LITHUANIA

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Explore A World Of Innovation

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PICTURE: ANDRIUS-ALEKSANDRAVICIUS

"Lithuania is the fastest-growing UAE trade partner in the non-oil sector"

Ramunas Davidonis, Ambassador of Lithuania to the UAE elaborates on the strong bilateral trade ties between both nations, and how the new direct flight between Vilnius and Dubai is helping bring the two countries even closer

What have been the highlights for bilateral relations between Lithuania and the UAE over the last year?

This year has witnessed significant growth in bilateral relations between Lithuania and the UAE. The UAE values innovation, future-driven solutions, and resilience, which Lithuania has experience and a proven record of.

Lithuania is the fastest-growing UAE trade partner in the non-oil sector, growing more than four times in 2023. Generally, bilateral trade has steadily grown in the last 5-10 years, especially in critical sectors such as agriculture, food, high-tech, ICT, and life sciences. It is also important to note that Lithuania's export of services to the UAE has grown by 58 per cent, especially in transport, logistics, and ICT.

Export of agricultural and food products reached 16.1m euros, and has grown by 5.4 per cent in 2023. This steady growth of food exports signifies that the UAE is becoming familiar with and more interested in high-quality, ecological, and natural food products from Lithuania. These numbers demonstrate that Emirati companies have started to recognise the high value and expertise Lithuanian businesses provide globally.

Out of the many political and business visits, I would like to highlight the visit of the President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda to the UAE at the end of 2023 to participate in the timely and crucial discussions on the global effects of climate change during COP28.

The direct "airBaltic" flight connecting Vilnius and Dubai brought much more attention to Lithuania for tourism and business, paving new explorations from both sides. The next necessary step, seeing the success and packed planes, would be having direct flights all year round in the nearest future.

Please shed some light on the recent visit of the UAE Minister of Economy, Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri to Lithuania in August 2024. What are the key takeaways from this visit?

The visit of Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri, Minister of Economy of the UAE, to Vilnius in August 2024 is a significant milestone in bilateral relations between Lithuania and the UAE. Minister Al Marri arrived at Vilnius with a business delegation comprising 30 Emirati SMEs and larger investors, all looking for partnerships and opportunities in Lithuania. One of the key results from this visit is the strong agreement between both countries to promote bilateral trade and investment, mutually develop innovations and joint projects in infrastructure, transport, energy, tourism and other areas.

Another milestone was the first historical meeting of the Lithuanian-UAE Joint Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation, which had participants from the Ministries of Agriculture, Economy and Innovation, Environment, Energy and Foreign Affairs from both sides.

Overall, I hope this visit paves the way to significant growth in trade relations and friendly ties between our countries.

Lithuania received excellent feedback through the World Happiness Report this year, being considered the best country to live and work in for global youth under 30. What are the factors that led to this incredible achievement?

I believe Lithuania and our youth to be truly deserving of the title of the happiest country in the world for the under-30 population.

This achievement showcases the resilience and exuberance of our young populace, which grew up in a free, independent and democratic country. At the same time, Lithuania's youth remain grounded in their country's history, which encourages strong solidarity with those in less fortunate situations.

The happiest young generation is also a result of Lithuania's continuous initiatives and policies, aimed at creating a positive environment and a better quality of life for the young generation to thrive, with great work-life balance, nature and growth opportunities within hand's reach.

Which are the possible areas of investment for Emiratis in Lithuania and why?

I want to highlight the opportunities Lithuania's only seaport presents to potential investors and larger companies looking to establish their industrial lines somewhere in Northern Europe. The Southern Port of Klaipėda city will be completed in the next four years, expanding to 100 ha territory and 30 mln. ton capacity.

Klaipėda is a connection hub for industrial developments and export, connecting railway, road and sea. Klaipėda port is expected to launch the first green hydrogen refuelling station in 2026, both stationary and mobile, pioneering the new and climate-neutral technology in the Baltic States. I invite Emirati businesses and especially those working in maritime, to look into the opportunities of this Baltic gem.

As a different type of investment, it is important to mention the achievements of Lithuanian universities in medical, biotechnology and life sciences research, providing incredible opportunities for students from the UAE and its region. Lithuanian University of Health Sciences and Vilnius University have been recognised as trailblazers in their genome, protein and medical technology research.

What are the trends dictating Lithuania's burgeoning tourism sector and how could tourists from the UAE possibly benefit from the same?

