

Souvenirs

“CRUMPLED” PORCELAIN LATVIA

Ivory china is one of the many types of porcelain. The material is distinctive in that its surface, with its uneven, dirty white tone, looks like elephant bone. Latvian ceramicist Jānis Ronis also works with ivory china. He designs his vases and cups by hand, using a special technique that gives the china the

look of crumpled paper. This time-honoured material makes Ronis's dishes fit a classical setting, though the designer's witty games with form also make his dishes match a modern interior. The dishes may be purchased at the gift shop Rozentāli, at Brūņinieku iela 27, in Riga. Whether you want to share that last detail with admirers is, of course, entirely up to you.

www.rozentali.lv



OLDE HANSA KRAMBUDE, ESTONIA

It happens more than you might think. Visitors who spend enough time in Tallinn's Old Town get hooked on the over Medieval vibe of the place, and then they find they want to learn to play the lute, wear a pointy hat and start talking funny. Or at least they feel they can't leave without some kind of Medieval souvenir. Fortunately, there's a place that specialises in goods from that era: Olde Hansa Krambude, the one-stop-shop for all your Medieval needs.

Connected to the popular Olde Hansa restaurant, this little boutique is crammed with items ranging from the practical, like earthenware plates, cups and

glassware, to purely decorative items like Medieval costumes and silver jewellery with semi-precious stones. Everything sold here is handmade, mostly right here in Estonia, and designs are as authentic as they come – they're all based on known historic traditions or archaeological findings. Drop in to browse through the hand-carved combs and iron candle-holders, try on the pointy-toed shoes, or pick up some spices, schnapps or even some Medieval-style soap.

There are also CDs of Medieval music available. You have to play them in a post-Medieval machine, of course, but it's a lot easier than learning to play the lute.

Find the shop near the Town Hall at Vanaturukael 1.



IMAGINATIVE HANDMADE CERAMICS, LITHUANIA

If you can be sure of getting a chunky ceramic object home in one piece, one of the most unique shops in Vilnius' Old Town is Interios. As the name implies, all of the colourful items are designed to beautify your home. Most have been handcrafted by one artist, Violeta Ganusauskien, who has travelled throughout Europe and Asia to bring back inspiration to meld into her innovative designs. Somebody once said that the most unimaginative gift you could ever buy is a candleholder. But at Interios

candleholders take on a whole new meaning. Voluminous cubes of wax sit on not-quite-flat red surfaces inscribed with golden linear patterns. Smooth white potpourri holders have different-sized compartments, while cats and other beasts are designed Picasso-style, disjointed yet utterly graceful. Bowls and vases look unbreakable, as sturdy as rocks, yet are curvaceously graceful. Finally, once you decide what to buy, the gift-wrapping is as artistic as the products themselves, using dried flowers, shells and cinnamon sticks. **Shop: Interios, Pilies gatv 14, Vilnius**





A HAND-HELD FAN, SPAIN

Although originally invented in Japan and perfected in China, the hand-held fan has become a traditional object in the hands of Spanish men, and, even more so, women, since the 15th century. Its use soon surpassed the merely decorative function, and helped to develop a highly sophisticated sign language, whereby the ladies could

communicate with each other or send messages to their male suitors.

The town of Aldaya, near Valencia, is nowadays one of the most important producers of abanicos in all of Europe, so if you happen to land in this wonderful Mediterranean city, do not miss the opportunity to hold a beautiful fan in your hands and learn a few secret signals that may come in handy some day!

BEER BOOTS, GERMANY

Tales abound about the origin of the beer boot. One refers to a Prussian general who ordered a glass boot made because he'd promised his troops to drink from his shoe if they won a key victory. Another legend holds that German soldiers in the trenches during WWI drank from boots out of necessity. Whatever their origin, *Bierstiefel* have become an indelible symbol of German drinking culture. Amateurs often fail to notice the air pocket that forms in the toe and are surprised by a sudden rush of beer when they drink too quickly. For you beginners, remember, toe sideways. Today, shops throughout Germany sell both

hand blown boots and the machine-pressed variety.



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