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Latvia, Jurmala, Dzintaru Prospect
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Price EUR 839 000

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The first very visible change will come with the introduction of the *Bombardier CS300* in the second half of 2016. The all-new jet aircraft will gradually be phased into our fleet, delivering unmatched traveller comfort. The aircraft's increased operational efficiency will lead to more affordable flight tickets and new destinations, as the *CS300* can reach locations as distant as the Canary Islands and the United Arab Emirates from Riga.

Our anticipated fleet modernisation will result in a better choice of destinations and flight schedules to and from the Baltic Sea region,

Western Europe, the CIS and the Middle East. And while you enjoy *airBaltic's* winter offers, city breaks and skiing destinations, we are finalising preparations for your upcoming summer flights.

Our new summer highlight is Reykjavik, Iceland, with its stunning nature and wildlife. You will also see numerous improvements to our existing network around the Baltic Sea. *airBaltic* flights out of Stockholm Arlanda will operate up to five times per day; connections out of Tallinn, Vilnius and Riga will be further reinforced with major European hubs; and leisure travellers will have more attractive travel options to Mediterranean and Black Sea resorts.

Did you know that *Bombardier*, the manufacturer of our future fleet, recently flew its *CS100* aircraft non-stop from Riga, Latvia, to Montreal's Mirabel airport? The aircraft travelled 6,342 kilometres in 8 hours and 35 minutes.

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Yours,
Martin Alexander Gauss



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A week in London

It was a perfect hippie “dig”. Located on Notting Hill’s Portobello Road Market in London, it had everything: a funky dining area with large, overhanging plant leaves, several alcoves and two different bars, all conveying a simple and slightly worn look. The pub-cum-B&B is famous for fresh oysters, nightly crowds and simple breakfasts with good, strong coffee.

We were fortunate to secure the most desirable flat for a week. Its tiny spaces occupied the top two floors. A diminutive “kitchen” alcove stood by the first-floor entry hall, where there was barely enough room for shoes, overcoats and our two carry-ons. Steep, narrow stairs led up to a room with a double bed and a dresser. The bathroom was so tiny that you had to take a shower on your knees in the tub. Yet the place was spotlessly clean, with soaps and gels worthy of a *Marriott* without the usual big hotel cleaning smell.

The pièce de résistance was our private rooftop garden, with potted plants that included flowers planted in a white toilet. The garden provided a fine view of the surroundings, including a nearby church tower whose lit up, faded clock face was barely visible at night, thus adding a bit of old London mystery.



*In London,
late October 2015*

And boy, was the city crowded!

And boy, was the city crowded! In many places it was as packed as the Tube during rush hour. While Leicester Square had been freed of its pre-Olympic construction work, a confusion of vertical scaffolding remained on the western side, where we immediately lost our way. The square’s most important feature, a theatre ticket sales booth, was functional again and we secured excellent tickets to two highly acclaimed new plays.

Oresteia was an adaptation of three ancient Greek plays with an Orwellian ending that lingers powerfully in memory. The intermissions were strictly regulated time intervals, as with Richard Wagner’s opera *Parsifal*. The other play was the brilliantly titled *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, an unforgettable avant-garde work about a lad with behavioural difficulties. Not only was the acting marvellous, the entire stage was a geometric abstraction that mirrored in lights the interior of the affected individual’s brain whenever he became agitated. Near the end of the play that agitation, shown in light patterns, metamorphosed into the frenetic agitation of the entire city of London, as manifested in conflated linear patterns of nighttime traffic and Tube trains.

Having worked in London, I had favourite friends and places to visit. One was the noble statue of Edith Cavell at St. Martin’s Place opposite the Portrait Gallery. A British nurse shot in German-occupied Belgium during the First World War for helping Allied servicemen escape, she had treated soldiers regardless of nationality. Sadly, my usual late-evening conversations with Admiral Horatio Nelson could not take place, as Trafalgar Square was crowded with gigantic plastic creations for the World Rugby Championship. Another time, certainly. **BO**



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SPOTLIGHT ON WINTER

Five things that you should do in Latvia in January

1/ Visit some art galleries and find a painting that you like with a winter scene. Our favourite is *Winter (Ziema)* by Dace Lielā (2009, acrylic on canvas).
2/ Revive your cross-country skiing skills.

3/ Try a venison steak in red wine sauce.
4/ Attend a trendy aerial yoga session.
5/ Listen to a recording of the Vienna Philharmonic's *New Year's Concert*, which was conducted this year by famous Latvian maestro Mariss Jansons.

ON THIS MONTH'S MENU

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



THE TREND:

Jewellery Jewellery pieces by the Latvian *VERBA* brand are invariably refined and airy, and the company's *Splendor* winter collection is no exception. Conveying northern elegance and purity of form, these items are an excellent choice for women who know their own worth and who radiate tender sensuality.
① verba.lv

Food When the winter choice of fresh fruits and veggies narrows down to slim pickings, try having some fresh micro-greens around. They are full of antioxidants, enzymes and vitamins and can easily be grown at home. Those who lack a green thumb can always buy their veggies through local farmsteads such as *absolutsd.lv*.



Home Update your home with the latest trends, just as famous German carpet designer Jan Kath has done by drawing inspiration from iconic 21st-century abstract painters for his *Artwork* collection. These hand-knotted rugs show varying pile heights, being woven and layered to give the impression of brushed oil on canvas. Available in Riga at the *Krassky* interior showroom.
① krassky.lv



PLAYS OF LIGHT

Lately, interior designers have been placing increasing emphasis on simple adjustments in lighting to generate changes in home atmospheres. With the help of light bulbs and lampshades, for example, one can make the tone of a wall look either warmer or cooler. In your quest for new lighting, don't restrict your search to stores that sell interior items. See what kind of lamps the best restaurants use, and ask yourself why. Restaurateurs want their clients to feel good and to spend a lot of time in their establishments. The popular *MUUSU* restaurant in Riga is one example of a public space where masterful plays of light can be seen.

Text by **ZANE NIKODEMUSA** and **ROGER NORUM**
Photos by **LAURIS AIZUPIETIS** (F64) and publicity

READING LIST



Megan Mayhew Bergman. *Almost Famous Women*

In fictionalised accounts of real women who lived on the edges of society and whom history has largely forgotten, this book champions the underdog. Each story is based on a woman who attained some degree of celebrity, whether from racing speed boats, being a musician in a swing band, living as a show business conjoined twin, or being Lord Byron's illegitimate daughter. Disturbing and at times tragic.
EUR 24.30, ① scribnerbooks.com

Casey Gray. *Discount: A Novel*

Finally, someone has set a novel in a classic American superstore. The story is played out near the Mexican-American border in satire and ambition, with all the backstories and behind-the-scenes that you'd ever want. Gray offers a startlingly humane and contemporary portrait of life on the suburban fringe. You'll never look at corporate or suburban life the same way again.
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DISCERNIBLE MOTION (TVERAMĀ KUSTĪBA) SOLO EXHIBITION BY ARTIST PĒTERIS SIDARS
Arsenāls exhibition hall of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga
January 8 - March 13



Pēteris Sidars. Self-portrait. 2010. Oil on cardboard

Latvian textile artist Pēteris Sidars (b. 1948) has been widely admired for his talent and daring. He uses unconventional techniques to work with unusual materials, while asking pointed questions about the purpose of art and the importance of experience. His

latest solo exhibition is a significant event on Riga's cultural scene, surprising viewers with its poetic temperament and philosophical depth.

① Inmm.lv
Torņa iela 1

Text by **ZANE NIKODEMUSA**,
DOVYDAS KIAULEIKIS and **LIINA KARO**
Publicity photos

GRAND CONCERT OF LATVIAN SYMPHONY MUSIC

Great Guild Hall, Riga
January 23

A unique opportunity to see some of Latvia's best-known classical music pieces being performed by the country's most illustrious orchestras, namely the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra and the orchestra and choir of the Latvian National Opera and Ballet. The orchestras will be joined by various renowned soloists, including local talents Margarita Vilsone, Mihail Chulpaev and Krišjānis Norvelis.

Tickets at bilesuparadize.lv
Amatu iela 6



EXHIBITION *THE STORIES OF VILNIUS CINEMAS*

National Art Gallery, Vilnius



Helios cinema. Vilnius, 1956. Image by V. Peršinas. Property of S. Žalneravičiūtė

Until January 31

This exhibition presents the history of Vilnius' cinemas, from the first public film screenings in the late 19th century to the present day. Regardless of whether you are visiting Vilnius for the first time or are a local, you will get a glimpse of the Lithuanian capital's past

from a different perspective. More than just physical buildings, cinema theatres are treated in this exhibition as cultural institutions with changing roles in different historical periods.

① ndg.lt
Tickets at the door
Konstitucijos prospektas 22

ESTONIAN MUSIC AWARDS 2016

Nordea Concert Hall, Tallinn
January 28

Estonia's best musicians and bands will receive awards for their latest year of hard work at the Nordea Concert Hall. The eventful awards ceremony brings the most exciting acts on stage with thrilling performances created especially for that night. The award categories include best male and female acts, best band, best song, best album and many others. If you are interested in learning more about the Estonian music scene, then this is the perfect event for meeting the right people and discovering new artists.

Tickets at piletilevi.ee
Estonia puistee 9



Curly String won many awards last year at the Estonian Music Awards



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— Сергей Рахманинов

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Text by **LIENE PĀLĒNA**
Photos by **ČIRTS OZOLIŅŠ**, F64



World of puppets

Possibly the most wondrous place in the centre of Riga

It is not known how many performances have taken place at the legendary Latvian Puppet Theatre, which has been operating without interruption for more than 70 years. However, the number of puppets that have entertained several generations of children extends into the thousands. Most of these puppets are in storage, while others are on display at the puppet museum on the second floor of the building.

Among the museum's oldest puppets are a few that were made in the 1940s by Ivan Rudenkov (1887-1950), the founder of the first professional puppet theatre in Latvia. Also on view are exemplars created by world-famous director and artist Arnold Burov (1915-2006), who is considered to be the father of Latvian puppet movies. He is the author of the first Latvian animation film and went on to create more than 40 others, shaping the world view of millions of children all across the world.

Burov's contemporaries recall that the master was very demanding and scrupulous in his work, explaining the most detailed thoughts and feelings of every puppet character before the filming of each following movie frame. As a result, the puppet films that Burov directed leave a refined and poetic impression.

The theatre's storage warehouses are a real puppet lover's paradise. Here one will find many puppets that have played supporting roles in previous productions and that haven't seen the light of day for many years, as well as the main characters of popular children's plays. One of these is Pif the dog from *The Adventures of Pif*, which has been among the theatre's most famous and best-loved productions and which has been on the puppet theatre's repertoire since 1984. Incidentally, the play can be seen again this month. Not surprisingly, more than one colourful and slightly worn version of Pif can be found in the theatre's repositories.

Arnold Burov can also be credited with moving the puppet theatre to its current premises on Krišjāņa Barona iela in downtown Riga, not long after the theatre put on its first performance in 1944. In fact, the Latvian Puppet Theatre has been located in the former *Radio Modern* movie house for the past 70 years. The old cinema hall is still in use, but in the place of a movie screen stands the now legendary stage, on which more than 600 puppet performances are held in both Latvian and Russian each year. **BO**

① ielluteatris.lv

TOP 3 things to do at the Latvian Puppet Theatre

Find your favourite childhood hero in the theatre's repertory and see a performance about him or her.

Try to guess which puppet is the heaviest in the museum. It weighs more than 14 kilograms!

In viewing the puppets on display at the museum, take note that each one of them has been carefully made by hand, reflecting the personality of its creator.

The author wishes to thank Aldis Linē of the Latvian Puppet Theatre for his assistance in the writing of this article.



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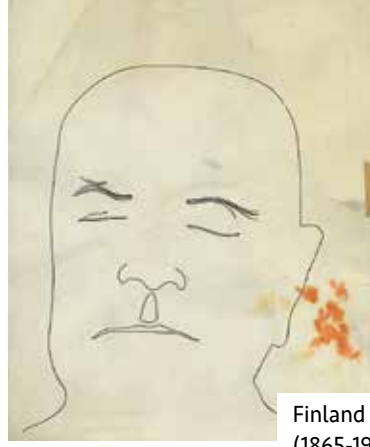
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Text by **UNA MEISTERE,**
anothertravelguide.com
Publicity photos

Mīkēlis Fišers, Officers Ball Together with Extraterrestrials at the Vaulted Hall of Neu-Schwabenland in Honour of Osama Bin Laden's Elimination, 2011.



◀ Jean Sibelius by Andy Warhol (c. 1953), Galerie Daniel Blau, Munich. Drawing based on Yousuf Karsh's now iconic photograph from 1949. Courtesy: Daniel Blau Munich/London. Andy Warhol Artwork © 2014 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, source: Life, Aug. 7, 1950, p. 79 or April 16, 1951, p. 168, photo of Jan Sibelius by Yousuf Karsh © Yousuf Karsh, Courtesy: LIFE Magazine © Time, Inc.

Finland marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), the country's most famous composer, on December 8 and celebrations are continuing this year. Accordingly, the National Museum of Finland is hosting the exhibition **Sibelius. One Must Live Every Note** (Mannerheimintie 34; kansallismuseo.fi) until March 13. For the first time, some of the composer's original musical manuscripts are being shown, along with a portrait of Sibelius painted by Andy Warhol and close to 130 other artefacts.

Sibelius was known to indulge excessively in wining and dining, consuming prodigious amounts of fine foods and alcohol, and smoking tobacco on a daily basis. He also liked to dress elegantly, in accordance with the status that he felt he deserved as an accomplished composer. However, his expensive tastes surpassed his ability to sustain them, and his family ran into considerable debt.

The composer is said to have required absolute silence during the creative process, usually composing his music at his work desk. Only once an oeuvre was nearly complete would he play the piece on the piano to hear what it sounded like. Sibelius drew a great deal of inspiration from the Finnish landscape and from nature as well as from Finnish mythology and the *Kalevala*, Finland's national epic.

Later this month, one of Latvia's best-known contemporary artists, Mīkēlis Fišers, will hold his first solo exhibition in Finland. Fišers received Latvia's highest arts award, the Purvītis Prize, in 2015. His Helsinki exhibition of about 50 paintings and installations is titled **Conspiracy Landscapes** and will be shown from January 22 to February 6 at the Valssaamo exhibition hall, which is located in a former cable factory (Kaapelitehdas, Tallberginkatu 1; kaapelitehdas.fi).

Fišers' most recent works continue to reflect his interest in esoteric themes and conspiracy theories about technologically advanced extra-terrestrials that allegedly visited the Earth in the past. Some of the works on display were made during the three months in 2015 that Fišers spent in Peru and Bolivia – at "places of power" or "conspiracy landscapes" that the aforementioned aliens are said to have frequented.

Helsinki's hotel scene, for its part, has been recently complemented by an extravagant newcomer, the **Hotel Lilla Roberts** (Lilla Robertsgatan 1-3; lillaroberts.com). It can be found in an early 20th-century building that once served as the head office for the city's energy works and then as a police station. The hotel is located in the popular design district, and there is no shortage of impressive design objects in the interior as well. The lobby, for example, is adorned with *Moooi* lamps designed by Marcel Wanders as well as life-sized horses and other attractive elements. Painted in warm and subdued tones, the 130 guest rooms have been decorated with textiles that display modern interpretations of traditional Finnish motifs.

Helsinki

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Hotel Lilla Roberts



Photo by Kati Kosanen



I.61 JEWELRY AGENCY





Photo by Agostino Osio

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Having recklessly embraced the follies of globalisation, the fashion industry is now waking up from its hangover and reluctantly revising its values. In that sense, the exhibition titled **The New Vocabulary of Italian Fashion** at the Triennale Design Museum in Milan (Viale Emilio Alemagna 6; triennale.org; until March 6) couldn't have come at a more appropriate time. The exhibition showcases the history of more than 100 Italian-based designers and brands since 1998, the year that *Google* and *iMac* came onto the scene and the year that preceded the infamous collapse of *Lehman Brothers* and other investment banks by precisely one decade. The exhibition is arranged thematically in eight different rooms, each reflecting a core "value" of the words *Made in Italy*: Archetype, Construction, Detail, Laboratory, Material, Ornament, Surface and Uniform. Aside from completed clothes and accessories, one can also see fashion items at various stages of their production process, providing an anatomical view of the fashion industry in a literal sense.

Another ode to the eternally inspiring charm and beauty of Italy can be seen at the Palazzo della Ragione Fotografia, which is hosting the exhibition **Henri Cartier-Bresson and Others. Great Photographers and Italy** (Piazza dei Mercanti; palazzodellaragionefotografia.it) until February 7. Here, visitors will discover how 35 world-famous photographers – including Robert Capa, David Seymour, Helmut Newton, Paul Strand, Thomas Struth and Nobuyoshi Araki – have expressed their love of Italy through captivating pictures of people, historical events and landscapes over an 80-year period.

A flower shop, a cocktail bar and a café – all under one roof, and all belonging to extravagant jazz singer and florist Rosalba Piccini, who happens to be a fiery redhead. It is hard to imagine a more intriguing combination for a small Italian business. Not surprisingly, **Potafiori** (Via Salasco 17; potafiori.com) has enjoyed a dedicated following of regular customers since its very opening. Small dining tables stand among flower pots and floral arrangements, the fragrance of fresh blossoms permeates the air, jazz music plays in the background, and occasionally someone spontaneously starts to play the piano, adding a light tone of carefree romanticism to the relaxed atmosphere, which contrasts markedly with the daily rush outside on the streets of this modern, 21st-century metropolis.



David "Chim" Seymour, Bernard Berenson observing the statue of Paolina Borghese by Antonio Canova at the Galleria Borghese in Rome. Rome, 1955



Potafiori



Photo by Dodo



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Apple Store



Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp



▲ Daniel Buren souvenir photo, *From One Arch to the Others (D'une arche aux autres)*, onsite installation, Gardens of the Sacred Heart (Jardins du Sacré-Coeur), Casablanca, April 2015. Detail © DB-ADAGP Paris

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RIGA and VILNIUS

Fans of the *Apple* company can now visit the first specialised **Apple Store** in Belgium (Avenue de la Toison d'Or 26-28). Located in a sparkling new glass-walled building designed by *Foster + Partners*, the store is a veritable epicentre of futuristic gadgets, with potted trees growing inside its ultramodern setting.

Those who seek food for the soul and wish to contemplate spiritual matters might consider hopping onto a train and taking the half-hour trip to Antwerp. Since last November, the city's main house of worship – the Cathedral of Our Lady (Groenplaats 21) – has been the permanent home of **The Man Who Bears the Cross**, a bronze sculpture by renowned Flemish artist Jan Fabre. Bearing a striking resemblance to Fabre himself, the man in the sculpture can be seen balancing a massive cross on the palm of his right hand.

"Do we believe in God, or don't we? The cross on his arm is a symbol of that question," says Fabre of the sculpture, which is the first contemporary artwork to be displayed within the cathedral. As pastor Bart Paepen explained in a public statement, in gaining ownership of the sculpture, the cathedral is continuing the traditional cooperation between art and the Church, as art "challenges one to believe".

The **A Fresco** exhibition by legendary French artist **Daniel Buren** (b. 1938) at the Centre for Fine Arts (Rue Ravenstein [Ravensteinstraat] 23; February 19 - May 22; bozar.be) promises to be one of the most intriguing cultural events of the year in the Belgian capital. Buren is best known for his compositions with regular, contrasting 8.7-centimetre wide coloured stripes, which are inspired by similarly striped cloth patterns that were once widely sold in France. It was precisely the use of stripes and their integration into cityscapes that made Buren famous during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the artist continues to create urban installations to this day.

One of Buren's most popular outdoor works, *Les Deux Plateaux*, consists of black-and-white striped columns in the inner courtyard of the Palais Royal in Paris. In fact, historical architectural sites are among the artist's favourite "canvases", which Buren transforms into colourful mirage-like scenes through relatively simple forms of expression. The Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Picasso Museum in Paris are but two of the many buildings that Buren has used as backdrops for his art.

As a consequence of making his mostly temporary installations at specific sites, it is impossible for Buren to organise retrospectives of his works, of which 80 percent no longer exist. Consequently, the Centre for Fine Arts plans to get around this hurdle by showing a film about the man and his work on multiple screens, thus tracing Buren's career from the 1960s to the present. In addition, Buren will create a special installation in the Horta Hall of the Centre for Fine Arts, placing his own art alongside the works of more than 70 past and present-day artists who have influenced him, including Paul Cézanne, Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Sol LeWitt and Pierre Huyghe. **BO**

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Text by **AGRA LIEGE**
Publicity photo

Artistic safety curtain

Each season, the safety curtain of the Vienna State Opera's main stage is transformed into a temporary exhibition space for contemporary art.

Since 1998, world-famous artists have been displaying large-format images (176 square metres) that are affixed onto the safety curtain with magnets over the period of one opera season.

The decorated safety curtain can be seen before the start of the opera, during the intermission and at the end of the performance. The artworks have helped to revitalise and modernise the opera house, which is one of the most active in Europe.

The first oeuvre to launch the *Safety Curtain* project was created by American artist Kara Walker, who is best known for black-and-white silhouette works that explore racial identity, gender, violence and sexuality. In stark contrast to the Neo-Renaissance-style architecture of the opera house, which was completed in 1869, the safety curtain has been buzzing with expressiveness and provocative ideas that replace each other each season, while retaining the constant message that the only thing which is permanent is change.

Walker has been followed by such established artists as Rosemarie Trockel, Cy Twombly, Maria Lassnig, Richard Hamilton, Tacita Dean, Cerith Wyn Evans and many more.

These monumental works thread the path between tradition and innovation, giving people

the chance to interact with contemporary art in a place where they might not be expecting it.

