

NOVEMBER 2015

balticoutlook

airBaltic
inflight magazine

ROUTES IN AND AROUND

VERONA

Plus:

EXCLUSIVE: CELEBRITY CHEF
EZRA KEDEM

A SKI HOLIDAY TO REMEMBER
TRAVEL LIKE BOND.
JAMES BOND

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Riga Region, Spunciems
Area of the central building 543,5 m²
Area of the guest house 280,6 m²
Land area 4 000 m²
4 floors, 5 rooms
Price upon request

Luxury villa consisting of 2 buildings carries on traditions of Jurmala's wooden architecture of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Central building – hall, living room, fireplace room, library, winter garden, 2 bedroom zones, exercise room, wine cellar, terrace, tower with a weathercock. Guest house: 2 bedrooms, living room with a kitchen, swimming pool with a recreation area, Swedish sauna, garage for 2 cars, household rooms.



Рижский район, Спунциемс
Площадь центрального здания 543,5 м²
Площадь гостевого дома 280,6 м²
Площадь земли 4 000 м²
4 этажа, 5 комнат
Цена по запросу

Роскошная вилла, состоящая из 2 зданий, продолжает традиции архитектурного деревянного зодчества Юрмалы 19-го и начала 20-го веков.

Центральное здание – холл, гостиная, каминный зал, библиотека, зимний сад, 2 спальных комплекса, спортзал, винный погреб, терраса, башня с флюгером. Гостевой дом: 2 спальни, гостиная с кухней, бассейн с зоной отдыха, шведская сауна, гараж на 2 машины, хозяйственные помещения.



Marupe, Liliju Street
Area of the building: 477,7 m²
Land area: 2 080 m²
2 floors, 7 rooms
Price – 1 300 000 EUR

Spacious house consisting of 2 buildings connected by a passage.

Central building – living room with a fireplace, kitchen, dining area, 2 bedrooms, study, 2 bathrooms. Well-groomed territory with landscape design. Guest house – living room with a fireplace, kitchen, 2 bedrooms, SPA area with steam bath and jacuzzi. Wardrobe and household rooms. Open terrace.



Марупе, улица Лилию
Площадь здания: 477,7 м²
Площадь земли: 2 080 м²
2 этажа, 7 комнат
Цена – 1 300 000 EUR

Просторный дом, состоящий из 2 зданий, соединенных между собой пассажем.

Центральное здание – гостиная с камином, кухня, столовая зона, 2 спальни, кабинет, 2 ванные комнаты. Ухоженная территория с ландшафтным дизайном. Гостевой дом – гостиная с камином, кухня, 2 спальни, SPA-зона с паровой баней и джакузи. Гардеробная и хозяйственные помещения. Открытая терраса.



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Welcome aboard



MARTIN ALEXANDER GAUSS
Chief Executive Officer *airBaltic*

Dear Customer,

Winter arrives with increased economic activity in northern Europe and the Baltic Sea region, as vacation-goers return to their regular work and studies. We at *airBaltic* are supporting this seasonal trend by offering even better services to our business travellers.

We have made more seats available at lower prices for flights within the Baltics and Scandinavia. Most notably, we have improved our links between Stockholm and the Baltic capitals by offering up to five daily flights. We have also upgraded our Riga-Berlin route, which is being serviced by larger jet aircraft in the winter season.

Furthermore, we are considering additional improvements to our Baltic connections with Western and Eastern capitals where the demand is strong. This is part of our Horizon 2021 business plan of strengthening *airBaltic's* presence in the Baltic Sea region. By combining the potential of the three markets

of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, we hope to foster further economic growth and create new jobs. This, however, will require the continued modernisation of our fleet, and our existing agreements with *Bombardier* for the purchase of state-of-the-art C-Series jets are an excellent starting point.

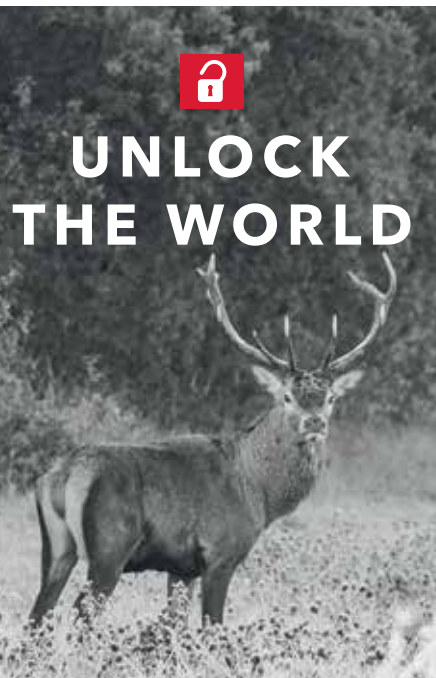
For those with winter escapes in mind, we have opened new routes to Salzburg and Verona. These complement our existing destinations in the Alps, the High Tatras and Caucasus Mountains. For the sun-seekers, we offer flights to Larnaca, Cyprus, and Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, in cooperation with *Tez Tour*.

Did you know that our family of code-share partners has reached 20 members, with *LOT Polish Airlines* recently joining? This is an excellent and symbolic number for *airBaltic*, as it coincides with our 20th anniversary.

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



Yours,
Martin Alexander Gauss



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About the November interview



In order to become truly acquainted with sunny Tel Aviv – one of *airBaltic's* most popular fall and winter destinations – *Baltic Outlook's* deputy editor Zane Nikodemusa headed out to visit this dynamic and creative city. The jewel on the Mediterranean offers not only wonderful beaches, restaurants and art museums, but also the chance to meet with exciting and ambitious people. One of these is celebrity chef Ezra Kedem, who is credited as being the creator of modern Israeli cuisine.

Baltic Outlook's encounter with him (page 66) was a momentous event, because Kedem is widely known to be a domineering personality who doesn't get drawn into personal conversations. However, our planned 20-minute interview unexpectedly

extended into an almost two-hour-long discussion about the most important commandments that should be observed, both inside and outside of the kitchen. Our fortuitous meeting took place in Kedem's paradise within the confines of a quiet convent in Jerusalem, which provides a breathtaking view of the Judean Hills. This Garden of Eden – where the star chef grows his own pomegranates, figs and strawberries – is the only place where the master manages to make time stand still. Admittedly, in between Kedem's meditative reflections and sips of cool rosé wine, the master chef managed to rattle off some strict instructions to one of his assistants, who was getting ready to drive off and serve lunch to a famous Hollywood film producer.

baltic Outlook

Editorial Staff

Chief Editor: Ilze Pole / e: ilze@frankshouse.lv

Deputy editor: Zane Nikodemusa /
e: zane.nikodemusa@frankshouse.lv

Copy editor: Amanda Jātniece

Design: Marika Kossatz

Layout: Inta Kraukle

Cover: Corbis

Frank's House

Baltic Outlook is published by SIA Frank's House

Stabu 17, Rīga, LV 1011, Latvia / ph: (+371) 67293970

/ w: frankshouse.lv / e: franks@frankshouse.lv

Director: Eva Dandzberga / e: eva@frankshouse.lv

Advertising managers:

Indra Indraše / e: indra@frankshouse.lv / m: (+371) 29496966

Ieva Birzniece / e: ieva.birzniece@frankshouse.lv / m: (+371) 26416866

Advertising manager in Lithuania:

Renata Olisova / e: renata@frankshouse.lv / m: (+370) 60623762

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Printed at Poligrāfijas grupa Mūkusala, Latvia, phone (+371) 67063187

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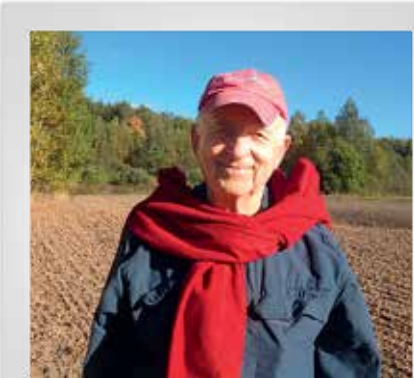


In-flight conversations

In late winter of 1990, I took the second ever commercial flight on a *Scandinavian Airlines Boeing 707* from Riga to Copenhagen. I had worked days and nights at the University of Latvia in Riga and taught English one night a week at the University of Agriculture in Jelgava. As an English speaker, I worked with the Danish Democratisation Fund and was constantly in demand among visiting groups from Scandinavia. I had become fatigued and longed for a week's rest with good food in Copenhagen, a city that I love.

The flight was memorable in that I was the only passenger on board. The flight attendants plied me with food and drink, saying: "You poor thing! You look gaunt. We know there is little food to be had in Riga right now." But after a dinner at a favourite restaurant in Copenhagen with white tablecloths, silverware and the warmth of Danish speech and food, a strange feeling of melancholy overcame me. I missed my students and did not wish to have exclusive privileges.

Flying out of Riga to anywhere has changed radically since then. If you flew across the Atlantic at that time (and I still do so perhaps four times a year), you had to spend a night in Copenhagen with a hotel voucher from SAS. There was no coordination with international flights. Now there is. There is also a new airport



Taking a break between trips at Mierini, my maternal grandmother's farm in Latvia, October 2015

The conversation was lively and the flight therefore short

building in Riga, a good Latvian-Baltic airline (*airBaltic*) and much else. Riga is a great place from which to visit all of the major European capitals as well as lesser places.

I would be "telling tales out of school" (i.e. lying) if I claimed that flying long hours to anywhere does not become tedious and boring. At times I might prefer other modes of getting from here to there, such as walking or kayaking in the wilderness,

sailing, and driving through vast deserts or endless spruce and birch forests. However, the undeniable virtue of flight is that one gets to distant places in a relatively short time, notwithstanding the fuss.

Although I am very cautious about engaging in small talk during any flights, surprises can nevertheless arise. One night on a flight from New York to Riga via Oslo, I imagined myself sitting next to a reincarnation of Jeanne Moreau, the fine French film star. I have no recollection of how we started talking, but we did. Of course, she was not Moreau, but she looked like her in the dimly lit cabin. It turned out that my travel mate was indeed connected with the movies as a Polish film director. When we got up to change flights, the magic of the resemblance was gone.

On another flight I sat next to a Brazilian travel writer who was heading to Riga with her husband for a New Year's celebration in the snow. The conversation was lively and the flight therefore short. The snow came two days after New Year's, and we are still e-mail friends.

Flying back to Riga two months ago, my seat mate was a renowned professor of medicine at the famed Rochester University in Manhattan and at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm. Since I am writing a book about the cancer year with my late wife, our conversation was very important to me. **BO**



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SPOTLIGHT ON THE LATE AUTUMN

Five things that you should do in Latvia in November

1/ Experience a dose of invigorating aroma therapy by placing scented plaster orange slices into your wardrobe.

The slices are fragrant with ethereal orange oil and are made by the Latvian home décor brand KAZA.

2/ Try out a restaurant meal of roast goose and cooked

sauerkraut, a traditional dish eaten on St. Martin's Day (November 10) to mark the end of the autumn preparations for winter.

3/ Take a meditative walk along the peaceful grounds of the Riga Brethren Cemetery, Latvia's largest memorial ensemble. It is dedicated to about 2,000 Latvian

soldiers who died between 1915 and 1920 during the First World War and War of Independence.

4/ Listen to soulful works by composer Emīls Dārziņš (1875-1910), considered one of the most romantic composers of Latvian classical music.

5/ Take an adrenaline-filled ride on a four-wheeler (jenamotors.lv).

ON THIS MONTH'S MENU

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

THE TREND:



Beauty Latvia's best-known organic cosmetics manufacturer MĀDARA Cosmetics has just released a new series of *Time Miracle* anti-aging products. The daytime toning mist can be used according to need for ensuring an optimum skin moisture level and for protecting the skin from the cold autumn winds.

EUR 22.50.

① madaracosmetics.lv

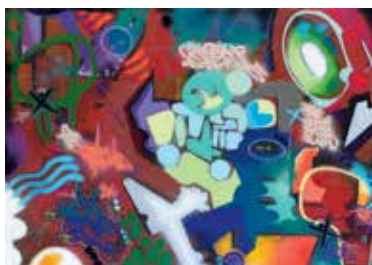


Design

Family-owned French luxury design house Pierre Frey and popular

American graffiti artist Toxic have joined forces to create a limited-edition three-piece wallpaper and fabric design that features the artist's painting *No Toys Allowed*. This inspiring collection can be viewed in Latvia at the *Ticians* interior fabric salon.

① ticians.lv



Travel

Favoured by the rich and the famous, the *Rimowa* suitcase brand is collaborating with the *Steiff* luxury toy maker to create an exclusive new series of suitcases. Their tender lining is made of grey alpaca wool, which *Steiff* also uses to manufacture its legendary teddy bears. These suitcases demand special care and don't come cheap, going for a retail price of about 990 euros apiece.

VIEW FROM ABOVE

For a short while in November, after the leaves have fallen off the trees and before the snow has covered Riga's rooftops, one can catch an unusually clear view of the city's towers, chimneys and other building details. On cold autumn days, locals like to roof-watch from the *Skyline* bar on the 26th floor of the *Radisson Blu Hotel Latvija* and from the top floors of the Latvian National Library building.

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

READING LIST



The Book Cover in the Weimar Republic

A fascinating look into history, literature, philosophy and art books in interwar Germany. The volume brings together 1,000 of the most striking examples of dust jacket ingenuity, supplemented by essays discussing the context of 14 precious years of freewheeling spirit (1919-1933). A historical artefact that looks gorgeous on your coffee table, in your library or even on your wall.

EUR 49.99, ① phaidon.com

Suzanne Scanlon. *Her 37th Year: An Index*

Following a year in a woman's life after a moment of marital crisis, this innovative, post-modern story is structured in the form of an index – a collection of conversations, letters, quotations, moments and dreams. The book compellingly crosses genres and styles, and Scanlon's remembrance of things past compels us to construct her story in our own minds.

EUR 14.50, ① noemypress.org

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BOLERO... BALLET PERFORMANCE

Latvian National Opera and Ballet, Riga
November 11 and 25

The recent premiere of the *Bolero...* ballet performance was a hit in Riga, with two more shows to follow this month. A fine cast of ballet soloists provides a fresh and exciting show of contemporary dance and interactive projections choreographed by Krzysztof Pastor (Poland), Atila Egerhazi (Hungary) and several talented local choreographers – all to the music of famous French composer Maurice Ravel.

Tickets at bilesuparadize.lv
Aspazijas bulvāris 3



TALLINN BLACK NIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL

Various cinemas in Tallinn
November 13-29

November is a wonderful month to be in Tallinn. Yes, it will be rather dark and possibly cold and windy, but there is hardly a better time to meet up with friends and go see a movie in a warm and cosy cinema. The *Tallinn Black Nights* film festival offers a large variety of movies and activities to brighten up the month, with the programme to be announced on November 6.

© 2015.poff.ee

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

CHRISTMAS JAZZ MUSIC FESTIVAL

Various places in Tallinn
November 28 – December 17



© Isabel Pinto
Portuguese fado star Ana Moura

This intimate and serene international jazz festival is showcasing numerous concerts at churches, clubs and concert halls in the Estonian capital. Among the treats are headlining performances by the American *Vijay Iyer Trio* and Portuguese fado star Ana Moura. In addition, a special concert celebrating Frank Sinatra's 100th birthday will see English singer Stephen Triffitt and the Estonian *Dream Big Band* come together on stage.

① jazzkaar.ee



Kaspars Zariņš. NR 14.
Oil on canvas. 2015

TIESŠRAIDE (LIVE BROADCAST) SOLO ART EXHIBITION BY KASPARS ZARIŅŠ

Daugava art gallery, Riga
November 5 - December 5

Any solo exhibition by illustrious Latvian painter and Art Academy professor Kaspars Zariņš (1962) is a feast for lovers of contemporary art. This time, the artist has shed his customary cloak of self-irony and delves into a study of nature, while revealing his state of mind and sensitive sense of perception. A profound and multifaceted art experience that is simultaneously nuanced and tender.

① galerijadaugava.lv
Ausekļa iela 1

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Details **LOCAL AGENDA**



CONTEMPORARY? DANCE PERFORMANCE

**Menų spaustuvė (Arts Printing House),
Vilnius**

November 28

This is not your typical modern dance performance, where dancers move sporadically around a pitch black stage. *Contemporary?* does more talking than dancing and looks into the contemporary dance scene with a self-ironic glance, invoking cliché movements, phrases and even costume details. Fresh from this summer's Edinburgh Festival, *Contemporary?* is returning to Lithuania with a performance in English.

Tickets at [tiketa.lt](#)

① [menuspaustuve.lt](#)

Šiltadaržio gatvė 6



SILICON VALLEY COMES TO THE BALTICS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**Radisson BLU Hotel Latvija conference centre, Riga
November 7**

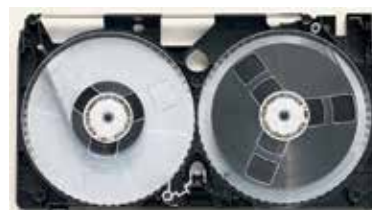
This technology startup conference is the biggest event of its kind in the Baltic Sea region, bringing together more than 650 startup and tech talents, investors, executives and media representatives. The conference theme "Money goes where talent grows" will highlight the value of ideas and talented teams. Ten internationally acclaimed speakers from Silicon Valley will address the conference, along with representatives of such Baltic success stories as *Ask.fm*, *Infogr.am* and *Transferwise*.

Tickets at [ekase.lv](#)

① [sv2b.com](#)

Elizabetes iela 55

**SCANORAMA
FILM FESTIVAL**
Forum Cinemas, Vilnius
November 5-15



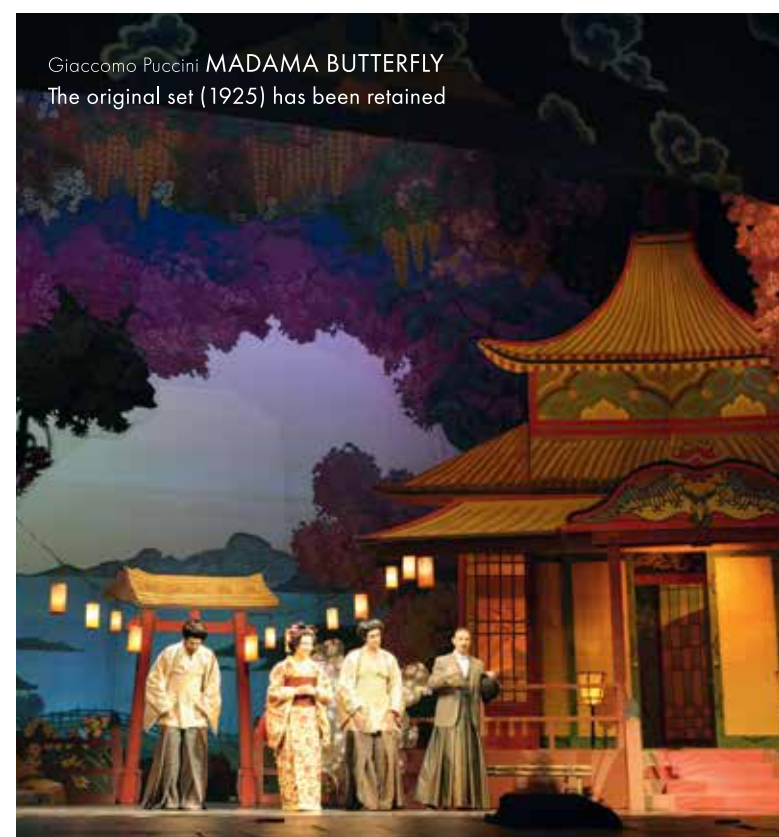
© Toby Hudson

As the main cinematic event of the autumn in Lithuania, the *Scanorama* film festival is bringing together some of the most notable movies from this year's festivals around the world. Watch out for

Dheepan, a French drama telling the story of three Tamil refugees who flee civil war-ravaged Sri Lanka and come to France. Amid the background of the current refugee crisis in Europe, this film won the *Palme d'Or* at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival. In all, viewers will have more than 100 films to choose from on nearly a dozen cool November evenings in Vilnius.

Tickets at [forumcinemas.lt](#)

Savanorių prospektas 7



Giacomo Puccini **MADAMA BUTTERFLY**
The original set (1925) has been retained

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NOVEMBER 2015

01	○	NABUCCO	
04, 27	B	SWAN LAKE	
06	B	ROMEO AND JULIET	
07	○	VALENTINA	
08	B	SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS	
11, 25	B	BOLERO...	
12	○	IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA	
13	B	RAYMONDA	
14	C	FROM CLASSICAL TO JAZZ	
14	○	MADAMA BUTTERFLY	Special Cast
15, 22	B	THE NUTCRACKER	
19	○	RIGOLETTO	Special Cast
20	B	THE SLEEPING BEAUTY	
21	○	THE BIRDS' OPERA	
21	B	UNKNOWN TERRITORIES	
26	○	MANON LESCAUT	Special Cast
28	○	LE NOZZE DI FIGARO	
29	B	KARLSSON FLIES...	

○ - opera | B - ballet | C - concert

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Staro, Riga!

Festivals of light and the *Baltic Light Chain*: portable urban storytelling

Text by **AGRA LIEĢE**
Photos courtesy of
Staro, Riga!



The annual festival of light *Staro, Riga! (Riga, shine!)* is celebrating its seventh anniversary this year and has become a popular tradition among both Rigans and visitors of the city. The festival will take place from November 18-21 and, as it does every year, will feature impressive outdoor light objects, installations and performances. For a few days, these expressive forms of urban art will turn the city panorama into an otherworldly sight through the use of artistic light and video technology.

However, this year *Staro, Riga!* is also cooperating with three other European light festivals: the *Tallinn Light Biennale* in Estonia, *Beepositive* in Vilnius, Lithuania, and *Naracije* in Gdansk, Poland. Together, these festivals make up the *Baltic Light Chain*, an international project that has supported 18 young artists from the four European countries.

After attending a summer school to hone their skills in the use of light technologies for creating urban art, the project participants made 11 objects and installations that have already been exhibited as part of the light festivals in Tallinn and Vilnius. The festivals in Riga and Gdansk are now following in November, featuring both the co-created light objects and local installations.

In Riga, private organisations have been welcome to make and exhibit objects of light on their own

initiative, and many local inhabitants have taken up the practice of decorating their houses with unusual lighting for the duration of the festival.

Although the light festivals in the Baltics and Poland are relatively small in scope compared to similar festivals elsewhere, they are quite well-attended. In any case, the *Baltic Light Chain* is likely to be expanded in the coming years, as the enthusiastic participants of this year's initiative are now looking to Northern Europe and beyond. So let there be more light! **BO**
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Nīcgales iela 18a, Rīga, Latvia / www.kate.lv

Details RIGA CLOSEUP

In cooperation with the
Zvaigzne ABC publishing house
Text by **UNA GRIŠKEVIČA**
Photo by **KASPARS GARDA**



More information
about the Great
Guild and other
notable spots
in Riga can be
found in *Pastais
Rīga* (Walks
Through Unusual
Riga), a book by
Una Griškeviča.



The Great Guild was reconstructed in 1965 with modifications added to provide the auditorium with superior acoustics

The interior of the Münster Hall has not changed a great deal since its construction in 1330, aside from the relocation of a musicians' balcony that was originally donated to the Great Guild by two of its members in 1646. Although musicians no longer perform on the balcony, DJs sometimes spin their tunes there at various functions. For nearly 700 years, the hall has hosted social events such as balls, meetings and concerts. Practically all of the wedding celebrations of Riga's wealthy class took place in the Münster Hall until the 18th century. The hall's original 17th-century crown-shaped chandeliers still hang from the ceiling, while the painted coats-of-arms of the former Hanseatic League cities also date from that period.

It is also worth visiting the Fireside Chamber, which was built in 1521 and was formerly known as the Bride's Chamber. This is where newlyweds spent their first wedding night after celebrating together with their guests in the Münster Hall. The room has been rebuilt several times over the centuries and now serves as a rehearsal hall for the musicians of the LNSO. The auditorium, for its part, continues to host concerts by the LNSO and other musicians, including world-class performers. **BO**

Amatu iela 6 | ☎ lns.lv

From guild to concert hall

The history of Riga's Great Guild (*Lielā gilde*) concert hall goes back to the 14th century. The building is not only a historical monument, but also the home of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra (LNSO) and a lively meeting place for lovers of classical music.

The Great Guild's roots extend even further back to a time when the current edifice had not yet been built, with the founding of the Riga Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit in the 13th century. This brotherhood was open to most traders and craftsmen, except for weavers and bathhouse attendants. Eventually, two separate groupings arose, which met in halls named after the German cities of Münster and Soest. This indicates that the first members of the brotherhood were possibly from these two German urban centres.

Later, the brotherhood formally branched off into two separate socioeconomic groups, with the Great Guild uniting German merchants and the Small Guild uniting German craftsmen. The merchants of the Münster Hall obtained their official statutes (*Schragen*) in 1354, which is considered to be the year of the Great Guild's foundation.

