

MARCH 2011

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airBaltic
inflight magazine

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Berlin

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Green vs. "green"

A spring list of top products
see page 46



Estonian eco-fashion designer Reet Aus

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Editorial Staff

Chief Editor: Ilze Pole
e: ilze@frankshouse.lv
Editor Ieva Nora Firere
e: ieva@frankshouse.lv
Translator, copyeditor and reviser:
Kārlis Roberts Freibergs
Design: Marika Strāle
Layout: Inta Kraukle
Cover: Corbis, *John the Murderer by*
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Frank's House

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by SIA Frank's House
Stabu 17, Rīga, LV 1011, Latvia
ph: +37167293970
w: frankshouse.lv
e: franks@frankshouse.lv

Director:

Eva Dandzberga
e: eva@frankshouse.lv
Advertising managers:

Indra Indraše
e: indra@frankshouse.lv
m: +37129496966
Lelde Vikmane
e: lelde@frankshouse.lv
m: +37129487700
Ieva Birzniece
e: ieva.birzniece@frankshouse.lv
m: +37126416866

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Bertolt Flick,
CEO airBaltic

Dear Passenger,

Airports form an essential part in the development of any economy. A network of direct air connections to major business destinations constitutes an essential element for assuring regional and national growth. Businesses are dependent on having at their disposal a tight network of air routes to capital cities and industrial centres in other markets, served frequently, reliably, and punctually.

Local politicians in certain European regions have been actively supporting the establishment of air routes, from secondary but also main airports, granting direct subsidies and in other ways using public funds to attract air carriers. The major beneficiary of this development has been the Irish low-cost airline Ryanair.

Over the last 10–15 years, Ryanair has turned into an expert on how to use regional/local interests for their own narrow interests, exerting strong pressures on local decision makers to receive airport landing, handling, and other services for free or at sharply reduced rates. In cases airports do not comply with the carrier's demands – Gerona airport in Spain can be mentioned as only one recent example – Ryanair simply decides to reduce or even to discontinue its operations.

Ryanair's approach, playing with local interests for its own gain, threatening to move whenever its own interests are at stake, has been questioned, both by other airlines and by competition authorities. Supporting Ryanair with public funds discriminates against other airlines, distorts competition, and, in the longer run, destabilises market development.

Ryanair has entered the Latvian market in 2004, rapidly taking over one fifth of the market. Despite this competition, airBaltic, the Latvian national carrier, has been able to continue its own development, serving the Baltic region by extending its route network from 30 to over 70 on-line destinations and by increasing its passenger base by a factor of 10 from 300 000 passengers to over 3 million passengers and its market share from 40% to 66%. In 2011, airBaltic's passenger increase in Riga will be equal to Ryanair's total number of Riga passengers. I feel that Ryanair's business model, thriving on the expense of others, has no place in Europe where non-discrimination on the market place has been accepted as being a fundamental principle, equally applicable to all players. The European Regions Airlines Association (ERA), alerted by its members, has started to take a close look at Ryanair and its undertakings, and is prepared to take legal action if required.

airBaltic has never objected to competitors operating to and from Riga. Competition is to the benefit of the consumer, no doubt, only – there has to be a level playing field.

Have a nice flight!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Flick', written in a cursive, stylized script.



TEXT BY ROBERT
COTTRELL
PHOTO COURTESY
OF F64

Plotting a silent revolution

Most people looking for a hotel room ask first about the location of the hotel, then the price of the room, then whether breakfast is included. For me, the first worry is always noise. I can't stand it. If I had a switch for my ears, I'd keep them turned off more than half the time. So I don't want a room facing a busy street. It can't be next to the hotel lifts. And even that still leaves all sorts of hazards that show themselves only after check-in. Is the air-conditioning noisy, and, if so, does it switch off? Does the head of my bed share a wall with the television

dance competition on a tin floor and you wouldn't hear a whisper. If only I could afford €500 night and up for a hotel room, my travel problems would be solved. I'm equally fussy about noise in shops and cafés and restaurants – and here, money shouldn't be a factor. It costs nothing to turn off the radio. But nobody ever does. I can see three possible explanations. First, customers want more noise in their lives: unlikely. Second, the staff want a bit of music to break up the boredom of the working day: much more likely. Third, background music is not meant to be liked. It's meant to keep you on edge so that you spend your money and shove off.

I'm sure this last explanation is the right one for music in shops. Test after test has shown that loud music causes shoppers to spend their money more quickly. I'm equally sure that the music in *Starbucks* cafés is designed to stop you doing a day's work there with your laptop.

Now, here's my constructive suggestion—my free gift to some enterprising publisher. I propose a series of "Silent Travel" guides, which highlight silent hotels, silent cafés, silent restaurants, silent shops. Even museums, churches, public libraries. Anywhere without background or foreground music.

We quiet people will recognise one another by these guides. We will get together in our quiet cafés. We will plot a silent revolution, beginning with a European Day of Calm, on which we demand that taxi-drivers turn off their radios and earphones are banned in public places. Just imagine: without so many interruptions, we might even start talking to each other. **BO**

Just imagine: without so many interruptions, we might even start talking to each other

set next door? Can I hear the people tramping around in the room upstairs? And am I really the only person in the world who minds these things?

When I was wondering what it would take to make a hotel room really quiet, I went to the Four Seasons in London, which was the poshest hotel I could think of, and asked them. They took me round and explained the secrets of nocturnal peace. When you close one of their bedroom doors, a little plate drops down at the bottom, sealing the gap between door and carpet. Bathroom plumbing is cast-iron and isolated. If any electrical equipment makes so much as a polite hum, it is thrown out. The floors and ceilings are insulated so well that the people upstairs could be running a tap-

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Milan's *Bar Jamaica* still as popular as ever

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www.jamaicabar.it

Milan's *Bar Jamaica* will be very easy to find for art lovers, as it is not far from the *Pinacoteca di Brera* and its stupendous collection of works by some of Europe's most famous artists. The legendary bar and café once served as a central meeting point for the city's artists and poets. This year, the *Bar Jamaica* will celebrate its 90th birthday. When it first opened its doors in 1921, the establishment housed the only coffee machine and telephone in the entire Brera district, making it a favourite stopping point for both passers-

**ONE DAY
MUSSOLINI
LEFT
WITHOUT
PAYING,
BECOMING
THE FIRST
PERSON TO
BE WRITTEN
INTO THE
BAR'S LIST OF
DEBTORS**

by and neighbourhood locals; mainly blue-collar workers, bricklayers, cabmen and prostitutes. Soon, it also became popular with students from the nearby art academy (*Accademia di Brera*). One regular patron was a young journalist from the *Poppolo d'Italia* newspaper. He would stop in for a cup of black, foamless cappuccino coffee on his way to work. One day he left without paying, becoming the first person to be written into the bar's list of debtors. Although the amount that he owed was very small, only 25 centesimi,

his name – Benito Mussolini – remained on the list for some time. Following the end of the Second World War, the *Bottigliera del ponte di Brera* obtained a name-change and became the *Bar Jamaica*, in tribute to Alfred Hitchcock's 1939 movie *Jamaica Inn*. It was here that Milan's most prominent painters held their first post-war exhibition, thus cementing the bar's reputation as a real artists' hangout. Emilio Tadini, the former president of the *Accademia di Brera*, recalls that the *Bar Jamaica* was a real *macchina dell'amicizia* or friendship factory, which eliminated all social and class barriers between the patrons after the first two glasses of wine.

A number of famous cultural personalities experienced this magic in person, including Ugo Mulas, Lucchino Visconti, Allen Ginsberg, Umberto Eco and many others. Although times change and patrons tend to "migrate" from bar to bar, the *Bar Jamaica* has never lost its special status. It is still known for the free *Mamma Lina* lunches, tradition that is still practiced at the *Bar Jamaica* today. It comes from post-war period, when artists who didn't have enough money to pay for a meal could instead leave one of their artworks with the owners. The famous bar and café continues to be a popular meeting spot and is sure to remain in memory for some time to come. **BO**



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Facts:

Terminal 1 opened in June 2009

Participating in the "silent airport" and "green landings" movements, Barcelona Airport generates less acoustic contamination inside. For landings, airplanes approach in gradual descents, cutting both CO₂ emissions and fuel consumption by 25%.

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TEXT BY VERA CIRIA | PUBLICITY PHOTO

Leading the concept of all-inclusive airports

Barcelona Airport's new Terminal 1 is paving the way for future passenger service with its Very Important Traveller option.

A huge, diaphanous space opens up before your eyes upon arriving at Barcelona Airport's Terminal 1 (T1). Modern, clean and white, 95% of the illumination is natural, achieved through a clever system of reflecting panels to bounce daylight around the open space. Before passing through the security checks, take a moment to sample some *tapas* and wine at the Michelin-starred *PortaGaig*. Run by Carles Gaig, the food is simply delicious.

Almost all connecting flights are situated within the same terminal, eliminating the unnecessary time and stress implicit from changing from one building to another. National and international flights are located within walking distance, all joined together by the central *Sky Center*.

Looking very much like a shopping mall, the *Sky Center* is composed of 49 shops and 29 restaurants, including several children's play areas to keep the young ones occupied. From fast-food establishments to finer dining, the wide selection is sure to suit nearly all tastes. In addition, the *APTC* restaurant and *Onza* sweet store now provide gluten-free products for celiacs. At each end of the shopping area, huge, open-air terraces offer a breath of fresh

air or the option to spend some time in the sun.

The three VIP lounges have the unusual benefit of being open to all passengers for a set fee – part of the airport's Very Important Traveller concept. Each lounge is equipped with such amenities as rest areas and sofa beds, shower rooms and plenty of food. The nearby entertainment and wellness centres offer all kinds of services, including golf simulators, hairdressing, full spa treatments and thermal circuits. T1 is also a leader in the new concept of all-inclusive airports with business centres. The terminal is fully equipped with offices and boardrooms, a banquet hall and restaurant, courier services and car rentals, hostesses and audiovisual equipment. In other words, it

offers a fully functioning congress centre for business travellers. Ten rest units, similar to hotel rooms, are designed for overnight stays, while a 344-square-metre gym is open to travellers and workers alike. Trainers are on-hand to help with personalised workout programmes and exercise classes throughout the day. The newest novelty, just introduced in March, is in the form of interactive touch panels that link passengers to video-conference and information points. Considering the large amount of time that people sometimes have to spend at airports, T1 has introduced some interesting innovations for the comfort of both its passengers and employees, which may very well spread to other airports all across the world. **BO**



TIEDÄ, ÄLÄ ARVAA.

Tarot-pakka sekaisin ja kristallipallo huurussa? Asiakassuhdetta hoidettaessa on parempi tietää kuin arvata. Helpoiten se onnistuu Microsoft Dynamics CRM -ratkaisun avulla.

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Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online

www.microsoft.fi/crm

MARCH / 2011



Gioachino Rossini's *Barber of Seville (Il barbiere di Siviglia)*, Latvian National Opera / Premiere on March 5, with subsequent performances on March 6 and 18, as well as in April, May and June

During a typical performance season, the Latvian National Opera comes out with six new productions. *Il barbiere di Siviglia* is this spring's new addition, featuring the Riga debut of Lithuanian conductor Modestas Pitrenas. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* is known as one of the most brilliant and popular comic operas ever composed. Count Almaviva enlists the help of the witty barber Figaro to come up with an ingenious plan for him to meet Rosina, the girl of his dreams. Doctor Bartolo, Rosina's ward, keeps her confined in his house, and Almaviva and Figaro have to overcome many obstacles before the count wins Rosina's hand in marriage.

www.opera.lv



Finnish Music Days in Latvia: *Latvija State Choir and Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra*
Great Guild Concert Hall / March 9

This will be the first concert in Riga by one of Scandinavia's leading orchestras, the *Helsinki Philharmonic*. Conducted by John Storgård, it will perform works by Jean Sibelius, Einohuhani Rautavaara and Robert Schuman, together with the renowned *Latvija State Choir*.

Under Storgård's leadership, the *Helsinki Philharmonic* has gained increasingly wide acclaim, judging by the glowing audience reviews and steady rise in ticket sales. Already, the number of season tickets purchased for the spring of 2011 has set a new record. Fortunately, admission to the concert in Riga will be free of charge, as it is being supported by the EU's Central Baltic INTERREG IV A programme.

www.koris.lv



The Second Purvītis Prize, *Arsenāls Exhibition Hall of the Latvian National Museum of Art* / Until April 10

The new-founded prize (awarded since 2009) is named after the grand master of Latvian painting Vilhelms Purvītis (1872-1945) and is a biennial event on the Latvian art scene. Every two years panel of judges decides which artist or

group of artists will receive more than 28 thousand euros for an outstanding performance in visual arts. This year's exhibition will cover the work, expressive examples of painting, photography, installations and video art, created by eight shortlisted candidates: Ilmārs Blumbergs, Kristīne Kursiņa, Kristaps Ģelzis, Imants Lancmanis, Kaspars Podnieks, Mārtiņš Ratniks, Inta Ruka and Krišs Salmanis.



Windstream

Windstream spring festival

/ From March 20 to April 25

With the motto "Wake up, remember, listen, enjoy!" the Riga Professional Symphony Band is proudly hosting the second annual *Windstream* spring festival. Over the course of one month, the band will be performing musical works in

various styles, including well-known Latvian classics and new oeuvres by local composers. The events will range from chamber music concerts to Rock'n'Opera, along with a joke concert and performances dedicated to various events, including the Easter celebrations. One concert will also be held in memory of the victims of communist repression. The admission to a number of these events will be free of charge.

www.music.lv/riga

Roxette in concert

Arena Riga / March 16

After performing at six sold out concerts last summer, the Swedish pop icons Marie Fredriksson and Per Gessle of *Roxette* are returning to the world stage full of enthusiasm. The super group, which has sold 70 million albums over its 25-year career, has not toured the European continent since the release of its previous album, *Room Service*, in 2001. *Roxette*'s last world tour took place even further back, in 1994-1995, to support the *Crash! Boom! Bang!* album.

Now, with the fresh release of its new album *Charm School*, *Roxette* is set to go back on the road.

"If you had asked me a couple of years ago if there would ever be a new *Roxette* tour, I would have very quickly said 'No!'," explains singer, guitarist and songwriter Per Gessle. "Knowing what Marie had to go through in recovering from her severe illness [cancer], this seems almost magical. It will be wonderful to meet with our audience again."

Tickets can be purchased through
www.ticketservice.lv



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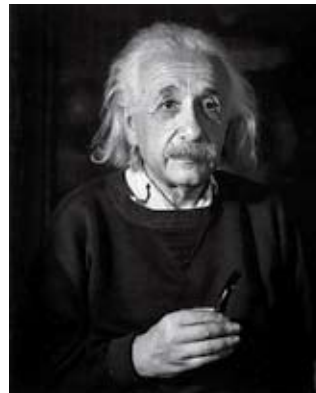
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Vienna

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Trude Fleischmann:
A self-assured eye, Wien
Museum / Until May 29



Trude Fleischmann (1895–1990) is considered to be one of the most outstanding female photographers of the 20th century. Born into

a Viennese Jewish merchant family, she made her debut during the euphorically passionate 1920s, representing a new and independent generation of women who did not fear to experiment in a field of art that was almost exclusively dominated by men. Fleischmann provided a fresh impetus to her craft, surpassing many of her male counterparts in boldness and daring. She created lively snapshots of life in Vienna, as well as a legendary portrait gallery of such prominences as physicist Albert Einstein and Austrian architect Adolf Loos. Her studies of naked dancers during the 1920s gave rise to a sensation even in Vienna, which was considered to be a liberal city by the standards of the day.

Karlsplatz

www.wienmuseum.at

Frankfurt

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Felix Gonzalez-Torres:
Specific objects without
specific form
MMK Museum für Moderne
Kunst / Until April 25

Fifteen years after his death, Felix Gonzalez-Torres remains an icon in contemporary art. The Cuban-born American was one of the most influential artists of his generation, despite his premature passing away of AIDS in 1996 at the age of 38. The travelling retrospective of his works is one of this year's European

exhibition highlights, featuring some of the artist's most popular paintings, photographs, sculptures and public projects, as well as lesser-known works. First displayed at the Wiels Centre for Contemporary Art in Brussels, the exhibition's final showing can be viewed until the end of April at the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt am Main.

Domstrasse 10

www.mmk-frankfurt.de



Paris

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Tous cannibales
La Maison Rouge / Until
May 15

This exhibition examines the subject of cannibalism and the images associated with it, from Ancient Greek mythology to 19th-century vampire legends, including the fantastic stories related by explorers of the New World, as well as fairytale

characters. Curated by Jeanette Zwingenberger, the exhibition features paintings, drawings and etchings from centuries past, as well as sculptures and other works by such contemporary artists as Jake and Dinos Chapman, Matthew Barney, Wim Delvoye and Sarah Lucas.

10 Boulevard de la Bastille

www.lamaisonrouge.org

Stockholm

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Investigations of a dog Maga3 Stockholm Konsthall / Until May 29

This new exhibition of contemporary art obtained its title from a short story written by Franz Kafka in 1922. The story centres on an unusual dog who seeks to make new discoveries and expand his understanding of the world. His insatiable curiosity turns him into an outcast among his own kind. The participants of this Stockholm exhibition are also eccentric outsiders, who analyze

contemporary society and politics, making use of new means of expression to create a new form of language. Practically all of the participating artists, including Jeff Koons, Maurizio Cattelan and Bruce Nauman, are stars in their own right. Some 40 works are on display, along with five short stories written by five different authors. The event is being organized by the FACE network (Foundation of Arts of a Contemporary Europe).

Frihamnen

www.maga3.com



Berlin

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MaerzMusik festival of contemporary music March 18-27

For the tenth year in a row, the *Berliner Festspiele* is organising an event-filled festival of contemporary music in Germany's capital city. As one of the city's best-funded cultural institutions, the *Berliner Festspiele* has managed to put together an extensive programme of various new works, nine of which will be performed to the public for

the first time.

The performances of the *Maerz Musik* festival will be held at different venues throughout the city, including theatres, exhibition spaces, concert halls and the *Berliner Philharmonie*, as well as the *Moskau*, *Berghain* and *Trafo* night clubs. With a special emphasis on cinema this year, a number of the concerts will also take place at the *Babylon* movie theatre.

www.maerzmusik.de

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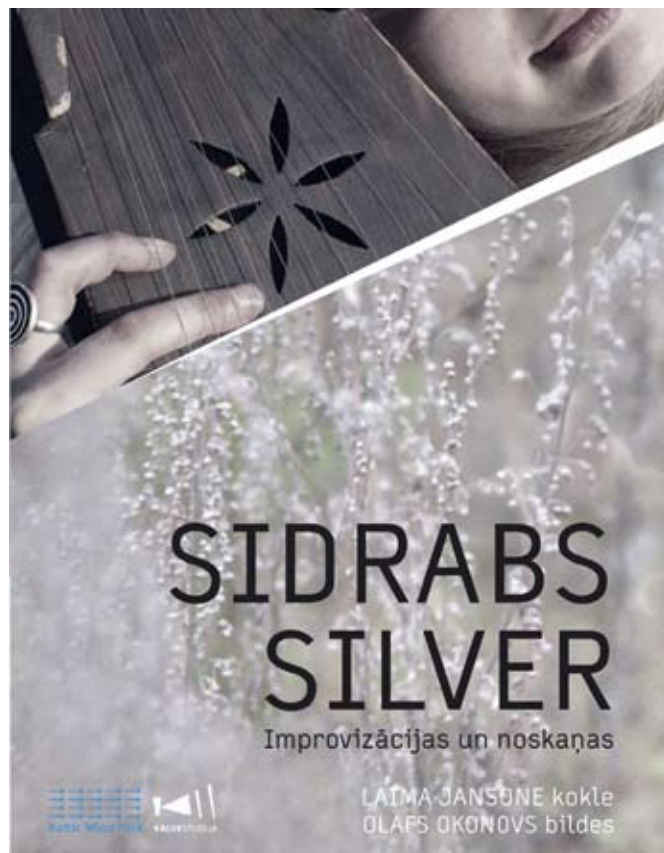
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🔗 **The other side of the coin (Monētas dubultportrets). Directed by Romualds Pipars Studija Ģilde, 2010**

The absurdity of life in the Soviet Union was characterized by a certain paradox. Although officially there was no unemployment and nearly everybody was obliged to take on a salaried position of one form or other, people also practiced

hobbies that they might not have taken up under other conditions. One of these was amateur filmmaking with 8-millimetre movie cameras. Now, director Romualds Pipars has put together a number of documentary home movies with an archaeologist's passion, piecing together a captivating story of the past that extends into the 1980s and depicts daily life behind the Iron Curtain. The film is in Latvian, with subtitles in English and Russian.



