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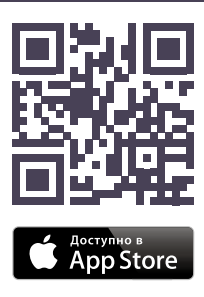
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Martin Alexander Gauss
Chief Executive Officer *airBaltic*

Dear Customer,

Would you wonder about a group of fellow travellers in an animated discussion about an art exhibition? Would you wonder more if half of the people on your flight suddenly burst out singing?

Riga is a European Capital of Culture for 2014, and its presence can be encountered well beyond the confines of the city. About 30,000 participants, staff and volunteers are behind Riga's 2014 cultural programme. Up to 2 million visitors are expected to flock to the city to view a whole series of outstanding cultural events that will take place all year long.

Galleries, theatres, concert halls, museums, schools of arts and crafts, cinemas and whole neighbourhoods of the city have taken months to prepare for this landmark year, and to ensure that everyone can breathe and feel the culture in the air. Furthermore, Riga's partner town of Sigulda will bring sports and culture events closer together. You as a visitor will most likely find traces of your own culture in the Riga 2014 programme, stemming from Riga's history as a meeting point of various nations.

Saturated with culture, you can use Riga as a starting point for escapes further away from modern civilisation. Enjoy the short but intense Baltic summer, with daylight extending almost round-the-clock. The

three countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have about 1000 kilometres of pristine coastline. Their beach destinations are among Europe's best-kept secrets, with fields of fine white sand stretching as far as the eye can see, to the backdrop of green pine forests.

The more sociable visitors will meet lots of fellow vacationers at the seaside resorts of Palanga, Jūrmala and Pärnu, while outside of these towns, those seeking privacy will be able to find their own stretch of empty beach even in the busy season. If you intend to head more inland, then you may find it useful to hop onto one of our brand new buses, which link *airBaltic's* Riga hub with regional centres in the Baltics – Valmiera, Jēkabpils, Bauska and Daugavpils in Latvia, Tartu in Estonia and Kaunas and Panevėžys in Lithuania. The bus schedule is synchronised with *airBaltic* flight arrival and departure times, so that you can enjoy convenient connections to airports in Europe, the Middle East, Russia and the CIS.

Did you know that the history of Riga as a transit hub between West and East goes back over 1000 years, its role as a commercial gateway set down by Vikings, Eastern traders and Hanseatic merchants?

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

Yours,
Martin Alexander Gauss



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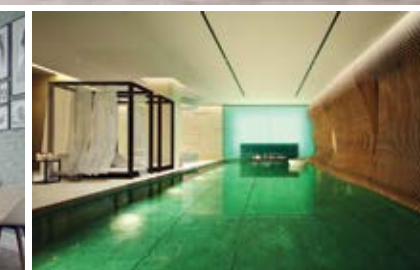
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Уже этим летом в Латвии, в Юрмале, на первой линии моря, в центре «золотой мили» откроет двери жилой квартал, уникальный по своей сути. Всего полтора часа полета от шумной Москвы и вы в своем загородном доме в Европе. Здесь только лучшее: от прогулочных велосипедов с логотипом LEGEND., дизайнерских холлов и безупречного сервиса, до частного пляжа, изысканного ресторана и собственного спа-комплекса с бассейном.

Латвия – спокойная, изысканная европейская страна, с комфортным общением на русском языке, замечательной экологией, культурой, вкусной едой и качественным образованием. Страна с особым притяжением, умиротворяющая и вдохновляющая. Ее жемчужина – курортный город Юрмала славится мягким приморским климатом, целебным воздухом соснового бора, белоснежным песком пляжей, минеральными водами и лечебными грязями.

Квартал LEGEND. формируют три многоквартирных жилых дома: Villa Churchill, Villa Hepburn, Villa Dietrich, частная вилла - Villa Hemingway, клубный дом с рестораном - Villa Tiffany и инфраструктура, не имеющая аналогов на балтийском побережье. Перед архитектором квартала была поставлена задача в архитектурных образах и формах передать неординарность легендарных личностей XX века. При этом LEGEND. – не реплики архитектурных стилей, а сплав характерных акцентов и деталей, прочитанных в новом, современном ключе.

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Down the Danube

Our first big journey as a married couple was a kayak camping trip down the Danube in early June. We had just sold our colour TV to cover the cost of a new German folding kayak and most of our travel expenses. Colour TVs were a novelty and quite expensive back in those days. We felt slightly guilty about selling off the television set, which my wife's parents had bought for us as a wedding present. However, the guilt did not last long, as we both were students and loved outdoor travel.

We began our trip in the southern German town of Ulm, which was an excellent place to start. The kayak could be purchased there and small boats could navigate comfortably enough in that part of the Danube. A dash of adventure would be added by locks that you had to operate manually by yourself. Our final destination was Vienna, over 500 kilometres away. After assembling the new boat by the shoreline, I decided to test it by myself and confidently set out into the stream. However, as a greenhorn with little boating experience, I had underestimated the river's speed. The river seized the boat and I found it impossible to turn back upstream, no matter how hard I paddled. The centre of Ulm whizzed by in a flash.



I WAS AWOKEN BY THE SOUND OF THE RIVER RUSHING BY, QUITE CLOSE TO THE TENT

By the time I found a back eddy and reached the shore, it was late afternoon. People were heading home from work. I hoisted the kayak onto my shoulders and walked back as fast as I could to where I had left my wife. This meant traversing sidewalks

full of rushing pedestrians. With my head ignominiously inside the boat, I could see only two or three meters ahead of me. Fortunately, I did not run into anyone, as those who saw me coming quickly got out of the way.

Once we finally made it onto the river, our progress was swift. Eventually, we found a nice field of grass for setting up camp. I pulled the kayak well up the riverbank and looped the painter loosely around a willow bush. We were confident and happy.

Then, in the pitch darkness of the night, I was awoken by the sound of the river rushing by, quite close to the tent. I stepped out to check on the boat. To my horror, it was afloat in shallow water. Another greenhorn error! This time, I pulled the kayak up almost to the tent and tied it firmly to a willow bush. Incredibly, the kayak was afloat again in the morning.

After that incident, however, we had a glorious time. The river was fast and smooth. The weather was mostly sunny and warm. We sat back, drank the occasional beer and felt like royalty. When we reached Regensburg, we found that the city had been flooded by heavy rains and melting mountain snow. We paddled around on some of the streets, enjoying the sights from a most unusual perspective. The rest of the journey was uneventful, but delightful. BO

TEXT BY EDMUNDS VALDEMARS BUNKSE,
PROFESSOR EMERITUS AND GEOGRAPHER
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Healing mud baths

Anyone who comes to Burgas, Bulgaria by plane can see the red pools just before landing. They are salty paradises for natural healing.

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As daylight breaks, Burgas' sea salt mines are already a hive of activity. Deeply tanned mineworkers slip on their rubber boots and grab their shovels to start another strenuous workday. With determined steps, they set off along the wooden footbridges that cross through the mine's mud pools. They must walk very carefully, not only because the footbridges are narrow, but also because health- and beauty-conscious bathers come here to lie in the salty mud, like contented sea lions at a beach.

The miners go on to their workplace, salt pools in which most of the water has evaporated. There, they shovel the salt onto conveyer belts, which transport the salt further away for drying in large pyramid-shaped piles. Back at the mud pools, the mud-covered bathers rest in the sand, running into the sea to wash off their skin once the mud has dried.

Burgas is the second largest Black Sea port in Bulgaria and the fourth largest city in the country. It is also a popular resort town. Back in 1945, when the Nazi German army withdrew from the region, the retreating soldiers are said to have brought back not only valuables and documents, but also

three train cars filled with mud. The order had been given by the high command of the Third Reich, which had been informed about the beneficial qualities of this Bulgarian natural resource three years earlier. The lye and the mud from the salt pits had been tested in German laboratories in 1942 and found to be useful for health treatments.

The mud is the sedimentary product of a seaside salt lake, dark grey to black in colour. It contains various inorganic

BEAUTY-CONSCIOUS BATHERS COME HERE TO LIE IN THE SALTY MUD, LIKE CONTENTED SEA LIONS AT A BEACH

substances, including silicates, gypsum, iron and aluminium compounds as well as hydroxides and salts. Treatments with this mud are said to have a positive effect on the peripheral nervous system. The mud's thermal properties dilate the blood vessels and open new capillaries. The mud also works well at healing a wide range of skin ailments, arthritis, disc herniations and plexitis. However, it is not to be applied to the

skin in cases of tuberculosis, venereal and malignant diseases.

The healing mud and lye pools lie in the southern part of Lake Atanasovsko and are the largest free outdoor "spa centre" in the country. All locals know the place, and recently an increasing number of foreign visitors have also been arriving.

It is worth learning a few tricks from the locals about the application of the mud. For example, the best times for a truly effective healing process are shortly after sunrise and late in the afternoon. That is because it simply gets too hot when the sun is high in the sky, and the mud on the skin can dry too rapidly. Plus, there is a greater risk of sunburn on unexposed parts of the body.

When applying the mud to your skin, you should smear the area around your heart. You can smear your face, but not your whole head. After the mud has dried, rinse your skin with warm water and then wash it off in the sea. One should not take mud baths when hungry or immediately after eating.

A visit to the natural healing mud, salt and lye pools doesn't cost a single cent. Even the car park next to the mud and lye pools is free. You can also find showers nearby, and the beach is less than a hundred metres away. **BO**



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SPOTLIGHT ON SUMMER

Five things that you should do in Latvia in June

- Stroll through the area around Riga's Grīziņkalns Park, which has a high concentration of old wooden two-storey houses.
- Have dinner at a restaurant with a rooftop terrace, such as *Terrace Riga* on the roof of the *Galleria Riga* shopping centre, or *Gutenbergs* in the Old Town.
- Visit the Tropical Butterfly House at the Botanical Garden of the University of Latvia in Riga, which houses butterflies from the jungles of South America, Asia and Africa.
- Hire a guide and visit the pastures where wild horses roam at the Pape Nature Park in southern Kurzeme. (www.pdf-pape.lv)
- See a grandiose classical music performance to mark the beginning of the open-air concert season at the Dzintari Concert Hall in Jūrmala (June 6).

TEXT BY ZANE NIKODEMUSA AND
ROGER NORUM
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READING LIST



Karl Ove Knausgård,
Boyhood Island (EUR 11.20,
www.vintage-books.co.uk)

The third in the Norwegian author's sensational (and sensationalised) series of autobiographical novels looks at the lives of adults and children living in Norway in the 1970s. His brutally honest and well-narrated writing has been raved about by everyone from James Wood to Zadie Smith, while his candour has alienated most of his family and many of his friends. Perhaps worth reading on account of this alone, but definitely worth perusing on account of his beautiful prose.

Nikil Saval, *Cubed:*
A Secret History of the Workplace (EUR 20.90,
www.randomhouse.com)

Taking an in-depth look at where we work, this compelling and humorous chronicle of white-collar employment reminds us that we didn't always slave away in cramped 'counting houses' (as offices were known in the 19th century). The book sheds light on how we came to spend so much of our lives in cubicles and in the social worlds of our workplaces. Even better, it offers ideas on how we might improve our work conditions.

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ON THIS MONTH'S MENU

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

THE TREND:



Music Latvia's most famous post-folklore group *Ilgi* has gained much international acclaim on the world music scene. Following extensive concert tours abroad, the band is returning for a summer concert series in its native land. The summer solstice is a special time for *Ilgi* and for thousands of Latvians, many of whom play recordings of the band's music as they celebrate the country's most significant holidays. (www.ilgi.lv)

Beauty Refreshing and moisturising hydrolats or floral waters made of medicinal plants from forests and fields have grown quite popular among beauty-conscious women in Latvia. The waters contain valuable elements from the plants, which tonify the skin even on the hottest days of summer. Among the wide selection available are extracts of linden blossoms, forest raspberries, camomile and jasmine. (www.graenn.eu)



Design One of Latvia's best-known jewellers, Andris Lauders, has created new works especially for the exhibition *Amber in Contemporary Art Jewellery* at Riga's *Putti* gallery. The pieces are reminiscent of fishing boats and by extension pay homage to the sea, from which most Baltic amber is obtained. The exhibition can be seen until July 26. (www.putti.lv)

BIGTIME MUSIC IN A SMALL TOWN



Cēsis is one of Latvia's most beautiful towns, and now it also boasts one of the most beautiful concert halls in the country. Inaugurated at the end of May, the Cēsis Vidzeme Concert Hall will host high-level musical performances all summer long. Artistic director Arturs Maskats is one of Latvia's most noteworthy composers as well as a former advisor to the head of the Latvian National Opera. He hopes to bring a breath of the world's great concert halls to the picturesque town. (www.cesukoncertzale.lv)



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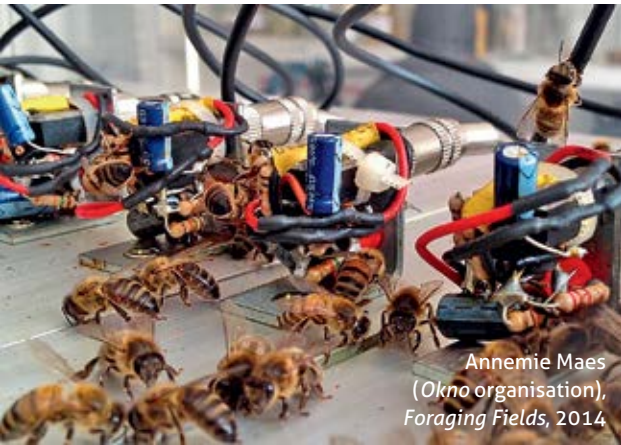
TEXT BY ZANE NIKODEMUSA
PUBLICITY PHOTOS AND COURTESY OF THE
LATVIAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Kings of Leon concert Mežaparks open-air stage, Riga June 25

The upcoming concert by US rock band *Kings of Leon* promises to be the most noteworthy open-air concert in the Baltics this year. Riga is one of only eight European stops on the group's new *Mechanical Bull* concert tour, which is named after the ensemble's Grammy Award-nominated and most recent studio album. According to lead vocalist Anthony Caleb Followill, "It's the first time in a while that our fans have had a breather from us...and people are really excited. We're going to try to bring something special to the table." The latest recording by *Kings of Leon* has a similar sound to the band's first critically acclaimed albums *Youth & Young Manhood* (2003) and *Aha Shake Heartbreak* (2004).

Tickets at www.ticketpro.lv and www.bilesuserviss.lv
Price: EUR 45–55

JUNE 2014



Annemie Maes
(Okno organisation),
Foraging Fields, 2014

Fields art exhibition Arsenāls Exhibition Hall, Riga Until August 3

The *Fields* international art exhibition is a key event of the *Riga 2014 – European Capital of Culture* programme. On display are approximately 40 works by artists from all over the world, with a special focus on Central, Eastern and Northern Europe. The exhibition presents a lively landscape of art that challenges existing viewpoints and proposes positive visions for the future. The artists have made new combinations of existing fields in imaginative ways, fusing and navigating between the social and the natural as well as the scientific and the emotional.

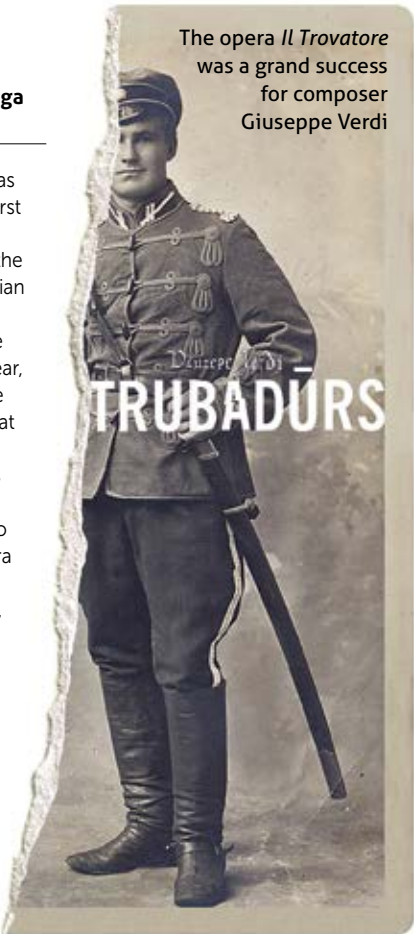
More information at www.rixc.org/fields
Torņa iela 1

Riga Opera Festival Latvian National Opera, Riga June 3-15

The Riga Opera Festival was founded in 1998 and was the first festival of its size and scale in Eastern Europe. Every summer, the festival marks the end of the Latvian National Opera's performance season with an overview of the best moments of the previous year, offering fans a chance to relive their favourite scenes or see what they've missed.

This year's programme features Richard Wagner's opus *Rienzi*, *Rise and Fall*, along with Gaetano Donizetti's most celebrated opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and one of the 20th century's best operas, *The Love for Three Oranges* by Sergei Prokofiev. Last, but not least, is Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore*, which was a grand success for the composer and still maintains its place in the golden classics of opera repertoire.

Tickets at www.bilesuparadize.lv
Price: EUR 9–65
Aspazijas bulvāris 3



The opera *Il Trovatore*
was a grand success
for composer
Giuseppe Verdi

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TEDxRiga 2014 forum
Splendid Palace theatre, Riga
June 12

The *TEDxRiga 2014* technology, entertainment and design forum is taking place this year at *Splendid Palace*, the oldest and most ornate movie theatre in Riga. This year's theme is *The Agriculture of Culture*, with answers sought for such questions as how to seed, grow, protect and share culture. Started as a four-day conference in California 25 years ago, *TED* has grown to support world-changing ideas with multiple initiatives. The annual *TED Conference* invites the world's leading thinkers and doers to speak for 18 minutes. Local, self-organised events around the world are branded *TEDx*. Among the lecturers at this year's forum in Riga are lawyer and public speaker Lauris Liepa, science journalist Sandra Kropa, entrepreneur, investor and IT engineer Jānis Bergs, Latvian-based Vietnamese artist Kao Viet Nguyen and American-Latvian chef Kārlis Celms.

More information at www.tedxriga.com
Elizabetes iela 61

Riga 2014 Solstice celebrations
Mežaparks open-air stage, Riga
June 21–22

This year, Riga will host a grand celebration of the summer solstice during *Riga 2014 Solstice*, a two-day event highlighting various solstice traditions and rituals from Latvia and other countries. The programme includes the dance performance *Lec, saulīte! (Rise, Fair Sun!)*, presentations by international musicians participating in the World Summer Solstice Festival, a World Beer Parade featuring beer brands from Latvia and elsewhere, and the Riga Solstice Crafts Fair. The celebrations will close on June 22 with dancing and singing all night long.

More information at www.riga2014.org



Ernie Haase & Signature Sound concert
Riga Congress Centre, Riga
June 10

Ernie Haase & Signature Sound is the world's leading gospel music quartet and the recipient of numerous Grammy Award nominations. It has won several GMA Dove Awards and has a number of gold and platinum DVD disks to its credit. The musicians are known for uniting 21st-century ideas with enduring quartet traditions from the 1950s.

The group's *Tribute to the Cathedral Quartet* DVD (2010) briefly topped the Billboard Music Video chart upon its release, relegating videos by *The Beatles* and the *Rolling Stones* to second and third place.

Tickets at www.bilesuserviss.lv
Price: EUR 11-31
Kr. Valdemāra iela 5



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DETAILS / RIGA 2014

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RĪGA 2014

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

TEXT BY AGRA LIEGE
PHOTOS BY ANDRIS ZEGNERS

Amber Vein in Riga

Ancient gemstone on display
at museums of the European
Capital of Culture

A rare type of thread and a 4000-year-old elk's head are among the fascinating amber items on display this year, during Riga's tenure as a European Capital of Culture for 2014. Set in five different museums, the *Amber Vein* series of exhibitions reveals the history of this yellow gemstone and its use throughout the ages.

The Latvian National Museum of History is highlighting the mysterious fossilized tree resin in *Amber – Jewel of the Baltic Sea*. The exhibition's pride and joy is the aforementioned elk's head, estimated to date from around 2000 BC and ranking among the world's top ten art objects of this type from that period. The museum is also known for housing one of the largest amber collections in the world, with approximately 15,000 objects.

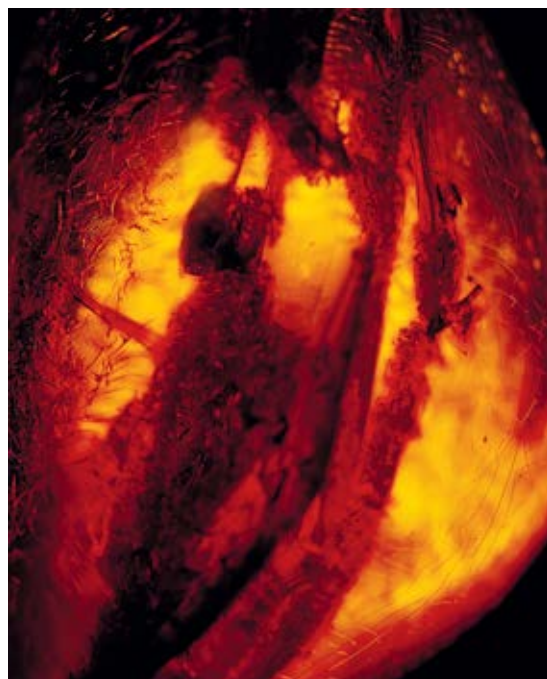
The Latvian Museum of Natural History, for its part, has since January been displaying the permanent exhibition *Amber through the Ages*. The physical and mechanical properties of amber have

always been of interest to scientists, and much still remains unknown. One fairly recent discovery is the creation of amber thread by Latvian scientist Inga Ļašenko. Although applications for the new material are still being researched, the thread was primarily made with medical uses in mind, as amber is known to delay blood clotting. A video showing the acquisition process of the thread can also be seen at the exhibition.

The exhibition *Amber – the Myths and the Science* at the Pauls Stradiņš Museum of Medical History looks at amber in folk medicine. The gemstone has always been surrounded by a mystical aura, with various unverifiable healing properties attributed to it. Among the treasures found at the museum are special recipes of medical remedies that make the use of amber.

One thing is clear – there is more in amber than meets the eye, and there is more of it to see this month than ever before in Riga. **BO**

www.riga2014.org



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Blow-Up. Antonioni's Classic Film and Photography Albertina Until August 17

This exhibition provides a great opportunity to again watch one of the most iconic films from the 1960s – Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966). The film's imprint on cinema was just as powerful as its influence on photography and on cultural history as a whole, providing a unique portrait of London during the swinging 1960s in all of their splendour and decline. The film is

replete with references to a wide range of photographic styles, including fashion photography, social reporting, pop art and abstract photography. In addition to stills from the film, photographs that can actually be seen in *Blow-Up* and pictures illuminating the cultural and artistic context of the movie will be shown. Among the exhibited photographers are David Bailey (the man on whom the protagonist in *Blow-Up* is based), Terence Donovan and Richard Hamilton. And of course, photos of these photographers' legendary muses – Jane Birkin, Veruschka and Vanessa Redgrave – will also be on display.

Albertinaplatz
① www.albertina.at



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This year, the *Fondation Cartier* is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a special exhibition programme. Founded by the luxury jewellery maker Cartier in 1984, the foundation commissioned an exhibition space to display the works of the world's most prominent contemporary artists. Designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, the space opened its doors ten years later, in 1994. In the 30 years since its inception, the *Fondation Cartier* has become one of the most respected contemporary art institutions in Paris, with a collection of around 1,000-1,200 works by

about 400 artists of 30 different nationalities. The central event of this year's anniversary celebrations is *Vivid Memories*, a multimedia exhibition that will feature new artworks every two months. Among those whose oeuvres will be shown is Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake – who plans on creating a special light installation in the foundation's garden in cooperation with *Artemide* – as well as Australian-born designer Marc Newson and American film director David Lynch, who will put on a garden theatre show of films by various artists.

261 boulevard Raspail
① www.fondation.cartier.com

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PUBLICITY PHOTOS AND BY ALAMY

Amsterdam

Holland Festival June 1 – July 29

The Holland Festival is one of Europe's most distinguished art forums, having been an important part of the continent's cultural life since 1947. Its repertoire features works that have been created specifically to premiere at the festival as well as powerful performances that have already been shown elsewhere. This year, the programme is replete with events by some of the world's best artists. Among them is Canadian magical theatre master Robert Lepage, who is also known as the Alchemist, and who will be presenting *Spades*, the first part of his new *Playing Cards*

performance cycle. Then there is legendary British director Peter Brook, nicknamed "the Socrates of theatre". Despite having gone completely blind, he continues to direct theatre performances. In Amsterdam, Brook will be presenting the Dutch premiere of *The Theatre of Astonishment*. Another mammoth event is *River of Fundament*, a five-hour-long movie that US artist Matthew Barney made in cooperation with Berlin-based American composer Jonathan Bepler. The film was inspired by American writer Norman Mailer's novel *Ancient Evenings*, which depicts events in Ancient Egypt from 1290 to 110 BC.

① www.hollandfestival.nl



The bitter tears of
Petra von Kant

© HANS JÖRG MICHEL

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London

External indicative CGI

Summer pavilion at
the Serpentine Gallery
Kensington Gardens
From June 26

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Each year, the design of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion in Kensington Gardens gets entrusted to a leading contemporary architect, making the pavilion a major London attraction during the summer. The pavilion serves both as an architectonic experimental space and as a litmus test of the newest trends in architecture. Last year's architect was Sou Fujimoto of Japan, whose pavilion was seen by a record-breaking 200,000+ visitors. This year's pavilion – the 14th overall – will be designed by Chilean architect Smiljan Radic, who plans to construct a nearly transparent cylindrical structure

resembling a snail's shell. According to the architect, the pavilion will continue along the tradition of constructing small and romantic structures in parks and gardens, which was popular from the 16th to the early 19th centuries. The 48-year-old architect is among the youngest to be showcased at the Serpentine Gallery and is known for designing original structures that unite natural and artificial materials as well as rough and smooth surfaces. Among his creations are cliffside luxury villas along Chile's Pacific coast and museum projects in Latin America.

Kensington Gardens
www.serpentinegallery.org

Munich

Munich Opera Festival

June 21 – July 31

Founded more than 130 years ago, the Munich Opera Festival is among the world's oldest musical theatre events. Nowadays, the festival's programme features the best works that have been shown at the Munich Opera this and previous seasons, assembling outstanding musical talents to perform them. This summer, Polish director Krzysztof Warlikowski will be in the festival spotlight, with several of his directed works on the repertoire. One of them is *Kabaret Warszawski*, a harsh musical portrayal of contemporary human and political realities in Eastern Europe that will be presented by Warsaw's Nowy Teatr.

Latvian soprano Kristine Opolais will also be performing at this year's Munich Opera Festival, portraying Vitellia in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera *La Clemenza di Tito*, which will be directed by Jan Bosse (Germany) and conducted by Adam Fischer (Hungary). In another eagerly waited event, virtuoso tenor Jonas Kaufmann (Germany) will present *Liederabend*, a special evening of song. For years, well-known German director Peter Konwitschny has been responsible for adding a little provocative spice to the festival, and this year is no exception, with Konwitschny directing and Gabriel Feltz (Germany) conducting Richard Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*.

www.muenchner-opern-festspiele.de



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TEXT BY UNA MEISTERE,
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Little Black Book Athens

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◀ Metamatic:taf

An art gallery, bar, café and night club all in one, *Metamatic:taf* provides a platform for all possible creative ideas and initiatives, even the craziest ones. In a sense, this establishment is the heart of the new Athens. Since 2009, it has been located in a decrepit building in the Monastiraki district and is a beehive of activity seven days a week. *Metamatic:taf* is a venue for exhibitions, concerts, literary readings, theatre and dance performances, serving as both a vibrant cultural centre and a rendezvous point.

Normanou 5

ⓘ <http://theartfoundation.metamatic.gr>



▼ Papaioannou

A fantastic venue for enjoying a taste of the legendary Greek islands while staying in the metropolis. This fish tavern is popular with the locals and is situated in the Mikrolimano port of the Piraeus district, about a 15-minute taxi ride from downtown Athens. *Papaioannou* stands right on the shores of the Mediterranean, in a small bay that is filled with yachts and fishing boats. It offers the catch of the morning, which consists of superbly prepared seafood, shrimp and other seafood. A good time to come is for a late lunch or early dinner, when you can unhurriedly enjoy the scene of the setting sun adding tones of pink and orange to the sky and to the white yachts bobbing in the sea. It is advisable to reserve a table in advance.

Akti Koumoundourou 42



▲ Café Avissinia

A great place to visit if you want to get closer to Athens' untamed soul. The *Café Avissinia* can be found right in the heart of the Monastiraki district in a square that bears the same name and that is also famous for having one of the most charming flea markets in the city. On Sundays, pianists and accordionists perform one after another on the ground floor. Greek families gather there and passionately sing along, sometimes breaking a plate or two in the enthusiasm of a wonderful musical moment. The boudoir-style interior is covered with paintings from the owners' art collection, with hardly any free space left on the walls. The windows on the second floor offer a marvellous view of the Acropolis, while the rooftop hosts an open terrace. The food is excellent and rooted in the traditions of classical Greek cuisine.

