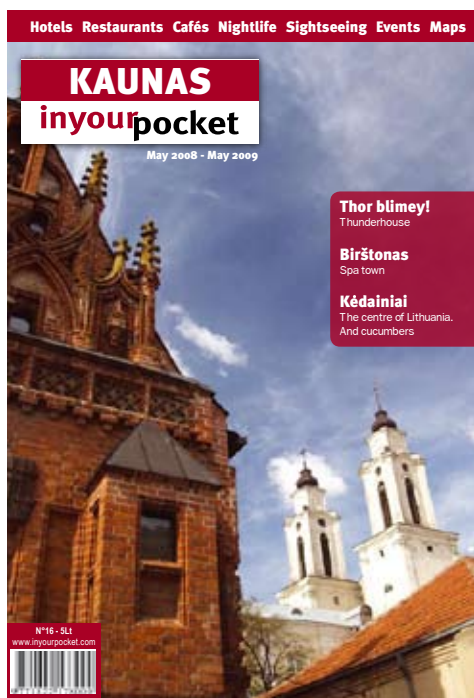


instant

KAUNAS

inyourpocket

May 2008 - May 2009



Introducing Kaunas

Kaunas is a bit of an unruly little mite. It doesn't come up and embrace you with pretty Old Town views, and if you're after a five-star hotel you're in the wrong city. Indeed, Kaunas is actually a bit shabby and ugly. But stick with it. Show an interest, give it a chance and it comes up trumps every time.

It would not be an understatement to say that Kaunas has the best nightclubs in the country. It's also home to the best value restaurants – you can get wonderful meals here for prices that will leave you feeling guilty that you didn't pay more.

Not only that, but Kaunas has a wonderful range of oddities and curiosities – old abandoned forts, wacky museums and a nude statue proudly airing its apparatus right next to a church. See the 'cover story' box below for more on that one.

Most importantly, however, is the fact that Kaunas is the most authentically Lithuanian city. The percentage of native Lithuanians who live in Kaunas is greater than in any other Lithuanian city. That may or may not matter to you, but it's worth remembering that it's only in Kaunas that you can claim to have seen the living, beating heart of Lithuania. Enjoy.

Restaurants
Bars
Clubs
Sights
Hotels
Transport

and a whole host of other useful information

This small .pdf guide has been written to aid the traveller to Kaunas who doesn't need or want to carry an encyclopedia-sized guidebook around in their pocket. A bold experiment in travel writing, the best (and the worst) bits of the city have been boiled down and condensed into one fun-sized read for the lightweight traveller.

Customs

Criminal masterminds take note: Lithuanian customs officers have recently demonstrated that one cannot expect to arrive on a plane with a crocodile, hide a late model Mercedes under a pile of onions on the back of a truck, carry cocaine in your handbag or get away with saying that you're going to use all those cannabis plants to make herbal tea. All such cunning schemes have been foiled at the border. Other than such obvious considerations, those arriving from EU countries have no import restrictions placed upon them – although you will need to make it known if you are arriving with €10,000 or more in cold, hard cash.

When arriving from non-EU countries, you are entitled to bring in one litre of spirits or two litres of wine or beer and 200 cigarettes, 100 cigarillos, 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco. You can bring 50g of perfume and 250ml of eau de toilette (that's just diluted perfume, for those men among you who don't speak poof). You can't bring plants, meat, milk or dairy products from outside the EU except under certain circumstances. Dogs require vaccinations and passports (or other proof of vaccination).

You can take home as much art as you wish tax free unless it's over 50 years old, in which case expect to pay 10-20 per cent duty. Take two photos of the art piece and your passport to the Committee of Cultural Heritage, Snipiškių 3, tel. 273 42 56. Many of the better antique shops in Klaipėda (see page 40) can take care of all the paperwork for you. For more detailed information check www.cust.lt, and for information on animal related arrivals, check www.vet.lt.

Disabled travellers

While things have greatly improved for the disabled over the past few years, Lithuania is still a tough place to get around on anything other than two wellfunctioning legs. Even places that claim to be wheelchair friendly are often flanked by deep kerbs or stairs, or are located on cobbled streets. Outside of the capital, you'll be lucky to find any thought given to wheelchair accessibility at all.