🔗 **Sidrabs / Silver. Improvisations and moods (Improvizācijas un noskaņas). Laima Jansone (kokle), Olafs Okonovs (photos) DVD + CD, Kalvestudija, 2011**

Many people erroneously associate the *kokle* – a traditional Latvian stringed instrument similar to the zither – with boring folk music that is on its way out of the country's cultural scene. Such misperceptions are certainly bound to disappear if one hears the first solo release by Laima Jansone, one of Latvia's most talented players of this ethnographic instrument. In *Silver*, Laima offers the listener nine meditative improvisations played exclusively with the *kokle* and no other accompanying instruments. One can detect the influences of music from other lands in these works, which Jansone does not deny.

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➤ **The power of photography:**
www.lifeforcemagazine.com



Nowadays, people can take photographs not only with their cellular phones, but also with their mp3 players, and it wouldn't be surprising if tea kettles and laundry irons with built-in photo cameras soon appeared on the market. Practically anyone can now engage in photography and publish their works in the internet through such

social network sites as *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

In a web that has been saturated with pictures of varying quality by amateur photo enthusiasts, photographer and journalist Damien Bird is seeking to revive the long-neglected sphere of photo essays. At one time, these were popular features in many an illustrated magazine.

Bird's new online *Life Force Magazine* is devoted entirely to stories that are told mainly by photographs, and is available to online viewers free of charge. Besides maintaining this hobby, Bird is continuing to take photographs for such newspapers and magazines as the *Times*, the *Telegraph*, *GQ*, *Esquire* and *Geographical*. As with the content in traditional magazines, the material in *Life Force* is updated once a month.



➤ **Patti Smith. Just Kids**
Ecco, 2010

In 1967, 20-year-old Patti Smith headed from Philadelphia to New York, with the goal of establishing a career as an artist. She didn't have enough money for a bus ticket, and only made it to the Big Apple because she found a purse with 32 USD in it. Having no place to stay in the city, she sometimes slept in the streets and in Central Park, subsisting on salad leaves, dried bread and other food scraps that she managed to scrounge up. At that time, she became romantically involved with an equally destitute young man named Robert Mapplethorpe. Eventually, the couple moved into the legendary *Hotel Chelsea*, where they befriended Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Allen Ginsberg and many other cultural figures.

One night, while watching Jim Morrison perform during a *Doors* concert, Smith felt the urge to take to the stage on her own. She has since become a music legend, and unlike many of her former contemporaries, she is still alive. Mapplethorpe, for his part, went on to become a world famous photographer. Smith and Mapplethorpe split up in 1974, after Mapplethorpe realized that he was gay, but maintained a close friendship until his AIDS-related death in 1989. A day before he died, Smith promised Mapplethorpe that she would write their story. Now, more than 20 years later, she has fulfilled that promise with a riveting autobiography entitled *Just Kids*. Last year, Smith's written work received the prestigious US National Book Award in the non-fiction category.



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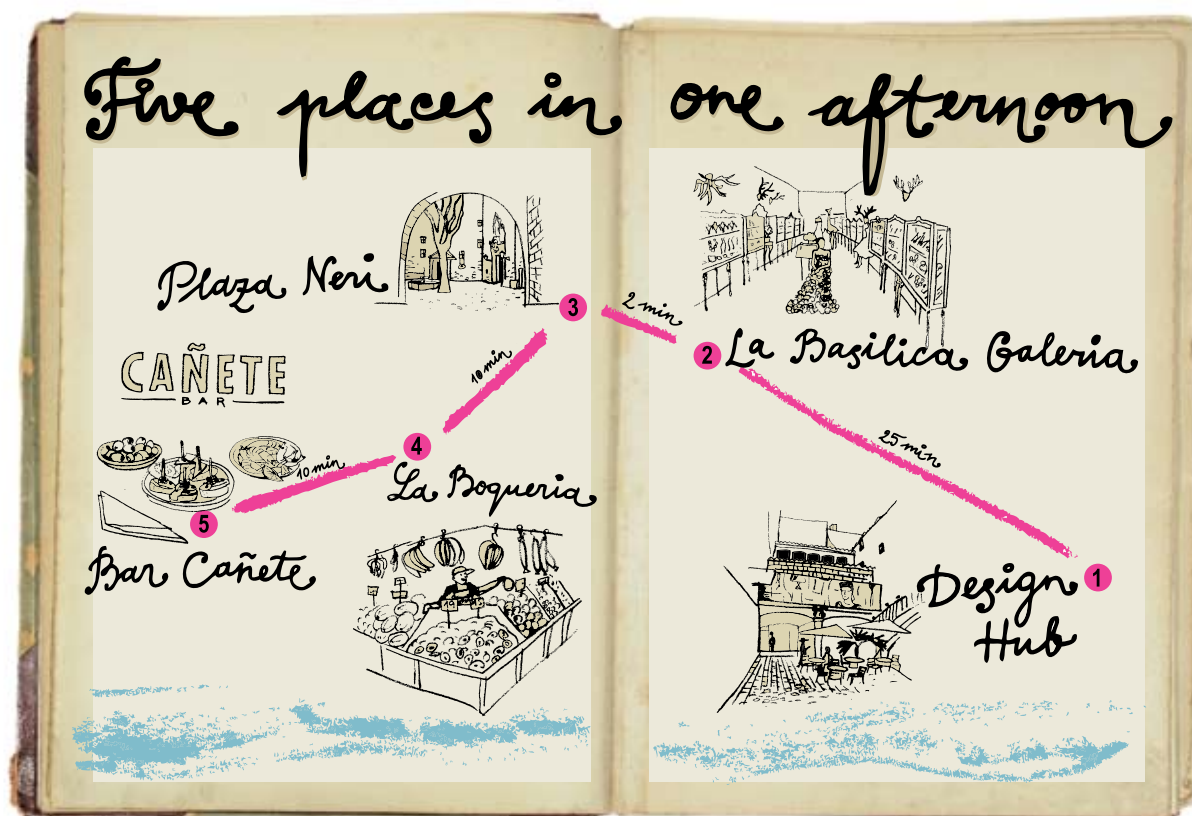
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Barcelona



TEXT BY VERA CIRIA | ILLUSTRATION BY INGA BRIEDE

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> 1 DHUB – Design Hub Barcelona

Calle Montcada 12

Metro: Jaume I

📍 www.dhub-bcn.cat/en

Merging a museum, a knowledge centre and a research laboratory, the DHUB acts as an umbrella organization for Barcelona's Museum of Decorative Arts, Fashion and Textile Museum, and Department of Graphic Arts. Blending the past with the present and looking firmly into the future, the DHUB tackles interesting issues, presenting unique and wonderful design exhibitions. The architecture of the building is spectacular and the cobbled courtyard café presents wonderful dishes at any hour of the day.

> 2 La Basílica Galería

Calle Sant Sever 7

Metro: Jaume I

📍 www.labasilica.es

Located along a maze of narrow, back streets in the Gothic area, *La Basílica Galería* is the city's best alternative jewellery shop. Founded by jeweller Piotr Rybaczek in 2007, the gallery aims to introduce new creative talents, gathering more than 50 contemporary jewellers in a mesmerizing space. Filled with unusual creations

and exquisite cabinets that house each of the unique items, the shop's prices vary widely to suit budgets of all sizes.

> 3 Plaza Neri

Plaza Sant Felip Neri

Metro: Jaume I

During the Spanish Civil War, one of the many bombs that fell upon the city landed in a quiet square, pockmarking an adjacent church façade. While time has continued its course everywhere else, in Plaza Neri it still seems to be waiting and holding its breath. The church, with its tell-tale pitted surface, remains fully functional. A small, park fountain never seems to stop bubbling, while nearby, a beautiful hotel terrace provides the ideal place to stop for a drink and ponder the square's dramatic history.

> 4 La Boqueria

Las Ramblas – Plaza de la Boqueria

Metro: Liceu

📍 www.boqueria.info/Eng/index.php

After so much quiet at the first three locations, the *Boqueria* market will present a startling change. Filled with noise, colours and smells, this is Barcelona's best food market and also the busiest. No one is sure when the market

first started operating, although 1701 seems like a good bet. In 1914, the *Boqueria* obtained its current structure and form. Push your way through the "touristy" front line, back to where the locals still buy their produce from their favourite stalls and where the prices are cheaper. Bring home such delectable souvenirs as succulent hams or smoked cheeses, which will be specially packaged for you to place conveniently in your airplane luggage.

> 5 Bar Cañete

Carrer de la Unió 17

Metro: Liceu

📍 www.antiguobarorgia.com

After working up an appetite at *La Boqueria*, it is now time to try some of Catalonia's delicious food. The *Bar Cañete* is located only a few minutes' walk away and has been open for less than a year. Be prepared for a tight squeeze, as there are no tables, only a very long bar with stools, and the place is usually packed at all hours. Many of the menu's ingredients are sourced from the nearby market and the resulting *tapas* are delicious. The *Bar Cañete* has been a huge hit among the locals, so the dishes and atmosphere are truly authentic. **BO**



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www.contraforma.lt

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Design by Rasa Baradinskiene

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www.rasadesign.lt



RIN chair, Fritz Hansen

Design by Hiromichi Konno

This chair has been created in perfect harmony with Japanese and Danish design traditions. The star-shaped base is in two heights and can be ordered in polished or powder-coated aluminium to match the shell.

www.fritzhenzen.com



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Just like the disorder that results from the clothes that we throw into piles at home, *Hang On* creates order in its very own way.

www.normann-copenhagen.dk



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Architecture of shoes

TEXT BY IEVA NORA FIRERE
PHOTO BY NILS VILNIS, WWW.VILNIS.LV
STYLING AGNEIJA LAPSA

Before venturing into the shoe business, Elina Dobeļe was an architect, who designed her first private residence at the age of 23. She gained a great deal of hands-on experience and continued designing houses until 2008, when the world economic crisis brought Latvia's construction sector to a standstill. That, together with the birth of her daughter, led her to reassess the career path.

One day, as Elina rummaged through her extensive collection of footwear, she realized that she has passion for something else – shoes. This got her to think that perhaps she could design her own line of footwear, with each item telling its own story. And so, *Zofa* was born.

Various architects have established side ventures in the world of footwear design. Two years ago, for example, Iraqi "starchitect" Zaha Hadid worked with *Lacoste* to create a new, high fashion boot. Elina sees many parallels in the design of shoes and houses. Both must be pleasing to the eye, comfortable and solidly constructed. *Zofa's* trademark is a creative combination of textiles and leather, with each pair of shoes being hand-made by skilled craftsmen. In addition *Zofa* shoes are orthopaedically designed, with wide soles that ensure extra comfort.

Currently, designer shoes by Latvia's only commercial footwear manufacturer can be purchased in Riga, London, Hamburg, Moscow and the Japanese city of Kumamoto. This spring, a new *Zofa* shoe store is set to open on Antonijas iela 22 in Riga, and Elina hopes to expand her company's growing network still further.

www.zofa.lv



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The Latvian-born spy legend

TEXT BY GIRTIS ROZNERIS AND
IEVA NORA FIRERE
PHOTOS BY JANIS SALINS, F64

The camera's dimensions

(8.0 x 2.7 x 1.7 cm) were five cubic centimetres less than a box of matches from that period.

Weight: 125 grams

Diaphragm: 3.5

Exposure time: ½ - 1/1000 sec

Focus: 20 cm to infinity



Walter Zapp was a quiet and withdrawn teenage boy. He lived in Riga, and at the age of 15, he decided to create a pocket-sized photo camera that was capable of taking high-quality pictures.

This was a revolutionary concept, considering that during the early 1920s, when Zapp started thinking of how to realize this dream, the smallest available photo camera was a *Leica*, whose dimensions were similar to those of a modern-day semi-professional single-lens reflex camera (SLR). Soon after, Zapp moved to Tallinn, Estonia. It took him 16 years to come up with the prototype of what would later define the standard for all subsequent 11x8-mm film cameras. Then, two years later, in 1938, following his return to Latvia, the mini camera that he designed began to be mass-produced at the *VEF* factory in Riga. Known as the *VEF-Minox*, Zapp's invention came to be used for espionage by intelligence agents from a great many countries. It was also a coveted luxury item that retailed for 248 lats. That

was a tremendous sum, considering that a skilled worker's monthly salary was about 200 lats, and that a bicycle cost 100 lats. During the following four-and-a-half years, *VEF* made approximately 17 500 *Minox* cameras, many of which were exported

to Western Europe and the USA. The collector's value of a *VEF-Minox* or *Riga-Minox* from that period is about 700 EUR, and has continually risen over the years. The most valuable collector's item from this series has the words *Made in USSR* inscribed on the back, as it was made for only a short time, from 1940 to 1941.

Zapp fled to Germany at the outbreak of the Second World War, and founded the *Minox GmbH* company in 1945. Under his stewardship, the enterprise later released the *Minox II* and *Minox III*. Zapp and his company

subsequently parted ways, and the inventor only began to be widely recognized for his contribution toward the end of his long life (he died in Switzerland in 2003 at the age of 98). Two years after his death, *Minox GmbH* released a special edition mini camera in honour of Zapp's 100th birthday. **BO**

The *Minox* mini camera revolutionized the photo industry. Along with its small size, it also had a pull-out protective cover and a large shooting capacity, with 50 frames per film. These were all unprecedented innovations during the 1930s.



Placing the film inside the camera became much more convenient, for Zapp's 8x11 mm film cartridges came smartly packaged in small metal canisters.

Special thanks to the Latvian Museum of Photography (www.fotomuzejs.lv)

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ANOTHERTRAVELGUIDE.COM

TEXT BY UNA MEISTERE,
WWW.ANOTHERTRAVELGUIDE.COM
PHOTOS ALAMY, CORBIS AND BY AINARS ERGLIS

Berlin

between the wild and the glamorous

Berlin possesses that extremely rare trait – every time you visit you realize that it is utterly hopeless to seek the Berlin you were in perhaps only half a year before. It's similar to how the old man in the Wim Wenders film *Wings of Desire* searched for the city of his youth in the vacant lot where the Potsdamer Platz once was. I remember how I searched for a bookshop enticingly described in a travel guide but discovered that it was long a clothing store. And things like that happen again and again here.



Courtyard off Bergmannstrasse in bohemian part of Kreuzberg



Go to the bar Solar for a panoramic view of the city

On Sundays at four, the place is packed and tunes like “Besame mucho” are belted out among the churning dancers

New things far outnumber the lost, however. There is no lack of history in Berlin, of course, but the sense of being at a construction site is the dominant sense, both direct and metaphorical. One always feels that Berlin is still growing – so it is also still wild, untamed and unpredictable.

No wonder Monocle placed at the top of liveable cities, calling it a marvellous city to be young in. It’s also a great town to be surprised in. It has just the right energy – inexhaustible. It incessantly inspires.

One colourful street

Wandering about Mitte, the centre of Berlin, on a Sunday stroll among the many galleries in Auguststrasse, on a cloudy and windy day of greyness, I am struck by a fiery red stroke of light across the façade of one building. It seems to me that it wasn’t there before. It turns out that I’m right – the structure containing the Me Collectors Room at Auguststrasse 68 appeared only a year ago and is completely fresh. It was created for the collection of Thomas Olbricht, a medical doctor who collected art for a quarter of a century. Works from the 16th century to our time have a unifying theme – Eros, death, and transience. The gallery exhibits work by well-known artists like Cindy Sherman, Marlene Dumas and Gerhard Richter. The scope is grand indeed – the visitor enters the café first (on Sundays full of families with children), then a concept store where the wares are displayed on white cubes with casters. The entrance to the gallery itself is on the upper storey, and the sheer size of the space cannot be noticed from below. Two grand halls host shifting exhibits are joined to the so-called Wunderkammer Olbricht, a chamber of wonders indeed. There are over 150 different displays connected to medicine both traditional

and non-traditional from every corner of the earth on view here. That includes an ivory model of a pregnant woman from the 17th century – her organs and even the fetus can be removed for study. Emerging from this weird collection of anatomical objects and totems, one is struck by a chandelier like a birdcage accidentally opened – as in a vision by Hitchcock, birds circle, their wings reflecting the lively activity in the café below. The motto of the place? “Consider the fact that you will die.”

Cheek by jowl with the Me Collectors Room is one of the oldest artistic inhabitants of the Auguststrasse scene – the actual heart of a district that was derelict before the Wall came down; Kunst-Werke Berlin. This is the institution that made the neighbourhood the core of Berlin’s art world, when Klaus Biesenbach founded his institute of contemporary art in an abandoned 19th-century margarine factory. The space was soon joined by two new buildings – the American architect Dan Graham’s Café Bravo and the Berlin architect Hans Düttmann’s exhibition hall. Kunst-Werke Berlin is still a sort of centre of gravity, though newcomers like the Me Collectors Room have added more flair to the area.

At Auguststrasse 14 one can enter a completely different Berlin, however. If not in the know, one could easily pass Clärchens Ballhaus, a restaurant and dance hall. On Sundays at four, the place is packed and tunes like “Besame mucho” are belted out among the churning dancers. Some keep the rhythm and others simply sway as they can. Among them are a few truly fantastic dancers, though. Most of the clientele is over thirty and there are not a few silver-haired patrons, including grandfathers and granddaughters. No one dances alone. Everyone can find a partner and nobody fools around – dancing here is serious business. People get dressed up, too – a sort of Socialism retro rules the day, with the men in suits that long ago went out of fashion and many a woman in evening dress. There are a few people in contemporary clothes and even jeans, however. There are little tables along the walls, but not many come here to dine. Those that do watch the dance floor. The space isn’t fresh at all, with a disco ball and silver angel hair on the walls among old posters – but the atmosphere is suffused with a fantastic, positive energy. You won’t get “Besame mucho” out of your head after visiting. The Ballhaus is an authentic Berlin institution dating to 1913, when the Kaiser’s head servant gave his



Mitte, Tascheles



Checkpoint Charlie

Do rent a bicycle.
Berlin is best enjoyed on a bike

bleeding to Fritz Bühler and his wife Clara's project. The true story really isn't known, because the archives related to the building were lost in the Second World War. People say that there was actually a bordello here in the 1920s. Not everybody realizes that Clärchens Ballhaus has two ballrooms – ordinary mortals danced downstairs, whilst the upper hall was reserved for high society. The upper hall was closed for a long time after World War Two. It reopened only in 2005 and now hosts literary soirées and diverse concerts.

Nearby, at Auguststrasse 28, there's a shop with one of the best names for a store selling magazines that I've ever encountered – *Do you read me?* The shop carries publications that cover the spectrum of the Auguststrasse scene – art, culture, architecture, design, fashion, literature, music, drama, photography, social studies and politics all find a place here. From Monocle to Foam, Interview and Frame... one can find Vogue, but mainstream women's magazines won't be found here. The interior is spare, by Greige/Buero. Black shelves and a wooden bench in the centre of the space where one can browse through the periodicals. The concept is simple – everyone who values pretty publications with serious content should come here.

