

## Poetry in Motion

With COMPANION, Berlin-based Syrian dancer and choreographer Medhat Aldaabal shares the story of departing and arriving through the art of movement.



p.28

## Zurich by Chance

Forget social media's toplist and conventional city guides—and let chance become the heart of your trip. At least that's how we explored the Swiss city.



p.9

## The Atlantic Row

We met with RowHHome, four brave women from Hamburg who are the first German team to take part in the world's toughest ocean-rowing race.



p.22

## Tomatoes on Tour

There is one element of touring that Alisa Tsybinas, singer of Shi Offline, finds challenging: food. For us, the vegan shares her recipe for a vegan stage sandwich.



p.16

# Companion 18



A magazine by [friendsoffriends.com](http://friendsoffriends.com) for 25hours Hotels

Featuring from

Fashion & Style, Food & Drink, Art & Entertainment, Outdoor & Activity, Hospitality & Retreat, People & Business  
Berlin, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, Paris, Vienna, Zurich & Beyond

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## INSPIRED BY ICELAND



Fire and ice, darkness and light: Iceland is a country of extremes. And it seems that it is exactly the erratic nature that inspires its locals to innovations, whether it is food, music, architecture or design. COMPANION went hunting for the island's creativity.

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## A Reader's Digest

There are lots of ways to explore the world. By flying somewhere, for example. Or by reading. Literature has always attempted to broaden horizons and take readers on journeys to the farthest corners of the earth. Even our cities can be brought to life in books, as our literary tour reveals.

↳ [Activity Map, p.24](#)

Frankfurt is, without question, a misunderstood city. Whenever I travel the world, I tell people how beautiful it is here.

↳ [Column, p.30](#)

## Travel and Leisure

Upgrade your journeys or your everyday life at home with our selections from the best of the material world—and this time even beyond.

↳ [Products, p.15](#)

## Paris Sound Heroes

The French capital isn't all just postcard-perfection. Multicultural neighbourhoods like the area around Gare du Nord are filled with verve. And music.

↳ [Music Page, p.8](#)

## Future Hospitality

COMPANION speaks to Elisabeth Johansen and Vanessa Borkmann, two hospitality innovators in the fields of research and design, about the future of the sector.

↳ [Talking Business, p.12](#)

## A Culinary Journey

For gourmets and gourmands: We explored the Austrian region of Burgenland which is worth visiting for its excellent wines and superb regional cuisine.

↳ [Food & Drink, p.20](#)

# Dr. Hauschka



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### Editor's Note



At COMPANION, travel is our profession. Yet funnily enough, we've never dedicated an entire issue to the subject. Until now, that is. #18 has become a real printed journey—to encounter different people, cities, countries, always seeking to go further. Because for this issue, we interpreted 'travelling' in a more abstract sense. For us, the question behind the stories that make up this issue was: how can you actually get access to the world?

One response: through literature! Our cheerfully illustrated Activity Map shows that by choosing the right reading material, we can explore cities in more ways than just physical presence—and that sometimes, that path takes us on an even greater adventure. The exact opposite, too, can be exciting: to plunge into a city you have never visited before and let yourself be guided by chance—which we did on our District Tour through Zurich.

Another perspective on places for #18 was their sounds. What does the area around the Gare du Nord in Paris, one of the most transit places in Europe, sound like? And what does that reveal about the neighborhood? Rooksana Hossenally took on these questions for our Music section. Meanwhile, Eva Biringer embarked on a culinary exploration tour of Burgenland to discover what the tastes of the Austrian region not far from Vienna reveal about its cultural diversity.

Meanwhile, our Cosmos section revolves around a 'trip' in an altogether different sense—The New Health Club, a new lifestyle platform dedicated to the new darling of certain scientific schools of thought: psychedelics. The most extreme trip in our issue, however, was undertaken by the four Hamburg-based friends behind Team RowHome, who COMPANION met shortly before they took on the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge: 3,000 miles in a rowing boat across the Atlantic—which is known as the 'world's toughest row'. Things also got a little extreme for our editor-in-chief Celina Plag, who was planning on exploring Iceland's north for this issue, but got stuck around Reykjavik due to stormy gusts. Code Red!

Meanwhile, our columnist Florian Siebeck probably had the shortest and easiest journey for #18: The Frankfurt-based journalist put together his thoughts on the experience of sleeping in a hotel in his own city—and, in doing so, found that the whole wide world awaits right on your doorstep.

HAVE FUN TRAVELING!

### Friends of Friends

The online magazine Friends of Friends has been portraying inspiring personalities since 2009, forming a creative and international community along the way. Over the years, we have also built a lively network of talented people in the 25hours Hotels cities of Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Vienna, Zurich, and Paris — and everywhere else to come. Some have contributed to this 18th issue of COMPANION, which dives into the world of travel. The result? Read on to find out more.

[friendsoffriends.com](http://friendsoffriends.com)



### Contributors

Janik Söllner



Although Janik often forgets his toothbrush, he loves travelling—his most recent brushless experience being on the Trans-Siberian Railway last year. For this issue of COMPANION, the illustrator dealt with rather unusual travel adventures: Janik designed our Activity Map—a literary journey—as well as our Cosmos section that explores the trend of psychedelic micro-trips as new health tools. Dealing with alternative methods of movement is nothing new for the illustrator: his favourite things to draw are volcanoes with legs.

[@janik\\_soellner](https://twitter.com/janik_soellner)

Emily May



After having left her hometown to study contemporary dance at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London, Emily moved from the United Kingdom to Berlin to pursue her writing career and spend time in the city that birthed some of her favourite choreographers. Her love of movement has informed the majority of her travels over the past year, including several dance festivals around the world. For COMPANION, Emily engaged with a different form of motion—an interview with the first all-female German team to row across the Atlantic as part of the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge.

[emilymayuk](https://twitter.com/emilymayuk)

Yves Bachmann



For small-town-kid Yves, one thing was always clear: It's either the big wide world—or Zurich. The Swiss photographer, who focuses on documentary, portraits and lifestyle, has chosen the latter as his home. However, for clients such as Die Zeit, Monocle, Neon or Credit Suisse, he is regularly drawn out into the world—for example, to Cape Town every winter. For this issue's District Tour, he stayed at home: Yves photographed Zurich through the eyes of a tourist. And in the process, he even discovered something new by chance.

[yvesbachmann.com](https://twitter.com/yvesbachmann.com)

Celina Plag



For the past three years, our editor-in-chief Celina has been developing and realising the pages of COMPANION together with the team. The freelance editor and journalist, who sees the radar tower of the disused Tempelhof Airport when she looks out of the window of her Berlin apartment, is often on the road herself. This time she went out on the hunt for creativity in Iceland, and let chance guide her through Zurich. Celina also writes for FAZ Quarterly, Frankfurter Allgemeine Magazin and S/Spiegel, among others, preferably about culture, style, women's empowerment, and travel, of course.

[@celinaikes](https://twitter.com/celinaikes)

# HEALTHY TRIP

TEXT MANUEL ALMEIDA VERGARA  
ILLUSTRATION JANIK SÖLLNER

With The New Health Club, writer Anne Philippi has founded a fashionable lifestyle platform for psychedelics. From LSD to magic mushrooms: in conversation with COMPANION, she sheds light on a different kind of trip along the new paths of medicine.

**COMPANION:** A 'lifestyle platform for psychedelics'—that sounds adventurous.

Anne Philippi: Basically, we are experiencing a 'psychedelic renaissance' right now. It's about a whole new definition of psychedelic drugs and their consumption. And not only with my platform: there are more and more people all over the world, who start to understand psychedelics as a new tool. They are not interested in recreational use at parties, they are looking for an accompanied journey to healing. An example would be to take an LSD trip with the supervision of a psychiatrist, to find out things that you might never have achieved even after 20 years of therapy. I want to accompany this idea and the developments that already exist in this realm with my platform. What I am not primarily interested in, is the legalisation of drugs: at this point, psychedelics are still illegal. But what they could do is becoming more and more obvious, that's what many studies are showing.

**Do you move in an illegal context?**

No, we are starting a conversation about a new psychedelic culture, supported by many university studies, since psychedelics might be on their way to being decriminalised. So there should be a new context—not only a medical one, but also one that reflects a new lifestyle. And there is a difference between that and comprehensive legalisation. Numerous studies from the US and the UK have presented remarkable research results. For instance, King's College London, the Imperial College in London and the Charité in Berlin are currently researching whether psychedelics would be a good substitute for psychotropic drugs and anti-depressants. Within the field of psychotropic drugs, hardly anything has changed in the last 20 years. And anyone who has had to take them knows that as a human being, you are simply switched off.

**Why has this suddenly become such a big topic?**

On the one hand, because according to the WHO, 322 million people in the world currently suffer from depression—and that doesn't even include anxiety disorders or addictions. This number is also related to effects of digitalisation, which means that traditional environments as well as communities and relationships have been disrupted. Today, our brain faces completely different challenges, than it did five years ago. This is not a pessimistic outlook, but a fact. Our brains are attuned to a world that, in fact, no longer exists.

**How can psychedelics—which in addition to LSD and magic mushrooms in a broader sense also include ketamine, MDMA or the plant brew ayahuasca—help?**

They work on many different levels, but to make it short, they can change your mind and you should read Michael Pollan's amazing book *How to change your mind*, where he explains how these substances work exactly. Besides accompanied trips, microdosing—for instance the intake of very small amounts of psychedelics—is currently a huge topic in some circles. In Silicon Valley, this has become very popular. Especially CEOs of tech companies are tuning into the conversation. They found out that microdosing can help them focus. There are interesting websites, such as The Third Wave by Paul Austin. He is a pioneer, a 'psychedelic coach'. However, unlike psychedelics in general, there are not many studies on microdosing yet. So it's kind of a self-experiment, but this could change fast.

**Is all this ultimately a matter of self-optimization?**

No, it is not. There are documentaries about people who suffer from depression or ADHD—not necessarily high performers or tech evangelists, just normal people—they all admitted that the new way of dealing with psychedelics has changed their whole attitude towards life: they regained control over their lives and felt better after treatments. In addition, the different facets of this topic can also offer an answer to the fact that many people lack spirituality in their lives.

**What do you mean by that?**

I worked in the so-called 'lifestyle' context, wrote for Condé Nast luxury lifestyle outlets. The old world of luxury and fashion seems to be falling apart right in front of us. I know a lot of people who are asking themselves: what will remain when all that disappears, since this was the world they grew up in, that made them who they are. Many people come across the topic of psychedelics when asking themselves bigger questions about life. It is also born out of a desire to find a new spirituality—something that was perhaps catered to by religions in the past. But most people don't want a sometimes kitschy Yoga spirituality, no 'Emotional Detox' tea from the supermarket. They want something that provides answers. The New Health Club is starting a conversation about how psychedelics could provide these answers in our new world, in which we also explore new ways of coming to terms with our mental health.

↳ [thenewhealthclub.de](http://thenewhealthclub.de)

## Sharing is Caring

PARIS FOOD & DRINK

How is it that women still do the majority of the cooking at home, yet it's men who lay claim to the glory that comes from being on the biggest gastronomic stage? Thankfully, that's slowly starting to change. More and more young and dynamic female chefs are making a name for themselves with their own restaurants on the international scene. Mikaela Liaroutsos of Ètsi in Paris is one of them. She also gives guidance to the restaurant's guests with a gentle request on her website: 'It is advisable to order two or three dishes per person.' What lies behind this advice isn't mere business acumen—at Ètsi they mostly serve Greek meze—small starter-sized plates which are great for sharing after a long day of sightseeing in Paris. The menu features dishes such as grilled sardines with herbs and candied lemons or pan-fried calamari served with ouzo-flavoured Greek yogurt. What does the chef herself recommend? 'We share everything here.' Precisely.

↳ [Ètsi etsi-paris.fr](http://etsi-paris.fr)



## The Perfect Wave

BERLIN OUTDOOR & ACTIVITY

You don't always have to head to Australia's Gold Coast to catch a wave—the surf's outstanding in Berlin, too! The city's first indoor surfing centre, Wellenwerk, has recently opened its doors. They also plan to open a surf shop, a restaurant, and a mixology bar. Nevertheless, the centre's star attraction will remain the perfect wave: it has a constant summery water temperature of 26 degrees, and reaches up to 1.6 metres. Unlike at the beach, however, the wave height and flow rate can be adjusted during a 60 minute session, allowing visitors to learn the ropes step-by-step, on their way to becoming an expert. And Wellenwerk has one more advantage over the Australian beach: there's no need to worry about sharks at the centre on Landsberger Allee!

↳ [Wellenwerk wellenwerk-berlin.de](http://wellenwerk-berlin.de)

## HIKING AND BIKING

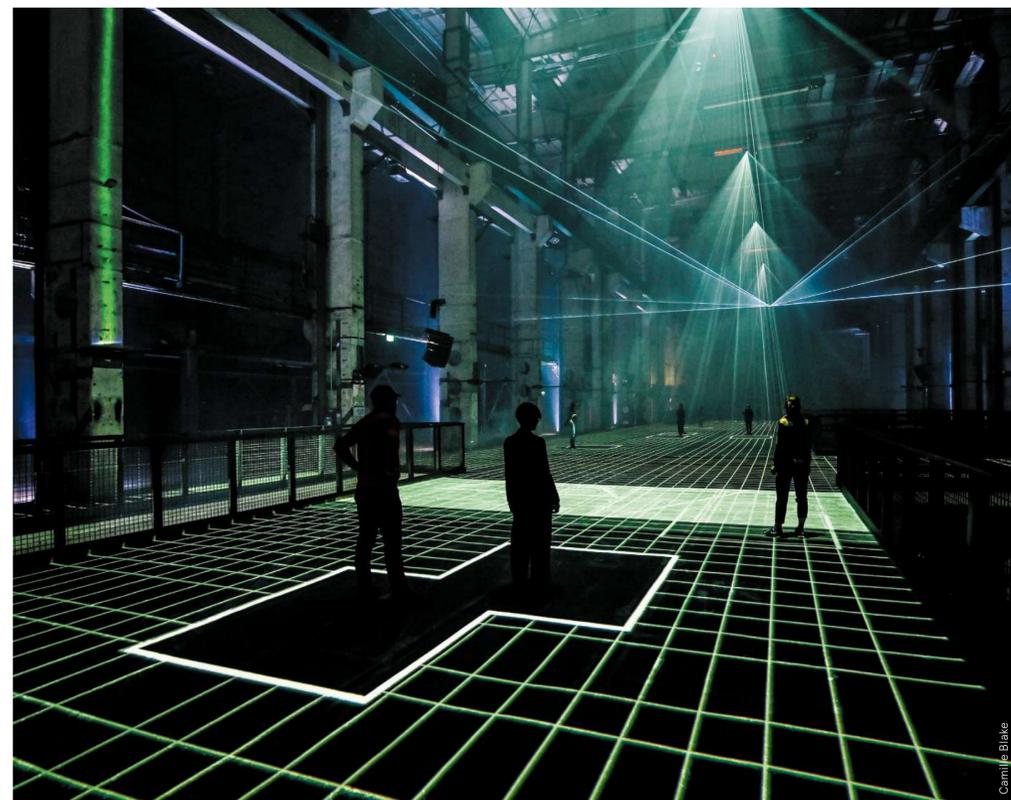


## LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

BERLIN ART & ENTERTAINMENT

Continuously revolving around itself—that spells the end of art. So it's a good thing that LAS, Light Art Space in Berlin, is seeking to link art with other disciplines. The newly-established foundation works 'at the interface between art, new technologies and science', in the belief that 'the interdisciplinary platform will widen horizons, challenge the perception of the present and stimulate the imagination of the future.' Its exhibitions so far have been realised in close cooperation with artists who specialise in the medium of light. Prior to finding its own premises, LAS is exhibiting in well-known locations. The first exhibition involved an audiovisual installation created by the Turkish artist Refik Anadol at Kraftwerk Berlin, and summer will usher in the presentation of a work by American digital art pioneer Laurie Anderson. Where will the journey lead to next? Further into the future, at any rate.

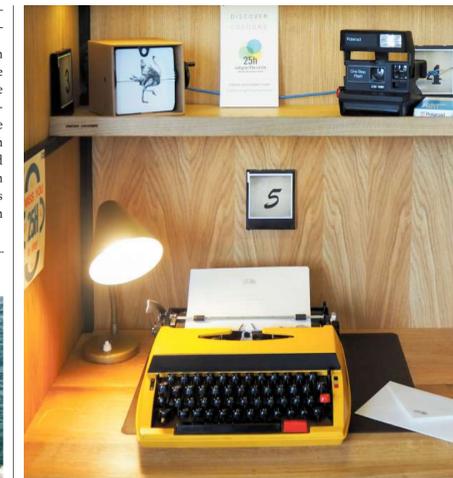
↳ [LAS lightartspace.org](http://LASlightartspace.org)



MAJORCA OUTDOOR & ACTIVITY

Naturally, it's wonderful to while away your entire holiday lazing on the Majorcan beach. But sometimes the paths on the other side of the promenade are very relaxing, too. From the hiking trails through the picturesque Serra de Tramuntana, for example, active holidaymakers can catch a glimpse of the magnificent cliffs and the ocean. And you don't need to be a hiking pro, either: the mountain range offers ascents ranging from the gentle to the difficult—which also makes it ideal for exploring on two wheels. The Bikini Mountain & Island Resort, for instance, not only lies at the scenic foot of the Tramuntana mountain range, but it also hires out mountain bikes for exciting excursions. As well as packing hiking boots and knee pads, guests should also leave a little bit of room in their suitcases for swimwear—after all, the beach is never too far away.