Electricity

Lithuania has a nuclear power plant of the same questionable design as the one that chucked a monumental wobble in Chernobyl. It's still gently humming away about 80km north-east of Vilnius, but will be shut down as a condition of Lithuania's EU membership. The first of two reactors was shut down as promised at the end of December 2004, and the second must go offline by the end of 2009. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have agreed to join forces and build a new nuclear power plant in Lithuania which should go online by 2015, but don't hold your breath.

Regardless of where the electricity is produced, it pours out of European style two-pin sockets at 220V, 50Hz AC. Travellers from outside Europe, or from that strange little island in Europe that still uses big three-prong monster plugs, should bring an adaptor. The best place to look for adaptors would be the Akropolis shopping centre, where Elektronikos Pasaulis and a nearby geek bits store may be able to help you.

Money

The unit of currency in Lithuanian is the litas (Lt), which comes in denominations of 10Lt, 20Lt, 50Lt, 100Lt, 200Lt and 500Lt notes. The coins can be divided into two categories: the significant 1, 2, and 5Lt coins; and the nearly weightless and worthless centas/centai/centų coins of which there are 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1. The value of the litas is locked to that of the euro (€) at 3.4528Lt to €1. Most places of any note in cities now happily accept credit cards, and ATMs dot the streets ensuring cash for everyone with money in their account and a card attached to the Cirrus or Visa network. Travellers' cheques can be redeemed for cash in hotels and banks. If you're heading out of town, cash-up before you go – it can be as hard to find an ATM in Kapčiamiestis or Skaistgirys as it can be to pronounce the name.

Safety

Exercise common sense. Don't flaunt your wealth and flash your cash. Don't walk home from a nightclub along dark alleys while draped in bling-bling jewellery or blinking technology. Stay cautious, look like you know where you are going (zigzagging won't help) and you will be fine. Truly heinous crimes are rare here, but theft is becoming increasingly more common. Do not leave mobile phones, wallets, purses, or fashion-accessory pooches unattended or out of your direct reach. Especially at street side cafés or in bars. Green-uniformed police are supposed to be keeping the peace in Old Town, although finding one when you need one is like looking for a cucumber in a haystack.

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Instant Kaunas

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kaunas@inyourpocket.com.

Tourist information

Kaunas Regional Tourist Information Centre E-2, Laisvės 36, tel. 32 34 36, info@kaunastic.lt, www.kaunastic.lt. A swish space for a helpful crowd. If they don't know it, nobody does. Also at Kaunas Castle, Papilio 17, tel. 32 34 36, fax. 42 36 78, www.kaunapolis.lt. Open (Jun - Aug) 11:00-18:00. Kaunas International Airport (Karmėlava), tel. +370 616 509 91. ▶ Open (May and Sep) 09:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 15:00. Closed Sun. Open (Jun - Aug) 09:00 - 19:00, Sat 10:00 - 18:00, Sun 10:00-15:00. Lunch 13:00-14:00. Open (Oct - Apr) 09:00 - 18:00, Fri 09:00-17:00. Closed Sat, Sun.



Tourism Information Centre Mūsų Odisėja J-5, Čiurlionio 15, tel. 40 84 10, fax 40 84 11, info@turinfo.lt, www.turinfo.lt. Friendly, and offering the same services as the above-mentioned people. Note that this lot can also arrange car rental. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. Closed Sat, Sun.



Old lady overtakes train

Arriving by train

It's all sparkly and new and doesn't smell of wee anymore. (But some of the customers still do.) **Getting to town from the train station** Taxis can be found to the right of the station on exiting, and the gentlemen behind the wheels suffer from the exact same symptoms as those at the airport – greed. If you pay more than 15Lt for a trip to Old Town, congratulations. You've just been ripped off. Make sure the meter is running before setting off. Trolleybuses 3, 5, 7 and 14 all leave from the first stop on the right-hand (north) side of Vytauto, directly opposite the station. To get there, use the swanky new green underpass.

Arriving by plane

The airport is 12km north of Kaunas. It's small and not too busy, making baggage reclaim and customs formalities fast and efficient. There is an ATM outside, to your left as you exit. A small currency exchange is in the centre of the main hall and has a confusing array of opening times that seem to be scheduled around flight times.

