

Souvenirs

MEDIEVAL JEWELLERY by Laura Šmideberga LATVIA, ESTONIA

Tallinn shops offer a huge range of jewellery in all shapes and sizes, but if you want to bring home something truly unique, something indicative of the city's Medieval heritage, pick up one of the elegant creations made by Latvian artist Laura Šmideberga. The colourful, one-of-a-kind necklaces she fashions are inspired by the Medieval-era practice of using glass beads as currency. As

she explains it, women in this region used to wear jewellery made of beads both to show their wealth and to keep their 'bank' in a safe place, i.e. on their person. Some of her necklaces also feature metal pendants that served as guardian amulets, presumably to ward off harm.

Olde Hansa Krumbude, a shop at Vana Turg 1 that specialises in Medieval

wares, is the best place to find Šmideberga's jewellery.

Recent examples of items on sale there include Viking-style necklaces, one with a horse pendant, and one with a guardian amulet that also serves a practical function – it doubles as an ear wax cleaning spoon. Whether you want to share that last detail with admirers is, of course, entirely up to you.

CARNIVAL MASKS Venice, ITALY

Venice is a city of artisans. From prized Murano glass to lace and wood crafts there are thus dozens of choices for souvenir hunters. Nothing, however, is quite as authentic as a handcrafted Carnival mask. Specialty shops work throughout the year creating masks, visors and full outfits. The *mascherari* hand craft masks from leather or, more commonly, papier-mâché and decorate them with gold leaf, bells, feathers, jewels and velvet. Like all souvenirs in Venice, masks vary considerably in quality and cost. Avoid San Marco for its tourist prices and stick to the backstreets in Dursoduro and San Paulo. A good price is anything between **50 and 100 Euro**.

ŠAKOTIS CAKE LITHUANIA

Visitors to Lithuanian supermarkets may be wondering what those tall yellow spiky things are in the cake and biscuit section. They happen to be one of Lithuania's most popular and distinctive products. You can't miss a *šakotis*: instantly recognisable, never forgotten. A hollow cone of any height with lots of short, stumpy branches coming out of it, it's traditionally used for special occasions such as birthdays and weddings. And if there aren't too many of those in your calendar, the cake's lengthy shelf life ensures that it can be kept for ages and still be consumed without fear of mould or moss. Baked in a special oven or on a spit – hence the hollow middle – it is said that the *šakotis* can only be created by experienced masters. The runny cake mix, made with loads

of eggs, is attentively spooned on and allowed to droop as the spit rotates. Once baked, the glazed 'branches' are splashed with chocolate and other mouthwatering ornamentations or simply left in their original radiant flaxen colour.



BALTIC SEA AMBER POLAND

On the north coast of Poland, amber from the Baltic Sea literally washes up on the beaches; in fact 80% of the world's amber originates from the Baltic region. Polish jewelers collect the precious fossilized tree sap to shape, polish and fasten into silver and gold jewelry. In Krakow's Old Town Square (the largest in Europe), at the Sukiennice – the medieval cloth hall, today a massive Renaissance style market place dealing in traditional Polish wares – you can find elegant or artistic necklaces, pendants and bracelets at wholesale prices ridiculously lower than those of any jewelry shop in greater Europe or the United States.

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