

FEBRUARY /  
MARCH 2021  
*airBaltic*  
Inflight magazine

# baltic

## outlook

### KOLKA

#### THE GEM OF THE LATVIAN COAST

KOLKA AND  
THE LIVONIAN COAST

NEW WAYS OF TRAVEL

RIGA'S RISING  
START-UP SCENE

SPRING IN STUTTGART

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### *airBaltic* became the first airline in the world to receive a five-star rating for its COVID-19 safety procedures

**MARTIN ALEXANDER GAUSS**  
Chief Executive Officer, *airBaltic*

**Dear guests of *airBaltic*,**  
I wish to thank you for following all of the various additional safety and health measures currently in place. The aviation industry has done a lot to make the flying experience as safe as possible, but, as always, we count on your support and understanding.

Earlier this year we were honoured to become the first airline in the world to receive a five-star rating for its COVID-19 safety procedures from *Skytrax*. *airBaltic* was also included in the world's top 20 airlines by *Airlineratings.com*. This confirms that we have done our part well and that our efforts have been recognised globally.

The key components that will make future travel possible again are vaccines, strict health and safety measures, and shared responsibility and solidarity. We expect that some of these measures will remain in place for the foreseeable future, however, we also believe that leisure

travel will be possible again during the upcoming summer season.

We know that the demand is there, and we are waiting to see how the situation develops. As the leading carrier in the Baltics, *airBaltic* has already made its preparations – this summer season, which will begin by the end of March, we will offer flights to more than 70 destinations from Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius.

Even if the demand for air travel today is low, we still aim to return to our growth path as outlined by the company's business plan. To support our plan of flying a fleet of at least 50 *Airbus A220-300* aircraft by early 2024, we have recently announced plans to build the largest aircraft hangar in the Baltics. The new hangar will provide the necessary infrastructure for us to be able to perform all of the required maintenance on our aircraft as well as offer these services to other customers of the *Airbus A220-300*.

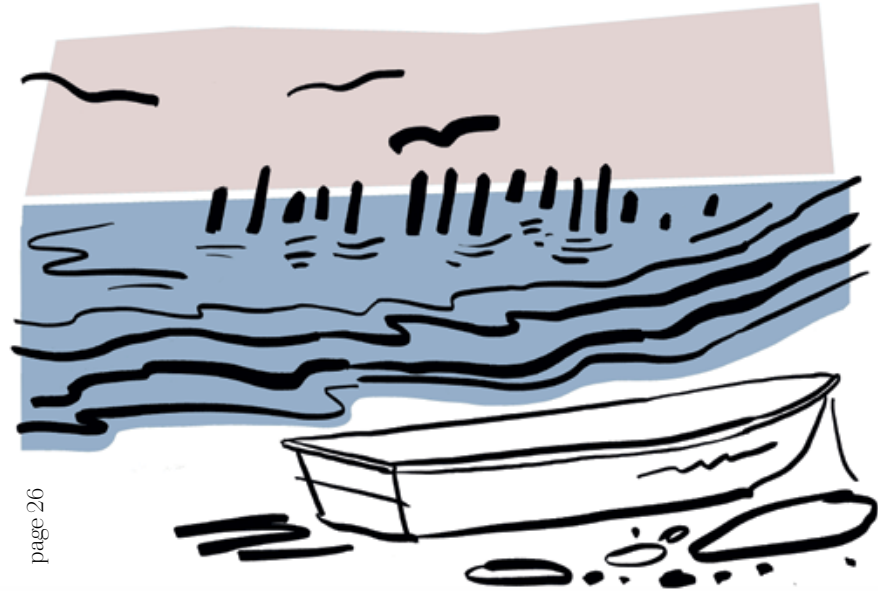
Just like other significant events that have led to aviation crises in the past, this current crisis has changed the industry forever. Nevertheless, we are ready to grow again as the European aviation sector is seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and more vaccines are becoming available.

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



Yours,  
Martin Alexander Gauss





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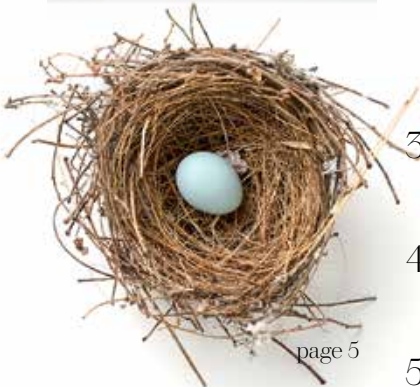


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## baltic outlook

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Words by Zane Nikodemusa  
Publicity photos

# The ultimate checklist



## DESIGN

### Contemporary accents

Aficionados of good design and minimalism are excited about the interior accessories offered by the new brand *DeTales*. Its sustainably manufactured candleholders, ikebana vases, and aroma diffusers are made of artificial stone left over from the bath industry. The brand is the brainchild of Latvian designer Ieva Kalēja, who also established the internationally recognised lighting brand *Mamma Lampa*.  
[detales.design](https://detales.design)

## MUSIC

### Sound of a piano

The debut album by rising Latvian piano star Daumants Liepiņš, released late last year, has already won international acclaim, including praise from music critics at *The Times* and *The Guardian*. Liepiņš' first CD includes not only compositions by Sergei Rachmaninoff but also the premiere recording of the Piano Sonata No. 3 'Kaija' (Seagull) by Latvian composer Imants Zemzaris. 'Like many of us, I have also spent more time out in nature during the pandemic. And that is what this album is about – about the majesty of nature and the fragility of the soul,' explains Liepiņš.  
[skani.lv](https://skani.lv)



## BEAUTY

### Healthy look

At a time when more and more people are embracing an environmentally friendly lifestyle, natural cosmetics are also experiencing unprecedented popularity. A new brand in this field has recently emerged in Latvia as well. Following three years of research and testing, *Labrains* now offers clients a range of innovative, natural dermocosmetic products aimed at restoring health to problematic skin. As the accomplished model Liya Kebede has said: 'Take good care of your skin and hydrate. If you have good skin, everything else will fall into place.'  
[labrains.eu](https://labrains.eu)

Words by Zane Nikodemusa  
Publicity photos and by *iStock*

## PAULS JAUNZEMS SCULPTURE PARK

Located near the mouth of the Lielupe River, Vakarbulļi is one of the most pristine places in Riga. This former fishing village located in a protected nature area exudes authenticity and a certain historical romanticism. It is said that every home here still has a boat. But Vakarbulļi is also home to the sculpture park of sculptor Pauls Jaunzems (b. 1951). His large stone sculptures displayed on the banks of the river near his house beautifully complement the surrounding environment. If you're lucky, you might even meet Jaunzems himself and hear some of his exciting stories.

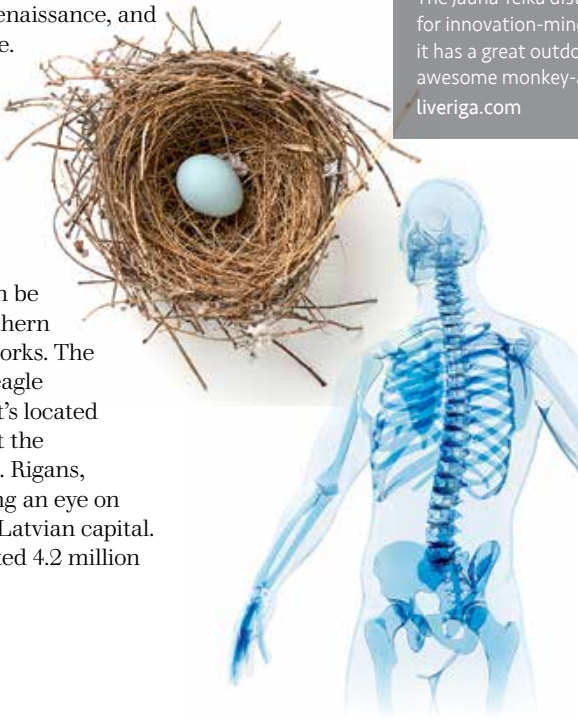


## SPRINGTIME IN THE MANOR PARKS

In February and March Rigans eagerly await the emergence of snowdrops in their parks, courtyards, and green spaces. The best place to seek out these first messengers of spring is near old manor houses. As far back as the 15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the wealthier residents of the city established manors in the fields and meadows across the river from central Riga, in the area known as Pārdaugava. In later years these properties were used as summer residences. Most of the manor houses surviving to the present day reflect the Baroque, Neo-Renaissance, and Classicism styles of architecture.

## ONLINE BIRD CAMS

For several years now, the Latvian Fund for Nature has set up webcams streaming live from bird nests throughout the country. A variety of species can be seen, including eagle owls, northern goshawks, ospreys, and black storks. The most popular is a white-tailed eagle nest in Durbe Municipality that's located atop an old spruce tree at about the height of a nine-storey building. Rigans, on the other hand, enjoy keeping an eye on northern goshawk nests in the Latvian capital. Last year, the bird cams attracted 4.2 million views worldwide.  
[ldf.lv/tiesraide](https://ldf.lv/tiesraide)



### Did you know?

The Jaunā Teika district is the place to be for innovation-minded professionals. Plus, it has a great outdoor area with a randomly awesome monkey-astronaut statue.  
[liveriga.com](https://liveriga.com)

## RSU ANATOMY MUSEUM

Riga has become one museum richer with the opening of the new Anatomy Museum. At the core of the collection are Latvia's first anatomy materials for medical students, developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The collection contains almost 6000 units introducing visitors to the human body through real specimens and other objects. The digital guide available in Latvian, Russian, or English helps to provide in-depth information about the exposition.  
[FB/RigaAnatomyMuseum](https://fb.com/RigaAnatomyMuseum)

## Quote of the month

Travel and change of place impart new vigour to the mind.

Seneca the Younger – Roman philosopher, dramatist, and statesman of the highest order. May his quote serve as inspiration when planning which countries and cities to visit this year. Modern studies confirm that travel positively impacts several personality factors, including creativity, extraversion, open-mindedness, and happiness.

RIGA

February / March 2021

Photo by Uģis Nikodemus





VILNIUS

**SCULPTURE OF LEONARD COHEN**  
Did you know that Vilnius has a sculpture of Leonard Cohen (1934–2016)? Although the musician, poet, and songwriter never visited Lithuania, his mother and grandfather were from Lithuania. Local sculptor Romualdas Kvintas (1953–2018) managed to capture the human side of this famous performer, and his rendition brings a smile to all who visit it. The sculpture has been temporarily erected in the courtyard of *Gabi*, a restaurant on Šv. Mykolo gatvė in the Old Town. Listen to a legendary Cohen album as you look for it.

MO MUSEUM

Vilnius’ newest museum is a must for those who appreciate modern and contemporary art. Designed by renowned architect Daniel Libeskind (b. 1946), MO Museum is itself a work of modern art that has won several architecture prizes. The exhibitions change regularly to reflect different artists and themes. The museum also hosts film screenings, educational activities, and concerts. [mo.lt](http://mo.lt)

HOT AIR BALLOON FLIGHT

Any lover of heights will enjoy flying in a hot air balloon over Vilnius. And if you decide to take that flight in winter, you’re bound to make some unique memories! Once you’re back on the ground, you’ll take part in a special induction ceremony at which you’ll receive a certificate and forever be a part of the local hot air ballooning crew. [hotairballoon.lt](http://hotairballoon.lt)

**Did you know?**  
Some traditional Lithuanian dishes have so much in common with Jewish cuisine that it’s sometimes impossible to trace their origin. [govilnius.lt](http://govilnius.lt)

WELL-KNOWN FILM LOCATIONS



The capital of Lithuania is becoming an increasingly popular shooting destination among filmmakers globally. The biggest foreign production shoot in Vilnius before the pandemic was the *Netflix* series *Stranger Things*. Other hit shows shot here in recent years include *War and Peace*, *Chernobyl*, *Catherine the Great*, and *Young Wallander*. Some of these picturesque settings are readily available to the public, and special guided tours can also be arranged. [govilnius.lt](http://govilnius.lt)



ESTONIAN MARITIME MUSEUM

The Estonian Maritime Museum is one of the largest museums in Estonia and also the most popular. Founded on the initiative of former captains and sailors in 1935, its main exhibition is located in 500-year-old Fat Margaret Tower in the historical centre of Tallinn. In 2012, the museum opened a second space at Seaplane Harbour, which features a modern exhibition in the impressive hangars and the harbour area with museum ships. [meremuuseum.ee](http://meremuuseum.ee)

FOTOGRAFISKA TALLINN

Fotografiska is an internationally recognised museum of photography with its roots in Stockholm. Through the work of top photographers and rising talents, the museum tells the stories behind the images, from the beautiful and surprising to the painful and uncomfortable. Fotografiska Tallinn is located in the heart of Telliskivi Creative City. In addition to world-class art, it also has a café, a gift shop, and a zero-waste restaurant with fantastic views. See the website for current shows and events. [fotografiska.com/tallinn](http://fotografiska.com/tallinn)

TALLINN



TALLINN ZOO

Science indicates that watching cute animals is good for our health. Of course, *YouTube* offers tons of kitten and puppy videos, but a visit to the zoo is more informative. Located in the beautiful Veskimetsa park forest, Tallinn Zoo’s collection of animals is considered one of the most fascinating in northern Europe. It features African giants (elephants and rhinos), majestic predators, playful primates, and many other exotic and endangered species. There’s also the impressive Polar Bear World and a children’s petting zoo. [tallinnzoo.ee](http://tallinnzoo.ee)



**Did you know?**  
One of the most charming features of Tallinn’s Old Town are the gabled, medieval residential houses that line its streets. [visittallinn.ee](http://visittallinn.ee)



SKYWHEEL OF TALLINN

If pandemic-related restrictions and weather conditions allow, get a view of Tallinn from above. One way to do so is on a Ferris wheel. Located on top of T1 Mall of Tallinn, the Skywheel lifts you 120 metres above sea level, where you can enjoy fantastic views of the city, Ülemiste Lake, and the airport. The Skywheel is the second-highest vantage point in Tallinn, right after the TV Tower. Its weatherproof pods hold up to six people each, either sitting or standing, and can accommodate wheelchairs and prams. [FB/SkywheelOfTallinn](https://www.facebook.com/SkywheelOfTallinn)





Allas Sea Pool

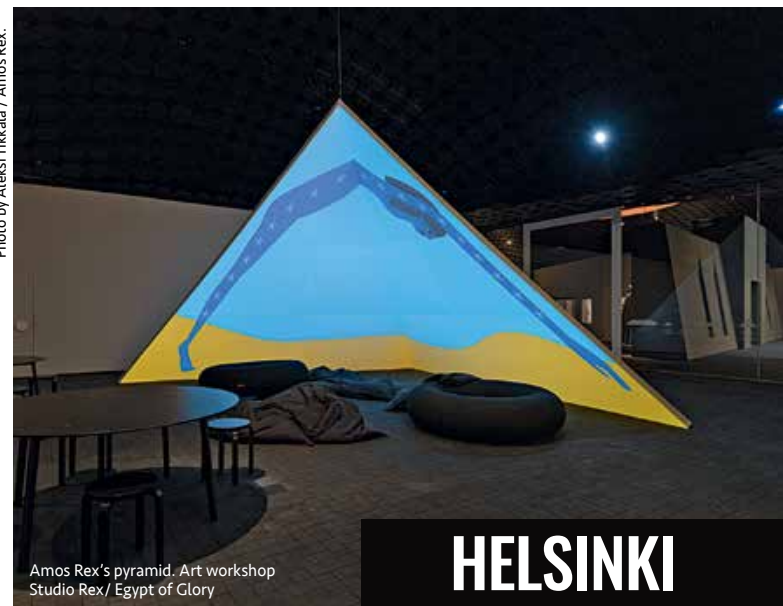
Words by **Olga Dolina**  
Publicity photos



Allas Sea Pool, that urban icon of the Finnish capital open all year round, overlooks the harbour and Market Square ([allasseapool.fi](http://allasseapool.fi)). Here, all are welcome to experience the refreshing combo of an open-air swim and the hot steam of a sauna. The pool now offers a **Winter Swimming at Allas** series that takes place on Tuesdays throughout February and March. A stimulating dose of energy for body-mind balance, this traditional Finnish winter activity helps to reduce stress and anxiety, among other benefits. The classes are led by experienced instructor Magnus Appelberg, who teaches the correct breathing techniques and explains how to safely manage in cold water. After the introduction, everyone takes an unforgettable dip in the sea-water pool, followed by a warmer dip in the 27°C pool.

**Egypt of Glory: The Last Great Dynasties** on show in the eye-catching spaces of the Amos Rex Museum, is considered the largest collection of its kind currently exhibited outside Egypt (Mannerheimintie 22-24; [amosrex.fi](http://amosrex.fi); until March 21). This exhibition covers the most important aspects of Egyptian art and culture. Travel back to the exciting time of the pharaohs to explore the worldview, state structure, and annual life cycle of the ancient Egyptians. The exhibition also offers an encounter with mummies. Everyday objects, from clothing to old tax receipts and even a 365-day calendar divided into 12 months, just like we use today, form the backbone of the show. Amos Rex offers guided mini-tours in its digital space, including one through the virtual tomb. Kumu Art Museum co-hosts this exhibition in Tallinn.

A monument of historical, social, and architectural significance, **Helsinki Olympic Stadium** is now open to the public to explore its new chapter of glory (Paavo Nurmen tie 1; [stadion.fi](http://stadion.fi)). Inaugurated in 1938 and expanded to host the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, the stadium recently underwent a meticulous four-year refurbishment and reopened this past August. The new shelter roof is made of three million kilograms of steel, while the total gross area of the project is 40,720 square metres. Special guided tours introduce visitors to the venue's nearly 100 years of history, new underground spaces, museum, and imposing tower. The *Bistro Stadion* restaurant serves satisfying seasonal menus in a gripping functionalist setting.

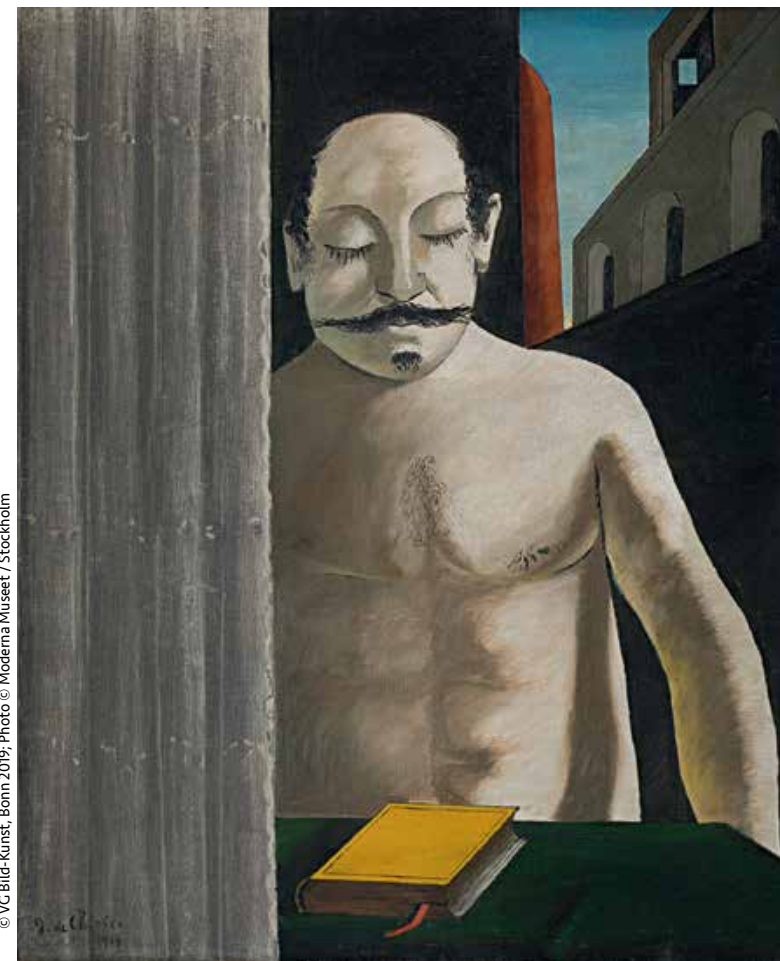


Amos Rex's pyramid. Art workshop Studio Rex/ Egypt of Glory

# HELSINKI



Photo by Wellu Hämäläinen



© VC Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2019; Photo © Moderna Museet / Stockholm

# HAMBURG



Planten un Blomen park



Moxy Queen Sleeper at Moxy Hamburg City hotel

◀ Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978)  
The child's brain, 1914  
Moderna Museet, Stockholm

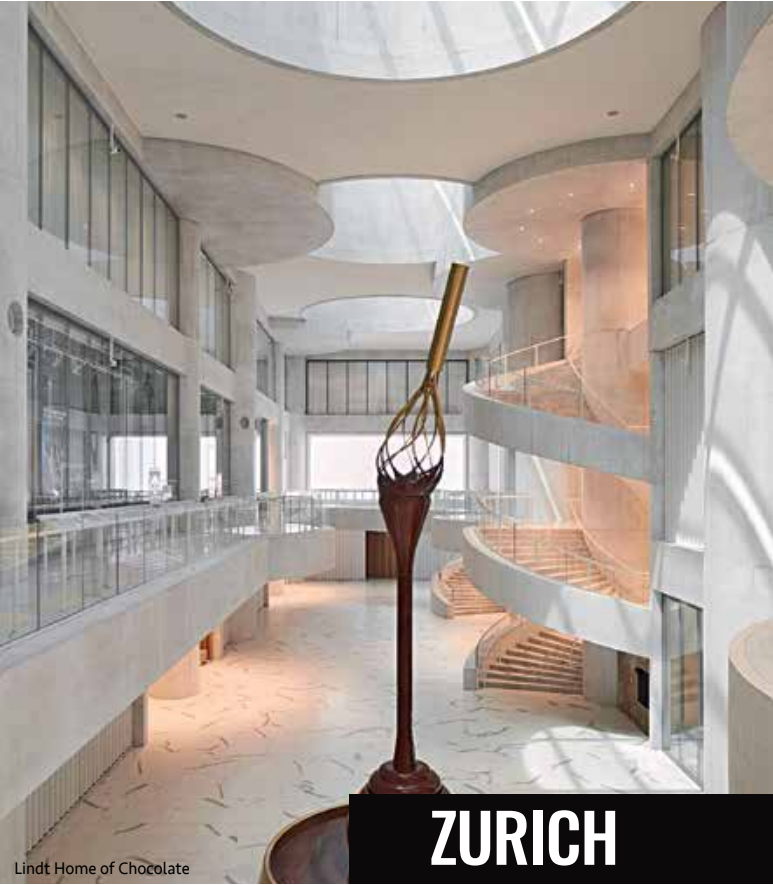


In the last months of winter, Hamburg's urban natural landscapes invite people to inspiring open-air strolls and activities. **Planten un Blomen** is a picturesque inner-city park with 47 hectares of lawns, idyllic ponds, and thematic gardens that wake up in the spring (Holstenwall 30; [plantenunblomen.hamburg.de](http://plantenunblomen.hamburg.de); ice-rink reservations at [eisarena-hamburg.de](http://eisarena-hamburg.de)). Moreover, this park, which is nearly 200 years old, is home to one of Europe's largest Japanese gardens. In Planten un Blomen one can fully experience the contrast between winter and summer. This is where you'll find the city's largest open-air skating rink, EisArena Hamburg, which is as big as three ice-hockey rinks and remains open until mid-March. Meanwhile, the greenhouses open all year round let visitors relax amongst exotic plants and the ambience of tropical rainforests.