The safety curtain for the current 2015/2016 season has been decorated by French artist Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. Titled *Helen&Gordon*, Gonzalez-Foerster's work is a photographic recreation of the famous portrait of another artist, abstract expressionist Helen Frankenthaler, by *Life* magazine photographer Gordon Parks in 1957. In this piece, Gonzalez-Foerster assumes the role of Frankenthaler, which is not the first time that she has impersonated real or fictional characters in her works:

"I enter these characters like rooms to explore their relation to art from the inside," she says.

The *Safety Curtain* exhibition series is being implemented for the 18th time by *Museum in Progress*, a Vienna-based private art association, in collaboration with the Vienna State Opera and the Bundestheater-Holding. Ring the curtain down! **BO**

WHAT SHOULD YOU SEE?

The Vienna State Opera will be showing all parts of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung) on January 10, 13, 17 and 24. German composer Richard Wagner's cycle of four epic operas is regarded as one of the most important milestones in the history of classical music. Don't miss it!

① wiener-staatsoper.at

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Holidays in the sun

Text by **AGRA LIEĢE**
Photo by *Alamy*

If you are looking for a destination with comfortable temperatures above 20°C, plenty of sunshine for your sun-deprived body and wondrous cultural and architectural gems, then look no further than the diverse and vibrant country of Israel.

Since part of the charm of a sun-filled holiday is that you don't have to rush around like your heels are on fire, a shortlist of must-sees in Tel Aviv and Acre, a historic port-city, might come in handy.

When planning your trip to Tel Aviv, think sun and beach, and book your hotel accordingly. This means that you should not have to take more than a few steps to reach your daily beach chair by the warm sea. The *Brown Beach House Hotel* in Tel Aviv fits this requirement perfectly and offers the ultimate boutique hotel experience.

However, if you want to be close to Tel Aviv's famous nightlife, then *The Norman* hotel in the heart of the city will suit you perfectly. Not far away along Rothschild Boulevard stands the White City, an impressive collection of over 4,000 buildings built in the Bauhaus, or International, style and providing for a truly magnificent sight.

After spending a day on the beach, one can start the evening by exploring *Sarona*, Tel Aviv's newest shopping and entertainment compound. This open-air centre allows one to be embraced by a warm and soft breeze and feel the closeness of nature, while

shopping in a buzzing and charming environment filled with like-minded people. As a special dinner treat, try out some remarkable Israeli cuisine at the *Abraxas North* restaurant on Lilienblum Street, where chef Eyal Shani is king.

Only an hour-and-a-half long train ride north of Tel Aviv is Acre (locally known as Akko), another amazing beach holiday destination in the sun-filled country. This ancient city is small and everything lies within walking distance. A stay in Acre calls for another easy-access-to-heaven dwelling spot, and the *Efendi Hotel* offers just that. This amazing boutique hotel is composed of two Efendi houses that once formed a palace and that still reflect its past splendour. The hotel provides unforgettable rooftop sunset views, not to mention the desirable matter-of-seconds access to pristine water and a golden, sandy beach.

Acre also offers a wide range of shopping and dining opportunities. Try the *Uri Buri* restaurant by the historic port for the finest fish and seafood available. The busier *Tachana* compound showcases the work of many young and talented Israeli designers, while small and hidden gem-filled boutiques line Shabazi Street. The one site outside the old city worth visiting on a slightly more active day (if you can peel yourself away from your beach chair) is the Baha'i shrine. You can take a private cab there and see the beautiful nearby gardens as well. **BO**



Somma
1867

furniture
light
accessories



Text by **DACE VAIVARA**
Publicity photos and courtesy
of VisitOSLO.com

OSLO

knitwear traditions

The

wardrobe of Norwegians during the winter season is unimaginable without warm and patterned knitwear, which has been an important facet of Norway's cultural identity for ages. Indeed, traditional Scandinavian knitting patterns continue to be as popular as ever in the country.

The *Marius* knitted jumper is one of the most famous Norwegian clothing items. Created in the 1950s by Unn Søiland, it is named after Marius Eriksen, a Norwegian war hero, pilot, skiing star and later actor. The jumper's red, white and blue geometrical pattern is in the colours of the Norwegian flag and is a modern interpretation of the traditional *Setesdal* pattern. Popularly known as the *Marius* pattern, it has become the best-known Norwegian knitting configuration, both within Norway itself and abroad. The small v-shaped ornaments of the original

Setesdal pattern are known as a *lusemønster* (lice pattern), while the crosses were thought to protect the wearer from evil spirits.

One of the country's best-known and successful knitwear manufacturers is *Dale of Norway*, which produces modern interpretations of traditional Norwegian knitting patterns. Each region of Norway has its own type of traditional clothing, known as *bunad*. Aside from reinterpreting the popular *Setesdal* pattern, *Dale of Norway* has also created designer knitwear inspired by clothing from the Trondelag region of the country and from the wonderful architecture and charming old wooden houses of Trondheim, the erstwhile Viking-era Norwegian capital. **BO**

SHOPPING IN OSLO

Dale of Norway Concept Store

Founded in 1879 by Peter Jebsen, *Dale of Norway* is known for the highest-quality knitwear in traditional and contemporary Norwegian patterns. The company has made skiwear for the Norwegian national winter Olympic ski team since 1956. This store offers typical Norwegian-style unisex jumpers or sweaters, hats, scarves and gloves knitted from 100% wool.

Karl Johansgate 45
① daleofnorway.com

Oleana

Those who are fond of feminine and romantic-style clothing will appreciate the colourful knitted womenswear by *Oleana*. Founded in 1992 by Norwegian designer Solveig Hisdal, the company combines traditional

Norwegian ornaments with richly coloured flower patterns. Along with knitted clothes, scarves and woollen blankets by *Oleana*, the store also offers elegant accessories such as *Tyrihans* silk scarves and *Huldresølv* silver jewellery.

Stortingsgata 8
① oleana.no

T-Michael & Norwegian Rain

This is the flagship store in Oslo of the famous Bergen-based raincoat brand *Norwegian Rain*, which was founded by creative director Alexander Halle and tailor/designer T-Michael. The sculptural minimalist and Japanese lifestyle-inspired hi-tech models are called the coolest raincoats on the planet and are available in a wide choice of styles, including winter versions with warm linings. Men can also choose from *T-Michael* woollen suits, shirts, leather shoes and bags.

Kirgegata 20
① norwegianrain.com

Oslo

Halsen

Women's sweater
by *Dale of Norway*,
EUR 259.90,
daleofnorway.com

Men's knitwear by *Napapijri*,
EUR 199, napapijri.com

Hat by *Dale of Norway*,
EUR 199.95,
daleofnorway.com

Headband by
Dale of Norway,
EUR 39.95,
daleofnorway.com

Hat by *Napapijri*,
EUR 40,
napapijri.com

Boots by
Tamaris,
EUR 110,
tamaris.eu

COMMERCIAL PREMISES FOR SALE

201 Brivibas gatve, Riga



Up for sale: real property consisting of three buildings with individual square metreares of 1226 m², 2470 m² and 10648 m², located at 201 Brivibas gatve in Riga (near the VEF). It's an excellent choice for investment as the object is being sold in an operational state (cash flow of 50,000 EUR per month, excluding VAT). The interiors of two of the buildings have been renovated and are currently used as offices. The luxury department store *PODIUM* is housed in the third building; it is planned to redesign the building for office use.

The property is strategically well-placed – it is adjacent to the Elkor Plaza department store, a hotel, and the offices of various companies. Located on Riga's main thoroughfare, Brivibas gatve, the property is surrounded by well-developed infrastructure that includes three modes of public transport and a large flow of people on a daily basis. A car park with a capacity of 120 cars is included.

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Gross site area 1: 1226 m²

Site area 1: 1026 m²

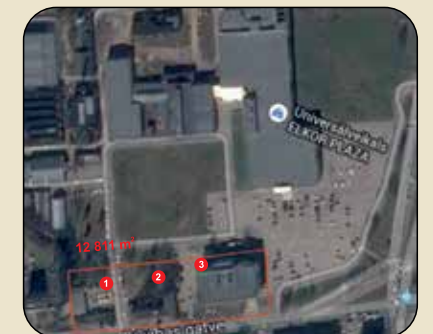
Gross site area 2: 2470 m²

Site area 2: 1177 m²

Gross site area 3: 10648 m²

Site area 3: 2274 m²

Price: **EUR 10,900,000**



Phone: +371-25863446. E-mail: e.zelenko@elkor.lv

A waste bin for his wife's hair salon

Rather than remaining hidden inside kitchen cabinets, waste bins by the Danish *Vipp* brand tend to be openly displayed to serve as visual accents in room interiors. What's more, the design of the company's classical waste bin model has barely changed since its creation 77 years ago.

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

WHAT IS IT?

A stainless steel and rubber waste bin designed by Holger Nielsen in 1939. Individual requests to make modified versions, such as a beige model with a marble top, have been steadfastly turned down by the manufacturer. While certain minor changes have been made to the design over the years, the waste bin continues to be made with a stainless and powder-coated steel body, two side handles for easier carrying, a 4-mm thick stainless steel lid, a rubber pedal and a rubber ring at the base to ensure that floor surfaces are not damaged when the bin is moved.

WHY IS IT SPECIAL?

While *Vipp* products in general are known for

the high quality of their design and technical execution, the story behind the creation of the company's pedal bin is also quite special. In 1931, 17-year-old Holger Nielsen wins a car in a lottery at a local football stadium. Since he doesn't have a driver's license, he sells the car and invests his earnings into a metal lathe. Later, the skilled metal smith sets up his own workshop.

Fast forward to 1939, when Holger's newlywed wife, Marie, asks him to make a practical waste bin for a hair salon that she has just opened. Holger works hard in his workshop for many days, eager to fulfil her wish. When he shows her the final product, Marie is delighted. This marks the beginning of *Vipp* and its gradual transformation into a world-famous brand.

Although Holger's original intention is to make only one waste bin for Marie, soon the customers at the hair salon – many of whom are the wives of doctors and dentists – take notice of the practical device and tell their husbands about it. Before long, Holger becomes inundated with requests for more bins. During the following decades, *Vipp* metal waste bins become a permanent feature at medical and dental clinics all across Denmark.

Holger's motto is that "good design never goes out of fashion", and his product receives only a few minor improvements by the time that he passes away in 1992. Unwilling to see the legacy of her father's work disappear after his death, Holger's daughter Jette quits her job as a social worker in Copenhagen and moves back to her native town of Randers to take over the company. She ventures out of the professional medical market and shows the stylish waste bin to the finest furniture and design shops in Scandinavia. When *The Conran* eventually orders the product for its shops in London and Paris, Jette knows that she is on the right track. A short time later, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) also purchases a number of *Vipp* pedal bins for its collection.

HOW DOES IT FIT INTO INTERIORS?

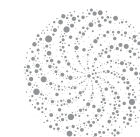
There is no need to hide this elegant product inside a cabinet or closet when it can be displayed in the room like a piece of furniture. Although the classical *Vipp* waste bin model is black, last year the company also released a snow-white version in five different sizes. **BO**

© vipp.com

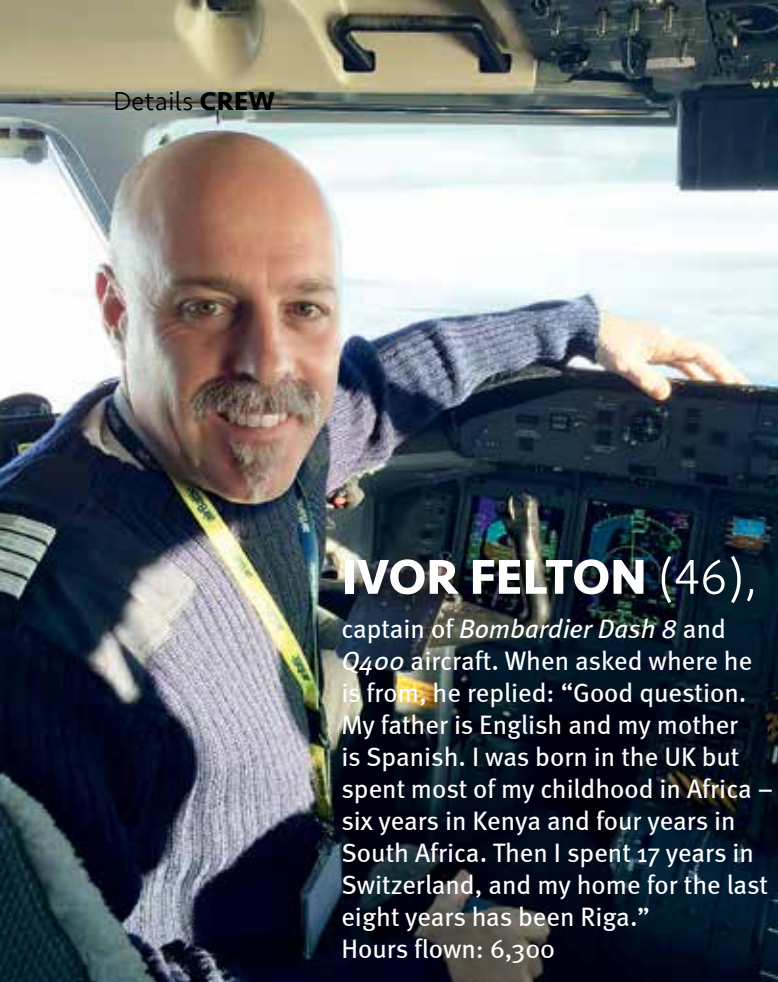


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GAISMAS MAĢIJA



IVOR FELTON (46), captain of *Bombardier Dash 8* and *Q400* aircraft. When asked where he is from, he replied: “Good question. My father is English and my mother is Spanish. I was born in the UK but spent most of my childhood in Africa – six years in Kenya and four years in South Africa. Then I spent 17 years in Switzerland, and my home for the last eight years has been Riga.”
Hours flown: 6,300

Text by **ILZE POLE**
Photos courtesy of **IVOR FELTON**

This is your captain speaking

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

HOW IT **ALL BEGAN**

During my flights as a child in the 1970s and 1980s from London to Nairobi and Johannesburg, I realised that I want to fly as a pilot. Unfortunately, after 10 schools in three countries, my career officer told me that my grades were not good enough, so I put that dream aside. I then completed my studies in hotel catering management and worked in Switzerland as a chef. During the late 1990s, the Swiss aviation industry was short of pilots, so I decided to resume following my childhood dream.

I was approaching 30 years of age, married, with a one-year-old baby daughter and a second one on the way, and unable to stop

working full time. Nevertheless, I enrolled for part-time studies at the Horizon Swiss Flight Academy. Flying was the easiest part, while the theoretical exams in German were hard. I completed my studies there after two years and was in the process of being selected for *Crossair*. However, in 2002, *Swissair* went bankrupt, *Crossair* disappeared, but the new *Swiss International Air Lines* had too many pilots! Nevertheless, I didn't abandon my dream and kept my CPL/IR licence valid for six years, all the while waiting for a chance to start. In 2007, I passed the selection process at *airBaltic*, and at the age of 38, my new career at last took off.

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

The size of the cockpit. It is so small and compact, yet it has big windows and a bright sunshine view.

Photo by Klaus Auf der Maur

FAVOURITE **BOOK**

I am a terrible reader. I've been trying to finish a very interesting book for the last five months: *The Red Orchestra* by Gilles Perrault. *Flight International* magazine keeps me up-to-date with the latest in aviation.

HOBBIES

I still try to visit my two teenage daughters in Switzerland, as I have a new family in Riga with two boys. We are in the process of renovating two Art Deco houses, turning them into one. Well, perhaps driving an old *Land Rover* can be considered a hobby.

FAVOURITE **RESTAURANT**

Being a chef, I appreciate good food, so here are my favourites in Riga:

Everyday restaurant: *Telpa* (Matisa iela 8) serves great brunches. The chef and owner, Rihards Fridenbergs Kalniņš, is passionate about cooking and it shows in the food. He also has an excellent team working with him.

Evening dinner with a loved one or friend: *Istaba* (Kr. Barona 31a). I love the simple menu.

Something special in the summer: *36. Līnija* bar and grill on the beach in Jūrmala. Professional, welcoming service and great food. I love to observe the customers come and go, some of them even with body guards.

FAVOURITE **RUNWAY**

I enjoy the challenge of preparing the flight approach and landing on a new runway. Last year, I did that in Heringsdorf, Germany, while in the summer of 2014, we had to approach the airport in Rijeka, Croatia, straight from the north, descend over the coastal mountains and sea past the city, and land on an island 85 metres above sea level.



THREE **THINGS** THAT I NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT

Almost the same as being a passenger: my pilot's licence (which is my ticket to fly), my passport and my credit card.

SNAPSHOT TO SHARE

This picture was taken by my friend Klaus Auf der Maur in Tali, Canton of Schwyz, Switzerland. I used to sit at that exact spot and look at planes crossing the Alps, waiting for the day when I would also be up there.



LAST **DESTINATION** FLOWN TO AS A PASSENGER

Zurich. My partner was representing Latvia at a European-Asian conference in Montreux on human rights and trafficking. I was on babysitting duty for my four-month and three-year-old sons.

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NO.1 SMART
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You could easily mistake this smart watch for a gorgeous Swiss-made designer timepiece: in fact, it's both. The MoMA-collection watch now lets you track your sleep cycles, movement activity and fitness achievements. The sleep cycle function lets you set a time window for a smart sleep alarm, while the watch can wake you up during your lightest phase of sleep. Even better, it automatically sets the precise time and date when you travel to a new time zone. The battery lasts for 2+ years, no winding necessary. EUR 873 | [mondaïne.com](#)

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Put a sock on it

OK, first let's just get it out there: these socks are *not* going to win you the 2016 Riga Marathon. They might, however, keep your feet healthy, prevent ankle and leg injury, and make running more enjoyable in the, erm, long run. The innovative textile sensors capture specialised running data to determine how well you move (e.g. measuring pressure signals for whether you land on your heels or the balls of your feet) and then analyse how you might improve your running over time via an app.

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EUR 368 | [sensoriafitness.com](#)



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AIGARS TRUHINS

A master at realistic fiction

World-famous children's book writer
Jeff Kinney

Renowned American author Jeff Kinney (b. 1971) wanted to become a cartoonist when he was a kid, but his artistic talents were not widely appreciated once he grew up. Nevertheless, Kinney didn't abandon his childhood dream completely. Despite the criticism that he received, Kinney continued to draw witty cartoons with funny dialogues in his sketchbook, which eventually led to the adventures of a ten-year-old boy named Greg. Nowadays, the fictional Greg has become a book hero for millions of children across the world. *TIME* magazine even placed Kinney on its list

of the world's *100 Most Influential People* in 2009.

The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book series continues to draw rave reviews, with more than 164 million books having been sold in 30 different languages. Three movies based on Kinney's books have also been released. However, perhaps the author's main accomplishment is getting children to put down their tablet computers and actually start reading printed books again, something that many kids hadn't done for ages.

Hence, it was no surprise that during a year-end visit to Riga as part of his

latest world tour, Kinney was encircled by throngs of kids both big and small, who stood patiently in a long line to get his autograph in their copies of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Rumour has it that besides signing hundreds of books in the Latvian capital, Kinney also spent an entire evening writing his autograph on 2,000 more small cards, which will be given out to Greg's biggest fans.

The real-life book author looks very much like a grown-up version of Greg. His face is often lit up by a boyish smile, and his kind-hearted eyes make it easy to spot the kid who once dreamed of becoming a cartoonist.

"Greg and I are complete opposites to Harry Potter. Harry is smart and talented, while I got into lots of trouble and misunderstandings during my childhood, and still do! Greg, too, is a simple character – not very agile, but with a good heart. He's not a hero, just a regular boy from next door with whom you would go out exploring," says Kinney of his world-famous book protagonist.

The author has kept Greg at the same age throughout the book series, very much like Peter Pan.

"I talk a lot with children to see what they like doing at various ages. Not too long ago, I was still asking my two sons for advice, but now they have grown bigger, so I have to dig deep into my memory again to retrieve my childhood experiences," says Kinney of his book-writing process.

Aside from writing children's books, Kinney also enjoys creating video games.

"Both books and video games can be cool. We shouldn't forbid our children from doing certain things. Instead, we should channel their interests into a variety of outlets. If someone likes to read, then that will be for life. Video games, for their part, are good if you want to have some fun," Kinney adds.

While only the author knows how many more ideas are hidden in his famous sketchbook, Kinney has promised that many new adventures are still in store for Greg. That will please not only the children who have avidly followed Greg's antics, but a whole army of parents and grandparents as well, for Kinney's books become quite catchy once you have started to read them. **BO**

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Recipe, style and photo
by **ZANE JANSONE**,
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Ingredients

1/2 cup raw buckwheat
1/3 cup nuts (hazelnuts,
almonds, walnuts or other nuts
of your choice)
1/4 cup pumpkin seeds
1/3 cup sunflower seeds
2 tsp. lemon juice
2 tbsp. chia seeds
2-3 tbsp. dried cranberries and/
or black currants
1 tbsp. coconut oil
2 tbsp. honey or maple syrup
1 tbsp. shelled hemp seeds
1 tbsp. goji berries
Fresh blueberries
Cow's milk, plain yogurt or
nut milk

Preparation

Place the buckwheat, nuts,
pumpkin and sunflower seeds
into a bowl and cover them
with water. Add the lemon
juice and let sit for 12 hours (or
overnight). Thoroughly rinse
the mixture, add the chia seeds,
dried berries, melted coconut
oil and honey or maple syrup.
Mix well and spread out evenly
onto a baking pan that has been
covered with baking paper. Bake
in the oven at 140°C for about
30 minutes until the granola
becomes golden and crunchy.
Cool. Crumble into a bowl and
sprinkle with the goji berries,
hemp seeds and blueberries.
Enjoy together with milk
or yogurt.