I invite businesses and people from the UAE to discover Lithuania, a safe and green country, a nature haven, perfect for escaping the summer heat and finding a secure, free, and inspiring space for travel, studies, or business. The first Lithuanian Michelin guide features 34 selected restaurants, four of which have been awarded a Michelin Star — a global recognition that is worth considering when travelling.

LITHUANIA

A real-time economy innovation hub in Northern Europe

Data a strategic resource in the age of knowledge, says Simonas Černiauskas, CEO, Infobalt

Digital data is the new oil of our times, fuelling real-time economies and innovation under proper regulation, says Simonas Černiauskas, CEO at Infobalt, Lithuania's digital technologies association. This Northern European country by the Baltic Sea has concentrated its efforts on opening digital data and transparent, consistent regulation, aiming to create an environment where businesses can freely experiment with innovations and develop services.

Lithuania is reaping the rewards of these efforts — recently ranked 8th in the European Union and 16th globally for start-up ecosystem growth and attractiveness. For a nation of just 3 million people, with limited natural resources, these are significant achievements.

"Data is a strategic resource in the age of knowledge and digital technologies. It powers numerous fields — from artificial intelligence solutions and biotechnology to transport, smart agriculture, renewable energy, and healthcare," Černiauskas stated in an interview.

Various studies consistently rank Lithuania among the top ten advanced European and OECD countries for data openness.

According to Lithuania's Ministry of Economy and Innovation, the size of the open data market in Lithuania is growing rapidly, with projections estimating it will reach $138 million by 2025 and $314 million by 2026. By 2026, open government data is expected to contribute up to 1.71 per cent of the country's GDP.

"The idea that openness, clear regulation, and institutional support would create a favourable environment for digital innovation has proven successful," Černiauskas said in the interview. This success translates into higher quality public services and a solid foundation for businesses.

The mobility platform developed and maintained by the public transport start-up Trafi, born in Vilnius, Lithuania's capital, helps manage complex transportation systems in European cities like Berlin, Brussels, Munich, Portsmouth, Zurich, and Southampton.

Lithuania, alongside its regional partners, was one of the first to develop and test a digital eCMR platform under real-world conditions. This platform eliminates the need for paper documents and accelerates control-related processes.

The company Oxipit, leveraging open health data, developed artificial intelligence solutions for automating the evaluation of chest X-rays, thereby reducing the workload on radiologists. These solutions are already certified in the European Union.

Regulation also plays a significant role, notes Infobalt's Černiauskas. "We are an EU member state, so a large and growing portion of regulation is common across all countries. This can be seen as a barrier, but it can also be turned into an advantage," he says.

VARIOUS STUDIES CONSISTENTLY RANK LITHUANIA AMONG THE TOP TEN ADVANCED EUROPEAN AND OECD COUNTRIES FOR DATA OPENNESS.

This thinking has helped Lithuania become one of Europe's main centres for financial technology (fintech) innovation. By implementing the EU's open banking directives and providing businesses with the necessary tools and environment, this Northern European country is now home to nearly 300 innovative fintech companies and serves as a primary product testing ground.

Lithuania is currently striving to replicate its fintech breakthrough and success story in other areas, such as cybersecurity — where the country is ranked second in the world for its readiness — as well as in the artificial intelligence and medical technology sectors, according to Černiauskas.

PICTURE COURTESY: A. ALEKSANDRAVIČIUS/WWW.LITHUANIA.LT

An invitation to EAT Lithuania

'EAT Lithuania' is an approach representing **Exceptional**, **Advanced** made and **Tasty** food from green Lithuania

Lithuania invites the world to try a wide range of sustainably produced food products of exceptional quality made according to the highest standards of the European Union, using advanced technologies and solutions but maintaining centuries old traditions, and most importantly, tasty and appealing to a global palate.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU STILL DON'T KNOW ABOUT LITHUANIA?

Lithuania is predominantly known to the world as a booming start-up community (700+ companies), a country that has a deeply ingrained appreciation for open data and developed collaboration between researchers and entrepreneurs. A country of under 3 million people, Lithuania has a solid track record of innovation – from co-creating one of the world's largest scientific lasers and building nano satellites to the first Lithuanian-made hybrid tractor powered by biomethane and electric drives.

