

# Estonia

BALLOONING's European Correspondent Shares a Purely Pleasureable Flight



by Nienke Bos

My feet gently lift off from the earth while the wind guides me on an adventurous exploration. Destination unknown. Tallinn breathes a Nordic vibe even though soon the traces towards freedom uncover themselves. From the medieval Old Town and massive modern skyscrapers the scenery changes into concrete living blocks you would easily categorize as extraordinary Sovietic. Outside the city limits I observe abandoned military barracks while at the same time some innocent children send their smiles and greetings up. In a small red balloon I'm drifting over delicate natural treasures, leaving the rush of the city life behind.

Balloonists speak the universal language of freedom and desire of satisfying their senses in search for the unknown. Interesting, how a piece of fabric and a powerful burner can connect kindred spirits from all over the world. It only takes a touch of the clouds to make me forget I miss the Dutch cycling culture, our unhealthy deep-fried yet delightful snacks and our 'ggg'- sound dominating language. Estonia embraces me with purity.

I hear the wind softly playing with the leaves of the trees. An elk desperately tries to hide which enlightens the atmosphere in our tiny basket. In a masculine tone a cool story is shared about an earlier flight during which bears were



*The medieval Old Town and massive modern skyscrapers give way to concrete living blocks reflecting a Soviet past as the flight moves toward the city limits...*



*(Above) As the flight progresses the cityscape gives way to peaceful, pastoral farming scenes with cozy rural homes while (below) neither man or beast, young or old can resist glancing up to the heavens at the bright red orb floating past...*



spotted. Because of the calm winds we decide to make an intermediate landing in the middle of a bog filled with berries undiscovered by fanatic berry pickers, till now. I jump out of the basket and feel like coming down in a heap of fluffy feathers. The earth is soft, the berries slightly sour and the immense cleanliness of the air makes me doubt about any existing pollution.

Our flight continues over sweet wooden houses. The chimneys show signs of coziness and the protective dogs make sure our passing by doesn't remain unnoticed. Curtains are put aside and curious faces stare at us with fascination. I managed to gather many Estonian smiles in my heart already on this way; priceless.

The day almost came to an end but the grand finale is yet to come. With the sunset on its way, the Baltic light covers Estonia with a soft blanket of the last few warm sunrays of the year. This particular light pleases the eyes and even makes the most old sheds revive a hint of livelihood it used to host hundred years ago. The wind has dropped down and the many tiny lakes in between the forests sharply mirror their accompanying trees lighted by the setting sun. With one last blast from the burner that kept us airborne we safely come down, back into the arms of mother earth.



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