↳ [Bikini Mountain & Island Resort bikini-hotels.com](http://Bikini Mountain & Island Resort bikini-hotels.com)



## I'M PACKING MY CASE

COLOGNE HOSPITALITY & RETREAT

It measures a mere 100cm x 80cm x 200cm. And yet the suitcase that guests can now obtain from Cologne's 25hours Hotel The Circle will whisk you off into a completely different world. One from the recent past, to be precise. Together with the Vienna-based concept store Supersense, the hotel has packed items which hark back to a time before iPhones and Instagram. The 'Analogue Upgrade' is not just about old-fashioned gadgets and techniques, however—it also boasts a journey through time for all the senses. It's about 'the famous whirring of a Polaroid camera, the smell of freshly-typed letters, and the pleasant hum of the tube television.' Supersense invites travelers to 'reawaken multidimensional experiences which call on our senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing and thus evoke genuine feelings.' And that works better on the other side of the digital world. Not to worry, however: laptops and smartphones are, of course, still very welcome at the 25hours Hotel The Circle.

↳ [Digital Upgrade the.supersense.com](http://Digital Upgrade the.supersense.com)



# Ragazzi & Ragazze

FRANKFURT FOOD & DRINK

'Caffé Bomba is an attitude to life, ragazzi e ragazze on the streets of Italy with a cane and a hat, good mood, without appointments and a lot of appetite', is the mantra of this café's creators. And images of those sun-drenched streets, in the most beautiful cities in Italy, perhaps Rome or Florence, come straight to mind. But at least when it comes to coffee, you can save yourself the trip there. Caffé Bomba is not located in the Mediterranean, but in the lobby of the 25hours Hotel The Trip in Frankfurt am Main, it radiates the sweet scents of Italy. The coffee creations are made exclusively from beans that have been roasted especially for the café, and of course pastries and cold drinks are also on the menu. And with its own merchandise collection in cooperation with the Frankfurt streetwear store Uebervart, the Italian spirit of dolce vita is now also available to wear: Although the casual hoodies are a far cry from 'a cane and a straw hat'.

↘ Caffé Bomba @caffe\_bomba



## Florence in Munich

MUNICH FASHION & STYLE

You won't find headache pills here. But if you're looking for an elegant souvenir or a charming little present, head straight to this pretty pharmacy-style shop in Munich. Santa Maria Novella's first German flagship store offers a genuine experience. 'The traditional formulas haven't changed much in some cases and the dedication with which the products are manufactured and packaged in Florence is exceptional,' says Melanie dal Canton, who, as the manager of MDC Cosmetics, runs one of the most popular beauty boutiques in Berlin, and has now opened a store in Munich. The products actually come from Europe's oldest pharmacy, the Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella in Florence, which has been producing its pharmaceutical and cosmetic products since 1612.

↘ Santa Maria Novella [mdc-cosmetic.de/SMN](https://mdc-cosmetic.de/SMN)



# ↑ Explore → Hamburg in All ← Directions ↓

HAMBURG OUTDOOR & ACTIVITY

The stars of the sightseeing trips are the classic VW Bulli camper vans, which allow you to experience Hamburg in a completely different way. But what's the point of going for a spin without a suitable companion? That's why the passenger seats of Waterkant Touren ('Water's Edge Tours' in German) vehicles are filled with a smart local who can share a thing or two about the city. And not just the usual tourist spiels about the Speicherstadt district and the Elbphilharmonie concert hall, either. You can pass by the best-known tourist sights of the Hanseatic

metropolis, or you can take a trip through the undiscovered parts of the city; for two hours or three and a half—you can take your pick and book the tour that suits you. All of the guides can naturally offer advice on the coolest places to shop and the trendiest restaurants to eat at. Here's a hot tip right now: the 25hours Hotel Altes Hafencan in Hamburg is the perfect place to sleep off the exhilaration of your tour.

↘ Waterkant Touren [waterkant-touren.com](https://waterkant-touren.com)

ZÜRICH FOOD & DRINK

Feeling like you have a cold coming on after disembarking your flight to Switzerland? A remedy awaits at Schnupf (which is close to the German word Schnupfen, 'a cold')—at least, that's what its name would suggest. In fact, the Zurich bar is mainly frequented by those who are looking for a completely different kind of medicine. The drinks at Schnupf are legendary: you can order anything from beloved classics to newer creations at the pretty little bar with its dim lighting and stylish atmosphere. The chance that one drink will turn into a quite few lot is increased by the bar's selected music programme, which its website previews. If you're hungry, the menu offers a small but fine selection of dishes to line your stomach early on in the evening. Or later, for that matter.

↘ Schnupf [schnupf.bar](https://schnupf.bar)

# A Drink a Day...



## Daily News and Tragedy

VIENNA ART & ENTERTAINMENT

'Schwarzwasser' (black water) is a bit like taking a journey across Europe. After all, one of the current plays at Vienna's famous Burgtheater, which is based on a new text by Elfriede Jelinek, involves a Spanish island, an Austrian politician, and the niece of a Russian oligarchic. It's about power and media, greed and money, insanity and intrigue. Sounds like the great dramas of antiquity that inspire Jelinek. To viewers, however, some elements of 'Schwarzwasser' might also seem familiar from more contemporary times: Parallels with current players in Austrian politics are no coincidence. A government in strife and a blundering young chancellor, investments and Ibiza—the piece is at once commentary and criticism.

↘ Burgtheater [burgtheater.at](https://burgtheater.at)

## A Short Trip to South Korea

DÜSSELDORF ART & ENTERTAINMENT

Exactly 8566,78 kilometres as the crow flies: that is the distance between Seoul and Neuss. An enormous distance, but the exhibits in the Langen Foundation have it covered. Until the end of March 2020, the exhibition space is showing the solo exhibitions of Korean artists Minjung Kim and Park Seo-Bo. While Minjung Kim is known for her collaged works made of layered Hanji paper, and for abstract compositions that play with organic forms and strong contrasts, Park Seo-Bo has created his own movement. His structured, mostly monochrome paintings are considered the foundation of Korean monochrome painting: the 'Dansaekhwa' movement. By the way, the Langen Foundation in Neuss can be easily reached from Düsseldorf. In just 6.68 kilometres as the crow flies, to be exact.

↘ Langen Foundation [langenfoundation.de](https://langenfoundation.de)



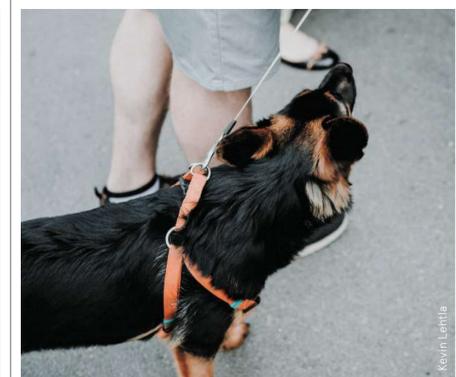
Kai Werner-Schmidt © Langen Foundation



FRANKFURT OUTDOOR & ACTIVITY

A sniffer dog sniffs at a suitcase and strikes—at Frankfurt's airport this doesn't necessarily mean that its owner is hiding illegal items in their luggage. Nevertheless, they will hardly be happy: it is the only airport in the world to offer a service with a 'Bed Bugs Team', whose sniffer dogs check baggage for bed bugs on special request. Six dogs are specially deployed for this purpose. The service, which must be requested by email to [bedbugdogs@fraport.de](mailto:bedbugdogs@fraport.de) three days before arrival, costs a flat rate of 106 euros for three suitcases and 29 euros for each additional suitcase. In the case of a find, the airport's own exterminator comes directly. Money well spent—as anyone who has brought the cheeky little beasts back home from a hotel well knows.

↘ Bed Bugs Team [frankfurt-airport.com](https://frankfurt-airport.com)



Kevin Lehtila

# The Sounds of Gare du Nord

Listen to the Paris Heroes playlist on the 25hours Hotels website:  
[25hours-hotels.com/en/companion/journal/paris-heroes](https://25hours-hotels.com/en/companion/journal/paris-heroes)

TEXT ROOKSANA HOSSENALLY  
 PHOTOS JULIETTE ABITBOL, ÉDOUARD SANVILLE

With its palatial stone buildings that catch the light of the sun and its unrivalled savoir-faire when it comes to eating, dressing, and loving well, Paris has plenty of reasons to be proud. Look a little closer, however, and you'll find that the French capital isn't all just postcard-perfection. Multicultural neighbourhoods like the area around Gare du Nord are filled with verve, giving Paris an edge that only travellers who veer off the tourist trail can truly discover.

'Marlboro—marlboro—marlboro!' Cigarette vendors cling to railings, their rhythmic chatter flowing in tune with the metallic 'whoosh' of the station gates as they swipe open and close to release the throng of disembarking metro passengers. The French national railway's jingle, a ubiquitous chime, pours out from invisible speakers, competing with the steady rumble of traffic outside as the sun rises. Metal shutters roll up, revealing displays of seductively lacy wedding dresses and shiny red three-piece suits. Radios are flicked on, pushing out songs of sunshine that slice through the clattering city.

As she makes her way from the station to Montmartre, Clotilde Floret absorbs it all, keeping the sounds tucked away somewhere in her mind's repertoire. An electronic music producer and singer with a penchant for female-led electro-punk, Clotilde has lived close to Gare du Nord since she moved to Paris. The station's sounds are woven into the fabric of her life and her music. Originally from Lille, she made the move to the big city years ago, stepping off the train right here. The sounds captured her imagination, as they would every time she caught a train back to Lille, or elsewhere.

With Gare du Nord being the gateway to Europe, she found herself here often when she began touring the world with her band, We are Enfant Terrible. 'It's a place that I love to stroll through because of its unique rhythm,' she says. 'It's a cultural crossroads with travellers arriving at the station and rubbing shoulders with the various communities that live in the area. And its sounds are a culmination of all that energy.'

As Europe's busiest train station with over 700,000 daily passengers, Gare du Nord bears an impressive and yet often overlooked stone façade built around a triumphal arch that dates back to 1864. The figures along its cornice represent the various destinations in France and abroad. The station owes its grandeur to the days when the bourgeoisie flocked here to escape the city in favour of fresh sea air, like Deauville or Le Touquet.

To the untrained eye seeking gold and marble, the area might seem overwhelmingly chaotic. However, on closer consideration, you'll find that Gare du Nord and its surrounding areas are among the richest in the city—in terms of culture. Around the corner is Little India and its plethora of restaurants, closer to Chateau Rouge you'll find Congolese fabric shops, while a mix of communities originally hailing from North Africa and Sub-Saharan countries have turned whole areas like Barbès into vibrant pockets of multiculturalism.

For Julie David, who in 2014 opened Walrus, a record-store-slash-café-and-bar just a few streets away, the area still achieves the right balance of trendy and authentic. 'I

wouldn't have opened Walrus anywhere else,' says Julie, for whom the area is a real hub for music from all over the globe. 'Being near the station, we're close to the United Kingdom and its incredible music scene, as well as lots of music labels and venues.'

However, what makes her feel most at home is the area's locals. 'I love the cultural diversity here—it's like no other place in Paris. It's great to be able to get a curry down the road, or a *steak frites*, have a look at all the African wedding dress shops, and pop into places where you can buy all sorts of fun colourful knick-knacks. It's important to keep some areas where things are still accessible to most, price-wise, which is becoming a rare occurrence in the city.'

A ten-minute walk away, close to some of the city's best music venues like La Cigale, Le Trianon, La Boule Noire, and Élysée Montmartre, is where cross-cultural music maestro Saïd Assad is setting up Le 360.

In a nutshell, it's the music venue Paris has been waiting for. Steeped in the city's fabric of many cultures, Le 360 is a powerhouse for creative collaborations hailing from near and far. For the Teheran-born music producer of the record label Accords Croisés—which has focused on bringing together artists from all over the world since the nineties, including the Indian sitar player Ravi Shankar—his objective is clear. 'What we need is to go beyond multiculturalism.' Transculturalism is asking artists not just to sing or play side by side, but rather it's asking them to really fuse their styles together to create a new sound.'

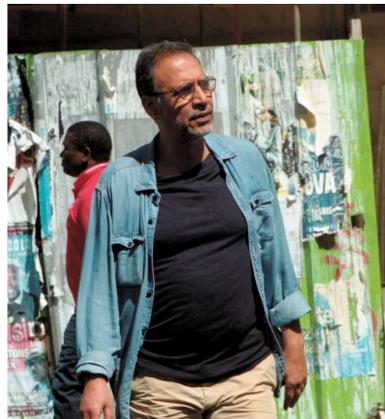
Set among Afro-hairdressers, Moroccan bakeries, independent fashion labels and art associations fighting to keep independent creation alive, Le 360 is a one-stop shop for artists with its own ecosystem that isn't reliant on mass industry channels. And Saïd and his team have thought of everything. From the niches in the building's façade for street art exhibitions, to a state-of-the-art concert hall, apartments adjoining a rooftop terrace with jaw-dropping views of the Sacré-Cœur, recording studios and a light-filled restaurant, Le 360 is Paris's independent music spot to have on your radar.

Gare du Nord and its surroundings might be far from the golden-hued representations of Paris on social media, but digging around here reaps the kind of reward that can't be measured in likes and shares.

Learn more about the neighborhood through *Portraits of the Gare du Nord* by Alex Toledano. The book is also on display at the 25hours Hotel Gare du Nord in Paris.

## Paris Heroes' Playlists

### Saïd



- 1 **Quand on a que l'amour**  
by Jacques Brel
- 2 **Talkin' bout a Revolution**  
by Tracy Chapman
- 3 **Nterini**  
by Fatoumata Diawara
- 4 **Al Bint El Chalabeya**  
by Dorsaf Hamdani
- 5 **Dia Barani**  
by Arat Kilo ft. Mamani Keita and Mike Ladd

### Clotilde

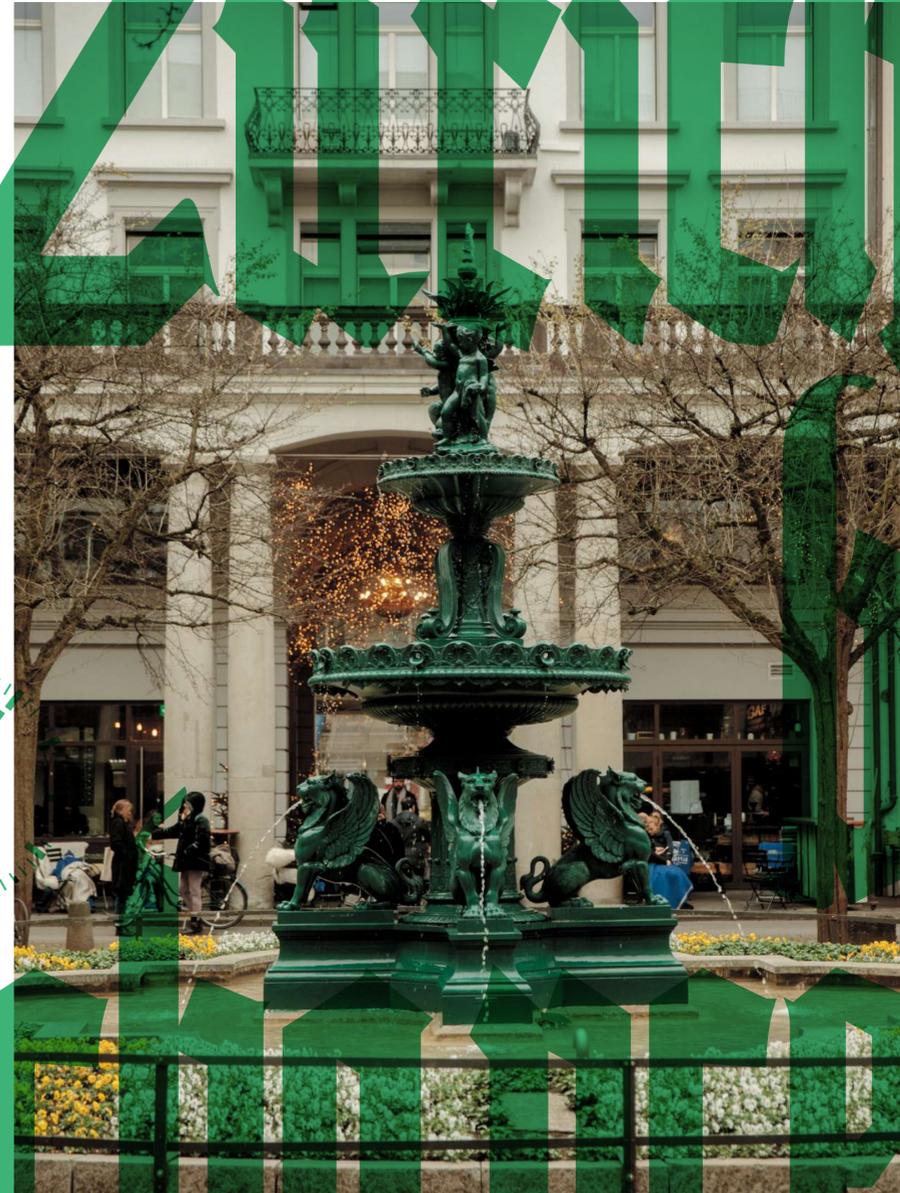


- 1 **Mathématiques Modernes**  
by Disco Rough
- 2 **Butterfly**  
by Léonie Pernet
- 3 **Go**  
by Théodora
- 4 **Couleur menthe à l'eau**  
by Isaac Delusion
- 5 **Filthy love**  
by We Are Enfant Terrible

### Julie



- 1 **Jam Hot**  
by Johnny Dynell and New York 88
- 2 **Busting out**  
by Material
- 3 **Game And Performance**  
by Deux
- 4 **Imperial Motors**  
by Lives of Angels
- 5 **Move your body**  
by Bramsam



TEXT CELINA PLAG – PHOTOS YVES BACHMANN

The beach bar on the small island that looked so great online but unfortunately not in real life; the secluded natural setting that's considered a real insider tip, but has already served as a backdrop for the selfies of a million Instagram users; the hand-carved artwork, which, when unpacked at home, turns out to be mass-produced: thanks to social media anyone who travels the world today sets out with a clear idea of what and where they want to eat, buy or do upon arrival—and is often disappointed. In the context of a consistently growing tourism sector and relentless globalisation, the search for something like 'authenticity'—which is what travel is often about at its core—has become a difficult and sometimes even impossible undertaking in many places around the world.