Kinetou 7

ⓘ www.avissinia.gr

◀ New Hotel

A stay at the *New Hotel*, which opened its doors two years ago, is like a voyage in itself. The hotel is a truly inspiring place, and on top of that, you are guaranteed a great night's sleep in an extremely comfortable bed. Designed by the Brazilian architects' bureau *Campagna Brothers* – with the added participation of architectural students from the University of Thessaly – the *New Hotel* was built on the sight of an existing hotel. The owners gave the creative team complete artistic freedom.

Accordingly, some of the furniture and decorative installations in the hallways were made of various items from the defunct hotel, with wooden door frames, drawer parts and door handles nailed to the wall in a seemingly chaotic fashion. However, every nuance of the interior has actually been thought out to the finest detail, with a marvellous balance achieved between the explosion of ideas and functionality, turning a night spent at the *New Hotel* into a unique experience.

Filellinon 16

ⓘ www.yeshotels.gr



▲ Juergen Teller: Macho DESTE Foundation June 20 – October 29

The DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art is one of Athens' main cultural epicentres. It was founded in 1983 by Greek entrepreneur and art collector Dakis Joannou. The foundation is based in a former sock factory, which is open to the public only when exhibitions are on display.

This summer, it will be worth dropping in to have a look at the *Macho* exhibition by German photographer Juergen Teller. The photographer is famous for his ability to establish such a close sense of intimacy with his models that the subject matter in many of his photographs looks unstaged, as with such erstwhile icons as photographer Cindy Sherman – whose breasts he is cupping from behind in one famous shot – or a young Kate Moss lying in an unmade bed, her hair dyed dirty pink, looking like she has just woken up.

Filellinon 11, Nea Ionia

ⓘ www.deste.gr



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Estonian song and dance celebration touches hearts

From July 4 to 6

The Estonian song and dance celebrations are unique events that bring together giant choirs of 25,000 singers and thousands of dancers. More than 70,000 spectators enjoy the concerts and join in with the most popular songs.

Fly to Tallinn
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The Song Celebrations have been held since 1869 and have become an important anchor of Estonian identity. Twice in history, the celebrations have led to Estonian independence. During the 19th century, they were at the core of the national awakening of a peasant people that valued its own language and cultural heritage. The festivals strengthened the Estonians' sense of identity as a common nation, eventually resulting in the proclamation of Estonia's independence in 1918.

After the Second World War and during the Soviet occupation, the Song Celebrations helped to keep Estonia's national identity alive. The Soviet authorities understood the propaganda potential of the celebrations and added Soviet songs to the repertoire, but the people continued to sing their favourite national songs. In 1988, several hundred thousand people gathered at the Song Celebrations and sang for days and nights in a collective call for their country's freedom. This Singing Revolution led to Estonian independence once again in 1991.

More than 20 years have passed since Estonia regained its statehood, and the Song Celebrations remain as popular as ever. Estonians from all over the world come home for the festivities as they would for a family gathering. The repertoire is challenging and choirs practice for two years in order to pass the selection auditions. According to a recent study, 90% of Estonians have had a personal experience with the Song Celebration as either performers or audience members. The Song Celebration is listed as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

This summer, the Song Celebration will be held on July 4-6 under the theme *Touched by Time. The Time to Touch*. The event is far more than just a few choirs singing. It is a powerful emotional experience in which positive energy engulfs both the singers and the audience. This is one of the rare times when the otherwise cool and reserved Estonians show and share their emotions.

A Dance Celebration is held alongside the Song Celebration, in which about 8,600 dancers aged 8 to 80 form complicated patterns on the grass in three separate performances.

All of these events fit into one weekend. In addition, with more than 40,000 participants of the Song and Dance Celebrations in town, many spontaneous small concerts and dance performances will also be held during this special weekend. Why not enjoy a performance of the Dance Celebration on Friday evening at 6 PM, or on Saturday or Sunday morning at 11 AM? Don't miss the colourful procession with all of the participants on Saturday. It starts in the city centre at 2 PM and winds through Tallinn for five kilometres to the Song Celebrations.

The first concert of the Song Celebration starts at 8 PM on Saturday with a classical journey through the repertoire of all celebrations since 1869 and with the

participation of selected choirs. The second concert starts at 14 PM on Sunday and offers an enjoyable festival atmosphere for the whole day. Numerous other concerts with violins, zithers and folk music will be held around the city in the evenings.

For art aficionados, the Tallinn Art Hall is presenting *OrnaMentalne*, an exhibition of traditional patterns, while Kumu (a branch of the Art Museum of Estonia) is showing large-scale summer exhibitions by artists Nikolai Triik and Raul Meel. The museum can be found in Kadriorg, just a short walk from the Song Celebrations through Kadriorg Park. The Mikkeli Museum, also in Kadriorg, is exhibiting a private collection of Estonian classics. **BO**

www.kunstimuuseum.ee



All concerts and performances take place outdoors. Tickets are on sale for EUR 4-50 at www.laulupidu.ee

TEXT BY KRISTINE BUDZE, PASTAIGA
PUBLICITY PHOTO / PP MØBLER

Centenary for King of Chairs



The *Round Chair* became famous after being used by rival candidates John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon during the first televised US presidential election debate in 1960

Hans J. Wegner (1914-2007) is considered to be the best Danish designer in history. Popularly known as the King of Chairs, he spent his entire creative life seeking to create the perfect chair, saying that such a task could actually never be completed.

During his long and illustrious career, Wegner drew more than 2500 sketches for about 1,000 pieces of furniture of different types, with his main focus, of course, on chairs. Even today, a number of Wegner-designed chairs are still considered to be practically ideal furniture items that don't fall out of use or out of style, regardless of the changes in fashion trends.

Wegner worked in the Modernist era, a time of industrial mass-production, when glass and steel were all the rage, to be later followed by plastic. However, Wegner did not succumb to the spirit of his times so easily and remained faithful to centuries-old carpentry traditions. All of his most famous chairs were made of solid wood, in cooperation with various carpentry workshops.

The designer knew how to soften the cold and harsh Modernist aesthetics that were popular in his day with the warmth that wood provides, together with surfaces polished by craftsmen's hands and the familiar authenticity of simple country furniture. Wegner's furniture fits in well with both the long-standing Scandinavian values of quality craftsmanship and natural materials.

The designer's chairs are so comfortable to sit in that kings, queens and other heads of state have taken quite a liking to them. During the first televised presidential election debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon, the two opposing candidates sat on *Round Chairs* designed by Wegner. It is said that another VIP waited for two years before his chair was delivered. The man in question was Danish king Frederick IX, who had ordered a four-legged *Valet Chair* that Wegner was still testing. The hanger-shaped chair back was designed to keep a jacket placed on it wrinkle-free, while the seat tilted up for use as a pants hanger.

A number of Wegner's chairs continue to be made by *Carl Hansen*, *PP Møbler* and *Fritz Hansen* and can be found in various types of interiors all over the world. Proud owners say that some of these chairs continue to fulfil their function even decades after being purchased, experiencing just the occasional cleaning with soap and water. To commemorate the centenary of the Danish King of Chairs, the *Designmuseum Danmark* in Copenhagen is hosting the exhibition *Wegner – Just One Good Chair* until November 2. A book of the same name has also been released in Danish, English and German. **BO**



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Hear colour: Neil Harbisson

Colorblind artist Neil Harbisson is the first person on the planet to have a passport photo that shows his cyborg nature

TEXT BY KOREN HELBIG
PHOTOS BY LARS NORGAARD

Neil Harbisson literally listens to colour through an antenna inserted just beneath his skull, an unconventional fusion with technology that makes him one of the world's first living cyborgs. "You are not using technology or wearing technology," says Harbisson, who is half Spanish and half British. "That, for me, is feeling cyborg." The 31-year-old was born with achromatopsia, a rare condition that limits his colour perception to black and white. His cybernetic transformation began in 2004,

when he and a friend developed an electronic webcam capable of translating colours into sound frequencies. "It was like a whole new world. Suddenly there was sound and then I had to start learning the colours as if I was a four-year-old," he says. At first the webcam required headphones and a cumbersome 5-kg computer, but over time it morphed into a single, antenna-like device arcing from the base of his neck to the front of his forehead – an eyeborg. Last December, Harbisson finally found a surgeon willing to implant the eyeborg's computer chip inside his skull.



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He remained awake during the three-hour surgery in Barcelona, when three holes were drilled through his skull – two to support the antenna and the third for the audio entry point, which delivers sound directly to his skull and allows him to hear through bone conduction in the same way as a dolphin.

Afterwards, Harbisson realised that he could feel the antenna as an extension of his own body. “If I close my eyes and someone touches the antenna, I feel it,” he says. “I do everything with it. I shower with it and I sleep with it. The only thing I can’t do is submerge. I have gone swimming but I swim like an old lady.”

Harbisson is already known globally for intricate art projects that blur the line between vision and sound, such as sound portraits made after listening to the colours of people’s faces. Now the antenna is equipped with wireless *Bluetooth* technology, opening up a whole new world of creative expression.

“I no longer need to perceive the colours that are in front of me. I can perceive the colours that someone else is seeing,” he said. “We demonstrated that in the first talk that I did about this in March. Someone in New York sent images to my head direct from Times Square and I was able to sense all of the different colours that she was Skyping.”

Harbisson, who in 2010 launched the Cyborg Foundation to help “humans become cyborgs”, realises that questions do arise about the wisdom of uniting humans and technology. However, he believes that such a fusion provides a key to better understanding our own reality.

“As humans, we have focused a lot on extending our knowledge, but we haven’t focused at all on extending our senses and our perception of reality,” he says. “The more we extend our perception of reality, the more knowledge we will gain from reality.”



This month, Neil will address the NEXT Conference in Seoul, South Korea, on June 19 before heading to France for the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity on June 21. **BO**

www.eyeborg.wix.com/neil-harbisson



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A Midsummer Night's Dream

An insight into Latvian rites on the year's shortest night

Jāņi is a colourful and slightly mysterious Latvian festivity that begins on the evening of June 23 and continues at least until sunrise on June 24, or St. John's Day. The celebration marks the summer solstice, when the Northern Hemisphere experiences the longest day and the shortest night of the year. But who is *Jānis*, the mythical patron of the celebration whose name is chanted in many of the 4,500 Latvian folk songs dedicated to this unique day?

Sometimes extolled as a son of God (*Dieva dēls*) in Latvian folklore, *Jānis* does not, however, bear any relation to Saint John the Baptist (other than the fact that the name *Jānis* is the Latvian equivalent of the English *John*). *Jānis'* roots are to be sought far back into pagan times, well before the 13th-century conquest and Christianisation of what is now Latvia by German crusaders.

The *Jāņi* festivities incorporate a tribute to the sun, which is demonstrated by various fire rituals and by staying up all night to welcome the sunrise. There is also the element of a fertility cult, as reflected in a number of rites with obvious sexual innuendos. For example, some of the traditional *līgo* songs, which are sung only on that night, refer to the search for a mythical fern blossom. As those who are familiar with botany well know, ferns don't bloom; but they are said to do so during *Jāņi* night, providing a legitimate excuse for a young man and a young woman to go off and look for the blossom together. The birth of a child nine months later is a sure sign of the couple's success in this endeavour...

SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL *LĪGO* SONGS REFER TO THE SEARCH FOR A MYTHICAL FERN BLOSSOM



Centuries ago, the erotic undertones of the solstice celebrations were not to the Church's liking, which attempted to reorient the theme of the festivities toward the cult of St. John the Baptist. Nevertheless, Latvians continued to pay tribute to the mythical horse-riding harbinger of sun, fertility and blooming during the *Jāņi* celebrations.

In one sense, *Jāņi* is a festival of liberation and non-compliance with erstwhile objections to its nature. It is a "let your hair down" celebration reminiscent of the famous ball scene in Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*. However, rather than wearing carnival masks, the daughters of *Jānis* adorn their heads with flower wreaths, while the sons of *Jānis* wear wreaths made of oak leaves.

Jāņi is associated with the diligent preparation of various foods, *līgo* songs, bonfire-jumping, staying up all night wearing a wreath or garland, and, if luck will have it, setting out in search of the blooming fern with a special someone... **BO**



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Time for a picnic

TEXT | PHOTO | STYLE BY ZANE JANSONE,
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Turkey and quinoa burgers with yoghurt and curry sauce

Ingredients
(8-10 burgers)
0.5 kg ground turkey meat
1/2 cup quinoa
1 cup water
1 pinch sea salt
1 egg
1 small onion
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1/2 tsp. sea salt
1 pinch freshly ground pepper
1 handful fresh herbs (parsley and coriander leaves)

Preparation
Rinse the quinoa and pour into a pot. Add the water and salt. Boil for 12-15 minutes until the quinoa is soft and almost all of the water has been absorbed. Finely chop the onion and herbs. Put the turkey meat into a bowl. Add the boiled quinoa, egg, chopped onion and herbs, Worcestershire sauce, sea salt and pepper. Knead in all of the ingredients. Heat up a grill or grill pan. Make flat burger patties from the meat mixture. Fry for 3-4 minutes on each side until the meat is sufficiently cooked. Prepare the yoghurt sauce by adding the mustard, lemon juice, sea salt and curry to the yoghurt. Keep in a cool place until serving time. Slice the burger buns in half. Slice up the tomatoes and red onion. Lay out a salad leaf, tomato slice, meat patty and onion slice on the bottom half of each bun. Pour some yoghurt sauce on top of each garnished meat patty and cover with the top half of the bun.

Strawberry and rhubarb drink

Ingredients
3-4 rhubarb stalks
2/3 cup Demerara cane sugar
1 cup water
1 lime peel
1 vanilla pod
3 limes (juice)
2 cups strawberries
1 litre Perrier or S.Pellegrino or other natural mineral water
1 bag (0.5 litres) ice cubes

Preparation
Peel the rhubarb stalks, cut them into small pieces and place into a small kettle. Add the sugar, water, lime peel and vanilla pod. Boil at low heat until the rhubarb is soft (about 5 minutes). Add the strawberries and boil for a couple of more minutes. Cool and strain through a sieve. Fill a jug half-full with ice. Add the strawberry-rhubarb syrup and mineral water. Garnish with strawberry and lime slices if desired.

A PASSION
TO DREAM

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ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION MAY HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS



Wikipaella founders
Guillermo Navarro
(from left), Jose Maza and
Paco Alonso

TEXT BY KOREN HELBIG
PHOTOS BY WIKIPAELLA

The fight for authentic paella

Have you eaten any paella lately? Bad news: you may have contributed to the global "prostitution" of one of Spain's most emblematic dishes.

At least that's what three men from Spain's Valencia region, where paella originated, are saying. They also say that they are determined to fight back. They fear that their country's famed saffron rice dish is being corrupted by tourism and celebrity chefs like Jamie Oliver, who have dared to add such unconventional ingredients as chorizo, peas and avocado.

Accordingly, the trio has launched *Wikipaella*, a new website to police "infringements against authentic paella". It is also designed to educate tourists who want to know more about the real paella and to help people find authentic paella at restaurants in Spain and abroad.

"We found chicken nuggets in a traditional paella once, which is absolutely horrible," says *Wikipaella* co-founder Guillermo Navarro.

An advertising executive, Navarro began to notice how the famed dish was losing its authenticity while working in the United States and the UK, where he sampled second-rate paella advertised as "traditional". Particularly galling were chefs who insisted on adding chorizo, a Spanish sausage and a key ingredient of British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's paella.

"I don't have a problem with Jamie Oliver or with any innovations to paella," Navarro says. "However, it's wrong when Jamie or other chefs say that the paella they have invented is 'traditional' or 'authentic'. These labels evoke a proud heritage that can add to the price, which is cool when it's true, but false when you are lying."

When Navarro moved to Madrid, he realised that even the Spanish capital was serving up substandard versions.


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WIKIPAELLA ANALYSED
170 RECIPES TO CREATE A DEFINITIVE
LIST OF WHAT IS ALLOWED IN AUTHENTIC
VALENCIAN PAELLA

“Traditional paella is being prostituted around the whole world because a lot of tourists are looking for that dish and it’s big business. However, traditional paella is simple, even plain, because we make it with just six or seven basic ingredients. If you add more, then it’s prostitution,” Navarro adds.

Wikipaella analysed 170 recipes to create a definitive list of what is allowed in authentic Valencian paella, which is cooked on a wide, flat pan, usually over the coals of an open fire. Finally the trio decided: yes to broad beans, tomatoes, saffron, paprika and, of course, Valencian rice. Meats such as rabbit, chicken, and even duck and snails are also common. However, almost everything else is forbidden.

“It’s about zero-kilometre gastronomy, or using the ingredients that are available within a one-kilometre radius,” Navarro explains.

Like other Spaniards from the Valencian region, Navarro is fiercely protective of paella because it is a much-loved symbol of his identity and culture.

“We love our authenticity and we want to show that essence to the rest of the world,” he emphasises.

While Navarro thinks that the best paella in the world is made by his mother, you can find other restaurants that offer traditional paella at www.wikipaella.org. BO



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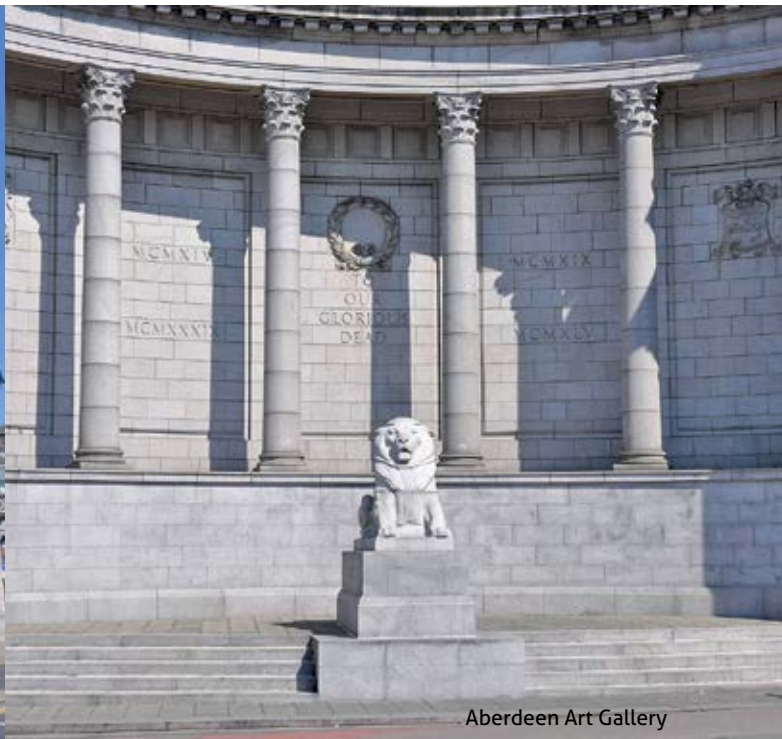
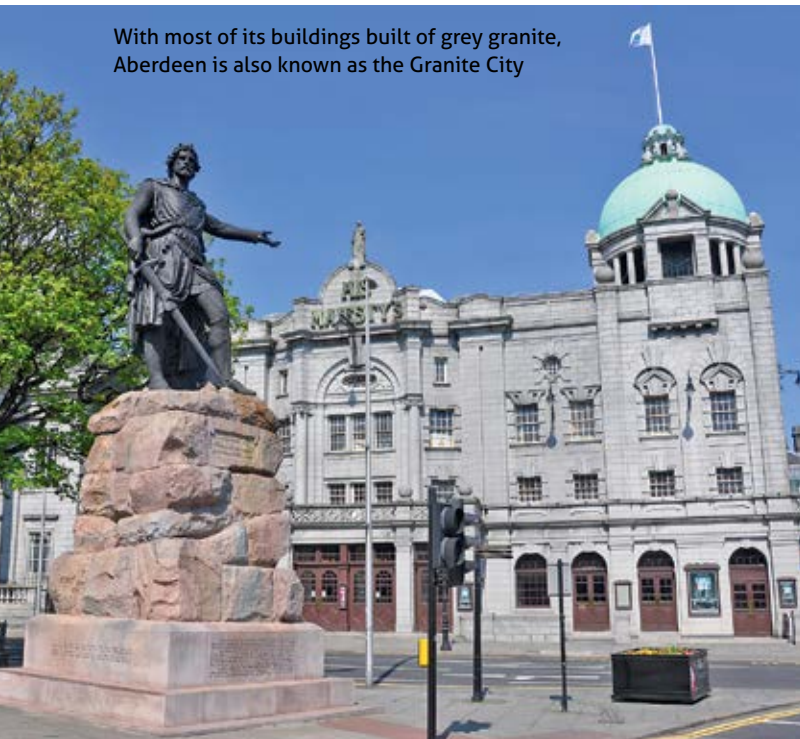


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With most of its buildings built of grey granite, Aberdeen is also known as the Granite City



Aberdeen Art Gallery

THE CITY SEEMS TO ENJOY ITS WEALTH IN A MODEST, DOWN-TO-EARTH WAY

The characters of cities are as diverse as those of people. And it is precisely this character that gives a city its particular feel. I surmised that Aberdeen has character already before arriving there. In all of my travel experiences, Aberdeen is the first city that people told me never to visit on a weekday, because hotel prices double on weekdays, and sometimes it's impossible to find a room at all. But on the weekends the city is calm and quiet. "Oil," I was told with an expressive nod.

Aberdeen is located in northeast Scotland, on the North Sea coast, and is known not only as the Granite City (most of its buildings have been built of grey granite), but also as Scotland's oil capital. Oil was discovered there in the late 1960s and has been like a gold mine for the city and entire region ever since. On Sunday evenings, however, Aberdeen seems less like an oil metropolis and more like a sleepy little town with the occasional Ferrari or Lamborghini surreally cruising its empty streets.

The city seems to enjoy its wealth in a modest, down-to-earth way. The classic smell of money so characteristic of the consumer cult is not even very noticeable along Union Street, Aberdeen's main artery, which is also known as the Granite Mile. Aberdeen has only one five-star hotel, the *Marcliffe Hotel and Spa*, and it's not even located in the

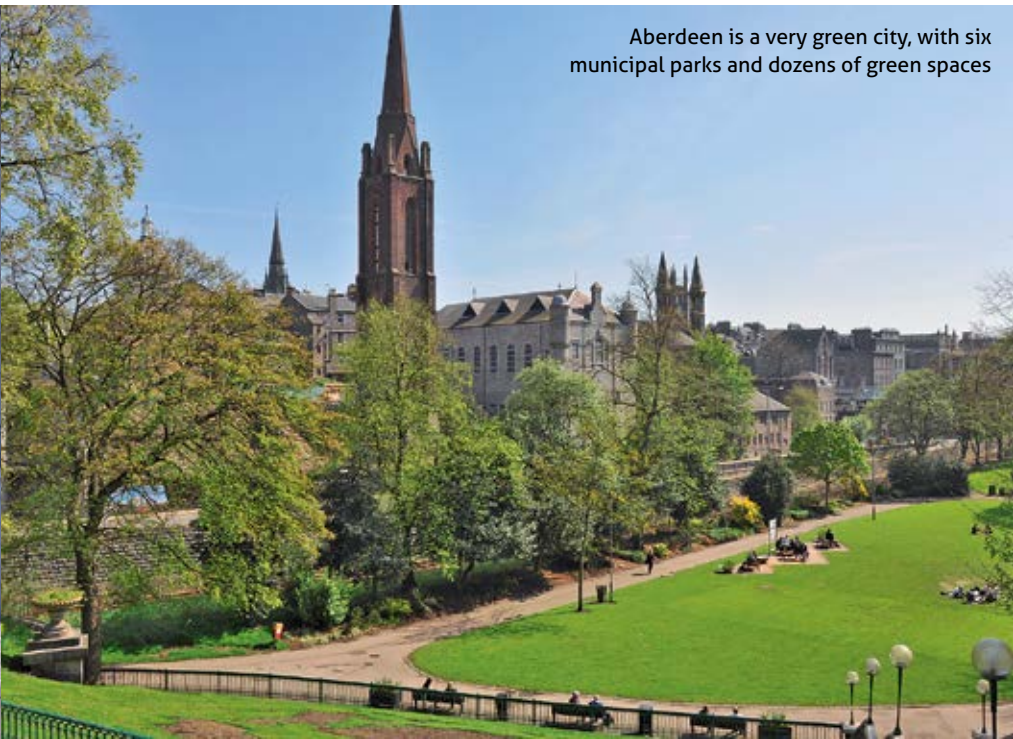
centre of the city, but rather in a historical Victorian-era building on the outskirts of Aberdeen.

When I later meet Stewart Spence, a charming elderly gentleman well-known among locals as the owner of the *Marcliffe Hotel and Spa*, he says with a laugh that on a weekday, some rooms at Aberdeen's budget hotels cost more than they do at his establishment. That's the paradox of Aberdeen.

"Aberdeen has always been a wealthy city," says Spence. "That is thanks to the fishing, farming, textile and paper manufacturing industries. We've historically had very close ties with Russia; we exported fish to Russia. When the oil was discovered, everyone thought that it would be gone in ten years. But it's been already 40 years, and the reserves still haven't dried up. Aberdeen has developed unique technologies for the extraction of its oil. Up until then, the only precedent was the Gulf of Mexico, where the water is relatively shallow. The North Sea is very deep, and the climate is also not very pleasant. But over the years, the oil-extraction technologies have been developed to such a level that many Aberdeen-based companies no longer work in the oil business here, but instead earn their money by advising companies elsewhere in the world. Only their main offices still remain in Aberdeen."

In 2012, Aberdeen was recognised as one of the three happiest places in Great Britain, together with Oxford and Reading/Bracknell. The study was conducted by *PricewaterhouseCoopers* (PwC) and based on economic success and quality of life. I must admit that the city does not lack for proof. Aberdeen has two universities, almost no unemployment and is quite welcoming of newcomers and immigrants.

Aberdeen is a very green city, with six municipal parks and dozens of green spaces



Many of those working in the service sector are Eastern Europeans, of whom a large number combine studies with employment.

As Spence says, if it were not for these service sector workers, there would even be a real deficit of labour in Aberdeen, a city with a population of 201,500. "In addition, average salaries are relatively high. The lowest I pay my hotel employees is eight pounds an hour. In the restaurant it's ten pounds an hour."

Aberdeen is also the home of one of Great Britain's oldest and busiest ports. Surprisingly, the mouth of the harbour is a favourite place for dolphins to play, and they can be seen from the shore with binoculars or on specially organised cruises. The locals even have a friendly name for these animals – urban dolphins. Aberdeen has its own beach, and the water there is cleaner than at some Mediterranean beaches. However, the swimming season is considerably shorter.

Aberdeen is a very green city. One of its points of pride is Duthie Park, a 44-acre green space with one of Europe's largest indoor gardens featuring lush flora and fauna from around the world. It has been open to the public (free of charge) since 1883, when Lady Duthie, who had created the garden as a memorial to her uncle and brother, bequeathed it to the city.

As in any citadel of prosperity, Aberdeen has plenty of good restaurants, its own theatre (His Majesty's Theatre, whose stage has enjoyed the talents of Vivien Leigh and Noel Coward) and an art museum (the Aberdeen Art Gallery is the largest art space in northern Scotland). But the unique thing about Aberdeen is that, unlike so many other cities around the world, it does not end at its official borders.

There is truth to the expression "Aberdeen – City and Shire". It seems that nearly the whole essence of Scotland has been concentrated in the area around Aberdeen. No matter what road you take from the city, you will be in the deep countryside within a matter of 30 minutes; in the harsh, wild beauty of the Scottish landscape, where you can allow yourself to become lost, forgotten and whipped by the wind.

There are more than 50 golf clubs in Aberdeenshire, including the sixth oldest golf club in the world, the Royal Aberdeen Golf Club, established in 1780. The region is also home to five of Scotland's best salmon rivers, including the River Dee, world-famous among fishermen for its spring salmon. Here, it's a common sight to see fishermen wading into the water up to their waists. Northern Scotland is also home to the whisky industry, and the Aberdeen area boasts 30 distilleries. In other words, all



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And, as if the aforementioned were not enough, northern Scotland has the highest concentration of castles and manor houses in all of Europe. Thirteen of these – the cream of the crop, so to say – are included in a special “castle tour” and represent not only the fates of prominent regional families (the Irvines, Burnetts, Forbes, Setons, Sempills, Gordons, Grants, Farquharsons, etc.) but the meanderings of Scottish history as a whole.

