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## EDITORIAL FRAGILE BEAUTY



Lake Baikal. Photo: Raimond Klavins

We have decided to dedicate this edition of our magazine to travel, holidays in the most beautiful destinations of our planet and health. 'The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page,' St Aurelius Augustine said.

So let's not miss out on the remaining days of this beautiful summer, which is truly special this year: after two years of fighting the plague of Covid-19 (God knows where it came from) people can once again travel the world, getting to experience the culture of different countries and people, recharging with positive energy and, last but not least, restoring their health. Lockdowns, social distancing and masks have been forgotten (but for how long?..). Once again, creative people are inspired by the beauty and colours of nature,

meeting with interesting people and the stunning diversity of architecture of cities. It is no coincidence that many great masterpieces were created by writers and artists under the impression of their travelling.

The beauty of our planet is inexhaustible! But this beauty is fragile and vulnerable: it depends too much on the will and actions of people. It is much easier to destroy it than to create something beautiful. Now that the voices warning us that the world is on the brink of a nuclear war are becoming even louder, we realise this particularly keenly.

'It must shake up our conscience that we become all the more inhuman the more we grow into supermen...' considered Nobel Peace Laureate, German-French philosopher and humanist Albert Schweitzer.

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# THERE, BEYOND THE HORIZON...

*Travel makes us wonder and admire, experience new emotions  
and feel the joy of life*

By EKATERINA GRIGORIEVA

For more than two years, the world has lived with the pandemic. People have even gotten used to this new reality. But this January, Director-General of the World Health Organisation, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, suddenly announced that 2022 could be the last year of the coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, the panic subsided (although its echoes are still heard), the borders opened, and people were again allowed to travel. You can once again enjoy your vacation by the sea, spend time in restaurants, go to concerts, and most importantly, visit your family and friends living in other cities and countries.



Photo: Stefan Stefancik

Travel makes us wonder and admire, experience new emotions and feel the joy of life. Only by going on a journey, you can take

only to broaden one's horizons, but also to reevaluate one's life, take a fresh look at the wonderful world

*"Wandering is the best thing in the world. When you wander, you grow rapidly, and everything that you see changes even your appearance. I would recognise people who travel a lot, among thousands of other people. Wanderings purify and intertwine meetings, centuries, books, and love. They relate us to the sky. If we have received the unproven happiness of being born, then we must at least see the earth."*

Konstantin Paustovsky

a break from the daily grind, forget about work for a while, shake off stress and problems.

Getting to know the culture of other peoples and countries helps not

granted to us, feel its beauty and return home as a new person.

"A person who travels a lot is like a stone carried by water for many hundreds of miles: its roughness

is smoothed out, and everything inside them takes on soft, rounded shapes," said Élisée Reclus, the French geographer and historian, a member of the Paris Geography Society.

We spend most of our lives at work and in an endless bustle. And sometimes we prefer to "travel" sitting on the couch in front of the TV.

But the routine is much more dangerous than the riskiest adventures...

We need new impressions and emotions, otherwise we risk losing the taste for life.

So, let's not postpone our dream of traveling "for later", dear readers!

# BORIS JOHNSON'S GOVERNMENT IN CRISIS

*Will the Tories manage to regain their credibility  
before the 2024 general election and stay in power*

By KARINA ENFENJYAN

In early July, Boris Johnson announced that he was stepping down as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and as the Leader of the Conservative Party. The decision came after 50 government ministers resigned, including Johnson's former closest supporters Treasury chief Rishi Sunak and Health Secretary Sajid Javid.

Johnson's reign, which began in late 2019, was by no means flawless. A series of mistakes, scandals and dishonesty, which the prime minister resorted to in his effort to retain his position at all costs, drastically decreased his ratings. The British public was outraged by the parties at 10 Downing Street, which were held during the peak of the nationwide lockdown in May 2020 and even on the eve of Prince Philip's funeral in April 2021, when the entire country has plunged into mourning.

Who will be Britain's next prime minister? It will be decided not by 47 million British voters, but only by the 160,000 members of the Conservative Party. In the UK, the prime mini-

ster is not directly elected. Instead, members of parliament are elected and the leader of the party with the most MPs forms the government. And since the Conservatives still have a large majority after Johnson's victory in the 2019 election, his successor will simply inherit that majority and become head of government. Johnson will continue to carry out his duties until the Conservative Party elects a new leader.

In the last round of parliamentary voting, which took place on July 20, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss (113 votes) and former Chief Secretary to the Treasury Rishi Sunak (135 votes) advanced to the final election for prime minister and Tory leader.



Foreign Secretary Liz Truss

Millionaire Sunak who took over as Chancellor of the Exchequer in February 2020, soon found himself in the thick of coronavirus problems. And although he allocated 350 million pounds to support the national economy, the crisis was not overcome. Nevertheless, he has every chance of taking the prime minister's chair.



Former Chief Secretary to the Treasury Rishi Sunak

Liz Truss promises the British public, once she wins the election, to be bold in making decisions designed to change the situation in the country for the better.

The results of the election will be known on September 5, during the final round of voting among the members of the Conservative Party.

The winner will face the hard work of being the leader of a divided party. Will the Tories manage to regain their credibility before the 2024 general election and stay in power (unless, of course, an early general parliamentary election is called), or will they still have to cede Downing Street to the opposition party?



# ‘CENTAURUS’, OR THE MANY FACES OF OMICRON

*According to experts, the Centaurus subvariant of Omicron can evade immunity given by vaccination or prior infection*

By VLADISLAV STREKOPYTOV,  
RIA Novosti

The original Omicron – BA.1 – appeared in late 2021 in southern Africa. It differed from the previous strains by a huge number of mutations. The spike protein alone, responsible for the penetration of the virus into human cells, had up to thirty mutations.

The super mutant turned out to be mild (it caused a less severe illness), but very contagious, which is why it quickly spread across the globe.

It was immediately followed by BA.2, which was dubbed ‘stealth Omicron’ by the media as PCR tests were unable to detect it and costly genome sequencing had to be used. This variant, even more contagious than BA.1, caused the second ‘Omicron wave.’ In India and South Africa it peaked in December 2021, and in Europe and America it lasted from March to April 2022.

The third wave was related to lineages of stealth Omicron – at the beginning of the year the BA.4 and

BA.5 subvariants appeared in South Africa, and BA.2.12 and BA.2.12.1 were dominant in the USA.



Photo: Martin Sanchez

In addition to its rapid growth and wide geographical spread, virologists have been alarmed by the huge number of extra mutations in BA.2.75 compared to the original BA.2. Some even suggest considering it a new version of Omicron.

But the World Health Organization (WHO) added the new subvariant to its monitoring list without giving

it an official name straight away. An ordinary Twitter user Xabier Ostale made advantage of the situation and on 1st July he wrote: ‘I have just named BA.2.75 variant after a galaxy. Its new name is Centaurus strain.’

Xabier Ostale is not a virologist – he just tweets information about the coronavirus, its strains and ways to stay safe. However, his post quickly went viral, and this nickname stuck to the strain. In the Russian version it sounds as ‘Centaur’, despite the fact that the author named it after the constellation Centaurus.

Thanks to its nickname the world’s leading newspapers (including The Guardian) began to write about the new strain, and people began to search for information on the internet. So a random tweet made one of the Omicron subvariants famous.

By the way, BA.2.75 is not the only variant of SARS-CoV-2 that has recently received an unofficial name.

The subvariant BA.5.3.1 is often referred to as ‘Bad Ned’ by virologists because of its N E136D mutation. In Germany it now accounts for more than a quarter of Covid-19 cases.

## *Everything didn’t go according to the plan*

The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), following the WHO, initially classified BA.2.75 as ‘a variant under monitoring’, and on 14th July changed the classification to ‘a variant of interest’. So there are indications that it is more contagious or more severe, but there is as yet little evidence or it is still unavailable.

According to experts, Centaurus has mutations (primarily in the spike protein) that can give it an advantage over other strains of SARS-CoV-2. For example, it can spread faster or evade immunity given by vaccination or prior infection, including the previous Omicron subvariants.

