

CHRIS GULKER,
InMenlo founder, dies at 59 | PAGE 3

The Almanac

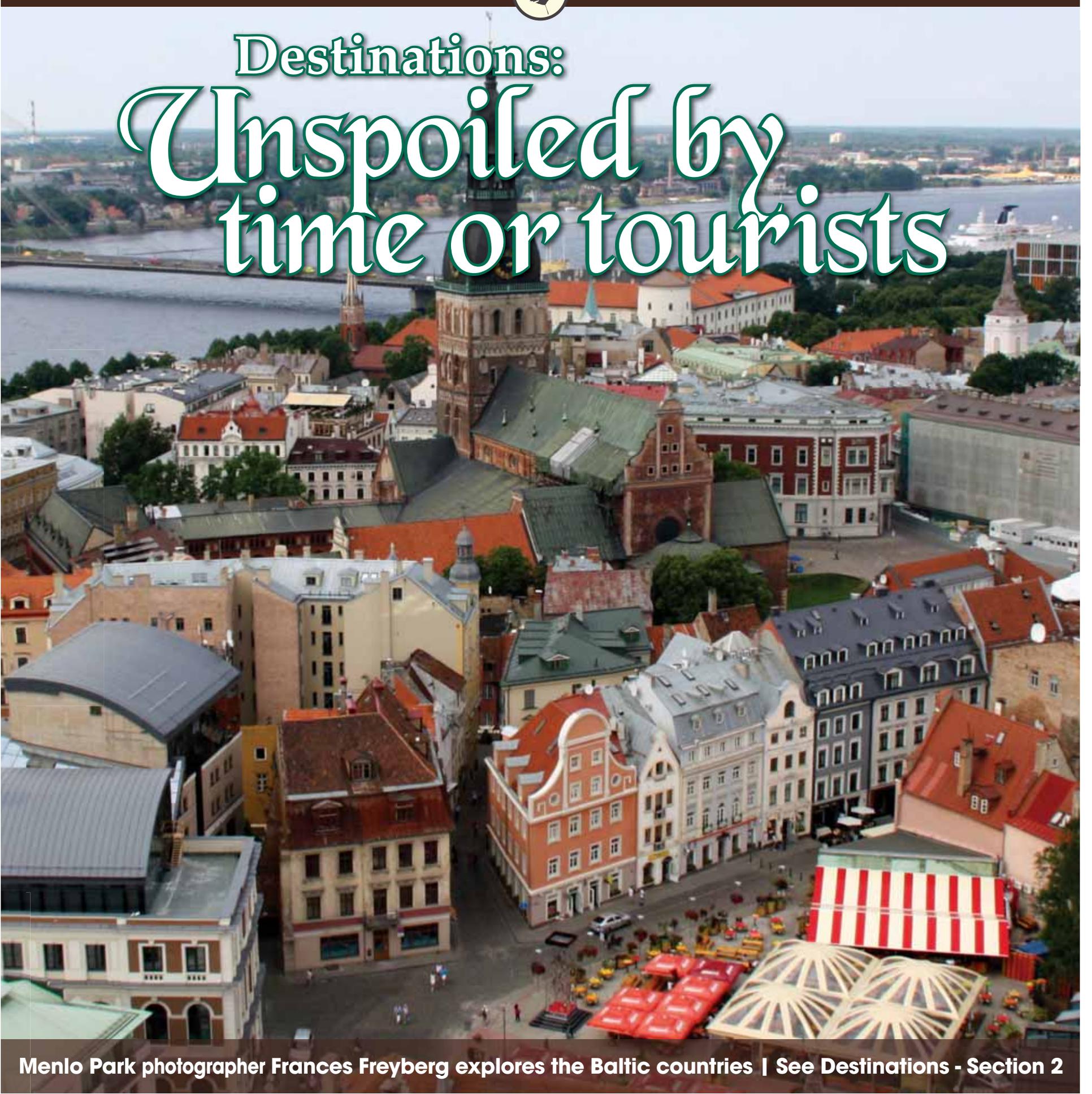
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Destinations: Unspoiled by time or tourists



Menlo Park photographer Frances Freyberg explores the Baltic countries | See Destinations - Section 2

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A special section on travel and adventure by local people. ■ November 3, 2010

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Unspoiled by time or tourists

Menlo Park photographer Frances Freyberg explores the Baltic countries

Story and photos by Frances Freyberg

Among the delights of independent travel are the unplanned stops: to walk through a castle ruin on a hillside, to visit a windswept patch of coastline, to sample fresh fruits from an outdoor market.

Like many of their former Eastern Bloc neighbors, the Baltic countries — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — don't appear on the radar of the average American tourist.

That's good news for you, because this history-rich and architecturally diverse northern European region is as unspoiled by the tourist masses as its delightful countryside is unspoiled by time.

Architectural collage

Touring each country's capital city is a distinct architectural adventure. Tallinn, Estonia, is centered on its small medieval Old Town, with narrow cobblestone alleyways, colorful gabled homes, and grand

Gothic cathedrals, all tucked behind the old city walls. Tallinn plays up its medieval past with a summer festival and market, where restaurant staff and street vendors dress and act the part.

Riga, Latvia, is a haven of stately Art Nouveau buildings within an eclectic mix of old and new architectural styles. Larger and busier than Tallinn's, Riga's Old Town is a maze of winding streets lined with outdoor cafes and a wide variety of museums and shops. In the late summer evenings, locals and visitors alike fill the main squares to enjoy live music over a glass of wine.