Getting to town

Greedy taxi drivers sit outside the arrivals hall, and as is usual in Lithuania wish only to make you spend more money than you should. Try to negotiate a fare before setting off, and expect to pay around 20Lt for a trip to the centre. Local minibus number 120 runs regularly into the centre of the city for a mere 1.50Lt. You can also get bus 29 from the bus stop out the front of the airport.



Arriving by bus

Kaunas's bus station is a purely functional affair offering little in the way of modernity or comfort and plenty in the way of concrete, shady looking characters in tracksuits, and rubbish bin fires. Try to arrange to leave before you get there, if you know what we mean. If you've been stuck on a bus for hours, well maintained toilets (open 05:30 - 21:30, 11t) can be found hiding behind the buildings on the southeast side of the station.

Getting to town

The bus station is a five-minute walk to the centre of town and something more like a twenty-minute stroll away from Old Town. If you're laden with luggage you might prefer to take a taxi or public transport. To do so, exit the station, walk about 100m to your left, and jump on any trolleybus (they all go via the centre). See the Getting Around section (page 40) for details on using public transport.

Arriving by road

Kaunas isn't the most thoughtfully signposted city in the world. Add to that a rather complicated one-way system in the centre and you have a slight challenge on your hands. Oh – and then there's those roundabouts that are so big that you don't realize that they are roundabouts until you have done three laps. Once you get to where you're going, you have to park. Parking meters don't accept coins, and work on a debit card or scratch card system. You can buy cards at any kiosk (if you can find one that hasn't run out of stock) and a few bars and cafés. We're just not sure where you are supposed to park while buying a card. To top it all off, Kaunas drivers are all as mad as a bucket of beavers.

Is that a Kaunas In Your Pocket? Or are you just pleased to be here?

No one is going to call Kaunas the cuisine capital of Lithuania, but things have been steadily improving of late, and now at least the city offers a full range of options from the cheap and chewy to lap-of-luxury fine dining. One thing to keep in mind is that things are a bit spread out in Kaunas, and there are some real gems located a short distance from the centre of town. Don't let that put you off. Kaunas is hardly expensive, so a taxi won't break the bank.

Chinese

Didžioji Siena Kumelių 7, tel. 22 05 85, dldzjojsiena.meniu.lt. It's all very rich, red, and refined in here. Quite tranquil. You'll feel immediately relaxed as you peruse the menu and notice a good range of favourites and traditional Chinese dishes, although your taste buds might be getting quite excited. Food is generally very good and certainly always flavoursome, although we have had chicken that was a tad chewy on one occasion. Service is superb - indeed, outstanding by Kaunas standards - and goes a long way to make this place a sanctuary worth seeking out. ▶ Open 11:30 - 23:00. [Icons]

Ilgoji Upė Vilniaus 13a, tel. 22 60 71. It's hidden in a courtyard, it always looks like it's closed and has a generally uninviting appearance. It's even a bit dowdy inside and it appears that the ceiling is sagging. Despite all that, however, it's worth a visit just for the food, which is reasonably priced and very tasty. There are countless options in the menu and those that we sampled were delicious. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00. [Icons]

International

Daniela E-3, Mickevičiaus 28, tel. 32 15 05, restoranas@danielahotel.lt, www.danielahotel.lt. Not as posh at it appears, but not as expensive either. The paper napkins and television are the giveaway. Still, there's a menu crammed with creative concoctions and that alone makes a visit worthwhile. We passed up the lava stone-grill option to go for something involving bananas wrapped in leek and chicken. While it could have been a bit more skilfully prepared—the chook was a bit tough—it did offer a lovely combination of flavours. Less challenging meals will probably be fine. The setting is sleek and comfortable, the menu is marvellous, service is friendly ... we happily recommend a visit. ▶ Open 07:00 - 24:00, Sat, Sun 08:00 - 24:00. [Icons]

Breakfast

From 06:30
Diverso (Reval Hotel Neris) Donelaičio 27, tel. 30 61 00, fax 30 62 00, neris.sales@revalhotels.com, www.revalhotels.com. ▶ Served 06:30-10:00. Sat Sun 07:00-11:00. [Icons]

From 07:00
Presto Laisvės 90, tel. 22 10 87, www.presto.lt. Lots of tea and coffee, a few pancakes and omelettes, and bad service. ▶ served until 11:00. Sat, Sun from 09:00. [Icons]