The building that is now known as the Great Guild obtained its current form between 1854 and 1857, when it was rebuilt in a Tudor Gothic style under the supervision of architects K. Beine and H. Schöll. The edifice was first assigned to serve as a concert hall during the Soviet occupation of Latvia, but its top floor was destroyed in a fire in 1963. The Great Guild was reconstructed two years later in accordance with a project by Latvian architect Modris Ģelzis, with modifications added to provide the auditorium with superior acoustics.

A café that operates during concert performances can be found in the vestibule by the Münster Hall. It has four stained-glass windows devoted to the Paris World Fair of 1937. These cultural artefacts were designed by Latvian artist Ansis Cīrulis and depict the fields of construction, shipping, trade and craftsmanship, which were important sectors of the Latvian economy during the prewar independence period (1918-1940).



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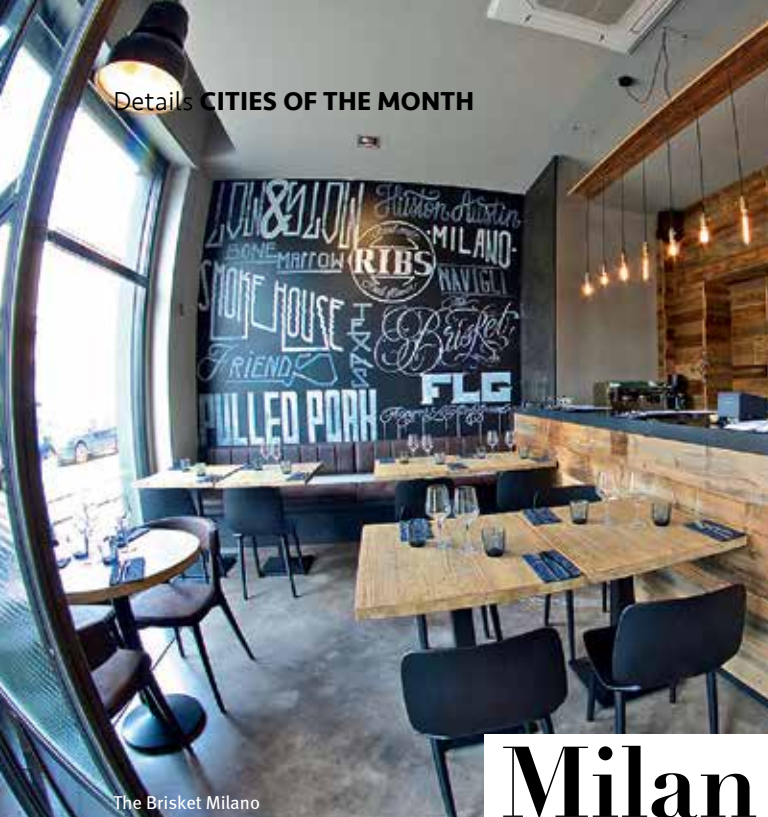
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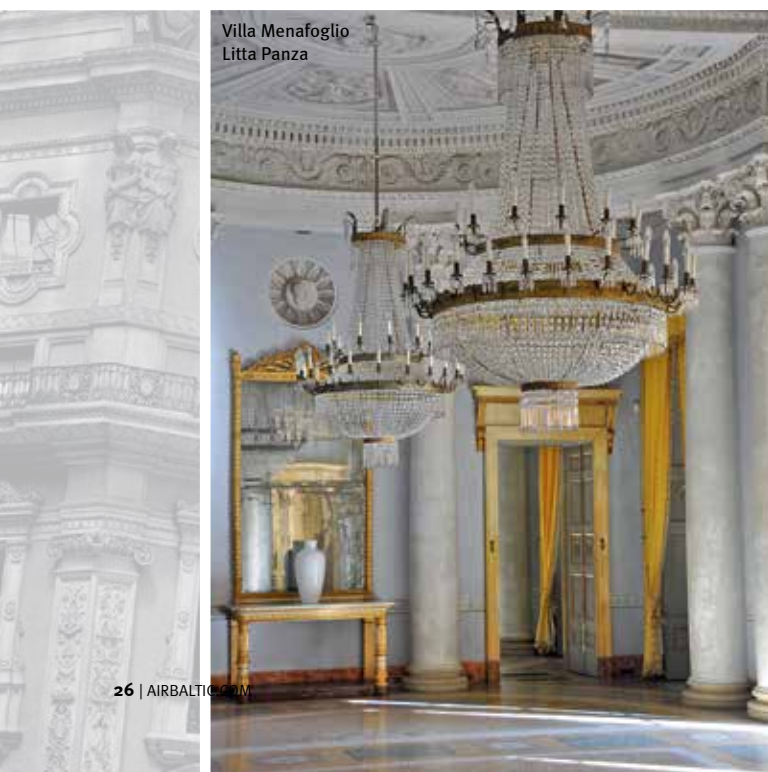
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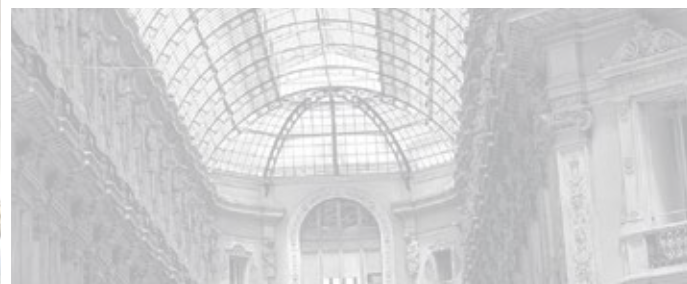
Text by **UNA MEISTERE**,
anothertravelguide.com
Publicity photos and
by **AINĀRS ĒRGLIS**

The Brisket Milano (Ripa di Porta Ticinese 65; brisketmilano.com) is a great place for a hearty autumn meal, as long as you are not a diehard vegetarian. Located in the Naviglio Grande canal district, the restaurant sports a robustly simple interior that reminds one of a Texas smokehouse. A patch of red brick stands devoid of its plaster coating on one wall, while sturdy wooden boards cover other wall surfaces. The table tops are also made of wooden boards, while others have been enveloped in aluminium sheeting. The menu features briskets, pulled pork, steak, spare ribs, sausages and chicken wings as main courses, along with some tasty and meatless side dishes as well. The food preparation philosophy at this establishment could be described as “slow and low”, meaning that the ingredients are heated at a relatively low temperature for many hours, thus retaining a maximally ideal flavour and texture.

This new store will delight those who wish to supplement their autumn wardrobe with truly original items, rather than the standard global brands that can be found on the main avenues of most world metropolises. The **Milaura** concept store (Corso Giuseppe Garibaldi 35; milaura.it) can be found in the artsy Brera district, its two floors showcasing stylish items by 120 young designers – some of whom are already established, but many of who are still little known. Each item has been carefully chosen by the store proprietor, who always seems to be one step ahead of current fashion trends. *Milaura* also has its own line of designer items, a number of which have been partially manufactured at the San Vittore prison in Milan and at another prison in Beirut, Lebanon. According to the owner, this socially responsible practice is providing employment, new skills and income for inmates who would otherwise remain idle in their places of incarceration.

If you wish to escape the bustle of the big city and get a breath of fresh air, then it is worth taking the approximately 50-kilometre trip to the town of Varese, which is home to one of the most beautiful and legendary residences in the region, the **Villa Menafoglio Litta Panza** (Piazza Litta 1; visitfai.it/villapanza). Built in the mid-18th century, it was acquired in 1935 by the Panza family of Milan, which included the famous art collector Giuseppe Panza (1923-2010). The permanent exhibition of more than 150 works from Panza’s collection – including installations of light by James Turrell and Dan Flavin – is housed in the main building and in the former stables.

The spacious English garden and parts of the villa itself are currently hosting *Natura Naturans*, an exhibition by American artists Roxy Paine and Meg Webster. On show until February 28, this poetic story about the endless cycle of life and death in nature stimulates all five senses, while highlighting nature as a source of life and humans’ often destructive relationship with it. Try to spend at least half a day at the villa, where you can also have lunch. In addition, Milan’s Malpensa airport is only a 30-minute drive from there (36 km).



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Karl Lagerfeld, *Autoportrait, New-York, 2011*
Black-and-white inkjet print on Fabiano paper



Longstanding multimedia fashion king Karl Lagerfeld operates in many fields and continues to be an influential figure at the age of 82. He is a man who refuses to stand still and to repeat himself in his creative endeavours. Many of his diverse photographs can now be seen at the exhibition **Karl Lagerfeld: A Visual Journey**, which is on show at the Pinacothèque de Paris (28 Place de la Madeleine, pinacothèque.com) until March 20. The exhibition is being curated by legendary German book publisher Gerhard Steidl and *Chanel* visual director Eric Pfrunder. It was Pfrunder who encouraged Lagerfeld to try his hand at photography in the 1980s, and the rest, as they say, is history. Lagerfeld's photographic interests have been varied and include architecture, Paris by night, portraits and abstractions, to name a few. His experimentations also extend to exposure and printing techniques, and the full spectrum of Lagerfeld's photographic media – such as daguerreotypes, screen-prints and digital prints – can be seen at the exhibition.

The recently opened **Musée du Parfum** (Museum of Perfume, 3-5 Square de l'Opéra Louis Jovet) will stimulate more than just the eyes. Located not far from the Opéra Garnier, the museum was set up by the well-known French perfume manufacturer *Fragonard Parfumeur*, which was founded in 1926 in the southern town of Grasse and is named after 18th-century painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard. This is the company's second museum of perfume in the French capital. The first was located on the rue Scribe but was shut down with the opening of the second museum. The new museum retraces the history of perfume-making over a 3,000-year period, from Ancient Egypt to the present, depicting quasi-alchemistic experiments with exotic ingredients and displaying an impressive collection of perfume bottles.

On the Paris hotel scene, the formerly renowned *Grand Hôtel de Bachaumont* has been reborn in a new incarnation, the **Hôtel Bachaumont** (18 Rue Bachaumont; hotelbachaumont.com). The hotel experienced its heyday at the beginning of the 20th century, when the nearby Les Halles served as Paris' largest fresh food market. Following the dismantling of the market in 1971, the hotel experienced a gradual decline and later housed a private clinic. Now the premises have been revived to serve their original purpose, with 50 guest rooms reflecting a mix of modern and Art Deco styles. The hotel bar, for its part, is popular with the trendy crowd.



Fragonard museum



Hotel Bachaumont



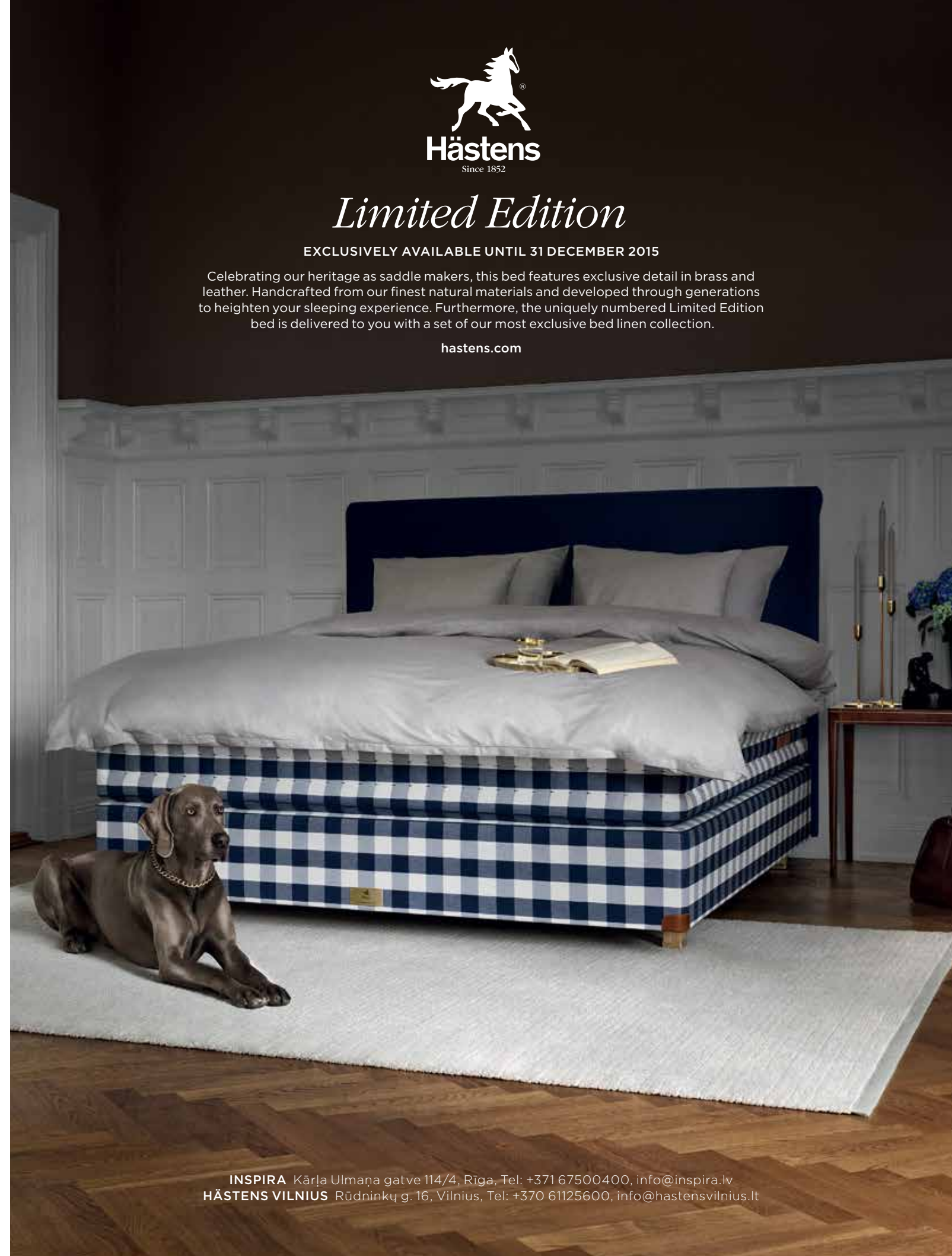
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Woodstockholm café

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Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson has said that art can save the world, for it can influence and change people's way of thinking. With the flair of a visual poet, the artist uses fog, water, air, light and reflections as instruments to manipulate with viewers' feelings and senses, thus expanding their field of experience. Eliasson's creations always have an element of grandiosity to them, both from the perspective of their size and subject matter, depicting such natural phenomena as waterfalls, rivers, rainbows and the sun. Now Stockholm's *Moderna Museet* (Skeppsholmen; modernamuseet.se) is showcasing works by the artist that date from the 1990s to the present in a comprehensive retrospective named **Olafur Eliasson: Reality Machines**. On view until January 17, it offers visitors the chance to go astray and find themselves again in a labyrinth of colours, where water squirts up in cascades and sandstorms are created right within the museum's four walls.

Torsgatan is a special place. In 1910, it became the first street in Stockholm to be paved with asphalt and later was home to the first concrete skyscraper in the Swedish capital, the Bonnier Building. Designed by a father and son duo of architects – Ivar and Anders Tengbom – construction on the edifice began in the late 1930s but was halted during the Second World War. It was finally completed in 1949. This year, the *Tengbom* architect's bureau symbolically returned to the building as the designer of the newly opened **Torsgatan 21** restaurant (Torsgatan 21; torsgatan.se). Its interior pays tribute to the building's history as the home of a publishing house, with loads of metal, zinc and black paint creating a rather robust feel, somewhat similar to a creative workshop and a very modern restaurant combined in one space. Designed to be a meeting place over breakfast, lunch and dinner, *Torsgatan 21* also houses a bakery and a take-away deli.

Founded only five years ago, *Woodstockholm* is a comparatively young Swedish furniture manufacturer and design agency that has already carried out several innovative projects. One of the latest is the **Woodstockholm** café (Mosebacke Torg 9; woodstockholm.com), which is located in the company showroom and is a shining example of contemporary design. In accordance with the company's name, the main interior element is wood, and each of the design elements therein has its own story to tell. The *Märket* wooden lamp stands out in particular. It was created by *Woodstockholm* designer and architect Lars Stensö, who drew inspiration from floats and buoys (nautical marks) that can be found in the Baltic Sea.

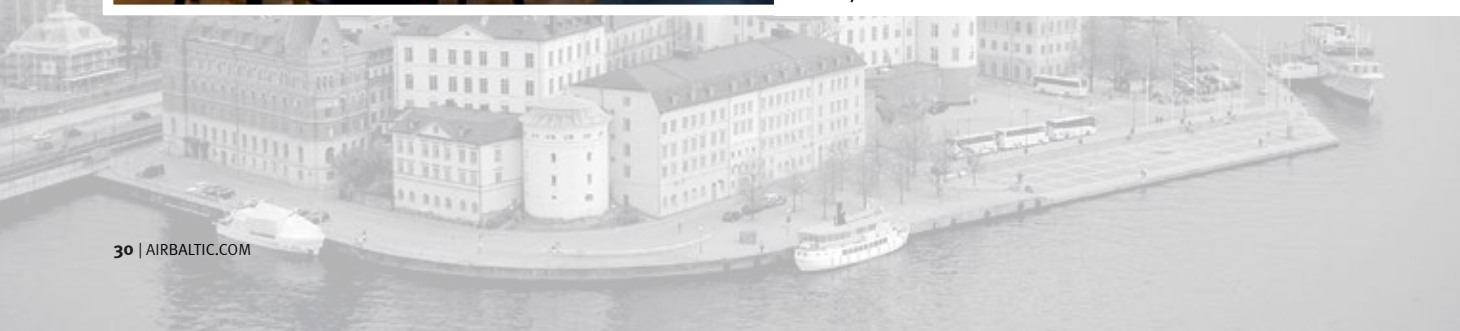


Torsgaten

Stockholm



Olafur Eliasson: Reality Machines



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Amsterdam: Eye Film Institute

Futuristic and slightly supernatural, the *Eye Film Institute* is one of the most striking architectural landmarks to arise in Amsterdam during the last few years and simultaneously one of the most exceptional film museums in Europe.

The locals have grown very fond of this white building on the banks of the River IJ, and it really is hard not to fall in love with this unusual edifice, which reminds one of the solitary eye of a cyclops. Inaugurated in 2012, the *Eye* is located in the northern, or Noord, district of Amsterdam, straight across the river from the central train station. It can easily be reached from the station by ferry.

The *Eye* might also look like a strange alien from outer space who has firmly fixed his gaze upon the viewer. In some way, the building is like a movie in itself. It was designed by the *Delugan Meissl* architects' bureau of Vienna to serve as a new home for Amsterdam's *Filmmuseum*, whose quarters in the legendary Vondelpark had become too small to house a growing archive of 37,000 films and counting.

Text by **UNA MEISTERE**
Publicity photo

Film is an illusion of sorts, and so is the *Eye*. Covered with white aluminium tiles, the building façade has many different appearances, depending on the vantage point, angle and intensity of light shining upon it.

A staircase of wooden steps leads upward like a ramp into the "bowel" of the structure. On the basement floor, a number of bright yellow futuristic cabins (pods), each with seats for three people, offers visitors the opportunity to see films for free.

A few steps away is a large movie screen upon which anyone can be an artist for a few moments, expansively splashing paint around with no inhibitions, like Jackson Pollock used to do. This virtual paint is "poured" onto the screen by the shadows of passers-by in another modern wonder of technology. Here, adults can once again revert to their childhood as they compete with their kids to make the most interesting virtual paint splotches.

The *Eye* also houses an exhibition hall, four movie theatres (with 315, 130 and 67 seats) and a very good restaurant. Indeed, restaurants seem to have become

a standard feature in most contemporary buildings of culture. This particular restaurant is similar to the deck of a ship, offering a magnificent view of Old Amsterdam in the distance through its large windows. In the foreground, tugboats, boats and ferries quietly glide past along the river, just like they would in a scene from a silent movie.

In addition, the Film Institute is known for its captivating exhibitions, one of which is currently on show until January 17. The exhibition is devoted to Italian cinematographic genius and style perfectionist Michelangelo Antonioni, who was one of the 20th century's most innovative movie directors. The first part of Antonioni's 1960s trilogy *The Adventure*, *The Night* and *Ellipse* marked a turning point in movie-making history and heralded the dawn of a new cinematographic era. As part of the exhibition, Antonioni film fragments appear on 13 gigantic screens, overwhelming the senses with their sheer power and magic.

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The season of giving

Text by **ELĪNA RUKA**
Photos courtesy of the Office
de Tourisme de Beaune

Every year on the third weekend of November, after the grape harvest has been picked and the wine has been poured into casks and bottles, Burgundy celebrates three glorious autumn days that culminate with the Hospices de Beaune Wine Auction.



This year, the famous charity auction for wine connoisseurs and professionals is taking place for the 155th time in Beaune, the wine capital of Burgundy, a region that has been dispatching wine to Rome and other distant destinations since at least the 14th century.

Like the days of a calendar year, Burgundy is home to 365 small plots distributed in about 100 *Appellations d'origines contrôlées* (AOC), or controlled appellations of origin. Among the best known are Volnay, Pouilly-Fuissé, Chablis and Maconnais.

With a population of about 22,000 inhabitants, the picturesque town of Beaune hosts various wine tasting events and dinners as well as street performances and concerts during the lively autumn weekend, not to mention a half-marathon that winds its way through various vineyards.

The charity auction takes place on Sunday afternoon at the Hospices de Beaune, otherwise known as the Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune, which was founded in 1443 as a hospital and refuge for the poor. Decorated with glazed coloured tiles, the building is a beautiful 15th-century architectural gem. From its inception until the cessation of its operations in the 1960s, the hospital received generous donations and other kinds of support from the town's inhabitants. Nowadays, auction proceeds continue to be given to medical institutions and to *Toutes à l'Ecole*, an organisation that funds education for girls in Cambodia, as well as to the *Imagine Foundation*, which undertakes research into genetic diseases.

Aside from providing the opportunity to support various good causes, the auction permits oenophiles to get the first taste of vintages that will otherwise be made available to the public only two years later. The quantities offered for sale vary from lots of three bottles to entire casks, which contain the equivalent of about 300 bottles.

Those who can't make the trip have the option of bidding electronically, as the auction is accessible to anyone with a computer and internet connection. The auction traditionally begins with the sale of 24 casks of *Cuvée Dames Hospitalières*, a blend of Beaune Premier Cru named after the nurses who tended to the sick at the hospital.

The high point of the event, which concludes with a candlelit dinner, is the sale of the President's Lot. Traditionally auctioned off by a celebrity, the lot sold for a record 400,000 euros in 2010. Diehard festivalgoers cap the event with a lunch on Monday at the Château de Meursault, to which each guest brings along a bottle of wine. The atmosphere is always merry, and most participants would heartily agree with Salvador Dalí's assertion that "someone who knows how to taste is no longer just drinking wine, but is tasting secrets." **BO**

① beaune-tourism.com

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Text by **ELĪNA RUKA**
Publicity photo

At a time when even five-year-old kids are given selfie sticks as presents at birthday parties and when hundreds of self-made travel photos can be found in practically everyone's smartphone, professional photographers are making a comeback. These skilled artists caution against an over-reliance on selfies and on the photographic skills of passers-by, as the pictures that you are now taking may later become cherished testimonies of your life for your children and grandchildren.

Czech photographer and traveller Matej Slezak is credited as being the initiator of this new trend and of going against the flow. He noticed that many selfies and other pictures taken on smartphones are not of sufficiently good quality to keep as mementos for future generations. This led him to found a new company that offers the services of *localgraphers*, or personal vacation photographers who double as local guides.

At first Slezak worked alone, showing visitors his native city of Prague and revealing hidden gems and interesting places that make perfect backdrops for photo sessions. Now more than 50 other localgraphers in 40 different countries have joined the enterprising Czech, providing their local insights and qualitative photo sessions, thus "killing two birds with one stone", so to speak. The localgraphers on Slezak's website each have a profile with samples of their work and a description of their interests and photo styles, along with some helpful travel recommendations.

Meanwhile, Slezak continues to travel to various European capitals and to such exotic destinations as Hong Kong and Costa Rica. Although he takes a lot of pictures with his own camera, he also hires skilled localgraphers to obtain beautiful and lasting photo testimonies of his trips with his friends and family. **BO**
① localgrapher.com

Goodbye selfies

Everything flows and changes. Right now, the hottest new trend for capturing your travel experiences is a professional photographer. So long, selfie stick!



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Details **STYLE**

Text by **DACE VAIVARA**
Publicity photos, F64
and courtesy of Riga
Fashion Week

RIGA grey vs colour

For Latvians, elegant dressing has been traditionally associated with subdued and grey tones, which can perhaps be explained by the country's northern location at the edge of the Baltic Sea and cool climate. Latvians' fondness of the colour grey is reflected in their history, culture and art, as can be seen in paintings by Latvia's old masters from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Natālija Jansone, Anna Led, Katya Katya Shehurina, M-Couture, Baiba Ripa, QooQoo, Red Salt, Cinnamons Atelier, One Wolf and Keta Gūtmane are just a few of Latvia's best-known fashion brands. Each offers colourful clothing collections in different styles and each has achieved recognition on fashion stages across the world.

