

Souvenirs

Simply a Chair? LATVIA

A chair. It seems like the simplest thing in the world. But for a chair to be comfortable and safe, as well as beautiful, a designer must invest a great deal of effort. In Latvia, there are designers who know how to do this. And they do it perfectly. I like it. And you'll like it, too.

Python chair
CHAIR BALTIC, Marijas iela 13/2, Rīga
www.chairbaltic.com



Linen Coat, LATVIA

Textile designer Laima Kaugure was the first Latvian artist to create world-class items from linen, which have since attracted the attention of famous brands like Armani and Calvin Klein. By arranging a visit to the artist's workshop/salon, you'll have the chance to see one of the most tasteful interiors in the world. Here's you'll watch how beautiful home items and articles of clothing are made from linen using ancient production methods. The lining of the linen coat is made of silk – gentle as a cloud.

Linen coat
GARAGE, Elizabetes iela 83/85, Rīga

TEXT: NATALIA JANSONE PHOTOS: MĀRIS ZEMGALEĪTIS

Plates Daubed with Paint, LITHUANIA

Right from the times of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes when Renaissance and Baroque tiles were oven-roasted for palaces and castles, the art of ceramics has been a way of life for many of the country's artisans. Dishware, pots, stove and roof tiles and, from the 1930s, porcelain and abstract ceramic art are hallmarks of the hallowed tradition of Lithuanian ceramics. There's even a Museum of Ceramics, situated on Town Hall Square in the subdued and charming Old Town of Kaunas. Handmade plates and dishes – sometimes graceful and delicate, sometimes big and clunky – can be found in souvenir shops and on market stalls around the country. Outside the capital, some of the tiny family-run souvenir shops in Lithuania's most beautiful towns, such as Druskininkai, Trakai and Nida will have them. Many of the lavishly decorated dishes are suitable only to show off around the home, but a lot of them have practical purposes too, to hold fruit or snacks for example. Often, however, you simply won't want to hide the lovely designs.

TEXT AND PHOTO: ANATOL STEVEN



Folk Sneakers, ESTONIA

Sure, you *could* come home from Tallinn toting the same knit scarves and amber trinkets as everyone else. But if you want to surprise your friends and family with something that's original, fun and still very much Estonian, make an effort to pick up a pair of stylish 'folk sneakers' while you're here. Yes, that's right, folk sneakers – an innovation that fits squarely in the 'bizarre but true' category. These are essentially just ordinary tennis shoes decorated in the colours and patterns of traditional Estonian folk costumes. There are several different designs to choose from, each one named for the parish where the pattern originated. The funky footwear was the brainchild of artist Indrek Kaing, himself a folk dancer for 14 years. Kaing's goal was to reawaken interest in traditional folk designs by using them in a contemporary application. It seems to have worked – since their launch in February, the shoes have become a hit. The list of VIPs that have bought them is reported to include the Estonian presidential family, the president of Skype and Broadway star Tony Vincent. Thanks to high demand, the line is even set to expand to other products soon, including baby shoes. The

TEXT: STEVEN Q ROMAN

place they're sold is also a bit unusual: the main distributor is the Estonian Post Office. Drop by the Eesti Post shop on Viru 20 in Old Town to check them out. You can also order them online at www.rahvusmeened.ee.



TEXT: ANTONIO DIAZ

Aalvar Aalto decorative bowls, FINLAND

liittala, one of the most prestigious Finnish design companies, has taken the famous design of Aalvar Aalto for trays and vases and applied it to mini bowls, very suitable to put all kind of objects – candles, chocolates, or snacks in them. Aalvar Aalto (1898-1996) is probably the most famous Finnish architect and designer. His vase designs were first presented in 1937, and

since then they have famous world over, distinguished by the simplicity of their forms and sensual plasticity as well as the multiple purposes for which they can be used. If you visit Finland and want to bring home a sample of tasteful national design or if you need to buy a refined present for a relative or a friend, a decorative bowl is an excellent choice for a souvenir. Easy to transport and suitable in all kinds of settings, it is just the perfect choice for a little piece of Finland!

Turkish Hookahs, TURKEY

The atmosphere inside an Istanbul nargile (hookah bar) is a quintessentially Turkish vibe – businessmen, young couples, and tourists arrayed on couches lazily puffing on ornate mouth-pieces, connected by serpentine hoses to brass, porcelain, or glass water pipes. The sound of water bubbling, the smell of Turkish tobacco – accents of fruit, chocolate or coffee – and a light haze of smoke evoke bygone images of the Wild Wild East. A Turkish hookah is the perfect Istanbul souvenir, a fascinating conversation piece for any home. They are gorgeous, made from colorful glass painted with golden floral designs and brass tops engraved with Arabic script. Most souvenir shops sell hookahs at inflated prices and there are dozens of specialty shops in the Grand Bazaar (be sure to haggle as much as possible). The best prices may be found with a little detective work at larger outfitters such as Haydar Nargile (www.haydarnargile.com), a wholesale shop near Galata Bridge in Eminonu.

TEXT AND PHOTO: RICHARD CARRIERRO