A fortress on a cliff and the footprints of Dracula

The most impressive and famous castle, which happens to be nearest to Aberdeen, is Dunnottar Castle, also known as the “fort on the shelving slope”. Its dramatic form – ancient ruins atop a steep cliff literally carving into the North Sea – has by now become a symbol of Scotland. Mel Gibson brought additional fame to the castle in 1990, when it was used as a stage for Franco Zeffirelli's screen version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. More recently, it has served as the setting for Scottish director Paul McGuigan's upcoming blockbuster *Frankenstein*. Golden-Globe-nominated actor James McAvoy will play the main role; Daniel Radcliffe of *Harry Potter* fame will also star in the movie.

Once you arrive at the castle, though, you realise that even the brightest Hollywood names evaporate like mere sea foam in comparison to the might of the castle itself. Dunnottar and the surrounding area are completely self-sufficient in their drama! The 50-metre cliff upon which the castle stands is almost completely

surrounded by a gorge and the sea. The only approach to the castle is via a narrow path, which is followed by a steep climb to the actual castle gate. Waves bash at the foot of the cliff, and gulls loudly circle overhead. The day I visit is one of Scotland's first real spring-like days of the season, and some locals have made a picnic in the green grass on the other side of the gorge. Right at the edge of the gorge, a love-struck young man gives a bouquet of flowers to his girlfriend. One needs not be a romantic to understand that these people could scarcely choose a more delightful setting for their activities.

Dunnottar Castle is located about three kilometres from the fishing village of Stonehaven, and it's possible to make the trip by foot along the coast. The history of the castle stretches back to the Middle Ages, and for three centuries it was associated with the legendary Keith clan. Many stories are linked to the castle, including one about the small garrison of local soldiers who were able to fend off the British army here for eight months, thereby protecting the Scottish crown jewels. Nowadays, the crown, sceptre and sword can be seen at the Edinburgh Castle Museum. Dunnottar Castle covers 1.4 hectares, and most of the ruins are of buildings dating to the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. An ambitious restoration programme, begun by Viscountess Cowdray in 1925, saved the castle from further destruction.

No less impressive, although maybe not as widely marketed, is Slains Castle. Built in the 16th century, it is located near Cruden Bay, approximately 40 km north of Aberdeen. The road to Slains Castle is one of the most beautiful coastal roads in Scotland, curving along cliffs

abloom with yellow springtime flowers and lush green hills and pastures, where sheep graze and new lambs romp. The lambs wobble on their long legs and rejoice in their newly-discovered environment, but they regularly run back to their mothers for security and some warm milk.

According to legend, Slains Castle served as the inspiration for Bram Stoker's novel about Count Dracula. Stoker is said to have come upon the small fishing village after fleeing crowded Dublin and seeking a quiet but inspiring place to write. And, it must be said that, apart from the couple of boats in its small harbour, the village has managed to preserve this aura of quiet and seclusion. Stoker first arrived here in 1894 and stayed at the *Kilmarnock Arms Hotel*, where his signature can still be seen in the hotel's guest book. He later returned to Cruden Bay many times, and the village served as the author's refuge for 17 years.

Dracula is only one of several novels Stoker wrote there. It is said that the local cliffs were the inspiration for the vampire's teeth and, when the sea becomes really wild, it can literally drive fear into a person. It is not difficult to imagine why Slains Castle fascinated Stoker; it seems that terrifying mysteries appear completely on their own here. Both the castle and the surrounding area have a slightly chilling and at once bewitching wildness; like the

feelings we had listening to fairy tales in our childhood, when the most extreme turns in the plot begin at the moment the youngest son boldly ignores a warning to, say, never open a particular door or never head down a particular road....

Slains Castle is located on the coast about an hour's walk from the village. Because the ruins of the castle are privately owned and their future is unclear (at one point there were plans to turn the castle into holiday apartments, but nothing further has been done to date), it is not included in the classic tour of Scottish castles, nor is there the typical brown sign along the road signifying a historically significant object. A cliff rises on one side of the path, and a small stream gurgles along the other side, with the North Sea battering the shore only a little ways further.

There was once another castle here, Old Slains Castle, which was built as a fortress in the 13th century. However, the castle was destroyed in the battle between the Earl of Huntly and King James VI. The current ruins are from New Slains Castle, which was built later. The castle belonged to the descendants of the Earl of Huntly until the early 20th century, when the 20th Earl of Errol decided to sell it in 1916 because the family was unable to maintain the property. Management of the castle has currently been left to nature, until plans for the

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Dunnottar Castle

future have been agreed upon. If you wish to experience the drama of Slains Castle to its fullest, visit it at sundown, when the reflection of colour accentuates the sharp outlines of the castle's silhouette.

Before heading to Fraserburgh, the largest shellfish port in Europe, it's worth making a small detour inland. Haddo House, another of the region's legends, is located on the outskirts of Oldmeldrum village. The manor house was designed for the 2nd Earl of Aberdeen in 1732 by one of the best-known Scottish architects of the 18th century, William Adam. Haddo House has been the home of the prominent Gordon family for over 400 years, and the interior still contains countless artefacts from its long history. The building is now managed by the National Trust for Scotland and is open to the public. The elegantly laconic exterior contrasts with the ornate Victorian-style interior. The house is surrounded by a large park containing lakes, walking paths and green hills seemingly stretching to infinity.

About 45 km north of Oldmeldrum, near the North Sea coastal town of Banff,

is another masterpiece by William Adam, namely, Duff House, which is currently an affiliate of the Scottish National Museum. Duff House was created as the embodiment of the ambitions of William Duff, or Lord Braco, a noteworthy politician and landowner. Duff House is the most impressive early 18th- century private residence in Scotland. Lord Braco had the swagger and feelings of grandiosity common to many Scots, and it is said that his euphoria reached its highest point when the King, having assessed Braco's financial and political successes, graced him with an Irish peerage title.

As a monument to his success, Lord Braco chose to create an impressive and beautiful seat for his family that would also be included in the map of Scotland's most prominent architecture. Having chosen Adam to design the building, he gave the architect complete freedom. The friendship between the two, however, later ended up in court as Braco maintained that he had considerably overpaid for the house. Braco and Adam had not drawn up a contract, and Adam managed not only

YOUR NEXT DESTINATION

the architectural aspect but also the construction of the building. Apparently, Braco was so angry with Adam that Duff House remained an empty shell until the end of the Lord's lifetime, and the architect died an early death due to the stress involved with the project.

Be that as it may, the property remained in the Duff family until 1906, when Braco's great-great-grandson, the Duke of Fife (husband of King Edward VII's daughter Louise), gifted it to the nearby villages of Banff and Macduff. The house was later used as a hotel, then as a hospital, and during the Second World War it housed German prisoners of war. Having suffered several air raids, the building was in such poor condition after the war that only its unique architecture saved it from complete destruction.

The Ministry of Works took over management of the building in the 1950s and slowly restored it. In the 1980s, in cooperation with the National Galleries of Scotland, an extensive project was begun to turn Duff House into a museum. The goal was to return the house to its former glory and bring back to it the aura of a Scottish aristocratic property. Today, the rooms of Duff House are decorated with authentic furniture and artworks from the collections of many prominent Scottish families, who have either lent or given the works to Duff House. Among the gems are also works by El Greco.

The White Lady and Donald Trump

The manor houses of Scotland, as well as the fates of their former and current owners, are worthy of novels, and the history of each house could fill volumes. Some of these former aristocratic properties have been turned into hotels, each with its own unique



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character. In fact, there are so many such hotels that you can travel the whole of Scotland and spend almost each night in a different manor house.

One of the most exciting accommodations along Aberdeenshire's northern coast is the *Castle Hotel* in Huntly. The name is a little confusing, though, because the hotel is not located in a castle, but rather in an 18th-century manor house that once belonged to the Dukes of Gordon. However, Huntly Castle (or, the ruins thereof) is nearby, a mere five-minute stroll along an avenue of hundred-year-old trees. The house has changed owners several times, and its current owner is a former sea captain who, after working for many years in the shipping industry in several different countries, bought the house as a gift for his wife. According to one story, which he gladly shares with his guests, the purchase took place in Cyprus, under the influence of much alcohol and by telephone at that.

Be that as it may, his whole family now lives in the old manor house, and a night at the hotel feels like staying as a guest in an old family country home. The tweed-covered stairs creak pleasantly, a fire crackles invitingly in the first-floor vestibule fireplace, the rooms are large and comfortable (and contain everything that is needed without going overboard on luxury), the view from the window is green and lush, and the birds sing like crazy in the mornings. The owner is always present at breakfast and dinner, entertaining guests

with stories of the house's history and his own turbulent adventures.

Another gem among Aberdeenshire's accommodations is the *Meldrum House Hotel*, located in a prominent manor house that was constructed around the medieval-era Tower House, once the highest point in the Oldmeldrum area. The history of the building stretches back to the 13th century, and it has been owned by several prominent Scottish families. The *Meldrum House Hotel* is also said to have its own ghost, known as the White Lady. She usually visits men who stay in Room No. 3. According to legend, she kissed one such guest on the cheek during a thunderstorm in 1985.

Even though Meldrum House has been a hotel since the 1950s, it recently underwent an extensive reconstruction and is now one of the most stylish accommodations in the Aberdeen area. The rooms, which are a virtuoso combination of history and the present, simultaneously evoke a feeling of succession and of the 21st century. The textiles alone create a true tapestry of sensation, with traditional Scottish tweed patterns translated into contemporary design. And, if you happen to be here during a wedding, when all of the male guests (regardless of age) are dressed in traditional kilts – the Scottish version of *black tie* – you will feel just like in a movie. The hotel grounds include an 18-hole golf course, and locals disagree about which is better: Meldrum House's or American billionaire Donald Trump's ambitious

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project nearby, which Trump himself has deemed “the greatest in the world”.

At the time, Trump’s arrival roused passions on all sides, from nature conservancy groups to local inhabitants. Trump was accused of all possible sins, even to the point that the annual *Spirit of Scotland* award and *Top Scot* title, which is given to the person who “has made the greatest impact in furthering Scotland’s reputation at home and abroad,” were awarded to the local farmer who refused to sell his 23-acre property to Trump so that he could create the golf course. However, according to Jenni Fraser of the *VisitAberdeen* tourist office, despite the passions that it aroused, Trump’s golf course has been a huge magnet for tourism in the region. It is located on an undeniably exclusive site right on the coast and is worth a visit for the view alone.

Even though Scotland’s smaller roads are in wonderful condition, they are narrow and sinuous and travel on them is relatively slow, encouraging one to enjoy the views at a leisurely pace – the mountains, the shaggy-coated Galloway cattle grazing near the roadsides, the bright yellow canola fields in springtime bloom and the small villages, each famous for something else. Cullen is famous for its *Cullen skink*, a hearty cream-based soup made with smoked fish, potatoes, milk, butter, onions and pepper. Although the soup can be ordered at almost every eatery in the village, the best soup is in the *Cullen Bay Hotel* restaurant. Located at the edge of the North Sea and

with large windows facing the water, this restaurant is constantly battered by the wind, making it clear why the soup needs to be so hearty. Keith, on the other hand, is the home of *Chivas Regal* whisky. Aberlour is a mecca for salmon fishers. Elgin is the home of *Johnstons of Elgin* and legendary Scottish cashmere.

Even though only two roads in Aberdeenshire have been officially named scenic drives – the North Sea coastal road from Fraserburgh to Banff, and the North Deeside Road that meanders inland along the River Dee and connects Aberdeen with Perth (particularly well-travelled because of the royal residence at Balmoral Castle) – nearly every small road threading through Aberdeenshire could be named thus. No matter where you drive, the landscape changes every 15-30 minutes.

Further inland, snowy mountaintops emerge beyond green hills, while along the coast it seems that the cliffs have miraculously begun blooming. The natural environment of Scotland has healing qualities. If you wish to head even deeper into the beauty, then Perthshire is only a two-hour drive from Aberdeen. It is famous for its forests, mountains, lakes, deer-hunting and the most wonderful panoramas in all of Scotland. Edinburgh is also about a two-hour drive from Aberdeen, south along the coast. Aberdeen is truly a gateway to Scotland.

A special thank you to *Europcar* for its support in the creation of this article.



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INSIDER'S VIEW

A city with a big village atmosphere



Stewart Spence is an Aberdeen legend. He is the owner of the city's only five-star hotel, *Marcliffe Hotel and Spa*, and has been in the hotel business for over 50 years, since age 15, when he began his career as a chef's assistant. The *Marcliffe* first opened its doors to the public in 1993, with former Russian head of state Mikhail Gorbachev attending the ceremony. Since that time, a whole string of

VIPs and entertainment stars has stayed at the hotel, including Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and Rod Stewart. Photos of these and other celebrity guests are displayed by the grand piano in the hotel's drawing room.

The *Marcliffe* is located in a historical Victorian-era building just outside of central Aberdeen. It has only 38 rooms and feels like a true oasis of hedonism, taking after its owner. Among other things, Spence is a passionate wine aficionado, golfer and fisherman, for whom "salmon tours" of Iceland and Russia are annual rituals. Above all, however, Spence is a true Aberdeen patriot;

he has left Aberdeen for an extensive period only once in his long lifetime, while he trained in Paris for two years. Spence calls Aberdeen a gateway city, a base from which to embark upon excursions further into Scotland, whether they be whisky tours or outings to legendary castles and seaside villages.

"Although Aberdeen is a vibrant city of over a quarter of a million people, no matter where you are, you can be in the countryside within 10 to 15 minutes. It has a big village atmosphere, which is really nice," he says. We asked Spence for his recommendations regarding golf, gastronomy and relaxing.

What is an ideal itinerary for a weekend tour of the Aberdeen area?

On the first day, take a tour of the castles near Aberdeen. On the second and third days, go on a whisky tour and a drive along the northern coast all the way to Elgin, which is the birthplace of Scottish cashmere. You should definitely stop at *Johnstons of Elgin*, which has been producing fine wool and cashmere fabrics since 1797. Of course, you can buy their products in London and elsewhere around the world, but there it's much more expensive. In Elgin you can also see how it is all made. The Elgin factory is located on the banks of the River Lossie, and it is open to the public five days a week.

Balmoral Castle, one of the residences of the British royal family, is definitely worth a visit. The Queen lives there for ten weeks every year, and the castle is also open to

the public for a short time (from April 1 to July 31). Crathes Castle is relatively close to Aberdeen, only about a 20-minute drive. This 16th-century castle belonged to the same family for over 400 years, but is now under the management of the National Trust for Scotland and is open to the public.

The most dramatic castle in the Aberdeen area is, of course, Dunnottar Castle, which stands atop a cliff right on the seacoast. It's a fantastically powerful site! Slains Castle near Cruden Bay evokes a similar feeling. It was made famous by Bram Stoker, who was inspired by it to write his novel *Dracula*. Visitors can experience a whole range of castles in the Aberdeen area, from the dramatic (Dunnottar, Slains) to the nice, gentle ones like Crathes, Drum Castle and Duff House. Duff House is a part of the National Galleries of Scotland and is an art museum. It also happens to be close

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to a very good golf course, the Duff House Royal Golf Club.

Where are the best and most interesting golf courses?

Lately, I've been going to the Trump Golf Club most often. It's right by the sea – a fantastic spot. I'm an honorary member of that club, as I am of Cruden Bay, which is on the list of the 100 best golf clubs in the world and is legendary for its dramatic panoramas of the North Sea and sand dunes. The Cruden Bay Golf Club was established in 1899. I'm also a member of the Royal Aberdeen Golf Club, which

is the sixth oldest golf club in the world. The Deeside, Ballater and Braemar golf clubs are great as well. In fact, almost every small town here has its own golf club. Last year, we were able to play golf all year round because it snowed for only two days.

Where are the best fishing spots around Aberdeenshire?

Definitely the River Dee, the River Don and the River Ythan for salmon and sea trout. For sea fishing it has to be ports and little harbours like Catterline, Stonehaven and Collieston.

What are your five favourite restaurants in Aberdeen?

That's not so simple. Aberdeen is full of good restaurants, so it's pretty hard to have a poor experience. One of my favourites is *Cults Hotel* (328 N Deeside Rd.), which has a true British pub serving fish and chips and beer, but the quality there is much higher than one usually finds in traditional pubs. If you're looking for a really good steak, go to *Prime Cuts* (31 Crown Street,

City Centre). My favourite Italian restaurant is *Bistro Verde* (1-2 The Green, City Centre). Another good choice is *Granite Park* (8 Golden Square, City Centre). For Chinese and Thai cuisine, head to *Zen* (17 Bon-Accord Crescent).

How would you describe the people of Aberdeenshire?

I think they have always been friendly. They may be a little cautious, but once you make friends with them, you make friends for life.

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

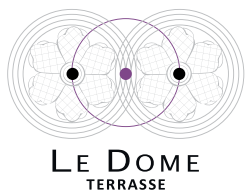
That the Scottish people are frugal, greedy and not generous. I have always found it to be the complete opposite.

Which is the most special place for you in Aberdeenshire?

I think definitely my golf clubs; my 60 years at the Royal Aberdeen Golf Club and my almost 50 years at the Cruden Bay Golf Club. Also some of the stretches on the River Dee and Don, where I have caught my biggest and best salmon. **BO**



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Dante, the great Brazilian defender

Representing his native country as it hosts the 2014 football World Cup later this month is the culmination of years of hard work for FC Bayern Munich superstar Dante.

The Brazilian football player's statuesque hair, wide-eyed smile and charisma have helped to turn him into a likable cult hero. Yet Dante, the central defender with a king-sized presence on the pitch, has had to adapt along the way, straddling two cultures and very different climes. From South America to his adopted Germanic homeland, Dante's ascent in the realm of club football has been gradual but steady. The latest chapter in his life story sees the defender returning home to the place that helped to make him a star.

Dante Bonhim Costa Santos – popularly known as Dante – was born in 1983 in the northeastern Brazilian coastal town of Salvador de Bahía. Despite living in Brazil's *capital of happiness*, Dante, like most children there, grew up in poverty. In 2001, he began to play for local football clubs before joining *Juventude*, a club that gave the boyish Dante a glimpse of what lay further down the line.

His solid performance there prompted the French club *Lille* to recruit him as a player. Dante made his move across the Atlantic to Europe at the age of 21. Not surprisingly, he missed the samba, sun and beaches as well as his parents, brother and sister. "I've got used to that now, it's part of the job," he has since told the German *Bundesliga* website.

Two years later, Dante switched to Belgian outfit *Charleroi*, making a substantially greater number of playing appearances than for his Gallic predecessors, before leaving for *Standard Liège* in 2007. This latter move heralded the arrival of something he would grow accustomed to later in his career – winning the league title.

His third European country, Germany, beckoned in 2008 with a transfer to *Borussia Monchengladbach*,

which was struggling near the bottom of the *Bundesliga*. Dante gained a reputation as one of the best defenders in the league, and it was at Monchengladbach that adoring fans first started to don afro wigs in tribute to the team's most prominent defender.

However, despite making strides as a footballer and developing a special relationship with the club's supporters, Dante later acknowledged to the German press that he had to move on. His dream of being called up to play for the Brazilian national team in 2013 would not have come about had he continued to play for Monchengladbach.

DANTE MADE HIS MOVE ACROSS THE ATLANTIC TO EUROPE AT THE AGE OF 21

And so it was that, for what in modern football terms is a modest figure of just 4.7 million euros, he became a *Bayern Munich* player in the spring of 2012. He soon cemented his place on the team, becoming a rock in the Munich giant's record-breaking 2012-2013 season, which saw the team win the domestic league and cup as well as the UEFA Champions League. Up to February 2013, Dante and his defensive colleagues had accomplished the extraordinary feat of conceding just seven goals in 21 matches – something unlikely to be equalled any time soon, if at all.

During this time, Dante has won much praise from his cohorts. Coach Jupp Heynckes recently said that Dante is "the sort of defender every manager dreams of having," while defensive counterpart Philipp Lahm



DANTE'S APPOINTMENT TO HIS COUNTRY'S NATIONAL TEAM AT THE AGE OF 30 SHOWS HIM TO BE A LATE BLOOMER

described him as “one of the best defenders I have ever played with.”

Bayern Munich's success has continued into 2014, helping to make a global star of the Brazilian. What's more, Bayern Munich's fans have picked up where those of Borussia Monchengladbach left off by continuing the tradition of wearing Dante wigs to matches.

The stars aligned even further for Dante in 2013, when he made his debut for the Brazilian national team in a friendly match against England. Dante admits to being surprised at the call-up, even if his legions of fans weren't. Apparently, his Brazilian and Bayern Munich teammate Luis Gustavo revealed the news to him after a training session. Dante refused to believe Gustavo, only to discover that he had over 40 missed calls in his mobile phone. Only then did the news sink in.

Football defenders often reach the peak of their powers towards the end of their twenties. Dante's appointment to his country's national team at the age of 30 shows him to be a late bloomer. He has often praised the “disciplined” nature of the game in Germany, which he says has helped to tune and channel his natural skills and flair.

A cheerful person and optimist by nature, Dante says that the celebratory mood in Munich suits him very well. Indeed, after Bayern's 2013 title victory he was seen in the throes of the festivities, singing and dancing alongside the jubilant supporters. Still, it's just the mark of the man that song and dance one day can be followed by hard work and training the next.

Dante's charisma and technical talents have proved valuable elsewhere as well. Last year, he was elected as an official ambassador for the non-governmental international development organisation SOS Children's Villages. His role involves spending time with children, being a friendly face for the organisation's work and encouraging the aspirations of those who might wish to follow in his footsteps.

Culturally, German industriousness and Brazilian flair might seem hard to reconcile, but a shared passion for football connects both countries. Dante is a proponent of integration both inside and out of football, telling the Bundesliga website: “It's important that we don't stick to our own clique. We're a collective, so we have to interact with everybody.”

Hi Dante. You're coming to the end of your fifth football season in Germany. How do you feel now compared to when you first arrived?

It has been a long way. When I first got here, I was hired to help a team be saved from relegation. Now, I

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OUTLOOK / IN CONVERSATION



Representing his native
Brazil against Italy for the FIFA Confederations Cup in 2013

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I HAD TO PROVE THAT I WAS CAPABLE OF PLAYING
A HIGH LEVEL OF FOOTBALL, AS THE COMPETITION FOR A
POSITION HERE IS VERY TOUGH

am in a team that is fighting all the time to
be the best in the world.

**What was challenging about moving to
Munich as a city and a club?**

As a city, Munich is very nice. My family
has adapted to life here and likes it very
much. (Dante is married to Jocelina. They
have a daughter named Sophia and a son
named Diogo.) With regards to the club, I
had to prove that I was capable of playing
a high level of football, as the competition
for a position here is very tough. I had to
perform and help my team.

**Could you describe some of your
favourite things about Munich and
German culture?**

The city is safe and clean. The place
where I live is calm and my kids go
to a very good school. I live about
10 kilometres from the city centre,
which I enjoy visiting. Munich has very
good restaurants and there is so much
going on all of the time. What I like
about the German culture is that the
discipline, the way things work, and
the setting in Munich is perfect for me
and my family.



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Playing for *Bayern Munich* in
a Champions League round against *Arsenal* at the Allianz Arena, 2014

THE GERMAN LANGUAGE IS VERY DIFFICULT, BUT I
KNEW THAT IN ORDER FOR ME TO BE SUCCESSFUL, I HAD TO
LEARN IT – AND I DID

Bayern Munich players take part in the
traditional *Oktoberfest* celebration
each year. What is it like being
involved in that?

It is a lot of fun. To be able to wear the
typical Bavarian clothes, to drink from
the one-litre beer mugs and be with your
teammates in this setting is great.

To many people, Brazilian and
German cultures might seem like a bit
of a clash. What aspects of German

culture have you embraced and
what aspects have you found
most difficult?

We have a lot of Germans in Brazil.
When I was playing at *Juventude*
just before moving to France, the
place was cold and there was some
German influence. Therefore, when I
came to Europe I did not have such a
cultural shock.

The German language is very
difficult, but I knew that in order for

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OUTLOOK / IN CONVERSATION

me to be successful, I had to learn it – and I did. As I said before, the discipline and the way things are organised here is different than in Brazil, but I prefer it this way.

Where would it be possible to find a taste of Brazil in Munich? Where would someone be able to dance the samba, for example?

There are not so many opportunities for that. There is no *Churrascaria* (a place where meat is barbecued in the South American style: *Churrasco*) here, so we sometimes go to a Portuguese restaurant. But we do play samba music at home with friends when we have some time off.

You are very interested in music. Are there any similarities between German and Brazilian music?

When I was a kid, my uncle used to take me to his football games and then we went to sing and play samba music. That is how I learned to like samba and Brazilian music in general. The rhythm in Brazil is very different from Germany, for sure.

Dante celebrates his team's Bundesliga championship victory in 2014



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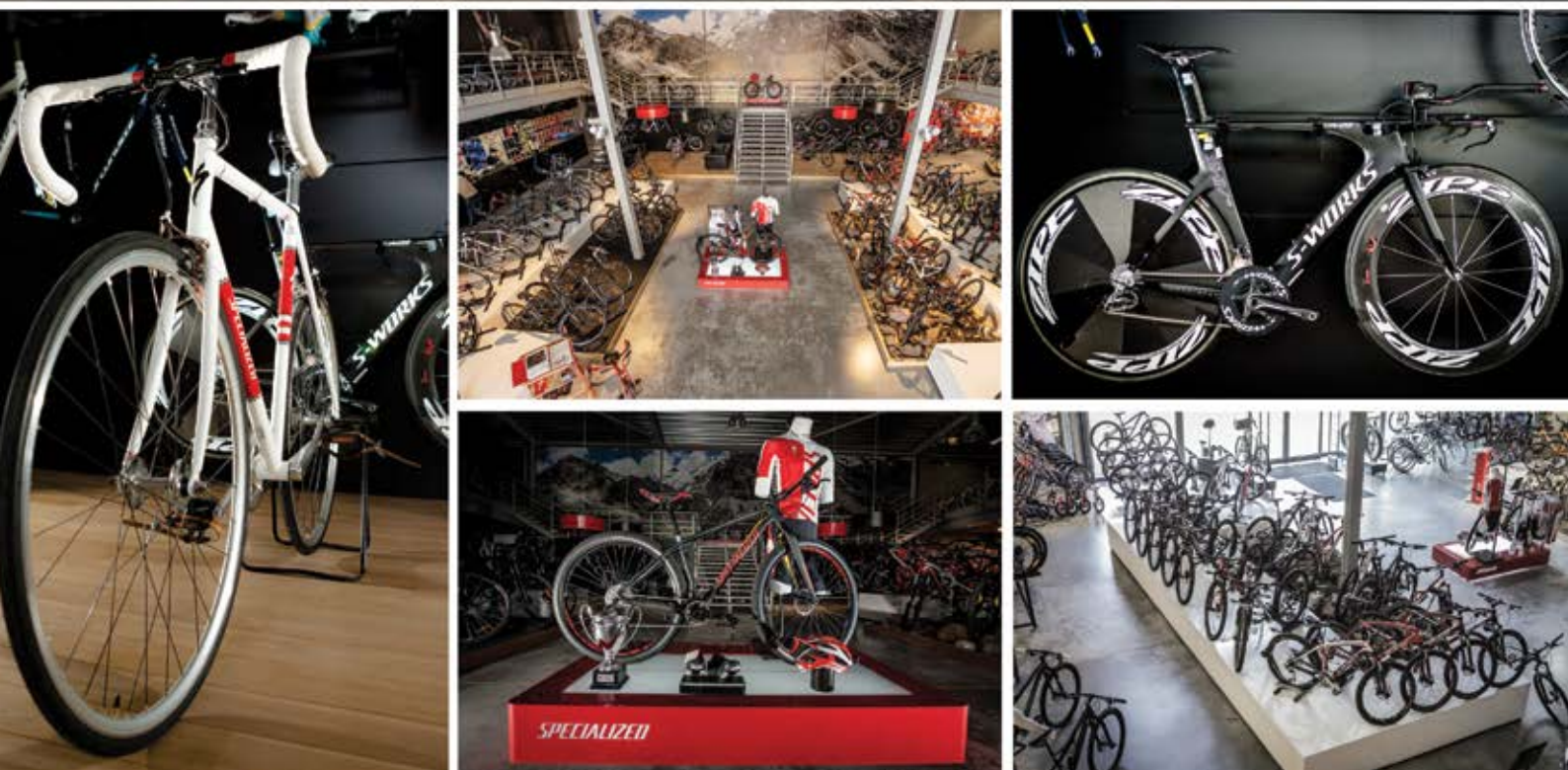


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The World Cup in Brazil is just around the corner. Apart from the football, what are you most looking forward to when you return to your home country?

Well, I won't be doing anything else apart from being with the national team. It will be a very tough tournament, so we must be focused. Our generation has the opportunity to win the championship in front of our fans, and that won't be easy to do. We will have to be at our best at all times. Therefore, what I look forward to most is seeing our fans in the stadium, the new arenas and the people behind the *Seleção* (Brazilian national team).

Finally, if a German and a Brazilian met on a desert island, what do you think they would find in common?