**De Chirico: Magical Reality** at the Hamburger Kunsthalle shines a spotlight on Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), the founder and most vivid representative of the Metaphysical style of painting (Glockengießerwall 5; [hamburger-kunsthalle.de](http://hamburger-kunsthalle.de); until April 25). The showcase of more than 60 works explores the iconic paintings of De Chirico's groundbreaking period from 1909 to 1919. This is when he united with artists Giorgio Morandi and Carlo Carrà and composer Alberto Savinio to create a 'different modernism'. Metaphysical painting often depicted representational but incongruous objects and produced disquieting effects on the viewer. Influenced by Greek mythology, the philosophy of Nietzsche, the French avantgarde, and shadows of the First World War, De Chirico soon became a master of light, shape, and space. His enigmatic and abandoned Italian piazzas layered with prop-like objects and doll-like figures conjure a haunting, otherworldly mood where time stands still.

This welcoming and multidisciplinary city greets a new hotel just like itself, the **Moxy Hamburg City** (Anckelmannstraße 11; [moxy-hotels.marriott.com](http://moxy-hotels.marriott.com)). Located between the Alster and Elbe rivers, which exude urban marine romance, the *Moxy* bursts with creative contrasts and stands out with bold, youthful interior design that encourages guests to go out and discovery the city. The hotel's ambience created by JOI-Design features the casual, industrial chic of concrete walls, open-plan spaces, and colourful details in the common areas. The 291 laconic rooms are highlighted with wood and leather details and equipped with everything a leisure traveller might need.





**Bed Stories** at the National Museum Zurich explores the intimate and curious timeline of the bedroom (Museumstrasse 2; nationalmuseum.ch; until April 4). It is said that we spend almost a third of our life asleep, which means that the bed is probably our most-used and most-beloved piece of furniture. Hardly any item is more closely linked to birth, death, making love, or thoughtful fantasising. This exhibition addresses bedroom anatomy, typology, and cultural representation across four centuries. From the symbol of the absolute power of Louis XIV in 17<sup>th</sup>-century France, when bedroom rituals were held in front of a select audience, to more private bedtime spaces that emerged from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The story of the bed follows trends in applied arts and design as well as the evolution of hygiene practices. From splendid grandeur to functionality, the exhibition also takes a tour of the bedrooms of the upper echelons of Swiss society.

*Lindt & Sprüngli*, the Swiss pioneer of chocolate-making, celebrated its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year. To mark the occasion, chocolate aficionados welcomed the long-awaited opening of the **Lindt Home of Chocolate** (Schokoladenplatz 1, Kilchberg; lindt-home-of-chocolate.com). Built in graceful dialogue with the historical factory, the modern design of the new three-storey building by the architects at *Christ & Gantenbein* catches the eye with elegant curving staircases, suspended walkways, and imposing skylights. A spacious tasting area is accompanied by the world's largest *Lindt* chocolate shop and a chocolateria offering chocolate-making courses. A visual highlight greets visitors in the foyer – the world's tallest chocolate fountain pumping 1500 kilograms of real chocolate and towering 9.3 metres above guests. To make this seemingly weightless wonder work, 94 metres of pipes were laid inside the structure.

The new **Sorell Hotel St. Peter** and its relaxing courtyard garden are nestled between the Sihl and Limmat rivers just a few minutes' walk from the picturesque lake promenade, Old Town pedestrian area, and Kunsthaus Zurich (In Gassen 10; sorellhotels.com). The hotel has a welcoming vibe, combining boutique character with cosiness, functional design, and a relaxed atmosphere. It has 45 light-filled, flexibly designed rooms as well as spacious suites equipped with kitchenettes for both short- and long-term stays, providing a proper setting for relaxation. Guests are even offered personal yoga mats. Some rooms can be combined via connecting doors to form apartments of up to 98 square metres.

*Taste of  
life*



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



Words by Ilze Vītola  
Photo by iStock

# Riga’s rising start-up scene

Riga has become the new haven for start-ups.

According to the ‘Not Optional’ campaign initiated by *Index Ventures*, Latvia is one of the most start-up friendly countries in the world. It’s the result of a newly issued stock option policy that helps start-ups breed by adding to welcoming tax breaks and visa regulations that have already lured many foreign tech companies to settle down in Riga. Considering the financial turmoil caused by the pandemic, it seems like perfect timing – after all, ingenious Rigans tend to see opportunities in disguise. Last year, the *Giraffe360* real estate photography service managed to raise a 4.5-million-dollar funding round for its growth, while Riga-based global print-on-demand behemoth *Printify*, reckoned to be the next Baltic unicorn-in-the-making, went on a hiring spree and engaged a sea of new talent. Top talent is also awaiting *Lokalise*, a software start-up that focuses on the translation and localisation of apps and websites. The fledgling venture gathered six million dollars in funding to extend its team, which is one of the largest first-time investments for a Latvian start-up to date. The year we spent partly in virtual mode was also fortunate for *F3*, the Riga-based social app catering for Generation Z. At the end of 2020, *F3* gathered 3.9 million dollars in seed funding from investors across the globe. Maybe it’s those Art Nouveau façades or Riga’s verdant parks that spark their creativity?



www.LiveRiga.com



## DID YOU KNOW:

Held annually in Riga, the **TECHCHILL** conference is the main start-up and tech bash in the Baltics.

According to EuroStat, **53% OF ENGINEERS** in science and technology in Latvia are women, which is one of the highest proportions in the European Union.

In March 2020, the first virtual hackathon, known as **HACKFORCE**, was organised in Latvia and resulted in numerous solutions to the challenges posed by the pandemic, including the cutting-edge *Shield48* face shields.

Many of the city’s **START-UPS ARE BASED** in the former Faculty of Biology building of the University of Latvia.



AC Hotel by Marriott Riga



Magdelēnas kvartāls Stage II



Zaļā iela 1



Business Garden Riga

## A developer with strong roots

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

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



www.vastint.eu



Words by Ilze Vītola  
Publicity photos and by Ilze Vītola



## MY VILNIUS

The multifaceted artist **Robertas Narkus** is a voice of his generation. He will represent Lithuania at the 59<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 2022 with the solo project *Gut Feeling*. Born and bred in Vilnius, he still finds the city mysterious and, as he says, full of friendly ghosts. ‘Nature, culture, night life – almost everything you might want is within walking distance,’ he comments.



### Contemporary Art Centre

If you’re in Vilnius, enjoy the city’s contemporary art! The Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) is located in the heart of the Old Town. Not only does it usually have at least three cutting-edge exhibitions on show, its second-floor lobby also offers one of my favourite views of the Old Town. Explore the vast space and sculpture garden before it closes for a long-awaited reconstruction. This year, the CAC opens the XIV Baltic Triennial, a significant art event that takes place every three years.  
Vokiečių gatve 2  
cac.lt

### Naugarduko gatve

Sure, Vilnius has a magnificent Old Town, but don’t be afraid to leave its confines and wander west up the hill. Right now, all the hip folks are moving to the street called Naugarduko gatve. Coffee geeks go to *Crooked Nose & Coffee Stories*, fashionistas gather at *Backstage Café*, but I like my coffee at the tiny *16i*. A secret tip: the best *Baumkuchen* (or *šakotis* in Lithuanian) is made right next door to *16i*. The ladies working there might be a bit grumpy and charge you extra if you ask whether the šakotis is fresh, but it’s worth it!  
T. Ševčenkos gatve 16i  
FB/ 16i kava

### Senoji trobelė

When I crave the potato-meat dumplings known as *cepelinai* – a traditional Lithuanian dish – I head to *Senoji trobelė*. But if you’re on a budget or just love the authentic feel of workers’ canteens, go to *Montuotojas* next door. It serves lunch from 11.00 to 15.00. You might have to ask around to find the entrance.  
Naugarduko gatve 36  
senojitrobele.lt

### Delta Mityba

This is an artist-run restaurant with a project space called *Autarkia* hidden inside an industrial territory that’s been transformed into artist lofts and studios. This is where you can find me most of the time. When you’re at *Delta Mityba*, try the *bao* or *bibimbap*!  
Nagarduko gatve 41  
FB/ Delta Mityba



## Mystery solved

The fascinating story behind the most photographed bridge in Barcelona.

Words and photo by James Taylor

No trip to Barcelona is complete without spending some time in the labyrinth of streets that make up the famed Gothic Quarter. The web of shadowy laneways is at the heart of the city, around every corner another relic from Roman times, a sun-dappled square, a secretive medieval treasure.

The neighbourhood’s crumbling Roman ruins date back more than 2000 years, but most of the Gothic Quarter was constructed in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The dark and medieval character of the neighbourhood hasn’t changed a whole lot since then, which is why it’s surprising to find out that not everything in it is so ancient. One of the newest additions to the Gothic Quarter is El Pont del Bisbe, or the Bishop’s Bridge.

This superb Neo-Gothic bridge blends in perfectly with its medieval surroundings despite having been constructed in 1928. Made of marble and bridging the cobbled street called Carrer del Bisbe, its eye-catching design features Gothic patterns and pillars. Located halfway between the squares in front of Barcelona Cathedral and the Catalan Parliament, it’s one of the Gothic Quarter’s famous sights.

The bridge is the work of Catalan architect Joan Rubió i Bellver (1870-1952), student and friend of Antoni Gaudí, the famed architect behind the Sagrada Família basilica. Like Gaudí, Rubió was ambitious; he put forth an extensive plan to redesign all the ancient buildings in the area around Barcelona Cathedral. Unfortunately for him, the city rejected his plans and only went forward with the construction of the bridge. If not for that, it might be Rubió on everybody’s lips in Barcelona, not Gaudí.

Furious and bitter at this rejection, Rubió secretly incorporated a chilling skull-and-dagger motif on the bottom of the bridge. Today, this small act of revenge is at the centre of some dark legends; some even say it’s a real human skull. Look for it as you walk under the bridge – but be wary. Legend says that anyone who looks at the skull is cursed with bad luck. An even darker legend tells us that if the dagger is removed, the city of Barcelona will crumble to its foundations, destroyed. But it’s not all bad news – another myth says that if you walk backwards under the bridge while looking at the skull, one wish will come true. It’s up to you whether to risk it or not.



## Amsterdam IN 24 HOURS

### WHERE TO STAY

Residing in a lovingly renovated old tram depot in one of the most lively areas of the Dutch capital, *Hotel De Hallen* has it all: history, location, good food, and loads of atmosphere.

The repurposed complex on the west side of the city also boasts a restaurant and food hall. Add the cinema and library, and this is one spot in Amsterdam where visitors and locals intermingle naturally.

Bellamyplein 47 | hoteldehallen.com



### WHERE TO SHOP

Of course, cheese is a great souvenir for your loved ones back home – as long as it's in airtight wrapping. The Dutch are famous for their Gouda, but they've had a weak spot for French cheese for centuries. One veritable institution for French cheeses is the *Fromagerie Abraham Kef*.

The knowledgeable and patient staff lets customers taste different kinds of cheeses and assists them in making their selection. *Kef* also maintains a *proeflokaal*, or tasting hall, up north across the IJ River, where you can book tastings.

Van der Pekplein 1b | abrahamkef.nl

### WHERE TO EAT

The Netherlands' history as a colonial power is evident in the way Surinamese food has developed, combining ingredients and techniques from Indonesia, India, China, Africa, and South America. *Roti*, a classic dish loved by many, takes Indian-style pancakes and pairs them with a big serving of potatoes, beans, and a hearty curry gravy.

Bilderdijkstraat 193 | riaz.nl

Words by Koen Verhelst  
Publicity photos and by iStock

Ever-evolving Amsterdam is an urban playground that's a breeze to get around in and is always full of surprises.

Fly to  
Amsterdam  
from  
€149  
roundtrip



### A CLASSIC NOT TO MISS

The *Canvas* skyline bar just east of the city centre is somewhat of a new classic in Amsterdam. The building used to house the editors and reporters of the *Volkskrant* newspaper but has since been converted to a hotel, co-working space, and fancy bar with dazzling views of the city's towers. In fact, *Canvas* has been at this enviable location for much longer than the hotel. But the duo has since become a favourite with locals living in the area as well as visitors in search of something a bit different.

Wibautstraat 150 | volkshotel.nl



Photo by Adrie Mouthaan

### WHY NOT?

Cities all over the world have zoos featuring 'regular-sized' animals. Amsterdam is no different, with the Artis Zoo in a central location just east of the city centre. But right next to Artis you'll find a very different kind of collection: Micropia, which grows, cares for, and displays bacteria and microbes. Indeed, it's an entire museum devoted to the smallest creatures on Earth (and your body) located in a dimly-lit, slightly mind-bending space. Combination tickets with Artis are available, but keep an eye open for when Microbia will open again and under what conditions.

Plantage Kerklaan 38-40 | micropia.nl

SOAP

2 METRES

# WE CAN PROTECT EACH OTHER

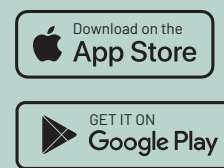
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# Point of view

Where to go in Iceland, according to equine photographer Līga Liepiņa.

Fly to  
**Reykjavik**  
from  
**€89**  
roundtrip



Gluggafoss waterfall

## My secret spot

‘Gluggafoss waterfall is located in southern Iceland, quite close to the main road, yet it is so often missed. Iceland is a country of waterfalls, and you can find one wherever you go, so why exactly Gluggafoss? Well, it’s tucked away in the beautiful Fljótsdalshlíð valley, and on a good day you’ll have stunning views from here over the infamous Eyjafjallajökull glacier. The waterfall itself has two levels and is also very picturesque. Massive cliffs surround the upper level, and, while the sound of the falls is quite loud, standing on the top level gives so much peace and serenity.’

Words by **Līga Valko**  
Photos courtesy of Līga Liepiņa



## Līga Liepiņa

instagram.com/liga.liepinaa  
Number of followers: 30.4k

Līga Liepiņa was born in Latvia, but she has lived in Iceland for more than half of her life. As a child, she was always obsessed with horses. After she was gifted her first riding lesson, she immediately knew that horses would play a massive role in her life. Liepiņa has been playing around with photography since she was a teenager, and several years ago she purchased her first professional camera, intending to get more into landscape photography. But she was surrounded by horses every day, so they became her main subject of photography.

After having done portrait photos of riders and their horses, Liepiņa soon realised that she would like to incorporate the stunning Icelandic landscape in her photography. Today, her main focus is on capturing the brave, wild-at-heart Icelandic horse in mesmerising landscapes.



Sólheimajökull glacier

## Other locations to check out:

- The Sólheimajökull glacier is only 2.5 hours’ drive from Reykjavik. Due to global warming and glacier retreat, the hike from the parking lot to the glacier gets longer and longer every year, but it’s worth a visit! Arrive in the late evening to experience the grandeur of this beautiful yet mysterious glacier. If you feel adventurous, book a guided glacier walk to explore the glacier and its ice formations.
- The Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon is the most iconic site in Iceland, and for good reason. There are not many places in the world where one can see massive icebergs that have broken off a glacier and are calmly floating in a lagoon. Seals can often be spotted swimming here and playing among the icebergs. Don’t forget to visit the famous diamond beach just on the other side of the road, where ice blocks have been washed back to shore. Head to the beach at sunrise, when the sun shines through the ice and creates a rather magical sight.

Words by **Lana Jūra**  
Photo by *iStock*

# Casanova’s Venice

Today, Giacomo Casanova is best known as one of the most famous lovers in history. But the famous Venetian was not only a great seducer – he was also an adventurer.

Venice has always been considered one of most magical and beautiful cities in the world. Anyone who has been there can tell you how saturated it is with genuine romanticism and intriguing secrets. Here, between the turquoise-blue waters of the canals, no one knows for sure at which point, nor where, truth turns into legend.

Among the most famous of Venetians, Giacomo Casanova (1725–1798) brought extra colour and excitement to the city’s mystical aura and gave rise to many of its legends. This gallant man has gone down in history as an unsurpassed master of seduction with a passionate and cunning character. Historical documents confirm that he was an erudite and impulsive intellectual who enjoyed writing, alchemy, and travelling; he also joined several secret organisations. Casanova charmed and enchanted not only women – he also befriended some of Europe’s most notable politicians, thinkers, and cultural figures of the day.

The story of his escape from the Piombi prison in the Palazzo Ducale – famous for its impenetrable walls and fortifications – became something of an international 18<sup>th</sup>-century bestseller. Casanova performed this impossible mission through the roof of the palace and with the help of the clergyman Marino Balbi and friends among the Venetian nobility, who sent a gondola to spirit him away.

Casanova’s adventures and sexual conquests have been immortalised in countless films, among them Federico Fellini’s masterpiece *Il Casanova di Federico Fellini* (1976), Édouard Niermans’ *Le Retour de Casanova* (1992) featuring Alain Delon in the lead role, and Lasse Hallström’s *Casanova* (2005). However, it’s more exciting to head to Venice in person and see the iconic locations associated with the great adventurer for oneself.

Fly to  
**Venice**  
from  
**€109**  
roundtrip



## DISCOVER THE HIGHLIGHTS AND HISTORY OF THE ICONIC VENETIAN

### Campo San Samuele and surrounding area

Many stories from Casanova’s childhood and youth revolve around Campo San Samuele. Back then, this was an elite area and home to Venice’s wealthy aristocrats. Casanova was born on Calle della Commedia (now Calle Malipiero) and baptised in the small San Samuele Church. Because both of his parents were actors, he was raised by his grandmother Marzia Baldissera Farussi. As a teenager, Casanova frequently visited the ornate residence next door, the Byzantine-style Palazzo Malipiero constructed between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and home of the senator Alvise II. But his friendship with the senator fell apart due to a woman. Today, the Casanova Museum & Experience is located in the palazzo.  
**Campo San Samuele, San Marco 30124**

### Caffè Florian on Piazza San Marco

Find this café at the very heart of the city under the Procuratie Nuove arcade on the south side of St. Mark’s Square. It is considered Europe’s oldest café, having been opened on December 29, 1720, by Floriano Francesconi under the name *Alla Venezia Trionfante* (Triumphant Venice). Thus Venice was introduced to the newly fashionable coffee culture. As Casanova wrote in his memoirs, he came to the *Caffè Florian* ‘to see and be seen by others’. Savour a Cioccolata Casanova (hot chocolate, mint cream, and chocolate shavings) and special Casanova’s Breakfast along with the café’s ornate, historical atmosphere.  
**Piazza San Marco 57, 30124**

### Casino Venier

From *Caffè Florian*, cross St. Mark’s Square and wind your way through the shopping zone of Le Mercerie in the direction of the Rialto Bridge. About halfway to the bridge, you’ll come across the legendary Casino Venier. The ornate palazzo is currently home to the Alliance Française cultural organisation, but, in an effort to restore the building’s 18<sup>th</sup>-century aura, it also includes a salon dedicated to Casanova. In his day, a *casino* was a small salon where guests arrived in masks, organised intimate meetings and entertainment, gambled, danced, and also discussed the theatre and the new ideas introduced by French philosophers.  
**Ponte dei Bareteri, San Marco 4939**



## Opposites attract

The colours of the year create an energetic unity of opposites. Serious, stable grey together with sunny yellow brings a peaceful and harmonious yet also very happy atmosphere to any home.

Style by Ieva Čecina  
Publicity photos and by iStock



Laconic concrete-coloured flowerpot, 14 cm, *Hay*, EUR 15

Story tealight holder, *Normann Copenhagen*, EUR 53.50



Glass pumpkin by Oiva Toikka, 100x135 mm, *Iittala*, EUR 250



Refined *Medusa Lumiere* whisky glass set, *Versace*, EUR 145

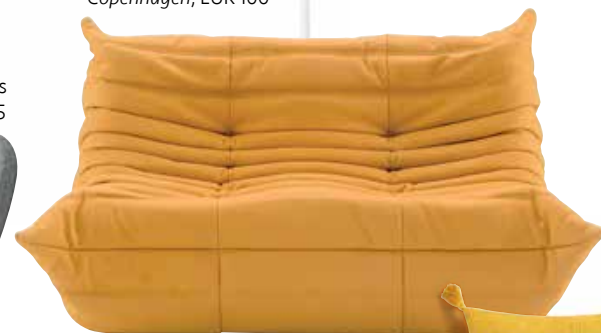


Fun yellow wall lamp, *Normann Copenhagen*, EUR 100



Vintage-style rug, 200x300 cm, *Zara*, EUR 169

Lightweight linen curtains, 120x250 cm, *H&M Home*, EUR 79.99



Togo double sofa – a design classic, *Ligne Roset*, EUR 4990

Decorative pillow, 45x45 cm, *Zara Home*, EUR 17.99



Elegant *Liva* rocking chair, *Bloomingville*, EUR 369



Woven basket with handles, 35 cm, *H&M*, EUR 19.99



Oval *Medusa Rhapsody* serving platter, *Versace*, EUR 205



Floral *Early Bird* dessert plate, 21 cm, *Pip Studio*, EUR 9.95



Tale wire fruit bowl, 31x29x21 cm, *Serax*, EUR 92.50



*Muuto* coffee table, 59 cm diameter x 36 cm high, EUR 559

## Welcome on board

The German capital greets long-awaited Berlin Brandenburg Airport, which has begun sending travellers up into the sky and welcoming them back on ground.

Words by Olga Dolina  
Photo by Marcus Bredt



‘If I were to say what is, next to peace, more important to me than anything else, then without qualification my answer would be: freedom.’ In hopes of regaining the freedom of travel, this inspiring quote from German chancellor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Willy Brandt (1913–1992) welcomes passengers to the new Berlin Brandenburg Airport Willy Brandt, which is named after the acclaimed politician. The inaugural flight from BER (its IATA airport code) took off on October 31, 2020.

Located 18 kilometres south of the Berlin city centre in Schönefeld in the German state of Brandenburg, Berlin Brandenburg Airport replaces the Berlin Tegel and Schönefeld airports and is currently the only airport operating in the German capital. With an area the size of about 2000 football fields, BER is now Germany’s third-largest airport after Frankfurt am Main and Munich.

Back in 1998, the architectural competition for its construction was won by acclaimed Hamburg-based *Gerkan, Marg and Partners Architects* (gmp). The key features of the building are modularity and maximal functional flexibility, in which all of the elements – such as the passenger terminal, maintenance, service and cargo areas, and Airport City situated between the parallel takeoff and landing runways – are aligned along the overall axial system. The clear lines of the

edifice are enhanced by a colonnade motif and form a particularly coherent transition between the architecture and the landscape of vast open space surrounding the airport.

The newly built railway, road, and aviation hub intersects at a single point, shortening the distances between different transport modes and making navigation easier and more comfortable. For instance, the separation of departure and arrival passengers on different terminal levels is organised via three-storey bridges that lead to the gates. The check-in counters are covered in walnut panelling, which adds much more cosiness to the formal ambience one usually encounters in airports.

The high roof over the impressive 220-metre-long hall of Terminal 1 measures 49,000 square metres. It continues outside the building as a massive canopy structure sheltering the outdoor drop-off area. The clear and open spatial arrangement of the terminal hall, which has a nearly 20-metre-high façade, gives the cohesive, light-flooded space a welcome airiness. Its structure is based on a pre-tensioned cable system in which the only structural members are horizontal profiles, thereby giving passengers unobstructed views of the entire panorama outside.

[ber.berlin-airport.de](http://ber.berlin-airport.de)



# New ways of travel

Nomadism can be applied to anything – in fact, the pandemic is giving it a boost.

