



JANUARY 2015

balticoutlook

airBaltic
inflight magazine

A SHORT JAUNT TO
LONDON'S
NEWEST HOTELS

Plus:

DAVOS – SKIING AS IT USED TO BE
HOW MILAN BECAME A FASHION INDUSTRY CAPITAL
WHERE TO FIND THE EQUATOR?

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на котором отражается их внутренняя сущность.”

Дюма А. отец



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VERTU

HANDMADE IN ENGLAND**

Welcome aboard



MARTIN ALEXANDER GAUSS

Chief Executive Officer *airBaltic*

Dear Customer,

Latvia assumed the presidency of the European Council on January 1 to be in the driving seat of the 28-country European Union for the first half of the year. This means an action-packed calendar in Riga and Brussels, and *airBaltic* as the official carrier is delighted to fly you into the focal point of political events from wherever you are in Europe.

One of the priorities of the Latvian EU presidency is a better, more competitive Europe. We at *airBaltic* strongly share this desire, particularly when it comes to competitiveness in the aviation industry. We have recently completed a major restructuring programme and emerged as a better, more efficient and consistently profitable carrier. Furthermore, our achievements contribute directly to the competitiveness of businesses and individuals in the Baltic Sea region, as we improve connections by air to provide better access to markets, open up new commercial and leisure opportunities, and eventually create new jobs.

Helping our customers and making their business life or leisure travel more convenient was exactly our focus when we improved our winter flight schedule. This season, westbound departures from Riga have been moved to earlier morning

hours so that you have more time to do business or relax in various European cities. This also means that you will arrive in the Baltic region earlier if you start your journey from airports in Vienna, Paris, Prague or Amsterdam.

Aside from the addition of new destinations and a more convenient flight schedule, we have also strengthened our industry-leading punctuality over the past year. With 95 flights out of 100 arriving on or ahead of schedule, we are one of the most punctual airlines globally and will remain committed to this over the coming years.

You might be on your way to enjoy a winter escape in the Alps or High Tatra Mountains, or a weekend city break. While you enjoy this trip, we are already thinking of your work-life balance in the summer months. Get ready for two new confirmed Mediterranean destinations – the Greek island of Rhodes and Dubrovnik on the Croatian coastline – and for the announcement of additional destinations shortly.

Did you know that January is the month when we celebrate the one millionth passenger on our Oslo-Riga route?

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

Yours,

Martin Alexander Gauss



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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



KOREN HELBIG
Family feeling (p. 54)

Career: Journalist since 2005, working for a small newspaper in South Australia. I came to sunny Spain in 2013 and my freelance work has since appeared in publications such as the *New Internationalist*, *El País*, *GlobalPost* and *Narratively*.
Proud of: I moved to Spain with basically zero Spanish, so I'm pretty happy that I've been able to reach a conversational level within a year.
Must-visit city: I'm not fond of the cold, so my must-visit mid-winter destination is Málaga in southern Spain, which has the warmest winters of any European city.
Life motto: Thoughts become things. That is, whatever you focus your mind and attention on becomes your reality, so make sure that you're dreaming big!



JIMMY PETTERSON
Davos – skiing as it used to be (p. 90)

Career: I began working as a ski and travel journalist way back in 1985.
Proud of: I do and have done many different kinds of jobs. I have a BA in history and an MA in education. I have worked as a schoolteacher, ski instructor, travel arranger, singer/entertainer, writer, photographer and hotelier, to name a few, but I think that I am proudest of my role as a dad.
Must-visit city: Tallinn is one of my favourite cities. Prague and Brugge are also spectacular.
Life motto: Skiing is life, powder is heaven, travel is knowledge.



KRISTĪNE GILUCE
Inside the world of filmmaking (p. 72)

Career: I have been working in film journalism since finishing my film studies in 2011. I feel especially happy about my work when I get the chance to interview illustrious movie personalities, who enrich me with their intellect, world view and charm.
Proud of: Right now I feel the greatest pride in matters that concern my personal life.
Must-visit city: Brussels. Only those who haven't got to know the city would call it boring. This multicultural Wallonian gem has so much to offer in terms of culture, cuisine, architecture and other facets of urban life.
Life motto: Travel is the best form of education.

baltic Outlook

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– Trend consultant, Anne Berneck



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Trend consultant Anne Bernecker says:

“This is Scandinavian design spot on! It’s respect for materials, quality and attention to details combined with a very modern, no fuss design. Seam lines are perfectly stitched to achieve an honest, calm and effortless look.”

Evoking a sense of immediate comfort, rich, beautifully supple suedes and leathers are coupled with soft, nude colours for women, along with cognac and dusted hues for men.

“This sneaker will achieve more character as you wear it. We chose camel leather, which contributes to the casual, Scandinavian, laid-back look that appeals to everyone,” says ECCO Lead Designer, Niki Tæstensen.

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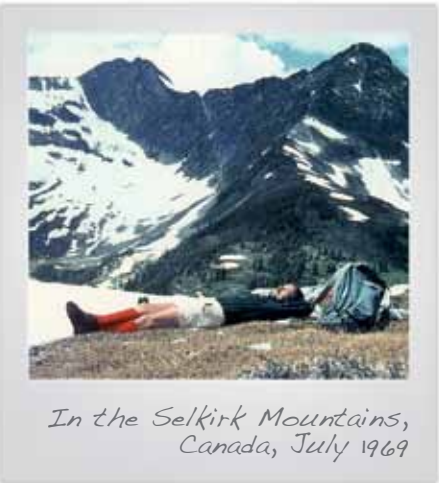


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Away from civilisation

Yes, it was the light. The grey granite of the Sierra Nevada Mountains turned white in the mountain sun, the lakes blue-black, their waves myriad slivers of shining mirrors. I had previously trekked in the Swiss Alps, staying at small hotels or alpine huts where the food and wine were simple yet tasty. But the California Sierra Nevada or “Range of Light” stole my heart and led me further into the western mountains of North America: the Canadian Rockies and the Cascades in Washington State. It was a different kind mountain travel, during which we carried all of our food and gear on long treks, with the added pleasure of making campfires. A campfire not only warms you and lights up the wild, it is also part of the primeval human psyche. Campfires are hypnotic and inspire conversations; and pun intended, they kindle the imagination.

During one of my previous treks in Switzerland’s Engelberg Valley, I had come upon a precarious snow bridge. A tiny stream ran under it and plunged down a vertical wall. No other way forward existed. If the bridge collapsed, I would plunge to my death. I turned around and went back to my wife and one-year-old son. All day I felt restless. Would my dreams of becoming a mountain climber be dashed? Not a Rebuffet, who had climbed all of



Campfires
are hypnotic
and inspire
conversations

the difficult north faces in the Alps, but a modest one? The next morning I went straight to that little bridge and crossed it. Crossing it again on the way back was especially fearsome. I had been foolish and prudently decided to end my dreams of

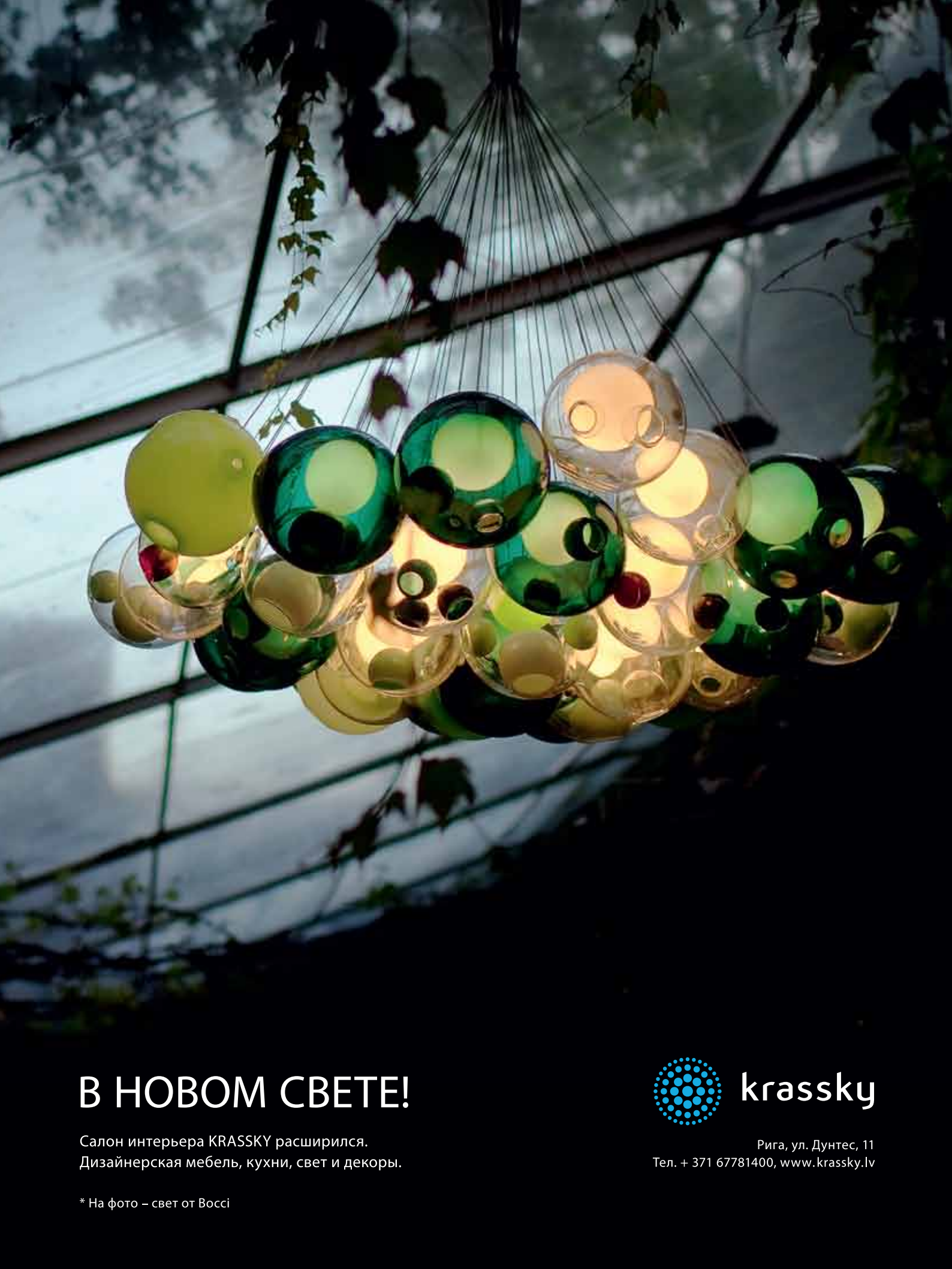
climbing in Switzerland.

“The Sierras” were a nice alternative, leading us to many other mountain ranges in western North America. I say “us” because I had learned from my boy scouting experiences in West Germany that it was enjoyable to travel in twosomes. A group is a moving social entity, obscuring direct and harmonious contact with nature. Twosomes, however, can walk close together or far apart, as their moods, thoughts and daydreams strike them. My first long treks were with my wife, then for many Augusts and some Januaries they were with my lifelong friend from doctoral studies – a tall Irishman with a great sense of humour and a poet’s soul. Our treks occurred at a time when mountaineering and camping gear and sales outlets were developing almost exponentially. The *Ski Hut* in Berkeley, California, was a pioneer in all this. Gear and food were becoming ever lighter, and although dehydrated meals were bland, we fixed that by adding a bit of fresh onion. As a result, we could stay out in the wild longer and travel farther, always choosing mountain crest trails. Ten days away from all civilisation became the norm. No matter what travails occurred en-route, ending such journeys was like leaving a dear friend, always with a good-bye wave to the landscape. **BO**



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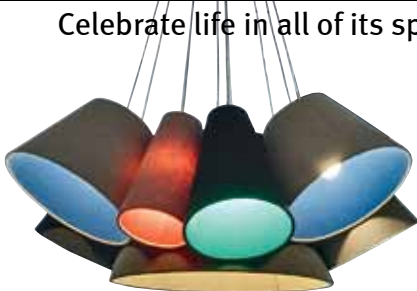


SPOTLIGHT ON THE WINTER
Five things that you should do in Latvia in January

- 1/ Renew your skating skills at any one of the outdoor skating rinks in the Latvian capital or in other cities and towns across the country.
- 2/ Watch the world's best barmen perform at the *OlyBet Flair Mania* competition on January 15 at Riga's *Olympic Voodoo Casino* (flairmania.com).
- 3/ Open the winter kiteboarding season on the frozen lakes and snow-covered hills of Latvia's central Vidzeme region.
- 4/ Listen to the legendary Moscow-based *Orthodox Singers* (*Pravoslavniye Pevtsiye*) male choir perform Riga Cathedral (*Rīgas Doms*) on January 10.
- 5/ Reserve a ride on a genuine bobsleigh and zoom down the Sigulda bobsleigh and luge track at speeds that can reach 100 km/h (makars.lv).

ON THIS MONTH'S MENU

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



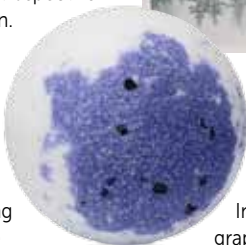
THE TREND:

Design Interior lamps assume an especially important function during the dark winter months. Lately, the modern and functional cloth lamps and lampshades by the Latvian company *LaLampa* have been all the rage and have become must-have objects in many private and public interiors.
① lalampa.lv

Music The most recent album *Iekams* by one of Latvia's most popular bands, *Instrumenti*, offers a poetic but simultaneously down-to-earth and minimalistic musical experience. Very personal, at times unsettling, but just cosmopolitan enough to permit each listener to engage in retrospective thought and meditation.
① instrumenti.in



Beauty Winter's dark and cold evenings are an appropriate time to take warm and soothing bubble baths. Available in various aromas, such as cranberry, blueberry and peony, the bath bubble balls by the Latvian soap manufacturer



Stenders will help you to relax and wind down. In addition, the grapeseed and almond oils added to the bath bubble balls make the skin especially soft.
① stenders-cosmetics.lv

Riga has become the latest city to host a branch of the *LUMAS* international gallery of modern art and design. The gallery has more than 35 places worldwide where it sells originally signed

artists' works that have been made in a limited number of exemplars (usually between 75 and 150 copies), at prices that range from 120 to 800 euros. The gallery's owners say that

they wanted to create a middle ground between unique artworks that cost at least 1,000 euros and the inexpensive reproductions available at museum stores. *Audēju iela 6, Riga*



ACCESSIBLE ART

Text by **ZANE NIKODEMUSA** and **ROGER NORUM**
Publicity photos and by **TIMURS SUBHANKULOVs, F64**

READING LIST



Joe Warwick. **Where Chefs Eat**

Just out this month in its second edition, food writer Joe Warwick's latest streak of brilliance is a runaway success and a gourmet's dream tome. The hefty volume contains updated recommendations for great restaurants all over the world, direct from the people who know food better than anyone else – several hundred of the world's best chefs, Heston Blumenthal and René Redzepi included.
EUR 18, ① taschen.com

David Marsh. **For Who the Bell Tolls: One Man's Quest for Grammatical Perfection**

This paperback is the salve to many of the grammar problems that plague much formal and informal writing today. Written by *The Guardian's* production editor and style guru, this book is a solid, enjoyable way to make sure that we know our gerunds from our subjunctives, that we avoid the greengrocer's apostrophe on every corner and that we stay away from those pesky run-on sentences – in the pursuit of achieving fluid and clear communication.
EUR 16, ① faber.co.uk

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① [instagram.com/mcouturelatvia](https://www.instagram.com/mcouturelatvia)

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GAGGENAU

THE METAPHYSICS OF THE RUNNER EXHIBITION BY PAKUI HARDWARE

kim? contemporary arts centre

January 16-March 1

Pakui Hardware is the pseudonym that collaborating Lithuanian artists Ugnius Gelguda and Neringa Černiauskaitė took up in 2014. In their exhibition *The Metaphysics of the Runner*, the artists explore the relationship between the future and the imagination. The runner treads in time past Internet images, brands and fragments of video films. Is it possible, the artists ask, that at the end of this journey the runner will no longer be part of an artificially generated reality?

More information at ① kim.lv
Maskavas iela 12/1

JANUARY 2015

GREAT CONCERT OF LATVIAN SYMPHONY MUSIC

Great Guild Hall | January 24

This major concert presents the unique opportunity to hear three of the country's best symphony orchestras – the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra and the Latvian National Opera Symphony Orchestra – perform classical music works by well-known Latvian composers.

Tickets at ① bilesuparadize.lv

Price: EUR 7-30

Amatu iela 6

Liepāja Symphony Orchestra with conductor Atvars Lakstīgals



VALENTĪNA OPERA BY COMPOSER ARTURS MASKATS

Latvian National Opera

January 28



The first opera by internationally renowned Latvian composer Arturs Maskats is a testimony to the dramatic times that Riga experienced from 1939 to 1944, including the Shoah (Holocaust) and the annihilation of nearly all of the city's Jews. The opera has been well-received and standing ovations have been given not only to the soloists but also to the choirs, whose singing has been described by viewers as "excellent".

More information at ① opera.lv

Tickets at ① bilesuparadize.lv

Price: EUR 4-33

Aspazijas bulvāris 3

APRITE SOLO EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY ILZE STREKAVINA

**Creative studio of the Arsenāls
exhibition hall**

January 9-February 8

While critics have not always described the paintings by talented artist Ilze Strekavina (b. 1948) as aesthetically pleasing and easy to grasp, her works nevertheless attract the viewer in their search for ideals and topical subtexts. This exhibition features a selection of the painter's most significant works, providing a comprehensive insight into her lengthy artistic career.

More information at ① Inmm.lv

Torņa iela 1

Commentary of Immanuel Kant's *Categorical Imperative*. 1984. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Tukums Museum



Photo: Mārtiņš Lablakis



Palladium concert hall

January 16, 17, 23, 24

The annual *Cabaret* performance in Riga invites you to sense the magic and mystery of the full moon. *La Luna*, a musical show that has gathered some of Latvia's best singers, musicians, dancers and circus artists, will continue well after the official programme has ended, with talented singers performing some of the world's most popular songs – including tango and jazz pieces – and spectators taking to the dance floor until as late as 3 AM.

Tickets at ① bilesuparadize.lv

Price: EUR 60-80 (admission includes a seat at a table, a glass of wine and snacks)

Marijas iela 21

LA LUNA MUSICAL SHOW

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KAPRĪZE

SOLO EXHIBITION
OF PAINTINGS BY
BIRUTA DELLE

Daugava art gallery
From January 14

Painter Biruta Delle (b. 1944) is a fierce individualist who has always chosen to go her own way. She entered the arts scene during the 1960s and became one of Latvia's most noteworthy artists. Her works display a powerful play of lights and darks that gives them a dramatic and even tragic feel.

More information at [galerijadaugava.lv](#)
Alksnāja iela 10/12

KHL ICE HOCKEY GAME

DINAMO RIGA – HELSINKI JOKERIT
Arena Riga
January 7

The Latvian capital's *Dinamo Riga* hockey team faces intractable opponent *Helsinki Jokerit* on its home turf in what promises to be an exciting KHL match. The Finnish team, which made its debut this season in Europe's best hockey league, has been doing quite well in the Western conference, while Latvia's legendary hockey fans are sure to give their home team all of the support that they can muster.

Tickets at [bilesuserviss.lv](#)

Price: EUR 4.25-85.00

Skanstes iela 21



Nikolai Balabin. *Fallen Gold*, brooch.
Silver, patina, leaf gold



Heng Lee. *Pixels 9.1*, embroidered brooch. Stainless steel plated with 20K gold, thread, silk organza

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Renowned jewellery artists from Latvia and other countries reveal their sentimentalities about winter at this Riga exhibition. If contemporary jewellery has not inspired you until now, then here you are likely to find something that appeals to you among the different styles and materials used by the skilled masters.

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Mārstaļu iela 16

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LIVE MUSIC ON WEEKENDS

Details **RIGA CLOSEUP**

Castle of Light

The National Library of Latvia has become the most talked about library in the Baltic States.

Last year, more than four million books found a new home in the sparkling National Library of Latvia building, right across the Daugava River from Old Riga on Mūkusalas iela 3. Designed by world-famous Latvian-American architect Gunārs Birkerts, the towering edifice that Latvians popularly



Text by **LIENE PĀLĒNA**
Photos by **ANDREJS TERENTJEVS, F64**
and **INDRIKIS STŪRMANIS**

call the Castle of Light was officially opened to the public last August.

During the first six months of this year, the library will be the central venue for European Council meetings under Latvia's presidency of the European Union. For this reason, the library's first two floors will be closed to the public until July. Nevertheless, visitors will still be able to get a feel of the modern building's unique atmosphere on the higher floors.

The edifice's large size makes it quite imposing, and practically each of its 13 floors houses some creative Latvian interior details. The stone floor in the vestibule, for example, is inlaid with a classical linen tablecloth decoration known as a huckaback pattern, which is best viewed from the higher floors above. Looking upward from the ground floor, one will see the People's Bookshelf with privately donated books extending upwards for five storeys!

The fifth floor houses one of the country's greatest cultural treasures, a wooden shelf built in Moscow in 1880 in accordance with the specifications of Latvian folklorist Krišjānis Barons. Known as the Daina Cabinet, its drawers house 268,815 pieces of paper on which Barons personally noted thousands of folk songs, riddles and sayings during his numerous folklore-collecting expeditions to the Latvian countryside.

The National Library of Latvia is not only a storage space for books, but also a cultural and education centre that regularly hosts various types of exhibitions. One of the most impressive "paintings" can be seen when you take the lift to the seventh floor and look out of the small window onto the tower of St. Peter's Church across the river. The sight is quite memorable but easy to overlook if you are inattentive. **BO**

© Inb.lv

TOP 3

must-do's at the National Library of Latvia

See a 35-mm film in the library's modern audio-visual centre, which imparts a whole new meaning to movie-watching.

Take in a splendid 350-degree panoramic view of Latvia's capital city from the top floor.

If you feel fit and trim, then walk up the staircase and visit every library floor. It will take you 377 steps to get to the top. A noble and athletic endeavour.



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Moxy hotels

Text by **UNA MEISTERE**,
anothertravelguide.com
Publicity photos

Milan



Carlo e Camilla

A long-awaited exposition of works by famous Dutch painter **Vincent van Gogh** is currently on display until March 8 at Milan's Palazzo Reale (Piazza del Duomo). Titled *Van Gogh – Man and Land* (*Van Gogh – l'Uomo e la Terra*), it is a prelude to the rich cultural programme that Milan will be offering as the host city of *Expo 2015*. With 47 of the artist's works on display, this is the largest exhibition of Van Gogh's works to be shown in Italy for the past 60 years. The paintings have been installed in a setting designed by Kengo Kuma, a proponent of natural materials and one of Japan's most prominent architects.

Italy's designer capital is also the place where *Inter Ikea* and *Marriott International* have pooled their efforts to launch an ambitious new chain of affordable boutique hotels. Over the next ten years, the two companies plan to open 150 **Moxy hotels** in Europe, aiming chiefly at young customers aged 18-35. The first *Moxy* is located at Terminal 2 in Milan's Malpensa airport (moxy-hotels.marriott.com).

Those expecting to see something similar to an *Ikea* showroom at *Moxy* will be disappointed, as the hotel is instead filled with amusing details, such as a shower head in the elevator, while the interior sports such classic gems of design as *Tom Dixon* lamps and *Vitra* tables. However, the hotel does share a couple of *Ikea* traits: it was built in only six months and each room arrived onto the construction site flatly packed. The hotel's pricing policy is also quite user-friendly, with rooms starting at 79 euros per night.

One must-see destination for refined hedonists of design and gastronomy is the new gastro-bistro **Carlo e Camilla** in Segheria (Via Meda 42), a collaborative venture by *Michelin*-starred chef Carlo Cracco and design guru Tanja Solci. The restaurant is located in a former factory and its interior is extremely minimalistic, with only two long wooden tables set up in the shape of a cross and extravagant chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. Expertly directed plays of light throw leaf-shaped patterns of shadows onto the tables and light up the patrons' hands whenever they reach for their plates.



Vincent van Gogh, *View of Saintes-Maries*, 1888, Kröller-Müller Museum, Netherlands



Vincent van Gogh, *Roses and Peonies*, 1866, Kröller-Müller Museum, Netherlands



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Museu del Disseny de Barcelona

Barcelona



Chök

At last, Barcelona also has its own museum of design. The **Museu del Disseny de Barcelona** (Pl. de les Glòries Catalanes, 37; museudeldisseny.cat) opened its doors at the end of December in a new building designed by the local architects' bureau *MBM Arquitectes*. The establishment has two sections, one of which is underground, while the other towers 14.5 metres above the landscape like a periscope.

The new museum houses about 70,000 items and unites four former independent museums under one roof: the museums of decorative arts, ceramics, textiles and clothing, and graphic arts. The Museu del Disseny aims to turn Barcelona into a major destination of design, and already now there is no lack of unusual design projects in the Catalanian capital.