So how do you get to know a place you have never been to in all its specificity without falling into tourist traps? This is what I asked myself before embarking on this District Tour of Zurich. As a journalist, I spend a quarter of the year traveling around the world—but somehow I hadn't yet made it to the Swiss city which, despite its relatively small population of around 430,000 is considered one of the most important financial centres in Europe, and also boasts a lively creative scene. I set out to explore the German-speaking metropolis on the Limmat—taking a different approach to the usual: by chance.

It was Lena Grossmüller's *Reiseführer des Zufalls* (travel guide of chance) that gave us the idea. The travel guide can be universally transferred to anywhere in the world, and is intended as an 'attack on

the comfort zone,' as the author promises. The idea came to Lena, who, as chance would have it, is a resident of Zurich herself, for the reasons mentioned above: she was looking for a way to break out of repetitive travel patterns—and at the same time found an excellent topic for her master's thesis in design with this book project, published by Kommod Verlag. Laden with all kinds of unusual tasks, short essays and philosophical questions, the strikingly well-designed booklet, for which Lena is also working on an English version in 2020, serves as a guide for travellers willing to take fate into their own hands.

Everything is possible, nothing a must: Together with photographer Yves Bachmann, I embarked on the chance tour, which felt a bit like a scavenger hunt. Yves, who has lived in Zurich for many years, was, by the way, particularly fired up: He got to know his hometown from a completely different perspective—and even discovered something new along the way.

↳ [dscvr-guide.com](https://dscvr-guide.com)



1

### Kosmos Buchsalon

'Why not start at Kosmos?', Lena Grossmüller suggests on the morning of our tour of Zurich. The book café on Europaallee, which is also a cinema and bar, is one of her favourite places in the city. Good idea: asking a local for tips is also recommended by her travel guide, so why not learn from the expert right away? Conveniently, Kosmos is right next to the 25hours Hotel Langstrasse, where I spent the night. From the hotel bed, you can roll right out into the doorstep of the modern building with floor-to-ceiling windows, whose tables on the ground floor are already crowded at ten in the morning. After browsing through the huge assortment of literature, we settle on a quieter table on the upper floor, from where we study the brunch menu with a view over the bookshelves. 'No matter where you eat or drink, order number 12'—we had discovered this instruction while leafing through the guide. But that would mean ordering Bircher muesli, which we find boring, so we count from the bottom instead, and end up with 'Tokyo', an Asian-influenced glass noodle salad—something different for breakfast. A little cheating is permissible.

↳ kosmos.ch



7

### Cinchona Bar

In the Cinchona Bar, set in 25hours Hotel Langstrasse, not far away from Helvetiaplatz and perfectly located in the creative, lively surrounding district, we let the tour end—and the evening begin. The cosy seating areas, surrounded by plant tendrils, are perfect for relaxing, but we still choose a seat at the large rectangular bar, which is the beating heart of the hotel. From there, the view of the pixelated erotic mosaic of the artist Tobias Rehberger is unbeatable—and it gets even better with every highball. 'Highballs' are Cinchona's house classic: medium-sized cocktails with a huge ice cube in them, of which one can easily have a few. We take a last look at the travel guide, which asks us to summarise the trip using a strange collection of words. Among them: tax return, ukulele and phantom. And of course: coincidence.

↳ cinchona.bar

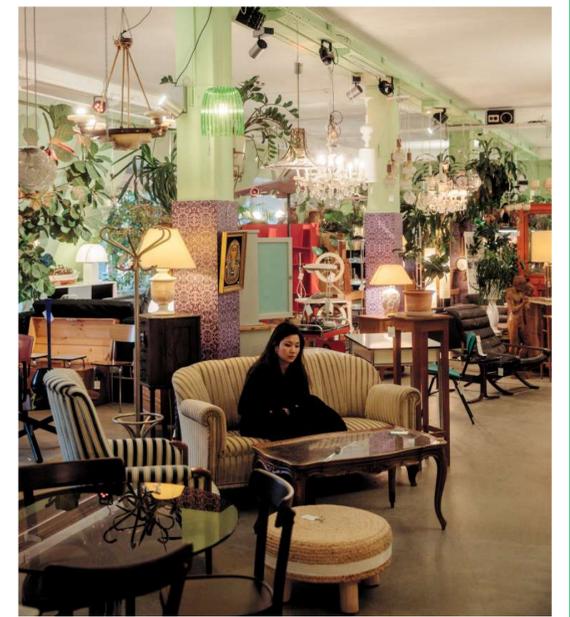


2

### Brockenhaus

After seeing the prices, we need to catch our breath. So it is in fact true that Zurich is an expensive place—at least for non-Swiss people. With the travel guide, we fan out fresh air and ponder one of its questions: 'What is free?' Yes, too, has to smile. 'In Zurich? Not even water!' exclaims the photographer, explaining that even ordering tap water costs extra in restaurants here. What is reasonably priced, as we learn from a lady at the next table, is the Zürcher Brockenhaus, a non-profit association and vintage shop founded in 1904, which donates its annual profits to institutions for the disabled, nursing homes and similar ones. We head straight there. It is also located in District 4, only a few minutes' walk from Kosmos. We lose ourselves amidst the assortment of antique tableware, vintage furniture, records and all kinds of knick-knack, such as old hand-written postcards and kitschy vases. A rather bizarre painted carafe in the shape of a rooster falls into our hands. 'Find the oddest souvenir in town', the guide prompts. There you go.

↳ zuercher-brockenhaus.ch



3

### The Panorama at Grossmünster

What next? 'Let's follow someone,' says Yves, his eyes gleaming—another mission from the guide book, which causes us to briefly wonder whether it's even allowed, until we discover an elderly gentleman in a long flowing trench coat and with a bowler hat on his head, evoking Sherlock Holmes on a secret mission. We follow him for several minutes in zigzag lines through District 4, where new and old collide in a wonderfully lively way. In the process, we think up abstruse stories about what this man is up to right now. Tracking down a German tax evader seems to be the most credible theory. Then Yves laughs and says: 'He's led us to the red light district.' The street is new even to Yves. We continue to stroll aimlessly until the twin towers of the Grossmünster church open up in front of us—the city's landmark. Because we usually tend to avoid such obvious tourist attractions, we climb up the countless steps—'Do something you wouldn't otherwise do', the travel guide recommends. The view over the historical old town, the nearby Lake Zurich and the impressive mountain panorama in the background is a sight to behold.



# In Zurich,

# nothing is for free.

4

### Street Art by Harald Naegeli

On the way back down, we notice two pieces of graffiti in the tower, rendered in simple curved lines that form two people in an impressively artistic way: a skeleton that reminds us of a floor lamp and an abstract female nude, easily recognisable by its pair of breasts. 'They're Harald Naegeli's,' says Yves. Here, everyone knows the so-called 'Sprayer of Zurich', who began his creative career in the 1970s, when graffiti was far from being accepted as an art form by society and the authorities. Naegeli was sometimes even condemned for his activities. He escaped a prison sentence in 1979—by which time he had already sprayed about 900 graffiti works in Zurich—by fleeing to Germany, where he became friends with Joseph Beuys—and continued his work. Yves promises to take us to a bridge which displays another of his works later on the tour. Though he qualifies it with a warning: 'The best way to discover Naegeli's work is by chance.'



5

### Zurich by the Water

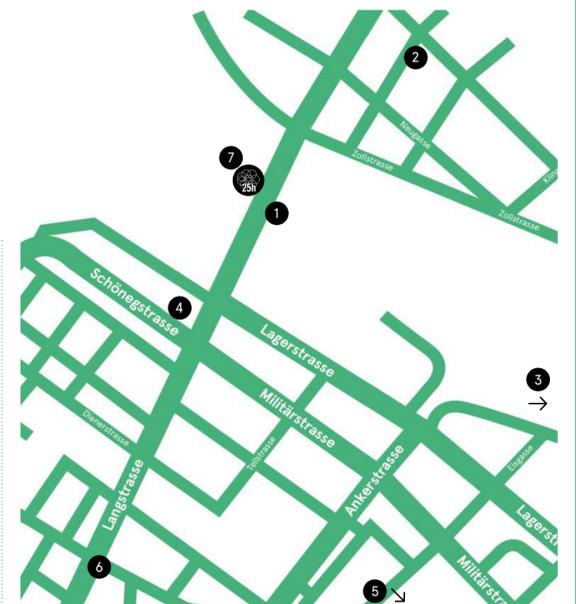
Because we liked Lake Zurich—which is appreciated as a local recreation oasis by locals and tourists alike—so much from above, we decide to stroll there from Grossmünster—it is also only a stone's throw away. On the way, there are two tasks for the photographer Yves, which we discover in the travel guide. Number 1: 'Photograph a sight of the city—but with your back to it.' Bridges, historic houses, water: because everything in the old town looks picturesque, this is not necessarily a challenge. So on to number 2: 'Photograph an unusual detail!' We walk for a while until Yves notices at some point that he has already photographed several artfully decorated gargoyles, some made of green ceramic, others decorated with dove figures, popping up all over the city. 'I've never really noticed this before, but it's true, Zurich is full of them,' he says, happy about the new insight into his home town. The drinking water from the many public fountains is free, by the way. Yves hadn't even thought of that earlier in the day.

6

### Bank Restaurant

Slowly, we start to make our way back. Because we can't remember where we came from, for once we don't pull out our smartphones—but instead ask passers-by for directions. A coincidental side effect: We learn about Patisserie Sprüngli, whose 'Luxemburgerli', something like a local version of French macarons (which the people of Zurich don't like hearing at all) is conveniently located on our route—as is the restaurant-café-bar Bank, which was actually once a branch of Credit Suisse. In the past, there have been regular riots here on Helvetiaplatz on May 1st, and the branch has apparently been on fire several times. Today, however, you can bank on the restaurant which is a safe space in culinary terms. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, drinks: Even though financial trading has ceased here, Bank is still in business from morning to night. Fresh bread comes from the baker next door, and the modern Mediterranean sharing plates in the evening are a welcome investment in any friendship.

↳ bankzurich.ch



- 1 Kosmos Buchsalon  
Lagerstrasse 104
- 2 Brockenhaus  
Neugasse 11
- 3 Grossmünster  
Grossmünsterplatz
- 4 Street Art  
Find out yourself
- 5 Zurich by the Water  
Utoquai
- 6 Bank Restaurant  
Molkenstrasse 15
- 7 Cinchona Bar  
Langstrasse 150

# TALKING BUSINESS

## Future Hospitality

TEXT CELINA PLAG



Elisabeth Johansen



Vanessa Borkmann

Tourism is booming, the world is changing. Naturally, the demands of hospitality are adapting accordingly. As innovators in the sector, Elisabeth Johansen and Prof. Dr.-Ing. Vanessa Borkmann know this well: Elisabeth as a partner of the Scandinavian design agency Styll Trampoli, which has been creating hotel interiors with a strong focus on storytelling

for the past 25 years, and Vanessa as initiator of FutureHotel, an innovation network led by the German institute Fraunhofer IAO that aims to bring research into everyday life. In conversation with COMPANION, they share their approaches to smart technologies, community thinking, and ideas for better mental health hotels.



**COMPANION: Elisabeth, Styll is all about storytelling. When it comes to hotels, what does it actually mean?**

**Elisabeth Johansen:** We always say: write the script before you do the film. Storytelling is above all an experience-based communication tool: we translate it into the hotels' concept and interior design—always looking at who the customer is, and for whom we want to create surprising moments and memories that last. To achieve that goal, we work together with a multidisciplinary team—among them artists, designers, architects, interior designers, engineers, developers, copywriters and art directors. To us, a good story becomes the foundation for clear, attractive and highly distinctive concepts.

**Can you provide an example?**

**EJ:** Take the 25hours Hotel Das Tour in Düsseldorf, for instance. When we were asked to create the interior concept, we first looked at the history of that area and found out that the so-called Quartier Central had a strong connection to France. And as the hotel is located in Düsseldorf, the city plays a big part as well. Of course the city on the Rhine inspired us, too. So we came up with the idea of a love story between a German engineer and a French artist, and the hotel is their love-child. German engineering and French artistic flair, hints of the story can be seen in the two different room categories as well as many of the details within various areas of the hotel which you can see in many of the details, like the French-style kiosk or the gastronomy concepts like the restaurant The Paris Club. We always aim to mix local heritage and culture with modern travellers' needs.

**Vanessa, you are into hospitality, too—but you approach it from another angle.**



FutureHotel showcase

**'I strongly believe that hospitality is not about only selling beds in the future anymore.'**



25hours Das Tour Düsseldorf

**Vanessa Borkmann:** Originally, I was trained as an architect, but I switched to research when I started to work at Fraunhofer IAO, which is the largest organisation for applied research in Europe. When I arrived there, hospitality was not yet a big topic, so I created the FutureHotel project that started as a think tank on future scenarios for hotels, with a focus on the hospitality sector in German-speaking countries. The general idea is to bring research into real life.

FutureHotels has been an ongoing project that will continue for another one or two years. It sees us collaborate with hotels and other players in the hospitality sector—25hours Hotels is one of our partners, for instance.

**FutureHotel also has a showcase, which was first presented at the inHaus Innovation Center in Duisburg in 2008. Can you explain the idea behind it?**

**VB:** We created a visionary hotel room that can be used as a testing field and demonstration platform. There, we explore future hotel design, architecture solutions, prototypes across the whole guest journey, from smart rooms and automated check-ins to service robots. Each represents innovation issues for the hotel of the future.

**Looking back at it over a decade later, has the future already become the present?**

**VB:** Well, all of our technological and digital inventions are definitely realisable today, but that doesn't mean our showcase needs to be replicated and implemented everywhere. Based on surveys and research, we develop and test new ideas. One of our projects was based on the question of how to improve work environments in hospitality. We led innovation workshops and surveys about daily work life. Participants could vote for future scenarios, such as: Would you want to vote for your boss every year?

**At the FutureHotel showcase, as you said, one element you tested was the smart check-in; automated processes that enable visitors to enter via an app, where receptionists are no longer needed.**

**VB:** Smart check-ins are already a reality. There are many early adopters, especially in the Asian sphere. And we have many hotels worldwide which are at least testing the concept. It will become standard in the future world of hospitality. But the level of anonymity depends on the hotel's concept, of course. The service without personnel is more likely to suit a business-related hotel or hotel that is focusing on sleeping only.

**EJ:** We see the smart check-ins as one option out of a toolbox that is expanding with new techniques and possibilities. There is still a need for human interaction, but it doesn't necessarily have to be a person behind a counter. Guests have various demands and wishes, and depending on the hotel we are developing, we try to match this and integrate it into the hotel. What we experience is that some guests appreciate the opportunity to come in late or leave early, some want to just leave quickly in the morning without having to do a formal checkout while some really want to interact, discuss and talk to a receptionist and have additional services. All this requires flexible processes solutions. But there is still a need for interaction.

**VB:** I would like to differentiate these ideas. When we talk about smart check-ins, we mean, above all, the exchange of information like guest passport and credit card details. Based on research, I can say that in the future, this exchange of data will be completely done automatically, either via an app or even in advance. Then, the question of if, or how, you greet your guests upon arrival, is a completely different one.

**Can you explain further?**

**VB:** The touchpoints you might have instead of a traditional reception can vary quite a lot, and new ideas are more than welcome. For instance, they could take the form of a bar or café at the entrance where the barkeeper or barista simply says 'Hi!', but the guest can ask questions. Or a personal concierge that welcomes you. A hologram is another option. So, the greeting has more to do with service or to which extent a hotelier embraces their visitors.

**EJ:** At Styll we always look at the bigger narrative. The lobby/reception/lounge or greeting area is one of the main areas where the idea or concept of the hotel can be communicated. So even the guest can ask questions. Or a personal concierge that welcomes you. A hologram is another option. So, the greeting has more to do with service or to which extent a hotelier embraces their visitors.



**VB:** Smart lighting is also a topic here. Not only when it comes to the entrance or public spaces. We need travelers to stay healthy, including in terms of mental health. Looking at our world that turns faster every day, combined with the increasing number of people who suffer from anxiety or depression, hoteliers need to be conscious of their visitors' state of mind. It is partially based on what we already have at home—like light that influences your mood, a bed that encourages better sleep, or smart services that reduce mental stress. Privacy and data safety are also important related topics.

**EJ:** When we create a hotel, we want people to feel good. Guests can go straight from the lobby to their rooms and might simply enjoy the interior, or they can take some time to explore the story of the entire building. This creates a certain curiosity and makes people feel more comfortable. Another factor is safety: is the bar area, for instance, designed in a way that a single female traveller would enjoy spending time there by herself? If you travel alone, you might not want to sit in the middle of the room, with all eyes on you.