Words by  
Koen Verhelst  
Publicity photo

From the air, the *Wild Coast Tented Lodge* on the southern coast of Sri Lanka looks more like a group of bright white boulders. It's only the pools that give away the fact that we're looking at a hotel here. The restaurant consists of two large, bulging structures made of dark wood that partially cover the pool. 'We took our inspiration from the big boulders in nearby Yala National Park,' says architect Olav Bruin. 'The monkeys climb onto it as if it were an actual boulder!' Bruin is the creative director of the *Nomadic Resorts* architecture firm and is based in the Dutch port city of Rotterdam. He designs resorts like this one in Sri Lanka, and so far, he has mainly worked in Southeast Asia and southern Africa. The concept behind the resorts is that they are not only anchored in their natural and cultural surroundings but also blend into them. 'Whenever I visit a new location for an assignment, I collect pebbles, fossils, animals bones, flowers. We also look at the design in local arts and crafts and analyse the traditional building techniques. These have evolved for centuries to deal with bright sun, heavy rains, and hot temperatures, and often the traditional techniques work way better than air conditioning.' The nomadic shepherds of Central Asia and fishermen of Oceania serve as a template for Bruin and his colleagues, who named their bureau in honour of 'people who move through the landscape while leaving as little trace as possible'. As the world slowly but surely moves out of the pandemic, Bruin believes several trends that were already picking up steam beforehand will now truly settle in the minds of travellers. 'People

will book much less randomly and make an accommodation count. The stories behind resorts will become much more important, as will sustainability. And make no mistake, this kind of concept can easily work in Europe as well; the design would just be different to accommodate for the climate. Imagine customising your own route from one treehouse or glamorous tent to the next. Stay one night in a treehouse on a tiny island in the Swedish countryside, and the next day a kayak is waiting for the journey to the next camp.' The same could work in the Mediterranean or the Alps. But what about those contemporary nomads who type away on their ultraportable laptops in Medellín, Mumbai, Tijuana, and Tallinn? With pandemic restrictions tying them down, digital nomads the world over have now been able to get to know a new city, island, or beach town for a year or longer. It's an exotic, unpredictable lifestyle that some office workers might find tempting after spending months isolated between the same four walls of their home office. And with employers more accepting of remote work, perhaps the digital nomad is finally here to stay. Bruin certainly thinks so: 'It's a small but growing group that we expect will grow after the pandemic.' *Nomadic Resorts* is hoping to set up a try-out hotel on Mauritius early next year and thereby become hotel owners themselves. 'The principles remain the same: to anchor and to blend in. We want to make sure local enterprises benefit from this hotel, so we will not have our own restaurant. Instead, we'll be working with deliveries from local restaurants and support services that locals also use.'



**Olav Bruin** is an architect from the Netherlands and the creative director of *Nomadic Resorts*. The bureau was established in 2013, and its three specialists are based in Rotterdam, Cape Town, and Mauritius. Bruin specialises in bamboo construction and has worked in exotic locations such as the Maldives, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. The team effort that built the *Wild Coast Tented Lodge* in Yala, Sri Lanka, received the 2020 AHEAD Award in the Gamechanger category for being a sustainable and low-budget solution.

## CASPER THE GLOW LIGHT Sleep tight

Our bodies sometimes struggle to get into sleep mode due to nightstand lamps or gadgets that emit a lot of blue light, which sends the mind a signal that it's still daytime. But this bedside lamp emits a warm light and slowly dims out to help you fall asleep. In the morning, it slowly lights up again, thus helping you to wake up without the disturbing noise of an alarm. Many more features can be programmed via smartphone. USD 229.99 (approximately EUR 189) casper.com



ATOMI SMART COFFEE MAKER  
Wake up with coffee

Smart kitchen appliances, such as this coffee maker you can control via smartphone app, are one of the perks of the *Wi-Fi* and *Bluetooth* age. Pre-program the brewing time to fit your early-morning schedule, and wake up to the aroma of fresh coffee. It even has voice control that works with *Amazon Alexa* and *Google Assistant*. USD 89.99 (approximately EUR 74) atomismart.com

## THE NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

**Keep your mind sharp**  
If you spend too much time on social networks just scrolling through the content with no real agenda, maybe it's time to make a change. Replace the social media apps on your phone's home screen with a crossword puzzle from *The New York Times*. Keep your eyes busy and your mind sharp with a new crossword every day. Monthly subscription fee Available on the *App Store* and *Google Play*.



Words by Viesturs Kundziņš  
Publicity photos

## Treat yourself These smart self-care gifts will change the way you relax when working from home.

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Reading a book is one of the great gifts of humanity, allowing us to dive into fantasy worlds or gain new knowledge of all kinds. But regular paper books can be a burden to carry around. This slim, light e-book reader stores hundreds of books on a single device and has a battery that lasts for weeks. What's even better – download the free app to read the same books on your phone and tablet as well. From USD 119.99 (approximately EUR 99) kindle.com Free app available on the *App Store* and *Google Play*.



### WOOLIG SLIPPERS

**Comfy feet**  
There's a saying in Latvia: 'The main thing is to keep your feet warm.' These attractive, comfortable, cosy handmade wool slippers in a variety of colours and all sizes are just what you need for that. They'll also serve you well in summertime, because the natural, breathable fibre captures moisture and releases it into the air, keeping your feet dry and comfortable at all times. EUR 59.99 woolig.com





# A memorable evening

Despite lockdowns and isolation, creating unique and special dining experiences is still a thing these days.



At a time when virtual cooking classes and delivery services seem to be the only food trends around, experts are encouraging us to not give up on enjoying life in person. Accordingly, special dining experiences have been named one of the hottest food trends of the year.

Although dining experiences may at first glance seem like just knee-jerk reactions to the pandemic and a form of escapism from isolated life at home and other restrictions, for several years now there has been a substantial change in the way people view the act of dining out. According to the *International Journal of Hospitality*, if in the past we perceived the act of going out to eat as a way to obtain the nutrients needed to continue our day, then now we often see it as a way to connect with other people, build a sense of community, and create an experience for ourselves and others. We pursue memorable experiences that we can share with our friends and relatives.

How has this changed what restaurants are offering? More and more, they're presenting us with exclusive types of dining experiences. Think tasting menus, food-and-wine pairings, private dining experiences that go above and beyond in terms of ingredients and access, allowing guests to be both fancy and indulgent. Some restaurants are embracing minimalism and sustainability, while the experiences at others are more tech-forward. But they're united by the fact that creativity is quite mesmerising. There seems to be no limit to the new, cutting-edge dining concepts on offer. Just be sure to book ahead!

## Creativity is quite mesmerising

Words by  
Zane Nikodemusa  
Publicity photo

## UNIQUE DINING EXPERIENCES IN LATVIA WORTH EXPLORING

### Pavāru māja

Surrounded by nature, *Pavāru māja* in Līgatne is a place for gastronomic adventures and becoming acquainted with the flavours of nature in this part of the world. Here, just an hour's drive from Riga, chef Ēriks Dreibants and friends have restored an elegant old building where they adhere to the slow-food philosophy as they create meals based on foods from local farmers, producers, and sustainable foraging in the nearby forests and meadows. The gourmet menu features a four-course lunch and six-course dinner to savour together with your nearest and dearest. [instagram.com/pavarumaja](https://www.instagram.com/pavarumaja)

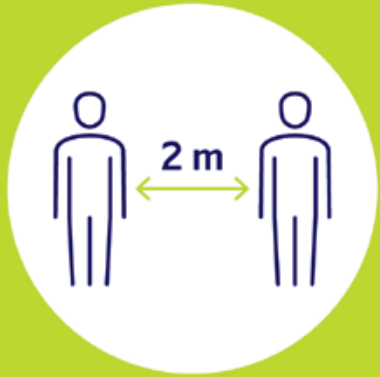
### Skudras metropole

The *Skudras metropole* performance and event venue is a pioneer on the Latvian scene for unique dining experiences. Its dinner sessions organised by creative director Gundega Skudriņa delight guests not only with their meticulously planned scenarios and inspiring locations (old manor parks, botanical gardens, even wild beaches) but also with the dizzying technologies appearing at and around the dinner table. One of this partnership's projects, called *Spoguļnamiņš* (Mirror House), featured a unique accommodation suspended above a river and won second place in the Grand Prix category and first place in the Brand Experience category at the 2020 BEA World festival of events and live communication. [FB/skudrasmetropole](https://www.facebook.com/skudrasmetropole)

### Vakars uz ezera

The exclusive *Vakars uz ezera* (Evening on the Lake) pop-up restaurant is a summer-season hit located on a raft floating on Kālezers, one of Latvia's most beautiful lakes. It serves a six-course dinner prepared right there on the spot and complemented by a special selection of wines. The meals are made by some of Latvia's best chefs, and the experience is supplemented with performances by talented musicians. These evenings on the lake begin about three hours before sundown so that guests can enjoy dessert against the backdrop of a vivid sunset. [instagram.com/dinner\\_on\\_the\\_lake](https://www.instagram.com/dinner_on_the_lake)

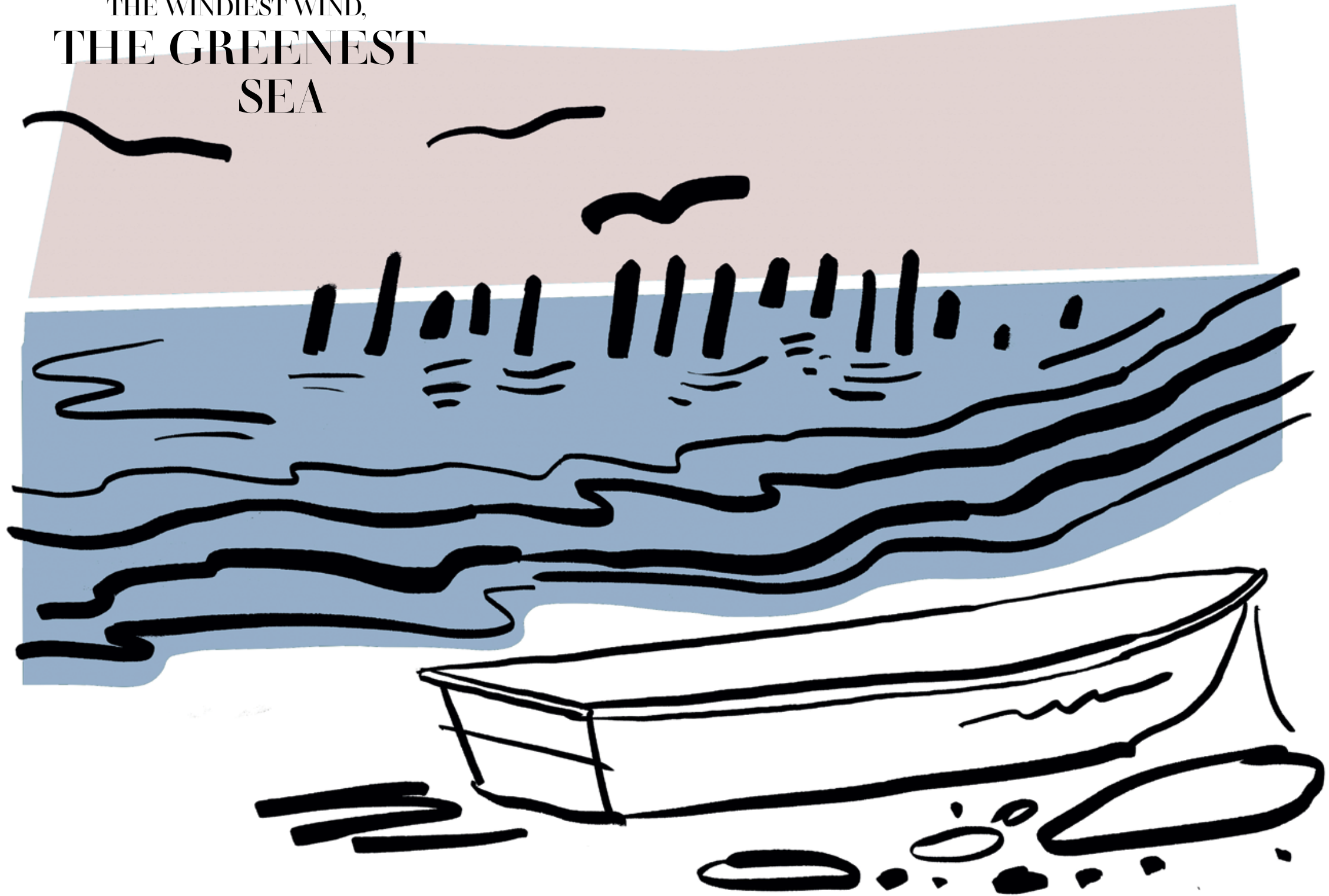
# Travel with confidence!





Words by Ilze Pole  
Photos by Jānis Mednis  
Illustration by Agnese Tauriņa

# THE WARMEST WARMTH, THE WINDIEST WIND, THE GREENEST SEA



The warmest warmth is that of a kitchen heated by a wood stove. Such stoves can still be found in old rural homes, as long as they have not been swept away during remodelling to make space for modern kitchen gadgets. I grew up in a house with a stove like that, and tonight in Kolka there's also one at 'Ūši', the guest house I'm staying at just a couple hundred metres from the seashore. The shore of the Gulf of Riga, to be precise. The Baltic Sea – or 'the big sea', as the locals call it – is on the other side of Cape Kolka.

It's late January, and I see a snowstorm approaching as I make my way to Kolka, the northernmost village in western Latvia. The wind blows the snow around, turning the pines and spruces white, and when I glimpse the sea every now and then from the road, the water looks as grey as the sky. Fierce. But the strokes of lush green in the tree branches remind me who's the real winner of the storm.

I've never been to Kolka in winter. Or in spring. Kolka is where I go in August, every year. I go alone, and I always stay in the same house, in the same room. There I'm not bothered by anyone. Kolka is the last stop if it's the sea you're looking for.

The ceiling in my room in that old fisherman's house is so low I can touch it with my hand. The sun shines in all day long, and the sea is just beyond the dunes. August mornings are cool, and the sunsets smear the sky with all possible shades of orange and red as if it were blood after a battle. During the day, though, the air is hot and I lie on the beach, no one else around. I sleep in the afternoon and have a beer in the evening. And I speak to no one for a couple of days. I'm happy to have this place. Because eventually I feel an overwhelming abundance of regained energy and am ready to return. I want to return. To whomever and whatever.

But this winter afternoon the rough winds and fine snow make my walk along the beach almost impossible. I don't recognise it. I'm not sure anymore which path across the dunes will take me back to my house, and I decide to return to the village through the abandoned fish processing plant. No one is there, either. Only ruins. Suddenly I spot some writing on a wall – it says 'waste of crime', which somehow seems so relevant to this setting. Back home, back in that warm kitchen, I spend almost all evening talking with the owner of the house, Dženeta Marinska, about times long gone and how they've shaped the present. And in a way, Marinska's story reflects the story of this whole quiet, tranquil village. But in reality it has been neither quiet nor tranquil...





## The story of Kolka has been neither quiet nor tranquil...

**THE FISHERMAN’S HOUSE I RETURN TO, CALLED ‘ŪŠI’, STANDS AT THE OLDER END OF THE VILLAGE, CLOSER TO CAPE KOLKA, AND WAS FIRST MENTIONED IN THE LOCAL CHURCH BOOKS IN 1770.** Marinska’s family has lived in it since 1902, when her great-grandfather bought the house from the local estate. Back then, Latvia was a part of the Russian Empire, but most of its land was owned by large estates, which in turn rented out smaller parcels to local farmers. It was almost impossible for farmers to afford land of their own, so Marinska assumes that her great-grandfather earned the money by working on merchant ships.

In 1857, the Latvian economist and politician Krišjānis Valdemārs (at the time still a student at Tartu University) published an article about attracting Latvians and Estonians to seafaring, thus himself attracting the attention of the Russian authorities as an expert in that field. Valdemārs was soon invited to work in Saint Petersburg. In 1864 he founded Latvia’s first naval school in Ainaži, which trained young seamen, including captains and helmsmen. Valdemārs also advocated establishing a shipbuilding industry in Latvia and Estonia, and by

the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, 550 long-distance vessels had been built in Latvia. Likewise, Valdemārs took part in the formation of the first Latvian joint-stock shipping companies, because he saw the sea as a way of increasing his nation’s prosperity. This tide was felt in Kolka as well. Marinska’s grandfather also worked on merchant ships in his youth. Only after establishing a family of his own did he switch to fishing, thus working nearer to home.

Marinska herself grew up in Kolka and as a child spent lots of time in this house, where her grandmother lived alone for many years after her grandfather passed away. Vera Andersone had survived two world wars. At the end of the second of those wars, she and her family were forced to abandon ‘Ūši’ due to intense fighting still going on in the area. But they were lucky to be able to return to the same house, which had survived the war and also escaped being nationalised by the Soviet regime. Andersone, who had raised five children, remained energetic, optimistic, and positive – and smoking unfiltered cigarettes – to the end of her days.

**AS YOU LEAVE THE ‘ŪŠI’ HOMESTEAD, THERE ARE TWO QUITE EXTRAORDINARY BUILDINGS TO ITS RIGHT AND ITS LEFT, BOTH FULL OF HISTORY.** On the right is the Kolka Lutheran Church, dedicated in December of 1886. Like many churches throughout Latvia, it was vandalised during the Soviet era and used as a waste storage site by the local kolkhoz. But in 1991, very soon after Latvia regained independence, local residents and congregation members raised money to restore the



church. The church also has an unusual altarpiece, a modern triptych painted by Latvian artist Helēna Heinrihsone and donated by her to the church in 1993. The right panel depicts the hands of Saint Peter, the left panel the City of God described in the Book of Revelation, and the centre panel shows Christ on the cross. The altarpiece brings an accent of bright colour to the church’s otherwise modest interior. During the restoration, a time capsule document was found in the church. It stated that the site of the Lutheran church in Kolka had changed already three times as well as the fact that in recent years many congregation members had migrated to the tsar’s faith (as the Orthodox Church was referred to at the time). The Orthodox Church of the Nativity in Kolka, dating to 1892, stands just a five-minute walk from the Lutheran church, on the other side of the ‘Ūši’ driveway. Conversion to Orthodoxy was often not linked to religious persuasion but instead seen as a way to obtain land, which the tsar had promised to all who converted. And the locals gladly did so. Kolka was the only coastal village in these parts where an Orthodox church was built. The congregation was eventually forced to sell the nearby Orthodox school in order to fund the restoration of its church, which had also suffered significant damage during the Soviet era.

Yet another story involves Kolka’s Roman Catholic congregation. In fact, it’s believed that the very first Christian church in Latvia may have been built right here in Kolka – more than 900 years ago, when Christianity was first introduced to these lands. However, this is still disputed by historians. In any

case, the Catholic congregation was reestablished in Kolka 30 years ago but did not have a church of its own. So the Kolkans decided that if they couldn’t build a church, at least they could move a church. And so, in 1997 they moved the Grīpi Catholic Church (constructed in 1935) from Saka on Latvia’s western coast, deconstructing it log by log and then putting it back together again in Kolka. The floor, windows, and roof were restored and the tower built anew; the confessional is the original from Grīpi. The relocated church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea.

A small, unnamed road leads past the church to the sea. On the right side by the water stands *Līcis-93*, one of the largest fish processing facilities along the coast. It currently employs 240 people. Fishing and fish processing has long been the main industry in Kolka. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Estonian manufacturers of Russian origin managed the fish processing industry. The first product was sprats salted in a spiced solution; they were called ‘Reval anchovies’, and sold all across Russia (*Reval is the former name of Tallinn – Ed.*). Up until the First World War, almost every village along the coast had its own fish processing facility, although they were sometimes little more than a wooden shed.

After the war, fishermen established cooperatives to share fishing boats and other gear, which was expensive to maintain by individual fishermen. Following the Second World War and the founding of collective enterprises known as kolkhozes, Kolka became quite rich. The introduction of new fishing methods in the 1950s allowed a single boat to catch





Fishing in Kolka.

## Fishermen were paid by catch volume, so it was in their interest to fish as much as possible

up to 40 tonnes of fish in a day. The boats were so full they almost sank before reaching the shore.

The economy back then was ruled by the strict implementation of five-year plans. No prohibitions or limits, only plans that needed fulfilling. The larger the catches, the better; the more quickly this was done, the better. Fulfilling a five-year plan in four or even three years meant bonuses and awards as well as travel tickets to Soviet resorts. Fishermen were paid by catch volume, so it was in their interest to fish as much as possible. In fact, they hauled in so many fish that the facilities were unable to process them all...and some were simply buried in the ground. As a result, fish stocks quickly decreased. But fortunately, limits were eventually introduced and these practices came to an end.

At the same time, however, this entire coast – from Nīca in southwest Latvia up to Kolka and down again to Mērsrags on the Gulf of Riga – was part of a special border zone of the Soviet Union. Seeing as this was the extreme western border of the USSR, Soviet border guards constantly patrolled the coast, and the only civilians allowed in the zone were residents. Any relatives wishing to visit required special permits. Cape Kolka was completely off limits. ‘When I was going to school in Riga, my mother

had to send me a special invitation to come home for a visit,’ remembers Marinska, the guest house owner. ‘I then had to submit the invitation to the militia office and wait for a permit. As a first-degree relative, I received a permit that was valid for one year. By the mid-1980s, though, I tried bringing a couple of girlfriends with me who didn’t have permits, and they were made to get off the bus in Roja. But they just took a detour around the militia post and came to visit me and my family anyway. By that time the regime was no longer as strict, and I don’t remember the border guards tilling the beach anymore to see whether anyone had walked on the sand – that was back in the 1950s and 60s.

‘But we stayed away from the closed zones anyway,’ continues Marinska. ‘We had been taught since childhood that going to Cape Kolka wasn’t allowed, and we obeyed. We only swam at the one public beach in the village, which closed at eight in the evening. Otherwise, the border guards could arrest you for attempting to cross the border of the Soviet Union, and that was a serious offence. Some of my acquaintances had even been taken to the police station for questioning.’ After all, Gotland is a mere 230 kilometres from Kolka...

After the Soviet army left the special zone, people could again visit Cape Kolka, as well as the entire coast. This was a big and emotionally significant event for Latvians, including the local residents. The permit system was abolished, and a great many people from all across Latvia visited Kolka in the first years following independence, in the early 1990s.



An old fisherman pulling his boat out of the sea at Sikrags. Photo taken around 2004.

**CAPE KOLKA... THERE’S A SPECIAL FEELING AT THE CAPE ON THOSE EARLY AUGUST MORNINGS WHEN I’VE BEEN THERE. THE AIR IS MOTIONLESS.** There might be a fishing vessel or two in the distance, but otherwise the water is usually smooth as a mirror. That’s what tranquillity looks like. But in fact, navigating through this part of the Baltic Sea is dangerous. The Irbe Strait, which is 29 kilometres wide and 60 kilometres long, separates the Kurzeme peninsula of Latvia from Saaremaa, Estonia’s largest island. As I’m later told by Dainis Briedis, a captain with more than thirty years of experience on merchant and fishing vessels, this part of the sea has always demanded special attention from seafarers due to the risk of running aground. Even despite the advantages of modern technologies, Kolka Lighthouse still plays a vital role for ships. And the nearby village, historically called Domesnes and one of the oldest mentioned settlements in Latvia, was established for the purpose of maintaining the lighthouse.

In earlier times, bonfires were lit along the shore to warn sailors. A lighthouse at Kolka was first mentioned in historical documents in 1532. It was probably originally a wooden tower with a bonfire (and later, oil and kerosene lamps) at the top. Eventually, a second, higher tower was built, and the two lights situated one above the other signalled to seafarers that they must turn away from the land. But even so, shipwrecks were common. In addition, the sea approached closer and closer, threatening the towers. In the 1860s, a ‘fire ship’ filled with lanterns

was set up at the tip of Cape Kolka, but this was also difficult to maintain, especially in storms. Around this time, the Russian Empire began significantly developing its seafaring capabilities. After assessing the condition of lighthouses throughout Russia, it decided that a lighthouse urgently needed to be built at Cape Kolka. Thus, construction of an artificial island began in 1872 about six kilometres from the current shore. Local fishermen transported rocks to the site by boat – and on carts in winter, over the ice – to build the island. A temporary lighthouse was finished three years later, with the permanent lighthouse unveiled in 1884.