These are two very different cultures. However, their passion for football is the same and this is something that both people have in common. **BO**

Dante together with his wife Jocelina and children Sophia and Diogo at Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany



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Piebalga is a region with a rich cultural and historical legacy. Located in the Vidzeme Highlands in central Latvia, it boasts breath-taking and picturesque scenery. However, this region may not immediately reveal its charms to the passing tourist. Long accustomed to the attentions of intelligent, creative and refined souls, Piebalga must be wooed like a self-sufficient and haughty mademoiselle. However, well-placed efforts by the visitor are guaranteed to pay off with a magical and unforgettable experience. At least that's the way things went for me. Here are some of the most prominent sights and historical footnotes that will permit you, as well, to get better acquainted with the magic of Piebalga.

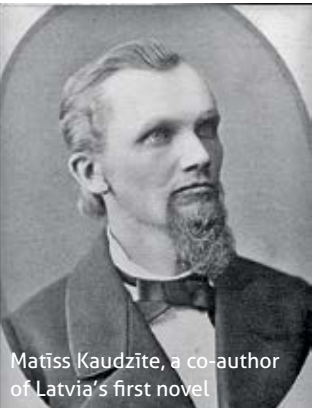
1

Historical rivalry

The first thing that a potential conqueror of Piebalga should know is that this resourceful and coquettish being, located 130 km northeast of Riga, has two sides to it: the municipalities of Jaunpiebalga (New Piebalga) and Vecpiebalga (Old Piebalga). The rivalry between these two towns goes back for centuries, and the inhabitants of both areas have traditionally looked down upon their neighbours with an unconcealed sense of superiority.

The people of Vecpiebalga cite their high rate of literacy – which goes back for centuries – as well as their active cultural life as a sign of their pre-eminence. The inhabitants of Jaunpiebalga, for their part, are known for their industriousness, persistence, creativity and craftsmanship. One undisputable fact is that at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the peasants of Piebalga were among the most highly educated in Europe.

The rivalry and erstwhile antagonism among the inhabitants of the region was reflected in *Times of the Land Surveyors* (*Mērnīeku laiki*, 1879), one of Latvia's best-known literary works. It was penned by Reinis and Matīss Kaudzīte, two brothers who worked as schoolteachers in Vecpiebalga. As the first novel to be written in the Latvian



Matīss Kaudzīte, a co-author of Latvia's first novel



Reinis Kaudzīte, the other co-author of Latvia's first novel and Matīss' brother

language, it provided a realistic glimpse into the contentious land surveying activities of the 1860s and 1870s in the central part of Latvia.

The authors proved so skilful at portraying various personalities and facets of daily life in the region that their farcical tragicomedy about Piebalga remains on the curriculum of required literature at Latvian schools to this day. Numerous quotes and expressions from the legendary novel are cited in everyday speech no less



Kalna Kaibēni is the oldest memorial museum in Latvia

often than words of wisdom by Cicero or Paulo Coelho.

The fame brought to Piebalga by *Times of the Land Surveyors* has practically given it the status of a pilgrimage site in Latvia. Even those who haven't read the book are captivated by the countless lakes, rivers, hills (whose average elevation is 250 metres) and meadows, which provide a truly picturesque backdrop. However, in order to discover the beauty of Piebalga, one must not hurry and one must be observant.

When I entered *Kāpnēs* (Steps, GPS: 57.1791 N, 26.0557 E), the only café in

Jaunpiebalga, at the beginning of my trip, I imagined that I would be served an infusion of camomile blossoms that had drawn their strength from the Vidzeme sun, along with fresh home-baked bread. Instead, the waitress offered me French fries and an impersonal tea bag. It was raining outside. The video of the song *Magic* by *Coldplay* was playing on the TV set. I had no idea that within a half an hour I would be grateful for this grey moment in the café and perceive it as a theatrically refined introduction to a magical and inspiring experience of the real Piebalga.

2 Majestic museums

The charm of this region comes from its unspoiled life energy. But what should you definitely visit? One of the local museums. As a long-time home for the intelligentsia and a cradle of modern Latvian literature, Piebalga houses more museums than any other Latvian rural region. Forget about convenient elevators and other urban comforts in Piebalga. When you arrive at the museum that you have chosen to visit, you will probably have to wipe the dust off of your face, or at least off of your shoes, because the museums of Piebalga are located at various secluded lakesides, hillocks and farmsteads, which are only accessible by dirt roads.

These are the places where numerous notable Latvian writers and artists have lived and drawn inspiration over the centuries. Hence, the people of this



Poet and storywriter Kārlis Skalbe spent 18 summers at the *Saulrieti* summer home

out-of-the-way region cannot be accused of being provincial. For a time that extends as far back as the 18th century, "there have been no illiterate people in Piebalga," says Līva Grudule, the head of the Piebalga museum association *Orisāre*.

THE SCANDINAVIAN-STYLE ARCHITECTURAL CHEF D'OEUUVRE REALLY DOES OFFER SPLENDID VIEWS OF THE SUNSET

To cite one example, Reinis and Matīss Kaudzīte, the authors of the aforementioned *Times of the Land Surveyors*, set out on foot for Paris from their homestead, which is named *Kalna Kaibēni* (GPS: 57.0280 N, 25.7223 E) and which is the oldest memorial museum in Latvia. They reached the French capital in 1889, the year of the inauguration of the world's highest man-made structure at the time, the Eiffel Tower. By the way, recently French photographer Denis Westhof, the son of the late writer Françoise Sagan, compared the charm and unspoiled scenery of Piebalga with that of southern France 50 years ago.

Saulrieti (Sunsets), the erstwhile summer home of Latvian poet and storywriter Kārlis Skalbe (1879-1945), is also now a museum. The Scandinavian-style architectural chef d'oeuvre really does offer splendid views of the sunset as well as of Lake Alauksts and the surrounding Latvian countryside (GPS: 57.0781 N, 25.8421 E). This is where Skalbe, known as Latvia's Hans Christian Andersen, took refuge from the hustle and bustle of Riga. The memorial museum is laid out with furniture and other items from the time when the writer lived there, including family mementos and photographs.

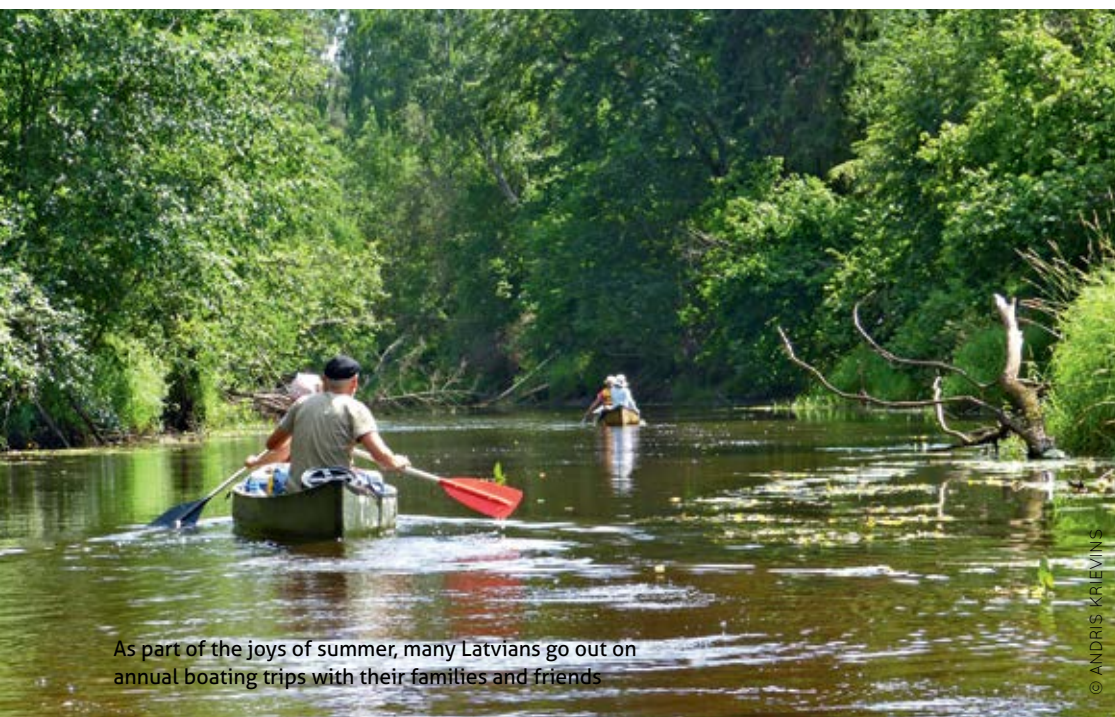
Take a short scenic trip along the winding and freshly paved P33 road between Vecpiebalga and Jaunpiebalga to *Jāņaskola* (GPS: 57.1112 N, 25.9314 E), the memorial museum devoted to composer Emīls Dārziņš and writer Jānis Sudrabkalns. Here, at the site of a renovated former schoolhouse, one can listen to recordings by the famous Latvian musical talent, including Dārziņš' best-known work, *Melancholic Waltz* (*Melanholiskais valsis*, 1904). As the fragrance of the jasmine and peony blossoms mingles with that of the wood from the stately old edifice, the sophisticated elegance of Piebalga's former inhabitants can be distinctly felt.



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As part of the joys of summer, many Latvians go out on annual boating trips with their families and friends

© ANDRIS KREIVINS

3

Industrious hosts

In view of the refined and cultural aura conveyed by Piebalga's museums, my next logical stopping point is the Piebalga Porcelain Factory (*Piebalgas Porcelāna fabrika*, www.porcelanadarbnica.lv). Located in the former dairy of the Ineši rural territory near Vecpiebalga, the factory produces cups saucers, beer mugs and other items of the finest European porcelain, which is imported to Piebalga from Great Britain. I am greeted by co-owner Zane Rone, who runs the establishment together with her husband and porcelain artisan Jānis Ronis. She tells me not to get my clothes dirty, as the whole workshop is covered with a fine layer of snow-white porcelain powder.

I stop to look at a worker in the process of making one of the factory's best-selling items:

a virtuously ascetic milky white cup whose exterior is shaped like crumpled paper.

If you plan your trip sufficiently in advance, then you can make an appointment to tour the factory. Some of its most impressive and creatively made items are also on display at the Vecpiebalga Manor in Ineši (GPS: 57.0210 N, 25.8310 E), which is open daily during the summer months.

Zane says that she hopes to open a café that will serve coffee with the factory's unique cups and plates, as the lack of cafés is something that not only visitors from the cities have complained about. I eventually do get to taste some excellent coffee at the *Vanagkalns* active leisure centre in the Jaunpiebalga municipality (GPS: 57.1123 N, 25.9565 E). The road to *Vanagkalns* is marked by signs depicting a pictogram of a skier, which might seem a bit odd at a time when summer is fast approaching.

Milk-white cups have become a best-selling item for the *Piebalga Porcelain Factory*



© ROJS MAIZĪTIS

THE WHOLE WORKSHOP IS COVERED WITH A FINE LAYER OF SNOW-WHITE PORCELAIN POWDER

It turns out that the leisure centre boasts lovely cross-country ski trails during the winter months as well as an ice wall for alpinists. This becomes all the more understandable when one learns that owner Raimonds Dombrovskis is a seven-time former US biathlon champion and that skiing is his passion.

The former athlete immigrated to the United States as a teen, represented that country at the Calgary Olympic Games, and later undertook various other sports-related activities, including a 6500-kilometre roller-skating trip from Alaska to Mexico. He eventually returned to Latvia and has been living in Piebalga for more than 10 years.

"I can't tell you what I have done here in just 15 minutes," says Raimonds upon meeting me. However, he stops glancing at his watch as our conversation progresses and gradually begins to relax. Indeed, time seems to slow to a standstill at *Vanagkalns*. A whole array of ski boots has been neatly arranged

on shelves at the guest house, the pairs pressed closely together to quietly wait out the summer months.

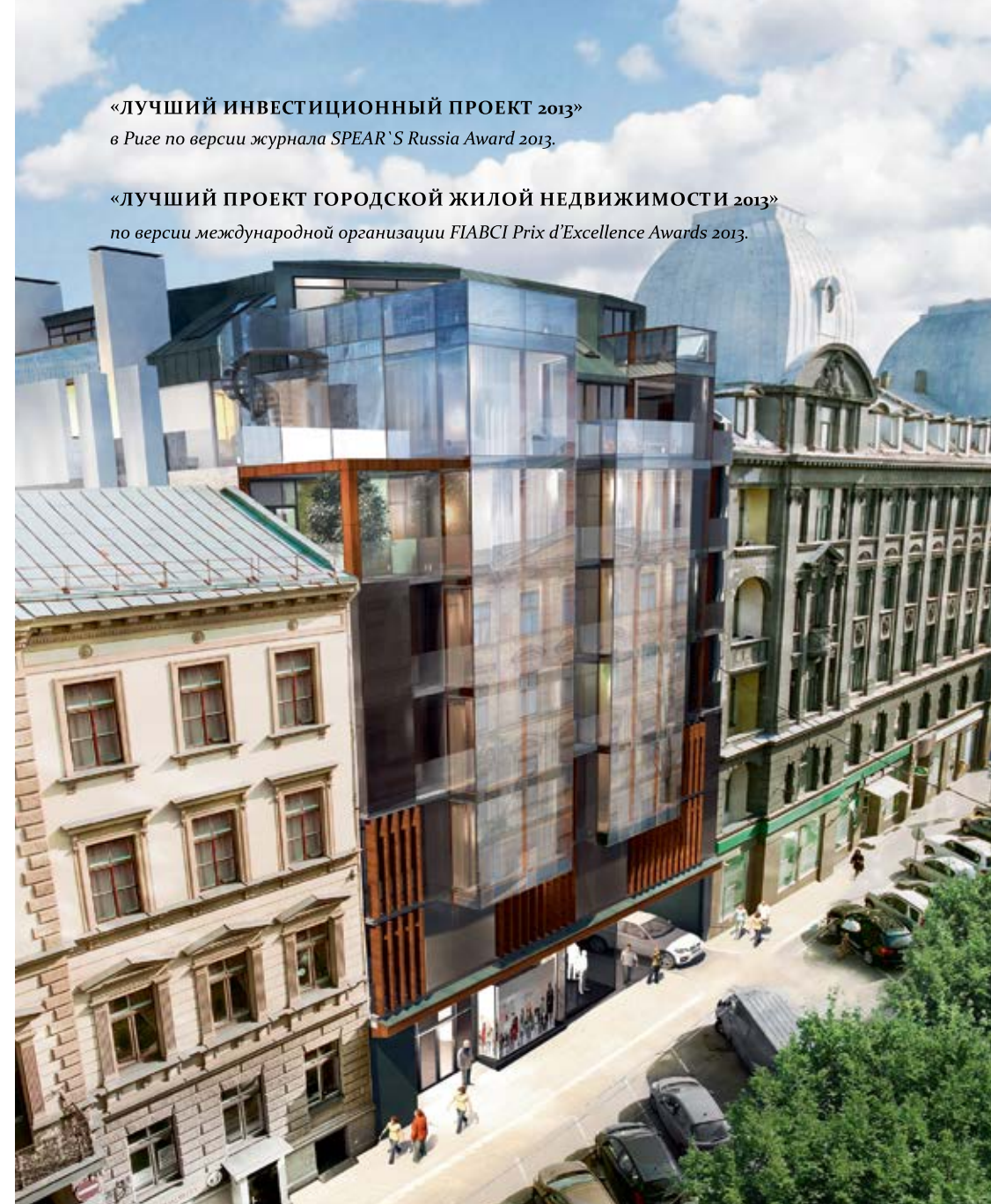
That is a time when Raimonds, who has boated in various exotic places, including the Yukon River, offers boating trips along the rivers of Vidzeme. A whole slew of kayaks and canoes rest lazily in the sun at the pond by the guest house, waiting to be taken away for the next adventure. While the boating trips that he offers are not extreme by any means, they are not pure pleasure outings for novices, either.

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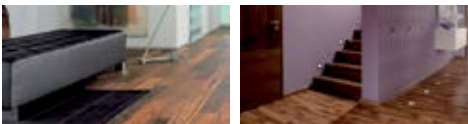
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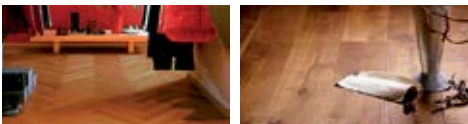


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OUTLOOK / TRAVEL



The techniques used to dry herbs and other plants for infusions are passed on from generation to generation

4

Green farmsteads

Although Piebalga's idyllic countryside houses the summer residences of many a city dweller, artist and foreigner, the Dolmanis family has been firmly entrenched in Piebalga for at least seven generations. The family runs the *Lielkrūzes* organic food farmstead in Jaunpiebalga (www.ekokruzes.lv, GPS: 57.1794 N, 25.9639 E). My study of the map on the farmstead's billboard, which depicts the surrounding 120-hectare territory in detail, is interrupted by the farm's friendly dog, who insists that I pet him and give him some loving attention.

Lielkrūzes was deemed to be the most beautiful farmstead in Latvia in 2013, and everything at this model establishment is well-managed, as testified to by the Latvian Nature Fund. For example, a written description of one sort or other is affixed by the doors of practically every building. Here one can catch crayfish and fish, as well as watch free-ranging cattle, horses and sheep grazing in the meadows. More than 70 species of birds nest in these parts, making Piebalga a bird-watchers' paradise.

I proceed to visit the Dolmanis' neighbour Jānis Širka at the *Vecstrupīni* farmstead by the edge of the Gauja River (GPS: 57.1647 N, 25.9880 E). The farmstead houses a "black" Latvian sauna

or bathhouse, where the smoke from the wood fire to heat the small building is let directly into the washing room and released through a hole in the roof. Jānis was born in that very same sauna, a customary practice in the days of old.

Back in the farmstead's guest house, he offers me a superb infusion of organically grown herbs. During the summer months, his garden is full of calendulas, cornflowers, peppermint and lemon balm plants. Tourists driving by often stop by the roadside to take pictures among his blooming greenery.

MORE THAN 70 SPECIES OF BIRDS NEST IN THESE PARTS, MAKING PIEBALGA A BIRD-WATCHERS' PARADISE

As Jānis sniffs at a bunch of cowslip blossoms, black currant and lime leaves, he tells me about their beneficial properties and I revel in the fulfilment of my initial desire to drink a genuine herbal infusion from the fields of Vidzeme. Jānis' specially grown herbal teas are also available under the *Lauku tēja* (Country Tea) brand at various Latvian stores and pharmacies.

Moving on to the Zosēni rural territory in the Jaunpiebalga municipality, the old saying that the people of Piebalga are true craftsman rings particularly true at *Mazvieķi* (GPS: 57.1542 N, 25.8772 E). The

wind-swept hills and vales of this farmstead are full of...sheep. At first the owners Laima and Gunārs Ciekuržnis were interested in growing berries, but the sparse and hilly terrain forced them to adapt and opt for sheep-farming instead.

If there is a sheep, then there is a shearer, and if there is a shearer, then there is wool. At *Mazvieķi*, the sheepskins are crafted into slippers and vests, while the wool is woven and knitted into mittens and sweaters. The owners can't recall the last time that they were ill, for they claim that lambswool has health-inducing properties. If one makes a sufficiently timely reservation, then Laima will gladly prepare some lamb soup for her guests.

Her husband, Gunārs, who is also a skilled woodworker, soon hopes to master a traditional craft of the region: that of making spinning wheels, a trade for which Piebalga was formerly known. Facing the wind that blows briskly over a hillock, Laima takes delight in the view and at the fact that it extends so far off into the distance, acquiring a particularly beautiful dusky hue on the shortest nights of the year around the summer solstice.

OUTLOOK / TRAVEL



Many inhabitants of Piebalga use sheep as an effective substitute for lawn mowers and trimmers on uneven and hilly terrain

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The traditional Līgo Evening bonfire is lit at sunset on June 23

5

Solstice mysteries

A special atmosphere reigns in Piebalga at the time of the June solstice, which is widely celebrated on Līgo Evening (*Līgo vakars*, June 23) and St. John's Day (*Jāņi*, June 24), and which is one of the most magical Latvian holidays. The fields give off the fragrances of sweet woodruff, oxeye daisies and clover blossoms, while the mist-covered lakes seem to doze off into a slumber as the sun sets, to reawaken gently in the morning.

At the aforementioned *Lielkrūzes* biological farm, owner Guntars Dolmanis hums self-composed melodies and serves his homemade beer to solstice celebrants who have gathered at his farm. In fact, this June will mark the 40th year in a row that he will be doing so. Everybody is welcome to join him and his

family for some *Jāņi* singing, dancing and other activities.

Having finished making *Jāņi* cheese on Līgo Evening, the women and girls customarily go off into the nearby fields, to return wearing freshly made wreaths of flowers on their heads. Many people choose to celebrate this festivity wearing Latvian folk dress. Often the celebrants go from house to house before the sun has set in a ritual known as *aplīgošana* – singing *līgo* songs, bearing bunches of flowers and blessing the neighbouring homesteads in the process. The good news is that on Līgo Evening complete strangers and passers-by are welcome to join in on the festivities. As the *Jāņi* bonfire is lit to mark the sunset, *līgo* songs are sung by all, eternalising the mythical legend of Piebalga.

On June 21 (the date of the real, or astronomical, solstice), the people of Piebalga and their guests will light a bonfire on the scenic Mount Viņķi in the

Jaunpiebalga municipality (*Viņķu kalns*, elevation 243 metres, GPS: 57.1475 N, 26.0765 E). There, they will sing all night and greet the sunrise on the longest day of the year.

A similar celebration with singing and other traditional solstice rituals will take place that same evening at the *Vēveri* open-air museum in the Vecpiebalga municipality (GPS: 57.1172 N, 25.8435 E). The museum incorporates a group of authentic 19th-century buildings from farmsteads and artisans' workshops of the Piebalga region. Here, one can sense the closeness with nature, peace and freedom that past generations experienced. Visitors will be able to weave worsted wool yarn into cloth, grind grain into flour at a mill and bake homemade bread. The view of the surrounding countryside is magnificent from the renovated windmill.



In preparation for the *Jāņi* solstice festivities, women and girls of all ages collect flowers in the fields and weave wreaths on June 23



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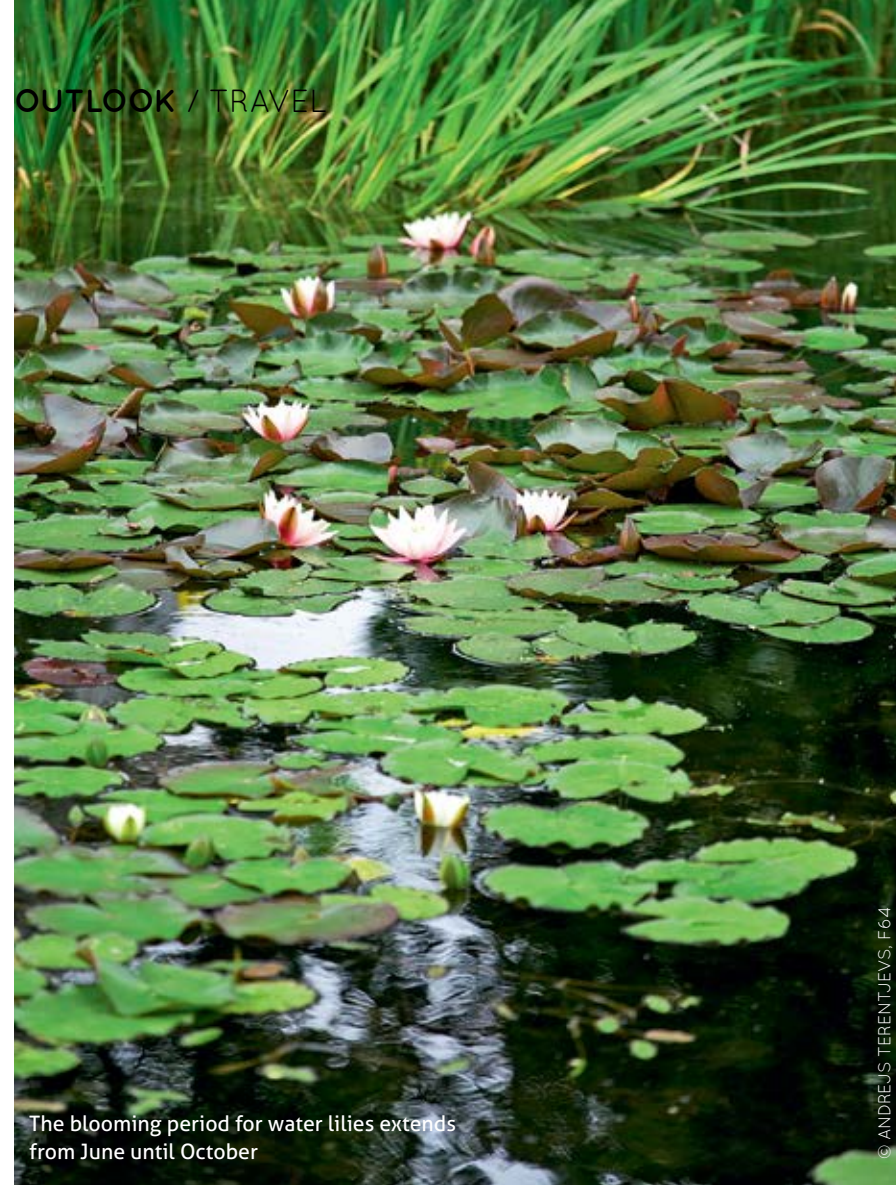


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OUTLOOK / TRAVEL



The blooming period for water lilies extends from June until October

© ANDREJS TERENTJEVS, F64

What to see in Piebalga

Water lilies convey an added sense of charm to Piebalga's numerous lakes, which is why they have become a symbol of the region. They are even referred to in a number of popular Latvian songs. Two specially made water lily ponds can be found in the centre of Vecpiebalga, at the edge of the Cēsis-Madona motorway (P 30). The first pond was dug in 1984, and the ponds now host about 30 different species of specially grown and selected water lilies. These plants sprout beautiful blossoms in mid-summer and can even be purchased on the spot.

Where to stay in Piebalga

The renovated *Jaunogrīņi* guest house has a history that goes back at least 200 years. It also offers the use of a Latvian sauna and, as a true sign of

distinction, sells its own homemade Latvian rye bread.

📍 www.jaunogrini.lv

Where to eat in Piebalga

Let yourself be charmed by the waitstaff at the *Ūdensroze (Water Lily)* café by the central market square in Vecpiebalga. It conveys the feeling of a genuine country restaurant and offers homemade smoked meat products for sale as well as porcelain items from the region.

📍 www.udensroze.lv

What to experience in Piebalga

A boating trip around the seven islands of Lake Inesis could well be one of the most romantic experiences of the summer. *Inesieši* holiday house, Ineši rural territory, Vecpiebalga municipality.

📍 www.viesunamiem.lv/inesiesi



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TEXT BY ROGER NORUM
PHOTOS BY VISITOSLO

City on the rise

Norway's first city is currently the best place in Scandinavia for high-minded design and culture, stellar historical museums and ruins, and proximity to the great outdoors.

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© VISITOSLO/ROD COSTA

Just a few years ago, Oslo was the odd man out among the Nordic capital cities. It was culturally lagging, socially colder and best known as a contender with Tokyo for being the most expensive city in the world. However, Oslo's residents have always been proud of their city. Over the past few years, the Norwegian capital has been upping its ante, with a slew of new restaurants, cultural attractions and things to do for lovers of the great outdoors as well as a titanic, multi-decade-long waterfront development project that is changing the face of the city.

Oslo now rivals hyped Copenhagen and passé Stockholm for a diversity of goings-on and also solves the city break vs. country break dilemma. Named by *Wallpaper Magazine* in 2011 as one of the world's most compelling architecture and design destinations, Oslo is ideal for both design-minded travellers and nature-lovers. This style-conscious cosmopolitan centre is perched right on the edge of the world's most stunning outdoor landscapes, in contrast to many run-of-the-mill, urban-only destinations we often head to for our weekend getaways.

Oslo's churches, historical buildings and museums offer something for visitors of any cultural bent, and most are within just a few blocks of each other. Stroll along the main thoroughfare of Karl Johans gate to view Oslo's Neo-Romanesque parliament building, or *Stortinget*, completed in the mid-19th century. Immediately next door is the city's cathedral, or *Domkirke*, an austere 17th-century square structure with a green copper spire.

Also worth a gander is the *Radhus*, a twin-towered, red brick functionalist structure from the 1930s. It is the seat of the municipal government, but it is probably best known outside of Norway for holding the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony every year on December 10, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death.

The nearby Peace Centre holds a grand hall dedicated to the past holders of the prize, with multimedia presentations showcasing the fascinating lives of a hundred-odd Nobel laureates. Elsewhere are a slew of impressive churches, fortresses and castles that rise up over Oslo and its harbour, including the *Akershus Slott* and *Festning* built by King Haakon V Magnusson in 1299 to protect the city from maritime marauders.

