the 1970s. They have accumulated roughly 1,000 works, from modern classics like Pablo Picasso (Spain) to minimalist pioneer Dan Flavin (USA) and avant-garde painter Kazimir Malevich (Russia).

The collection is heavy on American artists and focuses on pop art. On display are more than 700 items, including over 100 works by Andy Warhol. The museum is also home to one of the most important collections of art by American artist Cy Twombly, including 60 paper works, photographs, paintings and sculptures. These are shown alongside pieces by Franz West, an Austrian artist associated with abstract expressionism and who created bright sculptures coiled together like giant worms.

Soak up an extensive tour of German legends and view pieces by Joseph Beuys, Polish-born artist Sigmar Polke and iconic painter Gerhard Richter. The museum also houses over 100 illustrated books by Pablo Picasso and works by Young British Artist sensation Damien Hirst.

An ongoing group show called *Dark Pop* digs into the darkness below the surface of a seemingly colourful world. From portraits of Marilyn Monroe to Jackie Kennedy, cultural criticism plays a role in looking back on a bygone era. The exhibition includes works by American artists Jeff Koons, Alex Katz, Bruce Nauman and Robert Gober, among others.

Theresienstraße 35a

museum-brandhorst.de

Text by **LIENE PĀLĒNA**
Photos by **GATIS GIERTS** (*F64*), **GUNĀRS JANAITIS**, **ANDRIS TONE** and publicity materials

MASQUERADE BALL

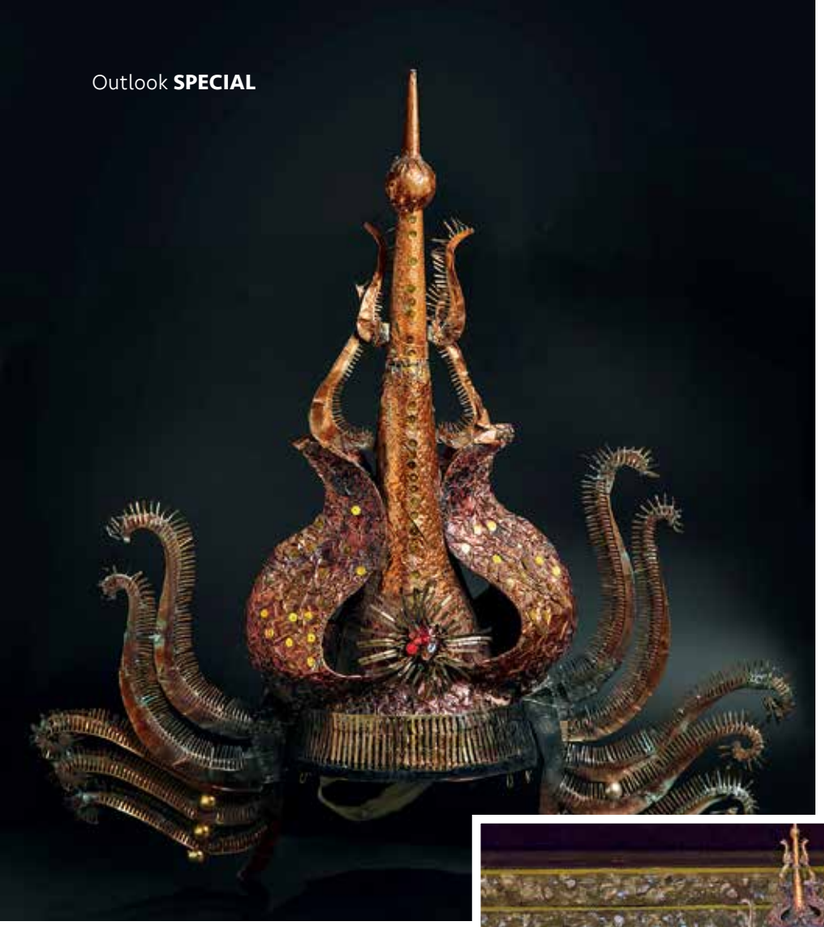
Let us take you on a behind-the-scenes tour of the most beautiful masks at the Latvian National Opera

February is Carnival month in many parts of the world, with the culmination taking place on Shrove Tuesday, or *Mardi Gras*. This is a time when participants bear the costumes of princes, baronesses, fairies and other good and evil characters. Irish writer Oscar Wilde once said that "a mask tells us more than a face." While he was evidently speaking figuratively, the costumes worn at carnivals and masked balls are often chosen for a reason. Every mask has a meaning and a story to tell. *Baltic Outlook* has met with prop maker Ilze Egle and gained the unique opportunity to look into the treasure chest of masks being held in the wardrobe of the Latvian National Opera (LNO).

Fragility and strength in *Romeo and Juliet*

Some of the masks at the Latvian National Opera are not prepared on the spot but are bought in bulk, as was the case with the masks for the dancers of the corps de ballet in *Romeo and Juliet*. This ballet with music by Sergei Prokofiev was first shown at the LNO only last fall. It is a story that demands a simultaneous display of extreme fragility and strength from its characters. Often the scenographers and costume designers already have a vision of how a character should look, and this was also the case for *Romeo and Juliet*.

This particular mask was made from at least 10 layers of papier-mâché (a mixture of paper and glue). However, regardless of the number of layers that are used in their making, papier-mâché masks still need to be handled with care, especially if they are worn for lengthy periods on stage by ballet soloists. There have been cases of paper masks starting to unravel due to their direct contact with the sweat exuded by the performers. To prevent this from happening, the mask-makers glue cloth into the mask's inner layer and use other technological means at their disposal.



Turandot's dynasty of crowns

Giacomo Puccini's opera *Turandot* first appeared in its current form at the Latvian National Opera more than 40 years ago. The performance represents a historical testimony of a zenith in Latvian opera traditions during the 1970s. At the time, the public was enchanted by the combination of skilled directorship, outstanding visual effects and captivating music. The ethnographic stylisations and Oriental splendour of the original props continue to impress audiences with their beauty.

In 2011, Puccini's legendary work was revived and performed again on the stage of the LNO after a hiatus of more than 40 years. The same masks that were made over four decades ago – including the headdresses of the Chinese princess Turandot – were worn by the performers in 2011. These props are truly majestic and quite heavy as well, with both metal and cork being used to make them.

Turandot's crowns have been worn at the LNO by various outstanding opera soloists, the last of whom was the Latvian National Opera's own soprano Yulianna Bawarska. When asked how it was possible for her to sing with such a heavy crown on her head, Bawarska answered that while the headdress is indeed heavy, it is also symmetrical, making it fairly easy to wear if it is placed in the proper position.

"During the past 40 years, these crowns have been worn by many opera primadonnas, which is why I am convinced that they convey a particular energy. The crowns represent the continuation of a long dynasty of singing, just as is the case in monarchies, which is why those who wear them bear a particular responsibility to the public. The second act has a very difficult aria, which would already be difficult enough to sing in comfortable pyjamas, to say nothing of such a heavy crown and costume. There were times when I felt like a true victim in this ornate getup. Nevertheless, the role of Turandot is a big and noble challenge to take on. I don't know if a more responsible role exists at the Latvian National Opera," says Bawarska.

> There have been times when I have felt like a true victim in this ornate getup

Imitation gemstones in *The Nutcracker*

Pyotr Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker* conjures up a bewitching fairytale world in a story about the endless struggle between good and evil. Above all, however, it is a story about love, which triumphs in the face of injustice and overcomes all obstacles. The scenographer and costume designer for the LNO production of *The Nutcracker* is the famous Russian fashion designer and historian Alexander Vasilyev, who created a stage design depicting Riga in the late 19th century, complete with elaborate Art Nouveau interiors. It is amid this picturesque backdrop that the heroine Marie meets the Nutcracker on Christmas Eve and is later transported by him to a fairytale land.

Costumes and masks make up a substantial part of the expenses for large opera and ballet productions. In order to keep ticket prices at an acceptable level, many costumes and masks are produced from inexpensive materials that look sufficiently glitzy and convincing from the audience's vantage point. Thus, instead of real gemstones, coloured jewels made of plastic have been placed into this crown, which is worn during the *Russian Dance* scene. Some props are made as little as one month before the premiere of a show, which means that prop-makers must work fairly quickly and still produce a quality product.

> Many masks are produced from inexpensive materials that look sufficiently glitzy from the audience's vantage point

LATVIAN NATIONAL OPERA

FEBRUARY 2015

01	opera	LA TRAVIATA	
04	ballet	GISELLE	
05	opera	AIDA	
06	ballet	THREE MEETINGS	
07	opera	RIGOLETTO	
08	ballet	THE NUTCRACKER	
09	ballet	SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS	
11	ballet	SWAN LAKE	
14, 15	opera	MIKHAIL AND MIKHAIL PLAY CHESS	
15	concert	THE HISTORY OF PIANO TRIO	
20, 21, 22	opera	MANON LESCAUT	Premiere
25	ballet	LA BAYADÈRE	
26	opera	IL TROVATORE	
27	ballet	ROMEO AND JULIET	
28	opera	VALENTINA	

CONTACTS
Aspazijas bulvāris 3, Rīga, LV 1050
(+ 371) 67073777
info@opera.lv, www.opera.lv

TICKETS
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Splendour and grace in *Anna Karenina*
Based on the novel by Leo Tolstoy and with music by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, the ballet *Anna Karenina* portrays the human tragedy of betrayal and falling into temptation. Anna is a faithful wife and loving mother until her heart is suddenly fuelled by a passion that destroys her peaceful daily routine and harmonious family life. She succumbs to the attentions of another man, leaves her husband and her son, but ends up no happier than before.

Since the themes in this story remain as pertinent as ever in our day and age, the ballet is being presented for the ninth straight season this year on the stage of the LNO. The aristocratic environment portrayed in *Anna Karenina* is full of splendour and grace, just like the masks that are worn in the ballet performance.

Mask-makers are understandably reluctant to reveal the techniques that they use in the practice of their craft. However, according to performing artists familiar with the process, an initial mask of the desired shape and size is usually made from clay or plasticine. A plaster cast of the first mask is then made and once the cast has hardened, it is further worked in with another cast of papier-mâché. Once the papier-mâché has hardened, it is separated from the plaster and its edges are smoothed out. Finally, the papier-mâché mask is painted over

> The papier-mâché mask is painted over and occasionally adorned with cloth or other decorations

and occasionally adorned with cloth or other decorations, as the situation dictates.

This specific mask, which is worn in the masked ball scene by a dancer from the corps de ballet, has been decorated with ornate, gilded cloth. Since this opera mask and many others like it was designed to last many seasons, the mask-makers try to ensure that even the finest details are not only pleasing to the eye but also hardy and durable. Many people are involved in the production of each mask, starting from the artists who draw up the sketches, continuing with the craftsmen who give the images a specific form and the decorators who give them their character, and ending with the ballet dancers and opera singers who tell a story with the masks on stage.

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Crossing borders

Rödl & Partner around the Baltic Sea

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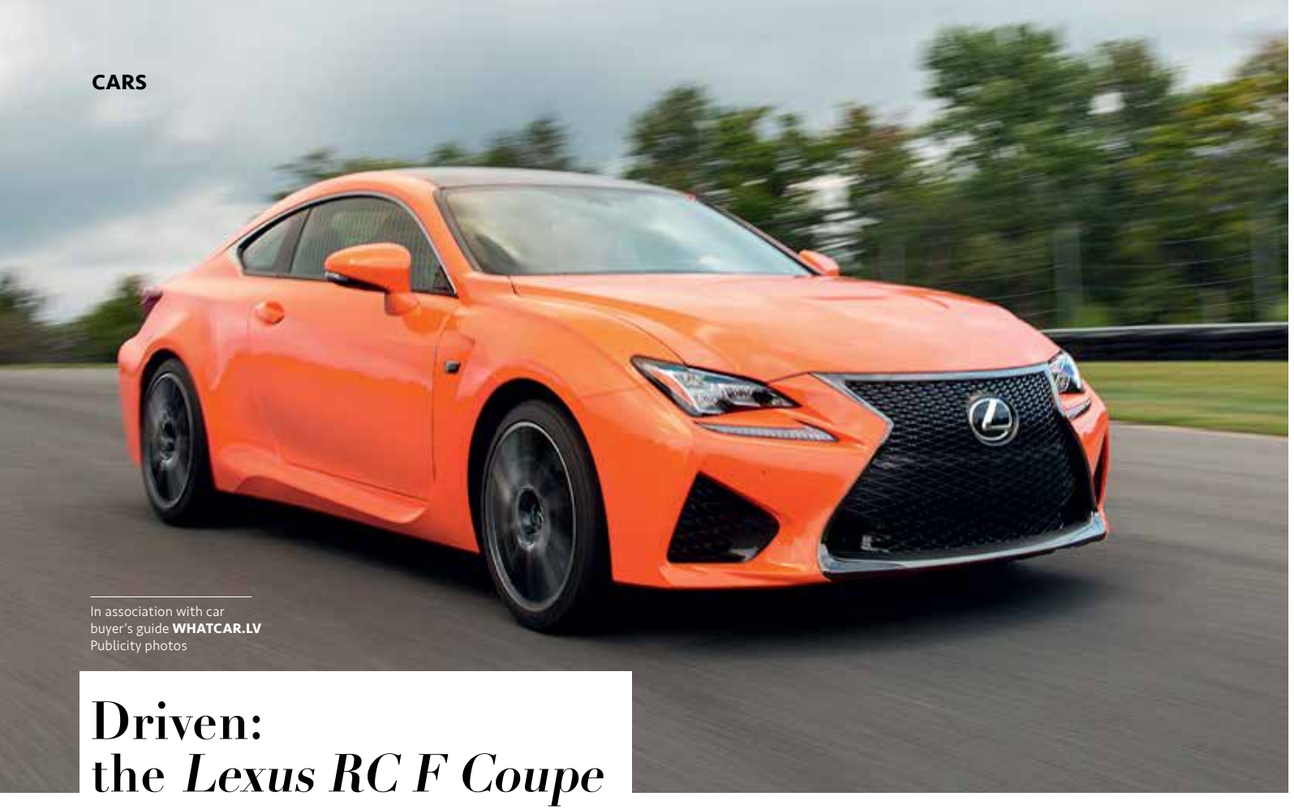
This performance presented new challenges to the prop-makers, who had never made gigantic birds with huge masses of fine, silk feathers before

Mass of feathers in *The Bird Opera* (*Putnu opera*)

The Bird Opera by Latvian composer Jānis Lūsēns experienced its premiere at the LNO 15 years ago. It is a colourful and exciting story about the kind-hearted Doctor Dolittle and his astute animal friends, who manage to rehearse and perform an opera despite the obstacles put forth by the evil Mr. Thornton. This work has been one of the most successful children's shows to have ever been performed on the stage of the Latvian National Opera. On top of that, it has helped children to better understand how operas are made and performed.

