

EXPERIENCE A HISTORY OF YOUR OWN PILGRIMAGE IN VILNIUS



VILNIUS – A CITY OF MERCY

Almost all of Lithuania's history can be told in its churches, so it is no surprise that the country has a deep tradition as a pilgrimage destination. For more than 400 years, pilgrims have been meeting at the painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Gates of Dawn in hopes of receiving Mary's blessing and help, or even to thank her for the grace she may have already bestowed upon them. Today, about 30,000 pilgrims from all over the world visit Vilnius annually. The path of Mercy that can be found here begins with the special works of St. Faustina and the Blessed Father St. Michael Sopoćko, who lived in Vilnius and spread the message of

God's Mercy to the world. The places of interest for pilgrims promote the city through its sacred heritage. Vilnius is special because the main Christian denominations are clearly visible on the narrow streets of the Old Town – there are Catholic, Russian Orthodox, and Lutheran churches, Greek Catholic prayer houses and more. With this leaflet, we invite you to experience Vilnius' most holy places, feel the Mercy of God, and witness the seven works of mercy for the body and soul. Even a short visit to one or more of these holy places will lighten your spirits and give you hope. Explore Vilnius – a City of Mercy.

ALONG THE ROAD OF MERCY



1. THE SHRINE OF DIVINE MERCY Dominikonų St. 12, open daily 24 hours

After being housed in several different churches over the years, the painting of God's Mercy is now worshipped by believers in the whitewashed space of the Shrine of Divine Mercy. Famous for the grace it bestows on visitors, the painting is the work of Eugene Kazimirovski, who painted it in 1934 in Vilnius according to the visions of Saint Faustina. Following its creation, copies of the small image soon spread around the world. Today, it is one of the most recognisable and respected paintings in the Catholic Church, and pilgrims travel thousands of kilometres just to see it. The Shrine of Divine Mercy offers visitors the blessing of Jesus through the painting. With his raised right hand, the Saviour grants His blessing to all those who are confident, and with His left hand, which touches His robe right by His heart, He spreads His grace, heals and breathes life into souls. Pilgrims are always welcome here – there is a feast of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the shrine 24 hours per day.

2. THE HOUSE OF SAINT FAUSTINA V. Grybo St. 29; I – VII 10:00 – 17:00

The Apostle of Divine Mercy, Faustina Kowalska, lived in the Convent of the Congregation of the Mother of Mercy in Vilnius from 1933 to 1936. Here she experienced many revelations of Jesus through which she was asked to fulfil the message of God's Mercy to the world. A prayer of Mercy was dictated to Sister Faustina in Vilnius. In this city she also met Father Michael Sopoćko, who helped her fulfil Jesus' request. Thanks to him the painting of God's Mercy was painted in Vilnius, the celebration of Mercy Sunday was initiated in the city, and a new monastery, which is known today as the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus, began to commemorate. Encouraged by Father Sopoćko, Sister Faustina began writing a diary that today is one of the most famous mystical experiences in the world of literature. Pope John Paul II canonised Sister Faustina in 2000. Today, when visiting the former residence of Saint Faustina, you can concentrate, pray and participate in events dedicated to Mercy.

3. CHAPEL OF THE GATES OF DAWN Aušros Vartų St. 14; www.ausrosvartai.lt

Nowadays, the Gates of Dawn is one of the most important historical and religious sites in Vilnius. It is not just the chapel itself that is so important, it is also the street that leads to the gate, which is always crowded with believers and tourists admiring a very special view – the painting of the Mother of Mercy. Originally, these city gates were like the others in the wall surrounding the Old Town; however, in the 16th century they were given to the Carmelites the Chapel of God's Mother was added to the Gates of Dawn. Here, the painting of the Holy Virgin Mary found a place. Painted in the first part of 17th century and later decorated with gold-plated silver embellishments, the painting has a deep history surrounded by legend, as evidenced by the many prayer candles brought by visitors. The Mother of Mercy at the Gates of Dawn has been uniting believers from all nations and confessions since its creation. Today's Gates of Dawn remains a special place not only for the prayers but also for anyone seeking care from the Mother of Christ, support in the struggle of spirit, or wisdom to help make difficult decisions. Visit the Gates of Dawn and ask for your miracle.



