

# Vilnius Historic Centre - UNESCO World Heritage City

The historic centre of Vilnius is the cradle of the entire state of Lithuania and a location which is especially significant in the history not only of Lithuania but also of a broad expanse of Eastern Europe, in terms of its political influence, rich architecture, works of art, and the many cultural and scientific ideas that took shape here.

This 352-hectare area was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994, thus recognising its exceptional universal value. The historic centre of Vilnius is a wonderful example of a city that developed organically over the course of more than five centuries. Here one can still find the radial street layout characteristic of the Middle Ages and a wide variety of architecturally valuable buildings, damaged only in certain places by wars and occupations. A portion of the buildings have managed to keep several cultural layers; as styles came and went, such buildings were rebuilt, so a present-day observer can see an architectural mosaic unfold in some buildings. It is important that the city has long been known for its openness to other cultures. The houses of

worship of different religious confessions we see today remind us of that. At the beginning of the 14th century, when Vilnius was first mentioned in written sources, Grand Duke Gediminas wrote letters inviting members of various professions to come to the capital of Lithuania and thus opened the door to different cultures. More than a few peoples have made significant contributions to the growth of Vilnius, including Jews, Ruthenians, Poles, Tatars, and others.

And so we invite you to set off on a journey through the streets and alleys that call to mind the Middle Ages. In the nomination file for the historic centre of Vilnius that was submitted to the World Heritage Committee, six main architectural ensembles were identified; you will visit all of them (and more!) when you follow the suggested route. Magnificent architecture and the subtly intertwining Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque structures will tell you the multicultural stories of the city.

## 1 Cathedral Basilica of Saints Stanislaus and Ladislaus in Vilnius

54,685680, 25,286751  
Katedros a. 1 | katedra.lt



Cathedral Basilica of Saints Stanislaus and Ladislaus in Vilnius

The Cathedral of Vilnius is one of the oldest and most important places of worship for Lithuania's Catholics. The original Cathedral was built at the end of the 14th century, after Lithuania was officially converted to Christianity. The rulers and most influential nobles of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were buried in the cathedral's crypts.

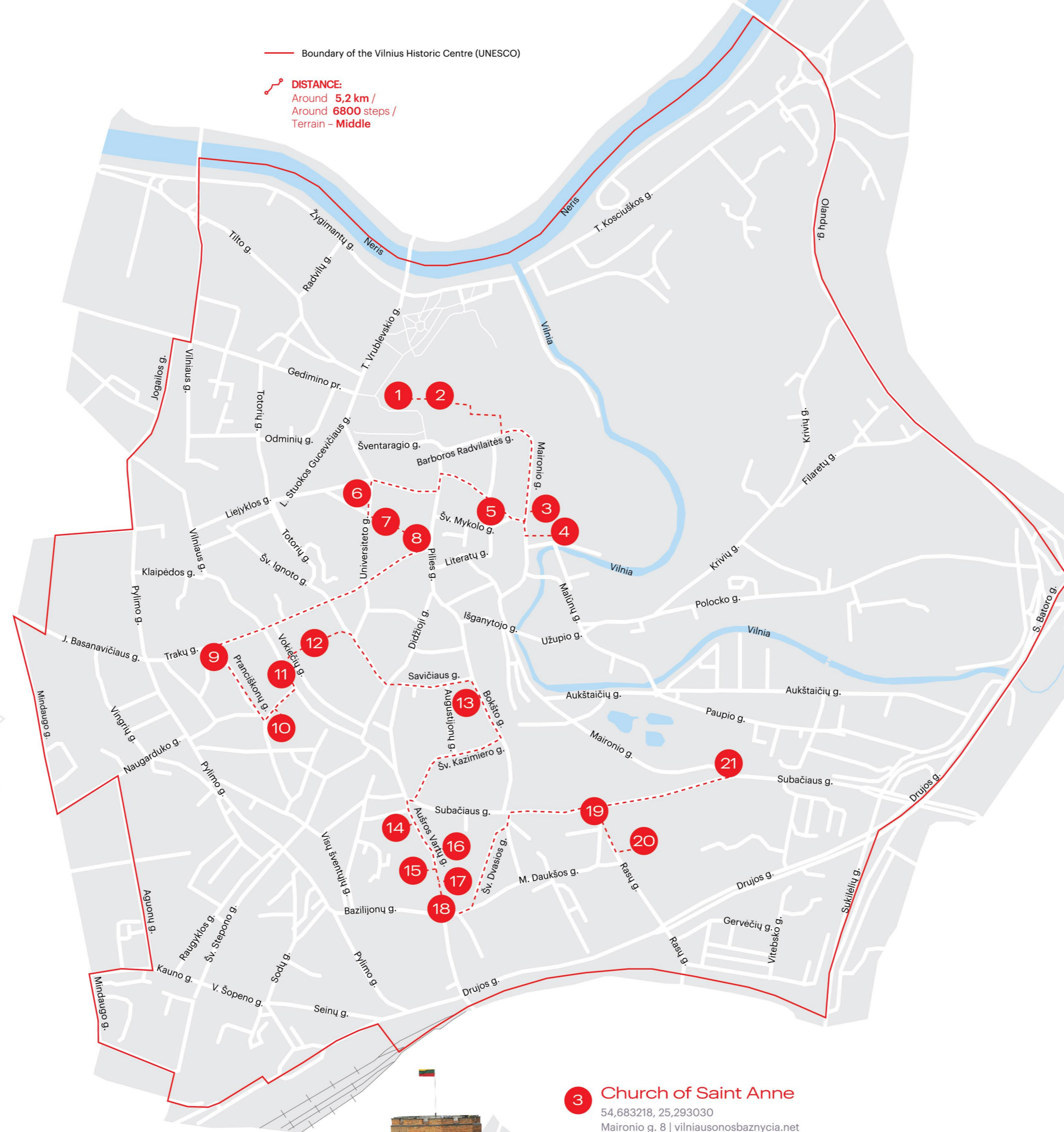
The Cathedral repeatedly burned, was damaged and again rebuilt in different periods in the prevalent Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque styles. During the last reconstruction, at the end of the 18th century, the cathedral was rebuilt according to the design of architect Laurynas Gucevičius; the building took on grand Classicist forms. However, Baroque elements remained, especially the ornate and abundantly-decorated Chapel of Saint Casimir. One can also see a famously curious painting of the prince, in which Saint Casimir is pictured with three hands!