A talented, experienced and hard-working crew of costume- and prop-makers works at the Latvian National Opera. Its members skilfully put together intricate costumes from various parts of the world and from different eras in human history. However, this performance presented new challenges to the prop-makers, who had never made gigantic birds with huge masses of fine, silk feathers before. Thus, although the canaries in *The Bird Opera* appear to be the lightest and airiest birds, they have actually been sewn together from a stiff and coarse tulle fabric. The foundation for the wings of many of the birds was made from thick folds of cloth, with the silk feathers added on top, layer by layer. **BO**

The author expresses her sincere thanks to the Latvian National Opera and to prop maker Ilze Egle.



In association with car buyer's guide **WHATCAR.LV**
Publicity photos

Driven: the *Lexus RC F Coupe*

This is the new *Lexus RC F*, just arrived on Western European roads and headed for the Baltic States as well. More high-performance coupé than out-and-out sports car, the *RC F* has no immediate forebear in the *Lexus* range, although it effectively succeeds the V8-engined *IS F* performance saloon of 2007.

The company decided to sacrifice a bit of usability this time around for the sake of greater style and desirability. *Lexus* probably also figured that the equity built up by the incredible *LFA* supercar would better sell coupés than saloons.

However, *Lexus* hasn't simply lopped a couple of doors off an *IS* saloon and dropped in a 5.0-litre V8. Its underbody is all steel, with hot-stamped ultra-high-strength sections used to add rigidity to the rocker panels and cabin pillars, and braces reinforcing the body-in-white in no fewer than five separate places.

A 5.0-litre V8 engine will make the car one of only a few performance coupés left on the market that doesn't use turbochargers. Making 477 hp, it's an overhauled version of the *IS F's* lump given new intake, exhaust, injection, cooling and lubrication systems as well as lighter internals for a heady 7300-rpm redline. Of the current crop of rival fast Germans from *BMW's M* division, *Audi's Quattro GmbH* and *Mercedes-AMG*, only the higher-output version of the new twin-turbo *C63* will have more power.

That power is deployed via an eight-speed automatic gearbox with a paddleshift manual mode and full torque-converter lock-up in second through to eighth gears. Enhancing traction at the rear wheels is a standard *Torsen* limited-slip differential, although a much cleverer active torque-vectoring rear diff is available as an option.

It is in fact a planetary gearset outputting to two multi-plate clutches, one on either side of the final drive unit. Managed by electric actuators and a dedicated ECU, the system can route 100 per cent of engine torque to each individual rear wheel and can react to changing surface conditions within a thousandth of a second.

After the likeable dynamic shambles that was the *IS F*, *Lexus* has gone all out to ensure that the *RC F* not only looks like a true hardcore piece of kit but also works like one. Those vents in the front wings really do feed air away from the 380-mm front brakes, and there are some fairly aggressive settings for the front suspension and steering systems to make for a grippy and direct front end.

What's it like?

This is *Lexus* making an 84,000-euro luxury coupé as hardcore as it dares – with some success. The *RC F* feels like a car with it all. New *C63* notwithstanding, it's got the firmest ride and the most uncompromising damping you'll find at this price point. The powertrain has moments of wonderful savagery, the handling is direct and interactive, and the car is robust enough from a performance perspective to take as much circuit-based abuse as you're likely to throw at it. So it's twice the performance car the *IS F* was.

An active exhaust system saves *RC F* owners from theatricality on par with a *Jaguar F*-type's start-up growl. The *Lexus* starts undramatically and punts around at town speeds comfortably enough, although even here the car's *Sachs* performance dampers make their presence known by transmitting plenty of surface patter from the road. At higher speeds they keep the body level at all times and deal with compression very well but could do with more subtlety and better rebound control.

Unusually, those dampers are just about the only mechanical constituent of the driving experience that you can't meddle with. The car has four drive modes (Eco, Normal, Sport S and Sport S+), four stability control modes (Normal, Sport, Off and Expert), automatic and paddleshift manual modes for its transmission and, if you've optioned it, three modes for the torque vectoring diff (Standard, Slalom and Track).

In Eco mode the V8 engine switches to the Atkinson cycle to save fuel, which sounds incredible but is true. We tried it and it works, so now you know: you can leave yours in Sport S. Meanwhile, the stability control works best in Expert, and the diff in Standard mode, with the throttle-steering possible in Slalom being just a touch too pronounced and indelicate to use regularly on the road.

The car steers with reassuring weight and a bit of feedback, diving into corners flat and with incisive purpose. Cornering balance is biased ever so slightly towards stability on turn-in and understeer mid-corner, but you can neutralise the car's attitude on a track or through a longer well-sighted bend with power. Provided that the V8 is in a position to provide the power, that is.

That's because everything the *RC F* does to entertain you happens with at least 5000 rpm showing on the tacho. It has to. The engine is noticeably short on mid-range thrust below that threshold, yet it makes the car quite seriously fast and exciting to drive above it. If you thought *Audi's* 4.2-litre atmospheric V8 felt a bit peaky, this trumps it – and by some way.

The *RC F's* driver therefore has a choice to make: enjoy a typically *Lexus* waft down the road in a cabin with excellent wind suppression and an engine and transmission that are entirely docile at low and middling revs, or clog it in Manual mode with the crank spinning at anti-social speeds and the handling alive underneath you.

There is no middle ground state in which the car can operate half as well. The

transmission kicks down clumsily in every automatic mode, and though it downshifts quite nicely under hard braking, it generally gives you the impression that keeping that atmospheric V8 revving in its sweet spot is a big ask.

That ends up being the biggest criticism you can level at the *RC F*. The car is more than thrilling enough when you're charging along hard and just about refined enough to soothe when the former mode has worn out your enthusiasm – but it's not an effortless fast cruiser.

While the F-type *V6 S* and *M4* have the chassis tune and powertrain responses for brisk, long-striding, give-and-take mileage, the *Lexus* insists on pausing for a moment, kicking down three ratios and then going like a missile every time you exit a tight corner or pass a dawdling supermini.

Should I buy one?

As a character car or a break from the German performance mainstream – perhaps. But not with mixed daily use in mind, and certainly not because you suspect *Lexus* has rediscovered the dynamic brilliance of the *LFA* here.

The *RC F* is a lot of things, and a lot of fun in the right circumstances. The really interesting thing that the *RC F* shows is how hard *Lexus* is prepared to work and how committed it's willing to be in order to establish itself as a maker of truly credible performance machines.

After the miscue that was the *IS F*, *Lexus* has blazed its effort high and wide this time. But it has also fired a warning shot that will get the attention of plenty of people in Munich, Neckarsulm, Affalterbach and elsewhere. **BO**

QUICK **FACTS:**

1. The *Lexus RC F* is a rival for the likes of *BMW's M3* and *M4;*
2. Powering the *RC F* is a 477-hp 5.0-litre V8 engine;
3. The 0-100 km/h sprint time takes 4.5 seconds, maximum speed is 270 km/h;
4. The rear-drive *RC F* comes with a *Torsen* limited-slip differential as standard kit;
5. It is equipped with an eight-speed automatic transmission.

Architectural masterpiece in Liepāja

The decorative staircase that leads to the basement is one of many ornate interior elements

A colourful accent in the ceiling of the hallway on the second floor creates appealing plays of light opposite a tile mosaic

Publicity photos

The signature style of Liepāja's former municipal architect Paul Max Bertschy can be most easily discerned in the city's late 19th and early 20th-century red brick buildings, one of which is the *De Rome* business and trade centre on Zivju iela 3. Formerly the home of the upscale *Hotel de Rome*, the edifice stands out with an unusual circular construction and romantic courtyard.

Red brick – a hallmark feature of the city

Bertschy was born on January 1, 1840, in a small town not far from Berlin. He arrived in Liepāja in 1871, where he served as the city's municipal architect for more than 30 years, until 1902. According to art historian Imants Lancmanis, the red brick buildings that Bertschy designed changed the face of the port city and heralded a new era of change.

When the architect arrived in Liepāja, the city was just beginning to experience an economic upsurge. Although Liepāja had already been home to some small manufacturing companies since the first half of the 19th century, the completion of a railway line to the city hastened the construction of larger factories, which promoted Liepāja's further development. To commemorate the architect's contribution to the city's landscape, more than 60 buildings that Bertschy designed have been marked with brass plaques.

A modern hotel

During the 19th century, the first shopping malls began to appear in Europe's major cities. The *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II* in the centre of Milan, for example, was at one point the largest and most prominent shopping centre on the continent, housing the most lavish and upscale stores.

Following this trend, senior police officer Nikolai von Ramedlov asked Bertschy to design the first shopping gallery in Liepāja. In 1881, plans were approved for a new edifice that would have entrances on both Zivju and Stendera streets and would be built with two separate corpuses.

The winds of change that continually affected the city also blew into this building, and Ramedlov sold it to Bertschy's colleague, construction materials manufacturer Wilhelm Riege.

Liepāja had already become popular as a resort town in the early 19th century and was being visited by a large number of tourists, which promoted the rise of the hotel business in the city. Accordingly, Riege decided to turn the shopping mall into the *Hotel de Rome*. Plans for the refurbishment of the building were approved in early 1891, and by the end of that same year the new hotel opened its doors for business.

The most important visual changes affected the façade and entryways. The main entry was constructed through a vestibule on Zivju iela, while the façade facing that street was lengthened. A closed inner courtyard with a water fountain as its central element was also built, along with a lush garden. The fascinating garden was the hotel's pride and joy and was featured on postcards of the city from that era.

In addition, the *Hotel de Rome* installed a number of amenities that were modern in their day, including an unusual vacuum cleaner that was operated by two men – one of whom pedalled the bellows, while the other went about cleaning the establishment's many rooms.

The hotel was one of the first buildings in the city to be connected to a water main and sewage system. Its heating system was also well-planned, with all of the wood stoves that heated the hotel rooms being fired up from the hallway, rather than from within the rooms themselves. The basement, for its part, housed a cellar for the wine that the hotel's owners bought in bulk, bottled themselves and then sold on to the public.

During the early 1900s the hotel was purchased by the Drāts family, but it was nationalised during the Soviet occupation of Latvia. After the Second World War, the building operated as a branch of the nearby *Līva* hotel. Following the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, the heirs of the Drāts family regained ownership of the edifice.

21st-century revival

The building began to undergo significant restoration work in the late 1990s. Urgent repairs were conducted to the roof and the premises were gradually renewed, with the building façade and part of its interior regaining their full former glory. Workers restored the ornate wall and ceiling decorations and refurbished the store windows of the erstwhile shopping mall in the courtyard section.

Following these major upgrades, various commercial enterprises set up shop on the ground floor and business offices were opened in the former hotel rooms.

The building's rich history testifies to the strength of Liepāja's winds of change. This architectural gem in the heart of the city awaits a new owner who will appreciate its magnificent historical heritage. Although currently the former *Hotel de Rome* is operating as a business and trade centre, plans were set up a few years ago to convert it into a recreation centre and to install a spa and water relaxation centre in the basement floor.

Liepāja was formerly a popular resort town and vacation spot. If the city's development plans and tourism figures are anything to go by, then Liepāja is right on course for achieving this status again very soon.

