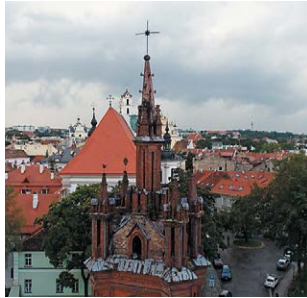


# Vilnius





# Vilnius, the Capital of Lithuania



## Location

Vilnius – this quintessentially European city stands at the very heart of the continent (26 km from its geographical centre to be precise). With a population of just over half a million, it is cosy, friendly and on a refreshingly human scale. Yet the city boasts a confident air thanks to its proud history and thriving economic and cultural life.

Few other European capitals combine cosmopolitanism and tradition as charmingly and seamlessly as Vilnius. Little wonder, then, that the city is attracting more and more tourists and business travellers every year.

## Factual Information About Lithuania

**Population** 2,87 million

### Ethnic Composition

Lithuanians 87 %

Polish 5,6 %

Russians 4,7 %

Others 2,7 %

**Territory** 65 300 km<sup>2</sup>

It's the largest of the three Baltic countries, mostly fertile lowland, peppered with many lakes.

### Borders

Baltic Sea 99 km

Belarus 678 km

Kaliningrad (Russia) 289 km

Latvia 610 km

Poland 103 km

### State Language

Lithuanian

### State Religion

Roman Catholicism

### Government

Parliamentary Republic

**Currency** Euro

### Climate

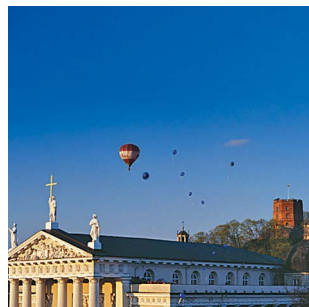
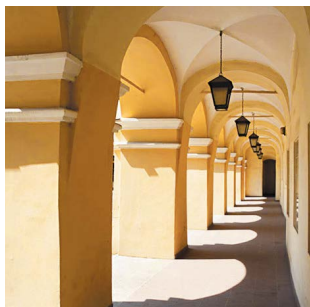
Marine/Continental

### Local Time

GMT + 2 hours (EET),

GMT + 3 hours (summer time)





## Introducing Vilnius

Vilnius has many faces – its labyrinthine Old Town, its sleek business district, its elegant centre, its many open squares and parks, its historic suburbs – all of which blend together into a seamless whole. The city's charm is in its harmonious sense of unity – it just feels right whichever way you look at it.

Walking around Vilnius, you will encounter an astonishing variety of architectural styles and gems. You'll stumble upon narrow cobblestone streets, charming courtyards and cutting-edge public sculptures. You'll be amazed by the abundance of outstanding restaurants, bars and cafes. You'll see that we Lithuanians work hard but also know how to have a good time. Vilnius is a city that suits every taste: young lovers stroll around holding hands in romantic bliss, families joyfully ride their bikes around the vast network of bicycle lanes, friends sit outside a restaurant or wine bar on a cool summer evening relishing the warm weather and delightful atmosphere of the city. It is impossible to visit Vilnius without feeling its unique spirit. You can't come away without being spellbound by its beauty, mystery and magic.









## Where history is now

The earliest known use of the name Lithuania was in a Latin text dating from 1009 and Lithuania was established as a state in 1253. Vilnius began to flourish when, in 1323, Grand Duke Gediminas wrote letters to foreign craftsmen and merchants inviting them to settle in Vilnius, promising them the freedom to trade and live as they wished. By the late 14th century Lithuania's borders extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea and Vilnius was a thriving city that was famed for its architecture, trade, academic excellence and multi-culturalism.

The capital continued to develop and prosper throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, when it attracted great architects, artists and thinkers from near and far. Many of the city's currently celebrated characteristics were first formed during that time.

Vilnius is a city with tremendous historic pedigree. Its esteemed university is one of the oldest in Eastern Europe. Its Old Town is one of the best preserved in Northern Europe and is a UNESCO World Heritage Sight. The city is, quite simply, a tour de force of urban elegance.

