



# The Craziest Tour Company in the World

Want someone to kidnap you, teach you how to fire a Kalashnikov AK-74 and get you so drunk you die (CPR included)? For a good time, call Estonia's XXXL Tours

When an Estonian stands in front of you at a firing range, armed with semi-automatic weapons, you know he is shooting at much more than the target ahead. With each bang of the gun, he goes a little further back in time. Over the course of the last seven centuries, the local population has been imprisoned, deported, exiled and murdered by an all-star team of dictators, including Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Hitler and Stalin. (The country has only been truly free since 1991.) He fires first at the Russians who marched into his country and didn't march back out. *BANG.* He fires at the Nazis who said they would make life easier



Guns for hire: at the firing range in Estonia, you can give it your best shot (some assembly required).

but sure as hell didn't. *BANG.* He fires at the Communists who refused to leave as one cold decade turned into five. He fires at all of them: the Swedes, the Danes, the Germans and the Russians, everyone who invaded his country and took with them Estonian culture, language and bodies. *BANG BANG BANG BANG.* One by one, history's greatest tyrants fall to their deaths at this firing range outside of Tallinn, Estonia. To this one man, standing on this one spot, shooting represents loss and it represents life. And sometimes, it represents a whole lot of money.

Thirty-year-old former professional kick-boxer Rene Kuusik has made a career out of giving men anything they want. Not surprisingly, what they want most often is sex, booze and guns. Rene will comply on all three points. He is in the happiness business. Groups of men, usually on a pre-wedding blitz, come to recently liberated, free-for-all Estonia looking for a good time. They give Rene a list of pleasures and he makes sure they get them. It's all pretty simple and very lucrative.

"My clients usually want to get as drunk as possible, as often as possible. One man asked me if he could drink until he died. And then he did. He sort of stopped breathing for 30 minutes. It was serious." Rene will also arrange for ladies to mud-wrestle, and has hired women to lie still

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THEY CAN SHOOT  
AT TWO FREESTANDING  
CARTOON CHARACTERS,  
ONE A HAND-DRAWN  
UNISEX FIGURE WITH  
ANGELINA JOLIE LIPS  
AND THE OTHER  
A MALE CUTOUT  
WAVING THE BIGGEST  
PAPER GUN  
HE COULD FIND



If a man fired a gun once for each day Estonia has been under foreign rule, he would need 255,500 bullets and a whole lot of time.



so men can eat off their bodies. Sometimes he arranges for the Estonian police to “kidnap” one of his clients. “We accuse him of committing some horrific crime the night before and usually he was so drunk he can’t remember if he did it or not.” Rene says his client is then so relieved it was all a joke that he can’t be angry. Sure. And in the rare moments when his customers are not drunk, Rene takes them shooting.

What happens here is a brief training session (“Uh, shooting your friend in the face is not funny”) followed by a barrage of shots using Kalashnikov AK-74s, Calicos, Mini Uzis, Micro Uzis, shotguns, pistols, revolvers... The tourists line up, grab their guns and shoot to their hearts’ content. They arrive in groups of 15 and spend an inordinate amount of time posing like gangsters and secret agents (which is exactly how you know they are neither). The men can aim at the typical bull’s eye targets 25 metres away or they can shoot at two freestanding cartoon characters, one a hand-drawn unisex figure

with Angelina Jolie lips and the other a male cutout waving the biggest paper gun he could find. It costs \$85 to shoot them with the Gangster Package (bigger guns) and \$65 with the wimpier Recreational Package.

In Estonia, firing a gun is not something you learn and then put away like an old guitar. Rene, like all other Estonians, had to serve in the military. Shooting is part of who he is. “We provide a public service. Men think shooting a gun is like you see in Hollywood films – you fire or get hit and nothing happens. Here, men learn the truth. These guns are powerful, loud and they can hurt you just firing them.” Rene has taken parts of his country’s violent past and combined them with his country’s liberated present. The result is a lot more loud drunks on the streets of Tallinn, broad smiles on the faces of pretend hit men and more money in Rene’s pocket.

☎ – Ava Chisling

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