Angelika Bertschy, the great-granddaughter of the illustrious architect, has described Liepāja as "an ideal place to rest, free one's mind, engage in contemplation, come up with ideas and establish visions." **BO**

The elaborate courtyard of Liepāja's *Hotel de Rome* in a photograph from the 1920s. (From *Bertschy: the Contribution of Architect Paul Max Bertchy and His Sons to Liepāja* [*Bertschy: Arhitekta Paula Maksa Berči un viņa dēlu devums Liepājai*] by Imants Lancmanis and Angelika Bertschy.)

The renovated courtyard of the *De Rome* business and trade centre. (Photo from *Bertschy: the Contribution of Architect Paul Max Bertchy and His Sons to Liepāja* [*Bertschy: Arhitekta Paula Maksa Berči un viņa dēlu devums Liepājai*] by Imants Lancmanis and Angelika Bertschy.)

ⓘ For more information about this property owned by *Swedbank Group's* real estate company *Ektornet*, visit ektornet.lv.

Ektornet Творение Макса Пауля Берчи ищет владельца

Стиль немецкого архитектора Макса Пауля Берчи наиболее ярко проявляется в его зданиях, построенных из красного кирпича. Это касается и строения по улице Зивью 3, которое привлекает внимание своей пространственной композицией и романтичным внутренним двором.

Здание было построено в 1881 году по заказу полицмейстера Николая фон Рамедлова и предназначалось для торгового пассажа. Впоследствии дом был продан стройподрядчику Вильгельму Риге, который переоборудовал его в гостиницу.

Всего несколько лет назад в здании располагалась респектабельная гостиница *Hotel de Rome*. В целях привлечения туристов предполагалось создать в ней центр отдыха, а в подвалах оборудовать помещения для водных процедур. Сегодня здесь находится бизнес-центр *De Rome*.

Это славное архитектурное наследие достойно особого внимания. Возрождением этой жемчужины будет отдана дань памяти значительным событиям и именам.

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В сотрудничестве с

Swedbank

Publicity photos

Ribs that really rock

Preparing excellent ribs is laborious, which is one good reason to leave this task to the experts. Enter the skilled chefs at *Ribs & Rock* in the heart of Old Riga, who treat ribs at a truly state-of-the-art level.

Although *Ribs & Rock* belongs to the same people who founded three other popular Riga restaurant chains – *Steiku Haoss*, *KID** and *MUUSU* – this attractive American-style restaurant with a Latvian heart and staff carries a slightly different message than its kin, emphasising rock and roll music and prime baked ribs.

At *Ribs & Rock* you will hear old-school favourites like Jimi Hendrix and *Led Zeppelin* as well as newer classics by *REM* and *U2*, to name a few. As an extra bonus, live music is provided on weekend nights by some of the best local bands. Adding to the musical atmosphere are posters of such rock legends as Jim Morrison, *Led Zeppelin*, *AC/DC* and Kurt Cobain, which decorate the walls of all five restaurant dining rooms, along with vintage guitars, drums and other instruments. One can hardly think of a better setting for those who appreciate both fine food and classic rock music.

Before *Ribs & Rock* was opened, its chefs had transformed the kitchen into a laboratory, seeking new methods of achieving tender and juicy meat. The outcome is nothing short of remarkable. By the way, pork is not the only meat that the restaurant serves. Head chef Renārs Valdmanis also offers dishes with veal, lamb and wild game. Furthermore, the meat used in these dishes is of the highest possible quality, which is ensured by specially hired butchers who service both the *Ribs & Rock* and *Steiku Haoss* restaurants.

Being the only restaurant in Latvia to specialise in lamb, beef and pork ribs, *Ribs & Rock* knows how to make its customers' mouths water right from the start. Sometimes the aroma emanating into the dining hall is so irresistible that it's easy to overrate one's hunger when choosing from an order of either 400 or 800 grams of ribs.

Among the restaurant's specialties are *Dark Side of the Moon* (pork ribs prepared with the renowned *Riga Black Balsam*) and *Garlic Blues Band* (pork ribs in garlic marinade with bacon and cheese) as well as *Red Hot Chilli Peppers* (spicy pork ribs with jalapeno peppers and marinated pepperoni) and *U2* (a rich food plate for two people).

The ribs are featured in a separate menu and are served with different side dishes like variously filled baked potatoes, as well as with diverse sauces such as forest mushroom sauce with thyme, four-pepper sauce with brandy and avocado-cheese guacamole – all freshly made in the restaurant's own kitchen.

If you aren't in the mood for ribs, the restaurant also offers appetisers, soups, salads, pastas or fish to choose from as well as a wide range of steaks. One special side dish is *Ribs & Rock's* home-baked bread, which provides an extra dose of culinary pleasure through an ideal combination of tastes.

Be sure to match a special wine with your main course. Believe us, *Ribs & Rock* is among the best places in Riga for coupling wine with other tasty dishes such as pork ribs. Appetisingly filled plates, relaxed patrons sipping refreshing drinks and listening to live music by Latvian rock groups while enjoying each other's company – all this awaits those who choose to visit Riga's *Ribs & Rock* restaurant. **BO**

Ribs & Rock

Ribs & Rock
Kaļķu iela 8, Riga
Tel. (+371) 28650450

Open:
Mon.-Wed.: 13:00 - 23:00
Thu.-Sat.: 13:00 - 24:00
Sun.: 13:00 - 23:00

ribsrestaurant.lv
facebook.com/ribsandrock
twitter.com/ribsandrock
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Gourmet paradise

For Riga's inhabitants, *1221* isn't just a random number, but the name of a popular restaurant that offers a memorable gastronomic experience in the heart of the Old Town. The establishment is known not only for its top-quality food and friendly service, but also for the magical aura that stems from its location in a venerable building that is more than 300 years old. The charming wooden terrace with a view of Old Riga's narrow streets, the historic wooden staircase, and the garlic and onion strings on the walls demonstrate that not only the menu but also the interior conveys a fine balance between the traditional and the modern.

The expertise of internationally renowned Latvian chef Roberts Smilga can be sensed in every dish that the menu offers. Smilga readily admits that he likes to experiment and try new things – both inside the kitchen and outside of it. That is exactly why the menu at *1221* features both traditional Latvian foods and more adventurous main courses, such as veal tails stewed in red wine, pigeon breasts and even horse fillet steak. While the latter dish took a while to be accepted by both the restaurant's staff and its patrons, it has kept its place in the menu due to the steady demand for this superb delicacy.

One outstanding culinary delight has been prepared in accordance with a recipe from the court of the Tsar of Russia: sturgeon and salmon borsch with herb and garlic sour cream. For those who are used to eating borsch with meat, this will be a pleasant discovery. The soup is accompanied by freshly baked bread with mild truffle butter that literally melts in your mouth, adding an additional note of pleasure to this gastronomic delight.

The diverse and creative menu at *1221* is one of the main reasons that the restaurant's regular clients return there again and again. After all, there aren't too many places in Latvia that serve smoked beaver salad or entrecote that has been cured for 28 days on a slab of salt. There are even fewer establishments where the chef compares his kitchen to a sandbox "in which one should play as creatively as possible". True gourmands appreciate this perfect mix of inspiration and professionalism, which is why the number of the restaurant's regular customers is continuing to grow. If you haven't already done so, then get ready to join their ranks! **BO**

Restorāns 1221
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1221@apollo.lv
ⓘ 1221.lv

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Culinary hotspots

Your essential eating out guide to the best restaurants, cafes and eateries

UZBEGIMS, RIGA

A TASTE OF CENTRAL ASIA

Located in the picturesque "Quiet Centre" of Riga, *Uzbegims* is a veritable find for those who appreciate Central Asian dishes. The authentic Uzbek cuisine features *plov* (a risotto made with mutton) that melts in your mouth, *chebureki* (a deep-fried turnover or pasty filled with ground or minced meat), *dolmas* (vegetable leaves wrapped around a filling) and Central Asian sweets. When I stopped in on an early Friday afternoon, there weren't very many visitors. However, dinner tables are often reserved far in advance, with guests frequently lingering for hours to enjoy a tasty meal in pleasant surroundings.

The restaurant setting is quite appropriate for business lunches during the afternoon hours. The entrepreneurs at the table beside me opted for a traditional *plov*, the classic dish for which the Uzbeks are best known, and which I chose as well. The waitress warned us that we would have to wait at least 20 minutes for this meal, which might put off customers seeking just a quick bite to eat. As it turned out, the Tashkent-style *plov* was definitely worth the wait and tasted just great! Be advised that this dish has an oily consistency and is quite filling, making it best-suited for those seeking a substantial meal.

The traditional Uzbek flatbread also met all of my expectations, served still warm from the oven. The gastronomic experience at *Uzbegims* is made all the more pleasant by the friendly and professional waitstaff as well as the Uzbek chef, who personally places the servings of plov onto the patrons' plates from a steaming pot and wishes everyone a tasty meal.

One can further get acquainted with the Uzbeks' diverse culture through the paintings, decorative plates, musical instruments and rugs as well as the folk dress of the waitstaff and traditional Uzbek music in the background. All of these important details provide for a homey and agreeable atmosphere. What more could one desire for escaping to this parallel Central Asian universe for a couple of hours? Oh yes, I almost forgot. The prices are quite reasonable, with most of the main courses going for less than 10 euros.

Address: Elizabetes iela 10B
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RASOLS, RIGA

CHIC POST-SOVIET CUISINE

If there is a restaurant and café that wants to stand out with something different, then *Rasols* certainly fits the bill. The establishment is the only place in Riga to focus on Soviet-style dishes, including the ubiquitous *rasols*, a cold salad made with boiled potatoes, mayonnaise, diced vegetables and other ingredients.

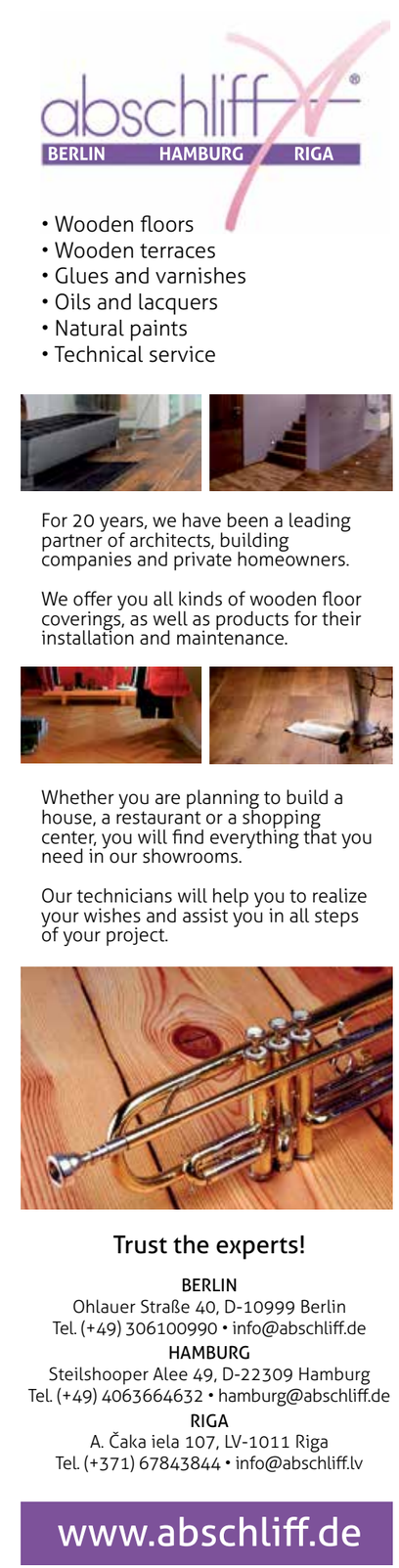
> The place is homey enough for working alone with one's laptop or tablet

Fear not, however, as this café is thankfully not a faithful reproduction of a typically stark and unfriendly Soviet-style cafeteria. The *rasols* and other foods that were often put on the table during Soviet-era family celebrations are served here in ornate dishes and decorated with crepe paper flowers, while the cosy interior warms the heart with its bright ethnic pillows and fireplace. The place is homey enough for working alone with one's laptop or tablet, or for a social evening out with friends and family.

"A taste of my childhood," is the first thought that entered my head when I tried the lightly salted herring with cottage cheese, fried potatoes and tomatoes in jelly that the waitress had recommended. However, while the food is authentic and good, it is perhaps most appropriate for those who enjoy strong flavours and marinated foods. High society dames accustomed to light Caesar salads may find it hard to choose something to their liking.

In order to induce customers to concentrate more on the food and less on their restaurant bill, the owners have listed only two prices for the main courses: five and seven euros. Nevertheless, while the quality of the dishes leaves no cause for complaint, seven euros for the soup of the day does seem to be a bit steep. Instead, I chose a cake made with pecans and condensed milk – one of the best that I have ever tasted!

Adress: Strēlnieku iela 9
Open: Mon.-Sun.: 11:00-22:00
facebook.com/cafe.rasols



KEY to RIGA

Every city has its key. It is the city's guardian.
It is used to open the city gates when guests are welcome.

