You are in Lithuania!

Trakai Castle

You are in Lithuania. Experience the green surroundings: meadows and hills are everywhere. Hear how the land is praised by the singing of birds. Five national parks are waiting for you to explore. Travel through refreshing forests, see cultural monuments: castles, ancient burial mounds, churches, crosses and more.

Lithuania's rivers and lakes are calling out to be explored; numerous resorts and spa centres are ready to share the healing secrets of their mineral springs. Hear the soughing of the sea, feel the grains of sand between your fingers as they run through your hands. Get a traditional amber necklace and take a piece of Lithuania back home with you.

Did you know that the name Lithuania is a thousand years old? Discover Lithuanian history and art. Theatres, exhibitions, concerts, festivals – all are here for your entertainment. In Lithuania you can listen to world-class classical music, watch numerous plays and operas in the country's 30 theatres and enjoy high quality contemporary art.

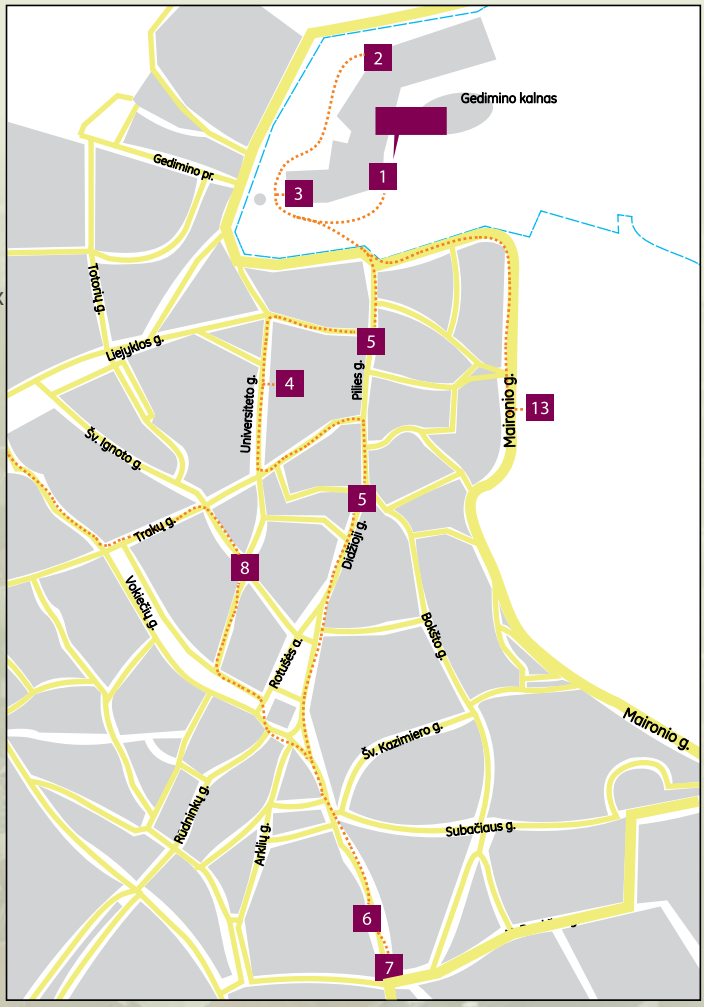
Need a good place for a conference, seminar or meeting? Then look no further. Experienced Lithuanian travel agencies will help you find conference halls and make sure everything runs smoothly. Hotels, holiday camps, farmsteads, guest and recreation houses are all ready for your stay.

Taste Lithuania. Take a bite of brown bread and enjoy the taste of golden rye. Spread some honey, put a slice of white cheese on top and enjoy... but don't forget to thank those little workers buzzing in the meadows. If you are thirsty, have a sip of Lithuanian kvass. Smile. You are in Lithuania.

See it! Feel it! Love it!

Old Town of Vilnius:

1. The Castles in Vilnius
2. The National Museum of Lithuania
3. Archcathedral Basilica of Vilnius
4. The Architectural Complex of Vilnius University
5. The Streets of Pilies and Didžioji
6. The Lithuanian National Philharmonic Hall
7. The Gate of Dawn
8. The Jewish Quarter
13. The Church of St. Anne

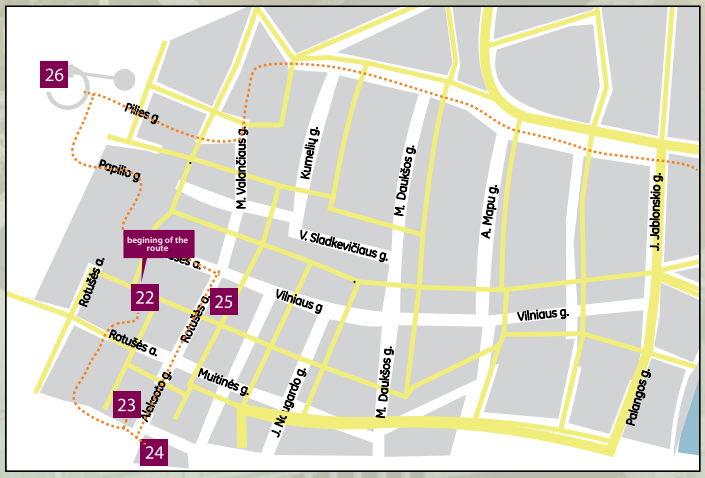


Route

0 Places of interest

Old Town of Kaunas:

22. Town Hall Square
23. The House of Perkūnas
24. The Church of Vytautas
25. Maironis Museum of Lithuanian Literature
26. Kaunas Castle



The city of red roofs and pealing bells

The Old Town of Vilnius

Vilnius

Although Vilnius is first of all the political, economic, and academic centre of Lithuania, which is natural for the capital of a modern state, its historic architecture – moderate yet especially warm – charms every visitor. This is a city where everyone feels at home. You will feel the same, especially on a Sunday morning upon hearing the church bells peal and smelling the delicious scent of coffee in the Old Town.

In 1994 the Old Town of Vilnius, otherwise known as the masterpiece of Baroque, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Start exploring this stunning city by paying a visit to the royal castles.

Pilies Street

Vilnius

The Royal Palace of Grand Dukes

The observation deck of the Tower of Gediminas

1. The Castles in Vilnius

The Upper Castle, or Gediminas' Tower Castle

* Arsenalo St 5, Vilnius
* Tel. +370 526 17 453, +370 526 29 426
* **Opening times: May–Sept, daily (10am – 7pm); October–April, Tue-Sun (10am – 5pm). * Admission charge. * www.lnm.lt**

A hill was a convenient place for people to settle. The first settlement in the surrounding area is known to have been built in the Neolithic Age. The first fortifications were constructed on the hill in the 9th century, and in the 13th–14th century a castle was built on the site. The castle was home to nearly all of Lithuania's rulers. They regularly expanded and rebuilt the castle and, as a result, in the 15th–17th centuries Vilnius developed into one of the most significant cities in Europe.

The brick castle consisted of two parts – **The Upper Castle** and **The Lower Castle**. The surviving remnants of the Upper Castle located on Gediminas Hill and the Western Tower, otherwise known as **Gediminas Castle Tower**, are open to visitors to this day. The hill allows a splendid view of Vilnius with the white Royal Palace of Lithuania below and a sea of red roofs in the Old Town with numerous church towers standing out among them.

To get to the top of Gediminas Hill you may use a **funicular** (Arsenalo St 5). In May–September its daily opening hours are 10 a.m. – 7 p.m., in October–April – Tue–Sun, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

The National Museum in the Royal Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania

* Katedros Sq 4, Vilnius * Tel. +370 521 27 476
* **Closed to visitors. * www.valdovurumai.lt**

The Upper Castle, built at the foot of Gediminas Hill, was destroyed in the 19th century with only a few of its original buildings surviving. Today the final restoration works of the National Museum – the **Royal Palace of the Dukes of Lithuania** – are being carried out.

Important to see:

** The Gediminas Castle Tower;*
** The Funicular to Gediminas Hill;*
** The Façade of the Royal Palace.*

Having **descended** *the hill you will find yourself in the courtyard of the National Museum. Be sure to visit it.*

2. The National Museum of Lithuania

* Arsenalo St 1, Vilnius
* Tel. +370 526 27 774, +370 526 29 426
* **Open: May–Sep, Tue–Sat: 10am– 5pm, and Sun: 10am-3pm; Oct–Apr, Wed–Sun (10am-5pm.). * Admission charge. * www.lnm.lt**

The museum is the largest and oldest **depository of cultural heritage** in Lithuania. The roots of the museum can be traced back to the mid 19th century when Count Eustache Tyszkiewicz (Lith. Eustachas Tiškevičius), a historian and a collector, established the Museum of Antiquities. In 1918, Dr Jonas Basanavičius, one of the leaders of the national liberation movement, began to establish the Museum of History and Ethnography by joining together collections from the Museum of Antiquities and the Lithuanian Scienti□c Society. Today the museum stores impressive **collections of Lithuanian archaeology, history, and ethnic culture**. The museum holds educational activities, for example Thursday evenings are dedicated to the history of culture. Don't miss this chance and come along!

In the Cathedral Square, **next to the castles**, is the white Archcathedral Basilica of Vilnius. **Don't pass it by**, as it is a signi□cant part of the history of Vilnius.

3. Archcathedral Basilica of Vilnius

* Katedros Sq 1, Vilnius
* Tel. +370 526 10 731, +370 526 11 127 \
* **Opening times: daily (7am–7pm).**
* **Free of charge. * www.katedra.lt**

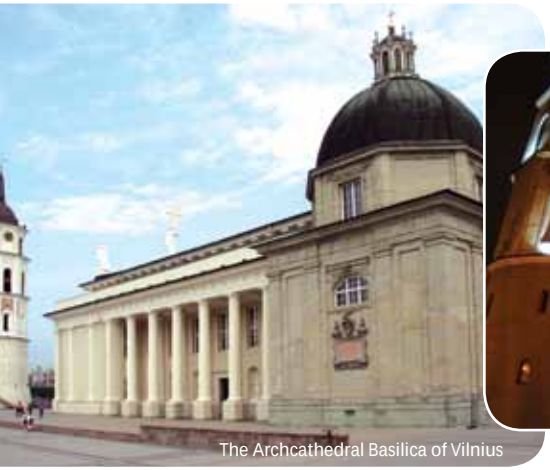
The Archcathedral Basilica of Saint Stanislaus and Saint Vladislav is situated on a site believed to have been a **pagan shrine**. It was supposedly built to commemorate

The National Museum of Lithuania

King Mindaugas' conversion to Christianity in 1251. Since then the Cathedral has undergone many restorations and as a result the present building contains elements of di□erent architectural styles. Features of Classicism appeared at the end of the 18th century when the Cathedral was rebuilt according to the project of a famous Lithuanian architect, Laurynas Stuoka-Gucevičius.

The building contains numerous valuable frescoes, sculptures, and tombstones and the basement is decorated with the **oldest known fresco** in Lithuania (dating back to the 14th century), portraying Christ's cruci□xion. The Cathedral chapel is the eternal resting place of the patron of Lithuania and special patron of all youth, **Saint Casimir (Kazimieras)**.

In 1430 the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas was buried in the Archcathedral. Additionally, the Cathedral Mausoleum guards the bodies of the Grand Duke of Lithuania as well as King Alexander of Poland (Aleksandras Jogailaitis) (1460–1506), the two wives of Sigismund Augustus (Žygimantas Augustas), i.e. Queen Elisabeth of Austria (Elžbieta) and Queen Bar-



The Archcathedral Basilica of Vilnius

- *The Chapel of Saint Casimir;*
- *The Kings' Crypt;*
- *The Chapter Crypt;*
- *The Bishops' Crypt;*
- *The Burial Place of Vytautas the Great;*
- *The Mausoleum.*

Important to see:

bora Radvilaitė. The walls of the Cathedral also provide shelter for the urn containing the heart of King Wladyslaw Vasa (Vladislovas Vaza) (1632–1648). Tourists can see the tombs of these nobles by booking an excursion to the **basement of the Cathedral**.

The 57 metre high **belfry** of the Cathedral is situated on the remnants of the Lower Castle's **defensive wall** tower. In the 17th century a clock was built inside. Even today we can hear its bells tolling.

Vilnius University

Having left the Cathedral, approximately halfway to the belfry, you will come to the multicoloured "**Miracle**" **tile** with inscribed glass letters saying "STEBUKLAS" (miracle). It marks one of the oldest pagan priest ritual sites in Europe. The place is still believed to possess **miraculous attributes**. Step on the miracle tile, make a wish, turn around and **your wish will come true**.

Now look left to greet **Gediminas**, the founder of Vilnius. He looks down on the city from a platform.

Go straight along the square to Universiteto Street. On your right you will see the Presidential Palace, and on the left stretches the majestic complex of buildings which make up Vilnius University.

4. The Architectural Complex of Vilnius University

* Universiteto St 3, Vilnius
* Tel. +370 526 87 003
* **Excursions in the complex and the library are held on weekdays, 9am–3pm.**
* **Admission charge.**
* **www.mb.vu.lt, www.vu.lt**

Vilnius University bookstore

Established in a block of Vilnius framed by three streets – Šv. Jono, Skapo, and Universiteto – Vilnius University is a complex of majestic buildings possessing features of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classicist styles. It is famous for its **twelve** inner **courtyards**, and the Church of St. Johns, the **belfry** of which is **the highest** in the entire city. The University Library, established in 1570, boasts particularly rich collections of old and rare editions, first print books and cartography. **The first Lithuanian book** – "Katekizmas" ("Catechism") by Martynas Mažvydas, is also stored in the University Library.

Founded in **1579**, Vilnius University is one of the oldest and most prominent higher education institutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Functioning for a long time as the only school of learning in Lithuania, the University was a keeper of cultural and scientific traditions and has played a significant role in the cultural life of neighbouring regions. It was the place of education and work for many people who later became famous across Europe.

In 1753 the **Astronomical Observatory** was established at the University, which is one of the oldest of its kind in Europe and the oldest in the former state of Lithuania and Poland. Be sure not to miss the vast collection of ancient astronomical devices.

Paying a visit to the **Faculty of Philology** is also a must. The impressive frescoes "The Seasons of the Year" in the lobby of the Centre of Lithuanian Language Studies were created by the prominent Lithuanian artist Petras Repšys. The frescoes, which occupy an area of 200 m², include motifs of ancient Baltic mythology. Just a few steps away, the University **bookstore** "**Littera**" contains another masterpiece of contemporary art, i.e. a painting in the al fresco style by Antanas Kmieliauskas. The 120 m² arch portrays figures symbolising astronomy, medicine, botany, music, art, and other sciences as well as the arts.

The pride of the University is **the Church of St. Johns** located in one of its most impressive inner courtyards. It is a must-see site for you too. Construction of the church was begun after the Christianisation of Lithuania in 1387. The interior of the church is unique as it contains the only composition of **ten** presbytery **altars** in the Baltic countries.

Since the times of the Jesuit academy the Church of St. Johns has been a prayer shelter for professors and students, a venue to hold performances, discussions, dissertation defences, celebrations welcoming kings, etc. Today this place hosts graduation ceremonies, various concerts and festivals. The church also houses The **Museum of Science**.

On your way back from the University, **return** to the Cathedral Square and, once there, immediately turn right. There is an important history lesson to listen to.

Vilnius – a city you will want to come back to!

5. The Streets of Pilies and Didžioji

* Tel. +370 526 29 660
* **www.vilnius-tourism.lt**

These are the oldest and most beautiful streets in the Old Town of Vilnius, the main route to the Dukes' palace, a place where the nobles and a□uent residents of the city built their houses.

Pilies Street charms everyone with its variety of architecture: residential houses are built in the **Gothic** style (Pilies St 12 and 14), Chapter House (Pilies St 4) is an example of a **Renaissance**-style building, while the gable of the Church of St. Johns. is built in the **Baroque** style.

The monumental bust of Juliusz Slowacki placed in the courtyard of Pilies St 22 marks the place where he lived together with his stepfather Professor August Becu, the pioneering Lithuanian epidemiologist who started vaccinating people against smallpox. On the right of Pilies Street the whole block is occupied by the **Vilnius University** complex. On the other side, a bit higher up (Pilies St 24) stands the "Narutis" hotel. At the beginning of the 19th century it was home to the Polish writer and historian Józef Ignacy Kraszewski. Nearby, at Pilies St 26 is the **House of the Signatories**. It was in this place that on the 16th of February 1918 the Council of Lithuania signed the

The Street of Pilies

Town Hall Square

Act of Independence of Lithuania. Now the building houses a museum.

At the crossroad that previously used to be a □sh market area, we can now see a cosy **market square**. In the square stands a huge stone called by the name of Ragutis, the God of beer. Legend has it that the one who moves the stone will not die in his bed. The stone was found nearby in Latako Street and pulled to the place where it now stands. Unfortunately, the archaeologist who gave this order was shot at a party in Užupis.

