Vilnius Travel Guide

Discover Vilnius: Lithuania's Baroque Beauty & European Green Capital 2025

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Things to do in Vilnius

Landmarks & Monuments

Vilnius showcases architectural treasures spanning seven centuries, from medieval fortifications to neoclassical elegance. The city's skyline is punctuated by distinctive towers and spires that have witnessed Lithuania's complex history, including periods under Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russian Empire, and Soviet occupation before independence in 1991.



Must See

Gediminas Tower & Upper Castle

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Standing proudly atop Castle Hill since 1409, this **iconic octagonal tower** is the last remaining structure of the Upper Castle and Lithuania's most recognizable symbol. Climb to the top for **spectacular 360-degree panoramic views** of Vilnius' red-tiled roofs, church spires, and the winding Neris River. The tower houses a small museum detailing the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. You can reach the summit via a steep but scenic walking path or take the convenient funicular. The hilltop setting offers the city's best sunset photography opportunities.



Must See

Vilnius Cathedral & Bell Tower

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The **neoclassical Vilnius Cathedral** (Cathedral of St. Stanislaus and St. Ladislaus) stands majestically in Cathedral Square, marking the spiritual heart of Lithuania. First mentioned in 1387 during Lithuania's Christianization, the cathedral was built on the site of a former pagan temple. Inside, discover stunning **Baroque and Renaissance frescoes**, the Chapel of St. Casimir adorned with marble and stucco, and the underground royal mausoleums. The adjacent 57-meter Bell Tower houses a historic clock. Don't miss the **miracle tile** in the square – legend says standing on it and spinning three times while making a wish brings good fortune.



Top Pick

Gate of Dawn (Aušros Vartai)

30-45 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

Built between 1503-1522, the **Gate of Dawn is the only surviving gate** from Vilnius' original defensive wall system that once featured five gates. This Renaissance-Gothic structure holds profound religious significance, housing the Chapel of Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn with its **venerated 17th-century painting** of the Virgin Mary, believed to have miraculous powers. The chapel attracts Catholic and Orthodox pilgrims from around the world. The painting's unusual iconography and silver-gold riza covering create an ethereal atmosphere. Visit during morning hours for a more contemplative experience, or attend evening prayers to witness local devotion.



Notable

Three Crosses Monument

45 minutes to 1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

Perched atop Bleak Hill (Plikasis kalnas), the **Three Crosses** commemorate Franciscan monks martyred in the 14th century, according to legend. The current concrete monument, erected in 1989, replaced earlier versions destroyed by Soviet authorities. The hilltop location offers another **stunning panoramic viewpoint** of Vilnius' Old Town and modern skyline. The steep climb through pine forest takes 15-20 minutes and is particularly beautiful at sunrise or sunset. The monument has become a symbol of Lithuanian perseverance and faith through centuries of occupation.



Notable

Vilnius TV Tower

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Lithuania's tallest structure at 326.5 meters, the **Vilnius TV Tower** stands as both an architectural landmark and memorial to Lithuania's independence struggle. On January 13, 1991, Soviet forces attacked the tower during Lithuania's push for independence, killing 14 civilians – a tragedy commemorated by memorials at the base. The current public observation deck is at 170 m. The 165 m rotating restaurant, Paukščių Takas, is under reconstruction; the tower’s site lists the bistro-bar Toliai at the observation deck. On clear days, you can see up to 50 kilometers. The tower hosts occasional BASE jumping events and light shows.

Tips for Landmarks & Monuments

- **Best photography times:** Golden hour (sunrise/sunset) at Gediminas Tower and Three Crosses for magical lighting on the Old Town
- **Combo ticket savings:** The Vilnius Pass includes many monuments and saves money for multiple attractions
- **Accessibility note:** Bell towers and hilltop monuments involve stairs and steep climbs – wear comfortable shoes
- **Free viewpoint:** The walk to Three Crosses offers stunning views without admission fees

Museums & Galleries

Vilnius' museum landscape reflects Lithuania's layered history, from medieval grandeur through Soviet occupation to contemporary artistic innovation. The city offers world-class collections spanning archaeology, fine arts, occupation history, and cutting-edge contemporary art in striking modern architecture.



Must See

Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights (KGB Museum)

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Housed in the former KGB headquarters, this **deeply moving museum** chronicles Lithuania's suffering under Nazi and Soviet occupations. The basement contains preserved KGB prison cells, interrogation rooms, and the chilling execution chamber where Lithuanian freedom fighters and intellectuals were killed. Exhibits detail the deportations to Siberian gulags, resistance movements, and the long struggle for independence. **Plaques outside list names of victims** killed in the building. The museum provides essential context for understanding modern Lithuania and the Baltic states' complex 20th-century history. Allow time to absorb the emotional weight of the exhibitions.



Top Pick

Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

This magnificent palace is a **21st-century reconstruction** (completed 2018) of the original 15th-century royal residence that served as the political and cultural center of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Though criticized by some for being modern, the palace offers **unparalleled insight into Lithuanian history** through interactive exhibits, archaeological finds, and beautifully recreated ceremonial halls blending Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles. Discover treasures from when Lithuania was a European superpower stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The museum expertly contextualizes Lithuania's golden age and its rulers who would become kings of Poland.

Top Pick

MO Museum (Modern Art Museum)

1.5-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Designed by renowned architect Daniel Libeskind, the **striking contemporary MO Museum** opened in 2018 as Lithuania's first private museum dedicated to modern and contemporary Lithuanian art. The geometric white building itself is architectural art. Inside, rotating exhibitions showcase Lithuanian modernist works from 1960s onward, including pieces banned during Soviet times. The museum brilliantly connects Lithuanian art to broader European movements while highlighting unique national perspectives. Interactive displays and multimedia installations make art accessible. The rooftop terrace offers excellent Old Town views. A must-visit for contemporary art lovers and architecture enthusiasts.



Top Pick

Holocaust Museum & Litvak Culture Museum

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

These interconnected museums preserve the memory of Lithuania's once-thriving Jewish community. Before WWII, Vilnius was known as the '**Jerusalem of the North**' with over 100,000 Jews – 95% perished in the Holocaust. The Holocaust Exposition documents the systematic destruction through photographs, artifacts, and survivor testimonies. The Museum of Culture and Identity of Lithuanian Jews (Litvaks) celebrates the rich cultural heritage, religious traditions, and contributions of Lithuanian Jewry through interactive exhibits. These museums provide crucial historical context and honor a community that profoundly shaped Vilnius' character.



Notable

National Museum of Lithuania

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Lithuania's premier museum complex spans from prehistoric times to the present day, housed in both the historic Old and New Arsenal buildings within the Lower Castle. Collections include **archaeological treasures, medieval armor, folk art, ethnographic displays,** and exhibits on Lithuanian culture through the ages. The museum provides comprehensive coverage of Lithuanian identity, customs, and historical development. While there's some overlap with the Palace of the Grand Dukes, history enthusiasts will appreciate the breadth of artifacts and the beautiful historic buildings themselves.



Notable

Lithuanian Art Museum & National Gallery

2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The Lithuanian Art Museum network encompasses several locations, with the **National Gallery** being the flagship venue for Lithuanian fine art from 16th century to present. Collections include religious art, portraits of nobility, landscapes, and Socialist Realist works from the Soviet period. The Applied Art Museum branch showcases decorative arts, furniture, and design. These museums provide essential context for understanding Lithuanian cultural development and artistic traditions influenced by Polish, Russian, and Western European movements.



Notable

Contemporary Art Centre (CAC)

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Located in the heart of Old Town, the **CAC is one of the Baltic region's largest contemporary art spaces**, occupying a renovated 19th-century building. The center hosts cutting-edge exhibitions by Lithuanian and international artists, focusing on experimental and conceptual works, video art, installations, and performance. The CAC has been instrumental in developing Vilnius' reputation as a creative hub. Exhibitions change regularly, so check the current program. The venue also hosts lectures, workshops, and film screenings, making it a dynamic cultural meeting point.

Tips for Museums & Galleries

- **Museum closures:** Many museums close Mondays and some close Tuesdays – plan accordingly
- **Emotional preparation:** The KGB Museum and Holocaust exhibitions are emotionally intense; allow time to process
- **English availability:** Most major museums offer English audio guides or detailed English text
- **Photography:** Check policies – some museums restrict flash or photography in certain areas
- **Museum passes:** Vilnius Pass provides free entry to 20+ museums and attractions

Religious Sites

Vilnius earned the nickname 'City of Churches' with over 40 active places of worship representing Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and other traditions. The architectural diversity spans Gothic, Baroque, Renaissance, and Neoclassical styles, reflecting Lithuania's complex religious history and position at the crossroads of Catholic and Orthodox worlds.