Mitte's unpredictable future

Not far away at Oranienburger Strasse 35/36 there's a prestigious gallery for the art of photography, C/O, located in what was a fancy post office in the 19th century. It was also a school for postal workers and telegraph operators. Like many buildings in Berlin, the structure was severely damaged in the war – it was only partly restored in the late 1980s. The gallery opened in 2000 with the space unchanged – the floors are covered with linoleum in places and the historic columns are falling apart. The photographer Stefan Erfurt found the place when searching for a space for a retrospective of the Magnum archives. The second floor once housed the school's basketball court, and the hoop can still be seen. Most of the greats in modern photography have had shows here, from Annie Leibowitz and Nan Goldin to Robert Mapplethorpe, who died at a young age of AIDS in 1989. Mapplethorpe was one of the most scandalous photographers of his time, but these days scandal is secondary – there are 187

black and white photographs on view, from early Polaroids to later landscapes and portraits of famous persons like Andy Warhol and Patti Smith. His legendary male nudes are also on display. The exhibit gives one a strong sense of his occasionally stunningly cold tonality – aesthetics devoted to the precision of shadow and form. It is as though a furious blast of energy were frozen, remaining ready to explode at any moment. One can feel what Mapplethorpe said incarnate: "I never liked photography. Not for the sake of photography. I like the object."

In mid-January the media came out with the news that C/O may cease to exist after this show; the property has been purchased by an Israeli company, El-Ad, which has plans for a shopping centre and luxury hotel at the site. The gallery's press service, however, notes that intense negotiations for a space in the transformed structured are underway.

The possible closure of C/O has rekindled debate about the future of Mitte. The abandoned and derelict buildings of the central district drew all sorts of creative projects once the Wall came down, with the artists in the lead. The tourists followed, taking millions of snapshots of a changing Berlin... and then came the real estate brokers, who cashed in on the creativity and popularity of the centre but drove the rents sky high, forcing many a creative institution out.

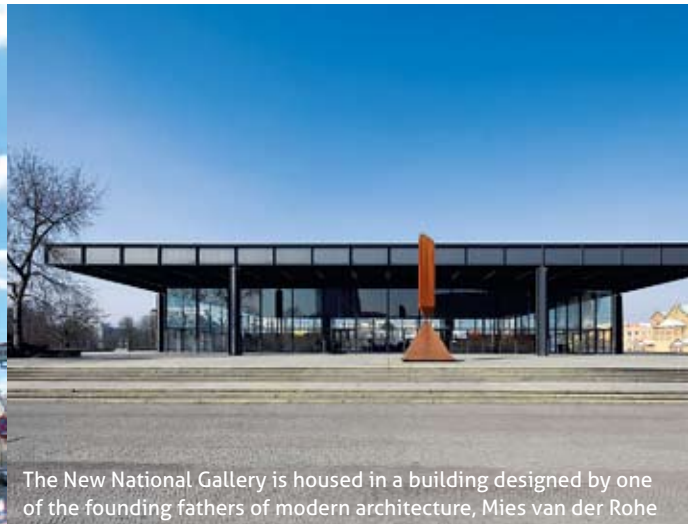
One of the testaments to this tendency is in Oranienburger Strasse – the legendary Tascheles. In 1908 this was a shopping arcade. In 1945 it was bombed, and until the Wall fell it was simply a witness of devastation. In the 1990s the artists came. Free-thinking creative people turned it into both a squat and a performance space. Along with 30 artists' studios there's a café where one can get a beer for a couple of euros in an atmosphere of authentic anarchy – the Café Zapata. Though one could still sip beer among the freaks in February, the Tascheles has a new owner – HSH Nordbank. The bank plans to sell the property for 35 million euros, according to *Der Spiegel*.

The fact is, though, that Tascheles and C/O are the very last bastions of creativity in the area – you are more likely to find the Indian restaurant with its barker luring tourists in. The area has lost much of the energy that made it famous.

Though the untamed ambience of the metropolis is threatened



The luxury fashion department store Quartier 206



The New National Gallery is housed in a building designed by one of the founding fathers of modern architecture, Mies van der Rohe



Three gurus of the cuisine scene in Berlin did the cooking, with works of art on sale among the food

incessantly, though – people keep pronouncing it dead. The opening of the snobbish Soho House hotel and private club branch was a kind of death knell. Even so, the wild Berlin lives on. The city is large enough, and unlike Paris it has plenty of space where things will keep bursting into flower.

A restaurant as mission impossible

You also can't be certain of what you will find behind any door in Berlin. That's another unique trait in the German capital. There are many secret addresses that one learns of only by word of mouth. The Japanese fashion house Comme des Garçons started its guerilla stores here. In contrast to typical temples of fashion, shopping took place in buildings scheduled for demolition – Comme des Garçons offered far lower prices on a mixture of new and past season clothing in spaces that were not renovated. This idea – the pop-up shop – was soon taken up by other luxury brands and is now in the mainstream. The Berlin Comme des Garçons is the only relic to have become a permanent shop. The

location has changed – it can be found Brunnenstrasse, a street saturated with stylish stores and galleries in Mitte. Lil Shop as it's called is little and retains the informal, messy ambience of the pop-up, doubling as a gallery – the walls are devoted to changing exhibits.

The pop-up tradition developed in Berlin has a fascinating successor – the pop-up restaurant. A local catering company, Pret A Diner, started a restaurant called Pret A Dinner – The Melting Point, which was open for only 35 days (it closed at the end of February). Three gurus of the cuisine scene in Berlin did the cooking, with works of art on sale among the food. The restaurant was a kind of interactive meeting place, with the customers as active participants in the creative game. The point was a counterpoint to the typical four-star place, with seasonal products and terrific food the focus and with no attention paid to what one would expect in an expensive restaurant. The location, too, was extraordinary – the former mint of the German Reichsmark. Reservations were taken curiously as well – one got a secret code on the Internet if lucky, hoping for a table at what turned out to be – if briefly – the most popular restaurant in town.

Another strange culinary institution in Berlin is Cookies Cream, an alternative that has already attained cult status. You could think of it as mission impossible for the simple reason that finding it is a quest. It's located in a place where you would never imagine a restaurant. When you reach Behrenstrasse 55, the address posted



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C/O gallery



Clärchens Ballhaus

by a metal chain, don't get confused and go into the non-descript foyer. You'll pass the service entrance of the Komische Oper and the bicycles used by its staff. Then you'll pass rubbish bins and disused machinery. On the right side there's an ordinary door which seems to be made of material taken from the very same Komische Oper. Ring the bell. The door will open but no one will await you. The space reeks of the period of the Iron Curtain. If you haven't dismissed design when passing the rubbish bins, you will once inside. Nothing has changed here since before the Wall fell. Unpainted walls and sawed-off pipes for lighting fixtures

accompany common couches. The lighting and a few details set off the décor, however. You can also glimpse the goings-on in the kitchen, which remind of a family awaiting guests rather than a restaurant. All this turns out to be merely a façade, though – Cookies Cream is actually a true adventure for a true gourmet. The vegetarian cuisine will change anyone's mind about any supposed limitations of the vegetarian. In fact, you may not recognize the potatoes or the carrots – the tastes and textures are simply out of this world. The place is very much Berlin – it possesses the easy charm that makes this city differ from any other. **BO**

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If you're in Berlin for a day...



...and you want to sample the cream of the crop...

Have your morning coffee at Oliv Café, at Münzstrasse 8. A charming café in the central Mitte district, with rough wooden tables and home-baked pastries and bread. Go to at least one of the remarkable exhibits of photographs currently on view – the Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective at C/O (until March 27th; [Oranienburger Straße 35/36](http://Oranienburger_Straße_35/36); www.co-berlin.com) or the Nan Goldin exhibit at Berlinische Galerie (until March 28th; [Alte Jakobstraße 124-128](http://Alte_Jakobstraße_124-128); www.berlinischegalerie.de). (Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, Kurfürstendamm 153; www.schaubuehne.de)

If you're in Berlin between the 18th and the 27th of March, you should take in an event at the new music festival *MaerzMusik*, taking place across the city at various venues – from the cinema Babylon to the clubs Moskau, Berghain and Trafo to the Philharmonic and various theatres. (Radialsystem V;

www.berlinerfestspiele.de).

If you'd like an inexpensive, quick and fabulously tasty lunch – a combination that's never easy to find – the Vietnamese eatery Monsieur Vuong at (Alte Schonhauser Strasse 46; www.monsieurvuong.de) has attained classic status.

With a shopping spectrum that ranges from the mainstream to the totally untamed, Berlin is a design and fashion destination in its own right. The most exciting shop to appear of late is Voo (24 Oranienstrasse; www.vooberlin.com), with over 300 square metres of design, books, and accessories.

Do you need a nice dinner to dot the "i"? Fashionable and snobbish, the Grill Royal (105B Friedrichstrasse; www.grillroyalberlin.de) also offers the owner's collection of contemporary art. The cornerstone of the menu is steak. It's truly a great steak! The hottest bar in town at the moment is Kingsize (Friedrichstrasse 112b; www.kingsize.de) – it's actually pocket-sized, but it's always abuzz.

Sunday in Berlin

If you stay at the new Cosmo Hotel (Spittelmarkt 13; www.cosmo-hotel.de), you can sleep in – breakfast is served until two in the afternoon on weekends.

All of the city's major museums are open on Sundays. At Martin-Gropius-Bau ([Niederkirchnerstraße 7/Ecke Stresemannstr. 110](http://Niederkirchnerstraße_7/Ecke_Stresemannstr._110); www.gropiusbau.de) there's a fine exhibit called *Compass: Drawing from the Museum of Modern Art New York* on view from March 11th until the 29th of May; it's a rare opportunity to see the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection. Works by Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg,

Edward Ruscha and Martin Kippenberger are among the highlights.

Have lunch at Borchardt (Französische Strasse 47, Mitte). There's no better place in Berlin for people-watching! This was a Parisian brasserie in the 1920s, and the breath of decadence from the city of light can still be felt. Order oysters and the house specialty – Wiener Schnitzel, incredible here. And watch the show – politicians, artists, show business types, models and stars all show up at Borchardt.

If you want to see a film, you should consider the cinema and not only the

movie. High End, for example (Oranienburger Strasse 54, Mitte) is in a shopping centre built in 1906. The impressive stone façade still bears the scars of the Second World War. The movie house was opened in 1949 and housed the East German film archives. Then there's the Delphi Filmpalast (Kantstrasse 12A, Charlottenburg; www.delphi-filmtheater.de) – one of the great movie theatres of what

was West Berlin before the Wall came down. Despite its quirky, independent repertoire, it is one of the most popular art houses in Berlin. Then there's the Babylon, in Rosa Luxemburg Square by the *Volksbühne*. It's also fiercely independent. It opened in 1929 – a live ballet accompanying the film showing. Some of the films screened here are new, but classics and various retrospectives dominate.

If you have two days in Berlin

Rent a bicycle and get to know a different Berlin! Start tennish with *Hackescher*

Markt, then follow the *S-Bahn* bridge in the direction of the Spree. Crossing the river you'll

arrive at Museum Island (the *Alte Nationalgalerie*, *Pergamon Museum*, *Bodemuseum* and, *Altes Museum* are all located here). Then head for *Unter den Linden* and the Brandenburg Gate. Just after *Friedrichstrasse* there's the *Café Einstein* (*Unter den Linden 42*), a place well-known for breakfasts – the coffee is exquisite and the apple strudel is great! At 11 – visit the Brandenburg Gate, passing *Pariser Platz*, the renovated Hotel Adlon and the Reichstag with its modern glass dome. Lock your bike and take in the view from the dome! At 11:30 – follow the Spree to the *Hauptbahnhof*, the modern central railway station. At *Invalidenstrasse 50-51*, the former *Hamburger Bahnhof* now hosts contemporary art. The museum opened in 1966 and has a remarkable collection of late 20th-century art. Return to the Spree and head for the presidential residence, *Schloss Bellevue*. Then see the *Siegessäule* and *Tiergarten* – the hunting preserve of the Kaisers, one can still come across rabbits here! Follow *Strasse des 17. Juni* and check out the flea market at *S-Bahnhof Tiergarten* – then ride to *Ernst-Reuter-Platz* and *Savignyplatz*. At one, you've two good choices for lunch – *Paris Bar* at *Kantstrasse 152* and *Café im Literaturhaus* (*Fasanenstrasse 23*), across the *Kurfürstendamm*. Around 3:00 pm, visit *Viktoria-*

Luise-Platz in *Schoeneberg*... after which, on the way to *Potsdamer Platz*, you'll find the National Gallery, the State Library, and the famous Philharmonic. Somewhere in *Potsdamer Platz* you should leave your bike and simply walk about. This area was completely empty after the war, with only a couple of buildings still standing. One is the *Weinhau Huth Square's* southern portion, and the other the former *Grand Hotel Esplanade*. Both have been integrated into the modern architecture. If you'd like a coffee, *Josty* at *Bellevuestr. 1*, open since 1793 but destroyed in the war, is a Berlin legend. At 5 pm, if you still have the strength, continue on to *Kreuzberg*. Turks, freaks, and various alternative sorts populate this lively quarter. At *Urbanhafen* (on the *Landwehrkanal*, not far from *Prinzenstrasse*) there are boats that have been turned into cafés. Crossing the canal, at 6 pm or so, you will enter *Friedrichshain*. Visit *Simon-Dach-Strasse*, a trendy street with countless cafés, bars and restaurants, and ride to *Karl-Marx-Allee*. This is a different Berlin indeed – Stalin era apartment blocks dominate. The bar at number 95 is located in what used to be the Czech airline office. At 8 pm you can return to *Hackescher Markt* by way of *Alexanderplatz* – if you're hungry after all that bicycling, there's no lack of restaurants in the area. **BO**

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TEXT BY IEVA NORA FIRERE
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALAIN ROBERT

Adrenaline addict

Two weeks after scaling yet another skyscraper in Hong Kong and a day before giving a speech in Italy, urban climber Alain Robert (48), otherwise known as the French Spiderman, settles into a chair and says pensively that there are less gaps between the panels of the latest-model skyscrapers, making it much more difficult to get a good grip. Nevertheless, Robert cannot wait to summit the world's current highest building, the *Burj Khalifa* in Dubai, later this year.

Climbing the Sears Tower (now the Willis Tower – 443 m) in Chicago in 1999

The three-and-a-half-hour flight from Riga to Barcelona and the four-hour drive along the Mediterranean coast to the small town of Pézenas was well worth the trip. Once Robert has agreed to an interview, he grants you his full attention. Sitting on his king-sized bed, the wiry, long-haired climber slips on his climbing shoes and effortlessly crawls up the wall to the ceiling of his bedroom, which also doubles as his “work room,” for it has the highest and most slanted surface in his 300-year-old house. For about 20 minutes each day, Robert conducts various training exercises, his head hanging downward, to keep him in top form for a unique activity that he himself pioneered – the professional scaling of skyscrapers. After perfecting his rock- and cliff-climbing skills as a youth in the French Alps, Robert turned to skyscrapers about 17 years ago.

Following a serious, 15-metre fall that resulted in multiple fractures and left him in a coma for five days, Robert awoke partially paralyzed and still suffers from vertigo to this day. His doctors advised him to stop climbing and start resting. Nevertheless, Robert has managed to overcome the disabilities and has since scaled more than 100 skyscrapers. He climbs without any safety equipment, using only his bare hands and a small bag of climbing chalk powder fastened around his waist to absorb the sweat from his palms.

Having become world-famous for his exploits, Robert now enjoys the support of various sponsors and uses his prominence to focus the media’s attention on environmental issues.

When you conduct an ascent, the writing on your clothes suggests that you are concerned with global warming. I was wondering whether that is just a handy, “hot” environmental issue to draw more attention to your exploits, or a genuinely serious concern of yours. How much do you really know

about climate change? What might happen to the village of Pézenas in a hundred years’ time, for example?

As we are quite close to the coast, Pézenas might find itself under water at some point, due to the rising level of the oceans. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka face the same threat. Whenever we talk about global warming, we are actually talking about the lives of our children. Look at what happened recently in Australia, with its floods and cyclone, and the US, with its severe winter storms. The world is facing various kinds of problems, whichever region you are talking about.

I think it is in the hands of the world’s leaders, and not so much individual persons, to really push change through, as global warming is very much about changing the economy and the way that we conduct our daily lives. For awhile, it seemed that things were moving in the right direction, with everybody in the right frame of mind, thinking about global solutions. Then the worst financial crisis came on, making global warming again a luxury issue on many agendas. But did you come over here to talk about global warming?

Not really. That was just a prelude to “warm up” the conversation.

Fair enough. Since you are from *Baltic Outlook*, I will mention that global warming goes well with the aviation industry, as airline companies are now trying to decrease their emissions of greenhouse gases, using different fuel and lighter equipment.

Tell us about how you switched from cliff-climbing to buildings. Although you had become a leader in the niche of solo technique [climbing alone without any safety equipment – ed.], you were still earning only peanuts. Then, in 1994, you took up an offer to climb buildings. Was this a rational choice based on projected income calculations?



Born as Robert Alain Philippe on August 7, 1962

Married to Nicole, has three sons

Since climbing his first skyscraper in 1994, Robert has scaled more than 100 giant structures

After his most serious fall in 1982, his doctors deemed him "disabled up to 60%"

No. Actually, in the beginning I spent more money on building ascents than I earned. The activity started to turn profitable only in 1997 or 1998. In fact, I did not take seriously the first offer that I got. I mean, how do you expect me to climb a building? It is flat and slippery! The offer was quite tempting, though, for it included a trip to New York, Dallas and Houston. So I thought – why not?

I had been climbing rocks for years and years, and felt that I had reached my limits and could not advance any further. Climbing buildings presented a new challenge, as well as a new activity to conduct – not only from a personal, but also a global point of view. And there is one additional aspect that played important part. The illegal touch.

You have been arrested a hundred times.

Much more than that, actually. The last time was recently in Paris, when I was just checking out a building together with a guy who wants to make a film about me.

In a way, these arrests resemble staged performances for the sake of the public.

Not always. When I was in jail in San Francisco, I was treated just like the other guys, locked in the same cell, eating the same food and undergoing the same daily routine as the other prisoners.

However, I have read of other cases, when right being released from an arrest, you are taken to see the king or other important person.

A lot depends on the country and on the skills of your lawyer. I have plenty of lawyers around the world who are ready to help me out, and most of them are willing to work *pro bono*. In Hong Kong, for example, I have been arrested four times. Each time, everything was settled on the spot, without the need to go to the police station. The illegal aspect turns the outcome of my ascents into a game, making it different from climbing a cliff. And I have a constant need for that game. Two weeks ago, I climbed a skyscraper in Hong Kong so I can rest a bit, but within the next two weeks, I will feel the need to conduct a new climb.

I am tempted to call you an adrenaline addict.

In a way I am. I don't like living in the past, talking about this and that ascent, with nothing to look forward to.

Do you experience any moments of peace and happiness at all? Or only a constant urge?

For me, a moment of peace and happiness comes when I realize that I have a new project waiting around the corner.

In mountain climbing there is a certain dream list, for example, the 14 summits over 8000 metres in height, while in your niche, new skyscrapers are being built every year. This must make your to-do list an ever-changing one.

That is true. For now, the current tallest building in the world, the *Burj Khalifa* in Dubai, is still in my sights and I am waiting for the official green light.

Why are you planning it as a legal ascent?

The *Burj Khalifa* consists of different levels and is constructed in such a manner that I could be arrested after climbing only the first 100 metres. If that was the case, then the project would not make any sense, as the building is over 800 metres high.

So the Burj Khalifa is next in your trophy case?