Today, daily services are held in the Cathedral, and state and national holidays are ceremoniously observed. The royal crypt is open to visitors.



In front of the Cathedral, you will find a tile with the footprints of an unknown participant in the Baltic Way, made on 23 August 1989 while marking the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, when a living chain of people holding hands stretched 600 kilometres to connect the capitals of three Baltic countries. Documents related to this significant event have been inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

thebalticway.eu



— Boundary of the Vilnius Historic Centre (UNESCO)

**DISTANCE:**  
Around **5,2 km** /  
Around **6800 steps** /  
Terrain - **Middle**

## 2 Vilnius Castle Complex

54,685854, 25,289173

National Museum-Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania, Katedros a. 4; Gediminas Castle Tower, Arsenalo g. 5, vedovurumai.lt | Inn.lt

The Vilnius Castle Complex is composed of three castles: the Lower, the Upper, and the no-longer-extant Crooked Castle.

The Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania has been rebuilt on the site of the Lower Castle, the oldest masonry of which has been dated to the 13th-14th c. It is the former residence of the rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. An especially magnificent period for the castle was the 16th century, when Bona Sforza, Grand Duchess of Lithuania and Queen of Poland, came from Italy to reside here, bringing with her the spirit of the Renaissance. Her son, Sigismund II Augustus, later became Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland. During those years, an abundant collection of trophies and tapestries and one of the richest libraries in Europe was accumulated at the Palace. Unfortunately, the Palace suffered extensive damage and its riches were pillaged in the latter half of the 17th century during the wars with Russia.

As the millennial anniversary of the Lithuanian state approached, it was decided to rebuild the



Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. A museum makes its home here, thoroughly acquainting visitors with the history of the Palace.

The Upper Castle was first mentioned in written sources in the 14th century. It was repeatedly rebuilt; it mainly performed a defensive function. Because of the 17th-18th c. wars with Russia, the castle fell into disrepair, and only the brick Gediminas Tower has survived to the present day. A historical exhibition has been set up in the tower, as well as an observation deck at the top, from which a wonderful panoramic view of the city opens up.

Little is known of the third, Crooked, castle, which stood on what is now called the Hill of Three Crosses. It is known that at the end of the 14th century, the castle was burned and was never rebuilt.