Have you ever spent a night in a bakery? Then how about a stay at the 74-room **Hotel Praktik Bakery** (Provença 279; hotelpraktikbakery.com)? It can be found in the Eixample district, which is full of architectural gems designed by Antoni Gaudí. In the hotel lobby, the *Baluard* bakery beckons with its open kitchen, where pastry chefs busily prepare baguettes, croissants and other goodies and place them onto glass-walled shelves. There is also a café where you can try out the pastries, no matter if you are just passing by or if you have ventured out of your hotel guest room for a quick bite to eat.

Chocolate is a Barcelona obsession. There are few other cities where you will find so many shops that engage in the most radical experiments with chocolate. The newest kid on the block is **Chök** (Carrer del Carme 3; chokbarcelona.com), which practices what it calls "chocolate cuisine". The tasteful white interior in itself gets the appetite going and more than 30 different types of chocolate are made right there on the spot in an open kitchen. The place always seems busy and reminds one of a veritable experimental theatre.



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Astrup Fearnley Museum

© Nic Lehoux

Design aficionados can now count Oslo as an “in” place to visit. The new **YME Universe concept store** (Karl Johans gate 39; ymeuniverse.com) – which unites fashion, art and design under one roof – can be seen as the equivalent of such legendary classics as *Colette* in Paris and the Dover Street Market in London and as a unique experience in its own right. The store’s interior was designed by the well-known Norwegian architecture office *Snøhetta*, which drew inspiration from Norse myths about the creation of the world. These say that once the separate kingdoms of ice and fire were united, the creative spirit was born. The kingdom of ice is embodied on the ground floor by an interior that reminds one of a slowly flowing half-frozen river, while up above the pleasing aroma of fresh wood makes you feel like you have entered an oasis of life.

Oslo’s design scene was recently supplemented by yet another **Snøhetta project – two gigantic beehives** that the architecture office has set up on the roof of the Mathallen food court (mathallenoslo.no), which is the city’s gastronomic epicentre. The aim of the project is to encourage nature (and mainly bees) to return to the city. Mathallen is located in Vulkan, Oslo’s new creative quarter, and is home to more than 25 independent local food producers and restaurants. Popular with the locals, the dining hall also looks like a beehive of activity at lunchtime.

Oslo is also presenting itself no less ambitiously onto the art map of Europe. What changes have the creation of the European Union, the ease of travel and the artistic and cultural interaction among the people of Europe brought to the continental arts scene? Answers to these questions have been sought through the **Europe, Europe** exhibition, which can be viewed at the Astrup Fearnley Museum until February 1 (Strandpromenaden 2; afmuseet.no). The showing features works by 30 young artists from eight European cities – Berlin, Brussels, Paris, London, Prague, Lisbon, Zurich and Oslo – and will then travel to other European exhibition spaces. **BO**

© Morten Brakestad



Beehives on the roof of Mathallen food court

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YME Universe concept store / Snøhetta & Ketil Jacobsen



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Man-made marvel

A must-see place that really should be on your travel to-do list.



Text by **LIENE PĀLĒNA**
Publicity photos

"I am in the most beautiful library in the world," I thought when I crossed the threshold of the library at the Strahov Monastery in the Czech capital. As I beheld the splendour of the building's Philosophical and Theological halls, I got the feeling that Harry Potter really does exist and that this magical place might fill up with even more magical guests at any moment.

Welsh television producer and screenwriter Russell T. Davies once said that books are the world's most effective weapon. If that is the case, then the Strahov Library is full to the brim with arms of all sorts. The pride of both Prague and the Czech Republic, it is more than 800 years old and the largest monastic library in the country. It regularly features in lists of the world's most beautiful libraries and is especially popular with *Pinterest* users, as practically every tourist who visits the place wants to snap pictures of it for posterity. The library houses approximately 200,000 volumes, of which the oldest is the 9th-century *Strahov Evangeliary*.

The Baroque-style ceiling frescos in the aforementioned Philosophical and Theological halls are truly impressive, as are the high shelves of engraved wood, which are filled with old books and manuscripts. I would have gladly spent hours climbing around the wooden book ladders and stepping from shelf to shelf to immerse myself into this mysterious mass of literature. Unfortunately, most members of the public don't get to enjoy this privilege.

While the library is open to the public for an entry fee of 80 Czech crowns, you won't get past the green entry doors of both halls unless you have previously made a reservation for a guided tour. That is the only way to get inside the illustrious rooms and take in their majestic aura. Photography is also restricted, but you can still engrave the images of your fascinating visit in your memory, which nobody can erase. **BO**

Strahovské nádvoří 1/132, Prague
① strahovskyclaster.cz/library

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HOMMAGE À CLAUDE MONET

Fake Equator



Text by **FLORIAN MAAB**
Publicity photos

It's cold outside and you feel the need for a change of scene, but can't fly to the Equator? Then the travel trend of indoor holiday resorts might cater to you.

We are only 60 kilometres from Berlin, Germany. Children are playing in a subtropical Balinese lagoon while their parents sip mojitos at a Caribbean beach bar with a view of the rain forest. *Tropical Islands* is an artificial warm-weather wonderland in the world's largest free-standing hall. The indoor resort is 360 metres long, 210 metres wide and 107 metres high. It is so large that the Statue of Liberty in New York would snugly fit into it.

Like the pavilions at Riga's central market, this edifice was originally built as an airship hangar. The tropical getaway for winter-weary travellers comes with a beach, a lagoon, a rainforest, swimming pools, water slides, a spa and several bars and restaurants. Guests can spend the night in

a camp at the rainforest or sleep in African, Asian or Caribbean-style lodges and rooms. Even a big red sunrise is guaranteed, thanks to a projection on a huge screen.

If you are not a fan of sunny beach resorts but prefer winter sports instead, then how about some indoor skiing fun? This season, you will find skiers and snowboarders racing down artificial indoor slopes and sipping mulled wine at cosy wooden ski huts after their run, before heading back to the ski lifts. Ski domes and arenas have sprung up like mushrooms at Landgraaf in Holland, Druskininkai in Lithuania, Moscow in Russia and Weittenberg near Hamburg, Germany. The biggest ski dome is planned in Denmark with an impressive three kilometres of slopes. All of these places share one thing in common – they have no mountains.

However, before you head to the next indoor holiday resort, you might decide to opt for still another trend that will save you any possible disappointment. Just *Photoshop* yourself onto pictures of the places that you want to visit, take an imaginary journey around the world and impress your friends on *Facebook*, all from the sofa of your own home. **BO**

① tropical-islands.de

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Tribute to the *Chanel N°5* perfume by Parisian cartoonist Sem, 1921

Text by **IEVA ŠMITE**
Photos courtesy of *Chanel*

The bottle – an exceptional creation

It was just a couple of months ago when the new campaign for the legendary *Chanel N°5* perfume was launched with Gisele Bündchen as its new face.

The three-minute-long movie directed by Baz Luhrmann – later cut for a 30-second TV commercial – was quite impressive and glitzy. Here we take a look at the very first bottle and advertising campaign of the famous perfume.

Restrained, simple and geometric, the bottle chosen by Mademoiselle Gabrielle Chanel was as revolutionary in its time as the fragrance itself. The first model had rounded edges. In 1924, it was reworked in order to improve its strength and the airtightness of its seal. From then on, the bottle and stopper had beveled edges like emerald-cut diamonds. This was the only major change.

The white box edged in black underlined the simplicity of a shape that was simultaneously modern and timeless. The contrast of black-and-white emphasized with gold, the box echoing the edging on the jacket of a *Chanel* suit, the right angles and the transparency show that *N°5* incorporates all of the principal visual elements of *Chanel* design. In 1959, a *N°5* bottle was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The most recent development was in 1998, when the legendary *N°5 Eau de Parfum* bottle became a spray. Other than the addition of a discreet pump, the bottle was identical to its predecessor.

When the perfume was first created, Gabrielle Chanel hosted a promotional event to generate a buzz around her new fragrance. She invited a group of elite friends to dine with her in an elegant restaurant in Grasse, where she surprised her guests by spraying them with *Chanel N°5*. She officially launched the perfume in her Paris boutique in 1921, infusing the shop's dressing rooms with the scent and gifting a select few of her high-society friends with bottles. The success of the fragrance was immediate.

In the United States, *Chanel N°5* was initially sold by word-of-mouth, promoted from perfume counters at high-end department stores. The strategy in Europe was similar. The *Galleries Lafayette*, a notable department store, was the first retailer of the fragrance in Paris. In France itself, *Chanel N°5* was not advertised at all until the 1940s.

The first American *Chanel* advertisement appeared in *The New York Times* in 1924, announcing that the *Chanel* line of fragrances was now available at *Bonwit Teller*, an upscale department store. The first truly solo advertisement of *Chanel N°5* as the most important *Chanel* perfume also ran in *The New York Times* in 1934. **BO**



Bottle of *Chanel N°5*



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Tallin. Mixed influences

Estonian fashion has been shaped by geography and history and has been subject to various cultural influences from the north, east and west. This is reflected in the original way that Estonians mix fashion styles in their dress. The colours and silhouettes of their clothes are characterised by Scandinavian minimalism, practicality and simple lines, while an eastern influence can be detected in rich fabrics and details.

For their day-to-day clothing, Estonians usually opt for subdued tones such as beige, grey and ivory as well as classical black, dark blue and chocolate colours. They prefer a classical minimalist style and Scandinavian simplicity, with accents provided by interesting details and fabric prints. The younger generation, for its part, is more likely to follow current trends in fashion magazines and blogs, opting for a more colourful image and vintage items.

Text by **DACE VAIVARA**
Publicity photos and courtesy of the Tallinn City Tourist Office and Convention Bureau



Ivo Nikkolo

SHOPPING IN TALLINN Embassy of Fashion

This store carries a selection of creative clothing by some of Estonia's top fashion designers, including Aldo Järvsoo, Riina Pöldroos and Ketlin Bachmann, as well as unique jewellery by Tanel Veenre.

Tatari 6

① embassyoffashion.com

Oksana Tandit Concept Store

Since opening its doors one year ago, this concept store has been offering refined interior design items as well as high-quality and classically elegant clothing and accessories created by designer Oksana Tandit.

Tornimäe 5

① oksanatanadit.ee

Naiiv

This unique knitwear design salon by designer Liina Viira provides an avant-garde and colourful interpretation of Estonian folk dress and traditional clothing.

Müürivahe 36

① naiiv.eu

Sireen

Young Estonian fashion designer Liisi Eesmaa has set up a funky store with original vintage clothing, mostly from the 1970s.

Müürivahe 22



Earrings by Tanel Veenre, EUR 175, tvj.ee



Beret by Mosaic, EUR 22.95



Coat by Monton, EUR 159.95



Skirt by Bastion, EUR 79.90



Bag by Monton, EUR 39.95

The largest Estonian clothes manufacturer is *Baltika Group*, which operates in the Baltic countries under such brands as *Monton*, *Mosaic*, *Baltman*, *Bastion* and *Ivo Nikkolo*. *Ivo Nikkolo* was founded in 1994 and is one of the oldest and most successful commercial brands, offering high-quality designer clothing for women.

Estonia has strong artisanal and clothes-making traditions, and many Estonians order bespoke clothing items from well-known local fashion designers such as Katrin Kuldma, Kristiina Viirpalu, Pohjanheimo and Oksana Tandit. Also worth mentioning are the country's promising young talents, including Liisi Eesmaa, Britt Samoson, Liina-Mai Püüa, Taavi Turk, Laivi Suurväli, Triinu Pungits, Piret Ilves, Marit Ilison, Jo Nurm and others who have introduced innovative and fresh approaches in the Estonian fashion arena. **BO**

Store addresses in Riga: Ivo Nikkolo and Monton at the Spice shopping centre, Lielirbes iela 29 | Bastion and Mosaic at Domina Shopping, Ieriku iela 3

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Pearls are always appropriate

...said Jackie Kennedy. And we added a bit of gold.

Style by **KATRĪNA REMESA-VANAGA**
Photo by **EDMUNDS BRENCIS, F64**



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Chain and pendant,
Shine, EUR 340.07 and
EUR 483

Necklace, *Goldlight*,
EUR 259.31

Pearl necklace, *Grenardi
Pearls*, EUR 616.10

Necklace, *Goldlight*,
EUR 285.26

Addresses in Riga: *Montblanc*: Elizabetes iela 69, *Goldlight*, *Grenardi Pearls* and *Shine*: *Galerija Centrs* shopping centre, Audēju iela 16; *Jahonts*: *Galerija Rīga* shopping centre, Dzirnau iela 67



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Mistletones

Head(phone) into the new year with one of these stylish examples of over-the-ear ingenuity.

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While the audio masters at *Beyerdynamic* seem to have taken a backseat when it comes to mass production, they have definitely hit the bull's-eye with these headphones. The newly released series feels elegant and mature, with a subdued brushed metallic finish that befits its German engineering. Efficient Tesla drivers give the phones a rich, embedded sound with hefty, tight basses and some searing (but still warm) highs. The closed back design features cups that offer real freedom of movement.

EUR 279 | [beyerdynamic.com](#)



Text by **ROGER NORUM**
Publicity photos



PHILIPS FIDELIO M2BT

Cut the cord

Built on the heels of the award-winning *M1BT*, these *Bluetooth* gems are this month's only wireless contenders. Their improved, refined design features a rib-woven headband for flexibility and durability, with memory foam leather ear pads for comfort. Dynamic bass is handled by 40-mm high magnetic intensity neodymium speaker drivers, while the acoustic closed-back architecture provides excellent noise isolation. The headphones feature NFC pairing as well as integrated controls built into the right ear pad; simply push up or down to change volume and press in to skip a track forward or backwards.

EUR 249.99 | [philips.com](#)



BOWERS AND WILKINS P5

Art imitating hi-fi

The first serious headphones to be made by *Bowers and Wilkins* (the British firm otherwise known for dominating the very cool speaker market), these gorgeous pieces of art are already classics among audiophiles and design tech fans, providing sound that is very smooth and never overpowering. The phones are also great noise isolators thanks to a snug fit aided by a comfy adjustable headband swathed in soft, supple New Zealand leather. The detachable single-sided cable has a mic-remote designed for *Apple* users. Performs best at high volumes.

EUR 315 | [bowers-wilkins.com](#)



SENNHEISER URBANITE

Cooler cans in the city

These arrestingly stylish headphones are easily among the most cosmopolitan on the market when it comes to looks. And as *Sennheiser* is behind them, you know the sound is going

to be very good – a larger-than-normal driver ensures a solid balance without making the bass too overpowering. Features a resilient fabric headband cover and hardy aluminium sliders for adjusting a snug fit. Comes in plenty of colours and is also available in an XL version with larger earpieces.

EUR 179 | [sennheiser.com](#)



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EUR 161 | [aiaiai.dk](#)

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Text by **KRISTĪNE BUDŽE**, *Pastaiga*
Photo courtesy of Vitra

A chair for the delegates of the United Nations and much more

The *East River Chair* looks good not only in the interior of the United Nations headquarters in New York. It also fits in well in work offices and even children's bedrooms.



WHAT IS IT?

A chair that Dutch designer Hella Jongerius created specifically for the North Delegates' Lounge at the United Nations' headquarters in New York. It is now commercially manufactured by the Swiss furniture company Vitra. By all appearances, the designer's entire arsenal of available materials was used in the creation of this chair, which has been made in various refined colour combinations of wood, metal, fabric and leather. Both the designer and the manufacturer stress that the emphasis has been on the chair's functionality rather than its aesthetic qualities. For example, leather has been put in those places that are most likely to get dirty and wear out first, such as the armrests.

WHY IS IT NOTEWORTHY?

The *East River Chair* seems set to be a highlight of this furniture season and a fixture of 21st-century furniture design. Last fall, *Wallpaper* magazine ranked Hella

Jongerius at No. 2 in its list of the world's 100 most influential furniture designers. Taking into account that Jonathan Ive's workplace at *Apple* places him practically *hors compétition* in the top ranking position, Jongerius' placing is all the more significant. This might seem as a surprise to many, for Jongerius is not one of the world's most popular or best-known designers. Nevertheless, she is a widely respected authority in her field and one of the few women who has managed to make it on her own without the support of a male partner.

She has also managed to retain the seductively untamed and unorthodox feel that is characteristic of Dutch design with even the most rational and complicated industrial design projects, of which the remodelling of the interior of the North Delegates' Lounge is but one example. This New York project was entrusted to her in 2009 as part of an overall refurbishment of the UN headquarters, which had been built during the 1950s. To make sure that the end result would be up to the mark, Jongerius

recruited a team of some of the most illustrious Dutch designers and architects to assist her. The *East River Chair* is now an integral part of the remodelled North Delegates' Lounge.

HOW DOES IT FIT INTO VARIOUS INTERIORS?

The *East River Chair* is not a pretentious piece of furniture and doesn't need to be the focus of attention in a room. It is like a chameleon that adapts to the rules of the game in each interior. Jongerius has created the chair in various colour combinations to suit different situations. The chair's dark and elegant models will go well with the furniture of respectable business offices, while its bright and happy tones will be perfect for children's bedrooms. Thus, the *East River Chair* can be chosen as a vivid accent in a monochrome interior, or conversely, as a subdued player in a brightly coloured room. **BO**

① jongeriuslab.com



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SNAPSHOT TO SHARE

I took this picture a fairly long time ago, in 2010, during a flight to Nice. Another *airBaltic* plane was flying parallel to us. That generated really positive emotions!



LAST DESTINATION FLOWN TO AS A PASSENGER

Hamburg, on a flight to visit
a friend in June of 2013.

THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A PILOT

While you're
flying you feel
that the whole
world is at
your feet.

FAVOURITE RUNWAY

The one at the Riga airport. That is where my work day usually begins, and that is the runway that I always long for when I am away, because it leads back home.

FAVOURITE BOOK

The Client
[Klients] by
sports writer
Armands Puče.

HOBBIES

Ice hockey, windsurfing, ice swimming during the winter and downhill skiing. Travelling by car, which alternatively works up the adrenaline and relaxes me. I am fascinated by sports and antique cars. Spending time with my family at home and training my dog, a Rottweiler. This all takes up a lot of time.

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

You might meet your future wife, as I did, so be prepared for anything! I met Linda in 2007, when she was flying to Barcelona as a passenger. I was the captain on that flight and we were introduced by a cabin crew member.

THREE THINGS THAT I NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT

A chair covering made of denim with a *BMW* logo. That was my wife's idea and a present to me, as I am a big *BMW* fan. By the way, the company's logo depicts a rotating propeller, because *BMW* started out as a manufacturer of airplane engines.

A cap with the logo of the *Dinamo Riga* hockey club. I always bring it along for my flights. It helps to keep the shade over my eyes when I have to take off, land and fly against the sun. Before that I had a cap with a *BMW* logo, but it eventually became worn out and torn from being used so much. This time I chose the *Dinamo Riga* logo because hockey is my favourite sport and a hobby of mine. My friend Artis Ābols, who is the head coach of the *Dinamo Riga* hockey team, gave it to me as a present.

A teddy bear that my wife gave to me as a talisman. She is really scared of flying and says that the bear will protect me during my flights. It has been in my pilot's bag almost from the day when we first met. I also carry a pair of *BMW* sunglasses and *Telex* headsets.



HOW IT ALL BEGAN

My father flew as a navigator on commercial aircraft and some of my most vivid childhood memories are connected with Jacquot, a talking parrot that he brought back with him from faraway Angola. According to my dad, he took me out on my first flight when I was nine months old. He placed me onto the navigator's desk in the cockpit of an AN-24 and we flew over the city of Jelgava. Already from the time when I was a small boy, I said that I want to be an airplane pilot whenever somebody asked me what I would like to do when I grow up. As I watched my dad teach others as an instructor over the years, this conviction grew even stronger. I started my career as a pilot exactly 20 years ago. Perhaps it's not surprising that both of my sons like to draw airplanes.



FAVOURITE RESTAURANT

La Tour de Marie in Jelgava. It is located in the renovated tower of a former church. I go there with my wife to celebrate special occasions. A very beautiful and romantic spot.



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Smooth maestro

Looking for a romantic evening? Then maestro Andrea Bocelli has got you covered.



Andrea Bocelli is one of the most sought-after singers in the world and performs in front of an audience no more than a couple of times a year. The 56-year-old Italian tenor and pianist has acquired an unusual degree of mainstream fame and has performed for some of the world's highest-standing dignitaries, including popes, kings and presidents. Only the grandest show business and classical music stars get the honour of singing in a duet with him.

Canadian singer Celine Dion once said that "if God was to sing, then His voice would sound like that of Bocelli's". Thousands of fans would readily agree.

Bocelli was born visually impaired and lost his eyesight completely after an accident at the age of 12. The singer has publicly praised his mother, Edi, who had been encouraged by doctors to have an abortion, as it was known that her baby would be born with some sort of physical impairment.

Bocelli says that he would like his success story to encourage other expectant mothers to take the same brave step that his own mother took and to bring their unborn children to term.

Although clearly a gifted musician from an early age (Bocelli started to take piano lessons at the age of six, later learned to play the saxophone and flute, and was regularly asked to perform at the gatherings of his large family), he chose to study law at the University of Pisa. He did not, however, abandon music completely, but took singing lessons on the side under famous Italian opera singer Franco Corelli, who later became a close friend. Bocelli even played the piano in bars for a while to cover the cost of these lessons.

The singer's unique voice is melancholic and forceful at the same time – it is said to be incomparable to any other voice in the world. During his 20-year-

long career, Bocelli has sold over 80 million recordings and has become a living legend. He has brought elements of classical music into the pop music world and has gained success in both of these utterly different genres as a cross-over singer.

Bocelli's latest recording, *Love in Portofino*, is a live album that was released in October of last year. It contains several romantic compositions from his most recent studio album, *Passione*, including *Love Me Tender*, *Champagne* and *Quizás, Quizás, Quizás*. The Italian maestro will sing these and many other songs to his lucky fans at an exclusive concert in Riga on January 10. **BO**

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Healthy beginning

Start the New Year with a fresh and healthy salad, which will go perfectly with hot homemade pesto and creamy avocado and mustard sauce.



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

Ingredients

Salad
1/2 cup red cabbage, finely sliced
1 small tomato, cubed
1/2 cup cauliflower, divided into small florets
1/2 cup small spinach leaves
1/2 yellow bell pepper, cubed
1 tbsp. chopped leeks

Walnut pesto
5 pcs. sundried tomatoes
1/2 cup walnuts
1/4 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 tbsp. walnut oil

Avocado sauce
1 avocado
1 dash sea salt
2 tsp. lemon juice
1 tsp. grainy Dijon mustard

Preparation

Start by preparing the pesto. Pour a thin layer of warm water over the sundried tomatoes and steep for about 20 minutes. Pat dry with a paper towel and put into a blender together the walnuts. Add the walnut oil and Worcestershire sauce and blend to the desired consistency.

To prepare the avocado sauce, take a fork and mash the avocado together with the lemon juice, mustard and sea salt, or blend the ingredients together in a blender.

Arrange the spinach leaves, red cabbage, yellow pepper cubes, cauliflower, tomato cubes, walnut pesto and leeks in a serving dish and pour the avocado sauce over the freshly prepared salad. **BO**

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|---|---|---|---|

www.lido.lv



Text by
SANTA KRISTIĀNA ZĀMUELE
Photos courtesy of
ARNAUD LALLEMENT

We asked one of the best chefs in France what properties a good restaurant should have.

Seven commandments of a good restaurant

Arnaud Lallement is the chef of the *A. Lallement* restaurant at *L'Assiette Champenoise*, the latter of which was formerly run by his father and which he joined in 1997. In 2001, the restaurant was awarded its first *Michelin* star (it now has three). In 2003, at the age of 29, Lallement was the youngest participant selected by famous chef Alain Ducasse to take part in *Fou-Food France*, a project that enables young provincial chefs to present their work at one of the finest restaurants in Paris, the *Plaza Athénée*. In 2010, *L'Assiette Champenoise* celebrated its 35th birthday as well as 10 years of collaboration between Arnaud Lallement and champagne house owner Olivier Krug. Lallement regularly produces dishes to accompany Krug's champagnes.



COMMANDMENTS BY ARNAUD LALLEMENT

1. **Welcoming:** Welcome each of your clients joyfully and personally to embark them on a unique dining experience. We are a family company and I am fortunate to work on a daily basis with my wife, my mother and my sister.

2. **Atmosphere:** Each restaurant must have its own particular atmosphere. It is an accumulation of small details that make everything work.

3. **Service:** The service must be attentive but subtle.

4. **Fresh and regional products:** Cooking must reflect the region and promote local producers. That is my belief.

5. **Wine:** Due to our geographic position, we highlight champagne. All of the champagne houses and independent wine-growers represented in my menu live by family values and adopt an
- approach that is rooted in the soil. That really appeals to me.

6. **Chef's presence:** I make it a point of honour to be present in my kitchen and to welcome and salute all of my clients.