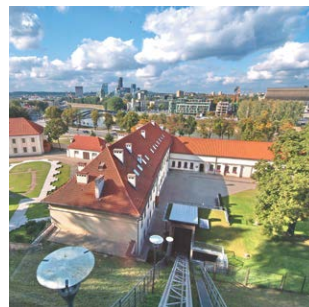
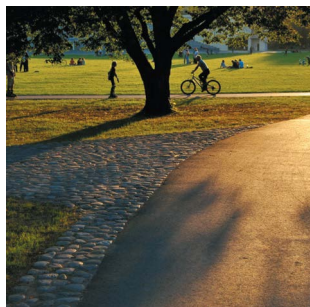
Vilnius is most often described a baroque city, but it boasts an abundance of every kind of architectural style. Napoleon himself was in awe of the gothic St. Anne's Church and said that he wanted to take it back to Paris in the palm of his hand.

The fashionable quarter of Užupis is often referred to as the Montmartre of Vilnius thanks to its artistic and laidback atmosphere. The elegant Gedimino Prospect was designed as a showcase street in the 19th century and frequently hosts street fairs and markets. The majestic Cathedral Square is just one of many public spaces where the city's inhabitants come together to celebrate! Nearby Trakai castle, which sits on an island in a beautiful lake, is a fairy-tale scene that epitomizes Lithuania's proud history.

History is alive and well in Vilnius but the city is no theme park. It is a vibrant, thriving and forward-looking city whose historic facade provides an elegant backdrop in which to do business and seize exciting new opportunities. Vilnius is an extremely open, public and fun-loving city where you'll be pleasantly surprised at every turn.







## Naturally healthy and uplifting

It's hard not to feel healthy and invigorated in Vilnius. The city's winding streets make walking a real pleasure – and nothing is too far away. The centre is filled with open spaces, public squares and areas of green. Sometimes it seems that the city was tailor-made for pedestrians and cyclists, especially during the summer! The use of electric public transport and major roads that route traffic around the centre helps to ensure clean air and a pleasant environment.

Two rivers, the Vilnia and the Neris, run through the heart of the city, with their gentle flow reflecting the relaxed rhythm of life that is so characteristic of Vilnius. The city's main river, the Neris, has pathways running alongside its meandering banks and is a hugely popular place for locals to take a relaxing evening stroll or leisurely bike ride in warm weather.

Even in winter, Vilnius glistens with natural beauty. A walk through the enormous Vingis Park, with the sound of snow crunching underfoot (Lithuanians call it the sound of 'witches thinking'), is a real seasonal pleasure. In winter the park is filled with ski walkers, while in summer it is abuzz with cyclists, rollerbladers and walkers enjoying the invigorating, pine-scented air.

In total, more than 40 per cent of the region of Vilnius is given over to parks and other green areas. These include nearby hills with breathtaking views and picturesque lakes where locals go to enjoy a relaxing dip in the cool water. Whether you want to go hot air ballooning in summer or try cross-country skiing in winter, you can do it in Vilnius with the utmost ease.

Lithuanians have a powerful, almost spiritual, bond with nature. Maybe it stems from their Pagan roots. After all, Lithuania was the last country in Europe to be converted to Christianity. In any case, it's impossible not to be affected by this deep respect for nature. Dried flowers decorate restaurants, hotels and shops throughout winter, while the pleasure of spending every waking moment outdoors and eating al fresco is one that is whole-heartedly enjoyed in summer.









## Be inspired

Vilnius is famed for its many splendid churches. The skyline of the Old Town is tightly packed with gleaming crosses, spires and domes, all of which lend a reassuring air of calm and continuity to the city.

The abundance of multi-denominational churches speaks of a rich and diverse history; some places of worship were even used as granaries, galleries and museums in former times. Happily, these days you are far more likely to see a newly wedded couple emerging from a church or to hear the strains of a chamber concert coming through the stained-glass windows.

While most churches have been beautifully restored, some of the smaller ones are still waiting their turn, although these have a particular charm in their own right. The breathtakingly beautiful interiors of the larger churches attest to the pride this predominantly Catholic nation takes in its faith.

The stunning Gates of Dawn in the Old Town is just one of several awe-inspiring places of worship. Originally part of the city's defensive fortifications, it is now a popular place of pilgrimage for Catholics thanks to its icon of the Virgin Mary, which many believe to have miraculous healing powers. Whatever your faith, Vilnius will make you feel right at home. Churches are an integral part of the city's rich tapestry of social life, and all are made to feel welcome.