Well, I wouldn't look at it entirely that way. For me, climbing buildings is a trophy in itself. When I was climbing only cliffs, my life was pretty shallow. I was rarely travelling, spending most of the time in France, doing pull-ups and push-ups. I was so focused on one thing and rarely came across surprises.

In contrast to cliff-climbing, building [ascending a building in climbers' jargon – ed.] involves very monotonous movements, basically using the same muscles over and over again. Haven't you ever found it more boring than rock climbing?

Instead of boring, I would say that it is quite enjoyable. I love climbing buildings, because the climb is pure, it is vertical and I keep getting challenged every time.

You have a terrible fate, in a way.

Everybody expects your next ascent to be higher, more difficult and more spectacular than the previous one.

Well, I don't let any pressure of this kind reach me. I only try to climb a building if I feel sure that I can reach its summit. That's why I prefer going to a city and choosing the target myself. Even if it is a corporate event, I always conduct a personal pre-check.

You have been climbing buildings for nearly 18 years, and still manage to gather large crowds and prominent media attention, even though the

How has the architecture of buildings changed? In favour of you or the opposite?

One fairly recent change has certainly been detrimental to me. Builders are now placing more silicone between the window panels. Years ago, there were more gaps for me to place my fingers, making it easier to complete a climb.

Which is your favourite building?

I absolutely loved climbing the Petronas



Robert's bedroom also doubles as his "work room"

story is more or less the same every time.

That is a wonder for me, too. *Laughs.* I get requests for interviews and TV stories almost every week. For those who organize such events, my climbs are actually a very handy and cheap way to attract the attention of prominent media. For 20 to 25 thousand euros plus a business-class airplane ticket and a five-star hotel room, they can get media coverage that would otherwise cost them one or two million US dollars.

That is quite a business for a climber. Have you had any serious competitors appearing?

Nobody comes to mind at the moment. Not too many people want to be involved with cops, lawyers and court appearances. Altogether, a climb can turn into quite an expensive event. A lawyer alone can cost 10 to 15 thousand US dollars.

Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

It took me almost 13 years until I succeeded. I was caught by the cops and arrested during my first two attempts – both times on the 60th floor, once in Tower 1 and the second time in Tower 2. When I made my third attempt in 2009, I knew I was risking up to three years in prison. I started early, at 6 o'clock in the morning, and managed to avoid attracting the attention of the public until I was well on my way to the summit.

Why didn't you get the three years with which you had been threatened? The police still arrested you after you completed your climb.

First, this time I succeeded. I managed to reach the top. Second, I held their flag up high in my arms. My feat brought the country a whole lot of free publicity, all across the world.

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Where does the beauty of a building lie for you?

In its smoothness, in its height, and in the fact that it is slippery. That is all very appealing to me.

You said that you calculate the risks before attempting a climb, but I have seen videos in which you get stuck while doing an ascent.

From below, things sometimes look different. I have had moments when I discover only during the climb that the size of the panels is changing – to such an extent that I cannot clasp them with my hands anymore. You can never calculate all of the risks.

Is panic a familiar feeling for you?

No, I would fall otherwise. When you are between life and death, it is better to be calm. Deep inside, I know that if I start shaking, then I am dead.

What helps you remain calm? Do you meditate?

I think it is my love for life. I don't feel like falling and dying, so I know how to deal with my state of mind.

It seems strange to hear something like that from you, a person who constantly provokes fate.

Of course I love life. Climbing buildings just sharpens my senses, my feelings and my alertness to the joy of living as such.

Would you say that climbing the Petronas Towers has so far been the most memorable event in your building career?

It was certainly an event that I will cherish for a long time to come. I loved the moment when I reached the top. You climb the sharp needle, then overcome the ball and suddenly find yourself on top of the world, so to speak. I loved the climb and loved reaching the top.

Is Petronas your Everest, then?

I wouldn't want to compare the two. A lot of my friends have climbed Mount Everest. If you climb the normal route, the one opened by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, and if the weather is good, then it is more like a very high altitude trek

than a climb. In addition, most climbers use supplemental oxygen to help them weather the harsh conditions of the climb. They have all kinds of tools to make the ascent easier.

By the way, when Reinhold Messner became the first person to reach the summit of Mount Everest without using bottled oxygen in 1978, his unprecedented feat was regarded as the first "fair" ascent of the mountain. In a way, you are also climbing by fair means. You use no additional safety equipment. It is just you and the building.

What can be compared between me and Messner is that all along the way, he has been the number one in something.

Why do you climb bare-handed?

For me, the climb is less about sports and performance and more about living on the edge, in the zone between life and death. People today are losing the feeling that they have to fight for life and this is my way of recreating it. The feeling of being close to death can be compared, in a way, to being a blind pianist. Everything seems sharper and more intense.

At the same time, as you balance seemingly effortlessly between life and death on the face of a building, I have heard that on horizontal grounds, right in your own home, you sometimes need more assistance than other people.

When I use all four of my limbs, I fare much better than when I use only two. That is the consequence of the falls that I have had over my lifetime. I have fallen on my scull a few times and been in a coma. As a result, when I manoeuvre a seemingly simple horizontal surface, my balance is not very good. However, I have learned to adapt. If you become too focused on your body's shortcomings, then things get only worse. Thinking all the time about the state of my body and all the feelings that accompany the old traumas would not improve my life.

Judging by your experience and age, you could already be considered a veteran.

Yeah, I know. In August I will be 49 and I need to accept that.

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Robert's legal ascent of the National Bank of Abu Dhabi in 2003 was watched by about 100 000 spectators

I have interviewed a number of sports veterans and they all say that sooner or later, the question of quitting eventually arises. Finding the right time to leave the scene is a tricky process. It is important not to leave too late.

Pauses. I have not been thinking of quitting. Not yet. Even after Brian, my

current manager, said: "Look, Alain, I have been following your exploits for more than 15 years and I think what you have done is fantastic. You no longer have to prove to the whole world that you can do it. You are at the stage when you can earn money without climbing." I agreed to give speeches and present lectures not because

I wanted to quit, but rather out of pure interest, to see if it works.

Does it work? How much of your income comes from lectures, speeches and books?

Nearly half. Speeches account for about 20% of what I make. Giving a speech is interesting and besides, there is no physical risk, but I am not yet ready to restrict myself to only that. Even though I am proud of what I have done, I am not yet ready to retire and rest on my laurels. I will continue to climb for as long as I can. Of course, I will have to tone down my activities and settle for easier climbs, as I will never reach the physical level of prowess that I attained during my twenties and thirties. On the other hand, my state of mind has actually improved over the past years. I have a better grasp of what I can do, of the actual extent of my abilities.

Is Asia currently your strongest magnet?

Yes, during the past few years, I have been flying mostly to Asia. In the United States, especially after 9/11, a tall building is now perceived differently than in other parts of the world. I still plan to go to Los Angeles and scale a building there before I retire, but I don't yet know when that might be.

Is that because you haven't yet decided when you plan on retiring?

Exactly. **BO**

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TEXT BY RIHARDS KALNINS | PHOTO COURTESY OF F64

Lace up your running shoes –

it's time to prepare for the 2011 Nordea Riga Marathon

In March, as the snows melt and the weather gradually begins to warm, the countries of Northern Europe start to prepare for the upcoming spring. Residents return outdoors to the streets and parks, migrating birds fly back from the south, and life slowly regains its vibrant colour. The city of Riga provides a further incentive for its residents and guests to head back outdoors and get their winter-weary bodies into shape, with an open call to prepare for the upcoming Nordea Riga Marathon. This, year, the eagerly awaited annual race is scheduled to take place on Sunday, May 22.

Founded in 1991, the Nordea Riga Marathon has become a tradition in the Latvian capital, drawing runners of all ages and from all walks of life. During the past few years, the race has also achieved popularity in the international marathon community, attracting participants from countries far and wide. The men's record of 2:16:42 was established in 2008 by Sammy Kibet Rotich of Kenya, while the women's marathon record, 2:38:16, was set by Maryna Damatsevich of Belarus just last year, when 10 000 runners from 45 countries pounded the cobblestones of Riga at the 20th annual Nordea Riga Marathon.

This year, the race is expected to attract up to 13 000 runners, who will once again have the chance to compete in five separate distances: a full marathon, a half-marathon, a 10K race, a 5K Fun Run, and a special one-kilometre Unity Race for people with special needs. All five distances will be held on the same day, and will weave through the historic streets of the Old City and central Riga, lined with iconic Art Nouveau buildings and blooming linden trees. The start and finish line, as always, will be on the banks of the Daugava River, just opposite the Riga Castle and within view of the city's famous church towers and spires.

Fun for the whole family

However, the Nordea Riga Marathon is much more than just a race through the streets of a beautiful, historic city. Organized by the Riga City Council in cooperation with the award-winning event-planning agency *NECom*, the marathon is also a high-spirited event that provides a day of fun and entertainment for the whole family. All along the race route, DJs will spin records to urge runners on and delight the assembled crowds, as teams of cheerleaders and drummers do their part to encourage racers with the power of rhythm and song. For the 5K Fun Run, competitors have even been known to dress up in elaborate outfits, making the event more of a carnival-like costume parade than a traditional road race. The organizers have also guaranteed a range of services to make sure that runners have a flawless experience in Riga. The marathon's headquarters will be located at a hotel in the city centre, where competitors can register for the races and purchase running gear at a special sporting goods shop. They can also sign up for the traditional pre-race dinner party, organized at a local restaurant the night before the race. In addition, registered racers will receive a Nordea Riga Marathon t-shirt designed by a local artist, who has also created the competition's unique logo



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and medals. This practice of commissioning a distinctive design by a local artist has since been adopted by other European marathons, ensuring that the Latvian penchant for good design has left its mark in the international racing community. On the day before the race, the organizers will once again host a special Friendship Run in the verdant Mežaparks district of Riga, on the shores of Ķīšezers Lake. At the friendly race, competitors will get to meet some of the professional runners who have participated in the Nordea Riga Marathon in recent years, including several racers from two of the world's marathon hubs – Kenya and Morocco – as well as from Latvia's neighbouring countries of Finland, Russia, Estonia, Belarus and Ukraine, which have contributed their fair share of excellent runners. All of the top racers will strive to edge closer to the world marathon record time of 2:03:59, set by Ethiopian athlete Haile Gebrselassie at the 2008 Berlin Marathon (although many doubt that it is humanly possible to beat the two-hour mark).

Flowers for the women

The top three finishers at the 2011 Nordea Riga Marathon will win generous cash prizes, along with the medals designed by the marathon's official artist. Surprise

awards and gifts will be provided by the race's official sponsors – *Nordea Bank*, *Lattelecom* and *Hanzas maiznīca*. The fastest racers from Latvia will be awarded the coveted Riga Mayor's Cup. This prize has recently acquired additional significance, as the city's mayor himself, Nils U akovs, competed in the half-marathon last year. If all goes according to plan, then mayor U akovs will do so again this May, running side by side with the residents of his city.

THE FASTEST RACERS FROM LATVIA WILL BE AWARDED THE COVETED RIGA MAYOR'S CUP

Perhaps the most distinctive local touch at the marathon comes at the very end of the race, when female finishers are awarded fresh flowers. The sight of so many colourful bouquets suffusing the air with their fragrant scent will surely invigorate the exhausted finishers, as will the sounds of thousands of assembled spectators lining the banks of the river and filling the spring air with their joyful cheers. Both runners and spectators alike will be united by the timeless thrill of competition, as well as a shared joy in the splendour of another Baltic spring. **BO**

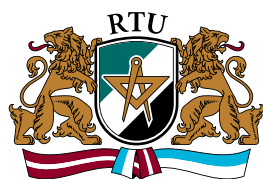
❶ For more information about the 2011 Nordea Riga Marathon, please visit www.nordearigamaratons.lv. Participants may register online from now until May 18. The entry free for the race includes a time chip, water and refreshments, a finisher's medal, as well as other services on the day of the race.

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Dr. Igors Tipans,

Foreign Students Department

Kalku iela 1, Rīga, LV-1658, Latvia

Tel. +371 67089013, +371 29495699

Fax +371 67089020

info@rtuas.lv



PHOTO COURTESY OF BALTIC BEES

Adrenaline Ride with the Baltic Bees

The *Baltic Bees* are the only professional civil jet team in Latvia, and are becoming an increasingly popular attraction not only in their home country, but across the world at large.

They are known for their thrilling aerobatic manoeuvres, frequently at speeds that exceed 900 kilometres (570 miles) per hour.

"Last year we performed in 15 different countries, including Germany, Russia, Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Estonia," recounts Artyom Soloduha, the 24-year-old lead pilot, who flies with a plane that is fittingly marked with the number 1.

"We hope to put on even more aerobatic performances this year. We are also looking forward to surprising the public with some new, original and daring manoeuvres that we have thought up ourselves," he adds.

The *Baltic Bees* have come quite far, considering that they were founded less than three years ago, in 2008,

by K.S.Avia, a Latvian business aviation company.

The *Bees* fly seven L-39C Albatross planes, which are tandem 2-seat jet training aircraft used by various air forces. The team is based at the Tukums airfield, about 65 northwest of Riga.

The *Baltic Bees* started off the year 2011 with a sensational display in front of 80 000 spectators at Al Ain Aerobatic Show in the United Arab Emirates. "We showed them what we are capable of doing, and also flew over Dubai and Abu-Dhabi," explains Soloduha. In addition, the Latvian air team offers spectators the opportunity to experience an aerobatic flight first-hand, right from the cockpit. For a donation of 1000 EUR, thrill-seekers are treated to a 20-minute Adrenaline Ride, during which they can feel all of the g-forces and other sensations that aerobatics pilots undergo during their stunt flights. Clients can choose the manoeuvres that they wish to experience, and are also given the possibility to take control of the aircraft, under the supervision of the pilot.

Interestingly enough, most of the passengers on such Adrenaline Rides have been women. "That is pretty surprising," says Soloduha. "I would have thought that it would be the reverse." In any case, such an unusual adventure is destined to become an unforgettable experience for anyone who feels brave enough to undertake it. **BO**

BALTIC BEES JET TEAM
 ⓘ www.balticbees.com
 Lestenes iela 5, Riga,
 LV-1002, Latvia
info@balticbees.com
 Phone: +371 67621450
 Fax: +371 67624354

TEXT BY SANTA MEIKULANE, SIGNE MEIRANE, GIRTIS ROZNERIS AND IEVA NORA FIRERE
PHOTOS CORBIS, COURTESY OF REET AUS AND INRE SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN

Green vs.

The term *green* is now a buzzword in the food, fashion and other industries, but risks becoming a swear word if we abuse it and apply the wrong meanings to it. On the one hand, *green* reflects our noble goals to save the planet, but on the other hand, companies are using this term to increase their profits.

Baltic Outlook sat down with a number of specialists in the gourmet, fashion, design, tourism, IT and aviation industries and set up a spring list of top products that are *green* in either one sense or the other, or both.



“green”



There is still confusion as to what is *green* and what is not, and the required standards for applying this term remain in a state of flux. The truth is probably somewhere between two extremes. On the one hand, you have well-intentioned environmental activists who overdo it with the term *green*, rendering its application impractical, and forgetting that humans of the 21st century have certain needs and demands. On the other hand, you have individuals who don't seem to realize how much their actions may affect not only the future of our planet as a whole, but also their own personal health and well-being. Take the food that we eat, for example. At first, we were told to "go organic" and to consume products that have been produced without the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Then we were told that this is not enough, as *organic* foods still have to be transported to their place of sale, sometimes over very long distances. Until eco-friendly fuels begin to be widely used, it makes little difference to the environment if the gas-guzzling food delivery truck is carrying regular or organically grown products. Regardless of their efficiency, these campaigns do have the positive effect of raising people's awareness. And that is an important first step. Environmental activists have a vital role to play in getting people to think about the consequences of their actions. We do need to find greener ways of living. We do need to think about the state of our planet. We do need people to come up with alternatives and show us how we can change our lifestyle. We do need to put an end to our reckless consumer culture and we do need to live responsibly.

airBaltic is proud to be among those enterprises that are seriously thinking about the environment. One sphere in which it has devoted considerable efforts is fuel economy. During the past five years, for example, the airline has managed to reduce its rate of CO₂ emissions by nearly 25%. That is a significant achievement, and in the years ahead, *airBaltic* hopes to further improve upon such statistics.

FOOD: Local + organic

Sauvignon blanc wine

There is nothing like a glass of cool sauvignon blanc wine on a warm spring day or hot summer evening. Fresh and crispy, it pairs particularly well with fish and cheese.

Asparagus

Used in some of the most ancient recipes, asparagus remains one of the most eagerly awaited spring vegetables all across the world. It is not only tasty, but also an excellent source of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. To many, a spring without asparagus is like a day without sunshine. One can perhaps do without it, but if that is the case, then one still gets the feeling that something is missing.

Green tea

Scientists are still studying the long-purported health benefits of this drink. As they continue their research of this tasty beverage, we will continue to drink it.



Extra virgin olive oil

High quality olive oil is not only tasty, but also rich in healthy nutrients, making it a must-have in every household. Small wonder that it is called "green gold" in some places.



Golden Delicious apples

Organically grown apples – in this case, green on the outside and light-coloured on the inside – provide a healthy source of fibre and antioxidant phytochemicals. To get the most benefit, don't peel your apples. Eat them together with the skin.

Basil

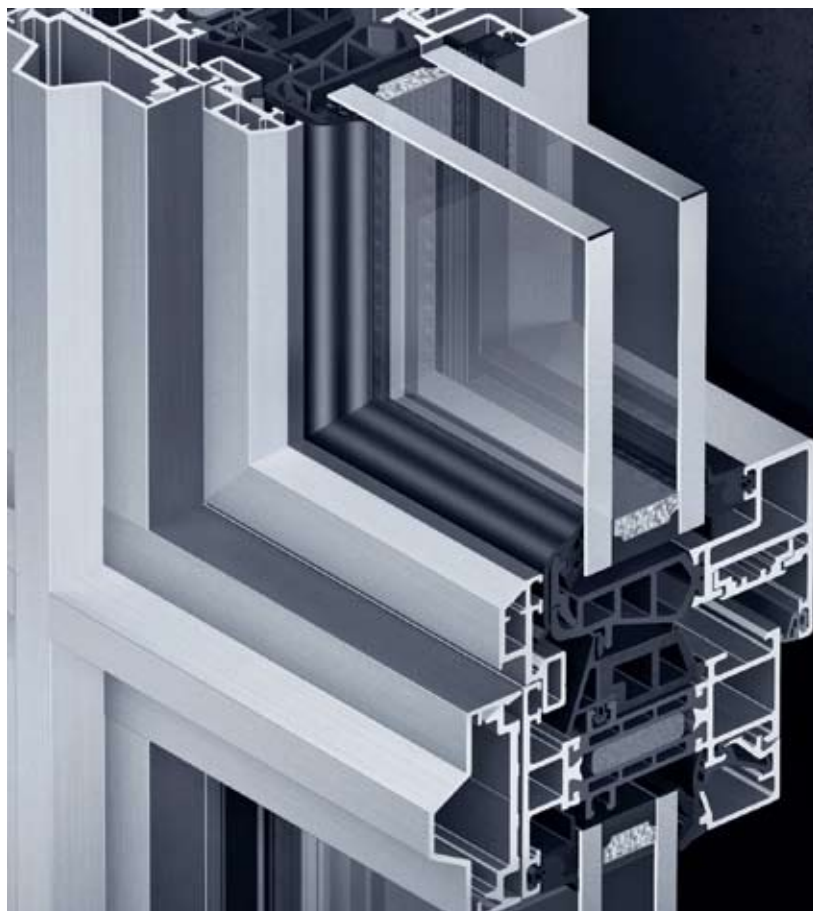
The "king of herbs" has a number of compounds that help to keep one strong and healthy. Furthermore, its particular taste makes it a great addition to many dishes.