7. **Chef's signature:** Cooking is my work and it reflects my personality. If I am here today, it is because I personally invested in my cooking and my dishes. There's always a story behind each dish: the men and women, farmers, fishermen, gardeners and wine-growers – people who share the same passion for products of outstanding quality. Finely seasoned, beautifully cooked and with a subtle harmony of flavours – that's the way to respect these products and pay tribute to them. To me, this is what fine cuisine is all about. **BO**
- ① assiettechampenoise.com
-
- 52 | AIRBALTIC.COM
-
- ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION MAY HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS



Text by **KOREN HELBIG**
Photos courtesy of **TIIA ETTALA**

Family feeling



ABOUT THE OWNERS

The couple, who met by chance in Anna's native Finland during a New Year's Eve party and married in 2002, say that they still appreciate the beauty of the apartment's makeover, five years after its completion.

"Almost every day we say to each other: 'Isn't it great to be living here?'" Eugeni explains. "It wasn't easy, we have a mortgage and we have to work hard, but when we are at home on weekends and have time to enjoy the space, then we feel very lucky."



LIVING ROOM

Eugeni says that the renovation work aimed to make the flat's beauty shine with simple and understated styling, adding modern functionality while maintaining the premises' traditional essence.

"The floors and ceilings are already so spectacular that you don't need to do much more," he adds, but admits that they departed from Barcelona tradition by stripping back the doors and window frames to reveal the natural wood.

"People never left wood unpainted because it was considered a sign of poverty. But we felt the natural wood would give our apartment a warmer touch."

Architects Anna and Eugeni Bach give *Baltic Outlook* a tour of their cosy apartment in Barcelona.

When Barcelona architects Anna and Eugeni Bach bought their dream flat, one of the first things that they did was roll up their sleeves to clean off the thick coating of dirt from the floor and walls. City authorities had cleared piles of junk left behind by a sick elderly man, but a lifetime of grime remained.

"It was kind of like a horror movie," Eugeni recalls. "But on the positive side, nobody had been interested in this flat. We were looking for something authentically Barcelonan and we could see the great potential in restoring the beauty of this old apartment, which is located on the

Carrer del Consell de Cent in the famed Eixample district."

Life during weekdays is hectic for the Bachs, so their flat becomes a haven of rest on weekends.

"Every neighbourhood in Barcelona has a marketplace, and we go to the one near our flat on Saturdays to buy all our food," Eugeni says. "Then on Sundays we have breakfast in the living room all together. It's a big thing and can take maybe an hour or more. We send the kids downstairs to buy the newspaper and fresh bread and then we sit together and talk and eat a good breakfast, which we don't have time for during working days."



BEDROOM

The couple discovered a hidden treasure in their apartment after throwing water on its dirty floors and unearthing old tiles that were traditional in Barcelona between 1880 and 1930.

"The rich covered their floors with luxurious Persian carpets, but these were very expensive, so people started to make imitation carpets with small coloured tiles," Eugeni says. "This style became very popular until eventually the tiles themselves became a luxury."



KITCHEN

Anna and Eugeni renovated their apartment over a period of six months, cleverly shifting some walls to make the space more liveable, while preserving the beautiful tiles and elegant traditional ceilings.

"Everything was original. This flat was built in 1910 and nothing had been touched," Eugeni says. The bland old servant's quarters were transformed into a modern kitchen, while some traditional tiles were moved from beneath the cupboards to cover the bare floors and maintain a classic style.



BATHROOM

The bathroom is where the most daring renovations were done, with Eugeni and Anna elevating the floor by 60 cm to hide a bathtub away beneath the shower.

"Normally you can't see the bathtub," he says. "But if we're feeling really tired and want to have a bath, then we just pull up the shower's wooden floor to reveal the bathtub underneath." The change also added more storage space and aligned the shower with an unusually high window, which was previously used to ventilate cooking smoke from the old kitchen.





CORRIDOR

"I had always dreamt of having a library," Eugeni says. "We have lots of books, but usually you need a lot of space for a library." The solution lay in lining the flat's nine-metre corridor with long bookshelves and low cupboards. "Now it's a corridor and a library and a storage space all at the same time," he says. "When the kids were smaller, they rode up and down the hallway with their trikes. We have played football matches there. It's very comfortable."

KIDS' ROOM

Anna and Eugeni had lived in a tiny flat with their children, Uma, 9, and Rufus, 7, and say the upgrade has made life much easier – not that their children really appreciate this.

"Our kids don't remember much about their previous flat, so this is the most normal thing in the world for them," Eugeni says. "They are more excited about cuddling up each night and reading before bed. We just started reading *Treasure Island* and it's a beautiful story. They love it." **BO**



TIME of ART

ВРЕМЯ ИСКУССТВУ В ВАШЕЙ ЖИЗНИ
ОТ КАРИМА РАШИДА В ЮРМАЛЕ

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Latvia assumes the EU presidency



For the first six months of 2015, Latvia is presiding over the Council of the European Union (EU). Our approach is reflected in the presidency's logo – a millstone representing productivity, sustenance and energy. We see the presidency as an opportunity to work for the benefit of each and every citizen of the EU.

The Latvian EU presidency will focus on three overarching priorities, which are to make the European Union more competitive, more digital and more engaged. In order for Europe to become more competitive, the EU member states need to increase investments and implement policy reforms to create more and better-paid jobs.

Creating a *Digital Europe* is the second of Latvia's three priorities, as the exploitation of the continent's digital potential will stimulate growth within the EU. It will also help to close the digital gaps between regions and people throughout Europe.

Thirdly, Latvia intends to reinforce the role of the EU in the global arena. We want Europe to be more engaged abroad in order to promote stability and prosperity, and we want to strengthen Europe's Transatlantic relationships.

TEN INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT LATVIA THAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW



1 Latvia is set to have the highest GDP growth rate in the EU. The European Commission predicts that Latvia will have recorded the fastest economic growth in both the EU and the euro zone in 2014. Latvia's GDP is expected to have increased by at least 3.8 percent in 2014 and should rise by 4.1 percent in 2015, which is the highest GDP growth rate among the EU's member states.

2 Latvia's accession to NATO and the European Union in 2004 was pivotal for cementing the country's

growth, stability and continued European integration. Both organisations embody the values of democracy that Latvians have held dear for decades. Latvia joined the euro zone on January 1, 2014.

3 Latvians are among the most multilingual Europeans, with 95% knowing at least one and 55% knowing at least two languages other than their mother tongue.



4 The Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration is a unique cultural phenomenon that has thrived for 135 years and that is included in UNESCO's Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage

of Humanity list. More than 40,000 singers, dancers and musicians participate in the event, which takes place every four years on average.



5 Riga, Latvia's capital city, has the largest number of Art Nouveau buildings in the whole of Europe.



6 Renewable energy amounted to 35.8 percent of Latvia's overall energy consumption in 2012, the second highest in the European Union, according to the Eurostat statistical office.

7 Latvia has the world's second highest percentage of women (41 percent) in senior management positions, according to a survey by the global management consulting firm *McKinsey & Company*. In addition, 51 percent of scientists in the country are women, says a *Women in Science* study by UNESCO's Institute for Statistics.

Photos courtesy of eu2015.lv and F64



8 Latvia has the sixth fastest Internet speed in the world and the second fastest in Europe (July 2014). Riga is also the European capital of free Wi-Fi, with the most free Wi-Fi ports per capita. Soon Latvia will be Europe's most developed country in Wi-Fi accessibility as a whole.

9 Considering Latvia's small size, the country's athletes have consistently performed well in sports of all kinds. Latvia placed 23rd at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, taking home four medals in skeleton racing, bobsleigh and luge. However, when ranked by medal count per capita, Latvia advances to third position, right after Norway and Slovenia. Latvians also brought home a gold medal in BMX cycling and a bronze in beach volleyball from the 2012 London Summer Olympics. By the way, approximately 100 different types of sports are practiced in the country, which has only 2 million inhabitants.



10 In January of 2014, thousands of people created a human chain to pass books hand to hand from the old National Library of Latvia building to its new home, the *Castle of Light*, which is the main venue of the Latvian presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The *Castle of Light* is one of the most significant 21st-century projects to be undertaken in Latvia, serving not only as the chief library of the country, but also as a modern and multi-functional culture, education and information centre. No wonder it has been chosen as the main venue in Riga for the Latvian EU presidency. **BO**

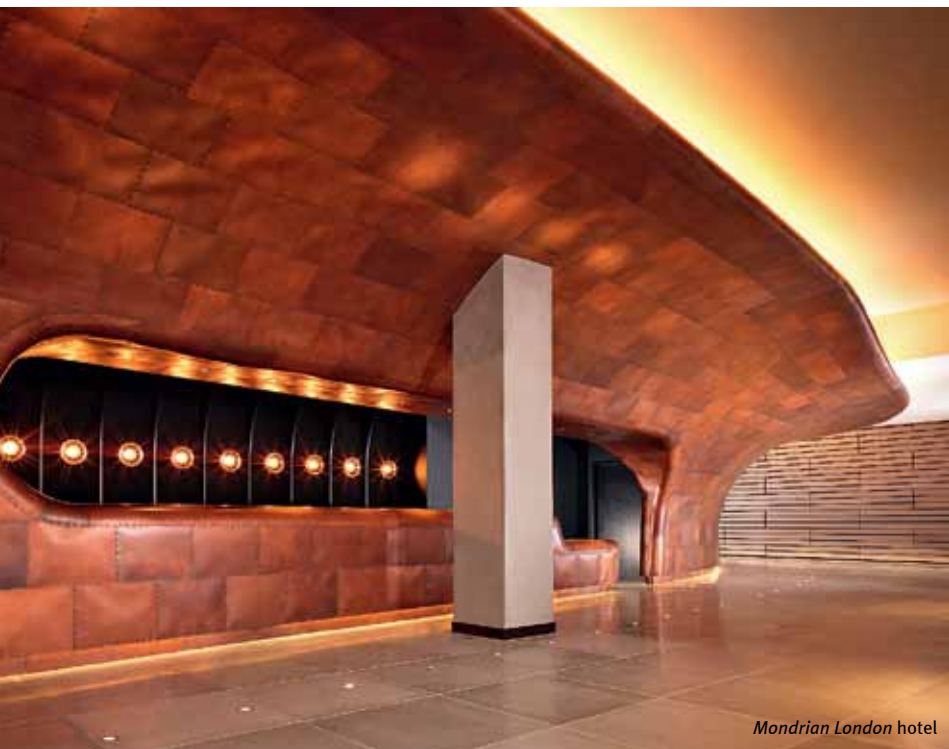
A SHORT JAUNT TO
LONDON'S
NEWEST HOTELS

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

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Mondrian London hotel



Mondrian London, Ham Yard, The Beaumont, The Exhibitionist, Ace Hotel Shoreditch, London Edition, Chiltern Firehouse.... It seems that London hasn't experienced such a boom in new and intriguing hotels since the turn of this century, when Ian Schrager, the father of design hotels, opened the *St. Martins Lane* and *Sanderson* hotels a year apart from each other. Both hotels were created together with Philippe Starck, a hooligan of design then at the zenith of his wild ideas. Their model became a vivid feature of the times and was featured in countless glossy magazines and coffee table books. Needless to say, those who could not afford to stay in their hotels at least tried to "look in through the keyhole", milling around the lobby and taking photos of Dalí's red-lips sofa at the *Sanderson* or some of Starck's now legendary gnome stools at *St. Martins Lane*. The only thing missing was the snapping of selfies, because social-network mania had not yet begun.

Back then, the *Sanderson* was presented as one of the brightest examples of a new concept in hotels, namely, hotels for those seeking something original, different and magical. The core of this idea was to situate a striking world of fantasy inside an undistinguished and fairly inexpressive building from the 1950s, in which the guest encounters a dose of design shock therapy worthy of Alice in Wonderland.

Much has happened since then. In the midst of it all, the design hotel concept had become something like a tiresome housefly, copied all around the world and dangerously close to its death. In other words, how many times can you play with the same wooden blocks before you've figured out all of the possible combinations and they start to become boring? And yet, design hotels did not die. They swiftly adapted to the times, finding yet more tidbits to feed to the mice that had seemingly overeaten, so to speak. After all, ever since the beginning of the "grand hotel" tradition, these establishments have served as a wonderful excuse for escaping reality.

In addition to the most essential element – a great bed – a hotel ideally also offers its guests a great story, or a journey within a journey. Hotels have always reflected the fashions and lifestyle of their times. They are small epicentres that soak up what's happening in the city, thereby becoming like a key to that city. A good hotel is never only a place to stay for the night; it is also a bar and restaurant, both of which sometimes live independent lives of their own.

Take *Claridges*, that legendary Art Deco gem, which has for decades been one of Londoners' favourite places for afternoon tea between 4 and 5 o'clock and always accompanied by piano music. As an aside, *Claridges* was recently at the centre of a much-publicised incident. The hotel staff had asked a nursing mother to cover herself and her baby with a napkin so that other guests

Hotels have always reflected the fashions and lifestyle of their times. They are small epicentres that soak up what's happening in the city

would not feel uncomfortable, but this request provoked a wave of protest by other mothers with young children. In a campaign called *Free to Feed*, about 40 mothers gathered at the entrance of the luxury hotel and publicly nursed their babies, staging a mass "nurse-in".

And so, taking into account the crop of new hotels, I decided to do an experiment as I headed to London one weekend in December – I would spend each night in a different hotel. After all, it's not that difficult to move around within the confines of one city; it's kind of like going out on a different date every night. However, unlike changing partners every night (which would rightly be considered a wanton thing to do), changing one's scenery is just

as intriguing but morally much more agreeable and acceptable. With three nights at my disposition, I chose the newest hotels: the *Mondrian London* and *The Beaumont*, both of which opened in September, and *Ham Yard*, which opened in the summer.

Dixon's ship

Of the trio, the *Mondrian* is the most pretentious. The hotel has 359 rooms and is located on the South Bank of the River Thames, not far from the Tate Modern museum (which is currently hosting a wonderful exhibition of works by the German classic of abstractionism, Sigmar Polke) and the legendary gourmet Borough Market, where enjoying some oysters amidst the market commotion is part of a successful day of experiencing London at its best. Interestingly, the gigantic ocean-liner-like Sea Containers House, built in the 1970s and designed by American architect Warren Platner, was originally built as a hotel. However, it ended up being used as an office building instead.

Platner was a classic American modernist architect, whose works also included the interior of the *Windows on the World* restaurant at the top of New York City's World Trade Center. British industrial designer Tom Dixon was invited to direct the rebirth of Sea Containers House into a hotel, and this has been his début in hotel design. As is often the case in such instances, Dixon has done everything possible to make the rebirth permanent. As he says himself, the hotel's concept was inspired by the "golden period of transatlantic liners".

Adorning the lobby of the *Mondrian* hotel is a stylised, almost life-size hull of a ship clad in copper plates, which seems to have weathered decades of ocean waves. It was inspired by the *Cutty*

Sark, a British clipper built in 1869 that was one of the fastest ships of its day, before the era of steamships had begun. Right across from the ship's hull is a purplish "seaman's knot" installation that at first glance resembles something from Jeff Koons' artwork; actually, it is a piece made by Dixon himself. Dixon the artist also left his mark in my room, where he took three cans of paint, poured out a painting-sized letter "M" and scratched "Dixon" at the bottom. I've never been on a cruise ship, but as I wandered through the halls of the *Mondrian*, I wondered whether the feeling might be similar. The staff is dressed in stylish uniforms designed by Karen Langley, the former fashion editor at British style magazine *Dazed & Confused*. A surprise awaits around every corner, which is also probably an integral element of cruise ships due to the fact that the passengers spend up to a whole week on their floating home.

Dixon has also managed to deftly combine elements from destinations on both sides of the Atlantic – America and England. Behind the lobby is a restaurant featuring an installation resembling the *Beatles'* yellow submarine, above which is a fragment of the Sea Containers House's original concrete ceiling. The *Dandelyan* bar across from the restaurant feels like a real English gentlemen's club with its chesterfield sofas, wooden panelled walls and so on.

Bartender Ryan Chetiyawardana is one of London's hottest cocktail experts at the moment, so don't be surprised if, as you watch the ships and motorboats slide by along the Thames, you start to feel like you're actually on a ship yourself. And, if only recently the toilet was the most prominent stage for hotel and restaurant designers (the toilet at *Dandelyan* is admittedly quite



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Ham Yard hotel

praiseworthy), then now that position has been taken over by the lift. In any case, Dixon has played around in the lift with abandon and involved his whole team, which set up a holographic bouquet of life-size “passengers”, from a British gentleman to Queen Victoria, a Parish-Hilton-like blonde, a rapper and an astronaut. Dixon himself is the astronaut, holding his little white dog against his spacesuit. When you ride with such fellow passengers up to the top floor, where the *Mondrian* lounge bar is located, you’re guaranteed a feeling of euphoria even before having your first glass of wine.

The panorama is one of the Mondrian Londons greatest assets. A third of the rooms have direct views of the Thames

Beyond the bar’s windows, the silhouette of the new London is lit up. Among the buildings in the skyline is The Gherkin, that classic of contemporary architecture designed by *Foster and Partners*, as well as an important newcomer, The Shard by star architect Renzo Piano. At 309 metres and 84 storeys, The Shard is currently the tallest building in Western Europe. An observation deck is located on the 68th-72nd floors (with the admission for one adult costing GBP 32.95), and the *Shangri-La* luxury hotel takes up the 34th to 52nd floors.

I must admit, the panorama is one of the *Mondrian London*’s greatest assets. A third of the rooms have direct views of the Thames, and I wonder whether there’s anything more luxurious than lying down in the evening on a great bed right in the heart of the British metropolis and gazing into the dark waters of the river and at the silhouette of the city. Like on a cruise ship, the “economic class cabins” are relatively small, but the apartments are spacious. Both, however, are overflowing with luxury cabin elements such as mirrors that resemble portholes and headboards that look like they’ve been made from elements of cabin doors.

The interiors are peacefully relaxing and have no trace of the technological manipulations so common in 21st-century hotels and that drive guests to despair because they don’t know which of the many remote controls turns off the bedside light.... Everything at the *Mondrian* is simple and understandable, and the “concertmaster” of design is played in accordance with Dixon’s sketches of lamps and chairs. A considerable distance below sea level – where the engine rooms might be found on a ship – is the *Mondrian* spa, one of the most glamorous hotel spa oases in London.

The entrance to the spa is marked by another of Dixon’s installations, a gigantic floor-to-ceiling copper drop of water. From a distance it looks as if the drop of water hangs above a lightly steaming pool (a masterly mirage), and actually that is the only thing missing from the cruise ship that Dixon has conjured. The hotel even has its own 56-seat movie theatre that is open to the public; tickets cost no more than they do at any other movie theatre in London. It is estimated that the *Mondrian* will bring even more new life to the rapid renaissance in the South Bank district and its cultural institutions (Tate Modern, Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, Globe Theatre and others).



The Beaumont hotel



A folly of colour and restaurants that take no reservations

If the *Mondrian* resembles a cruise ship, then *Ham Yard* in Soho on the other side of the Thames resembles a small village, complete with shops, a movie theatre, a bowling alley, a restaurant and a spa. *Ham Yard* is the newest and most ambitious hotel in the well-known British chain *Firmdale Hotels*. Its owners, Tim and Kit Kemp, are called the British equivalent of Ian Schrager. The small courtyard in which the hotel resides is only a couple of hundred metres from Piccadilly Circus. The hotel took its name from the wild pub on the same site in the 18th century. The courtyard became a place for nightclubs in the 1920s and 1930s and for jazz bars in the 1940s. It was damaged in an air raid during the Second World War, and its last significant inhabitant was *The Scene*, a popular club in the 1960s that even hosted the *Rolling Stones* and *The Who*. Under the direction of Kit Kemp, the courtyard has changed unrecognisably. Five large oak trees (transplanted there when the hotel opened) now share the yard with a Tony Cragg sculpture, and in the summer there’s

also an outdoor café. On a grey winter day – at least in this corner of London – it’s hard to imagine a more effective dose of shock therapy than stepping over the threshold into *Ham Yard*.

Ham Yard’s bohemian paradise of colours and textures draws one into a hallucinogenic dream that is impossible to describe. It can only be experienced, with the hope that it will not fade from memory. There is a spiritual kinship between Kit Kemp’s style and that of Christian Lacroix; both have a unique ability to paint with colours and designs in the most daring combinations. Lacroix is often called a poet of fashion, and the same could be said of Kemp with regard to interior design. She does not have a specific source of inspiration, because anything that she has seen – be it an object in a London antique store, a book, a film, a local park or a voyage further abroad – can become an impulse for her designs.

The walls of the hotel’s hallways are covered with pages from an old botanical book, which means that you can learn about various medicinal and culinary herbs as you look for your room. Some of these



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Your **NEXT DESTINATION**



The surrounding district of Soho has become the epicentre of Londons new trend of restaurants taking no reservations

herbs even grow in the garden on the top terrace and are used in the restaurant down below. The walls in my room were covered in a green-grey striped fabric, the pillows on the bed were blue and white, and one half of the sofa was grey while the other half was blue. The table was made of three fairly robust wooden boards of various lengths, and in the evening the decoratively notched base of the floor lamp cast a surreal design on the curtain, thereby giving one more dimension to the room.

Each room in the hotel is different, and it seems there is no corner of the world that has not inspired some aspect of *Ham Yard*’s interior. It is said that Kemp has a whole warehouse of things she’s brought back from her travels, including fabrics, objects, and artworks. The movie theatre in the basement of the hotel has bright orange chairs, fuchsia-coloured curtains and walls covered with electric blue fabric. The bowling alley nearby (open to everybody for GBP 20 per hour) is in a 1950s style. Here, you can even bowl in vintage shoes that Kemp found on *eBay*. One can only imagine what happens to those hotel guests who spend, say, a week in this slightly hallucinogenic world (in addition to 91 hotel rooms, *Ham Yard* also has 24 rental apartments) – perhaps they begin to yearn for minimalism in its most ascetic expression? But for those who are emotionally weary or suffering from a lack of inspiration, a couple of nights at *Ham Yard* is the ideal antidote.

The surrounding district of Soho is currently “in”, especially in terms of gastronomy. It has also become the epicentre of London’s new trend of restaurants taking no reservations. One of the originators of this trend, the Venetian-style tapas bar *Polpo*, is located very close to *Ham Yard*. Even though *Polpo* was definitely not the first such institution, according to contemporary London tales, it was the place that turned eating without restaurant reservations into a matter of style. Actually, there’s nothing really special about *Polpo*. It serves great fried calamari, but so do many

other places as well, at the same or even lower prices. The place itself is not large, the ceilings are low, and seeing as it’s usually stuffed with people, the air is quite stuffy, too. It has simple wooden tables and a paper menu that also serves as a place mat and is always in front of your eyes, thereby cunningly urging you to order more food. But there’s undeniably something to the place.

Guests talk to each other while standing in line, and everybody at *Polpo* is considered an equal (in testing the most fashionable no-reservation restaurants, *The Sunday Times* recently conducted an experiment – journalists posed as agents for celebrities, but, to their credit, all but a couple of the eateries suggested that the “agents” stand in line like everyone else). Later, the conversations continue at the bar, and by the end of the evening you’ve made if not a few new friends, then at least some new acquaintances.

Actually, *Polpo* has given rise to a new form of socialisation that recently seemed unimaginable. Doesn’t it sound completely absurd that one could actually enjoy standing in line? But *Polpo* has grown to nine locations in London, and the concept keeps on growing. Of course, it is possible to avoid standing in line by arriving for dinner so early that no one else has begun eating, or by visiting *Polpo Notting Hill* instead of *Polpo Soho*. Notting Hill is a bit further from the action in central London, but the *Polpo* there tends to be more accessible, albeit



maybe lacking a bit in adventure and atmosphere.

The Gormley cell

Even though a recent study comparing average hotel prices in 20 different districts of London found Soho to be the most expensive (GBP 219.20), Mayfair has always had more of an aura of exclusivity. This is where London’s biggest concentration of five-star hotels is located, to say nothing of luxury stores and expensive restaurants. In addition, the smell of money in Mayfair seems unchanged, despite economic and political turbulence.

Two years ago, Russian billionaire Yevgeny Chichvarkin opened a sanctuary for wine connoisseurs (it’s hard to label it as anything else) called *Hedonism* in Mayfair, a truly one-of-a-kind establishment. The store has two floors, both of them gigantic, and a chandelier made of 125 hand-blown *Riedel* wine glasses – a decorative accent in keeping with the best concept store traditions. Wine bottles lie on the shelves like design objects, and the carefully selected store specials vary from wines for a reasonable price of GBP 15 or so to GBP 16,777.80 for an 1882 Chateau d’Yquem. The shelves can be observed like exhibits in a museum, because you will hardly see such a wide range of wines (approximately 5,000 bottles) together in one place anywhere else.