## Culture comes to life

It's no accident that Vilnius was the European Capital of Culture in 2009. Lithuanians are a highly cultured people and Vilnius is something of a Mecca for the arts. Vilnius boasts some of the best contemporary theatre in Europe and its innovative productions are routinely sold out. Likewise, barely a week passes without a music festival or major concert taking place, whether it be jazz, blues, classical, rock, alternative music, gospel or...well, the list could go on.

In summer you'll regularly stumble upon free public concerts and the city often resembles a giant street party. The jam-packed events calendar can certainly rival that of any European capital.

The visual arts are also thriving in Vilnius with several cutting-edge museums showcasing the best in classical and contemporary art. The city also has an outstanding tradition in sculpture, so don't be surprised if you see some fantastic-looking objects in unlikely places.

A must-see is the Užupis district – the self-declared break-away republic – which embodies the artistic spirit of the city. There are also traditional arts and crafts tucked away in many small shops in the Old Town. Why not get a traditional Lithuanian scarf woven to your custom design? Or try your hand at polishing amber, the ancient jewel of Lithuania.

There are also loads of hands-on activities, ranging from craft workshops to dancing lessons. No matter what your taste, the irrepressible spirit of creativity in Vilnius offers plenty to entertain and enthrall you.







## Meet the people

Hope, hospitality, vitality – these are key characteristics of the Lithuanian people. They are also fiercely independent, hard-working, cultured and take a keen interest in world affairs. They are also extremely proud of their country and its many charms. One thing is for sure – you will be made to feel warmly welcome.

Lithuanians can be a little reserved, but make an effort and you will be richly rewarded. Start with a few words: “labas” is “hello”, and “ačiū” (which sounds like a little sneeze) is “thank you”. After that you can just speak English, as almost everyone here, especially the younger generations, speak and understand English very well.

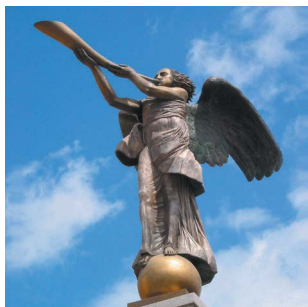
The people of Vilnius can also be surprised that you have shown an interest in their little city. (Honestly, they don’t know what they’ve got here!) It can be a pleasure to reflect the many delights of the city back to them – it’s a mutually rewarding experience that is often just the start of fascinating and engaging conversations.