Must See

St. Anne's Church

30-45 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

An absolute **masterpiece of Gothic architecture**, St. Anne's Church is Vilnius' most photographed building and architectural jewel. Built in the late 15th century using 33 different types of clay bricks in flamboyant Gothic style, the façade features intricate brick patterns, soaring spires, and delicate tracery. Napoleon supposedly said he wished he could carry it back to Paris on the palm of his hand. The church has survived 500 years of wars, fires, and occupations. The relatively simple interior lets the exterior artistry shine. Adjacent Bernardine Church forms a harmonious ensemble. **Free admission** makes this a must-see for architecture lovers.



Must See

Church of St. Peter and St. Paul

45 minutes to 1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

Often called the **'pearl of Baroque'**, this 17th-century church features one of Europe's finest Baroque interiors with over **2,000 white stucco figures** covering walls and ceilings. The sculptures depict biblical scenes, saints, mythological figures, and allegories in breathtaking detail. Master Italian craftsmen spent decades creating this ethereal white-on-white wonderland. The exterior's modest appearance contrasts dramatically with the opulent interior. The church represents the Catholic Counter-Reformation's artistic ambitions. Allow time to absorb the overwhelming sculptural richness – many miss details on first glance. Widely considered Vilnius' most beautiful church interior.



Top Pick

St. John's Church & Bell Tower (Vilnius University)

1 hour No Booking Needed

Map

Part of Vilnius University complex, St. John's Church combines Gothic and Baroque elements with a **soaring 68-meter bell tower** that was Vilnius' tallest structure for centuries. Built over 400 years ago, the church interior features impressive vaulted ceilings and ornate decorations. The major attraction is climbing the bell tower for what many consider the **best view of Vilnius Old Town** – better than Gediminas Tower as you're right in the heart of red-tiled roofs and church spires. The tower is accessible May-October; tickets are €5. Expect steep stairs (not fully accessible). The university courtyards surrounding the church are architectural treasures themselves.



Notable

Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit

30-45 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

This beautiful Orthodox cathedral with distinctive green domes represents Vilnius' Eastern Christian heritage. Built in the 17th century and reconstructed after fires, the church houses the **relics of three 14th-century martyrs** – Saints Anthony, John, and Eustathius – displayed in glass cases. The interior features traditional Orthodox iconostasis, frescoes, and the unique atmosphere of Eastern Orthodox worship. The church remains an active spiritual center for Vilnius' Orthodox community. Visitors should dress modestly and respect ongoing services and prayer times.



Notable

Bernardine Church & Monastery

30 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

Adjacent to St. Anne's Church, the late Gothic Bernardine Church and monastery complex dates to the early 16th century. The fortress-like red brick church features defensive elements added during conflicts with Moscow. The interior showcases Gothic ribbed vaulting and remnants of Renaissance frescoes. The monastery buildings now house various cultural institutions. The entire complex, set in beautiful gardens along the Vilnia River, exemplifies late medieval monastic architecture. Together with St. Anne's, this creates one of Vilnius' most photographed architectural ensembles.

Tips for Religious Sites

- **Modest dress required:** Cover shoulders and knees when visiting churches, especially Orthodox
- **Mass times:** Visit outside service times for better viewing access and photography
- **Free admission:** Most churches are free to enter, though donations are appreciated
- **Bell tower access:** St. John's Bell Tower is only open May-October; go early to avoid crowds
- **Photography etiquette:** No flash photography; be discreet during services

Neighborhoods & Districts

Vilnius' neighborhoods each possess distinct character, from the UNESCO-protected medieval Old Town to the bohemian artist republic of Užupis, reflecting the city's evolution through baroque grandeur, Soviet occupation, and contemporary creative renaissance.



Must See

Old Town (Senamiestis) - UNESCO World Heritage Site

Full day No Booking Needed

Map

Vilnius Old Town is **one of Europe's largest surviving medieval quarters**, encompassing nearly 2,000 buildings spanning Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Neoclassical periods. The UNESCO-listed district features labyrinthine cobblestone streets, hidden courtyards, and over 40 churches creating a remarkably harmonious architectural ensemble. Unlike many European old towns, Vilnius avoided major wartime destruction, preserving authentic medieval urban fabric. Wander narrow lanes like Pilies Street (the main artery), discover Literatų Street with its wall art honoring Lithuanian writers, explore atmospheric courtyards, and stumble upon countless cafés and artisan shops. The Old Town rewards aimless wandering – allow time to get pleasantly lost in this **living museum** where history breathes through every building.



Must See

Užupis - The Independent Artists' Republic

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Meaning 'beyond the river', **Užupis is Vilnius' bohemian soul** – a self-declared independent republic (tongue-in-cheek, but serious about artistic freedom) complete with its own constitution, president, flag, and army. After Lithuania's independence, cheap rents attracted artists to this formerly run-down district across the Vilnia River. The neighborhood transformed into a creative haven filled with galleries, studios, quirky sculptures, and the iconic **Angel of Užupis statue** blowing a trumpet. The district's constitution, posted on walls in 40+ languages, declares rights like 'Everyone has the right to be happy' and 'A cat has the right to be a cat.' Cross the bridge, get your 'passport stamp', explore street art, visit eccentric cafés, and soak in the free-spirited atmosphere. The area celebrates its independence day on April 1st with festivities.



Top Pick

Pilies Street (Castle Street)

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

The **main artery of Old Town**, Pilies Street runs from Cathedral Square toward the Town Hall, historically connecting Vilnius Castle to Poland and Russia. This pedestrian cobblestone street pulses with life, lined with colorful buildings housing restaurants, cafés, souvenir shops, art galleries, and street performers. Medieval buildings feature intricate architectural details worth examining. The street showcases Vilnius' architectural evolution and serves as the perfect introduction to Old Town's character. Watch for plaques indicating historic buildings and former resident notables. Prime people-watching territory, especially summer evenings when outdoor terraces buzz with activity.



Notable

Literatų Street (Literature Street)

30-45 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

A charming side street transformed into an **open-air tribute to Lithuanian literature** and writers. Building walls display artistic installations, plaques, and sculptures honoring Lithuanian poets, novelists, and literary figures from the creator of the first Lithuanian book to contemporary authors. Each artwork is unique, created by different artists interpreting the writers' work. The street exemplifies Vilnius' creative spirit and provides insight into Lithuanian literary tradition. Located just off Pilies Street, this quiet lane offers a contemplative contrast to tourist bustle. Art and literature enthusiasts should not miss this unique cultural walkway.



Notable

Gediminas Avenue

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Vilnius' main boulevard connects Cathedral Square to the modern city center, **blending historic and contemporary Vilnius**. This elegant tree-lined avenue features Neoclassical and Soviet-era architecture, upscale shops, restaurants, and cultural institutions. The Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, government buildings, and shopping centers line the route. The avenue is closed to traffic on weekends, becoming a pedestrian promenade. Watch for the changing of the guard at the Presidential Palace. Gediminas Avenue represents modern Lithuania while honoring its complex past, making it ideal for understanding how Vilnius bridges tradition and contemporary European urban life.



Notable

Lukiškės Prison 2.0

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

For 115 years, Lukiškės was Lithuania's most notorious prison, housing political prisoners, criminals, and dissidents behind high walls and barbed wire. Closed as a prison, the complex has been **transformed into a vibrant cultural hub** called Lukiškės Prison 2.0, housing 250+ artists, designers, musicians, and creatives in former cells. The site now features galleries, studios, performance spaces, cafés, and museums including exhibitions about prison history. This bold adaptive reuse project symbolizes Lithuania's transformation. Visitors can explore prison yards now filled with street art, attend concerts and events, and witness how Vilnius turns difficult history into creative energy. The transformation from dark past to artistic future embodies the city's forward-looking spirit.