One of the most flamboyant Latvian fashion brands is *MAREUNROL'S*, which was founded by talented fashion designers Māriete Mastiņa-Pēterkopa and Rolands Pēterkops. The designer duo has caught the eye of many viewers at international competitions and fashion exhibitions. Aside from creating fashion collections, *MAREUNROL'S* has also designed opera and theatre costumes, stage sets and fashion installations.

Lately, Riga's young creative types have been favouring the bohemian hipster style, which espouses a relaxed outlook on life, along with a close connection to nature and an affinity for various forms of art. This style involves a combination of vintage and second-hand clothing, old-school sneakers and accessories. The most popular meeting place for Riga's hipsters is the area around Miera iela, with its cosy cafés and art galleries, vintage clothing stores and bicycle shops. **BO**



Anna Led



Necklace by
Andris Lauders,
EUR 920,
store.putti.lv

Ring by
Andris Lauders,
EUR 695,
store.putti.lv

Vest by
NARCISS, EUR 970,
narcissfashion.com

Coat by *NARCISS*,
EUR 950,
narcissfashion.com

Purse by Ginta Sičeva,
EUR 102, KLASE

Boots by SAZ,
EUR 369,
creativelatvia.com

Earrings by Ginta
Sičeva, EUR 32, KLASE

Store addresses in Riga: Fashion boutique KLASE, Berga Bazārs, Elizabetes iela 83/85

SHOPPING IN RIGA

Amoralle

This newly opened store sells handmade, sensual home and boudoir clothing by *Amoralle*, a brand that designer Inese Ozola founded in 2008. Here one will find lingerie-inspired day and evening costumes, seductive underwear, stockings, silk gowns and bodysuits, fragrant boudoir candles and other feminine accessories. Brīvības iela 33
① amoralle.com

ZoFA atelier

Shoe designer Elīna Dobeļe established the first Latvian brand of handmade shoes in 2010. An architect by education, Dobeļe incorporates elements of both architectural and footwear design in her original shoe and boot models. She is known for putting together various

materials such as leather, cloth, string, metal and even wood in unusual combinations. Within the salon itself, old window frames and shoe boxes serve as shelves for the exclusive footwear. Vaļņu iela 12
① elinadobeļe.com

Putti art gallery

This gallery in Old Riga showcases unique contemporary and conceptual jewellery items made of precious metals. The pieces are fashioned by both local and foreign jewellery artists, some of whom are quite well-known in Latvia, including Māris Auniņš, Valdis Brože, Māris Šustiņš, Guntis Lauders and Andris Lauders – each with their own particular outlook and style. Mārstalu iela 16
① putti.lv

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LARUS
mēbeļu salons

*Kvadrat, Raf Simons,
Bird With Misc Cushions*

Close-up colours

Text by **KRISTĪNE BUDŽE**, *Pastaiga*
Photos courtesy of *Kvadrat*

The first collection of fabrics designed by Belgian fashion designer Raf Simons and produced by Danish furniture fabric manufacturer *Kvadrat* was presented to the world last year in a surprisingly low-key manner.



WHAT IS IT?

The cooperation between Raf Simons (who also works as a top figure at *Dior*) and *Kvadrat* can be defined as discrete, both in terms of their relationship with the media and in the design of the furniture fabrics themselves. Instead of eccentric patterns or flamboyant decorations, one comes across incredibly refined combinations of colour, unusual textures and superbly crafted textiles. This year, *Kvadrat's* collection of furniture fabrics has been supplemented with decorative pillows from a new textile created by Raf Simons.

WHY IS IT SPECIAL?

The first encounter between Raf Simons and *Kvadrat* occurred in 2011, when Simons was working on the fall collection for *Jil Sander*. He had drawn inspiration from the Modernism of the 1950s, in which the sombre heaviness of the previous wartime years could still be felt. In seeking appropriate fabrics for this reserved style of overcoats, Simons'

colleagues recommended textiles by *Kvadrat*. Following this successful project, the Danish manufacturer also kept the sophisticated fashion designer in mind. A few years later, *Kvadrat* asked Simons to help it create a collection of new furniture fabrics.

Simons, who had also studied industrial design, jumped at the opportunity to try his hand in a field that incorporates both fashion and product design. He had already noticed that furniture is often covered with either drab and conservative fabrics, or with overly eccentric and experimental textiles. Sofa manufacturers usually choose extremely smooth surfaces for practical reasons, but in this case Simons proposed trying out fabrics with a pronounced texture.

The designer was even more scrupulous when it came to the tones of the fabrics. According to Simons, the notion that grey and brown tones dominate in natural environments is a mere illusion. If one looks closely at flower blossoms,

for example, one will discern incredibly vivid tones. Even white orchids appear to be white only from a distance, as their blossoms actually reflect a variety of vibrant colours when viewed close up. The same can be said of the fabrics designed by Raf Simons – they may seem to be of a uniform colour at first, but when seen from up close, one discovers that the fabrics have been woven from a variety of sometimes brightly colourful threads. This year, Simons has also used the *Kvadrat* fabrics that he designed for fashion collections by his own personal *Raf Simons* brand and by *Dior*.

HOW DOES IT FIT INTO INTERIORS?

In cooperation with *Kvadrat*, both *Fritz Hansen* of Denmark and *Cassina* of Italy are offering furniture that features fabrics designed by Raf Simons. Consequently, other interior fabrics must be chosen with great care so that they don't look cheap and vulgar together with the refined and unobtrusive textiles by Raf Simons. **BO**

HOUSING ESTATE FOR SALE

Brivibas bulvaris 21, Riga



Located in the heart of Riga, this prestigious and historical building, including land property, is up for sale. A beautiful view of the park opens up from its windows. The building is located at the intersection of Brivibas bulvaris and Kalpaka bulvaris, and is just a few minutes away from the Old Town. The Freedom Monument - one of the most important national symbols of Latvia, is located nearby. The premises are best suited for either a hospitality business or premium-class apartments.

Land area – 1 467 m².
Site area – 1 148 m².
Gross site area – 5 625 m².

Price: **EUR 7 300 000**

COMMERCIAL PREMISES FOR SALE 201 Brivibas gatve, Riga



For sale: property with an active luxury department store at 201 Brivibas gatve in Riga, located near VEF. Brivibas gatve is the main street of Riga, and this area is surrounded by a well-developed infrastructure and public transport, ensuring a large flow of people on a daily basis. The five-story building is fully equipped with everything required for a retail business, including storage facilities in the basement. Included is a parking lot for up to 60 cars. The exterior of the building can be redesigned in glass, and the inside can be adapted for office use.

Land area: 4343 m²
Gross site area: 10648 m²
Site area: 2274 m²
Commercial area: 7945 m²

Price: **EUR 8 900 000**

For sale: property with an area of 63500 m² at 201 Brivibas gatve in Riga, located near VEF. The land is suitable for a mixed development, including housing. Maximum building intensity – 220%. The property is strategically well-placed near the Elkor Plaza department store, a hotel, and the offices of various companies. Brivibas gatve is located nearby. The property is suitable for various business activities, including the construction of offices and housing.

Utilities: electricity supply, water supply, central heating.

Land area: 63500 m²

Price: **EUR 4 900 000**



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Text by **ILZE POLE**
Photos courtesy of
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This is your captain speaking

HOW IT ALL **BEGAN**

My passion for airplanes started at an early age and is connected with the hunt for a suspected foreign submarine in Hardangerfjorden (Norway) in the early 1980s. We had a front row view of overflights by military patrol aircraft and jet fighters. When school essays became part of our homework, mine were always about airplanes, to the growing dissatisfaction of my teachers. At 16 I enrolled for the theoretical courses required to obtain a pilot's license. After graduating from high school, I joined the Royal Norwegian Air Force and supported F-16A/B fighters before starting my professional pilot training in the USA. I have now been with *airBaltic* for more than 10 years.

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

My sunglasses, cellular phone and credit card.

FAVOURITE **BOOK**

A recent favourite is *Pathfinder: A Special Forces Mission Behind Enemy Lines* by David Blakeley.

SNAPSHOT TO SHARE

Approaching the southernmost point of Greenland (Cape Farewell) en route from Goose Bay (Canada) to Keflavik (Iceland) while delivering *airBaltic's* newest *Q400* aircraft in August 2013. Icebergs are visible floating in the ocean. The delivery involved three flights and covered almost 7,000 km from the factory in Toronto to Riga. This photo was taken during the second flight.



LAST DESTINATION FLOWN TO AS A **PASSENGER** I flew to Sal (Cape Verde) for holidays in March.

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

The large number of buttons to press, although in modern airplanes this has been greatly reduced. How we manage to make sense of all the "chatter" in air traffic communications. Here we will have the benefit of text messaging in the near future, although voice communication will still be around for years to come.

HOBBIES

I have a one-year-old son, and living in Vilnius requires some travelling for my work, so most of my free time is spent with him. However, my wife and I also enjoy canoeing in the summer, and more recently SUP boarding. I've always loved building models, but this is something that I've less time to do now.

THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING **A PILOT**

You get to operate new and high technology machinery, you see great views and you are not tied to an office all day. The sun shines almost all of the time during the flights and every day offers something different, which also keeps the job interesting.



FAVOURITE **RESTAURANT**

The *Galo do Porto* Portuguese restaurant in Vilnius. It has a small courtyard where you can sit outside under the stars or inside when the weather doesn't cooperate. I recommend the *espetada*, and the service is fantastic.

FAVOURITE **RUNWAY**

Jersey Airport. The runway lies on a plateau, and when one lands toward the west, the runway seems to end in the English Channel. The weather can be quite a challenge as well, with occasional strong winds.



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Bedside manners

These amazing innovative gadgets can be enjoyed right from your pillow.

Text by **ROGER NORUM**
Publicity photos



OPHONE

Common scents

Of the five senses, just one had been forgotten by technology: smell. Now, a Harvard professor-student team has ingeniously come up with a way to transmit and receive olfactory information. The resultant device is filled with *oChips*, or tiny scent-filled cartridges that dispense aromatic puffs from the top of two tubes, offering up to 300,000 combinations of smells. The associated app lets you tag various scents wherever you are and "send" the electronic aroma for people to smell on their *oPhones*.

EUR 181 | ① onotes.com

SIGMO

Found in translation

This hands-free voice translation device will revolutionise how you communicate in other languages. Just press a button, speak a phrase and hear it instantly translated in real time into one of 25 languages. The voice translating services are always updating and improving, so the list of available languages will grow. While Latvian isn't currently offered, it should be soon. Also works as a Siri controller.

EUR 54 | ① sigmo.co



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It's clocking you

The future is here and it's come in the shape of a digital alarm clock. Much more than just a clock, though, *Ivee* lets you control connected home devices, receive online information (e.g. stocks and weather) and set reminders – all by using voice commands. Also links up with other "smart home" devices, such as *Nest* thermostats, *WeMo* plugs, locks and security cameras. The voice commands can be glitchy at times, but keep an eye out for the new second-generation multi-room voice system, which is due to be released in early 2016.

USD 99 | ① helloivee.com

PETCUBE

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This camera is the first product that allows pet owners to watch, talk and play with their pet. A wide-angle (138°) camera lets you see your pet in real time 720p HD video, and you can even talk to it through the built-in microphone and speaker. Best of all, you can activate a harmless laser pointer toy with your smartphone to play with your pet as it follows the light around.

EUR 180 | ① petcube.com



SMARTER WI-FI COFFEE MAKER

Electro Joe



A follow-on invention from the folks who brought you *iKettle*, this is a grind-on-demand drip coffee machine that functions with a few gentle smartphone gestures, letting you grind and brew from one to 12 cups at a time, automatically. A Welcome Home mode uses geofencing – triggered when you get within a certain distance – to prepare a cup of hot coffee as soon as you approach your driveway, while a Keep Warm mode ensures that your coffee is always hot when you're at home. Recovering caffeine addicts take cover!

EUR 255 | ① smarter.am



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Why do we love Nordic Noir?

Kerstin Bergman, Swedish crime fiction scholar and blogger

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

Kerstin Bergman is the person to talk to when it comes to Nordic crime fiction. She recently gave a lecture at the Riga International Film Festival on what has been termed Nordic Noir and its increasing worldwide appeal over the last decade.

The rise in popularity of Nordic crime fiction has a lot to do with Swedish writer Stieg Larsson and his *Millennium Trilogy*, which brought this form of literature to vast crowds of readers. According to Bergman, Larsson made the crime

genre much more varied, allowing police novel, psychological thriller and spy novel literature to overlap and mix. His work encouraged other Swedish crime authors who might have otherwise felt bound to write, for example, straight police stories. Rather than a grumpy old investigator (like Mankells' Kurt Wallander), the lead character in Nordic Noir novels is often a young and controversial female hero (like Larsson's Lisbeth Salander), and the world can't get enough of them. Thus, several adaptations of Swedish crime novels have been put onto the big screen, and many more appear ready to follow.

When comparing crime novel traditions across different Scandinavian countries, Bergman has observed a number of differences. Swedish authors tend to write more classic police novels, while the Danes have excelled in political and international thrillers. Norwegians, on the other hand, choose private detectives to narrate their stories.

Bergman says that Nordic crime fiction is replete with criticism of the state of affairs in society, highlighting current issues more than most other literary genres. While the murderers in the novels may not be characters we can relate to, Nordic crime fiction offers realistic portrayals, which attract readers strongly. Crime novels are easy to read, suspenseful and prone to draw the reader in, but another aspect of Nordic crime fiction is its focus on the set description. Authors describe the nature, weather and other facets of each location in detail, providing a background that amplifies the effect of the storyline. **BO**

① crimegarden.se

① facebook.com/CrimeGarden

Kerstin Bergman is a Swedish crime fiction scholar with an academic background. She is also a literary critic, lecturer and the author of such popular non-fiction works as *Regions of Swedish Crime Fiction: From Scania to Lapland* and *Crime Fiction: Developments, Genres, Perspectives*. A member of the Swedish Academy of Crime Fiction, Bergman runs the *Crime Garden* blog and delivers lectures at literary events and academic institutions worldwide.

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В Латвии, в Юрмале, на первой линии моря, в центре «золотой мили» построен жилой квартал, уникальный по своей сути. Один из самых титулованных проектов мира – LEGEND. за 2014 год получил награды от FIABCI, журнала SPEAR'S, конкурса Luxury Lifestyle, ассоциации строителей Латвии и приз «Лучшая архитектура в мире» от International Property Awards.

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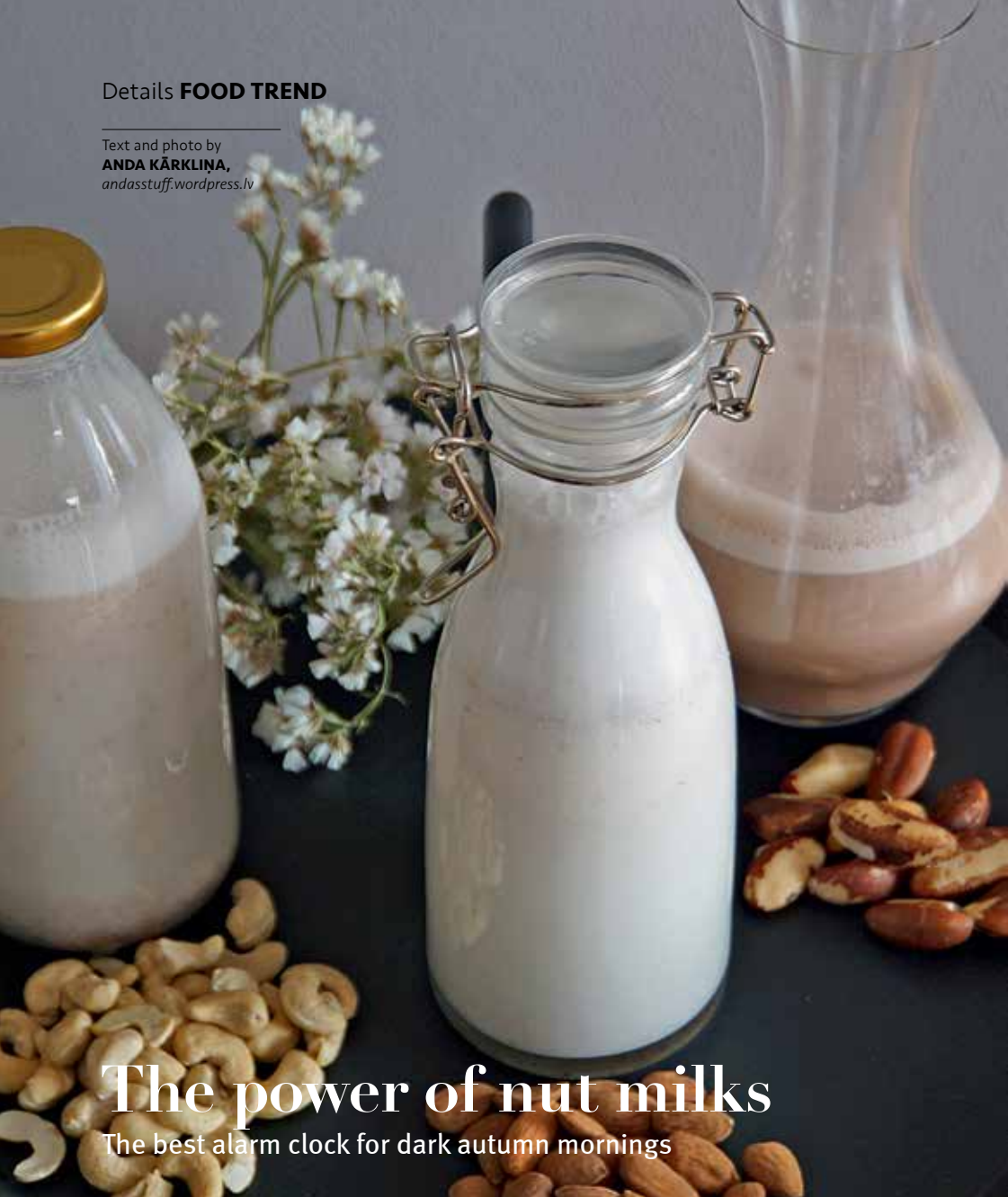
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Text and photo by
ANDA KĀRKLIŅA,
andasstuff.wordpress.lv



The power of nut milks

The best alarm clock for dark autumn mornings

We eat dairy products on a daily basis, and they seem particularly indispensable at breakfast, when a simple cup of coffee with milk can greatly lift one’s spirits. But one thing is increasingly ruining this most idyllic of morning rituals, and that’s lactose intolerance. This condition is currently at the top of most food allergy lists, and, as a result, more and more people are giving up dairy products because they lack the enzyme to break down and digest the lactose – a natural form of sugar – found in this food group. Even people who are not lactose intolerant often experience bloating and a heavy feeling in the stomach after consuming dairy products. For this reason, nutrition experts and lifestyle gurus are talking a lot about nut milks. Long known to vegans and adherents of the raw food philosophy as a tasty and healthy alternative to classic dairy products, nut milks are surprisingly easy to make at home. They are nourishing, full of vitamins and can be used to make breakfast foods such as milkshakes, porridges, muesli and even pancakes.

All you need to make this trendy wonder-drink is any kind of nuts soaked in water, a blender and fresh water. After soaking the nuts, strain off the water, rinse the nuts and put them in the blender. Add fresh water, blend, and soon you’ll have fresh, slightly creamy nut milk. Why must the nuts be soaked? Soaking makes it easier for the body to digest the nuts, lessens their bitter taste and awakens some of the most valuable nutrients in nuts. Normally, a nut remains dormant until the conditions are right for it to sprout and grow. When we soak the nuts, we give them the green light to begin this process and wake them from their “winter sleep” to release their nutrients. Soaking time depends on the hardness of the nut – the harder the nut, the longer it must soak. Almonds, Brazil nuts, pecans and hazelnuts should be soaked for at least four hours; better yet, soak them overnight. Cashews should be soaked for only one to two hours, otherwise they begin to lose their taste and natural oils. Because nut milks are made of a fresh product, use only certified organically grown nuts if at all possible. A number of things may be added to nut milks to enhance their flavour, such as dates, agave syrup, vanilla and fresh cacao powder. Homemade nut milk keeps in the refrigerator for two to three days. **BO**

A FEW RECIPES TO INSPIRE YOU

Cashew milk
Mild, with an unassuming flavour; good with your morning muesli.
1 cup soaked cashews
3 cups filtered water
Pinch of salt
Place all ingredients in a blender and blend on high for about three minutes.

Almond-vanilla milk
Creamy, slightly sweet, fairly bold flavour; good in porridges and a great source of energy after sports.
1 cup soaked almonds
4 cups filtered water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon agave syrup
Place all ingredients in a blender and blend on high for about three minutes.

Brazil nut chocolate milk
An ideal, dessert-like start to your morning. A glass of this milk gives you the energy you need and will also appeal to the youngest members of your family.
1 cup soaked Brazil nuts
4 cups filtered water (more, if a thinner consistency is desired)
1 teaspoon fresh cacao powder (found in organic grocery stores)
1 tablespoon agave syrup
Place all ingredients in a blender and blend on high for about three minutes.

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area | LIDO DOMINA
Domina Shopping Centre
Ieriķu iela 3, Riga |
|---|---|---|---|

www.lido.lv



Elegant simplicity

Text by **AGRA LIEGE**
Photos courtesy of
MAIJA LOOTONEN and
TUOMAS UUSHEIMO



Finnish architect Tuomas Siitonen gives *Baltic Outlook* a tour of a house that he designed in Helsinki and that conveys a classic aura of unobtrusive Nordic cosiness.

Lately, only a small percentage of private homes in Finland have been designed specifically for individual clients, as the market has been dominated by what are sometimes called “catalogue” houses. The romantic *House M-M* mansion, for its part, was specifically built to fit in with its surroundings and to reflect the personal history of its inhabitants.

According to the residence’s designer Tuomas Siitonen, the predominant characteristics of Finnish architecture and design are simplicity and straightforwardness. Wood features prominently in *House M-M*, as it does

in many other Finnish structures, being an abundant natural resource in the country.

Over the years, Siitonen has gathered experience for working with wood through both theory and practice. During his studies, he took part in creating a series of books about wood and then worked on the design of wooden structures before opening his own architectural bureau. Wood is also connected with the architect’s interest “in the history of residential and vernacular architecture – in how families in the past lived in single rooms and compartmentalised spaces for different activities. At the same time, I am concerned with the way that new technologies and means of communication are shaping how we use and inhabit spaces nowadays,” says Siitonen, exposing the connection between his creative calling and continued academic pursuits.

House M-M is situated in a former villa area of the Finnish capital that was partly transformed into a low concrete housing region in the 1970s. One of the

last remaining villas still stands on the plot where *House M-M* was built and it belongs to the parents of the owner. Siitonen sought to establish a harmonious relationship between the old house and the new house, and to maintain the privacy of the inhabitants of each home, while preserving a sense of mutual belonging.

The architect collaborated closely with the clients – a married couple and their two now teenaged children – for more than three years until the house’s completion in late 2013, creating 3D-models and going over the architectural drawings in detail.

One side of the building faces a busy road and railway tracks, which is why the more open part of *House M-M* faces in the opposite direction towards the garden and older family villa. The vegetation in the garden forms a green wall around the residence in the summer, creating a tree-house feel. During the winter, when the leaves are gone, it is possible to see much further from inside the house.

WOOD COVERING

The structure and the cladding of the family residence are made of wood. Since the house stands on a steep slope facing north, it was important to get as much light as possible into the main living spaces and children’s rooms. This was done by placing these on the second floor.



TIMELESS KIDS’ ROOMS

The children’s rooms can be combined into a single larger space after the kids get older and decide to move out. A separate smaller flat was built for them to use at the other end of the building so that they can remain on the property if they wish.



BEDROOM WITH A VIEW

The parents’ bedroom and a small working area look out onto the railway tracks from the top floor. The bedroom also has a view of the garden and so do most of the other rooms.





Details **LIVING**

HAPPY TOGETHER

A kitchen with elements made of birch is the centrepiece of the common living space. Above it stands a semi-private and more intimate mezzanine room for the family.



© Jenni Rope

ABOUT THE ARCHITECT

Siitonen studied architecture and graphic design at what is now Aalto University in Helsinki, with short work and study stints in Berlin and Madrid during that time. He has been running his own architecture bureau since 2010. The architect and his team are currently working on another private residence in Helsinki, two cabins in the Finnish Archipelago, the renovation of a movie theatre and the renovation of a museum in the Finnish capital. **BO**

PLACE FOR PEACE

Siitonen wanted the sauna on the ground floor to contrast with the light and airy space of the second floor. Clad in black tarnished wood, it was purposely made to feel a bit like a cave. The sauna stands close to the entrance of the house, with a separate door leading to the outside for cooling off. "This is the vibe that a sauna needs to have," says Siitonen. "For the Finns, the sauna is a place for peace and solitude."