Tip

Try to buy fresh and organic
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TBILISI'S

BEWILDERING ARRAY OF IMPRESSIONS

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I was last in Tbilisi four years ago. Then, too, the airplane landed in the middle of the night, and as my taxi rushed along the empty streets at five in the morning, the city reminded me of Cinderella, all dressed up for a ball. The authorities definitely didn't skimp on electricity, which dressed up the city in a fancy golden mirage of light. Warmly-lit churches, unbelievably beautiful despite their laconic exteriors, glimmered like pieces of amber against the dark backdrop of the mountains. In this sense, nothing has changed in the Georgian capital. The city continues to not skimp on electricity, while a number of more or less successful examples of contemporary architecture have been added to the landscape, demonstratively reminding visitors that four years is a long time and – at least on the outside – that life in the city has changed.

In a way, my accommodations confirmed this as well. On my last visit, I stayed with some acquaintances of acquaintances (which, by the way, is still the best choice if you wish to get a real taste of the country), but this time, also on the recommendation of local Georgians, I chose to stay at the *Rooms Hotel Tbilisi*. Having opened just over a year ago, it's the first design hotel in the city and a symbolic source of pride for Georgians. It embodies the new, Western-leaning Tbilisi, which at the same time has not forgotten its roots.

The *Rooms Hotel Tbilisi* is located in Vera, one of the oldest districts in the central part of the city. Vera has always been surrounded in an intellectual aura; Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and the Tbilisi State Concert Hall are close by. Reflecting the mood of the district, the hotel is located in a former Soviet printing house, while its interior combines a nostalgia for Old Tbilisi with something of 1930s New York. The old brick façade of the eight-storey hotel is now dressed in wood. Robust boards bleached by the rain, sun and wind are a design feature associated with legendary Georgian hospitality. The rooms also exude warmth, their red wallpaper saturated with traditional Georgian motifs, wooden floors throughout (also in the shower), real leather headboards on the beds and many other thoughtful touches (not least of which, electrical sockets in convenient locations) that hotels in European metropolises often sadly lack. Natural daylight floods the hotel's large, glazed atrium, and the library is full of literature by authors from around the world. Just outside, the windows of another wing of the former printing house have been turned into an exhibition hall displaying large-format photographs from an art project inspired by the *Rooms Hotels*. The hotel employees tell me that a new hotel will be opened there this very year. Although belonging to the same owners as the *Rooms Hotel*, the new hotel will open under the *InterContinental* brand.



The bow-shaped pedestrian Bridge of Peace over the Kura River

“Things are changing frequently and a lot. The world is starting to discover Georgia and its culture and contemporary scene. Some contemporary Georgian artists and designers have become popular worldwide, which has, of course, increased media interest in Georgia. In 2013, David Koma became the new artistic director for the House of Thierry Mugler, and Demna Gvasalia was announced this autumn as the new creative director of *Balenciaga*. Tamara Kvesitadze is quite well known on the European contemporary art scene and drew much interest at the Venice Biennale. Here in Tbilisi we have two fashion weeks per year, Tbilisi Fashion Week and Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week. The *Rooms* design company, created by two young and talented Georgian interior designers, collaborates with global brands and many well-known design galleries in Europe; Georgian artists can be found at *Sotheby's*; and so on. Of course, all of this drives fashion and design to another level and pushes forward creators, business and the current lifestyle scene. I am happy that the world is finally discovering one of the world's oldest nations and its very interesting contemporary scene with a unique Georgian touch,” Irakli Nadareishvili, the owner of Tbilisi's just-opened concept store *Chardin One Concept House*, tells me the next day.

Born in Tbilisi into a family of geologists and having graduated from Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgia State University, Nadareishvili left his homeland during the civil war (1991-1993) to continue his education in Salzburg and later in Berlin and Amsterdam. He then spent six years in Moscow, where, among other things, he collaborated with Ilze Liepa, a Latvian prima ballerina at the Bolshoi Theatre. He recently returned to Tbilisi and has become involved in a number of new, creative initiatives, including the creation of *Morning Chant*, the first production of contemporary dance in Georgia. He has also initiated

To obtain an overview of Georgian history, visit the **Museum of Fine Arts** named after Shalva Amiranishvali. With 140,000 works, this is the most remarkable collection of Georgian art on Earth and includes works from Russia, Western Europe and the East. The most valuable objects are items made by goldsmiths from the 8th to the 19th centuries. In addition, the Zarzma monastery icon and other religious objects are important symbols of Georgian culture.

The **Sameba** or **Holy Trinity Cathedral**, a symbol of modern-day Tbilisi, also merits a visit. Located on Mount Elijah, it is visible from almost any point in the city and appears to be almost magical when lit up at night. Begun in 1995, its construction was completed in 2004. As the largest religious edifice in the southern Caucasus, the cathedral houses 440 ornaments that span various styles. The interior is literally filled with light and awesome in its vastness.

A must-see destination is the **Open-Air Museum of Ethnography**, which



Dry Bridge Flea Market

a number of music festivals and worked as the main producer for several Georgian television programmes, such as a popular cooking show featuring Georgia's best-known chef, Tekuna Gachechiladze.

Nadareishvili founded the *Chardin One Concept Store* together with artist and designer Mariam Gambashidze. The store is intended as a destination for people interested in what's currently hot in Georgian fashion, design and contemporary art. Located on Chardin, one of Old Tbilisi's most charming pedestrian streets, the store is relatively small but nevertheless occupies three whole storeys of the building, offering the most vivid essence of the talent found on Tbilisi's creative scene. There's also an art gallery in the basement, because, as Nadareishvili says, the city has never had a proper place to view contemporary art. Nadareishvili is convinced that the *Chardin One Concept Store* could become a platform for diverse creative initiatives, meetings and ideas.

“Tbilisi is my native city. I was born in this lovely place and I love nearly everything here: the weather, the streets, the nice and kind faces and, most of all, the people. I've never visited any other city that is so tolerant and kind. I love the feeling of Asia and Europe being in one place and the city's eclectic appearance in everything – lifestyle, buildings, nature, people – I love this unique touch of something, which for me is Georgia. I love that I'm alive during this period when the city is transforming a lot, changing its look and its behaviour, but still remains Tbilisi – the city that loves you,” says Nadareishvili.

Although it seems that creative oases such as the *Rooms Hotel* and *Chardin One Concept Store* are becoming more common in Tbilisi, they are scattered far and wide and one must still search them out. Just finding them is a process in and of itself, because their doors are not always easily noticeable, nor are their signs very large. In other words, you need to know what



Photo by Design Hotels

Rooms Hotel Tbilisi

you're looking for and where. For example, if you want to find out what's happening in local fashion, then you should walk the whole length of Barnovi Street near the *Rooms Hotel*. The best-known destination on the street is *O, Moda, Moda*, a lifestyle store-café. In addition to a great selection of clothing and accessories made by local designers, it also offers good, healthy meals. The salad of the day, for example, is served on a small wooden board, and the whole store-café is full of clever design details. In fact, a spark of humour rooted in local tradition is undeniably one of the most recognisable features of Tbilisi's design scene today.

For those interested in what's happening on Tbilisi's gastronomy scene, a stop at *Culinarium* is a must. It's not quite the place to go for the *shashliks* (kebabs) and *khinkali* so traditional to Georgian cuisine, and at first glimpse you might think that you've seen very similar places (in terms of interior design) everywhere from Stockholm to Berlin. But there are several things that make *Culinarium* special. First of all, the restaurant is headed by Tekuna Gachechiladze, Georgia's contemporary chef of the moment and queen of Georgian fusion cuisine. Second, *Culinarium* is home to the first and only culinary school in Tbilisi. The restaurant's menu also changes regularly, and the chef hosts occasional thematic evenings dedicated to cuisines from around the world, thereby reminding guests that Georgia has always been a crossroads between Europe and Asia, with each culture leaving its mark on the local cuisine. Fusion cuisine is thus a very natural ingredient here. After all, it was the Mongols who introduced *khinkali* (meat- or mushroom-filled dumplings), now considered the backbone of traditional Georgian cuisine. The Arabs, Persians, Greeks and Russians all also added to local gastronomical traditions.

Another one of Gachechiladze's restaurants, the *Café Littera*, is located nearby in a beautiful Art-Deco-

features traditional rural buildings and numerous artefacts from all regions of Georgia. The museum occupies a vast area, 72 hectares in all. Be sure to inquire for a guide and don't be shy to ask lots of questions. The time that you spend there will enrich you with a deeper understanding of Georgia's ethno-geography. End your visit at the museum's ***Rachis Ubani*** restaurant, where you can savour delicious food and take in a beautiful view from the terrace. The museum spreads over a hill at Turtle Lake, and the best way to get there is by taxi.

Dry Bridge (Mshrali khidi) flea market is an enjoyable destination for a Saturday or Sunday morning. Full of surprises and discoveries, it is open 7 days a week, but weekends are especially lively and vibrant.

At an elevation of 2,196 metres and just 120 km from Tbilisi, **Gudauri** is the most popular and most modern ski resort in Georgia. The skiing season there lasts from December to April, and if it's been an especially



Chardin One Concept Store

style villa that served as a writers' house during the Soviet era. The restaurant is in the basement, but on warm days guests can sit at tables in the charming Writers' House garden, its stone walls covered in grape vines and black-and-white historical photos of Tbilisi. The garden harks back to enthusiastic words written by Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky and Alexandre Dumas, who were all charmed by the Georgian city. Dumas spent six weeks in Tiflis, as Tbilisi was then called, in the mid-19th century during his tour of the Caucasus, and he called the city a “Georgian paradise”. According to legend, he spent most of his time in Tiflis' bathhouses and didn't hide his delight in them.

Begin with a bath

In that sense, it seems that nothing has changed. If you wish to find the true soul of Tbilisi (no matter how harsh it may sometimes seem), start your discovery of the city at the hot sulphur-spring bathhouse, which can be recognised by the group of dome-shaped brick roofs on the western edge of the Old Town, near the Metekhi Bridge. It is said that Georgian ruler Vakhtang Gorgasali shot a pheasant there in the 5th century CE, but the bird fell into a very dense thicket. He went to search for the bird and found it in a sulphur spring. The water in the spring was so hot that the bird was already cooked and ready to place on the table.

Gorgasali considered this a good omen, so he ordered the building of the capital city on the site, which he then named Tbilisi, or “hot water”. Tbilisi's famous sulphur baths, which contain both public and private sections, were built in the place where the bird was found. Residents of Tbilisi head to the baths at least once a week. They say one ought to sit in the sulphur-rich water for at least half an hour and then be scrubbed and massaged by a masseuse. In so doing, all of the impurities and cosmic dust disappear,



Culinarium restaurant

the consciousness is set to “restart”, and one is ready to begin the day with skin that’s smooth as satin and with a fresh, childlike outlook on life.

After a bath, dive into the labyrinths of Old Tbilisi, which, despite being quite ravaged by time, is still incredibly beautiful and exciting. This is where you’ll find the historical Sioni Cathedral. Before the Holy Trinity (Sameba) Cathedral, now the largest church in the city, opened its doors up on the hill, Sioni, whose history stretches back to the 5th century, was the main cathedral and the seat of the patriarch. The former Jewish quarter, with its red-brick synagogue built in 1910, begins just a little ways further. Right across from the synagogue, in a small courtyard, is the *Moulin Electrique*, a favourite café among the local creative crowd. Georgians love a bit of patina, and this small café is full of vintage furniture. In one room, the drawers of an old wooden secretary hold love letters and rave reviews written on napkins by guests.

snowy year, then the highest run is kept open until May. Gudauri’s lowest lift station is at an elevation of 1,990 metres, while the highest one is at 3,007 metres. Run elevations range from 1,990 to 3,279 metres in altitude. In total, Gudauri has 57 km of ski runs, or 30 runs for beginners, 40 for intermediate skiers and 30 for adrenaline junkies. There are also slalom, giant-slalom and super-giant slalom runs for professional skiers. The ski trails are superbly maintained, the lifts are ultramodern, the gondolas are heated, and all runs are FIS-certified.

The small cobbled streets around the synagogue are great for wandering. The neighbourhood is a real jewel, where one can still get a feel for Old Tbilisi – an authenticity that can hardly be found anywhere in the world anymore. Some of the buildings are so run down that it looks as if they could fall into a pile of dust at any moment, but the majority still stand, spitefully strong; their paint peeled off long ago, their walls crooked, with wide cracks and layers of cultural sediment. Tbilisi was once a stop on the Silk Road, and it is precisely in its architecture that this crossroads of cultures is most noticeable. Orientalism, Neoclassicism, Art Nouveau, Iranian influences – they’ve all combined together with creative Georgian accents to form the face of Tbilisi. This is particularly obvious in the Old Town’s courtyards and lace-like wooden balconies that seem to be carved with filigree preciseness.

As sunset nears, ride the funicular up to the Narikala Fortress and enjoy a nighttime view of the city in a valley strewn with lights. This is also the best place from which to marvel at Tbilisi’s new and much-discussed architecture. Or, as it is called by many, ex-president Saakashvili’s legacy.

There’s the Presidential Palace, whose exterior is a strange hybrid of Germany’s Reichstag (the glass dome) and the White House in Washington, D.C. There’s also the new pedestrian bridge designed by Italian architect Michele de Lucchi, which, thanks to its “glass ribs”, earned all possible epithets for its senseless ostentatiousness, but has since become a favourite place of local residents for photo sessions. The Public Service Hall (designed by Italian architects Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas and resembling a clump of mushrooms) as well as the concert hall at the very foot of the pedestrian bridge (also designed by the Fuksas’ and resembling a curved



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TBILISI



Insider's view

Tbilisi's legendary hospitality is real



Nata Janberidze and Ketil Toloraia

Rooms is the Georgian brand of the moment. Having gained recognition in the international design community, *Rooms* products can be found at a number of prestigious design galleries around the world, including the iconic Spazio Rossana Orlandi in Milan. The brand was created in 2007 by two young Tbilisi-born interior designers, Nata Janberidze and Ketil Toloraia, who met as students at the Tbilisi Academy of Arts.

Together, they have implemented many exciting interior design projects in Tbilisi and elsewhere in Georgia, among them several restaurant dining rooms (including *The Dining Room*, *11/11* and *Vong*) as well as the interior for *Rooms Hotel Kazbegi*, which, followed later by *Rooms Hotel Tbilisi*, was Georgia's first design hotel. The hotel is located about 150 km from Tbilisi in the small village of Stepantsminda (formerly Kazbegi) at the foot of Mount Kazbek (5,033 m) and is known for its breathtaking view of the mountains.

Janberidze and Toloraia (J&T) say that their main source of inspiration is Georgia's mix of Asian and European cultures as well as the hospitality that their country is known for. Another essential element of their creative signature is a healthy spark of humour saturated with various historical and contemporary references, which brings a warm sense of humanity to their products and interiors.

What do you love most about living in Tbilisi?

Toloraia: I guess what makes Tbilisi special to us are the people who live here. And the famous Georgian hospitality, and also the very close human relationships and friendships.

Janberidze: For me, it's the visual and cultural diversity of the city.

Is there anything that you hate about Tbilisi?

J&T: After the Soviet Union broke up, the architecture of Tbilisi became very chaotic. Buildings were built out of pure necessity with cheap materials and had no aesthetic value at all. Sadly, this contributed to the city's loss of originality and charm.

What should one definitely do to catch the vibe of Tbilisi in all of its diversity?

J&T: Take a stroll through the old districts of the city, such as Plexanovi and Sololaki, where the remains of Tbilisi's originality and character still prevail. Rather than finding monumental landmarks, one comes across small and quirky antique shops, crumbling grand houses and lots of hidden gems tucked away in beautiful little alleys. Make sure to peek into the grand but dishevelled entrance halls, which will pleasantly surprise you.

Which is your favourite neighbourhood in Tbilisi and why?

J&T: The Sololaki area with its beautiful small streets and architecture. It's nicknamed the "Konka" district, with its famous Gabriadze café and Anchiskhati basilica.

Can you name your five favourite restaurants/café in Tbilisi?

J&T: We have different lists for well-designed or just tasty food categories. To

combine the two, these are the places that we would recommend:

The Dining Room, *Culinarium*, *Cafe Littera*, *O Moda Moda* café and the *Rooms Hotel Tbilisi* restaurant and bar.

Which are your favourite shops in Tbilisi?

J&T: For the fashion-conscious, concept stores such as *O Moda Moda* and *Pierrot le Fou*. For old and unexpected treasures, the famous Mshrali Khidi flea/antiques market.

How would you describe a perfect weekend in the city?

Toloraia: For me, the weekends are for my kids. So I would take them to the botanical gardens and go for a very long walk there. Evenings are best spent in the company of my closest friends and dining at the *Rooms Hotel* restaurant.

What is the biggest stereotype about Tbilisi and is it true?

J&T: I guess the biggest stereotype about Tbilisi is its hospitality. It's so true and quite unusual for a capital city.

What is the most special place (emotionally, spiritually) for you in Tbilisi?

J&T: Home is the favourite place for both of us, the place where we can rest emotionally and spiritually.

Where do you go when you want to escape Tbilisi?

J&T: It depends on the season and the amount of time that we have. During the winter, we would head to the *Rooms Hotel* in Kazbegi. Kakheti is best to visit in the autumn at grape-picking time. And for a super-quick escape, we would go to Mtskheta to enjoy local food and the region's ancient architecture. **BO**



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Silicon Valley Comes to the Baltics
startup conference

CREATING THE FUTURE

The rate at which technologies are being developed makes one want to reread sci-fi books, just to make sure that we don't overlook something really big. The other way to see what tomorrow holds is to attend startup conventions like *Silicon Valley Comes to the Baltics* and speak with someone who's been creating the future himself. *Baltic Outlook* recently caught up with Sten Tamkivi, an Estonian investor, former *Skype* executive and firm believer that there can be ten million Estonians (Estonia's current population is 1.3 million).

On my way to this interview, I had two songs playing in my head – Stevie Wonder's *I Just Called to Say I Love You* and Adele's new *Hello*. Obviously, communication over long distances has been a huge thing since the very first days of the telephone.

What's the most important or the most emotional thing that you have said over *Skype*?

When I use *Skype* to call my kids while I'm travelling, it's always about emotions, thoughts and shared moments, as opposed to phone calls, which can be very formal.

The most emotional moment... My father died two years ago and I could not be there because I was in the USA at the time. I had conversations with him when he was in the hospital with cancer and I didn't know how much time was left. Every call could be the last one.

I think that we cannot really move on with this conversation unless we touch upon your early days at *Skype*. You worked at the company in various roles for more than eight years. You ran the original R&D office and had different international positions. Tell us about that period.

I joined *Skype* to run its Estonian R&D office, which was the first one at the company, and I remained in that role throughout my time there. However, as often happens at fast-growing companies, I had other duties as well. At *Skype* we shared the special feeling that you could build something truly global without leaving your home.

Before *Skype*, if anyone in Estonia had international experience, it was because they had been abroad. You had to go to the USA to work for a big IT company or you had to move to London to work in banking. With *Skype*, many people saw for the first time that one can change the world from a tiny corner of the Earth. The belief that location does not matter probably remains the biggest lesson that I learned and forms the basis of my current company.

I learned many things at *Skype*. I wasn't one of the founders, as I joined some 18 months in, but it felt

like getting onto a rocket that's just taking off. We doubled our staff year after year; my friend from the engineering department conducted a thousand job interviews in one year.

The world has changed somewhat since 2003, when *Skype* was launched. We now have *Apple's FaceTime* and you can make calls using *Facebook Messenger* and *WhatsApp*. How do you see *Skype's* future?

I cannot comment on what they are doing now at *Skype* or about *Microsoft's* plans, but it is worth remembering that *Skype* was not the first to offer calls over the Internet; it was the first to offer a product that really worked.

The first internet call that I made was probably in 1993. There was some software that you had to install on *Windows* and configure ports and proxies. Then you got online only to discover that there is no one to talk to. *Skype* went on the market in 2003. Ten seconds after installation, you were online and other users were easy to find. That was a big achievement in itself.

During the time that I was with *Skype*, every year or even every month, a similar product was launched. *Google* launched *Google Talk* and we were scared shitless; we thought the game was over. A year later, however, they had maybe 50,000 users and we had added a few million. Nobody was able to take that momentum away.

What made you leave the company?

In 2012, I took an academic break and went to Stanford University in California to get a Master's degree, because I hadn't graduated in anything before. After completing my studies, I returned to *Skype* for a month and then decided to leave. From a personal perspective, it just felt like the end of an era.

My return to *Skype* also coincided with *Microsoft's* acquisition of the company. I was at *Skype* during the startup years, then the *eBay* years. Several CEOs came and went, and I got to work with many interesting



Sten Tamkivi in conversation with journalist Ilmārs Likums

You can live in Riga and work for a company in Tallinn or London

people. Then suddenly under *Microsoft*, I had 100,000 colleagues instead of 1,000, but I'm more of a startup guy.

Already while at university, I was thinking that maybe it was time for a change and started to invest into startups. Now with *Teleport* it is very satisfying to be in that early phase, where you cannot afford to delegate; it's very hands-on.

These days, you are very much into startup businesses. Besides your main duties at *Teleport*, which you founded, you have invested into other companies such as *Digital Sputnik*, *Fleep*, *Plumbr* and *Sellfy*. What do they do?

Probably the best-known company that I made an early investment in is *TransferWise*, which has been growing like crazy.

Digital Sputnik does LED lighting for the film industry, so when you get to see the new *Star Wars* movie it will probably have been made using *Sputnik's* products. *Estelon* ships 250,000-dollar audio speakers that look beautiful and sound amazing.