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Since 1992, Skonto Plan has designed and installed aluminium facades, walls, glass packet and metal constructions. We have accumulated experience implementing projects not only in Latvia, but also in Norway, Ireland, Belgium, Russia and Switzerland. We are currently working on the Eagle House which is a residential building in London and will be nominated for the London Architectural Prize in 2012. In order to achieve the highest level of quality, Skonto Plan uses technologies from the Schuco company in Germany. Our factory operates in compliance with ISO 9001:2000 quality management system standards.



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DESIGN

It is not likely that people will suddenly exchange their comfortable sofas or armchairs for furniture made of recycled cardboard. However, a new range of accessories, clothing, storage baskets and other items made from former plastic beverage bottles is surprisingly appealing. Perhaps that is because the perfectionist approach adopted by Scandinavian designers regarding the concept of recycling has resulted in aesthetically pleasing, durable and functional objects, rather than items that are merely cheap and designed for short-term use.



Restore storage basket made of recycled PET bottles. Muuto

Design Mika Tolvanen
Denmark

www.muuto.dk

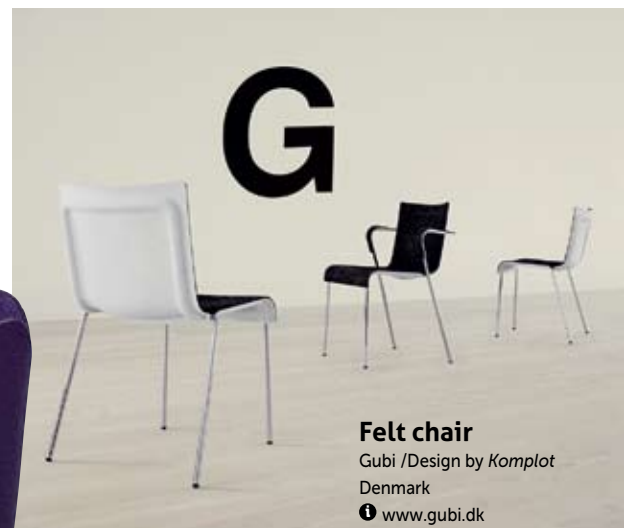
The name *Restore* is inspired by the fact that these items are manufactured from recycled materials.



Felt partition

Gubi / Design by Komplot / Denmark

www.gubi.dk



Felt chair

Gubi / Design by Komplot
Denmark

www.gubi.dk

Felt can be used for much more than just bulletin boards on which to tack notices. It has a slightly comical, woolly and cosy appearance, generating warm and positive emotions.

GADGETS

Calling green

Although Nokia already has a number of green-coloured telephones up for sale, this particular telephone is not only green in colour, but also environmentally friendly. Admittedly, it hasn't yet hit the market, but Nokia hopes that it will one day become a sales success.

The future model *Nokia EC509 Green Core* will not have a conventional telephone battery, but will run on stored-up kinetic energy. According to its British designer Matteo Trisolini, spinning the phone like a keychain will provide the necessary kinetic energy to charge it up.

The hole in the phone's casing is designed precisely for that purpose. Place it around your finger, and spin away! The picture is completed by LED battery indicators and a screen cover made of recycled PET plastic, which help to reduce environmental waste still further.





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Izmantojot savas zināšanas par dažādiem Lielbritānijas tirgus aspektiem, NU-IP palīdzēs atrast tieši jums piemērotāko partneri. Jau noslēdzot darījumu, NU-IP nepieciešamības gadījumā turpina uzraudzīt tā gaitu un palīdz risināt visdažādākās situācijas, kas var rasties.

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Reet Aus

FASHION

Recycled haute couture

Estonian designer Reet Aus is an eco-fashion pioneer in the Baltics. Rather than being relegated to a garbage dump, any piece of used clothing that gets into her hands will be transformed into a new form of *haute couture*. With vintage clothing selling increasingly well in many shops, one no longer has to feel ashamed to wear second-hand garments.

Eco-fashion and ethical clothing design are the next step up in the lifestyle of the socially responsible world citizen. One can term *eco-fashion* as an environmentally friendly answer to *fast fashion*. Eco-sustainable collections are now standard features in many a fashion week, and ethical brands are being launched one after another. Reet Aus' philosophy centres around injecting new life to discarded garments and production leftovers. In other words, everything that the fashion industry rejects, Aus is ready to use in the creation of her new collections. So far, she has been quite successful. About a year-and-a-half ago, the *Financial Times* mentioned Aus as being among the most increasingly influential Eastern European designers.





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Bombardier Q400 Next Gen

TOURISM

Save the beach!

Just as Mount Everest is the world's highest garbage dump, our oceans are the world's largest garbage disposal area. In order to give us an idea of how our future holidays might look, German eco-artist HA Schult has created a hotel with five double rooms, whose interiors are "decorated" with rubbish found on various European beaches. Nearly all of the "raw materials" used to build the hotel were washed up on the shores Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

The *Save the Beach Hotel* is the world's first, and for now, the only garbage hotel. It was inaugurated in Rome last year in commemoration of World Environment Day. While one won't be treated to five-star service and comfort (the hotel has no electricity or running water), one is bound to undergo an unforgettable experience.

Schult designed the hotel more as an environmental statement than as a genuine income-earner. The structure is portable and has already been displayed at central locations in a number of European cities. In Madrid, the hotel was fittingly placed close to the headquarters of FITUR, one of Europe's largest tourism trade fair organizations. The rubbish generated through tourist activity is an unresolved issue, and tourism industry experts are realizing the need for the industry to play a growing part in the solution.

📍 www.coronitasavethebeach.org



Trash Hotel in Rome, 2010

AVIATION

Algae for fuel and new types of aircraft

Due to the amount of energy required to accelerate and lift a heavy piece of machinery, flying passenger aircraft might not initially seem to be a green mode of transport. However, if one considers the long distances travelled, the availability of alternative transport infrastructures and the time required to reach a set destination, then air travel becomes a more attractive alternative. According to data from the International Air Transport Association, airplanes are responsible for about 12% of total CO₂ emissions by various means of transport, while road vehicles account for 74% of CO₂ transport emissions.

That being said, nobody in the airline industry is planning to rest on their laurels. In some places, researchers are studying how to manufacture jet fuel from biomass, waste or algae. But in the meantime, *airBaltic* is working in two eco-minded directions. First, the airline is trying to ensure that its flights are optimally filled with less empty seats and cargo space.

Second, its specialists are concerned with flying and maintaining the aircraft in the safest and most efficient manner. This means that great importance is also placed on equipment efficiency and fuel economy. For example, the most recent addition to the *airBaltic* fleet – the turbo-propeller *Bombardier Q400 Next Gen* – is currently the most fuel-efficient regional aircraft available on the market.

Besides equipment improvement, a lot has been achieved in developing environmentally friendly practices. That begins with the optimization of flight route planning, taking actual winds into account.

Specific loading guidelines are now in place to ensure the best aircraft balance, and detailed instructions have been given to catering companies regarding the amount of drinking water and beverages to be carried per flight, as well as the type and weight of food packaging. The goal has been to reduce the overall weight of service items on each flight. Continuous and extensive efforts have been put in place for our flights to become more efficient from the gate to the top of cruise and back, involving plenty of considerations and variables to manage.

Since 2005, *airBaltic* has managed to reduce its rate of CO₂ emissions by nearly 25%. This represents a promising beginning that will hopefully be followed by still more achievements in helping to preserve our environment while delivering sustainable air transportation service to our passengers.



ATU Duty Free

is ready for RIGA



ATU, established in 1999 as a joint venture between TAV Airports Holding and Unifree/Gebr.Heinemann, conducts significant operations and is an effective logistics organization with purchasing power. It is a perfect example of cooperation and partnership between TAV and Unifree/Gebr.Heinemann. TAV, one of the leading airport operators in the world, has completed a number of successful projects with the build-operate-transfer model. Unifree is an experienced duty-free operator and pioneer in the implementation of unique services and quality concepts, while its strategic partner and supplier Gebr. Heinemann is one of the largest duty-free operators and supply firms in Europe.

At the Riga Airport's new Travel Value & Duty Free shops, a tailored mix of top offers is waiting for customers to be discovered – and much more. Entertainment and variety are provided through monthly special offers and interactive promotions with food tastings, an up-to-date selection of trend products and novelties, special customer-oriented gifts, product sets and limited editions, as well as travel retail exclusives. Customers will be pleasantly surprised by the wide Travel Value & Duty Free assortment of products, which consists of perfumes, cosmetics, liquors, wines, tobaccos, confectioneries, delicatessens, toys, accessories and fashion items. Its variety exceeds the average number of articles offered at comparable international airport shops, especially within the larger Schengen shop. Tasting areas and further

impulse placements should increase sales through a higher penetration and additional purchases, as well as through the offering of "retainmentment" and "edutainment" to passengers at the Riga Airport.

Sustainability

ATU is aware of Riga as an important hub for the Baltic States and its local shop concept will be Latvia's pride. The assortment's popularity is based on both international Duty Free and local trends. Products from a Latvian charity

will be added to the product offering under social responsibility principles. Baltic souvenirs will also be a part of the assortment. Authentic local products from local suppliers will be included in the product range.

For the protection of the ecology and the well-being of future generations, ATU is also focusing on environmental issues. Customers are offered re-usable eco-friendly fibre and plastic bags that are 100% biodegradable.

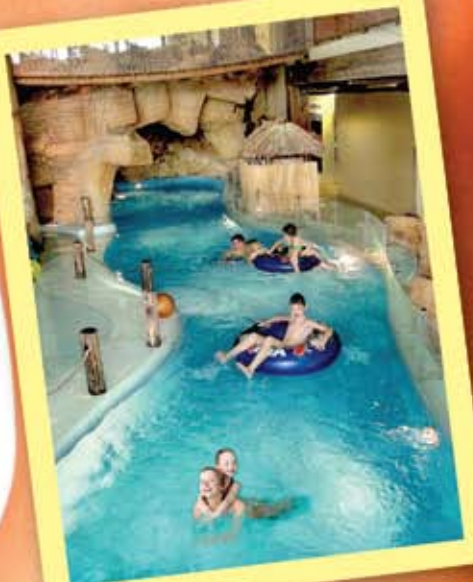
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Mr. Andris Kronbergs will cultivate an image for ATU Latvia with the collaboration of the Gebr-Heinemann design team. ATU is known for its experience in supporting customers, creating conceptual designs, developing architectural plans and generating detailed construction drawings and technical specifications according to EU norms. **BO**



Eternal

Usually people think that eternal summer can only be in hot countries. But you can enjoy many joys of recreation also where sun shines just 150 days a year and winter frosts sometimes reach 30 degrees below zero. Rain, and snow, and wind — all that is outside, but inside of Livu Aquapark, Jurmala, everything reminds you of delights of tropical health resorts even in winter.



The first thing everybody sees when approaching Jurmala from the side of Riga, is the odd structure on the bank of River Lielupe. Airplanes flying up to Riga International Airport also reveal view of sophisticated web of entwined motley pipes, which create remarkable architectonic form. To some it reminds road interchanges, to others — bundle of wires magnified a thousand times. But in fact it is favourite modern place of recreation for many people — Livu Aquapark.

It's the biggest in the Northern Europe and is open the whole year round. There are 40 different rides and amusements on the three floors of Livu Aquapark, in summer they are supplemented by another dozen and an outdoor beach. Modern sophisti-

ACCENTS OF DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Captain Kid Land

It's a true paradise for kids. The central object is impressive pirate ship with water cannons and slides. Walk over Lemon Bridge, Banana Bridge and pen-

dant Rope Bridge. Through the cave around Captain Kid Land meanders Orinoco River. In summer it is twice as long and flows outside. Every two minutes Land and river are washed away by huge five meter high waterfall.

Paradise Beach

Try to forget about European landscapes you crossed while driving here, and imagine that you relax in luxury hotel-park somewhere on distant ocean is-

land. Almost the whole territory of the Paradise Beach is occupied by the wave pool. Artificial wave generation system is even capable of creating "storms" with water crests of up to 1.5 m height. Pool floor is sloping.



summer of Jūrmala

cated equipment for those was ordered in Canada, Germany and Sweden.

To ensure safety and guarantee pleasure of amazing recreation to visitors, young people are on duty in aquapark, who are always ready to explain policy of the place or ensure everyone follow it... and no keys on ribbon — buying a ticket, each visitor gets a bracelet with chip — it is locker key, as well as data pool for paying for food, drinks, massage and multiple other services when you leave aquapark. The rest is included in ticket price.

Water recreation always attracts people, especially if water is warm and clean.

Livu Aquapark, occupying area of almost a hectare, combines three functional zones for people of different age and temperament. Active amusements, e. g., slides and diving, are located on upper floors. This is where Tornado Lasens ride, third biggest in the world and the only European amuse-

ment of such type, is located.

Few aquaparks in rich countries can offer its visitors twenty amusements of varied complexity for riding down in boats or without them, for extreme fans and kids alike.

Heart of Livu Aquapark is Paradise Beach at wave pool. From one side of it lies Captain Kid Land, from another — Spa Resort, place for relaxation admirers.

Have no doubt — Livu Aquapark is the place where you will quickly be in good mood. Because by organizing trip to this Kingdom of Eternal Summer for yourself, your kids or your friends, you actually organize great holiday for your family.

This can give you optimism, confidence and goodwill — things you lack sometimes for everything to be the way it ought to be. Don't miss the opportunity to visit Livu Aquapark, where summer doesn't end even in winter, when you come to Latvia.



24 Viestura St., Jūrmala, Latvia
Phone: +371 67755636
www.akvaparks.lv

This is where water aerobics exercises are held.

Lighthouse towers above the pool. Walk up, and impressive view of almost the whole territory aquapark will open.

Spa Resort

It is especially created for those who favour leisurely recreation. There is a bar in the very Bahamas Pool, come swimming to it and buy some drinks.

One part of this pool is located inside the aquapark, and another — outside, and in any time of the year.

Next to it there is cold water pool for true fans of contrast hydrotherapeutic procedures.

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Among the Romani of Soroca, everything happens quickly

TEXT BY ELVITA RUKA
PHOTOS BY AIJA BLEY

"Things will pick up here after Easter, but right now the place is practically dead," says a Romani (Gypsy) lady whom I have just met in the Moldovan town of Soroca, not far from the Ukrainian border. "Most of the youths have gone off to find jobs in Moscow and elsewhere, leaving us old people and children at home. Easter and other holidays are a good time to visit, as well as weddings. Then this town really gets swinging!"

The friendly, middle-aged woman offers to tell me my fortune. "Come, child, I can read your life's story like an open book! What an interesting life you have had! God has given you a great deal of talent and luck, but you have also suffered at the hands of others. Many envy you and don't like what you are doing. Don't tell them what you have on your mind. Don't tell anyone! Some are trying to put cogs in your wheels, but you will steadfastly continue along your chosen path. Believe me, God has given us Romani such eyes, that we can see right through people!"

Soroca is a picturesque town with the ruins of a centuries-old fortress, a tourist attraction for those with a taste of the exotic. Visitors come from far and wide to film

and photograph the town and its people. Soroca also has a district that is inhabited by well-to-do Romani, with its peculiar mix of obvious wealth and down-to-earth daily life, business and fortune-telling, piety and superstition, centuries-old traditions and modern conveniences. Like the neighbourhood in which they live, the Romani of Soroca also seem to be of dual nature, for despite their outward friendliness and openness, they remain an enigma to the outsider. The stately mansions are only an outer shell of the events in this community. I am not interested in how the owners have attained their wealth, but am irresistibly drawn by the occupants' natural vitality.

Powerful baroness

The gold teeth of a group of laughing, elderly Romani women flash in the early spring sunlight, with the wind occasionally blowing up their flower-embroidered shawls. They are at no loss for words. In five minutes, one of them has told me all about my past and my future. She has also slipped me a lump of sugar, the dried piece of a "root of good fortune" and a crumpled old banknote. Naturally, I have dropped a considerably



larger sum into the vivacious woman's apron, but have no regrets about this. It is not every day that someone with such deep and dark eyes will look into yours, and it is not every spring that your times of joy and sorrow will be predicted by a genuine Romani fortune-teller. The first elderly women that we meet give us a rundown of the situation in the town. The former Romani leader or "Baron" was named Arthur and after he died, his son inherited the title. However, the real ruler of the community is known as the Baroness. "Our current baron only thinks about himself. And now, with the bad news about the world economic crisis, things have not been so good this spring. We have all these nice mansions built up here, but what good is that if sometimes we don't even have any bread to eat?" one of them asks plaintively. However, she looks far too lively and healthy for me to take her complaints seriously. Seeming to read my thoughts, she soon starts to talk about happier things. At first, I mistake the Baroness for a servant, due to her simple style of dress. Her eyes, however, reveal a fiery sense of self-confidence, power and purpose. The wrecks of a number of *Chaika* luxury cars stand silent among the Baroness' flowerbeds. From time to time, small groups of Romani drive up to the house, some from other cities, to ask the Baroness for her opinion or blessing regarding one thing or another.

Seizing the moment

While the Baroness tends to business matters with her visitors, a small girl is trying to train a group of canaries in a cage. She blows a small whistle and waits for the birds to repeat what they have heard. She seems so happy and carefree, a real child of nature.

In a few years' time, the girl will be married off to one of her kinsmen. Romani girls grow up very quickly here. That is why a surprisingly large proportion of seemingly young and beautiful Romani women are already mothers, and even grandmothers. The Romani seem to waste no time. You grow, you blossom, you live out your life to the fullest, and then before you know it, you have become a wise, old woman.

The Baroness is inclined to make some money from our visit. "If you want to film us or take pictures, then you will have to pay," she says matter-of-factly. "After all, this isn't a circus! And you can only film my daughter. She is 17, beautiful and smart. A real Gypsy woman! Soon, she will be heading for Moscow with her husband. You won't find any better than her!"

The Baroness is very persuasive, and I am unable to resist her offer of a tarot reading. She opens up some old wounds, but orders me not to cry, for that is the past,

which the winds have already blown away and which God has already buried.

"How dare you tell fortunes if you believe in God?" I ask her. "Isn't that a sin? Particularly during Lent!"

"Actually, I haven't told you your fortune, have I?" she replies. "I haven't sinned against God at all. I only read what the cards tell me. You will experience a great deal of happiness in your lifetime, I tell you! Later, you will thank me. I swear by the Mother of God!"

I decide not to argue with her any further and manage not to cry, in accordance with her wishes. Things really



take place quickly here, and time flies like an arrow. The Romani teach you to seize the moment and seize it now. We sit and chat, relaxed, in the Baroness' inner

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AND ITS
PEOPLE**

courtyard. Her granddaughter has released the canaries from their cage, but does not get scolded. The girl's older brother tries in vain to seduce my travel companion Aija. Love is given by God and must be accepted when it is given. The man is persistent and asks Aija to visit him at his home.

A mentally deficient boy is also part of the household. Dressed in a red jacket, he tries to sweep away the sunbeams on the wall with a broom. "We don't forsake our own kind. We find a home for everybody," the

Baroness explains, as she follows his earnest sweeping movements with her eyes.

Together, we enjoy the first rays of the spring sunshine. The Baroness laughs a lot and tells us interesting stories. As we prepare to leave, I can sense that as soon as we exit through the gates, the Baroness will have forgotten about us, in the time that it takes to blink an eye. Perhaps that is just as well. The wind blows over the past and God buries it. As we leave, I see that the simple boy in the red jacket has "caught" a sunbeam with his broom. He smiles radiantly and looks truly happy. **BO**

Emotional stories
about post-Soviet people
by Elvita Ruka

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH **WHATCAR.LV**

First drive: *Ford Focus*

The third generation of *Ford's* big seller has *VW Golf* firmly in its sights

**WHATCAR?** says...

Focus's range of abilities will appeal to large audience



The *Ford Focus'* name is more appropriate than one might think, because ever since the original ground-breaking model was launched in 1998, it has been the focus of *Ford's* most up-to-date engineering solutions and technological advancements.