4. MONASTERY OF THE SISTERS OF MERCIFUL JESUS Rasų St. 4A

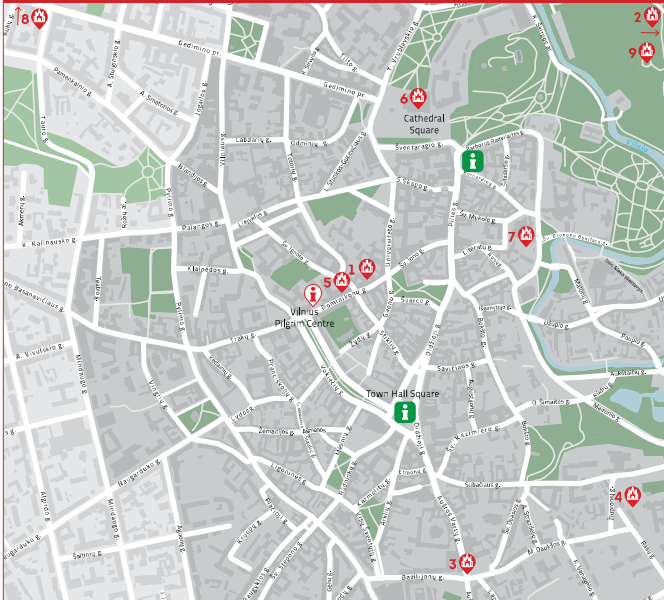
The Catholic Women's Congregation, founded by the Blessed M. Sopoćko, helps spread God's mercy. The purpose of the Sisters of the Merciful Jesus is to glorify and proclaim the mercy of God, to pray for others, and to do works of mercy. The congregation was founded as a religious institution to be set up in Vilnius; however, because of the Second World War, it was formally founded in Poland. The Sisters arrived in Vilnius in 2001 and settled in the former residence of a monastery building. The present monastery chapel, which is from the interwar period, was the studio of the painter Eugene Kazimirovski, known for creating the image of the Merciful Jesus, which he painted using instructions from Sister Faustina in 1934 based on her visions. The entire territory is known as the Hill of the Saviour. It serves as the historical centre of mercy and has been home to charities like the Monasteries of Visitations, Missionaries and the Merciful Sisters since the 17th century. Today, the Sisters of the Merciful Jesus have established a hospice and nursing home at the monastery for those with oncological diseases. Here you can directly touch mercy with yourself and keep God's message going.



5. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT Dominikonų St. 8

The Dominican Order monks in Lithuania stayed during Gediminas' time, so a wooden church in this place had already existed in 1321, and the stone Church of the Holy Spirit was built in 1406. It is one of the most charming churches in Vilnius, with its impressive Rococo ornaments: sixteen altars, spectacular organs designed by Adam Gottlob Casparini in the 18th century, and 45 paintings, which are kept as monuments. From 1986 to 2005, the painting of the Divine Mercy was respected here. The steady history of the church preserves a wealth of secrets, not only in the church but also in the underground ensembles, which houses the remains of the victims of wars and epidemics. Mass at the Church of the Holy Spirit are held in Polish, but all pilgrims are welcome to feel and share the aura of six hundred years of spirituality. Pope John Paul II visited the church on 5 September 1993. The right nave of the church is equipped with an altar dedicated to St John Paul II, which incorporates the Pope's blood into its relic.

MAP



THE MAIN LITHUANIAN SHRINE



6. THE CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF ST. STANISLAUS AND ST. LADISLAUS OF VILNIUS Cathedral Square 2; www.katedra.lt

The country's most important Catholic shrine, the Cathedral, is the symbol of Lithuania's baptism. The oldest masonry, dating back from the 13th to 15th centuries, and the oldest Lithuanian fresco, painted in the 14th century and depicting the crucifixion of Christ, remain in the Cathedral's catacombs. The site also houses the remains of the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the King of Poland Alexander; Zygmunt August's wives Elizabeth and Barbara Radziwiłł, as well as the urn containing the heart of Duke Władysław. The Cathedral, as it is seen today is the result of a reconstruction project headed by Laurynas Gucevičius in 1801. The Cathedral is also home to one of the most precious examples of early Baroque art – the Chapel of Saint Casimir, which holds the saint's remains. Visitors flock to the site to see the painting of St. Mary the Virgin (Madonna of the Siepieg) in the Cathedral's Gostautas Chapel, which has been known for its miracles for a long time. The work is also one of the earliest examples of a painting of Mary in Europe crowned by the Pope (1750).