The tower was built in Saint Petersburg and transported to Kolka by ship. It began to be automated in the mid-1970s and today no longer needs to be permanently manned. In the past, however, employees lived on the artificial island for up to a month at a time. In the winter, they arrived across the ice by horse-drawn wagon, bicycle, and even homemade ice yachts. But the last time the sea froze all the way to the lighthouse was a decade ago, in 2011.

There are many legends in these parts about bandits lighting bonfires in the Blue Hills of Šlītere to misguide ships, causing them to run aground, and then looting them. Including the sailors’ boots. That’s how the Kolka bandits gained the nickname ‘leg cutters’. When the corpses of sailors washed onto shore, they were usually too bloated to remove the boots. So the bandits cut off their legs, dried them, and then the boots slid off easily. In order to protect the goods on wrecked ships from being looted when





On the way to Kolka Lighthouse.

## Cape Kolka and the surrounding area is a significant migratory route for birds

washed ashore, the Dundaga estate, which owned the lands here, was obliged to collect and store them for a specified amount of time. Almost every village along this coast had special buildings for storing such goods.

One of the biggest known shipwrecks in this area took place in 1625. A Swedish squadron of 14 sailing ships led by admiral Clas Larsson Fleming was heading from Riga to Stockholm in September of that year. A nighttime storm arose, and ten of the ships ran aground at Kolka. One of the wrecks was discovered about 40 metres from shore in 1991, which led to closer investigation. Fleming's report of the wreck to the king was found in the Swedish archives. Among other things, it states that Fleming wrote to the locals and warned them to not loot the goods from the wrecked ships, otherwise they would soon 'learn the meaning of the sword and fire'. The wreck, presumably of the flagship *Gustavus*, was granted underwater cultural monument status in 2014, the only such site in Latvian territorial waters. It is located in the sea opposite the Kolka Lutheran Church.

**IT IS SAID THAT THE LIVONIANS ARE LIKE ROCKS UNDER WHICH WATER DOES NOT**

**FLOW. THEY ARE TOUGH PEOPLE. IT'S DIFFICULT TO MOVE THEM FROM WHERE THEY STAND OR TO CONVINCE THEM OF ANYTHING.** The ancestors of these people arrived in the area of present-day Latvia around the late Bronze Age. Livonians also lived on the Vidzeme coast of the Baltic Sea, north of Riga. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onward, however, the Latgalians and Couronians living further inland gradually assimilated the Livonians (who speak a Finno-Ugric language) in their vicinity. But the Livonian language has nevertheless left its mark on modern Latvian, for example, in the characteristic stress on the first syllable of all words.

But a story about northern Kurzeme without mentioning the Livonians, who were described in Nestor's *Chronicle* (early 12<sup>th</sup> century) as brave fighters, would mean leaving out an important part of this area's identity. Unfortunately, the Livonian population dramatically decreased over the centuries, and by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century they remained as a homogeneous ethnic group only in the handful of villages between Oviši and Ģipka in northern Kurzeme. Today, it is estimated that only about 250 Livonians live in Latvia. However, it is impossible to determine how many Latvians, especially those from the coastal regions, have Livonian ancestors.

The two world wars contributed to the Livonians' decline. They were forced to leave their homes in the coastal villages, some died in battle, many settled elsewhere and never returned to their ancestral homes. After the Second World War, Soviet military



The village of Sikrags.

bases were established in Livonian villages along the north Kurzeme coast. Local fisherman were prohibited from fishing in the sea; people from the small villages were forced to move to the larger towns of Ventspils, Kolka, and Roja, where fishing was possible. The small fishing villages became emptier and emptier: Lūžņa, Lielirbe, and Jaunciems were completely abandoned.

And yet the Livonians have survived and still cling to their culture, language, and traditions. Livonian photographer Jānis Mednis estimates that about 100 people in Latvia speak the Livonian language to some extent. He himself has studied the language intensely for several years. 'I remember my kitchen when I was studying abroad – I had lots of little notes with new Livonian words pasted to the refrigerator,' Mednis tells me when I visit him in Roja, where he recently moved.

'I realised that the only way to keep a language alive is to keep speaking it. We sing songs in this language, we recite poems, we talk a lot about how Livonian is dying out, but we aren't doing the main thing, which is speaking it on a daily basis, in the family. But that's what we need to do. The main thing is to make the decision that this is what we're going to do, because it's very easy to assimilate. But who's going to keep the language alive, if not us? We need to begin with ourselves. And that's why we speak Livonian in the family on a daily basis.' Mednis speaks only in Livonian with his newborn daughter, Kuldi. A Livonian textbook for children, titled *Kūldalāpš* (meaning 'golden child'), will soon be published as well.

While researching his family tree, Mednis learned that both of his parents are of Livonian ancestry. His father was born in nearby Vandzene, but his mother is of Finno-Ugric stock from the Vidzeme region. But the family did not maintain Livonian traditions, nor did Mednis' parents speak the language. Mednis began to take interest in his heritage only after reading about Livonian festivals in the press. 'I then began looking closer at my own family's history, learning about the traditions, attending language courses. Later, I studied the Livonian language under professor Tiit-Rein Viitso at Tartu University as well as at various summer courses and camps, also with private tutors,' Mednis explains. Now he organises such camps himself.

When we look at the photos in his archive, Mednis tells me about the exhibition featuring the Livonian coast and Gotland he recently had at the National Library of Latvia. When restrictions allow, the show will come here to northern Kurzeme and also travel to Gotland and Stockholm. The main theme in the images is the similarities between both coasts: the fishing traditions, the vernacular architecture, even the facial features of the residents.

Mednis also directs a Livonian musical ensemble. Called Nurmorkestõr, they gather once a week for rehearsals and will soon release their first album, which will feature contemporary arrangements of Livonian folk songs. I hear a demo version of it as we look at the photos of fishing villages. One of them, Košrags, is listed as a national cultural monument due to its traditional architecture. The first Livonian school, which operated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>





The park has also been referred to as the open-air museum of the formation of the Baltic Sea

century, was located in Košrags. Nearby Sikrags, one of the oldest Livonian settlements, is also a national cultural monument.

‘See, this homestead still has a smokehouse,’ says Mednis, pointing to a picture. Smokehouses were often made of old boats. When a boat was no longer seaworthy, it was cut in half, and the two sides were propped up against each other. There the fisherman kept his fishing implements and also smoked the fish. Such smokehouses can also be seen at the Roja farmers’ market, where local producers sell their products in the summer.

‘Our character tends to be unbending, even stubborn,’ Mednis says. ‘A Livonian is quite likely a reserved type of person, but at the same time much more impulsive and temperamental than the typical Latvian. And in harmony with nature. Kind of a loner. Feels best on his own homestead by the sea.’

**AND IT’S THIS PRISTINE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THAT’S POSSIBLY THE LIVONIAN COAST’S GREATEST TREASURE. THE SEA OF GREEN FOREST HERE IS IMMENSE AND ALSO INCLUDES ŠLĪTERE NATIONAL PARK (SNP).** This is the smallest of Latvia’s four national parks, and, thanks to the

former closed border zone, its history also differs significantly. SNP was founded in 1923 as a nature reserve covering only 1000 hectares around the Šlītere Lighthouse. Today, the park encompasses more than 16,000 hectares.

I meet Andra Ratkeviča, an education specialist with the Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia, at the Šlītere Lighthouse. She leads me into the former generator building, which has been transformed into an education centre. She has been working here since 1994, when she moved to this area after finishing college.

‘The unique thing about this park is that it still has a natural forest,’ says Ratkeviča. ‘The park is almost 100 years old, and it has remained undisturbed by human activity for all of that time. It was a remote area before then, too, and people didn’t interfere much with the natural processes here. Even after the big storm of 1969, when wind speeds reached 42 metres per second and many trees were knocked down, everything was left as it was, allowing the forest ecosystem to deal with the consequences of the storm on its own.’

A few holdovers from the Holocene Climate Optimum have survived in SNP – more precisely, the Baltic ivy and the yew (*Taxus baccata*). They were also the main reason why this part of the forest was singled out as a nature reserve almost a century ago. However, today it’s usually the unusual orchids and rare, protected insects and mosses that specialists from around the world come here to study. Among the other things visitors can see and appreciate at SNP are ramsons, or wild garlic, in early summer



and stands of ostrich ferns at the height of summer. However, the diversity of invertebrates here is a particular treat for nature researchers.

SNP has also been referred to as the open-air museum of the formation of the Baltic Sea. This sea is geologically very young, having formed only after the most recent ice age. The Blue Hills at Šlītere are in fact the ancient shore of the Baltic Ice Lake – the oldest stage of the Baltic Sea. Another shore, that of the Littorina Sea, formed about 6000 years ago and, as the sea receded, it created a unique ten-kilometre-wide landscape of dunes several kilometres long (nowadays covered with pine forest) alternating with narrow, boggy valleys. Driving from Kolka to Dundaga, you’ll notice this wavy terrain quite easily. In fact, the landscape is similar along the whole coast from Roja to Ventspils, not just in the park.

SNP was located within the Soviet Union’s closed border zone, and specialists at the park view this positively, because the isolation added an extra layer of protection to the forest. The Iron Curtain that divided eastern and western Europe was more than 12,000 kilometres long. In some places it was physically visible, as in the case of the Berlin Wall, but in other places, such as here, it was simply an area with very limited human activity.

Thanks to recent nature conservation efforts, this area is now considered an ecological corridor. Much is being done to ensure that the European Green Belt initiative (which SNP joined ten years ago) gains the support of politicians and spatial planners and that this band of green is not divided

or interrupted by various economic activities. May it remain a corridor for species, from large carnivores to tiny mosses, in which to move and thrive and be protected, and may it be left in its natural state, as a treasure.

Park visitors are welcome to explore this unique area on the nature trails. The anthropological load – that is, pressure from humans – has increased here in recent decades, especially along the shore. But Cape Kolka and the surrounding area is a significant migratory route for birds; in spring, one can sometimes witness several thousand birds flying past in a single hour, many of which stop here for a quick snack. Some, such as terns and the common sandpiper, even settle down and make their nests behind tufts of grass in the dunes. But they are disturbed by humans and their movements, as well as their unleashed dogs. Ornithologists have noted that some bird populations are decreasing noticeably due to the presence of humans. That said, the best time to come to Kolka for some bird-watching is in April and May as well as September and October.

When spending time in nature, remember to ‘pack it in, pack it out’. In other words, leave no trace. Accordingly, there are no waste containers in SNP, and all visitors are asked to take their water bottles and other garbage out of the park and dispose of them properly. It is a step in trying to control the waste problem in the park, although Ratkeviča says the situation in SNP is still relatively good compared with other national parks in the country and various green areas near cities, where people still throw out their rubbish in the forest.





**Baiba Šuvcāne**, who is Livonian, has written four books about the Livonian coast. Her extensive study about Kolka, titled *The Ancient Livonian Village of Kolka*, was published in 2010. It took her four years to write, and the book continues to be used by almost everyone as a reference regarding

village history. In 2016 she received the Order of the Three Stars, Latvia's highest state decoration, for her cultural achievements and significant contributions to the study, preservation, popularisation, and transmission to younger generations of Livonian cultural history.

Kolka has been dear to Šuvcāne since 1952. This is where her grandparents lived and where she spent all of her childhood summers. As she grew older, she never lost this link with Kolka, even though obtaining permits to visit the village and closed zone was a nuisance and a burden. She moved to Kolka permanently in 2006, which is also when she got the idea for her book. It surprised her that such a thick book could be written about such a small and out-of-the-way place, and that the village's history and the residents' stories were so rich and interesting.

#### Which places in Kolka do visitors tend to overlook?

People often don't notice the beauty of the coastal forests with their hills and valleys. A walk along the Kolka Pine Trail can give you an idea of what the nature is like here. The impressive Dumbri Hills and Mustamačouk Hill are steeped in legend. All of this relatively untouched coastal environment is our pride and joy. Anyone who becomes acquainted with the coastal villages and nature on foot or bicycle is guaranteed to really gain a lot. That's the best way to see and appreciate the primeval character of the landscape and local architecture. The entire surrounding area is protected and part of Slitere National Park as well as the Natura 2000 network of European protected areas.

#### How would you describe the locals?

I think it's hard to define a specific Kolkian character nowadays. Instead, we might speak of people in Kurzeme in general – on the whole, they're conservative, reserved, stubborn, kind of brusque in communicating with others, and don't express their emotions openly. The villagers have a strong urge to protect their homes; they don't immediately let strangers into their homes or minds. They work hard, are enterprising, have a good sense of humour, and don't like small talk. You have to earn their approval with

your deeds and work. Once you've gained their trust, though, they'll do everything to defend you if you're treated unfairly.

#### How do the locals endure the storms and high winds?

As a local woman once said, 'The wind is born in Liepāja, but it lives in Kolka!' There's rarely a day here without wind. In fact, Kolkans are surprised when they don't hear the waves crashing and the wind howling. Depending on which side the sea is churning, they immediately know which way the wind is blowing.

Of course, back when fishing was still the traditional lifestyle around here, even small storms were cause for concern, because they hindered the fishing and could potentially destroy the nets. But nowadays, many Kolkans like to go to Cape Kolka on stormy days to witness the might of nature and the powerful cross waves that crash and break against the sandbank and sometimes wash pieces of amber onto shore – our local gems.

#### Is there a typical local expression or folk belief you can share with us?

I suppose something about our location on the shores of the Big Sea and the Little Sea would be suitable here. The fishermen know that when the water becomes clear, expect a storm.

Not only do people influence nature, but nature itself is constantly changing. This includes Cape Kolka, which in recent years seems to be losing land to the sea. A storm in 2005 gouged out a chunk of land a couple of metres high all along the shore here, but in some places it has already been smoothed out. At first, the people of Kolka were shocked by the many fallen trees; the scene looked disorderly. But they were finally convinced that the downed trees should stay, because they help to stabilise the coast.

According to Jānis Lapinskis, a geologist and lecturer at the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences of the University of Latvia, the sea has washed away about 130 metres of land from both sides of Cape Kolka over the past 130 years. He bases this conclusion on the first precise, trustworthy map of the area, which dates to 1890. But erosion doesn't take place uniformly. 'Instead, it's more likely to happen in short, furious episodes,' Lapinskis explains. 'For about 15 years between the early 1980s and late 90s, the coast hadn't been disturbed in a while and Cape Kolka stretched far out into the sea.' But now the shore has receded on both sides of the cape, which Lapinskis says is just the normal course of nature.

But Šlītere Lighthouse has remained standing since it was built in 1849 on the ancient banks of the Baltic Ice Lake. From here one can see the sea without even climbing the tower. Legends tell that an oak tree on this site once served as a landmark for sailors. The coast was not so forested back then, and the oak could be seen from afar. But the tree died, and sailors wrote letters to the Russian tsar of the need for a lighthouse in this area. So the tsar gave Baron Osten-Sacken 7000 golden roubles to build a tower at Šlītere. The lighthouse stands on an advantageous site, naturally higher than the surrounding area at 70 metres above sea level, plus the almost 30 metres of the tower itself. So it's no surprise that it can even be seen from Sörve Lighthouse in Estonia. It has also served well as a lookout tower for forest fires. Today, Šlītere Lighthouse is no longer used for navigation purposes, but it is open to the public from mid-April until October.

Climb to the top of the lighthouse and see the vast sea of green forest turn to blue in the distance. In summer, the corn crakes rasp. In autumn, the cranes call. And right now, as I stand next to Šlītere Lighthouse and gaze at the sea beyond the tops of the trees, I long for my August mornings again, although this place is magical at every time of the year.



#### USEFUL ADDRESSES

##### WHERE TO STAY *Pilava* guest house

*Pilava* stands out not only in terms of design, but also with its environmentally friendly and sustainable approach. The guest house was built using only eco-friendly building materials as well as natural paints and varnishes, and the main power source here is solar panels, which also help to create a favourable microclimate and promote healthy sleep. *Pilava* is located only 20 metres from the seashore.

Roja | pilava.lv

##### *Palsa* yacht

Gundega and Lauris Karlsons offer cruises and overnights on the *Palsa*. Lauris is also the captain of the yacht, and the inspiring story of how he fulfilled his dream can be read on their website. Originally a fishing vessel, *Palsa* has been reconstructed as a leisure ship. The former fish hold now serves as living quarters with five comfortable cabins and portholes offering exhilarating views of the foaming waves.

palsa.lv

##### *Pitagi*, holiday home and campsite

This holiday home is located 800 metres from the Baltic Sea within Slītere National Park. The tastefully furnished house has four bedrooms, a kitchenette, a living room with a fireplace, and a sauna. *Pitagi* also has three fully furnished holiday cottages and a campground with six cabins, tent sites, trailer connections, and a service building with showers and toilets.

Košrags | pitagi.lv

##### MUST-TRY LOCAL DELICACIES Sklandrauši

Consisting of an unleavened rye crust with a hearty carrot-and-potato filling and garnish of caraway seeds, these small pies have been granted the Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) designation by the European Commission. This status is shared by more than 1100 European food products, which are protected by legislation regarding their geographical indication, designation of origin, and traditional features and qualities. In Kolka, get the best *sklandrauši* in summertime from Jānis Tarlaps at the 'Zvīņas' homestead across from the Kolka stadium or from Dženeta Marinska at 'Ūši'.

##### Smoked fish

Although not specifically a Livonian delicacy (smoked fish can be found all along the Baltic coast and in many other countries as well), a trip to Kolka without trying some smoked fish wouldn't be a real trip to Kolka. Buy the fish at small wooden huts along the roadsides. They're all locally sourced and smoked at home. Visit Andris Antmanis in Pitrags (call ahead at +371 26493087) to find out about the smoking process, see a smokehouse, and learn more about the local history.

pieandrapitraga.lv

For a restaurant meal, we recommend *Dzintarkrasts* in Žocene (near Roja) or *Otra puse* (Jūras iela 6/8, Roja).

##### WHAT TO DO

##### Slītere National Park with Vilnis Skuja

Vilnis Skuja, one of the most experienced nature specialists in Latvia and a legendary figure in his field, leads hikes through Slītere National Park. If you're particularly interested in bird-watching, check out kolkasrags.lv/Routes for a downloadable brochure. The Kolka Pine Trail features a 16-metre-high bird-watching tower.

Twitter: @Skuja.Vilnis

E-mail: vilnis.skuja@daba.gov.lv

##### Trips to the Kolka Lighthouse

The Domesnes association organises trips to the lighthouse with the goal of drawing attention to both it and Kolka's cultural heritage. The tradition began in 2014, with the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Kolka Lighthouse. Since then, once a year and in cooperation with the Freeport of Riga Authority, you can join an outing to the lighthouse. Contact Dženeta Marinska at dzenetam@gmail.com. Latvia's oldest lighthouse, Oviši Lighthouse (built in 1814), can be visited throughout the year. For more information, see portofventspils.lv/ Lighthouses. At 59 metres, the tallest lighthouse in the Baltics is Miķeļbāka (built in 1884). Because the sandy ground turned out to be unable to support its metre-thick walls, the lighthouse has begun to lean. Miķeļbāka, as well as its viewing platform at a height of 56 metres, is no longer open to the public, but there is a campground nearby (mikelbaka.lv).

##### Explore Mazirbe

Up until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this town was home to the largest settlement of Livonians. Construction of sailboats began here in 1860, and eight years later the Mazirbe Lutheran Church was built as a landmark for sailors. Mazirbe also had a naval school from 1893 until 1914, which trained about 2000 young sailors. The Livonian Cultural Centre was designed by Finnish architect Erkki Huttunen and built in 1939.

A nature trail leads along the former route of the narrow-gauge (660 mm) railway that connected Dundaga and the coastal villages with the larger towns of Ventspils and Talsi between 1916 and 1962. Along the trail, which is open to hikers and bicyclists, you'll see the site of Mazirbe Station, marked today by a commemorative stone. The small loop is 15 kilometres long, and the long loop is 19 kilometres long.

See the remains of old fishing boats at the Mazirbe boat cemetery. They were left here in the 1950s and 60s, when fishing by individual fishermen was banned in this special border zone of the Soviet Union and the fishermen dragged their boats inland.

##### Visit the Livonian Community House and farmers' market

At the centre of Kolka village stands the pride and joy of the local Livonian community, the Livonian Community House unveiled in 2019. It's situated in Kolka's first school, built in 1881. In the past, the school also housed a tavern, store, post office, and local government offices. Now a decade-long dream of finding a space for exhibitions, seminars, and local organisation offices has come true. The building's reconstruction even won the 2019 Latvian Construction Industry Award in the wooden buildings category. Here you'll find an ethnographic exhibition of objects found in local Livonian homes, from clothing and household objects to fishing implements. The Community House hosts a variety of events for the local community but also has plenty to offer visitors wishing to learn about the Livonians. This summer, the farmers' market will resume in its courtyard. 'Pastnieki', Kolka **bo**



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Words by Agnese Čivle  
Publicity photos

## STRAIGHT FROM THE RUNWAY

Alina Grinpauka is a well-known fashion illustrator who has worked with such legendary names in the fashion world as *Valentino* and *Dior*. At the same time, a large number of fans and followers on social media are enthused by her illustrations and view of the world. At a time when fashion weeks took place in capitals around the world, Grinpauka gave us a look behind the scenes of this very trendy form of art.



Photo by Edgars Drusts

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, fashion illustration – as well as photography – became an important instrument for turning the products of fashion designers’ imaginations into objects of desire for the greater public. Today, too, the story of every piece of clothing or accessory, first passed through the prism of an illustrator’s artistic perception, takes on a much more imaginative and sensual form. Published in a fashion magazine or *Instagram* account, an illustration appears almost physically tangible. It takes control of the viewer, and thus many viewers feel that the depicted object becomes almost vitally necessary.

Latvian fashion illustrator Alina Grinpauka’s gentle and flowing visual style has been recognised and appreciated by a number of world-class fashion houses. *Dior*, *Max Mara*, *Valentino*, *Alberta Ferretti*, *Tiffany & Co.*, and other influential lifestyle brands have chosen to translate their collections into the flowing spaces and graphic lines characteristic of her watercolour painting. In Grinpauka’s illustrations, they surrender their products to be worn by romantic, harmonious beings, a sixth sense of sorts detecting their feminine wisdom and intelligence. Just like Grinpauka herself.

Grinpauka first encountered and explored watercolours in New York. It was there that she took courses in the medium, after having graduated from the Art Academy of Latvia with a degree in functional design. Watercolour technique demanded a completely different way of thinking and perception of colour than she was used to. But the new medium swept her away, and she admits that she in fact works quite intuitively, balancing between predictability and fortuitousness, as she tries to control the fluid paints.

In 2019, the prestigious *Taschen* publishing house included Grinpauka in its book *The Illustrator: 100 Best from Around the World* as one of seven representatives from the fashion world. *Valentino*, for its part, addressed Grinpauka after noticing her work on her *Instagram* account.

### What is the main task of a fashion illustrator?

It’s a very broad profession. A fashion illustrator can be the person who makes an illustration before a garment is created as well as the person who makes an illustration after the garment is finished. In the first case, the professional works in-house as part of the design team. He or she puts the designers’ or artistic director’s ideas, concepts, and vision down on paper by making preliminary sketches. A commercial fashion illustrator, on the other hand,

is part of the production process – he or she works with finished material, after a collection has been released and must be presented to the public and sold. Commercial fashion illustrators use their artistic feel to ‘catch’ a design idea and message, to ‘catch’ emotions and a character. They pass all of that through themselves and put it down on paper. The result is a beautiful illustration that might then be used as advertising content.