**Not too long ago, guests might have been able to judge whether a hotel was nice and safe by the amount of stars it had. Today it seems like that system has lost a lot of its original power.**

**EJ:** Stars are still important, especially to big hotel chains, since they signify an international system that's easily understood everywhere in the world. But today it is definitely not the only system anymore. The hospitality sector is so much more diversified—there are hotels for any type of character. Design lovers will look for boutique hotels, then there might be hotels only for cyclists. I wouldn't be surprised if hotels specialised in catering to cat lovers, too. Today, everybody can find their niche.

**VB:** The stars are a relic from times when society abided by the class system. With the first tourist boom in the 1950s—when the middle class and even workers started to travel—it helped to provide orientation. The major criteria was always the price. That is definitely not the case anymore. Today it's all about mindset. This is also expressed in mixed lifestyles. You could go buy a pair of shoes at Chanel for 600 euros, but then you might sleep in a lively design hotel rather than in a posh five-star one.

**EJ:** We can already see that this idea of mixed lifestyle is something that even big chains adapt today, since there is not one kind of traveller anymore. At the same time, chains have already started to buy smaller hotel brands with young, cultural backgrounds. But of course there are still travelers who search for the 'opulent' spirit of a luxury concept.

**VB:** Many hotels today are in the lucky position not to have to think of how to attract any guest—but how to attract their kind of

guest. Social factors will become more important in the future. Guests ask themselves: Will I find my peer group here?

**So it is about enabling the guests to connect with their community.**

**VB:** Exactly. This is also based on surveys where guests were asked about their needs. It is about bringing the right people together. And creating experiences that make the guests want to come back.

**EJ:** Those surveys may also help to convince rather traditional hotels to change their concepts. Especially when it comes to the public areas, we see there is a will for change.

**What are those new changes we're seeing in public spaces?**

**EJ:** They are so much more diverse! Today, you might find retail stores, the new welcoming areas we mentioned before, coworking spaces, or bars that turn into real hotspots at night. And of course, gastronomy has completely changed. Ten years ago, you might have had a room for breakfast. Now, hotels really think about what culinary concept could fit into its surroundings—not only to the hotel itself, but also into the neighborhood. If the surrounding neighbourhood is missing a good cocktail bar or local specialties—then the hotel could fill the niche.

**Thinking of 25hours Hotels restaurants like Neni or Bar Shuka, you rarely see them empty—and they are always packed with a mix of locals and hotel guests.**

**VB:** It's not only about big city life. What hotels can give their neighbourhood is an important question. Co-living is also a subject here, as is the development of rural areas. This includes social questions as well as sustainability. Sustainable tourism is generally becoming more and more important.

**So to make a prediction, what might the future hotel look like?**

**EJ:** The world's population is growing, as is the number of annual travelers. If we do not want to continue destroying the environment or exploiting local communities, the hospitality sector needs to think holistically. This means well-constructed, long-lasting buildings, houses, and interiors of quality on the one hand, and good working conditions and responsibility for the local community on the other hand. There is also a trend for more local traveling; generally, traveling will be more local. People will look for local holidays, hotels for local products and suppliers. And a unique story, of course.

**VB:** To put it plainly, I strongly believe that hospitality is not about only selling beds in the future anymore. Hotels will become service hubs and sell experiences—hopefully with conscious mindsets behind them.

→ [styll.se](#)  
→ [futurehotel.de](#)

# Berlin Needs No Slogan

TEXT SILVIA SILKO



On the list of the most popular tourist cities in Europe, Berlin stands at number three: 13.5 million tourists visited the German capital in 2018, almost half of whom traveled from abroad. Berlin is in demand—that much is certain. On the one hand, tourism means a financial boost and a flourishing array of recreational activities for the city. On the other hand, local residents may be concerned about the tourists in their city: rents go up, popular places become overcrowded, and the city no longer appears to belong to its people. Balance and responsibility could offer some relief, says Burkhard Kieker. In an interview with COMPANION, the Managing Director of Visit Berlin—the capital's official marketing agency—speaks about the present and future of tourism in Berlin.

**‘Of course, we don’t want to turn the place into Disneyland, but Berlin is far from becoming that.’**

**COMPANION: Local residents are often critical of tourism increasingly turning Berlin into a superficial city—a trend, some say, is already apparent in places like London and Prague. Is there any truth to that?**

Burkhard Kieker: We believe that Berlin can only be a successful tourist destination, if the quality of life can be preserved for residents, whilst also offering tourists a quality holiday. The former should be happy to live here, and the latter should be happy to visit. The important thing is always to maintain a certain level of authenticity. Of course, we don't want to turn the place into Disneyland, but Berlin is far from becoming that.

**How does Visit Berlin work to resolve this conflict of interests?**

Berliners are indeed right: the city is growing and undergoing drastic changes at the moment. You have to keep up with it. On the other hand, a city like Berlin, the showroom of Germany, should also be shared. There tend to be various aspects to a major city: Berlin is hectic, loud, fast-paced and sometimes cramped. At the same time, it offers an abundance of culture, excellent infrastructure, a flourishing research scene and plenty of green space to relax. And other people want to be a part of that too. In short, you can't live in a global hub without sometimes getting the feeling that it can be a little overwhelming.

**Nevertheless, residents often feel that certain hotspots have become completely inaccessible. Of course, we have also noticed that there are**

certain parts of the city where there are simply too many people around. The Admiralsbrücke, Warschauer Straße, the Mauerpark, Boxhagener Platz—you can easily list the hotspots off the top of your head. That's exactly where we went to spend an entire weekend surveying passers-by. We wanted to know who they were, what they were doing there and where they came from. The results show that it can often be Berliners who make up 50 to 70 percent of those out and about, or alternatively people from nearby Spandau or Brandenburg who have come into the city for something. As a growing city, Berlin sees a lot of intra-Berlin tourism, which isn't really tourism at all. Therefore, we must warn you: be careful when voicing your frustration with tourists.

**Are there any measures that can combat the overcrowding at popular locations to any degree?**

Definitely. For example, we have made the Going Local app, which is intended to inspire guests in our city to explore the areas away from the tourist traps. The app shows everything else that Berlin has to offer. It's going very well so far. We also work together with all twelve districts to develop strategies to give visitors incentives to explore the sights of the city that are not on the typical tourist routes. This cannot happen overnight, of course; it is a very long-winded process.

**Former Mayor Klaus Wowereit gave Berlin its famous 'poor but sexy' image in 2003. Today, the city has outgrown this status: Berlin is still sexy,**

**but it's become expensive. In your opinion, what would be a fitting slogan for the city?**

Berlin doesn't need a slogan. Even just hearing the word 'Berlin' will conjure up a vivid image in most people's minds. The capital stands for a certain coolness, for freedom, and for tolerance.

**Speaking of tolerance, the Pink Pillow initiative has been in place since 2013. Hotels that are involved in the initiative commit to a special charter: The hotels do not discriminate against people of any sexual orientation, guests are provided with information about the LGBTQI+ scene, the working environment is as tolerant as possible and the hotels contribute to related social projects. 25hours Hotels is also part of the initiative. How is it shaping up so far?**

Very positively. With *Pink Pillow*, we consciously made a statement and toured the entire world with it. It's not just a statement about equality,

it is primarily one of commitment. The hotels that participate in the initiative are supposed to actively cater to the LGBTQI+ community.

**Do we still need an initiative like this in Berlin today? The city has long become an LGBTQI+ stronghold.**

Certainly, but we also want to promote it in other countries as well. We want to show everybody that people of all sexual orientations are welcome and that we pay particular attention to their needs. At the same time, the initiative also involves a political statement. We strategically visit countries that are much less open about this topic and say 'come on now!' The spirit of the initiative is the same as that of Berlin: open, tolerant and free.

visitberlin.de



## Heaven Scent

Marie Urban and her husband Alexander are not only the passionate noses and generators behind Berlin-based perfume brand Urban Scents—they're also pilots! For the first time, their two passions go together with a scent that's inspired by the smell of Berlin's sky—from high above the earth.

BER – CAVOK by Urban Scents, 180.00€

urbanscents.de

## On the Road

Los Angeles, Nicaragua, the Algarve? This stylish toy car for tiny travellers with a longboard on the top lets little ones travel to the greatest surfing destinations of the world and beyond. Imaginary adventures included.

Auto Woodie Redux by CandyLab via Smallable, 47.00€

smallable.com

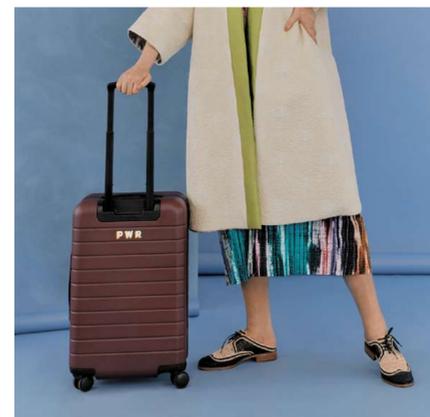


## Hold That Thought

You need to focus, but your thoughts would prefer to go on a long journey without you? This concentration tincture might help. It was created by Frank Leder, a German fashion and Tracht designer with his own unisex beauty line.

Unterprima by Frank Leder, 36.00€

mdc-cosmetic.de



## Personalise Your Journey

Enjoy a unique travel experience and never mix up your luggage with that of anyone else at the airport ever again! Now for a modest extra amount, any suitcase, personal item, and other products by Away Travel can be personalised with up to three letters.

Suitcases by Away Travel, from 245.00€

awaytravel.com



## Play it Offline

Place the blank vinyl on the platter. Connect to the music input of your choice. Press the start button—it only takes three steps to produce your own homemade record with Phonocut, which will be released at the end of 2020 by the Vienna-based analogue experts behind Supersense.

Phonocut by Supersense, 1,999.00€

Vinyl fans can enjoy the sound of Phonocut at the 25hours Hotel at MuseumsQuartier Vienna.

phonocut.com

# TRAVEL/LEISURE

Upgrade your journeys or your everyday life at home with COMPANION's selections from the best of the material world—and beyond.

## The World at Home

In times of cheap flights and mass tourism, exploring the world with the spin of a globe promises a sweet sense of nostalgia—and a high five from Greta Thunberg. This one shows a physical map with information about vegetation when it's unlit—and a political map when illuminated.

Globus by Rätthglobe 1917 Verlag, 199.00€

manufacture.de



## Women for Women

Yes, you can buy all these things we present here. Or maybe you pick less—and put some money towards supporting a sister! Since 1993, Women for Women International has helped over 479,000 traumatised and disadvantaged women in eight countries affected by war and conflict. By becoming a regular sponsor, you can further increase that number.

womenforwomeninternational.de



## Cosy Icebreaker

A scarf by the Munich-based artist and designer Ayzit Bostan is a sublime solution against cold winds or frosty air conditioning—and a fun invitation to start a conversation with people you meet along your trips. So: tell us everything!

Scarf by Ayzit Bostan, 65.00€

ayzitbostan.com

## Sound: Check

Great looks met music and the digital revolution when Danish design darling Hay collaborated with the sound experts from Sonos. The result is a series of limited edition speakers in a modern color palette that can be handled via app or voice control. Their compact size offers maximum flexibility.

HAY Sonos One Limited Edition, 259.00€

sonos.com



## In Search of Lost Things

We see a pattern here: every season, the designers behind German fashion label Odeeh use leftover fabrics that are far too beautiful to throw away and make purses out of them. Ideal for carrying and quickly accessing your travel goodies. Or anything else, for that matter.

Zipper Bag by Odeeh, 119.00€

shop.odeeh.com



# TOMATOES ON TOUR

TEXT SILVIA SILKO

Alisa Tsybinas loves touring. There's only one element of it that she finds challenging: food. As a vegan, it is not easy to find something that is free of animal products—and healthy—on the go. With her take on tomato bread, she has made a virtue out of necessity. For COMPANION, she reveals her recipe for a luxury vegan tomato sandwich.

Alisa Tsybinas is very good at transcending borders. The songs of her band, Shi Offline, are difficult to place into one specific genre. Her partner Gordian Gleiß uses driving, playful beats for electronic refinement, while the singer sings her crystal clear vocals or lets her voice oscillate between vulnerable highs and beguiling lows. Her compositions can best be situated between dream-pop, electro-punk, and ecstasy. Alisa loves to perform them at concerts. 'We dissolve into music,' says the 22-year-old. 'I try not to focus so much on the audience, but instead surrender to the dance and the hustle and bustle.' The energy of a live audience, of course, pushes the musician tremendously. That's what makes live on tour exciting for her.

The pair got to know each other by chance about four years ago. Alisa was strumming her guitar in a friend's apartment and singing along. Gordian, sound inventor, hip-hop producer, and theatre musician, was one of those listening—and at that time, happened to be looking for a new musical project. At their next meeting they wrote their first songs together, and a new band was born. In 2019 Shi Offline released their first physical LP 'Golaya', released under the Hamburg label Audiolith.

Not only does Alisa transform her ideas into music—she also studies at the Hamburg Academy of Fine Arts. It goes without saying that Shi Offline's music videos are always a little lost in reverie and call reality into question. Alisa finds it useful to withdraw from her own environment: Inner

balance is important to the musician. Driving out into the woods, leaving her mobile phone at home and immersing herself in silence—these things matter more and more to Alisa. 'I have the feeling that you need such moments, otherwise everything goes completely astray,' she says.

In autumn, you might find her picking mushrooms and collecting leaves; in summer, dipping into the lakes around Hamburg. And on tour? Staying centred becomes a little more difficult. 'Indeed,' says Alisa. 'But I have my rituals: I do a bit of yoga every morning to try to ground myself as well as I can through small things. I also make sure not to eat food that's too unhealthy.'

That's not easy as a vegan. In many backstage areas, vegetarian food is no longer scarce, but vegan options remain rare. 'Sometimes all you can do is cut up a tomato and drape it on a piece of bread,' she says, laughing. Alisa takes a critical view of the fact that veganism is still uncommon, especially for many concert organisers, and simply doesn't play a role at all in catering. Sometimes, she says, this is really frustrating. But that doesn't mean she's not a fan of tomato bread. Even at home, she prepares the classic pairing for herself. But then, it's as a luxury variant: juicy crusty bread is served with homemade spread made from cashews and fresh herbs—and with aromatic tomatoes, as fresh as possible. On tour, this version would be anything but an emergency solution.



Shi Offline  
Golaya

Audiolith / Broken Silence  
(Release: October 2019)

↳ [shioffline.com](http://shioffline.com)



## THE STAGE SANDWICH

### INGREDIENTS

MAKES 1 JAR / 250G

Tomato Spread		Tomato Sandwich	
1 Jar	Preserved artichokes (drained weight approx. 150g)	2	Slices of a strong mixed bread with a rustic crust
½ Jar	Pickled, dried tomatoes (drained weight approx. 280g)	2-3	Cherry or favourite tomatoes, preferably fresh from the market
50g	Unsalted cashews		Basil, for decoration
½	Garlic clove		
1	Generous splash of olive oil		
	fresh basil and thyme		
	Salt and pepper		

### METHOD

Drain the artichokes and tomatoes in a sieve. Pluck the basil leaves and thyme from their stalks. Purée all ingredients in a food processor and season with salt and pepper. If you want the spread to contain even more liquid, add a little more olive oil. Pour the spread into a clean, sealable glass. The paste will keep for about a week in the refrigerator.

Cut a thick slice of bread. Generously slather on the spread. Then cut the tomatoes into slices, chop the rest of the basil coarsely and garnish the open sandwich with tomatoes and basil. The tomato bread can be transported in a reusable lunch box to make an excellent travel snack.

# INSPIRED BY ICELAND

TEXT CELINA PLAG — PHOTOS DANIEL FARÖ

Welcome to Iceland—a world where fire meets ice, where long summer days stretch into endless winter nights. A land of extremes, home to temperamental volcanoes, captivating glaciers, with a natural world so breathtaking as to have, through time, influenced the creative works of a fleet of visionaries. In this edition of COMPANION, we journey to Reykjavík and the Reykjanes Peninsula to investigate how the capricious island has provided artists, designers, musicians, gastronomers and architects with boundless inspiration.



Looking out over Reykjavik's Hallgrímskirkja, Iceland's largest church, the people on the street appear as small blurred dots, wrapped up in thick garb that testifies to the extreme weather conditions they live with. The church itself is a testament to these conditions; an homage to nature's omnipotence. Jagged and hulking, its impressive structure serves as an allusion to the island's many majestic rocks, mountains and glaciers.

Iceland is a land of extremes: the winter months, where stormy winds meet long stretches of darkness, is nothing like Iceland's summer, when the sun virtually never sets. Here, famously, geological contrasts mesmerise. Having been formed by volcanic eruptions over a period of millions of years, the land of fire and ice continues to host some of the grizzliest volcanoes in the world that spew molten lava, creating endless plans of black sand and gaping, moon-like craters. The rebellious island roars, whistles, bubbles and steams—as if it were doing everything in its power to drive its inhabitants away. Yet its moodiness is of no avail. On the contrary, its radical nature has appeared time and time again to stir up remarkable creativity.

According to the Global Innovation Index, Europe's most sparsely-populated country, with around 360,000 residents, regularly ranks among the most innovative countries in the world—with a comparatively high output of famous artists, including Björk, Ragnar Eiríksson, Ólafur Eliasson and Hildur Guðnadóttir. In Iceland, creativity is encouraged from an early age, be it in art and cuisine, music, architecture or design.