PILGRIM ROUTE OF ST. POPE JOHN PAUL II



After Lithuania regained its independence in September 1993, the country's Catholics were visited by the great pilgrim Pope John Paul II. The Pope's first visit to Lithuania was used to encourage the adoption of the Gospel as a gift of salvation and an integral part of everyday life. In memory of St John Paul II, a pilgrimage route was established to celebrate and honour the creation of sacred and treasured places from the 14th century in Lithuania. The route is located in Vilnius and includes visits to the Cathedral and the Chapel of St. Casimir, the Temple of Divine Mercy, the Chapel of the Gates of Dawn and the Church of St. Theresa, the Church of the Finding of the Holy Cross with the Crossroad, and the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary's Visit in Trakai. It is also worth visiting the St. Holy Spirit Church, where the Pope met with the Polish speaking believers: one can honour the relic of St. John Paul II.

THE VISIT OF POPE FRANCIS



On his scheduled visit to the country in September 2018, Pope Francis brings an encouraging message to Lithuania. It is most certainly an occasion for spiritual renewal and an opportunity to reflect upon the questions he raises. Pope Francis' trip includes a ride around Vilnius in the Pope mobile, a meeting with young people at the Cathedral Square, a visit to the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Mother of Mercy painting at the Gates of Dawn, and the Museum of Occupation and Freedom. The motto of the Pope's visit – Jesus Christ is our hope – will encourage Christians to look forward to the future.

TREASURY



7. CHURCH HERITAGE MUSEUM Šv. Mykolo St. 9; II - VI 11:00 - 18:00; www.bpmuziejus.lt

The treasury of the Vilnius Cathedral is the oldest and most abundant treasure trove of all the churches of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It began to accumulate immediately after Lithuania's christening and the establishment of Vilnius Cathedral in 1387, and its history reflects the entire life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The treasury holds a large and impressive collection of goldsmith masterpieces: a monstrance, ecclesiastical cups, relics, many church utensils and tapestries. Despite the treasury suffering damages and looting in a number of wars, its collection has continued to grow to this day. The treasury was hidden at the beginning of the Second World War and was rediscovered unintentionally only in 1985, leading to the restoration of the sanctuary – 189 treasures are registered in a special act. The Cathedral's treasure trove has been open to the public since 2009 and is now exhibited in the Church Heritage Museum. However, the impressive liturgical objects are also lent and used today in masses held at Vilnius Cathedral. There are also various exhibitions and constantly updated exhibitions in the museum. The museum's most valued treasure is the crystalline reliquary of St. Eustachian in the shape of a cross, which was a gift to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's Vilnius Voivodship from Chancellor Albertas Gostautas, as well as monstrance given to the Church of St. Nicholas by Geranainai.



THE WAY OF SAINT JAMES



Although the most famous of the St. James Way is located in Spain, Lithuania joined the network of pilgrimage roads in 2016, ultimately reflecting the country's common Christian roots with Europe. Pilgrims can visit 32 St. James places marked with shells and 11 churches of St. James as well as other shrines. Through these ancient, prayer-filled places, each pilgrim can build their own route, as well as track the wooden crosses along the way. The 500-kilometre route across Lithuania, which also spans from Latvia and Russia to the Polish border, is a living social, cultural, and economic organism. Pilgrim lodging and catering facilities are available at the stops for pilgrims and crusaders.

Pilgrims can also visit the objects of St. James Way – the Chapel of the Gates of Dawn, the Church of St. Theresa, the Church of Sts. Philip and Jacob, the Apostles, and the Dominican Monastery.

8. CHURCH OF STS. PHILIP AND JACOB, THE APOSTLES, AND THE DOMINICAN MONASTERY

Vasario 16-osios St. 10
www.vilniausdom.wixsite.com/vilniaus-dominikonai

The first church in Lukiškės was founded on 1 May 1642, the day of the Apostles Philip and Jacob. In a specially equipped altar near the central altar, the image of the Mother of God of Lukiškės is painted on the tree and glorified by miracles.

Dominicans were evicted in 1844, and during the Soviet era the church was supposed to be destroyed, but, albeit abandoned, it managed to be preserved. After returning the church to the believers in 1992, Dominicans settled down after a year in the monastery. The centre of the General Vicar's Office of the Dominicans of Belarus, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania has since been established here.