To say anything more definite about the new subvariant scientists need to monitor it for some more time. It is still unclear how widely it

will spread. But at least in India it is already causing serious concern among doctors and epidemiologists.

In the middle of last year, many believed that the Delta strain was the pinnacle of the virus’ evolution and the pandemic was nearing its end due to the weakening of SARS-CoV-2 and reaching herd immunity by mankind. But Omicron which easily evades antibodies emerged, and everything didn’t go according to the plan.

## *A very common one*

In terms of symptoms Centaurus is generally similar to all the other Omicron subvariants. Its typical symptoms include a high temperature, cough, a stuffy nose, headaches, muscle pains,

a sore throat, stomach aches, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting.

The new variant primarily affects the upper respiratory tract and it is less likely to cause pneumonia. Almost no patients have reported loss of smell so far. According to preliminary findings, it is milder than the other strains of SARS-CoV-2 and causes lower mortality, but it is more transmissible.

The WHO believes that the current increase in the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases around the world is partly due to BA.2.75, and is urging all countries to return to wearing masks and social distancing.

According to the Emergency Response Centre for Preventing the Import and Spread of the Novel Coronavirus, over the past month the number of cases in Moscow has increased more than two and a half times. Covid cases are rising in other regions of Russia as well.



Photo: Alin Lun



Photo: Jan Kopriva



## HEALTH

# THE HUNZA VALLEY AS 'PARADISE ON EARTH'

*Scientists continue to struggle to unravel the secret of the Hunza people's longevity*

By EKATERINA POLYAKOVA



Photo: Adeel Shabir

The glorious mountainous Hunza Valley, known as a 'paradise on earth' and an 'oasis of youth', is located at the Pakistan-India border, where the three tallest mountain ranges of the world meet: the Himalayas, the Hindu Kush and the Karakoram.

The Hunza people are cordial and benevolent and famous for their hospitality. Though they speak the isolated Burushaski language, most of them understand Urdu and English.

Legend has it that the Hunza are descendants of the army of Alexander the Great who founded a settlement here during his Indian campaign. Perhaps that is why the Hunza Valley inhabitants, unlike their neighbours, look very similar to Europeans.

In the 1970s this piece of paradise gained immense popularity among hippies, who were attracted not only by the exotic and the thirst for wandering, but also by Indian hemp. By the way, the Hunza mainly use it as a seasoning for their dishes.

The main mystery of the Hunza people is their health. They almost never get sick, look young even at seventy and remain energetic in old age. Their women give birth till sixty or sixty-five.

At the World Cancer Congress, held in Paris in August 1977, it was announced that the Hunza were the only cancer-free population in the world.

The life expectancy of this tribe is the highest in the world: it is said to be 110–120 years. Scientists suggest that the reason for this is its pure glacial water, mountain air, physical activity and special nutritional principles.

The apricot, which the Hunza regard as their 'gold', plays an important, if not the key, role in their diet. In season they eat fresh apricots, and in winter they eat dried apricots, from which they make puree, juice, jam and even ice-cream.

They also grow apples, pears, sweet cherries, cherries, peaches, plums and, of course, vegetables.

The Hunza bake chapati bread from whole-grain wheat. They seldom eat meat and get protein chiefly from beans, barley and wheat. From dairy produce they prefer sheep's cheese.

Fittis, a local speciality, is a flat cake made of wheat flour, milk, butter and salt, baked on a hot stone.

During the 'hungry' spring season when fruit is not yet ripe, the Hunza eat virtually nothing and limit themselves to a dried apricot drink once a day.

The Scottish physician McCarrison, who studied the lifestyle of the Hunza Valley inhabitants for fourteen years, came to the conclusion that food is the key factor for this tribe's longevity and that the mountain climate is not a decisive factor: their neighbours living in the same climatic conditions get sick and their life expectancy is half as long.

In the book, *Hunza – a People Who Do not Know Disease*, R. Birch-

er emphasizes the basic principles of the Hunza people's nutritional model:

- vegetarianism;
- raw foods;
- very limited consumption of alcohol and sweets;

- moderate salt intake;
- products grown only on their own soil;
- regular periods of fasting.

In addition, the Hunza are famous for their extraordinary stamina and physical activity. This is manifested both in their work and their dances and games. They climb up steep mountains with ease and it is not at all hard for them to walk 100 to 200 kilometres a day – they do not even feel fatigue.

Another important secret of their good health and longevity is this tribe's incredible buoyancy. They never lose heart and are always cheerful.

'The Hunza have nerves as strong as ropes and as thin and delicate as a string,' McCarrison wrote. 'They never get angry or complain, do not get nervous or show impatience, do not quarrel among themselves and endure physical pain, trouble, noise, etc. with complete peace of mind.'



Photo: Anas Najam





# THE SUMMER OF THE LORD

*August 19 (August 6 according to the Julian calendar) the Church celebrates the Transfiguration of the Lord and August 28 (August 15) the Church celebrates the Dormition of the Virgin*

By AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI,  
*Doctor of Theology, Priest*

According to the church liturgical calendar, August is the last month of the year. It is interesting that this archaic tradition is preserved both in the Orthodox and in the Catholic Church. This Church New Year has almost no effect on the divine service itself. Nevertheless, for every person, to some extent connected with the church or biblical tradition of perceiving time, as the uniqueness of the chronological advancement of each life into each new moment, any such end of the annual period is important.

The year in the Russian church language is literally called the “Summer of the Lord”, “the summer of goodness” or simply “summer”. That is why the great Russian writer Ivan Shmelev (1873–1950) called his amazing novel “The Year of the Lord” (literally in Russian: “Summer of the Lord”).

This very coincidence of the words summer in relation to the year and to the season in different registers – church and secular – of the Russian language could become an occasion for us to think about the holidays of the end of August. These holidays – the Transfiguration of the Lord and the Assumption of the Most Holy Theotokos – are like celebrations of the end of summer. Let’s look at each of them in order of celebration.

## *Transfiguration of the Lord*

August 19, August 6 according to the Julian calendar, the Church celebrates the Transfiguration of the

Lord. The Day of the Transfiguration is an important occasion for the Church, as a Society of Believers, to reflect on the meaning of this Event. According to the Gospel, the Lord Jesus ascended the Mountain with the apostles Peter, James, and John, and was transfigured before them. Jesus of Nazareth was accompanied by the prophets Moses and Elijah. The voice of God and the Father testified that “Goodwill” rests on Jesus. The subsequent development of the redemptive mystery showed that the Favor of God is Jesus the Lord Himself. This event is described in the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Mt.17:1–6; Mk.9:1–8; Lk.9:28–36).

The end of the description of the Event of the Transfiguration in the Gospel testifies that the Transfiguration Itself is directly connected with the Cross of Christ. The Lord reveals His glory, after which He announces to the Apostles about the coming Suffering. “And as they were descending from the mountain, Jesus rebuked them, saying, Tell no one about this vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead. For the Son of Man will suffer” (cf. Matt. 17; 9.12). In the context of the sequence of liturgical celebrations of the Church, it is important that the celebration in honor of the Cross of Christ, the Day of the Exaltation, takes place on September 27, that is, on the fortieth day after the Transfiguration.

The Transfiguration of the Lord was a historical event, that is, it took place once in history. In turn, the early Christian communities that stood

at the origins of the gospel texts, and, after them, the patristic theology, gave the event of the Transfiguration a dogmatical meaning. This means that the Transfiguration has a special place in the history of salvation, and, most importantly, in the divine economy, that is, His administration of the world.

It is worth knowing that later Byzantine theology in the 14th century, in the person of the Thessalonian Archbishop Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), made a grandiose attempt at a complete rethinking of the Event of the Transfiguration. Recall that the traditions of Western Christianity are characterized by the so-called “ideological holidays”. In them, instead of, or along with specific events, there is a recollection of certain doctrinal truths: “The Body of Christ”, “Christ is the King”, “The Name of Jesus: The Lord Jesus Christ” etc. The Orthodox East of that time actually turned the Transfiguration into an ideological celebration in honor of the “divine light”, “uncreated energies” and the prayer practice of hesychasm. That is, the Transfiguration as a historical fact, and, most importantly, its direct connection with the Cross of Christ, were, if not forgotten, then, in any case, “relegated” to a secondary plane.