We extend you a warm welcome and an invitation to Key to Riga where you can experience the atmosphere of ancient Riga, its hospitality and the flavour of its traditional meals. It is located in the very heart of Old Riga at Dome Square. Among our special features are genuine medieval interior decorations, the magnificent twinkling of candlelight and Latvian cuisine served in local clay tableware. In the evenings live medieval music is played by musicians in period costume.

The legendary Latvian film The Devil's Servants, which was produced by the Riga Film studio in the 1970s, served as the inspiration for the restaurant. The Key to Riga was an essential part of this cinema classic and an exact replica now holds a place of honour in the restaurant.
It is said that he who holds the key to Riga will unlock a world of wealth and happiness and we encourage you to pick it up and see what it feels like to hold the key to this ancient city. Take a photograph with the key and capture a timeless moment with one of Riga's most revered symbols!

www.keytoriga.lv

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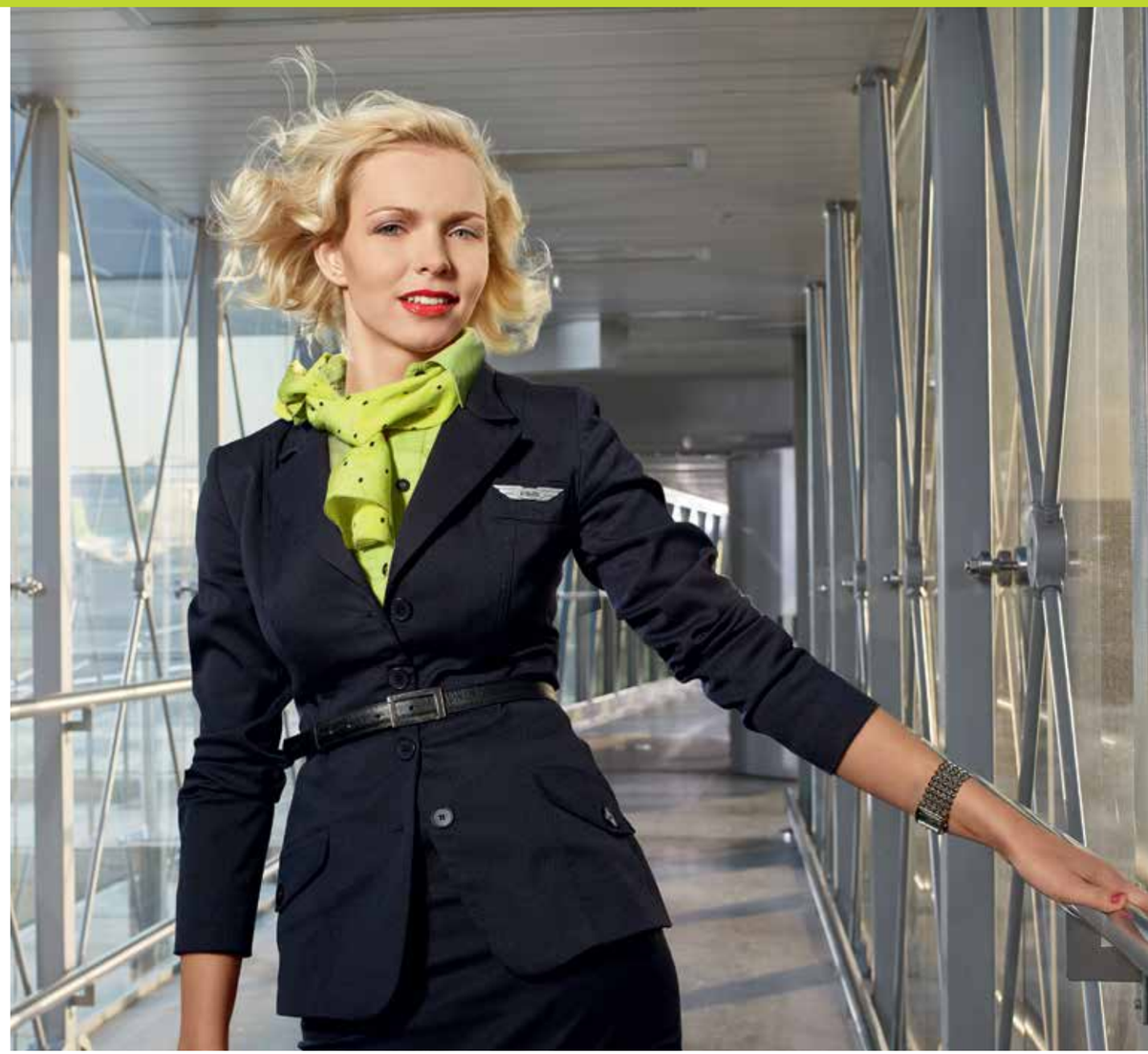

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airBaltic / NEWS

Island of Rhodes

1/ Greek island of Rhodes

2/ Travel with style in Business Class

3/ Fly *airBaltic* to Brussels

4/ More flights from Vilnius and Tallinn

5/ World's most punctual airline

1/ Greek island of Rhodes

Let's welcome another new *airBaltic* summer destination – the Greek island of Rhodes. This pearl of the Aegean Sea is ideal not only for those who want to relax on perfect beaches, but also for those seeking an action-packed holiday. Rhodes is one of the largest and most fertile of the Greek Isles. It enjoys a particularly good climate, with sunny weather for eight months straight. Bright green hills, rich valleys and an uninterrupted line of golden beaches make Rhodes a blessed place.

The medieval Old Town of Rhodes is among the best-preserved in Europe and impresses visitors with its romantic atmosphere. Walk along its narrow streets, visit the Venetian castle and Byzantine churches, and stroll around the old port.

Among other interesting places to visit during your holiday are the Acropolis of Lindos, the Aquarium and the Valley of Butterflies. Rhodes' beach resorts are large and fabulous. Kallithea and Faliraki are the most popular, with many tourist facilities and restaurants. Prassonissi, Ixia and Theologos, for their part, are favoured wind- and kitesurfing spots. A drive around this Greek island will also bring you to many lovely places and picturesque villages.

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→ Pillows and blankets for those who wish to rest.

3/ Fly *airBaltic* to Brussels

To coincide with the new business season and Latvia's six-month presidency of the European Union, *airBaltic* offers better scheduling of its flights between Riga and Brussels. There are now up to two daily flights on this route, giving business travellers, diplomats and other visitors more convenient options for their travel. Early morning flights take place every day except on weekends, while afternoon flights are available daily except on Saturdays.

The Riga-Brussels route is especially convenient for Business Class passengers, providing access to the Business Lounge at the Riga International Airport, fast-track security and exceptional meals.

Flight tickets to Brussels are available starting from EUR 59.

Amsterdam

4/ More flights from Vilnius and Tallinn

In response to increasing demand, last year *airBaltic* launched two new and direct routes from Vilnius to Amsterdam and from Tallinn to Paris. Thanks to a successful partnership with *KLM* and *Air France* (through which passengers can further extend their travel to the whole network of these airlines), flights on these two routes will now operate daily.

Furthermore, we are happy to announce the opening **of two more direct routes, from Tallinn to Berlin (in cooperation with *Air Berlin*) and from Tallinn to Vienna (in cooperation with *Austrian Airlines*)**. These new routes will be launched at the beginning of May, offering convenient connections throughout Europe.

For residents of the Baltic countries, this makes stunning Paris, Amsterdam, Vienna and Berlin even more accessible, providing additional leisure and business travel connections. The increased frequency of flights is also good news for those who wish to explore the two beautiful Baltic countries of Estonia and Lithuania.

Tickets from Vilnius to Amsterdam are available at prices starting from EUR 49 and from Tallinn to Paris starting at EUR 59. Tickets on the new Tallinn to Berlin route are available for as little as EUR 55 and from Tallinn to Vienna at prices starting from EUR 79. Check the full flight schedule at airbaltic.com/timetable.

5/ World's most punctual airline

airBaltic has been ranked as the world's most punctual airline for 2014 by the analysts at *OAG Aviation Solutions*, who tracked the performance of 43.5 million flights by more than 900 airlines around the world.

In response to this welcome announcement, Martin Gauss, the CEO of *airBaltic*, said:

"Our customers can truly rely on consistently punctual service. We are very proud to have achieved this result."

Last year *airBaltic* achieved a punctuality rating of 94.9%, which means that more than nine *airBaltic* aircraft out of ten arrive at their destination on time. *airBaltic* was followed in the global punctuality rankings by *Hawaiian Airlines*, *Austrian Airlines*, *Iberia* and *Norwegian Air Shuttle*.

***airBaltic* was also the first airline in Europe to introduce an on-time arrival guarantee in early 2009. This insurance allows *airBaltic* passengers to make the rare delays less inconvenient.**

airBaltic / BEHIND THE SCENES

Text by **EGITA KRASTIŅA**
Photo by **ANDREJS TERENTJEVS,** *F64*

Laura Vecvanaga,
vice-president (VP) of products and services

On the passengers' side

Laura Vecvanaga has held her current position at *airBaltic* for only a few months. However, armed with new goals, a positive attitude and a desire to help others, she is ready to ensure that each passenger has an enjoyable flight.

You have been working in aviation for the past ten years. What drew you to this field?
In 2005, I started working as a check-in agent at the Riga airport. After a year-and-a-half I got the opportunity to take my first step upwards and transfer to the airport's marketing department. It was interesting for me to learn how that mechanism functioned. Although the work was interesting, I understood after a year that my heart lies in being together with other people. I wanted to help passengers find answers to their questions and solutions to any outstanding issues. In 2008, the number of transit passengers at *airBaltic* grew very quickly and the airline established a new job position, that of transit coordinator. I took advantage of this opportunity, applied for the position and soon after began to fulfil my new duties. Airports are places where so many things are happening and where everything is advancing very quickly. In 2010, I got the chance to enter the operative side of the airline business and joined a newly established ground handling company. I was the head of the passenger service department and had about 60 agents on my team. I used my previous experience to teach other people in training courses and was involved in all kinds of activities. I really like working together in a group; it's important for me to be a part of a team.

You then did the same thing in Helsinki.
Yes, I soon received a job offer that represented a major challenge – establishing a new full-service ground handling company at Helsinki's Vantaa Airport. Ground handling involves all services connected to both the aircraft and the passengers while they are on the ground. From the moment that a plane lands on the runway until it takes off again, it is in the hands of a ground handling company or airline ground operations department.

Although that represented a major step and a big responsibility, I didn't hesitate in accepting the offer. Of course, my new job involved travelling to another country, where they speak a different language and have a different culture. However, if I set out to do something, then I always try to do it enthusiastically. I put the stress aside, as being wound up doesn't make the situation any better. I remember sitting down in my new office in the airport, opening my laptop and getting straight down to business, as there was no turning back. After several months of very hard work and a number of nights without sleep, we had created a strong team and could begin operating. *airBaltic* was our first client!

In the beginning it wasn't easy. It took a pretty long time for me to understand and accept the different working style in Finland. I also had to change my way of thinking in order for the team to accept me. Although there was quite a lot of work to do, it is an interesting time for me to remember. Now whenever the Latvian national hockey team plays against Finland, I have mixed feelings. Those games are hard for me to watch!

Some time later, the company had to make a number of painful decisions, and for various reasons our station in Helsinki was shut down. That was one of the most difficult periods in my career, because everything that we had worked so hard to build up now had to be torn down. In any case, I also learned quite a bit from that experience.

How did you come to assume your current position as VP of products and services at *airBaltic*?
After the Helsinki station was shut down, *airBaltic* offered me the chance to return to Riga and join its ground operations department, where I worked with a slightly smaller team than before. This position gave me the opportunity to look at ground handling services from the viewpoint of an airline, which is the recipient, rather than the provider of ground handling services. Then in October of last year, the airline established the position of VP of products and services. I didn't need to think twice about applying for the job, as I am always ready to gain new knowledge and expand my field of view. This position offers me a much wider range of activities. I get to cooperate with various other *airBaltic* departments and to come up with new ideas for improving our products even further.

What goals has your team set up for this year?
Right now our main goal is to continue upgrading our services so that passengers can choose what they want more easily. We are also trying to establish a uniform set of standards for serving our clients. Since January I have assumed additional responsibilities and am now in charge of the entire customer relations department, the call centre and the airport ticket office. Altogether that comes to a team of about 70 agents. We want to ensure that our customers are happy, we want to become more modern and quick-thinking, and we want to keep up with the times. Recently we improved the design and functionality of *airBaltic's* online check-in process to make it even easier for passengers to check in online before their flights. We want our customers to embrace the most modern technologies, as there is no way to avoid them and one has to look forward.

It seems like you are in your new job posting for good reason.
I would like to be on the passengers' side and accommodate everybody. I realise that this is very difficult to do, but it has to be done. Passengers have very high expectations when they fly. They don't want to stand in line when they check in, they want to sit in the best seats, they want to experience a personal approach and to receive personal announcements, they want their baggage to reach its destination undamaged and in one piece. We are trying to make improvements in all of these areas. Unfortunately, some things are beyond our control, such as the weather, the infrastructure at other airports, air traffic restrictions and many other factors. But we are also looking for ways to mitigate some of these delay-causing factors.

