

PRACTICAL INFORMATION: FACTS FOR FIRST TIME VISITORS

THE MAIN FACTS ABOUT LITHUANIA



Official Name	Lietuvos Respublika / Republic of Lithuania
Location	Eastern Europe. Borders with Latvia, Belarus, Poland and Kaliningrad region
Government	Parliamentary democracy with one legislative body, the Seimas
Population	About 2.9 million (83.9 % Lithuanians, 6.6 % Poles, 5.4 % Russians, 5.5 % others)
Capital	Vilnius
Language	Lithuanian
Currency	Euro (since 1 January 2015)
Religion	Roman Catholic
EU member since:	1 May 2004
NATO member since:	29 March 2004
Largest Cities	Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Panevėžys

Time Zone

Lithuania uses the Eastern European Time (GMT+2). The country utilizes Daylight Saving Time: on the last Sunday of March, when the countries of the Central European time zone spring forward one hour, and on the last Sunday of October, when Central European countries spring back one hour, Lithuania changes time too.

Weather

Average winter temperature: -5°C (lowest -27°C), average summer temperature: $+17^{\circ}\text{C}$ (highest $+35^{\circ}\text{C}$). It is difficult to forecast the temperature for the next winter or summer, but it is recommended to have an umbrella with you in spring and autumn. In late spring, storms can start suddenly. If you are coming in winter, do not forget your overcoat, woolen socks, sweaters, caps and gloves.

Geography

Lithuania is the largest and the southernmost country of the three Baltic States. In terms of its area (65,303 sq. km), Lithuania is larger than Denmark, Belgium and Switzerland. In the north, the Republic of Lithuania borders on Latvia, in the east and southeast – on Belarus, in the southwest it has borders with Poland and Russia (Kaliningrad District). In 1989, the French National Geographical Institute named a spot on the road to Molėtai, 25 km north of Vilnius, as the very centre of Europe. A park of modern art sculptures, the Park of Europe, was established in this place.

Timekeeping

Lithuanians are quite punctual. Thus, if they say that a party starts at nine o'clock, they will expect you to come at nine. Clubbing usually starts at 10–11 p. m. and ends, unlike in Southern countries, at 1–2 a.m.

On a Visit

Usually when Lithuanians go to visit someone, they bring something to the host (e.g. a bottle of wine, some chocolate, a cake, etc.). It is not a must, but it would be appreciated.

Phone Calls

Lithuanians answer the phone with “Alio” or “Klausau” (hello); they do not start a conversation on the phone by telling their names. So if you call someone on a fixed phone, you can never be sure that you are talking to the person you wanted to call.

You can buy SIM cards for pre-paid phone services at kiosks or other places marked with the trademark of the service. If you need to find a particular landline phone number, you can call the national phone company TEO or dial the short number 118 for information. In order to make a long distance call within the country, you need to dial 8, then the city code, and a telephone number.

For making international calls, you have to dial 00 (corresponds to the ‘+’ sign on mobile phones), a country code, a city code, and a phone number. In order to call a Lithuanian number from abroad you should dial +370-<city code>-<phone number>.

Emergency Number

The emergency phone number used in Lithuania is 112. If you need to contact the firefighters, the police or the medics in case of emergency, call 112. The calls on this number are free of charge.

Post Office

The main post office of Kaunas is located in Laisvės al. 102. It is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays.

ABOUT KAUNAS



Boasting of nearly 330 thousand inhabitants, Kaunas is one of the most significant cities of Lithuania. It is situated at the heart of Lithuania, at the confluence of the rivers Neris and Nemunas. Kaunas is the second largest city in Lithuania, located 100 km away from Vilnius, the capital city. This fast-growing modern city is rich in academic life; the city is a home town for 6 universities, 2 academies, and 3 affiliates of the universities located in Vilnius.

Kaunas is also an attractive centre of business, industry, science, studies and culture. Famous music, dance, and visual art festivals are held in Kaunas. It is the provisional capital of Lithuania (1920-1939), famous for its colourful history, cosy parks, remarkable Old Town and an interwar spirit.

Kaunas was and still is an important historical and cultural city of Lithuania, known for its active, young and ambitious people. In 1408, Magdeburg rights were granted to the city of Kaunas by the privilege of Vytautas the Great. In the early 20th century, Kaunas was the home of the Lithuanian Government and the capital of the country; this period is considered by many to be the golden age of the city. However, history tells us that even before this date, the city experienced many other periods of great prosperity and national importance.

Visit the hearth of Lithuania and experience its unique atmosphere:

Feast here!

Kaunas is home to a variety of festivals and events, including the famous Kaunas Jazz festival, Hanza days, Operetta, Pažaislis Classical Music festival, Bike show, Kaunas city days, Songs festival (listed by UNESCO), International Modern Dance Festival and many more.