A paradoxical response to this “theologization” of the Transfiguration was the popularly pious identification of the liturgy of the feast with the blessing of the new fruit harvest. Transfiguration like apples and grapes: symbols of the fall of the first

people and washing away the sins of all, “given for many” (Mt; 26.28), Eucharistic Wine. “God, our Savior, who deigned to call Your Only Begotten Son, the Lord God and our Savior Jesus, “grapes,” and thereby gave us the fruit of immortality,” says the prayer for the blessing of the fruits on the Day of the Transfiguration. Through this the Lord Jesus became the Blessing of the fruit harvest of the Lord’s Summer.

So, we are dealing with two, or even three meanings of the Event of the Transfiguration: 1. Biblical and historical; 2. Theoretical, ideological, and scholastic; 3. Folk and pious, which sums up a period of time. But the Transfiguration also has a special, fourth meaning. Until now, he almost always eluded the attention of the Orthodox Tradition.

At the moment of the culmination of the Eucharistic Prayer, the Church, through the mouth of a priest the Church pronounces the following words: “Remembering this saving commandment and everything that happened for us: the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, ascending into heaven, sitting on the right hand, the second and glorious second coming”. This is the key phrase of the Eucharistic prayer of the Church. For it precedes the double epiclesis of the simultaneous Transubstantiation of the Bread and Wine, and the Community into the Body and Blood of Christ. That is, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus. The praying Congregation itself also becomes the Body and Blood of the Lord! “Take what He is – the Body of Christ, in order to become what You are – the Body of Christ,” urges the greatest Father of the Church of all time, Saint Bishop Augustine of Hippo (354–430) in his sermon on the Eucharist.

So, according to the literal meaning of the words of this prayer, the Second Coming of the Lord is itself the subject of Remembrance. It has already happened. The Second Com-

ing, or, in the language of theology, the Parousia, is part of the remembrance of the Praying Community of the Church.

The true meaning of the Transfiguration is not in the past, that one-time manifestation of the glory of the Lord on Mount Tabor in Palestine, but in the future. In fact, the event of the Transfiguration will only be. It is the Feast of the Future, which marks an eschatological accomplishment. The Transfiguration is the memory of the Second Coming of Jesus.

“We no longer know Christ in the flesh,” writes the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 5:16). These words mean the following: unlike the Apostles, none of the subsequent generations of Christians, saw the Lord before His Cross. None of the Christians did not see Him until the Resurrection! The Lord Jesus available to us is the Lord Reigning over the Universe, the Lord Resurrected and the Master of History.

The Lord available to us is the Lord of the Second Coming. Available “already and not yet”. We will talk about this expression a little later. Therefore, and here it is important to return to the Transfiguration Event, we contemplate Him in Glory with our mind’s eye. As it is said in the Gospel about the Transfiguration itself: “Jesus was transfigured before them: and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as snow” (Matthew 17; 1–2).

The Day of the Transfiguration at the end of the church liturgical year is an important occasion for the church



*The Transfiguration of Jesus by Raphael. 1520*

community and secular society to reflect on the new meaning of this event. After all, in a very definite sense, this event becomes a farewell. For it is celebrated at the end of the church year. For next time the Church will celebrate the Transfiguration only in a year. Will celebrate if God prolongs the existence of this world. After all, according to Jesus in the Apocalypse, “Whoever witnesses this says: Yea, I am coming soon!” (Rev. 22:20). The dogma of the Church about the Second Coming means the conviction that our Lord longs to return again in order to transform the Universe and complete History.

## *Dormition of the Virgin*

Nine days after the Transfiguration, August 28 – August 15 in the Western liturgical tradition – the Church celebrates the Dormition of the Vir-





*Dormition of the Theotokos by Theophan the Greek. 1392*

gin. Dormition is death. However, the faith of the Church is convinced that the death of Mary – the Mother of Jesus – was not ordinary. Unlike any other human death, it was not, or, better, did not become for Mary the farewell to life. Hence the name Dormition. Let us note that in the Catholic Church the Dormition is called “Assumption”.

Knowledge about God is made up of theology and economy. This is how the Ancient Church divided knowledge about God. Within this logic, theology is what God is in Himself.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even if the world had not been created, God would always be and always remain, being Himself. One and only God. Christianity has always been, is and will be the confession of the strictest monotheism. “I believe in the One God,” begins the Creed.

The Divine Economy is the implementation of His saving plan in relation to the world created from non-existence. And most importantly, this is the redemptive work of God, the salvation of his beloved creation, whose name is man. Redemp-

tion and salvation, the raising of a person from the abyss of death, deliverance from sin, damnation, and death. Sin is a lost glory, and therefore deliverance from sin becomes for a person an introduction to the glory of the Lord Jesus.

According to the Creed, the beginning of the economic mystery lies in the the Incarnation of God. “I believe in the One Lord Jesus... incarnated from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary” says the Creed. God enters History, and, according to biblical texts, the Mother of God becomes the place of contact, the topos, or the threshold of the Coming of the Lord.

During the year, which is poetically referred to in Russian liturgical texts as the “Summer of the Lord”, the Church repeatedly celebrates in honor of the Mother of Jesus (cf. Acts 1:14). All feasts of Mary somehow connected with the divine economy of salvation: the Conception of the Virgin by Joachim and Anna, the Nativity of the Virgin, the Entry into the Temple, the Annunciation, the Presentation. All these feasts, in one way or another, relate to the mystery of salvation. They are directly connected with the Earthly Life of the Lord Jesus, his Death on the Cross and Resurrection. But what about Assumption?

Paradoxically, it turns out that the Dormition is the only feast of the Mother of God that is apparently no longer related to the divine economy, since the latter has already been completed. The Cross, and the Resurrection, and the Second and Glorious Coming again of the Lord Jesus – as it is said in the Eucharistic Prayer of the Church, are already, once and for all, inscribed in the history of the salvation of the Universe. According to the logic of linear dogmatic thinking, the Assumption is, as it were, taken out “outside of the divine economy”.

But God judged otherwise. And this mystery of the Truth about the Dormition, prepared by Himself, is directly connected both with human existence and with the dogma of the Second Coming. After all, as we have already noted in relation to the Feast of the Transfiguration, the Parousia of the Lord Jesus is mentioned in the liturgy in the past tense but has not yet happened!

In this sense, the exegetes of the last century are right when they said that the truth about the Second Coming is the only dogma that follows the logic of the simultaneous fulfillment of “already and not yet.” Those who reproach those who forget about this truth of dogma and history are also right. One of them, in his critical inspiration, proclaimed: “The eschatological shop of the Church has closed.” Recall that eschatology is the theology about the end of history, the end times and, most importantly, the Second Coming of the Lord.

Unlike all other Mother of God feasts, in the Event of the Dormition the Church, as the Society of the Faithful, becomes predominantly a contemporary of the Blessed Virgin. In order to realize this contemporaneity of it in the liturgical prayer of the Church, we must turn again to the Eucharistic prayer. After the transubstantiation of the Bread and Wine, the priest says: “We also bring you this service for all those who have died in the faith: forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, Evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and for every righteous spirit who has died in faith, and especially in the first place – about the Most Holy, Most Pure, Blessed Glorious Lady of Our Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary”.

From these words, uttered by the Community after the Transubstantiation, it becomes obvious that the commemoration of the liturgy that unites all the living – the living Before the Throne of God and the living here before the Throne of the Temple – reflects the worldview of the

contemporaries of the Blessed Virgin. Her contemporaries were those who were directly connected with the Apostolic Circle, with the first generations of apostolic disciples, who personally remembered and knew the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Jesus, who lived here on earth.

It is extremely important that for these first, holy people – Christians in the true sense of the word – there was in principle no difference between those who are still before God in the prayer of the Eucharist, and those who, like the Blessed Virgin, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and all The Infinite Cloud of Witnesses (Heb. 12:1), intercede before God in the communion of saints. These texts, in their meaning, go back to the contemporaries of the Blessed Virgin. They are worthy of perception with attention, fear, and awe. It is the living Words of the Ecclesia – the Assembly of the Church – and they enroll us among the Contemporaries of God by the Holy Spirit.