Icelanders have always had to work with what they found, because historically they could not rely on shipping goods. This means that we are also quite free from the burden of classical traditions, and leave room for the development of a very local kind of creativity,' says Hrölfur Karl Cela. Despite his demanding role as architect and partner at the renowned Icelandic architectural firm Basalt, Cela took the time to warmly welcome COMPANION into his home, where he sheds light on the connection between his country's harsh climes and the traits of those who live amongst them.

The fact that settlers first decided to set up camp in such a hostile place could be seen as miraculous in itself. It is said that around 800 AD marks the arrival of the first permanent settlers, sailors predominantly from Norway and other parts of Scandinavia. They lived off fishing, later cultivating the barren and difficult soil bit by bit.

Eventually, farm animals were introduced—among them the horse, hardly bigger than a pony, but robust. Icelandic horse is a bittersweet source of national pride. Due to geographical isolation, the local breed, which is much sought-after among lovers and has never built up an immune system beyond the island, would hardly survive in the long term if other horses were brought into the country. This melancholic-tinged narrative could be equally said of the Icelandic people themselves: Living in relative geographical isolation for centuries, and under extreme conditions, does something to the soul—both individually and collectively.

'To live and survive in Iceland, people have traditionally had to work hand in hand. This has led to a family-oriented society with a strong social network,' says Hrölfur, before pausing the conversation briefly to put his youngest son to bed. Family is important here, and ancestral roots tend to run deep, stretching far back into the country's history. Hrölfur's wife comes from an old seafaring dynasty, while his own ancestors were artists.

Tradition once held that Icelandic sons and daughters were obliged to continue the professions of their parents. Nowadays, that pressure no longer exists. However, there has recently been a resurgence of interest in investigating ancestral crafts and heritage. While it could be argued that this phenomenon is in keeping with global trends romanticising the handmade, Hrölfur also believes they are a consequence of Iceland's recent financial crisis, first triggered in 2008.

'People lost their jobs and asked themselves: What now?' says Hrölfur. The ensuing search for meaning led many people to explore their own origins. As the crisis hit, a fashion and design scene blossomed, while restaurants opened as new houses were built. Iceland's architects sought inspiration in the wild nature that surrounded them. Hrölfur has always found his creativity by retracing his own roots—turning to the wise words of his grandfather, a landscape artist who had influenced him. Much of the result is evident in his work for Basalt. Founded in 2009, the architectural firm has become particularly well known for building geothermal baths, including Vök Baths, Guðlaug in Akranes, Geosea Húsavík and the Blue Lagoon Retreat, all of which embrace the local nature of Iceland's legendary hot springs.

The original plan had been to visit Geosea and the region around Húsavík in the far north of the country, to experience first hand how nature affects creativity. Yet as strong winds paralysed all air and ground traffic on the island, everyone was grounded in Reykjavik and had to change plans. It is not without irony that Iceland's north sets the scene for the crime series Trapped, which has developed into an international hit centered around inspector Andri Ólafsson, who investigates mysterious murders in the surreal northern landscapes.

Instead of venturing into the north, the journey to seek out adventure and creativity was rerouted to the Reykjanes Peninsula, which encircles the capital city of Reykjavik. First stop: the newly-opened Aurora Base Camp. The stories about Norse gods, which are told here at the igloo-shaped observatory for Northern Lights, are more exciting than any TV thriller, in any case.

Iceland is one of the best places in the world to witness the Aurora Borealis—those magical green wisps of light in the sky which feature predominantly in Norse mythology. Scientifically-speaking, the lights are the result of collisions taking place between gaseous particles in the earth's atmosphere and charged particles released by the sun. These are transported into our atmosphere by so-called solar winds—the continuous flow of charged particles from the sun into the solar system—and solar flares. But to the Vikings, these green wisps of sky were Valkyries, the female spirits that formed Odin's entourage, and who collected the souls of vanquished warriors on the battlefield, allowing them to enter Valhalla.

Those blood-thirsty, war-mongering and macho days are far behind Iceland. Few can imagine its men acting the way Norse god Thor did. Today, Iceland's society is much more progressive, scoring highly in international rankings on gender equality, for example. In 1980, the world's first female president, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, was democratically elected in Iceland. Some argue that the ensuing climate of equality helps foster creativity and meaningful innovation, especially in the remit of environmentalism.

One example of this is Kranavatt, the world's first premium tap water brand. The principle: Fill the island's high-quality water from the tap into the recyclable bottle to reduce plastic waste. The Icelandic Pledge, which enables tourists to enter into a voluntary contract to help protect Iceland's nature, is another example of how Icelandic innovation fosters environmentalism.

A highlight of the Reykjanes peninsula is Lake Kleifarvatn, the largest lake on the Reykjanes peninsula. It is said that a monster in the shape of a worm and the size of a whale lives here, a testament to the way the world's most hauntingly spectacular corners have inspired stories through centuries. Speaking of inspiration: While some might find the darkness and chill of Iceland's winter months rather unsettling, the artistic population of Iceland looks forward to the dark season as one of creativity, enjoying the fleet of festivals on the calendar. These include the Iceland Airwaves and Dark Music Days, alongside the Icelandic Photography Festival and Design March. There are several events like this in the fields of design, music, art, literature and photography that take place at different locations around the country. As a tribute to their love of the season, the Icelandic people have come up with all sorts of ways to talk about its weather. Icelandic creativity shows up especially strongly in the myriad ways they can talk about snow—the language boasts 50 words for it.

In keeping with the island's quickly-shifting extremes, to the south of the peninsula lies the geothermal area of Krýsuvík, where red, green and yellow tones stretch across a completely different kind of volcanic landscape featuring bubbling and sizzling hot mud springs. The sounds they emit are almost melodic, just as the earth's sigh at Gunnuhver, has its own music. It is sometimes said that the sounds represent the sighing spirit of Gunnuhver herself, a female ghost who once—400 years ago, according to locals—caused quite a stir in the region until a priest set a trap for her and she fell into the spring there.

However, exploring the Blue Lagoon seems to be a good choice: That hot spring not far from Reykjavik supposedly has healing water, and is one of Iceland's main attractions. In 2018, it received a newly attached spa complex, designed by Basalt. The new building connects the existing and the new lagoon, sitting within the lava, so that the natural lava flows at the perimeter of the lagoon as well as on the interior walls of the spa.

In the darkness, the natural pool takes on a mystical glow. Steam rises from the water and is caught in the surrounding lights. In the warm water you can drift around. Those who stay for a while will notice how the muscles slowly relax, and the mind starts to tingle. Thoughts wander in all directions and begin to form new ones—and there they are. Creative ideas, fresher than ever.

### What to Do

**Hallgrímskirkja Church**

↳ [hallgrimskirkja.is](http://hallgrimskirkja.is)

**Aurora Basecamp**

↳ [aurorabasecamp.is](http://aurorabasecamp.is)

**Blue Lagoon**

↳ [bluelagoon.com](http://bluelagoon.com)

**Harpa Concert Hall**

↳ [en.harpa.is](http://en.harpa.is)

**FlyOver Iceland**

↳ [flyovericeland.com](http://flyovericeland.com)

'To live and survive in Iceland, people have traditionally had to work hand in hand. This has led to family-oriented society with a strong social network.'

### Where to Eat

**Skáll!**

↳ [skalrvk.com](http://skalrvk.com)

**Dill**

↳ [dillrestaurant.is](http://dillrestaurant.is)

**Hlemmur Foodhall**

↳ [hlemmurmatholl.is](http://hlemmurmatholl.is)

**Bryggjan**

↳ [bryggjan.is](http://bryggjan.is)

### Explore Nature

**Keifarvatn Lake**

**Krýsuvík Geothermal Area**

**Gunnuhver & Lighthouse**

**Brimketill Pond**

**Karlinn at the cliffs**

↳ [visitreykjanes.is](http://visitreykjanes.is)



### Festivals

**Winter Lights Festival**

↳ [visitreykjavik.is](http://visitreykjavik.is)

**List í ljósi Festival**

↳ [listiljosi.com](http://listiljosi.com)

**Food & Fun**

↳ [foodandfun.is](http://foodandfun.is)

**Dark Music Days**

↳ [darkmusicdays.is](http://darkmusicdays.is)

**Icelandic Photography Festival**

↳ [tipf.is](http://tipf.is)

**Design March**

↳ [designmarch.is](http://designmarch.is)

**Blues Festival**

↳ [blues.is](http://blues.is)

**Stockfish Film Festival**

↳ [stockfishfestival.is](http://stockfishfestival.is)

**Reykjavik International Literary Festival**

↳ [bokmenntahatid.is](http://bokmenntahatid.is)

**Iceland Writer's Retreat**

↳ [icelandwritersretreat.com](http://icelandwritersretreat.com)



At Weingut Krutzler the day starts quaint and quiet.

Burgenland has no mountains or valleys to speak of, and a distinct lack of yodellers and alpine architecture. The majority of the landscape is as flat as the proverbial pancake. German is the language in most villages, while Hungarian and Croatian are also spoken in some areas. Doesn't sound much like Austria? But indeed it is—this is a region which formerly belonged to Hungary and only became part of Austria after World War I, and which has since been the most unconventional part of the country. It forms the western edge of the Pannonian Basin—you can almost look over and catch a glimpse of Hungary in the distance.

The dishes that are served up here are pretty uncharacteristic too: for example, *Mohnsoufflé* (poppy seed soufflé), *Moorohsensteak* (a local kind of ox steak) or *Uhudlermarmelade* (Uhudler jam, made from a local grape variety. On offer is regional, award-winning cuisine, desserts and farm produce, and it is one of Austria's most exciting wine-growing regions. All are excellent reasons to embark on a gourmet tour of Burgenland.

Let's start with the wine. Covering an area of 13,200 hectares, the small state has the second-largest cultivated area in Austria, along with the highest temperatures.

In the southern part, close to the Hungarian border, lies Eisenberg, a subregion of Burgenland with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status. Deutsch Schützen, or Némethlővő-Csejke in Hungarian, has around 1,000 inhabitants and three tourist attractions, all of which are churches. The wines are acclaimed by atheists and Christians alike—such as those produced by Reinhold Krutzler, whose wines embody the terroir—red, fruity, loamy, or those of Christoph Wachter-Wiesler. The thirty-year-old operates one of the few businesses in south Burgenland which is run according to biodynamic principles. His *Olaszrizling*, the Hungarian name for Welschriesling, is divine.

A wider selection of first-class wine-growing estates can be found further north around Lake Neusiedl, a steppe lake surrounded by reeds, three-quarters of which belongs to Austria, with one tip belonging to Hungary. The best place to start is in Schützen am Gebirge at Georg Prieler's vineyard, which offers superbly matured white wines in addition to Blaufränkisch; from there move on to the dessert wine specialist Feiler-Artinger in Rust am See—make sure you sample the local speciality *Ruster Ausbruch*—and finally on to Sankt Margarethen to visit Rosi Schuster, whose son Hannes is continuing the family tradition of great single estate wines.

In Neusiedl am See, newcomer HP Harrer produces wines which may not be to the tastes of traditionalists, but are tantalising for those with an open mind. Alexander Koppitsch also plies his trade in the same place and generates interest with his natural wines.

On the eastern side of the lake, in Gols (with just under 4,000 inhabitants, and over a hundred wine-growing estates), Judith Beck has made a name for herself with stubbornly

natural wine, as has self-professed purist Claus Preisinger with the sparkling red wine, *Pusztai Libre*. Gernot Heinrich is proof that large enterprises of over a hundred hectares can also be run in harmony with nature—through the production of wines which are both charming and challenging at the same time. Also based in Gols are Paul Achs and Hans and Anita Nittnaus, who tend towards a more classic style, and Andreas Gsellmann, whose mash-fermented Traminer has made it as far as the trendy bars of New York. They all belong to the Respekt group, an association of 23 winegrowers who work in accordance with biodynamic principles, minimising interventions in nature as far as possible.

This principle is implemented particularly resolutely at Weingut Meinklang in Pamhagen. As Austria's lowest-lying borough, it lies directly on the Hungarian border, with one section of the Meinklang estate situated on the other side of the border. Three brothers cultivate 200 hectares, including horses, cattle, prized Mangalitsa pigs, fields with ancient grains such as emmer and Einkorn wheat, as well as 70 hectares of vineyards. Hannes, Werner and Lukas Michlits are the epitome of self-sufficient. During a lunch together—they tuck into salsify bake and steaks from their own slaughterhouse—terms such as soul, cosmos and Rudolf Steiner crop up. It comes as no surprise, then, that the family founded Burgenland's first Steiner school.

Regionality and family are two terms which you will encounter again and again on your trip through Burgenland, and this also goes for the Csencsits family. Mother Helga bakes bread, daughter-in-law Melanie is the hostess, and her husband Jürgen works in the kitchen. On his own, too—which is madness for a top-class restaurant which seats 60. The reason for this, however, is not so much excessive ambition, but rather a lack of young blood. 'Very few people want to train as chefs, and of those that do, many do not see it through,' says the 43-year-old. The few talented chefs who are here tend to be drawn to the big cities of this world, rather than Harmisch, a village in the municipality of Kohfidisch with 120 residents. This is a shame, because trainee chefs could learn a lot from Jürgen. Like how to put an Austrian twist on the Hungarian fish soup *Halásze*, or how *Eierschwammerlsterz*, a chanterelle mushroom polenta dish, can be transformed into a delicacy. The talented chef spent 15 years cooking at the Taubenkobel in Schützen am Gebirge, which is still a well-known name in Austrian haute cuisine. Taubenkobel was established in 1984 by two self-taught entrepreneurs. Head chef Walter Eselböck has gained two Michelin stars over the years, whilst his wife Eveline quenched their guests' thirst as sommelière.

Today, it's their son-in-law, Alain Weissgerber, who is in charge of serving up the so-called 'Pannonian cuisine'—strictly regional dishes inspired by Nordic cooking, such as *Zandernockerln* (pike-perch dumplings), *Welsleber in brauner Butter* (catfish liver with brown butter) and *Heureme* (they sauce). Next door, you can find the Greisslerei—the Eselböcks'

# A Culinary Journey

TEXT EVA BIRINGER

Culinary tourism in Burgenland: this part of the Austrian Pannonian Basin is not only a place where excellent wines flourish, but it is also worth visiting for its superb regional cuisine.

THIS TRIP WAS SUPPORTED BY BURGENLAND TOURISMUS.

second, more down-to-earth business in terms of prices and atmosphere. To describe the cooking as simple would, however, do it a great disservice. The Pannonian antipasti platter cleverly brings together the flavours of the region, as does the poached farmhouse egg with Jerusalem artichoke cream. Barbara Eselböck is a decidedly attentive hostess here, as she is at the Taubenkobel. Her sister Stephanie Eselböck-Tschepe, in turn, is behind the hip natural wines of Gut Oggau, along with her husband Eduard. The wine-growing estate is situated just a few kilometres from the Taubenkobel. It's particularly worth visiting between April and September, when the *Heuriger* (local tavern) is open.

There are many of these wine taverns, also known under the name *Buschenschank*, which serve wine from the latest harvest in Burgenland and throughout the rest of Austria. Most also offer a cold buffet, complemented by a small selection of more substantial hot meals. In the green inner courtyard at Gut Oggau, on the other hand, the appetiser they offer is a basket of raw organic vegetables from the Seewinkel, a region on the eastern shore of Lake Neusiedl renowned for its agricultural produce. The local wines are way above average, both in terms of price and quality. If you're looking for the local speciality, *Uhudler*—a rather coarse rosé with a wild strawberry aroma—you won't find it here, which some would say is a good thing.

*Uhudler's* roots go back to the southern part of Burgenland. In Deutsch Schützen, the Wachter-Wiesler family not only runs the aforementioned wine-growing estate, but also the Ratschen restaurant. Stefan Csar and Bernd Konrath are in charge of the cooking here, with the latter defying the zeitgeist with the statement, 'Not everything has to be regional.' Several things are, nonetheless—such as the pigeon meat from breeder Mettnagel, the tomatoes from Erich Stekovic, the so-called 'tomato grower extraordinaire', or native herbs such as chickweed. And this includes Uhudler too, which rounds off the tasting menu in the form of a sorbet. This has earned them two chef's toques from Gault-Millau, an honour of which Austria is proud. On Sundays, the restaurant is reserved for locals. Family is important in Burgenland, as well as good neighbourliness.

One place which is no longer as family-oriented as it used to be is the Gasthaus zur Dankbarkeit in the town of Podersdorf, which has around 2,000 inhabitants. This is down to Wolfram Siebeck: ever since the famous restaurant critic, who died in 2016, wrote a euphoric review of the restaurant, the owner Josef Lentsch hasn't had to worry about attracting foreign visitors. Josef, too, is particular about regionality—the menu mentions Pannonian saffron and

Steppe beef from Pamhagen; there is pan-fried pike perch with horseradish sauce and beetroot risotto, or pan-fried *Blunze* (black pudding with paprika sauerkraut). The portions are generous; the atmosphere is truly that of a village inn. As a foreigner, you will be briefly examined when you enter, greeted in Austrian German and then seated at the bar.