Tips for Neighborhoods & Districts

- **Free walking tours:** Excellent free tours of Old Town depart daily from Cathedral Square at 10am and 12pm (tip-based)
- **Get lost intentionally:** Old Town's magic lies in wandering its maze of streets and discovering hidden courtyards
- **Užupis visiting:** Cross the bridge for the full experience; look for constitution walls and 'passport stamps' at cafés
- **Evening atmosphere:** Old Town comes alive at dusk with lit churches and bustling outdoor cafés
- **Wear comfortable shoes:** Cobblestones are charming but tough on feet – proper footwear essential

Parks & Gardens

As European Green Capital 2025, Vilnius boasts over 60% green space, with parks, gardens, rivers, and forests integrated into urban fabric. The city's seven hills and two rivers create natural beauty within the cityscape, offering locals and visitors numerous outdoor retreats.



Top Pick

Bernardine Gardens

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Dating to the 15th century, the **Bernardine Gardens** nestle along the Vilnia River beside the Old Town walls, creating a peaceful green oasis in the city's heart. The park features winding paths, mature trees, flower gardens, sculptures, and romantic riverside walks. Originally part of the Bernardine monastery's grounds, the gardens blend natural beauty with historic significance. Popular spots include the reading corner with benches, children's playground, and café. The gardens connect to Vingis Park via walking paths, making them ideal for extended strolls. Spring brings blooming magnolias and tulips, while autumn colors transform the landscape. Free concerts and events occur during summer. Perfect for picnics, relaxation, or romantic walks with views of St. Anne's Church spires rising above the treetops.



Notable

Vingis Park

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Vilnius' largest park at 162 hectares, **Vingis Park** sprawls across a bend in the Neris River, offering extensive forests, meadows, cycling paths, and recreational facilities. The park is beloved by locals for jogging, cycling, rollerblading, picnicking, and outdoor concerts. The main open-air amphitheater hosts major music festivals and events, including the legendary Baltic Way human chain in 1989 when two million people linked hands across Baltic states demanding independence. The park features a summer stage, sports facilities, boat rentals, and numerous trails. Winter brings cross-country skiing. Vingis represents Vilnius' commitment to accessible green space and outdoor recreation for all residents.



Notable

Pavilniai Regional Park

Half day No Booking Needed

Map

Just outside central Vilnius, **Pavilniai** offers 1,482 hectares of pristine nature with hiking trails through dense pine forests, scenic valleys along the Neris River, and geological formations. The park contains the Pūčkoriai Exposure geological monument showcasing 380-million-year-old Devonian sediments. Popular for hiking, mountain biking, and nature photography, the park provides an easy escape into wilderness while remaining accessible by public transport. Trails range from easy riverside walks to challenging forest hikes. The park is particularly beautiful in autumn when foliage transforms into gold and crimson, and winter offers cross-country skiing and snowshoeing opportunities.



Notable

Verkiai Regional Park & Palace

Half day No Booking Needed

Map

This expansive regional park in northern Vilnius encompasses **picturesque landscapes, historic manor estates, and natural wonders**. The Verkiai Palace (currently under restoration) was once a magnificent neoclassical residence of the Vilnius bishops. The park features winding trails through forests and along the Neris River, the scenic Green Lakes, and numerous viewing points. Don't miss the impressive Tuputiškės Mill waterfall and the charming wooden churches. The park is ideal for extended nature walks, bird watching, and experiencing Lithuanian countryside within city limits. Popular with families, cyclists, and photographers seeking natural beauty and historic architecture.



Optional

Belmontas

1-2 hours No Booking Needed

Map

A romantic **nature and cultural complex** in a picturesque gorge along the Vilnia River, Belmontas combines natural beauty with historic mill buildings now housing restaurants and cultural venues. Walking paths wind through the forested valley, past waterfalls and old mill structures. The area is particularly enchanting during golden hour when sunlight filters through trees onto the river. Popular for romantic walks, outdoor dining with scenic views, and experiencing nature minutes from the city center. The historic mill buildings add architectural interest, and the area hosts occasional cultural events and concerts in the atmospheric setting.

Tips for Parks & Gardens

- **European Green Capital 2025:** Special events, exhibitions, and sustainability initiatives throughout the year
- **Bike rentals:** City bike-sharing system makes exploring parks easy; stations throughout Vilnius
- **Seasonal activities:** Parks offer different experiences each season – spring flowers, summer concerts, autumn colors, winter skiing
- **Picnic supplies:** Stop at local markets for Lithuanian cheeses, bread, and snacks before park visits
- **River activities:** Kayak and SUP rentals available along the Neris River during warmer months

Squares & Streets

Vilnius' squares serve as the city's living rooms – spaces where history, culture, and daily life intersect. From the grand Cathedral Square to intimate neighborhood gathering spots, these public spaces pulse with markets, festivals, protests, and everyday interactions that define urban Lithuanian life.



Must See

Cathedral Square (Katedros aikštė)

30 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

The symbolic and geographic **heart of Vilnius**, Cathedral Square has witnessed coronations, protests, celebrations, and historic moments for centuries. Dominated by the neoclassical Vilnius Cathedral and its freestanding bell tower, the vast open space connects Old Town to modern Vilnius via Gediminas Avenue. The square hosted the pivotal 1989 Baltic Way demonstration and continues as the gathering point for national celebrations, Christmas markets, and New Year's festivities. Look for the **'Stebuklas' (Miracle) tile** marking where the Baltic Way human chain began – tradition says spinning three times on it while making a wish brings good fortune. The square offers unobstructed views of Gediminas Tower on the hill and serves as the starting point for exploring the city.



Top Pick

Town Hall Square (Rotušės aikštė)

30-45 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

Located in Old Town's heart, **Town Hall Square** has been Vilnius' main marketplace and civic center since the 15th century. The elegant neoclassical Town Hall building, nicknamed 'White Swan' for its graceful appearance, anchors the space. Historically, the square hosted markets, executions, proclamations, and city celebrations. Today, it's surrounded by colorful buildings housing restaurants and cafés with outdoor seating. The square frequently hosts festivals, concerts, Christmas markets, and cultural events. The atmospheric space, enclosed by historic architecture, provides a more intimate counterpoint to the grand Cathedral Square and exemplifies Old Town's living history.



Optional

Lukiškės Square

30 minutes No Booking Needed

Map

Vilnius' largest square has a **complex and controversial history** reflecting Lithuania's turbulent 20th century. Originally created during the Russian Empire, it was later dominated by a massive Lenin statue during Soviet occupation (removed after independence). The square has witnessed protests, celebrations, and continues to generate debate about its purpose and design. Recent controversies included plans for a memorial that were abandoned. Today, the vast open space hosts markets, concerts, festivals, and outdoor activities. The square's ongoing evolution symbolizes Lithuania's struggle to reconcile difficult history while creating meaningful public space. Its size and central location make it significant despite aesthetic debates.

Tips for Squares & Streets

- **Events calendar:** Check what's happening in squares – markets, concerts, and festivals occur regularly
- **Christmas markets:** Cathedral Square and Town Hall Square transform into magical winter wonderlands December-January
- **Photography timing:** Early morning or evening light creates beautiful atmospheric shots with fewer crowds
- **Outdoor dining:** Town Hall Square cafés offer prime people-watching spots in warm weather

Tours & Activities

Vilnius offers diverse ways to experience the city beyond self-guided exploration, from specialized historical tours to outdoor adventures, culinary experiences, and creative workshops that provide insider perspectives on Lithuanian culture and history.



Must See Book Ahead

Free Walking Tours

2-3 hours Book Ahead

Several companies offer **excellent free walking tours** (tip-based) departing daily from Cathedral Square. These 2-3 hour tours cover Old Town highlights, major landmarks, and fascinating historical stories from medieval times through Soviet occupation to independence. Knowledgeable local guides provide context and insider tips while bringing Lithuanian history to life. Tours typically include Gediminas Tower area, Cathedral, Old Town streets, Užupis, and university district. The tip-based model means guides are motivated to provide excellent experiences. Perfect introduction to Vilnius and opportunity to ask questions. Book online or show up at departure time; tours operate year-round in English and other languages.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Soviet Vilnius Tours

2-4 hours Book Ahead

Specialized tours exploring **Vilnius' Soviet past** visit sites like former KGB headquarters, Soviet-era neighborhoods with brutalist architecture, monuments to communist ideology, and locations significant to Lithuania's independence movement. Expert guides share personal stories and historical context about daily life under occupation, resistance movements, and the 1991 January Events when Soviet forces attacked Vilnius. Tours often include visiting Soviet-era apartments, examining propaganda, and understanding how this period shaped modern Lithuania. Essential for understanding the Baltic states' recent history and the lingering impact of Soviet occupation. Some tours include Soviet-era car rides for authentic atmosphere.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Jewish Heritage Tours

3-4 hours Book Ahead

Expert-led tours explore Vilnius' rich Jewish heritage, the **'Jerusalem of the North'** that was home to a thriving 200-year-old Jewish community. Visit the former Jewish ghetto, synagogues, the Vilna Gaon's legacy sites, Jewish cemeteries, Holocaust sites, and locations associated with partisan resistance. Guides, often descendants of Lithuanian Jews, provide deeply personal perspectives on pre-war Jewish life, the Holocaust's devastation, and efforts to preserve memory. Tours typically include the Jewish museum, ghetto boundaries, Paneriai Memorial, and remaining synagogues. Essential for anyone interested in Jewish history, Holocaust education, and understanding the profound loss Lithuania suffered.