According to the Faith of the Church, the Mother of God, whom the Church glorifies as the Most Honorable of the Cherubim and the Most Glorious of the Seraphim, nevertheless had to die. And this is the great and incomprehensible mystery about the Dormition of the Mother of Jesus. Becoming contemporaries of the apostolic community, and therefore of the Blessed Virgin, in liturgical prayer, the Community becomes a contemporary of the Apostles. So the Church is given an understanding of how those who saw and knew her perceived her. She always lived in the Presence of the Son. According to Tradition, it was to Mary herself that the Risen Lord was the first to appear. Mary lived by the appearance of the Resurrected Glorified Messiah Savior.

The Apostolic Community waited for the Return of the Lord Jesus, lived for His Second Coming. She directly experienced His approach as if He had already knocked on the door, stood outside the threshold, inexora-

bly walked towards the world, history, and His Church. The apostles and Mary looked forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus in a real and immediate way.

Perhaps it is precisely in this “too strong”, great and amazing expectation that the reason lies why in Scripture and Tradition, so little has been written down and said about the circumstances of the earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos. Thus, the seeming unimportance of circumstances not connected with the preaching and proclaiming of the Coming was manifested. The Lord was approaching and the Community, together with Mary, proclaimed: “Our Lord is coming, Maran Afa!”

Perhaps it is this “too strong”, great and amazing expectation that is the reason why so little is written and said in Scripture and Tradition about the circumstances of the earthly life of Mary. Thus, the seeming unimportance of circumstances was manifested before the Truth about the Second Coming. The Lord was approaching, and the Community together with Mary proclaimed: “Our Lord is coming, Maran Afa!”

In the symbolism of the icon of the Assumption, much becomes obvious: the childish soul of Mary is in the hands of the Lord; the body – already Resurrected by Him – in the Kingdom of God and the Father. So in Mary and her Assumption is the Great Mystery of what awaits a person. The mystery, not noticed by theology, lies in the fact that the Completion of the Economy of Salvation – in a different, human, life perspective – is visibly contained in the Mystery of the Dormition. The mystery of life for those who left us, the mystery of life for us.

The Lord resurrected the Most Holy Virgin, already approaching in the Transfiguration of the Parousia. Dormition means that after the Summer of the Lord comes the Autumn of History. After all, Jesus is returning, He has already crossed the threshold.



CULTURE

# WHO CAN COMPARE WITH MY MATILDA?

*150 years ago, on August 9 [31], 1872,  
the ballerina Matilda Kshesinskaya was born*

SERGEI MAKIN

In Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*, the opera first staged at the Mariinsky Theatre in 1892, when Tsarevich Nikolai was fascinated by the ballerina Kshesinskaya, Duke Roberto of Burgundy sings the famous aria:

*Who can compare with my Matilda,  
Whose black eyes sparkle  
Like stars in the autumn night sky!  
She is wonderfully full of passionate  
bliss,  
Everything about her is intoxicating,  
everything about her is intoxicating,  
And everything is as hot as wine...*

The opera is based on the play *King René's Daughter* by the Danish playwright Henrik Hertz. The libretto was written by Modest, the composer's brother. Hertz's play was published in 1845. In 1849, the Russian translation by Vladimir Zotov was published in the collection *Pantheon and repertoire, Book 4*. Moreover, the authorship was attributed to the great storyteller as "the work of the Danish poet Andersen". In 1888, the Maly Theatre presented the play in this translation to Moscow audiences. In Zotov's text, which Modest Ilyich revised for the opera, the Duke of Burgundy really burns with passion for Countess *Matilda* of Lorraine:

*... and I am pre-engaged,  
But my passion for Matilda is so  
strong,  
And she loves me so much...  
Marriage with Iolanta  
Will make us miserable...*

Be that as it may, but Roberto's aria became not an obsequious reaction to the romance between the heir and the ballerina, but its beautiful musical accompaniment.

In those days aristocrats bowed before ballerinas, although they did not often conclude a church marriage with them. Baron Victor André adored Anna Pavlova, he was her impresario, but after her death he failed to prove that they performed a marriage ceremony. Matilda Kshesinskaya was more fortunate: in 1921, already abroad, Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich went down the aisle with her. And in 1935, Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich granted Matilda Feliksovna and her descendants the title of the most Serene Princes Romanovsky-Krasinsky (according to the legendary genealogy of the Kshesinsky family, they descended from the Polish counts Krasinsky).

Although Kshesinskaya was distinguished by her phenomenal technique and was the first among Russian ballerinas to spin 32 fouettés in the part of Odile, the majority relates her not with swan tutus, but with alcove adventures. At the same time, Kshesinskaya aroused among her fans not rude lust, but sincere, even selfless love. Shot in Alapaevsk, Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich until his death did not part with a gold medallion, where a photograph of Matilda was inserted and her diminutive name Malya was engraved.

## *The purest art*

There is still no film dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the birth of Marius Petipa. But it is better to shoot nothing than to create a "masterpiece" like the film *Matilda*. Its director Alexei Uchitel, who can safely be called a false history teacher, should have given the film a different name: say, *Clotilda*, and it would have become clear to everyone that we were facing a fantasy. There are countless anachronisms, blunders, outright manipulations in the film. The characters of *Matilda* beg to be called "your ignobility", "your implausibility", "your absurdity". The latter refers entirely to the director of the Imperial Theatres Ivan Karlovich (actor Yevgeny Mironov), who is a fantastic hybrid of Ivan Alexandrovich Vsevolzhsky and Karl Karlovich Kister.

But the worst thing about the film is its concept. The mythical hero represented by Mironov calls the Mariinsky Theatre a "brothel receiving government subsidies". Proof of it? At the beginning of *Matilda*, graduates of the ballet school Kshesinskaya and Karsavina are secretly photographed for the Tsarevich "in an interesting perspective".

There is complete confusion with the chronology in the film: if the "fact" refers to 1890, the year Kshesinskaya graduated from the school, then at that time Karsavina did not even enter a regular school: she was only five years old. And by 1888

(the Borki train disaster scene, before which, according to the film, explicit pictures are viewed in the royal carriage) – she was only three years old. Apparently, in this way it was supposed to engage those moviegoers who do not watch ballet, do not listen to opera, but read the tabloids with pleasure. It seems that *Matilda* was aimed at throwing dirt at Russian ballet.

When asked if the people who claim that the Mariinsky Theatre was the harem of the House of Romanov were telling the truth, Oleg Vinogradov, who was the chief choreographer of the Mariinsky Theatre for a long time, angrily replied: "This is absolute nonsense and untruth. Ballet is the purest art. Absolutely. And ballerinas, they are more like nuns, they are detached from real life, most often they have an insular nature and it takes longer than anyone else to get through to them, to achieve openness. This is connected with discipline, with a tough regime, and with traditions".

Kshesinskaya was not a nun. But every person plays own role in life. Matilda performed her difficult role brilliantly. After all, we remember the words of the real history teacher Melnikov from the film *We'll Live Till Monday*: "From most people remains only a dash between two dates".

In the film, Tsarevich Nikolai, looking at the stage through binoculars,

saw the naked breasts of the young Kshesinskaya and was inflamed with insane passion. The plot of the film is shoddy, and most importantly, false: in fact, everything was decorous and noble.

## *My dear lady*

Matilda's acquaintance with the future Emperor Nicholas II took place on March 23, 1890, after the gradu-



*Matilda Kshesinskaya in costume for the ballet La Bayadère (circa 1900–1902)*





Matilda Kshesinskaya in the year of graduation from the Imperial Theatre School. 1890

ation performance of the Imperial Theatre School, which was attended by the royal family. Then Alexander III said to the graduate: "Be the glory and jewel of our ballet". The performance was followed by a dinner. Kshesinskaya recalls:

"The sovereign sat at the head of one of the long tables, a pupil was sitting on his right, who was supposed to read a prayer before the dinner, and another was supposed to sit on his left, but he pushed her away and turned to me:

And you sit next to me.