The perfect place to round off your culinary tour through Burgenland less typically Austrian than it is full of international flair, many years ago, it was here, at Gut Purbach, that Max Stiegl became the youngest-ever chef to be awarded a Michelin star. When asked about his schedule, the extremely laid-back 39-year-old replies: 'I always have time.' The father-of-three also finds time to get involved in politics. Once, he kicked the right-wing populist FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) politician Heinz-Christian Strache—who was at that time still Vice-Chancellor, and who later became known for the Ibiza Affair—out of his restaurant, because his political beliefs were so far from Stiegl's own views. And because, as the owner, it was his prerogative to do so. Living out your values is important to Stiegl, especially in Burgenland, where people who speak German, Hungarian and Croatian coexist peacefully alongside each other, and places have multilingual signage. Stiegl was born in Slovenia, and grew up in Salzburg. He became known for his offal dishes and the *Sautanz*, an annual slaughter feast which takes place in November, and involves eating and drinking 'until your mother tongue deserts you'. Stiegl is also happy to serve up a meat-free menu upon request. Each dish is a testament to his brilliant use of Pannonian produce, such as pike perch with aubergines from the Seewinkel, as well as *Lammbeuschel*, the Austrian name for lung ragout, or chicken stuffed with truffles and goose liver and cooked in a bladder.

If you have shared a drink—or three—with the chef, you're probably best advised to stay overnight. And the next day, take the plunge in Lake Neusiedl to cool off. Because Austria's most diverse corner doesn't only boast magnificent cuisine; it also offers the best bathing opportunities, but that's another story.



At Weingut Meinklang visitors can witness different steps of wine production.

**'Regionality and family are two terms which you will encounter again and again on your trip through Burgenland.'**



Perfect pairing: Restaurant Taubenkobel offers exquisite food with their wine.



One can admire the view over Burgenland from the wine stocks of Weingut Krutzler.

## Burgenland's wine growers

Booking is essential prior to visiting any of the wine estates.

**Reinhold Krutzler**  
Deutsch Schützen  
↳ [krutzler.at](mailto:krutzler.at)

**Wachter-Wiesler**  
Deutsch Schützen  
↳ [wachter-wiesler.at](mailto:wachter-wiesler.at)

**Prieler**  
Schützen am Gebirge  
↳ [prieler.at](mailto:prieler.at)

**Feiler-Artinger**  
Rust  
↳ [feiler-artinger.at](mailto:feiler-artinger.at)

**HP Harrer**  
Neusiedl/See  
↳ [h.p.harrer@weinbau-harrer.at](mailto:h.p.harrer@weinbau-harrer.at)

**Koppitsch**  
Neusiedl/See  
↳ [weinbaut-koppitsch.at](mailto:weinbaut-koppitsch.at)

**Judith Beck**  
Gols  
↳ [weinbaut-beck.at](mailto:weinbaut-beck.at)

**Claus Preisinger**  
Gols  
↳ [clauspreisinger.at](mailto:clauspreisinger.at)

**Heinrich**  
Gols  
↳ [heinrich.at](mailto:heinrich.at)

**Paul Achs**  
Gols  
↳ [paul-achs.at](mailto:paul-achs.at)

**Hans & Anita Nittnaus**  
Gols  
↳ [nittnaus.wine](mailto:nittnaus.wine)

**Andreas Gsellmann**  
Gols  
↳ [gsellmann.at](mailto:gsellmann.at)

**Meinklang**  
Pamhagen  
↳ [meinklang.at](mailto:meinklang.at)

**Gut Oggau**  
Oggau  
↳ [gutoggau.com](mailto:gutoggau.com)



TEXT EMILY MAY

What makes four ordinary women from Hamburg want to become the first German team to take part in the world's toughest ocean-rowing race? COMPANION met founding team members Meike Ramuschkat and Catharina Streit to find out how they've gone from rowing novices to Atlantic Ocean-ready in the space of a year.

Decorated in a maritime theme, and located in close proximity to Hamburg's famed harbor, the 25hours Hotel HafenCity is a fitting location to meet Meike Ramuschkat and Catharina 'Cätschi' Streit, considering the nautical nature of their upcoming challenge. Both 33 years old and best friends since the age of 15, their friendship has been based on athletic pursuits from the very beginning, when they met while playing on the same field hockey team. Since then, the Hamburg-based pair have completed many sporting events together, including climbing Mount Kilimanjaro last year. Now, they've shifted their sights from the land to the sea with their latest endeavor—to become the first German team to take part in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge (TWAC).

Starting in early December each year, the TWAC is widely known as one of the toughest ocean rowing events in the world. Sponsored by Talisker Whisky—a distillery based on the Isle of Skye producing the world's oldest Single Malt Scotch Whisky—the race sees teams of varying sizes row 5,550 kilometers from the shores of La Gomera in the Canary Islands across the Atlantic to English Harbour, Antigua. According to Meike and Catharina, neither of them had any experience in watersports before deciding to take part in the race. So what ignited their interest in this extreme competition? 'I saw the documentary Four Mums in A Boat—a film telling the story of four working mums from Yorkshire, England, who were the first female team to complete the TWAC in 2015—and I was really inspired by it,' says Catharina. 'I think it was the fact that they weren't professional rowers, and started from zero to try and achieve something that at first may have seemed unreachable,' she continues, explaining how she called Meike immediately after watching the film to beg her to take part in the race with her. At first, Meike was reluctant, until she coincidentally happened upon the 2017 TWAC teams setting off while she was on holiday in La Gomera with her boyfriend. Struck by the electric atmosphere,

'I video called Cätschi, showed her around, and said on my god, we have to do it!'

And so began a year of intense training. Initially heading down to their local rowing club for every class possible, they soon linked up with trainer Stefanie Kluge. A pharmaceutical assistant and experienced rower, 51-year-old Stefanie began to lead them through a program of technique and strength exercises—'you use different muscles than you do for running,' adds Catharina, who is also a seasoned triathlete—to prepare them for the intense challenge to come. During this time, 51-year-old Stefanie attempted to match Meike and Catharina with other rowers to make them a four-strong team. After little success, and asking the permission of her family, she decided to join the team herself. Stefanie's daughter Timna, a medical technologist, was the last to join. At 26, she is the youngest member of the all-female group which now goes by the name of Team RowHome.

Alongside the physical demands of their intense training schedule, the team has found it challenging to balance preparations for the TWAC with other commitments in their everyday lives. 'It's difficult to handle both a full-time job and training,' says Catharina, who works as the Head of Quality Control for a well known Hamburg coffee roasting company. 'We always do muscle work in the morning before we start our jobs, as well as training in the evenings and on the weekends,' she continues. 'We have to factor in all the organisational elements and logistics, like attending appointments and doing our own media and marketing,' adds Meike, whose day job as a cardiologist has earned her the position as the ship's doctor.

While it is incredibly inspiring that the first German team to take part in the TWAC will be comprised solely of women the first German woman to cross the Atlantic solo was Janice Jakait from Lengfeld, Saxony in 2011 Meike admits that they didn't set out

on the challenge with a feminist agenda. 'It wasn't what motivated me in the beginning,' she explains, 'but hopefully we can be role models, and try to motivate girls from different backgrounds to do everything they want to, even if everybody says they can't.' This motivation to inspire the next generation is also linked to the fact that the team is rowing to raise money for two children's charities: Hamburg-based organisation Zeit für Zukunft, which offers mentorship opportunities for children between six and 16, and Kinderlachen, a German charity helping sick and needy children across the country. 'Everyone kept telling us we should choose an ocean-centered, environmentalist charity,' says Meike. 'We know that they are important and that these issues are definitely worth rowing for, but we are friends with one of the leaders and founders of the charity from Hamburg. We really liked the idea of doing something close to home and giving back to our local community.'

Various women have rowed the Atlantic both alone and in teams—the first solo row was completed by American Victoria Murden McClure in 1999, and the fastest female solo row was rowed by British adventurer Kiko Matthews in 2018, just months after undergoing neurosurgery. However, ocean rowing is currently still a male dominated sport. The demographics of TWAC's participants speak for themselves. Since 2013, the competition has seen a total of 15 all-female teams with the addition of four mixed teams, and in this year's competition, Team RowHome are one of only five all-female teams, with an additional brother-and-sister team from the UK and US. With a total of 36 teams this year's TWAC includes approximately only 16 percent of teams with female representation. This being said, numbers are rising by the year. 'As the race organizer of the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, Atlantic Campaigns are proud, motivated and inspired to see the ever evolving number of females teams entering the race,' a spokesperson from Atlantic Campaigns said in an email statement. 'The days of Ocean Rowing being a predominantly male sport are soon to be in the past with our female teams proving that discrimination, sexism and gender stereotyping is outdated. The Atlantic Ocean is no place for this—everyone has an equal chance of success.'

Ocean rowing first became a mainstream competitive sport with the launch of the Atlantic Rowing Race—now the TWAC—in 1997. Since then, other competitions that challenge rowers to traverse the tumultuous waters of the Atlantic have followed, as has the Great Pacific Race, the first rowing race to take place on

the Pacific Ocean in 2014. But ocean rowing is not the only activity pushing people to their limits, as a growing interest in the extreme is permeating all areas of sport for both professional and amateur participants. From paragliding to surfing, mountain climbing to parkour, pursuits that have an element of—sometimes life-threatening—risk have grown significantly in popularity over the last decade. In a 2016 article, The Guardian reported that the number of 'first jumps' recorded by the British Parachute Association had risen from 39,100 in 2006 to 59,679 in 2015. According to The Himalayan Database, 2018 was also a record year for numbers of people climbing Mount Everest, with 802 people successfully reaching the summit—an increase of 132 since the last record year in 2016.

But alongside the successes, there are always casualties, as the Himalayan Database's record of five deaths in Spring 2018 evidences. With this in mind, what is the appeal of the dangerous aspect of extreme sports? For American swimmer Sarah Thomas—who became the first woman to swim the English Channel four times without stopping in 2019—the attraction came from her motivation to test what her body was capable of. 'As I was doing 20-mile swims, it occurred to me that I could do more, and I wanted to see what that more was,' Sarah told filmmaker Jon Washer in an interview. According to a recent article on BBC News, her support team also stated that she used swimming as a way to cope with her treatment for breast cancer, dedicating her record-breaking swim to other survivors. Turning to the sea and water to aid mental health and overcome personal turmoil has been a recurring motivation for many sportswomen. Various swimming memoirs—from Alexandra Haminsey's Leap In describing open water swimming as a meditative path to self acceptance, to Canadian Jessica J. Lee's Turning, which casts cold water swimming as a cure for heartbreak—testify that for some, the risk inherent in taking to the world's seas, lakes, and oceans can be balanced out by water's life-affirming properties.

Of course, this doesn't negate the obvious challenges the ocean can pose, meaning that Hamburg's Team RowHome have faced some skepticism from friends and family about whether they should be taking part in the TWAC. They're not wrong to be concerned, as the competition lists hurricanes, whales, drifting containers, sun exposure, ten-meter high waves, and lack of sleep as some of the obstacles that teams may face. 'My parents are still not really in favour of me doing it,' Meike admits. 'My partner didn't think I was serious about it at first, then he got mad, but now he's



'Hopefully we can be role models, and try to motivate girls to do everything they want to, even if everybody says they can't.'

# Hamburgers in a

OK,' she adds with a wry smile. 'I think that when you first decide to take part, you don't think of the extreme weather conditions or what could happen on the ocean,' admits Catharina, whose family were also initially reticent to let her compete, but have now proudly booked flights out to Antigua to meet her at the finish line. 'We've done 30-hour practice rows on the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, where we encountered winds and some larger waves, but nothing that will compare to the Atlantic,' adds Meike. 'We obviously haven't faced any hurricanes yet, and we hope we won't! That is something that we're scared of.' Having named their boat after the sea goddess 'Doris' from Greek mythology, the team is sure to have mystical forces on their side to help them cope with unpredictable acts of nature. 'She will save us!' says Meike playfully.

All the emotions and ups and downs of the team's preparations are being captured by Close Distance Productions, a Hamburg-based company who are transforming their inspirational tale into a feature-length documentary. 'It's a funny story, actually,' says Meike, smiling as she recalls how the team were put into contact with the production company. 'Steff's husband is a doctor. He works with a wheelchair basketball team whom the film team have recently created a movie about.' After telling the crew the story of four girls from Hamburg who wanted to be the first German team to take part in the TWAC—leaving out the fact that one of them was his wife—Close Distance Productions took an interest, met the rowers, and soon decided to document their journey. Before long, 'they started following us around everywhere,' says Meike. 'They've joined us on the big steps of the journey, like on the safety trainings, and when we took the boat to England.'

After being followed by a camera crew, and having such a dramatic change of lifestyles over the past year, it's reasonable to presume that it will be hard for the team to adapt back to everyday life once the TWAC is over. 'If you talk to people who have rowed the Atlantic, or any ocean, some will say that everything is different afterward and you become a different person,' says Meike. She herself is unsure whether it will be so life-changing. 'I think it will be a very impressive experience, and it may change my view on a few things in life but I don't think it'll change my life completely. We'll see. I'll let you know in February!'

The big question is: will Team RowHome continue to row even after they've crossed the Atlantic? Meike and Catharina are confident their teammates Stefanie and Timna will—given their participation in the sport even before the TWAC—but are unsure

when it comes to themselves. Perhaps that's because they already have their sights set on new and different challenges? 'We've always said we'd like to do the Marathon des Sables,' says Catharina with a gleam in her eye, referring to the famed race across the Sahara desert. 'Many ocean rowers do it, actually. The four mums, the first female team to row the TWAC, some of them did it,' she adds, explaining how the team have been encouraged to sign up for projects or sports events after their Atlantic crossing to avoid 'falling into a hole' and feeling like they have too much time on their hands.

When asked if she would ever encourage people to take up a similar challenge, Meike suddenly becomes very serious. 'I think if someone has an inner feeling or a need to do something like this, then they will decide to do it by themselves,' she says definitively. 'I wouldn't recommend that just anyone do it, because you really need to want it so badly that you can make it through the year of training, and all this double work. Either you really want it, or you don't.'

Follow Team RowHome's journey on [wellenbrecherinnen.de](https://www.wellenbrecherinnen.de)



# Boat



# A Reader's Digest

TEXT TAKIS WÜRGER  
ILLUSTRATION JANIK SÖLLNER

There are lots of ways to explore the world. By flying somewhere, for example. Or by reading. Literature has always attempted to broaden horizons and take readers on journeys to the farthest corners of the earth. Even our cities can be brought to life in books, as journalist and author Takis Würger well knows. For COMPANION, he composed an international literary tour.

## Berlin ①

Berlin is the capital of German authors. Robert Seethaler, Judith Hermann, Dirk Kurbjuweit and a few others all live in the same little neighbourhood in Kreuzberg. It may be a little unimaginative to refer to their books. Instead, people visiting Berlin may want to take a look at *Luft nach unten* (ever downward) by the young Berlin author Aron Boks. It's a non-fiction book about the rarely-discussed topic of eating disorders among men. Boks writes from his own experience in soft yet powerful language, peppered with strong imagery.

## Vienna ②

Vienna is home to the dark lord of German-language literature: Thomas Glavinic. He's a little sinister, and it's not entirely clear whether you would want him as a son-in-law, but hardly anybody can write as beautifully and captivatingly in the German language as 'Glavi' does. His masterpiece *Das größere Wunder* (the bigger miracle) tells a story of love, friendship and mountaineering, and is so wonderful that I'm feeling the need to read it again right now.

## Munich ④

There is a moment in Ferdinand von Schirach's *Collini Case* where the hero meets with a lawyer at a luxury hotel in Munich, followed by a visit to the English Garden. As is typical of Schirach's work, the hero looks at the birds and thinks about something tragic, aristocratic and clever. Hardly anybody writes as cleanly as Schirach does. He illuminates the grey areas of guilt. From the very beginning, you hope that this book will continue forever.

## Zurich ⑥

There is one great novel involving Zurich—one which tells the story of a young woman and a vampire. With *Melodie der Nacht* (melody of the night), Sylvia Madsack created a masterpiece and paid homage to the Swiss city. After reading it, you'll want to go straight to the Kronenhalle, drink a glass of full-bodied red wine and search the so-called Swiss Gold Coast for the perfectly-designed vampire villa. The book is still a well-kept secret, but hopefully that will soon change.

## Düsseldorf ③

There's nowhere in Germany where I have eaten better Japanese food than in Düsseldorf. I have also heard from my style icon Tyler Brulé that nobody cuts hair as well as Japanese hairdressers, which is why I always consider popping into a salon whenever I'm in town. Because Japan is superb and so typically Düsseldorf to me, I recommend Martin Suter's *Allmen und der Koi* (Allmen and the koi) for this city. A fantastic, compact detective novel in which Detective Allmen must locate a stolen koi carp.

## Frankfurt ⑤

When I think about Frankfurt, I think about the Book Fair and how it feels to sit on a podium after a night of partying and with too much caffeine in your bloodstream, talking your head off. We once managed to sneak into this famous critics' reception at the Unselld Villa. My companion had nicked some nonsense books from the shelves and was being a little rowdy. I was so dreadfully embarrassed—I was only there because I wanted to see Nino Haratischvili up close. Her novel *The Eight Life* is still one of the strongest I've ever read. As thick as a paving slab, and worth every page at that. The Villa belongs to her publisher. Unfortunately, Nino wasn't there.

## Cologne ⑦

One of Germany's top publishing houses, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, is located in Cologne. This year, they published a small but powerful book: *Laufen* (walking) by Isabel Bogdan. It's a hard-hitting, honest and tragic book about a woman who tries with all her might to overcome her grief. *Laufen* is a great piece of literature and ultimately pays homage to life itself.

## Paris ⑧

If I could step into a time machine, I would probably travel to the 1920s to see Ernest Hemingway in Paris. Hemingway was surely an atrocious, stubborn and misogynistic man, but he could write so well that I would happily read his novels on my knees. Like *Garden of Eden*, a story about a young, affluent couple who spend their honeymoon on the French Riviera and eventually break up. Tragic, funny, secretive and, best of all, incomplete. It's as if he wanted to tell us over two glasses of Cuban rum that the most beautiful stories are the ones we finish ourselves.