Besides the fact that I love the people behind these companies, it is a lot of fun to invest in something that manufactures tangible products. I had concentrated exclusively on the Internet and on software since founding my first business at the age of 18, so this is a nice change. That being said, I believe that we should concentrate on software in the Baltics because it's such a scalable thing.

Plumbr helps software developers to trace problems in their software codes. *Fleep* is a group communication software that aims to replace different tools like e-mail or *Skype* and offers to use one common platform. It has been built by the early *Skype* team. *Sellfy* is a Latvian/Lithuanian company that helps to sell digital products. I have slowed down my investments a little bit to focus on *Teleport*, but I'm very happy to work with the portfolio that I have.

Investing in someone's business requires trust. How do you evaluate the potential of a new company or idea?

I need to believe in the vision and I need to see that the team believes in the vision. The people must be uniquely positioned in the market or have a specific background. Whatever the product is and whatever the plans are, things will change and the investor must be sure that the company is moving towards its goals.

I have followed friends whom I trust. I think it's a global pattern. If you find investors, then they will bring their friends along. I've been in both situations – I have followed other investors and I've called people in to join me.

Have you developed some kind of instinct when it comes to investments?

It is too early to tell. I have had one exit [*the sale of a company – ed.*] and a few failures. I think that the only way to evaluate investors is to look at their portfolios after they've been working for a certain period.

The only project I was lucky to exit was *Sunrise*, a calendar app. We invested in it with some early *Skype* friends. *Sunrise* had a very cool New York-based team of French and Belgian founders. They built the app and sold it to *Microsoft* for 100 million dollars.

Let's talk about *Teleport*.

We are building *Teleport* because we want every single government to compete for every single citizen. Governments should create environments that people would like to move to.

On the other hand, if you are a journalist or a software engineer, or a designer or someone who wants to found a company, we want to find a place where you will be able to realise your full potential.

There are some macro trends. For example, income has become location-independent. You can live in Riga and work for a company in Tallinn or London. Or you can build a small company and have clients in Poland or Ukraine.

People don't realise that from the income they earn during their lifetime, 70% goes into just two things – taxes and residency-related expenses. The quickest way to improve your quality of life is to change your X and Y coordinates so that you find yourself in a place with the right taxes, the right living costs and the highest potential of income. This is the problem that we want to solve with our software.

The product that we now have out is called *Teleport Cities*. You can tell us who you are, what kind of job you are looking for, what your current expenses are and we will scan 110 cities around the world and come back with budgets.

Let's say you want to live in a city with clean air. We will give you a list of the least polluted places and inform you about rental costs in each place. We are getting closer and closer to the point when it will be a one-click experience.

It sounds very exciting, but where is the money in this model?

We are experimenting with a few things. It's like building the early *Google*. The search setting is pretty complex, because you have to scan the whole world. Luckily, last year we raised enough



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Tamkivi often shares his extensive experience with others at conferences all across the world

Early-stage startups are now paying around 200,000 dollars per developer in Silicon Valley

money to keep working. Strategically, we want the search to be free so that as many people as possible can ask: "Am I in the right place?"

We can monetise the service later, when the actual move happens, because at that point people spend quite a lot of money anyways – on plane tickets, rentals and so on.

Our first paid product is called *Teleport Scouts*. If you find out that you have to move to Barcelona, for example, then we can get you in touch with someone who will help you to do that. We also work with some governments to help them reach specialists.

How big is the *Teleport* team?

We have 11 full-time employees who operate from six countries: Germany, France, Estonia, the UK, Canada and the USA. There are also some freelancers.

You must have a very broad perspective when it comes to founding new tech businesses and hiring people. Silicon Valley is probably Location No. 1, but what about other parts of the planet?

First, I would disagree with that definition of Silicon Valley. While it is undoubtedly an extremely special place, it's not unequivocally number one in everything. You have to take into account how expensive things are over there. A one-bedroom apartment can cost 4,500 dollars per month to rent. So, although the Valley is a cool place, if you are a 22-year-old entrepreneur who has just founded a company, then you should probably not go there immediately. Early-stage startups are now paying around 200,000 dollars per developer in Silicon Valley. This means that for a million dollars you can have five people working for a year.

Instead of one central place, we are seeing more and more specialised hubs popping up. In Europe these are London and Berlin, and partly Amsterdam and Stockholm. As for

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Outlook **INTERVIEW**

Silicon Valley is situated in Santa Clara County, California, between San Francisco and the nearby Santa Cruz Mountains. It is the world capital of technology

investments, the general rule of thumb is to raise the early money as close to home as possible, because then it is easier for you to get the investor's help and it also saves time. As soon as there are signs of success, it will become easier to attract the attention of foreign investors.

What about working on international teams with members in different locations? There must be challenges.

Absolutely! First of all, you have to decide what kind of people, what kind of culture and what kind of value you want. And then when hiring, you just remove location as one of the constraints.

Secondly – and that's something I learned at *Skype* and now implement at *Teleport* – it is much easier to build teams from the ground up. Out of the 11 people whom I hired to work for *Teleport*, six or seven got their job following video call interviews. When you build a certain culture already in the hiring process, then you attract the right kind of people. In this manner you can also test how they work when nobody is looking over their shoulder.

Since our employees live in different places, we pay them salaries that are good in a local context, but compared to Silicon Valley we still save a lot of money that can be used to cover travelling costs. So it works.

Let's talk about the startup system in the Baltics. Which country is the most advanced and which country is the furthest behind and why? What are the differences?

I think that we are all on the same trajectory, but Estonia is ahead of its Baltic neighbours thanks to the experience that was gained at *Skype*. Today in Estonia there about 400 active startups, with approximately 200 startups Latvia and 200 in Lithuania. Over the last five years, Estonian startups have attracted 150 million euros, while Latvian and Lithuanian startups have drawn 90 million euros in each country.

What are the brightest ideas that you have encountered over the last couple of years here in the Baltics?

Though geographically we are very close, we in Estonia are not that well-connected with the local scene in our neighbouring countries. Frankly, I see Finnish entrepreneurs much more often, because Tallinn and Helsinki basically form a dual city. So I won't judge. But generally, ideas from the Baltics seem to be serious. Companies try so solve real business problems, whereas in Silicon Valley you can come across rather opportunistic and trivial things like an app that organises pictures of cats, for example.

Oh, one of my friends and a co-founder of *Skype*, Ahti Heinla, recently launched the first product of his new company, which is named *Starship*. It's a delivery drone that does not fly; instead, it drives itself. *Starship's* team used to compete in NASA robot challenges. The boldness of doing that kind of thing is very, very cool.

What about ideas that are not directly IT-related?

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I think that we in the Baltics have the same issues: a lack of talent, less than perfect demographics and a fear of immigration. e-Residency opens the country to the whole world, while lessening the public friction associated with potential immigrants. When Estonia's chief Internet officer says that we could have 10 million Estonians, it's not a joke.

What can be done in order to improve the environment for startups?

I'm quite neutral about government support, because it can mean both good and bad things, but governments certainly can have a positive impact. Take Israel as an example. They have obligatory military service that includes some serious technology-related work. The knowledge that young draftees acquire there can be and is useful for new businesses.

The startup environment can help finance ideas that otherwise wouldn't be developed. Then there's the legal environment and taxes. Estonia is praised for its simple and transparent tax system, but from a startup point of view it is heavily tilted towards taxing employees and less the capital and spending. So, if you want to hire your first employees and they happen to be expensive developers, then you pay a lot in taxes early on.

The regulation of immigration is an important aspect. If you want to bring in a talented software developer, say, from Belarus, which is a non-EU country, then you need to figure out how to do it. Sometimes drawing talent from abroad is the only way to help some industries grow.

Governments have a huge role in education policy. Every twelve-year-old in the Baltics should know what entrepreneurship is. Kids should know that failing is OK. They should know that even though not everyone succeeds, they should keep on trying.

This will be my first and last interview for *Baltic Outlook* if I don't ask you whether startups in the Baltics can cooperate.

Sellfy – the company where I'm an angel investor – was created by Māris Daģis, a Latvian founder in an incubator in Lithuania. The investment was led by Toivo Annus, one of *Skype's* Estonian co-founders. That's an example of cooperation on a company level.

Perhaps it's not so much about having offices in all three capitals, but more about unity or a harmonious vibe when you are abroad. The founders from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia somehow feel like they are all together.

When I was in Silicon Valley, I was approached by many European company founders who wanted to catch up and see what's going on there. When a Lithuanian or a Latvian guy calls me, it always feels more special than, say, a call from a Romanian guy. Maybe we should have some joint information channels and some group chats. Shall we introduce a special hashtag like #balticmafia?

In Latvia we are having heated debates about education. What would you advise to those who are in high school?

I would suggest starting with mathematics or physics or computer science or chemistry and then adding other layers of knowledge on top of that. I also believe that we need very strong interdisciplinary and intercultural teams, because in order to build a successful startup, you need to have an engineer, a designer, a product manager and a business person, and all of them must be able to work and communicate together and understand each other's motivation and language. Accordingly, kids who study fundamental sciences should have some joint projects with art schools so that they know what real life will be like.

And finally, how will we communicate in 10 or 20 years?

Have you tried *Oculus Rift*, the virtual reality glasses? I think this is the technology to keep an eye on. In the not so distant future, we won't be able to distinguish what is real and what is virtual reality. Your physical location might be in Riga, but you will be able to join your colleagues in New York or anywhere else. I think we will move away from communication as a session that you initiate to something that is always around us when we work or have fun with our friends. **BO**




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WINTER IN MOSCOW

Text by ANNA LABZINA,
weheartmoscow.com
Publicity photos
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weheartmoscow.com

Moscow is truly an extraordinary city. Its combination of northern European austerity and Asian brightness makes it one of the most breathtaking capitals in the world. Heir to a long and illustrious history, Moscow is developing at high speed, providing an advanced urban environment and maintaining the best traditions of Russian culture and hospitality.

Although Russian winters can be harsh, with temperatures reaching -xx°C in January, don't be afraid to visit Moscow at that time, especially during the festive season, which provides a unique opportunity to see the metropolis covered in snow and lit with magic lights. Claiming to be "the best winter city", Moscow is full of bright decorations, which appear during the *Journey to Christmas* festival that starts at the end of December. The festivities include the New Year's and Orthodox Christmas celebrations and last about three weeks.

Moscow makes the best of winter's short, dark days and frigid temperatures. Festive lighting, whimsical ice sculptures and colourful Christmas markets appear throughout the city. Recently renovated pedestrian zones have been decorated with lights and host wooden chalets, where gifts and treats can be bought.

The scale of this year's festival is really impressive. More than 40 natural spruce trees and over 100 art objects have been set up, along with ice rinks, a giant ice slide, a historical photo maze and a four-metre-high ice clock. Coupled with theatrical performances and concerts, a festive atmosphere is guaranteed.

In spite of the fact that the *Journey to Christmas* festival ends on January 10, all of the city's decorations and artistic lightning will remain until the end of the winter, and Moscow's famous parks present numerous opportunities for winter fun. The city takes pride in these urban areas that have been turned into well-maintained nature spots with numerous entertainment opportunities.

The Hermitage Garden, Gorky Park, VDNH and Red Square are the most popular ice-skating destinations among Muscovites, with music playing in the background and nearby kiosks selling food, refreshments and other items. Bigger parks such as Sokolniki and Vorobyovy Gory also have cross-country ski trails through the snow. In fact, most of the city's 300 parks have either a skating rink or a ski run, or both of them, and winter sports equipment can easily be obtained at numerous rental points.

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SHOPPING AND ENTERTAINMENT

Moscow offers a diverse array of world-class entertainment at hundreds of venues throughout the city. You will find plenty of different ways to have a good time at festivals, concerts, boat cruises, bars, clubs, restaurants and cafés. Don't forget that January is an excellent month for shopping, as sales are held everywhere.



GUM: One of the oldest department stores in Russia is located at Red Square in the very heart of Moscow. The store hosts more than 100 fashion boutiques, including *Kenzo*, *Emporio Armani*, *Iceberg*, *Paul Smith* and many others. Besides luxury shopping, *GUM* offers some nostalgic amenities, such as a Soviet-style grocery store and canteen. (gum.ru)

Denis Simachev Boutique & Bar: Named after its owner (a famous Russian fashion designer), this establishment can be found on Stoleshnikov Lane, Moscow's most fashionable shopping street. The boutique sells antique furniture, aeronautic accessories and clothes, while the popular night club is open 24 hours a day. (facebook.com/dsbar)

Krysha Mira (Roof of the World): This club conveys an underground and relaxed atmosphere and focuses on high-quality electronic music. Hidden behind an unmarked metal door in an abandoned factory, it provides an expansive top-floor view of the Moscow skyline. (Kutuzovsky Prospect 12/3, kryshamira.ru)



◀ **TSUM Moscow:** Another major department store situated near the Bolshoi Theatre. The store carries the latest collections from major fashion brands as well as jewellery and watches. (tsum.ru)

▼ **Red October:** Situated in the very centre of Moscow opposite the Christ the Saviour Cathedral is the city's new mecca of cultural life. Here you will find art galleries, concept stores, cafés, educational activities and lots of cultural events such as designer fairs, concerts and exhibitions by Russian and foreign artists. The *Strelka Bar* therein (Bersenevskaya Embankment 14, Building 5, barstrelka.com) is a good place for a rest and a comfortable urban space for informal gatherings and cocktails.



▲ **Brusov Ship:** Located at the Krimskaya Embankment, the *Brusov Ship* has become a real cultural cluster point, with numerous cafés and concept stores. On Fridays and Saturdays, the party ship is known for its good music, nice people and loads of fun! (brusovship.ru)



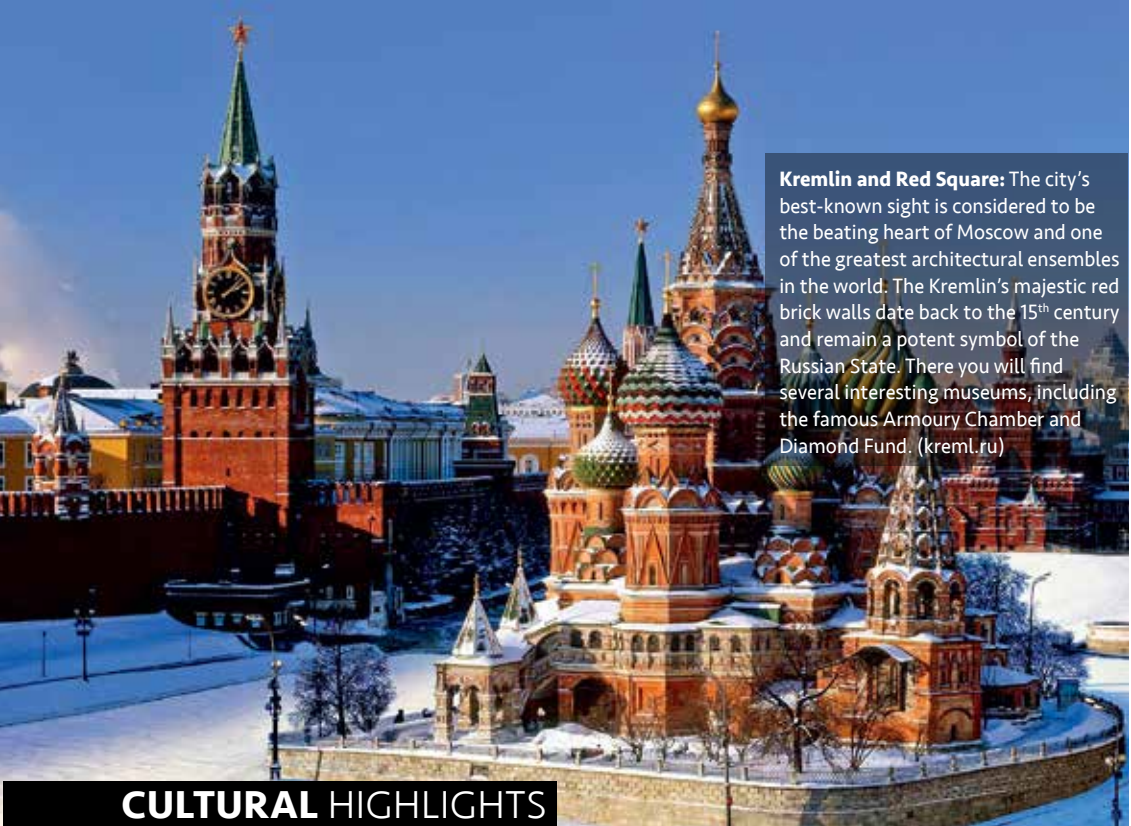
▲ **Tsvetnoy Central Market:** In case you are looking for something trendy, this new department store presents the latest collections by fashion designers as well as home decoration items. It also hosts several restaurants and cafés. (Tsvetnoy blv. 15, Building 1, tsvetnoy.com)



Tip: Despite overcrowding during the morning and evening rush hours, the Moscow Metro is one of the fastest and the most convenient ways to move around the city. In addition, it is a beautiful example of Soviet architecture, as most of the centrally located stations look like museums. A trip on the metro will cost you 50 roubles, or less if you buy tickets for a larger number of trips.



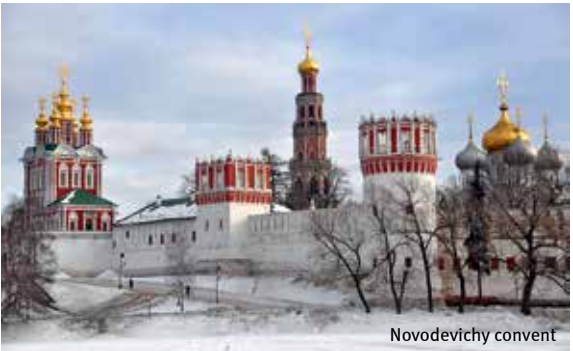
Klava: This small and stylish bar is situated in Patriarch Ponds, one of the cosiest, historic parts of the city. Its solid base of dedicated visitors consists of trendy locals and expats. The tiny dance floor with a hanging disco ball and the bar area get really packed on weekend nights. (Malaya Bronnaya Street 26, semifreddo-group.com/venue/klava)



Kremlin and Red Square: The city's best-known sight is considered to be the beating heart of Moscow and one of the greatest architectural ensembles in the world. The Kremlin's majestic red brick walls date back to the 15th century and remain a potent symbol of the Russian State. There you will find several interesting museums, including the famous Armoury Chamber and Diamond Fund. (kreml.ru)

CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

Moscow undoubtedly is the cultural centre of Russia. The main attractions and the most interesting places in the historic city centre are within walking distance of each other. Take a walk along Lavrushinsky Lane, Nikolskaya, Bolshaya Dmitrovka, Rozhdestvenka and Kuznetsky Bridge streets as well as Kamergersky and Stoleshnikov lanes or Stariy Arbat, Maroseyka and Pyatnitskaya streets to discover Moscow's diverse architecture and visit some museums, galleries and churches.



◀ **Russian Orthodox churches and monasteries:** Moscow has 790 Orthodox churches and eight monasteries where one can discover Russian history and admire traditional art. Some of the monasteries and convents were built at the borders of the old city and were called "guards" of the Russian capital. One of the most spectacular is the Novodevichy Convent. This UNESCO world heritage site is home to several exhibitions with stunning icons as well as a beautiful church and a cathedral. The ancient cemetery behind the convent is not to be missed. (Novodevichy Prospect 1, novodev.msk.ru)

Cosmonautics Museum: Opened in 1981 on the 20th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's inaugural space flight, this museum showcases a full-size rocket and space technology. You can try such interactive exhibits as the cosmonaut training centre simulator, virtual international space station and more (Prospect Mira 111, kosmo-museum.ru).



▲ **Moscow theatres:** The Russian capital's cultural agenda would not be complete without mentioning its wonderful theatres. The recently renovated **Bolshoi Theatre**, for example, is a true gem that hosts magnificent opera and ballet performances. Despite the high ticket prices, you will not be disappointed. (bolshoi.ru)



▼ **State Tretyakov Gallery:** This venerable institution has the largest collection of Russian art and is situated in Zamoskvorechye, one of the oldest and best-preserved districts of the city. Take a walk along the streets here to see how Moscow looked centuries ago. In addition, the gallery's paintings provide a fascinating insight into the everyday life of people in Soviet and pre-Soviet Russia. The Tretyakov Gallery's new building, located in Muzeon Park of Arts, has an impressive collection of 20th-century Russian art, including works by Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky and Natalia Goncharova. Once you leave the gallery, walk through the little sculpture park and look up at the massive statue of Peter the Great on the embankment. (Lavrushinsky Lane 10, tretykovgallery.ru)

▲ **Garage Museum of Contemporary Art:** This is one of the latest additions to the contemporary art scene in Moscow, along with the Multimedia Art Museum and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Founded in 2008 by Daria Zhukova (the wife of billionaire oligarch Roman Abramovich), the museum is the first Russian philanthropic organisation dedicated to the development of contemporary art and culture. It has presented more than 80 exhibitions, received two million visitors, produced over 200 books, launched hundreds of educational programs and opened

a public library of contemporary art, becoming one of the main cultural centres in Moscow. (garagemca.org)

The museum received its name from the first edifice where it was housed, the Bakhmetevsky Bus Garage. In 2015, the *Garage* moved into a newly renovated Modernist building in Gorky Park. Dating from 1968, the building was redesigned by Rem Koolhaas and OMA, with some original decorative elements, tiles and mosaics remaining. Along with exhibitions, the new quarters host a lecture hall, media library, cinema, children's art studio, bookshop and café.



GASTRONOMIC IMPRESSIONS

Moscow has a lot to offer to gourmets, including Japanese, Chinese, Italian, Middle-Eastern and many other cuisines as well as spiced-up versions of local Russian dishes. Some of the city's restaurants are among the best in Europe.