Lithuania is much more than that. Located in Northern Europe, where the climate is neither too hot nor too cold for growing quality

Solar panels at Biržu duona bakery

LITHUANIAN COMPANIES ARE USING ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES LIKE IT SOLUTIONS FOR MONITORING CROP GROWTH, FREEZE DRYING AND 3D FOOD PRINTING, AS WELL AS DEVELOPING AGTECH.

European astronauts will enjoy Lithuanian snacks such as Super Garden while in space

produce at scale, Lithuania is also known for blending the best of nature with the latest in tech.

With more than a third of its territory covered by forests, Lithuania boasts clean air and a relatively low number of heavy industry enterprises. In addition to that, it has access to vast resources of artesian groundwater – clean water that's 100 per cent free of human impact.

The country's natural advantages and tech prowess come together and open doors to intriguing possibilities in both agriculture and food production.

Lithuanian companies are using advanced technologies like IT solutions for monitoring crop growth, freeze drying and 3D food printing, as well as developing Agtech and building SOFA (Sustainable Organic Food Architecture), while relying on seasonal, organic goods to produce healthy and nutritional food products. As such, it can be a perfect partner to countries looking to diversify their sources of not just agri-food products but also innovative and healthy FMCGs.

SUSTAINABLY PRODUCED, CLEAN FOOD FROM GREEN LITHUANIA

Lithuanian agri-food products are exported to nearly 160 countries, reaching more than three-fourths of the world markets. The northeastern European country has much potential in providing sustainably produced quality food for global markets. The increasing demand for organic products has encouraged Lithuania to focus on organic farming. Today, more than 8 per cent of Lithuania's agricultural land is certified organic, and this is set to grow to 13 per cent by 2027.

Šarūnas Celiešius, Director of LitFOOD, Lithuania's food export promotion agency, says, "Our food products are known for cleaner sources and are produced using sustainable solutions and advanced technologies in the agri-food industry.

With sustainability in mind, our farmers and food producers are also increasingly deploying technologies that make agriculture and food production more environmentally friendly as well as sustainable. Our food producers use advanced technologies like freeze drying, 3D printing, and vertical farming to produce nutrient-rich products that have a range of advantages, including customisation, long shelf life, and reduced environmental impact."

The UAE is one of the important trade partners of Lithuania in the GCC. Bilateral trade between both nations has grown by more than 100 per cent every year for the past few years. The export of Lithuanian food products to the UAE is also growing every year and amounted to Dh64 million in 2023, and includes concentrated milk and cream, cheese and curd, beverages, fish, and processed cereals.

"There is a reason behind the ever-increasing numbers of food export from Lithuania. Products grown and made in Lithuania meet the highest food quality standards. We place a strong emphasis on the safety and quality of food production to provide consumers with top-quality products," concludes Celiešius.

From innovative functional snacks to sophisticated soft beverages, Lithuania presents a culinary journey like no other. EAT Lithuania underscores the nation's commitment to delivering innovative and high-quality products to the UAE market.

FROM BIOTECHNOLOGIES TO LASERS:

How Lithuania became a regional innovation centre

Lithuania has achieved significant developments in the fields of life sciences, space technology, lasers and other areas that create high added value

The innovation sector in Lithuania is rapidly growing, partly through the support of the Lithuanian government, which actively promotes investments in scientific research and experimental development, while supporting the development of an integrated and dynamic innovation ecosystem," says Romualda Straigien, Director of the Innovation Agency Lithuania. "The Innovation Agency makes a significant contribution to these efforts by implementing relevant financing measures for innovative businesses with the goal of creating favourable conditions for the export of products with high added value, the establishment of international business relations and networking. This opens up even more opportunities for Lithuanian businesses operating in innovation sectors, while simultaneously strengthening the country's position as a regional innovation centre."

LIFE SCIENCES – AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT PILLAR OF THE LITHUANIAN ECONOMY

In recent years, the life sciences sector has become established as one of the most important elements of the country's economy, growing by an average of 30 per cent annually. Currently, life sciences generate about 2.7 per cent of the country's GDP, and by 2030, this share is projected to increase to 5 per cent.

Lithuania has gained international recognition for its advanced research in the fields of biotechnology, pharmacology and biomedicine. With modern research laboratories and strong scientific institutions, such as Vilnius University and Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Lithuania is in a strong position to cooperate with international research centres and companies.