The year has started with some really good news: *airBaltic* has been deemed the world's most punctual airline.
I hope that not only those who work at *airBaltic* and at the Riga airport are happy about this, but that our passengers are also pleased. Surveys that we have conducted of our passengers show that punctuality is their prime concern. That is followed by baggage handling, ticket prices and service. We make these surveys every year to see how well we have accomplished our tasks and where we still need to improve our service. I believe that *airBaltic* is a flexible airline. If something is important to our passengers, then we are ready to work on making it happen. It is always nice to feel the support of your compatriots, to see that people from Latvia choose to fly with their own national airline and that they are proud of it. Sometimes we also receive negative comments and that hurts, as we are all working to the best of our abilities and in accordance with the highest standards so that our passengers can enjoy convenient, comfortable, pleasant, safe and punctual flights.

Do you like to fly to other places while on vacation, or do you prefer to rest at home to avoid thinking about planes and aviation?
I really love to travel! That is one fantastic thing about aviation: in ten hours you can be transported to a completely different part of the world. I don't perceive my work trips as travel anymore, but I really do enjoy flying off somewhere on vacation. I have fallen in love with Asia and, if possible, I try to fly there and escape our winter for two or three weeks in a place where it is warm and quiet. One of my best experiences has been in the Philippines, where I spent three weeks away from the city and other tourists, in a natural setting beside the clear, blue ocean.

Do you have any free time left over for hobbies?
During the summer I like to take part in orienteering competitions in the forest.

> I would like to be on the passengers' side and accommodate everybody

I was first introduced to the sport one day when I felt bored and just tagged along with an acquaintance. They gave me my number, a map and compass, and that was it! At first I needed some assistance, but now I really enjoy thinking logically on my own, concentrating and orienteering in the forest with the minimum that they give you. I find it really exciting and would recommend it to everybody!

Last summer I started a new hobby, which is actually more a pastime of my brother's – car racing with *Lada* (*VAZ*) cars from the 1970s and 1980s. He has been taking part in such races for a fairly long time, while I really enjoyed the role of cheering him on as a spectator.

How do you manage to maintain such a sense of optimism and energy?
I recently read a saying that goes: "You only live once? FALSE. You live every day. You only die once!" I think that this is absolutely true. Every day brings something new. Every day we can set new goals for ourselves and achieve something! **BO**

Onboard menu

Business Class

airBaltic's Business Class menu offers superior and healthy meals that blend the tastes of different cuisines from all over the world. Our Business Class passengers can taste dainty appetisers, main courses and desserts made from quality, fresh and seasonal ingredients.

Settle back, relax and enjoy your flight with a gourmet meal, complemented with an exquisite wine from our carefully selected wine assortment or other beverage from the drinks menu!

Economy Class

Economy class passengers can choose their on-board meal from the *airBaltic Café* menu that offers a delicious hot meal, chicken and salmon sandwiches, lasagne, tasty tortilla, healthy porridge and a variety of snacks and drinks.

Order your meal before the flight

Passengers who want to have a guaranteed tasty meal and to be among the first to be served can use one of our meal pre-order options. These offer a wide choice of various meals including breakfast, cold and hot dishes, kids' meals and dishes for special dietary or religious requirements.

airBaltic's pre-order menu features sixteen different meal sets that can be ordered while booking your flight ticket or any time later up to 24 hours before departure. Consult the *Manage My Booking* section at www.airbaltic.com or call (+371) 67006006 for international callers or 90001100 for calls within Latvia.

If you want an even more exclusive dining experience on board, more than 70 dishes are available at our innovative pre-order website www.airbalticmeal.com. There you can create your individual meal on a virtual tray up to 24 hours before your flight.

Our new online check-in system allows passengers to pre-order meals during online check-in, from 72 hours up to one hour before departure for flights from Riga. You can choose from a selection of eight delicious meals including breakfast offers, different cold and hot meals and a kid's meal.

airBaltic frequent flyer program PINS

About the program

PINS is the **airBaltic frequent flyer loyalty program** (formerly BalticMiles), which uses the loyalty currency "PINS". You can collect PINS while flying with airBaltic, shopping in airports, staying in hotels, renting cars, dining out and even by using the **airBaltic Payment Card** or the **PINS MasterCard.** It is also possible to collect PINS by doing your everyday shopping, with more than 700 local, global and online partners represented.

PINS program has various card designs from which you can choose, but if you are a frequent flyer, then the most suitable one for you will be the green **airBaltic PINS card.** The more you fly with airBaltic the higher your membership level and the greater the privileges. **Executive** and **VIP levels** are reserved for the most loyal airBaltic customers and ensure various benefits which include a **free baggage allowance**, **priority check-in**, **reserved seats** and much more to make traveling more pleasant. The youngest members starting from age 2 are issued with a special **airBaltic PINS Young Pilot card** which allows also children to collect PINS.

If you still have a BalticMiles card and haven't got your PINS card yet

Order your PINS card at **pinsforme.com** or contact PINS Member Service by writing an e-mail to **info@pinsforme.com.** While waiting for your brand new card to arrive, you can still use your BalticMiles card, which will still be accepted for the next few months.

If you aren't a PINS program member yet

Join the program right away – just ask a flight attendant for your card. Register your card online after the flight at **register.pinsforme.com** and **get 10 bonus PINS.**

airBaltic PINS card

airBaltic PINS Executive card

airBaltic PINS VIP card

airBaltic PINS Young Pilot card

airBaltic / pins

New benefits for VIP level members of *airBaltic's* PINS program

Those who travel regularly with airBaltic are entitled to receive a wide array of extra privileges as members of our PINS frequent-flyer program. Now **two additional benefits** have been added for the program's **VIP level members.**

Henceforth, *airBaltic* PINS VIP members travelling with Basic Class flight tickets can now bring **two carry-on pieces of hand baggage** on board at no extra charge. This means that our VIP customers – who often fly for quick business journeys that last just one or two days – no longer have to choose whether to bring their laptop computer or their compact suitcase into the flight cabin.

In addition, *airBaltic* PINS VIP members are now entitled to receive two free flight class upgrade vouchers per year. This will permit them to upgrade two flights from Economy to Business Class at no additional charge during a one-year period.

airBaltic's most loyal customers at the Executive and VIP levels can already receive various benefits, including priority check-in, reserved seats and fast-track security screening, to name a few. For a complete list of the privileges offered, please check the table below.

Rules and benefits	Status level		
	BASIC	EXECUTIVE	VIP
QUALIFICATION			
Based on Status PINS	registration	25,000 Status PINS	50,000 Status PINS
Based on number of airBaltic segments flown	⊘	30 (or 15 round trips)	60 (or 30 round trips)
Qualification duration	⊘	1 year	1 year
Status PINS expiration	after 12 months	after 12 months	after 12 months
Reward PINS expiration	after 36 months	no expiration	no expiration
THRESHOLD FOR RE-QUALIFICATION			
Based on Status PINS	⊘	20,000 Status PINS	40,000 Status PINS
Based on number of airBaltic segments flown	⊘	25	50
ADDITIONAL BENEFITS			
Advance seat request online	⊘	⊘	free
Seat Selection during online check-in	⊘	⊘	free
Business class check-in with economy class ticket	⊘	✓	✓
Security Fast Track get a stamp or a sticker on the boarding pass at the check-in counter	⊘	in Riga	in Riga
Lounge access	⊘	in Riga (only with Economy Elite and Business class tickets)	✓ (plus one guest and children)
Flight segment upgrade	⊘	⊘	2 upgrade vouchers per year
BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE			
Total free checked-in baggage allowance (free bags and total baggage weight)			
Basic class tickets	⊘	⊘	⊘
Free second piece of hand baggage	⊘	⊘	✓
EconomySmart and EconomyElite class tickets	1 item up to 20kg	2 items up to 40kg	3 items up to 60kg; 1 piece of sports equipment with maximum weight 20 kg free of charge
BusinessSmart and BusinessElite class ticket	3 items up to 60kg	4 items up to 80kg	5 items up to 100kg; 1 piece of sports equipment with maximum weight 20 kg free of charge

Hotels

Car rentals

At Riga airport

Online

pins e-Shop To collect PINS an online merchant must be selected via the e-Shop section on the PINS website **pinsforme.com**

Tips for collecting

Anna	Collected pins
Economy class ticket	500
Renting 1 car	500
Staying at the hotel	500
Shopping	500
Review about a hotel stay	150
pins 2 150	

The Johnsons	Collected pins
4 Basic class tickets	600
Renting 1 car	500
4 meals on board	100
Booking 2 hotel stays	3000
2 reviews about hotel stays	300
pins 4 500	

Robert	Collected pins
Business class ticket	1800
Renting 1 car	500
Staying at the hotel	500
Shopping	50
Yearly subscription	3500
pins 6 350	

airBaltic / SKIING

Fly *airBaltic* to the best ski slopes!

AUSTRIA

Fly to Vienna with airBaltic
from €89 ONE WAY

Riga – Vienna

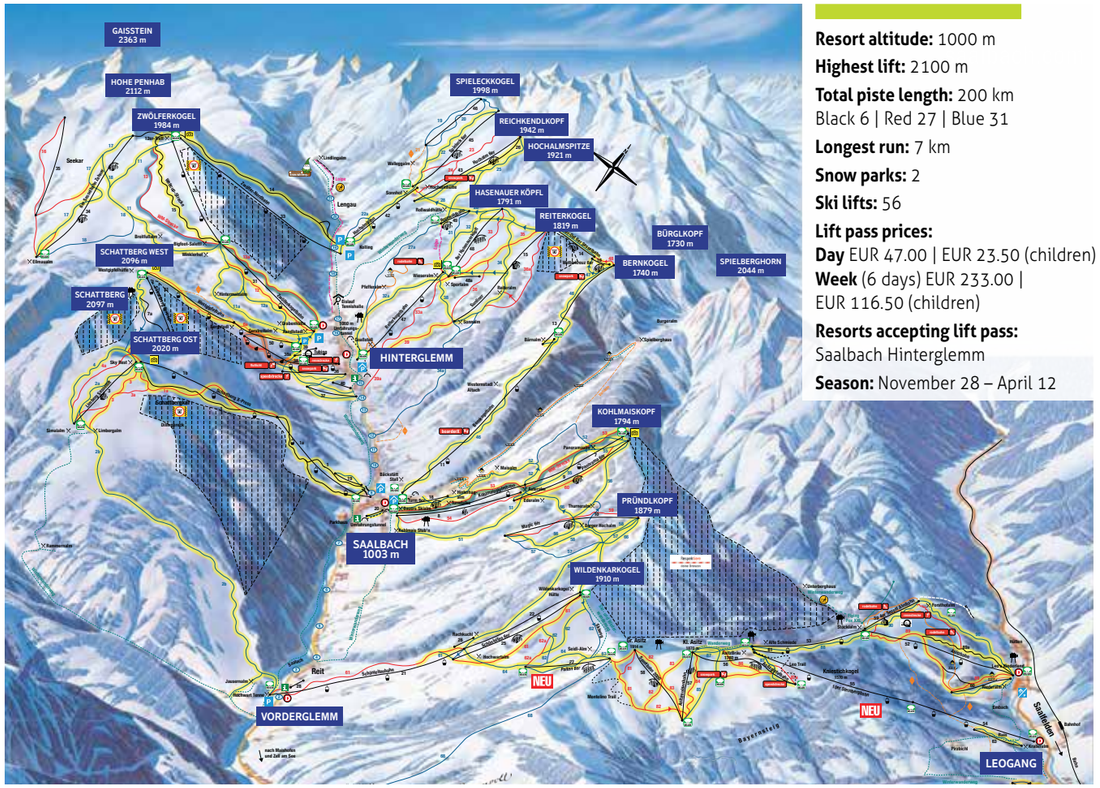
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 431	1-3456-	07:35	08:35
BT 433	12345-7	16:50	18:15

Vienna – Riga

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 432	1-3456-	09:30	12:30
BT 434	12345-7	18:50	22:10

Saalbach Hinterglemm

Visitors should make sure that they are well rested before they come to the Saalbach-Hinterglemm region of Austria. Colourfully named the Ski Circus, the region combines the slopes of one of the largest linked ski areas in Austria with the liveliest of après-ski activities. Saalbach is big and full of life, while Hinterglemm is more old-fashioned and down to earth. Both have great charm, a safe, car-free centre, plenty of après-ski events and all the traditional Austrian attractions.