▲ **Pushkin:** Not merely a restaurant, this is almost a theatre in the centre of Moscow. The food is a masterfully crafted and delicious recreation of traditional Russian recipes. While a meal at *Pushkin* may seem expensive, the visit is undoubtedly worth it. (Tverskoy Boulevard 26A, cafe-pushkin.ru)

▼ **Ragout:** Opened by a well-known team of local chefs, these two cafés offer a great selection of amazing meals based on seasonal products. Both are nice places for breakfast, a business lunch or a dinner with friends. (Olimpiysky Prospekt 116, Building 5; Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street 69, ragout.ru).



Delicatessen: Popular and centrally located on the Garden Ring, *Delicatessen* has been listed several times as one of the world's best bars. Aside from a superb wine list, it offers amazing cocktails. The fusion menu is inspired by Russian and European cuisine. (Sadovaya-Karetnaya Street 20, Building 2, facebook.com/DelicatessenMoscow)

Chaynaya: Hidden in an almost secret place within a dark courtyard near the Belorussky railway station, this establishment serves fantastic cocktails (possibly the best in the city) and has a tasty Asian menu. Don't forget to call and reserve a table before coming. (1st Tverskaya-Yamskaya Street 29, Building 1, facebook.com/chainayabar)

Tip: It is best to book a restaurant table in advance, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings. | Note that a service charge is not included in the bill. | It is acceptable to leave the equivalent of about 10% of the bill as a tip, but the final amount will depend upon your impressions of the service.

▼ **LavkaLavka:** A cosy restaurant presenting a new look at traditional Russian and other types of cuisine. The dishes are prepared only from fresh and natural farmers' products. Opened by a farmers' cooperative, this successful example of social entrepreneurship aims to revive agricultural and gastronomic traditions that have almost disappeared in Russia and other countries. *LavkaLavka* offers online services and a social network for farmers to interact with consumers as well as a chain of restaurants and retail stores with farm products. (Petrovka Street 21/2, restoran.lavkalavka.com)



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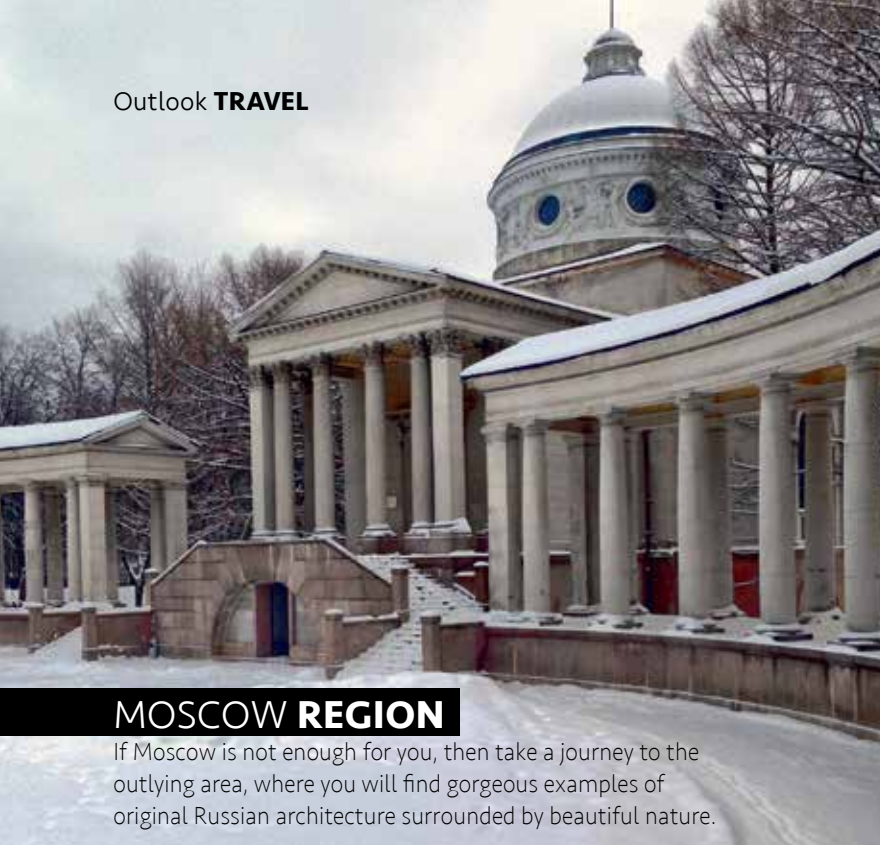


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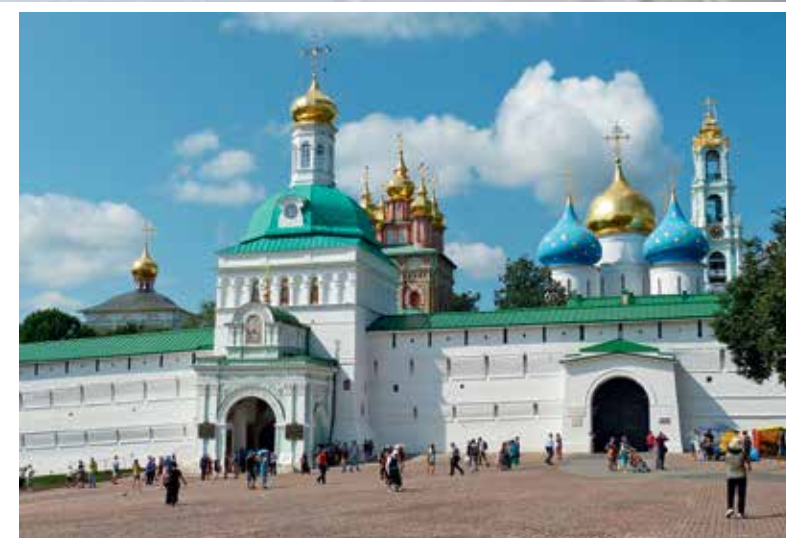
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MOSCOW REGION

If Moscow is not enough for you, then take a journey to the outlying area, where you will find gorgeous examples of original Russian architecture surrounded by beautiful nature.



▲ **Sergiyev Posad:** Formerly named Zagorsk, this town is situated on the so-called Golden Ring, about 70 kilometres northeast of Moscow. The town is dominated by the Trinity Monastery of St. Sergius Lavra, which is one of the largest and most important monasteries in Russia. Here you can abandon the bustle of the city, restore a sense of inner harmony and be alone at one of Russia's greatest historical monuments. (stsl.ru)

Tip: Make sure that you bring suitable winter clothing for your trip. Most important of all is a pair of warm and waterproof boots. Along with a ski jacket or warm waterproof coat, a hat, a scarf, warm gloves and some thermal underwear, you should be fine.



◀ **Arkhangelskoye Palace:** This unusual 18th-century palace and park ensemble are located 20 kilometres west of Moscow on the high bank of the Moscow River. The palace museum houses a unique collection of paintings, sculptures, prints, decorative art from the 17th-19th centuries and one of the largest collections of rare books in Russia. (arkhangelskoe.su)



Pushkin Museum-Reserve: Situated 45 kilometres southwest of Moscow, this complex consists of two estates: Zakharovo and Vyazemy. The latter is known as the birthplace of Alexander Pushkin's poetry, for the writer and his family made frequent visits there. This area is associated with key events in Russian history, including the Time of Troubles (1598-1613), Peter's reforms (1696-1725), the War of 1812, the Civil War (1917-1922) and the Second World War (1939-1945). Here you will find the 16th-century Church of the Transfiguration and other buildings, parks and ponds from the 16th-19th centuries. In total, there are more than 20 historical and cultural monuments at the Vyazemy Estate. (museum-gol.ru)



▲ **Dybrovitsy:** A small town and a real gem south of Moscow. It has a beautiful church that differs from the usual Russian Orthodox style, as well as a manor estate and a river. The church and manor house were visited by Tsar Peter I, Empress Catherine II and other members of the Romanov family. The house is beautiful and designed in a typical Russian style. Although the interior is not accessible to the general public, one can wander around the gardens and down to the river. The church, however is the real attraction.

◀ **Savvino-Storozhevsky Monastery:** Dating from the 14th century, this church cloister is located on Mount Storozhy in Zvenigorod. The surroundings are also picturesque and continue to attract both artists and poets. (savvastor.ru) **BO**



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THE AMAZING

APENNINES

SKIING FOR FOODIES

While the Alps get all of the glory and international publicity when it comes to Italian skiing, there are also around 30 ski resorts in the Apennine Mountains. *Baltic Outlook* journalist and passionate skier Jimmy Petterson has gotten a close look at a few of them.

Text by **JIMMY PETTERSON**
Photos by
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“It’s official,” wrote meteoweb.eu. “Capracotta and Pescocostanzo, Italy, are the snowiest places in the world!”

The Italian weather website reported a snowfall of 256 centimetres in an astoundingly short period of 18 hours for Capracotta, while 240 centimetres of fluff inundated Pescocostanzo on March 5, 2015.

“That would be maintaining a rate of around 5 inches of snow per hour for 18 hours,” senior meteorologist Tom Moore told weather.com.

The Wasatch Weather Weenies blog, based in the Wasatch

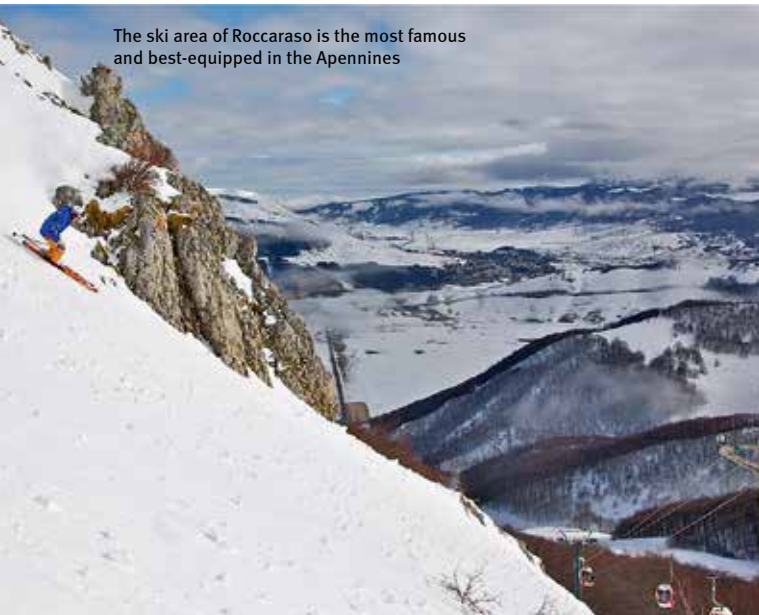
In fact, more than two dozen ski resorts stretch from north to south in the Apennine Mountains through the entire Italian peninsula. The residents of Florence and Rome know this, because the Apennines are much closer to them than the Alps, but most skiers beyond the borders of Italy have not been clued in.

The Apennine range stretches for 1,500 kilometres from close to Genoa in the north all the way to Sicily beyond the boot of mainland Italy. It includes a grouping of eight ski resorts northwest of Florence, the main cluster of 17 ski centres in the

particular day, three of us did so. The highest point in the system is Toppe del Tesoro (2,142 m). The upper sections there and on Monte Pretello (2,044 m) are above the tree line, with lots of possibilities for etching a track into virgin snow.

We put a number of first tracks into the powder of Pretello in the morning, and, believe it or not, Toppe del Tesoro was still virgin when we arrived there after lunch.

In between making first tracks at various peaks, we felt a certain obligation to sample a few of the pistes as well. After breakfast at the ski-in, ski-out *Hotel Pizzalto*, we mounted the Pizzalto lift



The ski area of Roccaraso is the most famous and best-equipped in the Apennines



Wealthy Roman couples drive up with their kids to Roccaraso on weekends



Winter panorama of Ovindoli Village

The snow gods did dust the mountains with a few centimetres of fresh snow

Mountains of Utah, which is one of the snowiest locations on Earth, exclaimed:

“This sort of thing is what the Wasatch Weather Weenies live for!”

All over the Internet, the news went viral: the 24-hour snowfall record of 230 centimetres on Mount Ibuki in Japan in 1927 had been obliterated.

In this age of climate change, we have become used to the upheaval of normal weather patterns, but we are more accustomed to reading about record droughts and high temperatures. The news from Italy was certainly a refreshing change.

The first question that comes to mind, of course, is: where are Capracotta and Pescocostanzo? The natural guess would be somewhere in the Alps.

In fact, both villages are situated about 200 kilometres east of Rome.

Rome! Are you kidding me?

central range close to Rome, the two ski areas on Mt. Etna in Sicily, and a handful of small resorts in between.

Coincidentally, I was touring a few of the top resorts a mere two weeks before the record dump. Klaus Arpia and Jörgen Smidt, two friends who are always ready to join any endeavour where snow, pasta and *vino* are part of the equation, accompanied me on this adventure to the Abruzzo region of Italy. We visited five of the most interesting resorts, all in the central Apennines, quite close to Rome.

Finding hidden gems

Our first stop was Roccaraso. Together with Rivisondoli, this is the largest ski area in the region, with about 30 lifts, 100 kilometres of trails and more than 700 vertical meters of skiing. The snow gods did not douse us with a record-breaking dump, but they did dust the mountains with a few centimetres of fresh snow.

Roccaraso, like all the resorts in Abruzzo, provides typical family skiing. Wealthy Roman couples drive up with their kids after work on Friday evening and stay for two nights, while the middle class arrives late Saturday morning and only has to pay for one night’s accommodation. By Sunday at 4 PM, everybody is on their way home and the pistes are completely empty until next Saturday.

If the ski trails are empty midweek, then you can perhaps imagine how many people venture *off*-piste. Not many at all. This

directly out the back door. There are four black (expert) pistes back to the hotel, and, before the morning was finished, we had cut first tracks into these runs as well.

I am not sure if the blue (moderately difficult) pistes had any patrons, but the black runs were as vacant as shark-infested waters. One of the best runs on the mountain was the black Direttissima Pratello – 631 vertical metres of excellent skiing with lots of space for freeriders on either side of where the groomers had flattened the snow.

All of us could have happily stayed and explored for another day, but we had a tight itinerary, and it was off to Ovindoli and Campo Felice. These two resorts are not lift-linked, but they share a lift pass and are only eight kilometres apart. Ovindoli is a mountain village right out of a Roman tale – ancient stone houses line narrow cobblestone streets that are intermittently bridged by a timeless Roman arch. If you don’t fall in love with this village, then you probably hate fairy tales or you are perhaps an architect who specialises in designing shopping malls.

Here, we became friends with Raffaele Siciliano and Desi Bartolotti. Raffaele owns a small bar where we enjoyed some drinks after skiing, while Desi is a ski instructor who was kind enough to show us around the slopes.

There were not as many off-piste possibilities as in Roccaraso, but here, too, the trails were both excellent and empty. We found

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some interesting terrain next to the avalanche barriers near the Del Falco piste. Not only did Desi lead us around the slopes, she also guided us to the *Chalet del Bosco* for lunch in Campo Felice.

When lunch turns into an après-ski

As I mentioned, food and wine are always important ingredients of a ski holiday in Italy, and this lunch was one that I will remember for a long time to come. We barely made it back down from the chalet by closing time.



Campo Felice is one of the few ski resorts in Italy that connects the two sides of the same mountain



Restaurants sited alongside the ski slopes ensure that you can catch some rays from the Mediterranean sun

The pistes were empty because people come here to eat rather than ski

In the Alps, the tourist offices are quite accustomed to visits from ski journalists and are duly accommodating. They generally comp me with a lift pass and perhaps somebody from the tourist office or ski school will take the time to show me around for a while.

Here in the Apennines, things were even better. The red carpet was fire engine red. Luca Lallini, the owner of the Campo Felice ski resort, had gotten wind of our visit and was at the chalet to dine with us. We started with an assortment of *antipasti* that included local salamis, prosciutto ham, eggplant *formaggio*, red beet salad and *bruschetta con lardo*.

With hardly a moment to come up for air, we found a parade of pastas being placed in front of us – fettuccine with wild boar, mushrooms with saffron, ravioli with ham and a different ravioli filled with zucchini.

I looked around me. The chalet was full. Aha! A lightbulb moment. The pistes were not empty because it was Tuesday; they were empty because people come here to eat rather than ski. Or maybe it was a little of each.

By now, I could hardly move, but there was no reprieve. A main course of diced beef with cheese, tomatoes and rocket salad accompanied by garlic potatoes followed.

Sometime between the pasta and the main course, the wine changed from white to red and the mayor stopped by to meet the journalists.

"This has been amazing, Luca, but I really can't eat another bite," I pleaded to our host, as the waiter carted out the remains of the main course.

Luca ignored me as if he couldn't understand English. "Have you ever tasted *tiramisu mascarpone*?" he asked. "Have you ever heard of busting your gut?" I retorted, but this question was truly beyond his knowledge of English slang. "It is a particular kind of tiramisu made with mascarpone cream cheese," he continued without missing a beat. "It's a specialty here, and it's very light."

"Yes of course," I answered sarcastically. "I know that tiramisu is not very rich and has no more calories than a small lemon."

"*Sei (six) tiramisu*," our host called out to the waiter.

If I am not mistaken, a bottle of *Vin Santo*, a dessert wine from Toscana, came in along with the *tiramisu*, and both the wine and the dessert were delectable.

Everybody was in a jolly mood and the mayor insisted that we stop in for après-ski drinks at his bar at the base of the lifts. By this time, of course, our lunch had already turned into an après-ski, but who was I to offend the mayor with a demure refusal?

Before long, I found myself in the mayor's bar, pouring shots of a yellow liquid out of a bottle labelled as "*alcool puro*".

If it was the intention of the resort's owner and the mayor to leave me with fond memories of skiing at their resort through an abundance of alcohol and good food, then they certainly succeeded. We all came away with a very good impression of Campo Felice, even if I do remember more about the food than the slopes.



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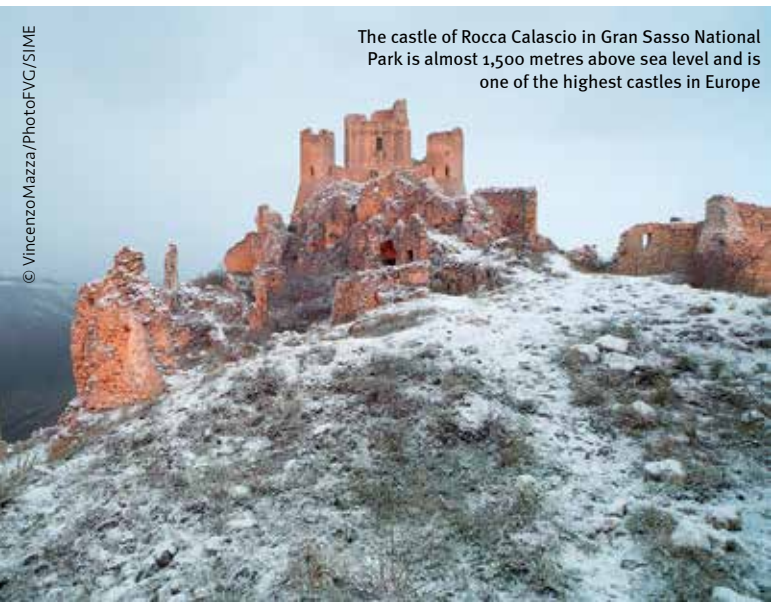
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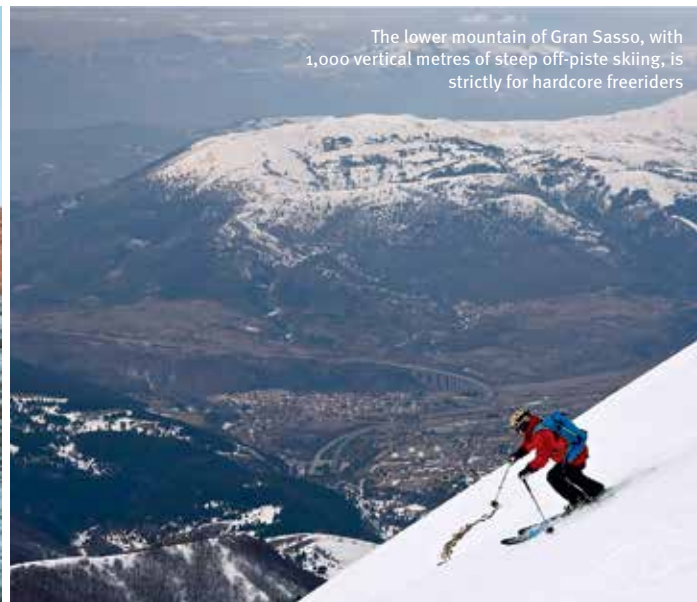
History lesson

My friends Klaus and Jörgen had to depart after our meal, but I had one more stop on my visit in Abruzzo – the Campo Imperatore resort and Gran Sasso, which is, at 2,912 metres, the highest peak in the Apennines. If Campo Felice stands out in my memory for the wonderful lunch that we enjoyed there, then Gran Sasso is perhaps most remarkable for its interesting history and for its even more friendly Italians.

Former Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was a great believer in sport, and it was he who had the stately mountaintop *Hotel Campo Imperatore* and the original cable car constructed way back in 1934. The cable car was one of Italy's first ski lifts. Ironically, Il Duce, as the infamous dictator was called by his friends and admirers, was later imprisoned in that very hotel. In 1943 – by which time Italy was losing the war and Mussolini had lost the favour of many of his people as well as King Victor Emmanuel III –



The castle of Rocca Calascio in Gran Sasso National Park is almost 1,500 metres above sea level and is one of the highest castles in Europe



The lower mountain of Gran Sasso, with 1,000 vertical metres of steep off-piste skiing, is strictly for hardcore freeriders

Here, you can sleep in the exact same *bed* where Mussolini spent 12 nights

Campo Imperatore differed in several respects from the previous resorts we had visited. To begin with, it has only 13 kilometres of pistes. A cable car takes visitors up to a plateau situated at 2,130 meters, where two chairlifts and a handful of trails provide 320 vertical meters of gentle intermediate skiing.