Top Pick Book Ahead

Food Tours & Lithuanian Cuisine Experiences

3-4 hours Book Ahead

Culinary tours introduce Lithuanian cuisine through market visits, traditional restaurants, and local tastings. Sample cepelinai (potato dumplings), šaltibarščiai (cold beet soup), kibinai (savory pastries), local cheeses, dark rye bread, and Lithuanian beer or mead. Tours often include Hales Market, hidden local eateries, craft beer breweries, and artisan food producers. Guides explain culinary traditions, seasonal ingredients, and how food connects to Lithuanian identity and history. Some tours offer cooking classes where you prepare traditional dishes. Perfect way to understand Lithuanian culture through its flavors and meet passionate local food producers and chefs.



Notable

Hot Air Balloon Flights

3-4 hours total Book Ahead

Experience Vilnius from above on a **magical hot air balloon flight** over Old Town and surrounding countryside. Lithuania has a strong ballooning tradition, and Vilnius' compact historic center and surrounding forests create spectacular aerial views. Flights typically depart at sunrise for optimal conditions, floating peacefully over church spires, red-tiled roofs, and green landscapes. The experience includes champagne toast after landing and flight certificates. Weather-dependent and requiring advance booking, balloon flights offer unforgettable perspectives and incredible photography opportunities. Popular for special occasions and romantic experiences. Various companies offer flights with different durations and routes.



Notable

Kayaking & SUP on Neris River

2-4 hours Book Ahead

Explore Vilnius from the water by **kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding** on the scenic Neris River. Various routes pass through city center with unique perspectives of architecture, under historic bridges, and through green parks. Longer routes venture into surrounding nature. Rental companies provide equipment and route guidance; some offer guided tours with historical commentary. Popular routes include paddling from city center to Vingis Park or longer excursions to Verkiai. The calm river is suitable for beginners, and the activity combines exercise with sightseeing. Operating May-September, water activities offer refreshing alternatives to walking tours during warm weather.



Notable

Bike Tours & Rentals

2-4 hours No Booking Needed

Vilnius' relatively flat terrain and growing bike infrastructure make **cycling an excellent exploration method**. Guided bike tours cover more ground than walking tours, visiting Old Town, Užupis, parks, Soviet-era districts, and riverside paths. Self-guided options include city bike-sharing system with stations throughout Vilnius. Routes range from leisurely riverside rides to comprehensive city circuits. Many tours include stops at viewpoints, cafés, and historic sites with expert commentary. Electric bike options available for easier riding. Cycling provides efficient transportation while enjoying fresh air and flexibility to explore beyond tourist center. Bike-friendly city with increasing dedicated lanes.

Tips for Tours & Activities

- **Advance booking recommended:** Popular tours (especially specialized ones) fill up quickly in summer
- **Weather considerations:** Outdoor activities are weather-dependent; have backup indoor plans
- **Tipping etiquette:** Free walking tours expect €5-15 tips depending on tour quality and length
- **Group discounts:** Many tours offer reduced rates for groups of 4+
- **Combination tours:** Some companies offer multi-day packages combining different themed tours at discounted rates

Day Trips & Excursions

Vilnius' central location makes it an ideal base for exploring Lithuania's diverse attractions, from medieval castles to natural wonders, Soviet history sites, and charming towns showcasing different facets of Lithuanian heritage and landscape.



Must See

Trakai Island Castle

Half to full day No Booking Needed

Map

Lithuania's most iconic castle and **most visited tourist attraction outside Vilnius**, Trakai sits majestically on an island in Lake Galvė, 28km west of the capital. This 14th-century Gothic castle served as a strategic stronghold for the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. The picturesque setting – red brick castle rising from blue waters surrounded by forests – creates fairy-tale atmosphere. Inside, explore the castle museum detailing medieval Lithuanian history, weaponry, and the unique Karaim culture (Turkic people brought by Grand Duke Vytautas). The charming town features wooden Karaim houses and restaurants serving traditional **kibinai pastries**. Activities include boat rentals, lakeside walks, and water sports. Winter transforms the frozen lakes into magical ice landscapes. Essential day trip accessible by car (30 min), bus, or organized tours.



Top Pick

Paneriai Memorial (Ponary)

2-3 hours No Booking Needed

Map

Located 10km from Vilnius center, **Paneriai (Ponary) Memorial** marks the site where Nazis and Lithuanian collaborators murdered approximately 100,000 people, primarily Jews, during WWII. This forest became a killing ground where Vilnius' Jewish community was systematically exterminated. The site features memorials, mass grave markers, and a small museum documenting the atrocities. Walking paths through the peaceful forest create haunting contrast with the horrific history. The memorial is essential for understanding the Holocaust in Lithuania and Vilnius' transformation from the 'Jerusalem of the North' to a city that lost nearly its entire Jewish population. Visiting requires emotional preparation but provides crucial historical understanding. Accessible by public transport or taxi.



Notable

Kernavė Archaeological Site - UNESCO World Heritage

Half day No Booking Needed

Map

Located 35km northwest of Vilnius, **Kernavė preserves Lithuania's earliest history** as the medieval capital before Vilnius. This UNESCO site features five impressive hill forts rising above the Neris River valley, with archaeological evidence spanning 10,000 years from Paleolithic settlements through medieval periods. The hilltops offer stunning valley views. An excellent museum displays artifacts discovered during excavations. Each July, Kernavė hosts a popular medieval festival with jousting, crafts, and historical reenactments. The site beautifully demonstrates Lithuania's deep historical roots and strategic importance. Less touristy than Trakai, Kernavė appeals to history enthusiasts and those seeking authentic archaeological experiences in natural settings. Accessible by car or organized tours.



Notable

Aukštaitija National Park

Full day or overnight No Booking Needed

Map

Lithuania's oldest national park (120km from Vilnius) offers **pristine nature with over 100 lakes**, dense forests, traditional villages, and outdoor activities. The park preserves traditional Lithuanian rural life alongside natural beauty. Highlights include Ladakalnis hill fort viewpoint, ethnographic villages, ancient beekeeping traditions, and water routes connecting lakes. Activities include hiking, cycling, canoeing, swimming, and wildlife watching. The park features camping areas, traditional guesthouses, and local cuisine. Perfect escape for nature lovers seeking authentic Lithuanian countryside, traditional wooden architecture, and outdoor recreation. Best visited May-October; requires car for accessibility. Allow full day or overnight to fully experience the park's offerings.



Notable

Hill of Crosses (Šiauliai)

Full day with travel No Booking Needed

Map

230km from Vilnius, the **Hill of Crosses is one of Lithuania's most powerful pilgrimage sites** – a small hill covered with thousands upon thousands of crosses, crucifixes, and religious carvings. The exact origin is unknown, but the site represents Lithuanian Catholic faith and resistance, especially during Soviet occupation when authorities repeatedly removed crosses only to have them mysteriously reappear overnight. Today, over 100,000 crosses create an overwhelming visual and spiritual experience. Pope John Paul II visited in 1993, further cementing the site's significance. The atmosphere is both haunting and hopeful. While distant from Vilnius, the Hill of Crosses offers unique Lithuanian cultural-spiritual experience. Best combined with visiting Šiauliai city or as part of multi-day northern Lithuania tour.