Resort altitude: 1000 m
Highest lift: 2100 m
Total piste length: 200 km
Black 6 | Red 27 | Blue 31
Longest run: 7 km
Snow parks: 2
Ski lifts: 56
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 47.00 | EUR 23.50 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 233.00 | EUR 116.50 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
Saalbach Hinterglemm
Season: November 28 – April 12

Ellmau

Nestling between the Kitzbüheler Alps and the majestic Wilder Kaiser mountains, Ellmau has one of the prettiest settings on our list. It is also part of *SkiWelt*, the largest linked ski area in Austria, featuring seven resorts and covering almost 280 km of pistes. Each resort has runs worth exploring, most of which are suited to beginners and intermediates, but there are also off-piste opportunities as well. The village itself is very relaxed, with welcoming shops and cosy bars and cafés. >

Kitzbühel

This is where it all began in Austria, and Kitzbühel is a dream destination for skiers. The small town in the Tyrolean Alps is home to the Streif Piste: surely the most iconic 2.6 km of snow on the planet. Since 1931, the brutally steep racecourse with its 80-metre jumps, tight corners and ferocious compressions has hosted the annual Hahnenkammrennen ski races, which are among the most famous in the world. The Hahnenkamm slope is the most demanding on the World Cup downhill circuit and one that every accomplished skier wants to tackle.

Resort altitude: 800 m
Highest lift: 2000 m
Total piste length: 170 km
Black 13 | Red 26 | Blue 21
Longest run: 6 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 51
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 49.00 | EUR 24.50 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 241.00 | EUR 120.50 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
Kitzbühel
Season:
December 14 – April 7

Resort altitude: 820 m
Highest lift: 1220 m
Total piste length: 250 km
Black 2 | Red 14 | Blue 24
Longest run: 7 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 91
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 45.00 | EUR 22.50 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 225.00 | EUR 112.00 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
SkiWelt ski resorts of Brixen im Thale, Going am Wilden Kaiser, Hopfgarten im Brixental, Itter / Muhtal, Scheffau am Wilden Kaiser, Söll and Westendorf
Season: December 6 – April 12

ITALY

Fly to Milan with airBaltic from €49 ONE WAY

Riga – Milan			
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 629	----5--	09:40	11:25
BT 629	-----6-	12:55	14:40
BT 629	1------	15:15	17:00

Milan – Riga			
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 630	----5--	12:30	16:10
BT 630	-----6-	15:20	19:00
BT 630	1------	17:55	21:35

Courmayeur

Founded in the 17th century as a spa town located at the very top of the Aosta Valley, Courmayeur is a charming place. Pretty buildings with slate roofs line the traffic-free cobbled streets of the old town. The little resort at the foot of the Mont Blanc chain offers outdoor activities, cultural and entertainment events as well as shopping, relaxation, gastronomy and the opportunity to practice a number of sports all year long.

Resort altitude: 1224 m
Highest lift: 2624 m
Total piste length: 36 km
Black 4 | Red 14 | Blue 6 | Green 3
Longest run: 10 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 18
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 45 | EUR 22.50 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 227 | EUR 113.50 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
Alagna Valsesia, Breuil-Cervinia, Crévacol, Etroubles, Pila and Saint-Rhémy-en-Bosses
Season:
Early December to mid-April

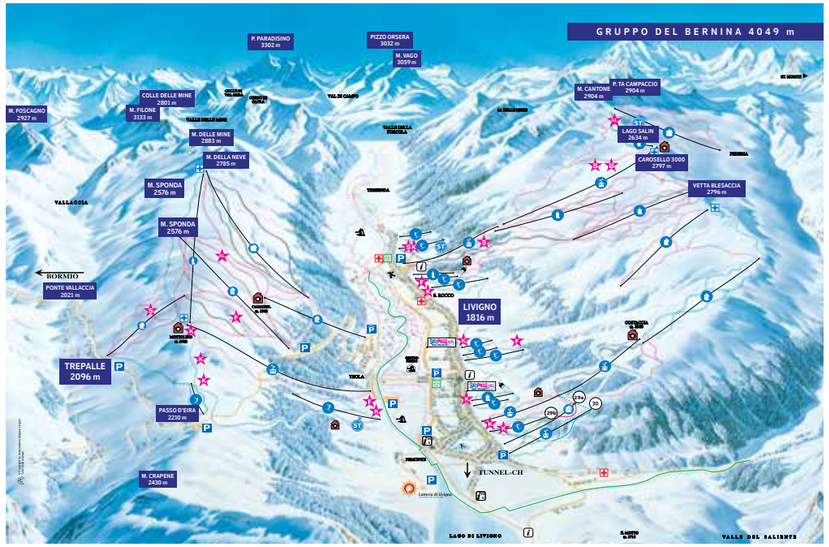
Sestriere

Sestriere is the highest ski resort in the extensive Via Lattea (Milky Way) linked ski area, boasting an impressive Alpine winter sports history as one of the world's first purpose-built ski resorts. A good choice for beginners and intermediates. Sestriere is also one of the few resorts where it is possible to ski at night on a floodlit run. During the summer months, it is a famous starting and arrival point in the *Tour de France* and the *Giro d'Italia* cycling races. Notably, it was the scene of a definitive moment in cyclist Lance Armstrong's now tarnished career. It regularly hosts FIS Alpine Ski World Cup events, and it was a main venue during the 2006 Winter Olympic Games.

Resort altitude: 2035 m
Highest lift: 2823 m
Total piste length: 200 km
Black 42 | Red 118 | Blue 54 | Green 7
Longest run: 5 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 92
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 36.00 | EUR 5.00 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 190.00 | EUR 30.00 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
Milky Way ski resorts of Clavière, Sansicario, Sauze d'Oulx and Montgenèvre
Season:
November 29 – April 12

Livigno

Families and beginners can enjoy gentle slopes and fun areas suited for acquiring basic techniques and for learning by playing. Furthermore, Livigno has a special tax status that dates back to Napoleonic times. There's no VAT, which means that drinks, fuel and consumer goods are among the cheapest in Europe. Apparently, there is even a Latvian-run hotel that serves Latvian cuisine.



Resort altitude: 1816 m
Highest lift: 2800 m
Total piste length: 115 km
Black 13 | Red 36 | Blue 29
Longest run: 4 km
Snow parks: 10
Ski lifts: 31
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 44.00 | EUR 35.50 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 219.00 | EUR 150.50 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
other Alta Valtellina ski resorts of Bormio and Santa Caterina.
Season:
December 19 – April 06

GERMANY

Fly to Munich with airBaltic from €69 ONE WAY

Riga – Munich			
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 221	12-456-	07:25	09:00
BT 223	1-3-5-7	17:30	18:45

Munich – Riga			
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 222	12-456-	09:35	13:05
BT 224	1-3-5-7	19:15	22:25

Garmisch-Partenkirchen

The two villages of Garmisch and Partenkirchen were merged into one when Germany hosted the Winter Olympic Games in 1936. However, even though they have been officially unified for nearly 80 years, unofficially they still compete with each other, sporting two of practically everything: two fire stations, two schools and so on. Partenkirchen is cute and cosy, with narrow streets and a centre filled with painted houses, while Garmisch's more organised grid of streets is lined with new concrete buildings and upscale shopping stores. This summer, Garmish-Partenkirchen also hosted the *BMW Motorrad Days*.

Resort altitude: 720 m
Highest lift: 2830 m
Total piste length: 62 km
Black 4 | Red 25 | Blue 10 | Green 3
Longest run: 4 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 33
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 38.50 | EUR 22.00 (children)
Week (6 days) N/A | N/A (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Garmisch-Partenkirchen
Season:
December 13 – April 13

airBaltic / SKIING

FRANCE

Fly to Paris with airBaltic from €69 ONE WAY

Riga – Paris

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 691	1234567	07:30	09:25
BT 697	---4-67	12:35	14:30
BT 693	123-5--	15:55	17:50

Paris – Riga

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 692	123-5--	10:10	13:55
BT 698	---4-67	15:15	19:00
BT 694	1234567	18:35	22:20

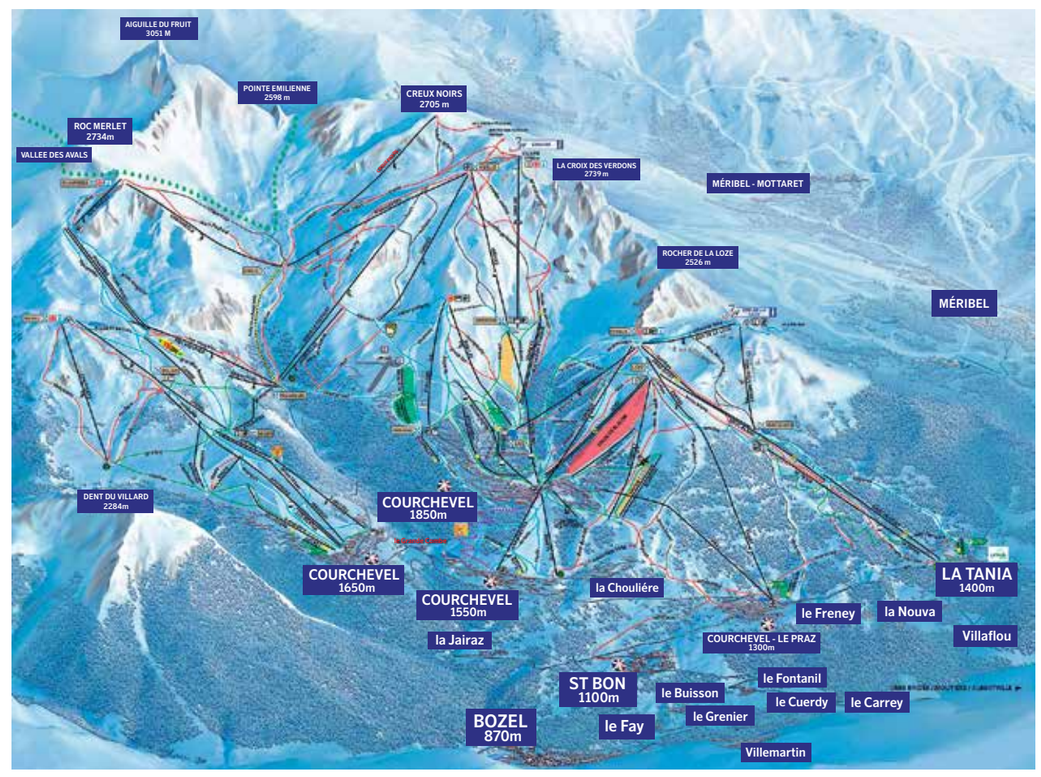
Tignes

Compared to its neighbouring resorts, sport comes first here and you're more likely to find visitors staying on the slopes as long as possible, rather than partying the night away. As for accommodation, Val Claret is the highest village at 2100 metres and has easy access to the glacier. Together with Tignes-Le-Lac just down the road, it is the most convenient place to stay, with a large choice of hotels, restaurants and shops. Slightly lower lie the cheaper and less convenient apartments of Le Lavachet, which are linked to the lifts by ski bus.

Resort altitude: 2100 m
Highest lift: 3450 m
Total piste length: 300 km
Black 45 | Red 46 | Blue 61 | Green 22
Longest run: 10 km

Snow parks: 2
Ski lifts: 59
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 52.00 | EUR 41.50 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 260.00 | EUR 208.00 (children)

Resorts accepting lift pass: Espace Killy ski resorts of Val d'Isère. Tignes is directly linked by Ski Lift to the ski areas of Val d'Isère
Season: December 20 – May 6



Meribel

There are plenty of reasons to love Méribel aside from its chalet-style architecture, wooded surroundings and friendly, village atmosphere. The prime reason is its central position within France's huge Trois Vallées ski area. The Olympic Centre built for the 1992 Winter Olympics is also open daily, offering a variety of non-ski activities for the whole family. It's no secret that avid skiers Prince William and Kate Middleton have also checked in for a family vacation at Trois Vallées!

Resort altitude: 1450 m
Highest lift: 3200 m
Total piste length: 600 km
Black 9 | Red 24 | Blue 34 | Green 10
Longest run: 5 km
Snow parks: 2

Total Lifts: 18
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 46.40 | EUR 37.30 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 226.40 | EUR 182.40 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Trois Vallées ski resorts of Courchevel, La Tania, Les Menuires, Saint Martin de Belleville and Val Thorens
Season: December 6 – April 17

Courchevel

Considered the most glamorous and celebrity-filled ski resort in the world, Courchevel offers breathtaking views of Mont Blanc. If the first thing that you think about when you hear 'Courchevel' is skiing, then the second thing should be gastronomy, as Courchevel boasts many *Michelin*-starred restaurants and is a gourmet ski destination.