## 3 Church of Saint Anne

54,683218, 25,293030

Maironio g. 8 | vilniausonosbaznycia.net

One of the best-known structures in Vilnius, a masterpiece of Late Gothic architecture and the subject of legends, the Church of Saint Anne was built at the beginning of the 16th century and has remained largely unchanged to the present day. The architect of the church is not known, but the differences between the lower and upper facades suggest that the building may have been built by two craftsmen. It is remarkable that 33 different kinds of clay bricks were used in the construction of the house of worship. While the church's interior is modest, it is adorned with an original Baroque altar by the architect Johann Christoph Glaubitz. The Church of Saint Anne is open to visitors.



**Johann Christoph Glaubitz** was a Late Baroque architect who lived in Vilnius in the 18th century. He was responsible for reconstructing about ten Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Jewish, and Lutheran houses of worship, and he is credited with developing the distinctive Lithuanian style of Baroque architecture.



Church of Saint Anne

# Vilnius Historic Centre



Lithuanian cross-crafting is a phenomenon bringing together art, craft, and faith; it is inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Don't miss the opportunity to take in the cross-crafting exhibition at the National Museum of Lithuania, and as you stroll around the historic centre of Vilnius, don't forget to look up and take a closer look at the church steeples. Many of them are topped by a cross with distinctive features.

Arsenalo g. 1, Inn.lt

There was a time when crafts prospered in Vilnius. The most varied houseware and decorative works were born in the glass and leather workshops and in the skilled hands of weavers, potters, and goldsmiths. And today the narrow streets and alleys of the historic centre of Vilnius are home to many crafts that have withstood the test of time. Choose one that suits your taste and drop by a workshop or gallery not just to buy an authentic item, but also to make your own unique souvenir!

Ingenious handmade items also reach Vilnius from the most distant corners of Lithuania. In the first days of March each year, the Old Town is taken over by folk artists and artisans for the bustling Saint Casimir's Fair, named in honour of Lithuania's patron saint.

seniejamatai.lt, kaziukomugevilnius.lt

Vilnius has long been known as a city open to different peoples and religions. And today you can not just feast your eyes on the houses of worship of various confessions, but also savour the multicultural flavours of Vilnius, like the fresh-baked Jewish bagel, the Karaim kibinas (similar to a Cornish pasty) or the Tatar hundred-leaf (a sweet pastry)! You'll find a real variety of authentic tastes in the Hales market, the oldest market still operating in Vilnius, in which you can try samples and buy original, organic local products.

halesturgaviete.lt

Vilnius is an important part of Europe known for its legends and sentimental stories. As part of World Heritage Journeys, an initiative sponsored by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and National Geographic, the historic centre of Vilnius has been included on the itinerary 'Romantic Europe'. The route takes visitors through eight World Heritage sites famous for their exceptional love stories. The remarkable story of Barbara Radvilaite and Sigismund II Augustus invites visitors to discover Vilnius. The love shared by the beautiful noblewoman and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, who was also the King of Poland, was fated not to come to fruition, overcoming the opposition of all those around them, Barbara and Sigismund married, but after just a few short years, the queen succumbed to illness. She had asked to be buried in Vilnius, and her coffin was transported there. One can visit her burial crypt located under the Cathedral.

visitworldheritage.com

The historic centre of Vilnius is divided into three main zones: the castle territory, the central Old Town that was once surrounded by a defensive wall, and the suburbs that formed during the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Užupis is one of the oldest inner suburbs of the Old Town. The fast-running Vilnia river was lined with mills, small factories and workshops for less-wealthy craftspeople. Today Užupis is known for its bohemian artistic community. Visitors find their way to the neighbourhood to read the constitution of the Republic of Užupis, translated into at least 31 languages as of this writing, or to swing on 'The Swing of Fate'. But in this republic of artists, it is also worth looking for significant historical sites, such as the small Church of Saint Bartholomew the Apostle, tucked in amongst the surrounding houses, or the first Catholic convent in Lithuania, or the remarkably beautiful gravestones in the Bernardine cemetery. Pick up the brochure about Užupis that you can find in any Vilnius Tourist Information Centre and set off to find this important part of the historic centre of the capital.