Optional

Grūtas Park (Stalin World)

Full day No Booking Needed

Map

130km from Vilnius, this unusual **open-air museum displays Soviet-era statues and propaganda** collected from throughout Lithuania after independence. The controversial park, nicknamed 'Stalin World,' features dozens of Lenin, Stalin, and Soviet monument statues along wooded paths, creating a surreal sculpture garden of toppled communist iconography. The site includes watchtowers, barbed wire, Soviet-era music, and exhibitions about deportations and occupation. While critics question whether the park trivializes suffering, supporters argue it preserves history and allows reflection on totalitarianism. The park offers unique, provocative experiences unavailable elsewhere. Combined with nearby Druskininkai spa town for full-day excursion. Requires car or organized tour; not easily accessible by public transport.

Tips for Day Trips & Excursions

- **Trakai timing:** Arrive early (before 10am) or late afternoon to avoid peak crowds and tour groups
- **Transportation:** Rent a car for flexibility; otherwise book organized day tours for distant sites
- **Seasonal considerations:** Many nature sites are best May-September; winter reduces accessibility but offers unique beauty
- **Combination tours:** Some operators offer multi-site day trips combining Trakai and Kernavė
- **Pack appropriately:** Bring layers, comfortable shoes, and weather protection for outdoor sites

Food & Dining

Real, highly-rated Restaurants in Vilnius, sourced from Google Places (rating above 4★).



Le Mans★★★★★ 4.9 (748)

1-2 hours

Map

Le Mans is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.9★ from 748 reviews. Located at Užupio g. 24, 01203 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM



River Town★★★★★ 4.9 (526)

1-2 hours

Map

River Town is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.9★ from 526 reviews. Located at Olimpiečių g. 1, 09200 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:30 AM – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 11:30 AM – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 11:30 AM – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 11:30 AM – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 11:30 AM – 10:00 PM
- Saturday: 2:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Amandus★★★★★ 4.9 (1,161)

1-2 hours

Map

Amandus is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.9★ from 1161 reviews. Located at Užupio g. 22, 01201 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: Closed
- Wednesday: 7:00 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 7:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 7:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 7:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Pirmas Blynas★★★★★ 4.9 (2,079)

1-2 hours

Map

Pirmas Blynas is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.9★ from 2079 reviews. Located at Savičiaus g. 15, 01127 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Tuesday: 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Wednesday: 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Thursday: 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Friday: 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Saturday: 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Sunday: 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM



BARN bistro (B’ARN)★★★★★ 4.9 (165)

1-2 hours

Map

BARN bistro (B’ARN) is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.9★ from 165 reviews. Located at Visų Šventųjų g. 7-110, 01306 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: Closed
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Detective★★★★★ 4.8 (775)

1-2 hours

Map

Detective is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.8★ from 775 reviews. Located at M. Antokolskio g. 13, 01131 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Saturday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Sunday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM



Gloria Restaurant★★★★★ 4.8 (248)

1-2 hours

Map

Gloria Restaurant is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.8★ from 248 reviews. Located at Ligoninės g. 5, 01134 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: Closed
- Tuesday: Closed
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 11:30 AM – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: 11:30 AM – 7:00 PM



LA PEPA (BISTRO-BRUNCH)★★★★★ 4.7 (1,853)

1-2 hours

Map

LA PEPA (BISTRO-BRUNCH) is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.7★ from 1853 reviews. Located at Dainavos g. 6, 01400 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 7:00 AM – 4:00 PM
- Tuesday: 7:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: 7:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 7:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 7:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 7:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: 7:00 AM – 11:00 PM



Ertlio Namas★★★★★ 4.7 (1,681)

1-2 hours

Map

Ertlio Namas is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.7★ from 1681 reviews. Located at Šv. Jono g. 7, 01123 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Thursday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 5:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Momo grill Vilnius★★★★★ 4.7 (1,111)

1-2 hours

Map

Momo grill Vilnius is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.7★ from 1111 reviews. Located at Totorių g. 1, 01103 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 12:00 – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 12:00 – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 12:00 – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 12:00 – 10:00 PM
- Friday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 12:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: Closed



Lokys★★★★★ 4.6 (4,193)

1-2 hours

Map

Lokys is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.6★ from 4193 reviews. Located at Stiklių g. 8, Vilnius, 01131 Vilniaus m. sav, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Tuesday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Wednesday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Thursday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Friday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Saturday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Sunday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM



Meat Lovers Vilnius★★★★★ 4.6 (4,145)

1-2 hours

Map

Meat Lovers Vilnius is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.6★ from 4145 reviews. Located at Liejyklos g. 8, 01121 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:30 AM – 10:00 PM
- Tuesday: 11:30 AM – 10:00 PM
- Wednesday: 11:30 AM – 12:00 AM
- Thursday: 11:30 AM – 12:00 AM
- Friday: 11:30 AM – 12:00 AM
- Saturday: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- Sunday: 12:00 – 9:00 PM



The Urban Garden★★★★★ 4.6 (950)

1-2 hours

Map

The Urban Garden is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.6★ from 950 reviews. Located at J. Basanavičiaus g. 3, 01118 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Tuesday: 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Wednesday: 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Thursday: 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Friday: 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM
- Saturday: 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM
- Sunday: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM



Žemaičių ąsotis★★★★★ 4.6 (4,381)

1-2 hours

Map

Žemaičių ąsotis is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.6★ from 4381 reviews. Located at Naugarduko g. 32-1, 03225 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Tuesday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Wednesday: 11:00 AM – 10:00 PM
- Thursday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Friday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM
- Saturday: 1:00 – 11:00 PM
- Sunday: 1:00 – 11:00 PM



Telegrafas★★★★★ 4.6 (507)

1-2 hours

Map

Telegrafas is a highly-rated restaurant in Vilnius, rated 4.6★ from 507 reviews. Located at Universiteto g. 14, 01122 Vilnius, Lithuania.

Opening Hours

- Monday: 7:00 – 10:30 AM, 12:00 – 3:00 PM, 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Tuesday: 7:00 – 10:30 AM, 12:30 – 3:00 PM, 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Wednesday: 7:00 – 10:30 AM, 12:00 – 3:00 PM, 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Thursday: 7:00 – 10:30 AM, 12:00 – 3:00 PM, 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Friday: 7:00 – 10:30 AM, 12:00 – 3:00 PM, 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Saturday: 7:00 – 11:00 AM, 12:30 – 3:00 PM, 5:00 – 10:30 PM
- Sunday: 7:00 – 11:00 AM, 12:30 – 3:00 PM, 5:00 – 10:30 PM

Practical Information

Seasonal Guide to Vilnius

Peak Season (June-August): Warmest weather (15-25°C/59-77°F), longest days, outdoor café culture thrives, and festivals abundant. However, expect larger crowds and higher prices. Perfect for enjoying parks, outdoor dining, and river activities.

Shoulder Seasons (April-May & September-October): *Best value and experience.* Mild weather, fewer tourists, lower prices, and beautiful seasonal changes. April-May brings spring blooms and renewed energy. September-October offers stunning autumn foliage and harvest festivals. Ideal balance of pleasant weather and manageable crowds.

Winter (November-March): Cold (often below freezing), short days, but magical Christmas markets, snow-covered Old Town creates fairy-tale atmosphere, and cozy café culture. December transforms Cathedral Square with festive markets and lights. Genuine local experience with minimal tourists. Bring warm layers!

Special Consideration for 2025: As European Green Capital, Vilnius hosts special sustainability events, exhibitions, and initiatives throughout the year, with peak programming May-September.

Ideal Visit Duration: Minimum 2-3 days for Old Town highlights; 4-5 days to include museums, day trips to Trakai, and deeper exploration; 7+ days for comprehensive experience including multiple day trips and regional parks.

Getting Around Vilnius

✈ Airport Transfer

- **Train:** Direct railway connection (opened 2019) to city center every 30-60 minutes. Journey 7 minutes to main station. The airport train fare to or from Vilnius Railway Station is €0.90; the ride takes up to 8 minutes.
- **Bus:** Bus lines 1, 2, 88 connect airport to city center. €1 single ticket, €0.65 electronic. Journey 20-30 minutes depending on traffic.
- **Taxi/Uber:** Go Vilnius estimates about €10 from the airport to Cathedral Square by airport taxi; fares vary by destination and service.; Uber/Bolt slightly cheaper. 15-20 minute journey.

Public Transportation

Vilnius has efficient **bus and trolleybus network** covering the entire city. The Old Town is compact and best explored on foot, but public transport is useful for reaching outlying attractions.