He pointed out to the heir a place nearby and, smiling, said to us:

Just don't flirt too much...

I do not remember what we talked about, but I immediately fell in love with the heir. As if it were today, I see his blue eyes with such a kind expression... When I said goodbye to the heir, who spent the whole dinner next to me, we looked at each other not the same way as when we met; a feeling of affinity had already crept into his soul, as well as into mine, although we were not aware of it".

The 20th century was not far off, the serf attitude towards the actress had gone far into the past: "Dress up as a shepherdess and enter my bedchamber". Nevertheless, it was considered shameful to marry a stage star: a military officer could marry an actress, but was obliged to resign after that. But it was not an ordinary nobleman, nor a count, nor a prince – it was a crown prince...

Nikolai, we must give credit where it is due, was very embarrassed at the thought that he would enter into an intimate relationship with a girl without marrying her. Kshesinskaya wrote in her diary: "Niki struck me... In the summer, he himself repeatedly reminded in letters and in conversation about a closer acquaintance, and now he suddenly said quite the opposite, that it could not be my first, that it would torment him all his life..."

Matilda turned out to be bolder, although she also worried in her own way:

"But how can I tell my parents about this?... Mother, I told myself, would still understand me as a woman, I was even sure of this, and I was not mistaken, but how can I tell my father? He had been brought up with strict principles, and I knew that I was dealing him a terrible blow... Until now, remembering that evening when I went to tell my father, I relive every minute. He was sitting at his desk in his office. When I got to the door, I couldn't dare to enter. Whether I dared or not... but my sister saved me. She entered his office

and told our father about everything. Although he knew how to control himself, I could notice with ease what was happening to him and immediately felt how he was suffering. He listened to me carefully and only asked if I was aware that I could never marry the heir and that I would soon have to part with him...

I found a small, charming mansion at No. 18 Angliisky Prospekt, which belonged to Rimsky-Korsakov. It was built by the Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich for the ballerina Kuznetsova, with whom he lived... (Unable to divorce his wife, the liberal-minded Grand Duke Konstantin, brother of Emperor Alexander II, established a second family with the ballerina Anna Vasilievna Kuznetsova. Five children were born to this family. – S. M.).

I hosted a housewarming party to celebrate my move and the start of my independent life. All the guests brought me housewarming gifts, and the heir presented eight gold, jeweled vodka cups...

After the move, the heir gave me his photograph with the inscription: "My dear lady," as he always called me."

### *The suffering of young Matilda*

Kshesinskaya celebrated a housewarming party in 1892. Then she decided to supplement her personal happiness with stage success.

"I really wanted to perform the ballet *Esmeralda*, in which Zucchi danced so amazingly (Virginia Zucchi was a virtuoso Italian ballerina and the prima of the Mariinsky Theatre in 1885–1888. – S. M.). I asked our famous, all-powerful choreographer Marius Ivanovich Petipa about this.

He always spoke Russian, although he knew it very poorly and never learned it during the long years of his stay in Russia. He addressed everyone on first-name terms. He usually

came wrapped in his checkered blanket and whistling...

After listening to my request for the ballet *Esmeralda*, he asked:

– Have you ever loved?

I enthusiastically told him that I was in love and still in love. Then he asked his second question:

– Did you suffer?

This question seemed so strange to me, and I immediately answered:

– Of course, I did not.

Then he told me what I later remembered often. He explained that only by experiencing the suffering of love can one truly understand and fulfill the role of *Esmeralda*. How bitterly I later recalled his words when I achieved the right to dance *Esmeralda* through suffering and she became my best role".

Matilda was ready for the fact that she would have to part with Nikolai, but still suffered when their fleeting happiness came to end: in November 1894 in the Grand Church of the Winter Palace, Nicholas II married Alexandra.

"What I experienced on the sovereign's wedding day can only be understood by those who are able to really love with all their soul and with all their heart and who sincerely believe that true, pure love exists," she later admitted. "I went through incredible mental anguish, watching hour after hour in my mind how this day went by. I realised that after the separation I had to prepare to be strong, and I tried to dull the oppressive feeling of jealousy in my mind and perceive the one who took my dear Niki from me, since she became his wife, already as an empress. I tried to pull myself together, not

lose heart under the yoke of grief and go boldly and bravely towards the life that awaited me ahead..."

Kshesinskaya remained independent until the end of her days, but in the depths of her soul a bitter resentment lurked, which splashed out purely in a feminine way: the ballerina did not allow her rivals to take the stage.

### *Throne for love*

Was it possible to give up the throne for the love of the incomparable Matilda? According to the Supreme Manifesto of March 20 (April 1), 1820, a representative of the Russian Imperial family could enter into a morganatic marriage. What is different about it is that the children born during such marriage did not have the right to inherit the throne. The situation changed after Alexander III signed the Supreme Decree of March 23 (April 4), 1889, which pro-



Kshesinskaya in Russian folk costume. 1912



hibited misalliance among members of the Imperial House.

It was in our democratic time that Prince William easily went down the aisle with the “commoner” Kate Middleton and at the same time did not become a “disinherited knight”. And when, in 1936, the young British King Edward VIII decided to marry the divorced American beauty Wallis Simpson, he was forced to abdicate: as the leader of the Anglican Communion, Edward had no right to such a marriage. “I have found it impossible to carry on the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge the duties of king, as I would wish to do, without the help and support of the woman I love,” he announced to the whole country on the radio. If Nicholas had loved passionately, recklessly, he would also have given up the right to the throne for the sake of Matilda. In this case, he would have been succeeded by his brother George, and after his death (as the Grand Duke died at the age of 28 from tuberculosis), Michael. However, Nikolai was not able to go silly over a woman.

While the heir was indulging in bliss with the ballerina Matilda, Alexander III concluded a Franco-Russian alliance and wanted to supplement it with a marriage union by marrying the heir to the daughter of the Count of Paris, Hélène of Orleans. However, an obstacle arose: the Catholic did not agree to convert to Orthodoxy, as required by the customs of the Romanov dynasty. The Tsarevich did not suffer like the young Werther, but was carried away by the German

princess Victoria Alisa Elena Louise Beatrice Hesse-Darmstadt. Not only German, but also English blood flowed in her veins: the girl was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria (as the French ambassador Maurice Paléologue wrote, she was also a



*In the role of Esmeralda (1899). Photo provided by the Russian magazine Ballet*

distant descendant of Mary Stuart). She was ready to overcome the only obstacle to marriage – the difference in religion. “Apart from this obstacle, nothing stands between us – and I am almost sure that the feelings are mutual! Nikolai writes in his diary. – All is in the lap of the gods. I bow before His goodness and calmly look to the future”. Nikolai was not tormented that Matilda was of “base” descent – so, it was fated to fail. He did not worry that the beautiful Hélène turned out to be an obstinate Catholic – so,

it was not to be. He believed that his fate was Alisa...

After the February Revolution, hard times came for Kshesinskaya. She was mocked in the press with obscene caricatures printed: the reign of freedom replaced the reign of the Romanovs. Therefore, Matilda Feliksovna did not expect anything good when she was invited to perform in the Petrograd theatre of the Conservatory in front of the soldiers of the Life Guards of the Keksholm Regiment. She was afraid that she would be greeted with hoots and shouts of “royal big-head”, if not worse. As the ballerina writes, her friends “mingled with the soldiers and listened to what was being said among them. At first, they found a rather hostile attitude towards me on the part of the soldiers... But when they began to tell them that I was a wonderful performer and that when they saw me, they would be delighted, the mood of the soldiers gradually changed”. Finally, Kshesinskaya decided to go on stage.

“After I danced my Russian dance, there was no end to the applause, and I had to repeat it again and, should I have energy, I could repeat it for the third time, so they accepted me, but I had no more strength. The soldiers threw their caps onto the stage with delight... I returned home tired, but with a relieved heart that I had fulfilled my promise and everything turned out well, but few knew what it cost me”.

One of the episodes of the film *Lenin in 1918* is a fragment when the revolutionary sailors are fascinated

watching *Swan Lake* in the Bolshoi Theatre. After the revolution, the “new spectator” immediately accepted the ballet, and not only because it was possible to gawk at girls with bare legs. That viewer was charmed and bewitched. “Charmed” derives from the word “charm”. Ballet belongs to white magic.