**Fashion illustration has a fairly wide range of applications nowadays. What was its role in the past?**

Interestingly, it began more as the illustration of fabrics and embroidery, with the goal of presenting available fabrics to women who wished to have garments sewn for them or to sew them themselves. The first static illustrations of finished garments appeared later, although they just simply showed a

## Magazines from the Art Deco and Jugendstil eras began to regularly feature illustrations on their covers

dress on a figure. The figure itself held no meaning, nor the space around it. The field of illustrating theatre costumes developed concurrently.

When fashion magazines began to be published, fashion illustration became more mobile, more expressive – figures were shown in various poses, hairstyles appeared on the models. Men also appeared in illustrations. Later, the setting or space in the illustration also became important, for example, a model might be drawn in a beautiful garden or next to a fountain. Magazines from the Art Deco and Jugendstil eras began to regularly feature illustrations on their covers as well. For example, the legendary Russian-born French artist Erté (1892–1990) illustrated a number of *Vogue* and *Harper’s Bazaar* covers.

Then the advertising era began, in which illustrations helped to also sell perfumes and cosmetics. When photography arrived on the scene, fashion illustration was downgraded to just an added value, a rare artistic surprise.

Fashion illustration experienced a rebirth in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, to a certain extent because so





Jill Sander Spring 2017

## The bigger the business, the better its internal organisation

much content is created today that there's a need for surprise. There's a need for vivid covers, vivid styles, different styles, distraction of attention, attraction of attention... Maybe that's also why naive illustration is the trend right now. Not everyone understands it, it's strange and unique, but lately all sorts of covers are featuring very extravagant illustrations. Maybe it's a reaction to the overproduction of the *Instagram* era, this need to always be capturing people's attention. As digital media develop, the demand for illustration will only increase.

**How would you describe your own style as an illustrator?**

I think my technique can be described as realistic. My illustrations are figural, because proportions are important to me. But it's hard for me to define my own style, because it has developed unconsciously. It's light, it displays a skillful, controlled flow of the paints. It's characterised by an abstraction of colour with specific details that are framed and defined with lines.

**You mentioned that an essential part of the illustrator's work is the ability to 'catch' the idea or message of a garment. Is this an inborn talent, or is it something one can learn and develop?**

People are accustomed to calling it a talent, but 'talent' is a very broad and abstract concept. In any case, this ability is definitely not just something indescribable that a person has or doesn't have, without any need to work at it. The ability to 'catch' comes from experience, from seeing lots and lots of things. To a certain extent, it's also intuition that lets a person guess, infer, or 'read' an idea or message and work with it.

**So, the more you look, the more you can see. Exactly.**

**What's the first thing you notice in a garment or collection? What are those first impulses on which you build your interpretation?**

When the illustrator switch in me turns on, instead of the woman switch... [*laughs*], then colour and form are the first things I see. Then the details. And only then comes delving into the fashion house's history, the collection's idea and message. And so the layers build up.

**What's the dimension you enter when you're drawing and painting? How do you feel in it?**

I'm a very pragmatic person; I consider and calculate everything before I begin working. But once I pick up my paintbrushes, then it's important for me to not think about anything and just enter that feeling of inspiration. Just do whatever comes, be in the process, not think about how or what's happening.

I work with watercolours, which is a medium that changes every second. It's an unpredictable medium, so it's important to relax and surrender. It's a meditative state in which you're here but at the same time you're not. Time passes, and you can sit there the whole day without eating or drinking... You forget yourself.

I recently saw a film about the fashion illustrator Antonio Lopez (1943–1987), an outstanding American artist of the 1970s and 80s. He would call his psychiatrist from time to time and ask to be put in a state of hypnosis over the phone so that he could tune out and enter a space of creativity. In my experience, when you do something with all your heart and without consciously thinking along, that's when you get the best results, because deep inside you simply know what you've got to do. Constant thinking can sometimes interfere.

**What's the most important thing you need to have in your work space?**

Definitely light and air. Spaciousness. And shelves on which to put everything. A white table.

**Is it also important for you to have music in the background?**

If you manage to achieve that feeling I just described, then nothing around you is really of much interest and you don't really hear the music or even notice when it stops playing. At the same time, music is one of the best ways to get in the mood to work when you wake up not yet in the mood to work.

**Tell us about your work 'buddies' – the tools and materials you work with.**

My material is liquid watercolours. They were originally used for calligraphy and possibly developed out of coloured ink. But they're liquid and have no binding agent – they're only pigment and water. So, the colour flows freely, nothing holds it back. The paint acts just like water. It's bright, and the pigments are very independent, mixing freely with each other. Only now, after having worked with them for some time, can I finally anticipate the result and guide it to some extent. But on the whole, the process is always full of surprises. The paper I use needs to be as natural as possible. The more cotton in it, the better it absorbs the paint and water and the better it works. Having professional tools and materials is hugely important, and one cannot skimp on them.

**You've worked with several iconic fashion houses.**

**What can you tell us about the internal workings and culture of communication at the big brands?**

In my experience, the bigger the business, the better its internal organisation. I've only had the best of experiences working with the big brands. The communication is prompt and easy, because everyone is interested in achieving the best result. They know



Alina Grinpauka. *Untitled*



Alina Grinpauka. *Untitled*





YSL Fall 2017

We were tasked with creating a Valentino muse in one of the fashion house's most iconic garments

what to expect when working with the illustrator of their choice, their briefs are precise and understandable, their time schedule takes into account any snags or delays that might arise.

How much creative freedom do the big fashion houses give an illustrator? How much creative freedom does commercial fashion illustration allow in general, considering that it has a very specific goal?

The big companies understand who they're working with and what they're paying for. Opinions and visions are in no way forced upon artists, ignoring their style and feel. What they expect of illustrators is creative vision and an approach that will enhance the project. The company may suggest and guide, and they may also reject work – that is, pay for sketches but not develop further collaboration. However, if the visual ideas of the artist and company correspond, there shouldn't be any problems. If I'm given a precise brief, freedom, and trust, then the result will turn out all the better.

Which have been some of your most successful collaborations?

On a local level, I enjoyed working with the *Galerija Centrs* shopping centre when we did last spring's campaign, even though it wasn't fully realised due to the pandemic. Visually, the campaign was based on fashion illustrations reflecting the styles of the world's three main fashion capitals. Milan reflected femininity, courage, and a love of showy accessories. New York reflected street style, which is bold, free, and youthful. Paris, for its part, meant chic, elegant, and romantic. And so we used these three stories to introduce the newest fashion trends and inspire the public. I really worked from the heart; I enjoyed the process and the result.

I also had a very valuable collaboration, during which I learned a lot, with the anniversary issue of *Cosmopolitan Latvia*, for which I was entrusted with illustrating the whole magazine. I was given complete freedom. And one month's time! My first experience with a global brand was with *Valentino*. They entrusted me and a few other fashion illustrators with creating an illustration that would warm up the public's interest in their new collection, before it even came out. We were tasked with creating a *Valentino* muse in one of the fashion house's most iconic garments. My style back then wasn't yet quite as developed as it is now – it was romantic and fairytale-like, so I offered something kind of like the illustrations in children's stories. Two muses with their hair up, dressed in black dresses... And *Valentino* accepted my sketches!

So then I had to get to work. At the time, I thought this commission was the right time to challenge myself by working with a larger format... If everyone's working with the A3 format, I can go bigger, just like Lopez! I took a 100x70 cm piece of paper, wet it in the shower, then stapled it while still wet to the underframe, like a canvas, waited for it to dry, transferred my sketch to it, mixed up the paint, and began... But the paint reacted, and it was all blotchy! I felt like crying, because I had to submit my work the following day. So I had to pull myself together and redo it. That taught me a lesson, that I need to swallow my pride, not be afraid of making mistakes, and be prepared to redo my work. In the end, the *Valentino* job gave me a good kick; it urged me towards a new beginning and inspired me to explore a new style. I'm very grateful for it.

What are some other big lessons you've learned?

Some jobs have fallen through, and those have also been the most unpleasant experiences. Admitting to yourself and the client that your visions don't correspond and that a compromise won't be the best solution – that's something you need to learn and overcome. Not trying to squeeze something out of yourself that's not there. Not trying to run after money that's been promised. Those are unpleasant experiences, but they're inevitable. It's important to talk about them, though, because we talk very little about failure, about the negative side of things. People get the idea that being a fashion illustrator is a dream job. It is, but it's also just as complicated as any other job.

In a way, your *Instagram* account is also your portfolio, and that's precisely where *Valentino* first noticed you six years ago. What's your opinion regarding the importance of *Instagram*?

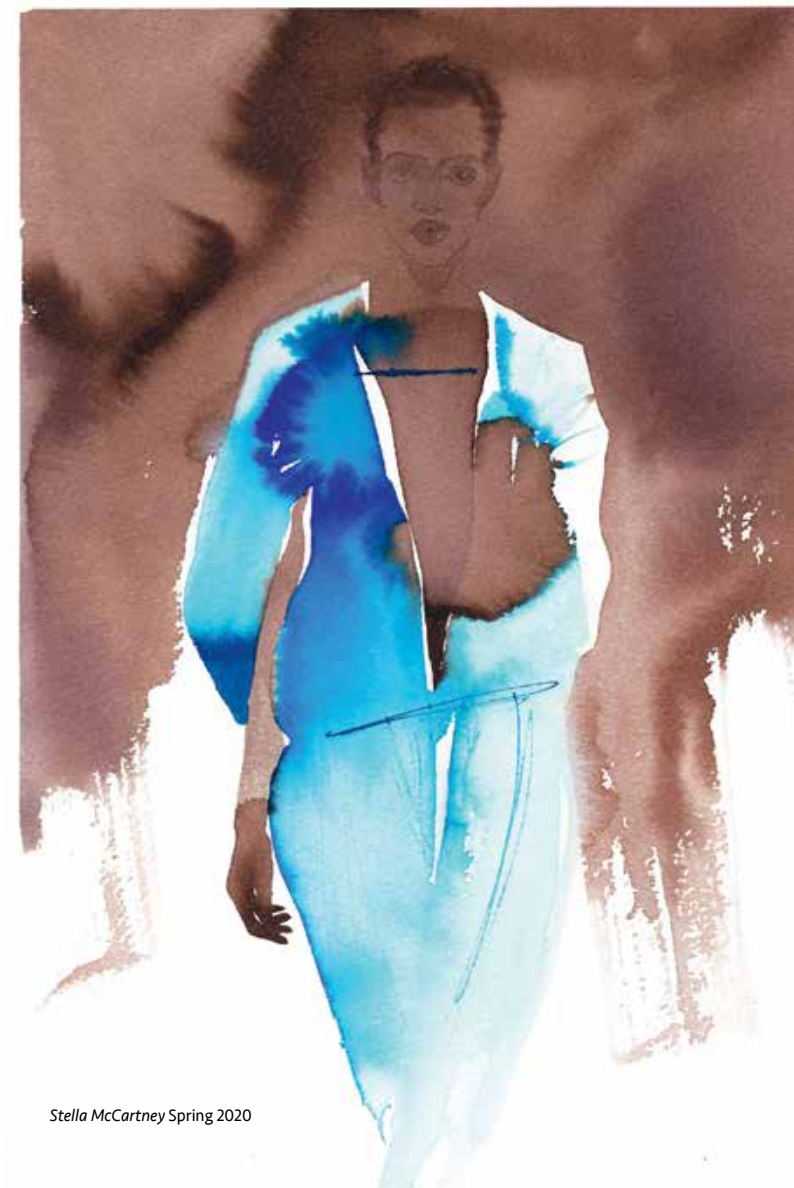
I think different people have different experiences with it. But I kind of lost heart after *Instagram* changed its algorithm, which the film *The Social Dilemma* also focuses on – I strongly suggest seeing it. I realised that I would never reach my audience without paying for it. *Instagram* no longer has the significance it once had, when people communicated and shared their private lives and later also their work.

Now it's a platform for buying and selling in which *Instagram* itself also makes money. I don't feel like I have the internal resources to chase after that, nor do I see the same return in it anymore. Maybe it just doesn't correspond with the way I work. But nor do I want to make *Instagram* communication a goal in and of itself, because lately that has begun to compete with my main work in terms of time.

So, back in 2015 you managed to be in the right place at the right time?



Jil Sander Spring 2018



Stella McCartney Spring 2020





Jil Sander Fall 2017 backstage

**I don't want to believe that online fashion presentations are going to replace live fashion shows**

Definitely. That was the perfect moment, because anyone could see anything. There was diversity, I saw much more interesting content there than I see today.

**Has fashion illustration been like a ticket for you to see the world? To get a glimpse behind the scenes at famous fashion houses?**

It's more like travelling has been a pleasant bonus that I never even considered when I formed my career as a fashion illustrator. I never dreamed of getting into fashion houses or meeting famous fashion designers; I was motivated by the creative process itself and fashion in the broader sense. That might also be one of the reasons why I don't experience disappointment all that much, because I'm open to opportunities without expecting anything, simply developing what comes naturally to me.

**As I understand, it's not a necessity nowadays to have an illustrator present at fashion shows for new collections.**

Yes, most everything takes place remotely, and the illustrator doesn't need to be present at shows. But of course, there are some events where the illustrator needs to be present. In Latvia, I've worked on presentations for *Dior* and *Max Mara* in which I've done live illustrations. In the global context, there are a few special collaborations in which the illustrator is present. For example, *Dries Van Noten* and the illustrator Richard Haines. One time he sat in the first row at a fashion show, making sketches that were later used in the brand's window displays. He also created the fabric designs for that collection. Unfortunately, fashion shows are no longer as elaborate, entertaining, or exclusive as they were 20 or 30 years ago, and illustrators rarely occupy seats in the first rows. In the dynamic behind the scenes, illustrators are not needed anywhere, in fact, they can even interfere with it.

**Speaking of fashion shows, what kind of changes do you think can we expect in this phenomenon of the fashion industry?**

This format is changing, and I think the winners will be those who look for new solutions and dare to be original. I like the policy of the *Kering* group brands – from now on they're going to do fewer shows, and only when they believe there's a good reason to do so. *Gucci* is dropping the concept of seasonal collections altogether, and *Saint Laurent*, with its fashion show in the desert, has shown how the video format can offer unlimited creative possibilities.

But I don't want to believe that online fashion presentations are going to replace live fashion

shows. In the current situation, an illustrator's presence at a fashion show doesn't much influence the final result, but still, a fashion show is something special. It's very hard to evaluate a garment as a product via a screen or photograph, so I hope that illustrators, too, will return to the front rows at fashion shows.

**What are the biggest changes we should expect in the post-pandemic fashion industry?**

I think it's hard to change people. I doubt this crisis will dramatically change people's habits or that they'll lose their need for beautiful clothes and confirming their status. It's too early to tell, but I think fashion might change only in the direction of comfort. One can look good and desirable even in comfortable clothes and without high heels. After the pandemic, we might retain the habit of wanting to feel comfortable.

**How are pandemic-related restrictions affecting your work?**

I feel it maybe only on a local level, because processes in Latvia aren't as active as they are elsewhere due to the smaller size of the market and the media space. Now during the pandemic I've had a lot of work from Russia, and in that regard everything is continuing digitally, no changes. Of course, in everyday life I miss inspiration, impressions, and communication. On the one hand, I had become tired from all of that, but on the other hand, I need it for my creative work.

**Have you tried illustrating for a different genre?**

In my collaboration with the Latvian design studio *Asketic*, I've created packaging illustrations for local brands such as *Pure Chocolate*, *Valmiermuiža*, *Latvijas Balzams*, and others. I consider illustration as a way to challenge myself and gain interesting experience. When people buy a box of chocolate, they probably never imagine that the flowers, plants, animals, or architecture they see on it have been illustrated by a fashion illustrator.

**In addition to fashion illustration, have you ever thought about expanding into so-called classical art? What other themes have you explored?**

There's an assumption that if you draw, you've got to have an exhibition. You need to paint paintings. But that's not the way it works. You need to have something to say. Right now I've got sketches of ideas, a few themes to contemplate, but I still don't feel that I've explored them enough. They're deep, psychological. About women. About how a woman's experience changes her, about relationships between women in a family. Also beauty and ageing, which are both themes that are closely linked to my work. I'm also a woman, and I'm over 30, and I see signs of ageing. Those are complicated things that I'm still having a hard time articulating and placing into some kind of format. **bo**



Grinpauka at work.



Last spring's campaign for the Galerija Centrs shopping centre.





Words by **kat Barber**  
Publicity photos and by *Alamy*

## WHY SPRING IS THE BEST TIME TO VISIT STUTTGART

Stuttgart is great in any season, but spring shows it in its best light. Find out some awesome local things to do in this sophisticated city with a small-town soul.

The Beatles said it best: 'Here comes the sun, little darling, it feels like years since you've been here.' With spring just around the corner, it's time to crawl out of hibernation and let your soul soak up that glorious sunshine. If you're searching for a springtime sojourn, pay a visit to Germany's sixth largest city to discover the laid-back destination that comes to life with flowers, beer, wine, and *Spargel*, and you might just forget about the long, cold, lonely winter.





© Stuttgart-Marketing GmbH

celebrated with, you guessed it, spargel schnapps.

Stuttgart is the capital of Baden-Württemberg, one of the epicentres of white asparagus production. Spargel has been grown here since 1500, but it wasn't until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that commoners got a taste of the 'royal vegetable', previously only available in royal dining halls. Compared to its better-known green variety, white asparagus is milder in taste and softer in texture. The white colour is achieved by restricting any sunlight from reaching the stalks during their six to eight-week growing period. Grown underground, then covered with black tarps, it's



▲ Once the season really gets underway, it's not uncommon to see special boards listing everything from soups to desserts with spargel as the headline act.

▲ Stuttgart is the capital of Baden-Württemberg, one of the epicentres of white asparagus production.

### SPARGEL SEASON

In Germany, spring could almost be renamed *Spargelzeit*. Named after the beloved white asparagus, spargel season runs between April and ends abruptly on June 24, the feast day of St. John.

Producers of the pale vegetable simply can't grow enough, with Germans consuming more than 70,000 tons of it each year, according to the German Agricultural Marketing Board. Cafés, restaurants, markets, and roadside stalls attract spargel connoisseurs, who unabashedly assess plumpness, roundness, and white purity before purchasing. Once the season really gets underway, it's not uncommon to see special boards listing everything from soups to desserts with spargel as the headline act. So consuming is this obsession with white asparagus, there's even a Spargel Queen crowned every year at regional spargel festivals and

### The thicker the stalk, the more you'll pay

a delicate, demanding process to ensure no light reaches these precious vegetables. Harvesting is a labour-intensive process using special blades that cut through the dirt, meaning a perfect bunch of spargel can fetch top dollar at markets. The thicker the stalk, the more you'll pay.

One of the best places to sample spargel is at *Alte Kanzlei*, nestled between the picturesque Schlossplatz and Schillerplatz. When the evening air is warm and the city lights turn on, this is the perfect spot to soak up Stuttgart's relaxed vibe. If you prefer a more intimate affair, follow the locals to a *Besen*, a pop-up wine tavern serving locally made wine alongside traditional Swabian dishes. If you prefer hops over grapes, visit one of the city's breweries, such as *Schönbuch* or *Carls Brauhaus*, and wash your asparagus down with a fresh pint of lager or pilsner.

If you feel like donning your chef's hat, head to the produce market held in Stuttgart's central *Marktplatz* every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Germans typically keep it simple, peeling and then slowly boiling the tender spargel stalks, keeping the tips just above the water, and then serving them with a rich hollandaise sauce alongside new potatoes and ham.



▲ When the sun is shining and floral scents fill the air, the ornate gardens quickly become the major drawcard.

► Home to the House of Württemberg until the end of the monarchy in 1918, the 452-room palace survived the Second World War.



### Ludwigsburg Palace is home to the largest palatial grounds in Germany

The palace was erected in 1704 by Duke Eberhard Ludwig, who famously said, 'There are already more than enough boring towns,' and hoped the newly built 'Versailles of Swabia' would ensure Ludwigsburg township avoided that misery.

Home to the House of Württemberg until the end of the monarchy in 1918, the 452-room palace survived the Second World War and has been lovingly restored and offered back for public enjoyment. While the palace itself offers guided tours in English and German, when the sun is shining and floral scents fill the air, the ornate gardens quickly become the major drawcard. The semi-permanent Blooming Baroque show has been welcoming visitors to explore its 30 hectares of flowers since 1954.

If you enter through the south entrance, you'll wander down the lush fairway towards the palace and duck pond. Behind the palace, the gardens are divided into different regions transporting horticulturists between tranquil Japanese gardens, colourful Sardinian botanicals, rose gardens, medicinal herbs, and the Baroque parterre pruned to perfection.





Bird lovers can tune into bird calls from all over the world in the Valley of Birdsong or spy pheasants, flamingos, and storks in the aviary, while families can step into a world of make-believe at the Brothers Grimm fairy gardens. Take a calm boat ride past miniature scenes from ‘Sleeping Beauty’, ‘The Frog and the Prince’, and ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ as well as classic model half-timbered houses. Wander up to Rapunzel’s tower, and a call of ‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!’ will coax down a thick blonde plait, retreating before any handsome princes get the chance to climb up.

The on-site cafés offer a chance to refuel while relaxing in the shade of the mighty chestnut trees. Treat yourself to a piece of warm apple strudel smothered in thick cream.



▲▲ The colourful buds begin to bloom across the city in March.

▲ Stuttgart is the capital of Baden-Württemberg, one of the epicentres of white asparagus production.

## WINE WANDERINGS AROUND STUTTGART

Winemaking has always played an important role in the Swabian city’s identity. In the Middle Ages, viticulture was the main source of income for many locals, and while the car industry has since taken over that role, Stuttgart’s hilly landscape is still covered with over 420 hectares of red and white grapes.

A stroll through these sloping vines is the ideal way to enjoy the warm spring air and longer days. The four-kilometre Stuttgart Wine Trail (Stuttgarter

Weinwanderweg) meanders its way through the villages of Untertürkheim, Obertürkheim, and Uhlbach, taking in history, wine tastings, snack stops, and incredible views.

Begin by catching the train from the city; it’s just a few steps to Obertürkheim, then follow the signposts up and into the vineyards. Continue along to Uhlbach and discover this region’s history of wine making at the Wine Museum, then quench your thirst and rest your legs at either the *Löwen* or *Krone* wine bar with a glass of Trollinger.



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▲▲ A stroll through these sloping vines is the ideal way to enjoy the warm spring air and longer days.

▲ The four-kilometre Stuttgart Wine Trail meanders its way through the villages of Untertürkheim, Obertürkheim, and Uhlbach, taking in history, wine tastings, snack stops, and incredible views.

Continue up to the historic Grabkapelle auf dem Württemberg, a Neoclassical burial chapel dedicated to the beloved Queen Katharina. The romantic spot offers one of the best views over the slopes: quaint villages, the *Mercedes-Benz* factory, and the Neckar River. The path continues back down into the town of Untertürkheim, where it would be remiss not to stop at *Alte Kelter* to try the best *Maultaschen* on offer. The restaurant is so dedicated to this local filled-pasta delicacy it’s even got a Guinness World Record for making them at top speed. To round out the loop, pay a visit to *Schwarz Weingut*, a small family-run winery adhering to traditional

methods and age-old recipes to create the noble drink. If you time it right, you’ll even get to visit its popular *besen*.

During spring and autumn, wine taverns (known locally as Besens) pop up throughout the city in converted barns, lounge rooms, and garages.