Just off Karl Johans gate is the *Nationalgalleriet*, which houses the country's largest collection of



Children creatively use the Oslo Opera House as a playground

OSLO'S OPERA HOUSE IS THE CITY'S HOTTEST EYE CANDY

art, including Edvard Munch's breath-taking work *The Scream*. Munch has his own museum as well, a few kilometres west of the city. There, you'll find most of the artist's other famous (and lesser known) works, including multiple sketches of *Madonna*, *Despair* and *The Kiss*. It is the best place in the world to see the eerie, haunting paintings of the local genius.

The museum is a short walk from the sprawling Frogner Park, home to 212 bronze, granite and wrought iron obelisks and sculptures by renowned Norwegian artist Gustav Vigeland. His *Vigelandsparken* is crammed full of works that explicitly display hundreds of intertwined stone bodies playing, eating, sleeping, fighting and loving *in flagrante delicto*.

Down at the waterfront, Oslo's Opera House is the city's hottest eye candy. Built in 2008, the angular white building of Italian marble slopes out of the Oslo harbour like a rising phoenix – or perhaps a glacier sliding its way into the fjord. One of the world's few

opera houses with a walkable roof and a lobby open outside performance times, the building won the 2009 Mies van der Rohe Award for contemporary architecture. It is also known for its three gorgeous, acoustically-tuned oak auditoriums, in which the world-class Norwegian Opera and National Ballet perform. Among the operas to be shown later this year are Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Verdi's *La Traviata*.

International development

However, the Opera House is just the tip of the iceberg of what's to come. Currently Oslo holds the title of Europe's fastest-growing capital, as the city is in the middle of a colossal makeover. Skyscrapers are going up left, right and centre, with about USD 10 billion being invested to expand Oslo's newest districts and redevelop its erstwhile industrial waterfront. Known as the *Fjordbyen*, or Fjord City, this urban renewal project began some 30 years ago with the creation of *Aker Brygge*, a traffic-free pedestrian area in the city's southwest.

This was followed by the establishment of the nearby Bjørvika and Tjuvholmen areas, but the changes now in store for the city are unprecedented.



Tjuvholmen has become Scandinavia's most luxurious mini-suburb and one of the region's trendiest arts districts

Oslo's port will be relocated to Sørhavna. There will be a newly constructed Central Railway Station. A dozen commercial and residential skyscrapers will go up as part of the *Barcode* project. The Munch Museum will move from Frogner to Bjørvika near the Opera House. The E18 highway will soon move underground into an urban tunnel.

All of this development is most visible in Tjuvholmen, the point of reclaimed land immediately southwest of the city centre that lies a few minutes' walk out from *Aker Brygge*. Criminals were once hanged here during the 18th century, when the area served as the city's drydock shipyard. Now Tjuvholmen (Thief Island) has become Scandinavia's most luxurious mini-suburb. The area was sold off to private developers in 2005, who have since constructed over 1,200 high-priced apartments and opened a host of restaurants and cultural institutions.

The entire neighbourhood is picturebook Scandi-stark-chic, with modern residential buildings and storefronts that

beckon with Brazilian lounge music. The effect is at once comforting, cloying and vaguely uncanny. While the Tjuvholmen project certainly has its critics – they've accused city planners of doing everything from encouraging gratuitous gentrification to inspiring a sense of zombie urbanism – the development is truly bold and brash.

At the end of one stretch of buildings in Tjuvholmen is the striking Astrup Fearnley Museum, a private, contemporary art space designed by Renzo Piano and opened in 2012. Built out of wood and curved glass across two buildings separated by a small canal, the museum's collection concentrates on international and American art, with several works by Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons.

A few streets away from the Fearnley is the appropriately named *The Thief* hotel, which steals one's breath away and which is changing what it means to be a hotel in Scandinavia. Opened in early 2013, the attention to luxury and detail at this

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White yachts bob in the bay at Tjuvholmen

THE HOTEL OFFERS AN ALL-ORGANIC BREAKFAST – THINK HOMEMADE VANILLA YOGURT WITH HONEY AND ALMONDS

nine-story, 118-room hotel is something unheard of for Nordic properties: rooms with private terraces and waterfront views, *Grohe* rainfall shower heads and 24/7 room service; an Andy Warhol painting of Jimi Hendrix in the restaurant; a private boat for exploring the Oslofjord – all a far cry from the predictable, Blandinavian business hotel rooms that the region has long suffered.

It gets even better. In the hotel's cellar is an 800 m² slate-and-wood spa with a 12-metre swimming pool, sauna, sensory showers and hammam. *The Thief* is now the only place in the city where superstars and VIPs stay. While it's easy to see why the hotel has become so popular among foreign visitors, it has also made its way into the hearts of Norwegians.

All of these changes in Tjuvholmen are enabling some real creativity in other parts of the city. A 10-minute walk away in the leafy Ruseløkka residential area is the *Guldsmeden Carlton*, a wonderful little family-owned hotel done up in Balinese furnishings, earth tones and lots of organic flavour (with Green Globe certification to prove that it's not all just talk). The cosy rooms are done up in teak woods and various organic fabrics. Some of them overlook a quiet courtyard, and all of them are a breath of fresh air compared to what one normally finds in Scandinavian accommodation.

The hotel offers an all-organic breakfast – think homemade vanilla yogurt with honey and almonds – which puts a new spin on the smorgasbord of many hotel buffets. The *Carlton* also houses *Kontrast*, a newly-opened restaurant presided over by Swedish chef Mikael Svensson. Svensson's pedigree and training at some of Scandinavia's best dining establishments mean that he can turn out some outstanding innovative dishes, including Hemsedal smoked elk with apple jelly, Gotland truffle and wasabi-powdered



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Summer day on the Oslofjord

OSLO NOW HAS SIX MICHELIN STARS ACROSS FIVE OF ITS RESTAURANTS

scallops, and reindeer. Add the restaurant's creatively-paired wines to the mix and you've got some spectacular dining to write home about.

In fact, the aforementioned stretches of the city are the best places to sit down for a meal. For a long time the phrase 'Norwegian cuisine' was more likely to raise an eyebrow than whet an appetite. Nowadays, many of Oslo's restaurants are infusing their dishes with rich flavours and fresh ingredients, using local and regional products and stressing the importance of age-old food traditions: Norwegians are once again consulting their grandmothers' recipe books.

Just across from the Fearnley Museum, for example, is *Tjuvholmen Sjømagasin*, a great place to spend a long Scandinavian summer evening. This chic and silvery open-kitchen restaurant serves outstanding lobster, king crab and crustacean dishes in a sprawling dining room with panoramic views of Oslofjord. Diners pick the catch of the day straight from steel casks, hand it to the team of chefs and then dine on it in a sprawling dining room. Oslo now has six *Michelin* stars across five of its restaurants: *Maaemo*, *Bagatelle*, *Ylajali*, *Fauna* and *Statholdergaarden*. Although dining at these spots is hardly cheap, they do some spectacular takes on New Nordic Cuisine.

Day tripping with Mother Nature

In the past, visitors to Norway flew into Oslo, spent a day seeing its sights and then headed off to Norway's far west or north for the mountainous landscapes



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Origo Summer Stage

Origo Summer Stage is a cultural spot situated in the centre of Riga, and reflects all of the cultural events and festivals taking place in Latvia, for example, the World Choir Games 2014 this July. It grants a unique opportunity to observe Latvian music festivals like Rīgas Ritmi and Saulkrasti Jazz. Here you can see high-class musicians and their performances for free.



Shopping in Origo

The Origo shopping centre is targeted at diverse groups of shoppers – it has more than 220 different shops on three levels. The first level of Origo houses a Rimi supermarket, as well as retailers in common and small goods and consumer services providers. The second level of Origo offers a wide choice of diverse shops selling clothing and accessories. The third level of building A houses a variety of diverse footwear and accessories shops, well-suited for purposeful and planned purchases. Whereas the third level of building B houses

Open-air terraces

Visitors are welcome to chill-out and enjoy summer evenings by tasting the delicious cuisine of open-air restaurants with their comfortable and vast terraces, or by just having some drinks while listening to various jazz, blues and rock'n'roll performances.

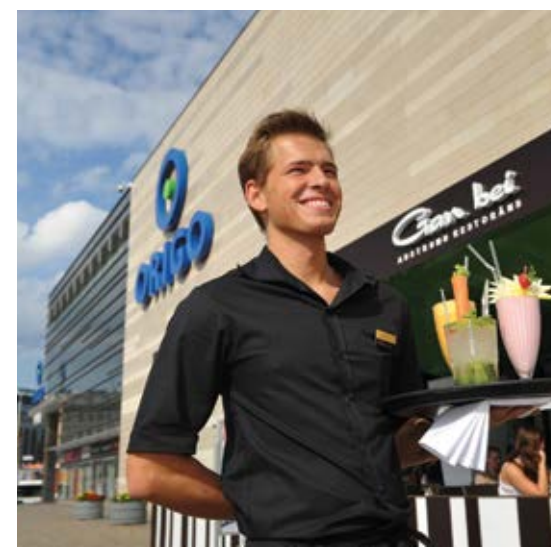
Large-scale gallery

Origo has also provided for your enjoyment a 450 square-metre open-air photo gallery, filled with large-scale photos of Latvian events and

everyday life that are sure to delight everyone.

Design object Sundial – Origo Universi

A new feature is the meeting place called The Sundial - Origo Universi in front of the Origo shopping centre, which is a gift for Riga 2014 - European Capital of Culture. It is a 9 metre-large interactive and educational design object that invites one to determine what time it is, as well as encourages exploration of Latvia's medieval castles and major sights in other European cities.





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THE CAPITAL IS JUST MINUTES FROM ALPINE, SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS, GUSHING RIVERS AND LUSH FJORDSCAPES

that the country is famous for. What many don't realise is that within an hour of Oslo are some of Europe's most beautiful and unspoiled regions.

South of Oslo stretches the Oslofjord, a 62-mile crevice of water and the Norwegian capital's link to the open sea. This slender fjord is a solid bet for history and culture buffs. Just a 10-minute boat ride away from the city centre, for example, is the offshore island of Bygdøy, home to the world's best preserved Viking ships, the oak *Gokstad* and *Oseberg* boats dating from 800 AD. Bygdøy makes a good option for an afternoon of museum visits: the island's half-dozen outstanding museums include the Viking Ship Museum, the Kon-Tiki Museum and the Norwegian Folk Museum, all of which put on excellent cultural shows throughout the year, including regular folk dance performances.

While the fjord's eastern shore offers a number of sandy beaches popular with Oslo's residents – especially in July – the western coast holds the remains of several Viking settlements. The Vikings originated in these fjordlands, and it was their experience of being cooped up for long

times in cold bodies of water that led them to explore – and at times wreak havoc on – the world at large.

The Vikings are gone, but in their wake are a collection of handsome villages. An hour-and-a-half west of Oslo, for example, is the *Blaafarveværket*, or the Blue Colour Works, where visitors can experience the history of an 18th-century cobalt mine. This was one of Norway's largest industrial centres, employing over 2,000 workers who sourced, mined and manufactured the rare and coveted cobalt blue pigment, which provided colour to 80% of the world's blue glass and porcelain. Here, a museum and art gallery displays the legacy of these mines.

While history certainly abounds in this part of Norway, the real reason that Oslo residents love their city is its proximity to nature. The capital is just minutes from alpine, snow-capped mountains, gushing rivers and lush fjordscapes. It's easy to get to sloping moors and empty meadows, where mountain farmhouses perch confidently about the slopes, and where wolverines, arctic foxes and shaggy musk oxen make their home.

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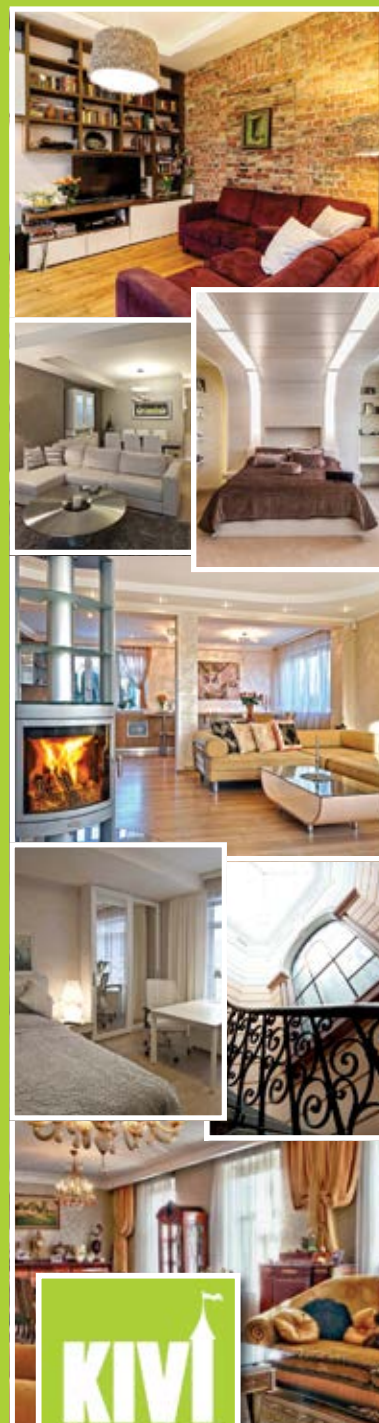


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OUTLOOK / TRAVEL

The Norwegian countryside is dotted with hundreds of *hytter*, or diminutive wooden cabins with stoves and provisions that are the perfect refuge for catching one's breath. You can easily while away an afternoon hiking, biking, skating, kayaking or skiing, as there are 343 lakes, 310 miles of ski trails, 387 miles of hiking trails and some 40 archipelagic islands in the immediate vicinity of Oslo – and these are never more than a quick train ride away.

High-adrenaline thrills await atop Norway's mountains, and one of the most enjoyable activities visitors to Oslo can take part in is to join local families on the weekend for a *fjelltur*, or mountain hike. Locals often hop onto the *T-Bane* (metro) to Ostmarksetra Forest for a walk in the nearby mountains and woods, which were the setting for Norwegian folk tales about princes, princesses and trolls.

It is places like these that inspired Nobel prize-winning author Sigrid Undset to move to nearby diminutive Lillehammer and pen her epic trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter*, a riveting story about the life of young girl in a Norwegian valley during the Middle Ages.

It is not difficult to see why Undset chose this region of Norway to write her fairy tales. The energy that engulfs this region in the summertime feels magical and otherworldly, and the cool air on brisk days is punctuated with the sight of locals garbed in colourful Nordic wool sweaters, making their way through forests and along hiking paths, and speaking their lovely, lilting singsong language. In Oslo's centre, there is more modernism and change than you know what to do with. But spend an hour or two outside the city, and you might well wonder how you'll ever go back. Worry not: you will. Oslo's inhabitants do it every day. **BO**



The *Engebret Café*, an Oslo institution where Henrik Ibsen, Edvard Grieg and Edvard Munch all had regular tables

Rooms at the *Carlton Guldsmeden* (www.guldsmedenhotels.com) start at around NOK 900; full meals with wine at the next door *Kontrast* (www.restaurant-kontrast.no) are similarly priced. Rooms at *The Thief* (www.thethief.com) start at around NOK 1900. For more information on Oslo, contact *Visit Oslo* (www.visitoslo.com).

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TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MIKA-PEKKA MARKKANEN

A new generation of shepherds

Photographer Mika-Pekka Markkanen travelled to Catalan farms and documented his journey

The past centuries have been a time of intense urbanisation. According to the United Nations, 200 years ago only 5% of the world's population was living in cities. Times have certainly changed since then. Now those small farms that have not yet withered away are struggling to stay alive alongside the giant agricultural establishments, with legislation favouring big-money operations. Furthermore, there is a lack of youths who are interested in continuing the work on small farms and keeping the ancient traditions alive.

However, a growing number of people are concerned about the countryside and the direction that our food culture is taking, and some have taken things into their own hands. Their aim is to take a few simple steps backwards.

The Catalan School of Shepherds, or *Escola de Pastors*, is a local project managed by the *Rurbans* association and the *mOntanyanes* company. Seeking to revitalise the countryside and traditional food culture in the rural areas of Catalonia, it is also connecting farms with enthusiastic young people seeking shepherds' boots to step into.

During the year-long studies, the students learn about traditional organic farming and

husbandry. Theoretical courses last one month, followed by four months of practical internships at rural farms or perhaps accompanying a lonely shepherd in a remote mountain valley.

Since the school was established in 2009, more than 80 students have graduated. Most of them have decided to continue working in the field of farming and animals.

"The school focuses on sustainability, ecology and economy. The relationship between farmers and nature is at the heart of the project," says Vanesa Freixa Riba, the head of the school. "The students are very motivated. They share the passion and the desire to live simply, to respect age-old traditions and to produce local organic food."

Although staying afloat alongside the big farming companies is a challenge, a promising wind of change and hope is in the air. Nowadays, it is again possible to see young shepherds in the Catalan countryside.

Last summer, I visited some of the school's students while they were doing their practical learning. I met with people of both genders who worked on different kinds of rural farms, as well as in remote valleys where shepherds roam with their herds through idyllic grazing lands.

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Guillem Martí Marigot, 32, effected his practical learning on a small farm in the Catalan village of Vilanova de Meià. After years of work at various part-time jobs, Martí was left wondering what kind of employment would really make him happy.

"Work is such a big part of our lives. I wouldn't want to end up with a job that I didn't enjoy doing."

Having eaten a lunch of fresh local products and homemade cheese found nowhere else, we return to the farm to open the gates of the pen. The goats race out with joy.

"During the summer, I take the goats out only after lunch and the hottest hours of the day. Then we return back to the farm before sunset. Probably the best part of this job is to get out with the goats," Martí says.

However, being a shepherd is not just about roaming around with your goats and dogs or living a simple life under the open sky. There's also a lot of cleaning and maintenance work to be done back on the farm, along with ensuring that the goats are well-fed.

"Also, things are a bit different here, since we are trying to revive a traditional breed. We have to select the purest goats, decide who mates with whom and so on."

Martí says that he plans to have an animal farm of his own in the future, but for now he will be happy to help the farmer for whom he is interning after completing his studies at the school.



◀ Martí has always been interested in nature and when he heard about the shepherd school, he immediately signed up for its studies.

“I want to be a part of the change that I wish to see. The current capitalist culture doesn't really care about the environment, nor about the well-being of the people. I want to help in the production of ethically and organically made local products.”

► Martí is returning from the farm for a lunch break in the village with a bucket of fresh goat's milk. He starts his day by milking the goats, then he makes cheese with the farmer.

“We are trying to increase the goat population and make it more stable and healthy. We are also experimenting with cheese-making, but so far it's only been for our own use,” says Martí.

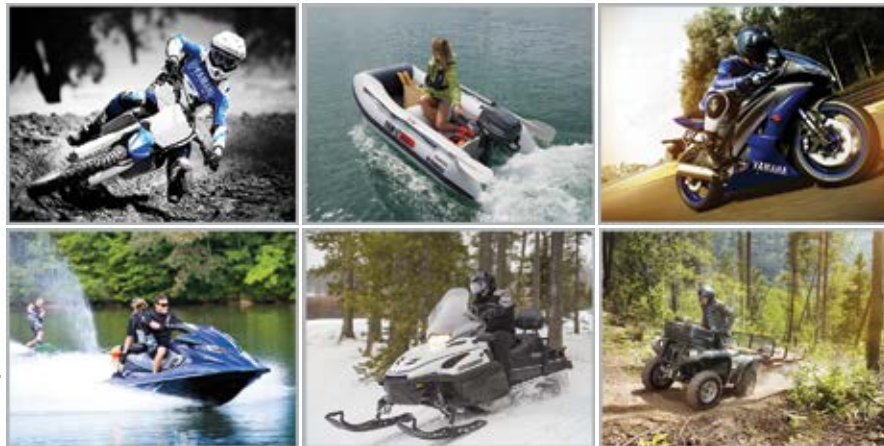


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▼ A Catalan goat munches on the leaves of an olive tree that is growing wild in the hills of Montsec.

"The goats are much more picky about what they eat than sheep. Once we are out, they quickly disappear into the thick bushes. It is challenging to keep up with them and make sure that none stray from the main herd," Martí explains.

▲ Night is turning into day as we step out of a shepherd hut in a foggy and remote mountain valley at Val d'Aran, on the border between Spain and France in the Catalan Pyrenees. I have come to spend a few days with 24-year-old Victor Rojas Orcalla, who is spending his fourth internship month here. The local shepherd for whom Rojas is interning has spent the last 30 years in the isolated picture-perfect valley of Bagergue.

Today Rojas has been assigned a big responsibility, since the old shepherd has told his intern to go out without him. We have to start early, as over 1,000 hungry sheep and goats are waiting to be set free from the pen, which has been completely cleared of its grass. The gates are opened and the herd starts its quest for fresh new pastures.

"The shepherd rarely has to guide the animals, for they pretty much know where they will find what they are looking for," Rojas says.



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KADO KARIM
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► Enjoying the gorgeous views of the Pyrenees.

"I would say that this is a big part of the salary," Rojas jokes.

Only a year ago, Rojas was studying marine biology at the University of Barcelona, but following a substantial rise in tuition fees, he was forced to look for other options. He heard about the shepherd school and, as a person who respects nature and traditions, he got excited about the opportunity for a life change.

"Now, as my shepherd studies are coming to an end, I really feel like I've found myself out here in the mountains with the sheep."



◄ The wet grass soaks our shoes immediately. Every now and then, the clouds roll in and engulf the valley within seconds. With poor visibility, the sheep disappear as well.

"The clouds make things a bit more tricky. Even with good visibility you might have to climb up a mountain to search for the herd with binoculars after your lunch break," Rojas says.

It is at times like this when the role of the dogs comes to the fore. Just one shout and the sheepdog knows just what to do. It runs full of energy to herd the sheep back together.

"Sometimes the dogs can be a bit too enthusiastic, though. It's good to provide the sheep with feeding that is as stress-free as possible." However, as Rojas puts it: "A shepherd without a dog is just a lonely man with a stick."



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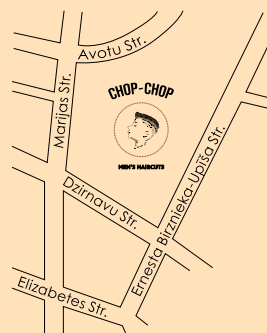
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• WET SHAVE WITH STRAIGHT RAZOR •



Listening to a football match of *FC Barcelona* in the wilderness. A pocket radio is pretty much Rojas' only connection to the outside world, as his cell phone works only in certain spots. During his four months of practical learning, Rojas has visited his home city of Barcelona only a few times.

"With every passing day, I feel stronger about not wanting to go back to the city. I love this simple life

away from the hurries and worries of the big cities. Out here in the mountains there's time for yourself and your thoughts," Rojas says.

Even if the life of a shepherd may seem like the same routine day in and day out, Rojas assures me that every day is different and interesting.

"This work is challenging and full of meaning."

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► Only a small percentage of the animals that a shepherd herds actually belong to him. This means that he is in charge of a lot of communal wool, milk, cheese and meat. The painted markings ensure that the owners can find their own animals amid the group of thousands.



It seems like the herd could continue grazing forever, but Rojas knows from experience that predicting the arrival of nightfall is essential. It's good to return to the pen before total darkness has set in. Once Rojas arrived at the pen with his head lamp and had to go back the next morning to look for stray animals.

The days of a shepherd are long and demanding, usually lasting from sunrise until sunset. Following the herd up and down on steep and often challenging slopes requires great physical fitness as well as mental stamina.

"At least at the moment, I wouldn't change it for anything. I have found the life change that I was looking for," says Rojas. **BO**



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TEXT BY AGRA LIEGE
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARTISTS

Beach art

*Artists with the most
beautiful studios in the
world*

A canvas that has no border embodies the very essence of what it means to be an artist. Its intimidating size can instill a fear of failure, while also challenging artists to test their limits and abilities and to work outside of their comfort zone. In its vastness, this canvas nods to the impossibility of preserving the works of art that are made on it, as this canvas is a beach. Four world-renowned sand artists let you in on their magical journeys from one beach to the next, revealing that they probably have one of the most amazing jobs in the world.





Samuel Dougados

Six years ago, Samuel Dougados took a leap of faith. After losing his job in Biarritz, France, he decided to immerse himself fully in his passion – art. He tried his hand at writing, painting and sculpting (all of which are still present in the artworks that he creates today), but he is now fully devoted to land and environmental installations.

Soon after he started his artistic career, Dougados came across a video of beach artists at work, and the image stayed with him. He moved to be closer to one of the beaches in the area – La Côte des Basques – and started creating. The making

of his first sand drawing brought him a special kind of joy, which was also fuelled by the positive response from passers-by. He also started taking creative photos of his works, generating another form of art in the process.

Beach art requires a large, flat and wet sandy surface. Ideally there should be a cliff or some other high point from which you can observe your work and photograph it. When working at the local beaches of Biarritz, Dougados needs to wait for quite a low tide to acquire enough drawing space.

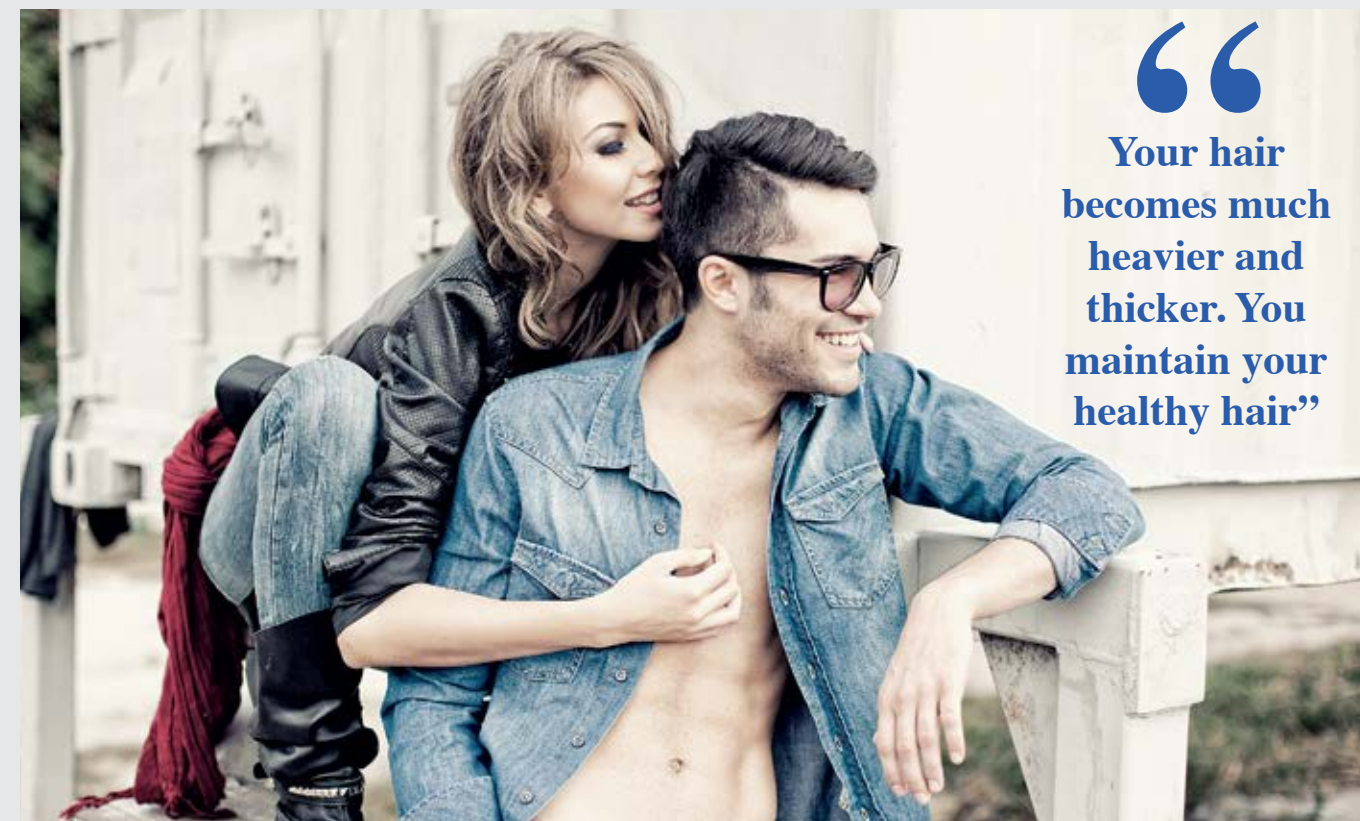
“The beach is a living canvas,” he says. “It changes every day and every season. When the winter storms hit, I lose one to two metres of drawing space.” Dougados says that he improvises a lot, as the ever-changing surroundings are an instant inspiration.