Lithuanian multipart songs are polyphonic folk songs, an especially old and traditional musical phenomenon, and have been recognised by inclusion on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Having developed prior to the rise of Christianity in Lithuania, the multipart songs are noteworthy for their frequent use of imitative refrains, sharp dissonant seconds and the simultaneous performance of different lyrics and different melodies. For six days at the end of May each year, the international folklore festival 'Skamba Skamba Kankliai' takes place in the historic centre of Vilnius, with evening performances of multipart songs.

ssk.lt

The living tradition of the Baltic Song and Dance Celebrations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania has been recognised by inscribing the large-scale festivals on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Every four years, tens of thousands of performers fill Kalnai (Hills) Park and Vingis (Riverbend) Park, stadiums and other public spaces in the capital, continuing the centuries-old traditions of Lithuanian song and dance.

dainuvents.lt



www.neakivaizdinisvilnius.lt  
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IG: neakivaizdinis\_vilnius

The mobile app 'Neakivaizdinis Vilnius' is available for download



The project was implemented by: The International Relations and Tourism Office of the Vilnius City Administration

Authors of the route: VŠJ 'Gatves gyvos'

Photographs courtesy of: Albertas Kazlauskas, Dovilė Rūkaitė, Gediminas Savickis, Vilnius Ethnic Culture Center Archive, Gintaras Vitulskis, Real is Beautiful Stock, Janas Bulhakas, the Great Synagogue, Lithuanian Art Museum, Marius Dizaineris, Real is Beautiful Stock, Martynas Vidzbelis, Lithuanian National Culture Centre archive, unknown artist, Barbara Radvilaite, Lithuanian Art Museum, Saulius Žūra, Vilnius City Municipality, VŠJ 'Go Vilnius'.

Layout: Vilma Černiauskaitė



#### 4 Church of Saint Francis of Assisi (Bernardines)

54,683082, 25,293892  
Maironio g. 10 | bernardinuansamblis.lt

The Bernardine monks invited to Vilnius in the middle of the 15th century established a wooden house of worship, which later became one of the largest brick sacral buildings in the Gothic architectural style. The façade of the church is distinguished by pointed-arch windows, a rising pediment with octagonal steeples and a fresco of the Crucifixion. The church's interior is especially valuable, striking for its Gothic vaults and frescoes. The church and monastery now belong to the Order of Friars Minor. Services are held daily, and visitors may take a tour of the architectural ensemble.



A large part of the Bernardine Garden located next to the ensemble belonged to the monks for several centuries. An exhibition with plants of various kinds has been created in the park in their memory. Visit it and discover what kind of plants for use as medicine, spice, or tea were grown by the Bernardines.



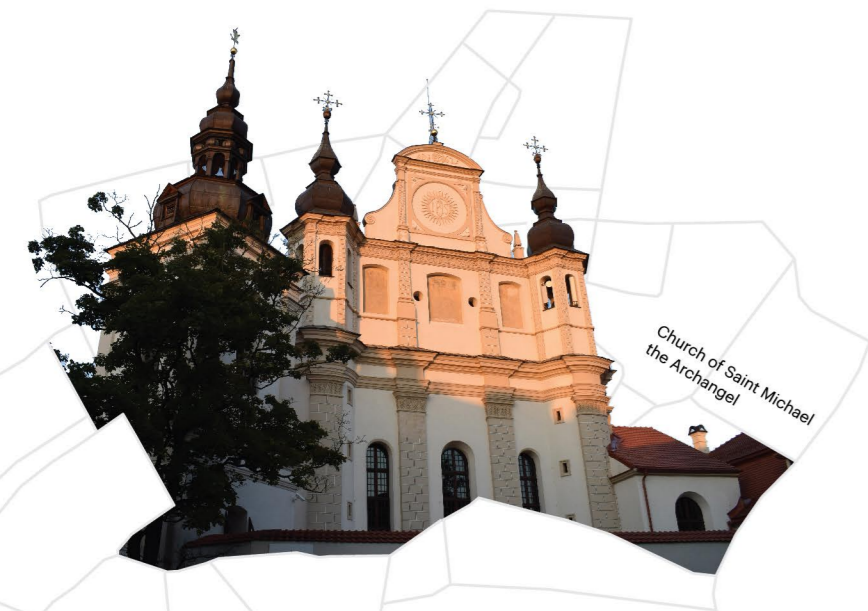
Church of Saint Francis of Assisi (Bernardines)

#### 5 Church of Saint Michael the Archangel

54,682862, 25,292063  
Šv. Mykolo g. 9 | bpmuziejus.lt

Built at the end of the 16th century, this church was commissioned as a mausoleum for the noble Sapieha family, influential in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. About 20 members of the family were buried here. It was the first church with such a purpose to be built in Lithuania. Three different styles are intertwined in the architecture of the building: Late Gothic, Renaissance, and Early Baroque. A Bernardine convent famous for its extraordinary wealth was located next to the

church; a large part of the nuns who lived there had been born into noble families. In the present day, the Church Heritage Museum is located in the buildings of the former church and convent. Here you can see the miraculous painting of the Madonna of the Sapiehas, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary with the Infant, religious masterpieces from the churches of the city of Vilnius, and a portion of the Treasury of the Cathedral of Vilnius.