A total of 14 higher education institutions in the country offer studies related to life sciences. As early as next year, Europe's largest life sciences centre will be based in Lithuania, and operating a total of eight advanced research centres. Northway Biotech, the company implementing the project, plans to invest a total of about 7 billion euros in this complex over the next decade.

Lithuanian scientific and research institutions provide a valuable contribution towards global achievements in the fields of cell and gene therapy, proteins, medical technology, agricultural biotechnology and food technology. For example, among other scientists, Virginijus Šikšnys, a professor at Vilnius University, made a significant contribution to the discovery of the CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing method (CRISPR), which heralded a breakthrough in genetics.

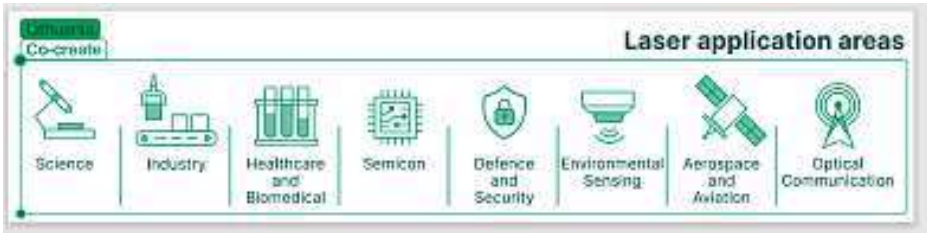
However, the Lithuanian life sciences sector is not limited to scientific research alone. The research becomes the basis for innovative products that are exported to more than 100 countries. One of the world's leading life sciences and clinical research companies, Thermo Fisher Scientific, has its production unit in Lithuania. Lithuanian life sciences start-ups Caszyme and Biomatter Designs have also made a global name for themselves thanks to the advanced solutions they are developing.

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES IN SPACE

The importance of the Lithuanian space industry is also growing swiftly. In 2021, Lithuania became an associate member of the European Space Agency (ESA), which opened up new opportunities for the country's business and scientists to contribute to international space projects. Scientific institutions and private companies are actively operating in Lithuania's space technology sector, which is developing rapidly.

An estimated 95 per cent of Lithuanian space industry companies carry out scientific research, experimental development and innovation activities, and more than half of the participants in the ecosystem are mature and well-established companies, with an annual turnover of 2 million to 10 million euros. Kongesberg NanoAvionics, one of the most successful companies in the Lithuanian space industry, specialising in the development of small satellites and their mission management, has successfully expanded its activities in the international market while cooperating with various space agencies and private companies.

Lithuanian scientists participate in various projects financed by ESA and other international organisations, and they contribute to space research and development of new technologies. The Lithuanian government also actively supports the development of the space sector by investing in scientific research and encouraging innovation. Lithuania has set a goal for the space industry to generate at least 1 per cent of the country's GDP by 2027.



LITHUANIA'S PRIDE – LASERS

Another heavyweight of the Lithuanian innovation ecosystem is the laser sector. With a long tradition of scientific research and development of lasers, Lithuania has become an important centre of this field in Europe and the world. Vilnius University's Laser Research and State Centers for Physical and Technological Sciences play a fundamental role in developing new laser technologies. Science closely cooperates with industry, thus ensuring faster practical application of knowledge and technology.

Lithuanian laser technologies go beyond scientific research, as they are also used in industry, medicine, telecommunications and many other fields. They even have a worldwide impact, as 95 out of 100 leading universities in the world use Lithuanian lasers, and organisations such as NASA and CERN also rely on them. More than 89 per cent of laser technologies created in Lithuania are exported, and the sector reached an average growth of 20 per cent annually in 2021-2023. The achievements of the Lithuanian laser sector are perfectly illustrated by the prestigious SPIE Prism award for the best laser FemtoLux30, awarded this year to one of the industry leaders – the company, Ekspla.

TOWARDS AN ADVANCED TOMORROW – ON THE GROWTH WAVE OF START-UPS

The vitality and growth of these innovation sectors is supported by the vibrant ecosystem of Lithuanian start-ups. It consists of over 1,000 innovative start-ups, employing more than 18,000 talents. This ecosystem has already produced three unicorns.

The total value of Lithuanian start-ups increased more than 7 times from 2018 to 2023 and reached 13.7 billion euros. This growth was much faster than in the region – during the same period, the value of start-ups in the Central and Eastern Europe region increased by 3.6 times, and by 2.7 times in the Baltic countries.