Nearby stands the Orthodox **Church of St. Paraskeva** (Didžioji St. 2). According to legend, Gannibal (or Hannibal), the Afro-**American great-grandfather of Alexander Pushkin**, was baptised here.

Didžioji Street 1 was known as Frank's house for a long time, as at the beginning of the 19th century this was home to Jozeph Frank, the head of the Therapeutic Clinic, who lived there together with other University professors. His contribution to

The Lithuanian National Philharmonic Hall

medicine at the University was so great that in his report to the Emperor in 1812, the senior doctor of Napoleon's Army stated that such medicine could also thrive in Paris. In the summer of 1812 the French Army intendant Marie Henris Beyle, now known under the name of Stendhal, stayed in the house. Now the building houses the French Embassy and a cosy French-style café.

On the other side (Didžioji St 4) is the former **Palace of Chodkevičiai** which contains the Vilnius Picture Gallery with its impressive collection of Western art. The museum holds classical music concerts which in summer take place in the inner courtyard. From 1940–1950 the philosopher Vosylius Sezemanas lived in this building. He is famous for the books "Logika" ("Logic") (1928) and "Estetika" ("Aesthetics") (1970) which are acknowledged as key treatises of Lithuanian philosophy.

This is where the most important square of the city – **Town Hall Square** – begins. It is situated at the meeting point of important roads. At first, it was a market place. At the end of the 14th century, when Vilnius obtained the Magdeburg rights, the Town Hall containing a magistrate's court was built. In its courtyard the herald would shout out the verdict to the public. The square contained a pole for fastening offenders to. To commit death penalty executions, a scaffold would be brought to the square. In 1794 Szymon Kossakowski (Lith. Simonas Kosakovskis), Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was beheaded in this place. In the 16th century, the site was also used to **burn protestant books**. Many entertainment events also took place in the square, including performances by travelling acrobats, comedians, etc. To this day the square is still used to hold many cultural events.

The Town Hall (Didžioji g. 31) was established by the privilege of King Jogaila at the end of the 14th century. At first it was a Gothic building, later reconstructed in the Classicist style according to the project of Laurynas Stuoka-Gucevičius, the most prominent architect of the time. It was used for storing weapons and the basement served as a prison. Now the Town Hall is used for ceremonial purposes, concerts, and exhibitions. The portico of the Town Hall has been the place for some prominent guests to address the Lithuanian public and give speeches, such as **Queen Elisabeth II** of the UK and US President George W. Bush.

At Didžioji Street 34 stands the first Baroque church in Vilnius – **The Church of Saint Casimir** (Kazimieras). It was founded and built by Jesuits to honour their prince and the patron of Lithuania, Saint Casimir. The church contains a 45-voice "Oberlinger" mechanic organ of three manuals. On Sundays the church holds free organ concerts.

Going up the street, on your right you will see an elegant Historicism-style building. This is the Philharmonic Hall.

6. The Lithuanian National Philharmonic Hall

* Aušros Vartų St. 5, Vilnius
* Tel. +370 526 65 210, telephone to book tickets: +370 526 65 233, +370 526 65 216
* **Open: Mon–Thu – 8am-16.45pm, Fri – 8am-15.45pm, as well as during concerts.**
* **www.filharmonija.lt**

A house built in 1902 is to this day one of the key **monuments** of Vilnius Historicism-style **architecture**. The project was implemented by the Russian engineer Konstantin Koroedov. In 1906 the hall hosted **the first Lithuanian national opera** – a premier "Birutė" by Mikas Petrauskas. After three years one of the most prominent violinists of the 20th century – Jascha Heifetz – played here for the first time. Among the famous artists to have performed on the stage of the Philharmonic Hall are: violinists Sergei Krylov and Gidon Kremer, pianists Mūza Rubackytė and Vadim Rudenko, and jazz organist Barbara Dennerlein. In addition, concerts by the German Symphonic Orchestra and "EuropaChorAkademie" have also been held here. Every year concerts of the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra with world-famous conductors, including Christian Knapp take place in the Hall.

The **concert season** in the Vilnius Philharmonic Hall runs from September to May. The regular schedule is complemented by the festive concerts of Christmas music week and the J.S.Bach music festival in March and April. Additionally, the Hall organises Vilnius Festival, "Nakties serenados" (Night Serenades) in Palanga and the Festival "Kuršių Nerija" in Neringa.

The biggest music institution in Lithuania also holds excursions during which you can visit and even hear rehearsals of the orchestra.

Your route is not finished here yet – continue up the street and you will see still another masterpiece of Vilnius architecture.

7. The Gate of Dawn

* Aušros Vartų St 12, Vilnius
* Tel. +370 521 23 513 * **Opening times: daily (6am-7pm). * Free of charge.**
* **www.ausrosvartai.lt**

Just as in Rome where all pilgrims aim for Saint Peter's Basilica, in Vilnius the Gate

The Gate of Dawn

The Jewish Quarter

of Dawn is the most celebrated pilgrimage site. Stories have it that the **cornerstone** of the defensive forti□cation laid in 1492–1507 was placed on the site of the road leading to Medininkai, on the way to Moscow. In 1514 the **Chapel of the Mother of God** was built above the Medininkai Gate in the defensive tower. According to the custom of Catholic European cities, the chapel hosted the **image** of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of Mercy. Since the mid 17th century, the image of the Gate of Dawn has been believed to have **miraculous** properties. You can hear numerous legends about the miracles relating to the church. According to one of them, in 1671, when the image of Mary was brought to the chapel, a two-year old baby fell from the second storey and died upon hitting the ground. The grieving parents left the baby by the image and next morning found it alive and well again. People who had encountered a miraculous experience, or those praying for one, would leave o□erings by the image. In this way it acquired its silver frame. In 1927 the image was **crowned with papal crowns**.

When you step out of the Gate of Dawn, **walk back to the Town Hall** and along Vokiečių Street to **step into** the mazy streets of the Jewish Quarter.

8. The Jewish Quarter

* The streets of Stiklių, Žydų, Jatkų, Gaono, Švarco, Vilnius * **http://litvakai.mch.mii.lt**

Jewish people started moving to Lithuania in the 13th century. The largest **community of Jews** lived in Vilnius. In the □rst part of the 17th century, 40 famous rabbis lived in the city. **The great genius** Eliyahu Gaon became famous in the 18th century. In his honour, a monument was built by the sculptor Kazimieras Valaitis in Žydų Street, at the site of the Great Synagogue. In the 18th century Vilnius became an acknowledged spiritual centre for Jews, hence eventually becoming known as the **Jerusalem of Lithuania**. This is when the phrase that "one should go to Łódź for income and to Vilnius for wisdom" came into being.

In 1563 Jews were granted the right to buy houses in the Old Town and to build a quarter. The linking point of the streets of Stiklių, Gaono, M.Antokolskio and Žydų is the heart of the Jewish Quarter which used to contain the thriving so-called "Stiklas" market with the numerous Jewish traders chatting in it. This was the area of their shops, workshops, houses of call, etc. The majority of the Jewish Quarter's houses

have survived to this day and some of them are in the process of reconstruction. Due to their special atmosphere, a stroll in these narrow winding streets is now a pleasure. If you walk swiftly, you will soon find yourself at the monument dedicated to Doctor Zemach Shabad (Rūdninkų St), created by the talented sculptor Romas Kvintas. The doctor was widely acknowledged and honoured because of his professional and social activity. He became the prototype of **Doctor Aybolit** in the poem by the famous Russian writer Korney Chukovsky.

Walking in the quarter, also remember the fact that during World War II this was the site of the Jewish ghettoes. The **Small Ghetto** that held in total around 11,000 ghettoized Jewish people, was liquidated by October 21, 1941, by which time all the people living in the ghetto had been killed. Following this, the **Big Ghetto** was opened and functioned until the year 1943. 29,000 Jewish people were imprisoned in this ghetto. The majority of them were also killed in Paneriai.

If you carry on going up the Streets of Vokiečių and Vilniaus, you will reach The Opera and Ballet Theatre – the heart of modern culture in Vilnius.

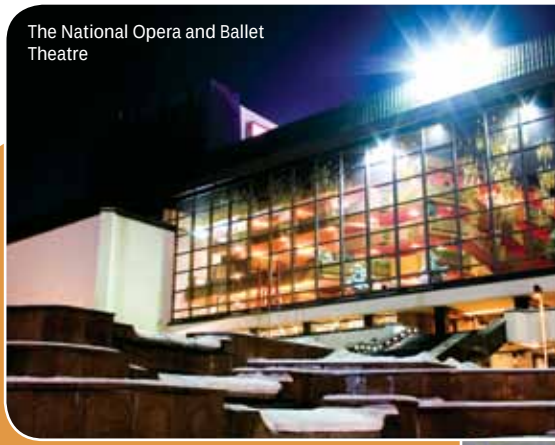
9. Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre

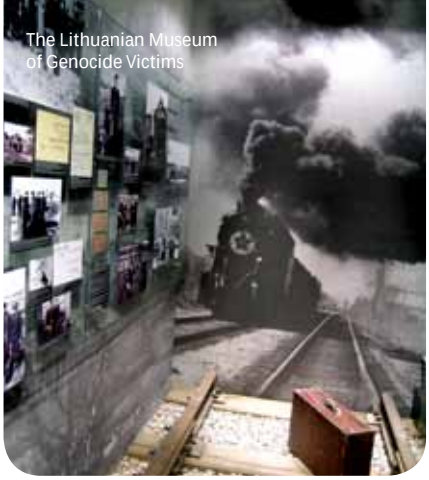
* A. Vienuolio St 1, Vilnius * Tel. +370 526 20 727, telephone to book tickets: +370 615 51 000
* **Opening times: Mon–Thu – 8am–5pm, Fri – 8am-4pm, and during performances.**
* **www.opera.lt**

In front of the majestic palace of Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, built in 1974, lies a modest monument created by the sculptor Gediminas Jokūbonis dedicated to Kipras Petrauskas. He was the **pioneer** of the glorious **history of the Lithuanian opera**.

The Hall now seats almost 1,000 spectators and hosts remarkable plays and performances of world-famous opera singers and top ballet dancers. Frequent guests in the Theatre are the famous soloists Violeta Urmana and Nomeda Kazlaus. Such figures as Montserrat Caballe and Ramon Vargas have also performed here. "The Flying Dutchman" was directed by world-famous Sound Director from the USA, Francesca Zambello, "Madam Butterfly" – by Anthony Minghella, whereas David Alden, an avant-gardist from the USA directed "Salome". The works of F. Chopin and R. Schumann were played here by the best pianist in the world, Evgeny Kissin, and last year the Theatre held a concert by one of the top orchestras in the world – the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

On more than one occasion the Opera and Ballet Theatre has hosted concerts by ballet soloists from the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, The Bolshoi Theatre of Moscow brought "Le Corsaire" to Lithuania, with leading roles played by such prominent dancers as Nikolai Tsiskaridze, Maria Alexandrova, Natalia Osipova, and Ivan Vasiliev, the so-called pearls of ballet. The National Opera and Ballet Theatre maintains particularly close ties with Maya Plisetskaya.


The National Opera and Ballet Theatre


The Lithuanian Museum of Genocide Victims

The repertoire of the Opera and Ballet Theatre is particularly rich featuring many classical ballets. In fact, this is something to take pride in, as not every European ballet can boast such an equally rich repertoire. This is why many classical ballet artists dream of pursuing their career in Lithuania. During breaks in the performance, it is common for spectators to **enjoy a glass of champagne** or a cup of hot chocolate. Come and experience the same pleasure.

The theatre is located **close to** a place which acts as a reminder of dark historical facts.

10. The Lithuanian Museum of Genocide Victims

* Aukų St 2A, Vilnius * Tel. +370 524 96 264
* **Opening times: Wed–Sat – 10am–6pm, Sun – 10am–5pm. * Admission charge.**
* **www.genocid.lt**

The building in which the structures of Soviet repression, the **NKVD** and **KGB**, operated from between the latter part of 1940 and August 1991 currently houses the Museum of Genocide Victims, the only such institution in the Baltic states.

The basement still contains the premises of a **prison and an interrogation room** in which Lithuanian residents who were deemed to be suspicious by the occupying rulers were taken by force. A permanent exhibition has been installed in the former chamber of **death sentence** execution. You can see the restored **wiretapping room** and visit the KGB inner prison.

Other exhibitions in the museum display the **guerrilla war** of the period of 1944–1953 and the imprisonment of Lithuanian people in **Russian gulags**, the **deportations** that took place during the period 1944–1953, and other KGB activities.

Having observed this painful history, **cross the Neris River** by the White Bridge and plunge into the world of art.

11. National Gallery of Art

* Konstitucijos Av. 22, Vilnius * Tel. +370 521 95 960
* **Opening times: Tue, Wed, Fri and Sat – 12pm–7pm, Thu – 1pm–8pm, Sun – 12pm–5pm.**
* **Admission charge. * www.ndg.lt**

The National Art Gallery is a contemporary and multifunctional **centre of art**

National Gallery of Art

and culture. This is an area of active communication where visitors can acquaint themselves with 20th century painting, sculpture, graphic arts, photography, installations, video art, and also participate in cultural events, lectures and educational programmes. The National Gallery of Art contains **11 galleries dedicated to the Gallery's permanent collection exposition**, a grand hall for temporary exhibitions, an open-air exposition court, a bookshop and a café. Various **cultural events** regularly take place in the gallery.

Leaving the National Gallery of Art, **walk back along the right bank of the Neris River** to the Old Town. Cross the river by passing King Mindaugas Bridge and walk surrounded by castles to Antakalnis where you will come to a magni□cent Baroque church.

12. St. Peter's and St. Paul's Church

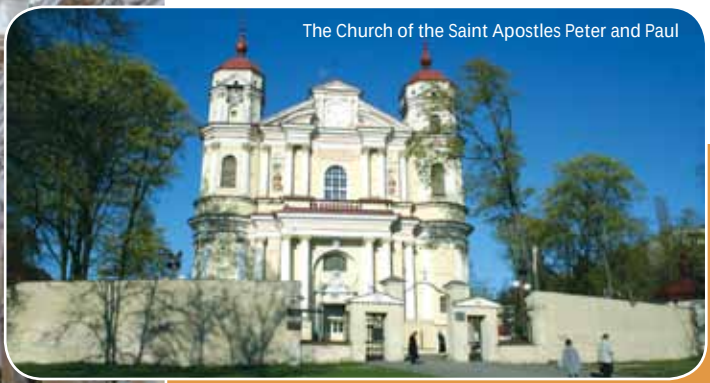
* Antakalnio St 1, Vilnius * Tel. +370 523 40 229
*** Free of charge. * Open: daily (6.00–18.30).**
*** www.vilnius-tourism.lt**

** The Queen's Chapel;*
** The Chapel of St Augustine;*
** The Chapel of St Ursula;*
** The Chapel of the Knights;*
** The Organ.*

Important to see:

Visitors are attracted by the particularly **stunning interior** of the church, while pilgrims □rst kneel down by the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of Mercy, which is believed to have miraculous properties, and the holy image portraying the Virgin Mary defending Vilnius' residents from the plague of 1710.

According to legend, the □rst church in the Antakalnis district was built in the 14th century on the **site of worship of the Baltic love goddess Milda**. Construction of the current church was begun in 1668 by Vilnius Voivode and the grand Hetman of Lithuania Michał Kazimierz Pac (Lith. Mykolas Kazimieras Pacas) (1624–1682) to commemorate victory in the war against Moscow. Italian craftsmen Giovanni Pietro Perti and Giovanni Maria Galli decorated the church with **white stucco mouldings** that spread the idea of the power, vitality and majesty of the church. After the founder died, the shrine became his grave – just as he wished, and Michael Casimir Pac was buried in the basement, below the entry to the church.



The Church of the Saint Apostles Peter and Paul

To honour the visit of Pope John II to Lithuania and Vilnius in 1993, the square in front of the church was given his name.

This is not the end of the route, as there is still another masterpiece is waiting for you to visit. It even stunned the French Emperor Napoleon. You will have to **return to the Old Town**.

13. The Churches of Saint Anne and Saint Francis of Assisi (Bernardines)

* Maironio St 8–1, 10, Vilnius
* Tel. +370 682 40 216 * **Opening times: The Church of St Anne is open: May–Sep, daily (11am–6pm); Oct–Apr, Tue–Sun – 5pm–7pm; The Church of St Francis and Bernardine (Bernardines) is open: Mon–Fri – 7am–7pm, Sat–Sun – 8am–7pm. * Free of charge.**
* **http://vilnius.lcn.lt, www.bernardinai.lt**

The Church of St Anne is one of the most enchanting and famous buildings in Vilnius, a **masterpiece of late Gothic architecture**. Numerous legends are associated with the church, the most widely known of which is that **Napoleon**, having seen the church, wanted to take it with him to Paris. The Church of St Anne was built in around 1495–1501. Since then it has been reconstructed repeatedly. However, its exterior has remained almost unchanged.