Church of Saint Michael the Archangel

#### 6 Presidential Palace

54,683257, 25,285957  
S. Daukanto a. 3 | pazinkvalstybe.lt

This location was always a symbol of power. In the 16th century, it was the Bishops' Palace. Later, after Lithuania was annexed by the Russian Empire, the building became the residence of the Governor General. At the beginning of the 19th century, the palace was reconstructed upon orders from the Tsar, and it took on the statelyness of Late Classicist architecture. Many prominent figures stayed here, among them Alexander I, Emperor of Russia; Louis XVIII, King of France; Napoléon Bonaparte, Emperor of the French; and Józef Piłsudski, Marshal of Poland.

At present, the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania is established here. In one building of the complex, the Centre for Civil Education invites visitors to get better acquainted with the history of Lithuania and the governance of the contemporary state.



Evangelical Lutheran church

#### 7 Vilnius University

54,682558, 25,287673  
Universiteto g. 3 | muziejus.vu.lt

Vilnius University is the largest and oldest institution of higher education in Lithuania, established in 1579 at the initiative of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). This cradle of learning exerted a large influence on the cultural life not only of Lithuania, but also of all of Central and Eastern Europe, and raised generations of scientists, artists, and public figures. The university ensemble with buildings in the Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classicist styles took shape over the course of several centuries. There

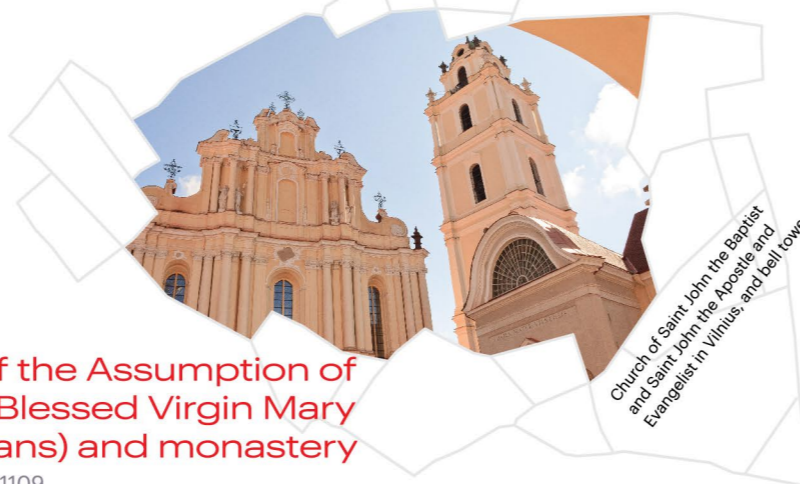
are 13 courtyards, named in honour of some of the most eminent figures who taught or studied at the university. The galleries of the Great Courtyard, or Petras Skarga Courtyard, are decorated with restored frescoes portraying the founders and patrons of the university, and if you go into the Faculty of Philology you can see the fresco 'Metu laikai' (The Seasons) by Petras Repšys, considered one of the most remarkable works of 20th century Lithuanian art. The bookshop 'Littera' located in the centre of the ensemble is also known for its impressive wall paintings; the vaulting and pillars are decorated with the frescoes of Antanas Kmeiliauskas, embodying the arts and sciences that flourish at the university. The architectural ensemble is open to visitors.

#### 8 Church of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist in Vilnius, and bell tower

54,682685, 25,288433  
Šv. Jono g. 12 | muziejus.vu.lt

This is the first parish church in the city of Vilnius. Construction was begun after Christianity was introduced to Lithuania in 1387 and the church opened its doors in 1426. Later, in the latter half of the 16th century, the house of worship was transferred to the Society of Jesus established next door, and from then on the church has been a part of the ensemble of Vilnius University. In the first half of the 18th century, architect Johann Christoph Glaubitz gave the Gothic building an

elegant Late Baroque look. The church's pillars are adorned with 18 sculptures, of which 12 are images of one or the other Saint John. Religious services as well as various concerts, special occasions and the graduation ceremony for newly-minted Vilnius University graduates are held at the church. The adjacent bell tower is the tallest building (68 metres) in the historic centre of Vilnius. During the warm season, the bell tower is open to visitors, to admire the panoramic view of the city of Vilnius.