## Florence ⑨

There are books that manage to convey a message in just a few pages, while others may need hundreds. One such novella is Alessandro Baricco's *Novcento*, a little book that generates a force like no other I've ever read. *Novcento* tells the story of a man born on an ocean liner, who one day decides to sit down at the piano in the ship's ballroom and realises that he was born with a gift. Never have I encountered a book whose author writes about music as eloquently as he does.

## Hamburg ⑩

The great talent in young German literature, Nora Gantenbrink, lives and writes in Hamburg. She wrote *Verficktes Herz* (fucking heart), the best collection of short stories I've ever read. It contains lots of little stories about love, and how it feels when it falls apart. Some of them will take you to St. Pauli or the Hafencity. One amazing story from this lovely little book is the story about Rö, a man who has always lost at everything—then on a trip to London, he wins it all for once.

## Dubai ⑪

Set in the capital of air conditioning and white cars, the best book for escaping the world, the heat and the tourists looking for oil for a day is *Tyll* by master author Daniel Kehlmann. It's the story of Till Eulenspiegel, the story of Germany during the Thirty Years' War, and the story of the last dragon in the north. Wonderful.

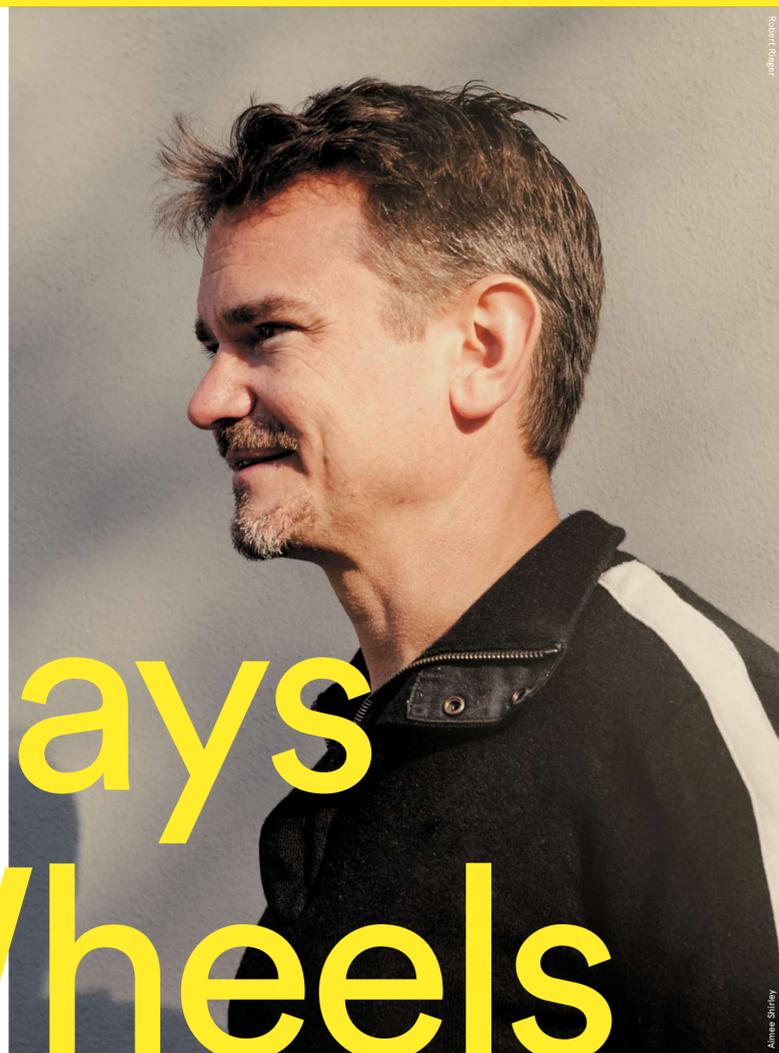
Takis Würger, born in 1985, learned his craft at the Henri-Nannen-Schule of Journalism and studied intellectual history at Cambridge, but did not graduate. He works as an editor for the news magazine *Der Spiegel*. His debut novel *The Club* was published in 2017 and was awarded the lit.Cologne debut prize. In 2019, Hanser published his second novel, *Stella*.

In cooperation with Hanser  
hanser-literaturverlage.de

the sooner now



# Holidays on Wheels



TEXT MANUEL ALMEIDA VERGARA  
IN COOPERATION WITH MINI

Car sharing is set to change the way we experience new cities. Olivier Reppert, CEO of SHARE NOW, is sure of that. Following the Car2go and DriveNow merger, he is at the head of a huge mobility company. And he took the time for a new episode of 'The Sooner Now' podcast—to chat about holidays.

Olivier Reppert's schedule is currently packed—even if he describes his role in a poetic way. 'Since the perfect marriage of Car2go and DriveNow, I've been the CEO of SHARE NOW,' says the Frenchman with a buttery-soft accent. What Olivier summarises so beautifully—the successful merger of two companies, bringing together what belongs together—also involves a lot of work.

In around 30 cities across Europe and North America, SHARE NOW now offers around 20,000 vehicles in its car fleet. Around four million registered customers worldwide rent cars via their smartphones. And since 2019, Olivier has been at the head of this huge company. To ask him to chat about holidays, of all things, is courageous—to say the least.

Even so, Lena Heiß and Fabian Ebeling, the hosts of 'The Sooner Now' podcast, go ahead and ask him anyway. 'Holidays? Sure,' says Olivier. He likes to explore foreign cities, immerse himself in the history of countries. 'What I find so great about Europe, for example, is that you can be in a completely different cultural environment within an hour,' he says. 'Also in terms of gastronomy, which is of course always very important to me as a Frenchman.' But

in conversation with Lena and Fabian, the subject matters beyond beautifully-plated dishes.

Since 2019, Lena and Fabian have been moderating the podcast for the The Sooner Now initiative of the same name, which MINI founded in 2016 together with the online magazine Friends of Friends. On The Sooner Now's online platform, at talks and conferences, answers are sought to many of the questions of our time, inventories are taken and future ideas are voiced. At the centre of the initiative is urban development and speculation about urban utopias. Or the associated podcast, the hosts invite a guest to the MINI passenger seat every month to discuss these topics on a joyride through the city.

Urban spaces? Car sharing? Holidays? How are new forms of mobility changing tourism, and the ways we experience and develop cities? As CEO of SHARE NOW, these are the questions that drive Olivier. 'Urban spaces everywhere face similar challenges,' he says. Questions of the conditions of urban spaces, for example, are common to all cities. All metropolises offer special challenges—and with them, opportunities. For example cities, Olivier says, 'that are really good for electric vehicles.'

With the development of the MINI Electric, which will be launched next spring, MINI is also focusing on sustainable solutions for living together in the city. Such approaches are already forming the decisive tourism trend of the coming years, Olivier believes: 'Travel has become very easy, but people will be even more concerned about their CO2 footprint. Everyone has understood that we have to pay more attention to our planet.'

Share instead of buy? With a focus on electric mobility as well? SHARE NOW is also likely to play an increasingly important role in future holiday planning: 'Initially, I underestimated how many customers appreciate being able to use our vehicles with their German account in Rome, Milan or Madrid as well,' Olivier admits.

Of course, the competition is fierce, especially on holidays. By train, by bus—discovering a new city via public transport is exciting. Sometimes the faces on a subway reveal more about a city than the pretty facades of houses that fly past tourists on a car ride above ground. 'You get a completely different feeling for how people are in a city, and how the mentality is there,' Olivier notes.

SHARE NOW's services can therefore be a useful addition to local public transport. 'To dive into a city, I find this flexibility very charming and also important,' says Olivier. However, not everyone wants to immerse themselves in a city, some would rather spend their holidays far beyond its borders. Especially those who spend their daily lives between a train seat and an office tower may like to swap their houses for a view of the horizon.

Car sharing in rural areas—so far, this is only a dream of the future. And that's exactly what MINI and Friends of Friends are interested in with their The Sooner Now initia-

tive. So how does SHARE NOW intend to respond to the growing demand for countryside trips? After all, the company's range of products and services has so far not only been limited to urban areas, but rather exclusive to large cities. 'We first have to expand our use cases,' says Olivier. After all, car sharing was originally intended as a short-term rental solution; today, cars are rented for just 30 minutes on average.

'But of course, our users also want to drive to the countryside and need a vehicle for several days or a week,' Olivier says, adding that this is a direction he will explore entrepreneurially in the future. An expansion of SHARE NOW's services to medium-sized cities, as well as increasingly flexible options—like the possibility to book a car further in advance—are topics that also occupy his mind with regard to tourism.

In addition to questions of future mobility and the merger of DriveNow and Car2go into SHARE NOW, Olivier has also recently been busy with another wedding: his own. 'I just came back from my honeymoon in Mauritius,' he says with a smile. 'I am a big fan of this island, where many cultures and religions live very peacefully together.' However, there is no car sharing in this paradise.

Listen to 'The Sooner Now' podcast on all major audio platforms or visit [thesoonernow.com](https://thesoonernow.com)

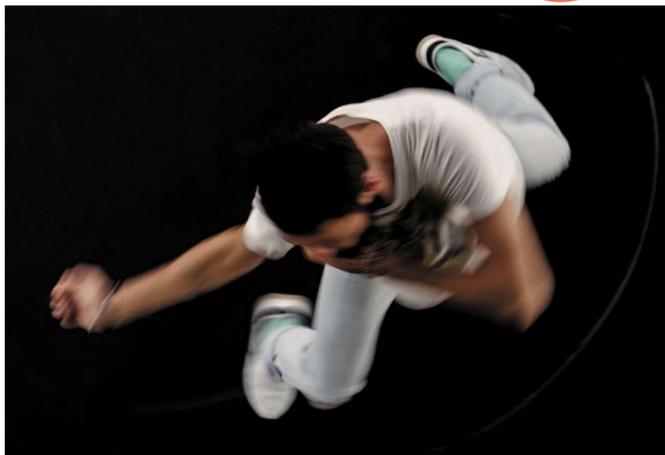
## The Sooner Now is a joint initiative between MINI Germany and Friends of Friends. The two companies have worked together since 2016, producing a series of events exploring questions surrounding the concept of urban futures. The new online platform, [thesoonernow.com](https://thesoonernow.com), deepens these questions by publishing articles and interviews with innovative change makers about the future of city life.

Listen to the whole interview with Olivier Reppert in the new podcast episode of 'The Sooner Now' on all audio platforms, on [thesoonernow.com](https://thesoonernow.com), or scan the QR Code here with your smartphone camera.



At the 'The Sooner Now' event in Berlin guests had the chance to experience the new MINI Electric for the first time in Germany.

# Poetry



TEXT ANN-CHRISTIN SCHUBERT — PHOTOS ROBERT RIEGER

Berlin-based Syrian dancer and choreographer Medhat Aldaabal tells the story of departing and arriving through the art of movement.

Movement is one of the rare languages that links the particular and the universal. While its endless variations convey local ways of being, community rituals and distinct cultural forms of expression, it holds the power to capture the human spirit and express across geographical and generational boundaries what words cannot. When Syrian dancer Medhat Aldaabal came to Berlin in 2015, it was movement that allowed him to honour his heritage while adapting to his adopted home—which, as Medhat described it, initially felt like 'a completely new world.'

It didn't take Medhat long to make a name for himself in the upper echelons of Germany's contemporary dance scene. One year later, he began collaborating with the esteemed Sascha Waltz and Guests, a Berlin-based, partly state-funded ensemble dedicated to the exploration of contemporary dance and theater. Its focus is distinctly international: Involving artists from around 30 countries, its artistic direction is dedicated to fostering exchanges with cultures from all over the world. It was in the framework of Sascha Waltz's *Zuhören* (Listening), a conversation format founded by Sasha Waltz, addressing artistic strategies with regards to political and humanitarian conflicts, that Medhat began to develop a personal work that would put his name on the map: *Amal*.



**'You just need to find the right opportunity, time, and place to present your art.'**

Co-created with dancer Davide Camplani of Sascha Waltz and Guests, the choreography of *Amal* depicts four immigrant protagonists' state of being in-between; between Syria and Berlin. A group of dancers act out argument scenes between relatives and moments of inner conflict through the dance; their emotions juxtaposed anger and hate with peacefulness, love, and forgiveness. The audience likely ascribes their act to war or crisis. Medhat doesn't mind such misperceptions, though. 'With dance, I can say what I want without judgement because my body hears what I'm saying and I can say it in my language of dance,' he says. The Arabic term 'amal' translates to hope, and as his hope continues to



thrive. Medhat knows his dance piece of the same name will continue to develop and evolve. 'The fighting becomes less apparent in *Amal* as it progresses. Naturally, if you tell a story several times, it becomes less painful.' The work has since been performed around Germany: in Berlin at the arts center Radialsystem V in 2016 and 2018, at the Sophiensäle in 2017, and on tour in Karlsruhe and Erfurt. In between rehearsals and performances, Medhat focused on new projects as a recipient of the Weltoffenhe Berlin (Cosmopolitan Berlin) fellowship, which is given to artists who are unable to work in their home countries. The year-long fund, which required Medhat to apply with his supporting institution, was his ticket to learn how to manage himself as a freelance dancer and choreographer—not only his ultimate goal, but the idea behind Sasha Waltz's motivation to support and foster talent.

Medhat compares Waltz to a godmother-like figure. 'She never treated our relationship like teacher and student; she's a friend. She has helped me throughout the entire process. I knew she had my back,' Medhat says about their collaboration which includes the teaching of young refugees and joint performances at 'Zuhören,' among them hours of improvisation. 'She opens her mind so much to inspire other dancers. If I worked with her every day for just one year, I would learn as much as I would in ten years with someone else.'

The fellowship also gave Medhat independence from the government Jobcentre, an environment and corresponding experiences he and two other male dancers deal with in his second work, *Come As You Are*, created with choreographer Nir de Volff. 'I always understood that if I want to share my opinion, there are going to be a lot of people who don't like it. No problem. I'll share it in a different way. Dancing is that different way. And it works,' Medhat states. *Come as you are's* depiction of Medhat's everyday reality of living in Germany—a reality dominated by council runs, paperwork, rejections, fears, new encounters, and mental challenges—is physical and intense.

It also embodies his transition from a dance scene heavily focused on traditional principles to a contemporary dance landscape—one that, in Medhat's words, is 'full of opportunities, where no dance space is the same.' More importantly, Medhat's recent creations no longer require him to conform to classical dance movements, or as he calls it, 'destroying my body.' Medhat graduated in drama arts from the Higher Institute of Drama Arts in Damascus in 2014, and only in his fourth year realized that he could be a choreographer, a profession he wanted to pursue outside of Syria. 'They need someone flexible who can jump, stretch legs, and so on. I don't have that kind of flexibility.'

Since collaborating with Sasha Waltz & Guests, Medhat has been translating his ideas, emotions, and experiences

into an expressive, eclectic, dynamic, and captivating aesthetic. He has found his platform not only as a dancer, but as a choreographer, too. 'I have found the time and space to figure out who I am, how to work, how to move. People here have more trust in you as a dancer. I never had that before,' Medhat says, as he finds his position back on the deck's dance floor, raising his arms, spinning his body, his feet gently sliding across the grey flooring.

Medhat's techniques evolve through breathing, by controlling and not controlling himself at the same time. 'You improvise,' he says, as he theatrically gestures with one hand, then raises the other to shape the letter M. 'If you want to talk about yourself, you figure out how to say 'hey' and 'I'm Medhat', for instance. You build up small movements, pick them up, and develop them into something else.' Everything else is emotion. 'Why do you want to say that you're here? Because you want attention. What does that mean for you? You may feel insecure. How does your body react? With a movement that you develop with a technique,' Medhat explains.

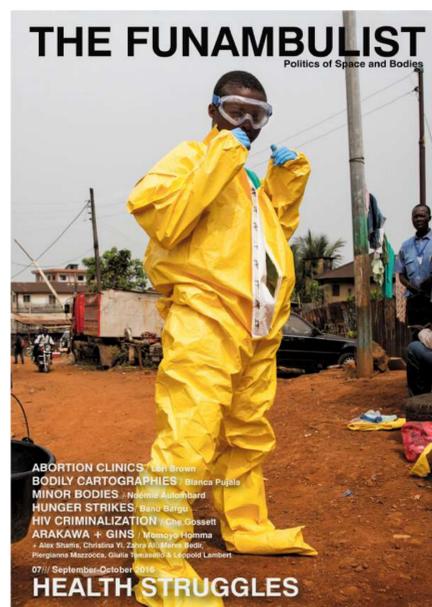
In Syria, such experiential methods are overshadowed by meticulously rehearsed choreographies. The folk dance practice dabke is most common, which comes with a range of synchronized and rhythmic steps, stomps, jumps, and kicks, all guided by the hip. Medhat hasn't abandoned what he learned in his home country—instead, he incorporates the traditional into *Amal* by building on movements generated from his hips. 'Contemporary dance triggers something in you. As with anything, if you want a piece to be special to exist in a community, you have to find your own personal way to stand out.'

Medhat also communicates his idea of cultural understanding off stage; in 2018, he joined Berlin's Humboldt University to talk about dance as a form of integration. 'Everyone is an artist—everyone is crazy, creative, and talented—no matter the technique,' he says. 'You just need to find the right opportunity, time, and place to present your art to then see if the audience believes, accepts, understands, or even loves it. Just do something real, whatever it is, and you will send a message. And it's not important if your legs are up or down, you jump or not, your arm is tense enough or not.'