That's why there is an awful lot of expectancy, not to mention investment, riding on the new 2011 *Focus*. The basic underpinnings are carried over from the previous-generation car, but much burning of the midnight oil has gone into tuning and beefing up various suspension components to improve ride comfort, refinement and roadholding. Additionally, the presence of a new torque-vectoring system is a significant performance and safety advancement. This clever gizmo uses the stability control and the brakes to dole out power to the driven front wheel with the most traction. It's a subtle and brilliant piece of kit, which elevates the *Focus'* cornering agility and stability to that of much more expensive sports cars.

Upgraded steering

For the first time, the *Focus* also gets electrically assisted power steering, which puts less drain on the engine to help boost fuel economy and reduce CO₂ emissions. Such systems have traditionally failed to deliver the feel and accuracy of hydraulic set-ups, with even esteemed manufacturers such as *Porsche* struggling to make them suitably responsive. The *Focus* is way ahead of the game. Its steering is light at low speeds and delivers a progressive increase in weight as momentum builds. It's smooth, super-accurate and the pronounced kickback that the previous model suffered when encountering big mid-corner bumps has all but been eliminated. Along with the steering, strong, progressive brakes and an accurate gearshift make the *Focus* feel full of life.

When you just want to sit back and enjoy the journey, the excellent isolation of road and wind noise makes the *Focus* an accomplished tourer.



| Engine | 1.6 TiVCT | 1.6 TiVCT | 1.6 Eco-Boost | 1.6 Eco-Boost | 1.6 TDCi | 1.6 TDCi | 2.0 TDCi | 2.0 TDCi | 2.0 TDCi | 2.0 TDCi | 2.0 TDCi |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|---------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Fuel | Petrol | Petrol | Petrol | Petrol | Diesel | Diesel | Diesel | Diesel | Diesel | Diesel | Diesel |
| Power | 105 Hp | 125 Hp | 150 Hp | 182 Hp | 95 Hp | 115 Hp | 115 Hp | 140 Hp | 140 Hp | 163 Hp | 163 Hp |
| Transmission | Manual | Manual | Manual | Manual | Manual | Automatic | Automatic | Manual | Automatic | Manual | Automatic |
| 0-100 km/h | 12.3 sec | 10.9 sec | 8.6 sec | 7.9 sec | 12.5 sec | 10.9 sec | 10.9 sec | 8.9 sec | 9.5 sec | 8.6 sec | 8.9 sec |
| Top speed | 187 km/h | 196 km/h | 210 km/h | 222 km/h | 180 km/h | 193 km/h | 196 km/h | 207 km/h | 205 km/h | 218 km/h | 215 km/h |
| CO ₂ g/km | 136 | 136 | 139 | 139 | 109 | 109 | 139 | 129 | 139 | 129 | 139 |

A look inside

The interior of this latest car is certainly a lot more stylish than the dullness that you got with the outgoing model, although it still isn't what you would call the last word in quality.

The biggest problem, especially in the cheaper versions, is that it's a little too reminiscent of the *Fiesta supermini's* cabin. The cat's-eye instrument cowlings and certain models' neat mobile phone-style controls are attractive, but too many other components look and feel rather flimsy. On the other hand, top-of-the-range spec and dual-zone climate control, cruise control and hill-start assist join the roster, alongside classier cabin materials and a more sophisticated central console layout. Options are plentiful, with items such as blind-spot monitoring, adaptive cruise control, lane-departure warning and lane-

keeping assist all being available. There's even a forward-alert system, which warns of an impending crash by giving the driver visual and audible alerts. It can also apply the brakes to help minimise any impact. *Ford* has bucked the trend for newer cars to be ever larger: the new *Focus* is 16 mm narrower than the outgoing car and just 8 mm longer between the axles. The cabin isn't quite as spacious as that of a *Volkswagen Golf*, but there's still enough room to seat four comfortably, while the boot is a handy, square shape.

Engine performance

On an early test drive in France, we were able to try a 163-hp 2.0-litre diesel and a 182-hp version of the all-new 1.6-litre Ecoboost turbocharged petrol engine. The diesel is available with a six-speed manual or a Powershift semi-automatic

gearbox. It isn't the smoothest or quietest engine at tickover, but it has loads of go when you need it. Once settled into a cruise, it's relatively docile.

The 1.6 turbocharged *Focus* hits 100 km/h in a fraction under eight seconds and loves to be revved hard, but it isn't just a road burner. The engine is extremely flexible, pulling from low revs in much the same way as a well-sorted diesel.

We've also driven the 115-hp 1.6 TDCi engine. It's smooth and punchy most of the time, although it can be a little jerky in traffic, and power tails off slightly above 3500rpm.

Verdict

The new *Ford Focus* has an incredibly wide spread of abilities, which means that it's perfectly focused on the needs of small family car buyers. It certainly lives up to our expectations. **BO**



The Quattro: an icon is reborn

The *Audi Quattro*. Even if your knowledge of cars extends no further than the fact that they have four wheels and an engine (usually), you will have heard of it. The *Audi Quattro* was as much a feature of the 1980s as electro-pop and Joan Collins' shoulder pads. It also proved that four-wheel-drive was not just for farmers and soldiers, and went on to dominate – some would say ruin – international rallying. There are now *quattro* – with a small *q* – versions of every *Audi*, bar the *A1*.

The concept

Audi has often thought about making another stand-alone *quattro*, and at the Paris motor show last September, it revealed a concept version of what the car might like. The fact that 2010 marked the 30th anniversary of the original *Quattro* is largely coincidental. Work on a new, potential model began back in 2008, but was temporarily shelved in the aftermath of the world banking collapse. Anyway, the future version owes much to the *Sport quattro* of 1983: short, light (the target weight is just 1300 kg, although it currently comes in at around 1340) and powered by a 2.5-litre turbocharged engine.

It is based on the V8-engined *RS5* coupe – sort of. The similarities are a five-cylinder turbocharged engine and four-wheel drive, through the latest evolution of the *quattro* driveline. However, the prototype is built around an aluminium skeleton, like the *R8* and *A8*, rather than a



welded steel body. Its wheelbase has been shortened, making it only a two-seater, and it's lower. Carbon fibre sections, including the bonnet, rear hatch, rear spoiler and some interior trim, help the weight-watching process.

The direct-injection engine comes from the *TT RS*, but has been modified to fit along the length of the car, rather than across the engine bay, and here it achieves 402hp between 5400 and 6500rpm.

The gearbox is a six-speed manual, but a seven-speed twin-clutch *S tronic* could easily be accommodated. The new mechanical *quattro* system is said to be smaller, lighter, faster to respond and more flexible than either of those that *Audi* currently uses.

While the concept car pays homage to the original *Sport quattro*, it is anything but retro. Its cabin is less upright, its smooth sides don't have the bulging wheel arches of the 1983 car – which looked as though it was wearing some of Ms. Collins' shoulder pads – and it has a matt-black version of *Audi's* single-frame radiator grille on either side of piercing headlamps, rather than horizontal slats and square light units. Only the rear screen pillars of the *Sport quattro* have been copied.

The sills have been signed by Walter Rohrl and Christian Geistdorfer, who drove a *Sport Quattro* for *Audi* in the World Rally Championship in 1984 and 1985. The wheels are flush five-spoke 20-inch alloys, rather than the white, dished 15-inch affairs of yesteryear.

Inside the cabin

The cabin has a simplicity that contrasts with the cluttered look of the old car. Its instruments are all-digital. There is an electronic handbrake and a version of *Audi's* *MMI* central control system. The switches are small and neat, but positioned on the outer edges of the instrument binnacle, just like those in the 1980 *Quattro*.

On the road

The prototype is a real runner. It has no air-conditioning, the instruments flicker because they have not yet been perfected for production, and some of the trim needs to be treated with respect for the same

reason. *Audi* let us drive the new vehicle, even though it is conservatively estimated to be worth 1 million EUR.

California's Highway Patrol was obliging enough to close off a section of road near the Pacific Coast Highway, thus ensuring that no one came to grief.

Push the red starter button, slide the firm, precise gearlever into first and ease up the long-travel clutch. The engine emits that unique sound you get from a five-cylinder unit, but with a deeper back-beat due to the absence of sound-deadening.

It's a hand-built prototype, so it rattles and clunks like a competition car, but the engine pulls smoothly and cleanly, the gearshift is firm and deliberate and the pedal actions are clear and consistent.

The engine is not as instantly torquey as some *Audi TFSI* units, largely because it has a big turbo and more aggressive camshaft profiles, but once you get it into stride – at a little under 2000 rpm – it pushes the car forward with serious intent, accompanied by a soundtrack not unlike that of the original *Quattro*.

One of the most impressive features is the steering, which is direct without making the car feel edgy. It does exactly what you've asked it to do. The suspension is far better than you have a right to expect from a prototype, revealing once again how good *Audi's* aluminium space-frame cars can be. The fundamentals of a really good car are already in place.

Will it ever be sold commercially?

Will you ever be able to buy such a car? The people behind it are optimistic, but say that even if the project goes ahead, it will only be a low-volume car, and therefore expensive. Possibly six-figure expensive. "The greatest interest has come from Germany and the UK," says Stephan Reil, the head of *Audi's quattro GmbH* performance division.

"Emotionally, everybody at the company wants to do it, but there would have to be a business reason for it. The final decision will have to be made by the middle of next year." Let us hope that the decision is yes. It would be a real travesty if this was the last that we ever saw of the *Quattro*. **BO**

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HP Pavilion DM1

A cool travel companion

The new HP Pavilion series DM1 laptop is equipped with the latest cooling technology. Its virtually silent, power-managed cooling results in a cool laptop to work with when spending long travel hours in airport lounges. The extended battery life of nearly 11 hours is another bonus. The compact DM1 is a great travel companion, being only just 2.1-cm thin, with a BrightView 11.6-inch screen, a 500 Gb hard drive and a built-in GPS with maps for offline travel planning.



Sony 3D Bloggie MHS-FS3 Capture and report. Now in 3D

The world has changed. Now, when you buy a new camera, consider a 3D version. The new Sony 3D Bloggie is the same size as a regular pocket camera and can take ordinary 2D pictures. However, you can also use it to make 3D movies and photos. Connect the camera to a 3D HD television set and immerse yourself back into events that seem astonishingly vivid; or take a preview through the built-in, 2.4-inch 3D LCD screen on the back of the camera, which precludes the need for 3D glasses.

Available starting from April for about 270 EUR.



Gorenje iChef+ Touch Control What's cooking?

While we now have touchscreen phones and ipods, our kitchen appliances still feel like the 1990s. Not anymore, as the new iChef+ oven module comes with a large touch-sensitive colour display that lets you choose your desired function with the slide of a finger. Best of all, you can indicate the type of food that you wish to cook. The principle is simple: touch the picture of a trout or a chicken, and the oven chooses the temperature, time and other settings. Adjust your cooking with various settings for each step and save your favourite recipes. The oven comes with the familiar bell sounds to which we have grown accustomed and will be available this spring.

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Woodheart, design by Michaela Schleyen

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KRASSKY

The Art of Fine Rugs

All over the world, tastefully decorated homes are adorned with sumptuous rugs, which not only add warmth and coziness but also serve as masterpieces of art and design, echoing the ancient Persian saying "Where lies thy carpet, there is thine home."

The most famous handmade rugs are Persian, produced in modern-day Iran. The art of carpet-weaving in the region dates back thousands of years, and rugs were prized both as functional objects and as works of art that embodied tribal motifs and religious symbols.

A single Persian rug may have more than a million knots per square meter, and

can take up to three years for a weaver to complete. This high density of knots guarantees the rug's endurance; a fine rug can last for hundreds of years, passed down from generation to generation like a family heirloom.

In the early seventeenth century, the Persian art of carpet-weaving inspired the French to try their hand at the craft. In the coming

centuries, the French produced some of the world's most elegant rugs, many of them for the royal courts and castles. Unfortunately, the majority of these rugs were destroyed during the French revolution and only a handful have been preserved in the archives of the Louvre museum.

Today, Rêves du Désert is the only rug manufacturer in the world with access to the Louvre's archives to offer reproductions of historic French rugs. Many of them recreate authentic designs and bear an official stamp of authenticity from the museum. These include reproductions of traditional hand-knotted *savonnerie* rugs and flat-woven rugs like those produced in the city of Aubusson, famous for its tapestries.

The art of carpet-weaving has also inspired a new generation of rug designers, like Jan Kath, who creates distinctive interpretations of classic patterns, giving them a vintage look, and Jürgen Dahlmanns, who designs rugs that are like paintings, with artistic variations in tone and color. These designers rely on master weavers from Nepal and use sumptuous Tibetan wool, the thickest in the world, which is naturally coated with a thin layer of natural wax to protect the material. In addition to Kath and Dahlmanns, the contemporary designer who produces some of the most avant-garde rug designs available today is Michaela Schleyen. An innovator in the field of rug design, Schleyen was the first to create glamorous sculptural rugs; she was also the first designer to introduce neon tones, which she worked on for three years, and pioneered the use of shiny cotton.

Masterworks from all three eras—Persian rugs, classic French reproductions, and contemporary rugs—can be found at the designer rug showroom Krassky, at Dunties iela 11 in Riga and Kovër Büro showroom on Frunzenskaya naberezhnaya 24 in Moscow. This intimate salon is like a gallery devoted to the fine art of rug design, featuring stunning examples of the craft from a range of designers, collections, and historical eras. Customers can not only browse through a variety of rug collections, but also custom order variations on the patterns they find, so their choices will match the interior of their homes.

For more information please visit www.krassky.lv or www.koverburo.ru.



Revival from Rêves du Désert



Radi Deluxe from Jan Kath



I Love You Original, design by Jurgen Dahlmanns



Eden, design by Jurgen Dahlmanns



Make a Beeline for Garage, Riga's Newest Wine and Tapas Bar

Last year, the title of hottest restaurant in Riga fell to Ostas Skati, or Harbor Views, located on Kipsala Island right on the banks of the Daugava River. In response to this widespread local love for Ostas Skati, the co-owner of the restaurant, Janis Jenzis, decided to open another local establishment with the same concept of reasonably priced gourmet cuisine served in a stylish setting.

Garage
Berga Bazārs, Elizabetes iela 83/85, Rīga,
phone: +371 26628833
www.vinabars.lv

This has given rise to central Riga's trendiest new wine and tapas bar, Garage, which continues the time-honored "democratic" tradition made famous at Ostas Skati. Jenzis has set up his latest creation in Bergs Bazaars, a historic shopping complex originally constructed in the 1870s and modeled on the Eastern-style bazaars popular at the time. The structure housing the wine and tapas bar originally served as an automobile garage for the members of the Bergs family during the early years of the twentieth century, when the bazaar was filled with rows of fashionable shops and boutiques, exactly as it is today. In honor of the building's long history, the aptly named Garage continues the automobile theme in its interior décor. Scattered throughout the loft-like space are upturned black oil drums that serve as makeshift tables when the place gets busy (which, needless to say, happens quite often), and the refreshingly brief menus are decorated with old issues of vintage auto magazines. But these whimsical touches are mixed with elements of fine design, such as

the collection of black-and-white photographs on the walls and the style gallery, managed by local artists, that occupies one corner of the space.

But the centerpiece of Garage is the long counter in the center of the room, where the chef prepares meals before your very eyes in an “open kitchen” setting.

In keeping with the best traditions of creative open-kitchen-style eateries, the chef designs a new menu every day, based on whatever fresh, seasonal products are on offer from local suppliers. Main courses can include anything from fresh pike perch to a hearty steak with a baked potato, and tapas can range from tiger shrimps in coconut milk, to marinated peppers and mushrooms, to a selection of inventive pâtés for spreading on toasted bread—it all depends on the culinary mood of the chef.

Though the general atmosphere at Garage alters depending on the day and the menu, there are several mainstays at this new wine and tapas bar. The first is the breakfast menu, served until 11 a.m., which features freshly baked croissants and bruschettas with your choice of toppings. Next comes the four-course business lunch, available daily with a fixed price for each course. And throughout the day diners can order bowls of marinated olives, a selection of tapas, a plate of French cheeses, and a tray of oysters on ice. If you happen to stop by between three and six p.m., a glass of wine will be accompanied by a complimentary tapas, all the better to help you work up an appetite for dinner. However, the cornerstone of Garage is wine. And here indeed, the establishment far exceeds any of its peers in the local dining scene. Jenzis is a wine aficionado who constantly travels throughout Europe, searching for the right vintages to bring back to Riga. In designing the wine list at Garage, his goal has been to include as many regions as possible, with as many different types of grapes, but for reasonable prices, in keeping with the “democratic” concept. Each of the wines is available by the bottle, with eight reds and eight whites also available by the glass. If customers become particularly fond of a certain vintage, they can purchase a bottle to take home, for half the price listed on the menu.

For those not in the mood for wine, Garage offers Kusmi Tea from France. This historic brand of specialty teas was founded in St. Petersburg in 1867 and quickly spread to



the major capitals of Europe. Now based in Paris, Kusmi Tea has a wide range of flavors, many of which are based on the original Russian recipes and aimed at boosting health and wellness. Like the wines, seasonal products, cuisine, and design elements at Garage, the teas were also individually selected for their uniqueness and their suitability to the “democratic” concept, which continues to attract diners longing for gourmet food and fine wine that is reasonably priced, graciously presented, and, most of all, simply delicious. **BO**

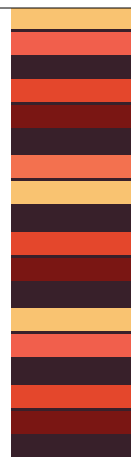


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Le Dome Fish Restaurant

Since its establishment in 2009, Dome Hotel and Spa has become the premiere luxury boutique hotel in Riga's Old Town. The historic building housing the hotel and spa was erected more than 400 years ago, and has been fully renovated to meet the exacting standards of the luxury boutique hotel industry.

This respect for authentic and distinctly local elements has been continued at the hotel's restaurant, Le Dome, which is open to the public for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and has its own separate entrance at Miesnieku 4. Le Dome showcases one of Latvia's national treasures: fresh fish from the Baltic Sea, whose low salinity has produced an abundance of marine and freshwater species. The restaurant purchases its fish daily from the coastal fishermen of the Gulf of Riga and from local vendors at the nearby Central Market. The fish are carefully selected each morning for their quality, freshness, and the sustainable fishing practices employed to obtain them.

Fillet of the day's catch have been laid out on ice in a rustic wooden box near the restaurant's entrance, so customers can select the fish of their choice before their meal. Of course, the task of preparing the dishes falls to the restaurant's award-winning executive chef, Alex Žiluks, who has achieved renown for his distinctive approach to preparing fish, which mixes both traditional

and contemporary culinary techniques.

Diners at Le Dome can also order two of the most exquisite delicacies found in the world's oceans and seas: oysters and caviar. The caviar, gathered from the coveted Osetra sturgeon, is produced by the Riga-based company Mottra, while the oysters, of the prized

Sylter Royale breed, are shipped directly from France. Gourmands will also appreciate Žiluks's most creative culinary concoction—his artful tapas—which have earned him great acclaim in local dining circles.