Church of Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist in Vilnius, and bell tower

#### 9 Church of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary (Franciscans) and monastery

54,679449, 25,281109  
Trakų g. 9

The history of the church dates to the 14th century, and the monastery is the oldest in Vilnius. Franciscan monks were the first Catholic order to be invited to Lithuania, and their missionary work significantly contributed to the consolidation of Christianity in the country. The ensemble was built in the Gothic style, later taking on Baroque features. The monastery was at that time a centre of art and science. There was a school, college, printing house, and a library with a rich collection of works. The Order of Friars Minor Conventual (the Conventual Franciscans) now find a home in the ensemble. Services are held at the church in Polish and Lithuanian.



Church of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary (Franciscans) and monastery

#### 10 Church of Saint Nicholas

54,678213, 25,282875  
Šv. Mikalojaus g. 4 | mikalojus.lt

This house of worship is one of the oldest architectural monuments in Vilnius. The church was built in the latter half of the 14th century to serve merchants and craftsmen arriving in Vilnius from the cities of the Hanseatic League; the name of the church confirms this, as Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors and merchants. The church was built in the Early Gothic style prevalent in Europe at the time, with simple forms using red brick. The interior is modest; the left altar is adorned with a 16th century painting of Saint Nicholas. The church that served as an important sanctuary



Church of Saint Nicholas

for Catholicism throughout the 20th century maintains its significance today. Services in Lithuanian are held daily.

#### 11 Evangelical Lutheran church

54,679145, 25,282756  
Vokiečių g. 20 | liuteronai.lt

The Evangelical Lutheran church in Vilnius was built in the middle of the 16th century, at the height of the Reformation. The majority of Lutherans in Vilnius at that time were residents of German origin.

At first built of wood, the church was later rebuilt in brick. The house of worship was repeatedly devastated by fires, and was reconstructed in

the 18th century by the master of Vilnius Baroque architecture, Johann Christoph Glaubitz. The décor he created at the church is stately in a subtle way, reflecting the religious doctrine of the Lutherans. Members of the Evangelical Lutheran parish in Vilnius regularly hold services at the church, and various community and city events take place there.

#### 12 Great Synagogue of Vilnius (no longer extant)

54,680035, 25,284410  
Vokiečių g. 13A

The Great Synagogue was an important element of the multicultural historic centre of Vilnius. It was one of the largest Jewish religious institutions in all of Eastern Europe, an important Jewish religious and educational centre, allowing Vilnius with good reason to be called the Jerusalem of the North. The first synagogue in this location was established in the 16th century, but there is no information about its appearance. The Great Synagogue in the Renaissance-Baroque style was built on the foundations of the first synagogue in the 17th century, when Władysław IV Vasa, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, granted the right to establish a Jewish quarter. It is thought that this house of worship in its size and splendour surpassed all other synagogues in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Having suffered from various misfortunes and wars over the years, the house of worship was partially reconstructed at the end of the 19th century. Unfortunately, during the Second World War the synagogue was quite badly damaged, and during the Soviet period, at the decision of the authorities, the buildings were completely demolished. However, archaeological research of the Great Synagogue complex performed over the last several years has revealed that valuable elements of the synagogue remain hidden underground. It is planned to

continue such research, and later it will be decided how to best commemorate the synagogue.



Adjacent to the former site of the synagogue, you will find on Žydy Street a monument to Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, the Vilna Gaon. He was a prominent Jewish spiritual leader and scholar who lived in the capital in the 18th century, a world-famous exegete (commentator) of the Torah and Talmud, whose name made Vilnius famous as the Jerusalem of the North.