## Winemaking has always played an important role in the Swabian city’s identity

Seeing as many of the local winemakers produce small batch wines, the besens give wine lovers a chance to taste local varieties of Trollinger, Limberger, Pinot Noir, or Riesling direct from the source. Traditionally served in glasses with handles, visitors can sample the latest wine variety, enjoy light dishes such as *Käsespätzle* (cheese noodles), *Leberwurst* (liver sausage), and *Käse Teller* (cheese platter), and enjoy chatting with friendly locals at the cosy, shared tables. But don’t expect to order a beer – it’s strictly forbidden here, as is coffee and dessert. To find a besen, keep an eye out for giant broomsticks hanging out front, a sign that the place is open for business, or visit [www.besentermine.de](http://www.besentermine.de) to check seasonal opening times. **bo**



Words by Līga Valko  
Photos by iStock and courtesy of  
Alise Diagne, Pernilla Danielsson,  
Erica Costa, and Timotej Gošev

# POSTCARDS

## FROM THE SOUTH

The many great travel bloggers and influencers out there are always on a mission to explore the world through travel, food, culture, and adventures. *Baltic Outlook* spoke with a few of them to get their take on locations for picture-perfect postcards and insider tips beyond the ordinary.





## THE SPELL OF THE CÔTE D'AZUR

**Alise Diagne**  
instagram.com/alise.diagne  
Number of followers: 2.1k



What's one place in Nice you'd choose as a postcard to send to a friend abroad?

In Nice you should really just wander around the city, grab a scoop of ice cream, and keep your eyes open, especially in the Old Town. The small, atmospheric streets will bring you to so many postcard-like places. There's only one rule: be present and keep all your senses in the here and now.

However, there's one particular thing I would suggest doing, and that's taking a breath-taking walk or bike ride to Villefranche-sur-Mer. Start from Port Lympia – from the corner of Rue du Lazaret and Boulevard Stalingrad, to be more precise – where you'll find a boulangerie and can get some snacks. My favourite is *pissaladière*, a type of onion pizza. Then walk towards Parc Vigier. There you'll find two *Vélobleu* stations where you can rent a bicycle...or continue on foot. Soon after the park you'll see the amazing *Le Plongeur* restaurant on a rock. Continue up the steep hill, past *Century 21 Lafage*, and along the coast. There are so many beautiful views here, but you're looking for the one in this photo. It's very close to the Princess Grace memorial. The walk should take around 45 minutes one way, a bicycle ride – about 20 minutes. You can always take a bus on the way back.

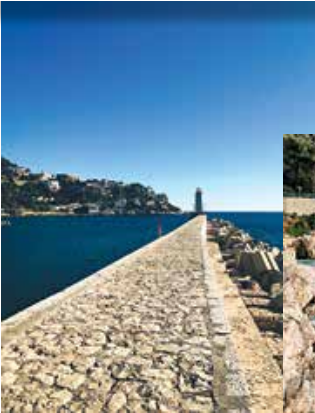
What's your top spot to explore off the beaten track in Nice?

It's another secret spot right in the city. To make it even more memorable, pick up dinner along the way – a takeaway pizza from my favourite pizzeria in the world, *Brasserie du Vieux Port* (7 Place Ile de Beauté). Then head in the direction of the Monument aux Morts de Rauba-Capeau war memorial but turn off on the long road leading to

Fly to  
**Nice**  
from  
€79  
one way



Villefranche-sur-Mer



The lighthouse in Nice



The colours of the Mediterranean Sea

Alise Diagne was born in Liepāja, Latvia, and lived in France for five years. She currently resides in Dubai. Several years ago, before she started to travel, Diagne wondered about all the beautiful places in the world, what was most important to her, and what she would love to do. 'I came up with an idea that resonated with me, and my wish was to see the world. Imagine if all of Earth were your apartment – you would definitely check out every little corner of it. So, because Earth is my home, I want to see all of it!' Diagne has always lived with the mindset 'it's already done', and travelling is no different. 'I knew I would travel and explore the world, because it makes so much sense to me. I live in the excitement of the future,' she says.

the lighthouse – at one point you'll need to cross a fence to continue the walk. Arrive half an hour or so before sunset, sit down with your pizza, and just enjoy the colours and the feeling of being in the middle of the sea.

What should a traveller wear or bring along when heading to Nice?

Nice can get very hot in the summer. But, for example, November can be very rainy, and January can be cold. But most of the time it's sunny, despite the temperatures. Therefore, always have your sunglasses with you. Nice is a great city for long walks. To explore the city to the fullest, bring comfortable shoes as well.

What are your top picks for local food and drinks?

Forget about your diet when in France – Mediterranean cuisine especially is too good to be counting calories. A few dishes you should try are *socca*, *salade niçoise*, *ratatouille*, *pissaladière*, *moules et frites*, and *pâtes aux truffes*...with rosé wine, of course. Also, don't forget to visit the boulangeries. My favourite cake in Nice is *tarte tropézienne*.

What would you recommend bringing home from Nice as a souvenir?

Memories are the best souvenir, so remember to always be present. Let things be and don't worry about anything while travelling. People often fret about getting lost, but nowadays with *Google Maps* and *Uber*, or just by asking someone on the street, you'll always find the way back.

The Côte d'Azur is known for having perfect light for painting, and it's no coincidence that many well-known artists have lived in this area. You can find local artists painting in the open-air market at Place Garibaldi or Cours Saleya. Head to *Wemood* (1 Rue Alexandre Mari) to get an art print to hang on your wall back home. I got one for myself before I moved to Dubai to always have memories of Nice close by.

## SUN-KISSED ISLAND OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

**Palma de Mallorca, Balears**  
**Pernilla Danielsson**  
instagram.com/lifestyle\_mallorca  
Number of followers: 35.9k



Pernilla Danielsson is a passionate Swedish photographer. After more than 20 years as an art director, she wanted to develop other sides of her creativity. Moving from Sweden to Mallorca more than ten years ago made her encounter beauty every day, and photography became a daily habit. 'I love to catch those magic moments in everyday life. So the transition to becoming a photographer came very naturally,' Danielsson adds. She describes her work as 'soul photography'. Danielsson loves to capture a feeling and create a time capsule of that moment for people to remember: 'No matter if it's people or places I take pictures of, I feel like everything has a story to tell. And I love to be a part of that storytelling.'

Fly to  
**Palma de Mallorca**  
from  
€89  
one way



Son Serra de Marina

What's one place in Palma de Mallorca you'd choose as a postcard to send to a friend abroad?

Son Serra de Marina is a very special place for me. It's a beach on the north side of the island and located in a nature reserve. I find the natural beauty there so incredibly raw and beautiful. There are no sunbeds or umbrellas in summer and no hotels, either. I go there all year round, and it's a great place to disconnect and recharge.

What's your top spot to explore off the beaten track in Palma de Mallorca?

Cap de Formentor, which is a fantastic spot to watch the sunset. And getting there is as scenic as can be. When the sky changes colour over the Tramuntana mountains and the sea, it's a moment you'll remember for life.

What should a traveller wear or bring along when heading to Palma de Mallorca?

Don't forget your sunglasses! With more than 300 days of sunshine, you'll need them all year round.

What are your top picks for local food and drinks?

I just love the different *cocas*, which are like a healthier version of pizza. They're easy to take with you, and you can eat them cold, too. My favourite style is *trampó* (a mix of tomato, onion, and pepper) enjoyed together with a glass of wine. There are plenty of great wines produced on the island. My favourite ones are the white Nounat and the rosé Eco Rosat from the small *Binigrau* winery.

What would you recommend bringing home from Palma de Mallorca as a souvenir?

Many very talented artisans here on the island have taken classic Mallorcan items and given them a modern touch. I think the *La Pecera* store in Palma (Victoria 4, Bajo B; lapeceramallorca.com) has the best selection of items like that. It depends on how much luggage space you've got, but there you can find the most beautiful handmade sun hats, espadrilles, and baskets.



Cap de Formentor



## ISLAND OF MYTH AND MAGIC

### Olbia, Sardinia

**Erica Costa**  
instagram.com/  
erykainviaggio  
Number of followers: 5.9k



Erica Costa is a wild explorer from Sardinia. She speaks to the most generous part of our human nature – the desire to share our feelings through writing and photography. Costa’s true passion has now become a full-time job – she’s a travel designer, a travel blogger, and a visual content creator. ‘I travel, I write, and I photograph to communicate the beauty of the world. I seek ways to give people a peek inside my mind and feelings through photography and words. It’s as simple as that – I invite them to experience it first-hand!’ Costa explains.

Since she was a child, Costa has always had a camera and pens by her side. She created her blog (erykainviaggio.com) in 2012, and, together with her social media accounts (*Facebook*, *Instagram*: @erykainviaggio), it has helped her to share her traveller’s mind and positive vibes as well as create tailor-made trips for people looking for a stunning trip around Sardinia.



### What’s one place in Olbia you’d choose as a postcard to send to a friend abroad?

Sardinia is an island in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea that’s more like a small continent. If you travel around it, you’ll find that no place is like any other, so you’ll feel like you’re taking a new and exciting journey every day.

In summer, take the ferry from Olbia (meaning ‘happy town’ in Greek) to Tavolara Island, a giant granite rock in the middle of the turquoise sea. The island once hosted one of the smallest kingdoms in the world, and if you wander around, you’ll find a little cemetery with the graves of Tavolara’s kings. The island is a sight to behold, with wild nature, crystal-clear water, a white sand beach, and mountains, making travellers feel like they’ve arrived in paradise.

### What’s your top spot to explore off the beaten track in Olbia?

From the emerald sea to the silver



rocks, there are many different places off the beaten track in Olbia, making it difficult to pick just one. Every month, the town impresses with something new and totally unexpected. Even in the winter season, you can still enjoy its Carnival traditions, but in spring hike a trail to the top of a mountain and discover the beauty of nature awakening. Bring a camera along

on your hike to capture Olbia at your feet.

Besides sights reached on foot, I’d recommend renting a car and going to San Pantaleo, a gem of a village near Olbia where artistic genius has merged with ancient Galluran history. Here you’ll find charming shops, small art galleries, and other great places connected to ancient traditions.

### What should a traveller wear or bring along when heading to Sardinia?

Sardinia is relatively small, but the weather changes depending on when and where you’re headed – from north to south, from the coast to the hinterland, from season to season. I’d recommend wearing layers so that you can adjust according to weather conditions. The highest temperatures in summer reach 30°C, while the coldest temperatures in winter, at an altitude of 1000 metres, can sometimes slip below -5°C. My advice is to always bring a windbreaker with you, because the mistral wind often blows in Sardinia. It’s certainly hotter in summer, but it’s still good to have a jacket, just in case.

### What are your top picks for local food and drinks?

When travelling up and down the island of Sardinia, there are plenty of traditional dishes to try. *Zuppa gallurese* is a delicious peasant dish made with bread, meat, and cheese and is the culinary specialty of the northeastern region of the island. Also try *fregola con arielle*, which features small balls of pasta cooked with a local variety of clams, and *malloreddus alla campidanese*, a traditional homemade pasta with a sauce of fresh sausage and pecorino cheese. If you’re a meat lover, try Sardinia’s most famous dish, *porretto arrosto* (roast pork).

### What would you recommend bringing home from Sardinia as a souvenir?

Remember to taste some dishes flavoured with saffron, also known as ‘red gold’. Saffron and *bottarga* (salted, cured fish roe) are a couple of Sardinian specialties you should bring back home to enjoy with friends and family.

## PEARL OF THE ADRIATIC

### Dubrovnik, Croatia

**Timotej Gošev**  
instagram.com/timotej  
Followers: 67.6k



Timotej Gošev is a Croatian photographer born in England. Growing up, his family travelled back to Croatia for the summer holidays. ‘Exploring my country started at a young age, and I always wanted to save memories with photographs to show people back home in England,’ he says.

Croatia is a country with more than 1000 islands, a crystal-clear blue sea, and many beautiful beaches. It’s a photographer’s dream. Gošev continues: ‘*Instagram* was originally created as a platform for photographers like me to show the world what our cameras capture. So it was natural for me to use it, right from the very beginning. I always dreamt of showing the world my country, and *Instagram* truly opened the door for me!’

### What’s one place in Dubrovnik you’d choose as a postcard to send to a friend abroad?

I believe that you find one iconic spot in every destination you travel to, a place so magical in itself that it stays in your memory forever. Just the thought of it can conjure up positive emotions and joyous wanderlust. For me in Dubrovnik, the most beautiful fortress city in the world, that place is the iconic Stone Pool below the luxurious *Hotel Excelsior*, which gives you a view of the front walls of the fortress. The pool itself is an example of design at its finest. It blends perfectly with the rocky Croatian coastline, making it visually stunning from every angle. The pool is just a few metres from the sea and fills up with salty seawater. It’s such a raw experience. When you enter that pool, it’s like you teleport back to the time when Dubrovnik was still young and known as the Republic of Ragusa.

### What’s your top spot to explore off the beaten track in Dubrovnik?

Well, there’s Betina Cave, my secret place in Dubrovnik. Located opposite Villa Sheherezade (Europe’s Taj Mahal), it can only be accessed by water. The cave has a stunning beach, but the sun hits the inside of the cave for only three hours before midday. The best way to get there is to rent a paddleboard or kayak. Paddling to the cave at a slow pace from the fortress is one of life’s best therapeutic experiences.

### What should a traveller wear or bring along when heading to Dubrovnik?

Dubrovnik gets hot in the summer. Especially around the fortress when the stone heats up.



Beautiful scenes from around Dubrovnik



Pack breathable clothing. There are two must-pack items when coming here: comfortable, light trainers and water shoes. I have no doubt you’ll be walking the city walls – it’s the number-one tourist experience in town and the best way to see the city’s beauty. The bad news is that there are literally a million steps. Make sure you have comfortable footwear. And, Dubrovnik’s beaches are rocky, so a good pair of water shoes will make the difference between having the best or worst beach experience here.

### What are your top picks for local food and drinks?

For the ultimate dining experience in Dubrovnik, visit the *Forty Four Restaurant* (Miha Pracata 6; fortyfourdubrovnik.com). Make sure to call and make a table reservation the moment you book your flight. If you’ve never had a gastronomic orgasm before, you’ll surely experience it here. *Forty Four* serves both meat and seafood, and if you trust my judgment, you’ll order a plate of grilled dentex, a game fish that we Croats consider the ultimate delicacy from the sea. Croatian wine is very special, and I have no doubt you’ll consume plenty. But one drink you must try while in Dubrovnik is *medica*. It’s a sweet brandy liquor made from honey.

### What would you recommend bringing home from Dubrovnik as a souvenir?

You can’t leave Dubrovnik without buying some souvenirs. With this city being the primary filming location for the hit television show *Game of Thrones*, something from King’s Landing is a must. Croatian extra virgin olive oil is among the finest in the world. We call it liquid gold, and, although not the typical souvenir, you should definitely buy a bottle. **bo**





CLASSIC

◀ Restored plasterwork, wall mouldings, ceiling cornices, and reinstalled herringbone parquet are quintessential elements of the classic Parisian flat. The bespoke mirror above the 19<sup>th</sup>-century marble fireplace visually doubles the size of the room. The blown glass chandelier is by American designer Lindsey Adelman, and the face-to-face custom velvet sofas are perfect for tête-à-tête conversations.

Words by Olga Dolina  
Photos by Benoit Linero

## PARISIAN LIVING

Get inspired by a tour of this atmospheric apartment in the Saint Sulpice neighbourhood, where nostalgic Parisian charm and restrained luxury are spiced up with modern expression, gracefully crafted details, a blend of monochrome elegance, and bold textures.



French interior designer  
Jean-Charles Tomas

One can hardly imagine a more Parisian part of the city than the centrally located 6<sup>th</sup> arrondissement. Embraced by the lively Luxembourg Gardens and the Church of Saint Sulpice, a historic landmark dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this gem of an apartment with 180 square metres of light-filled minimalist chic is nestled in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Haussmann style building. French interior designer Jean-Charles Tomas ([jeancharlestomas.com](http://jeancharlestomas.com)) led the complete makeover of this home. The classic layout was updated, with a few walls removed to add extra light and relocate the private rooms to the back of the apartment. Dressed in mostly black and white, the sophisticated character of the space is highlighted by bold touches of noble materials such as marble, brass, wood, and velvet.

► The glass doors with patinated brass framing are the highlight of the home office and were designed by Tomas himself. The Easy Armchair by Pierre Jeanneret is a timeless mid-century piece made of teak and canework. Behind the desk stands another design icon, the Management Chair by Charles and Ray Eames. An Atollo lamp by Oluce, a 1970s Italian classic designed by Vico Magistretti, provides subtle lighting.



TIMELESS





SPACIOUS



ART-LIKE

▲ The cosy breakfast nook with bespoke carpentry is set in a former fireplace zone. Deep-green velvet upholstery brings warmth to the space, and the niches on either side of the sofa are spacious enough to store tableware. Brass-framed Marta Sala armchairs stand next to the EM Table by Jean Prouvé, while yellow Jim Thompson upholstery gives a joyful accent to the composition.

◀ A former bedroom was turned into a kitchen that's as beautiful as a work of art. The massive Angelo Lelli ceiling light from the 1950s illuminates the monochrome work zone. Because the owners wanted all of the walls to be white, swirling Arabescato marble was selected for the countertops and backsplash to provide contrast. Handleless cabinets bring a touch of sleek modernity.

► Harmony in the master bathroom is achieved with clean lines and fine textures. The custom countertop is made from Silk Georgette marble that has a distinctively matte vein-like structure. Patinated brass-framed mirrors are illuminated by an Apparatus Studio sconce. The sinks and black tapware are by Dornbracht.



TEXTURES



EFFORTLESS

◀ 'Juxtaposing lush materiality with sleek, edited lines, this elegant space highlights masculine and feminine silhouettes with high-contrast, architectural detail for an air of improvised sophistication and effortless luxury,' is how the designer describes the entire interior. A relaxed atmosphere in the bedroom is achieved through earthy pastel shades and pleasant fabrics, such as the linens from Rue Hérold. **bo**





# WHAT DOES A MOVING SERVICE REALLY DO?

Publicity photos

*Adduco* is virtually the largest moving company in Estonia – it operates both locally and abroad, and has long-term experience in international moving services as well as throughout Estonia. Over the years, the company has found that the most widespread misunderstanding that many people have concerns the question of what exactly does a moving service do.

Moving services are often confused with courier or hauling services. Clearly, they all deliver items from point A to point B. However, this is where the similarities end. Aivar Kisel, head of *Adduco*’s international moving services, explains that the main feature of a moving service is that the client does not have to worry about anything.

‘Each client is appointed a personal project manager who makes sure to ask the right questions to get all the information we need to provide good service,’ he explains. ‘This means that the client has a person whom they can trust – an adviser to whom they can send

all necessary information as well as turn to for any questions or worries they might have. The client does not have to contact customer service, the moving staff, or the tax office separately. We take care of everything. We do not expect our clients to be experts when it comes to toll taxes, declarations, logistics, safe packaging, etc. The client is not obligated to immediately provide all the necessary information when they first turn to us, but it is essential that they cooperate in the process. After that, all that is left for our client to do is wait for their belongings to arrive at the desired destination.’

A moving service handles all documentation processes for the client. International moving services include export packaging, loading, and delivery of all household goods, including cars, if necessary. Of course, every relationship is based on trust, which means that the client also has the responsibility of not keeping pertinent information from their moving service.



**Customer testimonial**  
‘When you are moving your life from abroad to an entirely different environment, the process of relocating your possessions is the last thing you want to think about. *Adduco* offers a great moving service that removes any anxiety concerning logistics and keeps you excited about the journey ahead.’  
Hannes Päll, Executive Assistant to the CEO of Luminor Group

**Adduco»**  
Moving Services

A professional moving service means delivering the client’s items to the location of their choosing, dismantling and reassembling all furniture, loading and unloading it, and unpacking everything right in the house or apartment instead of simply leaving items in front of the client’s building. The property is left clean, and all packaging waste is disposed of.

As for any service, the client has the right to choose the extent of it. You can order a service package that includes the packing of all items planned to be moved, or you can choose to pack them yourself. However, take note that the risk of something breaking is significantly higher when you pack your boxes yourself. Moving specialists are trained experts who know how to load cargo into the van so that it does not move around during transport. If packing and loading is included on your list of purchased services, a professional moving service will take responsibility for any damages that might occur during the moving process. This means that the client is informed of everything that is going on throughout the process; clients are never kept in the dark.

Kisel emphasises that a moving service is a service of convenience and comfort, and much more than simply transporting objects: ‘Comfort and trust enable our clients to focus on what is important in their life at that moment, whether it is moving to a new home, a new city, starting a new job, or moving back to where they feel they belong. It is our job to make sure that the only thing our clients have to do is focus on their new beginnings.’

In addition to providing top-notch service, *Adduco* highly values the products and materials it uses to do its work. Being a leading company in the field, *Adduco* has therefore established its own product development branch.

For transporting suits and gowns, *Adduco* offers specially designed boxes with a built-in metal bar that ensures that the garments are stored and transported as gently as possible and with minimal wrinkling. All of *Adduco*’s boxes are uniquely environmentally friendly – they are made of 75% recycled cardboard and do not require duct tape. The boxes can hold up to 120 kg, and are incredibly long-lasting. *Adduco* takes back all packaging boxes after the move and either reuses or recycles them, eliminating any hassle for the client as well as lowering the company’s economic footprint.

*Adduco* is the only Estonian moving company that is a member of Eurovan, a European movers’ network. This guarantees fast and adequate pricing for international moving services in Europe. In addition, by being a member of the International Association of Movers (IAM), *Adduco* can relocate a client’s possessions even to the Bahamas if they so wish. Moreover, *Adduco* is the only IAM member from Estonia with IAMX validation, meaning that *Adduco*’s quality and compliance qualifications have been independently vetted, reviewed and validated, thereby ensuring the highest level of service.  
[adduco.ee](http://adduco.ee)



Photos by iStock and Shutterstock

# WELCOME ABOARD airBaltic



Colourful timber houses and the Nidelva river in the old-town district of Trondheim, Norway

## SUMMER SCHEDULE NEWS

Summer is coming and so are vacations! We've published our 2021 summer flight schedule and want to share some exciting news.

In June, we start flying from Riga to **Trondheim, Bergen, Yerevan, and Manchester**. We're also planning to reopen regular flights to **Liepāja, Tampere, Turku, Aberdeen, Almaty, Baku, Lviv, Kazan, Warsaw**, and other destinations that were suspended last year.

From May onwards, our flight schedule will also see the return of popular Mediterranean destinations such as **Palma de**

**Mallorca, Dubrovnik, Malaga, Olbia, Venice**, and many others.

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

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

Flights from Riga to **Tallinn** and **Vilnius** run three times per day to ensure convenient transit from Tallinn and Vilnius.

## THINK GREEN, FLY GREEN

We've created a new web page devoted to sustainability and corporate responsibility.

The design is fresh and modern, easy to use, and mobile friendly. Now you can calculate the fuel consumption per passenger on our flights and see the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions when travelling by *Airbus A220-300* between any *airBaltic* destination pair.

Check out the advantages of the *A220-300* – the only aircraft type in the *airBaltic* fleet – and get to know more about life inside our airline. Take a look at the goals we've set for each month in our sustainability calendar for this year. Explore the different services we offer, and read inspiring articles on how to travel greener.

A smaller footprint in the sky. Think green, fly green.

To get the best flight deals, look for prices with cherries on [airbaltic.com](https://airbaltic.com)!