The artist has worked on the beaches of France, Spain, Morocco, Great Britain, Jersey, Ireland and Bermuda, but there are many more on his “to do” list. He wants to “collect” beaches from all over the world and publish a book with his beach art photography, revealing the beauty of these beaches to everyone else.

Each of the places that Dougados has visited has something unique in its beauty. While the amazing pink sand of Bermuda is bathed by a clear blue ocean, the beaches there lack bird’s-eye-view vantage points. Jersey, for its part, has massive beaches that can host the hugest drawings. Dougados recalls the Lofoten Islands in Norway as a place where he would like to return, because he was not yet practicing beach art when he visited them.

The artist is often inspired by water. He loves to play with the reflections in the sea, which he perceives as a massive live mirror. In September of this year, Dougados will take part in a water biennale for which he plans a piece called *Illusion d’Eau-ptique* (a word play that sounds phonetically like “Optical Illusion”, with *eau* in French meaning “water”). Among his latest projects were two environmental sculptures – *I Need* and *The Tunnel* – which together with pieces from other renowned environmental artists were installed in the Brittany region of France.

📍 www.sam-dougados.com



“
Your hair
becomes much
heavier and
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THINNING HAIR?

How a new pill can boost your hair and self-confidence

Hair loss can be a nightmare for both men and women. It can make you look less attractive, and also lead to disadvantages within your career and limit you in your partner choice. It can lead to depression, loss of self-confidence and even identity change.

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“Your hair will look much bigger; it becomes heavier



and thicker. You maintain your healthy hair,” says Oxford Biolabs CEO Dr Thomas Whitfield.

Hair treatments often promise a lot without delivering, but TRX2 is backed by cutting-edge science and has been thoroughly tested. According to a study, 87 % of men and women see positive results when taking TRX2. The effects can be impressive – hair thickness may increase by 22.5 % after nine months and 38.7 %

after 18 months of treatment. Start TRX2 as early as possible in order to increase the chances of fully recovering your hair.

TRX2 is suitable for men and women of all ages. The crystalline white capsules come in a brown glass bottle, which is sufficient for one month of treatment and costs approximately €49. The manufacturer offers a money-back guarantee if ordered via TRX2’s official website, and ships worldwide.

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Andy Coutanche

Jersey-based sand artist Andy Coutanche, known by many as the Jersey Sandman, got involved in sand art by accident. Five years ago, he was in New Zealand building a small sailing yacht together with his brother. One day, they went for a leisurely stroll on the beach, talking over ideas for the retractable keel design of their yacht. Every now and then, Coutanche stopped to draw his ideas in the sand with a stick. On the way back, the angle of the sun had changed and the drawings stood out much more prominently than before. Coutanche

decided that it would be worth drawing something bigger, better and with more of a pattern.

He began drawing circular patterns and realized before long that he had, as he modestly describes it, "a bit of a knack for it." Coutanche was able to draw an almost perfect 10-13-metre circle without using any measuring devices; just by walking, drawing and glancing back to the starting point for reference.

As he got more and more into his new craft, Coutanche drew bigger and more elaborate designs, most of the time still symmetrical, based on ideas from crop circles and even from the *Led Zeppelin* box set that his brother owned. Coutanche's work has since grown more organic and less pattern-based, meaning that it has become more integrated into its surroundings on the beach.

Coutanche does not deny the strong influence of tribal Maori drawing on his work, as he has spent a lot of time in New Zealand. He does little planning these days, as plans are always subject to change, depending on the beach, the rocks, the sand bars and even evidence left by other people.

Coutanche has worked on the pink beaches of Bermuda (where he was also a

guest artist and judge at a beach art festival), France (with its miles of beautiful pine-fringed beaches) and New Zealand (which has bright white sand on its stunning east coast and black volcanic sand on the west coast). The artist also recalls the harsh beauty of Scottish beaches with their rugged cliffs and beautiful castles. And of course, he is also partial to his home base in Jersey, whose beaches and bays change in appearance as the sun circles round the island.

In 2011, the first World Beach Art Competition was held in Jersey by *MyMemory.com*, in cooperation with local tourism structures and help from Coutanche himself. The world's most skilled sand artists took part, including the likes of Samuel Dougados and Jamie Wardley. On one of the two unforgettable competition days, the artists worked together with the general public to create a large organic drawing.

Coutanche also practices long-exposure photography, which involves running around at night wearing black while light painting with fire and other flaming devices. This summer promises to be a busy one for the artist, who plans to participate in various events, including a sand art festival in Ireland this July.

📍 www.jerseysandman.com



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Jamie Wardley

Bradford-born Jamie Wardley is the founder and artistic director of *Sand In Your Eye*, a crew of professional sand and ice artists. Back in 1998, Wardley saw a man making a sand sculpture while on holiday in Norway and was mesmerised by the sight – blocks of sand had been turned into Her Majesty the Queen and Mr Bean. When the man offered Wardley to give it a try, he accepted and that's when his new life

started. In 2003, Wardley started working professionally, creating sand drawings and sculptures around Europe. Two years later, he established *Sand In Your Eye*.

While the organization does a lot of commission-lead work, it also pursues its own projects, which Wardley describes as “comments on the fabric of the human soul and the environment we exist in.” Its largest and most magnificent work so far has been *The Fallen*, designed by Wardley and fellow artist Andy Moss.

Along with 500 volunteers, the duo made 9000 stencils of people drawn in the sand, as a visual representation of what happens in the absence of peace. The work was created last year on International Peace Day (September 21) at the D-Day landing beaches in Normandy, in commemoration of the 9,000 civilians, Allied and German soldiers who lost their lives on June 6, 1944 – the day that the Allies began their operation to liberate France.

For the creation of large sand sculptures, Wardley and his team use building sand, and thus this process doesn't take place on a beach. Sculptures made of beach sand tend to collapse after a few days, as the grains of sand are round and roll off one another. For sand drawings, most

beaches can be used as long as the tide is out, when more space with wet sand is exposed. Wardley likes a lot of beaches in Europe, but says that UK beaches are especially convenient, as they are subject to large tides. The nicest beaches are more secluded, as at Watergate Bay in Cornwall.

Wardley says that anything can inspire him, and part of the fun is not knowing where the next source of inspiration will come from. It might even come from a conversation with someone over a coffee. Often the best ideas come from bouncing thoughts around within a group, as these tend to grow into something magical.

Wardley loves working in a team, since the natural canvas of the beach allows for much more grandiose artworks than any other medium, and such works can only be created within a team.

Currently *Sand In Your Eye* is participating in international festivals in northern Germany and Denmark, after which the team will return to the UK to work on sculptures and drawings. During the winter months, the team moves on to ice and snow, but lately they have also tried their hand at carving pumpkins...

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Tony Plant

Cornwall-born landscape artist Tony Plant has been practicing beach art all around the world for over 20 years. He describes his large-scale artworks as “temporary, site-specific interventions in the landscapes,” which are designed to disappear back into their natural setting within days, hours or even minutes. Plant photographs and time-lapses his beach drawings, holds photo exhibitions and has even made short films.

Plant originally studied to be a painter. When creating a work in the sand, he may spend a considerable amount of time walking around and through the chosen spot, observing how the shapes change as the tide drops and how the shadows grow and twist around the axis of the sun.

He loves working on exposed flats and on beaches that are shaped by the cliffs that surround them. His drawings are “a direct response to the fluidity and energy of the particular space.” Accordingly, any

shapes that he draws strive to balance out any imbalance in the landscape and are related to features that already exist within the particular beach. Plant has no interest in imposing his drawing onto a space, only to have it temporarily become a part of that place.

The artist always has a plan beforehand. By the time he starts working on the beach,

an unexpected intervention into the day of complete strangers and watch them interact with the art.

“People are intuitively linked to landscapes, and sometimes these drawings seem to evoke a really powerful response,” he says.

Plant considers himself lucky to have worked on beautiful beaches in



he knows exactly what he intends to do, and is curious to see what the difference between the intention and the reality will look like. Plant does not place great importance on seeing his drawings in their entirety before they disappear – he already knows if a drawing has turned out well once he’s completed it.

Plant also enjoys the social side of the creation of sand art, which is a means of stopping people as they wander along the coast. The artist gets the chance to place

Ireland, the Isles of Scilly off the Cornish peninsula, Sri Lanka, Iona (Scotland) and his hometown of Cornwall. He would also like to work in colder climates, as he is smitten by Iceland’s beaches of black volcanic rock that are covered with white snow, as well as the frozen lakes of Siberia in the winter.

He has recently been asked to create a work along the Gold Coast of Australia, and shortly after that he will be taking part in a project in Indonesia.

📞 www.tonyplant.co.uk



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Alla Dzevaltovska is Latvian artist working in animal portraiture. Horses take up a special part of her heart: “This love is forever, not only in the year of the Horse”. “My grandmother worked at the Riga Porcelain and Faience Factory making gold paintings on plates. The job carried a lot of responsibility. For me, my art is not a job; it is my way of making harmony. That is why my works are so colourful, and why I use rich, deep tones. I believe that my art works are vivid. I love impressionism and I always try new techniques and materials for further development of my skills”. Alla is currently taking part in an annual exhibition in the UK - the London Animal Art Fair, which features artists specializing in animal-inspired art.



Where to see Alla’s works:
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Mighty Art Nouveau monument awaits its rebirth

The stately apartment building at Brīvības iela 88 is one of the most unusual Art Nouveau gems in Riga. Before the Second World War, the edifice housed a number commercial establishments, including a liqueur manufacturer and a cosmetics factory, a printing house, art workshops and a restaurant. Currently the historic structure is waiting for new proprietors to give it new life by transforming it into a modern residential building or a hotel in the very centre of the Latvian capital.



Competition among Riga's outstanding architects

Historical documents in the archives of the Riga Building Authority show that the origins of the building go back to 1910, when its future owner, a trader of Latvian origin named Johans Ozolings, announced a competition for the design of a new multi-storey edifice. The beginning of the 20th century was a time when many architects in Riga were eager to demonstrate their abilities, and the competition for the building on Brīvības iela was no exception. In the end, a proposal by Latvian architects Konstantīns Pēkšēns and Ernests Pole was chosen.

Pēkšēns was one of the region's first professional Latvian architects and is known for designing the *Berga bazārs* shopping arcade on Dzirnau iela 84 as well as other buildings in Riga and churches all over Latvia.

One of the most modern buildings in Europe

According to historical documents found in the archives, this building on what

was formerly Alexander Street (renamed Brīvības iela or "Freedom Street" in 1923), was one of the most modern buildings in Europe, thanks to the steel concrete used in its construction.

The impressive and solid construction techniques resonate well with the significant size of the building, whose living area amounts to 13,759 m². The spacious patio located next door was initially designed as a commercial arcade. Many of the original Art Nouveau decorations on the façade have been retained, highlighting the building's rich cultural and historical legacy.

Unique fusion of styles

Every passer-by can look up and appreciate the multi-faceted narrative depicted on the façade, which depicts engineers, labourers, artists and even Vikings. The entry on one side of the building above the patio gate is guarded by a boy on a bear, while the entry on the other side is watched over by a girl on a lion. Perhaps these silent sentinels served as symbolic guards to ensure the peace and security of the building's

prominent residents, of which there were many – both before the Second World War and during the Soviet occupation.

The magnificent building has been described in detail by Jānis Krastiņš, a professor at the Riga Technical University and a member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. In *The Big Guide to the Architecture of Riga* (*Lielais Rīgas arhitektūras ceļvedis*), which he co-authored with Ivars Straumanis, Krastiņš notes that the building's Perpendicular Art Nouveau façade is complemented by Neo-Classical elements. Vertical elements placed several metres above the ground are a signature artistic feature of the Perpendicular Art Nouveau style, while the ornaments placed between the windows create a unique composition.

Home to MPs, scientists and teetotallers

In the late 1930s, the building was the sixth largest apartment complex in Riga. From the moment of its completion, the house brimmed with life. Most of the activity in the building stemmed from the various associations, stores, restaurants and workshops that operated there until the Second World War.

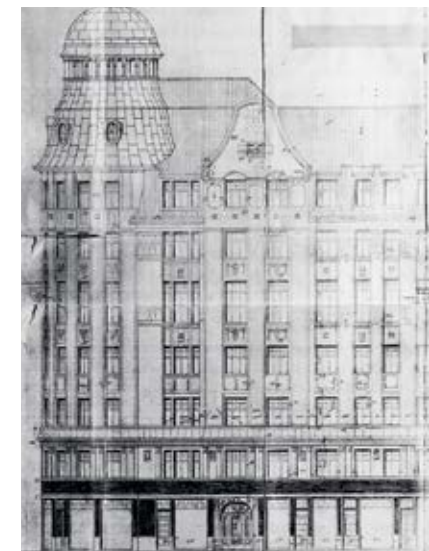
In 1919 – a dramatic year in Latvian history – the building served as the office for the Riga Central Trade Union Bureau during the brief occupation of the city by the Bolsheviks. The edifice also allegedly housed the Bank of Latvia later that year, although bank archives do not reveal any data in this regard.

At the end of the 1920s, the building was a meeting place for teetotallers, or "fighters against drunkenness and debauchery", who deliberated on how to eradicate such vices and who printed the *Life of Night Venues* (*Naktslokālu Dzīve*) newspaper. During this time, a Commission Against Drunkenness had been set up by the Riga municipal government, with the aim of fighting alcoholism by eliminating pubs in workers' neighbourhoods and limiting the times when alcohol could be legally sold. The newspaper wrote about the evils of drinking and debauchery and about the Commission's achievements in fighting them both.

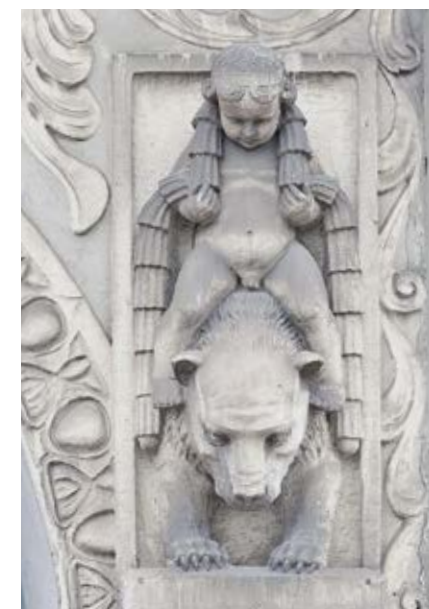
However, judging from the complaints lodged to the Riga Building Authority, the residents of the building were more



SOURCE ARCHIVE OF THE STATE INSPECTION FOR HERITAGE PROTECTION, 1960



Façade sketch
SOURCE RIGA BUILDING AUTHORITY



concerned about the presence of noisy factories and shops. During the first period of Latvian independence (1918-1940), the edifice housed the *Illusions* cosmetics factory, *Žanis Kaija's Printing Works*, the *Riga City Mutual Credit Society*, the *Iļģuciema Beer Brewers' Restaurant* and the *Schaar & Caviezel* liqueur factory and speciality shop as well as a number of other big and small companies.

However, peaceful coexistence between the entrepreneurs and the apartment residents was difficult to obtain. One of the complaints written in the 1930s bemoans the vibrating walls and the lack of quiet "day and night". A representative of the residents, Diodors Maslovs, wrote the following:

"Bering has installed machinery that makes the central heating pipes and the entire house quake, and the noise bothers the residents." Further in the letter, the residents of Brīvības iela 88 threaten to abandon the house if the Building Authority does not interfere in the conflict. There is no more information about how the dispute ended.

Bourgeois spoils for the military brass

During the Soviet occupation of Latvia, the top brass of the Baltic Military District of the Soviet Army was housed in some of Riga's most notable buildings, including Brīvības iela 88. In 1947, the edifice was taken over by the Soviet Baltic Fleet to house its officers. As in many other places in the former USSR, spacious flats were divided with humble partition walls and adapted for the "friendly life" of families sharing communal apartments. The other reminders of the Soviet military presence are florid wallpapers and blue walls.

Even though some of the cultural and historical value of the building was lost during the Soviet times, the unique façade, the characteristic Art Nouveau tiles in the stairwells and the partly surviving parquet flooring still testify to the edifice's former glory. **BO**

Ektornet

Find more information on this and other Art Nouveau gems of Swedbank Group's real estate company Ektornet at <http://www.ektornet.lv/en>.



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First drive: The all-new Nissan X-Trail

Think of the new *Nissan X-Trail* as an oversized *Qashqai* with a bit more off-road potential and the option of seven seats.

No longer is this *Nissan's* durable, rugged and slightly dowdy 4x4 – it's now got an efficient 1.6-litre diesel engine, a swanky interior and puts on-road manners firmly ahead of mud-wallowing ability. Entry-level models don't even have four-wheel drive.

Even the versions that do have four-wheel drive benefit from an on-demand system, which means that they're driven by only their

front wheels most of the time, with the four-wheel-drive system kicking in automatically when the terrain requires it. It can also be locked into four-wheel drive for those serious middle-of-nowhere moments.

What's it like to drive?

While the *X-Trail's* on-paper credentials suggest that it's a sophisticated on-road SUV, its hefty proportions, relatively slack suspension and somewhat slow steering make it feel more like a traditional 4x4 to drive.

It leans through corners and the body wobbles subtly as you go over bigger bumps, despite having a system that applies incremental braking in response to big bumps in the road's surface.

Still, that's the biggest criticism you can level at the *X-Trail*. The flip-side of the soft suspension is that it absorbs ruts and creases in the road, making it comfortable most of the time, despite the occasional jarring moment as it struggles to cushion sharper-edged potholes.

Although the light steering needs lots of lock to be applied even for relatively shallow corners, it does deliver enough bite and feedback at higher speeds, while also



allowing for easy manoeuvring around town.

Don't be afraid to go for the front-wheel-drive models, either; this set-up offers plenty of grip, and you're unlikely to notice any difference in road-holding unless you regularly drive in icy conditions or on tough off-road tracks.

The 130-hp 1.6-litre diesel motor is the only engine option from launch and comes as standard with a six-speed manual gearbox. It's not fast and it feels quite flat at low revs, but you do get a progressive surge of acceleration. Once you're into mid-rev range, there's enough of a response

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CARS



THIS THIRD-GENERATION X-TRAIL IS A DECENT ALTERNATIVE TO PREMIUM GERMAN RIVALS

to make the X-Trail feel punchy and relaxing to cruise in.

An automatic CVT gearbox (dubbed X-Tronic) is available as an option on the front-wheel-drive models and does a good job of making the X-Trail easy to drive. It doesn't over-rev noisily if you ask for a burst of acceleration, and in normal use the gearbox keeps the engine in its sweet spot, making it easy to drive the car smoothly.

Regardless of which gearbox you choose, coarse engine noise is a constant companion, and it's gruff even under moderate acceleration. Road noise does find its way into the cabin at higher speeds, but even so, the X-Trail is comparable with its rivals in this respect.

What's it like inside?

This is where the new X-Trail has made a stratospheric leap forward over its predecessor. There's a good variety of material textures, it feels solidly put together and all of the essential driver's information and controls are easily understood – and where they should be. All models get a height-adjustable driver's seat and front armrest, which, combined with the airy, spacious cabin, makes things very comfortable up front.

The middle row seats can be slid and reclined in a 60/40 split. Provided that the seats aren't as far forward as possible,

there's plenty of head- and legroom for tall adults to lounge in comfort; even three adults should be satisfied.

Getting into the third row of seats requires some dexterity, as you have to step up into the car head-first and duck through a fairly narrow gap behind the folded-forward middle seat.

Once you've clambered in, there's a reasonable amount of headroom compared with other seven-seat SUVs – enough even for a sub-six-foot adult to not feel hemmed in – but legroom is quite poor as the floor is high, so even longer-legged children will have to sit with their knees bent.

With the occasional back seats folded down, you have a flat floor and a usefully huge, 500-litre, square-shaped boot. Opt for the five-seat model and you also get a convenient two-box underfloor storage area, regardless of trim.

Should I buy one?

If you want to carry seven people on a regular basis, then you're better off with a conventional MPV such as a VW Sharan.

However, if you're set on the added practicality and cache of an SUV, then the X-Trail is one of the best options out there. The way it drives is no revolution, but it's comfortable, stable and classy inside, not to mention big and practical in both five- and seven-seat guise. **BO**

Eternal summer of Jūrmala

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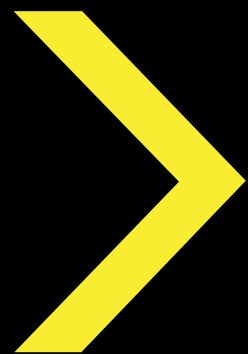
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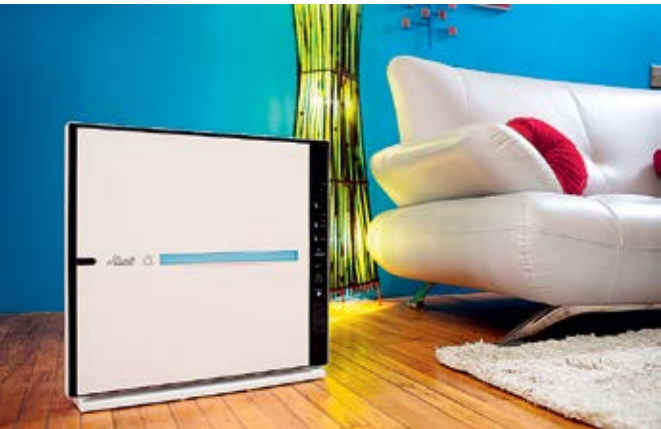
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OUTLOOK / GADGETS



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iKettle T(ech) Time

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This new gadget from Down Under works to prevent sleepless nights, jet lag and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Worn for 50 minutes a day, the Re-Timer goggles employ a unique green LED light to influence your melatonin rhythms, which help to regulate sleep patterns, improve the quality of sleep and reduce tiredness. The goggles are ideal for inveterate travellers because they cut down on jet lag by 're-timing' your sleep-wake rhythm in small steps before you travel. EUR 244 | www.re-timer.com



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Soft and comfortable furniture adds a cosy feel to any interior. However, it can sometimes be difficult to find tasteful and affordable furniture that fits the buyer's criteria for quality, price and design. Those who are still seeking the right furniture need look no further.

Natuzzi Editions is a high-end product line by Natuzzi Group of Italy. It offers a wide range of elegantly designed leather sofas, sofa beds and armchairs in a variety of colours. The diverse combinations will suit practically all tastes and requirements for convenience and comfort, making them perfect for contemporary interiors. The 2014 collection features not only graceful sofas and chairs, but also coffee tables, consoles and beautiful carpets.

Those who happen to be in Riga are in luck, as the KATE furniture salon has been offering various furniture collections by this highly regarded Italian manufacturer for the past several years. Currently KATE is one of the furniture salons worldwide that showcase the Natuzzi Editions brand gallery and the only one in Latvia to do so.

The Natuzzi Editions line is designed entirely in Italy, at the Natuzzi style centre. The sofas and armchairs are made at the Group's factories that are closer to the company's sales markets, in accordance with established Italian traditions of craftsmanship and industry. Certain stages of the furniture-making are conducted entirely by hand, ensuring perfection in every detail.

The Natuzzi Group uses only the finest leather in its furniture, placing great importance on the ethical aspects of the leather's obtention. For this particular collection, the company uses only leather from cattle that has been raised to produce

meat. The processing of this type of leather is a complicated and lengthy process, involving nearly 30 different steps. However, the premium quality of the end product justifies the effort put into obtaining it.

For lively households with small children and pets, Natuzzi Editions has created a special line of Protecta leather, which comes with an invisible protective coating. This extra layer effectively protects the leather against liquids, stains and visible signs of aging without compromising the leather's natural beauty. Even after many years, Protecta leather retains its smooth texture and uniform colour.

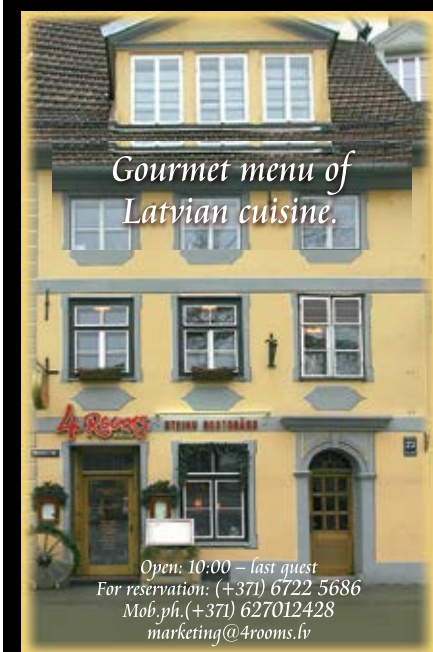
There are times when visually appealing sofas end up disappointing their owners

due to the fact that they are not as comfortable as they look. No such problems with Natuzzi Editions furniture, which will provide the user with years of comfort and pleasure. Natuzzi Editions allows for no compromises here, with the option of ordering such extra features as reclining or relax mechanisms, upholstered benches and headrests. The extra comfort and added functions are ensured by invisible high-quality mechanisms that operate silently and that don't require much physical effort to operate. Natuzzi Editions soft furniture combines smart-looking contemporary design with the highest possible comfort level. **BO**



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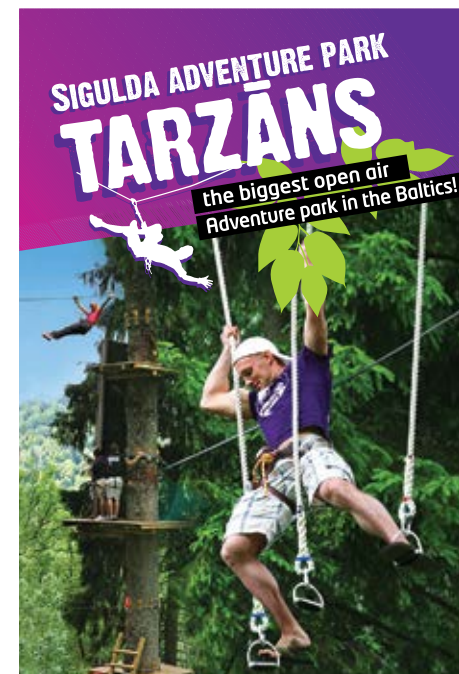
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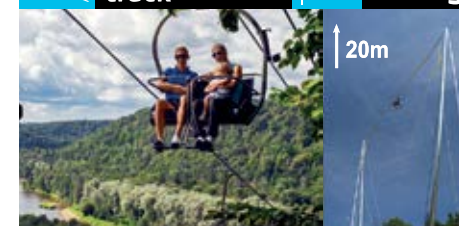
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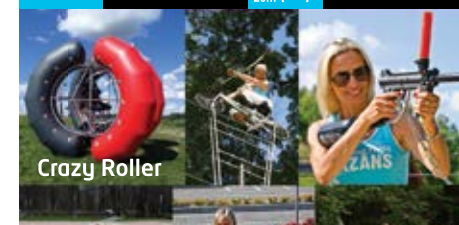
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PHOTOS BY REINIS HOFMANIS, F64

Neiburgs

Honouring tradition, honouring the flow



The stately building on Jauniela 25/27 in the heart of Riga's Old Town now houses the *Neiburgs* restaurant and hotel. The architectural pearl was originally designed for contractor Ludvigs Neiburgs back in 1903 by one of the most renowned architects in Riga at the time, Vilhelms Bokslafs. Over 100 years on, this unique pillar of the Art Nouveau tradition stands as resplendent as ever, having been carefully renovated under the stewardship of Neiburgs' descendants. The former apartment building has become a magnificent artefact, which its devoted owners are generously sharing with both local Rigans and visitors of the city. The guests who stay in the hotel's luxurious suites and the restaurant's patrons truly experience something of immense added value.

The elegant and lavishly decorated restaurant, which can be found right beside the spacious reception area of the hotel, needs little advertising. It is a popular venue for local office workers, who often opt for the moderately priced weekday lunch special (from 11 AM to 3 PM), as well as for guests staying at the hotel. (Isn't it nice to have one of the best possible dining options

in town a couple of steps away from your suite?) Many passers-by also drop in.

What needs to be said out loud, however, is that head chef Tomass Godiņš has just launched a new menu for the summer season, while leaving some of the most beloved dishes intact. He says that he is truly excited to have both regular customers and first-timers give his new dishes a try.

Among his latest additions to the cold starters section are fresh Italian Burrata – mozzarella cheese with a creamy ricotta-like filling that you would be hard-pressed to find elsewhere in the neighbourhood – and lightly marinated mackerel served on a toasted baguette with onions, capers and citrus mayonnaise. Godiņš is also pleased to showcase Arctic char carpaccio with rocket salad, cress, trout roe and avocado as well as smoked char salad with fresh country greens, seaweed and pickled fennel.