At the end of the 15th century, the Church of St Francis of Assisi (Bernardines) was built next to the Church of St Anne. It was incorporated into the city's defensive structures. Although the church acquired features of Renaissance and Baroque styles after the reconstructions of the 16-17th century, it still remains one of the **greatest sacred Gothic buildings in Lithuania**.

Tourists are o□ered a route in the Church of St Francis of Assisi (Bernardines). It leads to the **Chapel of St Florian** (The Three Kings), along the corridor of the cloister decorated with newly uncovered **frescoes**, to the Gothic courtyard. The route then runs to the presbytery – the monks' choir, the

The Church of Saint Francis of Assisi (Bernardines)

underground crypt, the Gothic Bell Tower, returning via spiral steps to the **loft of the church**, which now functions as a platform from which to enjoy splendid views across the **Vilnius panorama**.

Your journey in Vilnius is over here but it is a **convenient spot** from which to set o□ and explore its surroundings.

Important to see:

** The Chapel of St Florian;*
** The Frescoes;*
** The view from the loft of the Church of St Francis of Assisi (Bernardines).*

Photograph: A. Žygavičius

It is worth visiting Vilnius **in February** when ice sculptures are carved in the Town Hall Square. **From March 3 - 5** Vilnius is plunged into the buzz of Casimir's Fair (Kaziukas Fair) with the city's streets becoming a marketplace for Lithuanian artisans' crafts. The celebration is more than 100 years old. Throughout March Vilnius organises the contemporary opera festival NOA (New Opera Action), while **from May 26–29**, the exuberant international folklore festival "Skamba skamba kankliai" takes place in Vilnius. **On June 4** a unique Urban Adventure Race "Vilnius Challenge 2011" will be held. **June 18** is known for the Culture Night event called "Let There Be Night!" Before the Summer Solstice (Midsummer's Eve or St John's Eve), a Herb Market is open. **In July** the Festivals of Christopher Summer and Pilies take place, while August brings the Traditional Crafts Representing Bartholomew Fair. **On September 2–4** come to Vilnius International City Festival "Sostinės dienos" (Capital Days), **September 9** is the day when the festival Vilniaus fejerija 2011 (Festival of Fireworks) is held. **October** is also rich in events such as: "Vilnius Jazz", the international festival of song poetry "Tai – aš" (This is Me), "Vilnius tango □esta 2011", the Festival of Gastronomy "Pasaulio skonis" (Taste of the World), a festival of the best performances of Russian theatre "Auksinė kaukė" (Golden Mask), the Japanese □lm festival and the "Gaida" festival. **In November** one should not miss the Scanorama Nordic Film Festival.

Events in Vilnius

The Three Capitals Of Lithuania

Trakai Castle

Vilnius surroundings

By travelling in the surroundings of Vilnius and not going further than 50 kilometres away, you will have a chance to visit two more capitals of Lithuania – Kernavė and Trakai. In the former, which dates back to the 13th century and features five hill-forts set amid a wide green valley, you can enjoy stunning panoramic views. The latter, alluding to the fact that in the 15th century the Grand Duchy of Lithuania extended from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, you should not miss the chance to visit the impressive museum set in the medieval castle on an island in Lake Galvė . You can get to the castle by crossing long wooden bridges. Apart from visiting the castle and observing its interior you can choose a totally different vantage point. Enjoy the view of the castle by swimming in a boat, riding a pedalo, or even from a sailboard…

Start your trip in the surroundings of Vilnius by **visiting Trakai**. The distance between the contemporary capital Vilnius and the medieval capital is 28 kilometres.

14. Trakai Island Castle

* Kęstučio St 4, Trakai * Tel. +370 528 53 940, +370 528 53 946 * **Opening times: May–Sept, daily (10am–7pm.); Mar, Apr and Oct, Tue–Sun – 10am–7pm, Nov–Feb, Tue–Sun – 10am–5pm * Admission charge.**
* **www.trakaimuziejus.lt**

Trakai Island Castle is located on one of the isles of Lake Galvė and is the **symbol of Lithuania**. Construction of the castle was supposedly begun in the 14th century by the Grand Duke of Lithuania Kęstutis and finished in the 15th century by his son Vytautas. It was a fortress that **no enemy could ever destroy**.

After the Battle of Grunwald, when the Teutonic Knights had been decisively defeated, the Castle became the residence of

the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The town also started thriving: visits of merchants from other countries, honoured guests, and foreign ambassadors became more frequent and they were received in the **ceremonial hall** of the island's palace.

After reconstruction, in 1987 the castle regained the exterior of the 15th century. It now houses a **splendid museum** displaying many preserved objects such as pieces of furniture, pipes, stamps, clocks, porcelain and glass articles, and hunting trophies. The Dominican Abbey contains a permanent exhibition of sacral art.

Trakai Peninsula Castle

The Ethnographic Exhibition of Karaites

In summer, you have an excellent opportunity to attend **concerts** and the **opera festival** arranged in the Castle yard.

May 20 is the rare date when you have a chance to visit Trakai History Museum at night, during the events of "**Museum Night**". Get hands on and learn some ancient crafts, or try shooting a medieval-style bow. After dark the night's events begin with **medieval music**, dances, knight fights and fakirs.

15. Trakai Peninsula Castle

* Kęstučio St 4, Trakai * Tel. +370 528 55 297
* **www.trakaimuziejus.lt**

One of the largest enclosed castles in Lithuania, which had **11 defensive towers** of different sizes built during the 14th–15th centuries, it used to be one of the residences of the Grand Duke of Lithuania. In the 17th century much of the castle was destroyed in wars with Sweden and Russia and it was granted to **Dominican monks**. They started construction of a church but, having run out of funds, established a chapel and a monastery on the site. In the 19th century, when Tsarist rule closed the monastery down, the buildings were granted to the relevant administrative institutions, while the territory of the castle was turned into a park. Since 1990 the premises of the former Dominican Monastery have been occupied by the administration of the Trakai History Museum, therefore it is only possible to visit and see the **façade** of the castle.

16. The Ethnographic Exhibition of Karaites

* Karaimų St 22, Trakai * Tel. +370 528 55 286
* **Opening times: Wed–Sun (10am–6pm).**
* **Admission charge. * www.trakaimuziejus.lt**

Karaites are the smallest community of **ethnic Turkic adherents** living in Lithuania. In the late 14th century the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas reached the **Crimean peninsula**, implementing the

politics of conquering foreign lands. After victory against the Golden Horde, he brought back **383 Karaite families** who started living in the Trakai area. Some of them started working as guards, while others cultivated the land and worked in the field of agriculture, trade and crafts. The nation has preserved its uniqueness to this day and they still use their native tongue. Karaites still pray in a **Kenesa, the only such temple still operating in Europe**. You can learn much more about Karaites in the museum.

Užutrakis Manor House

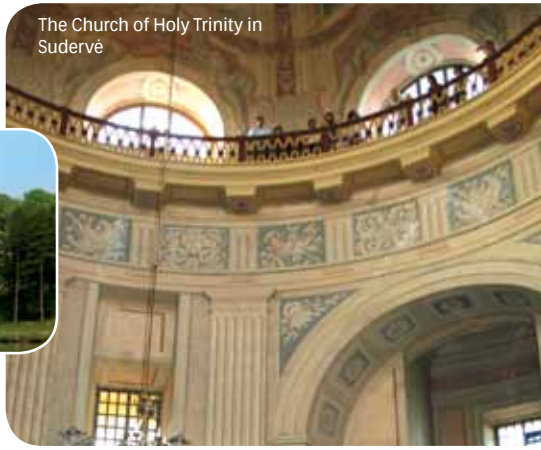
When you visit Trakai, the national Karaite meal – **kibinai** (pasties) – is a must to try. Enjoying the mouth-watering pasty, **take a look at the other side of Lake Galvė** – you will see a Classicist-style manor overlooking the surroundings. It is only 10 kilometres round the lake.

17. Užutrakis Manor House

* Užtrakio St 5, Trakai * Tel. +370 528 21 707, +370 528 55 006, +370 528 21 707
* **Opening times: Thu–Sun (11am–7pm).**
* **Admission charge. * www.seniejitrakai.lt**

The manor house located on the bank of Lake Galvė, has a stunning panoramic view of Trakai Castle and the town.

The complex of Užutrakis Manor House was created in 1897–1902 on the initiative of Count Tiškevičius. The Tiškevičius family owned the house until World War II. The Manor House of Užutrakis is built in the style of Historicism, in accordance to the design of a prominent Warsaw architect Józef Huss. A French landscape architect, **Édouard François**, planted the beautiful parterres of flower beds, and also designed and built the walkways, marble sculptures, busts and vases situated near the manor. Count Tiškevičiai used a ferryboat to reach the peninsula between Lakes Galvė and Skaistis.


The Church of Holy Trinity in Sudervė

In summer, the manor house hosts classical music concerts "**Užutrakio vakarai**", which traditionally start in late July and last until late August.

Having walked in the impressive natural surroundings of the park enjoying the splendid views of the lake, get ready to visit another site – Sudervė. It is **40 kilometres away** and it features the only round church in Lithuania.

18. The Holy Trinity Church in Sudervė

* Kernavės St 1, Sudervė, Vilnius dstr.
* Tel. + 370 5 249 0287 * **Opening times: before the service on weekdays – 4.30pm, Sun – 11am, 1pm and 3pm**
* **Free of charge. * http://vilnius.lcn.lt/**

The parish of Sudervė was established in the late 18th century by a Bishop of Vilnius, Ignacy Jakub Massalski (Lith. Ignotas Masalskis). In the period 1803–1822 Valentinas Volčackis, a **Dominican monk**, raised funds for the church. The church was designed by the architect Laurynas Bartkevičius who chose a structure based on the Roman Pantheon. The church of Sudervė is a **rotunda** with a dome-shaped roof, which is supported by six columns on the façade side. The niches between the columns house **sculptures** of the four evangelists and the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Well, it is now time to visit the first medieval capital of Lithuania. Kernavė is just 20 kilometres away. **On your way** don't forget to **stop and see the Stone Sculpture Park** located on the shore of Lake Vilnoja.

19. The Mounds of Kernavė

* Kerniaus St 4 a., Kernavė, Širvintos dstr.
* Tel. +370 382 47 385, +370 382 47 371
* **Excursions are held in the reserve in Apr–Oct, Tue–Sat (10am–5.30pm)**
* **Admission fee. * www.kernave.org**

The five mounds on the right bank of the River Neris create a spectacular view of the surroundings. This territory is the site of the medieval city of Kernavė, one of the centres of the development of the Lithuanian state, and the largest hill fort mound complex in the Baltic States. The complex is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The first inhabitants settled in Kernavė in 9,000–8,000 B.C. From then, throughout the Early Middle Ages, the site was constantly inhabited by people who left their marks on the area. It is a unique site in the whole Baltic Sea area, as no other five-mound complex can be found in the territory.

Written sources mention Kernavė in 1279 as the domain of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Traidenis and the **first capital of Lithuania**. In 1390, during a Teutonic

attack, Kernavė was burned down and its remains were hidden forever by a thick layer of soil, embalming the traces of the inhabitants of the Lithuanian Troy. At present the Cultural Reserve of Kernavė occupies a territory of 194.4 hectares and contains 18 sites and objects of archaeology, history, and culture.

Every year, on the **6th of July**, which is the date of King Mindaugas' coronation, Kernavė holds a festival of experimental archaeology called "**Gyvosios archeologijos dienos**" (Days of Live Archaeology), and in early spring hundreds of Lithuanians come here to celebrate Užgavėnės (Shrove Tuesday) and to send winter away (the traditional slogan is "Žiema žiema, bėk iš kiemo!" (Winter winter, leave my yard!)).

Events in Kernavė

Leaving Kernavė, **take the direction of Širvintos**. In 55 kilometres you will come to another impressive mound surrounded by many legends.

The Mound of Dubingiai

20. The Mound of Dubingiai

* Dubingiai, Molėtai dstr. * Tel. +370 383 54 761
* **Opening times: daily. * Free of charge.**
* **www. lietuvospilys.lt, www. musupaveldas.lt**

The mound of Dubingiai is located on the shore of the impressive Lake Asveja. It is a peninsula and a hill at the same time, and is 500 metres long and 200 metres wide. It **used to be an island**. The **Radvilos** family built a **palace** in the area and the remains of this from the 16–17th century still survive, as well as the ruins of the Evangelical Reformed Church.

Dubingiai was first mentioned in written sources in 1334 in descriptions of the war

The Mounds of Kernavė

against the Livonian Order. According to historical studies, after the Battle of Grunwald, the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas built a castle here. Later the palace was taken over by the Dukes Radvilos. In the 16th century, a Renaissance style brick church was built and the **Mausoleum of Radvilos** installed. The palace was also home to Barbora Radvilaitė, the wife of Sigismund Augustus (Lith. Žygimantas Augustas), the Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland.

In the late 17th century, when Biržai Castle became the main castle for Radvilos, Dubingiai gradually lost its signi□cance. Yet, the **view of Lake Asveja from the Mound** has remained as stunning as ever.

Having covered 26 kilometres by road in the direction of Vilnius you will see a **road sign inviting you** to stop at the **geographical centre of Europe**. Here you will □nd a memorial stone and a composition created by Gediminas Jakūbonis to mark Lithuania's accession to the European Union. Use this opportunity to pay a visit to the Park of Europe, which is just **20 kilometres** from the geographical centre of Europe.

The Park of Europe

21. The Park of Europe

* * Joneikiškių vlg., Vilnius district.
* Tel. +370 523 77 077 * **Opening times: daily, starting at 10.00 till twilight.**
* **Admission charge.** * **www.europosparkas.lt**

The stunning 55-hectare **open air museum** was founded in 1991 by the sculptor Gintaras Karosas. The area of the park is rich in landscape variety: you can □nd hills, hollows, small ponds, etc. Together with the artistic creations they make up an ideal union of nature and art.

There are over **100 art creations** by artists from **34 countries** displayed in the park. The collection of the museum contains pieces created by prominent contemporary artists including Magdalena Abakanowicz, Sol LeWitt, Dennis Oppenheim, and Beverly Pepper. One of the most impressive and original creations is the sculpture made of old TV sets, declared by the "Guinness World Records" as the largest sculpture of this type in the world.

In 2006 Gintaras Karosas was granted the **National Cultural Award for Advancement** for the original idea and the creation of the park. You can explore the park by bike, as a bicycle hire point is available in the park. Additionally, there is a café in the tourist centre where many visitors stop to have a meal after a walk in the countryside.

This is where your exploration of Vilnius and its surroundings **reaches its end**. To get back to the capital you will only have to travel 17 kilometres.

The Park of Europe

The city of green hills and medieval churches

Kaunas

Kaunas and its surroundings

Kaunas is often referred to as the provisional capital, since in 1920, after Poland had occupied the Vilnius region, all governmental institutions were moved to Kaunas. The city only remained as the capital until 1939, but it kept developing and refurbishing and has maintained the status of a respectable capital. Now the city is not only famous for its culture, which was particularly prominent in the early 20th century but also for the much older architecture and its unique natural surroundings. This incredibly green city is located at the con□uence of the two largest rivers in Lithuania, i.e. the Nemunas River and the Neris River. **Start your tour** in it by visiting the Town Hall Square.

22. Town Hall Square

* Tel. +370 373 23 436
* **www.visitkaunas.com**

Kaunas Town Hall is one of the three remaining town halls in Lithuania, and is, by the way, considered to be the most beautiful. It now houses the **Museum of Ceramics**. Every weekend brings an opportunity to see an impressive array of brides in their white dresses, as the Town Hall also contains a **Marriage Chamber**.

To the right of the Town Hall lies The Archcathedral Basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul (Vilniaus St 1), which is the largest Neo-Classicist building in Lithuania. Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, the Lithuanian moral authority, was buried in the church, while outside the church by the wall lies the mausoleum of the poet and priest Maironis.

Near the Archcathedral you can see the Jesuit Church of St. Francis Xavier (Rotušės Sq. 8). The premises of the former monastery are located by the church. They now house a Jesuit Gymnasium. In the 19th century, one of the most famous poets in Lithuania and Poland, Adam Mickiewicz (Lith. Adomas Mickevičius) taught in the college that was housed in the monastery.

You can get acquainted with Maironis, a □gure that is signi□cant for every Lithuanian, in a house with a beautiful Baroque gable (Rotušės Sq. 13). The poet lived in the building when he was working as the Rector of Kaunas Priest Seminary. Now the house contains the **Maironis Museum of Lithuanian Literature**. In addition, in front of the building stands a monument dedicated to Maironis, which was created by Gediminas Jokūbonis.