Gran Sasso makes up for that meagre offering of conventional pistes, however, by being home to a host of long off-piste descents and interesting ski-touring itineraries. The mountain is actually a huge massif with various peaks, the highest of which is Corno Grande. The upper section from 2,200 metres to the top is the *randonnée* domain, while the lower mountain with 1,000 vertical metres of steep off-piste skiing is strictly for hardcore freeriders.

I was interested in the lower off-piste routes, and I immediately asked a gentleman getting out of the cable car if he knew the area. Lorenzo Lentini, from Rome, was not an expert on freeriding, but he turned out to be quite a history buff. He pointed to a building next to the cable car station and explained that it was rather rich in historical significance.

he was removed from office and kept under lock and key in the hotel.

In one of history's boldest rescues, Mussolini's German counterpart Adolf Hitler summoned Captain Otto Skorzeny to lead a secret mission and return Il Duce to power. Twelve glider planes landed atop the plateau and Operation Oak was accomplished without firing a shot. The euphoric *Führer* later phoned Skorzeny with the words: "Today, you have carried out a mission that will go down in history."

Never one to miss an opportunity for some publicity, Hitler's propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels sent along a camera crew to document the entire proceedings for posterity.

Today, the red paint is peeling off the exterior walls of the hotel, but the establishment is still open for business and one can lunch on white tablecloths in the classic Art Deco dining room. I spoke with hotel director Paolo Pecilli, who lamented the lack of money available for renovations, and asked if I could visit Mussolini's makeshift prison. The director apologised, because that particular room was being occupied by a hotel guest.

All over New England one can read claims by local hoteliers that "George Washington slept here", but high in the Abruzzo Mountains, the Italians have that beat. Here, you can sleep in the exact same *bed* where Mussolini spent 12 nights dreaming of Hitler's special forces coming to the rescue.

After giving me the lowdown on the hotel and the daring mission to aid Il Duce, Lorenzo invited me to join his group of

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a red and white patterned knit sweater, is holding the top of the sweater up to her face, partially obscuring it. She is looking directly at the camera. The background is a snowy mountain landscape. Overlaid on the image is a yellow-bordered box containing the text "DEVOLD® OUTLET" in large, bold letters. Below this, it says "Vienibas g.109, Riga" and lists the operating hours: "I-V 10:00 - 19:00" and "VI 10:00 - 18:00". At the bottom right of the box is the "DEVOLD® MERINO WOOL" logo.

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A photograph of a snowy landscape with a lake, snow-covered trees, and small wooden houses in the background. Overlaid on the image is the word "Amateciems" in a large, white, cursive font. To the right, there is text describing the location as a modern, ecologically designed village. At the bottom left, there is a map of Latvia with a blue line indicating a route from Riga to Amateciems, with other cities like Ventspils, Liepāja, Cēsis, and Daugavpils marked. A text box in the bottom right corner contains contact information.

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friends for a ski. We cruised the pistes together for a few hours, but I also wanted to try at least one of the off-piste runs to the bottom. To that end, I needed to find some company.

Next to the hotel, a man was making adjustments to his wide freeride skis and I approached him. Indeed, Fabio Romagnoli was the man I had been hoping to find. He knew the mountain and was getting ready for a descent to the bottom with his friend Pietro. They kindly allowed me to join them. I followed them over to the top of the Monte Scindarella lift and we dropped down the back side.

Campo Imperatore is a small, rolling plateau that became a ski resort in the 1920s



finally had woven through the obstacle course, we had to walk along the road for a while to bring us back to the cable car. It was not my best run of the season, but it allowed me to appreciate the potential of the mountain in better conditions.

At the bottom, I parted ways from my two guides. Pietro left me with an invitation to return in the summer to go rafting, because he operates a rafting company on the nearby Nera River just below the Marmore Falls.

I later found out that the waterfalls are the result of the Romans having built a canal that diverted water over the cliffs way

The Gran Sasso ("Great Stone") mountains are the highest in the Apennine range



He knew the mountain and was getting ready for a descent to the bottom

Here, the off-piste routes to the bottom are steep and avalanche-prone because they funnel into narrow valleys that are classic terrain traps. The slopes were long and challenging and I almost drooled at the thought of skiing them in fresh snow, but I certainly would not want to ski there if the snow was too deep.

The moment we started down, the snowless valley unfolded majestically far below us. The sun was not strong on this day and the snow was very firm. The steepest slopes were trying to soften to a corn snow layer, but without much success. Today would certainly not be dangerous, but the skiing would clearly be no great pleasure either.

Once we had successfully negotiated the steep upper slopes, the going actually got more difficult. It had rained recently and major avalanches had taken the entire winter's bounty into the gullies below. Our narrow path was full of frozen avalanche debris interspersed with high bushes and small trees. When we

back in 271 BC. These are the highest manmade falls in Europe and are apparently quite spectacular when in full flow.

Travel is one of the most addictive diseases in the world. Each experience brings closure to some ideas that may have rattled around in one's brain for months, years or even decades, but at the same time, each trip exposes one to new information and locations that one had previously not known about.

During this journey, I ticked off five ski resorts that I had never visited before and found out that there were about 25 *more* resorts in the Apennines. I had skied an interesting off-piste descent on the lower section of the Gran Sasso massif and discovered that there were *additional* possibilities. And I had explored the mountains near Rome on skis, only to find that they also can provide some thrills in the summer from the inside of a raft. Perhaps most importantly, as with almost every trip that I have taken, I met kind people and made new friends, the most critical factor in seducing me to return for another visit in the future. **BO**

For more information on Roccaraso, see the *Hotel Pizzalto* website at pizzalto.com.

For more information on Campo Imperatore, see the *Hotel Fiordigigli* (hotelfiordigigli.it) or *Hotel Campo Imperatore* website (rifugiocampويمperatore.it/it/abruzzo-turismo/sciare-gratis-gran-sasso).

For more information on Ovindoli and Campo Felice, visit ovindoliparkhotel.it.

For more information on the Apennine ski regions in general, check out snowalps.com/appennini.

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FRANCE

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.

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Riga – Paris			
BT 691	123456-	07:30	09:25
BT 693	1--45-7	15:30	17:25
Tallinn – Paris			
BT 689	-2-4--7	07:05	09:05
Vilnius – Paris			
BT 701	---4--7	15:25	17:10

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Paris – Riga			
BT 692	123456-	10:10	13:55
BT 694	1--45-7	18:30	22:15
Paris – Tallinn			
BT 690	-2-4--7	18:50	22:45
Paris – Vilnius			
BT 702	---4--7	10:10	13:45

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 50.00 |
EUR 40.00 (children);
week (6 days) EUR 245.00 |
EUR 196.00 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
Three Valleys ski resorts
of La Tania, Les Menuires,
Méribel, Saint Martin de
Belleville and Val Thorens
Season: December 19 –
April 16



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 5 – April 17



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 26 | Red 41 | Blue 67 | Green 20
Longest run: 10 km
Snow parks: 2
Ski lifts: 97
Lift pass prices:
Day EUR 54.00 |
EUR 43.50 (children
5 – 13 years)
Week (6 days) EUR 228.00
(adult 14 – 64 years)|
EUR 182.50 (children
5 – 13 years)
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:
November 28 – May 8

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GEORGIA

Gudauri Gudauri is a growing ski resort, enchanting visitors with a wealth of opportunities for an active holiday in the mountains, unparalleled views, amazing colours, a festive atmosphere and a warm welcome for its guests. Situated on a south-facing plateau of the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range, its skiable area enjoys maximum exposure to the sun, which makes Gudauri a magnificent year-round tourist destination. Georgian hospitality is another reason why you should consider Gaudari for your next ski trip.

Resort altitude: 2196 m
Highest lift: 3250 m
Total piste length: 57 km
Black 10 km | Red 25 km | Blue 15 km
Longest run: 7 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 9
Lift pass prices: day EUR 13.00 | EUR 9.00 (children); week (6 days) EUR 70.00 | EUR 47.00 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Gudauri
Season: November 28 – April 17

Fly to Tbilisi with airBaltic from €89 ONE WAY

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Riga – Tbilisi				Tbilisi – Riga			
BT 722	----5-7	23:05	04:35+1	BT 723	1----6-	05:20	06:55



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
Highest lift: 2830 m
Total piste length: 62 km
Black 4 | Red 25 | Blue 10 | Green 3
Longest run: 4 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 33
Lift pass prices: day EUR 39.50 | EUR 23.00 (children); week (6 days) N/A | N/A (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Garmisch-Partenkirchen
Season: December 12 – April 3



SWITZERLAND

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

Fly to Zurich with airBaltic from €79 ONE WAY

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Riga – Zurich				Zurich – Riga			
BT 641	1-3-5-6-7	12:10	13:40	BT 642	1-3-5-6-7	14:15	17:45



SLOVAKIA

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

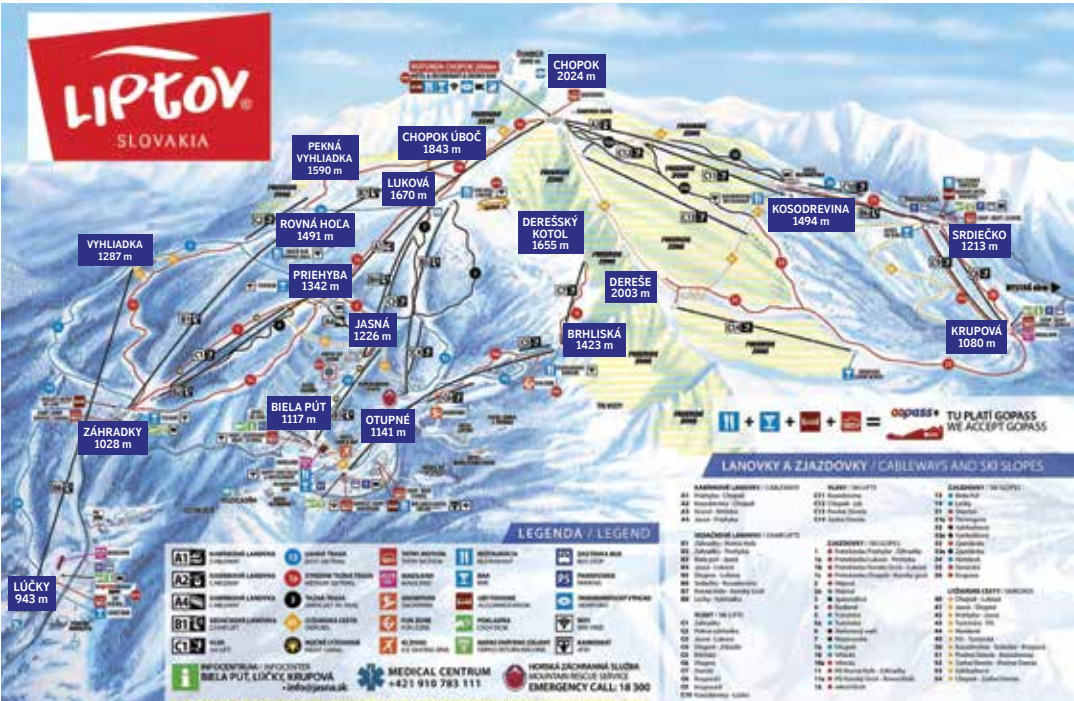
months every year. Jasna Low Tatras was given five prestigious quality awards in the international Ski Area Test. The upcoming winter season will offer attractive new

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 38, children EUR 27; week (6 days): adults EUR 199, children EUR 139
Resorts accepting lift pass: Jasna Low Tatras
Season: December to late April

Fly to Poprad with airBaltic from €59 ONE WAY

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Riga – Poprad				Poprad – Riga			
BT 485	-----6-	12:20	13:00	BT 486	-----6-	15:05	17:50
BT 1487	-2-4---	15:15	17:15	BT 1488	-2-4---	18:10	22:10



CARS

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



Driven: the all-new Opel Astra

If you were asked to think of a mid-sized family hatchback, chances are that it would be one of three cars: the *Ford Focus*, *Volkswagen Golf* or *Opel Astra*. You would be right if you did so, as these three are captains of the sales charts in their segment.

QUICK FACTS:

- 1 Tradition:** 11th generation of the *Opel* bestseller.
- 2 Engine:** 4 cylinders, 1399 cc, turbo, petrol.
- 3 Power:** 150 hp at 5,000-5,600 rpm.
- 4 Torque:** 245 Nm at 2,000-3,500 rpm.
- 5 Gearbox:** 6-speed manual.
- 6 Kerb weight:** 1278 kg.
- 7 Top speed:** 215 km/h.
- 8 0-100 km/h:** 8.3 sec.
- 9 Economy:** 5.4 l/100 km (combined).

Hence, a new model from any one of this trio is big news, so the arrival of the latest *Opel Astra* makes for powerful headlines. This version of the car really is all new. The body is smaller, lighter and more streamlined than that of its predecessor, aiding performance and efficiency, but they've upped the cabin space as well.

Of the engines that have been fitted into the new model, the 150-hp 1.4-litre turbocharged petrol engine is our favourite. It also comes in two tamer versions and is more powerful than any of *Astra's* previous petrol engines, but offers better economy and lower emissions.

The *Astra's* on-board tech has taken a leap forward, offering new features such as LED headlights, Forward Collision Alert with autonomous braking, and massaging seats. The vastly improved infotainment system includes onboard 4G-connectivity, a Wi-Fi hotspot, access to apps and the ability to use your smartphone through the touchscreen.

If you're thinking that the car has become vastly more expensive with all of these improvements, then you're wrong. Prices in Latvia start at 14,600 euros.

What's it like inside?

The fussy, button-laden dash of the old car has been replaced with a swooping, elegant and much cleaner design. Clear

instruments and sound ergonomics work hand-in-hand with pleasing materials that include lashings of gloss-black and chromed surfaces on the higher trims. Compared to the *Focus'* cheaper-feeling cabin, the *Astra* is now streaks ahead, although it misses out on the rock-like feel of a *VW Golf*.

The new 7.0-inch touchscreen takes centre stage in the fascia, which again, looks much better and is easier to use. The menus are easily understandable, while the screen is crystal clear.

The seat and steering wheel can be tuned to fit most sizes, but we suggest that you go for the ergonomic driver's seat. It's optional on most versions and includes lumbar adjustment, which alleviates the deficiency of lower-back support inherent in the standard seats.

Move to the back seats and you'll be pleasantly surprised, because there's loads of space – much more than in the aforementioned rivals and almost as much as in the voluminous *Škoda Octavia*. Two tall adults can sit in comfort and a third person will also fit, but then things get a bit more friendly.

The boot's a good size and shape, although not outstandingly versatile. You have to heave heavy items over a high loading lip, and there's no twin-height floor or under-floor storage. Also, if you fold the rear seats down, you're left with a sizable step in the extended load area.

What's it like to drive?

The weight saving that we talked about earlier has paid dividends in how nimble the new *Astra* feels to drive. The suspension also helps, keeping the *Opel* feeling well-planted, with little body roll. It's not perfect, though – the steering, while very accurate, hasn't much feel or weight away from the straight-ahead.

All that excellent body control does come at the expense of the ride quality. The *Astra* feels firm at times, especially around town, although not unduly uncomfortable; you just find yourself being jostled around as the car's body earnestly tracks the topography of the road. On balance, a *Ford Focus* still offers a better blend of ride and handling.

The 1.4-litre engine that we chose has plenty of poke and starts pulling from as low as 1,250 rpm. It's relatively smooth all the way up to 5,000 rpm, after which it starts to sound boomy. However, since most of the engine's performance comes from farther down the rev range, there's rarely a need to extend it to this point.

The default gearbox is a six-speed manual. It's light and precise, although it doesn't have quite the pleasing precision of a *Focus'* gear change. If you'd rather have the gears shifted for you, then a six-speed auto is an option.

Take the *Astra* up to motorway speeds and it feels completely at ease. There is a bit of wind noise from around the door mirrors and some background road roar, but this is nevertheless a car that will keep you relaxed on a long journey.

Should I buy one?

This new *Astra* hasn't got any major weaknesses. As an overall package, it's right up there with the best in its class. All of the important boxes have been ticked: it's good to drive and spacious, plus it has excellent value and is very well equipped.

The 150-hp 1.4-litre petrol engine is relatively smooth and quick, but if you're a high-mileage company car user, then we suspect that the cleaner, more flexible 1.6-litre diesel will make more financial sense. Either way, it would be wise to place the *Astra* on your shopping list. **BO**

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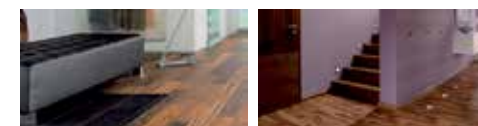
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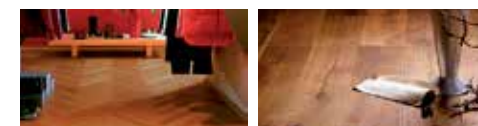


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Photos by
LAURIS AIZUPIETIS (F64)
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Cosiness and elegance meet at the *MUUSU* restaurant



Chef Kaspars Jansons

If you're looking for a warm, homey feel in Riga's Old Town, then head straight to the *MUUSU* restaurant (the name means "ours" in Latvian). *MUUSU* is not only a lovely place for gourmands to enjoy a refined meal, it is also a wonderful experience for those seeking a pleasant atmosphere. The feeling of being welcome is strengthened by the elegant wooden dressers, unpretentious linen accessories, exposed original brick walls and tasteful shades of grey in the restaurant's warm and cosy interior. And, as in every welcoming home, *MUUSU* also has its keeper of the hearth – head chef Kaspars Jansons.

While *MUUSU* belongs to the same people who founded three other popular Riga restaurant chains – *Steiku Haoss*, *Ribs & Rock* and *KID** – it carries a slightly different message than its kin, offering modern interpretations of classic European cuisine. *MUUSU* celebrated its first anniversary in 2015 and has quickly become a top culinary destination to many local Rigans and their guests. Within a short time, *MUUSU* has consolidated its identity and become one of the best lunch and dinner spots in the Old Town.

The restaurant's head chef Kaspars Jansons says that from the very start, he and his team have been using high-quality local products as much as possible in the preparation of delicious meals with a Scandinavian accent.

muusu
RESTORĀNS

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"In order to concentrate on excellence, we have narrowed the range of products that we work with. Food should provide not only a joyful experience, but also a sense of discovery. This means that the members of my team have to continue expanding their knowledge. They have to perform well at various chefs' competitions, they have to attend cooking classes and they have to intern with the world's best chefs. During the past year, *MUUSU*'s team of chefs has acquired a firm foundation and is ready for new culinary challenges. We'll continue looking for new ideas in 2016 and are eager to show our foreign guests that Riga is not only a beautiful city, but also an outstanding place for enjoying the fruits of the latest restaurant trends," says Jansons.

Jansons truly loves what he does. His eyes sparkle and his voice becomes more spirited when he talks about preparing foods, experimenting in the kitchen and wishing to please customers.

"*MUUSU*'s clientele are educated gourmands who know what they want. They know how food should taste and are not afraid of experimenting and trusting a chef's sense of creativity. We're always on the side of the client, because the client is the one who needs to leave the restaurant happy and satisfied. Our job is to read a person's wishes, so our waiters always try to get to know each customer," explains the talented chef.

In order to provide its visitors with a greater variety of new tastes, the restaurant will be presenting a winter and a summer menu this year. One of the highlights of the current winter menu is the smoke-fried lake eel with warm fennel salad, as well as the specially prepared rabbit. As Jansons emphasises, the ability to skilfully cook rabbit meat is a distinguishing feature of master chefs. Lately, though, Jansons has been concentrating on setting up a beer list for *MUUSU*.



"That's one of the latest restaurant trends. You pair outstanding beers with the dishes on your menu, just as you would with wines. Beer can bring out the best tastes in certain foods," Jansons says enthusiastically.

MUUSU is also a great choice for a weekend breakfast, business lunch or special event with dear friends. In addition, the restaurant's special degustation dinners have become quite popular, providing Jansons with

the opportunity to step out of the kitchen, meet with his guests and tell them about the exquisite dishes that he has prepared.

Indeed, *MUUSU* is an ideal place for being together with loved ones and feeling the warmth of home at the end of the day. Not surprisingly, once they have discovered the restaurant, clients keep returning there. And that's exactly what *MUUSU*'s founders hoped for when they started the enterprise. **BO**

Photos by **LAURIS VĪKSNE** (F64)
and publicity materials

More than just sushi

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



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 by business people who appreciate its large lunch selection and by tourists seeking the best sushi in town.

During the winter, guests can dine in a cosy and pleasant interior with a splendid view of Dome Square. 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 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 Sundays between 12:00-15:00, a particularly lazy atmosphere reigns, as Rigans and visitors to the city enjoy the opportunity to have a late all-you-can-eat breakfast or brunch, which includes a variety of starters, main courses and desserts along with tea, coffee, homemade lemonade and a complimentary glass of sparkling *Prosecco* – all of this for one fixed price.

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. Among the most requested are the refined Kanto and Tohoku maki with seafood fillings.

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*. Currently, five different types of ramen are available at *Planeta Riga*, including a vegetarian version.

The restaurant has started off the winter season with a new menu that incorporates the best Japanese culinary traditions as well as local European favourites like Caesar salad and cheesecake. With dishes featuring duck, steak and ribs, meat eaters are in for a veritable feast. However, don't wait too long to try out the winter menu's latest dishes, as these will change again during the summer season, offering continually new tastes with a Japanese touch. Yum Yum!