Mayfair is also home to London’s newest luxury hotel, *The Beaumont*. Two well-

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Borough Market

known personalities from London's gastronomy scene were present at the birthing of the hotel – Chris Corbin and Jeremy King, whose works include *Le Caprice* and *The Ivy* (London restaurants that are already considered institutions) as well as *The Wolseley*, known as London's grand café. *The Wolseley's* location is special in that the building, built in the 1920s, once belonged to *Wolseley Motors Limited*, the ambitious British luxury motor vehicle manufacturer that displayed its automobiles right there on the marble floor. *The Beaumont's* location is also linked to automobiles, as the site was once a parking garage for *Selfridges* department store. As befits anything in the luxury niche, the hotel has its own legend about a man named James Beaumont, who was the general manager at New York City's *Carlyle Hotel* in the 1920s. He was a society man with friends and well-situated acquaintances on both sides of the Atlantic. The lift, rooms and hallways at *The Beaumont* are full of black-and-white photos and references to 1920s glamour. The story about James Beaumont is actually pure fiction, but the hotel owners have managed to conjure the atmosphere perfectly.

Stepping into *The Beaumont* is like taking a journey back to a time that had a completely different rhythm. The interior encourages guests to slowly and unhurriedly enjoy details, gestures, aromas and textures. With this establishment, Corbin and King have realised their dream of the ideal hotel. In terms of comfort, every detail has been considered so carefully that no flaws can be found.

The bedroom can be divided from the dressing area with a sound-insulating wooden door so that the person waking up earlier does not disturb the person who prefers to sleep in. *The Beaumont* is located on one of Mayfair's quietest side streets, with prominent Georgian-style buildings as its neighbours. But on top of all this, *The Beaumont* has one more surprise – one that landed it in all of the biggest media even before its opening date. A huge *Lego*-robot-like figure – a work by British artist

A Sunday morning visit to the East End's Columbia Road Flower Market is a must. Walking the length of the flower-filled street, it's hard to imagine that it was once a mere path along which sheep were driven to the Smithfield slaughterhouses.

For a fine traditional meal, try *Rules Restaurant* (35 Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, rules.co.uk), which has been at this location since 1798. It's far from cheap, but it's worth the price. Further down in the East End, *St. John* is a terrific choice (26 St. John Street, stjohnrestaurant.co.uk). Located not far from the Smithfield Market, meat was once smoked here.

If you are with your children, then instead of visiting the Natural History Museum, you might try the V&A Museum of Childhood (Cambridge Heath Road, vam.ac.uk), which can be easily reached despite being in the East End. Grownups will also find the place to be fun. You can return to your childhood in one exhibit or another no matter when you were born, as the playthings here date back to 1600. The museum also features special exhibits and its shop is amazing, although admittedly it can be a drain on parents' pockets....

The Hunterian Museum (35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, www.rcseng.ac.uk) is an obligatory stop for those fascinated by human anatomy and other fine examples of God's creation. The museum's formaldehyde containers preserve a wide variety of animal as well as human body parts and organs. A true "shop of horrors" of biology!

Antony Gormley – sits on the edge of the hotel's southern façade.

The story of how the figure came about is quite humorous. To wit, the City of Westminster allowed the building to be turned into a hotel only on the condition that it contain a work of art that could be viewed by the public. When Corbin and King approached Gormley, the artist presented his idea for *Room* – a work of art (a sculpture) that fulfilled a room's practical function. One enters *Room* just as one enters any other room at *The Beaumont*. At first, guests step inside a classical living room (with walls adorned by Gormley's drawings), which then leads to a dazzling white marble bathroom in which the only accent is the old wooden door. A white staircase leads to the bedroom, but the staircase is partially hidden by a black velvet curtain, as if it were a stage.

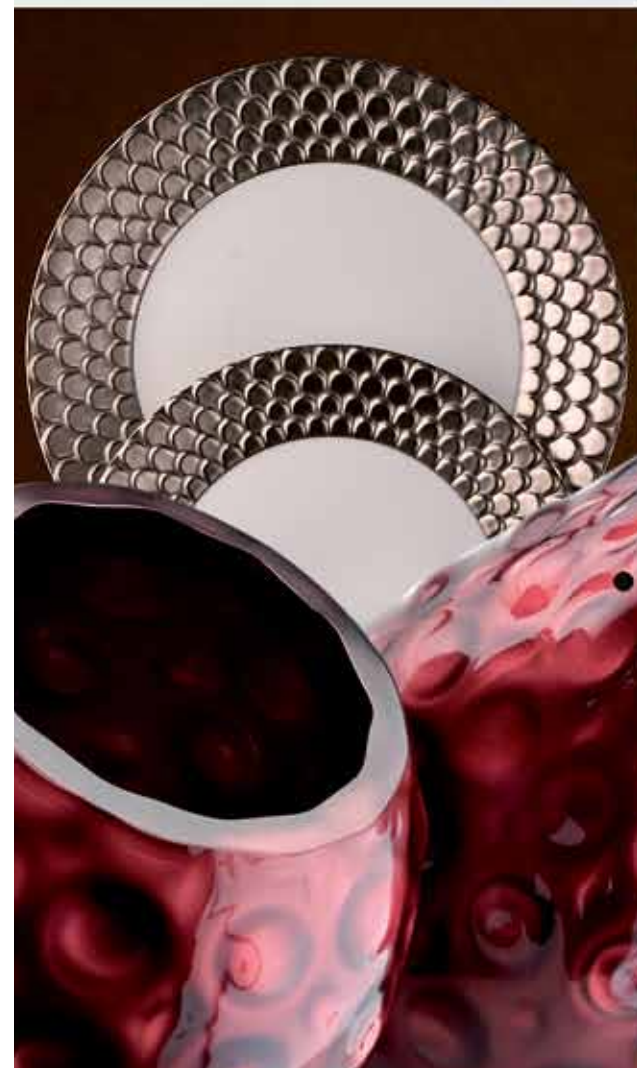
The bedroom itself contains nothing more than a bed with white linens. At four square metres, it is a small room, although the ceiling is ten metres high. The walls and ceilings are covered in fumed oak, with Gormley himself choosing the boards. It is said that it took six months to arrange the boards – one notch fitting the next, like a puzzle. The room still smells of wood, and it feels a bit like a monk's cell. The only window opens to the sky, and, when it is closed via remote control and the lights are turned off (all according to Gormley's plans and direction), the room fills with complete darkness. About three minutes later, when one's eyes have grown accustomed to the dark, one begins to see a hazy light peeking in past the beams of the "robot". To fully experience *Room*, Gormley suggests guests enter it fully naked; then, at least for a moment, they find themselves one-to-one with themselves.

As the artist said in an interview with *The Guardian*, this commission made him think a lot about what luxury means to us today:

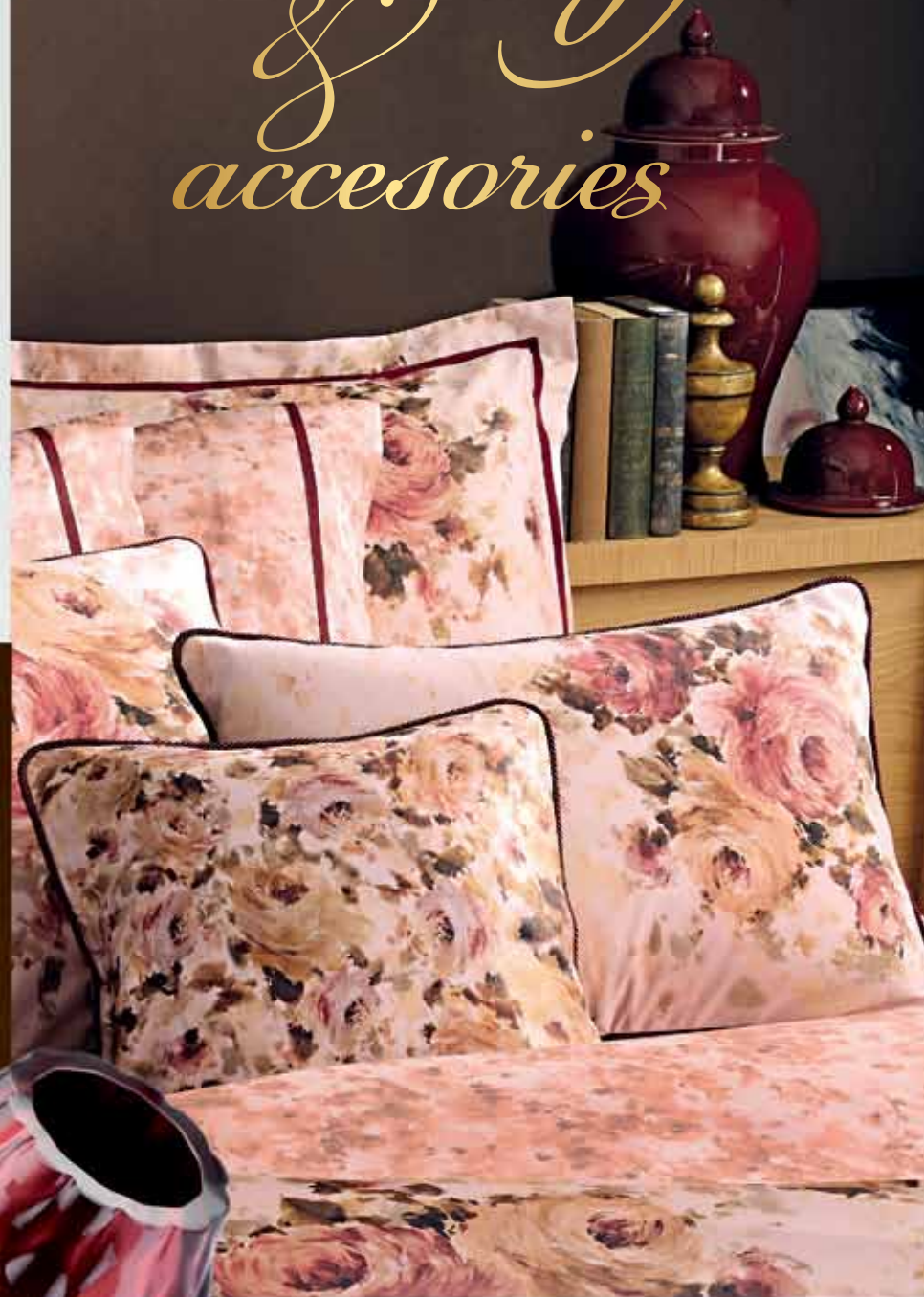
"I would say that luxury is a sense of total peace, silence and a place that is removed from the incessant demands of the world."

His wish had been for those who can afford to spend a night in this functional work of art (hotel staff remain silent about the number of such guests as well as the exact price for the room, although it is rumoured to be around GBP 2500) to ask themselves: "Who am I, and what am I doing here?"

It is hard to imagine a more apt accommodation than Gormley's cell in this era, which has already drowned in its excesses and desperately cries for a revision of values. Gormley's *Room* is open to the public twice a year, during London's Architecture Weekend, and that is an opportunity one should not pass up!



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Post Pop: East Meets West, Saatchi Gallery

The *Post Pop: East Meets West* exhibition opened at the Saatchi Gallery at the end of last year and is currently one of the most noteworthy events on London's art scene. The showing, which contains 250 works by 110 artists from Russia, China, Great Britain and the United States, was created by the Saatchi Gallery in cooperation with the Tsukanov Family Foundation, of which one of the founders is Igor Tsukanov, a Russian businessman and art collector living in London. The exhibition is grandiose and far-reaching, covering all 6,500 square metres of the Saatchi Gallery.

As Tsukanov, the author of the idea of the exhibition, says: "My idea was to show

the development of the language of art by using examples from various countries. And undeniably the most universal in the 20th century has been the language in Great Britain and later thrived in the United States in the 1960s, but the way in which it was used in Russia, China and Great Britain differed dramatically. In essence, the exhibition is a story about how artists living in these countries used one and the same language for completely different goals."

Western pop art created ironic messages about the contemporary consumer cult and society's obsession with celebrities,

while Soviet "Sots Art" drew attention to the absurdity of the government system and its ritual pomposity, conformism and false façade in the sarcastically ironic manner so typical of Russian art. For its part, Chinese "Political Pop", or "Cynical Realism" spoke openly and uncompromisingly about hate, repression, contempt for the ruling regime and social inequality.

The exhibition has not been set up geographically but rather by themes (Habitat; Advertising and Consumerism; Celebrity and Mass Media; Art History; Religion and Ideology; Sex and the Body), thereby presenting it like a gigantic geopolitical puzzle that is at once a beneficial lesson as well as a sarcastic illumination of the cynical and absurd world in which we live. Some of the artists included in the exhibition include the grandfather of Russian pop art Ilya Kabanov, American contemporary art superstars Jeff Koons and Richard Prince, and Chinese dissident Ai Weiwei.

Among the most impressive works of art is the *United Nations – Man and Space* installation by Chinese artist Gu Wenda. The work consists of a gigantic "tent" made of the flags of many nations, which have in turn been made from locks of hair from four million people. Wenda's work is shocking in its beauty and sends shivers down one's spine. The exhibition can be seen until February 23. **BO**

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INSIDE THE WORLD OF FILMMAKING

Influential film producer Nik Powell (b. 1950) is perhaps best known for his association with *Virgin Group*, a multi-billion-dollar holding company that he co-founded together with his childhood friend, the flamboyant businessman Richard Branson. Nowadays Powell heads one of the best film schools in the world and teaches future Oscar award winners.

For movie-goers, the pleasure begins once the lights in the theatre have been dimmed and the first film shots appear onto the screen. For those involved in filmmaking, this moment represents the end of months and even years of hard work and toil. One of the most knowledgeable people about the movie industry on this side of the Atlantic is Nik Powell, a world-famous producer and the director of the National Film and Television School in England.

Nik Powell's own lengthy career is worthy of a biographical film. In 1972, at the age of 21, he and Branson founded a record shop and mail order company that would later grow to become the *Virgin* conglomerate. Powell has jokingly referred to the young lads' startup venture as the equivalent of a modern-day *iTunes*. Although the two men later parted ways, Powell bears no grudge against his former business partner. He says that he has learned many things from Branson and remains impressed by Branson's unflagging determination and boundless enthusiasm.

Powell first went into the movie business at the age of 33 when he co-founded *Palace Productions* together with producer Stephen Woolley. The company produced several films, of which the most famous is *The Crying Game* (1992), a story about the experiences of an Irish Republican Army footsoldier. Directed by Neil Jordan, the film received six Academy Award nominations, of which it won one for best original screenplay.

Powell has also been acclaimed for his work on other films, including the 1986 drama *Mona Lisa* and the 1998 musical *Little Voice*, starring Michael Caine and Ewan McGregor. The latter film was produced under the *Scala* label, which Powell founded following the collapse of *Palace Productions*.

For the past ten years, Powell has been heading the National Film and Television School, whose graduates regularly receive accolades at the Cannes and other movie festivals, as well as at Oscar and BAFTA awards ceremonies. The school focuses on practical work and last year was named by the prestigious industry publication *Hollywood Reporter* as the world's best school of its kind. Interestingly, the sharp-witted and fiercely independent Englishman may well be the only director of an education institution of such high calibre not to have an academic degree.

During his interview with *Baltic Outlook*, the 64-year-old producer provided an enthusiastic and detailed behind-the-scenes look at the world of filmmaking.



The Crying Game (1992)



Little Voice (1998)

Many people think that the main person behind moviemaking is the director. What does it actually mean to be a producer?

The thing about being a producer is that we never tell people what we do so that they can't compete with us. If you take the architecture of buildings as an example, then the architect is the director and the producer is the property developer. The role changes according to the project. In continental European filmmaking, the producer's role differs from that of producers in England, which is different again from the role of producers in Hollywood. I would say that a producer is an entrepreneur. He is not necessarily making things, but he's guiding how they are made and then he's taking those things to the market, which is the audience. In the UK, all producers are producing independent films, but in the English-speaking world the producer is also the initiator of the idea more often than in continental Europe. The producer hires a writer who writes the script; then they hire the director. Sometimes the writer is also a director and together they will cast the movie. Then the director will focus on directing the piece, while the producer makes it possible to shoot the film, because someone has to get a camera, someone has to do the deals for the



Ladies in Lavender (2004)

I made *Ladies in Lavender*, because I knew there are thousands and thousands of people like my mother

locations, someone has to get the money, and those are all the things that a producer does.

What is the starting point for you, the trigger to undertake a film project?

First you decide that you want to get involved in a movie, and this will happen years before the movie is made. At that point you have an idea and a story that explores it. Maybe a writer brings a finished script, so you read it and say: this would make an interesting movie. If money can be raised for it and the film is thought to be special enough to succeed in the marketplace, then you hire a director, but it might be the director who brings you the movie and who you work with on developing the script. There are many combinations and many points at which you make a decision. The decision is always determined by whether or not your script is really good and by the availability of talent to make the movie. In other words, the time, the script, the talent and the money all come together when you make a movie. You don't choose it, it chooses you.

Which combination do you personally prefer?

When I am involved in making a movie, I don't need it to be nice, easy and pleasant. That is not relevant when you want to make a film. You want it to be something special. I know at the beginning that this is going to be a hard journey and with a lot of problems, so that's why there aren't so many producers. We know that we might lose our houses, lose our wives; all sorts of things can happen when you make a movie. It's gratifying when you get a good end result.

Is it possible to predict the taste of filmgoers?

You can't predict the tastes of the audience, but with your accumulated experience you have an idea. First of all, there are certain basic things that you need to achieve with the movie so that it is interesting. It needs to have a captivating story that the audience has either never seen before, or hasn't seen in this way before. The second thing is that when you tell a story, you have to tell it really well because you are competing with many other films, with very good filmmakers from across the world, including Hollywood. These people know how to tell stories and how to entertain audiences. I think when people put Hollywood down, they've got it the wrong way around. Can we [*European filmmakers – ed.*] be as good as them? And can they be as good as us in terms of art movies?

How do you manage to keep the story fresh if its development takes years?

You can't get bored of a story. If you are bored of a story, then you shouldn't be making it. Sometimes, we producers and directors go past a certain point and the film starts to get worse and we don't realise that. You have to keep the audience in your mind through the whole thing. Have you done it well enough to keep viewers interested? You know, I made a film for my mother. When she turned 80 she said: "Nik, I don't really like any of the films you're involved in. They are OK, but they are not for me." So I said: alright, I'd better find some films for my mother so

I can get back in her will. [*Laughs.*] So I made *Ladies in Lavender*, because I knew there are thousands and thousands of people like my mother.

Ladies in Lavender features the great British actresses Judi Dench and Maggie Smith. What defines an actor as a star?

Sometimes great actors are indeed well-known and famous. For me the most important thing is getting the best actors. That must always be the main criteria, rather than giving people a chance or having a star on the set. I don't define stars, but I do try to sell them. In the end, the movie critics will give great coverage about a great performance, even it is by people they have never heard of before. And the audience will go and see the film because someone will have said that this is a great performance.

Several of your produced films were nominated for Oscars. What does it mean to be nominated or to win an Oscar?

That is obviously very good for the ego and you feel really cool. [*Smiles.*] From a hard-bitten business point of view, winning Oscars and BAFTAS in particular helps and draws attention to the film, so you have a better chance. That is the point of Oscars, they draw attention to good work. Hopefully this gives more confidence for people to go and see the picture.

Speaking about awards, works by graduates of the National Film and Television School have earned a lot of prestigious prizes. Why is the school held in such high esteem?

One thing is that we are only post-graduate. We are not taking people at 18 or 19 years of age, we're taking them in at 24 or 25, so they have more life experience when they come to our school. The second thing is the mixture of students that other schools don't have because of the different courses we offer. Another thing is that we don't have such a glorious past as some of our competitors. We cannot rest like a Polish film school and say that Polanski went to our school. That may be true, but that was 60 years ago and that has nothing to do with today. So we are very focused on our current students, and that makes our film school look good.

After such a versatile career, how did you become a film school director and how did you get into the academic environment?

I think I am probably the only director of a film school who doesn't have a degree. In fact, you can't be the head of most schools if you don't have an academic degree. But someone asked me if I was interested and I have always changed my career every 10-12 years, so I thought: this is a really interesting thing for me to do when I am in my mid-fifties and I still have the

Giachino Rossini **IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA**

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21	opera	NABUCCO
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Running a film school was my first paid salary job. It's nice. As I once said, money comes into my bank account whether I do something or not

energy, interest and ambition to do a good job. However, I didn't know if I could do it, because I have never run an institution in my entire life. Running a film school was my first paid salary job. It's nice. As I once said, money comes into my bank account whether I do something or not. It is different, but some things are the same as when I was in the record business, the picture business. It means finding ambitious, focused people with talent and giving them support and space, the means and challenges to do better work and to succeed and to make cool things, to tell cool stories. I've been doing this for my entire life, so it's not such a change after all. And I am still the boss. It's a great opportunity, but at first I didn't know if I could do it, whether I could survive as an administrator in this kind of teaching environment, because I left school at 16.

What has changed the film industry since you entered it?

I'd need a week to think about that! [Laughs.] Obviously the digital age. It hasn't changed the fundamentals in itself, but it's given a new set of tools to tell stories. Not only visual effects, but every single thing that you use in a shoot is now digital. The process has changed. It enables new filmmakers, they can tell their stories for a smaller amount of money. It is not as expensive as it used to be. That also has changed distribution and funding. Now you have crowdfunding; there's actually a lot of financial sites where you can raise money. In addition, you have the ability to deliver the film in lots of different ways

and much more easily and cheaply to your audience. And there are people who say that if television didn't destroy the cinema, then this [points at a smartphone] will. But cinema is not competing with smartphones. It is competing with whether I want to go to see a football game or a movie in a theatre. As for young people, they like to be in dark places for reasons I can't think of. [Laughs.]

Speaking of places, filming involves location-searching. As a producer, do you travel a lot for this task?

Not with the school films, no. But nowadays there are two decisions regarding location-searching. One is how the location fits in with the story and the other is whether technically and logistically and financially it is viable. Sometimes you may have a great location, but it is so far that you can't use it. I do a lot of travelling, but now mainly because of the school. Like here in Riga, I was invited to come and do some talks; it is nice [Nik Powell was a guest at the Riga Meetings lecture series for movie professionals in December – ed.]. Not so much doing the big festivals like I used to.

There are areas in the world which I do not know. For example, I have never been to Brazil. So, of course, I would love to go to Brazil. I don't know southeast Asia very well, either. There are millions of places I would like to go, but basically nowadays I wait for people to invite me. [Laughs.] I suggest people do that! Somebody invited me to a festival in Bali but I couldn't go, so I hope they will invite me next year. **BO**



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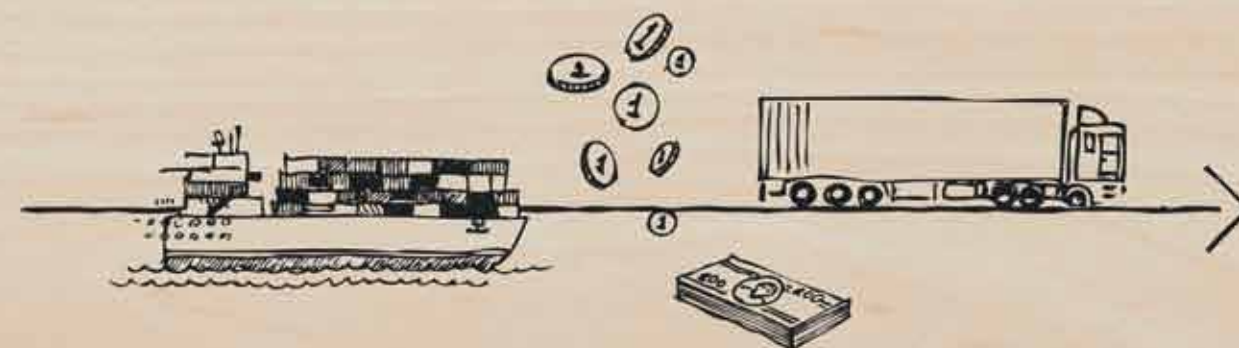
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HOW DID MILAN

BECOME A FASHION INDUSTRY CAPITAL?

Text by **DACE VAIVARA**
Publicity photos and by *Fabio Sartori*;
Corbis and *Alamy*

Milan is widely claimed to be Europe's top fashion destination. It is a city whose inhabitants like to see and to be seen, and where showing off the latest designer clothes is as natural as breathing, eating and sleeping. Milan is a fashionista's paradise, offering some of the world's best fashion shopping, glamorous design hotels and superb restaurants, not to mention the famous *Milan Fashion Week*, which will take over the city in February. However, Milan also harbours the odd green nature paradise and other hidden treasures.

A LOOK BACK INTO HISTORY

While it is common to see fashion as an ingrained facet of Italian identity, the ascension of fashion in the country is actually fairly recent. In 1935, the National Fashion Organisation was founded in Turin, but it failed to establish a niche for itself and was not successful. It was only with the first fashion show at Turin's *Palazzo Reale* in 1946 that fabric makers and the fashion industry began to work closely together. Based in the northern regions of the country, Italy's advanced textile industry was and still is a mainstay of the economy.