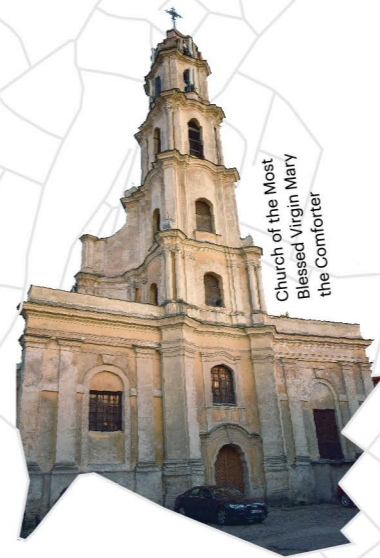
Great Synagogue of Vilnius

#### 13 Church of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary the Comforter

54,679152, 25,290288  
Savičiaus g. 13 | ramintoja.lt

The only single-steeple Baroque house of worship in Vilnius was built in the latter half of the 18th century by Augustinian monks. The church's exterior has remained nearly unchanged to the present day, but the ornate Late Baroque interior with nine altars and richly-decorated sculptures was completely destroyed during the Soviet period. Reinforced concrete partitions were built, and the inside area was adapted for use as a vegetable storage area.

The church is now undergoing rebirth: various cultural and civic events are held here.



Church of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary the Comforter

#### 14 Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society

54,676243, 25,288013  
Aušros Vartų g. 5 | filharmonija.lt

From the beginning of the 16th century, the residences of Muscovite merchants were located here. After repeated reconstructions, the building was reconstructed again at the beginning of the 20th century in the Historicist style. The luxurious Vilnius City Hall, for cultural events, opened its doors here.

In 1905, an event especially important to

Lithuania, the Great Seimas of Vilnius, occurred here. The idea of Lithuanian independence was raised in public for the first time. In 1906, the premiere of the first Lithuanian-language opera, 'Birutė', was performed at the City Hall. During the First World War, the building was used as a hospital. Later, its purpose was changed repeatedly, until the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society was established here in 1940. It is the largest concert institution in Lithuania, acquainting listeners with classical and contemporary music performed by well-known Lithuanian and foreign musicians. Visitors find an interior that has preserved the luxury of the Historicist style of the early 20th century.

#### 15 Church of the Holy Trinity (Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church) (Basilian Order of Saint Josaphat)

54,675329, 25,288158  
Aušros Vartų g. 7b

According to legend, a wooden Orthodox church was built at this site in the middle of the 14th century at the initiative of Uliana Alexandrovna of Tver, wife of Algirdas, Grand Duke of Lithuania. The church commemorated the first Christian martyrs in Lithuania: Anthony, John and Eustathius. At the end of the 16th century, after the signing of the Union of Brest, the Orthodox church was transferred to a new community, the Eastern-rite Catholics (Uniates). A Basilian monastery was established next to

the church, and the monks engaged in education and publishing.

In the 18th century, the ensemble was reconstructed according to a design by the architect Johann Christoph Glaubitz, and the church and the monastery took on Baroque forms. The Basilian Gate designed by the architect is especially noteworthy: it is considered his most advanced creative work.

Services in Ukrainian are held daily at the church.

#### 16 Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit

54,675597, 25,290518  
Aušros Vartų g. 10

For more than 400 years, the religious and cultural centre of Orthodox life in Lithuania has been located here. Construction of a house of worship and a monastery was initiated at the end of the 15th century by Helena, the Orthodox wife of Alexander I Jagiellon, Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland.

The relics of three Orthodox saints, Anthony, John and Eustathius, are kept in an ornate Baroque reliquary in the Church of the Holy Spirit. The Late Baroque interior and the vivid green iconostasis were created according to the



Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit

design of architect Johann Christoph Glaubitz.

At present, a monastery and a convent, the only such Orthodox institutions in Lithuania, operate alongside the Orthodox church. The house of worship is open to visitors, and services in Russian are held daily.

#### 17 Church of Saint Teresa of Ávila

54,674982, 25,289571  
Aušros Vartų g. 14 | ausrosvartai.lt

The Discalced Carmelites, having arrived in Vilnius in the 17th century, built this church; it was one of the earliest Baroque churches to be built in Lithuania, and was inspired by the Italian school of Baroque architecture. Construction was funded by Stefan Pac, Deputy Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The most luxurious materials were used, including black marble and Swedish sandstone. The coat of arms of the patron's family, featuring a lily, is visible on the church's pediment.



Church of Saint Teresa of Ávila

The house of worship was given the name of the co-founder of the Discalced Carmelites, Saint Teresa of Ávila.