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ROUTES IN AND AROUND VERONA

Text by **UNA MEISTERE**,
anothertravelguide.com
Photos by **AINĀRS ĒRGLIS**



Life is full of serendipitous events, and travelling is one of the best ways to discover this again and again. Likewise, this article would probably have turned out completely differently if, while searching for accommodations in Verona, I hadn't come across the *Borgo Porta Rossa* on the world-wide web. The small B&B on the outskirts of the city describes itself as a completely organic and ecologically friendly place. In addition, it's located in a 15th-century hilltop estate with extensive views of the Italian countryside and even the Alps. You must agree with me – what could be more intriguing?

However, by the time we've meandered through fields of Valpolicella grapes on an early October evening to reach the villa, it's begun to rain heavily. Patrizia Krisa opens the door, dressed in light beige and accompanied by two Golden Retrievers of the same colour. Beige and white also dominate the interior of the villa and blend elegantly with the old stone walls, which here and there feature carefully restored frescoes, giving the place a pleasant patina. The fireplace crackles invitingly, and we feel as if we've arrived at an old friend's house. Patrizia seems enveloped in a cloud of hospitality... or maybe we are feeling the soul of the house?

Later, she tells me: "You know, every house has a soul. Many people don't like to stay at home. They go home, they wash, they change, but then they feel a need to go out and to do something. They don't feel good when staying at home. And this is because there's not enough harmony between the objects and the house."

The villa had stood uninhabited for at least 20 years before Patrizia and her husband, landscape designer Alessandro Griso, found it eight years ago. It had once belonged to a wealthy Italian family that had so many properties it was unable to inhabit all of them. In two years' time Patrizia and Alessandro transformed the



Villa Capra La Rotonda, the masterpiece of Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio



Breakfast room at Borgo Porta Rossa



A view of Verona from the Adige River

It seems that beauty and style have been in the blood of the Veronese since ancient times

neglected villa beyond recognition, although one could easily imagine that the place has looked like this all along.

There are hardly any new items at *Borgo Porta Rossa*, except maybe the organic cotton bed linens and the bathroom accessories. All of the furniture is recycled. "All my life I was going around the world, and I have a huge collection of furniture from many countries: France, Italy, Germany.... And then I mix the things together or transform them. Sometimes you have items that are made for one purpose, but you can change them around and they can serve another purpose, have another life," explains Patrizia.

Thus, for example, she took a metal railing that she found in the attic, which had once been used to keep small children away

from a staircase, to make a dish drying rack. Many of the home's historical details were preserved as the couple reconstructed the villa into a hotel. One such detail is the 15th-century toilet or, rather, covered hole, because there was no plumbing back then. Integrated into today's interior, the former aristocratic "pot" now serves as a humorous decorative element.

Everything in this home is environmentally friendly and organic, from the foods served at breakfast to the cleaning supplies, which Patrizia and Alessandro developed according to an ancient Japanese technique and have even patented for both indoor and outdoor use.

"It's not enough that we try to use organically grown foods. We also need to observe these same principles in the environment around us," says Patrizia. *Borgo Porta Rossa* is the second environmentally friendly accommodation she and Alessandro have established. Their first project was *Casa e Natura*, also in Verona, which they later sold under the condition that the next owners continue with the same philosophy.

In 2011, they began *Beom*, a project focussing on all aspects of an ecologically friendly lifestyle. For now, they're the only ones in Italy – and possible all of Europe – who have managed to achieve this concept to the very last detail, and with such a refined elegance and contemporary feel at that.

Patrizia's father comes from an old aristocratic Viennese family, and her mother is from Italy. She speaks four languages. In the 1980s, when Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani began his *Emporio Armani* diffusion line, he chose Patrizia to introduce it to the European market. She later went on to study psychology and homeopathy.

"When you do houses or fashion, you have to be a little bit of a psychologist. You have to understand the way people want to dress and the way they want to live," says Patrizia, who moved to Verona 18 years ago. "I came here only because I liked the city. It's very green and full of history and art. You have to remember that Mozart also came here to play, because Verona is an inspiration for people."

She and Alessandro have completed several projects in Verona together. Among them is the garden in the medieval Castelvécchio museum. It's one of the most special museums in Verona, and its masterful reconstruction was designed by Venice-born architect Carlo Scarpa. Refined in its details, the reconstruction is a fine example of sustainable architecture that, although performed in the Modernist style between 1959 and 1973, still feels

fresh today. Patrizia says that she lives by the motto: "Beauty will save the world," a statement attributed to the famous writer Dostoevsky. "For me, this is the best sentence. You can be sustainable, you can recycle, but you shouldn't forget about beauty. You must aspire to beauty in your body, your house, in everything you do."

And it seems that beauty and style have been in the blood of the Veronese since ancient times. Maybe that's why people say that genuine Italian style comes from Verona. As you stroll along the Adige River near the Ponte Pietra – the city's oldest bridge, dating back to 100 BCE – Verona may even feel a bit like Paris. Thanks to the university's proximity, this is known as the students' quarter and, as evening approaches, the Via Sottoriva along the banks of the river becomes a hive of youths streaming in and out of bars and cafés.

As in other towns that are full of legends and tourists, globalisation swept local artisans away from the city's main streets long ago, and their charming storefronts now house glamorous brands like *Gucci*, *Prada* and *Louis Vuitton*. But the artisans can nevertheless still be found here and there, hidden on the small side streets where Verona's charm still lies. One such artisanal enterprise is *Cordovano*, which still keeps the authentic leather-making traditions alive, along with the idea of true luxury. This entails hand-made products, a clean style and materials of the highest quality. In addition, the leather that *Cordovano* uses in its workshop has been dyed using only natural plant-based dyes.

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Lamberti Tower, the tallest of Verona's towers, built by the powerful Lamberti family in 1772



Labirinto della Masone, the world's largest labyrinth on the outskirts of Parma

Nearby is the *Antica Bottega del Vino*, one of the oldest taverns in Verona, having served customers at this same location since 1890. In fact, its history stretches even further back to the 16th century. The tavern counts Ernest Hemingway and many other famous writers, artists, intellectuals and politicians among its legendary customers. In the cellar, the *Antica Bottega del Vino* has over 1,000 bottles of select wines. Despite its fame and the fact that the appetisers have taken on a more contemporary flavour, the atmosphere still befits a genuine tavern.

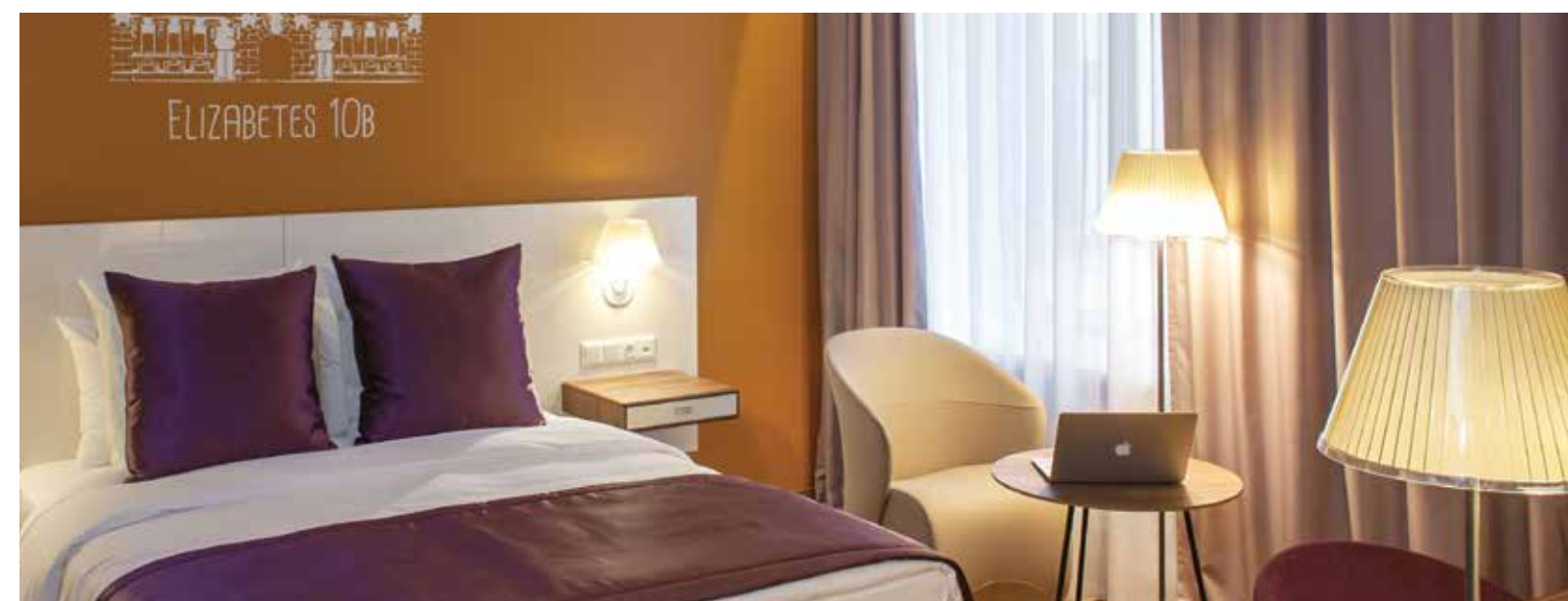
With regards to the even more distant past, the Arena di Verona is undoubtedly one of the city's best-known symbols. It is the third largest surviving ancient amphitheatre after Rome's Colosseum and the Arena di Capua. Each summer, under the open sky, it hosts one of the most emotionally saturated opera festivals in the world. But few of the music lovers in the audience probably stop to ponder the awful history of this pink limestone arena. Back when it was constructed in the year 30 CE, opera as we know it today had not yet been invented. Instead, gladiators fought to the death and later, in 1278, people were punished and burned there. Only in the Renaissance era did the Arena di Verona begin to be used for theatre performances. And only since 1913, when Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* was staged there in honour of the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth, has the arena with outstanding acoustics been used solely for the performing arts. The arena seats 22,000 viewers in 45 rows of step-like seating.

The myth of Juliet's balcony and the genius of Palladio

Verona's history is full of paradoxes. For example, the city's most popular tourist attraction – the Casa di Giulietta and its famous balcony – is actually just a myth. Of course, this doesn't lessen the desire of hundreds of thousands of tourists to spend a moment at the altar of the world's most beautiful and saddest love story. And thus the city is forced to use a variety of methods (including punishments) to deter the lovesick from announcing the condition of their souls to the world by painting graffiti and sticking love letters to the wall of the building with chewing gum. While

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literary experts argue whether Romeo and Juliet actually existed in real life, it was proven long ago that the balcony in question is not linked in any way to the two youngsters or Shakespeare.

What is true, however, is that Verona’s famous balcony has become one of the most wonderful myths and one of the most effective marketing ploys around. The house – known today as Juliet’s House – was built in the 13th century and belonged to the dell Capello family. Needless to say, a Juliet has never lived in it. The residence was bought by the city in 1905, which deftly took advantage of the similarity between the names Capello and Capulet. And, oh yes, the building never had a balcony until the 20th century, when it was added to stoke the myth. As an added footnote, the present balcony was actually made of 17th-century sarcophagi. If you wish to blur the boundary between truth and myth even more, then remember the arguments about whether Shakespeare actually ever used the word “balcony”. In any case, the play’s original text does not contain such a word, and, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the English word *balcone* only entered the language in 1618, two years after Shakespeare died.

If you really want to find Romeo and Juliet – and their feuding families, the Montagues and Capulets – you’ll have to drive for

Verona’s famous balcony has become one of the most wonderful myths and one of the most effective marketing ploys around

an hour to Vicenza, or, more precisely, the town of Montecchio Maggiore just west of it. This is where you’ll find two castles built in 975 that, at least according to legend, inspired the story about Romeo and Juliet, which was first written down in novel form by Luigi da Porto of Vicenza in 1552. Shakespeare later adapted the story and set it in Verona. As an aside, it has yet to be proven whether Shakespeare ever travelled to Verona or even Italy, for that matter. It’s possible that tales told by Italian merchants living in London, as well as the plentiful travel reports written by politicians and travellers of the day, may have helped him to conjure the colourful landscapes and description of Italy. In any case, the legend lives on, and any doubts of its truthfulness does not lessen its strength in the least.

Vicenza is not only a destination for romantic love stories, but also architects. The area boasts the largest concentration of masterpieces by Andrea Palladio, that famous architect of the High Renaissance. In his works (of which six can be found in Vicenza alone), the unbelievably talented master further developed the language of Classical architecture, leaving us with many buildings possessing such perfect proportion and calm, majestic form that they are still admired, studied and appreciated today. In fact, an entire architectural style is named after him – the Palladian style – and it is often said that Palladio changed the way the world saw things.

Palladio designed the symmetrical Villa Capra La Rotonda on the outskirts of Vicenza, which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe enthused about after visiting it: “Maybe never before has

architectural art reached such a level of magnificence.” The Villa Capra La Rotonda represents the ideal canon of harmony and is sketched by many beginning architecture students around the world as a part of their basic education. The villa was commissioned by Paolo Almerico and built in 1566. Having finished his career in the pope’s court at the Vatican, Almerico returned to the area of his birth and wished to create a quiet yet prominent sanctuary in which to spend the rest of his days. Sitting atop a hill, the building is surrounded by a beautiful park. Wherever you look – whether it’s at some architectural detail or the view out of a window – you feel as if you’ve arrived at an oasis of aesthetic fullness. The temple-like villa was inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, and its domed roof was also initially meant to be open to the elements, although Palladio later changed his mind on that matter. The symbolic heart of the villa is the majestic, round, church-like hall, from which it’s possible to reach all of the building’s rooms and hallways on both floors.

The villa has changed ownership several times over the years, and thus the originally named La Rotonda (The Round One) gained the supplemental name Villa Capra, in honour of its second owner. Since 1911 it has belonged to the Valmarana family of Venice, of which the late Mario di Valmarana, an architect and professor of architectural history, played a significant role in the villa’s preservation. The basement level, where the service staff’s rooms used to be located, now houses the very comfortable summer residence of the current owners. Of course, these rooms are closed to curious visitors, and, unless the security personnel specifically tell you, you’ll likely never guess they even exist, so discrete is the majestic villa.

Both the villa and the entire surrounding area are bathed in a feeling of incredible peace and harmony. If – like many visitors do – you sit down to rest on a stone bench outside in the garden, you’ll never want to leave. It’s like forcing yourself to pull your eyes away from an icon. It is said that every once in a while, an architecture student, spellbound by the timeless magic of the Villa Capra La Rotonda, sneaks away from the watchful eye of the security guards in the evening twilight to spend a night at the villa. But here it is also worth noting that the interior is open to the public only on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Parma and the world’s biggest labyrinth
About half an hour’s drive from Verona is another wonderful Italian town – Parma. It’s famous for its ham and namesake cheese as well as the Giuseppe Verdi festival that it hosts every autumn. The festival takes place in the Teatro Regio, one of the pillars of Italian opera traditions, and, despite undeservedly standing in the shadow of Milan’s La Scala and Venice’s La Fenice, the Regio is nevertheless well-known among

The 16th-century San Giorgio in Braida Church, located in the medieval quarter of Veronetta, holds a masterpiece by Paolo Veronese titled *The Martyrdom of St. George* as well as a painting by Tintoretto depicting the baptism of Christ.

From Verona’s earliest days, the Piazza delle Erbe (Market Square) has been considered the centre of the city. During the time of the Roman Empire, it served as the town’s forum. It was transformed into the main market square during the medieval era and remains so to this day. The oldest object in the square is a sculpture created in 1368, and many of the façades are still decorated with historical frescoes.

The Giardino Giusti, created in the early 15th century, is one of the best-known gardens in Italy. Its beauty and peaceful atmosphere have been admired by the likes of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Cosimo de’ Medici. With its alleys of cypresses, green lawn terraces and fountains, the garden is a true oasis in the middle of the city. In addition, the highest point in the garden provides a wonderful view of Verona.

Another outstanding view of Verona from above can be seen from the Castel San Pietro. The cypress-covered hill on the other side of the river has been inhabited since the Roman era and is believed to be the site where Verona was founded.

When in Verona, definitely try one of the most famous wines from this area and the Valpolicella region – Amarone. The wine is made from partially dried Corvina grapes. This means that after being harvested, the bunches of grapes are set to dry on straw mats for three months in special drying chambers, and only then is the fermentation process begun. Later, the wine is aged in barrels for at least five years. The final product usually has 15% alcohol and an extremely saturated character. It’s not for nothing that Amarone translates to “the Great Bitter.”

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Another special site can be found on the outskirts of Parma, namely, the world's largest labyrinth

connoisseurs of opera. Verdi, who was born about 30 km from Parma near Busseto, staged *Nabucco* at the Teatro Regio in 1843, and a record-breaking number of his operas were eventually played on that stage. Parma is also the birthplace of the legendary Italian perfumery brand *Acqua di Parma*, which created its first perfumes there in 1916. Its men's cologne *Colonia* was long used by Italian gentlemen to scent their handkerchiefs.

If you head to Parma from Verona along the A1 highway – also known as the *Autostrada del Sole* – you'll definitely notice a snow-white futuristic construction resembling an open accordion or gigantic piece of origami along the way. That's the Reggio Emilia AV Mediopadana railway station, designed by Spanish starchitect Santiago Calatrava and built only two years ago. The extravagant steel construction made of 19 modules, each 25.4 metres long, is

the only stop on the Milan–Bologna high-speed railway route. A bridge designed by Calatrava, which is just as white as the railway station, stands nearby. This example of radical contemporary design looks like a surreal alien in the surrounding landscape of cypresses and hilltop estates.

To fully enjoy the magic of Parma, it's best to arrive in the evening. As you pull your suitcase through the majestic lighted arches of the Palazzo della Pilota, which is home to several of the city's museums, you'll really start to feel the magic of the place. The palazzo got its name from the game of *pilota*, once a favourite of the Spanish soldiers housed there. Across from the palazzo runs the Via Giuseppe Garibaldi, one of the city's main streets, where travellers can find whatever their hearts desire, beginning with the *La Greppia* trattoria, which has practically become an institution. Located in a former stable since 1972, the air in the small eatery is so saturated with the aroma of truffles that you could mix it with a spoon, because autumn is truffle season. The trattoria's gourmet shop presents a beautiful array of hams, cheeses, salamis and much more. Devouring with the eyes is not

enough once you observe how expertly the foods are cut. This is the genuine charm of Old Italy.

Next to the cathedral on the Piazza Duomo stands one of Italy's most beautiful and unusual medieval buildings, the octagonal Baptistery of Parma. The beige-pink Verona marble used to build it makes it all the more special.

Another special site can be found on the outskirts of Parma, namely, the world's largest labyrinth. It is even included in the Guinness World Records book, thereby proving its claim. Over a decade in the making, it opened to the public only this past May and is the brainchild of Parma-born art publisher and collector Franco Maria Ricci, who has long been fascinated by the history and symbolism of labyrinths. At first he tried to involve his friend Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), the famous Argentinian writer and "magical realist", in the realisation of his irrational dream, but Borges declined, saying that the biggest labyrinth in the world had already been created – the desert. However, Ricci did not give up and eventually realised his dream.

The Labirinto della Masone is formed in the shape of a gigantic star, the geometry of which is best appreciated from the air, although the view from the tower at the entrance is also quite good. The labyrinth walls are made of 200,000 bamboo plants of various sizes and types, some growing three metres and taller. Ricci purposefully chose bamboo because it's one of the fastest growing plants. Being more than 70 years old, he wished to see the maze completed within his lifetime.

Before delving into the depths of the labyrinth, each visitor is provided a graphic visualisation of the maze. Actually, you have only two choices: follow the marked route like a dutiful student, or allow yourself to get lost. If the first option usually takes about 30-40 minutes to complete, then the second option might require several hours. And that's exactly the way Ricci planned it. Like Borges, Ricci believes that the labyrinth is a state of the soul, a symbolic path through life that includes hardships, apparent dead ends and the wonder of unexpected solutions. Also, the feeling of becoming lost is one

of the strongest emotions and therefore an unforgettable one. Believe it or not, you can get lost in the Labirinto della Masone in just a matter of seconds.

Sometimes sunlight enters the paths between the tall, triangular "roofs" created by the tops of the bamboo trees, while in other places the trees form ghostly jungle caves. At the centre of the labyrinth is a symbolic "city", complete with a main square and a pyramid-shaped chapel. Even though you can see the city from many points in the labyrinth's forest of bamboo, it has only one entrance. Like a promised land, the centre of the labyrinth seems so close, but you can only enter it once you've meandered through all of the pathways. Passing through the pyramid is also the only way to get out of the labyrinth.

In all, the labyrinth occupies eight hectares. The complex also includes a library and art gallery displaying Ricci's impressive collection of art. The artworks are mainly from the 16th and 20th centuries and include such gems as a bust of Pope Clement X made by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. *FMR*, the publishing house founded by Ricci in 1982, was a pioneer of art books as design objects. It printed books on handmade paper with black silk covers, and many of the books were themselves works of art, especially considering their prominent authors, among whom were Borges, Umberto Eco, Octavio Paz and Peter Bloch. Ricci sold his publishing house in 1998 for 10 million euros and invested the money in the labyrinth, thereby literally making it his life project.

Lake Garda and dancing on tables

Looking in the other direction from Verona, Lake Garda (Italy's largest lake) is only an hour's drive away. The area around the lake has beautiful hiking trails for any time of year, and the historical port, with its view of the lake and the Alps in the background, is worthy of a postcard. On fall afternoons, white swans, their necks elegantly extended, float silently past the boats. The town of Torri del Benaco has just over 3,000 inhabitants, but its history stretches back to the 2nd century BCE. It's one of the few towns that have managed to preserve their historical centres almost fully intact. San Giovanni Church, as well as the Trinity

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and San Gregorio a Pai churches, date to the 7th century. The romantic 13th-century Scaliger Palace, for its part, has become a favourite destination for newlyweds. However, the best thing to do is to just wander around and enjoy the peaceful lake landscape. French poet André Gide (1869-1951) did just that in the summer of 1948, taking lengthy walks, swimming, playing chess and writing.

Torri del Benaco also has one of the most interesting restaurants along the banks of Lake Garda, or at least in the Verona area. The locals say that people even come all the way from Milan to eat at the *Osteria Ago e Rita*. The owners were once a married couple, and, although they divorced long ago, they still continue to run the restaurant together. The change in marital status has not changed the service one bit. The interior at *Ago e Rita* is as simple as can be – it's a genuine Italian eatery with a shot of Indian style because, as we later find out, India is one of Rita's favourite destinations. The food is also simple. A basket full of fresh, cut vegetables, various sauces, salami, cheese and bread is placed on the table. If you wish, you can also get pasta, but there are no debaucheries of haute cuisine here.

Atmosphere is the main thing at *Ago e Rita*. Here, dancing on the tables at Sunday lunch is as natural and organic as brushing your teeth in the morning. And, for the past 30 years, it's usually Ago himself who starts the party rolling. As a signal to begin, he puts on *Frustami*, an Italian pop chart hit. It seems as if he's just set a spark to the room and it's off! The guests turn childlike, letting their instincts take over, and often they're all completely sober. The stereo plays the entire range of Italian pop music, and everyone who's capable of movement dances, from the youngest children to senior citizens. A dish smashes to the floor here and there, but that just adds to the fun. In any case, you won't need to go to the movies for a while after eating at the *Osteria Ago e Rita*. In Italy, if you happen to be in the right place at the right time, then you will see life enjoyed to its fullest!



Insider's view

Patrizia Krisa

The best skiing areas near Verona

As recommended by Patrizia Krisa, the owner of *Borgo Porta Rossa*, a 15th-century aristocratic villa that has been restored into a charming, fully organic and environmentally-friendly B&B.

FOLGARIA (TN), with its 74 km of ski slopes, is the closest skiing spot to Verona and very well known among locals. It takes approximately an hour and 20 minutes (96 km) to drive there, and it's great for both children and adults alike. If it's late in the season, they have the technology to make artificial snow. The best place to sit down, rest a little bit and take in the sun is Passo Coe. There are a lot of small, good restaurants around, and one of the best-known among the Veronese is *Ugo* (Via Emilio Colpi, 343; www.ristorantedaugo.com) in the centre of Folgaria. The family-run establishment serves typical local food, which is so good that you should stop there at least once. A special dish to try is the pasta with venison sauce. Another small, well-known eatery is *Bubu*. It has a strange name, but it is a very special place. You'll find it only if you take the chair lift up from Fondo Grande and, once there, you should try a sandwich made with local sausage.

The centre of Folgaria is small but very sweet, full of small shops and cafés where you can enjoy an after-ski drink before going to dinner. You can feel right at home there because the atmosphere is very cosy.

ANDALO (TN) is a wonderful place to be and has over 50 km of slopes. You can see Lake Garda while skiing and the view is really amazing. I recommend not choosing the highway to get there, but instead taking the panoramic road around Lake Garda, following the route Verona-Garda-Malcesine-Torbole-Arco Trento-Sarche-Lago di Molveno.