The interior of Le Dome is just as stylish as the hotel rooms on the upper floors of the historic seventeenth century building. Elegantly appointed, with walnut-colored wooden floors and a vaulted ceiling overhead, the space is adorned with black-and-white photographs of local fishermen at work, taken

by Latvian photographer Uldis Briedis. An upright piano in the corner by the bar will help add a romantic touch to the maritime atmosphere, with live music performed on weekends throughout the month of March. **BO**

**THE FISH ARE
CAREFULLY
SELECTED
EACH
MORNING
FOR THEIR
QUALITY,
FRESHNESS**

i For more information about exclusive offers at the restaurant (including healthy breakfasts, business lunches, and dinner specials), please visit www.fish-restaurant.lv. If you would like to make a reservation at Dome Hotel and Spa, visit their website at www.domehotel.lv. Le Dome also organizes catered banquets at the location of your choice, as well as private parties at the restaurant.

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Restaurants, bars, cafés

New pearls in Riga's city centre



Raw Garden restaurant

This restaurant's bright green façade provides a fresh dose of colour to the grey building in which it is housed. However, *Raw Garden* also stands out as a pioneer of raw food dieting in Riga. Such an eating establishment was bound to appear sooner or later on the

city's restaurant scene, taking into account the rising popularity of "green" eating. Under the principle of raw food dieting, dishes are prepared from fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds at temperatures that do not exceed 46 degrees Celsius, thus maintaining the ingredients' healthy nutrients and enzymes. The menu at *Raw Garden* is a gourmet version of raw food dieting. The sumptuous lasagna, stuffed peppers and dessert cheesecake will ensure that no diner feels deprived, even if veganism and raw food dieting are unfamiliar concepts. The light interior is supplemented with various tracts of literature propounding the benefits of raw food dieting. As you leaf through the texts, it may take a little time to get used to such testimonies as: "When I went raw..."

Skolas iela 12

Hours: Mon.-Wed. 11:00-19:00, Thu.-Sat. 11:00-01:00, Sun. closed.

📞 www.rawgarden.lv



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Bonēra vintage clothing store and café

Since opening its doors last summer, *Bonēra* has quickly made it to the list of hot spots among Riga's fashion-conscious and self-indulgent clientele. The establishment's Latvianized name is based on the first and middle names of "Coco" Chanel, the legendary fashion designer. She was originally born as Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel, and *bonheur* in French means "happiness." Thus, *Bonēra* has arisen to provide a sense of happiness for its visitors, and not only in the culinary sense, as natural fruit and berry juices from Eastern Latvia, along with home-baked cakes, are just part of this establishment's appeal. Located in an Art Nouveau building on a quiet street in Riga's city centre, *Bonēra* has successfully united on-the-spot catering with the sale of second-hand clothing. In this case, the term "vintage" has been replaced with the word *smalklietots*, which would loosely translate into English as "elegantly used" or "worn with distinction," reflecting *Bonēra's* refined approach to matters. Here one can find interesting objects that go back as far as the 1940s, including older *Pierre Cardin* and *Oscar de la Renta* clothing items.

Lately, the cafeteria has also sought to provide food for the soul with jazz evenings, concerts, performances and film screenings. Visitors would be wise to reserve a table in advance for such "intellectual" events, as indicated by the café's owners in [twitter.com \(Bonera_\)](https://twitter.com/Bonera_).

📍 **Blaumaņa iela 12a**

Hours: Mon.-Thu. 11:00-23:00, Fri.-Sat. 11:00 until the last visitor, Sun. closed.

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Jacek Osip,
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Belvedere restaurant

The setting inside the orangery in Lazienki Parki within the Warsaw Royal Bath Gardens is hard to beat. This is especially true during the summer, when groups of peacocks saunter past, proudly exhibiting their colourful plumage. Immaculate table arrangements are set right next to flourishing plant

life, while soft music tinkles in the background. All of this accounts for quite an experience, and the menu, which features the best in Polish and international cuisine, is of the highest calibre.

For opening hours and reservations,
call: + 48 22 841 2250
ul. Agrykoli 1

📍 www.belvedere.com.pl



Dekanta restaurant

The uncluttered interior of this centrally located restaurant

harbours shades of the Austrian Hapsburg era, with its vaulted ceilings, arched windows and smartly-dressed waitstaff. Flagstone flooring and a bar with wooden casks mounted behind it complete your immersion into the days of Emperor Franz Joseph. The menu is a collection of generous, meaty fare, such as beef sirloin and Wiener schnitzel.

ul. Marszałkowska 55/73

📍 www.dekanta.pl

Jazz Bistro



Bright, modern and airy. *Jazz Bistro* is everything that you don't expect of a jazz bar, with a smart-casual set of customers dining on good food inside an attractive interior that

could have come from a catalogue. The live performances are excellent, and better still, never loud enough to drown out your conversation. The founding company has seven *Jazz Bistro* spots in the capital city, four of which offer live music. Pick whichever address is closer to your location, as each offers a consistent degree of quality.

ZEN Jazz Bistro (ul. Jasna 24), **Piękna Jazz Bistro** (ul. Piękna 20), **Gwiazdeczka Piwna Jazz Bistro** (ul. Piwna 40) or **NU Jazz Bistro** (ul. Żurawia 6/12)

📍 www.jazzbistro.pl

Space Club

Opened in 2006, Warsaw's first bona fide "super club" seems to have taken its inspiration straight from the Balearic Islands. Dazzling lights, low banquettes and excellent acoustics compliment the big-name DJ's. The industrial setting, being located inside a former metal factory,

provides an excellent backdrop for the hands-in-the-air crowds, which can grow quite large. That is no problem in this 1700-square-metre club, which can accommodate over 1000 partygoers.

Hours: Fri.-Sat. 22:30-06:00
ul. Kolejowa 37

📍 www.club-space.eu

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The “green gold”

TEXT BY SIGNE MEIRANE, WWW.CETRASSEZONAS.LV
PHOTO CORBIS

In Umbria region olive oil is also known as “green gold.” That is because the olive oil made in this part of Italy has a distinctly green hue and smells like freshly cut grass. There are various factors that influence the way that olive oil looks and tastes, including the ripeness of the fruit, the olive cultivar (of which there are several hundred), the soil and climatic conditions, and the extraction and processing procedures. Nowadays, modern technologies permit the extraction of *extra virgin* olive oil, which is the highest quality oil available. The olives are pressed mechanically within 24 hours of their harvest, ensuring a lower water

content and a higher proportion of healthy ingredients. *Extra virgin* olive oil has a free acidity, or oleic acid content, of 0.65 to 0.8%. The lower the free acidity, the higher its quality. *Extra virgin* oil is obtained by cold-pressing the olives, which means that they are not heated or otherwise chemically altered, thus maintaining their full nutritional value. The oil can be used in salads and salad dressings, for dipping, and can be poured over hot foods. However, it is not suitable for cooking, due to its low smoke point.

Virgin olive oil has a free acidity that varies from 0.8 to 2.0%. It is also cold-pressed, but its taste is less pronounced. It can be used in the baking of both salty and sweet dishes, such as cakes and muffins.

Olive oil, with a free acidity of 2 to 4%, is a blend of *refined* and *extra virgin* oils. Refined oils are put through charcoal and other chemical filters to neutralize their bitter taste, without altering their initial glyceridic structure.

Lampante olive oil, with a free acidity that exceeds 3.3%, is not suitable as a food source. It is made from oil that has come from bad fruits or careless processing, and is generally intended for refining or for technical use. Such oils were previously used in oil lamps, hence the name *lampante*.

Pomace olive oil is derived from the pomace, or ground olive fruit pulp left over from pressing *extra virgin* and *virgin* olive oil. To extract pomace olive oil, the pomace is pressed further or is treated with chemicals. The resultant oil contains many impurities and may undergo several heating and filtering processes to refine it to an acceptable standard. It is then blended with *virgin* olive oil before being offered to consumers.

If you really wish to purchase olive oil of high quality and good taste, then read the label carefully. Look for such word or letter combinations as DOP (*Denominazione di origine protetta*) for Italian oils, AOC (*Appellation d'origine contrôlée*) for French oils, DO (*Denominación de origen*) for Spanish oils, and DOP (*Designation of Origin Protected*) for European Union products. These designations guarantee that the olive oil has been produced in accordance with the highest quality standards and oil-producing traditions of its place of origin.

Olive oil has many health benefits, which is another reason why it should be on everyone's shopping list. High quality *extra virgin* olive oil has retained its natural biological properties, monounsaturated fatty acids, nutrients and vitamins.

Filtered olive oils of various designations (including *extra virgin*) can be safely kept for two years, unopened, in a cool and dark place. Olive oil in opened containers should be consumed as soon as possible and kept away from direct sunlight at room temperature, as it has a fairly short shelf life. **BO**

PS: As you walk among the trees of an olive plantation, try to resist the temptation of picking a fresh olive from a tree and popping it into your mouth. If you do, then you will certainly not want to repeat that experience, as the taste of an unprocessed olive fruit is unpleasantly bitter.



I



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www.sushi.lv



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www.kabuki.lv



4 Rooms

to escape the chill in Old Riga

If you wish to find the centre of Riga, then head straight to Līvu Laukums (Livu Square), a popular gathering place ever since it was first designed after the Second World War. In the summer, the square is filled with beer gardens. During the winter, the territory is dominated by holiday markets and other outdoor attractions, such as a giant Ferris wheel that is perfect for some cool winter fun.

Meistaru iela 23, Riga
Tel. (+371) 6722 5686
www.4rooms.lv

Fortunately, the most central location in Riga also has its own restaurant for escaping the winter chill. At Meistaru iela 23, *4 Rooms* is not only one of the most centrally located restaurants in town; it also showcases some of the distinctive architectural features of this medieval city. The landmark building was constructed in the 18th century, although it contains structural elements that date back to the 13th century, including fragments of the city's first protective wall, erected on this very spot in 1201. An ancient fragment of that wall greets visitors as they pass into the main dining hall – the first of four rooms. They are also greeted by a very welcoming menu, which offers a good insight into the distinctive culinary traditions of the region. The menu also includes classic dishes from other cultures, perhaps in a nod to the many different nationalities

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GRAND FEAST – A WONDERFUL WAY TO SPEND AN EVENING

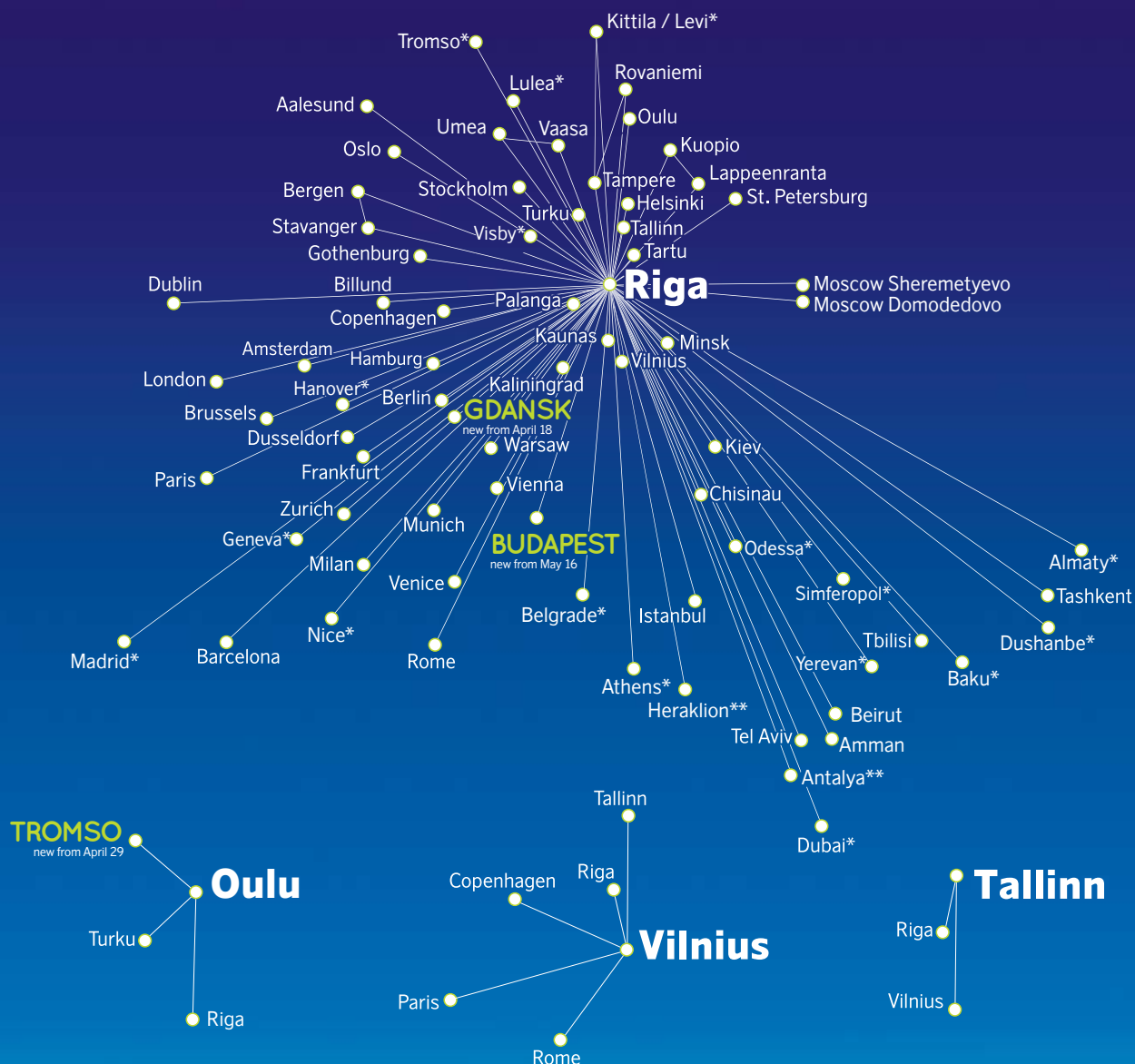
that have passed through Riga during the last eight centuries.

The menu opens with a selection of cheeses from all over Europe, allowing diners to construct their own cheese plate. Next come a variety of salads – from the classic Greek to the more exotic beef carpaccio salad with arugula. Diners may also wish to sample some local snacks, such as the lightly salted herring with fried potatoes, or the grey peas with onions and smoked meat – a Latvian favourite.

After wandering through the chilly but charming streets of Riga's Old Town, you will certainly want to warm up. For this reason, the restaurant offers a number of delicious soups, such as a tasty salmon cream soup with wild chanterelles, which artfully brings together the rich bounty of Latvia's rivers and forests.

The main courses are also ideally suited for chilly travellers. Although the menu does feature a fine selection of pastas and fish, the real focus at *4 Rooms* is on steak. The restaurant has almost a dozen different varieties, ranging from a "lady's steak" with pickled pumpkins and wild mushroom sauce, to the mighty, 400-gram "royal steak," with onion rings, loganberries, and homemade pickles.

Once you have finished your meal, you may want to wander through the three other rooms of the restaurant, each of which has its own distinctive atmosphere and is accessible by a series of winding staircases. The basement even offers water pipes for a post-meal smoke. Taken together, all four rooms can seat almost two hundred diners, whose lively chatter echoes off the wooden beams and ancient stone walls. That sounds like a grand feast – a wonderful way to spend an evening in the heart of Riga's charming Old Town. **BO**



* Seasonal flights.

** Operated in cooperation with tour operator Tez Tour.

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Budapest, Fisherman's Bastion

IN BRIEF

- 1/ New flights to Gdansk and Budapest
- 2/ Frequent fliers take advantage of Volume tickets
- 3/ Cheap and cheerful Finnish car rental
- 4/ Oulu flight network expands
- 5/ One year of airBaltic Training

1/ New flights to Gdansk and Budapest

airBaltic celebrates the arrival of spring by opening two new exciting routes. On April 18 flights are launched between two of the major Baltic Seaports: Riga and Gdansk in Poland.

An important city for hundreds of years under the German name of Danzig, the restoration of the Hanseatic Old Town is regarded as one of the most successful such projects ever undertaken. As well as architecture and some of Poland's best restaurants, the nearby resorts of Sopot and Gdynia have surprisingly good beaches. The new flight operates four times a week and offers excellent transit possibilities for Gdansk residents via Riga to more than 70 airBaltic destinations as well as plenty of tourists heading in the opposite direction.

On May 16th, in response to passenger requests a new flight to the glorious Hungarian capital of Budapest will be launched with four flights a week. Now passengers from the Baltics, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe will have excellent transit possibilities via Riga to one of Europe's great capitals, which is just as famous for its food and drink as for its historical importance.

One way tickets between Riga and Gdansk start from EUR 39 and to Budapest from EUR 49. Transit flights via Riga, for example from Tallinn, Helsinki or St. Petersburg, to Gdansk start from EUR 59 and to Budapest from EUR 65. Book early at www.airbaltic.com to get the best-priced tickets.

2/ Frequent fliers take advantage of Volume tickets

Individuals and companies alike who travel frequently within the Baltics, Scandinavia, Finland, Russia, Ukraine and Germany can benefit from Volume tickets giving flight flexibility and advantageous pricing. Volume tickets allow passengers to buy 20 one-way flight vouchers at a fixed price of EUR 72 each (taxes and surcharges included). The vouchers can be exchanged for flight tickets on routes between Riga and Tallinn, Tartu, Vilnius, Palanga, Kaunas, Stockholm, Helsinki, Tampere and Turku, and between Vilnius, Tallinn and Copenhagen within a 45-day period. Volume tickets are also valid on flights between Riga and Moscow, Kiev, Frankfurt and Hamburg, in addition to all the destinations mentioned above, at a rate of EUR 105 per one-way flight voucher. Alternatively, volume tickets for a longer period of 120 days can be selected. In that case the price per one-way ticket for the first route group will be EUR 105 and for the complete route group including also Moscow, Kiev, Frankfurt and Hamburg EUR 145. Customers buying volume tickets enjoy numerous advantages: tickets have a fixed fare; it is not necessary to indicate passengers' names and departure dates (which can be easily registered up to 2 hours prior to departure if seats are available); and for registered tickets it is possible to change the time of departure free of charge. Volume tickets are available from www.airbaltic.com.



3/ Cheap and cheerful Finnish car rental

If you are planning a trip to Helsinki, Lappeenranta or Oulu, the airBaltic website now offers cheap rentals on cars with the cheerful airBaltic colours. Rental prices throughout the month of March start from EUR 75 per day for cars such as the Chevrolet Spark and Fiat Grande Punto.

To book a car together with your flight go to www.airbaltic.com, enter your flight details and personal information and in the next steps you will be offered the possibility to select your car and the total rental price for your whole trip will be shown. Cars can be picked up and returned right at the airport, and even out of office hours keys can be returned via the special key box near the airport entrance.

4/ Oulu flight network expands

airBaltic continues to build its presence in Finland by expanding its operations from its hub in the north of the country, the city of Oulu. Besides the existing flights from Oulu to Turku and Riga, from April 29 a new route will be opened between Oulu and the city of Tromsø in north Norway. airBaltic will create history by being the first carrier to operate scheduled flights between these two important cities.

The flight between Oulu and Tromsø will operate twice a week with one way tickets starting from EUR 49.