And yet Matilda emigrated. Abroad she offered classical dance lessons, she never raised her voice in class. She wrote in her memoirs: “In my life I have seen love, and affection, and care, but I have seen, in addition to grief, a lot of evil... I don’t want to settle accounts with anyone, I don’t want to talk bad about anyone”. She corresponded with the director of the Tchaikovsky House-Museum in the town of Klin, and during the Bolshoi Theatre’s Paris tour in 1958, she cried with happiness. And she tactfully conveyed her admiration to Galina Ulanova through the British ballet critic Arnold Haskell, realising that direct contact with an emigrant, especially associated with the House of Romanov, could harm the Soviet artist. Matilda Feliksovna Kshesinskaya, the most Serene Princess Romanovskaya-Krasinskaya, died in 1971 in Paris at her 100th year of life.

*And will there be a match for you?*

Not all pre-revolutionary female artists led such a lifestyle as Kshesinskaya. Karsavina, a girl of the most strict rules, even considered dinner in a restaurant as “immoral” and was afraid of going to theatre salons for a long time: she was afraid that balletomanes would kidnap her from there with known goals. Finally, she went – and no one abducted her, although Tamara Platonovna was wonderfully beautiful and later married a British diplomat.

As Igor Severyanin wrote:

*In a noisy moire dress, in a noisy moire dress -*

*You are so aesthetic, you are so graceful...  
But who are the lovers? And will there be a match for you?*

And how many pre-revolutionary ballet dancers were mistresses? And if they married someone, then whom? Olga Kovalik’s book *The Daily Life of Ballerinas of the Russian Imperial Theatre* (Moscow, Molodaya Gvardiya, 2011) provides the following figures: “Out of all these nymphs, 129 girls tied themselves up with an “artistic” marriage, 26 married merchants and officials, 306 with various persons, 19 with the highest aristocracy, 34



*Eleonora Sevenard in the graduation performance of Paquita. Mariinsky Theatre. 2017. Photo by Mikhail Logvinov. Photo provided by the Vaganova Ballet Academy*

beauties were kept, 343 actresses were officially celibate.

Whether the ballerinas are celibate, whether they are married to colleagues or to the powers that be, whether they behave not quite decently from an ordinary point of

view, their body and soul live in their own world, and neither the prince, nor the king, nor the hero is their real bargain.

The 19th century made a goddess out of a classical dancer, and ballerinas willingly took such image. It was nymphomania, but not in the vulgar sense. In ancient mythology, nymphs are deities, albeit not of the highest rank. Ballerinas on stage and in real life played the role of goddesses, and aristocrats, up to the Grand Dukes, made much of their theatrical girlfriends and sometimes established parallel families with them, considering them as the main ones. The su-

periority complex in relation to the ballerinas was intertwined with the inferiority complex. The mind told the aristocrats that they were above the dancers, but the feelings whispered the opposite: the nobles dreamed of a woman whom they could pray to like a goddess, and at the same time squeeze in their arms. Ballerinas have become such women for lovers of beauty.

In 2017, Eleonora Sevenard, the great-great-granddaughter of Kshesinskaya’s older brother Joseph Feliksovich, graduated from the Vaganova Ballet Academy in Saint Petersburg (he remained in Russia and died during the siege of Leningrad). In 2017, Eleonora won the 1st prize at the All-Russian

Competition for Young Performers *Russian Ballet*, where she danced Odile in the pas de deux from *Swan Lake*. In the same year, she was accepted into the troupe of the Bolshoi Theatre. Amazing girl. May the hosts of heaven keep her safe!



# THE UNIQUE BEAUTY OF THE RUSSIAN LAND

7 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Russia

In vast Russia, there are countless unique places that you should definitely see with your own eyes. We have picked only seven of them, but they certainly can inspire you to make an exciting and unforgettable journey.

owes the unique purity of its water to the Epischura crustaceans, which live only in Baikal and act as a filter passing water through their bodies. The size of an adult translucent crustacean is about 1.5 mm.

## Lake Baikal

The lake located in the south of Eastern Siberia is one of the most ancient reservoirs of our planet. Its age is 25 million years. The water surface area is 31.7 sq. km and its depth is about 1700 m. This is the deepest lake on the planet and the largest natural reservoir of fresh water. The lake

## The Solovetsky Islands

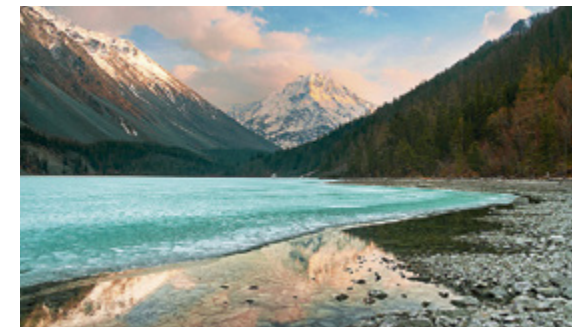
The Solovetsky archipelago consists of six islands located in the White Sea. They were inhabited in the 5th century BC, as evidenced by the preserved complex of cult and burial structures. In the 15th century, the Spaso-Preobrazhensky Monastery was founded on the Solovetsky Island as the spiritual center of the



Russian North to become one of the most revered and visited monasteries. The territory of the monastery is surrounded by massive walls; temples and other buildings have been preserved inside it.

## Golden Mountains of Altai

Golden Altai is the main mountainous region in the south of Western Siberia, which forms the headwaters of the Ob and Irtysh rivers. The heritage site includes three Russian sections of the Altai



the water by 200 m. The reason for the phenomenon of the Lena Pillars is considered to be a sharply continental climate, when during the year the temperature difference could reach 100 degrees Celsius.

## Island-city Sviyazhsk

Sviyazhsk located at the confluence of the Volga, Sviyaga and Shchuka rivers, was founded by Ivan the Terrible in 1551. In 1555, the Mother of God Dormition Monastery of Sviyazhsk was founded here to become the spiritual and educational center for the missionary program developed by the tsar. Its oldest churches include the Assumption Cathedral (1561), which is one of the two in Russia to preserve a complete cycle of frescoes



from the era of Ivan the Terrible, and the St. Nicholas Refectory Church (1556) with a bell tower.

Mountains: Altaisky Zapovednik and a buffer zone around Lake Teletskoye; Katunsky Zapovednik and a buffer zone around Mount Belukha; and the Ukok plateau. The territory is a habitat for rare and endangered species of animals, such as the snow leopard, Siberian ibex, Altai argali sheep.

## Lena Pillars

The Lena Pillars Nature Park is formed by rock formations of unique beauty. The stone ridge stretches for 80 km along the banks of the Lena River in the central part of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The highest of the rocks rise above



## Volcanoes of Kamchatka

The Kamchatka Peninsula is one of the most interesting volcanic regions in the world. It includes six specially protected natural areas: Kronotsky state nature biosphere reserve, By-



strinsky, Yuzhno-Kamchatsky, Nalychevsky, Klyuchevskoy nature parks and the Yuzhno-Kamchatsky nature reserve. There are 300 extinct volcanoes and 29 active volcanoes on the peninsula, among which Klyuchevskaya Sopka (height 4750 m) is the largest in Eurasia.

## The Petroglyphs of Karelia

More than 4,600 petroglyphs have been discovered in the Pudozh and White Sea districts of the Republic of Karelia, at a distance of 300 km from each other. This is one of the largest collections of rock paintings created in the Neolithic era in terms of the number of images and the area of their distribution. The petroglyphs of Lake Onega and the White Sea are a unique example of primitive art.





TRAVEL

# WONDER OF THE SEA

Spending your holidays by the sea in Italy means discovering iconic seaside resorts and landscapes. From the coves of Sardinia to the glamorous resorts of the Amalfi Coast. Speaking of about 8 thousand kilometres of coastline with a variety of breathtaking, wild and pristine beaches. Dive into the gentle waves of the Mediterranean and let yourself be soothed by its crystal-clear waters.