In the North-western corner of the square is the late Renaissance style **Church of the Holy Trinity** and the **Priest Seminary**. In this church the Samogitian Bishop and writer Motiejus Valančius lived in 1864. Outside the seminary stands a 4-metre high monument dedicated to M. Valančius. The creator of the sculpture is Leonas Žuklys.

A much-loved site for visitors is house number 28 in the Town Hall Square. It is the unique Museum of the History of Medicine and Pharmacy containing a 19th Century hall and displaying numerous ancient utensils and other original exhibits. By the way, do not be surprised to see not only tourists but also medical students here. They also visit the museum to gain some knowledge of ancient medicine.

Now **turn and walk to Aleksoto Street**.

The House of Perkūnas

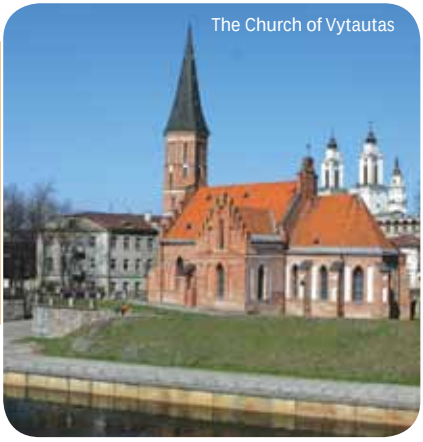
23. The House of Perkūnas

* Aleksoto St 6, Kaunas * Tel. +370 620 30 881
***Opening times: Mon–Fri – 9am–5pm, Sat–Sun – 10am-2pm.**
*** Free of charge. * www.perkunonamas.lt**

Perkūnas was the supreme deity in the Lithuanian pagan system. He was the god of thunder and the sky. A house dedicated to him is located in Kaunas. It is a two-storey residential brick house, considered to be one of the most beautiful and original monuments built in the late Gothic style in Lithuania. Particularly original is its façade: **16 types of bricks** were used to build it. The building was given the name of "The House of Perkūnas" after **a small statue of God Perkūnas** was found at the beginning of the 19th century.

For a long time the house belonged to private persons but after the war of 1655–1661 and the subsequent reconstruction, the building was taken over by the Jesuits. In fact, Jesuits own it to this day; it now houses a gymnasium. Additionally, lively

excursions are organised and we recommend that you join one of them. After some fun there – **rush down the same street** to see another Kaunas masterpiece.


The Church of Vytautas

24. The Church of Vytautas

* Aleksoto St 3, Kaunas
* Tel. +370 372 03 854 * **Opening times: during the service: Tue–Fri – 6pm, Sat – 10am and 6pm, Sun – 10am, 12pm and 6pm.**
* **http://vytautine.lcn.lt**

The church has an alternative name – the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - but is usually known by the name of **Vytautas the Great**, possibly due to the fact that he funded the church. This is **one of the oldest churches** in Kaunas and in Lithuania.

The church with its 28-metre high tower was built in the early 15th century in **the Early Gothic style**. In 1920–1933, the rector of the church was the priest Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas, a literary classic of Lithuania, famous for his rich linguistic heritage. He is buried in the wall of the church.

Now **turn back** to the Town Hall Square and visit yet another interesting museum.

The Church of Vytautas

25. Maironis Museum of Lithuanian Literature

* Rotušės Sq. 13, Kaunas
* Tel. +370 372 01 284 * **Opening times: Mon, Wed and Thu – 8am–5pm, Tue and Sat – 9am–5pm, Fri – 8am–3.45pm.**
* **Admission charge.**
* **www.maironiomuziejus.lt**

This is a **treasure-house** of Lithuanian literature. The initiator of collecting Lithuanian literature and other documents related to it was the poet whose poems are recited and known by heart by every Lithuanian. As the name of the museum suggests, it is Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis (1862–1932). After his death, the collection was supplemented by the works of another great poet, Bernardas Brazdžionis. Gradually the collection became the most important museum of Lithuanian literature.

In 1992 **Maironis' flat**, which had been demolished during Soviet rule, was restored. Now it has regained its original interior from the time the poet was living there. Don't be surprised at the luxuriousness of

its decorations. Bear in mind that it is located in a palace built in the 18th century. The palace itself has an impressive history - after the year 1812 it served as a hospital. At the time of Maironis, the first floor housed a publishing house "Sakalas" (Hawk), the first public library with a reading room in Kaunas, and a few cultural organisations.

Now the museum not only displays **exhibitions** but also organises **presentations** of the latest books, **meetings** with writers, and **music events**.

Walking the narrow streets, at the impressive site of the confluence of the Nemunas and Neris Rivers, you **will come to a castle**.

Kaunas Castle

26. Kaunas Castle

* Pilies St 17, Kaunas * Tel. +370 373 23 436
* **Opening times: Jun–Sept, daily (11am-6pm).**
* **Free of charge. * www.kaunopilis.lt**

It is the **oldest** stone castle built in the Gothic style in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The castle built in 1362 possessed both inner and outer walls, as well as **two towers** located in the corners. The castle was surrounded by a defensive trench. When the Teutonic Knights conquered the palace in 1362, they marked this victorious date in their documents. That was the **first time the name of Kaunas was mentioned in written sources**. In fact the castle was reconstructed after just 40 years. Unfortunately, however, only part of that castle survives today, as it was severely damaged by the floods of the River Neris in the 17th–18th centuries. Today the circular-shaped tower houses the Kaunas Tourist Information Centre and holds exhibitions. Additionally, you can buy souvenirs in the tower. In the yard of the castle impressive open air **concerts** and theatre **performances** take place.

Having listened to fine music in the castle, **don't forget to visit** the museum dedicated to the Lithuanian genius composer and artist.

27. The M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum

* V. Putvinskio St 55, Kaunas
* Tel. +370 372 29 475 * **Opening times: Tue–Sun, 11am-5pm * Admission charge.**
* **www.ciurlionis.lt**

The museum is rich both in creations of European art and Lithuanian crafts. But perhaps the greatest value of the museum lies in the fact that it contains and preserves virtually all the creative heritage of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911), **a genial Lithuanian artist**. He was the first man in Lithuania to discover abstract art and, in search of a unique Lithuanian style, **combined music with painting**, i.e. reflected painting in music and painted music.

The M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum

The museum stores 220 paintings, 52 pieces of graphic art, 10 albums of drawings, photographs by M.K.Čiurlionis, and rich archival data. In the Music Hall the records of M.K. Čiurlionis' creations are **played constantly**. In addition, the museum hosts piano music **concerts**. Various educational programmes are o□ered that will allow you to explore the mystical world of Čiurlionis' paintings, to hear him in music, and even to see him in an animated □lm.

It is now time for a ride. Come and try the oldest funicular in Europe!

28. Žaliakalnis funicular

* Aušros St 6, Kaunas * Tel. +370 374 25 882
* **Opening times: daily, 7am–7pm. * Fee.**
* **http://visit.kaunas.lt**

It has been 80 years that the residents of Kaunas have used a funicular to ascend the high hill of Žaliakalnis. The vehicle was built in the third decade of the last century. In fact, **President Antanas Smetona** himself oversaw construction. According to recorded data, by 1937 1.4 million people had used the funicular. It is still popular today: around 400–600 passengers use it every day. The cars move at a speed of 2m/s and the whole trip takes 1 minute and 38 seconds. In 1992 the funicular was repaired and regained its **original appearance from 1931**. In the cars you will hear music specially created to be played in the funicular by Giedrius Kuprevičius, a composer from Kaunas. Additionally, you will be welcomed by sta□ dressed in the clothing of interwar Lithuania. In the upper station is the **exhibition of photographs** which is renewed every month.

Žaliakalnis' funicular is one of the oldest means of transport of its kind still used in Europe. It is very convenient not only to reach the top of the hill but also to enjoy panoramic views of the green city.

Žaliakalnis funicular

Kaunas is a perfect destination in which to attend numerous cultural events. The following are the most popular and important: **March 5** – "Jubilatė Deo", an international young performers' sacred music festival; **April 5** – "Jauna muzika 2011", a festival of electronic and electroacoustic music; "Now Art Now Future", an international Print Biennial; "Susitikime dainoj", a traditional choir festival; **in May** – "Gintarinė pora", an international ballroom dance competition; **in August** – the international Hanza days festival; **in September** – "Photo'11", the 8th festival of photography art; **from October to December** Kaunas hosts the Kaunas Biennial "TEXTILE 11"; **in November** – "Didi 2011", a festival of design.

Events in Kaunas

Your journey in Kaunas has so far been on foot, so it's now time **to jump into a car** and explore its spectacular surroundings. Just 10 kilometres away you will come to the architectural complex of Pažaislis, located on the shores of Kaunas Reservoir. Its beauty will de□nitely captivate you.

Pažaislis Monastery

29. Pažaislis Monastery

* T. Masiulio St 31, Kaunas * Tel. +370 374 58 868
* **Opening times: Tue–Fri – 10am–5pm, Sat – 10am–4pm * Admission charge.**
* **www.pazaislis.org**

The complex of the Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Camaldolese Monastery is **rich in decorations and grandure**. The beauty of the Monastery was praised throughout the whole of Europe and, as a result, was visited by numerous historical □gures including Charles I of Sweden, and Tsars Alexander I and Nicolas I of Russia. The latter was so impressed by the splendour of the church that he awarded 130,000 Roubles so that the church could be renovated and turned into an Orthodox church.

The foundation stone of the church was sancti□ed in 1667; however, its consecration only took place in 1712. The complex was designed by an Italian architect, Giovanni Battista Frediani, and decorated with **plaster casts by the sculptors of Lombardy**, and with the frescoes of Michelangelo Palloni, a master from Florence. The interior of the Baroque church, which contains the mausoleum of its founder Krzysztof Pac (Lith. Kristupas Pacas) Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, is decorated with marble of di□erent colours, impressive **woodcarvings**, valuable images, and **140 frescoes**. Eleven of them depict the mission of Saint Bruno in Lithuania 1000 years ago.

The frescoes in the corridor to the sacristy were painted at the end of the 17th century by Michelangelo Palloni. He depicted the arrival of the monk (Saint Bruno) in Lithuania in **1009**, the baptism of Netimeras and the martyrdom of Saint Bruno. Describing the death of Saint Bruno, German chroniclers **mentioned the name of Lithuania for the first time** thus making the date acquire vital importance in the history of Lithuania.

Yet the artistic value of the buildings is not the only factor to have determined the fame of the church and the monastery. Every year on July 2 crowds of pilgrims would arrive to the feast day to see the miraculous painting "**The Mother of Beautiful Love**".

For 15 years the monastery has been home to the international annual **Pažaislis Music Festival** held in summer, which is highly ranked at an international level. This year the festival starts in May.

It is now time for you to explore folk architecture. **On the way to Vilnius** you will pass the village of Rumšiškės, just 12 kilometres away.

30. The Open Air Ethnographic Museum in Rumšiškės

* J. Aisčio St 2, Rumšiškės, Kaišiadorys dstr.
* Tel. +370 346 47 233 * **Opening times: May–September, Wed–Sun – 10am-6pm; Oct–Apr, Mon and Tue – 10am–8pm, Tue–Sun – 6pm–8pm. * Admission charge. * www.llbm.lt**

The museum invites you to travel back in time and discover the region's past. You can do this whilst becoming familiar with the heritage of Lithuanian rural life from the period of the late 18th to the early 19th century.

The open air museum by the banks of the Kaunas Reservoir, opened in 1974, occupies an area of 175 hectares. The museum contains around **100 buildings** with restored original interiors and surroundings as monuments of folk architecture. The collection is arranged in such a way that the buildings represent the main **ethnographic regions** of Lithuania: each region has its own authentic farmsteads with their own tools, implements, household items, and clothes.

Rumšiškės is **the last site in your route** in and around Kaunas, the city of green hills and medieval churches. But it is a very convenient place from which to head for Panemunė and **get acquainted with** the **much older history** of Lithuania.

Events in Rumšiškės

You de□nitely have to attend at least one of the events that the museum has to o□er. You can choose from educational events of the national customs, crafts workshops, or traditional festivals. Lithuanians still preserve their traditions and celebrate many holidays and religious **festivals** according to ancient customs. The key celebrations are listed below. **In February** the main celebration is Užgavėnės (Shrove Tuesday), a day when everyone makes pancakes, when people in masks travel from door to door asking for treats, and when the symbol of the winter – Morė – is burned. **April** is the month of the most important spring celebration – Easter. In Lithuania it is a special celebration: everyone, starting with little kids and ending with their grandmothers, decorates eggs. Due to the unique decoration methods that have been inherited, the artistry is impressive and you may perhaps never see anything of this kind elsewhere in the world. **In May** you are invited to the festivals "Čia visa Lietuva" and "Šokim, trypkim, sveiki būkim". **June** is the month of Midsummer or, in Lithuanian – Joninės (St John's Day), a night when thousands of □res are burnt and people dance until morning. **July** includes two celebrations: Saint Anne's Day and the Rye Harvest Festival. **August 15** marks the celebration of Žolinė (Meadow Grass Celebration or Herbal Holiday), universally known as the Day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. On this day the newly harvested ryes, barley, oats, etc are blessed. **In September** Rumšiškės holds the celebration of the Day of Crafts.

The Open Air Ethnographic Museum in Rumšiškės

The route of castles along the Nemunas river

The Mound of Seredžius

Central Lithuania

This route lies along the right **bank of the River Nemunas**, the longest river in Lithuania. You will be astonished by the rich array of castles and mounds situated on the route and by the stunning panoramas opening up from them. In addition, the legends surrounding all these sites will add to the incredible experience. When you reach Kėdainiai, don't be surprised that the Catholic area transforms into the area known as the Cradle of Reformation.

Start your trip by visiting the Mound of Veliuona.

31. Veliuona Mound

* Veliuona, Jurbarkas dstr.
* Tel. +370 447 70 153
* **http://tic.sesupe.lt, www.jurbarkas.lt**

Located at the **confluence** of the Nemunas and Veliuonėlė Rivers on a 30-metre high hill lie two mounds: Gediminas Grave Hill and Pilies (Castle) Hill. On the 32-metre high Pilies mound the castle of Junigeda used to stand. The castle was regularly attacked by the Teutonic Order. The fighting stopped just after the Battle of Grunwald (1410). It was then that the Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania built a new brick castle on the mound which, unfortunately, has not survived.

Over a 17-metre deep defensive trench lies the **Gediminas Grave Hill**. The stone sacrifice altar on it is a mark of pagan times (the period before Christianization in 1387). Pagans believed that the ghosts and their deity Veliona lived in the underworld and protected the fertility of the land and animals. During the vernal (spring) and autumnal equinoxes people would give offerings to the deity and the ghosts as well as lighting a fire on the altar as a sign of worship.

According to another legend, the Grand Duke of Lithuania **Gediminas** died while defending Veliuona Castle. This is the same man who had a dream of iron wolves howling, which turned out to be a prophetic sign and resulted in the founding of Vilnius. According to the legend, Gediminas was buried at the place of his death and in

Raudonė Castle

his honour the locals built a large mound; hence the name of the **Gediminas Grave Hill**. There is a memorial obelisk on the hill dedicated to the Duke.

Important to see:

- *The Monument to Vytautas the Great in Veliuona;*
- *The Monument to the 700th anniversary of Veliuona;*
- *The Stone with a footprint;*
- *The Observation platform of the Nemunas valley;*
- *Veliuona Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1644 m.) and the permanent exhibition of the sacral art;*
- *Veliuona Manor House and The History Museum of Veliuona Region;*
- *Veliuona Inn.*

If you cover 11 more kilometres along the Nemunas River, you will reach the town of Raudonė. It is located in two "layers": the upper and lower terrace of the River Nemunas. The town is separated by the River Raudonė, hence its name. Having reached the upper terrace by a steep road you will see the stunning castle.

32. Raudonė Castle

* Raudonė, Jurbarkas district.
* Tel. +370 345 51 262, +370 447 70 153
* **Opening times: Apr 15 – Oct 15, Mon–Sun (10am–4pm.).**
* **www.jurbarkas.lt, http://tic.sesupe.lt**

The castle was built in the 16th century. It has been **owned by numerous people**, damaged by recurrent □res but was rebuilt every time until 1944, when Germans demolished its great tower, which, when falling, destroyed part of the castle's southern wing. In the post-war period the tower and the destroyed section were rebuilt and the castle started housing a school.

The red towers of the castle are particularly spectacular at dusk, while the 33.5-metre high tower serves as an observation platform opening up spectacular panoramas of the Nemunas and its surroundings. Additionally, the park of the castle contains a **200-year-old** 1.4 metre diameter **chestnut tree**.

Drive 14 kilometres more, again along the Nemunas River and yet another castle **by the road appears in front of you**.