- **Tickets:** Single ride €1 (from driver, cash only) or €0.65 (electronic/app). Day pass €5. JUDU lists the m.Ticket and Trafi apps; app use requires a Lithuanian phone number.
- **Tourist tip:** Most central attractions are walkable; public transport mainly needed for TV Tower, Paneriai Memorial, regional parks, and accommodations outside center.
- **Accessibility:** Modern buses equipped with low-floor access; trolleybuses gradually being updated.

Bike Sharing

Cyclo Vilnius bike-sharing system with stations throughout the city. Register via app; first 30 minutes free, then nominal fees. Excellent for exploring parks and riverside paths. Growing network of dedicated bike lanes, though Old Town cobblestones are challenging.

Taxis & Ride-Sharing

Uber and Bolt widely available and reliable. Local taxi companies also operate (always use official taxi apps or call to avoid overcharging). Typical ride within city center €5-10.

Car Rental

Not recommended for exploring Old Town (pedestrian areas, limited parking, confusing one-way streets) but useful for day trips to Trakai, Kernavė, and regional attractions. Major rental companies at airport and city center. Driving is on the right;

roads generally good condition.

Walking

Old Town and central Vilnius are **highly walkable** and pedestrian-friendly. Most major attractions within 2km. Comfortable shoes essential for cobblestone streets. Walking is the best way to discover hidden courtyards, street art, and café culture.

Shopping in Vilnius

What to Buy - Authentic Lithuanian Souvenirs

- **Linen Products:** Lithuania is famous for high-quality linen textiles – tablecloths, clothing, accessories. Look for brands like Linas and domestic producers.
- **Amber Jewelry:** Baltic amber in various colors and styles. Ensure authenticity (should float in saltwater, smell like pine when heated). Prices vary widely; buy from reputable shops.
- **Handcrafted Ceramics:** Traditional and contemporary Lithuanian pottery, often featuring folk motifs.
- **Wooden Crafts:** Hand-carved wooden items including traditional utensils, crosses, and decorative pieces.
- **Lithuanian Honey& Mead:** Local honey varieties and traditional honey wine (midus). Excellent quality and authentic taste of Lithuania.
- **Handmade Cosmetics:** Natural skincare products using local herbs, honey, and traditional recipes.
- **Books & Art:** Lithuanian literature, art books, and prints from local artists, especially on Literatū Street.
- **Traditional Textiles:** Hand-woven sashes, folk costumes elements, and traditional patterns.

Best Shopping Areas

Old Town Artisan Shops: Pilies Street and surrounding lanes feature boutiques selling handcrafted items, amber, linen, and souvenirs. Higher prices but quality guaranteed and convenient.

Užupis: Art galleries, studios, and quirky shops selling original artwork, jewelry, and bohemian crafts. Perfect for unique, artistic purchases.

Hales Market (Halės Turgus): Vilnius' central market offers fresh produce, local foods, flowers, and some crafts. Great for experiencing local life and buying Lithuanian food products. Open daily.

Gediminas Avenue: Modern shopping street with international brands, bookstores, and department stores. VCUP shopping center and Panorama mall nearby.

Tymo Market (Weekend): Hip weekend market featuring local designers, vintage items, handmade goods, and street food. Saturday mornings in various locations; check schedule.

Bargaining Tips

Bargaining is **NOT customary** in Lithuania. Prices are fixed in shops, markets, and restaurants. Exception: Private sellers at flea markets may negotiate slightly. Attempting to bargain elsewhere may cause offense. Credit cards widely accepted; cash useful for small purchases and markets.

Annual Events & Festivals

Major Festivals

- **Užupis Day (April 1st):** The self-declared Artists' Republic celebrates its 'independence day' with parades, concerts, art exhibitions, and general bohemian festivities. Visitors receive 'passport stamps'. Wonderfully quirky celebration of creativity and freedom.
- **Vilnius Festival (May-June):** Classical music festival featuring international orchestras and performers in historic venues. High-quality concerts in churches, theaters, and outdoor spaces.
- **Midsummer (June 23-24, Joninės/St. John's Day):** Ancient pagan celebration of summer solstice with bonfires, flower wreaths, traditional songs, and overnight festivities. Many locals head to countryside, but events occur in

Vilnius parks.

- **Vilnius City Fiesta (July):** Three-day street festival with music stages, food vendors, craft markets, and performances throughout Old Town. Celebrates city's birthday with vibrant, family-friendly atmosphere.
- **Kernavė Medieval Festival (early July):** Day trip destination hosts Lithuania's largest medieval reenactment with jousting, crafts, historical camps, and period costumes. Highly popular family event.
- **Christopher Summer Festival (July-August):** Classical and contemporary music festival with concerts in unique venues including courtyards, churches, and open-air spaces.
- **Vilnius Book Fair (February):** Major literary event featuring Lithuanian and international authors, publishers, readings, and book launches. Important cultural gathering.
- **The 2026 festival is listed for October 14–18, a five-day run. Check the official schedule for the year you visit. High-quality performances showcasing jazz diversity.**
- **Christmas Markets (December-January):** Cathedral Square and Town Hall Square transform with festive markets selling crafts, food, mulled wine, and gifts. Ice skating, concerts, and holiday atmosphere. Runs late November through early January.
- **New Year's Eve:** Major celebration at Cathedral Square with concerts, fireworks, and festivities. Thousands gather to welcome the new year with music and celebration.

National Holidays (Expect Closures)

- January 1 - New Year's Day
- February 16 - Restoration of the State Day (Independence Day 1918)
- March 11 - Restoration of Independence Day (1990 from Soviet Union)
- Easter Monday (moveable)
- May 1 - Labor Day
- First Sunday of May - Mother's Day
- June 24 - St. John's Day (Midsummer)
- July 6 - Statehood Day
- August 15 - Assumption Day
- November 1 - All Saints' Day
- December 24-26 - Christmas

European Green Capital 2025: Throughout 2025, expect special sustainability events, green initiatives exhibitions, environmental conferences, and themed activities celebrating Vilnius' commitment to environmental leadership.

5 Perfect Day Itineraries

Day 1: Essential Old Town Experience

Morning (9am-12pm): Start at Cathedral Square; find the miracle tile and make a wish. Visit Vilnius Cathedral interior (30 min). Walk or take funicular to Gediminas Tower for panoramic views and small museum (1.5 hours). Descend and explore the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (1.5 hours).

Lunch (12-1:30pm): Traditional Lithuanian lunch at Lokys or Etno Dvaras near Old Town center. Try cepelinai or šaltibarščiai.

Afternoon (1:30-5pm): Stroll Pilies Street browsing shops and cafés. Visit St. Anne's Church (30 min) and adjacent Bernardine Church. Walk through Bernardine Gardens along the river. Explore Literatū Street's literary tributes (30 min). End at Town Hall Square for coffee at outdoor café.

Evening (5-9pm): Early dinner in Old Town. The Three Crosses viewpoint is reached by a steep uphill walk. *(See Unverifiable.)* - LOCATION: PracticalInfo → bestTimeToVisit WRONG: “Special Consideration for 2025: As European Green Capital, Vilnius hosts special sustainability events, exhibitions, and initiatives throughout the year, with peak programming May-September.” CORRECT: Vilnius’s European Green Capital year was 2025 and officially ended; don’t present its programming as upcoming for a 2026 trip. Return to Old Town for drinks at rooftop bar or cozy cellar bar. Enjoy illuminated Old Town architecture.

Day 2: Museums & Užupis

Morning (9am-12:30pm): Visit Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights (KGB Museum) - arrive at opening for fewer crowds. Allow 2-3 hours for this emotionally powerful experience. Short walk to nearby Church of St. Peter and St. Paul to see spectacular Baroque interior (45 min).

Lunch (12:30-2pm): Cross bridge into Užupis. Lunch at bohemian café like Užupio Kavinė with terrace overlooking river.

Afternoon (2-6pm): Explore Užupis Republic - find constitution walls in multiple languages, Angel statue, street art, quirky galleries. Get 'passport stamp' at café. Visit Contemporary Art Centre (1.5 hours). Walk back through Old Town via different route, exploring courtyards and hidden passages.

Evening (6-10pm): Visit MO Museum if open late, or save for another day. Dinner at modern Lithuanian restaurant like Sweet Root or Džiaugsmas showcasing contemporary Lithuanian cuisine. Evening stroll along Gediminas Avenue to Presidential Palace.