Duck *foie gras* has always been the magnum opus of *Neiburgs*' hot appetisers section and so it shall remain. For slightly more adventurous *foie gras* devotees, a duck *foie gras* ravioli with herb butter-fried lobster, steamed zucchini and creamy truffle sauce has entered the menu.

Adding to *Neiburgs*' summery mood are light and fresh newcomers in the salad department, such as rocket with avocado and melon in mustard and balsamic vinegar dressing, and the smoked char countryside special composition mentioned above. Those with a more substantial "salad appetite" can opt for roast beef salad with cherry tomatoes, fried mushrooms and salad greens.

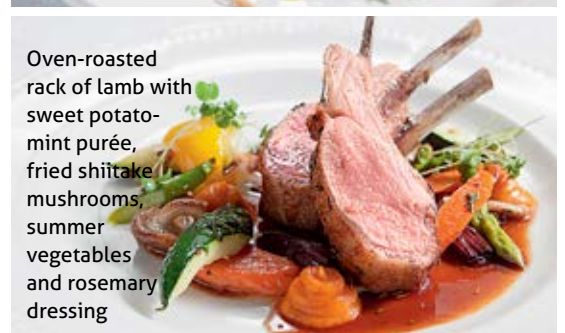
Neiburgs' soups are not for conservative types. Among the summer items is *ukha*, or Russian fish soup made with Latvian fish, vegetables, dill and...vodka. Then there are the two cold soups for when the summer heat sets in: the more classic tomato gazpacho with guacamole and basil, and the innovative avocado, spinach, chilli and cucumber soup with marinated prawns and cress.

Turning to the mains section, Godiņš has swapped traditional Latvian pork fillet with the more elegant grilled *Duroc* pork chop, served with feta cheese and apple mousse, summer vegetables and dark apricot dressing. Likewise, he takes pride in the oven-roasted rack of three-month-old lamb, served with sweet potato and mint purée, fried shiitake mushrooms and summer vegetables in rosemary sauce. "For ages, I was looking for a good supplier of lamb, and finally I've found one," says Godiņš.

Another novelty is *Neiburgs*' deference to the raw-eating community. Throughout the summer, *Neiburgs* will

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HOTEL/RESTAURANT

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be offering raw meals, such as fresh greens with tomato, basil, cheese-like yeast flakes and cashew dressing as a starter; lightly heated Portobello mushrooms with vegetables, spinach, almonds, tomato salsa and summer truffles for the main course; and a tangy apple and date cake for dessert. While Godiņš claims to be a beginner in this department, the dishes are tasty and filling.

We hope that your *Neiburgs* experience won't end with dessert, for it is a sheer pleasure to stay in one of the 55 suites of the *Neiburgs* hotel when visiting Riga. You can choose between a standard studio apartment (all of the standard suites are equipped with a kitchen), a deluxe studio, a two-room senior suite (which is great for longer stays and families), a two-storey suite and an exclusive two-storey deluxe suite, the largest in the hotel and popular among many a visiting VIP. The suite also offers an exclusive view of the high garden of the Riga City Council, which is hidden from viewers' eyes at ground level. The panoramic views unfolding from the windows of some of the suites on the sixth floor are perhaps even more breath-taking and can compete with many of the city's higher structures.

Plus, each of the suites is equipped with the *iHome iDL 100* – an alarm clock, radio and an *iPhone* charger in one – as well as a kitchen with an oven top and a set of crockery. At the basement level you will find a sauna and gym, along with the opportunity to receive a spa treatment or massage. One stay at *Neiburgs* and you are sure to want to return to Riga again! **BO**

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MUUSU

MUUSU is the latest addition to a successful chain of Riga dining establishments that includes *Steiku Haoss*, *Ribs & Rock* and *KID**, each with its own specialty. *Steiku Haoss* is a word play that fuses “steak house” with “steak chaos.” Not surprisingly, it excels at serving top-quality steaks. *Ribs & Rock* specializes in juicy, succulent ribs, while *KID** focuses on open buffets of fresh, seasonal and light dishes. The latest addition to the family is *MUUSU*, a playful variation of *mūsu*, which means “ours” in Latvian. The owners seem to have carefully planned the new restaurant to the tiniest detail. It stands close to the corner of the privileged Alberta iela, one of the most lavishly decorated Art Nouveau streets in Riga, and fits in beautifully.

MUUSU is perhaps a dash more elegant and classy than its thematic siblings. Its non-pretentious chic has not been overdone. The simple interior is of dark and elegant wood surrounded by white walls, with calm lighting and modest but beautiful linen elements. The tablecloths and the crockery are both of high quality. In fact, the handmade black-and-white clay plates, soup and dessert-bowls were custom-made for the *MUUSU* restaurant at a clay kiln in the northern Latvian town of Rauna.

So, what exactly goes onto these finely made plates? To start with, the menu at *MUUSU* was set up by talented and modest head chef Ainārs Volodka, who also heads the kitchens at *Steiku Haoss* and *KID** and who has been with this chain for over six years. In addition, Volodka has undergone



in-service training at the legendary Michelin-starred *Noma* restaurant in Copenhagen, Denmark. Aside from his daily work in Riga and sharpening his skills at other establishments, Volodka also visits at least one of the world's top 50 restaurants every year to have dinner, observe, evaluate and be inspired. Among the places that he has scouted out is the world-famous *Mugaritz* in San Sebastián and *El Celler de Can Roca* in Girona, Spain.

At *MUUSU*, Volodka has selected a classic base with a dash of his unobtrusive but distinct signature. He and his crew stick strictly to that which is in season; keep things as fresh, simple and wholesome as possible; and avoid overdoing, overcooking and over-flavoursing their dishes.

The new summer menu comes with shoots, sprouts and greens, with as much local produce used as possible. The beef carpaccio with rocket salad, parmesan, apple fillets and mustard grains in lemon juice is quite substantial, but the chefs have given vegetarian dishes some serious

thought as well. Their whipped goat cheese with beetroot noodles, leaf beetroot, fresh basil cream and rye bread makes a tangy and light yet hearty starter for the less carnivorous. Volodka is adamant about choosing local suppliers for most of his dishes, including the grilled venison with pearl barley, grilled beetroot and matching juniper berries.

The chefs have noticed that their patrons sometimes prefer lighter fish or vegetable-based meals. Accordingly, the menu also includes such international entries as Chilean perch, as well as Scottish salmon fried in dill-butter and served with leek, asparagus and Brussels sprouts. A particular delicacy is the sturgeon cooked in nut oil and served with black lentils, cauliflower and horseradish ice-cream.

At *MUUSU* they bake their own bread and offer three bread flavours every day, including pumpkin, olive, bacon on rye and cheese bread, but during Lent they added guiltless gluten-free carrot bread to the selection. Needless to say, it was immensely popular. Lunch is served every weekday from 12 to 3 PM and changes daily.

On top of it all, *MUUSU* now has a lovely terrace that is fenced off from the street, but that is still very outdoorsy, giving you a chance to admire one of the most beautiful streets in the vicinity. Speaking of beautiful locations, a sister restaurant to *MUUSU* will also be opening this month on Skārņu iela the heart of the Old Town. That promises to be another must-visit dining spot! **BO**



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FOOD & DRINK

TEXT BY AGRA LIEGE | PHOTOS BY GATIS GIERTS
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Garage, Riga Dusky wine bar

The Berga Bazārs shopping arcade is a central, chic and secluded enclave, bearing resemblance to a historical pedestrian village. It was built during the final decade of the 19th century by Kristaps Bergs, one of Latvia's first real-estate developers. Today, the arcade is home to several noteworthy establishments of varying focus, including the Garage wine bar. Successfully running since the end of 2010, Garage provides a dusky alternative to the surrounding restaurants, gastro-pubs and pastry shops.

It's pleasantly dark, as befits a space that really did serve as Bergs' dimly lit garage a century ago. The "eat" side at this establishment is quite simple compared to the "drink" side, as the small but frequently-changing menu is

but a complement to the extensive selection of Garage's wines. The owners have chosen an open kitchen layout, creating a lively hum in the smallish premises (the second floor, where the main food preparation takes place, is unfortunately off-limits), leaving you not too bothered by the cooking smells in this visible part of the kitchen.

The daily lunch offer caters to the office crowd of the area and is classy enough to satisfy just about anyone else who happens to be strolling in the city centre between 11 AM and 3 PM. Try the cream of cauliflower soup with bacon (or without, as vegetarians are welcome to suggest adjustments to the dishes), or the hot tomato and lentil tart with goat cheese and basil pesto, or the slow-baked veal chop with broccoli puree, caramelized pumpkins and mustard velouté, and finish off your meal with a piña colada cheese cake.

The most popular dish is tapas – chicken chorizo with pineapple, hummus, guacamole and some modern Latvian flavours – which you can nibble at while enjoying your glass or bottle of wine. Indeed, wine is Garage's main specialty. The owners travel around the world, looking for flavours that spark their imagination, and cooperate with providers in Germany, Argentina and Italy. Having set up a pop-up restaurant near Lake Garda in Italy last summer, they are now focusing all of their might at their home base again, having brought back plenty of wine bottles from the Garda region.

Come on Friday evenings, when live music is played in the courtyard shared by Garage, Andalūzijas Suns and the restaurant of the Hotel Bergs. We hear that Kylie Minogue might also drop by again the next time that she is in Riga.

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FOOD & DRINK



Mercato, Riga Pleasant deli vibe

When you pretend to be unpretentious, then being cool is the least you can do, and you can give that much to *Mercato*, the hipster sibling of *Osiriss* – a venerable cultural hub that is still densely populated with VIPs. *Mercato* gives off a fresher vibe, and although it opened its doors only in February, *Mercato* is not exactly new. Earlier this year, it ended its long-lasting romance with the *Riga New Theatre* and stepped out of the role of a theatre restaurant. However, *Mercato* still caters at the theatre before showings, just so you know.

The new establishment is bigger and conveys a lighter mood than its predecessor. It has a deli in the front, and you can leave your bike right by the entrance. The owners say that they are done with fancy and complicated things, but in this case, you can say it's the intention that counts. The atmosphere is indeed pretty relaxed, especially the front area by the deli showcases. A couple of round tables and a bigger communal one close in around a brunch table, from which you can select various foods between 12 noon and 3 PM every day (at EUR 5.80 a plate).

The deli offers reasonably priced goodies from Italy. The owners take special pride in their meat selection, saying that while "the choice of specialty cheese in Riga is pretty good, it's a bit behind in the top-range meat department". In the tradition of many a feel-good restaurant, *Mercato* sports a retail section filled with oil, dried goods and crockery, conveying the idea that it supports home cooking and demonstrating that the ingredients it uses are not something to hide behind your back.

The handmade black clay Japanese-style crockery by Ingrida Zagata is real eye-candy. Perhaps it's time to refill your cupboards with some fancy new items. One way to test the bowls on the spot is to get yourself some

Kalamata olives while you wait for the mains – they're truly divine!

Further inside, the place seems much more ceremonious, although the improvised low bar table (rather than a proper bar, which would require the presence of a bartender) offers the dash of funk that you may have been expecting at the entrance. While the owners would like you to feel comfortable and carefree – enjoying pastramis, risottos and the soup of the day – something does seem a bit off. Perhaps that's due to the waitstaff, who are a tad too stiff and who move around with an obvious air of self-importance. Talk about the difficulty of stepping out of role, especially when a former theatre restaurant is in question...

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Nice

IN BRIEF

1/ Hot destinations back on the summer schedule

2/ Celebrate on board

3/ Delayed arrival? No worries!

4/ Rijeka, a seaside paradise

5/ New payment method at www.airBaltic.com

1/ Hot destinations back on the summer schedule

If you're still unsure about where to spend your summer vacation, then check out our new summer schedule. Stunning beaches, diverse landscapes, great locations for summer sports, fun party places and shopping paradises can all be found at the destinations offered by *airBaltic* this summer, including Larnaca, Malta, Rijeka, Olbia, Athens and many more. Low-price tickets are on sale now, with additional flights added this year to the most popular places. Also meet our brand new summer destinations, which include Palma de Mallorca, Bucharest, Burgas and Varna.

The best possible deal for a perfect summer vacation is now online at www.airbaltic.com, with one-way flights starting at EUR 29.



2/ Celebrate on board

Create a memorable moment above the clouds – pre-order flowers, cakes or champagne for delivery to your loved one during a flight, and include a signed card with a personal message. *airBaltic* is now offering Celebration Services for surprising a friend, special someone, business partner or relative in the sky. You can place your order through www.airBalticMeal.com even if you are not flying.

Orders must be received at least 48 hours in advance. Order information must include the passenger name, flight number and flight date. Payments must be made online.

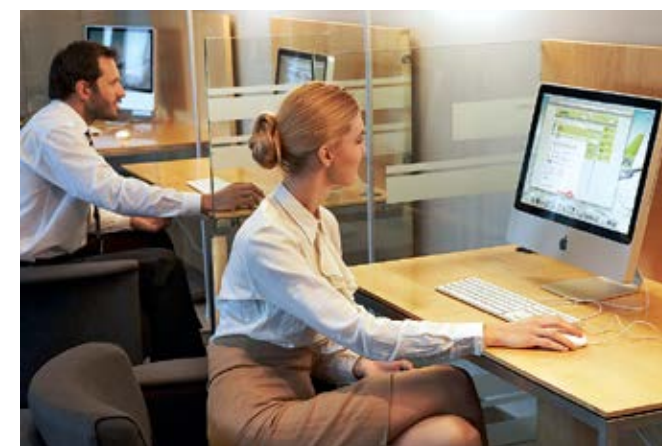
4/ Rijeka, a seaside paradise

The clear blue waters of the Adriatic Sea make Croatia a beach lover's paradise at the crossroads of Central Europe and the Balkans. Croatia is a very beautiful country with lots of activities to choose from. Whether you appreciate romantic long walks in the beauty of nature or the luxuries of a bustling city, Rijeka has it all. This part of Croatia boasts family beaches with gentle coves of pebbles or stones, well-hidden romantic spots, as well as tidy town beaches and coastal promenades for the best parties you've ever been to. Don't forget to try out the local cuisine, which boasts many seafood specialities prepared in various ways.

Flights from Riga to Rijeka operate twice a week, with ticket prices starting from EUR 99. Find the best possible offer at www.airbaltic.com.



Rijeka, Croatia



5 / New payment method at airBaltic.com

With the beginning of the summer season, Russian residents have even more options to pay for their bookings. These include some of the most popular payment systems in Russia – *Yandex. Money*, *QIWI Wallet* and *WebMoney* – along with more than 50 different internet banks. This eliminates the need to enter your credit card information every time that you wish to make a payment at airBaltic.com. Bookings paid through these systems are subject to the EUR 6.99 transaction fee.

Payments via bank link are accepted up to 96 hours prior to the scheduled departure.

Toms Bāliņš,
the customer relations
team leader



TEXT BY ANETE UGAINE
PHOTO BY LAURIS VIKSNE, F64

Work in the aviation industry is never boring

Working with customers is always exciting, says Toms Bāliņš, the customer relations team leader at airBaltic. During the past four years, Bāliņš, who started working in the Latvian airline as a customer relations representative, has seen his career advance rapidly and firmly believes that airBaltic is one of the most open and accessible airlines in the industry.

How did you start working at airBaltic?

I was looking for work and when I saw an advertisement for a customer relations position, I decided to apply. The vacancy was quite similar to my previous job, where I was also working with customers. After four years at *airBaltic*, I have become the manager of the customer relations division. I never feel bored here, because I find it very exciting to interact with clients. Something new is always happening, and besides, aviation is a very dynamic field; it is always developing and changing. Thus, my work here is never dull. That is why I like working at this company.

Do you often get positive feedback from customers?

Yes, we really do get a lot of compliments, especially about the work of our flight attendants and the onboard service; sometimes also about the work of people in the customer relations division, cash desks, call centre and other divisions. Compliments and praise make up a considerable part of the feedback that we receive. The tendency in the past few years has been for customers to say good things about the company more often than before. I hope that this trend continues in the future as well.

What are the main rules for communicating with customers?

There are many rules. Firstly, if a customer lodges a complaint, then we have to understand what the complaint is about and establish if it is legitimate. Secondly, we have to look at the particular situation from the viewpoint of aviation regulations and passenger rights. Afterwards, we decide how to address the issue. Naturally, a quick answer is one of the main rules. Our official time for answering a complaint is ten working days, but actually, we give our answers much sooner. We are one of the best in the industry, because there are airlines that give their answers after only three or four months. In social media we give answers in a matter of hours, provided that the complaint doesn't require additional inquiries on our behalf. We try

not to solve serious problems in social media, but rather through e-mails and letters, which permit us to communicate more comprehensively with the client.

How has the rise of social media changed the communication of airBaltic?

We have become more accessible, although we already were very accessible before. We don't hide our e-mail addresses or phone numbers. We have social media accounts, which provide an additional means for people to reach us. *Facebook* and *Twitter* have definitely facilitated communication between us and our clients. These media are for customers who don't want to call us or write us an e-mail and who perceive social media as the easiest way to reach us. Thus, we can reach a wider range of customers that way. We can react quickly through social media and solve many problems.

Some people still don't take social media seriously. What is the place of social media in airBaltic's communication strategy?

Every airline has accounts in social media and a lot of people use them, including businessmen and families going on vacation. I think that the amount of people who use social media to reach us will increase. Thus, social media are a very important part of our communication and permit us to resolve some issues very quickly. Of course, you can't solve complicated problems on *Twitter* or *Facebook*, but if someone wants to find out his reservation or flight number, then these media provide a fast and effective way for doing so, faster than by e-mail.

How would you describe airBaltic's customers? Are they using Twitter to reach you more often than before, or do most of them still call you?

A large part of our customers still call us, because there are questions that are best solved in this manner. If a passenger needs to change the name or the date on his flight ticket, then he will still have to call us. In *Twitter* we can only inform people about the steps that they should take to resolve their issue. Nevertheless, the number of customers who contact us through social media is increasing, as is the number of followers of our social media accounts. This means that we have to devote considerable attention to these customers, who prefer social media to newspapers and websites.

What kind of information are you providing in your social channels?

Firstly, you can get information about our flights and about special deals. You can get useful information

about changes in our policies. Our customers can ask questions on our wall in *Facebook*, where we will provide a quick answer.

How important will social media be for airBaltic in the future?

These media will rise in importance. It's no secret that most of those who currently use social media are young. They won't change their habits so easily when they become older, and will want to continue receiving information from social networks. This means that we will have to pay even more attention to social media. These media aren't about to disappear any time soon and will continue to exist in one form or another. Whether *Facebook* and *Twitter* continue to dominate in this field is another question that I can't answer.

OUR CUSTOMERS CAN ASK QUESTIONS ON OUR WALL IN FACEBOOK, WHERE WE WILL PROVIDE A QUICK ANSWER

What is the place of social media in your personal life?

I use social media to get information. I don't actively post information in *Facebook* or *Twitter*, but I do use them as news channels for acquiring information. I follow what other airlines are doing to understand how we can develop our channels and improve our performance. I look for new ideas on how to do things better. I check what is happening in *Facebook* and *Twitter* throughout the day to see what people are saying about *airBaltic* and other airlines. These media are a tool that helps me to keep my finger on the pulse.

How do you relax when you are not keeping your finger on the pulse through social media?

I like watching different kinds of TV shows and reading books. I often go to the theatre together with my girlfriend. These are ways for me to unwind, to turn my mind to other things and to forget the daily stress of work. I also like to travel and try to go somewhere at least a few times a year. I don't have any favourite destinations, but like going to places that I haven't visited before. I rarely go to the same place a second time. The only exception is Vienna, where my mother lives. I want to keep exploring new destinations and then perhaps return to the places that I liked the most. **BO**



Konstantins Palgovs,
TEZ TOUR Latvia CEO

TEXT BY IEVA ŠMĪTE | PUBLICITY PHOTO

For your unforgettable holidays

For the past six years, *airBaltic* has been operating charter flights for the *Tez Tour* travel tour operator, providing top-notch service to the agency's clients. Konstantins Palgovs has headed *Tez Tour* since 2003 and tells us more about the agency's partnership with *airBaltic*.

Initially, only those who worked in the tourism sector knew of the agency, whose slogan was *Advanced Tourism Technologies*. The emphasis on technologies forged the path that the agency would take and promoted its rapid growth in the tourism sector, which had previously been composed mostly of small tourism agencies.

"The products that *Tez Tour* offers as a large and influential tour operator are first and foremost designed for other tourism agencies, of which there are more than 300 in Latvia," says Palgovs. "These larger and smaller companies, which operate in Riga and other cities in Latvia, offer their clients trips that have been organized by *Tez Tour*. We once calculated that each year, every 50th resident of Latvia travels with *Tez Tour*. We are very pleased with this result. We want to ensure that tourists and tourism professionals – namely other travel agencies – choose us as their main partner."

When *Tez Tour* first began operating, it offered just one charter flight per week from Riga to Antalya in Turkey, and only during the summer season. At that time, there were as yet no charter flights from Latvia during the winter season, and the choice of hotels and resorts was quite small. Furthermore, up until fairly recently, the Riga airport offered flights and connections to a limited number of destinations and the flow of passengers was much smaller than it is now. This year, *airBaltic* alone is offering flights to more than 60 destinations. That gives Riga a huge advantage as an aviation business centre in the Baltic Sea region.

"Of the 60+ destinations now served by *airBaltic*, we worked together with the airline on the establishment of links with 14 cities," the director of *Tez Tour* continues. "That is no small accomplishment. In addition, for practically all of the new routes, the bulk of the responsibility and financial risks had to be assumed by *Tez Tour*. Now I can smile when I remember the first time that we sat at the table with representatives from *airBaltic*. We wanted to convince them that the airline shouldn't offer only one type of service and operate only regular flights. The beginning wasn't easy, but with time, charter flights became among the most profitable for the airline."

Tez Tour wanted to provide a superior product of the kind that is available for tourists in Europe's most prosperous countries. This goal was shared by both the travel agency and *airBaltic*. Now, after a lengthy pause, flights are again resuming between Riga and Palma de Mallorca, and for the first time, the airline is operating four flights per week to the popular Bulgarian resorts of Burgas and Varna. This represents a new phase in the partnership between *airBaltic* and *Tez Tour*, incorporating not only charter flights, but also regular (united) flights to these destinations. It is also the first time that regular flights have taken place between Latvia and Bulgaria, with four new flights per week operating this summer season.

"I pay very close attention to the reviews that our clients make about the trips that they have taken," says Konstantins. "That includes their comments about the punctuality of the flights and the level of the on-board service. Many passengers bring their kids along when they travel to holiday resorts, placing a great responsibility on both the tour operator and the airline for ensuring that the flight and the trip as a whole are pleasant. Every time that I step into the cabin of an *airBaltic* plane, I can see that the flight attendants are determined to do their job perfectly and professionally. That type of attitude is very important for *Tez Tour*. Actually, at one point I even considered working for *airBaltic*, but in the end, the opportunity never arose. However, in a sense, that wish has come true, and in a way that I had not foreseen. Together with the airline, we have accomplished a lot more than I had thought possible even just a few years ago."

Currently *Tez Tour* is the largest tourism company in Latvia. It operates 26 offices in 16 countries and serves about 1 million tourists every year. The company owns the 5* *Amara World* hotel chain in Turkey, charter airlines have a fleet of five *Boeing 757-200*, two *Airbus A330-300* and two *Boeing 737* airplanes. *Tez Tour* entrusts the service of its clients only to the most competent and professional partners. These partners are leaders in their field, and in Latvia *airBaltic* is undisputedly a leading company. **BO**

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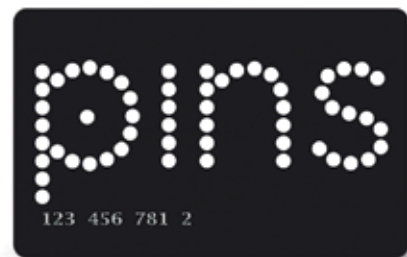
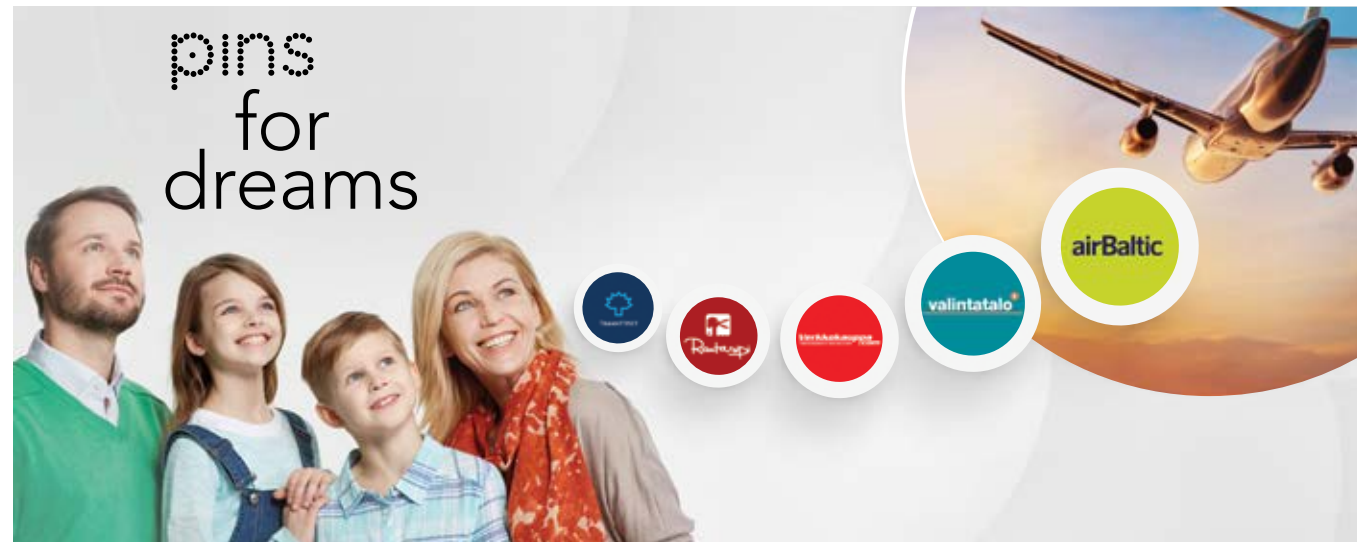
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→ Riga

Route nr	Departs	Arrives	Departs	Arrives	Departs	Arrives	Duration
BT001	Daugavpils 03:45	Jekabpils 04:55	05:00			Riga 07:10	03:25
BT002	Tartu 03:55	Valmiera 05:45	05:50			Riga 07:30	03:35
BT004	Kaunas 03:30	Panevėžys 05:10	05:15	Bauska 06:35	06:40	Riga 07:50	04:20

Riga →

Route nr	Departs	Arrives	Departs	Arrives	Departs	Arrives	Duration
BT001	Riga 23:30	Jekabpils 01:40	01:45			Daugavpils 02:55	03:25
BT002	Riga 23:20	Valmiera 01:00	01:05			Tartu 02:55	03:35
BT004	Riga 23:00	Bauska 00:10	00:15	Panevėžys 01:35	01:40	Kaunas 03:20	04:20



About the program

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Spend PINS on airBaltic flights starting from just 4200 PINS! You can also spend PINS on bus tickets, gift cards, donations, music downloads or online shopping items, with more than 3000 rewards available. When spending on Online Rewards, you can also use PINS in combination with money.

airBaltic pins cards

PINS is also the airBaltic frequent flyer program offering three membership levels: Basic, Executive and VIP.



Great news for those who live in Finland

The PINS coalition loyalty program has rapidly expanded, welcoming its newest partners, including one of Finland's oldest grocery retail loyalty programs Ykkösbonus, the consumer electronics powerhouse Verkkokauppa.com, as well as HotSport and Hotel Bonus Club – the loyalty programs of one of the leading Northern European hotel and restaurant chains Restel.

During its first month in Finland, the PINS loyalty program has already expanded to tens of new partners. You can now collect PINS at around 1350 points of sale all over the country for all your everyday activities!

Active travelers already know that traveling is a great way to collect PINS, and, indeed, you can get 2 PINS for each EUR you spend when booking a room at a Holiday Inn, Cumulus or

Rantasipi hotel, or eating out in Huviretki or Martina. Don't forget your PINS card when booking bus tickets online at Matkahuolto as you get 1 PINS for each EUR!

Of course, you can also collect PINS for shopping, as the consumer electronics powerhouse **Verkkokaupa.com** gives you 1 PINS for each EUR 4 you spend. If you're planning a home makeover, it is another great opportunity to collect PINS, as you get 1 PINS for each EUR you spend at Finland's leading paint and surface specialist **RTV Group**.

Look great and see great with new glasses from **Synsam** and collect 2 PINS for each EUR spent or get 2 PINS for each EUR you spend on exquisite jewelry and watches at **Timanttiset!** You can even collect PINS for your everyday purchases and grocery shopping as **Siwa** and **Valintatalo**

grocery and convenience store chains give you up to 4 PINS for each EUR spent.