Promising Lithuanian start-ups also attract more and more investments. In 2023, Lithuania was second in the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe, both in terms of the total attracted early-stage investments and in terms of their share per inhabitant of the country. Lithuanian start-ups are most active in the fields of software, business, financial technologies and life sciences and health technologies, and they have launched more than one successful product on the market.

CASZYME EXPLORES OPPORTUNITIES IN UAE

Caszyme is one of the brightest stars of the Lithuanian start-up ecosystem and life sciences. Specialising in the development of CRISPR-Cas gene editing technology, the company is developing new and efficient gene editing tools that help scientists around the world apply this technology in their activities and create commercial products based on it.

Caszyme aims to expand the possibilities of CRISPR-Cas technology in various fields of application of this method, from medical research and therapy to agriculture and the food industry.

One of the founders of the company is Virginijus Šikšnys, professor and biochemist, who contributed to the discovery of the CRISPR-Cas9 method. Caszyme currently has a total of 25 employees, most of whom are researchers in the field of life sciences.

The solutions they develop can help diagnose and treat various diseases more effectively, increase the resistance of food crops to climate change, and also have beneficial applications in other areas. While the company mainly works with the US, Southeast Asia and European markets, it is also looking for new cooperation opportunities in other regions, including the UAE.

Cooperation with researchers and companies from these countries can open new opportunities for one of the leading biotechnology companies in the region, thereby stimulating further development in the science of genetics. ●

Country or Region	Enterprise value 2018	Growth	Enterprise value 2023
Europe	€1.4T	2.9x	€4.1T
CEE	€62.1B	3.6x	€225.6B
Baltics	€16.1B	2.7x	€44.1B
Lithuania	€1.9B	7.1x	€13.7B

THE LITHUANIAN EDGE:

OIXIO's impact on MENA's financial innovation

OIXIO's innovative fintech solutions, powered by Microsoft Dynamics 365, are designed to meet the unique needs of the MENA region's dynamic financial landscape, says its CEO, **Dovydas Zinkevičius**

> **Lithuania is a hub for fintech innovation, with a skilled workforce and a strong tech ecosystem. At OIXIO we leverage this environment to develop effective solutions."**

Dovydas Zinkevičius, CEO, OIXIO

As OIXIO prepares to attend Fintech Surge at Gitex 2024, what makes your Leasing|Loans and IFRS16 solutions significant for the MENA market?

The MENA region is rapidly advancing in financial innovation, with a strong focus on digital transformation and regulatory compliance. Our OIXIO Leasing Loans solution automates leasing and loan management, enhancing efficiency, accuracy, and reducing costs.

Our IFRS16 solution ensures compliance with international financial standards, which is crucial for businesses operating across multiple markets in this diverse region.

Both solutions are built on Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central, known for its reliability and scalability. This technology foundation enables us to offer solutions that are not only advanced but also seamlessly integrated into the financial ecosystem, supporting the region's growth and regulatory demands.

How does OIXIO's Lithuanian background give you an edge in the MENA region?

Lithuania is a hub for fintech innovation, with a skilled workforce and a strong tech ecosystem. At OIXIO, we leverage this environment to develop effective solutions. Our RegTech project for the Central Bank of Lithuania, which won the GovTech Lab competition in 2020, highlights our capability to transform regulatory practices through innovative technology. This expertise is highly relevant to the MENA region's needs.

What benefits can MENA companies expect from partnering with OIXIO?

MENA companies will gain access to practical, reliable fintech solutions that are robust and customisable, thanks to our use of Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central.

We offer a deep understanding of global financial practices and a commitment to client success. Our tailored approach helps companies navigate the complexities of the financial landscape and seize new opportunities.

How can conference participants engage with OIXIO at Gitex 2024?

We invite all Fintech Surge attendees to visit our booth at Gitex 2024. Our team, including Sales Lead, Donatas Statulevičius and FinSolutions team manager, will be on hand to discuss how our solutions can shape your digital future. We look forward to exploring how OIXIO can support your organisation's growth and innovation.

Lithuanians create solutions for DNA-based information storage technology

Lithuanian university body collaborates with Lithuanian firm to develop autonomous solution for archiving data in DNA structures

A new field of science – DNA data storage – is being developed in Lithuania. Local company Genomika, together with Kaunas University of Technology and other partners, aims to develop an autonomous solution for archiving data in DNA structures. The total value of the project is more than 5 million euros.