Another dish worth trying at *Planeta Riga* is dim sum, which 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 18 percent as well as special offers. The client card can be obtained at the restaurant from the waitstaff. **BO**



Planeta Riga
Šķūņu iela 16 (entrance
from Tirgoņu iela)
Tel. (+371) 67223855
E-mail: planeta@rrg.lv
① planetariga.lv





Photo by Māris Zemgalietis

Publicity photo

A contemporary taste of Latvia

The *Kaļķu Vārti* restaurant in Old Riga is one of the best places for an unforgettable dining experience with exquisite modern Latvian cuisine

The opinion of award-winning chef Raimonds Zommers is important to many foodies in Latvia. He runs his own TV cooking show and is regularly interviewed by glossy local magazines that consult him about the latest cooking trends. He serves sumptuous meals to visiting monarchs and other heads of state at Latvian presidential banquets. He is the author of *Zommers. Contemporary Latvian Cuisine* (*Zommers. Mūsdienu latviskā virtuve*) and a consulting expert at the prestigious *WorldSkills* and *EuroSkills* international competitions for young professional chefs. Yet there is one place where Zommers can be found almost every day of the week, despite his local popularity and busy schedule. For the past 15 years, he has been the head chef at *Kaļķu Vārti*, one of Riga's best-known and most highly rated restaurants.

Anyone who goes for a leisurely stroll through the streets of Old Riga is likely to come across the legendary restaurant. *Kaļķu Vārti* has become such a fixture of

life in the vibrant Old Town that some local inhabitants and tourists even see it as a symbol of the city.

Over the years, the restaurant has stood out with superb cuisine and outstanding service, along with the ability to change with the times and introduce bold innovations.

Kaļķu Vārti's trademark feature is modern Latvian cuisine, to which Zommers is passionately devoted. "My goal is to be different from other chefs, to see further and think more expansively than usual. I want my dishes to be based on local ingredients as much as possible and to work with foods that are not always widely used. At the same time, I never permit the level of quality to suffer in my continual experimental quests," says Zommers.

The chef admits that he also sees an educational mission in his work, which he fulfils by offering new and seemingly unusual dishes to the patrons of *Kaļķu Vārti*. That is one reason why the restaurant's meals rarely repeat themselves in the regularly changing menu. The food on offer, which is based primarily on the highest-

quality local ingredients – including those that are organically farmed or come from the forest – will suit the tastes of both refined food connoisseurs and those who are accustomed to classical fare.

Zommers is placing particular emphasis on venison in this winter's menu. As a hunter, he knows all about deer, and his restaurant is cooperating with other responsible Latvian hunters to make sure that only the best venison is served on his restaurant tables.

"As a chef, I want to bring out the full bouquet of tastes that venison provides, as it comes from an animal that has grown up in the wild and fed off the forest. Since the flora varies in each country's forests, Latvian deer taste different than they would if they were hunted elsewhere," he adds.

Making sure to follow the strictest handling and preparation procedures, Zommers offers his guests the finest venison available and heartily recommends the restaurant's grilled venison chop with beetroot tian, pumpkin, parsnip crisps and porter sauce. **BO**



Chef Raimonds Zommers



kaļķu vārti

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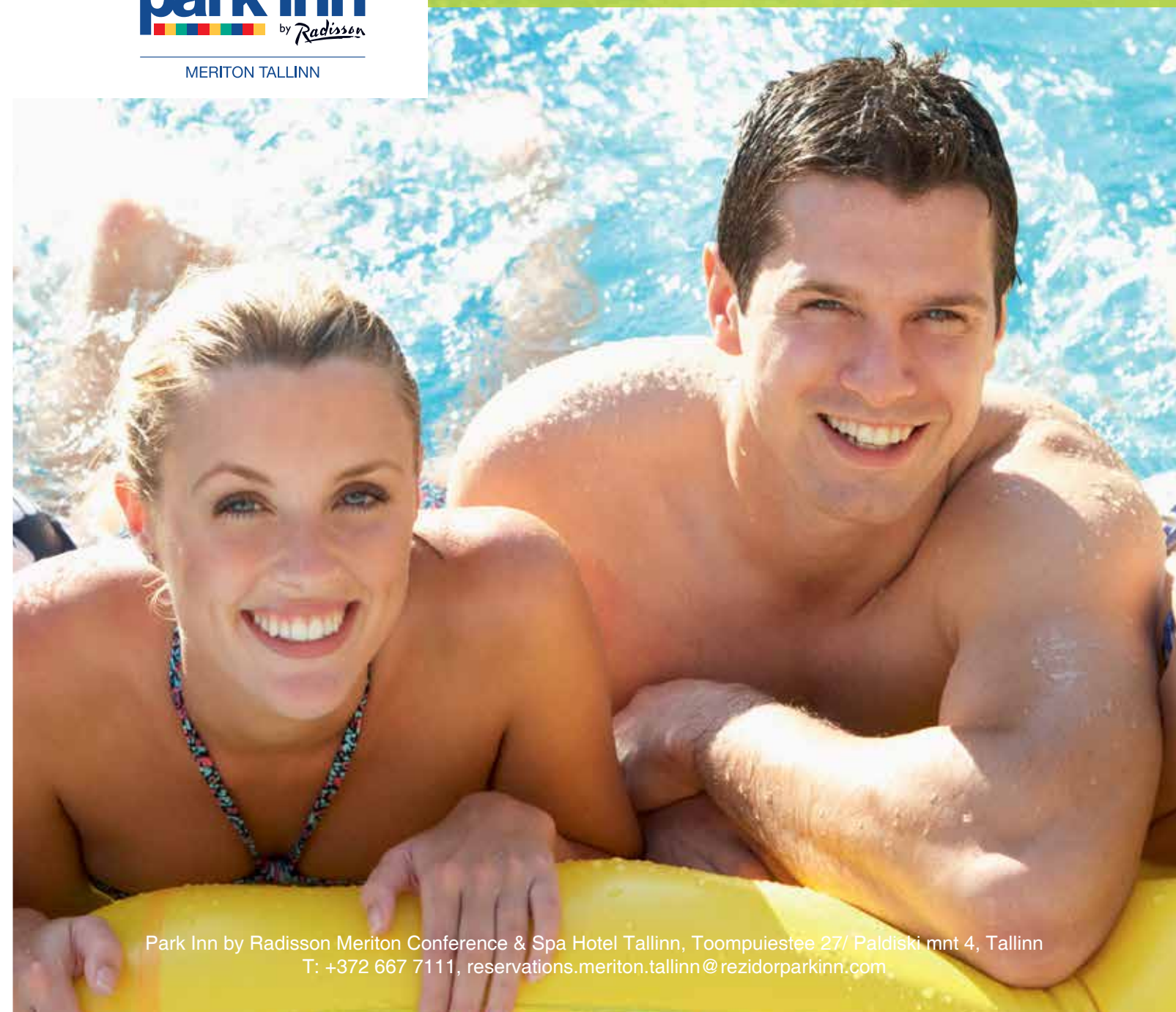
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Park Inn by Radisson Meriton Conference & Spa Hotel Tallinn, Toompuiestee 27/ Paldiski mnt 4, Tallinn
T: +372 667 7111, reservations.meriton.tallinn@rezidorparkinn.com

Restaurants, bars and cafés

Culinary hotspots in Tallinn

A guide to the best restaurants, cafés and eateries

Text by **LIINA KARO**
Publicity photos

AUGUST

New hotspot in town

Be it a Sunday brunch with friends, a quick lunch break during the working day or a romantic date with someone special, *August* is an ideal place to visit. As if Tallinn's Old Town wasn't wonderful enough before, there is now a new cosy café with a friendly staff, tasty foods and snacks, wonderful cocktails and pleasant music right on the corner of Müürivahe and Väike-Karja streets.

The pretty interior displays a hint of retro and the place is full of light even on dark winter days. The huge windows are a bonus, as the windowsills also function as seats and give a perfect chance to watch people on the streets or the snowflakes fall while sipping on some hot chocolate and nibbling on an almond croissant.

Regarding the food, *August* has tasty and affordable lunch offers during business days for both carnivores and vegetarians. The regular menu includes all-day breakfasts (the omelettes are really good and fluffy), a nice choice of main courses (the grilled goat cheese and quinoa with herb chicken are among my personal favourites) and a variety of cakes to choose from. On top of all that, *August's* coffees are probably the best in town. On weekends, the place stays open until late at night, often with the best DJs playing their favourite tracks while you enjoy your cocktails. Highly recommended!



Address: Väike-Karja 5, Tallinn
Open:
Mon.-Thu. 08:30-23:00
Fri. 08:30-02:00
Sat. 11:00-02:00
Sun. 11:00-23:00
① [facebook.com/kohvikaugust](https://www.facebook.com/kohvikaugust)

TALU&DELI

Fresh and local

If you are looking for something fresh, cool and local, then look no further than *Talu&Deli* right in Tallinn's city centre. The establishment operates as both a shop and a restaurant. The shop has an impressive variety of local foods and the owners are especially proud of their meat assortment. That is because they hired a competent butcher who makes sure that everything is fresh and of top quality. *Talu&Deli* also has a baker on the premises to provide you with fresh and tasty pastries. The food served in the restaurant is made of the same ingredients that you can find in the shop, so you are in for a food experience that is guaranteed to tickle your taste buds. There are lovely lunch offers, weekend brunches and always something for seafood lovers. (Hint:



Address: Teatri väljak 3, Tallinn
Open:
Mon.-Fri. Shop: 7:30-21:00;
Restaurant: 11:30-22:00
Sat. Shop: 09:00-20:00;
Restaurant: 11:30-22:00
Sun. Shop: 10:00-20:00;
Restaurant: closed
 ⓘ facebook.com/taludeli

ask for the fish tapas and you are in for a treat!) Bread and water are provided free of charge, while the service is nice and quick. *Talu&Deli* brings true Estonian flavours to the capital's centre for everybody to enjoy.





KEY to RIGA

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

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

The legendary Latvian film The Devil's Servants, which was produced by the Riga Film studio in the 1970s, served as the inspiration for the restaurant. The Key to Riga was an essential part of this cinema classic and an exact replica now holds a place of honour in the restaurant.

It is said that he who holds the key to Riga will unlock a world of wealth and happiness and we encourage you to pick it up and see what it feels like to hold the key to this ancient city. Take a photograph with the key and capture a timeless moment with one of Riga's most revered symbols!



www.keytoriga.lv

Doma laukums 8a, Riga, Latvia, LV-1050

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1/ New flights to Reykjavik

airBaltic will launch a new route between Riga and **Reykjavik** on May 28, with direct flights to the capital of Iceland operating twice a week.

Iceland is the second largest island in Europe after Great Britain and an absolute must for nature-lovers and adventure-seekers. Being one of Europe's most exotic destinations, Iceland is famous for its dramatic landscapes with multi-coloured mountains, extensive lava flows, thermal springs, glaciers, waterfalls and clear blue lakes.

Take a swim in natural lagoons under the open skies, where the water temperature is 39°C. Explore the mind-blowing natural scenery during a hiking or horseback-riding trip or go whale-watching.

One-way ticket prices from Riga to Reykjavik start at EUR 139.

2/ Summer is closer than you think

airBaltic will switch to its summer season flight program at the end of March, which means that many popular holiday destinations will return to the schedule following a lengthy winter pause.

As of March 29, flights will resume to **Nice** on the French Riviera and will operate three times per week.

In May, the popular cities of **Athens, Venice, Burgas, Baku** and **Dubrovnik** return to the schedule with two flights per week, while



Nice

Malta and **Olbia** will be served with one connection per week.

Then in June, **Rijeka** and **Thessaloniki** will be back on *airBaltic's* flight plan with two flights per week. **Palma de Mallorca** and **Rhodes**, for their part, will be linked to Riga by one weekly flight.

Check out the schedule and book early to get the lowest price for your tickets at airbaltic.com.

3/ Best service for business trips to Stockholm



Stockholm

airBaltic offers the best schedule for travel between **Stockholm** and the Baltic capitals of Riga and Vilnius.

Up to five daily flights between Riga and

Stockholm's Arlanda airport make travel very convenient for same-day business fliers from both ends.

There are also direct flights between Vilnius and Stockholm on weekdays, which in combination with up to five daily connections through Riga provide an excellent schedule for business travellers between the Swedish and Lithuanian capitals.

One-way ticket prices to Stockholm start at EUR 35.

4/ Visit Berlin for a perfect city break

With direct flights from Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn, **Berlin** is one of the most popular destinations in the *airBaltic* network. The airline flies to Berlin's Tegel Airport, which is located just a short 20-minute bus ride from the city centre.

This winter, flight connections between Riga and Berlin have become even more convenient. The route is operated twice a day on mornings and

evenings, making it expedient for same-day business or shopping trips. It is also serviced with comfortable *Boeing 737* aircraft, which bring you to the German capital in one hour and 55 minutes.

One-way ticket prices to Berlin start at EUR 39 on the airbaltic.com website.

5/ New flights from Tallinn and Vilnius

airBaltic is a truly Baltic airline that operates direct flights not only out of Riga, but also from Vilnius and Tallinn.

On March 27 new flights will be launched between Tallinn and **Amsterdam**, which will operate daily in cooperation with *KLM Royal Dutch Airlines*.

Starting from April 18 new direct flights will link the Baltic capitals **Tallinn** and **Vilnius** 10 times per week.

Currently from Tallinn there are direct flights to **Paris, Berlin** and **Vienna**, while passengers from Vilnius can fly non-stop to **Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam** and **Stockholm**.

Both Vilnius and Tallinn are connected to **Riga** by up to five daily flights, so passengers can also conveniently reach over 50 *airBaltic* destinations via the Latvian capital.



Amsterdam

6/ Fly between Russia and Ukraine through Riga

airBaltic offers convenient flight connections between Moscow or St. Petersburg in Russia and Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, via Riga every day. The total transit flight time is only four hours, and passengers do not need a Schengen visa, only a valid international passport.

One-way ticket prices between Moscow or St. Petersburg and Kiev start at EUR 99.

7/ Contact us, we speak your language!

Should you need assistance with your travel plans and flight booking, you are welcome to contact our Call centre, through which you can also order a meal for your flight and learn about additional services. We will also help you in the rare cases of lost luggage, flight delays or cancellations. If you have any suggestions on how we can make our service even better, then don't hesitate to give us your feedback.

Our staff speaks Latvian, English, Russian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Finnish and German.

Write to reservations@airbaltic.lv or call us at +371 67006006 (international calling rates apply; Mon-Fri: 7:00-22:00, Sat-Sun: 8:00-20:00).

Olga Trošina,
Head of e-commerce
at *airBaltic*

How did your career path at *airBaltic* begin?

I started as an online marketing specialist, writing newsletters, creating banners and using other online marketing tools for the airline's website. I was also involved in affiliate marketing and cooperated with some of the company's online partners. After around a year-and-a-half, I was promoted to the position of online marketing supervisor. Later, I started to manage e-commerce projects, which is a more technically challenging branch of marketing. This marked the first stage of our extensive website upgrading project, which became and still is my main responsibility.

What does e-commerce entail?

At the e-commerce department we deal mainly with the company's webpage, which includes its design and its functional features. For example, *airBaltic* recently launched flights to a new destination – Reykjavik. Our department has to make sure that the *airBaltic.com* website includes all possible flight options to this destination; that ticket prices and other flight-related information are correct, and that the website's users can use it without facing any technical or other difficulties. We constantly upgrade the webpage, and our ultimate goal is to get more and more people to use our services through it. We also collaborate closely with other departments, such as revenue management, marketing, sales and, of course, IT.

What has the new webpage project involved?

One primary goal was to make the website device-responsive, which means that it can now be accessed through various gadgets such as smartphones and tablets. If we want to keep up with the latest technological advancements, then this feature is a must-have, not merely a nice-to-have. *[Laughs.]* We want our customers

to use our webpage with ease, no matter what device they are using to access it. Most of the main changes have been at the back end, so to speak, which means that they are not very noticeable on the surface. Nevertheless, these changes have definitely boosted the website's efficiency. Loading speeds, for example, are now much quicker.

Who decides what changes are needed?

Well, apart from the central goal of making the website device-responsive, we also take into account customers' suggestions and requests. For example, we received requests to make it easier for passengers to calculate their total flight fee. Now on the booking page, customers see at the very first step what additional fees they may incur when choosing a particular flight, so they are in a position to make a fully informed and faster choice. I have been researching the way that the booking process is conducted on the websites of countless other airlines, and I have to say that in most of them this issue still remains – customers cannot clearly see what they will be paying for their ticket until practically the last stage of their booking, which makes it very difficult to compare the prices of flight tickets offered by different airlines. For example, in some cases the price that we list for a particular ticket might seem slightly higher than that of another airline, but often when you select the cheaper ticket, all kinds of hidden fees come up in the end.

Can you name other new features that have become immediately visible to the customer?

We've developed a few usability features in the design of the website to help our customers understand the information clearly and quickly. For example, previously during the booking process, passengers sometimes weren't sure if they had added an extra luggage item to only their departing flight, or to their return flight

as well. We have noticeably improved the design for this feature so that all of the booking aspects are now clear. One can easily see what services one has added and how much they cost. One can also see where to click to add a specific feature. The booking process is now much more transparent and simple.

You launched the website's revamped version in November. How have customers responded and what are you doing to continue upgrading the website?

This was only the first stage of the project. So far, we have introduced responsive design features on the homepage, in the booking process and in the check-in pages of the site. We will gradually continue to implement responsive design

The number of bookings made from mobile devices is constantly growing

features on the rest of our website, including the information pages about luggage and ticket purchasing conditions. Since launching the new webpages, we have been actively asking for customer feedback. It is still very early to say much, but the general response has been very positive. People like the layout, and, of course, they are happy that the booking can be done comfortably from a mobile device. We have observed that the number of bookings made from mobile devices is constantly growing. Then again, our customers have always been divided into two fronts – those who enjoy and welcome any kind of change, and those who tend to resist change at the initial stage. We have thought about both and know that it is best to go slowly, without pushing forth drastic visible changes. But, of course, nobody minds a quicker and more comfortable booking process! *[Laughs.]*

Do you look at other sites for inspiration?

I have researched countless other airline homepages in order to see what works. Since we wish to follow the best industry practices, I'm doing as much research as possible. However, the more that I've educated myself by researching other homepages, the more I've noticed which things don't work as well as might initially seem. Many features might look nice from the outside, but when you really put yourself in the shoes of a customer, you will soon enough stumble upon a difficulty and notice something that may not have been planned out well enough. Therefore, rather than borrowing some good features, we've seen many aspects of different websites that could be made to work better. We've taken note of these shortcomings and tried to avoid placing them in our website. Some design features are specific to certain regions where an airline operates, while others might apply to certain age groups. These considerations also have to be taken into account when introducing something new.

What do you like most about working for an airline?

I enjoy the dynamics of the airline work environment. It is not for people who like a slow and calm pace in their professional life! You have to be ready at all times for a situation when anything can happen, with new issues to resolve at very short notice. It is never boring and there is always something to do. I truly enjoy this aspect of my work, even though most of the time, the deadline for a newly assigned task is "yesterday." *[Laughs.]* I left for a peaceful fortnight at a beach just after the first part of the website project was completed. I am well-rested and happy to be back at work now, but one thing that I know for sure is that a good website is never completed! **BO**

A good website is never completed

Olga Trošina has been with *airBaltic* for just over three years, but she has a lot to show for the relatively short amount of time that she has worked at the airline. As the newly appointed head of e-commerce, Trošina has been leading the overhaul of the *airBaltic* website, which was launched in an upgraded version in the middle of November.

Text by **AGRA LIEGE**
Photo by
LAURIS VIKSNE, F64



Which ticket type is the best for you?

What are your priorities when you travel? Knowing these can make planning your next trip a lot easier. Take a look at the three *airBaltic* ticket types and choose the one that best suits your individual needs.

		BASIC	PREMIUM	BUSINESS
		Are you a budget traveller looking for the cheapest option to get from point A to B, and to whom no extra services are important? Just a nice flight at a nice price! In that case, the Basic ticket is the right choice for you.	Do you take frequent business trips and is your top priority smooth and easy travel in order to arrive at your destination well-rested? Choose a Premium ticket for a worry-free trip!	Are you the absolute luxury type, who expects exceptional service and care throughout the whole journey and who values privacy and flexibility? In this case, nothing less than a high-flying Business Class experience is acceptable!
BAGGAGE	Hand baggage	✓ 1 bag (8 kg) + 1 personal item	✓ 1 bag (8 kg) + 1 personal item	✓ 2 bags + 1 personal item
	Checked baggage	€29.99 per 1 bag (20 kg) if booked online	✓ 1 bag (20 kg)	✓ 2 bags (total 40 kg)
	Sports equipment	€34.99	€34.99	✓
CHECK-IN/ AT AIRPORT	Web check-in	✓	✓	✓
	Airport check-in	€10	✓	✓
	Priority check-in + Security fast track at Riga airport	€20	✓	✓
	Priority check-in outside Riga	€14.99	✓	✓
	Business lounge	⊘	⊘	✓
ON BOARD	Advance seat reservation	from €2.99	✓	✓
	Meal and drinks	Pre-order at airbalticmeal.com or buy on board	Pre-order at airbalticmeal.com or buy on board	✓
	Free seat next to you	⊘	⊘	✓
TICKETS	Flight date/time change	⊘	€50*	✓
	Name change	⊘	€50*	✓
	Cancellation with refund	⊘	€100	✓
	Date change warranty	€49.99*	⊘	✓
LOYALTY PROGRAM	Collect PINs	1 PIN per €	2 PINS per €	3 PINS per €

* If there are no tickets left in the original booking class, the passenger must cover the costs of the upgrade to the next available booking class.