However, domestic consumption was insufficient to further develop Italy's fashion industry, and export markets for the country's fashion products needed to be found. Leading fashion nations France and Great Britain would not do, as they were political rivals to Italy. Considering Italy's complex postwar relationship with the United States, establishing a foothold there would also be difficult. However, the inroads that shoe designer Salvatore Ferragamo had already made into Hollywood were encouraging and showed the U.S. to be a promising export destination. The first significant step in this direction was taken by count Giovanni Battista Giorgini, who organised an Italian high fashion show in Florence in 1951, with the participation of the best-known fashion houses from Florence, Milan and Rome.

This event marked the birth of Italian fashion and drew the interest of the international press as well as American fashion retailers. During the 1950s, each of Italy's four main fashion cities was assigned a particular role. Rome would cater to high fashion (*haute couture*), Florence to boutique fashion and Turin and Milan would specialise in ready-to-wear (*prêt-à-porter*) clothing. In 1962, the National Chamber for Italian Fashion was founded and several Milanese fashion houses joined in as members. The chamber soon began to organise Milan's ready-to-wear and Rome's high fashion weeks.

ASCENT TO GLORY

The 1970s and 1980s were marked by a continued development of the textile industry and a rise in the demand for ready-to-wear clothing, while Rome's high fashion scene with its exclusive evening gowns receded into the background. Milan's young and talented designers came to the fore, thanks in part to their entrepreneurial skills. Walter Albini was the first to design clothing for five different fashion houses, a novel approach at the time. In contrast to Florence's handmade suits and Rome's high fashion clothing, Albini offered an industrial style and released a men's clothing collection under his own name in 1975. Albini claimed that fashion designers did not need to create anything new, but had to work out their own individual style. His fashion shows represented a new means of communication and marketing that was picked up upon by future generations of designers and other fashion houses.

Fashion journalism also had an important role to play in propelling Milan to worldwide fashion fame, as some of the most significant fashion magazines were based in the city. During the 1950s, Milan's largest publishing houses *Mondadori*, *Rizzoli* and later also *Rusconi* published such famous fashion magazines as *La Donna*, *Grazia*, *Gioia*, *Amica* and *Cosmopolitan*, followed in the 1960s by the prestigious *Vogue Italia*

Emporio Armani fashion show for the spring/summer of 2015



Giorgio Armani models in 1977



and the first fashion magazine for men, *L'uomo Vogue*. Thanks to these and other magazines, fashion journalism and photography continued to develop in the city. During the 1960s and 1970s, *Vogue Italia* launched the professional careers of many young photographers. One of them, Oliviero Toscani, later became famous for his striking *Benetton* advertising photos.

GIORGIO THE FASHION KING

Giorgio Armani was the first fashion designer to establish a new means of cooperation in 1978, when he signed a licensing agreement with the Turin textile and clothing manufacturer *Gruppo finanziario tessile (GFT)*. Armani created a unique style, while *GFT* sold and distributed his brand collections and took a cut of the profits. Fashion was transformed into a new cultural industry that successfully united the production capacity of a manufacturer and the intellect of a designer. This new type of venture needed a corresponding communications network and support from the press, which during the 1970s could be adequately provided only from Milan.

During the 1980s, accessories and perfumes also began to be made under license, inaugurating a new era for Italian designers in the world fashion industry. Fashion shows became real performances, top models became more famous than Hollywood movie stars and fashion designers were idolised. In 1986, for example, Italian president Francesco Cossiga held a ceremonial reception in his official residence at the Quirinal Palace in Rome to honour and knight some of the country's most successful fashion designers, including Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace, Gianfranco Ferré, Valentino Garavani, Mariuccia Mandelli of *Krizia*, Paola Fendi and Wanda Ferragamo. These designers represented what *Made in Italy* was all about and helped to turn the fashion industry into the second most important sector of the Italian economy, right after tourism. That represented the zenith of these designers' popularity and their true moment of glory.

The 1980s in Italian fashion are associated chiefly with Armani, whose evening dresses were worn by Hollywood celebrities at Oscar awards ceremonies and whose men's suits were made famous by Richard Gere in the movie *American Gigolo* (1980).



Richard Gere wearing an Armani suit in *American Gigolo* (1980)

Armani added a soft look to the classic style of dress, imparting a relaxed and carefree image with free-fitting laconically cut jackets from slightly wrinkled fabrics for both men and women, making fashion history with his reserved elegance and minimalist sense of aesthetics.

Armani's empire on the Via Manzoni in Milan's city centre takes up almost an entire city block, complete with all kinds of stores, cafés and a hotel.



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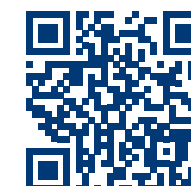
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Shopping on the Via Montenapoleone

THE BEST SHOPPING IN THE WORLD

Even those who have never been to Milan may have heard of the city's most famous shopping street, the Via Montenapoleone. Together with the nearby Via della Spiga and Via Sant'Andrea, it forms the city's golden triangle of shopping, where boutiques bearing the names of the world's most famous fashion brands stand side by side. The Via Montenapoleone, like Bond Street in London or Fifth Avenue in New York, is one of the world's most popular luxury shopping streets and the most elegant in Milan's legendary Fashion District, which was called the *Golden Quadrilateral* until the 19th century.

The street gained its name from the *Monte Napoleone* bank, which housed the region's public purse during the short-lived Italian Republic under Napoleon in the early 19th century. Composer Giuseppe Verdi also lived on this street, where he penned his famous opera *Nabucco*. The Via Montenapoleone's ascent to the summit of world fashion shopping began during the economic upswing of the 1950s.

Operating a shop on the Via Montenapoleone is prestigious and very expensive, as the rental price for one square metre of space costs about 7,000 euros per year. That is still far less than rental space on New York's Fifth Avenue, which is the world's most expensive street at about 16,700 euros per square metre, followed in second place by Causeway Bay in Hong Kong and Ginza in Tokyo.

The 500-metre-long street is home to about 80 luxury brand boutiques whose annual turnover reaches several billion euros, or 12% of the city's turnover, thanks in part to the income generated by foreign visitors.



Fashion show at Palazzo Clerici

MILAN FASHION WEEK

This northern Italian city draws particular attention to itself during *Milan Fashion Week*. The world's most important fashion show marathon takes place in four fashion metropolises. It begins in New York, continues in London, then goes on to Milan and ends in Paris. *Milan Fashion Week* takes place four times a year. The women's clothing collections of the following season are presented in September/October and February/March, while the men's collections are shown in January and June.

Milan Fashion Week is a turbulent event, complete with impressive fashion shows, social evenings and receptions, new store openings, exhibitions and presentations, media scrums over celebrities and top models, crowds of curious onlookers at the entries of the venues where fashion shows by the most famous designers are held, chaotic delays and irritating traffic jams. While the best-known designers hold their fashion shows in their own fashion houses, lesser-known artists rent ornate halls in historical palazzos and choose less traditional spots, for example, by building gigantic metal hangars in parks.

A fashion show is a prestigious affair, with official invitations being sent to accredited journalists, buyers and distinguished guests. Front row seats are usually assigned to the editors of the most influential fashion magazines, the largest retail buyers and celebrities. The calendar during *Milan Fashion Week* is a busy one, with about 100 fashion shows taking place. They are held every day on the hour and in various places, starting at 9 AM and ending at 9 PM, followed by presentations and parties.

HOW MUCH DOES A FASHION SHOW COST?

The cost of holding a fashion show in Milan depends on various aspects, such as the location, scenography, lighting, music, models, hair stylists, makeup artists, photographers and PR agencies. All this means that the final tab can run from 50,000 to even 800,000 euros. Lately, however, the budgets for fashion shows have been greatly reduced and fashion houses have been forsaking grandiose spectacles, opting instead for classic runway shows without any special effects. The fees paid to the models can also vary from 500 euros for a novice to 50,000 euros for a top model. Again, in order to save money, designers have been hiring ambitious top models less frequently than before, giving preference to new faces.

The presence of celebrities at a fashion show involves additional expenses. Hollywood actors draw a lot of media attention and serve as good advertising when they attend a designer's fashion show. Thus, many fashion houses cultivate good relationships with celebrities over a lengthy period, presenting actresses with lavish evening dresses to wear at film premieres and other events and covering all of their flight and other expenses for attending a fashion show. The cost of bringing over a film star can thus reach 200,000 euros, including agents' fees. Sometimes the most capricious actresses ask to be flown in on a private jet, lodged in a luxury hotel and serviced by a stylist.



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HIDDEN TREASURES

If you want to take a break from Milan's industrial landscape and fashion scene, then there are many historical artworks to see and beautiful public gardens to visit for leisurely walks, such as the Parco Sempione, which covers 47 hectares of territory. Milan is not only an industrial powerhouse, but also a significant arts and culture centre with 60 museums as well as about 150 art galleries and studios.

One of Europe's best-known museums is the Pinacoteca di Brera, which houses a rich collection of works from the 14th to the 20th centuries by Italian masters such as Raffaello, Caravaggio, Tiziano, Bramante and Modigliani. Another must-see in Milan is the world's most famous fresco, *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci in the Santa Maria delle Grazie church. It is also worth visiting the Museo del Novecento, which was built in 2010 and houses an exposition of 20th-century Italian art, with styles that range from futurism to avant-garde.

The real Milan reveals its hidden treasures to visitors very slowly. Hidden away in concealed courtyards are numerous historical and ornate palazzos and villas with lush gardens that most passers-by will fail to notice, such as the 16th-century Palazzo Spinola and 18th-century Palazzo Clerici, whose regal halls host fashion shows during the city's fashion weeks.

Another gem can be found in the prosperous residential Quadrilatero del

THE CITY'S NEW FACE

Milan's modern business district is receiving a major facelift and becoming a jewel in itself. The new CityLife district stands out with contemporary architectural masterpieces such as the Le Residenze apartment complex designed by Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid, the Lombardy region's administrative building, the Vertical Forest high-rises and the UniCredit Tower by Argentine-American César Pelli, whose 231-metre-high skyscraper is the highest residential building in Italy. All of these modern additions have become new symbols of Milan's rapidly changing landscape.

One new apartment concept in Milan's historic Porta Nuova district is particularly innovative. Designed by Italian architect Stefano Boeri, it consists of two skyscrapers known as the Vertical Forest or *Bosco verticale*. These are adorned with balconies that host 780 trees and about 1,000 plant species. The 111- and 79-metre-high buildings house 113 apartments, each with a private garden that filters the light of the sun and reduces noise and air pollution. The trees and plants are watered through a self-replenishing irrigation process, and photovoltaic panels on the roof convert sunlight to electricity.



Silenzio (Silent Quadrilateral) district not far from the Corso Venezia, where elegantly dressed dames once rode around in horse-drawn carriages during the 18th and 19th centuries. On a small street with a musical name, Via Mozart, one comes across the Villa Necchi Campiglio, which was built in the 1930s in a classicist style. The villa has a park with a pool, magnolias and camellias that bloom in the spring, and an outdoor café for a leisurely lunch or coffee. The villa houses a collection of 20th-century paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, Giorgio Morandi, Mario Sironi and other artists that is open to the public.

Fashion king Giorgio Armani has often mentioned this villa as a source of

inspiration, as evidenced in the interior of his minimalist-style luxury *Armani Hotel Milano*. This affluent part of the city is home to several majestic villas and Liberty-style Art Nouveau buildings, including the palazzo in which Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni filmed scenes for one of his first feature films.

A real treasure can be found on the Via Cappuccini: the Villa Invernizzi and its enchanting park, where pink flamingos and peacocks roam freely. This small nature paradise in the very centre of Milan provides respite from the bustle of the big city.

Milan is truly a diverse metropolis. It's up to you to discover and enjoy the Milan that best suits your tastes.



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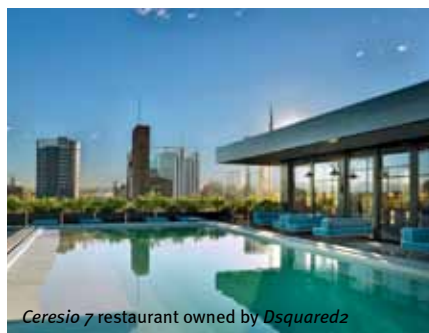
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Armani Hotel Milano, Bamboo Bar



Armani Bamboo Bar
A modern bar with a minimalist interior on the top floor of the *Armani Hotel*. Worth seeing from a design perspective and coming in for a business lunch or an Italian-style pre-dinner aperitif, when you can order a drink and get some appetisers for free. Via Manzoni 31
① milan.armanihotels.com

Armani/Nobu
Owned by fashion king Giorgio Armani, this is a refined restaurant from the standpoints of both design and gastronomy. Here one can enjoy great Italian cuisine with exotic Japanese and South American influences offered by one of the world's leading chefs, Nobuyuki Matsuhisa. The owner himself also sometimes stops in for dinner. Via Pisoni 1
① armanistorante.com



Ceresio 7 restaurant owned by Dsquared2



Ceresio 7

This large rooftop terrace on the top floor of a 1930s-style historical palazzo belongs to fashion cult brand *Dsquared2*. The restaurant is run by chef Elio Sironi. With a 360-degree panoramic view of the city, a bar and two pools, this is a glamorous and elegant meeting place for fashionistas. via Ceresio 7
① ceresio7.com

Bulgari Hotels & Resorts

This luxury hotel belongs to the famous *Bulgari* jeweller maker and is located in a renovated 18th-century palazzo. It has a superb restaurant, spa, garden terrace and a 4000-square-metre private park/botanical garden. It is also the place where *Bulgari* presents its new collections of jewellery, accessories and handbags during *Milan Fashion Week*. Via Privata Fratelli Gabba 7/b
① bulgarihotels.com/en-us/milan



Bulgari Hotel Milan



Just Cavalli club

Just Cavalli Restaurant & Club

Located in Sempione Park, this club, restaurant and lounge bar was established by eccentric fashion designer Roberto Cavalli and shares the owner's characteristic kitschy style, complete with animal fur patterns, leather sofas, crystal chandeliers and candleholders. This is where Cavalli holds his famous fashion show after-parties and where his beloved Great Danes can sometimes be spotted lounging on the sofas. Via Luigi Camoens, Torre Branca
① milano.cavalliclub.com



Trussardi alla Scala restaurant

Trussardi Alla Scala

Before going out to the opera at the famous *La Scala* theatre, stop in for dinner at the modern *Trussardi* restaurant, which is located just across the street. You will dine in an elegant, cosmopolitan and informal atmosphere and enjoy creative cuisine by chef Luigi Taglienti at an establishment that has received two *Michelin Italia* stars. Piazza della Scala 5
① trussardiallascala.com



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DAVOS – SKIING AS IT USED TO BE

Visit this world-famous skiing resort once and you are sure to return. *Baltic Outlook* journalist Jimmy Petterson shares his story of unforgettable Davos.

Text and photos by
JIMMY PETTERSON

My mother loved skiing more than almost anything else. She grew up with the sport in the 1920s and 1930s, when the slopes were empty and skiers were few and far between. I believe that she enjoyed the solitude and the serenity of being at one with the mountains as much as she cherished the sport. As time passed and skiing became ever more popular, she skied off-piste as much as she could, partly for the powder and partly for the tranquillity.

She naturally wanted to pass her passion for the sport on to me. She put me on my first pair of skis when I was two and sacrificed long hours of her own skiing time to teach me how to glide happily down the mountains in California, where I grew up.

Memory flashbacks

My early skiing experiences in the 1950s and 1960s were at local mountains in southern California, including Blue Ridge, Holiday Hill, Mt. Baldy and Snow Summit as well as the larger resorts of Mammoth Mountain, Squaw Valley and Alta in Utah. Mind you, even these larger American ski resorts were not really that big at the time. Mammoth Mountain, today number three in the country in skier visits, had two chairlifts and two T-bars the first time that I skied there in 1957. Squaw Valley, the host of the 1960 Winter Olympics, had about five. Alta had three.

Hence, when I was 20 and ready to see more of the world, my mom took me on a skiing trip to her native Europe. She explained to her wide-eyed son that skiing in the Alps was a completely different experience from the one that I had come to know in the United States. Instead of a short ski hill or two with a base lodge at the bottom, Alpine skiing involved a much more expansive lift system than I had ever seen, with long winding runs where skiers could glide through old mountain villages. Sometimes one finished a run so far away from one's starting point that one had to take a train back to the resort where one had begun the day. It sounded fascinating and I was eager to immerse myself into this new experience.

In her enthusiasm to show me the epitome of what she considered to be classic Alpine skiing, my mom took me to Davos, Switzerland. The year was 1970. There were also chairlifts there, as in the USA, but in addition to that, Davos was home to the famous cog-wheeled train up the Parsenn. This was a mode of uphill transportation that I had never seen before. From the top of the Parsenn, we skied the

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nine-kilometre descent to the neighbouring village of Klosters, where we ate lunch.

The next day, we did one better. At the end of the ski day, my mom led me on the 12-kilometre run to Küblis. There, we stopped in a *Konditorei* for a pastry and rode the train back to Davos. It was very civilised and I was beginning to understand the differences between skiing in the States and in the Alps. The comparison went beyond the size of the resorts and the length of the runs – there was also a marked difference in style and atmosphere.

At Blue Ridge, we might finish the ski day with a robust bowl of chili and saltine crackers at the counter of a diner in Wrightwood, while in Klosters, we rested in comfortable antique sofa chairs as an elegantly clad waiter brought us cakes and cappuccino.

More than 40 winter seasons, 4000 ski days and 500 ski hills have glided under my boards since that first visit with my mom, who has since passed on, but the years and the added ski adventures have not changed my perception of Davos and its surrounding ski villages. I have returned to Davos on various occasions and last winter I again visited this wonderful Swiss resort.

While the number of lifts and kilometres of pistes have of course increased over the years, the elegance and style that I first experienced in my youth remain intact. Today, the ski region offers more than 50 lifts and over 300 kilometres of pistes. And when it comes to an ambiance of grace and refinement, then who would know better than Prince Charles and the British royal family, who have been regular guests in Klosters for many years?

Even with all those kilometres of pistes, I have always been more interested in the vast stretches of virgin snow that lie between them. To that end, my friend Robert Heim and I

enlisted the services of a local guide, Sämi Balsiger. It was a fortuitous decision. There had been no snowfall for a few days prior to our visit, but Sämi had no problem finding locations with virgin powder.

Sämi began by taking us up as high as one can get in Davos – to the 2844-metre-high Weissfluhgipfel. From there, our leader led us around to the steep back side of the mountain onto a shady virgin stretch called Direttissima. The fact that no freerider had been at this prime location in the days since the last precipitation was a mystery, and we gleefully sent the dry powder flying.

For old times' sake, we skied the run to Küblis and stayed on the piste. It is an intermediate trail that undulates and winds down the mountain, dropping more than 2,000 vertical metres before finally meandering into the village. The snow was a bit icy and not great, but that didn't matter. I was skiing this one for mom, and I could feel her smiling all the while.

Odd Schatzalp

During our initial visit, my mom and I had only a few free days and our skiing was limited to the world-famous Parsenn-Klosters region. However, Davos also has four additional mountains: Pisch, Jakobshorn, Rinerhorn and Schatzalp-Strela, which is owned by a different company and requires a separate lift pass. On this visit, Sämi wanted to share all of the local mountains with us so that we could get a more complete picture of his playground than the one that most tourists usually see.

Schatzalp is perhaps the oddest of these ski resorts and one with an unusual history to boot. Way back in 1899, a funicular railway was completed to a plateau 300 vertical metres up the mountain. This train connected the village with a sanatorium that treated patients with tuberculosis and other lung disorders.

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We were all alone, laying three pristine lines in the untouched snow back down toward town



In 1912, the wife of famous German novelist Thomas Mann was treated there for a few months, and Mann used the location as the setting for his famous novel *Zauberberg (The Magic Mountain)*, which was first published in 1924.

The first ski lift on the mountain was erected in 1937, followed by two more that extended to the wide, open slopes above the sanatorium and tree line. Some years later, in 1954, when Davos was in the process of converting from a small spa village to a modern ski resort, the spectacular Art Nouveau sanatorium was converted into the *Berghotel Schatzalp*.

More major changes have occurred during this new century. Schatzalp's ski lifts were closed down in 2002, leaving the sledding track as the mountain's main attraction. Then, in 2009, two of the ski lifts were put back into service, but the ski slopes remained outside of the lift pass area that encompassed the rest of the resort. The lift that had previously connected Schatzalp with the Parsenn region remained closed. The little ski resort was re-inaugurated as a "slow skiing area" that caters to families with small children and elderly skiers who want to avoid the dangers of crowded and over-trafficked pistes.

As a result of its isolation from the general ski area, few visitors based in the bustling resort of Davos venture up into the separate pistes of Schatzalp. For that very reason, Sämi figured this to be a perfect spot to find some untracked powder. As Sämi had expected, long ridges and ravines of pristine powder lay waiting. The mountain looked deserted, with a lovely old mountain hut devoid of guests at the top and pistes as empty as a bar in Damascus on a Monday morning.

I have to admit that Robert, Sämi and I did not fully abide by the Schatzalp/Strela slow-skiing policy, but we were able to feel the ambiance of relaxation that the policy is intended to invoke. There was no stressful, crowded anthill of skiers crisscrossing a narrow piste trying to avoid collisions, and no race with hundreds of helmet-clad freeride freaks for the first virgin tracks. We were all alone, laying three pristine lines in the untouched snow back down toward town. It was as if we had been morphed back to the 1930s, when skiing was a new sport and a ski hill was still a place to get away from the crowds.

Snowboarders' paradise

After a quick lunch, we headed across to the Jakobshorn, the largest of the ski areas on the west-facing side of the valley and a particularly popular location with snowboarders. It is home to the large Jatz terrain park and one of Europe's biggest super pipes. The famously long runs of the Parsenn naturally have their share of flat, narrow trails, an anathema to snowboarders, while the terrain on the Jakobshorn has no such features.

Snowboarders and skiers who enjoy powder love the unprepared ski route down the back of the mountain to Teufi. It begins with a very steep entry that evolves into undulating terrain, mostly above the tree line.

This is a perfect end-of-the-day excursion as the last powder turn brings you to the rustic *Restaurant Teufi*, where one can let the day's ski experiences sink in over a cozy away-from-it-all après-ski drink. One can take the bus back from there, or one can stay for an evening meal and return slowly to Davos in a horse-

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drawn sleigh. Like the sparsely populated Schatzalp, Teufi is Davos at its bucolic best.

We were done for the day, but Sämi was far from done with us. His home is close to the Rinerhorn and he wanted to show us one of his favourite runs on his home mountain.

Fields of untouched snow

The following day, we headed up the Rinerhorn to ski on yet another run that was as quiet as Wall Street on a Sunday morning. This is another small lift system set onto a big mountain. The facilities consist of a gondola to the middle station and a handful of T-bars. There are many ski resorts where one has to go off-piste to get a semblance of solitude, but the Rinerhorn is yet another section of Davos where this elusive quality is attainable right on the main pistes. We cruised a morning warm-up run in utter peace and quiet and followed that with a 15-minute walk to access another back valley run called Bäbi.

Once again, Robert and I were amazed at the amount of open terrain with seemingly endless swathes of untouched snow. We stayed on the northeasterly slopes and enjoyed the morning sun. Eventually, we reached an icy trail in the Sertigtal that finally spit us out onto a

cross-country track, which we followed back to the main road, ending up very close to our guide's home.

We loaded our skis into Sämi's car and drove back to the Jakobshorn. This time, we followed a ski route out past the Jatz Quattro lift and walked further up into the valley for about 45 minutes. Now we were ready to drop back down a different and far less skied route to Teufi, one that Sämi called Rossboden. The conventional Teufi route is a great run, but to enjoy powder there, one generally must ski it pretty soon after a snowfall, as it is easily accessible and is marked on the piste maps. The Rossboden run, by contrast, took us once again into real virgin territory. It was steeper than the main route to Teufi and faced almost directly north – perfect for freeriding. Once again, the sun set on two happy powder hounds sipping Glühwein in Teufi.

Perfect Pischa

We still had one more day and one more mountain left to explore – the small resort at Pischa, which is similar to Schatzalp but minus the gigantic old hotel. While the area has only one cable car and a couple of T-bars, the amount of terrain that can be reached from this small set of lifts is remarkable.

Like Schatzalp, this ski area is almost all above the tree line and here too, fewer than 20 guests were on the mountain. The Davos/Klosters website describes Pischa as "a paradise for anyone searching for skiing as it used to be". That is a succinct and accurate description, but one that Robert and I had already found to be true of both Schatzalp and the Rinerhorn.

Most of the terrain on Pischa is exposed to the sun, and the off-piste slopes had a top layer of crust. However, this did not matter much. We had enjoyed our share of powder during the past couple of days and were happy to put a few more kilometres under our skis at high speed, without having to slow down to avoid a struggling beginner, plodding grandmother, erratic child or ski school snake.