33. Panemunė Castle

* Pilies 1-asis kaimas (Pilies 1st village), Jurbarkas dstr. * Tel. +370 689 93 185
* **Closed to visitor admission.**
* **www.travel.lt, www.vda.lt**

Panemunė Castle

The castle is believed to have taken its name from the Manor of Panemunė, which was acquired in the 16th century by a Hungarian nobleman, Janušas Eperješas. He later (in 1610) built a mansion-house. The Castle of Panemunė has features of the **Renaissance epoch**, yet in some places still retaining elements of the **Gothic style**.

In the 18th century the Castle was purchased by the Gelgaudai family. The new owners remodelled the building in the style of Classicism. However, in 1831, its owner Antanas Gelgaudas died in battle and, as a result, the building became derelict. The valuable collection of the library, as well as its gallery paintings were taken to Russia. Nevertheless, the **five cascade ponds**, the hilly landscape, and the stunning **walls** of the castle leave an unforgettable impression on visitors.

Leaving Panemunė behind, **you will have to pass** Raseiniai. 100 kilometres separate you from Kėdainiai.

34. Evangelical Reformed Church

* Senoji St 1, Kėdainiai
* Tel. +370 347 53 685, +370 347 51 330
* **Opening times: May–Sept, Sat – 11am–5pm, Oct-Apr - upon agreement in advance.**
* **Admission charge.**
***www.kedainiumuziejus.lt**

The landmark of the Old Town of Kėdainiai is the Evangelical Reformed Church, built in 1631–1652 by the noblemen Krzysztof Radziwiłł II (Lith. Kristupas II Radvila) and his son Janusz Radziwiłł XI (Lith. Janušas XI Radvila). In fact the church **looks more like a castle** than a church. At the time it was the **largest** church in Central Lithuania and Samogitia. The church houses the **mausoleum** of the Radziwiłł family and is the only restored tomb site of 17th-century noblemen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the state. In the ornate Renaissance and Baroque sarcophagi located in the crypt lie Vilnius' Voivodes and the great Hetmans Krzysztof Radziwiłł "The Thunderbolt" (Lith. Kristupas Radvila Perkūnas) (1547–1603) and Janusz Radziwiłł (Lith. Jonušas Radvila) (1612–1655). The crypt also contains the restored tin **sarcophagi** of the two preadolescent brothers and the sister of Janusz Radziwiłł.

Come to the bar "Grėjaus namas" located on the Street of Didžioji and taste a **Scottish** dish. Before you pay a visit you should know that Scottish people were attracted to Kėdainiai, the Lithuanian centre of Protestantism, by the nobleman Janusz Radziwiłł. He invited merchants and craftsmen and ensured that they had excellent conditions for successful businesses.

35. The Synagogues of Kėdainiai

* Senoji rinka 12, Kėdainiai
* Tel. +370 347 51 778 * **Opening times: Tue–Sat, 10am–5pm. * Admission charge. * www.kedainiumuziejus.lt, www.visitkedainiai.lt**

Jewish people started settling in the Square of Kėdainiai, also known as **Senoji rinka** (The Old Market), in the 16th century. Gradually they completely took over this part of the city. In the late 17th century, a synagogue known as the Great Synagogue was built. Now it is one of the two surviving Baroque synagogues in Lithuania. The famous Jewish thinker Gaon Eliyahu studied here in the 18th century. Now the Great Synagogue houses a Children's School of Art.

In the 19th century, another synagogue – **The Small Synagogue** – was built. In fact, one of the wings in this building was used as a cell for Jewish o□enders. Now the Classicist-style building holds a permanent exhibition of the Jewish community and the holocaust in Kėdainiai. The building also houses a Multicultural Centre where exhibitions, classical and jazz concerts, meetings with artists, seminars, book presentations and other educational events are held.

During World War II, **the Jewish community** in Kėdainiai was destroyed, as were all the Jewish buildings. In the summer of 1941 the Old Market Square was attached to the ghetto and thus became part of it, while the Great Synagogue was turned into horse stables.

The route of Central Lithuania is over in Kėdainai. Get ready to explore another region – **your journey continues in Aukštaitija**.

The Evangelical Reformed Church in Kėdainiai

The land of the thousand lakes

The Church of Palūšė

Aukštaitija

When you travel in Aukštaitija, its **lakes** will de□nitely captivate you. Vast and tiny, deep and shallow, azure and navy-blue – the shimmering lakes charm every visitor. Aside from lakes, the surrounding countryside contains shady woods, ancient wooden villages and – in areas further to the north – luxurious manor houses and castles. The area features a narrow gauge railway, which is still in use for tourist purposes, whereas **astronomers** invite you to explore not only the stars but also the human soul. While pleasing the eye don't forget to please the stomach too. Aukštaičiai people are renowned for their hospitality and they especially like to treat their visitors to **home-made beer**. But be careful as not only is it delicious but also extra strong!

Start your trip in the National Park of Aukštaitija. Visit interesting sites while at the same time enjoying refreshing swims in the abundant lakes that Aukštaitija's lands are dotted with. Ignalina and Palūšė are separated by just 6 kilometres.

36. The Church of Palūšė

* Palūšė, Ignalina dstr.
* Tel. +370 386 47 430, +370 615 21 401
* **Opening times: Sun, 12pm. * www.paluse.lt**

One of the most attractive places in Lithuania contains a little **wooden** church with a **belfry** built in the late 18th century. It is said to have been built only using an axe and **no nails**!

In the 19th century the church was renovated. In the 20th century Jonas Petrauskas, the father of the famous composers Kipras Petrauskas and Mikas Petrauskas, worked as an organist in the church. Finally, the Church of Palūšė is distinguished as **it was featured on the 1 Lita banknote**!

Further ahead the route will bring you along sandy forest paths to the **beekeepers**. To reach them you will have to cover 19 kilometres. **Stop** on your way **by a hill**,

The Museum of Ancient Beekeeping

popularly known as Ladakalnis, and look out from the top to the spectacular Land of Lakes.

37. The Museum of Ancient Beekeeping

* Stripeikiai, Ignalina dstr.
* Tel. +370 386 53 135, +370 687 59 330
* **Opening times: May–Sept, Tue–Sun (10am–7pm.).** * **Admission charge.**
* **www.ignalinatic.lt.**

Among dense forests, on the two splendid hills with the River Tauragna winding its way from the largest lake in Lithuania, Lake Tauragnas, below lies a farmstead. Upon arrival, you will be greeted by a majestic oak-tree sculpture of the Lithuanian god of bees **Babilas**. Babilas' mouth is always full of bees: some □ying away for the nectar, others – coming back with it. This is because a beehive has been installed in the mouth of Babilas' sculpture. The slopes of the hill contain ancient beehives that were used from the 15th to the early 20th century. Close to the museum, at the edge of a wood, bees are housed **in a fir trunk**. In the ancient house you can see bee-keeping tools and wax candles.

On the other side of the river lies a barn, which was a shrine of the pagan goddess of bees **Austėja** as well as a sacred stone with a bowl. Nearby lies an altar stone, where sacred □re is set to honour Gabija, the Lithuanian goddess of □re and hearth and a protector of home and family.

There is a bar at the museum; you can also **buy honey** and midus, a traditional strong alcoholic beverage that only Lithuanians know how to make.

It is now **time to turn to Zarasai**. An 83 kilometre drive will take you to the village of Stelmužė.

The Oak of Stelmužė

38. The Oak of Stelmužė

* Stelmužė, Zarasai dstr. * **Opening times: daily.**
* **Free of charge.** * **www.zarasai.lt/tic/**

The real age of the Oak of Stelmužė is di□cult to ascertain. It is supposedly **1500 years old**! It is the oldest and thickest oak-tree in Lithuania and one of the oldest in Europe. It is a natural monument in Lithuania. The diameter of the oak is 3.5 metres, it is 23 metres high and you need at least 8–9 men to embrace it. Legends tell that the area used to contain a **pagan altar**. At the moment scientists are trying to clone the oak-tree. It is anticipated that its sapling will be planted next year.

Close to the oak tree, stands an ancient little church.

39. The Church of Stelmužė

* Stelmužė, Zarasai dstr. * Tel. +370 385 52 456
* **Exterior only** * **Free of charge.**
* **http://panevezys.lcn.lt**

The Church of Stelmužė is one of the oldest wooden churches in Lithuania. In 1650 it was constructed by joining axed logs without using nails. The entranceway of the one-nave church is surrounded on three sides by 12 wooden columns. The altar and the pulpit contain valuable **Baroque decorations**, which, supposedly, were created by **folk craftsmen**. The churchyard includes a 17th-century **wooden belfry**, the bells of which are 400 years old. The building houses the Museum of Church Art. Unfortunately, due to the poor condition of the building you will only be allowed to take a look at its interior though the front door.

Continue your trip by **going** to Rokiškis, to see **an impressive manor house**. The distance to cover is 66 kilometres. This is where the route of the magni□cent manor houses begins.

40. Rokiškis Manor House

* Tyzenhauzų Av. 5, Rokiškis
* Tel. +370 458 52 261, +370 615 44 586
* **Opening times: Tue–Sun, 10am–6pm**
* **Admission charge.**
* **www.muziejusrokiskyje.lt**

This manor house has preserved the environment of the Counts Tyzenhauz. Just like in their times, concerts of chamber music, meetings and other events are held in the house. The manor house even displays authentic clothes of the Counts, including dresses by the famous **Coco Chanel**.

The palace was built at the beginning of the 19th century at the request of Count Ignacy Tyzenhauz (Lith. Ignotas Tyzenhau-

Rokiškis Manor House

zas). In addition to the manor house, a majestic **park** with huge **ponds** was also established. The world famous ornithologist Konstantinas Tyzanhauzas, who inherited the manor house, established a laboratory of natural sciences in the park.

Now the complex houses The **Rokiškis Regional Museum**. Its collection consists of more than 77 thousand exhibits. Among them are archaeological □ndings, ancient books, documents and printings, collections of coins, pieces of both □ne and applied arts, and the archival data of the manor house. It is worth paying a visit to the manor house if only because of the unprecedented Museum of Christmas Cribs and the unique **carvings by Lionginas Šepka**. He is the most prominent woodcarving master in Lithuania in his works mainly feature a religious theme. The tradition woodcarving is on the UNESCO World Heritage List for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Now **go to Biržai**. The drive is 65 kilometres. You will explore another magni□cent castle in the town.

41. Biržai Castle

* Radvilos St 3, Biržai
* Tel. +370 450 33 390; +370 450 31 883
* **Opening times: winter: Wed–Sat – 9am–5.30pm, Sun – 9am–4.30pm, summer: Wed–Sat – 10am–6.30pm, Sun– 10am–5.30pm.**
* **Admission charge.** * **www.birzai.lt**

The Castle marks the two **most important wars** in the history of Lithuania: the 17th-century war with Sweden and the 18th-century Great Northern War. The construction of the castle began in 1586 at the request of hetman Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł "The Thunderbolt" (Lith. Mykalojus Kristupas Radvila Perkūnas).

Among the remains that have survived to this day, are the defensive system of mounds and water ditches. The rest of the

castle was rebuilt in the late 20th century. It now houses the Museum of Biržai Region "Sėla". Among the exhibits on display are the **archaeological findings** of the Castle and the Old Town, numerous valuable writings from the 16th–19th centuries, the documentation and printings of the Lithuanian Reformed Church, including the **Bible of Radvilos** published in 1563, publications of Biržai press house, etc.

Don't forget to visit the unique permanent exhibition "Senoji aludarystė" (Ancient Beer Brewing) and take part in the educational programme for adults only "Žaldoko alus" (Žaldokas' beer). You will get acquainted with the ancient devices and tools of beer brewing, experience the hospitality of aukštaičiai (literary, highlanders) and will learn a couple of drinking-songs. But be careful as the beer of the region is **famous for its strength**! Drink driving is forbidden in Lithuania, you should therefore take care of transportation to get to Pakruojis, which is located 67 kilometres from Biržai. The site that you are targeting in Pakruojis is an impressive manor house.

But if the strong beer has made you dizzy, **take a walk** on the **525-metre long bridge** – one of the longest bridges in Lithuania. Across the lake it leads to the splendid Astravas manor house of the Counts Tiškevičiai.

42. Pakruojis Manor House

* Pakruojo vlg., Pakruojis district.
* Tel. +370 682 41 155, +370 421 61 584
* **Opening times: daily, 11am–10pm**
* **Free of charge.** * **www.pakruojo-dvaras.lt.**

The house of the Baron von Ropp family is situated just 2 kilometres from Pakruojis. The complex of the Manor House is featured in the **Book of Lithuanian Records** as the largest protected manor house. It was

Pakruojis Manor House

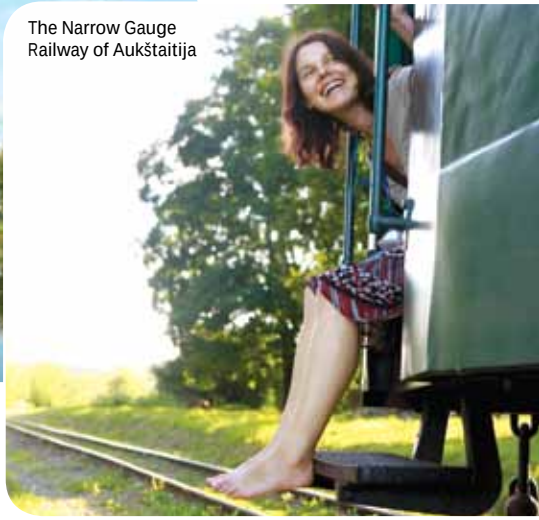
built between 1817 and 1840. The complex is surrounded by a huge English-style park. There are numerous barn houses near the manor house, as well as an **arch bridge**, which has become the symbol of Pakruojis. There is a dam on the River Kruoja and a water mill too.

The landmark of the impressive complex is the ornate two-storey **palace**. A rich array of materials was used to decorate the interior, starting with hunting trophies and ending with crystal chandeliers.

In addition to seeing the Manor House of Pakruojis, you can also stay in the house and have a meal at the 19th century inn. At weekends and holidays the miller of the manor house organises entertainment events, treating visitors to the dishes from the heritage of the Northern Lithuania's gastronomy and invites you to taste the local beer. You will also meet the legendary **dog Alšis**. It joined a group of Lithuanian

Important to see:

- *The Palace;*
- *The Park;*
- *The Wind and Water Mills;*
- *The Arch Bridge.*



The Narrow Gauge Railway of Aukštaitija

tourists in Belorussia, who were riding 2,000 kilometres to the Black Sea to commemorate and "simulate" the crusade of Vytautas, the Lithuanian Duke. The second storey of the inn houses The Museum of Tadas Blinda, a Lithuanian folk hero who fought the rich nobles.

If the beer has not made you too drunk, take the unique opportunity to enjoy a ride on the narrow gauge railway. For that you will need to reach Panevėžys, which is 50 kilometres away.

43. The Narrow Gauge Railway of Aukštaitija

* Vilties St 2, Anykščiai * Telephone for bookings. +370 455 77 127, +370 686 49 219, Telephone numbers to inquire about regular journey times +370 381 54 597, +370 620 18 243 * **Opening times: Tue–Fri, 8am–4.30pm.**
* **Admission charge.** * **www.siaurukas.eu**

The 75-cm wide railway has been operating in Lithuania for more than **a hundred years**. This narrow gauge railway was very important both during World War I and in the interwar period. In Soviet times, up to 24 trains per day would run on this line.

After the restoration of the independence of Lithuania, the narrow gauge railway became part of "Lietuvos geležinkeliai" (Lithuanian Railway). Now it only admits tourists and takes them on a 68.4 km ride along the Panevėžys-Anykščiai-Rubikiai line. You can choose a regular ride or even book an entertaining **theatricalised excursion** featuring some well-known characters. Every year, on the third Thursday in November, when the world celebrates Beaujolais Day, the narrow gauge railway takes visitors to taste young wine at the Troškūnai Monastery.

You can also book **combined trips**, i.e. you cover part of the route by the narrow gauge railway, and the other part by bike. Having left Panevėžys, the train stops at the station of Bajoriškės. From there you can ride a bike to the Manor House of Raguvėlė, situated 7 kilometres away. You can return to Panevėžys using the narrow gauge railway.

Having had a good time and **pleased the stomach**, you may wish to **have a rest** in a peaceful and picturesque town of **Anykščiai**, located on the bank of the River Šventoji.

44. A. Baranauskas' Granary and The Memorial Museum of A. Vienuolis

* A. Vienuolio St 4, Anykščiai
* Tel. +370 381 58 015, +370 381 52 922, +370 381 52 912
* **Opening times: Jul–Aug, 9am–6pm, Sep–Jun, 8am–5pm * Admission charge.**
* **www.baranauskas.lt**

A. Baranauskas' Granary

In 1839, when one of the greatest Lithuanian poets Antanas Baranauskas was four years old, his father purchased some land and the family moved to the village of Ažupiečiai. They brought with them granary from their farmstead. It was here that in during the summers of 1858–1859 the poet **wrote** his most prominent **poem** "Anykščių šilelis" (Forest of Anykščiai).