From 08:00
Pieno Baras Daukanto 18, tel. 20 93 78. Simple buns and cakes to eat in or take away. ▶ Served until 18:30. Closed Sat, Sun. [Icons]

From 09:00
Olive Vilniaus 7, tel. 20 94 93, lrestoranas@gmail.com, http://olivezeiga.meniu.lt. ▶ Served 09:00-12:00. Sat, Sun 10:00-12:00. [Icons]

Diverso (Reval Hotel Neris) E-2, Donelaičio 27, tel. 30 61 00, fax 30 62 00, neris.sales@revalhotels.com, www.revalhotels.com. Typically slick for a restaurant in a top-notch hotel chain. It's all very prim and proper and freshly preened, the service is brisk and friendly, the location is convenient and the atmosphere is both comfortable and refined. The menu is a bit brief - there's not much to choose from - and we found food to be disappointing. Meals are beautifully presented (you'll be tempted to reach for the camera phone) but loose appeal once you start cutting them up and putting them in your mouth. Still, it was early days for this restaurant when we visited, and they will most likely sort such problems out. ▶ Open 10:00 - 23:30, Sat, Sun 11:00 - 23:30. [Icons]

Europa C-3, J. Gruodžio 19-21, tel. 30 27 10/30 27 11, fax 30 27 00, europa@santaka.lt, www.santaka.lt. When you're not interested in the sort of random culinary adventure that this part of the world seems to so often provide, just nestle into the smart brick cellar, make a selection from the small but pleasing menu, and rest assured that your meal will be simple, satisfying, well prepared and close to perfect. There's a nice glass atrium and occasional classy jazz, but it's the food that you will come back for - a simple recipe well executed. ▶ Open 11:00 - 03:00, Mon 11:00 - 24:00, Fri 11:00 - 04:00, Sat 12:00 - 04:00, Sun 12:00 - 24:00. [Icons]

Geras Vyno Rūšys D-1, Laisvės 75/Maironio 24, tel. 20 72 33/+370 685 086 62, info@gerasvynorusys.lt, www.gerasvynorusys.lt. A husband-and-wife operation with all the nice personal touches and commitment to service and quality of a good family-run business. Take your time making a selection from the impressive menu, trust their wine recommendations, and settle into the cosy brick cellar for a very pleasant evening. Another one of Kaunas's hidden treasures. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00, Fri 10:00 - 24:00, Sat 12:00 - 24:00, Sun 12:00 - 22:00. [Icons]

Miesto Sodas D-2, Laisvės 93, tel. 42 44 24, daiva@miestosodas.lt, www.miestosodas.lt. As bright, fresh and airy as a freshly scrubbed Colgate yawn. It combines a modern menu restaurant with a salad bar sprouting with zippy things to do with leaves. The perfect place to sit in a gleaming glass box and watch the world go by, or just gaze across the green patch of a park next door. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Thu, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 24:00. [Icons]

Perkūno Namai K-4, Perkūno 61, tel. 32 02 30, fax 32 68 78, hotel@perkuno-namai.lt, www.perkuno-namai.lt. It's divergent dining, with a menu that leaps from frogs' legs to ostriches, covering a few piscatorial pleasures and a Moroccan chicken along the way. The décor is... erm, we forget, but two walls were covered in pride-of-the-owner pics, so it feels like you're eating in a photo album. The food is award-winningly good (hence the pride), coming up trumps in terms of presentation, flavour and texture. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00. [Icons]

Senieji Rūsiai B-3, Vilniaus 34, tel. +370 601 025 25/20 28 06, rusiaiseni@gmail.com. If this place was in London or Paris, you'd have to book before you were born to get a table. As it's in Kaunas, you can just turn up and get a table either for a fast cheap lunch or a fine dinner. At any time it's outstanding, with an airy feeling cellar, frescoes on some walls, quick and quality service, and real towels in the bathrooms. Really, they've thought of everything. The food is also superb and as such, this is one restaurant that it would be a shame to miss. Wonderful. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Sat 12:00 - 24:00. [Icons]