New partners join the program all the time, so keep checking back to find more great opportunities to collect PINS for your dreams, whether you want go out for a meal with your family and friends, rent a car or subscribe to a magazine. Keep an eye on the special offers which give you 2x or 3x PINS at selected partners! And, of course, take your PINS card with you when traveling, as the program has partners all over the world!

If you're not a member of PINS, it is easy to join online! In addition to the global PINS website pinsforme.com, there is a local site for Finland at pins.fi with news and offers tailored for those who live in Finland. Join today and see the amazing benefits of PINS for yourself!

Tips for collecting

LATVIA



LITHUANIA



ESTONIA



FINLAND



GLOBAL



ONLINE



New partners where to collect pins



New routes from Lux Express

You can collect up to 150 PINS and receive up to 40% off your ticket when you book a bus journey with Lux Express! This June, Lux Express welcomes Helsinki and St. Petersburg to their route network. It also operates bus routes in the Baltic states, Minsk, Kaliningrad, Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, and Berlin. Travel more, win more! Book your tickets online at www.luxexpress.eu!



Pienepūka flower and gift shop

Celebrate your special events with ease! Flower and gift shop Pienepūka offers a wide range of flowers, bouquets, potted plants, greeting cards, sweets and other gifts. Pienepūka also carries a wide selection of party balloons, and its experts will help you choose the most suitable decorations for all your events. Flowers can also be ordered online, and the staff will make sure your recipient gets the very best!



Sixt rent a bicycle

Sixt bicycle rent introduces a greener, smarter and cheaper way how to explore Riga and Jurmala: the seasonal pass for only 29,99 EUR! You get two free hours of bike rental every day in all Sixt self-service bicycle rental stations and a 50% discount on additional rental time. Plus, you also collect 200 PINS for a seasonal pass, when booking at www.sixtbicycle.lv!



UniPark car parks

UniPark is a car parking facility provider near Vilnius and Kaunas International Airports. The car parks have a license plate identification system ensuring simple and convenient use. All the parking areas are under CCTV surveillance 24 hours per day. To book a parking space visit www.unipark.lt or simply drive into the car park.



Restaurant Salvete

The gourmet slow food restaurant Salvete is located at the European Centre Golf Club near Vilnius. Salvete offers exclusive and meticulously prepared dishes and a quiet environment so you can take your time and enjoy truly great food.



Tips for spending



The excitement of travel lies undoubtedly in the destination, and with the commuting possibilities available in our day and age, the world is indeed your oyster. However, a comfortable trip is no less important than enjoying the time at the end of your journey. Be it a leisurely family holiday or a two-day business trip, you want to travel comfortably and be equipped with everything that you need.

Most holidays begin with a flight. Wouldn't it be perfect if you managed to get some sleep on the plane and arrive at your destination fully refreshed? The *Ergoplatti* travel pillow will help you sleep and feel comfortable during your flight. It is perfect for both the lower back and the

neck and is available for only 7534 PINS.¹

While comfort is important, comfort combined with style is even harder to find. If you are on a business trip, then an elegant bag to suit any outfit is in order, and we have something that fits the bill perfectly. Our *Lisbon* Tuscany leather travel bag is ultra-chic, simple and spacious. Coming in four natural colours, it can be obtained for 43,879 PINS.²

A stylish pair of designer sunglasses is the must-have accessory for your holidays in the sun. So, of course, we have a wide range of great-looking sunglasses on the Online Rewards shop, such as these sleek and elegant sunglasses from *Mokki*, which you can grab for 7651 PINS.³

A cornerstone of a successful trip is being well-prepared. If being comfortable means having all of your toiletries with you, then so be it! The *Mammut* travel washbag is ideal for storing small crucial items and can be yours for 8750 PINS.⁴

We can assist you in preparing for your trip, but where will you be going? It turns out that we can help you with that as well. Should you wish to visit sunny Nice or other destinations in southern and western Europe, then you can use your PINS to purchase flight tickets. For example, flights to France are available for only 6300 PINS one way.⁵ Sounds almost too good to be true!



All the prices displayed include shipping costs to Latvia. Prices and availability of rewards are subject to change and may vary by delivery country.

Join at pinsforme.com
or ask a flight attendant
for your card!

Partner story



PINS and Dr. Solomatin Eye Center have something in common – they both help people fulfill their dreams. While the medical center brings the dream of perfect eyesight to life, PINS can help it come true much faster. Collect and spend PINS with Dr. Solomatin Eye Center and you will see the difference.



* PINS cannot be received for special offers, discounted purchases and services ordered via third parties.



**Prof. Igor Solomatin,
Dr. Solomatin Eye Center CEO and leading specialist:**

Our clinic provides hi-tech laser eye surgery services. Thanks to two modern lasers available in the clinic, we are able to provide highly personalized vision corrections, practicing all vision correction methods that are available in ophthalmology. Our specialists have enough options to select the right technology and method for every patient that is the most effective and safe for a particular individual. Compared to our competitors, the services we provide are moderately priced, but thanks to our collaboration

with PINS we can make them affordable for anyone. It is possible to spend one's PINS on our medical services and 20 EUR gift cards at pinsforme.com. For example, if one does not have enough PINS for the desired procedure, it is possible to exchange PINS for 20 EUR gift cards, add them up and use them in combination with money. Here is a tip – you can also give the gift cards to your friends and family as a present if they wish to get free of glasses and contact lenses. Perfect vision has never been so affordable before!"

Tips for spending at Dr. Solomatin Eye Center

Visit us at acucentrs.lv or call 27748898





Onboard menu

Customized meal pre-order system



Fiji Tiger prawns

Passengers who want to create their own meal set or who have special dietary requirements can try out our customized in-flight meal pre-order system. It allows passengers to choose from more than 70 pre-order meal options and place them onto their virtual tray.

Among the dishes on offer is the Greek-style fish souvlaki, honey-glazed duck breast, dietary dishes like stewed rabbit with wild rice, as well as special meals for kids such as funny pirate fish sticks. These can be selected together with one of nine salads and nine types of dessert, along with a drink of your choice.



Happy Forest



Honey-glazed duck breast

Business Class

airBaltic's summer menu offers light and healthy meals with a wide choice of recipes from all over the world. Business Class passengers can enjoy dainty appetizers and main courses like salmon escalope served with spinach and velouté sauce, grilled turkey fillet with kiwi salsa, or roasted beef tenderloin with rucola and cherry tomatoes, as well as delicious desserts. The new breakfast menu has meals for a great start of the day, including an omelette with greens, grilled zucchini and Fetaki cheese; oven-baked eggs; grilled smoked turkey and vegetables; and Caesar salad with tiger prawns. These meals are served together with an appetizer and granola or assorted fruits.

Economy Class

Economy Class passengers can choose their onboard meal from the *airBaltic Café* menu. Two different hot meals – grilled pork fillet with potatoes, vegetables and mushroom sauce, and teriyaki salmon with rice and fried vegetables – come together with a delicious dessert. Also on offer are hot and tasty chicken tortillas with vegetables and mushrooms, chicken salad with parmesan cheese, two kinds of fresh sandwiches and a variety of snacks and drinks.

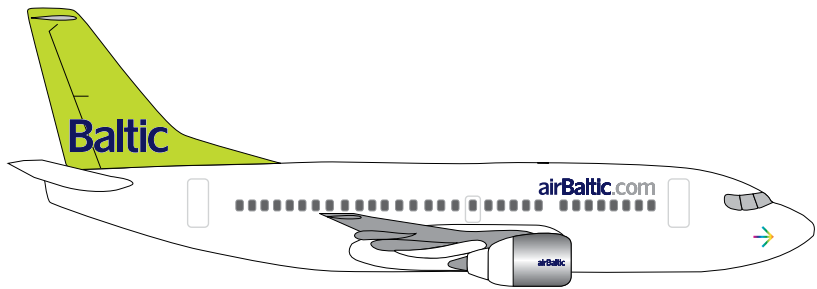
Order your meal before the flight

Make your flight experience even more exciting! Order a gourmet meal while booking your flight ticket or any time later, up to 24 hours before departure, under the Manage My Booking section at www.airbaltic.com.



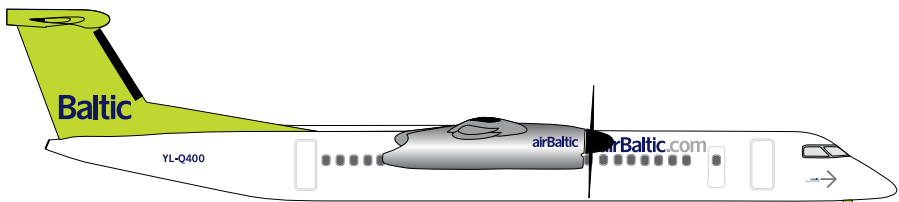
Boeing 737-300

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



Boeing 737-500

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

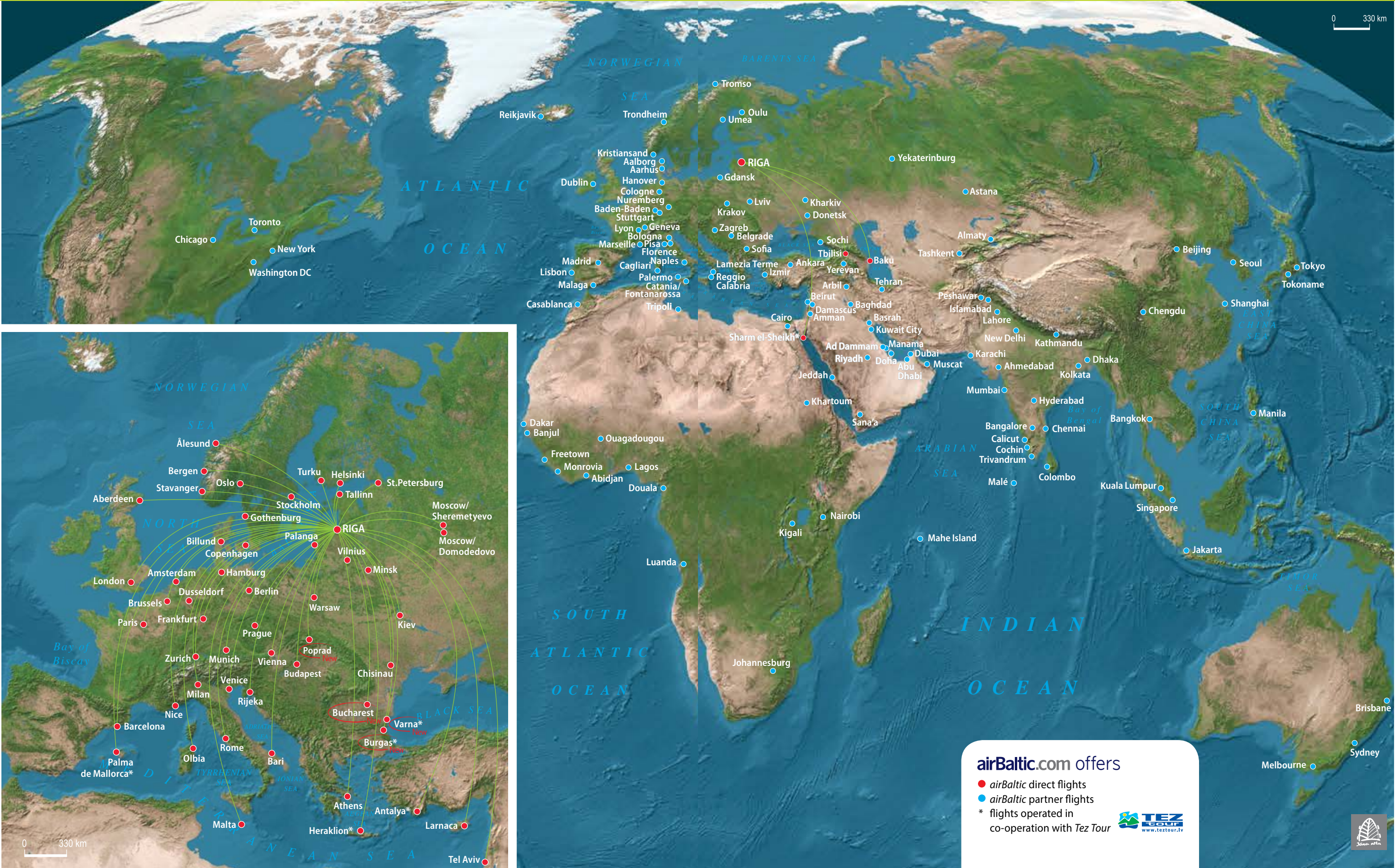


Q400 NextGen Bombardier

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

Flights from Riga					Flights to Riga				
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure Arrival
ABERDEEN Dyce					ABERDEEN Dyce				
BT 659	RIX	ABZ	1-4---	09:20 10:00	BT 660	ABZ	RIX	1-4---	10:35 15:05
BT 659	RIX	ABZ	--3---7	16:20 17:00	BT 660	ABZ	RIX	--3---7	17:35 22:05
ALESUND					ALESUND				
BT 175	RIX	AES	----5--	09:50 11:15	BT 176	AES	RIX	----5--	11:45 15:00
BT 175	RIX	AES	-----7	12:45 14:10	BT 176	AES	RIX	-----7	14:40 17:55
AMSTERDAM					AMSTERDAM				
BT 617	RIX	AMS	1234567	09:10 10:35	BT 618	AMS	RIX	12-45-7	11:20 14:35
BT 619	RIX	AMS	1234567	16:35 18:00	BT 618	AMS	RIX	--3--6-	11:40 14:55
					BT 620	AMS	RIX	1234567	18:45 22:00
ATHENS					ATHENS				
BT 611	RIX	ATH	-23----	10:55 14:15	BT 612	ATH	RIX	-23----	14:50 18:10
BT 611	RIX	ATH	-----6-	14:40 18:00	BT 612	ATH	RIX	-----6-	18:35 21:55
BAKU					BAKU				
BT 732	RIX	GYP	--3--7	23:05 05:00+1	BT 733	GYP	RIX	1-4---	06:00 08:10
BARCELONA					BARCELONA				
BT 681	RIX	BCN	-23-56-	09:30 12:15	BT 682	BCN	RIX	-23-56-	12:55 17:35
BT 683	RIX	BCN	1-34-7	14:10 16:55	BT 684	BCN	RIX	1-34-7	17:40 22:20
BARI					BARI				
BT 623	RIX	BRI	-----7	09:30 11:25	BT 624	BRI	RIX	-----7	12:00 15:55
BERGEN					BERGEN				
BT 171	RIX	BGO	---4-7	22:45 00:10+1	BT 172	BGO	RIX	1...5--	05:20 08:40
BERLIN Tegel					BERLIN Tegel				
BT 211	RIX	TXL	12345-7	09:20 10:15	BT 212	TXL	RIX	12345-7	10:45 13:35
BT 217	RIX	TXL	123456-	13:10 14:05	BT 218	TXL	RIX	123456-	14:35 17:25
BT 213	RIX	TXL	1234567	17:55 18:50	BT 214	TXL	RIX	1234567	19:25 22:15
BILLUND					BILLUND				
BT 145	RIX	BLL	1234567	22:45 23:45	BT 146	BLL	RIX	1234567	05:50 08:40
BRUSSELS					BRUSSELS				
BT 601	RIX	BRU	12345--	06:05 08:00	BT 602	BRU	RIX	12345--	08:30 12:15
BT 601	RIX	BRU	-----6-	09:20 11:15	BT 602	BRU	RIX	-----6-	11:55 15:40
BT 603	RIX	BRU	-----7	15:55 17:50	BT 604	BRU	RIX	-----7	18:20 22:05
BT 603	RIX	BRU	1-45--	17:30 19:25	BT 604	BRU	RIX	1-45--	19:50 23:35
BUCHAREST					BUCHAREST				
BT 503/505	RIX	OTP	1-3-5-7	23:15 02:00+1	BT 504/506	OTP	RIX	12-4-6-	05:40 08:30
BUDAPEST					BUDAPEST				
BT 491	RIX	BUD	1-345-7	13:10 14:35	BT 492	BUD	RIX	1-345-7	15:05 18:20
BURGAS					BURGAS				
BT 755	RIX	BOJ	-----7	09:45 12:25	BT 756	BOJ	RIX	-----7	13:00 15:35
BT 755	RIX	BOJ	---4---	16:05 18:45	BT 756	BOJ	RIX	---4---	19:20 21:55
CHISINAU					CHISINAU				
BT 420	RIX	KIV	-2-4-6-	12:55 15:20	BT 421	KIV	RIX	-2-4-6-	15:55 18:25
COPENHAGEN					COPENHAGEN				
BT 133	RIX	CPH	1234---	06:45 07:25	BT 142	CPH	RIX	--3-567	06:00 08:35
BT 131	RIX	CPH	1234567	09:40 10:20	BT 134	CPH	RIX	1234---	08:05 10:40
BT 139	RIX	CPH	1234567	18:10 18:50	BT 132	CPH	RIX	1234567	12:35 15:10
BT 141	RIX	CPH	-2-456-	22:55 23:35	BT 140	CPH	RIX	1234567	19:20 21:55
DUSSELDORF					DUSSELDORF				
BT 231	RIX	DUS	-2-4-67	09:45 11:25	BT 232	DUS	RIX	-2-4-67	11:55 15:25
BT 233	RIX	DUS	1-3---7	16:05 17:45	BT 234	DUS	RIX	1-3--7	18:15 21:45
FRANKFURT					FRANKFURT				
BT 243	RIX	FRA	1-3--7	09:30 11:15	BT 244	FRA	RIX	1-3...7	11:45 15:20
BT 245	RIX	FRA	-2-456-	16:15 18:00	BT 246	FRA	RIX	-2-456-	18:35 22:10
GOTHENBURG Landvetter					GOTHENBURG Landvetter				
BT 121	RIX	GOT	12-4-6-	22:55 23:40	BT 122	GOT	RIX	-23-5-7	06:00 08:35
HAMBURG					HAMBURG				
BT 251	RIX	HAM	1234567	09:10 10:15	BT 252	HAM	RIX	1234567	10:45 13:40
BT 253	RIX	HAM	--3-5-7	17:30 18:35	BT 254	HAM	RIX	--3-5-7	19:05 22:00
HELSINKI					HELSINKI				
BT 301	RIX	HEL	1234567	09:40 10:45	BT 326	HEL	RIX	1234567	07:40 08:35
BT 303	RIX	HEL	1234567	12:50 13:55	BT 302	HEL	RIX	1234567	11:15 12:15
BT 305	RIX	HEL	1234567	16:25 17:30	BT 304	HEL	RIX	1234567	14:25 15:25
BT 307	RIX	HEL	1234567	19:45 20:50	BT 306	HEL	RIX	1234567	18:00 19:00
BT 325	RIX	HEL	1234567	22:55 23:55	BT 308	HEL	RIX	1234567	21:20 22:20
KIEV Borispol					KIEV Borispol				
BT 400	RIX	KBP	1234567	09:25 11:15	BT 401	KBP	RIX	1234567	11:45 13:40
BT 404	RIX	KBP	123456-	16:40 18:30	BT 405	KBP	RIX	1234567	20:10 22:05
BT 404	RIX	KBP	-----7	17:50 19:40					
LARNACA					LARNACA				
BT 657	RIX	LCA	-2---6-	22:45 02:35+1	BT 658	LCA	RIX	--3--7	04:30 08:30
LONDON Gatwick					LONDON Gatwick				
BT 651	RIX	LGW	1-3-56-	09:20 10:10	BT 652	LGW	RIX	1-3-56-	10:50 15:35
BT 653	RIX	LGW	12-4-7	15:55 16:45	BT 654	LGW	RIX	12-4-7	17:30 22:15
BT 653	RIX	LGW	----5--	16:00 16:50	BT 654	LGW	RIX	----5--	18:10 22:55
MALTA					MALTA				
BT 739	RIX	MLA	-----7	09:15 11:55	BT 740	MLA	RIX	-----7	12:40 17:20
BT 739	RIX	MLA	-2-----	13:50 16:30	BT 740	MLA	RIX	-2-----	17:15 21:55
MILAN Malpensa					MILAN Malpensa				
BT 629	RIX	MXP	---4-6-	09:30 11:15	BT 630	MXP	RIX	---4-6-	12:00 15:40
BT 629	RIX	MXP	1-3-5-7	16:00 17:45	BT 630	MXP	RIX	1-3-5-7	18:30 22:10
MINSK					MINSK				
BT 412	RIX	MSQ	1-34--7	14:10 15:20	BT 413	MSQ	RIX	1-34--7	15:55 17:05

Flights from Riga					Flights to Riga				
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure Arrival
MOSCOW Domodedovo					MOSCOW Domodedovo				
BT 418	RIX	DME	-2345--	09:30 12:15	BT 417	DME	RIX	1234-67	07:10 08:20
BT 416	RIX	DME	123-567	23:05 02:15+1	BT 419	DME	RIX	-2345--	13:00 13:45
MOSCOW Sheremetyevo					MOSCOW Sheremetyevo				
BT 424	RIX	SVO	12345--	05:50 08:30	BT 425	SVO	RIX	12345--	09:20 10:05
BT 424	RIX	SVO	-----67	09:20 12:00	BT 425	SVO	RIX	-----67	12:45 13:30
BT 422	RIX	SVO	1234567	17:50 20:30	BT 423	SVO	RIX	1234567	21:15 22:00
MUNICH					MUNICH				
BT 221	RIX	MUC	123-567	09:20 11:00	BT 222	MUC	RIX	123-567	11:35 15:05
BT 223	RIX	MUC	12345-7	16:35 18:15	BT 224	MUC	RIX	12345-7	18:45 22:15
NICE					NICE				
BT 695	RIX	NCE	-----7	09:25 11:30	BT 696	NCE	RIX	-----7	12:05 16:05
BT 695	RIX	NCE	---4---	10:55 13:00	BT 696	NCE	RIX	---4---	13:35 17:35
BT 695	RIX	NCE	-2---6-	15:25 17:30	BT 696	NCE	RIX	-2---6-	18:15 22:15
OLBIA					OLBIA				
BT 655	RIX	OLB	-----6-	09:30 11:40	BT 656	OLB	RIX	-----6-	12:15 16:30
BT 655	RIX	OLB	---4---	15:00 17:10	BT 656	OLB	RIX	---4---	17:55 22:10
OSLO					OSLO				
BT 151	RIX	OSL	123456-	09:10 10:05	BT 158	OSL	RIX	1234567	05:50 08:40
BT 153	RIX	OSL	1234567	18:00 18:55	BT 152	OSL	RIX	123456-	10:35 13:25
BT 157	RIX	OSL	1234567	22:45 23:40	BT 154	OSL	RIX	1234567	19:25 22:15
PALANGA					PALANGA				
BT 033	RIX	PLQ	1234567	23:30 00:15+1	BT 032	PLQ	RIX	1234567	07:00 07:45
PALMA DE MALLORCA					PALMA DE MALLORCA				
BT 687	RIX	PMI	-----7	09:10 11:55	BT 688	PMI	RIX	-----7	12:45 17:25
PARIS Charles de Gaulles					PARIS Charles de Gaulles				
BT 691	RIX	CDG	123456-	09:05 11:00	BT 692	CDG	RIX	123456-	11:55 15:40
BT 693	RIX	CDG	12345-7	15:55 17:50	BT 694	CDG	RIX	12345-7	18:35 22:20
PRAGUE					PRAGUE				
BT 481	RIX	PRG	1-3----	09:40 10:50	BT 482	PRG	RIX	1-3----	11:15 14:20
BT 481	RIX	PRG	----5-7	12:55 14:05	BT 482	PRG	RIX	----5-7	14:35 17:40
BT 481	RIX	PRG	-2-4-6-	17:15 18:25	BT 482	PRG	RIX	-2-4-6-	18:50 21:55

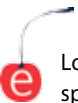


Country/City Ticket offices	Airport Ticket Offices
AUSTRIA	
Vienna airBaltic Germany Hauptstrasse 117, D-10827 Berlin ☎ 0820600830 local calls (EUR 0.17/min) service@airbaltic.de	Airport Schwechat Terminal 2 Airport Ticket Office Celebi Ground Handling ☎ +431 700736394
AZERBAIJAN	
Baku Improtex Travel 16, S. Vurgun Str. Baku AZ1000, Azerbaijan ☎ +994 124989239 info@improtex-travel.com booking@improtex-travel.com	Heydar Aliyev International Airport Airport Ticket Office Silk Way Airlines South Terminal ☎ +994 124972600
BELARUS	
Minsk	Airport Minsk 2 Airport Ticket Office airBaltic
BELGIUM	
Brussels 153 A Vilvoordelaan 1930 Zaventem ☎ +32 (0) 27126427 airbaltic@airagencies.be	Airport Zaventem Departure Hall ☎ +32 (0) 27230667 Airport Ticket Office Aviapartner
Croatia	
Rijeka	Rijeka Airport Airport Ticket Office Zračna Luka Rijeka ☎ +385 51 841.222
CYPRUS	
Larnaca	Larnaca International Airport Airport Ticket Office airBaltic / LGS Handling
CZECH REPUBLIC	
Prague	Vaclav Havel Prague Airport Terminal T2 Airport Ticket Office CEAS ☎ +420 220117540
DENMARK	
Copenhagen	Airport Copenhagen International Terminal 3 Departure Hall Airport Ticket Office SAS
Billund	Billund Airport Departure Hall Airport Ticket Office ☎ +45 76505205
ESTONIA	
Tallinn ☎ 17107 (airBaltic RESERVATIONS 0600411015 0.51 EUR/min, local calls only) tallinn@airbaltic.com	Airport Tallinn Main Terminal, Departure Hall Airport Ticket Office airBaltic / Tallinn Airport GH
FINLAND	
Helsinki (airBaltic RESERVATIONS 0600411015 0.64 EUR/min, Mon-Fri 09:00-18:00)	Helsinki Handling NewCo Oy Airport Ticket Office Servisair
Turku	Airport Turku Airport Ticket Office Airpro OY
FRANCE	
Paris APG France 66 avenue des Champs Elysées Building E, 2 nd floor 75008, Paris ☎ +33 153892100 airbaltic@apg.fr	Airport Charles de Gaulles Terminal 2D Airport Ticket Office Swissport Services CDG
Nice	Airport Nice Cote D'azur Terminal 1 Airport Ticket Office Lufthansa Ticket Desk
GEORGIA	
Tbilisi Discovery Travel Ltd/airBaltic GSA 72 Paliashvili st. Tbilisi ☎ +995 32 2 900900 airbalticgsa@discovery.ge	Airport Tbilisi Airport Ticket Office Discovery Ltd ☎ +995 32 2 900900
GERMANY	
Berlin airBaltic Germany Hauptstrasse 117, D-10827 Berlin ☎ 0900 124 7225 (EUR 0.69/min German landline – mobile calls may be different) service@airbaltic.de	Airport Berlin-Tegel Main Terminal Airport Ticket Office GlobeGround Berlin Opposite Gate 4/5
Dusseldorf	Airport Dusseldorf Terminal B Airport Ticket Office HAWAS Germany GmbH ☎ +49 211 421 6271

Country/City Ticket offices	Airport Ticket Offices
Frankfurt	Airport Frankfurt Airport Ticket Office Havas Germany GmbH Terminal 2, Hall E, Desk 939
Hamburg	Airport Fuhlsbuttel Terminal 1, Departure Hall Airport Ticket Office Havas Germany GmbH
Munich	Airport Munich Terminal 1 Airport Ticket Office Havas Germany GmbH
GREECE	
Athens Tal Aviation 44 Ilious str. 17564 - P.Faliro ☎ +30 210 9341500 F: +30 210 9341620 airbaltic@tal-aviation.gr	Athens International Airport Airport Ticket Office Goldair Handling
HUNGARY	
Budapest Tensi Aviation Kft. Komjádi Béla utca 1. ☎ +36 1 3451526 F: +36 1 9991466 aviation@tensi.hu	Budapest Airport Airport Ticket Office Celebi Ground Handling Hungary
ISRAEL	
Tel Aviv Caspi Aviation ltd 1 Ben Yehuda st, Tel-Aviv 63801 ☎ +972 3 5100213 / 4 F: +972 (0) 5108365 bt@caspi-aviation.co.il	Ben-Gurion International Airport Airport Ticket Office Laufer Aviation GHI Level 3, Terminal 3 ☎ +972 39754076
ITALY	
Rome Tal Aviation Italy Via Adolfo Rava, 106, 00142, Rome ☎ +39 0654242544 F: +390654242534 airbaltic@talaviation.it	Leonardo de Vinci – Fiumicino Airport Terminal 3, Departure Hall A.R.E. Airline Representative Europe
Bari	Bari Airport Airport Ticket Office Bari Palese
Milan	Milan Malpensa Airport Terminal 1, Departure Level Airport Ticket Office A.R.E. Airline Representative Europe
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