Visit!

The remarkable Old Town, which is a collection of ancient architectural monuments, the remnants of the 14th century Kaunas castle, the buildings of the Middle Ages in the Gothic and the Art Déco styles. The Kaunas Fortress is a valuable military heritage composed of a number of constructions that used to be a military complex. There are nine Forts around the city and the IXth Fort serves a museum. See the macabre collection of nearly 3,000 devils at the Devils' Museum and the exhibitions showing the unique artistic styles of composer and painter M. K. Čiurlionis as well as J. Mačiūnas, an initiator of the avant-garde Fluxus art movement.

Taste it!

The centrepiece of Lithuanian cuisine is dark rye bread. It is shown a great respect and even called “holy”; Lithuanians link many beliefs and magic with it. A great opportunity to taste it is to have soup in a bread bowl. Lithuanian drinks have very old traditions, and if you want to get to know them, the “Stumbras” museum offers a guided tour of the history and tasting of strong drinks. Among the multitude of things that make any Lithuanian swell with pride (rich history, amber, beautiful nature, basketball, etc.), there is one that has a special place in his heart. This source of pride is the Lithuanian Beer.

Make a wish!

The beautiful confluence of two biggest Lithuanian rivers is well known for a magical saying - the Nemunas river is a male and the Neris is a female. The meeting of two rivers is viewed as a marriage of a couple. Two rivers meet in Kaunas, they join and never split up! For those who want their dreams to come true it's the right place to go on rendezvous.

See it!

The whole of Lithuania found in one small area is the open-air museum in Rumšiškės, which is the biggest open-air museum in Eastern Europe. The museum with its collections of authentic wooden villages represents different regions of Lithuania: Žemaitija, Aukštaitija, Dzūkija, Suvalkija and Lithuania Minor.

Ride on it!

The Funicular, a unique means of transportation, is still in use today, including the genuine pre-war wagon, wooden seats, and stop platforms. Even today, the funicular takes people up to the hill, from which the panorama of the Kaunas city centre and Old town is wide open. Kaunas is the only city among Baltic States, where such means of transportation is available.

Sail!

The biggest man-made water basin in Lithuania, which is surrounded by a wonderful landscape, Kaunas Sea, is a perfect place for water activities.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN KAUNAS

Kaunas is an academic city with a rich history, offering plenty of interesting landmarks and fun places to visit. As a starter guide, here are some of the most important locations every guest of Kaunas should see. Each of the titles includes a link to a map showing the exact location of the landmark.

Kaunas Castle

Built in the late 13th century, it is the oldest brick castle in Lithuania and the first one in Kaunas. Kaunas Castle played a significant role in the defence system of the city, suppressing the attacks of the Crusaders and their further movement into Lithuania, including the capital Vilnius. In 1362, after a long siege, the Crusaders destroyed the castle; however, later it was rebuilt and fortified. Kaunas Castle lost its strategic significance after the Battle of Žalgiris (Grunwald).



Town Hall (Rotušės a.)

Often called the White Swan of the city, the Kaunas Town Hall combines elements of Gothic, Baroque and early Classicism styles. In the Middle Ages, the Town Hall was the centre of the city: its square served as the marketplace and the location of various festivities and executions of criminals. After the re-construction of the building in 1973, the Town Hall was turned into the Wedding Palace, while the Museum of Ceramic Art settled in its basement.



St. Francis Xavier Church and Jesuit Monastery (Rotušės a. 7, 8, 9). This late-Baroque style church was constructed in the early 17th century. In 1787, it was transferred to the Order of Franciscan Monks, later it served as an Orthodox Church, Alexander Nevsky's Cathedral and a Technical College. In 1990, the Jesuit Community regained the church.



Kaunas Cathedral (Vilniaus g. 1)

The only Gothic style church in Lithuania, using Basilica design. Reconstructed a number of times, the church has acquired architectural features of the Renaissance and Baroque. The Cathedral has 9 altars and crystal-type arches in the sacristy.



Vilniaus Street (Vilniaus g.)

The most beautiful and the busiest street in the Old Town, intended only for pedestrians. A long time ago, it used to be the main road leading to the Town Hall. The majority of its buildings have survived since the 16th century and many of them have been reconstructed.



Vytautas' the Great Church (Aleksoto g. 3)

This church was built in the 15th century, which makes it the oldest one in Kaunas. It is one of the first Gothic brick buildings of cross-shaped layout in Kaunas. The building belonged to Franciscan monks and was used as a warehouse of weapons during the Napoleonic Wars.