All flight prices mentioned in this magazine apply to GREEN tickets from Riga, Vilnius, or Tallinn that are booked in advance at [www.airbaltic.com](https://www.airbaltic.com). Prices are subject to availability and not available for all flights or days. Special conditions apply. Prices can be changed unilaterally by *airBaltic*.



The beach of Playa de Formentor, Palma Mallorca

## CATCH THE SUN

We're getting ready for the best and most awaited summer we've ever had! This summer we plan to fly to more than 60 destinations in Europe and beyond. For your wonderful vacation, we offer flights to many beautiful, sunny destinations.

Enjoy a classic Mediterranean climate in Spain. With hundreds of hours of sunshine per year and more than 200 beaches along the coastline, **Palma de Mallorca** is a paradise for lovers of the outdoors. **Malaga** truly has it all: scenic yellow-sand beaches, centuries-old castles, stylish ports and marinas, and excellent restaurants. And with sun-soaked beaches, art galleries, and incredible food, it's easy to fall for **Barcelona**.

Flights from Riga to **Palma de Mallorca** will start on May 2 and to **Barcelona** on March 30. Flights from Riga to **Malaga** will start on

June 2 and from Tallinn on April 17.

Delicious pasta, beautiful villages, and epic beaches – there are enough places to visit in Italy to last a lifetime. For example, explore **Olbia**, the gateway to pearly white beaches. Fly there from Riga starting May 22.

Enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime experience by riding in a gondola through the romantic canals of **Venice**. Flights will begin from Riga on July 1.

**Nice** is a place to enjoy life, take in the beauty of the gardens and the sea, and soak up the vibrant Mediterranean atmosphere. Flights begin from Riga on March 30.

Thinking of visiting **Dubrovnik**, the Pearl of the Adriatic? It's a dazzling city with a beautiful mix of an ancient town, turquoise waters, and Baroque architecture. Flights will start from Riga on May 1 and from Vilnius on June 4.



## HIGHEST SAFETY RATING BY SKYTRAX

Skytrax has awarded *airBaltic* a five-star COVID-19 safety rating. After performing a thorough audit in December 2020, *airBaltic* has become the first airline to receive the highest COVID-19 safety rating.

Skytrax is an international air transport rating organisation that launched the COVID-19 Safety Ratings programme back in August 2020, covering airlines and airports across the world. The audit focuses solely on cleanliness, hygiene, and safety procedures pertaining to COVID-19.



# Your health and well-being are our top priority

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



## BEFORE THE FLIGHT

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

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



## AT THE AIRPORT

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

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

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

## BOARDING

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

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

## ON BOARD

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

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

## CLEAN AIR INSIDE THE CABIN



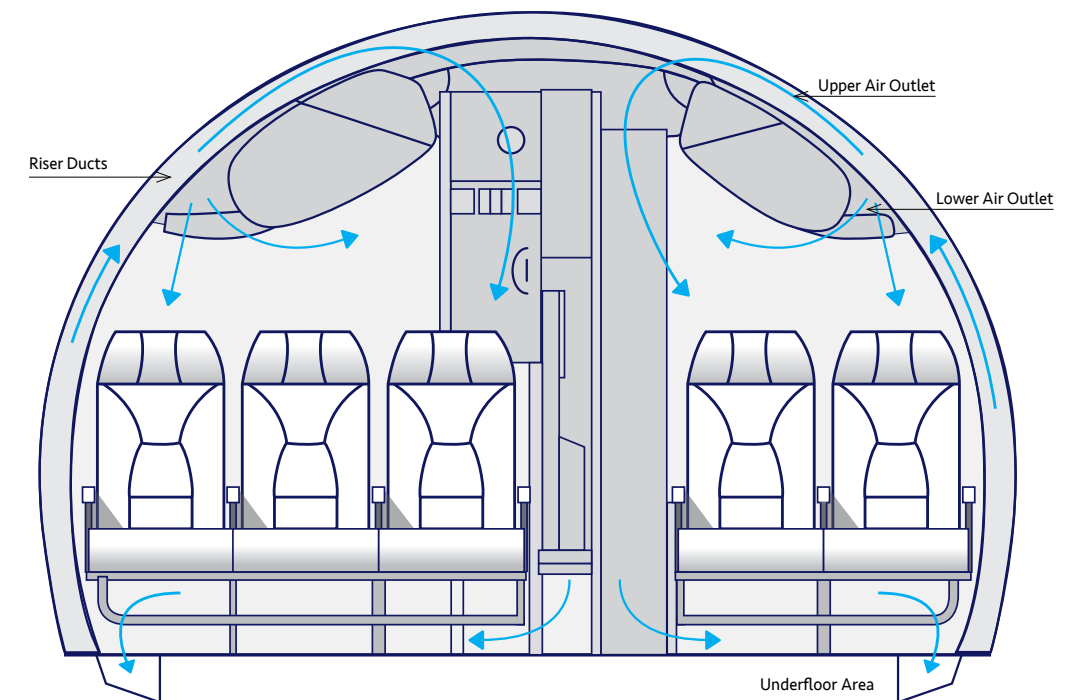
Our *Airbus A220-300* aircraft are equipped with a modern environmental control system using HEPA filters to eliminate all viruses and bacteria. Airflow is routed down towards the floor, thus minimising air transmission amongst passengers.

## AIRCRAFT DISINFECTION

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

# The science behind keeping cabin air clean

Words by Līga Vaļko



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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





OSKARS UGULIS,  
aircraft structure and composite  
repair technician-inspector

Words by Ilze Pole  
Photo by Mārtiņš Zilgalvis (*F64*)

## Microsurgeon of aviation

As part of the small workshops division at *airBaltic* that consists of sheet metal and composite workers, Oskars Ugulis' job is focused on solving issues concerning composite materials on all of the airline's aircraft. It also involves inspecting for any damage to aircraft, for instance, after collisions with birds. Together with the structural engineers, who provide solutions according to aircraft producer manuals, it's his job to carry out repair work. And it turns out that Oskars' hobby – riding and fixing surfboards – comes in very handy.

### How did you arrive at this job?

Everything happens for a reason... Before I began my studies and working at *airBaltic*, I lived in New Zealand for a while. I was back in Latvia getting some of my documents in order...when I fell in love with a woman who is now my wife. I returned to New Zealand for a short time, but then I moved back to Latvia permanently.

I had been a backpacker for seven years, travelling the world and doing all sorts of temporary jobs. My last stop had been New Zealand, where I spent a year working at an electric cable manufacturing company and developed an interest in mechanical engineering. I realised I had a talent and affinity for technical things; for example, I was able to detect problems in machinery in a very timely manner. So I made a decision to study mechanical engineering. Thanks to a number of chance events, I returned to Latvia and enrolled in Riga Technical University.

I was studying for a professional bachelor's degree, which required participating in an internship during my second year. I applied to *airBaltic* after returning from a trip with my family on an *airBaltic* airplane. I remember sitting on that plane, gazing out the window and watching the wing move [*laughs*]. I imagined it would be very interesting to do my internship at *airBaltic*. Besides, I had been fascinated by airplanes since I was a child.

### And how is your job linked to your hobby of surfing?

Well, surfboards are made of composite materials, too [*laughs*]! Surfing is my main hobby, and surfboards sometimes break. They then need to be repaired, and so I had a bit of experience with that. I had at least a basic understanding of what composite materials are.

But I learned the most from Edgars Koks, an aircraft structure and composite repair technician-inspector with whom I worked and trained under at *airBaltic*. I think he's the biggest specialist in this field in Latvia. He's also worked for the Latvian Olympic bobsleigh and luge teams. We developed a very good relationship and he trained me well, always explaining things about composites in a super interesting way.

*airBaltic* took me on for a three-month internship, which was the amount of time required by the university. And then they offered me a job after the internship ended. We were even able to devise a work schedule that allowed me to continue my studies. It wasn't easy, because I was working nights and going to school during the day, and our daughter was just born. But already a couple of years later I was offered a position as a technician, and I've now been at *airBaltic* for four years.

### Does being a technician require a certain kind of character or traits?

A technician needs to be very pedantic. I'd even say that's a precondition for this job. Scrupulous, precise, and possessing a steady hand.

For example, a crack has been discovered in one of the composite structures. The structure is a solid laminate. Imagine a piece of plywood, which consists of many layers glued together. In addition, the grain of the wood runs in different directions to give the plywood strength. But our crack goes through the whole laminate. We have to use our cutting tools to remove each layer of the laminate individually, one by one, until the whole damaged section is removed. The thickness of a single layer of carbon fibre reinforced plastic is approximately 0.18 millimetres. If a router operates at 30,000 rpm (revolutions per minute), then your hand must not shake at all. We laugh that we're the microsurgeons of aviation!

A person in this job needs to be very careful, alert, and exact. You also have to be willing to work according to all the instructions and procedures, even if at times you think a different solution would be more appropriate.

### Are you pedantic?

I never used to be, not at all [*laughs*]. But I learned to be fastidious and organised, because I lived in a van for nine months in New Zealand. The van was so small that I could reach anything I needed without moving from my seat, whether it was a piece of clothing or a fork to eat with or whatever. I developed my own system there, my own procedures to make it easier to live in such a small space [*laughs*].

I also did tattooing for a couple of years, which really trained my hands to not shake, and that helps me in my job now, too. But actually, anyone can learn to do this job, as long as they're patient, motivated, and have an interest in it.

### What kind of backgrounds do the new employees in your division come from?

We usually get students on internships. Some of them go on to become mechanics, some begin as mechanics and go on to complete various modules to become licensed technicians. *airBaltic* has big plans for attracting future technicians.

One of my current colleagues was once a trainee of mine. In fact, before he started working here, he led a model aircraft group for children and thus had experience working with composite materials. My job was basically to introduce him to the procedures and standards that govern our work here.

### What has been your biggest challenge over these past few years?

Probably one of the biggest challenges was combining work with my studies at the university. But as they say, a person can get used to anything

[*laughs*]. Luckily, I knew the situation wouldn't last forever. But I've never stopped learning. Last year, with travel opportunities drastically restricted, I enrolled in a master's degree programme in environmental engineering. To make effective use of my time. And the lectures all take place in the evenings and online.

I also want to develop further in the professional sense. And, if given the opportunity, I'd love to train a new employee again.

### How do you spend your free time?

There was a time when I worked only four days a week, and Fridays were completely 'my' day. I have a small workshop, where I fix and shape surfboards for myself. Travel destinations with my family are usually near water so that I can surf. Once a year we take a bigger trip to some exotic location. Someplace near the ocean, to catch the waves [*laughs*]! And I like to tailor my surfboard to each particular location. Because waves differ, and therefore a board needs to be shaped differently, too.

## I also did tattooing for a couple of years, and that helps me in my job now, too

### Where will you go on your next trip when travel becomes possible again?

Sri Lanka is one of my top destinations. If you go there at the right time, you don't even need a surf forecast – ideal conditions are guaranteed. I go to Sri Lanka every other year. In the in-between years I explore new places. But there have been occasions when the ocean is as flat as a lake for the entire two weeks that I'm there. So then you need to think about alternative things to do. You've planned to spend your whole vacation at the beach, but then you end up heading into the mountains. For my next trip, I'll probably go to Sri Lanka again, to enjoy some surfing.

### But what fascinates you most about airplanes?

Hydrodynamics and aerodynamics are really quite similar. I've also tried out a hydrofoil, which has an underwater winglike structure and operates according to a similar principle as a catamaran. There are special boards that on the surface look like surfboards, but they have a fin with a wing attached about 80 centimetres below the board. When you ride a surf hydrofoil, at a certain point the wing starts to lift the board out of the water, and that's an incredible, indescribable feeling. Kind of like an airplane, which takes off into the air once it reaches a certain speed. I find that fascinating.



Words by Ilze Pole  
Photo by Vladislavs Proškins (*F64*)

## Pilots out of their office

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



**Robin Heesen (39)**, from the Netherlands, Senior first officer on *Airbus A220-300* aircraft

### HOBBY

Robin Heesen arrived at the studio with a racket that strikingly resembled a tennis racket. But it was not. It was a padel racket.

“You have to come and check it out!” said my friends, also pilots at *airBaltic*, who invited me and my wife along for a game at the padel courts in Riga,” says Robin. “We used to play tennis together, and, seeing as padel closely resembles tennis, they thought I would like it.” Robin’s friends were not mistaken. With this job, it has always been hard to find a tennis partner. In that regard, Robin thinks that padel is much more approachable: ‘A group of players can come together in the evening for a match, and you don’t have to have a partner. The group can be up to 20 people, and then after a game of 20 minutes or so, you mix up the teams and play again.’

Robin also feels that padel is more accessible because the entry level is not as high as in tennis. You can be a beginner, having had just a few lessons, and still participate in a game. ‘In tennis you need to reach a certain level before it becomes really enjoyable to play with a partner,’ he says.

There are many padel enthusiasts in Riga. Friday evenings are when everyone gets together to play: ‘We put out a message in our *WhatsApp* group asking who’s free for a game tonight. Of course, that’s when the courts were open. I hope they’ll open up again soon.’

Robin began playing tennis at the age of 17. He enjoyed watching tennis on TV, so when he found an old tennis racket at home and got a couple of tennis balls, he went to an empty car park in his hometown in the eastern part of the Netherlands. ‘The car park had a perfect wall, and I just started hitting the balls against the wall,’ he recalls. It was fun, and he later joined a local tennis club.

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

‘My family used to go on holiday every summer, and most of the time we would fly to our destination,’ Robin begins his story about becoming a pilot. ‘The more we did that, and the older I got, the more I realised that taking a flight was actually the best part of the holiday. Flying fascinated me, and it became a highlight of the year.’

At a certain moment, the question arose about what to do after high school. Robin remembers attending an education fair, where a few flight schools were also present. One of them encouraged students to take part in a contest involving a flight simulator on a computer. Robin won the contest, and the prize was an hour in a real simulator. ‘I got answers to many other questions I had and realised that it was actually possible to become a pilot. From that moment onward, I put all my effort into getting into a flight school,’ he says.

Robin’s first job was with a Dutch wet-lease company, which means that the company leases aircraft, crews, and even maintenance personnel to other airlines. At the beginning, Robin piloted flights around Europe, but then he was sent to Africa for a while as well. It was a very interesting, exciting time. ‘You learn a lot in a job like that,’ he says with a smile.

Before joining *airBaltic* at 2015, Robin was working in Kazakhstan. ‘I met my future wife there,’ Robin says. ‘At a certain moment we decided to start a family, and the time was right for me to find a good base for us, a good, steady airline, and I found it at *airBaltic*. It’s big enough to have a good airline base and to build a career within the airline. On the other hand, it’s small enough to still know most of my colleagues directly or at least by name, which I also love!’

Words by Ilze Pole

Photos from the personal archives of Anete Liepa, Laura Hafiza, and Anastasija Lavrenova

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

1/ Flight attendant **Anete Liepa** joined *airBaltic* five years ago and hasn’t for a moment regretted her decision. One thing she particularly enjoys is her fantastic colleagues.

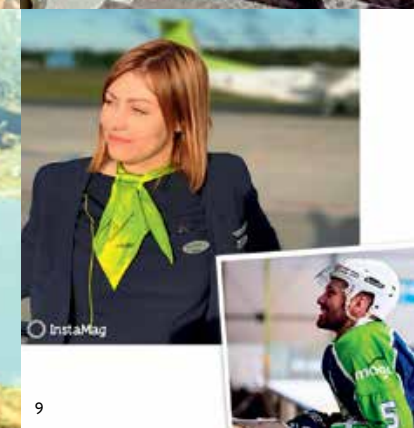
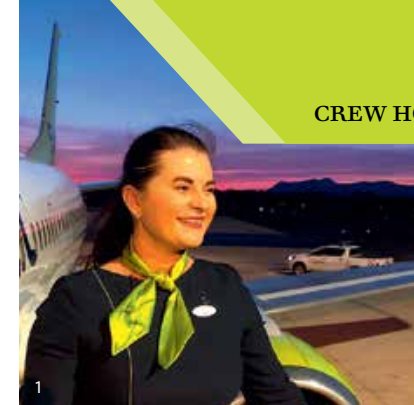
2/ Anete and her dog, Riko, have been together for 11 years already. They enjoy jogging in the woods and swimming. Even though huskies supposedly don’t like water.

3/ This photo was taken last March in Thailand at a sanctuary where elephants rescued from slavery can finally live in peace. Anete’s favourite destinations are places with a different culture she can learn about.

4/ Master cabin crew member **Laura Hafiza** joined *airBaltic* in the spring of 2015 after seeing an advertisement on *Facebook*. At the time, the profession seemed very unattainable to her and she didn’t believe she would be hired. However, she’s now been with the airline for six years already!

5/ Laura met her husband, Rizwan Hafeez, at a work party. Eight months later, they were married. And today, they have a two-year-old son. Rizwan is the main simulator engineer at *airBaltic*’s Training Centre. Laura and Rizwan love riding motorcycles and jump at every chance to do so in the summer.

6/ Laura enjoys adhering to a healthy lifestyle, which includes using various



## 9 SNAPSHOTS from the lives of our flight attendants

products made of natural ingredients. She has even begun making (and selling) her own natural deodorants.

7/ **Anastasija Lavrenova**, a senior cabin crew member, joined *airBaltic*

## Our cabin crew is always there for you!

in 2009 after moving from Moscow to Riga. Her previous job was related to chemistry and had harmed her health, so she was forced to look for something new. Aviation had always fascinated her, including wearing a uniform and the opportunity to travel a lot.

8/ That’s Almaty Lake behind Anastasiya. But her favourite holiday destination is Italy. She travels frequently with her family and misses it very much.

9/ Anastasiya’s husband, Andrejs, is an experienced ice hockey player who now plays for the HK Mogo team. She and their two daughters are his biggest fans, and they attend his games whenever possible. Anastasiya’s other hobby and passion is Russian dramatic theatre.



# airBaltic's sustainable development goals

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

## SUSTAINABILITY CALENDAR

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

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

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

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

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

## In December and January

### NEW DESTINATION TO KYIV

On December 1st *airBaltic* began direct flights between Vilnius and Kyiv in Ukraine, thus improving the indirect economic impact on the Baltic states by increasing connectivity with the Baltics. Even though travel is still currently limited, *airBaltic* believes that this will create a positive impact on tourism and business travel when regular operations resume.

Flights from Vilnius to Kyiv run two times a week, with a scheduled flight time of one hour and 15 minutes.

### SINGLE-TYPE AIRCRAFT FLEET

On December 8th *airBaltic* welcomed its 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> *Airbus A220-300* jets in Riga, registered as YL-AAX and YL-AAZ, respectively. These aircraft complete the planned deliveries for *airBaltic* in 2020. Both aircraft are part of the 50 *Airbus A220-300* aircraft the airline has ordered, and *airBaltic* holds 30 options for the same aircraft type. The *A220-300* features a high-quality air filtering system equipped with High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters that provide the best level of filtration currently available for recirculated cabin air from the very beginning of boarding, during the entire flight, and until all passengers have left the aircraft. The quality of cabin air is carefully controlled and is recirculated with ventilation rates that provide a total change of air 20 to 30 times per hour.

### FAREWELL TO THE BOEING 737

On December 17th *airBaltic* operated the delivery flight of its last remaining *Boeing 737* aircraft (YL-BBX) to its new owners, *Magnetic MRO*. Earlier this year, *Magnetic MRO* acquired three *Boeing 737* aircraft from *airBaltic*. Since May 2020, *airBaltic* has been operating all of its flights with a single aircraft type, the *Airbus A220-300*, thus minimising complexity and benefiting from the additional efficiency provided by the new aircraft.

*airBaltic* introduced its first *Boeing 737* aircraft back in 2003. Over the years, a total of 20 different *Boeing 737* aircraft carried more than 22 million passengers and performed more than 280,000 flights all across Europe and beyond.

With December being the month of industry, innovation and infrastructure, and January standing for decent work and economic growth, *airBaltic* has achieved some very important targets on its way to becoming a more sustainable airline.

### INTRODUCING THE SUSTAINABILITY WEBPAGE

On December 18th *airBaltic* introduced its sustainability web page. The design is fresh and modern, easy to use, and mobile friendly. Now you can calculate the fuel consumption per passenger on flights and see the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions when travelling by *Airbus A220-300* from point A to point B. Also, check out other advantages of the *A220-300*, get to know more about life inside our airline, see the goals the airline has set for each month in the sustainability calendar, explore the different services the airline offers, and read inspiring articles about how to travel greener and leave a smaller footprint in the sky.

[airbaltic.com/sustainability](https://airbaltic.com/sustainability)

### ONE OF THE SAFEST AIRLINES

On January 5th *airBaltic* was named one of the top twenty airlines in the world for COVID-19 safety by the *Airlineratings.com* rating agency. *airBaltic* has met all the criteria, thus receiving a full seven out of seven stars.

*Airlineratings.com* surveyed 430 airlines for COVID-19 compliance. For full compliance, airlines must have seven criteria in place: website information regarding COVID-19 procedures, face masks for passengers, personal protection equipment for the crew, modified meal service, deep cleaning of aircraft, personal sanitiser kits, and social distancing on board.

According to Geoffrey Thomas, the editor-in-chief of *Airlineratings.com*, these fully compliant airlines have gone above and beyond in the protection of passengers or in adding flexibility to travel. 'All these airlines have been trendsetters in making travel as safe as possible. Most major airlines have aggressively implemented a COVID-19 action plan, and we have been surprised at how quickly some have achieved full compliance,' says Thomas.

The safety and health of passengers is *airBaltic's* top priority. To read more about the new *airBaltic* health measures, visit the *airBaltic* website.

### 5-STAR COVID-19 SAFETY RATING

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, *airBaltic* began the Skytrax COVID-19 safety audit that assesses flight quality and safety. After completing the audit, on January 7th, *airBaltic* has become the first airline to receive the highest COVID-19 Safety Rating, and it also becomes the first airline to receive the 5-Star Skytrax COVID-19 Safety Rating.

Edward Plaisted of Skytrax: 'We are delighted to see *airBaltic* achieve the highest 5-Star COVID-19 Safety Rating and become the first airline to be certified at this level. The company has achieved an excellent standard of health and hygiene safety measures to keep customers and staff safe during the coronavirus pandemic, and this is being applied with a high level of consistency.'

Skytrax is an international air transport rating organisation that launched the COVID-19 Safety Ratings programme back in August 2020, covering airlines and airports across the world. The audit focuses solely on cleanliness, hygiene, and safety procedures pertaining to COVID-19.

### KNOWLEDGE OF airBaltic

Education and knowledge is the key to sustainable development, and therefore *airBaltic* has launched a new project called 'Knowledge on *airBaltic*', which encourages employees to join in and boost each other's knowledge about the diverse functions of different departments of the airline. Knowledge not only improves one's own self-esteem; it also provides us with the power to assist others in various ways. It enables us to interact with others in a more beneficial way, significantly increasing the efficiency of our performance. *airBaltic* believes that becoming better acquainted with different company functions and departments will create more value for the future. There are plans to develop this project further, and you can learn more about it in the upcoming issue of *Baltic Outlook* magazine.