The pistes were groomed to perfection. At closing time, we were still carving turns onto the morning lines of corduroy created by the piste machine the night before. Yes, this was skiing as it used to be, only better. Pischa offers modern-day grooming with 1930s crowds. If my mom was alive today, then she would be 93 and I am sure that she would feel right at home on the uncrowded slopes of Pischa, gliding safely and happily, and barely noticing that more than 40 years had passed since her last visit. **BO**



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Test drive: the *Nissan GT-R Nismo*

Some years ago, the GT-R made its reputation as a giant-slayer. It was an 80,000-euro sports car that could embarrass rivals costing twice as much. It is now more powerful than ever, but more expensive, too. We drove the new, most powerful 152,000-euro* Nismo version to find out if it's worth the money.



Some say that the world has gone mad, that hell has frozen over and that the sun has risen in the west. Why? Because the *Nissan GT-R* is now officially more expensive than the *Porsche 911 Turbo*.

At least, it is if you want the ultimate version: the new *GT-R Nismo*, which costs a staggering 152,000 euros. Bigger turbos give the car another 50 hp. It also comes with adjustable *Bilstein* dampers and a stiffer rear anti-roll bar to increase its performance.

A more rigid body shell, lashings of carbon fibre and tweaked aerodynamics reduce the weight and add up to 100 kg more downforce than the standard *GT-R*. Regarding other changes, we're not just talking about a new headlight design. Spanners, laptops, proper race know-how and Nurburgring records were involved, but then you'd expect that, because the *Nismo* costs almost 50,000 euros more than the standard *Nissan GT-R*.

The *GT-R* has always been characterised by the way that it delivers its power, and the *Nismo* is no different. In fact, it's about as subtle as a kick to the head. Floor the throttle and in a heartbeat you're surrounded by the mechanical whirring of the six-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox. Then you're hurled forwards, the steering wheel squirming in your hands as everything in the car strains to get the power to all four wheels. Make no mistake, the *Nismo* seems to detonate rather than accelerate.

Our short time driving on the Nurburgring was undertaken in torrential rain, so it was a struggle to feel the benefits of the many changes that have been made to this ultimate *GT-R*. Driven back-to-back with the standard *MY14* car, though, we noticed that the suspension alterations have resulted in a slightly sharper response as you turn in to corners.

The *Nismo* feels more poised and generally more tuned-in to delicate, fingertip inputs rather than the heavier-handed responses of the standard car. The steering has a meaty bite to it, and you get a great sense of how much grip there is to work with – not much in heavy rain, when it can feel seriously twitchy, but traction levels in the dry will be of the physics-defying, face-bending sort.

The *Nismo* also feels less prone to being unsettled by harsh mid-corner bumps. This hint at improved composure could be one of the greatest benefits to the *Nismo*; the standard *GT-R* has been criticised for an unforgiving ride, albeit less so on the current 2014 model.

Otherwise, the *Nismo* feels fairly similar to the less extreme versions. The automatic gearbox quick-fires up and down the ratios – at its best when you use the wheel-mounted paddles – and the *GT-R* will make light work of long journeys, although there are quieter and comfier sporting *GTs*, including the *Porsche 911 Turbo*.

The seats are bespoke – they're carbon fibre-backed *Recaro* buckets that feel brilliantly supportive and comfortable. A red rev counter with *Nismo* badging, contrast red stitching throughout the cabin and an *Alcantara* steering wheel complete with a red dead-ahead marker finish the bespoke *Nismo* treatment.

Everything else is pretty much as before, which means that the dashboard looks a bit like a *Casio G-Shock* watch, and some of the switches are recognisable from lesser *Nissans*.

Still, this works quite well, and you've got all of the equipment that you could want, including sat-nav, auto lights and wipers and climate control. The bits that you interact with on every drive (namely the steering wheel, gearshift paddles and brakes) also feel well engineered.

There's decent space for two, and while two more people can sit in the rear seat, they won't thank you if they have to spend too much time there. It's probably best to view the rear seat as luggage space.



Farther back, the boot is a reasonable size, so you can put your weekend's baggage in there and the shopping on the back seat. Of course, unless you plan to spend the weekend at a racetrack, you may have missed the point of the *Nismo* altogether.

Should I buy one?

Firstly, you can't buy it in the Baltic States. The closest places to do so are Warsaw, Dresden and Gothenburg. It does feel more light-footed and precise than ever, and also a touch more composed over rough roads, which represent improvements to all the right areas. Nevertheless, the *GT-R Nismo* remains a hard sell. Even with a generous kit list and performance that outstrips the *Porsche 911 Turbo* and every other four-seat sports car at this price, it's hard to see how this model, extraordinary as it is, can be worth so much more than its less hardcore sibling.

Still, with only 200 of these *Nismo* models being made a year globally, this model will retain a certain rarity factor, and there's no denying that it is an improvement on a car that was already a masterpiece of engineering.

If you're a collector or a *GT-R* aficionado, then you won't be disappointed. We'd suggest that you act quickly, too, if you want to lay your hands on a new one soon.

For the rest of the sports car fans out there, the cheaper *GT-R*, the *Audi R8* or any of the *Porsche 911* coupe variants will save you a lot of money without leaving you feeling short-changed in any way. **BO**

* Approximate prices in Sweden; to get an exact quote, contact a *Nissan* dealer near you.

QUICK FACTS:

- 1** The *GT-R Nismo* is powered by a 3.8-litre turbocharged V6 petrol engine;
- 2** The engine endows the *GT-R Nismo* with an astounding 600 hp;
- 3** There's also 652 Nm of torque on offer, which is sent to all four wheels through a six-speed dual-clutch transmission;
- 4** The *GT-R Nismo* weighs in at 1,720 kg, its sprint from 0-100 km/h takes less than 2.7 seconds;
- 5** Engine tweaks include modified ignition timing and a high-capacity fuel pump;
- 6** While there is no set limit to the number that will be built, *Nissan* plans to produce no more than 200 examples per year.

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Bourgeois classicist gem

This gem of a building at Grecinieku iela 1 in the heart of Old Riga is like a mirror that reflects the twists and turns of Latvia’s eventful history. Built for the rich and the powerful, the edifice has housed not only some of the city’s most influential bourgeois residents but also orphans, petty traders and even Soviet factory workers.

Grēcinieku iela 1 is a superb example of 18th-century classicist architecture. The residential building was constructed in 1779 atop a foundation of large stones and wooden piles. It was designed by master mason A. J. Wagenstein, who followed in the traditions of Christoph Haberland, a pioneer of classicist architecture. Wagenstein took a rational artistic approach in creating the building’s distinctly classicist elements, which are based on Ancient Greek architecture and mythology. The result is an unpretentious edifice whose noble simplicity continues to appeal to this day.

Classicism with precision

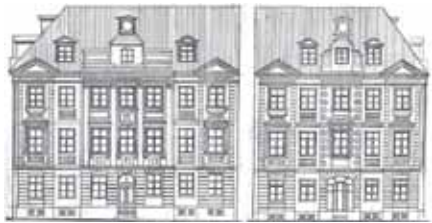
The entry door on Grēcinieku iela is one of the most visible examples of the building’s classicist heritage, with

transparent glass windows installed over robustly built and geometrically precise door frames. A unique carved wooden staircase links the building’s three floors. Within the former assembly hall, sculptural ceiling ornaments depicting images of animals, birds, mythical gods and people have been retained, along with fresco fragments. A number of rooms on the second floor are particularly ornate and aesthetically pleasing. In the ceiling corners, medallions depicting Aurora, the goddess of the dawn, are flanked by various objects, including a staff of Hermes, musical instruments and mason’s tools.

While the property at Grēcinieku iela 1 was originally designed as a residential building, it was gradually reconstructed to serve a more public function. It was refurbished during Latvia’s first period of independence (1918-1940) and then again during the 1980s, when Polish restoration workers restored its elaborate façade. The building currently houses a restaurant, a bar/casino and offices.



Photo dating from around 1941. From the archives of the Riga City Construction Board.



Sketch of the façade. From the archives of the Riga City Construction Board.

Times change, but the classics remain

The building at Grēcinieku iela 1 was initially owned by surgeon J. Shroeder and valued at 3,200 albertusthalers. He sold it to N. Borstett, the most senior member of the Brotherhood of Blackheads, who remodelled it in 1784 and sold it on to wholesaler J. Hay. By then, the value of the building had grown threefold and risen to 10,684 albertusthalers.

The most noteworthy changes to the building occurred in 1880, when owner H. Fleischer created retail space on the ground floor in accordance with a design by architect K. Felsko. By expanding the entryway and installing shop windows, Fleischer significantly changed the outer façade. The ground floor continued to be altered over the following decades, housing a fur store and a manufacturing warehouse. The building’s retail space was further expanded before the outbreak of the First World War to include the second floor as well, where a bookstore could be found. These stores could be accessed through the main entry on Grēcinieku iela, with residential space confined to the top floor.

From 1924 to 1927, owner A. Franz had the ground floor rebuilt again in accordance with a project by architect Paul Mandelstam. Franz also added an additional entry door on Skārņu iela, which became the main entryway to the building. The basement floor was fixed up to accommodate a locksmith’s workshop, while a men’s accessory and small goods shop was installed on the second floor, with

a small printing press operating on the third floor. In 1934, the ground floor was occupied by an eyeglass store, while the second floor housed a pant suspenders’ workshop.

Residence halls in a historical monument

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the second and third floors were turned into residence halls for the workers of a gas factory. After the transfer of the building to the city’s water main and sewage department in 1948, the residence halls were extended to include the former retail space on the ground floor.

Starting from 1955, the building’s residents made countless modifications to it, which included the unauthorised addition of partition walls to ensure that each family had its own room and kitchen. The residents thus created small apartments in the residential space, paying little regard to the edifice’s historical architectural value.

The historic building at Grēcinieku iela 1 was completely renovated several decades later, in 2004. Its original 18th-century interior elements still provide a unique touch, being restrained in their ornateness while simultaneously serving as a beautiful reminder of the edifice’s illustrious past. The architectural masterpiece is truly a unique example of Riga bourgeois classicism, as few other buildings of its kind can be found anywhere else in Latvia. **BO**

① For more information about this and other Art Nouveau gems owned by *Swedbank Group’s* real estate company *Ektornet*, visit ektornet.lv.



One of the building’s most valuable interior elements is its carved wooden staircase.



An ornate hall on the second floor with original plaster decorations.



Authentic plaster ceiling ornaments.

Ektornet

Образец рижского бюргерского классицизма на улице Гречиниеку 1

Расположившийся в самом сердце Старой Риги дом № 1 на улице Гречиниеку подобно зеркалу отражает все зигзаги истории Латвии. Дом № 1 на улице Гречиниеку был построен в 1779 году. Архитектором проекта стал мастер-каменщик А. Й. Вагенштейн.

В здании расположена одна лестничная клетка с уникальной резной деревянной лестницей, соединяющей три этажа. Во внутренних помещениях сохранились скульптурные лепные украшения на потолке бывшего зала — животные, птицы, образы богов и людей, а также фрагменты фресок.

Дом был полностью реновирован в 2004 году. Оригинальные элементы 18-го века придают ему особое настроение; они сдержаны в своей роскоши и в то же время служат красивым напоминанием истории дома. Кроме того, рижский бюргерский классицизм, образцом которого является и дом № 1 на улице Гречиниеку, уникален — такого в Латвии больше нигде не найти!

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В сотрудничестве с





Latvia – a partner country in *International Green Week* 2015

January 16-25, *Messe Berlin GmbH*,
Messedamm 22, Berlin

Latvia is proud to be a partner country of this year's *International Green Week*, the world's largest and most significant annual fair devoted to food, agriculture and horticulture. Latvia truly is one of the greenest countries in Europe, as visitors will be able to see for themselves at this year's national stand, which will present and sell delectable food products from Latvia's forests, meadows, fields, gardens, apiaries and fishermen's homesteads. Crafts by Latvian artisans will also be available for purchase, while renowned caterers and restaurants such as the *LIDO* bistro will be on hand to market their services.

Visitors will also be able to learn about the many opportunities for rural tourism, as Latvia is country that is best enjoyed slowly! A Latvian postage stamp specifically dedicated to *International Green Week 2015* will be presented during the fair, along with a Baltic Sea culinary exposition. Don't miss the opportunity to get a taste of Latvia during the ten-day event in the heart of the German capital. See you at Hall 8.2! **BO**



Visitors will also be able to learn about the many opportunities for rural tourism, as Latvia is country that is best enjoyed slowly!



More than just sushi

If you are in the Latvian capital and in the mood for some outstanding Japanese-style food, then head straight to the *Planeta Riga* restaurant.

Photos by **ANDREJS TERENTJEVS** and **GATIS GIERTS**, F64 and publicity materials



In order to enjoy truly outstanding Japanese cuisine, one doesn't have to travel to Asia. *Planeta Riga* in the heart of the Old Town has become the Latvian leader in Japanese-style casual dining. The restaurant is frequented every day by business people who appreciate its large lunch selection as well as by tourists seeking the best sushi in town.

The atmosphere at *Planeta Riga* changes with the seasons. During the summer months, patrons enjoy sitting on the beautiful terrace that offers a splendid view of Dom Square, while during the winter, they can dine in a cosy and pleasant interior. Both floors of the restaurant are decorated in light and classical tones highlighted by various historical elements, such as the exposed original brick walls.

The winter season has also arrived with a new menu, and the restaurant is particularly busy on weekdays between 12:00-16:00, when guests can choose from six different lunchtime specials. These will suit practically all tastes, including those of vegetarians, who have not been neglected. The lunchtime specials include miso soup, a main course, salad and sushi, and a choice of tea or coffee. It's worth mentioning that the portions are quite sizeable and that both the salmon and sushi melt right in one's mouth.

On weekends, also between 12:00-16:00, a particularly lazy atmosphere reigns, as Rigans and visitors to the city enjoy the opportunity to have a late breakfast or brunch, which includes a starter, a main, a dessert and coffee or tea, along with a complimentary glass of sparkling *Prosecco*.

Of course, the sushi (classical maki, premium and even hot and tempura-baked rolls) is in a class by itself and parades under an array of impressive names, including famous Japanese manga artists and film directors. The winter menu has been supplemented with hot sushi, which is perfect for the colder months of the year. Among the most requested are the refined

hamanishi maki – warm tempura rolls with smoked eel, prawns, cream cheese, avocado and mild nut sauce.

However, *Planeta Riga* offers much more than just outstanding sushi. If the restaurant's menu has a star performer, then it is definitely ramen, the traditional Japanese soup-like noodle dish. This involves preparing a special broth that is boiled for several hours to achieve an extremely rich taste. Head chef Staņislavs Gurjanovs has gone out of his way to perfect his ramen preparation technique, which he learnt from Japanese master chef Kanji Furukawa (also known as Ramen Boss) at the *Shoryu Ramen* restaurant in London. Not surprisingly, that restaurant has been recommended in the *Michelin Guide 2014*.

Another dish worth trying at *Planeta Riga* is dim sum, which Staņislavs Gurjanovs mastered while working under a renowned chef in Moscow. Dim sum is a Chinese delicacy, with little packages of mushrooms, veal, chicken, lamb, Peking duck, salmon and more served in a traditional steamer basket. *Planeta Riga's* dim sum are handmade and offer a truly unique taste experience.

One of the most popular desserts, whose fame has spread to the extent that guests come in specifically to try it, is the *Asian Planeta Sphere* – a specially made chocolate sphere that the chef has filled with homemade ginger ice cream, cashew nuts and blueberries. When melted chocolate is poured over it, the sphere opens up and releases its contents, just like a lotus blossom – a true delight for the eyes and for the taste buds of the most discriminating gourmet.

Planeta Riga's high standards of quality have ensured that many of the restaurant's guests keep returning on a regular basis. Some have also obtained a *Planeta Special* client card, which gives them extra privileges and the opportunity to enjoy discounts of up to 70 percent as well as special offers. **BO**



Planeta Riga
Šķūņu iela 16 (entrance
from Tirgoņu iela)
Tel. (+371) 67223855
E-mail: planeta@rrg.lv
www.planetariga.lv



Double Coffee — double success



Sergey Plotnikov,
Double Coffee, CEO



www.doublecoffee.com

The *Double Coffee* chain of restaurants, which has been successfully operating in Latvia since 2002, is now setting its sights abroad and is quickly gaining popularity within the markets of Russia and other CIS countries.

Since *Double Coffee* launched a franchising system in 2005, the chain has been rapidly expanding to other nations. While placing a significant focus on Russia and its CIS neighbours, the company is keeping an eye on Europe as well. There is a considerable interest in the *Double Coffee* brand in Poland, for example. Overall, the company plans to open up to 50 new *Double Coffee* restaurants in the next three to four years.

Recently *Double Coffee* signed an agreement to open a restaurant in Kazakhstan. The new *Double Coffee* branch in Almaty is conveniently located in the very heart of the city and close to two universities, with every reason to believe that customers will appreciate the establishment. Since 2010, two successful restaurants have been operating in Sochi, along with one in Pskov and one in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. Other outlets have recently opened in Tomsk, Novorossiysk (Russia) and in Baku (Azerbaijan), among other places.

Double Coffee's consistent success in Latvia has provided it with a solid basis for further expansion to neighbouring European and CIS countries. Currently the company's main target is Russia,

where the franchise is booming. It has received many inquiries from Russian regions and from such major cities as Krasnodar, Rostov-on-Don, Tyumen and Novosibirsk, to name a few.

Compared to local Russian chains, *Double Coffee* represents a truly European brand. This includes a European way of doing business, along with a European way of dealing with partners and advertising, not to mention a superior product. At the same time, *Double Coffee's* partners in the CIS countries find it easy to work with the company due to a common way of thinking and a common Russian language. However, it is the economics of the business that appeals most to them: the cost of a *Double Coffee* franchise is three to four times lower than for comparable European brands.

The company is also very flexible in the purchase of local produce and other necessities. This sets *Double Coffee* apart from federal chains, which often insist on their own supplies. Advanced technologies enable the smooth operation of a restaurant in every town or city that uses local produce. Whenever the need arises, though, *Double Coffee* is always happy to help with supplies. Similarly, it can provide assistance in building and launching a franchise for partners who lack sufficient experience in this sort of business.

Everyone interested is welcome to visit *Double Coffee's* head office in Riga and to inspect the ingredients of our success. **BO**

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Ресторан Дядя Ваня - место, где в домашней уютной атмосфере можно получить удовольствие от хорошей еды и выпить водки. В меню блюда на основе классических русских рецептов, но с современной подачей. В баре упор на чистый крепкий алкоголь и настойки собственного приготовления.



Таежные пельмени с мясом косули. В ресторане Дядя Ваня подается со сметано-брусничным соусом. Рецепт пельменей привезен из Таежных краев одним из наших постоянных гостей и опытным охотником. Рецепт прост: мясо косули, тесто на основе свекольного сока и специальный кисло-сладкий брусничный соус. Для придания соусу более интересного вкуса добавляем немного домашнего хрена.

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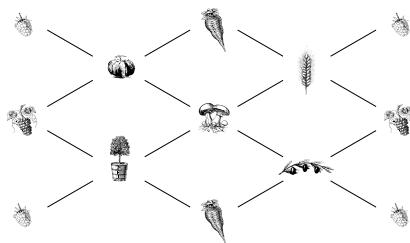
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Text by **LIENE PĀLENA**
Photos by **LAURIS VĪKSNE** and **EDMUNDS BRENCIS, F64**

Restaurants, bars and cafés

The best of the best

For the second year in a row, an international jury has selected the best restaurants in Latvia. Here is a look at the first and second place finishers for the year 2014.



VINCENTS, RIGA

STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Vincents has taken the top position as best restaurant in Latvia for the second year running. This is not surprising, as founder Mārtiņš Rītiņš truly is an outstanding culinary master. He is also perhaps the best-known chef both within and outside of Latvia. Quite fittingly, one of the restaurant's most visible interior elements is a series of photographs on the walls showing Rītiņš posing with some of *Vincents'* most prominent guests. These have included Latvian and foreign heads of state such as Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, George W. Bush, Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles and many others.

The food at *Vincents* is

absolutely superb and Rītiņš says that he tries to provide restaurant guests not only with a culinary adventure, but also a high-class cultural experience. The restaurant opens its doors at 6 PM, indicating that this is not the place for a quick bite to eat, but rather for an extensive Slow Food dinner experience. Visitors should bear in mind that *Vincents* is not the cheapest restaurant in town and that a meal together with wine will cost about 100 euros per person. That is due in part to the highest quality (and expensive) products that Rītiņš uses in his kitchen, such as fresh Atlantic salmon flown in from the Faroe Islands, premium olive oil from the Mediterranean, home-baked bread and home-churned butter from organic ingredients, genuine wasabi

and truffles, to name but a few.

The restaurant's classically reserved interior, crystal lamps and candlelight generate a ceremoniously romantic atmosphere, which suits *Vincents'* concept of adding a personal touch at practically every step. Since the restaurant operates mostly on the basis of reservations, the staff is known for establishing what country an upcoming group of guests is coming from to give it a pleasant surprise. On some days, for example, Rītiņš himself might greet a group of visitors from Scotland outside by the restaurant entry with a welcoming tray of whisky in hand.

Address: Elizabetes iela 19
Open: Mon.-Sat.: 18:00-22:00
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① restorans.lv

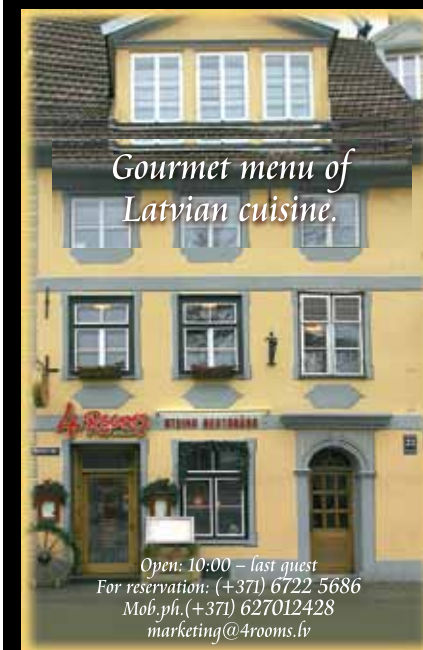
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BIBLIOTĒKA No.1, RIGA

CONTEMPORARY TASTE OF LATVIA

With its tasteful interior, friendly service and refined menu, *Bibliotēka No.1* was deemed to be the second best restaurant in Latvia in 2014. Its prime location is also a plus, as the dining room's wide windows look out onto one of Riga's oldest and most beautiful parks, Vērmāne's Garden. The restaurant opens its doors at 12 PM on weekdays, making it a good spot for both formal business lunches and more relaxed meetings. The place becomes particularly lively during the evening

hours, when locally and internationally awarded chef Māris Jansons serves his lightly marinated Baltic sprats, veal cheeks, venison steak and other delectable dishes. Frequently all of the restaurant tables have been reserved in advance for the chance to enjoy what Jansons calls a contemporary taste of Latvia with high-quality seasonal products. The price here for a dinner with wine comes to about 70 euros person, which is commensurate with the quality of the meal. The restaurant offers three types of divine home-baked bread, and the salmon is so mild that it melts right in your mouth.

The high-class service here deserves special mention, with

Bibliotēka No.1 employing some of the friendliest and most knowledgeable waiters and waitresses in the Latvian capital. The waitstaff will be glad to help you pair your meal with a good wine, for Jansons considers wine to be an important accompaniment to the food that he prepares. Whether you come for an evening celebration with family and friends or a late Sunday breakfast or brunch, the restaurant's staff will make sure that you feel right at home and that you will want to return again soon.

Address: Tērbatas iela 2
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- and a shop selling amazing confectionery and pastries, as well as products made by Latvian producers from original recipes.

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1/ Dubrovnik – the Pearl of the Adriatic

1/ Dubrovnik – the Pearl of the Adriatic

George Bernard Shaw once said that “those who seek paradise on Earth should come to Dubrovnik”, the beautiful Croatian city that is also known as the Pearl of the Adriatic. Dubrovnik is best known for its breath-taking Old Town, and it is hard not to be impressed when walking along the ancient city walls that have protected a civilised, sophisticated people for centuries. Nestled between the Adriatic Sea and the Dinaric Alps, Dubrovnik is an accessible and affordable destination for many travellers. While swimming in the clear and warm sea will surely refresh you, there are also plenty of adventurous activities – climb the walls that surround the Old Town or Mount Srđ to catch a splendid view, or visit the Dubrovnik Summer Festival.

airBaltic's Dubrovnik route will begin operating on May 26, with one-way ticket prices starting from EUR 99.