According to Renaldas Raišutis, Director of the K. Baršauskas Ultrasound Research Institute at Kaunas University of Technology (KTU URI), the DNA cache can be a perfect fit to archive large amounts of data.

"In a globally digitalised society, more and more data is created and used every year. Conventional data storage centres consume 1.5 per cent of the world's electricity and emit 200 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO_2) per year," he says.

According to Raišutis, there is a global search for reliable, high-density, sustainable and economically viable data storage solutions. For this reason, the enormous potential of storing data in DNA molecules has become apparent.

The DNA Microfactory Laboratory


Renaldas Raišutis, Director, KTU URI

IN 2060, ENTIRE EARTH SURFACE WOULD BE COVERED

The KTU professor says that 65 years ago, a 5 megabyte (MB) hard drive could barely fit in a cargo plane – today it is equivalent in size to an average digital photograph. However, despite the evolution of data storage technologies, the current ones are not up to the task of meeting growing demand.

The DNA Microfactory for Autonomous Archiving (DNAMIC) project, led by Lithuanian company, Genomika, together with an international team of researchers will develop a hard drive based on the storage of data in DNA molecules within three years.

The project is funded by the EIC Pathfinder programme, part of the European Horizon. This is the first project funded by this programme in Lithuania. The programme is aimed at companies developing disruptive technologies – products or services that alter the way consumers, businesses or industries operate.

According to Dr Lukas Žemaitis, co-founder of Genomika, DNA, an information storage technology that has been developed and refined over billions of years, could be a potential technology for information storage.

Ignas Galminas, the second co-founder of Genomika, explains that this invention could solve a multitude of problems related to data storage, such as the use of water and rare metals, longevity and others.

"If the problem of data storage is not solved, by 2060, large data centres will cover the entire surface of the earth," he notes.

DNA IS HIGHLY STABLE AND RELIABLE

Genomika, KTU and researchers from four other countries are working together to develop the first modular drive that will allow a user with no specific knowledge of genetic technologies, to record and read digital information using DNA.

Storing information in synthetic DNA structures allows for more efficient use of space, a small footprint and the ability to store information for thousands of years with very low energy consumption, says Prof. Raišutis of KTU. He believes that storing data in DNA caches is particularly relevant in the healthcare sector, as digitised patient data is stored for their entire lifetime. The storage and processing of digitised information is also crucial for the development of new diagnostics and treatments.

"This is an exceptional project coordinated in Lithuania, which contributes to solving a global problem. It is not only technologically but also scientifically relevant, as a new field of science – DNA Data Storage – is starting to develop in Lithuania," says Žemaitis.

WIRED FOR SAFETY:

The future of connected vehicles

As vehicles evolve into data-driven machines, telematics is guiding the transportation industry toward a smarter, safer, and more sustainable future

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to drive a car that's as smart as your phone? How about a car that can not only follow its intended path but also predict potential obstacles? Telematics is more than just a phrase in this age of linked automobiles - it is the innovation engine propelling us forward.

Picture this: a morning commute where your car alerts you to traffic congestion long before you reach it, suggests a faster, alternative route, and keeps you updated on the precise location of every delivery vehicle in your fleet. This is the power of GPS tracking technology, an innovation that's reducing travel time, minimizing fuel wastage, and enhancing the overall efficiency of our journeys.

But the story doesn't stop at safety. In a world increasingly concerned with sustainability, telematics is becoming a crucial player. By analysing driving patterns and optimising routes, telematics systems are helping to slash fuel consumption and reduce emissions, making a tangible impact on the environment. Imagine the whole impact if every car on the road had this technology, it is not just the direction of transportation!

Yet, none of this would be possible without the right hardware. Behind the scenes, companies like Ruptela are leading the development of a wide array of devices tailored for different industries, from logistics to public transportation and beyond.

These devices offer endless possibilities, from basic tracking to advanced diagnostics, ensuring that every aspect of a vehicle's operation is monitored and optimised. With such a vast range of accessories and customization options, the potential benefits for businesses are immense, driving efficiency, safety and sustainability.

So, as we speed into the future, it's worth asking: is your vehicle just a machine, or is it part of a smarter, safer, and more sustainable world? The road ahead is wired for safety — are you ready to take the wheel?