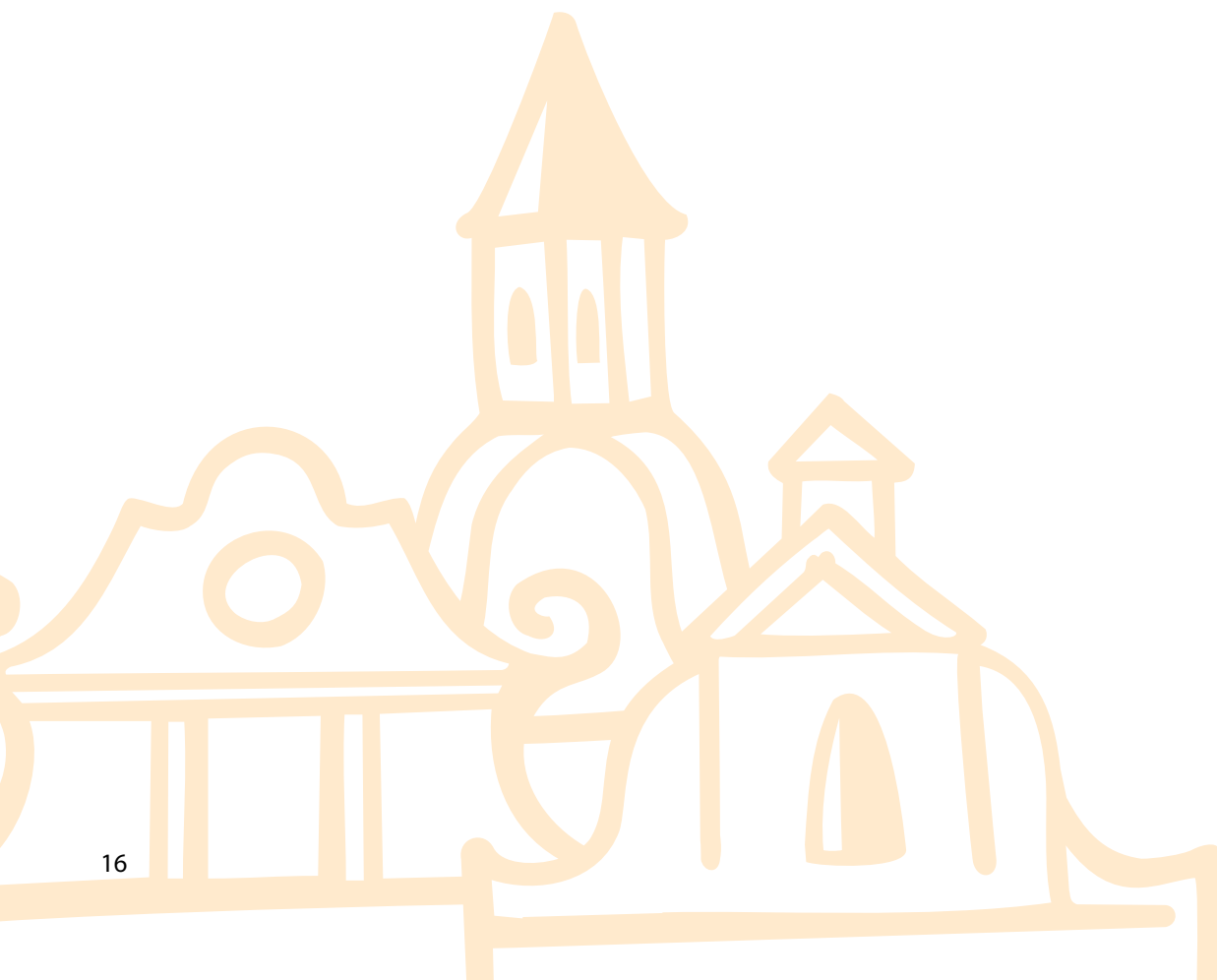




## Be Our Guest

For a small city Vilnius has a staggering choice of accommodation options. The highest levels of comfort and service can be found in five-star hotels, many of which have been cleverly incorporated into historic buildings and are conveniently located right in the centre of the city. Boutique hotels are attractive for their unique features – period details, carefully crafted themes and personal service.

Budget travellers can choose from a growing range of budget hotels and hostels, while families might prefer to explore the vast range of B&B and guest house accommodation, many of which are tucked away in the Old Town and offer self catering facilities. There is also a full range of apartment rental options, from unadorned offerings at budget prices to the most extravagant opulence (with a price tag to match).









Vilnius isn't just a feast for the eyes. Outstanding cuisine, great value and good times are abundant in a wide range of restaurants, bars, clubs and taverns.

Every kind of food is on offer in Vilnius, from specialised national cuisines, to fashionable international fusion, to traditional Lithuanian fare, to the increasingly popular delights of slow food (not to forget something in the way of fast food).

Many consider cepelinai – large dumplings of potato wrapped around spiced meat or curd – to be Lithuania's national dish. You certainly have to try them. Other Lithuanian treats include a wide variety of breads, delicious and hearty soups and game dishes for meat lovers. Lithuanians are also understandably proud of their locally produced beers, balsams, spirits and mead.

Vilnius has a range of restaurants and a thriving nightlife scene to give any capital a run for its money. The city's numerous bars, pubs and clubs cater for every possible taste. From ultra-hip lounge-style bars, to thumping clubs, to laidback pubs, you're guaranteed a good time in this fun-loving city.

## **Always at your service:**

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[www.vilnius-events.lt](http://www.vilnius-events.lt)

[www.vilnius-convention.lt](http://www.vilnius-convention.lt)

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Rodūnios road 2, LT-02189 Vilnius  
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Photos: E. Grimalienė, V. Kirilovas, A. Quested, J. Karasevičiūtė, Keichi Kagi, S. Platukis, M. Aleksa (The Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre), G. Trečiokas, K. Petronis, A. Ufartas, „Kempinski Hotel Cathedral Square“, „Ramada Hotel&Suites“, Vilnius Tourist Information Centre & Convention Bureau, Vilnius City Municipal Government Tourism Division, also from Shutterstock.