## Polignano a Mare

Perched on the edge of a high cliff rising from the Adriatic Sea, Polignano a Mare is one of the most spectacular and popular locations on the Apulian coast.

The historic centre of this seaside village is a maze of narrow streets that slope down towards a tiny beach, the Lama Monachile, which cuts the cliff in two. Underneath the town, a tangle of caves invites you to discover a crystal-clear sea. Polignano is also the birthplace of Domenico Modugno, the singer-songwriter of “Volare”, the most famous Italian song in the world.

The historic core of Polignano a Mare, an inhabited centre since Neolithic times, is an expanse of white houses of medieval origin clustered on the cliffs. The village is entered by passing under the 16th-century Arco Marchesale, also known as Porta Grande, which until 1780 was the only point of access to the village that was surrounded by a moat, now hidden by Piazza Garibaldi, with its drawbridge.

You can get lost in the narrow streets of Polignano, sooner or later you will land at an overlook to the sea and the surprise effect will be even greater.



Photo: Francesco Dondi

There are about twenty caves that the sea has created with the force of its waves on the cliff on which Polignano stands: the largest is the Palazzese cave, so called because it is located under a noble palace from which it could be accessed. Today, the palace has been transformed into a five-star hotel that has created restaurant rooms in the natural recesses of the cliff and the cave remains accessible by sea.

## Panarea

Panarea is the smallest and lowest of the seven Aeolian islands, but also the oldest, geologically speaking.

With its rocks and islets, it forms a kind of “archipelago within an archipelago” in the stretch of sea between Lipari and Stromboli. An unspoilt paradise in the Sicilian sunlight, at

sunset becoming the queen of night-life, epicentre of Aeolian social life.

Discovered in the 1960s by a large community of artists and intellectuals in search of a lost Eden, a set

to dance until dawn, among boutiques and restaurants, you can also visit a small branch of the Lipari Archaeological Museum: it preserves artefacts that testify to the island’s

on the surface. In contrada San Pietro, a thermal spring also gushes out at a temperature of 50 °C, used by the island’s inhabitants for therapeutic purposes.

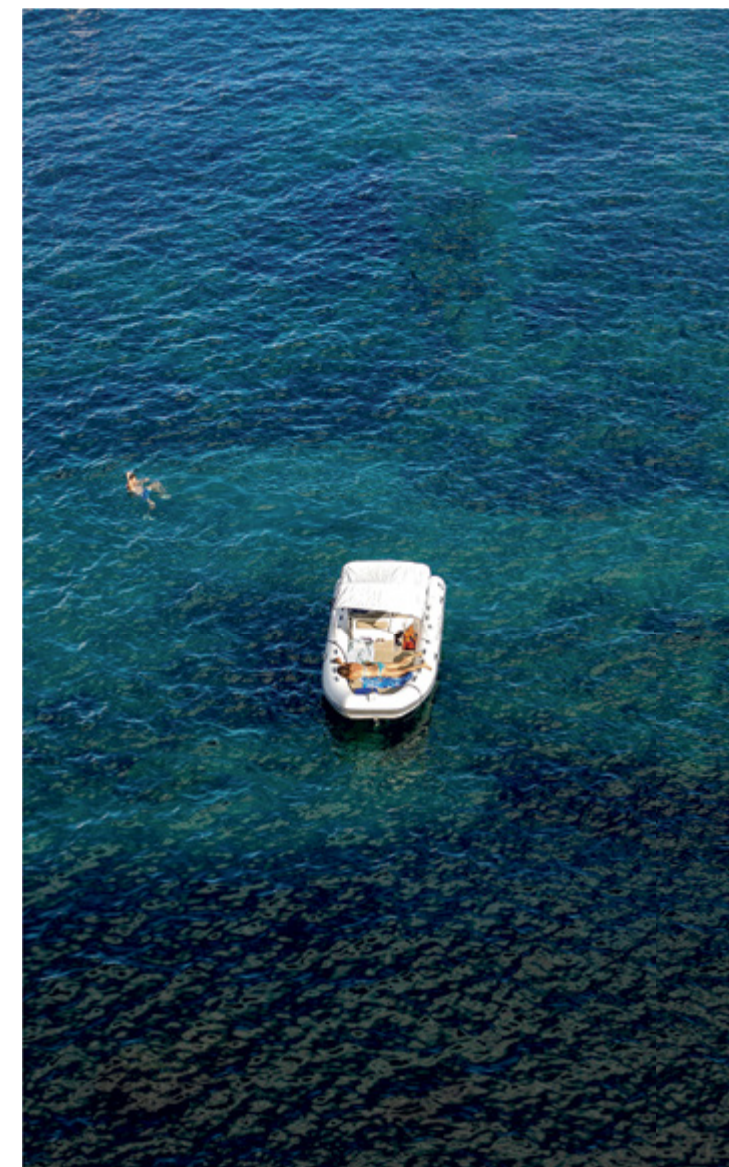


Photo: Pietro De Grandi

celebrated by legendary films, over the decades the island has become a popular destination for tourism and the international jet set, attracted by its black beaches, thermal mud baths, whitewashed houses overlooking the sea, amidst patches of bougainvillea, capers and prickly pears.

In the small town of San Pietro, the centre of the archipelago’s summer nightlife, among clubs and discos

ancient history, from the Neolithic period to the Bronze Age, almost all from the prehistoric village of Capo Milazzese.

Traces of the ancient volcanic activity can still be found in the vapours of a series of fumaroles, which emanate from the cracks between the rocks of the Calcara beach and from the sea, where the gas escaping from the seabed forms columns of bubbles visible

A single concrete strip crosses the island: no cars are allowed here, but scooters, bicycles and Piaggio Ape cars can be hired to get around.

Most of Panarea’s coastline consists of high, jagged cliffs, from which it is difficult to access the sea. The beaches here are few and not all within walking distance; however, they are among the most beautiful in the entire archipelago.



Only a couple are accessible by land: Cala Junco, along the southern coast of the island, an enchanting natural pool with crystal-clear turquoise waters, protected by high cliffs, also famous for the prehistoric village of Punta Milazzese behind it, consisting of the remains of 23 oval huts.

Along the same path, you will also come across Cala degli Zimmari, in a bay backed by a cliff and Mediterranean scrub, the only sandy beach on the entire island, known for its characteristic red colour that, by contrast, gives the sea that washes it a unique cobalt blue hue.

In Panarea, the most popular sport is to rent a boat and head out to sea, to discover the many little-visited coves nestled between its cliffs, islets and seascapes.

### Levante

Fresh air and pure nature, towns nestled amidst mountain rocks, and terraced vineyards.

Enchanted, fairytale-like sceneries await all along the Riviera Ligure di Levante. Beloved by the writers that have told their story to the world, Portofino, Cinque Terre, and the Gulf of Poets greet us one after the other, as we work our way down the coast from Genoa to magical Versilia.

The Gulf of Paradise is perhaps the most beloved by tourists in search of its particular mix of nature, history and glitz. It is here that from the pristine Regional Natural Park, you will find the exclusive Portofino, frequented by the international jet-set. Following are Lavagna, one of the major touristic ports on the Mediterranean, and Rapallo, a city that perfectly fuses history, art, and beautiful natural scenery. Those passionate for the sea will also appreciate swimming in the picturesque coves of Santa Margherita Ligure and Sestri Levante.

At the center of the terrain around Riviera Ligure di Levante lie the lidos of Levanto, little city of ancient



Photo: Florian Urigen

origins and important touristic hub. This is where the internationally renowned Cinque Terre begins. Taking the route towards Porto Venere and Lerici, rather, you will happen on the Gulf of Poets – or the Gulf of La Spezia – where man, earth and sea seem to have reached perfect harmony. Sarzana rises up in the Val di Magra, between La Spezia and Massa Carrara, heart of the historic territory of Lunigiana, and the endpoint of a tour of this astounding and awe-inspiring Riviera of Liguria. But of course, when you're ready to take on a new tract of the breathtaking Italian coast, Versilia beckons!

### Procida

The coveted appointment of Italian Capital of Culture 2022 was awarded the first time to an island – a delightful destination and meeting place ready to enchant visitors.