NEW TICKET TYPES ON *airBaltic* FLIGHTS

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

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

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

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

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

Flights from RIGA						Flights to RIGA					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
AMSTERDAM						AMSTERDAM					
BT 617	RIX	AMS	1234567 Till March 6	07:35	09:00	BT 618	AMS	RIX	1234567 Till March 6	10:20	13:30
BT 617	RIX	AMS	123456- From March 8	07:35	09:00	BT 618	AMS	RIX	123456- From March 8	10:20	13:30
BT 619	RIX	AMS	1–45-7	16:25	17:50	BT 620	AMS	RIX	1–45-7	18:55	22:05
BERLIN Brandenburg						BERLIN Brandenburg					
BT 211	RIX	BER	1-3-5-7	07:25	08:05	BT 214	BER	RIX	1-3-5-7	8:55	11:30
BRUSSELS						BRUSSELS					
BT 603	RIX	BRU	–4–7	16:35	18:05	BT 604	BRU	RIX	–4–7	19:05	22:25
COPENHAGEN						COPENHAGEN					
BT 139	RIX	CPH	1-3-5-7	18:40	19:10	BT 140	CPH	RIX	1-3-5-7	20:10	22:35
DUBLIN / From March 06						DUBLIN / From March 06					
BT 661	RIX	DUB	–6–	07:30	08:45	BT 662	DUB	RIX	–6–	09:45	14:35
DUSSELDORF						DUSSELDORF					
BT 233	RIX	DUS	–6–	17:10	18:25	BT 234	DUS	RIX	–6–	19:25	22:30
FRANKFURT						FRANKFURT					
BT 243	RIX	FRA	1-3-5-7	07:25	08:45	BT 244	FRA	RIX	1-3-5-7	09:45	12:55
GENEVA						GENEVA					
BT 647	RIX	GVA	–6–	15:15	17:05	BT 648	GVA	RIX	–6–	18:05	21:50
HAMBURG						HAMBURG					
BT 251	RIX	HAM	–3–7	12:35	13:20	BT 252	HAM	RIX	–3–7	14:20	17:00
HELSINKI						HELSINKI					
BT 303	RIX	HEL	1-3-5-7	14:05	15:05	BT 304	HEL	RIX	1-3-5-7	15:55	16:55
KITTLA / From Feb 27 → NEW ROUTE						KITTLA / From Feb 27 → NEW ROUTE					
BT 381	RIX	KTT	–6–	12:35	14:30	BT 382	KTT	RIX	–6–	15:30	17:25
KYIV** / From March 1						KYIV** / From March 1					
BT 400	RIX	KBP	1234567	7:20	8:50	BT 401	KBP	RIX	1234567	9:50	11:35
LARNACA						LARNACA					
BT 657	RIX	LCA	–5–	13:55	17:40	BT 658	LCA	RIX	–5–	18:30	22:30
LISBON / From March 23						LISBON / From March 23					
BT 675	RIX	LIS	-2--5--	12:25	15:10	BT 676	LIS	RIX	-2--5--	16:10	22:40
LONDON Gatwick						LONDON Gatwick					
BT 651	RIX	LGW	–5– From March 5	07:40	08:40	BT 652	LGW	RIX	–5– From March 5	09:40	14:25
BT 653	RIX	LGW	1-34567 Till Feb 28	15:30	16:30	BT 654	LGW	RIX	1-34567 Till Feb 28	17:30	22:15
BT 653	RIX	LGW	12-4-67 From March 1	15:30	16:30	BT 654	LGW	RIX	12-4-67 From March 1	17:30	22:15
MADRID Adolfo Suarez Barajas / From March 25						MADRID Adolfo Suarez Barajas / From March 25					
BT 685	RIX	MAD	–4–	13:00	16:15	BT 686	MAD	RIX	–4–	17:15	22:15
MILAN Malpensa						MILAN Malpensa					
BT 629	RIX	MXP	–6– Till Feb 20	07:35	09:20	BT 630	MXP	RIX	–6– Till Feb 20	10:20	14:00
BT 629	RIX	MXP	-2--6- From Feb 23	07:35	09:20	BT 630	MXP	RIX	-2--6- From Feb 23	10:20	14:00
MINSK** / From March 2						MINSK** / From March 2					
BT 412	RIX	MSQ	-2-4-6-	12:50	14:50	BT 413	MSQ	RIX	-2-4-6-	15:50	15:50
MOSCOW Sheremetyevo** / From March 1						MOSCOW Sheremetyevo** / From March 1					
BT 422	RIX	SVO	1234567	18:10	20:55	BT 423	SVO	RIX	1234567	21:45	22:30
MUNICH						MUNICH					
BT 221	RIX	MUC	–6–	07:15	08:30	BT 222	MUC	RIX	–6–	09:15	12:25
BT 223	RIX	MUC	1--5-7 Till Feb 28	16:55	18:10	BT 224	MUC	RIX	1--5-7 Till Feb 28	19:10	22:20
BT 223	RIX	MUC	--34--7 From March 3	16:55	18:10	BT 224	MUC	RIX	--34--7 From March 3	19:10	22:20
OSLO						OSLO					
BT 151	RIX	OSL	--3-567 Till Feb 28	07:15	08:00	BT 152	OSL	RIX	--3-567 Till Feb 28	09:00	11:35
BT 153	RIX	OSL	1-3-567 From March 1	18:15	19:00	BT 154	OSL	RIX	1-3-567 From March 1	20:00	22:35
PALANGA						PALANGA					
BT 033	RIX	PLQ	1-3-5-7	23:20	00:05+1	BT 032	PLQ	RIX	12-4-6-	05:50	06:35
PARIS Charles de Gaulle						PARIS Charles de Gaulle					
BT 691	RIX	CDG	1-3-5-7	07:20	09:10	BT 692	CDG	RIX	1-3-5-7	10:10	13:55

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

Flights from RIGA						Flights to RIGA					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
REYKJAVIK						REYKJAVIK					
BT 169	RIX	KEF	-----6-	13:55	16:00	BT 170	KEF	RIX	-----6-	17:00	22:40
ROME Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino						ROME Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino					
BT 633	RIX	FCO	-----7	14:50	16:55	BT 634	FCO	RIX	-----7	17:55	21:55
SALZBURG / From Feb 20						SALZBURG / From Feb 20					
BT 437	RIX	SZG	-----6-	17:00	18:15	BT 438	SZG	RIX	-----6-	19:15	22:20
STOCKHOLM Arlanda						STOCKHOLM Arlanda					
BT 109	RIX	ARN	1-3-5-7	18:40	18:55	BT 110	ARN	RIX	1-3-5-7	19:45	21:50
ST- PETERSBURG** / From March 1						ST- PETERSBURG** / From March 1					
BT 448	RIX	LED	1-3-5-7	12:20	14:30	BT 449	LED	RIX	1-3-5-7	15:20	15:35
TALLINN						TALLINN					
BT 311	RIX	TLL	1---5--	05:45	06:35	BT 362	TLL	RIX	1234567	05:40	06:30
BT 311	RIX	TLL	-234-67	07:15	08:05	BT 316	TLL	RIX	1234567	14:30	15:20
BT 313	RIX	TLL	-234-67	11:55	12:45	BT 318	TLL	RIX	-234-67	21:10	22:00
BT 361	RIX	TLL	1234567	23:15	00:05+1						
TBILISI** / From March 2						TBILISI** / From March 2					
BT 724	RIX	TBS	-2-4-6-	13:50	19:15	BT 725	TBS	RIX	-2-4-6-	20:45	22:20
VERONA / From Feb 27						VERONA / From Feb 27					
BT 625	RIX	VRN	-----6-	07:10	08:45	BT 626	VRN	RIX	-----6-	09:35	13:00
VIENNA						VIENNA					
BT 431	RIX	VIE	1-3-5-7	07:35	08:35	BT 432	VIE	RIX	1-3-5-7	09:25	12:25
VILNIUS						VILNIUS					
BT 341	RIX	VNO	1-345-7	06:10	07:00	BT 350	VNO	RIX	1234567	05:40	06:30
BT 341	RIX	VNO	-2---6-	07:15	08:05	BT 346	VNO	RIX	123-56-	14:25	15:15
BT 343	RIX	VNO	1-3----	12:05	12:55	BT 346	VNO	RIX	---4--7	15:05	15:55
BT 349	RIX	VNO	1234567	23:15	00:05+1	BT 348	VNO	RIX	1-3----	21:20	22:10
ZURICH						ZURICH					
BT 641	RIX	ZRH	-----5-7 Till Feb 28	07:30	09:00	BT 642	ZRH	RIX	-----5-7 Till Feb 28	10:00	13:25
BT 641	RIX	ZRH	--3-5-7 From March 3	07:30	09:00	BT 642	ZRH	RIX	--3-5-7 From March 3	10:00	13:25

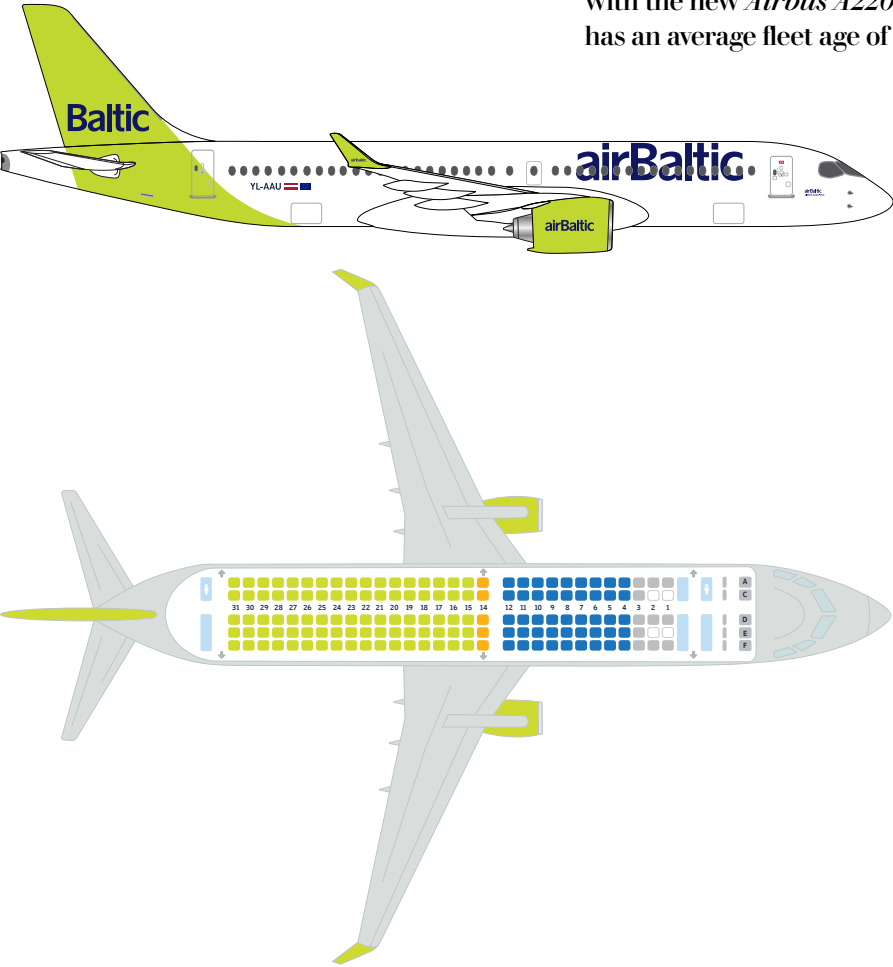
Flights from Tallinn						Flights to Tallinn					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
AMSTERDAM						AMSTERDAM					
BT 621	TLL	AMS	1---5--	07:25	09:00	BT 622	AMS	TLL	1---5--	10:20	13:40
BERLIN Brandenburg / From Feb 17						BERLIN Brandenburg / From Feb 17					
BT 201	TLL	BER	--3--6-	08:55	09:50	BT 202	BER	TLL	--3--6-	10:50	13:40
COPENHAGEN / From Feb 17						COPENHAGEN / From Feb 17					
BT 195	TLL	CPH	--3--7	16:05	16:45	BT 196	CPH	TLL	--3--7	17:45	20:10
LONDON Gatwick						LONDON Gatwick					
BT 649	TLL	LGW	-2---6-	13:35	14:40	BT 650	LGW	TLL	-2---6-	15:40	20:30
OSLO						OSLO					
BT 199	TLL	OSL	-----7	09:25	10:00	BT 200	OSL	TLL	-----7	11:00	13:30
BT 199	TLL	OSL	----4---	16:05	16:40	BT 200	OSL	TLL	----4---	17:40	20:10
SALZBURG / From Feb 20						SALZBURG / From Feb 20					
BT 439	TLL	SZG	-----6-	14:25	15:55	BT 440	SZG	TLL	-----6-	16:55	20:20
STOCKHOLM Arlanda						STOCKHOLM Arlanda					
BT 191	TLL	ARN	-2-4---	08:55	08:55	BT 192	ARN	TLL	-2-4---	09:55	11:55

Flights from Vilnius						Flights to Vilnius					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
AMSTERDAM						AMSTERDAM					
BT 609	VNO	AMS	1-3-5--	07:50	09:20	BT 610	AMS	VNO	1-3-5--	10:20	13:35
BERLIN Brandenburg						BERLIN Brandenburg					
BT 215	VNO	BER	1-3----	14:35	15:10	BT 216	BER	VNO	1-3----	16:10	18:40
KYIV**						KYIV**					
BT 414	VNO	KBP	-2---6-	09:00	10:15	BT 415	KBP	VNO	-2---6-	11:15	12:35
PARIS Charles de Gaulle						PARIS Charles de Gaulle					
BT 701	VNO	CDG	---4--7	07:50	09:45	BT 702	CDG	VNO	---4--7	10:35	14:15



# Welcome aboard our new *Airbus A220-300*

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



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

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

## Use of portable electronic devices

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

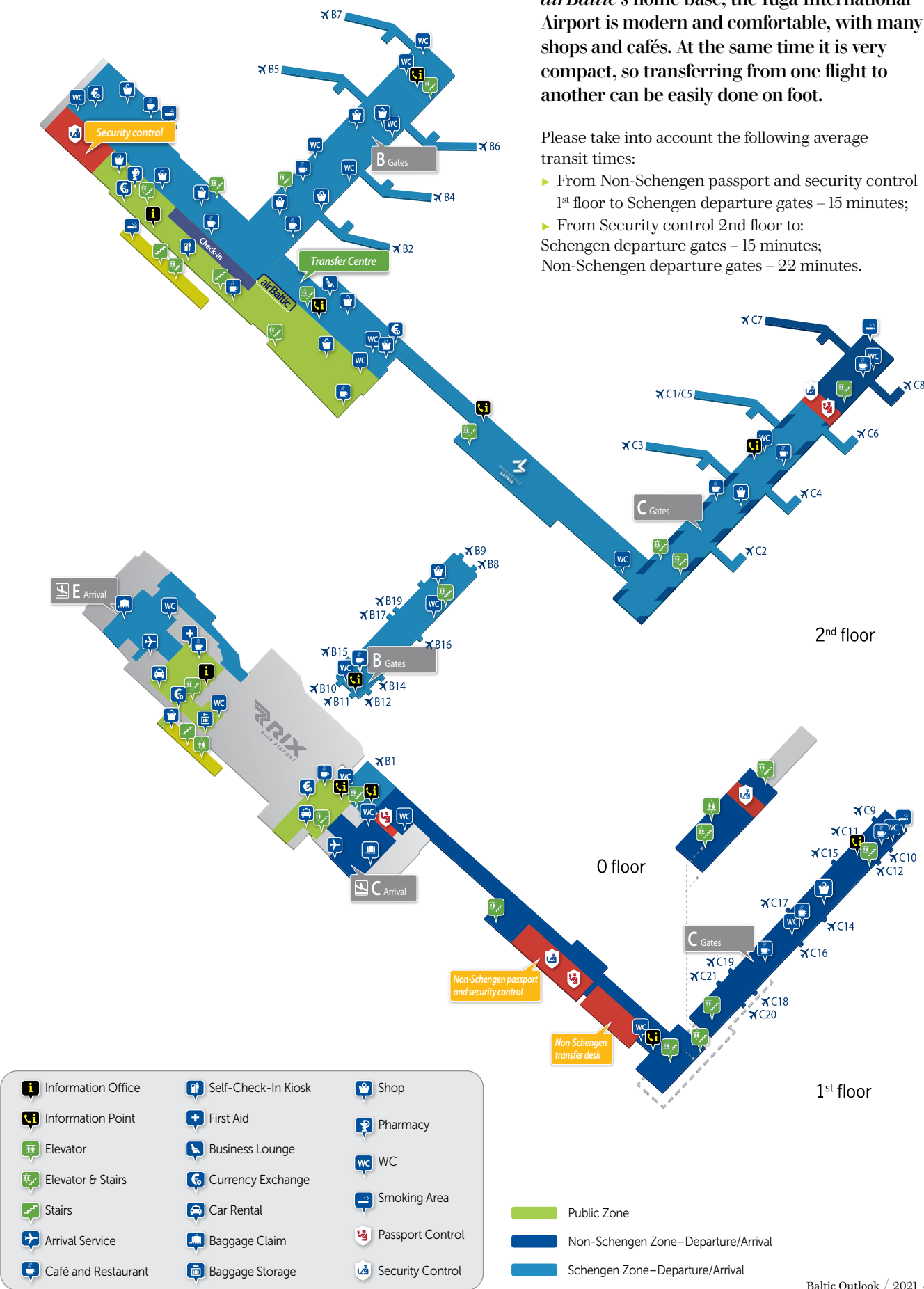
\* Shall be stowed in overhead bin or under the front seat inside an appropriate bag.  
In case a battery or device is damaged, hot, produces smoke, is lost, or falls into the seat structure, immediately inform the cabin crew.

# Welcome to Riga International Airport

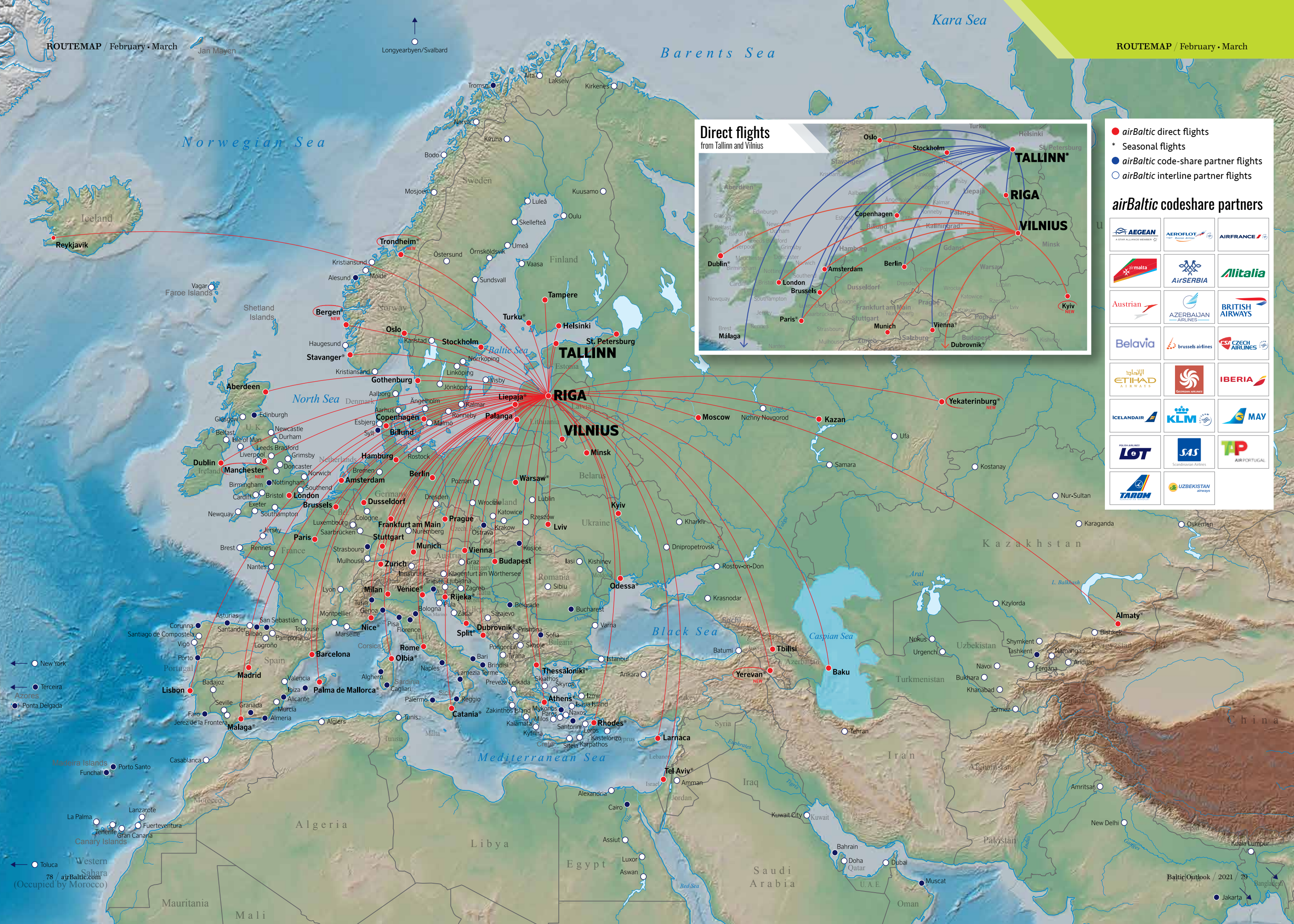
*airBaltic*’s home base, the Riga International Airport is modern and comfortable, with many shops and cafés. At the same time it is very compact, so transferring from one flight to another can be easily done on foot.

Please take into account the following average transit times:

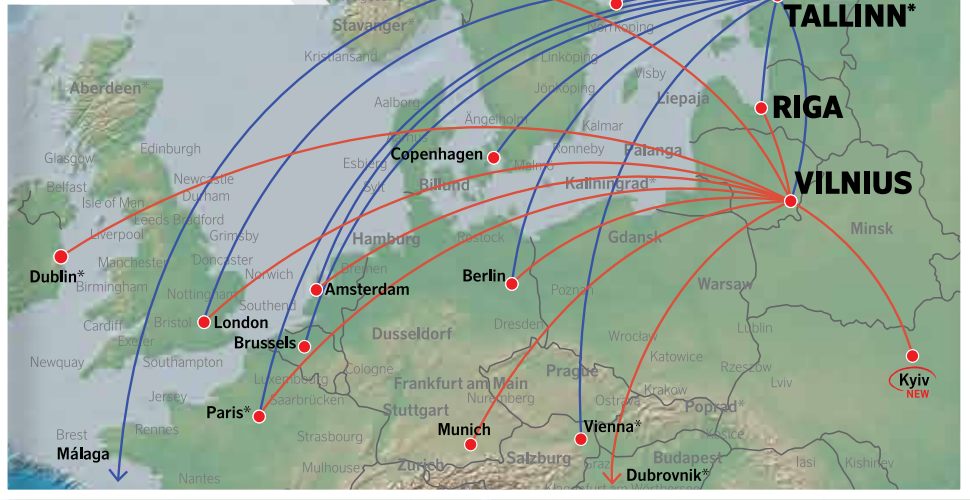
- From Non-Schengen passport and security control 1<sup>st</sup> floor to Schengen departure gates – 15 minutes;
- From Security control 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to:  
Schengen departure gates – 15 minutes;  
Non-Schengen departure gates – 22 minutes.







Direct flights  
from Tallinn and Vilnius



**airBaltic direct flights**

\* Seasonal flights

**airBaltic code-share partners**






# Spice up your trip with our extras!

Book these useful services along with your ticket at [airbaltic.com](http://airbaltic.com) or add them to your booking later on.

**Flight cancellation and name change options**

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

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

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

**Heavy cabin baggage**

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

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

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

**Checked baggage**

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

**Pre-order a meal**

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

**Reserve a seat**

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

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

**Fast track in Riga**

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

**Special equipment**

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

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

**Assistance for children flying alone\***

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

**Travelling with pets\***

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

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Choose from over 25 great value meal sets

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Vegetarian and gluten free

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



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

Think green  
Fly green



**20% less**  
CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

**50% less**  
noise

**50% less**  
NO<sub>x</sub> emissions



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