2/ Charming Aalborg for your spring break

2/ Charming Aalborg for your spring break

While Aalborg is only the 4th largest city in Denmark, it is by far the most vibrant and interesting town apart from the capital. You can explore centuries of Danish culture in a city that has developed from a fortified trading post and fisherman's town into a classic manufacturing base and a modern centre of culture and education. Aalborg is a relatively small town for a city holiday, but it has plenty of offerings to keep you busy and entertained throughout your stay, regardless of whether you like to party, study architecture or simply fancy a nice time in a charming city full of activities and sightseeing attractions.

airBaltic will launch its Aalborg route on April 18. Flights will operate once a week, with ticket prices starting from EUR 69.



3/ Poprad, the gateway to the Tatras

We have just launched a new route between Riga and beautiful Poprad, Slovakia.

Located at the foot of the High Tatra (or Tatras) Mountains in the northern part of the country, Poprad is known for its picturesque historic centre and as a holiday resort. The Tatras, for their part, are a sort of mini-Alps that provide breath-taking scenery throughout the year, plus a whole lot of outdoor activities. Poprad is thus the perfect destination for a wonderful winter holiday with lots of skiing and snowboarding. However, if you are more of an indoor traveller or prefer water activities, then the Tatra Gallery and the AquaCity water park will also keep you occupied. In addition, the *Caffè Trieste*, located inside a bell tower dating from 1658, provides the best Italian coffee in town!

airBaltic operates one weekly return flight to Poprad on Saturdays, with one-way ticket prices starting from EUR 55. In addition, you can bring your ski equipment with you on flights to Poprad at no additional charge!

4/ Freeze that price on winter flights

You have found the perfect offer at airbaltic.com but are not yet sure of your friends' plans for that weekend? No worries, we have just the right proposition for you. *Freeze my price* lets you book your flight and postpone payment for up to 48 hours. A handy option for those who want a little more time to find a matching hotel deal, learn a bit more about their destinations or simply finalise their travel plans with friends and family.

To secure your price, pay only EUR 8.99 if using an *airBaltic Payment Card* or EUR 14.98 if using other means of payment. To pay for your flight within the 48-hour period, enter the *Manage my booking* section at airbaltic.com.

5/ The perfect gift for the holiday season

airBaltic has prepared something special – the airline's travel gift e-vouchers are the perfect present for fulfilling the travel dreams of your parents, children, friends and other loved ones. Gift e-vouchers are available on all *airBaltic* flights for only EUR 35 and through airbaltic.com for any other desired amount. *airBaltic* gift e-vouchers can be used to book flights together with additional services, and they can be spent as either the sole means of payment or as partial payment for a larger sum.



Purchase *airBaltic* gift e-vouchers through our onboard Sky Shop, at airbaltic.com or at the *airBaltic* ticket office at the Riga International Airport.



Text by **EGITA KRASTINA**
Photo by **LAURIS VIKSNE, F64**

Sparkling eyes

Gunita Vilmane has a charming smile and displays a positive attitude in everything that she does. In this interview she talks about her dream job, work experiences and wishes for the New Year.

Gunita Vilmane,
Human Resources (HR)
Business Partner for
the President's Office,
Commercial and Support
Functions

What is your career background and how did you end up in HR?

I have been spoiled and feel rewarded from my experience with the good companies and leaders that I have worked with. During my Bachelor's studies at the Riga Stradiņš University, I had a course in human resources that was led by Gunta Veismane. She was an inspiring lecturer and I quickly understood that this is my area! After graduating, I started to work

as an HR generalist at *ABB*, which is a global leader in power and automation technologies. I didn't have the relevant work experience when I applied, but as my manager later said, I had a high degree of motivation, a willingness to learn, a positive attitude and sparkling eyes. I have been working in HR for 12 years since then and I can confirm that these qualities are extremely important for hiring the right people. Currently I hold the role of HR business partner at *airBaltic* and look after 20 departments in the airline.

What exactly is an HR business partner?

The field of human resources has developed a lot over the years. Being very much a transactional function in the past, it now encompasses three important areas of expertise. Administrative expertise is still important. You have to do things in a qualitative, precise and timely manner. Operational expertise involves resourcing, succession planning and building a talent pipeline. It also deals with performance and compensation management, the coordination of training and development, taking care of the employer brand and other duties.

The third aspect is partnering expertise, which takes up most of the time for an HR business partner. This involves working closely with the managers to help them achieve their business objectives, building trust-based relationships with them, helping and supporting them in organisational design situations, coordinating change processes and regularly checking the "health of the organisation". That entails analysing what employees say and establishing what engages and motivates them.

Recently I read a saying that describes HR very precisely: if HR operations are the engine that keeps the car running smoothly, then HR business partners are the satellite navigation system that helps to guide the vehicle and determine its direction so that it reaches its destination along the best possible route.

You have lived and worked outside of Latvia. What did you do during your stay abroad?

While working at *ABB* in Latvia, I was offered an international assignment at the company's headquarters in Switzerland. I was part of a global HR team and worked in talent acquisition. I worked out global recruitment standards, rolled out an employer branding initiative and implemented a global recruitment system and career portal. At the same time, I was a certified assessor in student and graduate assessment centres and took part as an assessor

in a manager development program. During the assignment I travelled a lot and had the opportunity to see how talent acquisition works in a country where the average HR person hires one employee per month, while in China they hire an average of 26 per day. I noticed unique cultural differences. The Chinese practice direct diplomacy, while Americans have a pushy style. The Nordic countries are demanding, while people from the Middle East bear a heart-warming attitude. Sometimes, however, they might have a hidden agenda. It's amazing how people are different and at the same time similar all over the world.

Despite living in such a beautiful country and having a decent career opportunity, I missed my native Latvia and my family. After four years in Switzerland I returned to Riga and got the brilliant chance to join one of Latvia's top employers – *airBaltic* and its great HR team. I like the fact that the airline has high business standards, is innovative and open to change, is international and has many gifted leaders. My job here is very interesting and I would say that right now this is my dream job.

Germany has more than 40 local airlines, while the three Baltic countries together have 16. Is it possible to find the required specialists from only the Baltic States?

Recruitment is always a challenging area. Some positions are easy to fill, while others require a longer search. We try to figure out the most efficient recruitment strategy and select the right channels. *airBaltic* is tempting as a brand and that helps in the recruitment process. Here I have to say thanks to all *airBaltic* employees, who are ambassadors of our good name and reputation.

Being the leading airline in the Baltics, we look for specialists from abroad as well. With foreign experts we bring in fresh experiences as well as different perspectives and know-how. This strengthens our team. I also feel proud whenever our foreign colleagues say that they are positively surprised at how smart, professional and knowledgeable our people are. We really do have talented employees and managers and we have an inspiring CEO! With such a strong team, we will be an even more successful airline.

And now for a popular HR question. Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

I have to be careful in answering this question, as my colleagues from the HR community might read

something between the lines! Of course, I am joking and actually I appreciate your asking. A question like this reveals what people are thinking and what their values are. I see myself continuing to develop in the HR area. I would like to get a deeper knowledge of the aviation industry and its specifics, such as the environment of the pilots and cabin crew as well as the engineering and technician areas. At our department we work shoulder to shoulder and openly share all of our topics and challenges, for in order to be the best HR business partner for your employer you have to deep dive into the business. Unfortunately, this means that you rarely have the time to look into your neighbour's garden. However, the different departments of the airline always support each other when necessary. I would also like to develop my competence in different areas and industries and not just remain in my comfort zone.

How do you like to spend your free time?

Travelling is one of the most frequent free-time eaters for our family. Having tight working schedules, we enjoy weekend trips. I love the opera and ballet. I also enjoy cooking and often make nice dinners for my family and friends. My husband has a talent at making superb main courses, so in this regard there is no competition! I concentrate more on party decorations, starters and desserts. We often choose travel destinations where we can enjoy some special cuisine. We were excited last August to visit the French Riviera and Provence in France. We also like to choose travel destinations that are linked to an event. Recently we were in Paris for a Kylie Minogue concert, and soon after we visited some close friends in Luxembourg for a gourmet festival, where we met famous Latvian chefs who were actually judges at the event. I really felt proud to be Latvian! We also like to travel for sports such as downhill skiing, golf and swimming. Sunbathing is a particular pleasure!

What New Year's wishes would you like to convey to our passengers?

I wish everyone a prosperous new year in all regards. Let's be positive and let's not be shy in raising our profile. We are a strong and wise country! Last year Riga was a European Capital of Culture, while during the first half of this year Latvia will preside over the presidency of the European Union. Our country will be receiving a lot of attention. We should be proud of this and of ourselves. **BO**

Onboard menu

Business Class

airBaltic's Business Class menu offers superior and healthy meals that blend the tastes of different cuisines from all over the world. It was created by Andris Vasilonoks of LSG Sky Chefs, who uses fresh, seasonal ingredients and adds his own refined flavours to classical, quality dishes.

The new Business Class breakfast menu offers delicious and wholesome meals for a great start to the day, including omelette with herbs and baked salmon, duck rilette with marinated potatoes and Kalamata olives, and scrambled eggs with grilled chicken and vegetables.

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

Economy Class

Economy Class passengers can choose their onboard meal from the *airBaltic Café* menu. The winter selection includes a new delicious hot meal – grilled chicken fillet with broccoli-potato gratin, grilled zucchini and sweet-and-sour pineapple sauce. You can also choose from chicken and salmon sandwiches, lasagne, tasty tortilla, healthy porridge and a variety of snacks and drinks.



Chicken Schnitzel



Latvian-style Chicken



Pork Medallions

Heavenly meals on the pre-order menu

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

airBaltic's pre-order menu features

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

If you want an even more exclusive

dining experience, then choose from more than 70 dishes at our innovative pre-order website airbalticmeal.com. There you can create your own individual meal on a virtual tray up to 24 hours before your flight. Consider trying one of the most popular meals, such as Latvian-style chicken breasts, chicken schnitzel or pork medallions.

Join airBaltic loyalty program PINS



About the program

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

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

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

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

If you aren't a PINS program member yet

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



airBaltic PINS card



airBaltic PINS Executive card



airBaltic PINS VIP card



airBaltic PINS Young Pilot card



How to collect

Collect PINS for flying with airBaltic, staying in hotels, renting cars, shopping, eating out and much more. The program also offers collecting PINS at a wide range of well-known international online shops for travel, home, sports, beauty and more.

Collect with airBaltic:

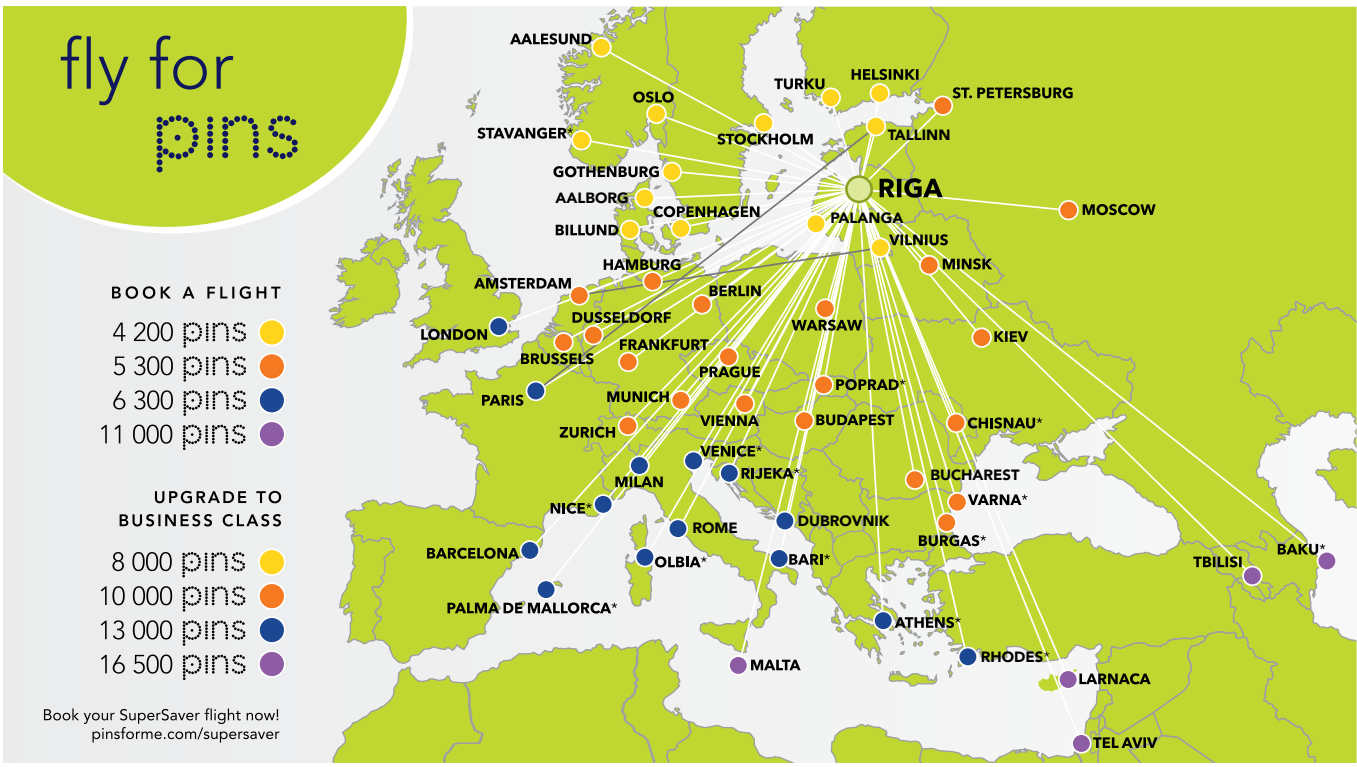
- 3 PINS for each EUR spent on a Business Class ticket
- 2 PINS for each EUR spent on an Economy Class ticket
- 1 PINS for each EUR spent on a Basic Class ticket

How to spend

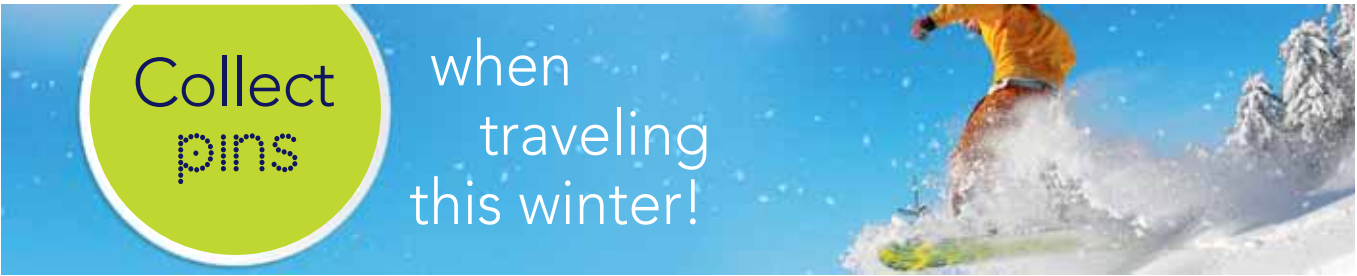
Spend PINS on airBaltic flights, gift cards, electronics or more than 2000 other products and experiences available online. When spending in “Online Rewards”, you can also use PINS in combination with money.

Spend on airBaltic:

- Exchange your PINS for flights from just 4 200 PINS.
- Upgrade your ticket to Business Class from just 8 000 PINS.



Prices are reflected for airBaltic economy class, one-way flight tickets. Airport taxes and fees are not included, seat availability is not confirmed, restricted and subject to change. Please read full terms and conditions at pinsforme.com
*Seasonal flight



Hotels	Radisson	park inn	HILTON HHONORS	FIRST	Kempinski
Car rentals	SIXT	Hertz	AVIS	Budget	Europcar
At Riga airport	FRIDAYS	APTIEKA	ato DUTY FREE	RIX	red cab
Online	HolidayCheck.com	PointsHound	Booking.com	Hotels.com	Expedia

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

Tips for collecting

Anna			The Johnsons			Robert		
		Collected pins			Collected pins			Collected pins
airBaltic	Economy class ticket	500	airBaltic	4 Basic class tickets	600	airBaltic	Business class ticket	1800
Hertz	Renting 1 car	500	Budget	Renting 1 car	500	SIXT	Renting 1 car	500
Radisson	Staying at the hotel	500	airBaltic	4 meals on board	100	WORLDHOTELS	Staying at the hotel	500
CHIC	Shopping	500	PointsHound	Booking 2 hotel stays	3000	ato	Shopping	50
HolidayCheck	Review about a hotel stay	150	HolidayCheck	2 reviews about hotel stays	300	The Economist	Yearly subscription	3500
pins 2 150			pins 4 500			pins 6 350		

GERMANY

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

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

Fly to Munich with airBaltic from **€85** ONE WAY

Riga – Munich					Munich – Riga				
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival		Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival	
BT 221	12-456-	07:25	09:00		BT 222	12-456-	09:35	13:05	
BT 223	1-3-5-7	17:30	18:45		BT 224	1-3-5-7	19:15	22:25	



ITALY

Courmayeur Founded in the 17th century as a spa town located at the very top of the Aosta Valley, Courmayeur is a charming place. Pretty buildings

Fly to Milan with airBaltic from **€49** ONE WAY

Riga – Milan					Milan – Riga				
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival		Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival	
BT 629	----5--	09:40	11:25		BT 630	----5--	12:30	16:10	
BT 629	----6-	12:55	14:40		BT 630	----6-	15:20	19:00	
BT 629	1-----	15:15	17:00		BT 630	1-----	17:55	21:35	

with slate roofs line the traffic-free cobbled streets of the old town. The little resort at the foot of the Mont Blanc chain offers outdoor activities, cultural

and entertainment events as well as shopping, relaxation, gastronomy and the opportunity to practice a number of sports all year long.

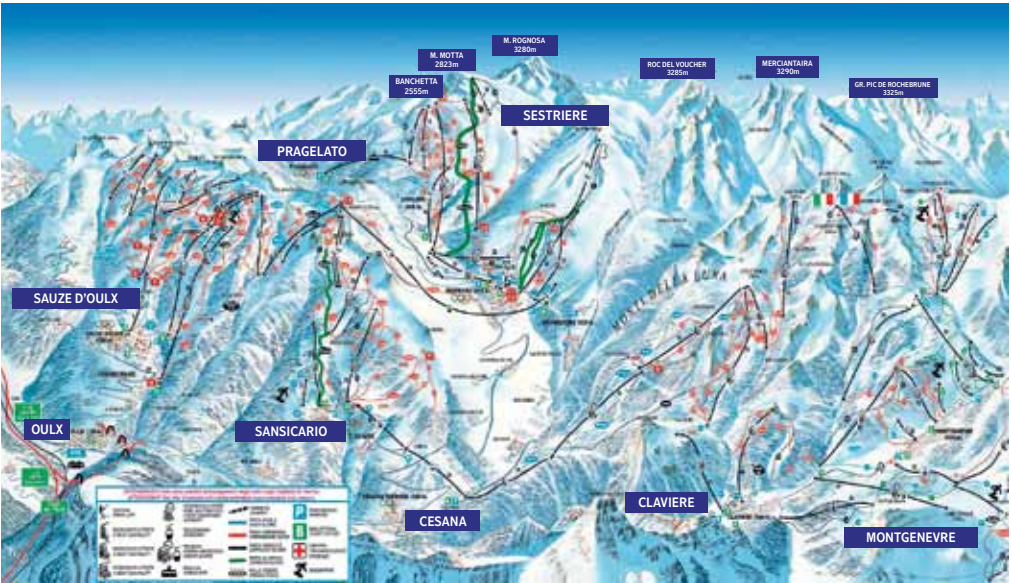


Resort altitude: 1224 m	Highest lift: 2624 m	Total piste length: 36 km	Black 4 Red 14 Blue 6 Green 3	Longest run: 10 km	Snow parks: 1	Ski lifts: 18	Lift pass prices: Day EUR 45 EUR 22.50 (children) Week (6 days) EUR 227 EUR 113.50 (children)	Resorts accepting lift pass: Alagna Valsesia, Breuil-Cervinia, Crévacol, Etroubles, Pila and Saint-Rhémy-en-Bosses	Season: Early December to mid-April
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Sestriere Sestriere is the highest ski resort in the extensive Via Lattea (Milky Way) linked ski area, boasting an impressive Alpine winter sports history as one of the world’s first purpose-built ski resorts. A good choice for beginners

and intermediates. Sestriere is also one of the few resorts where it is possible to ski at night on a floodlit run. During the summer months, it is a famous starting and arrival point in the *Tour de France* and the *Giro d'Italia* cycling races.

Notably, it was the scene of a definitive moment in cyclist Lance Armstrong’s now tarnished career. It regularly hosts FIS Alpine Ski World Cup events, and it was a main venue during the 2006 Winter Olympic Games.



Resort altitude: 2035 m	Highest lift: 2823 m	Total piste length: 200 km	Black 42 Red 118 Blue 54 Green 7	Longest run: 5 km	Snow parks: 1	Ski lifts: 92	Lift pass prices: Day EUR 36.00 EUR 5.00 (children) Week (6 days) EUR 190.00 EUR 30.00 (children)	Resorts accepting lift pass: Milky Way ski resorts of Clavière, Sansicario, Sauze d’Oulx and Montgenèvre	Season: November 29 – April 12
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Livigno Families and beginners can enjoy gentle slopes and fun areas suited for acquiring basic techniques and for learning by playing. Furthermore, Livigno

has a special tax status that dates back to Napoleonic times. There’s no VAT, which means that drinks, fuel and consumer goods are among the cheapest in Europe.

Apparently, there is even a Latvian-run hotel that serves Latvian cuisine.



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



Fly to Paris
with airBaltic
from **€69** ONE
WAY

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

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

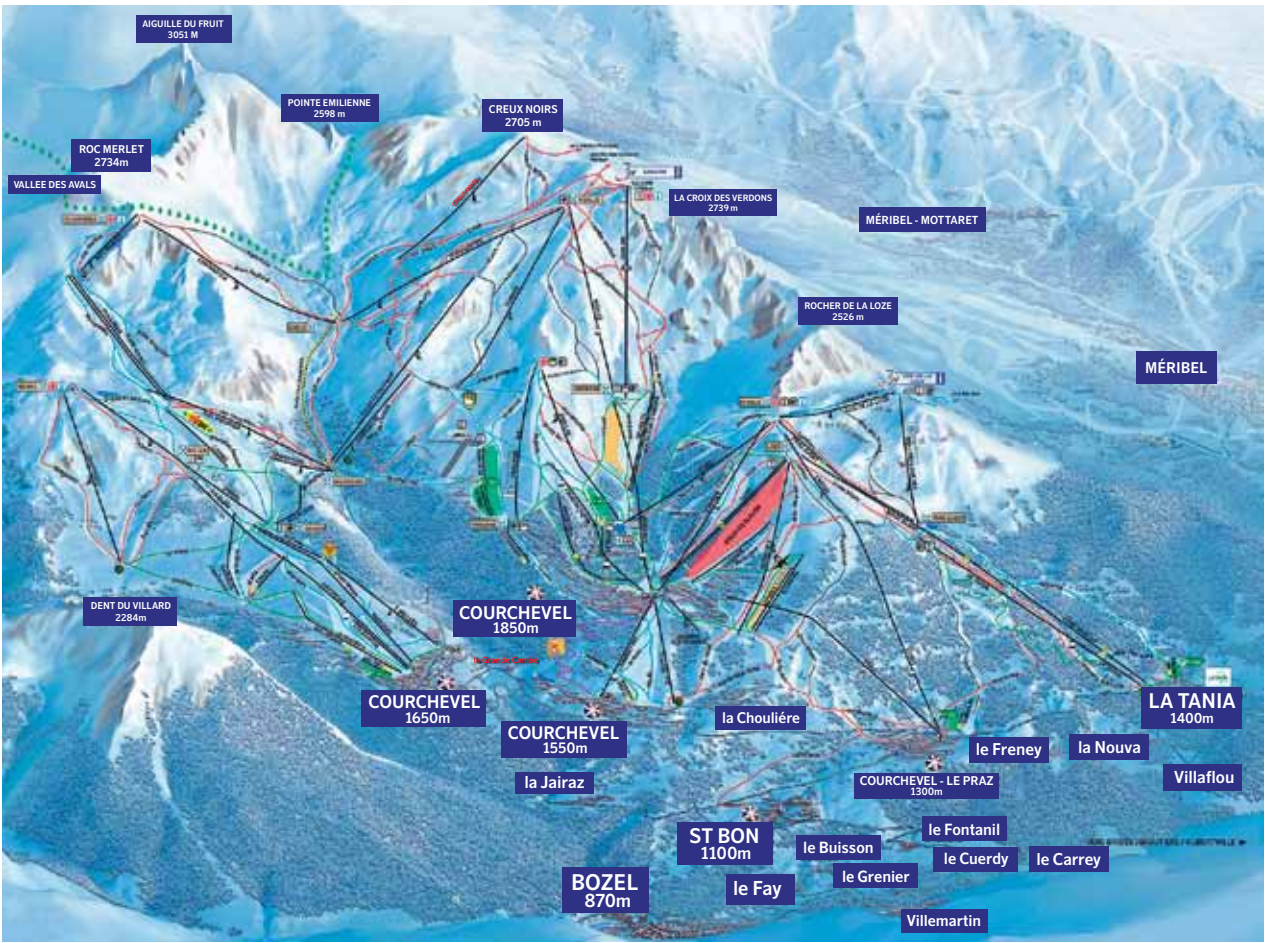
Tignes Compared to its neighbouring resorts, sport comes first here and you’re more likely to find visitors staying on the slopes as long as possible, rather than partying the night away. As for accommodation, Val Claret is the highest village at 2100 metres and has easy access to the

glacier. Together with Tignes-Le-Lac just down the road, it is the most convenient place to stay, with a large choice of hotels, restaurants and shops. Slightly lower lie the cheaper and less convenient apartments of Le Lavachet, which are linked to the lifts by ski bus.