Resort altitude: 1850 m
Highest lift: 3230 m
Total piste length: 600 km
Black 10 | Red 42 | Blue 40 | Green 27
Longest run: 7 km

Snow parks: 2
Total Lifts: 20
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 49.00 | EUR 39.20 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 240.00 | EUR 193.00 (children)

Resorts accepting lift pass: Trois Vallées ski resorts of La Tania, Les Menuires, Méribel, Saint Martin de Belleville and Val Thorens
Season: December 20 – April 17

SWITZERLAND

Fly to Zurich with airBaltic from €59 ONE WAY

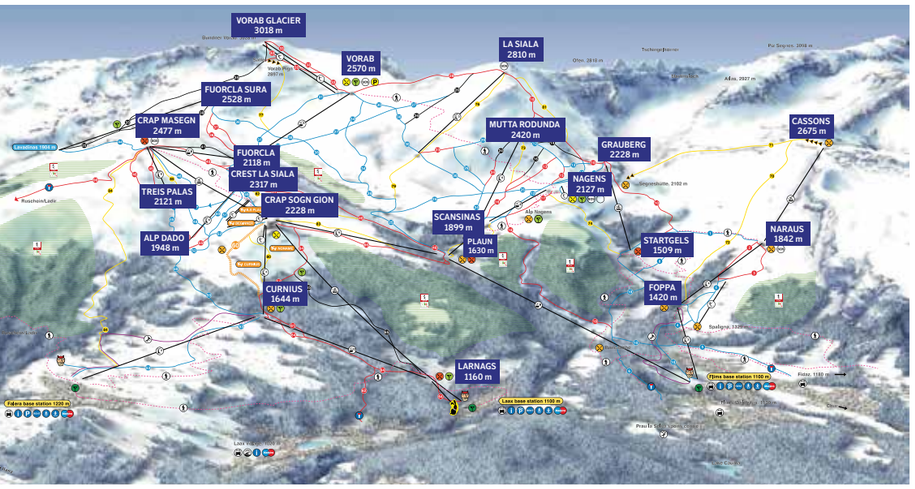
Riga – Zurich

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 641	12-4---	07:50	09:20
BT 641	----5-7	16:55	18:25

Zurich – Riga

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 642	12-4---	10:00	13:30
BT 642	----5-7	18:55	22:25

Flims Laax Falera There's something to satisfy just about everyone's wishes here, with a wide selection of services to choose from, including mountainside restaurants, places for renting the latest ski gear and accommodation.



Resort altitude: 1100 m
Highest lift: 3018 m
Total piste length: 220 km
Black 18 | Red 40 | Blue 45
Longest run: 14 km
Snow parks: 4
Ski lifts: 27
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 61.67 | EUR 20.58 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 346.67 | EUR 115.58 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Flims, Laax, Falera
Season:
December 20 – April 6

St. Moritz St. Moritz is Switzerland's most famous exclusive winter resort. There are plenty of designer stores to keep posh ladies busy after lunch, while other visitors come to watch the annual polo, horse racing and cricket competitions on the town's frozen lake. You might even run into Ivana Trump!

Resort altitude: 1850 m
Highest lift: 3300 m
Total piste length: 350 km
Black 9 | Red 61 | Blue 18
Longest run: 10 km
Snow parks: 2
Number of ski lifts: 57
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 64.11 | EUR 19.73 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 294.27 | EUR 100.28 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Corviglia, Corvatsch above neighbouring Silvaplana and the Diavolezza Glacier area
Season:
October 18 – April 6

Davos Davos prides itself on keeping good company. Alongside resorts such as Zermatt, St. Moritz, St. Anton and Kitzbühel, Davos is a member of *The Best of the Alps* association of 12 classic Alpine resorts. The nearby resort of Klosters has long been a favourite haunt of Prince Charles and sometimes his sons as well. Hence, the main cable car that takes skiers to the top of Gotschnagrat is called the *Prince of Wales*.

Resort altitude: 1560 m
Highest lift: 3146 m
Total piste length: 320 km
Black 12 | Red 39 | Blue 31
Longest run: 12 km
Snow parks: 3
Ski lifts: 50
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 55.90 | EUR 22.20 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 272.93 | EUR 109.34 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Parsenn, Pischa, Jakobshorn, Rinerhorn, Madrisa and Gotschna
Season:
November 14 - April 19

SLOVAKIA

Fly to Poprad with airBaltic from €55 ONE WAY

Riga – Poprad

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 485	-----6-	14:00	14:40

Poprad – Riga

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
BT 486	-----6-	15:15	18:00

Jasna Low Tatras Jasna Low Tatras is one of the most popular skiing destinations in Slovakia, offering excellent slopes covered with man-made snow for five months every year. Jasna Low Tatras was given five prestigious quality awards in the international Ski Area Test. The upcoming winter season will offer attractive new products and innovations, such as a popular daily après-ski programme, night sledging, fresh track skiing, a Fun Zone, a snow park and others.

Resort altitude: 943 m
Highest lift: 2024 m
Total piste length: 46 km
Black 7, Red 18, Blue 9
Longest run: 12 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 30
Lift pass prices:
Day: adults EUR 30, children EUR 21
Week (10 days): adults EUR 290, children EUR 203
Resorts accepting lift pass: Jasna Low Tatras
Season: December to lateApril

Information from:
www.skiresort.info | www.skiingthealps.com | www.piste-maps.co.uk | www.ski-france.com | www.j2ski.com | www.vt.sk | www.skigermany.com

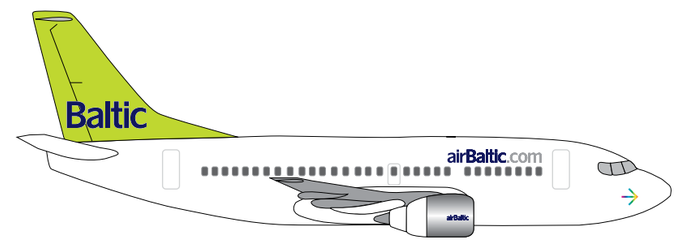
Plan your summer now!

Summer flights are now on sale from 29€

*Seasonal flight
**Flights operated in cooperation with tour operator Tez Tour

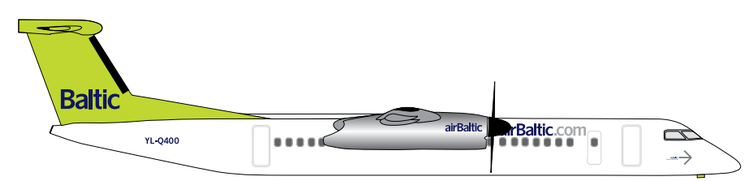
Boeing 737–300

Number of seats	142/144/146
Max take–off weight	63 metric tons
Max payload	14.2 metric tons
Length	32.18 m
Wing span	31.22 m
Cruising speed	800 km/h
Commercial range	3500 km
Fuel consumption	3000 l/h
Engine	CFM56–3C–1



Boeing 737–500

Number of seats	120
Max take–off weight	58 metric tons
Max payload	13.5 metric tons
Length	29.79 m
Wing span	28.9 m
Cruising speed	800 km/h
Commercial range	3500 km
Fuel consumption	3000 l/h
Engine	CFM56–3



Q400 NextGen Bombardier

Number of seats	76
Max take-off weight	29.6 metric tons
Max payload	8.6 metric tons
Length	32.83 m
Wing span	28.42
Cruising speed	667 km/h
Commercial range	2084 km
Fuel consumption	1074 l/h
Engine	P&W 150A

Flights from Riga						Flights to Riga					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
ALESUND						**ALESUND**					
BT 175	RIX	AES	----5--	07:40	09:05	BT 176	AES	RIX	----5--	10:15	13:30
BT 175	RIX	AES	------7	13:20	14:45	BT 176	AES	RIX	------7	15:15	18:30
AMSTERDAM						**AMSTERDAM**					
BT 617	RIX	AMS	1234567	07:40	09:05	BT 618	AMS	RIX	1234567	10:20	13:35
BT 615	RIX	AMS	---4-67	12:45	14:10	BT 616	AMS	RIX	---4-67	14:55	18:10
BT 619	RIX	AMS	1-3-5--	16:45	18:10	BT 620	AMS	RIX	1-3-5--	18:55	22:10
AMSTERDAM flights from VILNIUS						**AMSTERDAM flights to VILNIUS**					
BT 609	VNO	AMS	---4-67	14:40	16:40	BT 610	AMS	VNO	---4-67	10:20	14:05
BARCELONA						**BARCELONA**					
BT 681	RIX	BCN	----5--	09:30	12:15	BT 682	BCN	RIX	----5--	12:55	17:35
BT 681	RIX	BCN	1------	14:00	16:45	BT 682	BCN	RIX	1------	17:45	22:25
BERLIN Tegel						**BERLIN Tegel**					
BT 211	RIX	TXL	123456-	09:20	10:15	BT 212	TXL	RIX	123456-	10:45	13:35
BT 213	RIX	TXL	12345-7	17:45	18:40	BT 214	TXL	RIX	12345-7	19:20	22:10
BILLUND						**BILLUND**					
BT 145	RIX	BLL	1-3-5-7	22:55	23:55	BT 146	BLL	RIX	12-4-6-	05:50	08:40
BRUSSELS						**BRUSSELS**					
BT 601	RIX	BRU	12345--	06:20	08:15	BT 602	BRU	RIX	12345--	08:55	12:40
BT 601	RIX	BRU	-----6-	09:40	11:35	BT 602	BRU	RIX	-----6-	12:05	15:50
BT 603	RIX	BRU	12345-7	16:30	18:25	BT 604	BRU	RIX	12345-7	19:20	23:05
COPENHAGEN						**COPENHAGEN**					
BT 131	RIX	CPH	1234---	06:45	07:25	BT 134	CPH	RIX	1234---	08:05	10:40
BT 131	RIX	CPH	1234567	09:30	10:10	BT 132	CPH	RIX	1234567	10:45	13:20
BT 139	RIX	CPH	1234567	18:40	19:20	BT 140	CPH	RIX	1234567	19:50	22:25
DUSSELDORF						**DUSSELDORF**					
BT 235	RIX	DUS	1-3-5--	12:50	14:30	BT 236	DUS	RIX	1-3-5--	15:00	18:30
FRANKFURT						**FRANKFURT**					
BT 241	RIX	FRA	1--45-7	12:45	14:30	BT 242	FRA	RIX	1--45-7	15:05	18:40
HAMBURG						**HAMBURG**					
BT 251	RIX	HAM	-2-4---	07:50	08:55	BT 252	HAM	RIX	-2-4---	09:25	12:20
BT 253	RIX	HAM	--3-5-7	17:45	18:50	BT 254	HAM	RIX	--3-5-7	19:25	22:20
HELSINKI						**HELSINKI**					
BT 301	RIX	HEL	123456-	09:25	10:30	BT 326	HEL	RIX	123456-	06:00	07:00
BT 303	RIX	HEL	1234567	13:35	14:40	BT 302	HEL	RIX	1234567	11:00	12:00
BT 307	RIX	HEL	1234567	19:35	20:40	BT 306	HEL	RIX	1234567	15:15	16:15
BT 325	RIX	HEL	12345-7	22:55	23:59	BT 308	HEL	RIX	12345-7	21:20	22:20
KIEV Borispol						**KIEV Borispol**					
BT 400	RIX	KBP	123456-	09:20	11:10	BT 401	KBP	RIX	123456-	11:40	13:35
BT 404	RIX	KBP	12345-7	16:45	18:35	BT 405	KBP	RIX	12345-7	20:10	22:05
LARNACA						**LARNACA**					
BT 657	RIX	LCA	-----6-	14:20	18:10	BT 658	LCA	RIX	------7	12:10	16:10
LONDON Gatwick						**LONDON Gatwick**					
BT 651	RIX	LGW	1--4---	09:30	10:20	BT 652	LGW	RIX	1--4---	11:10	15:55
BT 653	RIX	LGW	--3-5-7	15:20	16:10	BT 654	LGW	RIX	--3-5-7	16:50	21:35
MILAN Malpensa						**MILAN Malpensa**					
BT 629	RIX	MXP	----5--	09:40	11:25	BT 630	MXP	RIX	----5--	12:30	16:10
BT 629	RIX	MXP	-----6-	12:55	14:40	BT 630	MXP	RIX	-----6-	15:20	19:00
BT 629	RIX	MXP	1--4---	15:15	17:00	BT 630	MXP	RIX	1--4---	17:55	21:35
MINSK						**MINSK**					
BT 412	RIX	MSQ	1-3---7	13:35	15:45	BT 413	MSQ	RIX	1-3---7	16:25	16:35
MOSCOW Sheremetyevo						**MOSCOW Sheremetyevo**					
BT 424	RIX	SVO	12345--	04:25	07:05	BT 425	SVO	RIX	12345--	07:45	08:35
BT 424	RIX	SVO	-----67	09:20	12:00	BT 425	SVO	RIX	-----67	12:45	13:35
BT 422	RIX	SVO	1234567 As 5 FEB	18:00	20:40	BT 423	SVO	RIX	1234567	20:40	21:30
MOSCOW Vnukovo						**MOSCOW Vnukovo**					
BT 416	RIX	VKO	12345-7	23:20	02:05+1	BT 417	VKO	RIX	123456-	05:50	06:45