Day 3: Trakai & Nature

Morning (8am-12pm): Early departure to Trakai (bus from station or organized tour). Arrive before crowds. Explore Trakai Island Castle and museum (2 hours). Walk around town visiting Karaim wooden houses and ethnographic displays.

Lunch (12-1:30pm): Traditional kibinai (Karaim pastries) at Kybynlar or Senoji Kibininė. Try sweet versions too. Optional: Rent boat or paddleboard on Lake Galvė (summer only).

Afternoon (2-6pm): Return to Vilnius. Visit Vingis Park or Verkiai Regional Park for nature walks and fresh air. Alternative: Relax at hotel or explore neighborhood you haven't visited yet.

Evening (6-10pm): Dinner at Belmontas restaurant in scenic riverside gorge setting. Return to Old Town for live music at jazz club or traditional Lithuanian folk music performance.

Day 4: Jewish Heritage & Modern Vilnius

Morning (9am-1pm): Jewish Heritage walking tour or self-guided visit to former ghetto area. Visit Vilna Gaon Museum and Holocaust Exposition (2 hours). Walk to Choral Synagogue, Vilnius' only surviving synagogue. Visit Paneriai Memorial (taxi or bus 30 min from center) - allow 1.5 hours for this moving site.

Lunch (1-2:30pm): Return to center. Lunch at Hales Market trying local foods, or nearby restaurant.

Afternoon (2:30-6pm): Explore modern Vilnius: Gediminas Avenue shopping and architecture. Visit National Gallery or Lithuanian Art Museum (2 hours). Tour Vilnius University courtyards and St. John's Church, climb bell tower if open (1 hour).

Evening (6-10pm): Sunset from Vilnius TV Tower observation deck and rotating restaurant (advance booking recommended). Alternatively, evening at Lukiškės Prison 2.0 exploring creative spaces, galleries, and evening events.

Day 5: Relaxed Exploration & Hidden Gems

Morning (9am-12pm): Sleep in and enjoy leisurely breakfast. Visit Gate of Dawn chapel (30 min). Walk the old city walls remnants. Explore Bastion of the Vilnius Defensive Wall museum (45 min). Browse Tymo Market if it's weekend.

Lunch (12-1:30pm): Light lunch at trendy café in hipster Pylimo Street area.

Afternoon (1:30-5pm): Choose your own adventure: Option A: Rent bike and cycle riverside paths to Belmontas and beyond. Option B: Visit remaining museum on your list (National Museum, Applied Arts Museum). Option C: Take hot air balloon flight (pre-booked). Option D: Relax in parks, cafés, people-watching.

Evening (5-10pm): Farewell dinner at top restaurant - reservations essential for places like Nineteen18, Stebuklai, or Sweet Root. Post-dinner: Final walk through illuminated Old Town, perhaps ending at Cathedral Square where you started. Buy last-minute souvenirs. Toast to Vilnius at rooftop bar with views over red-tiled roofs.

Customization Tips: These itineraries are suggestions; mix and match based on interests. Museum lovers should add extra time. Outdoor enthusiasts might skip museums for more nature time. Families should include more parks and interactive activities. Weather may require indoor backup plans. Always leave buffer time for spontaneous discoveries - Vilnius rewards wanderers!

Instagram & Photography Hotspots

Iconic Views & Panoramas

- **Gediminas Tower Summit:** Classic 360-degree panorama of red-tiled Old Town roofs, church spires, and modern skyline. *Best time: Golden hour (sunrise or 1-2 hours before sunset) for warm light.* Avoid midday harsh light.
- **St. John's Bell Tower:** Often considered superior to Gediminas Tower as you're right among Old Town roofs. *Best time: Late afternoon (4-6pm).* Open May-October only.
- **Three Crosses Hill:** Dramatic monument silhouette with sprawling city views. *Best time: Sunrise for misty magic or sunset for golden-pink light on buildings.* Blue hour after sunset also stunning.
- **Vilnius TV Tower Observation Deck:** Modern cityscape from 165m height. *Best time: Blue hour (twilight) when city lights begin glowing.* Clear days offer 50km views.

Architectural Gems

- **St. Anne's Church Façade:** Gothic masterpiece with intricate brickwork. *Best time: Morning (9-11am) when front-lit, or evening when illuminated.* Multiple angles from Bernardine Gardens.
- **Church of St. Peter & St. Paul Interior:** Heavenly white-on-white Baroque stucco. *Photography tip: No flash needed; natural light through windows creates ethereal effect. Go midday when interior brightest.*
- **Vilnius University Courtyards:** 13 interconnected courtyards with Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical architecture. *Best time: Late afternoon shadows create depth.* Relatively empty during academic holidays.
- **Town Hall Square:** Colorful historic buildings surrounding elegant white Town Hall. *Best time: Evening when outdoor cafés create lively foreground and buildings are lit.*

Charming Streets & Details

- **Pilies Street:** Quintessential Old Town cobblestone street with colorful buildings. *Shooting tip: Stand at one end capturing vanishing perspective; use archways for framing.* Early morning (7-8am) nearly empty.
- **Literatū Street:** Artistic wall installations honoring writers. Each artwork unique. *Photography tip: Shoot individual pieces close-up or capture entire street atmosphere.*
- **Bernardine Gardens:** Riverside park with St. Anne's spires rising behind trees. *Best time: Spring (April-May) for blooming trees and flowers, or autumn (September-October) for golden foliage.*
- **Užupis Constitution Walls:** Colorful declarations in 40+ languages. *Instagram gold: Frame creative shots with Angel statue in background or river reflections.*

Hidden Gems & Unique Angles

- **Užupis Angel:** Iconic trumpet-blowing angel statue on pedestal. *Best time: Sunset backlighting creates dramatic silhouette, or midday for clear features.* Climb steps for elevated angle.
- **Cathedral Square from Various Angles:** Experiment with different perspectives: from Gediminas Avenue looking toward Cathedral with tower behind; from lower castle terraces; using bell tower for vertical lines.
- **Old Town Courtyards:** Hidden atmospheric spaces accessed through archways. *Photography tip: Seek ornate doorways, climbing plants, vintage details.* Many courtyards freely accessible during daytime.
- **Vilnia River & Bridges:** Reflections of Old Town in calm water (early morning best). Several picturesque stone bridges. *Best time: Dawn for mirror-like water, or autumn for floating leaves.*
- **Street Art in Užupis & Pylimo:** Evolving murals and graffiti art. *Location: Explore side streets off main routes.* Particularly dense around Užupis and trendy Pylimo Street area.

Seasonal Specialties

- **Winter: Snow-Covered Old Town:** Red roofs dusted with white snow creates fairy-tale scenes. Christmas market lights add magic. *Best time: Early morning after fresh snowfall before footprints.*

- **Spring: Blooming Parks:** Bernardine Gardens, Vingis Park burst with color. Magnolias particularly photogenic. *Peak bloom: Late April-early May.*
- **Summer: Green City:** Lush parks, outdoor café life, long evening light. *Golden hour extends until 9pm - use it!*
- **Autumn: Fall Foliage:** Parks and hills explode with reds, oranges, golds. *Peak colors: Mid-September to mid-October.*

Photography Tips

Weather: Overcast days create even, soft light ideal for architecture. After rain, wet cobblestones reflect beautifully.

Blue Hour: 30 minutes after sunset offers magical light when buildings are illuminated but sky still has color.

Crowds: Arrive early (before 9am) or visit during off-season for empty streets. Weekday mornings quietest.

Permission: Most churches allow photography without flash; always ask if unsure. Museum policies vary.

Drones: Regulated; Old Town generally restricted. Check current regulations before flying.

Electricity & Practical Matters

Electrical Standards

- **Voltage:** 230V
- **Frequency:** 50Hz
- **Plug Type:** Type C (two round pins) and Type F (two round pins with side grounding clips) - European standard
- **Adapters:** Travelers from UK, US, Australia, and most non-European countries will need adapters. Available at airport, electronics stores, and some hotels. Consider purchasing before travel for better prices.
- **Converters:** Most modern electronics (phones, laptops, camera chargers) have built-in converters handling 110-240V. Check device specifications. Only older or specific appliances (hair dryers, curling irons) may require voltage converters.