In 1921 the land was left in a will to Antanas Žukauskas-Vienuolis, a famous Lithuanian classical writer. He built a house and lived in the area until his death. In his free time Vienuolis collected material and started establishing the museum dedicated to his famous relative. After his death the well-preserved house was turned into the memorial museum of A. Vienuolis. In the museum you will nd a rich collection of photographs telling of his journeys, meetings, hobbies, and relatives.

If you are over seeing both museums, there is another unique museum **worth paying a visit to 7 kilometres away near** Anykščiai.

45. Museum of the Horse

* Niūronys vlg, Anykščiai dstr.
* Tel. +370 381 51 722, +370 623 70 629
* **Opening times: May–Aug – 9am–6pm, Sep–Apr – 8am–5pm. * Admission charge.**
* **www.arkliomuziejus.lt**

Museums displaying **live exhibits** are

Museum of the Horse

not so numerous in Europe. This museum includes some enormous exhibits.

Horses have been kept in Niūronys since 1980. They are taken care of by the students of the Anykščiai School of Agriculture. Visitors are allowed to try horseback riding within the area of the museum. If you don't feel like riding a horse yourself, get into a cart (local dialect bričkelė or lineika) and **take a 12-kilometre ride** in the picturesque surroundings along the River Šventoji.

The unique Museum of the Horse in Lithuania was established by the agriculture professor Petras Vasinauskas (1906–1995). You can learn practically everything about horses here, from the roots of their existence to the structure of their bodies. Do you know how to determine the age of a horse? By looking at its teeth! The guide at the museum will kindly tell you this and other interesting facts.

A horse riding competition and a traditional festival "Bėk bėk, žirgeli!" is held annually by the museum in June. Aside from this event, there are plenty of other activities to engage in: **learn to bake bread** in an authentic house typical of the Aukštaitija region, try making dipped candles or decorating eggs. Additionally, the owners of the house always treat visitors to rural delicacies, including bread, honey, cheese, and lašiniai (slabs of smoked pork underskin fat).

Now head in the direction of Utena. 28 kilometres away, you will **see an arrow** pointing the way to the Museum of Ethnocosmology. The distance from Niūronys to the museum is 72 kilometres.

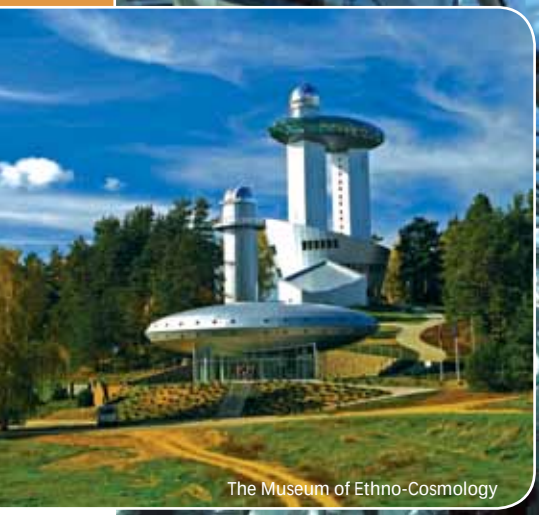
46. The Museum of Ethno-Cosmology

* Kulionys vlg., Molėtai dstr.
* Tel. +370 383 45 424 * **Opening times: 24/7, winter: Mon–Sat; summer: Tue–Sat.**
* **Admission charge, only booking in advance.**
* **www.cosmos.lt**

You will not find anything else of this kind elsewhere in the world. This unique museum is devoted to exploring **man's relation to the cosmic world**. This is where the idea of ethno-cosmology came into being. Many visitors have been interested and inquired about the nature of human existence in such a vast universe and its meaning. Now one can get answers to such questions in this impressive museum, the establishment of which required an investment of 22 million Litas. The museum holds one of the largest telescopes for public use in Europe. Its main mirror is 80 cm in diameter.

Along with observing the stars you can also watch the Sun. For this purpose speci□c **telescopes with solar filters** can be used. Excursions are held both during the **day** and at **night**. Certainly, good weather is of key importance.

This is the **end of your route in Aukštaitija**. 76 kilometres remain in order to return to Vilnius.



The Museum of Ethno-Cosmology

The Museum of Ethno-Cosmology

The route of legends and heroes

The Mound of Birštonas, or the Hill of Vytautas

Southern Lithuania – Dzūkija and Suvalkija

In no other place but Dzūkija will you hear as many legends and stories about the heroic achievements throughout the history of Lithuania. All the stories and legends are worth hearing: indeed the valiant men from this region were always the first to defend their land from enemies. The best place to hear the legends is at the tops of the stunning **mounds**. While wandering in the forests, don't forget to visit a **unique village**, where people preserve the ancient lifestyle and do not care for 21st-century advancements. And don't forget to take a basket for **mushrooms** – the area boasts plenty of boletuses.

Driving from Vilnius on the Marijampolė road, a **sign** 90 kilometres away **will invite** you to Birštonas – one of the most beautiful resort towns in Lithuania. A stay in the town is particularly lovely in autumn, with peaceful pleasant walks listening to the sounds of maple leaves under your feet. At the outskirts of the town you can exercise by climbing another high mound, locally known as The Hill of Vytautas.

47. The Mound of Birštonas, or the Hill of Vytautas

* Birštonas * Tel. + 370 319 65 740
*** Opening times: daily. * www.visitbirstonas.lt**

The Hill of Vytautas has splendid views of the River Nemunas, its slope, and the surrounding forests as it is one of the highest mounds in Lithuania reaching 40 metres in height.

At the end of the 18th century, the area contained a **wooden castle** as part of the defensive system of the Duchy of Trakai and one of the hunting mansions of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas. Surrounded by deep trenches and ravines, swampy wetlands, a mound, and lower fortifications, the castle endured numerous attacks by the Teutonic Order but was never captured. Unfortunately, today the story is part of the heroic history of Lithuania.

Leaving Birštonas go via Alytus to Merkinė. Having covered 65 kilometres you will be **charmed by** the captivating surroundings.

48. The Mound of Merkinė

* Merkinė, Varėna dstr.
* **www.dzukijosparkas.lt, www musupaveldas.lt**

At the con□uence of the Rivers Merkys and Nemunas sits a large mound. It is surrounded by the valleys of the Nemunas and Stangė Rivers, whereas its northern side is separated from the further highlands by a deep hollow. There used to be a castle on the top of the mound which in the 14th–15th century, alongside Vilnius and Kaunas, made up **the main defensive system of the country**. Merkinė was the key strategic site

The Mound of Merkinė

by the Nemunas River in the battles against the Livonian Order. Unfortunately, in 1391 the castle was occupied by the Teutonic order.

After taking in the breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside, go to Zervynos passing through Varėna, also known as the "capital of mushrooms". Having **driven 45 kilometres**, you will have the experience of travelling back in time by □nding a village that looks exactly the same as Lithuanian villages did 200 years ago.

49. The Village of Zervynos

* Zervynos vlg., Varėna dstr.
* Tel. +370 310 57 245
* **www.dzukijosparkas.lt**

The village containing 48 homesteads is a **unique forest settlement** that has preserved its architectural character of the 18th–19th centuries. The local people retained the unique buildings as well as their

traditions and customs: on All Souls' Day they light □res in the cemetery. The village has not been a□ected by land reforms and has preserved its original layout, which is acknowledged as the most valuable aspect of the site. The farm houses are aligned to the street, running in a narrow strip between the slopes and the valley of the Ūla River. All the houses in Zervynos are **wooden**. There are □ve **crosses** built in the settlement. In addition, the **Oak** of Zervynos and the pine trees with hollows for bees have been declared natural monuments.

Enjoy a walk on the sandy paths of Zervynos, wade in the waters of the Ūla River, pick mushrooms and then set o□ to Druskininkai passing the village of Marcinkonys. **Don't forget** to stop on your

way to **visit** Grūtas Park. The time-travelling continues – this time it takes you 50 years back. The distance from Zervynos to Grūtas is 45 kilometres.

50. Grūtas Park

* Grūtas, Druskininkai * Tel. +370 313 55 511, +370 682 42 320 * **Opening times: daily, since 9am to twilight. * Admission charge.**
* **www.grutoparkas.lt**

In the swampy forest of Dzūkija, close to Druskininkai, an area of 20 hectares houses **86 statues of Soviet-era figures**; the sculptures were taken down from the squares of Lithuanian cities. You will see Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Vincas Kapsukas, an important Lithuanian Soviet □gure, and many other familiar historical □gures. The park displays watchtowers and the fragments of prison camps, which are exactly the same as those used in Siberia where 130 thousand Lithuanians were exiled. There is a café in which you can try some **Soviet meals**. They are served in Soviet-era dishes, which will

Grūtas Park

de□nitely surprise you. For those who do not fancy Soviet food, the café o□ers different dishes containing mushrooms – the renowned goodies of the Dzūkija region. The club-reading room contains a restored election **campaign centre**. It is an example of a typical Soviet cultural institution of the interwar period in that its interior contains pictures of Stalin and Lenin, communist

Grūtas Park

slogans, and literature. These interior attributes were mandatory in all the institutions of the time. The permanent exhibition ends with a hall similar to those used in the Soviet era to show movies, to hold meetings or house a **library** of Soviet books.

Grutas Park also contains a small **zoo** with both local and exotic birds, and a few deer and boars.

After the frightening experience of witnessing Soviet realia, go to relax in the remarkable resort town Druskininkai, which is just 4 kilometers away. **Plunge into a world of** music and painting, and relax in the rustling of the leaves. Alongside national acclaim, the resort is now known internationally too. Its treatment and SPA centres, excellent hotels and top quality services are much loved by tourists of neighbouring countries.

Apart from the captivating natural surroundings, Druskininkai has gained fame because of its globally acknowledged artists. It is the hometown of such prominent □gures as the modernist sculptor Jacquess Lipchitz and the artist and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis.

51. The Memorial Museum of M. K. Čiurlionis

* M. K. Čiurlionio St 35, Druskininkai
* Tel. +370 313 52 755 * **Opening times: Tue–Sun (11am–5pm). * Admission charge.**
* **www.muziejai.mch.mii.lt, www.druskininkai.lt**

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911) was the □rst composer and artist who searched for the Lithuanian style and who managed to penetrate into and re□ect the depths of the nation's spirit. He was the man who combined **music** with **painting**, a symbolist who pioneered in revealing the charm of **abstract art**.

The Museum was established in 1963 in his parents' home, where the artist lived from 1896–1910. In the **two houses** the authentic interior and domestic items have been restored. The two other buildings house a permanent exhibition displaying his creative output, biography, and family history. If you visit the site in summer, don't miss the chance to attend one of the concerts of "Druskininkų vasara su M. K. Čiurlioniu" (Druskininkai Summer with M.K. Čiurlionis). In June the place is crowded with young people who take

The Memorial Museum of M. K. Čiurlionis

part in the study week organised by the publishing house “Baltos lankos”. Finally, in August the city holds the festival “Muzika be sienų” (Music without Borders).

When walking in the city, stop by the monument of M.K. Čiurlionis created by the sculptor Vladas Vildžiūnas, for which the artist was awarded the national prize. Now let’s go further. Another site to capture the eye as well as the heart is only 12 kilometres away.

52. Liškiava

* Varėna dstr.
* Tel. +370 616 75 517, +370 614 67 478
* **Opening times: Tue–Sun, 10am–12pm. and 2pm–4pm. * www.liskiava.lt**

Jurgis Kosyla, who lived with his wife Kristina in Liškiava 314 years ago, left all their property in his will to **Dominican monks** on condition that having arrived from Seinai, they would build a church of the Holy Trinity and a monastery and that they would start living there. The Dominicans ful□lled the wish of the founder and as a result the village now houses a □ne **complex of the Late Baroque period**. The buildings are decorated with frescoes created by Italian craftsmen, 7 altarpieces, authentic benches with Dominican intarsias, and 18-19th-century paintings. The complex has been restored, and visitors can stay overnight and participate in the various events that are organised here.

Important to see:

- *The Church basement with the bodies of monks;*
- *The permanent exhibition of the liturgical heritage;*
- *The Village;*
- *The Mound.*

Church of Liškiava

By the way, the village contains four monuments of archaeology: a mound, the Church Hill, the stone containing a footprint of an ox and the so-called “Stone of Witches”, and the ruins of the 14 – 15th-century castle tower. Don’t forget to see them all. A popular attraction in summer is a journey by boat from Druskininkai.

Returning from Liškiava **it is recommended to travel via** Leipalingis to reach Kapčiamiestis. This makes 35 kilometres in total. You are going to hear an unbelievable and shocking story.

53. The Museum of Emilijos Pliaterytė

* Taikos St 11, Kapčiamiestis, Lazdijai dstr.
* Tel. +370 612 67 491 * **Opening times: Tue–Thu – 9am–5pm; Fri–Sat – 9am–4pm.**
* **Admission charge.** * **www.lazdijumuziejus.lt**

The Lithuanian Jeanne d'Arc – this is the name often used by historians to refer to the Countess Emilija Pliaterytė, who **led the uprising** against Tsarist Russia in 1831. Although the uprising was quickly suppressed and Emilija died of exhaustion, Lithuanians still mention her name with great dignity. The heroine is buried in the cemetery of Kapčiamiestis, which contains a monument dedicated to her. Much more information about the heroine is provided in the museum.

This is the last attraction of the route in the hilly lands of Dzūkija. You can go back to Vilnius: if you drive via Birštonas, the total trip is 144 kilometres. But it is worth exploring another region – Suvalkija, the land, which raised the most glorious and valiant Lithuanian men. Suvalkija is renowned for its **delicious kvass** (*Lith. gira*) and **bread**, products made of rye. This is due to the fact that the region has the most fertile soil in Lithuania. The lands have also raised numerous strong men. Travelling in this region will give you an opportunity to learn about them at the same time as enjoying excellent local foods.

The Monument of Emilija Pliaterytė

Go from Kapčiamiestis **further westwards**, passing Lazdijai and Marijampolė. You can start exploring the area by visiting the native town of one of the key Lithuanian □gures. You will reach it in 82 kilometres.

54. Jonas Basanavičius' House in Ožkabaliai

* Ožkabalių vlg., Vilkaviškis district.
* Tel. +370 342 69 365 * **Open: May–Sept, Tue–Sat – 10am–6pm, Sun – 10am–3pm; Oct–Apr, Tue–Sat (10am–5pm).**
* **Admission fee.** * **www.lnm.lt**

Jonas Basanavičius was a Signatory of the Act of Independence. He was born in 1851. People have given him the name of the **Patriarch of the Nation**. The house that used to be his parents residence contains a memorial composition while the box room includes an exposition dedicated to the inheritor of the homestead, the collector of fairy tales and songs, brother of Jonas Basanavičius – Vincas Basanavičius. The other room houses an **ethnographic exposition** of the Suvalkija region.

In 1988, when Lithuanian made a decision free from the Soviet occupation,

an oak tree wood in the area near the farmstead of J. Basanavičius was planted as a symbol of **national revival**. Now the wood occupies 39.4 hectares and contains 8,400 oaks.

Visitors can go for a walk in the oak wood, ride in a horse-drawn carriage, ride a pony or try the local herb tea. Two important events are held in the site: on the last Saturday in April is the meeting of the **Signatories of the Act of Independence**; the 23rd of June is the well-known **Midsummer Day** (Feast of Saint John).

To reach another museum dedicated to a great man, drive 30 kilometres **passing Vikaviškis**.

55. V. Kudirkos klėtelė-muziejus

* Paežeriai vlg., Vilkaviškis dstr.
* Tel. +370 638 95 246, +370 342 46 268
* **Opening times: Tue–Thu – 11am–5pm, Fri – 11am–15.45pm, Sat – 10am–6pm.**
* **Admission fee. * www.vkmuziejus.lt**

Vincas Kudirka (1858–1899), who was a physician, is known by Lithuanians as The Herald of Independence. He was the leader of the National Movement, editor of the newspaper "Varpas", a writer, publicist, and translator. But most importantly, he is the **author of** "Tautiška giesmė" (The National Song), which is the **official National Anthem of Lithuania**.

In 1965, the teacher Stasys Ankevičius established a public museum in the farmhouse of Dr Vincas Kudirka. It is now owned by the Museum of the Vilkaviškis Region and has an impressive permanent exhibition on display.

Carry on further to the River Nemunas and in 36 kilometres you will come to **another spectacular site**.