Resort altitude: 2100 m
Highest lift: 3450 m
Total piste length: 300 km
Black 45 | Red 46 | Blue 61 | Green 22
Longest run: 10 km
Snow parks: 2
Ski lifts: 59
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 52.00 | EUR 41.50 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 260.00 | EUR 208.00 (children)

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



Meribel There are plenty of reasons to love Méribel aside from its chalet-style architecture, wooded surroundings and friendly, village atmosphere. The prime reason is its central position within France’s huge Trois Vallées ski area. The Olympic Centre built for

the 1992 Winter Olympics is also open daily, offering a variety of non-ski activities for the whole family. It’s no secret that avid skiers Prince William and Kate Middleton have also checked in for a family vacation at Trois Vallées!

Resort altitude: 1450 m
Highest lift: 3200 m
Total piste length: 600 km
Black 9 | Red 24 | Blue 34 | Green 10
Longest run: 5 km
Snow parks: 2
Total Lifts: 18
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 46.40 | EUR 37.30 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 226.40 | EUR 182.40 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Three

Valleys ski resorts of Courchevel, La Tania, Les Menuires, Saint Martin de Belleville and Val Thorens
Season: December 6 – April 17

Courchevel Considered the most glamorous and celebrity-filled ski resort in the world, Courchevel offers breathtaking views of Mont Blanc. If the first thing that you think about

when you hear ‘Courchevel’ is skiing, then the second thing should be gastronomy, as Courchevel boasts many Michelin-starred restaurants and is a gourmet ski destination.

Resort altitude: 1850 m
Highest lift: 3230 m
Total piste length: 600 km
Black 10 | Red 42 | Blue 40 | Green 27
Longest run: 7 km
Snow parks: 2
Total Lifts: 20
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 49.00 | EUR 39.20 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 240.00 | EUR 193.00 (children)

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

SWITZERLAND

Fly to Zurich with airBaltic from €75 ONE WAY

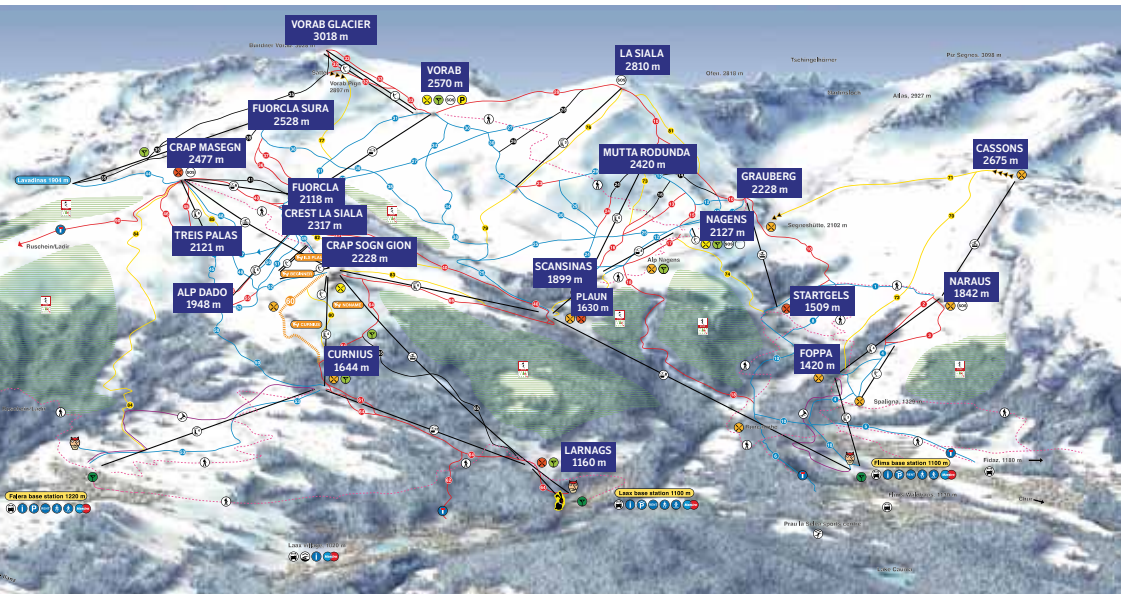
Riga – Zurich				
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival	
BT 641	12-4---	07:50	09:20	
BT 641	---5-7	16:55	18:25	

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

Flims Laax Falera There's something to satisfy just about everyone's wishes here,

with a wide selection of services to choose from, including mountainside restaurants,

places for renting the latest ski gear and accommodation.



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



Davos Davos prides itself on keeping good company. Alongside resorts such as Zermatt, St. Moritz, St. Anton and Kitzbühel, Davos is a member of *The Best of the Alps* association of 12 classic Alpine resorts. The

nearby resort of Klosters has long been a favourite haunt of Prince Charles and sometimes his sons as well. Hence, the main cable car that takes skiers to the top of Gotschnagratt is called the *Prince of Wales*.

Resort altitude: 1560 m
Highest lift: 3146 m
Total piste length: 320 km
Black 12 | Red 39 | Blue 31
Longest run: 12 km

Snow parks: 3
Ski lifts: 50
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 55.90 | EUR 22.20 (children)
Week (6 days) EUR 272.93 | EUR 109.34 (children)

Resorts accepting lift pass: Parsenn, Pisch, Jakobshorn, Rinerhorn, Madrisa and Gotschna
Season: November 14 - April 19

St. Moritz St. Moritz is Switzerland's most famous exclusive winter resort. There are plenty of designer stores to keep

posh ladies busy after lunch, while other visitors come to watch the annual polo, horse racing and cricket competitions on

the town's frozen lake. You might even run into Ivana Trump!



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

SLOVAKIA

Fly to Poprad with airBaltic from €55 ONE WAY

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

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

Jasna Low Tatras Jasna Low Tatras is one of the most popular skiing destinations in Slovakia, offering excellent slopes covered with man-made snow for five

months every year. Jasna Low Tatras was given five prestigious quality awards in the international Ski Area Test. The upcoming winter season will offer attractive new

products and innovations, such as a popular daily après-ski programme, night sledging, fresh track skiing, a Fun Zone, a snow park and others.



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

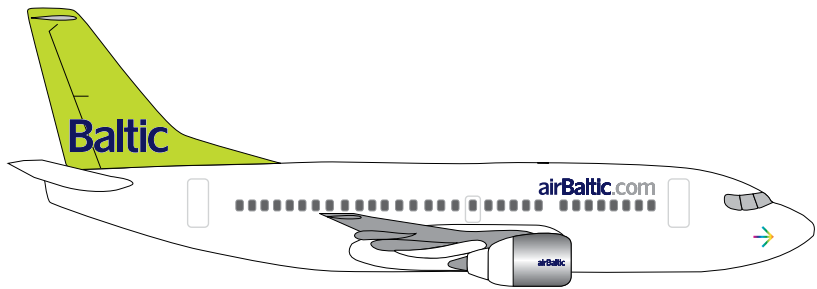
Your next hot destination – Larnaca!

Weekly flights from November till March



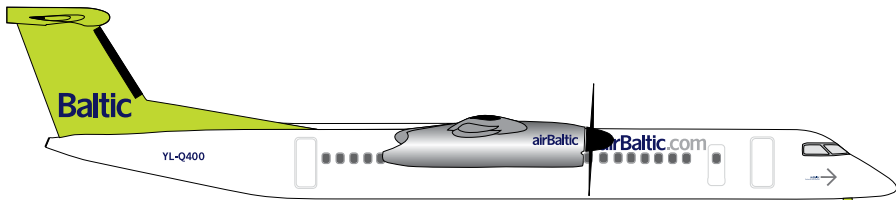
Boeing 737-300

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



Boeing 737-500

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



Q400 NextGen Bombardier

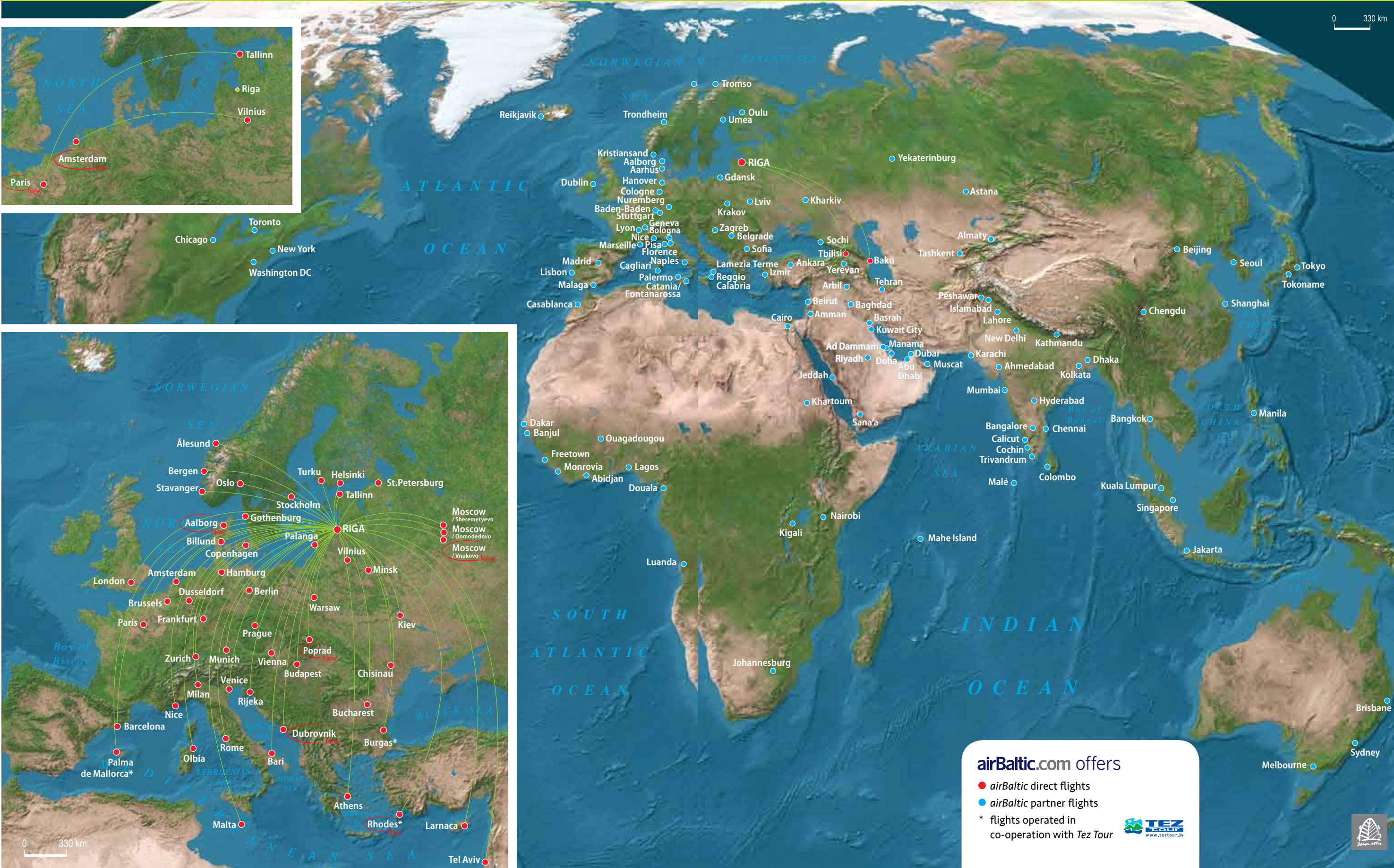
Number of seats	76
Max take-off weight	29.6 metric tons
Max payload	8.6 metric tons
Length	32.83 m
Wing span	28.42
Cruising speed	667 km/h
Commercial range	2084 km
Fuel consumption	1074 l/h
Engine	P&W 150A

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Flights from Riga					Flights to Riga				
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure Arrival
ALESUND					ALESUND				
BT 175	RIX	AES	-----5--	07:40 09:05	BT 176	AES	RIX	-----5--	10:15 13:30
BT 175	RIX	AES	-----7	13:20 14:45	BT 176	AES	RIX	-----7	15:15 18:30
AMSTERDAM					AMSTERDAM				
BT 617	RIX	AMS	1234567	07:40 09:05	BT 618	AMS	RIX	123-5--	10:20 13:35
BT 615	RIX	AMS	---4-67	12:45 14:10	BT 616	AMS	RIX	---4-67	14:55 18:10
BT 619	RIX	AMS	1-3-5--	16:45 18:10	BT 620	AMS	RIX	1-34567	18:55 22:10
AMSTERDAM flights from VILNIUS					AMSTERDAM flights to VILNIUS				
BT 609	VNO	AMS	---4-67	14:15 15:40	BT 610	AMS	VNO	---4-67	10:20 13:40
BARCELONA					BARCELONA				
BT 681	RIX	BCN	-----5--	09:30 12:15	BT 682	BCN	RIX	-----5--	12:55 17:35
BT 681	RIX	BCN	1-----	14:00 16:45	BT 682	BCN	RIX	1-----	17:45 22:25
BERLIN Tegel					BERLIN Tegel				
BT 211	RIX	TXL	123456-	09:20 10:15	BT 212	TXL	RIX	123456-	10:45 13:35
BT 213	RIX	TXL	12345-7	17:45 18:40	BT 214	TXL	RIX	12345-7	19:20 22:10
BILLUND					BILLUND				
BT 145	RIX	BLL	1-3-5-7	22:55 23:55	BT 146	BLL	RIX	12-4-6-	05:50 08:40
BRUSSELS					BRUSSELS				
BT 601	RIX	BRU	12345--	06:20 08:15	BT 602	BRU	RIX	12345--	08:55 12:40
BT 601	RIX	BRU	-----6-	09:40 11:35	BT 602	BRU	RIX	-----6-	12:05 15:50
BT 603	RIX	BRU	12345-7 Until 18 JAN	15:00 16:55	BT 604	BRU	RIX	12345-7	19:20 23:05
BT 603	RIX	BRU	12345-7 As 19 JAN	16:30 18:25					
BUCHAREST					BUCHAREST				
BT 503	RIX	OTP	1---5--	23:15 2:00+1	BT 504	OTP	RIX	-2---6-	05:50 08:40
BUDAPEST					BUDAPEST				
BT 491	RIX	BUD	1-3-5--	13:15 14:40	BT 492	BUD	RIX	1-3-5--	15:10 18:25
COPENHAGEN					COPENHAGEN				
BT 131	RIX	CPH	1234---	06:45 07:25	BT 134	CPH	RIX	1234---	08:05 10:40
BT 131	RIX	CPH	1234567	09:30 10:10	BT 132	CPH	RIX	1234567	10:45 13:20
BT 139	RIX	CPH	1234567	18:40 19:20	BT 140	CPH	RIX	1234567	19:50 22:25
DUSSELDORF					DUSSELDORF				
BT 235	RIX	DUS	1-3-5-7	12:50 14:30	BT 236	DUS	RIX	1-3-5-7	15:00 18:30
FRANKFURT					FRANKFURT				
BT 241	RIX	FRA	1-34567	12:45 14:30	BT 242	FRA	RIX	1-34567	15:05 18:40
HAMBURG					HAMBURG				
BT 251	RIX	HAM	-2-4---	07:50 08:55	BT 252	HAM	RIX	-2-4---	09:25 12:20
BT 253	RIX	HAM	--3-5-7	17:45 18:50	BT 254	HAM	RIX	--3-5-7	19:25 22:20
HELSINKI					HELSINKI				
BT 301	RIX	HEL	123456-	09:25 10:30	BT 326	HEL	RIX	123456-	06:00 07:00
BT 303	RIX	HEL	1234567	13:35 14:40	BT 302	HEL	RIX	1234567	11:00 12:00
BT 307	RIX	HEL	1234567	19:35 20:40	BT 306	HEL	RIX	1234567	15:15 16:15
BT 325	RIX	HEL	12345-7	22:55 23:59	BT 308	HEL	RIX	12345-7	21:20 22:20
KIEV Borispol					KIEV Borispol				
BT 400	RIX	KBP	123456-	09:20 11:10	BT 401	KBP	RIX	123456-	11:40 13:35
BT 404	RIX	KBP	12345-7	16:45 18:35	BT 405	KBP	RIX	12345-7	20:10 22:05
LARNACA					LARNACA				
BT 657	RIX	LCA	-----6-	14:20 18:10	BT 658	LCA	RIX	-----7	12:10 16:10
LONDON Gatwick					LONDON Gatwick				
BT 651	RIX	LGW	12-4-6-	09:30 10:20	BT 652	LGW	RIX	12-4-6-	11:10 15:55
BT 653	RIX	LGW	--3-5-7	15:20 16:10	BT 654	LGW	RIX	--3-5-7	16:50 21:35
MILAN Malpensa					MILAN Malpensa				
BT 629	RIX	MXP	-----5--	09:40 11:25	BT 630	MXP	RIX	-----5--	12:30 16:10
BT 629	RIX	MXP	-----6-	12:55 14:40	BT 630	MXP	RIX	-----6-	15:20 19:00
BT 629	RIX	MXP	1-----	15:15 17:00	BT 630	MXP	RIX	1-----	17:55 21:35
MINSK					MINSK				
BT 412	RIX	MSQ	1-3---7	13:35 15:45	BT 413	MSQ	RIX	1-3---7	16:25 16:35
MOSCOW Domodedovo					MOSCOW Domodedovo				
BT 418	RIX	DME	12345-- Until 15 JAN	09:45 12:50	BT 417	DME	RIX	123456-	05:35 06:45
BT 416	RIX	DME	12345-7	23:20 02:25+1	BT 419	DME	RIX	12345-- Until 15 JAN	13:35 14:45

Flights from Riga					Flights to Riga								
Flight No		From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No		From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
MOSCOW Sheremetyevo							MOSCOW Sheremetyevo						
BT 424	RIX	SVO	12345--		04:25	07:05	BT 425	SVO	RIX	12345--		07:45	08:35
BT 424	RIX	SVO	-----67		09:20	12:00	BT 425	SVO	RIX	-----67		12:45	13:35
BT 422	RIX	SVO	1234567		17:00	19:40	BT 423	SVO	RIX	1234567		20:40	21:30
MOSCOW Vnukovo							MOSCOW Vnukovo						
BT 414	RIX	VKO	12345--		12:55	15:40	BT 415	VKO	RIX	12345--		16:25	17:20
MUNICH							MUNICH						
BT 221	RIX	MUC	12-456-		07:25	09:00	BT 222	MUC	RIX	12-456-		09:35	13:05
BT 223	RIX	MUC	1-3-5-7		17:30	18:45	BT 224	MUC	RIX	1-3-5-7		19:15	22:25
OSLO							OSLO						
BT 151	RIX	OSL	123456-		09:15	10:10	BT 152	OSL	RIX	123456-		10:45	13:35
BT 153	RIX	OSL	12345-7		17:55	18:50	BT 154	OSL	RIX	12345-7		19:20	22:10
PALANGA							PALANGA						
BT 033	RIX	PLQ	1-3-5-7		23:05	23:50	BT 032	PLQ	RIX	12-4-6-		06:10	6:55
PARIS Charles de Gaulles							PARIS Charles de Gaulles						
BT 691	RIX	CDG	1234567		07:30	09:25	BT 692	CDG	RIX	123-5--		10:10	13:55
BT 697	RIX	CDG	---4-67		12:35	14:30	BT 698	CDG	RIX	---4-67		15:15	19:00
BT 693	RIX	CDG	123-5--		15:55	17:50	BT 694	CDG	RIX	1234567		18:35	22:20
PARIS flights from TALLIN							PARIS flights to TALLIN						
BT 689	TLL	CDG	---4-67		15:10	17:10	BT 690	CDG	TLL	---4-67		10:10	14:05
PRAGUE							PRAGUE						
BT 481	RIX	PRG	1--4-6-		07:30	08:40	BT 482	PRG	RIX	1--4-6-		09:15	12:20
BT 481	RIX	PRG	-----7		13:15	14:25	BT 482	PRG	RIX	-----7		14:55	18:00
BT 481	RIX	PRG	-----5--		17:45	18:55	BT 482	PRG	RIX	-----5--		19:25	22:30
ROME Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino							ROME Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino						
BT 631	RIX	FCO	----5--		09:20	11:25	BT 632	FCO	RIX	----5--		12:10	16:20
BT 633	RIX	FCO	1-----7		14:25	16:30	BT 634	FCO	RIX	1-----7		17:55	22:05
STOCKHOLM Arlanda							STOCKHOLM Arlanda						
BT 101	RIX	ARN	1234567		09:20	09:35	BT 104	ARN	RIX	123456-		06:25	8:40
BT 109	RIX	ARN	1234567		19:10	19:25	BT 102	ARN	RIX	1234567		10:05	12:20
BT 103	RIX	ARN	12345-7		22:55	23:10	BT 110	ARN	RIX	1234567		20:00	22:15
ST-PETERSBURG							ST-PETERSBURG						
BT 442	RIX	LED	123456-		09:30	11:50	BT 447	LED	RIX	12-456-		06:25	06:45
BT 444	RIX	LED	12345-7		19:00	21:20	BT 443	LED	RIX	123456-		12:30	12:50
BT 446	RIX	LED	1-345-7		23:15	01:35+1	BT 445	LED	RIX	12345-7		21:55	22:15
TALLINN							TALLINN						
BT 311	RIX	TLL	123456-		09:30	10:20	BT 362	TLL	RIX	123456-		06:10	07:00
BT 313	RIX	TLL	1234567		14:00	14:50	BT 312	TLL	RIX	1234567		11:10	12:00
BT 317	RIX	TLL	1234567		19:35	20:25	BT 314	TLL	RIX	1234567		15:25	16:15
BT 361	RIX	TLL	12345-7		22:55	23:45	BT 318	TLL	RIX	12345-7		21:25	22:15
TATRY / POPRAD							TATRY / POPRAD						
BT 485	RIX	TAT	-----6-		14:00	14:40	BT 486	TAT	RIX	-----6-		15:15	18:00
TURKU							TURKU						
BT 359	RIX	TKU	1-3-5-7		23:05	00:15+1	BT 360	TKU	RIX	12-4-6-		05:55	07:00
TBILISI							TBILISI						
BT 722	RIX	TBS	----5-7		23:10	04:40+1	BT 723	TBS	RIX	1----6-		05:15	06:50
TEL AVIV							TEL AVIV						
BT 771	RIX	TLV	-2---6-		14:40	19:00	BT 772	TLV	RIX	--3---7		11:40	16:10
VIENNA							VIENNA						
BT 431	RIX	VIE	1-3456-		07:35	08:35	BT 432	VIE	RIX	1-3456-		09:30	12:30
BT 433	RIX	VIE	12345-7		16:50	18:15	BT 434	VIE	RIX	12345-7		18:50	22:10
VILNIUS							VILNIUS						
BT 341	RIX	VNO	123456-		09:40	10:30	BT 350	VNO	RIX	123456-		06:10	07:00
BT 343	RIX	VNO	1234567		14:00	14:50	BT 342	VNO	RIX	1234567		11:10	12:00
BT 347	RIX	VNO	1234567		19:35	20:25	BT 344	VNO	RIX	1234567		15:25	16:15
BT 349	RIX	VNO	12345-7		22:55	23:45	BT 348	VNO	RIX	12345-7		21:30	22:20
WARSAW							WARSAW						
BT 463	RIX	WAW	12345-7		23:05	23:35	BT 464	WAW	RIX	123456-		06:15	08:40
ZURICH							ZURICH						
BT 641	RIX	ZRH	12-4---		07:50	09:20	BT 642	ZRH	RIX	12-4---		10:00	13:30
BT 641	RIX	ZRH	-----5-7		16:55	18:25	BT 642	ZRH	RIX	-----5-7		18:55	22:25



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Croatia	
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CYPRUS	
Larnaca	Larnaca International Airport Airport Ticket Office airBaltic / LGS Handling
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Dusseldorf	Airport Dusseldorf Terminal B Airport Ticket Office HAVAS Germany GmbH ☎ +49 211 421 6271

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Munich	Airport Munich Terminal 1 Airport Ticket Office Havas Germany GmbH
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HUNGARY	
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