Medhat understands his fight for attention as one that involves training, gaining experience, and developing ideas. 'It's not really fighting for listen to me—it's please stay with me,' he says. This approach has resonated around Germany and beyond. In late 2019, Medhat and fellow Syrian dancer Amr Karkout worked together with New York studio Battery Dance to lead *Dancing to Connect for Refugee Integration* in Cottbus, Brandenburg, a series of dance workshops bringing together 100 refugees and non-refugees, which culminated in a spirited performance to a soaring medley of music, from Albioni's *Adagio* to Arabic singing.

Moving forward, Medhat aims to open more people's eyes on issues that not only concern him. 'I understand movement as an exchange, but it also embodies change. The way I deal with people is changing; I'm more open, more accepting, and more understanding.' All that has developed with time. He was even at peace with the idea of giving up dancing professionally. 'I always think about the worst things that could happen. If I have peace with the worst things, then whatever happens will be okay. But I believe that we can live through our art, otherwise it makes no sense.'

[dabkecommunity.com](http://dabkecommunity.com)



# ISSUE BY ISSUE BY

TEXT EMILY MAY

In French, the word *funambulist* means tightrope walker. In a geopolitical climate where lines must be carefully tread, its definition makes it a fitting title for the Paris-based activist magazine that bears its name. The publication has been applying a critical perspective to politics while fostering opportunity for solidarity across borders since 2010, when it was founded by Léopold Lambert, a trained architect. Today, The Funambulist has expanded from its initial blog format into a vibrant multi-channel media outlet, comprising bi-monthly print and digital editions, a podcast, a book, and, above all, a global community.

Oppression takes many silent forms—silent, that is, until we start taking notice. Of structural racism. Of architecture's entrenched power imbalances. Of the slow rise of neo-colonialism. Of daily violence against LGBTQ+ communities. Examining the politics of bodies, places and societies has long been the agenda of The Funambulist—and it's one which has never been more present in today's increasingly polarised world. Addressing issues of colonialism, racism, misogyny, ableism, violence against queer communities and women, the magazine is dedicated to exploring how the concept of treading lines transfers into social and geographical organization. 'Individuals are often assigned to be on a specific side of a line or border,' founder Léopold Lambert says of the choice behind the name. 'The figures that walk along and straddle those lines subvert the accepted order.'

To date, The Funambulist has honed in on diverse topics across its 26 issues, with themes ranging from insurgent architecture—architectural structures that fundamentally challenge the status quo—to futurism. 'When deciding on a title or theme, we always strive to go with those we find most important,' says Margarida Waco, The Funambulist's head of strategic outreach. 'Whether it's about the dominant order of society, the militarisation of space, counter approaches and narratives that challenge the current social order, The Funambulist acts as a voice for both discreet and outspoken activism,' Margarida continues. The activism she refers to often takes the form of revealing, or drawing attention to, what has been overlooked. Issue #18, for example, delves into the subject of bias in cartography and power. From the erasure of past existences in Palestinian territories to the emergence of Japanese tsunami stones, its pages offered an insightful look at the destruction inherent in mapmaking. 'Our first 20 issues had a strong deconstructive dimension, which means they spent time analysing the different means through which various forms of state and normative violence gets deployed against bodies,' Léopold explains, before adding that in more recent years, the magazine has endeavoured to foster a more positive narrative. 'Constantly presenting this deconstructive analysis without focusing on the work accomplished by activists and revolutionaries

against the violence they describe appears unproductive to us,' he adds. Take, for example, issue 25, whose focus evidences The Funambulist's adeptness at imbuing hard-hitting truths with a constructive narrative. Its subject is self-defence, and its features range from asking challenging questions: Why has a state of non-violence become the default practice? When is self-defence—and, for that matter, violence—legitimate? Honouring its positive aim, the issue sheds the spotlight on various organisations of resistance: Like the Rojava Autonomous Women's Army, the Algerian National Liberation Front, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Taken together, the portraits and profiles remind us that, beyond efforts for survival, self-defence is an 'act of existence.'

Giving a platform to a diversity of voices who have may been side-lined or silenced in the past is central to The Funambulist's mission. Its articles, podcasts and blog posts are produced by a wide range of international contributors from different cultural and geographical backgrounds, as well as from different disciplines and fields of expertise. 'Some of our contributors and even team members may have lived through political struggles and/or traumas,' adds Waco, who herself has been politically displaced. Featuring first-hand accounts and perspectives is equally important to the editorial team. 'We operate on the basis that the more one is connected to a topic, the more they have an important and interesting perspective on it,' Léopold says, adding that this approach is contrary to a certain understanding of 'objective' journalism that is particularly prevalent in France. 'This is how we formed the community of thinkers, activists, designers, and artists who have contributed to the magazine for the past four and a half years and we would not have it any other way.'

[thefunambulist.net](http://thefunambulist.net)  
[soundcloud.com/the-funambulist](https://www.soundcloud.com/the-funambulist)

# HOUSE OF

A night in Frankfurt's 25hours Hotel The Trip is also a journey through forgotten countries, according to our columnist Florian Siebeck.

Sometimes I feel like Frankfurt's ambassador. Whenever I travel the world, I tell people how beautiful it is here. Frankfurt is, without question, a misunderstood city. Everybody loves Berlin, Munich, too—its quality of life, Oktoberfest, the Alps. Hamburg is, of course, the 'Pearl of the North', but most Germans find Frankfurt terribly boring. 'Bankfurt', 'Krankfurt', a sterile city with faceless towers—and the majority of international visitors who have flown into Frankfurt have seen nothing but the airport's interior.

I actually hail from Berlin and moved here a good ten years ago, originally to study. Meanwhile, I don't want to leave. This is due, on the one hand, to the city and its wonderful people, many of whom moved here without great expectations and are therefore very open and community-minded, and on the other, to its location: on a good day, I don't need more than 20 minutes to get from my front door to a boarding gate at the airport; and via train I can reach almost anywhere in Germany in less than four hours, and Paris in only three.

However, the district between the railway station and the banking district, in which I live, is an imposition, despite the many Gründerzeit buildings and lively bars. Some call it 'too dangerous', others 'too dirty', but that doesn't bother anyone in Paris either. How good that there are enough excuses, because the station district also has the highest density of hotels in the world, according to some. The 25hours Hotel The Trip, for example, is located a stone's throw away from the main station. 'Around the world in a day' is written on the facade—a hint at the journey that awaits inside. And for me, an opportunity for escapism?

The Frankfurt artist Michael Dreher designed the hotel together with Thomas Tritsch from Morgen Interiors, using furniture thrown together from different countries, and textile plants in the lobby that a tailor has stitched together from old uniforms. Walls and elevators were painted by Frankfurt artists. Right at the entrance there is an old Lambretta. 'It belonged to a Frankfurt woman who used it to travel all over Europe,' says Julia Dziergwa, who works at 25h and guides me through the building. Everywhere there are references to adventurous expeditions, everywhere there is memorabilia. Maps and pictures tell stories of distant countries and people from all over the world.

Right behind the lobby, Julia points me to the 'library of forgotten countries'. Here, there are books from countries 'which, by definition, never existed, places which would like to be a country, or countries which once were one and no longer exist.' It is a fantastic space: From my armchair, I travel through Yugoslavian villages to Kurdistan and Carthage, to the ancient Phoenician cities, which had an 'almost intoxicating desire for worldly experience and sensual pleasure, for the multiplication of their possessions and their carefree enjoyment,'—precocious capitalists, in other words. In the USSR I see breeding bulls, fully automatic rolling mills, and excessive nightlife. During excavations in Persia I come across bowls with running greyhounds, bull's heads and bronze lions, and the Sialk I burial ground on the Iranian plateau, where I learn that 7000 years ago they sprinkled iron oxide powder on the dead when they buried them sideways under the ground in a squatting posture. Exactly why is a question that remains unanswered still today.

Of particular interest is a book by Heinz Helfgen: After the Second World War, he thought that he was no longer interested in the daily grind, 'grabbed his best buddy's bike and started cycling, with 3.80 Deutschmarks in his pocket,' says Julia. For two years, he circumnavigated the world, fi-

nanced by books and newspaper articles. Several rooms are dedicated to him, with photos and excerpts from his works. He also went to Sistan and Baluchistan, I discover, to the Afghan-Pakistan-Iranian country triangle. I myself was there a few years ago, in Zahedan, because Lonely Planet said it was a completely joyless place. It was true. While Helfgen was offered gold and opium, I only received B-grade goods from China.

At the reception, I'm asked where I want to sleep: in Africa or Asia, Oceania or the Arctic, in the tropics or the mountains. I choose the Arctic. I left my computer at home because first, what should I do with it in the Arctic and second, I finally want to relax. 'Almost home' is written on my pillow, which really is true—I only live five minutes from here. My room is dedicated to Roald Amundsen's expedition to the South Pole, the 'strange adventure of his life'. Infected by the adventurer's spirit, I do something I never usually do: watch television. After ten minutes I'm reminded why that is—a casting show makes me so tired that even the film about Hitler's defeat in Stalingrad feels like a welcome change.

The next morning breakfast is served in Bar Shuka on the ground floor, where Israeli and Palestinian culinary influences combine in the form of soul food—and where organized chaos and dancing on the tables often occurs in the evenings. In the mornings, it feels a little more civilised, offering a small but fine breakfast buffet. I ask Julia what kind of people sleep here. 'Particularly young people who like the city,' she answers. And have no problem with the neighborhood. Because from the coworking space further up, which is nicknamed 'Studio 54', and in which an experimental water conditioner gives me the 'freshness kick for in-between', you have a clear view of the local drug scene. 'Of course people talk to us about it,' says Julia, 'but we don't hide anything. Individual guests may be slightly indignant, but education helps.'

I think guests could easily enjoy a stay here without even leaving the building. Its multicultural offerings are horizon-broadening: there is an Italian café, an Israeli restaurant and a Japanese bar, a Bollywood cinema and a rooftop parkour. A night of wild dreams led me through Tibet and southwestern Africa, along the cliffs and glaciers of Patagonia to the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. I also saw a few friends on the way: Their pictures hang in the inner courtyard as part of the 'smile, the world' art project.

I take the Schindelhauer bike out of my room and ride through my neighbourhood, the Station District. Not much has changed since I left: Junkies, red lights, hipster bars, everything still there. Sometimes Frankfurt feels like a microcosm of the world. I think the Station District is probably the most international district in the world. With 180 nations on four blocks, even Berlin can't compete. I have a few euros in my pocket, and looking up at the sky, I think to myself, 'Just keep riding now—why not?'

As a reporter for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung group and Monocle, Florian Siebeck is on the road 250 days a year. For this story, our columnist learned that he doesn't have to leave his adopted home of Frankfurt to discover the world.

➔ [floriansiebeck.com](#)

# WORLD CULTURES

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## DEUTSCHSCHÜTZEN, AUSTRIA

**Weingut Krutzler**  
Deutsch Schützen Nr. 250  
Opening hours on request  
➔ [krutzler.at](#)

**Weingut Wachter Wiesler**  
Untere Hauptstrasse 7  
Closed for January and February  
Wednesday–Friday 17:00–0:00  
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➔ [wachter-wiesler.at](#)

## GOLS, AUSTRIA

**Weingut Andreas Gsellmann**  
Obere Hauptstrasse 38  
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➔ [gsellmann.at](#)

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Monday–Friday 8:00–12:00  
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➔ [nitthaus.wine](#)

**Weingut Beck**  
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➔ [clauspreisinger.at](#)

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➔ [gutoggau.com](#)

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Hauptstrasse 86  
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Hauptstrasse 3  
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## Masthead

COMPANION is a magazine about the people who shape and enrich our cities.

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➔ [etsi-paris.fr](#)

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➔ [waterkant-touren.com](#)

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➔ [hlemmuratholl.is](#)

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➔ [skalrvk.com](#)

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De Söller  
Carrer De Migrjorn 2  
➔ [bikini-hotels.com](#)

## ZÜRICH, SWITZERLAND

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Pflingtwaldstrasse 102

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# MY 25HOURS

## My Dubai

TEXT MANUEL ALMEIDA VERGARA

A Bed, a chair, a table: Furniture alone does not make a hotel room. That's where Melita Skamnaki and Wilhelm Finger come in. Their London company Double Decker selects artworks for hotels all over the world. Including for the new 25hours Hotel One Central in Dubai, which opens in 2020.

**COMPANION:** Small boutique hotels, big chains, a cruise ship—you've bought art for many different clients. What makes working for 25hours Hotels in Dubai special?

Melita: Maybe the fact that we don't believe in the role of Art Buyer—we don't see ourselves as such, at least. We don't buy art, we curate it. We tell stories in order to establish a connection between the guests and the hotel. 25hours Hotels get our approach. And that is what makes the project in Dubai so special.

**Making that connection between guests and hotel doesn't sound easy. For that to work, the art has to appeal to countless guests with very different tastes.**

Wilhelm: We want to capture the vibe of the respective city, show the mood of the people who live in each special place, and how they express themselves creatively. We want to work together with locals to get

to know their rituals, preferences, and ideas. And we want to have an honest conversation about the area and create an inviting atmosphere. This is how we can evoke an emotional reaction in the guests, because it is precisely these elements that create a homely feeling.

**What role does your own taste play in this?**

Melita: Well, with everything you do, your personal taste has a role to play. I firmly believe that it's this authenticity that ultimately makes for a successful aesthetic. So our personality is also a decisive factor in every project. I prefer art that tells strong stories over pretty things that just fill the walls.

**Is a successful artistic narrative also what attracts you personally, when staying at a hotel as a guest?**

Wilhelm: Certainly. But friendly staff are also very important to me, as is a certain feeling of cosiness, and that the house is cultivated. I like to enter into dialogue with my surroundings.

**Can you switch off at all in a hotel? Or do you constantly evaluate the art presented there?**

Wilhelm: That is indeed a trap that we keep falling into. But that's okay. We love to travel, discover new things, and relax—and we love our job just as much.

↳ [double-decker.org.uk](http://double-decker.org.uk)



## My Copenhagen

TEXT MANUEL ALMEIDA VERGARA

**COMPANION:** Your book title is imbued with a healthy dose of pride—what makes Italian baking so special?

Melissa: My book is first and foremost called *The Italian Baker* because I'm an Italian baker. It's not about being arrogant. Sure, we Italians know a bit about good food. But I appreciate the baking traditions of other countries just as much. For example, I have often devoted myself to the art of German baking. The whole world is full of good food!

**The café at the new 25hours Hotel in Copenhagen will certainly offer traditional Italian delicacies, won't it?**

Of course it will. But there'll also be modern recipes, which I am developing especially for the café. When it comes to baking, I get a bit wild. I like to give my creativity free reign and to not limit myself, so I'm sure I'll surprise our guests.

**What's also surprising is the name you've chosen for the café.**

That's right. It's called Café Duse, named after Eleonora Duse, an Italian actress who changed theatre fundamentally and forever. She shaped a new, natural way of acting—she really cried on stage, for example, which didn't exist before. But Duse was also a real businesswoman. She ran the theatre as director. And, like Frida Kahlo, she was politically engaged. Above all, she was a true feminist.

**Will Café Duse also represent your own views on feminism?**

Certainly, but less in a political sense. I'm not politically engaged, but I am interested in justice, equality and loyalty. I admire women who stand up for themselves and follow their dreams.

**Will the city of Copenhagen also play a role in the concept?**

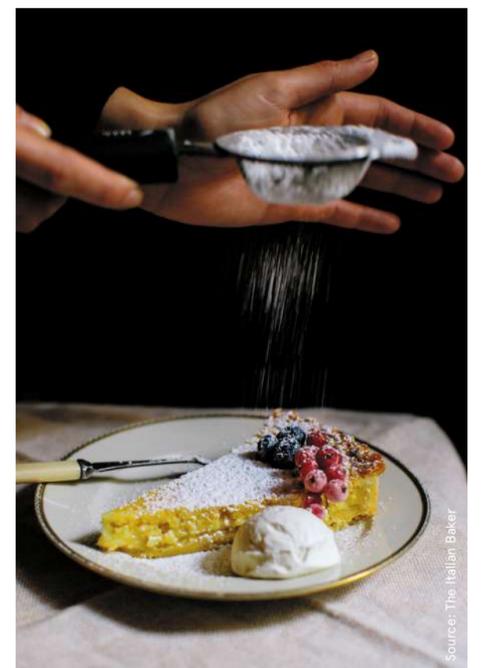
Perhaps. But I have great respect for the traditions of other countries, which I don't want to adopt just like that. My goal is also to present recipes that are not yet so well known in Denmark, to surprise our guests. What I'm really looking forward to, is using the great ingredients that Denmark is known for. Good butter, for example. Travelling often inspires me to create new recipes.

**Travelling is a good keyword—after all, you are developing the café for a hotel. What is most important to you when staying at a hotel as a guest?**

This probably isn't surprising to hear, but I'm a real breakfast fanatic. If the breakfast is good, the whole hotel is good.

↳ [melissaforti.com](http://melissaforti.com)

Melissa Forti doesn't hide behind her big mixing bowls. The young baker from Florence has long been a shooting star. Her book *The Italian Baker* has become a bestseller in Italy. Next, she is developing her own café for the new 25hours Hotel Round Tower in Copenhagen, which opens in 2021.



BERLIN — COLOGNE — DÜSSELDORF — FRANKFURT — HAMBURG — MUNICH — PARIS — VIENNA — ZURICH