A place for foodies, digital nomads and nature lovers

Amazing culinary finds as well as a sanctuary for digital nomads seeking that perfect work-life balance, Lithuanian tourism dishes it out by the spadefuls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PICTURES: ŠIMAS BERNOTAS, KIPRAS ŠTREIMIKIS


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1. Amandus restaurant, Vilnius
2. TV tower, Vlnius
3. The Treetop Walking Path, Anykščiai
4. Aukštumala Marsh Educational Trail
5. Sports complex near the White Bridge in Vilnius

The southernmost of the Baltic states, Lithuania continues to surprise and delight visitors with its blend of multilayered history, stunning landscapes, and love for all things tech. This year, this offbeat spot has even more to offer, cementing its status as a must-visit destination for foodies, creatives, entrepreneurs on the road and all sorts of insatiable explorers.

The culinary revolution of Lithuanian cuisine has been brewing for quite some time, and earlier this year, the country's food scene was finally recognised by the prestigious Michelin Guide. Its arrival in Lithuania was nothing short of spectacular, with 34 establishments receiving mentions and an impressive four restaurants awarded coveted Michelin stars. This recognition is a testament to the quality of modern Lithuanian cuisine, which blends respect for age-old traditions and local produce with contemporary trends and a drive for excellence.

While high-end dining experiences are now gaining international recognition, simpler, traditional Lithuanian food can be equally impressive, often with surprising twists. For instance, šaltibarščiai, a cold, refreshing summer soup, comes in a striking neon pink colour! Another popular delicacy, šakotis, resembles a tree. You can have a go at making this buttery spiked cake yourself, pouring batter over a spit rotating above an open fire. It's a process that requires patience, but the result is deliciously rewarding.

Beyond its culinary appeal, Lithuania offers an irresistible proposition for digital nomads seeking the perfect work-life balance, something that Lithuanians truly cherish. The country's excellent digital infrastructure extends to innovative co-working spaces that blend seamlessly with natural surroundings. Tech Arts, on the outskirts of Lithuania's capital Vilnius, is a zen-like workspace with forest views that allows you to combine vibrant city life with natural tranquility. Another co-working highlight is Tech Spa in Druskininkai. Set in a beautiful spa town famous for its mineral springs, it offers a unique setting fine-tuned for both productivity and relaxation.

Lithuania's pristine landscapes offer endless opportunities for exploration, and not just for remote workers. Hikers can traverse winding trails through ancient woods, while water enthusiasts can kayak along tranquil rivers or wakeboard on shimmering lakes. The Curonian Spit peninsula, a UNESCO World Heritage site, enchants visitors with its towering sand dunes and aromatic pine forests. Foraging for wild berries, birdwatching in wetlands, or simply unwinding amidst unspoiled scenery — Lithuania provides plenty of opportunities to connect with nature and rejuvenate both body and spirit.

Whether you're savouring Michelin-recommended cuisine in Vilnius' charming Old Town or working on your latest project with a lake view, Lithuania promises an unforgettable experience without the crowds. It's time to discover its unique blend of culinary excellence and digital connectivity amidst breathtaking natural beauty.

Direct flights between Dubai and Vilnius, now twice a week

Air Baltic to continue direct scheduled flights between Vilnius and Dubai from October-end this year

Latvian airline Air Baltic plans to continue operating direct scheduled flights between Vilnius Airport and Dubai from the end of October this year. The flights are scheduled to operate twice a week (Wednesdays and Saturdays) and will continue throughout the winter season (until the end of March 2025). The route was already launched during the last winter season.

"These flights will continue to improve Lithuania's accessibility, investment climate and the conditions for developing economic relations with Asian countries. Dubai is a strategically important airport with connections to many Asian countries, so this will significantly improve Lithuania's accessibility," says Tomas Zitikis, Head of Flight Development at Lithuanian Airports.

According to the airline, the duration of the direct flight is about 6 hours. 35 minutes.

It should be noted that the Vilnius-Dubai route will complement the existing year-round Riga-Dubai route, thus further expanding travel opportunities to this popular destination throughout the region.

Dubai is an important Middle East shipping port and a global business hub, with major global aviation service providers operating and expanding, and a large Lithuanian community. Dubai receives most of its tourists between November and March, when the weather conditions are most favourable for tourism. People are attracted to Dubai for its architecture, entertainment, shopping centres, beaches and museums.

Book your tickets at the best prices on airBaltic's website **www.airbaltic.com**

PICTURES: AIR BALTIC / LITHUANIAN AIRPORTS