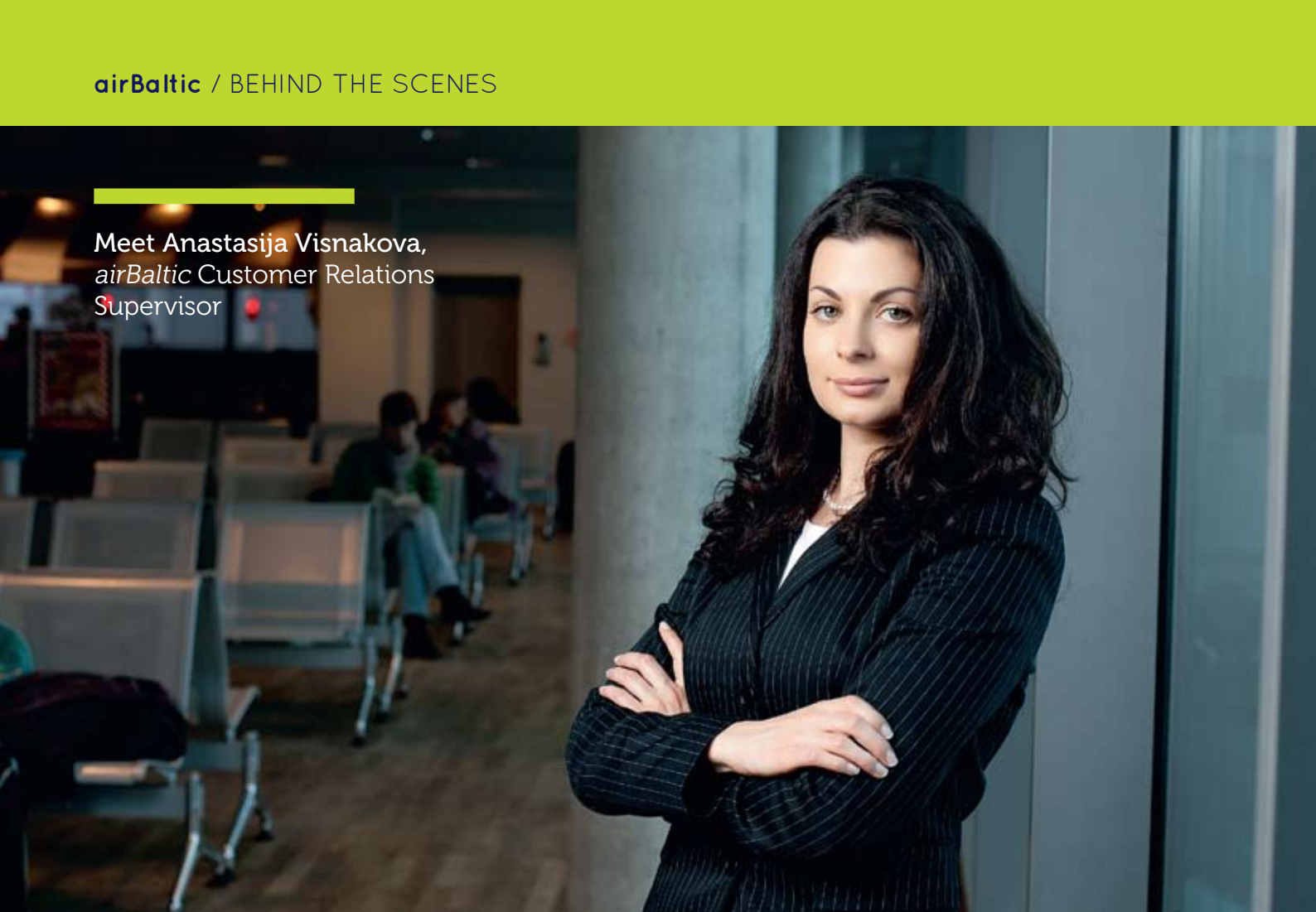
5/ One year of airBaltic Training

In February the airBaltic Training facility in Riga celebrated its first year of operations, rapidly becoming a well-regarded centre of excellence in the airline industry. Moreover, the centre recently became the regional training centre for the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which is a huge achievement for such a young institute.

airBaltic Training offers a wide range of aviation training at its modern, purpose-built facility equipped with a B737 Classic Full Flight Simulator, Multi Purpose Trainer, door trainers, and computerized classrooms. All instructors are still active pilots with huge experience. The B737 simulator is considered to be one of the best of its type in the world.

It is acknowledged also from the clients. During its first year of operation airBaltic Training services were used by many well known airlines of the region as well as several pilot schools. Also a big number of self sponsored private pilots have obtained their Boeing 737, Boeing 757 or Fokker 50 Type Rating in the centre. Further employment of these pilots in airBaltic and other airlines is a really good proof for the quality of knowledge obtained.

"The flexibility, support and general impressions have been beyond expectations. We can without hesitation recommend airBaltic Training to any other operator or flight school."
Emanuel Dal Head of Svensk Pilotutbildning



Meet Anastasija Visnakova,
airBaltic Customer Relations
Supervisor

The Emotional Intelligence of Customer Relations

TEXT BY RIHARDS
KALNINS
PHOTOS BY ANDREJS
TERENTJEVS, F64

Why did you choose to work in the customer relations department?

The customer relations department is a great place to begin your career at an airline. There are lots of people who want to work at an airline, but don't know what they want to do. But if relating with customers and communicating with customers is your calling, then the customer relations department is truly the best department to begin your career. People have complaints about all kinds of things—everything from lost luggage to some sort of “noises” on the plane. In order to provide an answer that is as objective as possible, and to satisfy the need for information about what happened, you have to communicate with all the departments—from senior pilots and flight attendants to cleaning crews and the technical department. In a sense, the customer relations people are exclusive, because we know everything about everything. We

know how to reserve tickets, why baggage is lost, and what has happened with a plane on a given flight.

So the principal aim of your department is to solve problems for customers?

Exactly. Our motto is: “a customer relation is at the heart of what we do.” Because the customer is in the middle of everything, he's the one who pays our salaries and he is the one who can tell us whether or not our product works. We are the department that filters information about how a specific product or procedures work. We find out whether or not people like something, and if they don't like it, we find out what they don't like; if they like it, and then we forward all compliments to the corresponding department. We also offer feedback to other departments about their actions and operations. There are lots of new opportunities for customers to share their thoughts in social media, but we are

the people who conduct the investigation. We will investigate the matter step-by-step, to ascertain what happened, what was involved, who made a mistake and when. However, our function is not to look for mistakes, or to find the guilty ones; our aim is to improve the product by discovering inaccuracies. Criticism is what helps us grow, solve our errors, and improve our results.

How does the department work to investigate and solve customer complaints?

The department's thirteen employees are divided into groups. Each group is responsible for specific problems, and the members of each group are professionals in their field. One group is responsible for flight irregularities – missed flights, cancelled flights, and other related issues. Another group deals with baggage – everything from insurance to lost bags. And then there is a group responsible for all other sorts of claims. Every case is investigated, and all the materials related to the case are examined, starting from the ticket-reservation process and ending with requests for information from external stations. We request information about what happened, and examine the reports that everyone keeps. In aviation there must be a report about almost each step of the process. We examine this information, compile it, process it, and then provide an objective answer to the customer.

What happens if a customer has a problem with his luggage?

If your luggage is damaged, then you must head straight to the lost and found office at the airport and report the damage. If your luggage hasn't arrived, then you have to show the baggage tag (issued at the check-in desk) stuck onto your passport or ticket. You should never throw this tag out, because it is the only document with which you can prove that the baggage was yours. If you lose that tag, then you can't register the baggage as missing. At the lost and found office, which you'll find at every airport anywhere in the world, you can report what happened to your bag.

What are the strangest complaints you have heard?

We receive lots of unusual claims and inquiries every day. For instance, a passenger, who was, in fact, an acquaintance of mine, wanted to fly to Genoa, the capital of the Liguria region in Italy (in Italian it is spelled "Genova"). But he mistakenly bought a ticket to Geneva, and ended up flying there instead. It's one thing to buy the wrong ticket, you can conceivably make a mistake here, but the passenger went to the airport,

found his gate (with a sign saying "Geneva"), got on the plane, listened to all the announcements by the cabin attendants and the pilots, and then still flew to Geneva instead of Genoa. Of course, at the end of the journey he wasn't too happy about that, though it was his own fault. We laughed about this later, and he couldn't explain WHY he did it. It happens!



Criticism is what helps us grow, solve our errors, and improve our results

How has working in the customer relations department influenced you as a person?

I never cease to be amazed by people – by both their bad deeds and their good deeds. Over time you get used to the fact that people are very different. In terms of working in the customer relations department, you really need to have emotional intelligence. That's a fashionable term now, it encompasses empathy, your reactions to events, and your ability to be strong, cultured, and polite at the same time. You must have this characteristic in order to work here. And you must love people. If you are one of those who dislike other people, then you definitely can't work in customer relations. Because then every single complaint, every claim, will try your patience. You must be very patient, and you must be able to accept these complaints as part of your job, instead of taking them personally. **BO**

Weather radar

PHOTO BY ULDIS PELNA



Fokker 50 with removed fiber glass nose cowl for maintenance access to weather radar

Everyone wants to know what weather is in store for them, but when you are actually up among the clouds it becomes even more important. That's why modern aircraft are equipped with weather radar as one of their on-board radar systems, usually located in the nose of the aircraft.

The weather radar system uses the reflective effect of microwave pulses on substances such as rain to obtain a picture of conditions ahead of the airplane. Basically, the raindrops which are often found in stormy areas reflect the radar beams, and the more rain that is in the air, the stronger the reflected signal will be.

Weather radar is strong enough to "see" up to 320 miles ahead of the aircraft, giving the pilot ample time to plan an alternative route avoiding storms and turbulence in many cases.

The system incorporates something called a Doppler Turbulence Detection circuit which can measure variations in the horizontal speed of raindrops – a reliable indicator of strong winds. Another feature is a Forward Looking Windshear detector which gives between 10 and 60 seconds of approaching "windshear," when wind speed and direction can change dramatically over a very short distance. That's why when the pilot warns of approaching turbulence over the aircraft intercom and asks passengers to fasten their seatbelts, the turbulence can sometimes seem to arrive as soon as he has finished speaking!

Interestingly, thunderstorm reflectivity can be divided into three parts. The bottom third of the storm is composed entirely of water and is the part of the storm that most efficiently reflects radar energy. The middle third of the storm is composed of a combination of super-cooled water and ice crystals. Reflectivity in this part of the storm begins to reduce as ice crystals are very poor radar reflectors. The top third of the storm is composed entirely of ice crystals and is almost invisible to radar. To combat this potentially misleading picture, MultiScan Radar takes information from different radar scans and merges the information into a more accurate total weather picture.

The weather radar system presents the pilots with a topographic map type display of weather formations and features such as rivers, coastlines and cities, allowing him to see a huge amount of information at a glance.

All in all, an impressive collection of technology – particularly when you remember that the whole thing works in an aircraft that is constantly changing its speed, direction and altitude! **BO**

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| Western and Southern Europe | 9 000 | 40 000 |
| Caucasus, Central Asia and Middle East | 12 000 | 55 000 |

Please note: offer is subject to availability. Airport taxes must be covered by the Member separately.

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march.balticmiles.com

New BalticMiles partners:

1/ Restaurant 1221 in Riga 🇱🇻



A family restaurant set in a magnificent 300-year-old building, 1221 is a refreshing change from Riga's glitzy nightlife. The classic furnishings spread over three floors take you back to a gentler age, while the Latvian and European cuisine will satisfy both body and soul. Start with elk meat goulash soup with wild mushroom, then tuck in to fried lamb back with goat cheese, nut-pineapple cuscus and rosemary-honey sauce, and finally

treat yourself to pumpkin-seed ice cream tureen with sweet chestnut-orange sauce. There's an extensive wine list too.

Contact information: Jauniela 16, Riga, +371 67 22 01 71,
1221@apollo.lv; www.1221.lv

Earn 10 Point per each lat spent in the restaurant.



2/ Dorpat Hotel and Spa in Tartu 🇪🇪

As Estonia's top university town, Tartu has been nurturing minds for generations. Now a new hotel and wellness spa will take care of your body. The six-story getaway has 200 rooms and five suites with all the mod cons including internet connection and facilities for handicapped people. Ten conference and seminar rooms with space for 1,100 persons make this the biggest meetings venue in southern Estonia. After a hard day's work, enjoy a massage, sauna or beauty treatment at the adjacent spa centre.

Booking information: info@dorpat.ee; www.dorpat.ee

Earn 500 Points per hotel stay and 100 Points for spa treatment worth 25 EUR and more.



3/ Café Osiris in Riga

Yves Saint Laurent's dictum that "fashions fade but style is eternal" helps explain the success of Riga's legendary café Osiris. For 17 years, this central café has been a magnet for politicians, entrepreneurs, actors and students, who keep coming back despite countless other venues opening (and closing down) around town. Perhaps it's the cosiness of the understated interior, with some tables and two black couches where time seems to stand still. Or the brief but stylish and reasonably priced international menu served by staff that treats regulars like family members. Booking ahead is recommended for lunch and dinner.

Booking information: Osiris@ticino.lv ; Tel+371 67 243 002

Earn 5 Points for each lat spent in the café Osiris.

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Great to **spend**

SAMSUNG Galaxy Tablet P1000

108 157 Points
or € 743



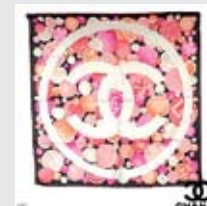
KOLONNA Sports Club CENTRS
1 Year Membership

61 228 Points
or € 433
Save 40%



CHANEL Foulards silk scarf

30 637 Points
or € 235
Save 57%



ZoLO a Go Go - playsculpture

6 336 Points
or € 48



APPLE iPod touch 8GB
4th generation

35 166 Points
or € 239



All prices displayed include shipping to Latvia. Price and availability are subject to change depending on the delivery country.



Business class / On all airBaltic flights, Business class passengers will enjoy a complimentary full meal including appetizer, hot main course, dessert (except flights shorter than one hour, where snacks are served instead), and a wide range of beverages and alcoholic drinks. On flights lasting longer than three hours, we offer a double service—first a full hot meal served with beverages, followed by a snack consisting of coffee or tea and a small dessert. On night flights with early morning arrival, we provide a “wake-up” service with tea or coffee and a light breakfast.

Economy class / Economy class passengers can purchase a selection of snacks, hot meals (on flights longer than 1 h. 30 min.) and beverages from the onboard menu cards. To save money and time, preorder your meal before the flight, either at the airBaltic website or ticket offices. This will guarantee that your choice will be available, and that you'll be served first.

Buy on board!

This spring comes with new perfumes available for purchase on board *airBaltic* flights. Explore the complete selection of gifts and souvenirs in your onboard menu cards.



Dsquared2
She Wood EDP,
50 ml

A feminine touch with vanilla, lemon and jasmine.

63 EUR



Salvador Dali
DALISSIME Travel Kit:
EDT spray, 50 ml
+ body lotion, 100 ml

A mild and sensual fragrance for women, with a scent of peaches, apricots and red berries.

31 EUR



Bvlgari MAN EDT,
60 ml

An iconic and contemporary masculine fragrance with “white” woody oriental notes.

44 EUR



INFLIGHT

ENTERTAINMENT

On flights longer than 2 hours 30 minutes, passengers can rent portable entertainment devices pre-loaded with movies, cartoons, serials, music and games.

TV serials: House | Modern Family | The Office | Friends | Glee

For kids: My gym partner's a monkey | Looney Tunes | The Batman | The Simpsons (new episodes) | Family Guy (new episodes) | Wallace and Gromit

Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader



Fantasy, adventure

Cast: Georgie Henley, Ben Barnes, Skandar Keynes, Will Poulter, Tilda Swinton

In this new installment, Edmund and Lucy Pevensie, along with their cousin Eustace, their friend King Caspian, and a warrior mouse named Reepicheep, find themselves swallowed into a painting and on to the Dawn Treader. Their mission – on which rests the fate of Narnia itself – takes the courageous voyagers to mysterious islands and a river that turns to gold, to fateful confrontations with magical creatures and enemies.



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 1



Fantasy

Cast: Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Helena Bonham Carter

Part 1 begins as Harry, Ron and Hermione set out on their perilous mission to track down and destroy the secret to Voldemort's immortality and destruction – the Horcruxes. On their own, without the guidance of their professors or the protection of Professor Dumbledore, the three friends must now rely on one another more than ever. But there are Dark Forces in their midst that threaten to tear them apart.



True Grit



Adventure, Drama

Cast: Matt Damon, Jeff Bridges, Josh Brolin, Barry Pepper

Fourteen-year-old Mattie Ross's father has been shot in cold blood by the coward Tom Chaney, and she is determined to bring him to justice. Enlisting the help of a trigger-happy, drunken U.S. Marshal, Rooster Cogburn, she sets out with him – over his objections – to hunt down Chaney. Her father's blood demands that she pursue the criminal into Indian territory and find him before a Texas Ranger named LeBoeuf catches him.



The Social Network



Drama

Cast: Jesse Eisenberg, Andrew Garfield, Justin Timberlake, Armie Hammer, Max Minghella, Josh Pence, Brenda Song, Rashida Jones

On a fall night in 2003, Harvard computer programming genius Mark Zuckerberg sits down at his computer and heatedly begins working on a new idea. In a fury of blogging, what begins in his dorm room soon becomes a global social network and a revolution in communication. A mere six years and 500 million friends later, Mark is the youngest billionaire in history... but success leads to complications.



Due Date



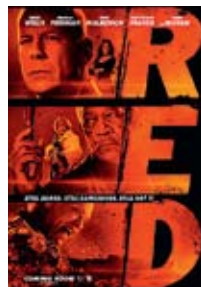
Comedy

Cast: Robert Downey Jr., Zach Galifianakis, Michelle Monaghan

Peter Highman is an expectant firsttime father whose wife's due date is a mere five days away. As Peter hurries to catch a flight home from Atlanta to be at her side for the birth, his best intentions go completely awry when a chance encounter with aspiring actor Ethan Tremblay forces Peter to hitch a ride with Ethan – on what turns out to be a cross-country road trip that will ultimately destroy several cars, numerous friendships and Peter's last nerve.



Red



Action comedy

Cast: Bruce Willis, Morgan Freeman, Helen Mirren, John Malkovich, Mary-Louise Parker, Karl Urban

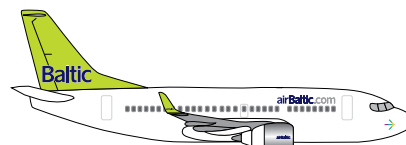
Frank, Joe, Marvin and Victoria used to be the CIA's top agents – but the secrets they know just made them the Agency's top targets. Now framed for assassination, they must use all of their collective cunning, experience and teamwork to stay one step ahead of their deadly pursuers and stay alive. The team breaks into the top-secret CIA headquarters, where they will uncover one of the biggest conspiracies and cover-ups in government history.





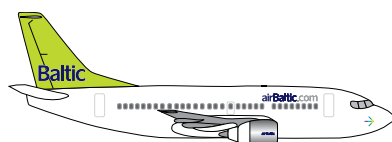
Boeing 757-200

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Number of aircraft | 2 |
| Number of seats | 200 |
| Max take-off weight | 115.7 metric tons |
| Max payload | 25 metric tons |
| Length | 47.3 m |
| Wing span | 41.05 m |
| Cruising speed | 850 km/h |
| Commercial range | 6888 km |
| Fuel consumption | 3900 l/h |
| Engine | ROLLS ROYCE RB211-535E4 |



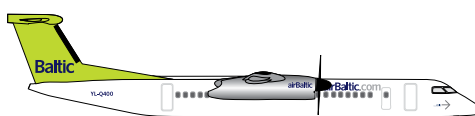
Boeing 737-300

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Number of aircraft | 8 |
| 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 |



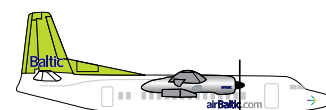
Boeing 737-500

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Number of aircraft | 6 |
| 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

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Number of aircraft | 8 |
| 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 m |
| Cruising speed | 667 km/h |
| Commercial range | 2084 km |
| Fuel consumption | 1074 l/h |
| Engine | P&W 150A |



Fokker 50

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Number of aircraft | 10 |
| Number of seats | 46/50/52 |
| Max take-off weight | 20.8 metric tons |
| Max payload | 4.9 metric tons |
| Length | 25.3 m |
| Wing span | 29.0 m |
| Cruising speed | 520 km/h |
| Commercial range | 1300 km |
| Fuel consumption | 800 l/h |
| Engine | P&W 125 B |

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