Flights from Riga						Flights to Riga					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
MUNICH						**MUNICH**					
BT 221	RIX	MUC	12-456-	07:25	09:00	BT 222	MUC	RIX	12-456-	09:35	13:05
BT 223	RIX	MUC	--3-5-7	17:30	18:45	BT 224	MUC	RIX	--3-5-7	19:15	22:25
OSLO						**OSLO**					
BT 151	RIX	OSL	123456-	09:15	10:10	BT 152	OSL	RIX	123456-	10:45	13:35
BT 153	RIX	OSL	12345-7	17:55	18:50	BT 154	OSL	RIX	12345-7	19:20	22:10
PALANGA						**PALANGA**					
BT 033	RIX	PLQ	1-3-5-7	23:05	23:50	BT 032	PLQ	RIX	12-4-6-	06:10	6:55
PARIS Charles de Gaulles						**PARIS Charles de Gaulles**					
BT 691	RIX	CDG	1234567	07:30	09:25	BT 692	CDG	RIX	123-5--	10:10	13:55
BT 697	RIX	CDG	---4-67	12:35	14:30	BT 698	CDG	RIX	---4-67	15:15	19:00
BT 693	RIX	CDG	123-5--	15:55	17:50	BT 694	CDG	RIX	1234567	18:35	22:20
PARIS flights from TALLINN						**PARIS flights to TALLINN**					
BT 689	TLL	CDG	---4-67	15:10	17:10	BT 690	CDG	TLL	---4-67	10:10	14:05
PRAGUE						**PRAGUE**					
BT 481	RIX	PRG	1--4---	07:30	08:40	BT 482	PRG	RIX	1--4---	09:15	12:20
BT 481	RIX	PRG	------7	13:15	14:25	BT 482	PRG	RIX	------7	14:55	18:00
BT 481	RIX	PRG	----5--	17:45	18:55	BT 482	PRG	RIX	----5--	19:25	22:30
ROME Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino						**ROME Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino**					
BT 631	RIX	FCO	----5--	09:20	11:25	BT 632	FCO	RIX	----5--	12:10	16:20
BT 633	RIX	FCO	------7	14:25	16:30	BT 634	FCO	RIX	------7	17:55	22:05
STOCKHOLM Arlanda						**STOCKHOLM Arlanda**					
BT 101	RIX	ARN	1234567	09:20	09:35	BT 104	ARN	RIX	123456-	06:25	8:40
BT 109	RIX	ARN	1234567	19:10	19:25	BT 102	ARN	RIX	1234567	10:05	12:20
BT 103	RIX	ARN	12345-7	22:55	23:10	BT 110	ARN	RIX	1234567	20:00	22:15
ST-PETERSBURG						**ST-PETERSBURG**					
BT 442	RIX	LED	123456-	09:30	11:50	BT 447	LED	RIX	12-456-	06:25	06:45
BT 444	RIX	LED	12345-7	19:00	21:20	BT 443	LED	RIX	123456-	12:30	12:50
BT 446	RIX	LED	1-345-7	23:15	01:35+1	BT 445	LED	RIX	12345-7	21:55	22:15
TALLINN						**TALLINN**					
BT 311	RIX	TLL	123456-	09:30	10:20	BT 362	TLL	RIX	123456-	06:10	07:00
BT 313	RIX	TLL	1234567	14:00	14:50	BT 366	TLL	RIX	12--5-- As 16 FEB	07:45	08:35
BT 317	RIX	TLL	1234567	19:35	20:25	BT 312	TLL	RIX	1234567	11:10	12:00
BT 365	RIX	TLL	1--4--7 As 15 FEB	22:35	23:25	BT 314	TLL	RIX	1234567	15:25	16:15
BT 361	RIX	TLL	12345-7 Untill 13 FEB	22:55	23:45	BT 318	TLL	RIX	12345-7	21:25	22:15
BT 361	RIX	TLL	12345-7 As 15 FEB	23:30	00:20+1						
TATRY / POPRAD						**TATRY / POPRAD**					
BT 485	RIX	TAT	-----6-	14:00	14:40	BT 486	TAT	RIX	-----6-	15:15	18:00
TURKU						**TURKU**					
BT 359	RIX	TKU	1-3-5-7	23:05	00:15+1	BT 360	TKU	RIX	12-4-6-	05:55	07:00
TEL AVIV						**TEL AVIV**					
BT 771	RIX	TLV	-2---6-	14:40	19:00	BT 772	TLV	RIX	--3---7	11:40	16:10
VIENNA						**VIENNA**					
BT 431	RIX	VIE	1--456-	07:35	08:35	BT 432	VIE	RIX	1--456-	09:30	12:30
BT 433	RIX	VIE	12345-7	16:50	18:15	BT 434	VIE	RIX	12345-7	18:50	22:10
VILNIUS						**VILNIUS**					
BT 341	RIX	VNO	123456-	09:40	10:30	BT 350	VNO	RIX	123456-	06:10	07:00
BT 343	RIX	VNO	1234567	14:00	14:50	BT 354	VNO	RIX	12--5-- As 16 FEB	07:45	08:35
BT 347	RIX	VNO	1234567	19:35	20:25	BT 342	VNO	RIX	1234567	11:10	12:00
BT 353	RIX	VNO	1--4--7 As 15 FEB	22:35	23:25	BT 344	VNO	RIX	1234567	15:25	16:15
BT 349	RIX	VNO	12345-7 Untill 13 FEB	22:55	23:45	BT 348	VNO	RIX	12345-7	21:30	22:20
BT 349	RIX	VNO	12345-7 As 15 FEB	23:30	00:20+1						
WARSAW						**WARSAW**					
BT 463	RIX	WAW	12345-7	23:05	23:35	BT 464	WAW	RIX	123456-	06:15	08:40
ZURICH						**ZURICH**					
BT 641	RIX	ZRH	1------	07:50	09:20	BT 642	ZRH	RIX	1------	10:00	13:30
BT 641	RIX	ZRH	----5-7	16:55	18:25	BT 642	ZRH	RIX	----5-7	18:55	22:25

The given information is a subject to amandements and cancellations taken unilaterally by *airBaltic*.

New direct flight from Tallinn to Berlin in cooperation with *Air Berlin*

For the summer season, *airBaltic* has launched a new direct route to link Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, with Berlin. Starting May 6, *airBaltic* will fly from Tallinn to Berlin four times a week. The new direct flights will be operated in cooperation with codeshare partner *Air Berlin*, permitting *airBaltic* passengers to explore over 34 destinations in 15 countries served by *Air Berlin* through its Berlin hub.

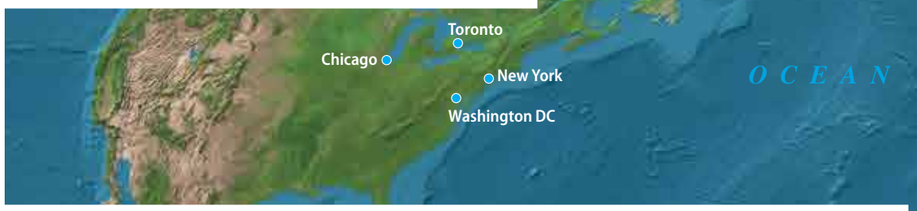
New direct flight from Tallinn to Vienna in cooperation with *Austrian Airlines*

For the summer season, *airBaltic* has launched a new direct route to link Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, with Vienna. Starting May 7, *airBaltic* will fly from Tallinn to Vienna four times a week. The new direct flights will be operated in cooperation with codeshare partner *Austrian Airlines*, which serves 56 destinations in 33 countries through its hub in Vienna.

airBaltic codeshare partners

AEGEAN – A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER
АЭРОФЛОТ – Российские авиалинии
airberlin – Your Airline.
AIRFRANCE
Alitalia
Austrian
AZAL
BELAVIA – Belarusian Airlines
BRITISH AIRWAYS
brussels airlines
CSA CZECH AIRLINES
ETIHAD AIRWAYS
GEORGIAN AIRLINES
KLM
MAY
SAS – Scandinavian Airlines
TAROM – ROMANIAN AIR TRANSPORT
TRANSAERO AIRLINES
UZBEKISTAN airways

airBaltic / FLIGHTS



airBaltic.com offers

- *airBaltic* direct flights
- *airBaltic* partner flights
- * flights operated in co-operation with *Tez Tour*

Country/City Ticket offices	Airport Ticket Offices
AZERBAIJAN	
Baku Improtex Travel 16 S. Vurgun Str. Baku AZ1000, Azarbaijan ☎ +994 124989239 info@improtex-travel.com booking@improtex-travel.com	Heydar Aliyev International Airport Airport Ticket Office Silk Way Airlines South Terminal ☎ +994 124972600
BELARUS	
Minsk	Airport Minsk 2 Airport Ticket Office airBaltic
BELGIUM	
	Airport Zaventem Departure Hall ☎ +32 (0) 27230667 Airport Ticket Office Aviapartner
Croatia	
Rijeka	Rijeka Airport Airport Ticket Office Zračna Luka Rijeka ☎ +385 51 841 222
CYPRUS	
Larnaca	Larnaca International Airport Airport Ticket Office airBaltic / LGS Handling
CZECH REPUBLIC	
Prague	Vaclav Havel Prague Airport Terminal T2 Airport Ticket Office CEAS ☎ +420 220117540
DENMARK	
Billund	Billund Airport Departure Hall Airport Ticket Office F: +45 75338410
ESTONIA	
Tallinn ☎ 17107 (airBaltic RESERVATIONS 0600411015 0.51 EUR/min, local calls only) tallinn@airbaltic.com	Airport Tallinn Main Terminal, Departure Hall Airport Ticket Office airBaltic /Tallinn Airport GH
FINLAND	
Helsinki (airBaltic RESERVATIONS 0600411015 0.64 EUR/min, Mon-Fri 09:00-18:00)	Helsinki Handling NewCo Oy Airport Ticket Office Servisair
Turku	Airport Turku Airport Ticket Office Airpro OY
FRANCE	
Paris APG France 66 avenue des Champs Elysées Building E, 2nd floor 75008, Paris ☎ +33 153892100 airbaltic@apg.fr	Airport Charles de Gaulles Terminal 2D Airport Ticket Office Swissport Services CDG
Nice	Airport Nice Cote D'azur Terminal 1 Airport Ticket Office Lufthansa Ticket Desk
GEORGIA	
Tbilisi airBaltic ticket office 61 Paliashvili str. 0179 Tbilisi ☎ +995 32 2 900900 airbalticgsa@discovery.ge	Airport Tbilisi Airport Ticket Office Discovery Ltd ☎ +995 32 2 900900
GERMANY	
Berlin	Airport Berlin-Tegel Main Terminal Airport Ticket Office GlobeGround Berlin Opposite Gate 4/5
Dusseldorf	Airport Dusseldorf Terminal B Airport Ticket Office HAVAS Germany GmbH ☎ +49 211 421 6271
Frankfurt c/o AVIAREPS AG Kaiserstrasse 77 ☎ +49 (0) 900 001 227 (EUR 0,49/min from fixed lines, different costs may apply for mobile calls) ResBT-Germany@aviareps.com	Airport Frankfurt Airport Ticket Office Havas Germany GmbH Terminal 2, Hall E, Desk 939
Hamburg	Airport Fuhlsbuttel Terminal 1, Departure Hall Airport Ticket Office Havas Germany GmbH
Munich	Airport Munich Terminal 1 Airport Ticket Office Havas Germany GmbH
GREECE	
Athens Tal Aviation 44 Ihous str. 17564 - P.Faliro ☎ +30 210 9341500 F: +30 210 9341620 airbaltic@tal-aviation.gr	Athens International Airport Airport Ticket Office Goldair Handling
HUNGARY	
Budapest Tensi Aviation Kft. Kormjadi Bela utca 1. ☎ +36 1 3451526 F: +36 1 9991466 aviation@tensi.hu	Budapest Airport Airport Ticket Office Celebi Ground Handling Hungary
ISRAEL	
Tel Aviv Caspi Aviation ltd 1 Ben Yehuda st. Tel-Aviv 63801 ☎ +972 3 5100213 /4 F: +972 (3) 5108365 bt@caspi-aviation.co.il	Ben-Gurion International Airport Airport Ticket Office Laufer Aviation GHI Level 3, Terminal 3 ☎ +972 39754076
ITALY	
Rome Tal Aviation Italy Via Adolfo Rava, 106, 00142, Rome ☎ +39 0654242544 F: +390654242534 airbaltic@talaviation.it	Leonardo de Vinci – Fiumicino Airport Terminal 3, Departure Hall A.R.E. Airline Representative Europe
Bari	Bari Airport Airport Ticket Office Bari Palese
Milan	Milan Malpensa Airport Terminal 1, Departure Level Airport Ticket Office A.R.E. Airline Representative Europe
Olbia	Olbia Geasar S.P.A. International Airport Costa Smeralda
Venice	Airport Venice Marco Polo Airport Ticket Office A.R.E. Airline Representative Europe
LATVIA	
Riga ☎ 90001100 (0.51 EUR/min for local calls +371 67006006 for international calls)	Riga International Airport Main Terminal Airport Ticket Office airBaltic
LITHUANIA	
Vilnius ☎ 890015004 (2.12 LTL/min, local calls only) vnoreservations@airbaltic.com	Vilnius International Airport Airport Ticket Office Litcargus ticketing@litcargus.lt
Palanga	Palanga Airport Airport Ticket Office Orlaiviu Aptar-navimo Agentura ☎ +370 46052300 F: +370 46056401
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