Andalo is located 130 km from Verona and you will need an hour and 40 minutes to get there by highway. By panoramic road (also 130 km) the trip takes approximately two hours.

PREDAZZO-OBereggen (TN) has 48 km of ski slopes and is located 170 km, or about a two-hour drive from Verona. This is a special and beautiful part of *Dolomiti Superski*, the biggest ski area in the world, with 1200 km of snow-covered trails and 12 different skiing areas.

SELVA DI VAL GARDENA (BZ) has 175 km of ski slopes and is located a two-hour drive (190 km) from Verona. At the Val Gardena ski area you'll find a black slope that was developed specially for the World Cup. It's called the Saslong, is 3,446 metres long and has a height difference of 839 metres. It's also possible to do the well-known and legendary *Giro dei Quattro Passi* (Tour of the Four Passes), also called Sellaronda, around the mountain. It's a 26-km long ski slope that is almost always taken without stopping. The landscape of the Dolomites is exceptionally beautiful there.

PINZOLO (TN), with 340 km of ski slopes, is located 140 km or a two-hour drive from Verona. It is the first ski station in the area of Adamello-Dolomiti di Brenta. From there, it's easy to go further to Madonna di Campiglio, which has a very nice black slope called Tre Tre (3-Tre). You can also ski on the Spinale slope and then stop at Grostè, an old lodge with a breathtaking view of the Dolomiti di Brenta and the Adamello Glacier (3,538 m). **BO**

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Text by **ZANE NIKODEMUSA**
Publicity photos

A REVOLUTIONARY FROM **JERUSALEM**

Ezra Kedem (50) is a celebrity chef, and not only in his native Israel. Former US president Bill Clinton and Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich are just two of the many famous guests whom he has hosted at private dinners. However, possibly the most impressive entry in Kedem's CV is his ability to achieve almost the impossible, which was to create modern Israeli cuisine and get his country's inhabitants to see olive oil as more than just a health food.

Israel's chefs are rising stars on the world gourmet scene, skilfully combining flavours and ingredients from the Middle East, the Mediterranean and Old Europe. The Israelis are calling their refined skill the new Israeli cuisine. Not yet 30 years old, this relatively new style of cooking might seem unfittingly young in a land that displays testimonies of a rich historical past at every step. However, notwithstanding its surprisingly young age, the new Israeli cuisine is appealing in its fullness and natural harmony. These two characteristics came forth very strongly to me as I tried out dishes that several celebrity chefs had prepared in Tel Aviv.

In order to get better acquainted with modern Israeli cuisine, I visited such popular restaurants in Tel Aviv as *Catit*, the *Kitchen Market Restaurant*, *Mashya* and *Pastel*. I learned that many of the chefs at these restaurants were formerly schooled and mentored by none other than Ezra Kedem, who is considered to be the creator and pioneer of the new Israeli cuisine.

In conversations about Kedem, the evident admiration that his former students display toward the culinary master attains an almost mystical character. He operates a small kitchen in a convent near Jerusalem with a large, beautiful garden. He presents regal dinners to the rich and the famous. He engages in charity work and conducts culinary tours for terminally ill patients.

In hearing these reverential descriptions about Kedem and his work, I get the impression that he was destined to become a star chef and that my upcoming meeting with him will truly be a momentous event – especially since the chef devotes a great deal of time to his restaurant business and often presents master classes in other countries. For example, one of his most recent international projects involved the opening of the *Colors* restaurant at Tsvetnoy Central Market in Moscow.

I am fortunate to experience first-hand that Israel is indeed a land of miracles, because it turns out that Kedem happens to be in the country and that he is ready to meet with me in Jerusalem on a very hot Thursday morning. At 9 AM, Kedem's Moroccan chauffeur Danny arrives to pick me up at my hotel in a venerable *Mercedes*. Although our initial efforts to communicate in English are laborious, we soon strike a common chord in our mutual enthusiasm for the roadside orange and olive groves and for the green pine forests on the outskirts of Jerusalem, which add a refreshing dose of colour to the sun-baked sandy terrain. After an hour, we enter the charming Jerusalem neighbourhood of Ein Kerem, where the Christian *Les Sœurs de Notre-Dame de Sion* (Sisters of Our Lady of Zion) convent is located. This is where Kedem opened the private *Arcadia Studio* kitchen and planted an organic garden a few years ago.

The chef's personal studio, where one can experience an exclusive private dinner and attend various workshops, is an oasis of peace compared to Kedem's nearby *Arcadia* restaurant in Jerusalem, which is quite cosy but always noisy and crowded. The restaurant has been at the forefront of the new Israeli cuisine ever since Kedem founded it in 1995 and continues to be one of the best eating establishments in the country.

Born in 1965 in Jerusalem's German colony, Kedem grew up immersed in the invigorating aromas and flavours of countless ethnic cuisines and in the colourful markets that he frequently visited, accompanying his mother on her weekly shopping trips to the Machne Yehuda, Bethlehem, Ramalla and Jerusalem's old city food markets. Kedem soaked up the traditions and cultures of both the Jerusalemite and Iraqi-Jewish kitchens of his childhood.

After his military service, he studied in New York at the French Culinary Institute, apprenticing with



Kedem has served dinner to numerous celebrities in this glass dining room, which offers a breathtaking view of the Judean Hills.

It's impossible to enjoy French cuisine in our hot and arid weather conditions

chef Jacques Pépin for 18 months, and then went on to intern at the famous *Alison on Dominick* under Sicilian-born chef Tom Valenti. However, Kedem always wanted to work in Israel, and, after finishing his studies abroad, he returned to his country and founded his own restaurant.

The now legendary chef greets me in his private studio in a simple black T-shirt and jeans. With a wide and self-assured sweep of his hand, he motions for me to take notice of the fruit trees growing in the garden, after which we proceed to a stunning, separately built glass dining room that offers a breathtaking view of the Judean Hills. There, in the cooling shade, we sip on glasses of rosé wine and nip on snacks prepared by the chef's "right-hand men". Our initial small talk extends to an almost two-hour-long conversation about the most important rules that must be followed, both in the kitchen and in life.

They say that modern Israeli cuisine might not have arisen if it hadn't been for your efforts. Do you agree?

Yes, that's true. I began my quest to create a modern form of Israeli cuisine about 27 years ago, which is when this type of cooking is generally considered to have been born. I was young and energetic and decided to find a new identity for our region in terms of cooking. An identity with a lot of sun, which shines strongly here and which is in plentiful supply. Modern Israeli cuisine uses fresh herbs, lots of vegetables, olive oil and local produce. It is simple, just like the people who live here, but

simultaneously sophisticated and a little bit spicy. Above all else, it is about freshness and a lot of sunshine.

What was Israeli cuisine like before your culinary revolution?

About 30 and even 25 years ago, Israeli chefs were obsessed about combining classic French recipes with kosher cooking. And the result was horrible, because the ingredients were not used wisely. The chefs used way too much butter, milk and cream. In my opinion, you need to prepare food that corresponds to the local climate. It's impossible to enjoy French cuisine in our hot and arid weather conditions. We don't need to use so much butter and cream. In fact, it's absurd to use so much butter in a land where olive oil flows freely. You will be surprised to learn that just a few decades ago, people here used olive oil mostly for medicinal purposes. Everybody was trying to imitate the French, because their cuisine has always been very powerful. I have great respect for French cuisine and I have learned a lot from its most accomplished master chefs, but we as a nation needed to find our own identity in food preparation.

Jewish cuisine is well known all over the world. Doesn't that symbolise Israeli cuisine?

In a sense it does, but I think that you have to look at Israeli cuisine in a wider context. A country's "kitchen identity" should be defined primarily by the products that are naturally available on the spot – by the fruits and vegetables that grow in people's own gardens, by the fish that local fisherman can catch, by the cheese that local farmers can make. This didn't seem important to anybody when I started working here. Everybody was concentrating on imported foods, and so was I at first. During the first six months after I opened the *Arcadia* restaurant in 1995, I offered my customers

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The master chef says that he feels best in the kitchen of his secluded *Arcadia Studio*, where he prepares memorable meals together with his assistants.

French and Mediterranean cuisine. Then I spent a weekend in Cairo, Egypt, returned to my restaurant and told my team that we are changing our philosophy. I took the restaurant menus and wrote *Israeli cuisine* on them in large, bold letters. My fellow colleagues, journalists and restaurant customers all expressed doubts about the sustainability of my decision. This turned out to be just the beginning of a much more serious journey, in which I have sought to establish my personal and my country's identity in terms of cuisine.

What happened in Cairo? Why did your outlook on cooking change so suddenly?

I saw that in Egypt they respect and revere their national cuisine. But actually, I took my seemingly impulsive decision due to an experience with Parmesan cheese. We needed it to prepare a risotto but couldn't find any because it wasn't being imported in sufficient amounts. At that time, you had no way of knowing when a foreign product that restaurants needed would be available. So

I said, "Enough!" I went up to the mountains to visit a farmer who had some goats and told him that I needed a cheese that is similar to Parmesan. He agreed that Parmesan is an amazing cheese, but he recommended that I try out the cheese that he had personally made and which smells and tastes like our own native land. I took in the smell of the farmer's cheese and realised how important it is for food to tell us familiar stories. Even in everyday cooking, we prepare memories, we prepare our childhood, we prepare stories that are connected with our family. And my calling was certainly not to prepare a story about French cuisine. My calling was to tell a story about the heritage of my country and about the people of my land. That's how I started this exciting culinary journey. At that time, many young chefs were working for me and we managed to create a movement that snowballed into an avalanche.

How important is religion in your kitchen philosophy?

It is important because this is Jerusalem, where several religions meet. For example, you are presently actually sitting on Vatican




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Outlook INTERVIEW

soil and not in Israel, because this is the territory of a Catholic convent. This symbolism fits in perfectly with my interest in drawing many different people together. Once a week, I invite young aspiring chefs of different religious backgrounds to a unique culinary workshop. It is important for me to see that Christians, Jews and Muslims are talking with each other and working together. We don't lead an easy life in Jerusalem, but then we meet here in my paradise and understand that food is a language that unites. For six months, these youths come here once a week and interact with each other. They would never do that on the street. After half a year has passed, they often realise that they can also be friends and respect each other. That's very important for me. I am not fanatically religious. I want to show them that we can each speak in our own language and still respect each other.

I've read that you have even worked out a special form of food therapy.

Yes. I had a TV show several years ago, and after it ended I went to a hospital for people with mental illnesses. Together with the doctors, I selected 11 patients and taught them cooking once a week. By law, you are not even allowed to hand them any knives because these patients are considered to be dangerous to society. However, I saw how the hours that we spent together changed them. They weren't kids. They were 55, 60 and even older. Each time, I could see their self-confidence growing. The joy and the enthusiasm that they expressed when they remembered the tastes of their childhood and their mothers' cooking is unforgettable. That became a very special event in my life.

Now I am continuing to help people who have been afflicted with cancer. I'm not pretending that I can cure them. This isn't a story about that. It's a story about improving people's quality of life through therapy, about close cooperation between me and psychotherapists. For example, we work a lot with the aromas of food, which can have a calming effect and make people feel happy at least for a short while. It's not a commercial thing. I offer them these hours in my paradise from my heart and permit them to forget their pain for awhile. The *Arcadia Studio* is often called

an embassy of Israeli cuisine. Works of the heart are one of its main assignments.

Why is it important for you to help others?

Because if God gave me talent and nimble hands, then I have to use these not only for my personal gain, but also for the good of the world. Of course, you have to know how to sell your talent, but it is no less important to abide by the "give-and-take" principle. My chauffeur Danny also always says, "Give, and it will be given to you." I never forget that.

Do you remember the day when you realised that you have a talent for cooking and that the dishes you prepare turn out quite well?

I started to prepare meals because it was necessary for my family. My mother had become very ill, so I had to take over and cook for my father, my sister and my brother. I was 13 years old and soon realised that there are many different and exciting ways to prepare a meal. I decided that this would be my destiny. Even while serving in an elite special forces unit of the army, I prepared meals for my fellow soldiers. It was inspiring to see that my strong, specially trained 19-and 20-year-old army buddies enjoyed the food that I cooked for them. That reinforced the conviction that this is what I really want to do. Actually, I had already begun to work at restaurants in Jerusalem at the age of 16. After serving in the army, I went abroad to study and eventually wound up in New York.

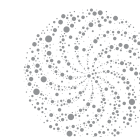
Why did you travel so far from your homeland?

I wanted to learn various cooking techniques. I was really lucky, because I got to intern under some outstanding chefs. My connection with New York is another interesting story. After graduating from the culinary school, I was sent to intern at a very good Italian restaurant. I was supposed to work there for two or three years and then return to Israel. When I went to the job interview, the famous restaurant chef was sitting with his feet up on his desk and barely even looked at me. He just told me that I could start working right away. However, I wanted to know how much I would be paid, because I was



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living all alone in New York. It turned out that my salary would be so small that I wouldn't even be able to rent a room near the restaurant, so I decided not to work there after all. I returned to my school and told them my story. They told me that they could offer me a teaching job at the school, but because I had developed such a powerful vision and culinary language, they recommended that I return to Israel and change the established restaurant culture there. So that's what I did.

Approximately ten years ago, I accepted a restaurant reservation from the famous Manhattan chef who had barely spoken to me during my job interview and whose job offer I had turned down due to the low salary. He didn't remember my name or meeting me in connection with my job interview in New York, but he had come to Jerusalem because he had heard a lot about my restaurant. After that, he said, "I made a big mistake." I truly am happy to have followed my own path. I have met

He was an old man, and I managed to bring back fond memories of his youth with my fish soup

many interesting people during my lifetime, including presidents, chancellors and monarchs. Bill Clinton is only one of many guests who have come specifically to the *Arcadia* restaurant because they have heard about it from others. At moments like that, I realise that I really have accomplished something special.

What is the best compliment that you have ever received?


There is a professor, a genius who lives in Jerusalem. He is very, very old – almost 100 years old. We have nicknamed him the President of *Arcadia*, because he has dined at our restaurant more than 500 times. Approximately 15 years ago, he called to again reserve a table. The restaurant was full that day, so the person who took the call turned him down. When I found out that the professor had called, I told my staff that we always have to find a seat for him. I called him back and invited him over for dinner. I set a table for him in the middle of the restaurant and prepared a delicious fish soup for him. After dinner, the professor said that I had taken him back to the time when he was a student in Marseille during the 1940s. That was a tremendous compliment that I still recall with pleasure today. I was in fact administering a form of food therapy to him. He was an old man, and I managed to bring back fond memories of his youth with my fish soup. He probably also had a beautiful girlfriend during that time.

What do you like most about living and working in Jerusalem?

Jerusalem is a spiritual city with a very impressive past. Here, even the most secluded spots have a history that goes back thousands of years. This is the place where I was born. That's why it will always be at the centre of my world and my heart. It is my heart. Were you born in Riga?

Yes.

You see, that's where your heart is. Mine is in Jerusalem. **BO**



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Text by **FLORIAN MAAP**
Publicity photos

A SKI HOLIDAY

TO REMEMBER

The Wilder Kaiser (Wild Emperor) region is the largest connected ski area in Austria and one of the world's best. It boasts a wide array of skiing trails (pistes) to suit all levels of experience, along with pristine nature, a crystal palace and scenic movie filming locations.

On a clear sunny day, you can catch the first glimpse of the Wilder Kaiser's

majestic silhouette already in Germany, shortly after leaving the Munich airport on the highway near Rosenheim. The imposing fringed mountain tops are so densely packed together that they look like one compact body of limestone. If you see them from the south in Austria, the middle part resembles the crowned head of an emperor. According to popular lore, that fine view inspired Charlemagne to introduce the mountain range's name by saying:

"After I am long dead, you, Emperor, will still be there!"

Also known as the Kaisergebirge, this is one of the Alps' smaller and lower sections, but it offers one of the most powerful mountain appearances, comparable to the Dolomites.

Ellmau is one of the four villages right at the foot of the Wilder Kaiser. It has a relaxed, friendly and welcoming vibe, with nice little shops and cosy cafés, pubs and restaurants. The first local whom I pass on the streets already sets the tone with an informal "Grüß Di, wie geht's?" (Hi there, how are you?).

If you enter a bar in the evening, then you instantly feel like a welcome guest at a party.

"Tyroleans from the valley are easygoing, different from other rather subdued mountain people," explains Peter Moser, a local guide and head of the village's tourist office. The Kaisergebirge is an all-season destination, so people are used to having guests around.

As soon as the first white flakes come down, it's all about having fun in the snow. With 290 km of downhill routes on 186 slopes served by 90 lifts and mountain cable cars, the Wilder Kaiser will cater to all skiing tastes.

Moser accompanies us for our first skiing trip. Ironically, working as a ski instructor is practically the only job that he hasn't done during his 37 years in the local

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tourism industry. Moser recommends starting with a red (moderate) slope from the top of Hartkaiser all the way down to the valley. The infrastructure is simply perfect, especially since a number of lifts were added or improved for this winter season, such as world's fastest eight-seater chairlift and a ten-person XL gondola.

The skiing along Moser's suggested piste is perfect, with broad slopes and smooth bumps, and the views of the landscape are simply breathtaking. As the next range of higher mountains has kept a respectful distance from the Emperor, you can enjoy amazing panoramic views of such lofty peaks as Großvenediger and Großglockner. Don't hurry to rush down the trail in one go. Two fantastic ski huts beckon along the way, and a day without *Brotzeit* is a wasted day in Austria.

Practically all of the 70 huts in this area are still family run. The food is regional and seasonal, with lots of organic ingredients – no industrial canteen

APRÈS-SKI
The **Alpeniglu Brixen** really is located inside a genuine snow igloo, but don't worry, as the legendary parties will surely keep you warm.
① alpeniglu.com

The **Rübezahl Alm** has the best hut parties with live music. Who knows, you may end up partying elbow to elbow with the likes of the Prinz von Bayern, the Swarovskis or Kiev mayor Vitaly Klitschko, not to mention the *Bergdoktor* crew, even though this is the main location of another TV series: *Wilder Kaiser*.
① ruebezahalm.at

partly icy. To see nothing in between the bottom of the valley and the next five metres of steep slope left my heart in my boots, but it was certainly worth the while. While most slopes are for moderate skiers or beginners, there are enough black trails to entertain ambitious skiers with all of the right bulbs, bumps, jumps and narrow curves in all the right places on steep pistes that can slope at an angle of up to 75%. On three slopes, radar systems check your speed and several cameras record your attempt to impress the rest of the world on *YouTube*. An insider tip among semi-professionals is the ungroomed downhill route at Scheffau, which should be tried only in the best snow conditions.

The huge choice of lifts, cable trains and slopes allows for a relaxed skiing experience even at the

Austria's Wilder Kaiser region offers more than 250 kilometres of skiing pistes



Those who are not into skiing can take nature outings among the many hiking trails in the area

The mountain cafés in this part of Austria are often lively and joyful



© Peter von Felbert

Most slopes are for moderate skiers or beginners

food here! Prepare yourself for some huge and tasty portions. Start your lunch at the *Jägerhütte* with *Speckknödel* (bacon dumplings) and finish at the *Rübezahl Alm* with the rich and hearty *Kaiserschmarrn* as a dessert. Other notable regional meals are roast venison and *Tiroler Gröstl* (a bacon, onion and potato fry-up). An *Obstler* (home-brewed brandy) is also a must as a digestif.

The next day, we try a more demanding black downhill route starting at Hohe Salve and ski down to the Mittelstation Hochsöll. It's really steep and



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season's peak. The region is perfect for families, with carpet-lifts, ski schools and restaurants that cater specifically to children. Parents can bring in their kids in the morning and pick them up later in the day.

Of course, the Wilder Kaiser is not only about downhill skiing. You should put on some cross-country skis at least once during your trip. At most places you can do so literally right at your front doorstep and head off to a huge variety of beautiful slopes that extend for 197 km.

If you're more into snowboarding, then three fun parks in Ellmau, Söll and Westendorf are equipped with plenty of flat rails, wallride spines, rainbow or kinked boxes and picnic tables – ready and waiting for the lords of the boards.

Actor Hans Sigl of the popular *Bergdoktor* (Mountain Medic) TV series can often be seen in the villages of the area



The locals are accustomed to the caravans of *Bergdoktor* pilgrims

This season's trend is Telemark skiing, an elegant form of the sport that originated in Norway. Naturally, you don't have to wait for the first snow to visit the imperial mountains. All kinds of activities can be enjoyed at the Wilder Kaiser throughout the calendar year. Aside from its well-deserved fame as a ski destination, the Wilder Kaiser is also the world's biggest e-bike region and the first official mountain hiking region in Austria. During the summer season, there's no better way to explore the magic than by hiking in the early hours from Ellmau up to Gruttenhütte. Leaving the picturesque village with its beautiful Tyrolean houses behind, you traverse a forest of mountain maple, ash, beech, fir and spruce. Hawks float weightlessly in the sky above, and the scene couldn't be any more idyllic. As the trees thin out, glimpses of massive limestone appear through the woods. Right at the tree line, the majestic summit of Ellmauer Halt (the highest in the region at 2344 metres) appears above your head.

If some fellow hikers seem a bit over-equipped, it's because the real fun is only about to begin. Gruttenhütte serves as a starting point for some of the Alps' most prestigious climbs. Legendary adventurer Heinrich Harrer, the teacher of the young Dalai Lama (played by Brad Pitt in *Seven Years in Tibet*), started his climbing adventures at the Wilder Kaiser and regularly came back to the region for some alpinist action. If climbing is a bit too extreme for you, then consider hiking on the slopes of the Zahmer Kaiser, or Tame Emperor, which stands just behind its bigger brother.



Bergdoktor star Hans Sigl during a break in filming

The scenic Wilder Kaiser region offers unforgettable views of the sunrise and sunset

Among TV stars

Hanna, 55, can't stop smiling. "It's my best holiday ever," she beams, having travelled all the way from a small German town on the Dutch border. She has just witnessed the filming of a nice romantic scene with actor Hans Sigl as the *Bergdoktor* (Mountain Medic). The German-Austrian TV series is an international success, having been broadcast in numerous countries, including Latvia, Estonia, the USA and Canada. It is currently the most popular series in Germany, with an average of 6.5 million viewers per episode. The *Bergdoktor* has all of the drama and dating gossip that you can expect from a TV series in its 8th season, only it's a tad less kitschy than other TV productions filmed in the region and has a more sophisticated approach. A real medic is always on hand as an advisor, and some of the more elaborate *Bergdoktor* stories have even made it into German schoolbooks.

Breathtaking Sigulda

Less than an hour's drive from Riga, Sigulda is one of Latvia's most beautiful cities and serves as a popular downhill skiing destination during the winter months. Located in the Gauja River Valley, Sigulda also offers adrenaline junkies the opportunity to ride down its luge and bobsleigh track at speeds that can reach 120 km/h. This year, Sigulda opened the only cooled cross-country ski track in Eastern Europe to begin operations already starting from the month of November. The unique track boasts top-notch facilities, including a fully lit 1.25-km-long frozen section. Furthermore, it has been built in accordance with the high standards of the International Ski Federation and has already begun to host a number of notable cross-country ski races for the winter season.

Anyone wishing to try out the new track will be able to rent *Fischer* ski equipment or get their own skis sharpened and waxed at the Sigulda Sports and Active Leisure Centre, followed by the opportunity to unwind in a Latvian sauna after an exciting session of skiing. Experienced cross-country ski instructors are also on hand to teach skiers who are just beginning to learn the ropes.

Any trip to Sigulda will be made all the more pleasant by the wide range of restaurants, cafés, hotels and cosy guest houses that beckon in the city and its surroundings. In short, Sigulda is an ideal destination for an active and unforgettable day or weekend trip.

S!



Sigulda Tourism Information Centre Address: Ausekļa street 6, Sigulda Phone: +371 67971335
www.tourism.sigulda.lv Coordinates: 57.153206 24.853781 E-mail: info@sigulda.lv

The locals are accustomed to the caravans of *Bergdoktor* pilgrims, as this area was already a popular filming location before the series, especially for romantic movies and Schlager or *Volksmusik* shows. And of course, the people of the region are well aware of the free advertising that they get.

In one recent poll, 70% percent of visitors to the Wilder Kaiser said that the *Bergdoktor* series was a factor in their holiday choice. While most of the

Views like this unfold from the rooms of many hotels and guesthouses in the Wilder Kaiser

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Pistes: 186

Total piste length: 280 km

13 black pistes (17 km)

74 red pistes (129 km)

99 blue pistes (134 km)

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Season: starts December 5

Ski lift day pass prices:

adults – EUR 41.50 (December 5-18

and March 12-April 5) and EUR 46

(December 19-March 11)

youth – EUR 37

children – EUR 23

❶ skiwelt.at

How to get there

Fly *airBaltic* to Salzburg or Munich. The shuttle bus service from Salzburg airport costs EUR 33, while the price for the shuttle from Munich is EUR 49. Alternatively, take the train to Kufstein and shuttle to the Wilder Kaiser from there for EUR 14.