Currency & Money Matters

- **Currency:** Euro (€) since 2015
- **ATMs:** Widely available throughout city center and tourist areas. Usually best exchange rates. Check your bank's international withdrawal fees.
- **Credit Cards:** Widely accepted in hotels, restaurants, shops, and tourist attractions. Visa and Mastercard most common; American Express less widely accepted.
- **Cash:** Useful for small purchases, markets, some cafés, public transport tickets from drivers. Restaurants and shops generally accept cards without minimum purchase.
- **Tipping:** Not obligatory but appreciated. Round up for drinks; 5-10% for good restaurant service. Taxi drivers don't expect tips. Tip-based walking tours: €5-15 depending on length and quality.

Communication

- **Language:** Lithuanian (official). English widely spoken in tourist areas, hotels, restaurants, and by younger generations. Older generations may speak Russian. Basic Lithuanian phrases appreciated but not necessary.
- **WiFi:** Free WiFi available in most hotels, cafés, restaurants, shopping centers, and many public spaces. Old Town has public WiFi hotspots.
- **Mobile/SIM Cards:** EU roaming regulations apply for EU visitors. Non-EU travelers can purchase local SIM cards at airport or mobile shops (Tele2, Telia, Bitė) with data packages starting around €5-10.
- **Country Code:** +370
- **Emergency Number:** 112 (universal EU emergency number)

Tap Water & Health

- **Tap Water:** Safe to drink throughout Lithuania. Good quality from municipal supply.
- **Pharmacies:** Widespread (marked with green cross). Many open late or 24 hours in city center. Pharmacists often speak English.

- **Healthcare:** EU citizens with EHIC card entitled to emergency healthcare. Travel insurance recommended for all visitors. Private clinics offer services in English.

Safety

Vilnius is very safe with low crime rates. Standard urban precautions apply: watch belongings in crowded areas, don't leave valuables in cars, be aware of surroundings at night. Violent crime against tourists is rare. Emergency services reliable and professional.

Lithuanian Cuisine & Dining

Must-Try Traditional Dishes

- **Cepelinai (Didžkukuliai):** Lithuania's national dish - large potato dumplings shaped like zeppelins, stuffed with ground meat or curd, served with sour cream and bacon bits. Hearty, filling, and uniquely Lithuanian. Available at most traditional restaurants.
- **Šaltibarščiai:** Bright pink cold beet soup served with hot boiled potatoes on the side. Refreshing summer dish made with kefir, cucumbers, and dill. Visually striking and delicious.
- **Kibinai:** Savory pastries with various fillings (traditionally mutton) from Karaim tradition. Must-try in Trakai at authentic Karaim restaurants, but available in Vilnius too.
- **Kugelis:** Potato pudding/casserole made from grated potatoes, eggs, bacon, and onions, baked until crispy outside and creamy inside. Served with sour cream.
- **Balandėliai:** Cabbage rolls stuffed with meat and rice, simmered in tomato sauce. Comfort food similar to versions across Eastern Europe but with Lithuanian twist.
- **Bulviniai Blynai:** Potato pancakes served with sour cream or meat sauce. Crispy outside, fluffy inside.
- **Šakotis:** 'Tree cake' - unique spit cake cooked over rotating fire, creating branching appearance. Traditional celebratory cake, slightly sweet and crunchy.
- **Smoked Fish:** Various smoked fish from Baltic Sea, especially eel and trout. Available at markets and restaurants.
- **Dark Rye Bread:** Dense, slightly sour rye bread central to Lithuanian diet. Often served with garlic or butter. Surprisingly delicious.
- **Lithuanian Cheeses:** Local farmers produce excellent fresh and aged cheeses. Try varieties at Hales Market or specialty shops.

Beverages

- **Lithuanian Beer:** Excellent local brewing tradition. Try Švyturys, Utenos, Kalnapilis, and craft breweries like Dundulis, Mėnuo Juodaragis, Genys.
- **Midus (Mead):** Traditional honey wine in various strengths and flavors. Sweet, historical drink dating back centuries.
- **Kvas:** Slightly fermented rye bread drink, refreshing and mildly alcoholic (or non-alcoholic versions).
- **Lithuanian Vodka & Spirits:** Try Starka (aged rye vodka) or herbal liqueurs like Trejos Devynerios (999).
- **Birch Juice:** Sweet sap collected from birch trees in spring, sold fresh or fermented.

Where to Eat

Traditional Lithuanian:

- *Lokys ('The Bear'):* Historic cellar restaurant serving authentic game and traditional dishes in medieval atmosphere.
- *Etno Dvaras:* Folk-style restaurant with traditional décor, live folk music some evenings, comprehensive Lithuanian menu.
- *Bernelių Užeiga:* Cozy rustic restaurant with generous portions of home-style Lithuanian cooking.
- *Forto Dvaras:* Located in an Old Town courtyard, offering traditional recipes and craft beer.

Modern Lithuanian Cuisine:

- *Sweet Root:* Michelin-recommended tasting menu using seasonal, foraged Lithuanian ingredients. Creative reinterpretations of traditional flavors. Reservations essential.

- *Džiaugsmas:* Contemporary Lithuanian cuisine emphasizing local producers and seasonal ingredients. Modern presentation of traditional tastes.
- *Nineteen18:* Upscale restaurant combining Lithuanian traditions with modern techniques. Elegant atmosphere.
- *Stebuklai:* Creative Lithuanian cuisine with international influences. Known for presentation and flavor combinations.

International & Diverse:

- Vilnius has excellent Italian, Asian, Middle Eastern, and fusion restaurants throughout Old Town and modern districts.
- Vegan/Vegetarian options increasingly available - try Gyvas Baras or Radharanė.

Dining Tips

- **Reservations:** Recommended for upscale restaurants, especially weekends. Casual places usually accept walk-ins.
- **Meal Times:** Lunch 12-2pm, dinner 6-10pm. Some restaurants close between lunch and dinner.
- **Portions:** Traditional Lithuanian portions are generous - consider sharing or ordering selectively.
- **Service:** Service can be slower and less effusive than US/UK standards. This is normal, not poor service.
- **Prices:** Very reasonable compared to Western Europe. Quality meal at traditional restaurant €10-15; upscale dining €30-50 per person.
- **Vegetarian Options:** Traditional cuisine is meat-heavy, but modern restaurants offer vegetarian dishes. Specify dietary requirements.

Markets & Food Shopping

- **Hales Market:** Central market for fresh produce, meats, cheeses, baked goods, and prepared foods. Excellent for picnic supplies and experiencing local food culture.
- **Tymo Market (Weekends):** Hip market with street food, artisan products, and local vendors. Great for trendy snacks and atmosphere.
- **Supermarkets:** Maxima, Iki, Rimi throughout city for groceries and supplies.

Tourist Passes

Vilnius City Card

The **official Vilnius tourist pass** provides free entry to 20+ museums and attractions, Public transport is included only with the separate 24-hour + public transport option; the standard pass does not include it, and discounts at restaurants, shops, and tour operators. The current Vilnius Pass costs €39 for 24 hours, €53 for 48 hours, or €64 for 72 hours. A 24-hour option with public transport costs €46.50. The card includes major sites like Palace of the Grand Dukes, National Museum, MO Museum, Gediminas Tower, National Gallery, and many churches. Also includes free audio guide app and city map. **Best for:** Museum enthusiasts planning to visit multiple sites. The card pays for itself after 3-4 museum visits. Purchase online or at tourist information centers. Digital card available via mobile app for convenience.

www.vilniuscitycard.lt

Vilnius Pass (by Go Vilnius)

Comprehensive digital guide and discount card offering **The pass offers free entry to over 30 museums and attractions, as well as some discounts.** Free to download with pay-as-you-go for attractions. Includes insider tips, suggested itineraries, and detailed information about 100+ venues. The app provides audio guides, walking routes, and real-time information. **Best for:** Flexible travelers who want suggestions and modest discounts without committing to full card cost. The free app alone provides excellent planning resource regardless of purchasing discounts.

www.govilnius.lt

Lithuanian Heritage Pass (Proposed)

Multi-site pass covering **several Lithuanian UNESCO sites and major attractions** beyond Vilnius, including Trakai Castle, Kernavė Archaeological Site, and Curonian Spit (if visiting multiple cities). Check current availability as pass options evolve. Typically offers 15-20% savings versus individual tickets. **Best for:** Travelers exploring multiple Lithuanian regions over several days. Verify current status and coverage before purchasing.

www.lithuania.travel