The quite ornate church interior created in the latter half of the 18th century has survived to the present day. An important element of the church's decoration consists of its paintings and frescoes, related to the contemplation encouraged by Saint Teresa. Services in Lithuanian and Polish are held at the church.



Gate of Dawn

#### 18 Gate of Dawn

54,674284, 25,289525  
Aušros Vartų g. 14 | ausrosvartai.lt

This is the only remaining gate of the Vilnius defensive wall built at the beginning of the 16th century. The shooting apertures remain visible to the present day. At that time, it was believed that the city would be protected not only by its walls, but also by the painting of the Mother of God that was hung in the Gate of Dawn. Later, miraculous qualities were attributed to this work of art. It was thought that fires were extinguished through its power and that the city was saved from final destruction in the wars raging at the time.

In the latter half of the 16th century, the Discalced Carmelites built a wooden chapel to house the

painting. After the chapel burned, a masonry chapel was built, which has come down to us with its Classicist forms, a facade decorated with the Eye of Providence and a Latin inscription, *Mater Misericordiae (Mother of Mercy)*.

The Gate of Dawn received particular attention in 1993. Pope John Paul II visited Lithuania after the country restored its independence and, watched by faithful across the world, recited the rosary in the shrine and bore witness that this devotional site was exceptionally important to him.

Today the Gate of Dawn is one of the best-known symbols of Vilnius. Pilgrims come in large numbers to see the painting of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Madonna of Vilnius, considered to be miraculous, and leave behind tokens of gratitude or votive offerings.

The chapel is open daily to visitors.

#### 19 Church of the Lord's Ascension to Heaven

54,676833, 25,296007  
Subačiaus g. 26

A church was consecrated on Išganytojas (Saviour) Hill in the first half of the 18th century. It took on its contemporary appearance in the middle of the 18th century, when it was rebuilt according to the design of architect Johann Christoph Glaubitz, giving the building Late Baroque features. This church stands apart from others thanks to its graceful proportions and the two slender steeples with their elaborate silhouettes.

The monks of the Congregation of the Mission engaged in charitable, educational activity in Vilnius, establishing homes for orphans and the elderly, hospitals, and a seminary with an extensive library.

During the Soviet period, the church was used as a storage area for collections of the Museum of History and Ethnography. At present, the buildings of the complex are closed; in the future, it is planned to adapt them for public purposes.

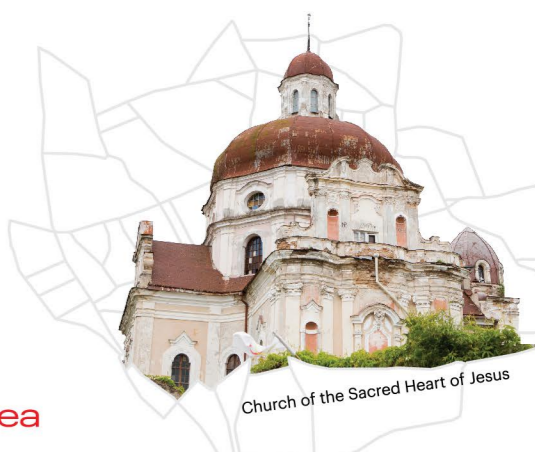
#### 20 Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary)

54,675723, 25,297481  
Rasų g. 6

At the end of the 17th century, nuns of the Visitation Order settled in Vilnius, and more than 50 years later, construction of a church in the Late Baroque style was completed for their use. The church was exceptional for its expressive cupola. The house of worship was built adjacent to the Congregation of the Mission monastery. In keeping with tradition, priests of the Congregation attended to the spiritual needs of the Visitation Sisters.

After Lithuania was annexed to the Russian Empire, the convent was adapted for use by Orthodox nuns and the church was transformed into an Orthodox church. In 1915, the Orthodox nuns left Lithuania, the Visitation Sisters returned to the house of worship and for some time, it again became a Catholic church.

During the Soviet period, the interior of the church and the convent was destroyed. The buildings were used as part of a hard-labour prison complex. The territory is now closed and awaits rebirth.



Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

#### 21 Subačiaus observation area

54,677505, 25,300204  
(Maironio g. and Subačiaus g. crossroads)

One of the most beautiful panoramic views of Vilnius can be seen from the Subačiaus Street observation area. Looking out from the observation area, one can see the majority of the most

important architectural and cultural heritage objects of the historic centre of Vilnius and one can take in the exceptional silhouette of the Old Town formed by the many church steeples reaching for the sky.