The *Daniels* café and restaurant at *Swarovski Kristallwelten* (Crystal Worlds), which was designed by the *Snøhetta* architects' bureau of Norway

can even get to meet with the actors and producers. A Norwegian woman and a real medic from Texas are among the hardcore fans that local guide Moser has met over the years, and guiding *Bergdoktor* film location tours is just one of his many tasks.

Tyrol's crystal palace

If your aching muscles demand a rest or if you experience one of the region's rare rainy days, then there's no need to stay in bed – as cosy as most of the accommodations may be. There's plenty to discover in the area and *Swarovski*, the region's most famous brand, is at the top end of the list. Nowadays, dazzling, diamond-like *Swarovski* gems appear on everything from dresses, purses, watches and sculptures to microphones and chandeliers. The Tyrolean family business, started by Daniel Swarovski 120 years ago, has become synonymous not only with transparent quartz crystals, but also with the bling-bling of a wealthy lifestyle.

The world's leading designers are eager to work for the Austrian family, and with the *Swarovski Designers of the Future Award*, the company promotes promising talents as well. Since the company's crystal products are like pieces of art, it doesn't come as a surprise that *Swarovski* also runs its own museum.

WHERE TO STAY

The *Hotel Kaiserhof* lives up to its imperial name. The five-star establishment offers large and well-decorated rooms, fantastic views with a complete panorama of the Wilder Kaiser mountains (particularly from the *Panoramaterrasse*), the best spa in the area and haute cuisine. Plus, the hotel is right beside the slopes.

❶ kaiserhof-ellmau.at

The *Hotel Der Bär* sports a good mix of traditional and modern styles and is also located at the foot of the hills. Chef Josef Seebacher might be the best cook around (having 14 points in the *Gault Millau* guide).

❶ hotelbaer.com

The *Alpengasthof Hochsöll* is another place that offers accommodation right next to the ski runs. All of the ingredients in the guesthouse's yummy food are local and seasonal.

❶ alpengasthof-hochsoell.at

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Outlook **TRAVEL**

At *Kristallwelten*, Swarovski's quartz crystals become a living experience. Twenty years after its opening, the museum is among the Tyrol's most visited attractions. But don't worry, because *Kristallwelten* will not remind you of an overrun Disney theme park. It's rather like a huge and stylish art gallery full of finely crafted items designed by world-famous artists.

Jack-of-all-trades André Heller, who doubles as a million-copy-selling singer, garden architect, poet, actor, variété and circus producer, is the mastermind behind *Kristallwelten*. The 17-metre-high "giant's head" that he created over the entrance spews water into a pond and looks particularly fascinating in the wintertime.

Jack-of-all-trades André Heller, who doubles as a million-copy-selling singer, garden architect, poet, actor, variété and circus producer, is the mastermind behind *Kristallwelten*. The 17-metre-high "giant's head" that he created over the entrance spews water into a pond and looks particularly fascinating in the wintertime.



Interior of the glass play tower by the *Snøhetta* architects' bureau



Swarovski Kristallwelten attracts over 600,000 visitors per year and reopened to the public at the end of April



A glass play tower with a faceted façade
by the *Snøhetta* architects' bureau

The chambers were completely redesigned by internationally acclaimed designers, including Alexander McQueen



Swarovski Kristallwelten store by
s_o_s architekten

And yes, there is a huge *Swarovski* store as well. Designed by *S_o_s* architects and covered with an impressive Starry Mosaic Sky cupola, it sports sound and lightning installations by the *Snøhetta* Norwegian design firm and resembles a design museum rather than a store. Currently, Jean Paul Gaultier's wild and colourful *Swarovski* creations are stealing the show there. **BO**



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An advertisement for the ETMO Gallery. The top half features the ETMO logo, which consists of the letters 'ETMO' in a stylized, geometric font made of white lines on a dark background. Below the logo, the word 'GALLERY' is written in a simple, white, sans-serif font. Underneath that, a paragraph of text in white sans-serif font reads: 'A collection of items created by Latvian artists combining traditional craftsmanship skills with contemporary design'. At the bottom, the address 'ARSENALA STREET 7, RIGA (Old Town)' and the website 'WWW.ETMO.LV' are listed in the same white sans-serif font. The right half of the image shows three models (two women and one man) standing against a dark, textured background. They are wearing scarves with traditional Latvian patterns in various colors (yellow, blue, and red). The models are looking towards the camera with neutral expressions.

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The newly released *Spectre* is the 24th James Bond film, with Daniel Craig in his fourth performance as Agent 007

Text by **TREVOR BAKER**

Photos by *Vida Press, Alamy, Corbis, Acme Film* and publicity (Danjaq, LLC and United Artists Corporation)

TRAVEL LIKE BOND. **JAMES BOND**

James Bond has always travelled to the best places. His latest adventure, *Spectre*, finds him zooming through the streets of Rome in an *Aston Martin*. And this isn't the first Bond film that could provide the inspiration for a spectacular holiday.

At the beginning of *Live And Let Die* (1973), James Bond is congratulated by his boss, M, on the way he handled "that Rome affair," which had left the Italians "very pleased." Unfortunately, this trip was entirely offscreen, as viewers never got to see Sean Connery's or Roger Moore's Bond taking out baddies by the Colosseum.

Happily, this oversight has been rectified in fine style with the new film *Spectre*, in which Bond (played once again by Daniel Craig) takes part in what must be one of the series' fastest car chases. The action starts at a funeral in what is supposed to be the 19th-century Campo Verano cemetery and continues right through the Vatican, along the Tiber River and over the Renaissance-era Ponte Sisto bridge.

Initially, the reaction of many Romans to a high-speed chase through the middle of their city could not be described as "very pleased." Director Sam Mendes was banned from filming near the fragile 16th-century Quattro Fontane fountains and people protested against the planned car chase at the Campo Verano. The religious order responsible for the site said that the 2,000 year old catacombs and early 19th-century cemetery shouldn't be profaned by a movie. In the end, the scenes were filmed

at the Museum of Roman Civilisation in the EUR district, south of the city centre.

After eventually getting the permission of the local authorities, Bond and his latest enemy Franz Oberhauser (played by Christopher Waltz) wrecked seven cars worth 24 million GBP during the filming. The cars, a *Jaguar C-X75* for Oberhauser and a brand new *Aston Martin DB10* for Bond, performed like true stars for the car chasing scenes. Only ten *DB10* cars were made – specifically for *Spectre* – and only one of these will later be sold to the general public.

The power of the Bond franchise meant that entire streets in the Eternal City were closed all night in March of this year. The result, though, will no doubt delight Rome's tourist authorities. The Italian capital looks perfect, even when shot at night and with bits of it getting knocked about by the speeding cars.

After putting his *Walther PPK* back in its holster, James Bond has always managed to find time for some leisure in his movies, so he's a pretty good holiday guide. If you want to know where to get the best vodka martini (shaken, never stirred), then you could do worse than strap yourself into your own *Aston Martin* and head off to one of the ever-growing list of destinations that James Bond has visited.

PARIS



The makers of *A View to a Kill* (1985) might not have been very imaginative in their choice of Paris' main tourist attraction, but the scene shot at the Eiffel Tower is one of the best moments of the film. Fifty-eight-year-old Roger Moore was probably cursing the scriptwriters as he ran wheezily up the steps in pursuit of black-caped Grace Jones (who plays the villainous May Day), only to see her parachute serenely off towards the city below. Here we see the French capital's most famous landmark at its best.

A less well-known but equally interesting Parisian site makes an appearance in the 1965 film *Thunderball*. Fans will remember Sean Connery's Bond hunting *Spectre* agent Colonel Jacques Bouvar (played by stuntman Bob Simmons), who had cleverly faked his own funeral but couldn't resist attending it dressed as his own widow. Bond ultimately follows Bouvar to a gorgeous, 16th-century palace 78 kilometres west of Paris. This is the Château d'Anet, which can still be visited today. It was built for Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of Henry II of France, almost destroyed in the French Revolution and restored in the 19th century.

Bouvar is still wearing widow's clothes when Bond turns up at his lavish residence, punches him and throttles him with a poker before escaping on a jetpack. Although the château is closed in December and January, one can visit it (preferably without a jetpack) on most afternoons between 2 and 6 PM at other times of the year. (chateaudanet.com).

The *Spectre* HQ in *Thunderball* is also in Paris, masquerading as a centre for a refugee charity. It's a fashionable mansion block that has hardly changed since the 1960s at 35 avenue d'Eylau, just behind the Place du Trocadéro and with a direct view of the Eiffel Tower at the end of the street.



British actor Roger Moore on the set of *A View to a Kill* (1985)



This 1983 *Renault 11 TXE* taxi took a major beating as it raced through the streets of Paris



Sean Connery on the set of *Thunderball* (1965)



Sean Connery and *Thunderball* Bond girl Claudine Auger, or Miss France 1958



The ornate Château d'Anet can also be visited by the public

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BERLIN



It was inevitable that James Bond would eventually end up at one of the most famous sites of the Cold War, Checkpoint Charlie and the Berlin Wall, which can be seen in *Octopussy* (1983).

Bond (played by Roger Moore) has travelled to West Berlin to meet M and receive a new ID as furniture salesman Charles Morton, who wishes to visit factories in East Berlin. In fact, Agent 007 is actually on the trail of exotic cult leader Octopussy (Swedish actress Maud Adams, who returns despite having been killed in a previous Bond girl role as Scaramanga's mistress in *The Man with the Golden Gun*.)

One of the few places where it was possible for non-German nationals to cross from West to East Berlin was at 43-45 Friedrichstraße, better known as Checkpoint Charlie. This site, once the border between the postwar US and Soviet parts of Berlin, had become a symbol of the divided city.

In *Octopussy*, Bond drives along Rudi-Dutschke-Straße in a black Mercedes and turns right onto Friedrichstraße, where the crossing point is topped by an intimidating tower. The filmmakers weren't allowed to film within East Germany, so they only got as far as the neutral zone between the two sides before having to call "cut."

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Checkpoint Charlie has become a tourist spot. A replica of the original guardhouse still stands, but the watchtower in the eastern sector, despite protests, was knocked down in 2000 to be replaced by offices. There are also two museums, one

In *Octopussy*, Bond drives along Rudi-Dutschke-Straße in a black Mercedes

opposite the guardhouse on the west and a smaller one on the east, showing part of the wall.

Bond fans might want to head to the upstairs floor of the *Back-Factory* café on Friedrichstraße, where they will find pictures and other memorabilia from the film, including a model of the movie's *Acrostar* mini aircraft hanging from the ceiling.

The original Checkpoint Charlie guardhouse is now located at the Allied Museum in Dahlem, in southwest Berlin.



Replica of a sign at the former border between East and West Berlin



Octopussy (1983) was the sixth James Bond film to star Roger Moore



The Checkpoint Charlie border crossing was a poignant symbol of the Cold War era

In the same film, Bond drives along one of West Berlin's most famous avenues, the Kurfürstendamm, which houses numerous shops, hotels and restaurants. Ever since the 1920s, "Kudamm" has been one of the most popular places in the city for a night out. Classic early 20th-century buildings such as the marble Berlin Film Palace from 1913 still stand, but since reunification, new buildings have changed parts of the street beyond recognition.

Nearby on the corner of Fasanenstraße and Ludwigkirchstraße is a small, dark bar, the *Rum Trader*, which was a favourite of James Bond author Ian Fleming. He included it in the novel of *Octopussy*, although it wasn't featured in the film. Entrance depends on the whim of the proprietor, because the locale is very small and feels packed when more than 20 guests are present. Bond, undoubtedly, would have got in every time.



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ST. PETERSBURG

After the Cold War ended in the early 1990s, some people wondered what James Bond would do with himself. *GoldenEye* (1995) provided the answer. The film's most spectacular scene is his tank ride through the centre of St. Petersburg, Russia. Part of that ride, in a sign of the changing times, was actually filmed in the city. Chasing after Natalya Simonova (played by Izabella Scorupco), Bond does wheel spins through the centre of the city and a huge amount of damage at Palace Square, pushing cars out of the way in an aggressive form of traffic control that would probably make even the drivers in Rome think twice.

However, Bond fans making a pilgrimage to St. Petersburg should be aware that not everything in the film was strictly accurate. At one point, for example, Bond smashes the tank through the plinth of a statue of a winged horse and ends up with it mounted on his roof. The statue is probably based on the memorial to Peter the Great that you can see at Senate Square, but Peter's horse doesn't have any wings.

Much of the tank scene was actually shot at an old *Rolls Royce* aircraft plant in Leavesden, Hertfordshire. The site was redeveloped as *Leavesden Studios* for the filming of *GoldenEye*. It's since been bought by *Warner Bros.*, who offer a Warner Brothers Studio Tour that focuses mainly on Harry Potter.



Pierce Brosnan and Famke Janssen in *GoldenEye* (1995)



James Bond arrives in Saint Petersburg



The makers of the Bond films didn't get permission to shoot in Russia itself

MOSCOW

Unsurprisingly, during the Cold War, the makers of the Bond films didn't get permission to shoot in Russia itself. That, however, didn't stop scenes from being set in the Russian capital. In *Octopussy*, for example, the corrupt General Orlov visits the Art Repository in the Kremlin to warn the curator of the museum that their plan to sell Russian national treasures abroad is about to be foiled.

The exterior scenes as Orlov walks up to the building were actually filmed at the old Royal Naval College in southeast London, which is now part of the University of Greenwich. For Bond lovers, London is the ultimate destination.



In *Octopussy*, the exterior of the Kremlin Art Repository was actually filmed in London



A fake Fabergé egg and a fellow agent's death lead James Bond to uncover a jewel-smuggling operation in *Octopussy*

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LONDON



James Bond’s home city has made an appearance in every one of his films. Indeed, there are now walking tours dedicated to visiting some of the more interesting landmarks. One of these has to include the site of the very first appearance of the spy on screen, the *Le Cercle* casino in *Dr. No* (1962).

The scene was actually shot at the *Les Ambassadeurs* (lesambassadeurs.com) gaming club near the *Hilton Hotel* on Park Lane. A T-bone steak at the restaurant will set you back 55 pounds, but that’s much cheaper than the annual 25,000-pound fee that you would spend to be a member of the club. In a real event that took place in 2004 and that could have come straight out of a Bond movie, the club’s owners were forced to issue a profit warning when retail billionaire Philip Green won 2 million pounds at the gambling tables in one night.

Another more regular location was the neo-Baroque Old War Office building in Whitehall, which was sold to a hotel developer at the end of last year, but which doubled as the M16 spy HQ in three films: *Octopussy*, *License to Kill* (1989) and *A View to a Kill*. The real M16 HQ, an imposing fortress near Vauxhall Bridge, didn’t appear until *GoldenEye*. It is also where the boat chase along the Thames starts in *The World Is Not Enough* (1999).

Many other sights in London double as something quite different. The beautiful courtyard of Somerset House near the Strand, for example, hosts an ice rink in the winter and is home to tinkling fountains in the summer. In *GoldenEye*, though, it’s portrayed as a square in St. Petersburg, and in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997) it’s the entrance to the Ministry of Defence.

Another bit of “Russia” in London is the church from *GoldenEye*, in which Natalya hides from members of the evil organisation Janus. The exterior shots were filmed at Brompton Cemetery’s Victorian chapel, while the interior is in the fabulously ornate St. Sophia’s Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Bayswater, West London.



Dr. No (1962) took James Bond from the pages of Ian Fleming’s novels to the big screen



James Bond actor Daniel Craig enjoys the view of Big Ben and the Ministry of Defence



The Vauxhall Cross SIS Building is the headquarters of the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6)

When James Bond comes to town, he literally stops traffic

Similarly, you won’t find the Hamburg HQ of *Tomorrow Never Dies’* media mogul Elliot Carver anywhere in Germany. It’s actually the dour *IBM* building near Heathrow Airport. Another location that’s strictly for Bond super fans (or those who love an out-of-town mall) is Level Four of the car park at Brent Cross Shopping Centre in the north of the city. This doubled as the garage of the *Atlantic Hotel*, where Bond saw off the baddies with his remote-controlled *BMW 750* in *Tomorrow Never Dies*, before propelling the car off the roof and onto the street below. As yet, there is no plaque to commemorate this filming event.

Inevitably, Bond has come back to London for *Spectre*. Filming shut down much of the centre of the city in the spring, when they shot scenes of a helicopter flying over Westminster Bridge and there were reports of explosions nearby. Streets around Trafalgar Square, the Mall (which leads up to Buckingham Palace) and Whitehall, the centre of government, all had to be closed.

When James Bond comes to town, he literally stops traffic. Anyone following in his footsteps, however, can take in the sites at a more relaxed pace. **80**

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Description: Agricultural land for sale in eastern part of Latvia. Object includes a place with the necessary infrastructure for the development of a new farm base.
- Info: **AGRICULTURAL/FOREST LAND** | Total area: **529,03 ha** | ID: **5060**
Description: The estate consists of two parts: one is in northern Latvia, approximately 117 km from Riga, and the agricultural land is currently rented out. The second part is 51 km from Riga, in the midsection of the country. Approximately half of the property is forest.

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AUSTRIA

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Riga – Vienna			
BT 431	1-3456-	07:40	09:05
BT 433	12345-7	16:30	17:55
Tallinn – Vienna			
BT 205	1---5--	07:10	08:30
Riga – Salzburg			
BT 438	-----6-	12:25	13:35
Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Vienna – Riga			
BT 432	1-3456-	09:45	13:05
BT 434	12345-7	19:00	22:20
Vienna – Tallinn			
BT 206	1---5--	09:55	13:05
Salzburg - Riga			
BT 438	-----6-	14:20	17:25

Saalbach Hinterglemm Visitors should make sure that they are well-rested before they come to the Saalbach-Hinterglemm region of Austria. Colourfully named the Ski Circus, the region combines the slopes of one of the largest linked ski areas in Austria with the liveliest of après-ski activities. Saalbach is big and full of life, while Hinterglemm is more old- fashioned and down to earth. Both have great charm, a safe, car-free centre, plenty of après-ski events and all the traditional Austrian attractions.

Kitzbühel This is where it all began in Austria, and Kitzbühel is a dream destination for skiers. The small town in the Tyrolean Alps is home to the Streif Piste: surely the most iconic

2.6 km of snow on the planet. Since 1931, the brutally steep racecourse with its 80-metre jumps, tight corners and ferocious compressions has hosted the annual Hahnenkammrennen ski races,

which are among the most famous in the world. The Hahnenkamm slope is the most demanding on the World Cup downhill circuit and one that every accomplished skier wants to tackle.



Resort altitude: 800 m
Highest lift: 2000 m
Total piste length: 170 km
Black 13 | Red 26 | Blue 21
Longest run: 6 km
Snow parks: 2
Ski lifts: 51
Lift pass prices:
day EUR 51.00 |
EUR 25 (children);
week (6 days) EUR 248.00 |
EUR 124 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
Kitzbühel
Season:
December 14 – April 7



Resort altitude: 1000 m
Highest lift: 2100 m
Total piste length: 270 km
Black 6 | Red 27 | Blue 31
Longest run: 7 km
Snow parks: 2
Ski lifts: 70
Lift pass prices:
day EUR 51.00 |
EUR 25.50 (children);
week (6 days) EUR 145.00 |
EUR 122.50 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
Saalbach Hinterglemm
Season:
November 28 – April 10

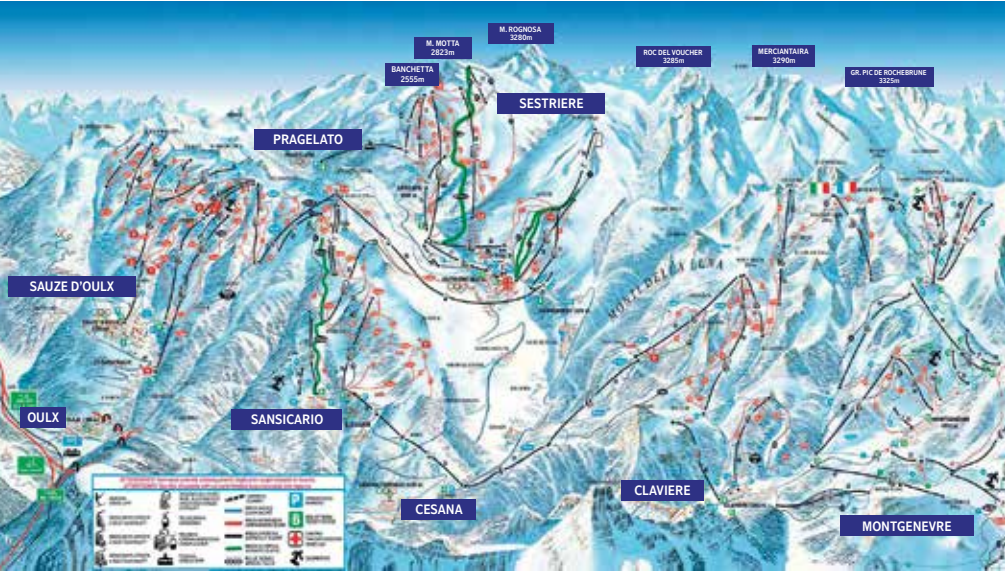
ITALY

Sestriere Sestriere is the highest ski resort in the extensive Via Lattea (Milky Way) linked ski area, boasting an impressive Alpine winter sports history as one of the world’s first purpose-built ski resorts. A good choice for beginners and intermediates. Sestriere is also one of the few resorts where it is possible to ski at night on a floodlit run. During the

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summer months, it is a famous starting and arrival point in the *Tour de France* and the *Giro d'Italia* cycling races. Notably, it was the scene of a definitive moment in cyclist Lance Armstrong’s now tarnished career. It regularly hosts FIS Alpine Ski World Cup events, and it was a main venue during the 2006 Winter Olympic Games.



Resort altitude: 2035 m
Highest lift: 2823 m
Total piste length: 200 km
Black 42 | Red 118 | Blue 54 | Green 7
Longest run: 5 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 92
Lift pass prices:
day EUR 36.00 |
EUR 5.00 (children);
week (6 days) EUR 155.00 |
EUR 25.00 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
Milky Way ski resorts of Clavière, Sansicario, Sauze d’Oulx and Montgenèvre
Season:
November 29 – April 12

Livigno Families and beginners can enjoy gentle slopes and fun areas suited for acquiring basic techniques and for learning by

playing. Furthermore, Livigno has a special tax status that dates back to Napoleonic times. There’s no VAT, which means that drinks, fuel

and consumer goods are among the cheapest in Europe. Apparently, there is even a Latvian-run hotel that serves Latvian cuisine.



Resort altitude: 1816 m
Highest lift: 2800 m
Total piste length: 110 km
Black 13 | Red 37 | Blue 29
Longest run: 4 km
Snow parks: 10
Ski lifts: 31
Lift pass prices:
day EUR 40.00 |
EUR 34 (children);
week (6 days) EUR 190.00 |
EUR 133.50 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
other Alta Valtellina ski resorts of Bormio and Santa Caterina.
Season:
December 18 – April 09

SLOVAKIA

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

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Jasna Low Tatras

Jasna Low Tatras is one of the most popular skiing destinations in Slovakia, offering excellent slopes covered with man-made snow for five months every year. Jasna Low Tatras was given five prestigious

quality awards in the international Ski Area Test. The upcoming winter season will offer attractive new products and innovations, such as a popular daily après-ski programme, night sledging, fresh track skiing, a Fun Zone, a snow park and others.

Resort altitude: 943 m
Highest lift: 2024 m
Total piste length: 46 km
Black 7, Red 18, Blue 9
Longest run: 12 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 30
Lift pass prices: day: adults EUR 38, children EUR 27; week (6 days): adults EUR 199, children EUR 139
Resorts accepting lift pass: Jasna Low Tatras
Season: December to late April



FRANCE

Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Riga – Paris				Paris – Riga			
BT 691	123456-	07:30	09:25	BT 692	123456-	10:10	13:55
BT 693	1--45-7	15:30	17:25	BT 694	1--45-7	18:30	22:15
Tallinn – Paris				Paris – Tallinn			
BT 689	-2-4--7	07:05	09:05	BT 690	-2-4--7	18:50	22:45
Vilnius – Paris				Paris – Vilnius			
BT 701	---4--7	15:25	17:10	BT 702	---4--7	10:10	13:45

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

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

Resort altitude: 1850 m
Highest lift: 3230 m
Total piste length: 600 km
Black 10 | Red 42 | Blue 40 | Green 27
Longest run: 7 km
Snow parks: 2

Total Lifts: 20
Lift pass prices: day EUR 50.00 | EUR 40.00 (children); week (6 days) EUR 245.00 | EUR 196.00 (children)

Resorts accepting lift pass: Three Valleys ski resorts of La Tania, Les Menuires, Méribel, Saint Martin de Belleville and Val Thorens
Season: December 19 – April 16

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

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

Resort altitude: 1450 m
Highest lift: 3200 m
Total piste length: 600 km
Black 9 | Red 24 | Blue 34 | Green 10
Longest run: 5 km
Snow parks: 2

Total Lifts: 18
Lift pass prices: day EUR 46.40 | EUR 37.30 (children); week (6 days) EUR 226.40 | EUR 182.40 (children)

Resorts accepting lift pass: Three Valleys ski resorts of Courchevel, La Tania, Les Menuires, Saint Martin de Belleville and Val Thorens
Season: December 5 – April 17



GEORGIA

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

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

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



GERMANY

Garmisch-Partenkirchen

The two villages of Garmisch and Partenkirchen were merged into one when Germany hosted the Winter Olympic Games in 1936. However, even though they have been officially unified for nearly 80 years, unofficially they still compete with each other,

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Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	Days	Departure	Arrival
Riga – Munich				Munich – Riga			
BT 221	12-45--	07:25	09:05	BT 222	12-45--	09:40	13:10
BT 225	----6-	12:10	13:50	BT 226	----6-	14:25	17:55
BT 223	1-345-7	16:30	18:10	BT 224	1-345-7	18:50	22:20

sporting two of practically everything: two fire stations, two schools and so on. Partenkirchen is cute and cosy, with narrow streets and a centre filled with painted houses, while Garmisch's

more organised grid of streets is lined with new concrete buildings and upscale shopping stores. This summer, Garmisch-Partenkirchen also hosted the BMW Mottorad days.