VILNIUS CARILLON

Vasario 16-osios St. 10

The church of Sts. Philip and Jacob, the Apostles has the largest carillon in the Baltic States, which consists of 61 bells, the smallest of which weighs 8 kg, and the largest 3.360 kg. The church tower is ideally suited for this instrument. The bells were found and the carillon was built in 2015 by the famous Royal Bell Foundry of Asten City in the Netherlands. "Royal Eijsbouts", which nurtures old bell founding traditions. The bell ringing accompanies not only religious holidays, but also state celebrations, and important historical commemorations. A variety of music, from the simple folk songs to complex classical, contemporary, virtuosic, and religious works, is played in the carillon.



SAINTS OF VILNIUS



ST. CASIMIR – PATRON OF LITHUANIA

Observed in the church on 4 March

The heavenly patron of Lithuania, the prince of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and of the Kingdom of Poland was famous for his piety while he was alive, and his grave became a place of worship – believing in his royal holiness, people came here to ask for intercession and to experience grace. Casimir's cult was confirmed in 1602, and St. Casimir became the first Lithuanian saint. His remains lie in the most beautiful Chapel of St. Casimir in the Cathedral of Vilnius. It is also worth visiting the Church of St. Casimir, which is the first and oldest Baroque church in Vilnius. Furthermore, Kaziukas Fair takes place in Lithuania on the weekend following St. Casimir's Day (4 March).



THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYRS IN VILNIUS

Observed in the church on 27 April

The pagans belonging to the manor house of the Grand Duke of Algirdas, Antanas, Jonas and Eustachijus believed and were baptised by the Orthodox Pastor Nestor. In 1347, they were ordered to denounce their faith and were tortured when they refused to do so. In 1547, the three martyrs were officially proclaimed Orthodox saints. In 1969, Pope Paul VI included them in the list of Roman Catholic Church saints. Currently, their relics are respected in the Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit of Vilnius. Every year on 26 June, Orthodox Christians celebrate the transfer of these relics and a special mass is held during which the reliquary is opened. Many believe that the relics belonging to the Orthodox martyrs have healing powers.



JOSAPHAT KUNTSEVYCH

Observed in the church on 12 November

Josaphat Kuntsevych began ecumenical work in an attempt to unite the Catholic and Orthodox Churches some 400 years ago. He started his career in Vilnius where he entered the Vilnius Academy, and later became the Archimandrite of the Vilnius Basilicum Monastery. In Lithuania, as well as being the Archbishop of Polotsk, Josaphat Kuntsevych actively defended and asserted the Orthodox communities and re-established unity with Rome. He was killed for the active unification of Christians in 1623. After the proclamation of Pope Pius IX in 1867, Josaphat Kuntsevych became the first saint of units. He was buried in Rome in St. Peter's Basilica, while sacred remains are respected in various places of Lithuania, Poland and Belarus.

9. THE HILL OF THREE CROSSES



Kalni parkas

The monument of the Three Crosses was erected to commemorate seven Franciscan martyrs of Vilnius, who were executed during the reign of Grand Duke Algirdas. It was built on the Crooked/Grey Hill, which is now known as the Hill of Three Crosses. The concrete Monument of Three Crosses was designed in 1916, by the famous architect Antanas Vivulskis. In 1950 the Soviet government destroyed the original monument, though its remnants can be seen at the foot of the hill. The present monument of the Three Crosses was reconstructed in 1989, just before the restoration of Lithuania's independence.

CALVARY WAY OF THE CROSS



Start at Pušynas Road 25, the northern part of Vilnius

The origins of the Vilnius Calvary reach as far back as the 14th century, and the Way was built in the 17th century to thank the Lord for the victory over the Cossack army. It is one of the largest complexes of Ways of the Cross in Europe, covering seven kilometres. Just like hundreds of years ago, believers go on walking routes to replicate the road of Christ's suffering. During the Pentecost, the hills here are filled with the songs of tearful pilgrims, and during the summer, the secular Franciscans of Vilnius invite believers to reflect on the suffering of Jesus walking along his path on the first Friday of the month at 3 p.m.

The Calvary of Vilnius is divided into two parts and reproduces the topography and orientation of Jerusalem so that worshippers, who were unable to visit the Holy Land, could repeat the last trip of Jesus. The takeup path from the Last Supper Room to the Quarterly Old Town Gateway consists of 20 stations, marked by eight chapels, a bridge along the Cedron stream, one brick and seven wooden gates, and the Way from Pilot Town Hall to Golgotha Hill – and 15 stations marked by 12 masonry chapels and three stations equipped in a church.