The House of Thunder (Aleksoto g. 61) One of the most original buildings of the flaming Gothic architecture, the House of Thunder was constructed in the 15th century for Hanza merchants. In the 19th century, a statue of Thunder was found in one of the walls, which is why it was designated as a pagan temple. The first Kaunas Drama theatre was established in the house in 1844. Now the House of Thunder belongs to the Jesuit High School.



Laisvės alėja (Laisvės al.) It is a 1.7 km long pedestrian-only street, connecting the old and the new parts of the city. Its beginning and end precisely indicate the directions of the East and the West. The street is one of the first places that every visitor should see while staying in Kaunas. The street starts with Soboras and brings you to Vilniaus gatvė, where the Old Town begins. This street was built during the last years of the 19th century and finished in the 20th century. After a reconstruction in 1982, it became a pedestrian street. Nowadays, Laisvės alėja is one of the main places for entertainment in Kaunas. It has a special charm which invites to go for a walk during the sunny days.



Monument to Vytautas the Great (at the turn of Laisvės al. and L. Sapiegos g.) This monument was unveiled in 1932 in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania. Created by sculptor Vincas Grybas, it first stood in Panemunė, but was destroyed in the Soviet years. After the restoration of independence, it was placed at the junction of Laisvės alėja and Sapiegos street.



St. Michael the Archangel Church (Nepriklausomybės a. 14) This is a neo-Byzantine style building (built in 1891-1895) with architectural traits of Orthodox sanctuary. The church was designed and constructed by Russian architects for the Kaunas military garrison. Later it functioned as an art gallery, until it was turned into a Catholic church.



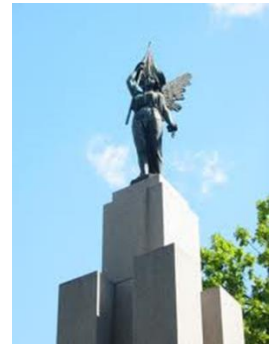
Kaunas Funiculars (Skriaudžių g. 8 and Aušros g. 6)

Kaunas is the only city in Lithuania which has funiculars, one of the oldest means of transport. The funiculars in Žaliakalnis and Aleksotas are used for two purposes – transportation and pleasure trips. The funicular in Aleksotas links the old part of the city with the slopes of Aleksotas, which offer a beautiful view of the city. The funicular of Žaliakalnis goes up from downtown to the monumental Christ's Resurrection Church, the roof of which also provides a spectacular panorama of the city.



Statue of Liberty (Vienybės a.)

This sculpture is the symbol of Lithuanian Statehood. It was inaugurated in 1928, destroyed during the Stalinist regime and restored in 1989.



Pažaislis Monastery (T. Masiulio g. 31, Kaunas) One of the most beautiful architectural ensembles of the Baroque style in Lithuania, the Pažaislis Monastery was built in the 17th century as a Camaldoli Abbey under the supervision of Italian masters from Florence. Pažaislis music festivals are held here every summer. More information at: www.pazaislis.lt.



VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

ART SPACES

AND MUSEUMS



VMU art spaces are cultural hot spots of the city. Important annual cultural events and festivals of Kaunas take place here, as well as various cultural, educational and social activities.

Gallery 101 (Laisvės al. 53-101, Kaunas)

The Academic art gallery 101 at VMU plays an important role in the intellectual life of the city. Educational projects and exhibitions held here present the cultural and historical context of art, while lectures and film viewings enrich the life of the urban and academic community, and facilitates critical dialogue and interdisciplinary interpretation of art and culture.

Gallery 5th Floor (K. Donelaičio g. 52, 5th floor, Kaunas)

The authors of the exhibitions at Gallery 5th Floor are as diverse as their subjects – they include not only the members of VMU academic community, but also social partners and friends.

Museum of S. & S. Lozoraičiai (K. Donelaičio g. 58, Kaunas)

On display at the Museum of S. & S. Lozoraičiai are personal belongings of the renowned Lozoraičiai family, together with the archives, such as video and audio tapes, documents, and photos. Authenticity of the exposition allows reconstructing the environment and spirit of the past times, highlighting the universal historical values through the presentation of these highly respectable people.

Sugihara House (Vaižganto g. 58, Kaunas)

The Sugihara Foundation is a museum and a public institution founded in 1999 by Lithuanian and Belgian intellectuals and businessmen in order to commemorate the name of Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara. The initiators of the foundation pursue several objectives, such as raising funds for the establishment and maintenance of the Sugihara House, rallying intellectuals for collaborative research on tolerance and strengthening cultural relations between Japan and Lithuania.

VMU History Hall (K. Donelaičio g. 58, Kaunas)

VMU History Hall is one of the spaces where people can acquaint themselves with an exposition showcasing the long-lasting history of the university and the building where the hall is located. Archived documents, photos, their reproductions, historical artifacts, possessions and donated exhibits are just some of the examples of what can be found here.