Resort altitude: 720 m
Highest lift: 2830 m
Total piste length: 62 km
Black 4 | Red 25 | Blue 10 | Green 3
Longest run: 4 km
Snow parks: 1
Ski lifts: 33
Lift pass prices: day EUR 39.50 | EUR 23.00 (children); week (6 days) N/A | N/A (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass: Garmisch-Partenkirchen
Season: December 12 – April 3



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SWITZERLAND



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



Resort altitude: 1850 m
Highest lift: 3300 m
Total piste length: 350 km
 Black 9 | Red 61 | Blue 18
Longest run: 10 km
Snow parks: 2
Number of ski lifts: 57
Lift pass prices:
 day EUR 64.11 |
 EUR 19.73 (children);
 week (6 days)
 EUR 294.27 |
 EUR 100.28 (children)
Resorts accepting lift pass:
 Corviglia, Corvatsch above neighbouring Silvaplana and the Diavolezza Glacier area
Season:
 October 17 – May 22

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 RIX

Latvijas pasta banka – LPB

E-commerce – an opportunity for new and experienced entrepreneurs



Edgars Lasmanis, vice-president of the Latvijas pasta banka

Publicity photo

During its seven years of operation, *Latvijas pasta banka* has become one of the most active banks in the sphere of e-commerce in the Baltic States. Currently, two-thirds of the bank's e-commerce clients are from other countries, while one-third are from Latvia.

LPB vice-president Edgars Lasmanis is an experienced e-commerce banker with 15 years of banking experience. He explains what e-commerce is, how it can be useful for both new and established companies, and how the bank and other parties play an important intermediary role in this process.

What is e-commerce?

E-commerce allows consumers to purchase products and services on the Internet. Every year, the scope of this activity is increasing. It opens new borders to e-merchants, who no longer have to be physically present in store buildings and who can sell their goods and services all over the world. Similarly, e-commerce allows shoppers to purchase products from practically any place on the globe.

E-commerce is useful for startup companies that may not have enough resources to invest into the opening of new stores, which involves expenses for rent, employee salaries, advertising and other needs. Experienced entrepreneurs, for their part, can use e-commerce to expand their sales markets.

Edgars Lasmanis mentions the example of a manufacturer and LPB client who had successfully sold

wholesale products to supermarkets for a long time. When the company's management decided to expand into the retail business, the costs and the work involved for opening new stores seemed to be very high. The manufacturer opened an Internet store instead and now, three years later, Internet sales are providing one-third of the company's earnings.

How can one start a business on the Internet?

It is easy to start an Internet business via *Latvijas pasta banka*. After signing a cooperation agreement, clients are granted access to the LPB platform, where they can monitor their transactions online and receive payments. The bank's platform also gives e-merchants the opportunity to study and analyse payments. For example, by establishing their shoppers' main geographical locations, companies can adjust their marketing and development strategies.

Clients of the LPB can precisely monitor payment card transactions, which speeds up business processes. For example, e-merchants are informed of payments made by their shoppers long before the payments actually arrive into their bank accounts. This means that an e-merchant can send out a product immediately after the payment has been made, with the knowledge that the required sum has been withdrawn from the buyer's account.

Special attention is also paid to the prevention of fraudulent transactions. Aside from the anti-fraud tools within the platform itself, an entire department of LPB bank specialists works vigilantly to ensure the protection of both shoppers and e-merchants.

The e-merchant's close link with the bank also adds an extra element of security for the shopper. When paying for a product by credit card, shoppers avoid the risk of losing their money due to the insolvency of the e-merchant, because in such cases the shopper can claim a chargeback. *Latvijas pasta banka* cooperates closely with two global credit card organisations, *MasterCard* and *VISA*, both of which guarantee the implementation of chargebacks in many situations.

Intermediary role

Up to five players may take part in an e-commerce transaction: the shopper, the bank that has issued the shopper's payment card, the e-merchant, the bank acquirer that services the e-merchant and receives the payment and, in some cases, the payment facilitator, which acts as an intermediary. Payment facilitators are involved in the servicing of transactions because

banks with large monolithic IT systems are slow to implement the latest changes in the e-commerce IT sector. This role is undertaken by payment facilitators, which are usually IT companies or authorised payment institutions that can also offer alternative forms of payment.

E-merchants who offer their customers a choice of several payment methods usually use the services of a payment facilitator. Conversely, e-merchants who wish to offer their shoppers the cheapest possible forms of payment will cooperate with an experienced bank acquirer, which also cooperates with the aforementioned payment facilitators. The bank acquirer has the advantage of offering its clients better financial conditions and lower transaction fees than the intermediary companies.

Successful cooperation – growing together with the client

Both large enterprises that are already engaged in trade and small startups can gain a great deal by cooperating with a bank that is experienced and that offers a variety of e-commerce services. *Latvijas pasta banka* has seen small enterprises grow and increase their turnover considerably within just a few years, which has been mutually beneficial for both the LPB's clients and the bank itself.

With e-commerce being one of the LPB's main business spheres, the bank offers valuable consulting services for new clients who wish to set up an Internet business, advising them about the forms of payments that they can take, e-commerce standards and regulations. The LPB also has an established network of professional cooperation partners and agents whose services its clients can use. For this reason, it is usually

most advantageous for a client to work directly with the bank, rather than to establish separate agreements with various intermediaries. Nevertheless, if it becomes evident during a consulting session that a client could gain more through a direct partnership with an intermediary, then the bank will not hesitate to offer such a cooperation model to its client.

Latvijas pasta banka has European *VISA* and *MasterCard* cross-border licences and is authorised to serve clients all across Europe. Although most of the bank's foreign clients are e-merchants from Western Europe, the bank also services a large number of clients from the CIS countries, and its staff members speak three languages: English, Russian and Latvian. The LPB works as an intermediary for clients from Russia who wish to gain a foothold in Western markets and works in the opposite direction as well by offering Western clients the opportunity to expand their businesses in Russia.

In our current globalised and digitalised environment, companies no longer need to operate solely with banks in their home country. They seek high-quality service at a competitive rate. They also want to be able to open an account and start processing payments as quickly as possible.

Not all banks are capable of conducting precise transactions in foreign currencies, but in e-commerce, precise transfers of funding are of crucial importance. E-merchants want to feel assured that the precise amount will be withdrawn from the shopper's account. For example, they don't want the shopper's issuing bank to deduct 101.50 Russian rubles for an item that costs 100. At *Latvijas pasta banka* such errors will not occur, because the bank operates in 32 different currencies. **BO**

SIX ESSENTIAL FACTORS FOR BEING A SUCCESSFUL E-MERCHANT:

- **IT** – Stable servers are crucial, because growing e-shops will use various computer programmes.
- **Payments** – The bank acquirer is your main partner, because it provides your e-shop with a stable cash flow.
- **Call centre** – Essential for receiving customers' calls, contacting shoppers and making direct sales.
- **Logistics** – Make sure that your product is delivered on time and by the date that you have promised.
- **Quality** – Your product or service must be of the highest quality, as well as the photos of the product that you place in your website.
- **Marketing and sales** – You know best why your product is so unique. Make the rest of the world know about it!



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Publicity photos



First drive: the *Subaru Levorg*

The *Levorg* is different, but then what else would you expect from *Subaru*? The car manufacturer admits that it didn't look at the fifth-generation *Legacy* wagon as a starting point, because customers had found it too big and ungainly. Instead, the *Levorg* is a reprise of the earlier and popular fourth-generation *Legacy*, making it a greatest hits tourer with the benefit of some of *Subaru*'s latest technology.

This includes a new aluminium 1.6-litre turbocharged four-cylinder boxer engine that delivers 170 hp, asymmetrical four-wheel drive that is split 60/40 front to rear, and *Subaru*'s Lineartronic CVT automatic transmission.

All of this makes the *Levorg* a niche proposition, as usual, but *Subaru* is also aiming at those who might otherwise buy a *Mazda 6 Tourer* or a *Škoda Octavia Combi*, not to mention the company's dedicated core of customers who simply wouldn't drive anything else.

Japanese domestic customers get a 2.0-litre turbocharged model with 300 hp, which won't be rolling on freighter ships and sailing West any time soon – officially at least. That's despite *Subaru Europe*'s findings, which indicate that people still associate the firm with its smokin' gold-wheeled blue *Imprezas*. *Subaru* is in the process of trying to kick that habit, so the asymmetrical four-wheel drive is for safety and pragmatism rather than for coming to the fore.

What's it like?

You cannot argue with *Subaru*'s focus on practicality, and the packaging is impressive. The car comes with a usefully

shaped and accessible boot, along with loads of front and rear passenger space.

The build quality is of a robustness common to all *Subarus*, although certain soft-touch tactility elements show that company executives have been listening to the press' criticism. Hard plastics are still evident but require more commitment to find, and doing so will reveal that the *Levorg* is also the most USB-socket-equipped car we've ever encountered. The infotainment system comes straight from the *Outback* and works commendably, while the driving position is good with impressive all-round visibility.

The *Levorg* is intended to be robust, practical and enjoyable, with agility and stability considered to be no less important safety boosts than the car's electronic driver aid. That being said, this model doesn't come with *Subaru*'s *Eyesight* stereo camera adaptive cruise control, autonomous emergency braking and pre-collision warning, at least not yet. Nevertheless, the car handles well, and *Subaru* is benchmarking the *Levorg* with the *Audi S3* and its own *BRZ*.

On a short testing track in Stockholm, the *Levorg* demonstrated fine control, with ambitious cornering speeds resulting in very little body roll. The car will need a run on Baltic roads to really ascertain its handling, but the few lumps and bumps that we came across in Sweden suggest that *Subaru* has achieved a decent ride. However, the power-assisted steering is an electrically powered rack-and-pinion setup, which is weighty but gives little real information, making you wonder how much grip is available on fast corners.

In any case, you'll give up pushing before reaching the point when the car understeers,

as the *Levorg* is best enjoyed at more sedate speeds. That's largely due to the transmission, which, despite its six-stepped ratios, does intrude with a characteristic CVT belt noise. It automatically changes to the stepped mode when you push the accelerator past 35% of its input in standard I mode, while selecting S mode makes the "gears" arrive with just 30% of accelerator input. The car would certainly be a better drive with a standard manual transmission or a dual-clutch automatic gearbox, both of which might give the new engine more chance to shine.

The new 1.6-litre boxer engine is smooth. Indeed it's perhaps too quiet for those who are drawn by the *Levorg*'s interesting technical make-up. Peak torque arrives at 1,800 rpm and hangs on for another 4,000 rpm. It's a shame, then, that the engine's output is stymied by the transmission, and its CO₂ looks high compared to similarly powered front-wheel-drive rivals. With power and torque figures close to – and, in the case of torque, better than – *Subaru*'s 2.5-litre naturally aspirated unit, it's highly likely that this engine will be rolled out across more *Subaru* models in the future.

Should I buy one?

As an all-weather, any-condition alternative family estate – maybe. Four-wheel drive makes for plenty of traction, the asymmetrical system being able to split its power 50/50 front/rear as a maximum, making the *Levorg* feel sure-footed and safe if not particularly exciting. *Subaru*'s strength remains its individuality, which means that there's a limited audience for this model. Nevertheless, diehard fans will love it for all of *Subaru*'s usual qualities. **BO**

QUICK FACTS:

- 1 On sale now
- 2 Price from EUR 26,490 (Latvia)
- 3 Engine four cylinders horizontally opposed, 1,600 cc, turbocharged, petrol
- 4 Power 170 hp at 4,800-6,500 rpm
- 5 Torque 250 Nm at 1,800-4,800 rpm
- 6 Gearbox CVT automatic
- 7 Kerb weight 1,551 kg
- 8 0-100 km/h 8.9 sec
- 9 Top speed 210 km/h
- 10 Economy 6.9 l/100 km



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

More than just sushi

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



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

During the winter, guests can dine in a cosy and pleasant interior with a splendid view of Dome Square. Both floors of the restaurant are decorated in light and classical tones highlighted by various historical elements, such as the exposed original brick walls.

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

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

Of course, the sushi (classical maki, premium and even hot and tempura-baked rolls) is in a class by itself and parades under an array of impressive names, including famous Japanese manga artists and film directors. Among the most requested are the refined Kanto and Tohoku maki with seafood fillings.

However, *Planeta Riga* offers much more than just outstanding sushi. If the restaurant's menu has a star performer, then it is definitely ramen, the traditional Japanese soup-like noodle dish. This involves preparing a special broth that is boiled for several hours to achieve

an extremely rich taste. Head chef Staņislavs Gurjanovs has gone out of his way to perfect his ramen preparation technique, which he learnt from Japanese master chef Kanji Furukawa (also known as Ramen Boss) at the *Shoryu Ramen* restaurant in London. Not surprisingly, that restaurant has been recommended in the *Michelin Guide* 2014.

Planeta Riga has also set up a special menu that is devoted entirely to scallops. Make sure to try the refreshing *De-Livrona Maki* with scallop, cream cheese, cucumber, iceberg salad, parsley and coriander, or the rich *Hotate Grill*, which consists of grilled scallop with nut sauce and fresh vegetables. Those who appreciate spicy dishes will love the *Yum-Yum Hotate Noodles*, which incorporate a perfect bouquet of Oriental tastes with scallop, udon noodles and coconut sauce. Yum Yum!

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

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

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



Planeta Riga
Šķūņu iela 16 (entrance
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Restaurants, bars and cafés

Text by **DOVYDAS KIAULEIKIS**
Publicity photos

Culinary hotspots in Vilnius
A guide to the best restaurants, cafés and eateries



FIRE PLACE

Exotic choice

Tucked away on the edge of Vilnius' business district is *Fire Place*, an eatery that has quickly established itself as a great place to go for a relaxed Saturday brunch.

The menu has just six dishes but manages to incorporate elements from Vietnam and Korea as well as the Mediterranean and Baltic regions. All dishes feature pita in some shape or form, and all are cooked on site in a specially created oven – the *Fire Place*.

Maria, originally from Korea, is one of the owners. She can often be found working her magic behind the counter silhouetted in front of the roaring oven fire. Aside from being a talented cook, she is also a polyglot who speaks English, Japanese, Russian and a number of other languages.

My choice of pita with roasted courgettes and hummus filling tasted great. Carnivores are also catered for with a choice of tuna or meat filling. For those with a hearty appetite

and for whom one portion might not be enough, but two would be too much, Maria can whip up a portion of carrot salad in a flash.

One interesting treat is *shakshouka*, a North African dish of eggs poached in a sauce of tomatoes, chilli peppers and onions. A rare dish on Baltic shores, it is even more unique here, where the eggs are cooked right in the *Fire Place*. The dish arrives on the table in a nearly red hot skillet.

Currently, *Fire Place* doesn't have an alcohol license, so wash down this exotic feast with locally produced birch tree sap, which is the Baltic contribution to the culturally rich yet concise menu. For all of the above reasons, *Fire Place* is well worth a detour off the beaten tourist track when you are in Vilnius.

Address: Šeimyniškių gatvė 17, Vilnius

Open:

Tue.-Sat.: 7:00-19:00

① facebook.lt/pitarija-fire-place



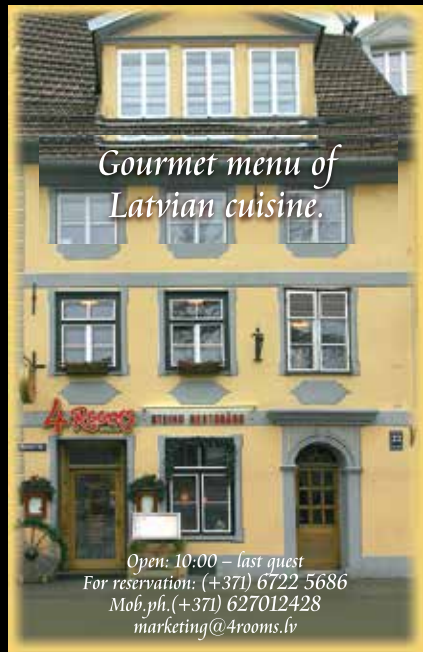
Queens is a British pub and restaurant with a gorgeous Victorian atmosphere and delicious food. More than 18 draught beers to choose from, including local and imported brands, a wide range of steaks, burgers and other meat dishes.

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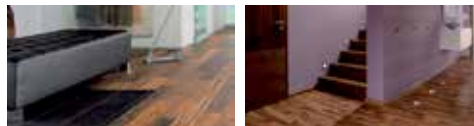
A first-rate Latvian restaurant with fine European cuisine. Banquet hall with a perfect view of Līvu Square on the 2nd floor. After your meal, enjoy a hookah in a relaxing atmosphere in one of the basement rooms.

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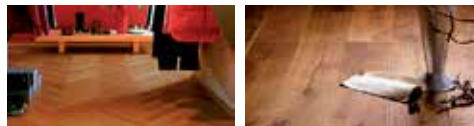


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Outlook FOOD & DRINK



JURGIS IR DRAKONAS

Pizza dinner

Lithuanians love their pizza, which may explain the large number of cheap pizzerias littering every town in the country. However, for those with a more discerning palette, *Jurgis ir drakonas* (George and the Dragon, or *JD*) stands out from the crowd.

The brainchild of English expat Tom Nicholson, it began a couple of years ago as an outpost of street food at various Vilnius festivals. Today, *JD* forms a mini chain of three restaurants located around the city. For visitors to Vilnius, the branch on Pylimo gatvė on the edge of the Old Town would be the best option.

Why does a line form every night at the door of *JD* and why are clients happy to wait for a table? For one, the restaurant offers truly outstanding pizza. *JD* sources its ingredients from Italy, which include *Le 5 Stagioni* flour, cheese and tomatoes. The special dough takes up to 24 hours to rise, and the pizzas are baked in an authentic dome oven. Further contributing to the establishment's popularity is Tom's wife, a local celebrity chef (think of Lithuania's answer to Martha Stewart or Nigella Lawson), who actively promotes the restaurant and shapes its menu.

Should you need to wait for a table, the staff will offer a complimentary glass of homemade lemonade once you are seated. The other diners will include local families, students, artists and even the odd Italian tourist. My dining partner gorged on *Nduja* pizza, a true Italian affair with traditional Calabrian sausage, jalapeños and fresh basil. As a vegetarian, I went for the promisingly named *More vegetables* pizza, with a long list of veggies as toppings.

Pizza isn't the only dish that draws the crowds, as *JD's* green salad is probably the best in the city. The large portion with its lush variety of lettuce, roasted seeds and delicious dressing could be a meal in itself, and it costs only three euros!

After feasting on pizza, make room for some dessert. *JD* makes its own ice cream of both traditional and less conventional flavours, from chocolate to carrot. Check the chalkboard for the day's offerings. Because



a pizza dinner is not supposed to last too long (after all, it's a fast food), we vacate our table for the next in line and hit the Old Town for some after-dinner drinks.

Address: Pylimo gatvė 22D, Vilnius

Open:

Mon.-Fri.: 11:00-22:00

Sat.-Sun.: 12:00-22:00

📞 jurgisirdrakonas.lt



KEY to RIGA

Every city has its key. It is the city's guardian.

It is used to open the city gates when guests are welcome.

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

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

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



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125 Fleet / 126 Behind the scenes / 128 Meals

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High Tatra Mountains

1/ New flights to skiing destinations

1/ New flights to skiing destinations

Those who long for a nice winter holiday in the Alps will be delighted to hear that starting from December 26, *airBaltic* will operate new direct flights from Riga to **Salzburg**, Austria and **Verona**, Italy.

The flights will operate once per week on Saturdays in cooperation with the leading Latvian tour operator *Tez Tour*.

Another skiing destination returning to the winter schedule is **Poprad**, a city in northern Slovakia at the foot of the High Tatra Mountains.

Flights to Poprad will start on December 15 and operate three times per week from Riga (on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays) and twice a week from Warsaw (on Tuesdays and Thursdays).

One-way tickets from Riga to Poprad start from EUR 59, while flights to Salzburg and Verona start from EUR 89. Book your flights at airbaltic.com.

2/ Visit Berlin this winter

3/ Enjoy more convenient travel with Premium tickets

4/ Pay for your flight through PayPal

5/ New partnership with LOT Polish Airlines

2/ Visit Berlin this winter

With direct flights from Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn, Berlin is one of the most popular destinations in the *airBaltic* network.

airBaltic flies to Tegel Airport, which is located just a short 20-minute bus ride from the city centre.

This winter, flight connections between Riga and Berlin have become even more convenient.

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

One-way ticket prices to Berlin start from EUR 39 at airbaltic.com.



Brandenburg Gate, Berlin

© visitberlin.de

3/ Enjoy more convenient travel with Premium tickets



airBaltic offers travellers a choice between three simple ticket types: Basic, Premium and Business.

Premium tickets are designed for those who prefer an easy and worry-free trip with the most essential services included in one ticket price.

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When booking your next flight at airbaltic.com, check out the Premium tickets displayed in the middle column of the flight booking engine.

4/ Pay for your flight through PayPal

At airbaltic.com, you can pay for your flights through *PayPal*, one of the most popular international online payment systems. Thousands of stores in 203 regions and markets accept *PayPal*, which processes almost 11.5 million payments per day.

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5/ New partnership with LOT Polish Airlines

In order to provide even better travel opportunities to its passengers, *airBaltic* has begun a new partnership with *LOT Polish Airlines*.

As a result, we are now able to offer more convenient and affordable flights from the Baltic States to Sofia (Bulgaria) and Belgrade (Serbia) via Warsaw.

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About the program

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

PINS program has various card designs from which you can choose, but if you are a frequent flyer, then the most suitable one for you will be the green **airBaltic PINS card**. The more you fly with airBaltic the higher your membership level and the greater the privileges. **Executive** and **VIP levels** are reserved for the most loyal airBaltic customers and ensure

various benefits which include a **free baggage allowance**, **priority check-in**, **reserved seats** and much more to make traveling more pleasant. The youngest members starting from age 2 are issued with a special **airBaltic PINS Young Pilot card** which allows also children to collect PINS.

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How to collect

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

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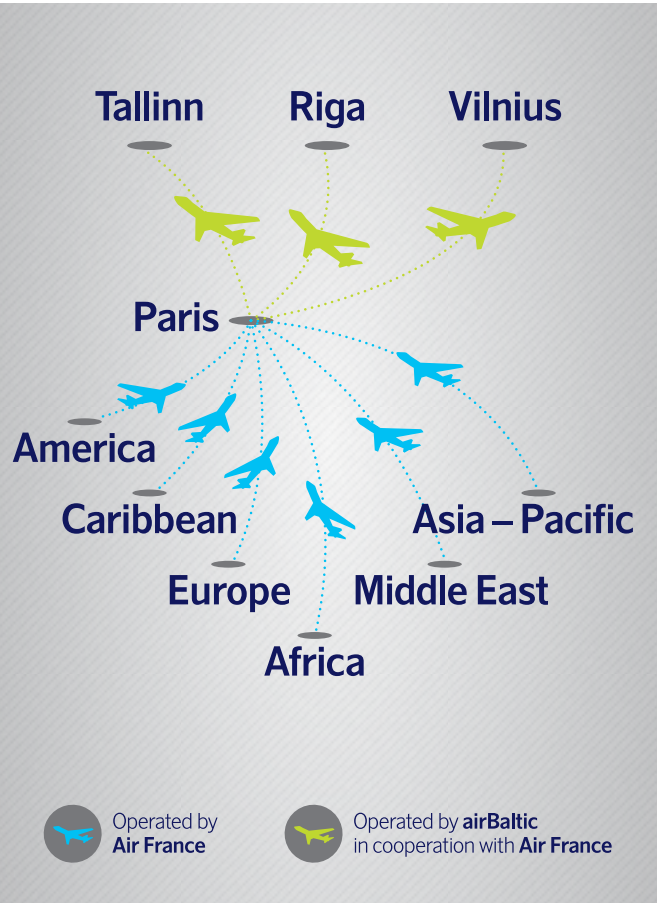
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Thanks to this, our passengers can benefit from attractive flight offers to the wide *Air France* network of 168 destinations in 93 countries via Paris.