Order a tasty meal before your flight

Why wait until you get to a restaurant at your destination or until you return home to your dinner table, when it is so easy to enjoy a delicious meal while on board an *airBaltic* flight?

For the best dining experience, order your meal before your flight from our pre-order menu. Prices start at just EUR 8 for a fine breakfast with fresh berries, a croissant, yoghurt and a glass of prosecco. Or spoil yourself a bit and pay no more than EUR 25 for the most exquisite meals with carefully selected starters, main courses, desserts and drinks.

Why pre-order?

- You will get exactly what you ordered and you can choose from a large variety of meals. The pre-order menu is much wider than the one available on board, with breakfast offers, meat and seafood plates, kids' and vegetarian meals, and dishes for special dietary or religious requirements.
- You will get fresh and healthy dishes prepared right before takeoff in the *LSG Sky Chefs* kitchen, the official *airBaltic* caterer.
- You will be among the first to be served once the plane takes off.

How to pre-order?

Order the meal for your next flight right now, while in the air!

A meal choice is available on the last page of the Food & Drinks menu. For more information and assistance, consult our cabin crew.

Check out the menu and order your meal while you reserve your flight, or up to 24 hours before departure in the **Manage My Booking** section at [airbaltic.com](#). Also available by phone at (+371) 67006006 for international callers or 90001100 within Latvia.

Visit our innovative pre-order website [airbalticmeal.com](#), where you can design your own menu from over 70 different dishes, up to 24 hours before your flight.

Or pre-order your meal **while checking in** for your flight online, from 72 hours up to one hour before departure for flights from Riga.



Happy breakfast



Latvian-style chicken breast



Pork medallions



airBaltic frequent flyer loyalty program PINS

About the program

PINS is the **airBaltic frequent flyer loyalty program**, which uses the loyalty currency PINS. You can collect PINS while flying with airBaltic, shopping at airports, staying in hotels, renting cars, dining out and even by using the **airBaltic Payment Card** or the **PINS MasterCard**. PINS can also be collected 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, 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 **extra baggage allowance**, **priority check-in**, **seat request** and much more to make traveling more pleasant. A special **airBaltic PINS Young Pilot card** is issued to the youngest members starting at the age of two, it allows also children to collect PINS.

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

Benefits for Executive- and VIP-level members of the *airBaltic* PINS program

Those who travel regularly with airBaltic are entitled to receive a wide array of **extra privileges** as members of our PINS frequent flyer program.

For instance, **airBaltic VIP members** travelling on a Basic ticket can use **the Business Class counter to check-in** for a flight, or simply drop off baggage and then just breeze through Riga Airport security! Instead of joining the regular queue at the security check, go **straight to the dedicated Fast Track lane** and save time.

airBaltic's most loyal customers at the Executive and VIP levels can **receive various benefits**, including **priority check-in**, **advanced seat reservation**, and **Fast Track security screening**, to name just a few. For a complete list of privileges offered, please check the table below.

Rules and benefits	Status level		
	BASIC	EXECUTIVE	VIP
			
QUALIFICATION			
Based on Status PINS	registration	25,000 Status PINS	50,000 Status PINS
Based on the number of airBaltic segments flown	⊘	30 (or 15 round trips)	60 (or 30 round trips)
Qualification duration	⊘	1 year	1 year
Status PINS expiration	after 12 months	after 12 months	after 12 months
Reward PINS expiration	after 36 months	no expiration	no expiration
THRESHOLD FOR RE-QUALIFICATION			
Based on Status PINS	⊘	20,000 Status PINS	40,000 Status PINS
Based on the number of airBaltic segments flown	⊘	25	50
ADDITIONAL BENEFITS			
Advance seat request online	⊘	⊘	free
Seat Selection during online check-in	⊘	⊘	free
Business class check-in with basic class ticket type	⊘	✓	✓
Security Fast Track	⊘	in Riga	in Riga
Lounge access	⊘	⊘	✓ (plus one guest and children)
Flight segment upgrade	⊘	⊘	2 upgrade vouchers per year
BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE			
Total checked baggage allowance (free bags and total baggage weight)			
Basic ticket type (Economy class) – Second cabin bag free of charge	⊘	⊘	2 cabin bags (55x40x20 cm max. each)
Premium class ticket type	1 item up to 20kg	2 items up to 40kg	3 items up to 60kg; 1 piece of sports equipment with maximum weight 20 kg free of charge
Business class ticket type	2 items up to 40kg	3 items up to 60kg	4 items up to 80kg 1 sports equipment set with the max. weight of 20 kg included

Now collect pins at Kaligo.com



WELCOME OFFER

Collect 5 000 pins

for hotel stay

Please visit www.kaligo.com/PINS for details on how to collect pins | Offer is valid until January 31, 2016

Tips for spending your pins

airBaltic Flights



from 4 200 pins

SPA Treatments



from 2 850 pins

Julbo Eris Cat 3 Winter Sports Goggles



6 837 pins

Apple TV



from 29 442 pins

and many more at spend.pinsforme.com

All prices include delivery to Latvia and are subject to change. The product range may change. Products are subject to availability.



Photo by Alamy

Fly all across the world via London

airBaltic is proud to cooperate with British Airways to offer our passengers convenient flights worldwide via London.

Book your whole journey in one go at airbaltic.com or britishairways.com. Fly from Riga to London with airBaltic and then further with British Airways to any one of 183 worldwide destinations.

The most popular destinations among Baltic travelers through British Airways are to Tampa, Orlando, Phoenix, Miami, San Francisco and Las Vegas in the USA as well as domestic UK destinations like Glasgow, Edinburgh, Jersey and Aberdeen.

Why book connecting flights together?

Booking connecting flights together in one ticket is the safest and most reliable way to conduct your air travel. Both airlines assume the responsibility for your connection and for taking you to your final destination, which means that you don't have to worry about delays or missed flight connections that are an airline's fault or getting your luggage from one flight to the other.

Two ticket types for your convenience

When booking connecting flights with airBaltic's partner airlines, you can choose

between two ticket types: Premium Economy with one piece of checked luggage, airport check-in and fast-track security control; and Business Class with a full range of services and flexibility.

Transit via London airports

airBaltic flies daily between Riga and London Gatwick airport, arriving in the South Terminal. British Airways flights leave from the North Terminal. To connect between the two terminals, use the inter-terminal shuttle service. It runs every few minutes and the ride takes 2 minutes. Please note that minimum connecting time between flights at Gatwick airport is 1.5 hours.

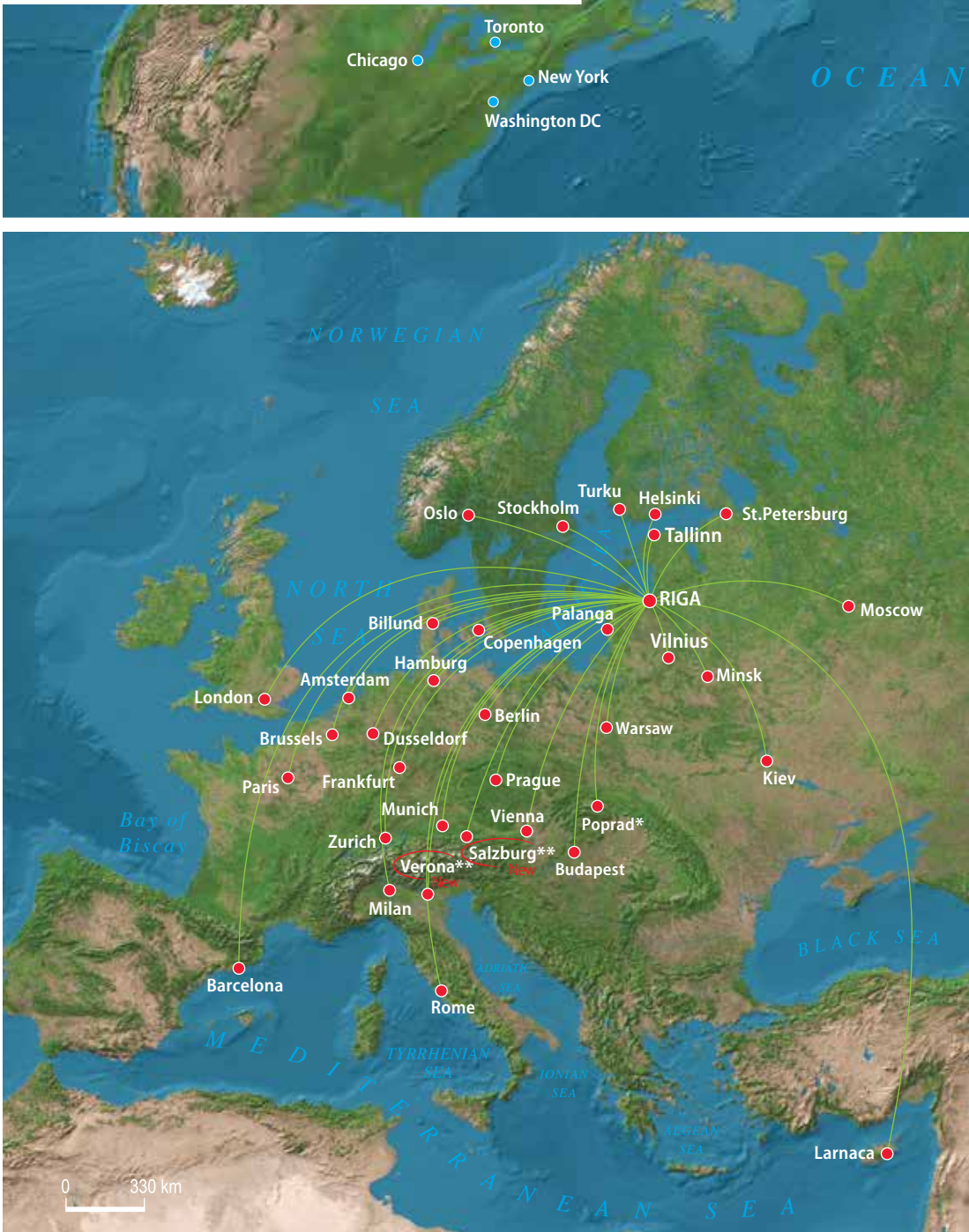
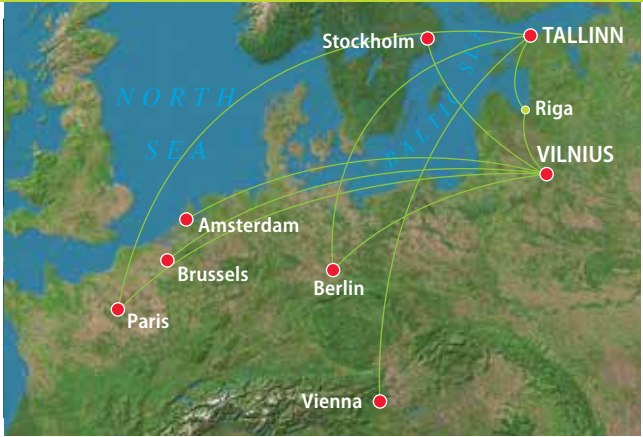
You can also connect to British Airways flights from London Heathrow airport. The recommended minimum connecting time between Gatwick and Heathrow is 3 hours. The best way to travel between the two airports is to take a National Express coach.

BRITISH AIRWAYS BASIC FACTS	
Founded	31 March 1974
Slogan	To Fly. To Serve.
Alliance	one world
Hubs	London Heathrow London Gatwick London City
Fleet	282 aircraft
Destinations	183

airBaltic codeshare partners



Flights from RIGA						Flights to RIGA					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
AMSTERDAM						AMSTERDAM					
BT 617	RIX	AMS	123456-	7:35	09:00	BT 618	AMS	RIX	-2-----	10:00	13:15
BT 619	RIX	AMS	12345-7	16:30	17:55	BT 618	AMS	RIX	1-3-5--	10:20	13:35
BARCELONA						BT 618	AMS	RIX	-----6--	10:40	13:55
						BT 618	AMS	RIX	----4---	11:00	14:15
						BT 620	AMS	RIX	12345-7	19:00	22:15
BERLIN Tegel						BERLIN Tegel					
BT 211	RIX	TXL	1234567	08:15	9:10	BT 212	TXL	RIX	1234567	09:50	12:40
BT 213	RIX	TXL	12345-7	18:20	19:15	BT 214	TXL	RIX	12345-7	19:45	22:35
BILLUND						BILLUND					
BT 147	RIX	BLL	1-3-5-7	12:20	13:20	BT 148	BLL	RIX	1-3-5-7	14:40	17:30
BRUSSELS						BRUSSELS					
BT 601	RIX	BRU	12345--	07:05	09:00	BT 602	BRU	RIX	12345--	09:55	13:40
BT 607	RIX	BRU	-----6--	11:50	13:45	BT 608	BRU	RIX	-----6--	19:15	18:00
BT 603	RIX	BRU	12345-7	16:35	18:30	BT 604	BRU	RIX	12345-7	19:05	22:50
BUDAPEST						BUDAPEST					
BT 491	RIX	BUD	1-3-5-- till Jan 15	12:25	13:50	BT 492	BUD	RIX	1-3-5-- till Jan 15	14:20	17:35
BT 491	RIX	BUD	1--5-- from Jan 18	12:25	13:50	BT 492	BUD	RIX	1--5-- from Jan 18	14:20	17:35
COPENHAGEN						COPENHAGEN					
BT 133	RIX	CPH	1234---	06:05	6:45	BT 134	CPH	RIX	1234---	07:20	10:00
BT 131	RIX	CPH	1234567	07:50	8:30	BT 132	CPH	RIX	1234567	09:05	11:45
BT 139	RIX	CPH	1234567	18:30	19:10	BT 140	CPH	RIX	1234567	19:45	22:25
BT 137	RIX	CPH	1-345- till Jan 15	20:45	21:25	BT 138	CPH	RIX	1-345- till Jan 15	23:00	01:40+1
DUSSELDORF						DUSSELDORF					
BT 235	RIX	DUS	1-3-5-7 till Jan 22	12:10	13:50	BT 236	DUS	RIX	1-3-5-7 till Jan 22	14:20	17:50
BT 235	RIX	DUS	1-3-5-- from Jan 25	12:10	13:50	BT 236	DUS	RIX	1-3-5-- from Jan 25	14:20	17:50
FRANKFURT						FRANKFURT					
BT 241	RIX	FRA	1-345-7 till Jan 17	12:10	13:55	BT 242	FRA	RIX	1-345-7 till Jan 17	14:25	18:00
BT 241	RIX	FRA	1-45-7 from Jan 20	12:10	13:55	BT 242	FRA	RIX	1-45-7 from Jan 20	14:25	18:00
HAMBURG						HAMBURG					
BT 251	RIX	HAM	-2-4---	07:20	08:25	BT 252	HAM	RIX	-2-4---	08:55	11:50
BT 253	RIX	HAM	1-3-5-7 till Jan 17	18:05	19:10	BT 254	HAM	RIX	1-3-5-7 till Jan 17	19:45	22:40
BT 253	RIX	HAM	--3-5-7 from Jan 20	18:05	19:10	BT 254	HAM	RIX	--3-5-7 from Jan 20	19:45	22:40
HELSINKI						HELSINKI					
BT 301	RIX	HEL	123456-	07:50	08:55	BT 326	HEL	RIX	123456-	05:50	06:50
BT 303	RIX	HEL	1234567	13:35	14:40	BT 302	HEL	RIX	1234567	10:25	11:25
BT 307	RIX	HEL	1234567	18:30	19:35	BT 304	HEL	RIX	1234567	15:05	16:05
BT 325	RIX	HEL	12345-7	23:15	00:20+1	BT 308	HEL	RIX	12345-7	21:25	22:25
KIEV						KIEV					
BT 400	RIX	KBP	123456-	07:30	9:20	BT 401	KBP	RIX	123456-	09:50	11:45
BT 404	RIX	KBP	12345-7	18:15	20:05	BT 405	KBP	RIX	12345-7	20:35	22:30
LARNACA						LARNACA					
BT 657	RIX	LCA	-----6-	12:45	16:35	BT 658	LCA	RIX	-----7	11:40	15:40
LONDON Gatwick						LONDON Gatwick					
BT 651	RIX	LGW	-----6-	07:45	08:35	BT 652	LGW	RIX	-----6-	09:20	14:05
BT 651	RIX	LGW	12-4---	09:20	10:10	BT 652	LGW	RIX	12-4---	11:05	15:50
BT 653	RIX	LGW	-3-5-7	15:55	16:45	BT 654	LGW	RIX	-3-5-7	17:30	22:15
MILAN Malpensa						MILAN Malpensa					
BT 629	RIX	MXP	--3-6-	07:55	09:40	BT 630	MXP	RIX	--3-6-	12:15	15:55
BT 629	RIX	MXP	1--5--	13:55	15:40	BT 630	MXP	RIX	1--5--	18:35	22:15
MINSK						MINSK					
BT 412	RIX	MSQ	1-3---7	12:45	14:55	BT 413	MSQ	RIX	1-3---7	15:50	16:00
MOSCOW Sheremetyevo						MOSCOW Sheremetyevo					
BT 424	RIX	SVO	1234567	07:35	10:15	BT 427	SVO	RIX	12-4-6- till Jan 9	06:00	06:45
BT 422	RIX	SVO	123456-	07:35	10:15	BT 427	SVO	RIX	123456-	06:00	06:45
BT 422	RIX	SVO	1234567	18:30	21:10	BT 425	SVO	RIX	1234567	11:00	11:45
BT 426	RIX	SVO	1-3-5-7 till Jan 10	23:25	02:05+1	BT 425	SVO	RIX	123456-	11:00	11:45
BT 426	RIX	SVO	12345-7 from Jan 11	23:25	02:05+1	BT 423	SVO	RIX	1234567	22:00	22:45
MOSCOW Vnukovo						MOSCOW Vnukovo					
BT 418	RIX	VKO	1--56- Jan 1-4	06:00	08:40	BT 419	VKO	RIX	1--56- Jan 1-4	12:15	13:10
BT 418	RIX	VKO	-2--6- Jan 9-12	06:00	08:40	BT 419	VKO	RIX	-2--6- Jan 9-12	12:15	13:10
MUNICH						MUNICH					
BT 221	RIX	MUC	12-5--	07:20	09:00	BT 222	MUC	RIX	12-5--	09:40	13:10
BT 225	RIX	MUC	-----6-	12:10	13:50	BT 226	MUC	RIX	-----6-	14:30	18:00
BT 223	RIX	MUC	1-345-7 till Jan 17	16:35	18:15	BT 224	MUC	RIX	1-345-7 till Jan 17	18:45	22:15
BT 223	RIX	MUC	--345-7 from Jan 20	16:35	18:15	BT 224	MUC	RIX	--345-7 from Jan 20	18:45	22:15
OSLO						OSLO					
BT 151	RIX	OSL	123456-	08:05	09:00	BT 152	OSL	RIX	123456-	09:30	12:20
BT 153	RIX	OSL	12345-7	18:15	19:10	BT 154	OSL	RIX	12345-7	19:45	22:35
PALANGA						PALANGA					
BT 033	RIX	PLQ	1-345-7 till Jan 17	23:15	23:59	BT 032	PLQ	RIX	12-456- till Jan 17	06:00	6:45
BT 033	RIX	PLQ	1-3-5-7 from Jan 18	23:15	23:59	BT 032	PLQ	RIX	12-4-6- from Jan 18	06:00	6:45
PARIS Charles de Gaulles						PARIS Charles de Gaulles					
BT 691	RIX	CDG	123456-	07:30	9:25	BT 692	CDG	RIX	123456-	10:10	13:55
BT 693	RIX	CDG	1-45-7	15:30	17:25	BT 694	CDG	RIX	1-45-7	18:30	22:15
POPRAD						POPRAD					
BT 485	RIX	TAT	-----6- till Jan 9	12:55	13:35	BT 486	TAT	RIX	-----6- till Jan 9	15:05	17:50
BT 485	RIX	TAT	-----6- from Jan 16	12:20	13:20	BT 486	TAT	RIX	-----6- from Jan 16	14:45	17:50
BT 1487	RIX	TAT	-2-4---	15:15	17:15	BT 1488	TAT	RIX	-2-4---	18:10	22:10
BT 1487	RIX	TAT	-2----- from Jan 26	15:15	17:15	BT 1488	TAT	RIX	-2----- from Jan 26	18:10	22:10



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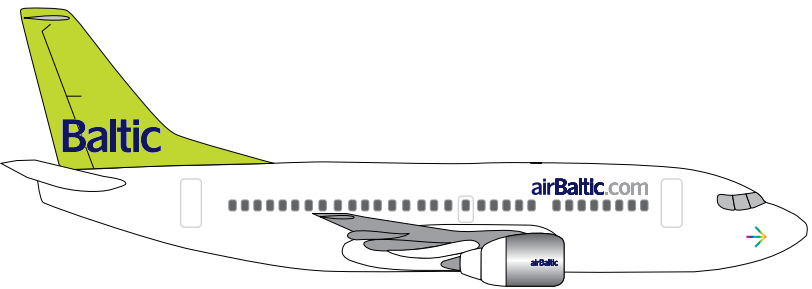
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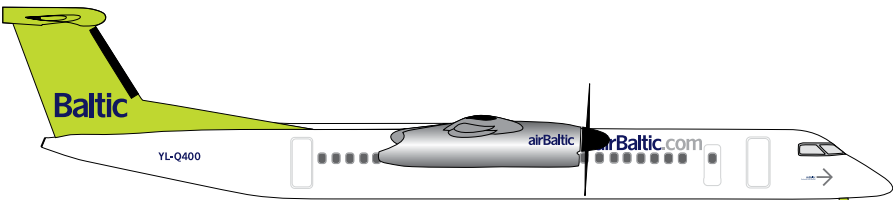
Boeing 737-300

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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