56. Zypliai Manor House

* Tubeliai vlg., Šakiai r. * Tel. +370 345 44 123
* **Opening times: summer, daily (9am–5pm), winter, Mon–Fri (9 am–5pm.).**
* **Free of charge. * www.zypliudvaras.lt**

It is one of the last and most beautiful manor houses built in Lithuania. The modest **Classicist-style** building was constructed by Lord Janas Bartkovskis in the mid 19th century. Now the premises, which used to be a horse stable, house the gallery of the manor house, one of the barns is now the village forge, and another has been turned into a pottery workshop. The manor house holds numerous events annually including open air workshops, Catholic youth camps, and some events of the Pažaislis music festival also take place here.

By the manor house lies **one of the largest parks** in Lithuania. Its landmark is the natural monument – the **Oak** of Zypliai, which is about 360 years old. It is 630 cm in circumference and 34 metres in height.

After a tasty meal and some rest, continue the trip by either returning to Vilnius or heading west for a stay by the Baltic Sea. But before that you have to **cross the Nemunas River**.

Zypliai Manor House Homestead

The land of peace and faith

The Hill of Crosses

Samogitia (Lith. Žemaitija)

If you miss peace, visiting the hilly land of Samogitia is a perfect choice. You will have the opportunity to rest quietly in the shades provided by the numerous churches and **monasteries**, marvel at the skill of the local craftsmen and will be surprised to witness the people's strength of faith. Or maybe you will decide to take the **pilgrim** route?

It is worth starting your acquaintance with the devout region of Samogitia a bit earlier: the outskirts of Aukštaitija have a special site where the wind gently blows through thousands of crosses.

57. The Hill of Crosses

* Jurgaičiai vlg., Šiauliai dstr.
* Tel. +370 413 70 860 * **Opening times: daily; The Chapel of the monastery is open daily, 8am–9pm. * Free of charge.**
* **www.kryziukalnas.lt**

Around 12 kilometres north of Šiauliai, in the fields, there is a small hill with more than **200,000 crosses**. They have all been brought here by Lithuanian people. The Lithuanian tradition of cross-crafting making has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

People started building crosses here in the 19th century. According to local people, the first crosses were built to pray for health. Other stories say that people started building crosses to commemorate those who died in the uprising of 1863. It was a sign of opposition to Tsarist rule, which having subdued the rebels punished everyone whose farmsteads contained crosses and tore them down. Therefore religious people decided to build crosses on the hill and did so at night time so that no one would spot them.

When Lithuania regained its independence, the Hill of Crosses started attracting crowds of pilgrims from all over the world. People started building and bringing crosses to the lower part of the hill. On 7 September 1993, Pope John Paul II visited the Hill of Crosses and celebrated Holy Mass. In 2000 a **Franciscan Monastery** was built near the Hill.

Now **your route crosses** Šiauliai. Stop there to see some sites. You can start with the visit to the Palace of Chaim Frenkel (also known as Chaim Frenkel's villa).

58. The Villa of Chaim Frenkel in Šiauliai

* Vilniaus St 74, Šiauliai
* Tel. +370 415 24 389 * **Opening times: Tue–Fri – 10am–6pm, Sat–Sun – 11am–5pm**
* **Admission charge.** * **www.siauliumuziejus.lt**

The Villa of Chaim Frenkel in Šiauliai

Chaim Frenkel was a famous manufacturer in Lithuania at the end of the 19th / early 20th century. He started a **leather factory** that was famous throughout the Russian Empire. In addition to this successful business he was also known for the charity he provided to the city and to the Jewish community.

Ch. Frenkel lived with his family in a Modernist-style mansion built in 1908. In the period between 1920 and 1940 the building housed a private Jewish gymnasium. During World War II the building served as a German military hospital, and later as a Soviet military hospital. In 1994 the building was granted to the Šiauliai Museum "Aušra". It now displays two permanent exhibitions. One of them is dedicated to Jewish cultural heritage and the Frenkel family, while the other one tells the story of the estate buildings in the province and the town in the 19th–20th centuries. You can see the stylised reproductions of an estate, a pre-war street and shop, and even watch a movie in the newly established retro cinema hall "Kapitol".

75 km separate you from Šiauliai and another important Samogitian destination – Telšiai. Come and visit one of the most signi□cant religious sites.

59. The Cathedral of Saint Anthony of Padua in Telšiai

* Katedros St 2, Telšiai * Tel. +370 444 60 605
* **Opening times: daily, 9am–6pm.**
* **www.telsiaitic.lt, http://telsiai.lcn.lt**

The landmark of the Telšiai panorama is the Cathedral of St Anthony of Padua. It was built by **Bernardine** monks. A popular monkhood was established in Telšiai in the early 17th century, having been invited by Povilas Sapiega, the owner of Telšiai lands, whose portrait is still kept in the church.

In 1624 the monks started building their □rst provisional wooden church and the brick buildings of the monastery. However after □res in the mid 18th century, they decided to build a stone church. The new church acquired a double name – Loreto Mother of God and St Anthony of Padua.

After the encounter with numerous churches, take a short rest. A 30 kilometre ride away is Plunge.

The Cathedral of Saint Anthony of Padua

60. Plungė Manor House

* Parko St 1, Plungė * Tel. +370 448 52 492
* **Opening times: Wed–Sun, 10am–5pm.**
* **Admission fee. * www.oginski.lt**

Though the Manor House is mentioned in written sources at the end of the 16th century (as well as Plungė), it was only in the 19th century that it became famous. At that time the site already had numerous buildings of Neo-Renaissance and Neo-Gothic style built according to the designs of Carl Lorenz. The buildings constructed in the style of Italian architecture determine the originality of the complex, while the vast 60-hectare **park** created in a variety of styles adds to its exclusiveness. The park has been established in the picturesque surroundings of the valley of the River Babrungas and contains two strings of ponds and an array of old trees still bearing pagan legends.

The Manor House now contains the **Museum of Samogitian Art**, which contains impressive collections of pictorial and graphic works by Samogitians who live abroad. Plungė Palace holds traditional exhibitions of creative works by Samogitians spread all over the world and in autumn hosts the classical music festival of Mylokas Oginskis.

As we have started discussing manor houses, **it is worth driving** 69 kilometres to see another located in Švėkšna.

61. Švėkšna manor House and the Church of St James the Apostle

Park: * Parko St 1, Švėkšna, Šilutė dstr.
* Free of charge. Church: * Bažnyčios St 1, Švėkšna, Šilutė dstr.
* Tel. +370 441 56 546
* **Opening times: before the service, Mon–Sat – 6pm, Sun – 9.30am and 12pm.**
* **Free of charge.**
* **www.samogit.lt, www.heritage.lt**

Plungė Manor House

Although the Manor House of Švėkšna has been mentioned since the mid 15th century, it is fair to say that it was actually created by the Counts Pliateriai (German Plater). At the end of the 19th century Count Aleksandras Pliateris established an **English-style park** and built a Neo-Renaissance style palace with a tower, popularly known as the villa "Genovaitė". After Lithuania regained independence, the manor house was given back to its inheritor Felicija Laimė Broel-Pliaterienė who kindly allows visitors into the park.

Švėkšna Manor House

The lower parterres are decorated with statues and vases, and there is even a sundial. There is a stream and several ponds in the park. A unique bridge joins the park to the Noe-Gothic **Church of Švėkšna**.

The church also possesses a 20th-century organ, Stations of the Cross, 10 altars, 4 confessionals, and a pulpit.

Look out over the lands of Samogitia from its highest hill. The journey to this place is 71 kilometres.

62. Medvėgalis Mound

* Buciškė, Laukuvos eld., Šilalė dstr. mun.
* Tel. +370 444 47 415
* **www.varniuparkas.lt, * www.silale.lt**

There are **two important summits** in Medvėgalis: one of them marks the highest point in Samogitia (234 m), whereas the second is a mound. Supposedly, Medvėgalis opens up the view to **14 church towers** and the Hill of Šatrija, which is 30 kilometres away. Ruins found at the foot of the mound and dating back to 1st millennium AD indicate the existence of a settlement at that time. Historical sources mention the wooden castle of Medvėgalis starting from the 14th century. This can be ascribed to the fact that it was regularly attacked by the Teutonic order: at least 20 crusades to Medvėgalis are recorded to have taken place. In 1329 enemies burned the castle and the defenders of Medvėgalis had

Medvėgalis Mound

to accept Christianity. However, after the crusaders had left, they abandoned Christianity and started **worshiping pagan deities** again.

Every year, in August a Festival of Arts is held in Medvėgalis. You can listen to both classical and contemporary Lithuanian composers' music.

Isn't it **time to come back** to religion? 71 kilometres away you will come to a religious centre, which is one of the most impressive Baroque monuments in Eastern Europe.

63. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Monastery in Tytuvėnai

* Piliakalnio St 1, Tytuvėnai, Kelmė dstr.
* Tel. +370 427 56 132 * **Free of charge.**
* **Opening times: Mon–Fri – 8am–12pm and 1pm–5pm, Sat, Sun or upon agreement in advance. * www.tytuvenubaznycia.lt**

Here you will feel like being in Italy. The **Bernardine** Monastery was built according to the best examples of Italian architecture. It is considered to be one of the most beautiful monuments of Late Renaissance and Baroque in North-eastern Europe.

Bernardines were invited to Tytuvėnai in 1614 by Andrius Valavičius, the standard-bearer and judge of Samogitian land court. At the end of the 17th century an organ was built in the church using donated funds. In fact, it is the oldest authentic **organ** still in use in Samogitia.

In 1771–1780 the **arcade galleries** were built in front of the church, in which the Stations of the Cross have been installed.

Every summer the monastery holds prestigious classical music festivals. **In September** the celebration of Šilinės (nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary) attracts crowds of religious people who gather for the feast: pilgrimage trips to Šiluva (the so-called Lourdes of Lithuania) are arran-

The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Monastery in Tytuvėnai

ged. If you **have the strength** to walk 8 kilometres on foot – join the pilgrims.

64. The Basilica of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Chapel in Šiluva

* M. Jurgaičio St 2, Šiluva, Raseiniai dstr.
* Tel. +370 428 79 200 * **Opening times: May–Oct, 8am–20pm., Nov–Apr, 8am–3pm.**
* **Free of charge.** * **www.siluva.lt**

Perhaps we would know very little about this village if it hadn't been for the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary to boys shepherding in the area in 1608. It was the **first apparition of Mary** in Europe and one of □ve acknowledged by the Church. At the beginning of the 20th century a **Chapel** was built on the site of the Marian apparition. The majestic 40 metre high building was designed by the gifted architect Antanas Vivulskis. The altar within the Apparition Chapel is constructed on the same rock where the apparition supposedly took place.

The central altar in the Basilica contains the **image** of the Blessed Virgin Mary portraying the □gures of the Mother Mary and the Child Jesus. It is believed to have miraculous powers.

The Chapel of the Church contains a **sculpture** of the Mother of God created in England in the 18th century. It also stores the **old cross** (1663) painted on wooden boards, which was shot during the □ghts between Calvinists and Catholics.

For almost 500 years in September Šiluva has held the Indulgenced **Feast** of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Huge crowds of **pilgrims** □ock to this site from all over Europe. They have their own centre in Šiluva. On 7 September 1993 the site was visited by Pope John Paul II.

The site of Šiluva brings the route in the pious land of Samogitia to its end. You can either return to Šiauliai or **turn to the highway** between Vilnius and Klaipėda.

The Basilica of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Chapel in Šiluva

The route of the amber land

The Lithuanian Seaside

The waves of the Baltic Sea cast a beautiful product on the beach– amber. Legend has it that the pieces of amber are the ruins of Queen Jūratė's palace. While here you will definitely hear the whole legend telling of her unhappy love story. If you watch attentively you might find the remnants of the palace yourself. Along with amber, the Baltic Seaside attracts visitors because of its rich history, splendid parks, and impressive natural surroundings. Start your journey by visiting The Amber Museum in Palanga, where nature is in union with history and architecture.

65. Palanga Amber Museum

* Vytauto St 17, Palanga * Tel. +370 460 51 319
* **Opening times: Sep–May, Tue–Sat – 11am–5pm, Sun – 11am–4pm; Jun–Aug, Tue–Sat – 10am–8pm, Sun – 10am–7pm.**
* **Admission fee. * www.pgm.lt**

The palace built in Neo-Classicist style is the **symbol** of Palanga. It is situated in the wood of the pagan priestess Birutė, which was considered by locals to be a sacred place, close to the Baltic Sea. The Counts Tiškevičiai who had owned several buildings in Palanga, established their mansion-house here in 1897. They were the initiators of the idea to make Palanga an impressive resort town.

To build the mansion two famous architects of the time were hired. The palace was designed by the German architect Franz Heinrich Schwechten, while the park is the creation of the famous landscape designer **Édouard François André**, the author of numerous impressive parks. Now the park is the100-hectare botanical garden of Palanga. The scenic park offers a variety of views and moods, and the paths in the park are surrounded by a rich array of plants, a variety of spaces, **ponds**, and **sculptures**.

Palanga Amber Museum

Count Feliksas Tiškevičius had a rich collection of amber: 153 artefacts dating back to the Neolithic and the Bronze Age, which he had collected in 1905–1907 in the swamps located in the coastal area. Now the collection is on display in the Amber Museum established in 1963 in the estate.

The Fireplace Hall hosts meetings with artists, while during summer months the museum's terrace becomes home to the "**Nakties serenados**" (night serenades) concerts much-loved by audiences. Since 1971 the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra has invited people to a unique concert cycle under the sky. The classical music played in the open air attracts not only holidaymakers but also famous performers. Numerous prominent artists from Lithuania and abroad have performed in the concerts of "Nakties serenados", to mention a few: violinists Gidon Kremer, Oleg Kagan, Tatjana Grindenko and Vilhelmas Čepinskis, cellists Natalia Gutman, Karina Georgian, Mark Drobinsky, Vytautas Sondeckis and clarinettist Eddy Vanoosthuyse.

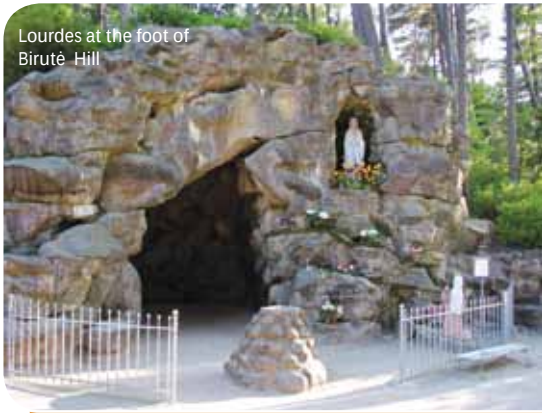
After visiting the estate and the botanical garden, **go to the top** of Birutė Hill, which is closer to the seashore, and listen to a fascinating love story.

66. Birutė Hill

* Vytauto St 15, Palanga
* Tel. +370 460 49 270, +370 460 49 271
* **Opening times: daily.** * **Free of charge.**
* **www.pgm.lt**

At the edge of the park lies a hill which has been known as the Hill of Birutė since ancient times. The following is the legend. When Lithuanians were **pagan**, it was common for decent girls to devote their lives to **serving gods**. They would guard the eternal □re day and night, perform merciful deeds, and lead virtuous lives. Such girls were called **vaidilutės** (pagan priestesses). One of them was Birutė. However, the beauty of the young girl captivated Kęstutis, the Grand Duke of Lithuania and as a result he married the priestess. Birutė bore and gave birth to Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. After her death Birutė was buried on the Hill, where the **eternal fire** to the gods used to burn. Visitors are reminded of this story by a **sculpture** built in 1965 in the symbolic burial place of Birutė.

Actually, in pagan times the Hill of Birutė housed a paleo-astronomical observatory and a pagan shrine of the □shermen and farmers.


Lourdes at the foot of Birutė Hill

On the base of the hill you will find **Lourdes**. It was established in 1900 by Feliksas Tiškevičius, the founder of Palanga Park. All the stones and rocks used to build it are natural. The route alongside the seacoast continues to the port, but on your way you **definitely have to stop** in Kretinga. It is located just 12 kilometres away.

Kretinga Manor House

67. Kretinga Manor House

* Vilniaus St 20, Kretinga * Tel. +370 445 77 612
* **Opening times: Jun–Sep: museum – Wed–Sun (10am–6pm); winter garden – Mon – 10am–6pm, Tue–Sun – 10am–8.30pm; Sept–May: museum – Wed–Sun (10am–5pm); winter garden – Tue–Sun – 10am–6pm, Sat – 10am–7pm. * Admission charge.**
* **www.kretingosmuziejus.lt**

The establishment of Kretinga Manor House started with a fruit tree garden planted in the late 18th century. After approximately 100 years the manor house was acquired by Count Juozapas Tiškevičius. Now the manor house is the property of the Museum of Kretinga. The Manor House is undergoing renovation but visitors are welcome to see the permanent exhibition of the history of manor houses and to visit the **winter garden** containing tropical plants and the splendid **park** of Tiškevičiai. The museum holds exhibitions of art, folk craftsmanship and floristry as well as concerts of the classical music and wind orchestras. The conservatory makes presentations of the **flower collections** obtained, while the park is a much-loved site for numerous **holidays**, such as Užgavėnės (Shrove Tuesday), Rasos (Dew Holiday), Jurginės (Day of St George), Sekminės (Pentecost). In autumn the celebration of "Medžio šventė" (Celebration of the Tree) takes place, and in spring people greet the returning birds.