Vilnius, Lithuania, is renowned for the ornate Baroque architecture within its sprawling Old Town. In addition to its many historic churches and cathedrals, Vilnius hosts a 16th century university and an alternative art community, which lend the city a young and vibrant atmosphere.

The three countries are also home to castles and palaces galore. In the Latvian countryside outside of Riga, visitors can take their pick of Baroque-Rococo or neoclassical palaces, or of 13th-19th century castles that dot the area. One of the most visited castles in the region is the picturesque Trakai Island Castle in Lithuania.

Suited for cycling

The Baltic countries are located on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, across from southern Sweden. Together, they boast more than 2,700 miles of coastline, including thousands of offshore islands.

The mainland is mostly flat, with lowlands to the



The three Baltic countries are located on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, across from southern Sweden. **Above:** Visitors come from nearby Vilnius, Lithuania, to see Trakai Island Castle and to boat or swim in Lake Galve.

west and gently rolling hills to the east. Inland highlights include the pristine lakes of eastern Latvia and Lithuania, as well as Estonia's unique wetlands that feature swamps, marshes and bogs.

Outdoors enthusiasts will find the flat terrain and quiet roads are nicely suited for cycling (but be prepared for well-kept gravel!), while the many lakes lend themselves to recreation such as canoeing and kayaking. National and regional parks cover all three countries and are refreshingly uncrowded, providing ample hiking and camping space for those who can brave the bugs

Continued on page 27

About the author:

Frances Freyberg of Menlo Park is a photographer specializing in vibrant color portraits of people, wildlife, nature and architecture from her travels to more than 50 countries. Her photographs can be found in the Portola Art Gallery at the Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park, in private collections, and online at francesfreyberg.com.

On the cover:

Frances Freyberg took this picture of Riga's Old Town and the Daugava River in Latvia from the steeple of St. Peter's Church.



Performers in traditional costume gather in Tallinn's Old Town Square for the annual International Folklore Festival Baltica.

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of summer.

For those who love the dramatic Northern California coast, beware that much of the Baltic coastline may seem somewhat flat in comparison. However, the mild summer sea is great for children and popular with families. Coastal highlights include Estonia's quiet offshore islands and Lithuania's Curonian Spit National Park — a 60-mile-long finger of land that is home to some of the highest drifting sand dunes in Europe.

Back roads

While visiting the capital cities and a national park or two will give you a taste of the Baltic countries, the best way to really get to know the region is by traveling the ground in between. An extensive bus network crisscrosses each country, but a rental car affords visitors the greatest freedom to explore the rugged Baltic back roads in all their gravel glory.

Photo exhibit

Frances Freyberg will exhibit photos from around the world at the Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Station Lane in Atherton, from Nov. 2 through December. On Wednesday, Nov. 3, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., a reception will follow a slide lecture and discussion of Ms. Freyberg's 2008 around-the-world journey.

Many of the roads through the region are only two lanes, and once off the highways, drivers can often find themselves on well-maintained dirt roads, passing through quiet forests, rural farming communities, and small country villages.

Among the delights of independent travel are the unplanned stops — to walk through a castle ruin on a hillside, to visit a windswept patch of coastline, to sample fresh fruits from an outdoor market, or to listen to folk music at an outdoor festival.

Rich history, culture

Ancestors of today's Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians are believed to have first settled the region between 3,000 and 2,000 BC. From the 13th to the 20th century, the Baltic countries have faced conquest or occupation by the Danes, Germans, Poles, Russians and Swedes.

Following a brief period of independence in the early 20th century, the Baltic countries were incorporated into the Soviet Union and did not regain sovereignty until 1991. They have been members of the European Union and NATO since 2004.

Throughout its turbulent history, each of the three Baltic countries has maintained a distinct cultural identity. Folk songs and traditional dress from across the region are celebrated at the annual International Folklore Festival Baltica. Each country also has its own currency and language, although English, German and Russian are widely spoken. ■

MORE INFORMATION

Here are some helpful websites:

- ◆ www.visitestonia.com/en
- ◆ www.latviatourism.lv/
- ◆ www.lithuaniatourism.co.uk/

Here are some useful books:

- ◆ "Eyewitness Travel: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania" by DK Publishing (January 2009)
- ◆ "Lonely Planet: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," 5th edition (May 2009)



Swans and coots in Aukstaitija National Park in Lithuania share the peaceful lakes with kayakers.



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**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PROPOSED ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS
ADOPTING UPDATED BUILDING,
RESIDENTIAL, MECHANICAL,
PLUMBING, ELECTRICAL AND GREEN
BUILDING CODES**

MENLO PARK CITY COUNCIL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park, California is scheduled to review the following items:

The Menlo Park City Council will hear public comment on proposed amendments to Title 12 (Buildings and Construction) of the Menlo Park Municipal Code and the adoption of the **2010 California Building, Residential, Mechanical, Plumbing, Electrical, and Green Building Codes** at its Regular Meeting of Tuesday, November 16, 2010. The regular meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. and will be held at the City Council Chambers, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said City Council will hold a public hearing on these items in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on **Tuesday, November 16, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.** or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon. If you challenge these items in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the public hearing.

Documents related to this item may be inspected by the public on weekdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, with alternate Fridays closed, at the Community Development Department, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park. Please contact Ron La France, Building Official, at (650) 330-6704 or email him rjlafrance@menlopark.org if you have any questions or comments.

Si usted necesita más información sobre este proyecto, por favor llame al 650-330-6702, y pregunte por un asistente que hable español.

DATED: October 28, 2010 Margaret Roberts
City Clerk

PUBLISHED: November 3, 2010

Visit our Web site for public hearing, agenda, and staff report information: <http://www.ci.menlo-park.ca.us>