It is also possible to go by the Mary's path, which consist of 12 stations and goes in the opposite direction of the road of Christ's suffering. The Calvary Way of the Cross is included in the way of John Paul II in the Archdiocese of Vilnius.

EVENTS

- 4 March; St. Casimir (Vilnius Cathedral)
- Week after Easter; God's Mercy Week (Temple of Divine Mercy)
- Seventh Sunday after Easter; Pentecost (Calvary Church of the Discovery of the Holy Cross)
- Week of 16 November; the feast of the Mother of Mercy at the Gates of Dawn (Chapel of the gates of Dawn).

SACRED MUSIC CONCERTS

- Free organ music concerts are held at St. Casimir Church: from May to October every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.; and every Sunday at 1:00 p.m. from November to April
- The Church of St. Apostles Jacob and Philip has the largest carillon in the Baltic States; its ringing can be heard daily at 12:55 p.m. The ancient Medieval Dominican Hymn "Salve Regina" sounds at 7:30 p.m.
- VOX ORGANI CATHEDRALIS summer concerts at the Vilnius Cathedral Basilica during every Thursday at 12:00 p.m.

ST. CHRISTOPHER – THE PATRON OF VILNIUS



L.S.

Mentioned in the church on 25 July

St. Christopher, in Greek "Carrying Christ", served the Lord in life by carrying travellers through the river. During his lifetime, he helped save around 48.000 sinners and after his death, became the guardian of gardeners, bookbinders, seamen, bridge builders and ferryman. Moreover, it is believed that he protects from disasters on various journeys and is therefore considered to be the patron of travellers.

St. Christopher is pictured on the Vilnius Coat of Arms (since 1330) wading in the water, leaning on a stick, and carrying a Jesus child on his shoulders. He blesses with one hand and in the other is carrying a globe. During the reconstruction of the Vilnius Town Hall in 1938, decorative grilles depicting the city symbol of St. Christopher were hung over the back door, and today the city's Coat of Arms can also be seen over the door of the Town Hall.

St. Christopher's Coat of Arms was banned during the Soviet era. St. Christopher's name memorialised in 1994 establishing St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra. Every year since 1998, distinguished residents of Vilnius receive the Holy Christopher's Award for their deeds.

Three sculptures of St. Christopher can be found in Vilnius today. One of the oldest sculptures of St. Christopher is in the Church of the Saint Apostles Peter and Paul. In the courtyard of the Church of St. Nicholas there is a granite sculpture of St. Christopher designed by Antanas Kmieliauskas to symbolise the freedom of Lithuania during the Soviet era, and the St. Christopher's sculpture in front of the Parliament was created by Kazys Kisielius.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Vilnius Pilgrim Centre	Dominikonų St. 6 pilgrimai@vilnensis.lt Opening hours: I-V 9:00-18:00 • Information about pilgrimage opportunities in Vilnius • Aid for organising pilgrimage trips, booking of overnight stay
Pilgrim Passport	You can download the Vilnius Pilgrim Passport from the website http://cityofmercy.lt . You can print a passport before the trip and ask for stamps to be affixed in the churches in Vilnius, the Pilgrim Centre or the Vilnius Tourist Information Centres.
The best time to visit	From late April to mid-September the days get warmer in Vilnius, so travellers often choose this time to visit the city. When travelling in the winter and early spring you need to prepare for colder temperatures and the possibility of sleet or snow. In the spring, summer and autumn it is recommended to bring clothing that protects against rain and umbrellas.
Accommodation	Vilnius has monasteries and guest houses that can accommodate individual pilgrims and their groups. Many of these places have suitable spaces for community thematic weekends, retreats, trainings, and conferences. The Domus Maria Hotel of Vilnius Archdiocese was founded in the former disalced Carmelite monastery just outside the Chapel of the Mother of Mercy at the Gates of Dawn. The Trinapolis Retreat House in the Vilnius Archdiocese is founded in the former Trinitarian Monastery surrounded by the Verkial Regional Park and the Vilnius Calvary Crossroad.
Baggage	Luggage storage services are provided at the Vilnius Bus and Railway Station, as well as at hotels. Pilgrims can leave their bags at the Pilgrim Centre during working hours.
St. Mass times in churches	Mass times in Lithuanian and foreign languages can be checked at churches, on their websites or on the website of the Archdiocese of Vilnius www.vilnensis.lt .