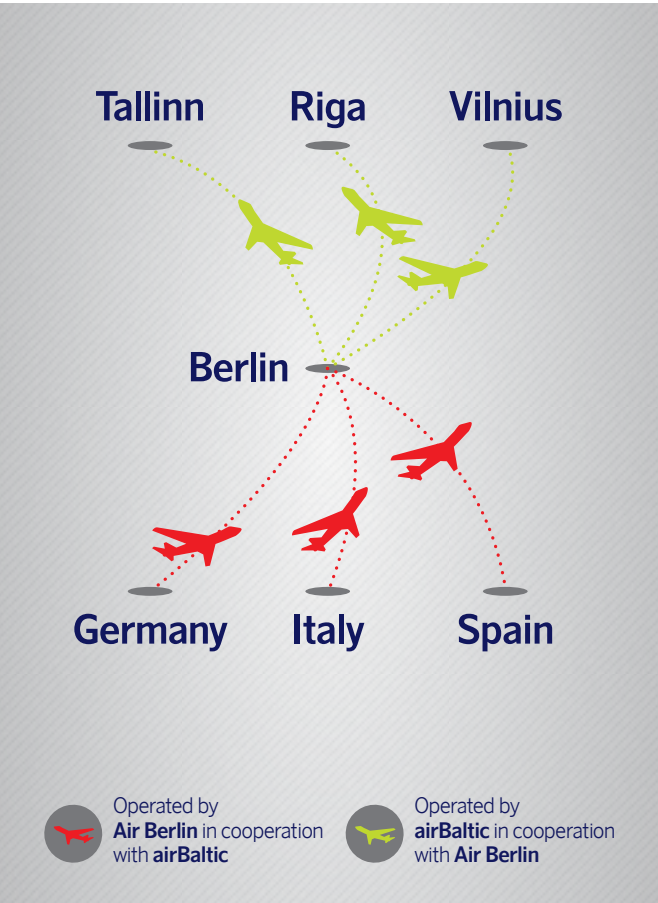
Check out the deals and book your flights at airbaltic.com.

Fly to Spain and Italy via Berlin

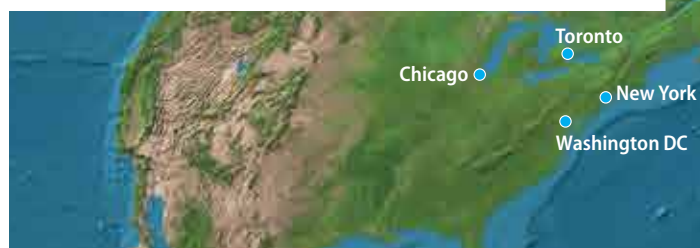
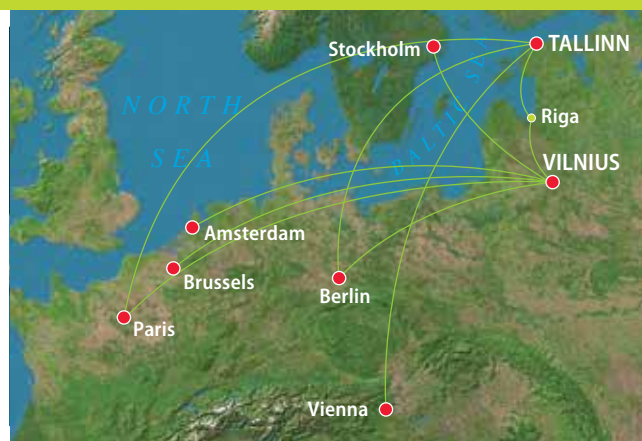
Aside from being a great travel destination in itself, Berlin is also an excellent transit point for further flights within Europe.

airBaltic operates direct flights from Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn to Berlin in cooperation with the German airline *Air Berlin*.

Now the partnership has been extended and you can book flights from all three Baltic capitals via Berlin not only to various cities in Germany, but also to many popular destinations in Spain and Italy at competitive prices.



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Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
AMSTERDAM						AMSTERDAM					
BT 617	RIX	AMS	123456-	7:35	09:00	BT 618	AMS	RIX	123456-	10:20	13:35
BT 619	RIX	AMS	12345-7	16:30	17:55	BT 620	AMS	RIX	12345-7	19:00	22:15
BARCELONA						BARCELONA					
BT 681	RIX	BCN	-----5--	07:50	10:35	BT 682	BCN	RIX	-----5--	11:15	15:55
BT 681	RIX	BCN	1-----7	14:00	16:45	BT 682	BCN	RIX	1-----7	17:45	22:25
BERLIN Tegel						BERLIN Tegel					
BT 211	RIX	TXL	1234567	08:15	9:10	BT 212	TXL	RIX	1234567	09:50	12:40
BT 213	RIX	TXL	12345-7	18:20	19:15	BT 214	TXL	RIX	12345-7	19:45	22:35
BILLUND						BILLUND					
BT 147	RIX	BLL	1-3-5-7	12:20	13:20	BT 148	BLL	RIX	1-3-5-7	14:40	17:30
BRUSSELS						BRUSSELS					
BT 601	RIX	BRU	12345--	07:05	09:00	BT 602	BRU	RIX	12345--	09:55	13:40
BT 607	RIX	BRU	-----6-	11:50	13:45	BT 608	BRU	RIX	-----6-	14:15	18:00
BT 603	RIX	BRU	12345-7	16:35	18:30	BT 604	BRU	RIX	12345-7	19:05	22:50
BUDAPEST						BUDAPEST					
BT 491	RIX	BUD	1-3-5--	12:25	13:50	BT 492	BUD	RIX	1-3-5--	14:20	17:35
COPENHAGEN						COPENHAGEN					
BT 133	RIX	CPH	1234----	06:05	6:45	BT 134	CPH	RIX	1234----	07:20	10:00
BT 131	RIX	CPH	1234567	07:50	8:30	BT 132	CPH	RIX	1234567	09:05	11:45
BT 139	RIX	CPH	1234567	18:30	19:10	BT 140	CPH	RIX	1234567	19:45	22:25
BT 137	RIX	CPH	1-345--	20:45	21:25	BT 138	CPH	RIX	1-345--	23:00	01:40+1
DUSSELDORF						DUSSELDORF					
BT 235	RIX	DUS	1-3-5-7	12:10	13:50	BT 236	DUS	RIX	1-3-5-7	14:20	17:50
FRANKFURT						FRANKFURT					
BT 241	RIX	FRA	1-345-7	12:10	13:55	BT 242	FRA	RIX	1-345-7	14:25	18:00
HAMBURG						HAMBURG					
BT 251	RIX	HAM	-2-4----	07:20	08:25	BT 252	HAM	RIX	-2-4----	08:55	11:50
BT 253	RIX	HAM	1-3--57	18:05	19:10	BT 254	HAM	RIX	1-3-5-7	19:45	22:40
HELSINKI						HELSINKI					
BT 301	RIX	HEL	123456-	07:50	08:55	BT 326	HEL	RIX	123456-	05:50	06:50
BT 303	RIX	HEL	1234567	13:35	14:40	BT 302	HEL	RIX	1234567	10:25	11:25
BT 307	RIX	HEL	1234567	18:30	19:35	BT 304	HEL	RIX	1234567	15:05	16:05
BT 325	RIX	HEL	12345-7	23:15	00:20+1	BT 308	HEL	RIX	12345-7	21:25	22:25
KIEV						KIEV					
BT 400	RIX	KBP	123456-	07:30	9:20	BT 401	KBP	RIX	123456-	09:50	11:45
BT 404	RIX	KBP	12345-7	18:15	20:05	BT 405	KBP	RIX	12345-7	20:35	22:30
LARNACA						LARNACA					
BT 657	RIX	LCA	-----6-	12:45	16:35	BT 658	LCA	RIX	-----7	11:40	15:40
LONDON Gatwick						LONDON Gatwick					
BT 651	RIX	LGW	-----6-	07:45	08:35	BT 652	LGW	RIX	-----6-	09:20	14:05
BT 651	RIX	LGW	12-4----	09:20	10:10	BT 652	LGW	RIX	12-4----	11:05	15:50
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MILAN Malpensa						MILAN Malpensa					
BT 629	RIX	MXP	--3--6-	07:55	9:40	BT 630	MXP	RIX	--3--6-	12:15	15:55
BT 629	RIX	MXP	1--5--	13:55	15:40	BT 630	MXP	RIX	1--5--	18:35	22:15
MINSK						MINSK					
BT 412	RIX	MSQ	1-3---7	12:45	14:55	BT 413	MSQ	RIX	1-3---7	15:50	16:00
MOSCOW Sheremetyevo						MOSCOW Sheremetyevo					
BT 424	RIX	SVO	123456-	07:35	10:15	BT 427	SVO	RIX	12-4-6-	06:00	06:45
BT 422	RIX	SVO	1234567	18:30	21:10	BT 425	SVO	RIX	123456-	11:00	11:45
BT 426	RIX	SVO	1-3-5-7	23:25	02:05+1	BT 423	SVO	RIX	1234567	22:00	22:45
MUNICH						MUNICH					
BT 221	RIX	MUC	12--5--	07:20	9:00	BT 222	MUC	RIX	12--5--	09:40	13:10
BT 225	RIX	MUC	-----6-	12:00	13:40	BT 226	MUC	RIX	-----6-	14:15	17:45
BT 223	RIX	MUC	1-345-7	16:35	18:15	BT 224	MUC	RIX	1-345-7	18:45	22:15
OSLO						OSLO					
BT 151	RIX	OSL	123456-	08:05	09:00	BT 152	OSL	RIX	123456-	09:30	12:20
BT 153	RIX	OSL	12345-7	18:15	19:10	BT 154	OSL	RIX	12345-7	19:45	22:35
PALANGA						PALANGA					
BT 033	RIX	PLQ	1-345-7	23:15	23:59	BT 032	PLQ	RIX	12-456-	06:00	6:45
PARIS Charles de Gaulles						PARIS Charles de Gaulles					
BT 691	RIX	CDG	123456-	07:30	9:25	BT 692	CDG	RIX	123456-	10:10	13:55
BT 693	RIX	CDG	1--45-7	15:30	17:25	BT 694	CDG	RIX	1--45-7	18:30	22:15
PRAGUE						PRAGUE					
BT 481	RIX	PRG	1234567	12:50	14:00	BT 482	PRG	RIX	1234567	14:35	17:40

Flights from Riga						Flights to Riga					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
RADOM						RADOM					
BT 459	RIX	RDO	-234-6-	12:45	13:25	BT 460	RDO	RIX	-234-6-	14:55	17:30
ROME Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino						ROME Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino					
BT 631	RIX	FCO	----45--	07:40	9:45	BT 632	FCO	RIX	----45--	10:30	14:40
BT 633	RIX	FCO	1-----7	15:15	17:20	BT 634	FCO	RIX	1-----7	18:15	22:25
STOCKHOLM Arlanda						STOCKHOLM Arlanda					
BT 101	RIX	ARN	1234567	07:30	07:45	BT 104	ARN	RIX	12-----	06:40	08:55
BT 105	RIX	ARN	1--4567	12:20	12:35	BT 102	ARN	RIX	1234567	08:40	10:55
BT 109	RIX	ARN	1234567	19:30	19:45	BT 118	ARN	RIX	-2--5--	09:30	11:45
BT 119	RIX	ARN	1--45--	18:05	18:20	BT 106	ARN	RIX	1--4567	15:15	17:30
BT 103	RIX	ARN	1-----7	23:15	23:30	BT 110	ARN	RIX	1234567	20:15	22:30
ST-PETERSBURG						ST-PETERSBURG					
BT 442	RIX	LED	1-3456-	07:45	10:05	BT 447	LED	RIX	12-4-6-	06:25	06:45
BT 444	RIX	LED	12-45-7	18:40	21:00	BT 443	LED	RIX	1-3456-	11:00	11:20
BT 446	RIX	LED	1-3-5-7	23:25	01:45+1	BT 445	LED	RIX	12-45-7	22:00	22:20
TALLINN						TALLINN					
BT 311	RIX	TLL	123456-	07:50	08:40	BT 362	TLL	RIX	123456-	05:50	06:40
BT 313	RIX	TLL	1234567	12:45	13:35	BT 312	TLL	RIX	1234567	10:35	11:25
BT 315	RIX	TLL	1234567	15:20	16:10	BT 314	TLL	RIX	1234567	14:00	14:50
BT 317	RIX	TLL	1234567	18:30	19:20	BT 316	TLL	RIX	1234567	16:40	17:30
BT 361	RIX	TLL	1234567	23:15	23:59	BT 318	TLL	RIX	12345-7	21:40	22:30
						BT 1364	TLL	RIX	----5--	22:00	22:50
TBILISI						TBILISI					
BT 722	RIX	TBS	----5-7	23:05	04:35+1	BT 723	TBS	RIX	1----6-	05:20	06:55
TEL AVIV						TEL AVIV					
BT 771	RIX	TLV	-2---6-	13:00	17:20	BT 772	TLV	RIX	--3---7	11:20	15:50
TURKU						TURKU					
BT 359	RIX	TKU	1-3-5-7	23:15	00:25+1	BT 360	TKU	RIX	12-4-6-	05:45	06:50
VIENNA						VIENNA					
BT 431	RIX	VIE	1-3456-	07:15	08:35	BT 432	VIE	RIX	1-3456-	09:45	13:05
BT 433	RIX	VIE	12345-7	16:30	17:55	BT 434	VIE	RIX	12345-7	19:00	22:20
VILNIUS						VILNIUS					
BT 341	RIX	VNO	123456-	07:50	08:40	BT 350	VNO	RIX	123456-	05:50	06:40
BT 343	RIX	VNO	1234567	12:45	13:35	BT 1354	VNO	RIX	--3--6-	06:20	07:10
BT 345	RIX	VNO	1234567	15:20	16:10	BT 342	VNO	RIX	1234567	10:35	11:25
BT 347	RIX	VNO	1234567	18:30	19:20	BT 344	VNO	RIX	1234567	14:00	14:50
BT 1353	RIX	VNO	--3----	22:55	23:45	BT 346	VNO	RIX	1234567	16:40	17:30
BT 349	RIX	VNO	12345-7	23:15	23:59	BT 348	VNO	RIX	12345-7	21:40	22:30
WARSAW						WARSAW					
BT 461	RIX	WAW	1-3456-	07:25	07:55	BT 462	WAW	RIX	1-3456-	09:00	11:25
BT 467	RIX	WAW	-2-4-7	18:40	19:10	BT 468	WAW	RIX	-2-4-7	19:55	22:20
ZURICH						ZURICH					
BT 641	RIX	ZRH	1-3-5-7	12:10	13:40	BT 642	ZRH	RIX	1-3-5-7	14:15	17:45
Flights from Tallinn						Flights to Tallinn					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
BERLIN Tegel						BERLIN Tegel					
BT 203	TLL	TXL	1--5--	15:20	16:15	BT 204	TXL	TLL	1--5--	18:10	21:00
PARIS Charles de Gaulles						PARIS Charles de Gaulles					
BT 689	TLL	CDG	-2-4-7	07:20	09:20	BT 690	CDG	TLL	-2-4-7	18:50	22:45
VIENNA						VIENNA					
BT 205	TLL	VIE	1--5--	07:10	08:30	BT 206	VIE	TLL	1--5--	09:45	13:05
Flights from Vilnius						Flights to Vilnius					
Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival	Flight No	From	To	Days	Departure	Arrival
AMSTERDAM						AMSTERDAM					
BT 609	VNO	AMS	---456-	08:55	10:55	BT 610	AMS	VNO	---4567	11:45	15:30
BT 609	VNO	AMS	-----7	09:00	11:00	BT 610	AMS	VNO	1-----7	16:50	20:35
BT 609	VNO	AMS	1-----	14:00	16:00						
BERLIN Tegel						BERLIN Tegel					
BT 215	VNO	TXL	-2--5-7	16:10	17:10	BT 216	TXL	VNO	-2--5-7	18:05	20:50
BRUSSELS						BRUSSELS					
BT 605	VNO	BRU	12-----	05:50	07:55	BT 606	BRU	VNO	12-----	09:00	12:50
BT 605	VNO	BRU	---4---	17:00	19:05	BT 606	BRU	VNO	---4---	19:35	23:25
PARIS Charles de Gaulles						PARIS Charles de Gaulles					
BT 701	VNO	CDG	---4-7	15:25	17:10	BT 702	CDG	VNO	---4-7	10:05	13:40
STOCKHOLM Arlanda						STOCKHOLM Arlanda					
BT 111	VNO	ARN	-2-5--	08:20	09:00	BT 114	ARN	VNO	1-45--	18:50	21:30



Photo by Mareks Šteins

Agija Kola-Kanča,
social media manager

Text by **EGITA KRASTINA**
Photo courtesy of **AGIJA KOLA-KANČA**

The new *airBaltic* blog is online!

Agija Kola-Kanča is the head of the new social media department at *airBaltic*. Although she has been with the airline for only two years, she has lots of experience behind her and great plans for the future.

Her passion for travelling and blogging combined with her sparkling personality have been a great push for launching the new *airBaltic* blog. Whether you are planning to escape the cold and relax on a sunny beach or jump right onto the

ski slopes and relish the joys of winter, *airBaltic's* blog can help you with some tips for your next trip.

***airBaltic* is launching its new blog in November. How did the idea arise to set it up?**

airBaltic already had a blog a few years ago, but unfortunately there weren't enough people and resources to keep it going. Now we again feel the need for a platform where we can place and store our news, mainly to inspire people to travel. We are already creating material with very good content. For example, recently we recommended 10 places to see in Aalborg, Denmark. However, such news items quickly disappear in the broad expanse of our website. In *Facebook* as well, articles like these draw attention for a short while and then quickly recede into the background. Many of our employees love to travel. They also like to write and take pictures.

This is a great opportunity for them to get involved in presenting the airline to the public, and to use this blog as a platform for telling their travel stories and giving some useful tips.

What is the main goal of the new blog?

The social media are mostly used as platforms for sales campaigns. If you want to find out more about your chosen destination, then you have to look for more detailed information elsewhere. The *airBaltic* blog will serve as a source of information about the places that we fly to. It will give tips about what to do, where to eat, where to stay and where to shop. It will give advice on how to best pack your travel bags, with reminders about what you are allowed to bring to the airport. There will also be all kinds of answers to the most frequently asked questions. The blog will be easy to navigate and will be written simply and clearly. The readers won't have to sift through long and confusing documents. For example, what you can and what you can't bring along in your hand baggage.

You were appointed to your new post quite recently. How did you become the head of the social media unit at *airBaltic*?

A couple of years ago, *airBaltic* was looking for a marketing manager. Despite the fact that my background was more connected to social media and digital matters, I was hired to fill the position. The social media were relegated to the background, but I wrote in them whenever I could in my free time. I already said in my job interview that I saw a huge potential for *airBaltic* to gain extra exposure in the social media, because we have a huge and high-quality base to work with. There are so many opportunities, especially for an airline, because lots of people like to fly and to travel. Ever since I started working here, I've felt that we haven't been making the most of our potential. Then recently all of the right circumstances came together with nearly all of the right people, so that we can now renew the blog. The process came into being really quickly.

What are the greatest challenges in creating a blog for a national airline?

The challenges are many and our goals are quite ambitious. [*Laughs.*] We are still in the process of completing our team so that we can work full steam ahead and reach these goals. Right now our main focus is on client services. Many social media users ask us questions about their flights as little as an hour before their departure time or while they are on their way to the airport. We have started to provide client services seven days a week so that those who fly out on a Saturday or a Sunday are not left without answers to their questions. The blog provides an additional opportunity for us to advertise not only *airBaltic*, but also Latvia and the Baltic States – various things and places that we are proud of. We have done quite a bit to popularise the destinations that we fly to from Riga. Now it's time to show people all of the good things that we've got right here at home and to invite them to travel to Riga.

***airBaltic* has the profile with the largest following from Latvia on *Facebook* (130,000 subscribers) and is also popular in Estonia and Lithuania. What are the main reasons for this widespread appeal?**

The fact that we are the largest airline in the Baltic States is a major factor. The people who were involved with the social media before I took over also invested a great deal into promoting our image. We cooperate with some excellent agencies in Latvia. They help us to come up with various creative solutions. Thus, our internal team at the airline is also complemented by a wonderful team on the outside, which has been working together with *airBaltic* from the day that we set up our website. This tandem has generated some very good ideas. People have always wanted to travel, and we give them the wings to fly where they want to. Air travel has become much more accessible and is no longer the privilege of the well-to-do. You can find plane tickets for just 29 euros this very weekend!

One might think that placing information on social media is as easy as a walk in the park. What would surprise those who don't work in the field?

One might think that it doesn't take much

skill to snap a quick picture and post it on *Facebook*. However, we have to think about how each photo fits in with our overall strategy. Many people and departments are involved in planning our communications strategy, based on the analysis of all kinds of data. This is one aspect of our job that many people don't even consider. Every click of the mouse on every part of our website is noted in some way or another so that we can glean some statistics. For example, if you are a parent with a young child at home, then you might wonder why the *Facebook* newsfeed will offer you items with pets and kids in them. That's probably because you are already watching this kind of content at home! [*Laughs.*] You know the saying: "Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are." The same can be said with *Facebook* feeds.

What draws you to the social media?

I like the feeling like you can be almost physically present at events elsewhere in the world. Borders have come crashing

this has resulted in two travel blogs. How did you start putting them together?

A couple of years ago, people started to say that the era of blogs is coming to an end and that the social media have become "the new black". I think that people had started to get tired of the sheer quantity of short news feeds that were coming out every day. Now it seems that blogs are once again experiencing a revival. Last year we did a lot of intensive travelling through Europe. We realised that there is a lack of websites with short and specific information. Most of the information is long and detailed, with all kinds of historical facts, like you would find in a *Wikipedia* article. As a result of all this, our blog *10 Things To Discover* came into being.

And how did your blog *Kola-Kanča* writes get created?

This year, our goal was to get better acquainted with our own country, Latvia. I set up a blog (kola.lv) to write about my discoveries in Latvia: old manor houses,

The blog provides an opportunity for us to advertise not only *airBaltic*, but also Latvia and the Baltic States

down and you can practically be in two places at once. For example, recently a friend of mine got married in Turkey, but I couldn't be there for the wedding. However, with the help of *Ustream*, I could watch and take part in the ceremony, even though I was in another country! In addition, the social media help you to get things done more quickly and conveniently. On the negative side, they have become an overly crucial part of our lives.

What has been your favourite social media project?

Aside from the *airBaltic* blog, which is my pride and joy, I am in the process of creating another cherished social media project, but that shall remain a surprise for now. Stay tuned for some more news in December!

You and your husband are both passionate about travelling. Together with your enthusiasm for photography,

beer breweries, restaurants, places to see and tourist opportunities as a whole. This past weekend we were in Latgale [*the eastern part of Latvia – Ed.*], where we came upon a fantastic manor house. When I saw it, I was simply speechless! Smack in the middle of nowhere. It's moments like these that make one wonder how many other undiscovered gems lie hidden in various far-off corners of Latvia.

You have travelled quite extensively.

What has been your favourite travel destination?

Each new destination that I visit becomes even better than the previous one. But one place that I always want to return to, no matter what the season, is Budapest. This is a city that unites various aspects from all over Europe. **BO**

Find inspiration for your next trip at airbalticblog.com



Onboard
menu

New Business Class menu

For the winter season, *airBaltic* has developed a new Business Class menu, which combines Western and Eastern cuisines and uses fresh local ingredients.

Passengers can enjoy wholesome breakfast meals such as scrambled eggs with lamb sausages and fried vegetables, pastrami with goat cheese and mango

chutney or Peking duck with cream cheese, stuffed zucchini rolls and vegetables, as well as homemade honey-roasted granola with dried local berries and seeds.

On afternoon and evening flights, delicate main courses like roasted duck breast with lingonberry sauce and sweet potato puree, beef curry with bulgur and grilled vegetables or braised rabbit with boletus sauce and mashed potatoes are served. These meals are complemented with

dainty appetisers and one of our excellent cheesecakes, panna cotta or chocolate tart with whipped cream.

In honour of Latvian Independence Day, which is celebrated on November 18, our Business Class passengers will also have the chance to taste special meals from traditional Latvian cuisine.



Order your meal before the flight

Use one of our meal pre-order options to have a guaranteed tasty meal for your next flight and be among the first to be served on board!

Check out the menu and order your meal up to 24 hours before departure in the **Manage My Booking** section at airbaltic.com. Also available by phone (+371) 67006006 for international calls or 90001100 within Latvia.

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

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

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