After a relaxing experience – **travel to Klaipėda**. The road is only 22 kilometres. Once there, go to the Old Town located by the seashore.

68. The Old Town of Klaipėda

Klaipėda Tourist and Culture Information Centre:
* Turgaus St 7, Klaipėda
* Tel. +370 464 12 186, +370 687 52 051
* **www.klaipedainfo.lt**

The Old Town of Klaipėda preserves the spirit of ancient **German cities**, as it was built by the Teutonic Knights. It was first mentioned in written sources by the name of Memelburg in 1252. It was then that the Teutonic Knights built a castle at the mouth of the River Danė. The Old Town that we see today was built in the 17th century by joining the area of the castle and the quarter known as Friedrich Town.

The distinctive feature of Klaipėda is the numerous **Fachwerk-style buildings**. This style was particularly popular in the early 19th century. The most beautiful houses of this style are located between Didžioji Vandens Street and the Market Square.

Klaipėda Castle Museum

The Old Town of Klaipėda

You can see an impressive Fachwerk-style warehouse constructed in the 18th century.

The heart of the town is the **Theatre Square**. In 1912 a fountain was built in honour of Simon Dach, a poet and professor of Königsberg who was born in Klaipėda. The fountain is topped by the statue of a young barefoot girl – Ann from Tharau, who was a heroine in one of Dach's folk songs. Nowadays the love story is still "sung" by the bells of the Munich Town Hall. Locals call the sculpture *Taravos Anikė*.

When wandering on the streets of the Old Town, **don't forget to visit** the museum situated at the basement of Klaipėda Castle.

69. Klaipėda Castle Museum

* Pilies St 4, Klaipėda * Tel. +370 464 10 527
* **Opening times: Tue–Thu – 10am–5pm, Fri – 10am–4pm * Admission charge.**
* **www.mlimuziejus.lt**

The Castle built by the Livonian Brothers of the Sword was attacked on numerous occasions by Samogitians and underwent restoration on many occasions. The castle had impressive defensive forti□cations – casemates and drawbridges surrounded by moats. The castle now houses a museum. A permanent exhibition is installed in the **potern** (a vaulted access passage) and the **casemates** of Prince Friedrich located underground, which used to serve as the artillery warehouse. By visiting it you will become acquainted with the development of the Klaipėda castle and the

Cultural events take place in Klaipėda all year round but the most important ones start on the **8th of March**. On International Women's Day locals celebration of Šiupinys (a meal, which was traditionally eaten on Shrove Tuesday in Samogitia) which is their name for the feast of Užgavėnės; **In May** Klaipėda opens the Summer season and hosts the Street Music Festival; **in June** people are invited to the International Klaipėda Jazz Festival (Pilies Festival) and "Jaunimo džiazo banga" (Youth Jazz Wave), and **in August** the city celebrates its birthday, the music festival "Muzikinis pajūris" (Music Seaside) and the most impressive event of the year – "Jūros šventė" (Sea Festival) – take place.

Events in Klaipėdoje

The Curonian Spit

city. The exhibition displays the weapons and jewellery of Curonians who lived in the surrounding region before the establishment of the Teutonic Order. Don't forget to walk the oldest **cobbled floor which dates back to the 16th century** and enjoy the stunning views of Klaipėda from the bastion of Friedrich.

Your route goes further westwards. **Take the ferry** to reach the Curonian Spit and drive 50 kilometres on the narrow road until you reach Nida.

70. Nida

* The Town of Neringa, Klaipėda county
* **www.visitneringa.com**

The peninsula that separates the Curonian Lagoon from the Baltic Sea coast is known as the Curonian Spit. It is a 98 km long, thin (at its widest part it only reaches 3.5km) **sand-dune strip** in many places covered with woods with several **fishing villages**, which now serve as resort areas. 52 kilometres of the Spit belong to Lithuania, the rest is a Russian area. This unique place is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Nida used to be a village and was established by fishermen in 1732, after their older settlements became covered with sand. Nida charms its every visitor with its unique wooden architecture and the sand cracking under the feet. It is worth paying a visit to the old cemetery as it preserves the unique wooden grave monuments called krikštas (pagan burial markers). In contrast to all Christians, the markers are at the foot of the deceased so that "on the day of the Last Judgement one would have something to grab on when getting up".

Close to Nida lie the magnificent windswept **sand dunes**, which in 1965 charmed Jean Paul Sartre, another Nobel Prize winner who was staying in the village. This is the highest dune known as the Dune of Parnidis, which contains a **sundial**. Part of it was destroyed on the 4th of December 1999 by the hurricane "Anatoly". You can reach the dune by taking the 800 m long **educational route**, on your way stopping to see numerous plants, lichens, mushrooms, insects, and birds.

While walking in Nida **don't forget to visit** the surviving 100 year old fisherman's house.

71. Fisherman's Ethnographic Homestead

* Naglių St, Nida, Neringa * Tel. +370 469 52 372
* **Opening times: Jun–Aug, daily (10am–6pm); Sep–May, Tue–Sat (10am–5pm).**
* **Admission charge.** * **www.visitneringa.com**

People lived in the original house, which was built in 1900, until the early seventies. When the family moved away, a museum containing authentic furniture and household articles was established in the house. On the basis of analogical buildings, the environment of the homestead has also regained its authentic appearance. In the yard of the house lie four authentic **fishermen's boats**, starting with a

Fisherman's Ethnographic Homestead

simple bark and ending with *kurėnas* – a traditional flat-bottomed Curonian sailing boat used for fishing.

If you love literature, **Thomas Mann's house is a must-see site**.

72. The Memorial Museum of Thomas Mann

* Skruzdynės St 17, Nida, Neringa
* Tel. +370 469 52 260 *** Opening times: Jun–15 Sep, daily (10am–6pm); 16 Sep – May, Tue–Sat (10am–5pm).**
*** Admission fee. * www.mann.lt**

"Joseph and His Brothers", essay "My Summerhouse", articles "What We Are to Expect", "Speech to the Youth", "The Blood of the Walsungs", letters to editors, publishing houses, translators, friends – all of these were produced in Nida by Thomas Mann, one of the most prominent literary figures of the early 20th century and **winner of the Nobel Prize**. He spent a few successive summers (1930–1932) on the "Uošvės" Hill (Lith. "*uošvė*" – mother-in-law) with his family in a house designed by the architect H. Reissmann.

In 1975, on the writer's 100th anniversary, the permanent exhibition was renewed by adding new exhibits brought from the German Democratic Republic. The living room, terrace, and the study have been restored to regain their authentic interior.

Since 1987 every July the **festival** of Thomas Mann has been held here and features such events as chamber concerts, meetings with writers, conferences, and seminars.

The house of Thomas Mann is **the last site** of your journey along the Baltic amber coast.

Events in Neringa

Nida holds plenty of traditional events. The main ones are as follows: The last weekend **of May** – the opening of Neringa summer season; **June and the beginning of July** – international festival "Vargonų vasara" (Organ summer); the end **of June** – international folk festival "Tek saulužė ant maračių", the festival of chamber music and ecology "Nepaklusniųjų žemė", three international festivals take place **in July**: Thomas Mann Festival, jazz festival "Nida Jazz maratonas", and the chamber music festival "Kuršių Nerija"; **August** – the Festival of Ancient Crafts, the international festival of choir of vocal music "Vox academia" and the movie festival "Baltijos banga"; **September** – the folk festival "Pūsk, vėjuži!", the international painting plenaire and seminar of Nida's photographers; the **22nd of September** – the symposium of reed sculptures and their burning (sculptures made of reed are exhibited and then burned), the highlight of the event is the burning of sculptures at night; **November** – the celebration of Neringa Town (its birthday), 1st **of January** – greeting the new year tasting the Curonian fish soup.

Tourism information centres in Lithuania

Alytus TIC
Rotušės Sq. 14A, LT-62141 Alytus
Tel. +370 315 52010
E-mail: info@alytus-tourism.lt
www.alytus-tourism.lt

Anykščiai TIC
Gegužės St. 1, LT-29106 Anykščiai
Tel. +370 381 59177
E-mail: antic@zebra.lt
www.antour.lt

Birštonas TIC
Jaunimo St. 3, LT-59206 Birštonas
Tel. +370 319 65740
E-mail: info@visitbirstonas.lt
www.visitbirstonas.lt

Biržai TIC
J. Janonio St. 2, LT-41148 Biržai
Tel. +370 450 33496
E-mail: tic@birzai.lt
www.birzai.lt

Druskininkai TBIC
Gardino St. 3, Druskininkai
Tel. +370 313 60803
E-mail: information@druskininkai.lt
www.info.druskininkai.lt

Jurbarkas TIC
Vydūno St. 19, LT-74118 Jurbarkas
Tel. +370 447 51485
E-mail: turizmas@jurbarkas.lt
www.jurbarkas.lt

Kražiai TIC
Kolegijos St. 5, Kražiai,
Kelmė District
Tel. +370 614 33660
E-mail: karziukc@gmail.com
www.kraziai.lt

Gargždai TIC
Klaipėdos St. 15, LT-96135 Gargždai
Tel. +370 464 73416
E-mail: info@klaipedadistrict.lt
www.klaipedadistrict.lt

Joniškis TBIC
Žemaičių St. 9, Joniškis
Tel. +370 426 52388
E-mail: ausra@jvic.lt
www.jvic.lt

Ignalina TIC
Ateities St. 23, LT-30121 Ignalina
Tel. +370 386 52597
E-mail: tic@ignalina.lt
www.ignalinatic.lt

Jonava TIC
J. Basanavičiaus St. 3,
LT-55171 Jonava
Tel. +370 349 52335
E-mail: muziejus.jonava@takas.lt
www.jonturizmas.lt

Kėdainiai TIC
Didžioji St. 1, LT-57248 Kėdainiai
Tel. +370 347 60363,
E-mail: turizmas@kedainiai.lt
www.kedainiai.lt

Klaipėda CTIC
Turgaus St. 7, LT-91247 Klaipėda
Tel. +370 46 412 186
E-mail: tic@klaipedainfo.lt
www.klaipedainfo.lt

TIC "Kauno vartai"
Rotušės Sq. 29, Kaunas
Tel. +370 37 321 112
E-mail: info@kaunovartai.lt
www.kaunovartai.lt

TIC by JSC "Mūsų odisėja"
M. K. Čiurlionio St 15, Kaunas
Tel. +370 37 408 410
E-mail: info@turinfo.lt
www.musuodiseja.lt

Lazdijai TIC
Vilniaus St. 1, LT-67106 Lazdijai
Tel. +370 318 51160
E-mail: turizmas@lazdijai.lt
www.lazdijai-turizmas.lt

Mažeikiai TBIC
Ventos St. 8A, LT-89103 Mažeikiai
Tel. +370 443 95351
E-mail: mtvic@mazeikiai.lt
www.infocentras.mazeikiai.lt

Molėtai TBIC
Inturkės St. 4, LT-33141 Molėtai
Tel. +370 383 51187
E-mail: turizmas@moletai.lt
www.infomoletai.lt

Nida CTIC "Agila"
Taikos St. 4, LT-93121 Neringa
Tel. +370 469 52345
E-mail: info@visitneringa.lt
www.visitneringa.lt

Palanga TIC
Kretingos St. 1, LT-00132 Palanga
Tel. +370 460 48811
E-mail: info@palangatic.lt
www.palangatic.lt

Panevėžys County TIC
Laisvės Sq. 11, LT-35200 Panevėžys
Tel. +370 45 508 081
E-mail: pantic@takas.lt
www.panevezystic.lt

Pasvalys TIC
P. Avižonio St. 6, LT-39149 Pasvalys
Tel. +370 451 34096
E-mail: turizmas@pasvalys.lt
www.pasvaliomuziejus.lt

Rokiškis TBIC
Tyzenhauzų St. 5, LT-42115 Rokiškis
Tel. +370 458 31512
E-mail: tic@rokiskyje.lt
www.tic.rokiskyje.lt

Skuodas TIC
Gedimino St. 1, LT-98124 Skuodas
Tel. +370 440 73935
E-mail: turizmas@skuodas.lt
www.skouds.lt

Šešupė Euroregion TIC
V. Kudirkos St. 61/1, LT-71126 Šakiai
Tel. +370 345 51262
E-mail: tourism@sesupe.lt
www.sesupe.lt

Šiauliai TIC
Vilniaus St. 213, LT-76348 Šiauliai
Tel. +370 41 523 110
E-mail: tic@siauliai.lt
http://tic.siauliai.lt

Šilutė Museum TIC
Lietuvininkų St. 4, LT-99179 Šilutė
Tel. +370 441 77785
E-mail: silute.turizmas@gmail.com
www.siluteinfo.lt

Švenčionys TIC
Laisvės Sq. 3, LT-18116 Švenčionys
Tel. +370 387 51047
E-mail: infocentras@svic.lt
www.svencionys.lt

Tauragė TIC
Vytauto St. 60, LT-72248 Tauragė
Tel. +370 446 61404
E-mail: tic@tvk.lt
www.taurage.lt

Telšių apsk. TIC
Turgaus Sq. 21, LT-87122 Telšiai
Tel. +370 444 53010
E-mail: turizmocentras@telsiai.lt
www.telsiaitic.lt

Trakai TIC
Vytauto St. 69, LT- 21001 Trakai
Tel. +370 528 51934
E-mail: trakaiTIC@is.lt
www.trakai.lt

Utena TIC
Stoties St. 39, LT-28134 Utena
Tel. +370 389 54346
E-mail: tic@utenainfo.lt
www.utenainfo.lt

Pakruojis RTC
Parko St. 5, LT-83166
Pakruojis Village, Pakruojis District
Tel. +370 421 61584
E-mail: turizmas@pakruojis.lt
www.pakruojistic.lt

Vilkaviškis TBIC
J.Basanavičiaus Sq. 7, LT-70101
Vilkaviškis
Tel. +370 342 20525
E-mail: info@vilkaviskisinfo.lt
www.vilkaviskisinfo.lt

Vilnius TIC
Vilniaus St. 22, LT-01119 Vilnius
Tel. +370 5 2 629 660
E-mail: tic@vilnius.lt
www.vilnius-tourism.lt

Zarasai TIC
Sėlių Sq. 22, LT-32110 Zarasai
Tel. +370 385 37171
E-mail: turizmas@zarasai.lt
www.zarasai.lt

Kaunas Region TIC
Laisvės al. 36, LT-44240 Kaunas
Tel. +370 37 323 436
E-mail: info@kaunastic.lt
www.kaunastic.lt

Šiauliai District TBIC
J. Basanavičiaus St. 7, 81156
Kuršėnai
Tel. +370 41 58 44 86
E-mail: vic@siauliai-r.sav.lt
www.siauliair-vic.lt

Ukmergė TBIC
Kęstučio Sq. 2-2/
Vienuolyno St. 14-2,
LT-20130 Ukmergė
Tel. +370 340 63551
E-mail: turizmas@ukminfo.lt
www.ukminfo.lt

Raseiniai TBIC
Muziejaus St. 5, LT-60122 Raseiniai
Tel. +370 428 70723
E-mail: info@rvic.lt
www.rvic.lt

Kaišiadorys TBIC
Gedimino St. 48, LT-56121
Kaišiadorys
Tel. +370 346 60466
E-mail: turizmas@kaisiadorys.lt
www.verslas.kaisiadorys.lt

Veisiejai TIC
Vytauto St. 47, Veisiejų m., Lazdijų r.
Tel. +370 318 56535
E-mail: veisiejumuziejus@gmail.
com

Tytuvėnai Pilgrim TIC
Maironio St. 1, Tytuvėnai, Kelmė
District
Tel.: +370 674 97392
E-mail: info@tytuvenai.eu
www.tytuvenai.eu

Jewish Cultural and Information Centre
Mėsinių St. 3a/5, Vilnius LT-01133
Tel. +370 5 261 6422
E-mail: info@jewishcenter.lt
www.jewishcenter.lt

Suvalkija TBIC
Laisvės St. 2, Kalvarija, Kalvarija
Municipality
Tel. +370 670 93708
E-mail: suvalkija.info@gmail.com
www.suvalkijos.info

Samogitians Diocese Museum TIC
S. Daukanto St. 6, Varniai, Telšiai
District
Tel. +370 444 47455
E-mail: alma@varniai-museum.lt
www.varniai-museum.lt

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TIC – Tourism Information Centre
TBIC – Tourism and Business Information Centre
CTIC – Cultural and Tourism Information Centre
RTC – Recreation and Tourism Centre

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