A poetic cultural project with a well-structured programme saw Procida – also on the strength of its timeless charm – appointed as Italian Capital of Culture 2022: this will surely increase the appeal of a destination already much loved by travelers, writers and filmmakers.



Photo: Erwin Doom

Numerous proposals embracing culture, art and music will welcome visitors throughout the year to this enchanting island. And there's more: meetings, conferences, exhibitions and installations. Everything follows three guidelines underlying the "Culture does not isolate" programme: "Lighthouse Projects" to promote urban transformation, regeneration and revitalization dynamics, "Anchor Projects" to investigate the cultural heritage and "Community Projects" to build community solidarity, social assets and personal relationships.

A sumptuous stage setting: many actors and directors have fallen in love with Procida over time and have shot memorable pages in international cinema here. Special mention goes to "The Postman" by Michael Radford with Massimo Troisi, as well as "The Talented Mr. Ripley" with Matt Damon. Further proof of Procida's absolute charm came in 2015 when Apple and Microsoft precisely chose to use images of the colourful island village to highlight the colour rendering of the screens for the iPhone 6S and SurfacePro4 tablet. Once the ferry has docked, you will truly be unable to resist the wonder of these

places, where the air smells of salt and tiny alleys with narrow steps lead up to the amazingly colourful town.

### Sardinia

Sardinia never ceases to surprise – for its charming coasts famous all over the world, culture going back more than one thousand years or its delicious cuisine.

Yet one thing that particularly intrigued us is the incredible variety of wildlife to be found in all the different scenarios Sardinia offers to travellers. Perhaps by venturing on horseback between lagoons and beaches, where you can sometimes witness the flight of pink flamingos, or diving into clear waters populated by wonderful colonies of red coral. And there's more: enjoy the beach of one of the largest deserts in Europe (Piscinas). Be

they creatures of land, water or air, the chance of seeing wonderful, free wildlife up close in their own habitats in Sardinia is extremely likely.

Fragrant pine woods, immersed in silence overlooking the beach at Arborea: white sand, enchanting seas. The Gulf of Oristano is a destination not only for many travellers but also for entire colonies of pink flamingos which, during the migration period, can rest in the lagoons typical of this area.

Expansive beaches, rocky coves, white sea-

beds and golden sand unwinding for 50 km along the Costa Verde and its pearl: Piscinas, an extension of the dune desert reaching down to the sea. At dawn, among sea lilies and poppies dotting the landscape with colour you may even experience the incomparable glimpse of Sardinian deer going down to the sea...



Photo: Reiseuhu



# WATER PIPES TO DELIVER HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND IN THE UK

By IVAN PIROGOV

The British government is set to trial a new technology scheme for delivering fast broadband run through water pipes. The trial will take place in parts of South Yorkshire as part of plans to get better internet access to people quicker.

New proposals to accelerate the rollout of broadband without digging up roads would see fibre-optic cables deployed through 17 kilometres of live drinking water mains between Barnsley and Penistone in the government technology trial.

Broadband companies could then tap into the network to deliver gigabit-capable connections to an estimated 8,500 homes and businesses

along the route, helping to level up hard-to-reach communities.

Civil works, in particular installing new ducts and poles, can make up as much as four fifths of the costs to industry of building new gigabit-capable broadband networks. The Fibre in Water scheme will demonstrate what could be a greener, quicker and more cost-effective way of connecting fibre optic cables to homes, businesses and mobile masts, without the disruption caused by digging up roads and land.

The network will also be used to set up 5G masts to bring fast and reliable wireless broadband to hard-to-reach communities where wired solutions

are too expensive to deliver commercially. The first trial of its kind in the UK, it will also explore how fibre can help the water industry detect leaks, operate more efficiently and lower the carbon cost of drinking water.

The trials will last for up to two years and, if successful, the technology could be operational in networks from 2024 onwards.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez said: "Digging up roads and land is one of the biggest obstacles to rolling out faster broadband, so we're exploring how we can make use of the existing water network to accelerate deployment and help detect and minimise water leaks. We're committed to

getting homes and businesses across the country connected to better broadband and this cutting-edge project is an exciting example of the bold measures this government is leading on to level up communities with the very best digital connectivity."

The first phase of the project launching today will focus on the legal and safety aspects of this innovative solution, and ensure that combining clean water and telecoms services in a single pipeline is safe, secure and commercially viable before any technology is actually installed.



Photo: Sigmund

If successful, the project could be replicated in other parts of the country and could turbocharge the government's £5 billion Project Gigabit – the biggest broadband roll out in British history funding top-of-the-range gigabit connections for millions of rural homes and businesses that would otherwise be left out of commercial deployment due to the higher costs of connection. Yorkshire and Lincolnshire have more than 300,000 rural homes and businesses in line for an upgrade, including 56,800 premises in South Yorkshire.

Gigabit-capable broadband coverage has rocketed in the UK from less than 6 per cent in 2019 to more than 66 per cent following government measures to stimulate commercial investment from broadband companies and bust barriers to roll out. In

the UK 20 per cent of water put into public supply is wasted due to leaks every day. With current technology, it can be difficult for water companies to quickly identify the exact location of a leak and carry out a repair.

This project, delivered by Yorkshire Water working with Arcadis and University of Strathclyde will test solutions that reduce water leaks by putting fibre sensors in the pipes which allow water companies to improve the speed and accuracy with which they can identify a leak and repair it, often before it causes a problem for consumers. Water companies have committed to delivering a 50% reduction in leakage, and this project could help to reach that goal.

The technology being deployed during the trials has been approved by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI).

The DWI requires rigorous testing ahead of approving any products and the processes that introduce them into drinking water pipes, and fibre has already been deployed in water pipes in other countries such as Spain.

Sam Bright, Innovation Programme Manager at Yorkshire Water added: "We are very pleased that the Government is supporting the development of the Fibre in Water solution which can reduce the environmental impact and day-to-day disruptions that can be caused by both water and telecoms companies' activities. The technology for fibre in water has significantly progressed in recent years and this project will now enable us to fully develop its potential to help improve access to better broadband in hard-to-reach areas and further reduce leakage on our networks."



# FIRST WOMEN'S HEALTH STRATEGY

By PAUL WILSON

Women and girls across England will benefit from improved healthcare following the publication of the first ever government-led Women's Health Strategy for England.

Following a call for evidence which generated almost 100,000 responses from individuals across England, and building on Our Vision for Women's Health, the strategy sets bold ambitions to tackle deep-rooted, systemic issues within the health and care system to improve the health and wellbeing of women, and reset how the health and care system listens to women.

Responses to the call for evidence highlighted a need for greater focus on women-specific health conditions, including fertility and pregnancy loss.

To support progress already underway in these areas, the strategy aims to provide a new investment of £10 million for a breast screening programme. This will provide extra capacity for services to recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic boost uptake of screening in areas where attendance is low. It will also help tackle health disparities and contribute towards higher early diagnosis rates in line with the NHS Long Term Plan.

Additionally, the strategy will ensure specialist endometriosis services have the most up-to-date evidence



Photo: Ani Kolleshi

and advice by updating the service specification for severe endometriosis, which defines the standards of care patients can expect.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said: "Our health and care system only works if it works for everyone. It is not right that 51% of our population are disadvantaged in accessing the care they need, simply because of their sex. The publication of this strategy is a landmark moment in addressing entrenched inequalities, and improving the health and wellbeing of women across the country.

Minister for Women's Health Maria Caulfield said: "When we launched our call for evidence to inform the publication of this strategy, women across the country set us a clear mandate for change. Women and clinicians also called for the expansion of information and educational resources for women and healthcare professionals, and more cohesion in the way services are provided, making it as simple as possible for women to access the healthcare they need."

Feedback from thousands of women across the country revealed that they feel their voices were not always listened to, and there was a lack of understanding or awareness among some medical professionals about health conditions which affect women.

To address this, the strategy commits to commissioning urgent research by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) into healthcare professionals' experiences of listening to women in primary care, with a focus on menstrual and gynaecological symptoms to inform policy to ensure women's voices are heard.



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