Cafés

Barracuda Vilniaus 14, tel. 20 55 35. We suspect this dingy little box was decorated in a lavish rash of style and modernism immediately after Lithuania gained independence and hasn't been renovated since. So there are chintzy dark red table cloths, black walls and former-designer furniture. It even smells a bit grim. It is, however, a reasonable place for a quick and cheap lunch as the menu features a good range of options that will add a spot of colour to your diet of lard and potatoes. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00, Sat 09:00 - 10:00. Closed Sun. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Kavos Klubas Valančiaus 19, tel. 22 96 69. The best thing about this place is that they stay open quite late, although we have noticed that most of the temptations listed in the menu are simply not available in the evening. If you turn up after dark you can enjoy little more than coffee and frustration. There is a cosy little room at the back which is ideal for those who wish to have an intimate chat or climb out the window and leave without paying. It would be an ideal café if only they would actually deliver what they offer. ▶ Open 09:00 - 23:00, Sun 09:00 - 19:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Konrado Užeiga Laisvės 49a, tel. 20 87 33. While this place isn't exactly hacked out of a forest of clichés, it's still a bit woody and rustic. There are touches of tackiness, but mostly you just get good value food in a simple and pleasant environment. There's outdoor seating in summer, but no view. It's a place where locals love to come for a fast feed or a quick drink. It attracts both rowdy lads and gossiping groups of little old ladies, which is either a sign of universal appeal or something strange and dodgy that we don't understand. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00. Closed Sun. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Morkų šėlsmas Laisvės 78b, tel. 42 54 39, www.morkuselmas.lt. A bright and colourful box for zippy hippies and other juice-sipping and vegetarian types. They do a good range of freshly-squeezed juices on the spot, as well as some simple vegetarian dishes. 'Cos you can't just live on peace, love and good vibes, man. Anyway, it all looks horribly zesty and healthy. ▶ Open 08:00 - 19:00, Sat 11:00 - 19:00, Sun 11:00 - 17:00. 📞 🍷

Retro Aveniu Laisvės 15, tel. 22 17 01, 22 62 36. This place provides a pleasant retreat and a nice tucked-away feeling without being too far away from the main drag. The clever retro photo album menu provides some interesting and inexpensive meals, and the waitresses occasionally provide amusement by tipping them into the laps of unsuspecting diners. If you can put up with poor service from inept staff, and want to have a break from people watching amid the maddening crowd, this is just the spot. ▶ Open 07:30 - 20:30, Sat 10:00 - 20:00, Sun 11:00 - 19:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷

Vero Café Laisvės 75, tel. +370 612 100 33, laima@verocafe.lt. The local coffee-cat Starbucks. Stand at the counter for five minutes scratching your head trying to work out what all the different types of coffees are and whether you want cinnamon or ginger or chocolate or whatever, then help yourself to milk and sugar and stirry sticks. Also at Karaliaus Mindaugo 49 (Akropolis), open 10:00-22:00. ▶ Open 07:30 - 21:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 21:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Sfinksas Aukštaičių 55/ Kudirkos 19, tel. 30 19 84, hotelfinx@takas.lt, www.sfinksas.lt. A lovely hotel restaurant focusing on fine international cuisine, the menu features such delicious treats as veal, salmon, oysters and the fabulous-sounding Žuolynas Grass Snake, which is in fact beef. Lithuanian dishes also available, and live music every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Portofino Savanorių 404, tel. 49 03 02, fax 49 03 01, info@portofino.lt, www.portofino.lt. It may be overflowing with rococo-ritz and chintzy glitz, but they have a very simple and honest approach to the whole business of dining. The best ingredients well prepared with a touch of flair, and presented at prices that are as affordable as possible without compromising the quality. The same sensible approach is evident in the wine list. Sounds like a good recipe? Well, the only ingredient missing is a convenient location - it's about a 10lt taxi ride out of the centre, but worth the journey. It's cheaper than going to Italy. ▶ Open 07:00 - 24:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Lithuanian

55° Laisvės 79, tel. 75 08 70/75 08 61, fax 75 08 51, restoranas@kaunashotel.lt, www.kaunashotel.lt. Lithuanian places can feel a bit basic and barn-like, but downstairs here you'll find all the country charm without the rough edges. In fact, it's really quite smart. There are even a couple of clever little romantic dining nooks hidden behind curtains. Upstairs the scene couldn't be more different with bright, light and modern decoration. The balance of rustic and refined is also present in the menu. You can scoff hunks of pigs' brains if you want, or nibble on dainty salads or delicate fish dishes - all are expertly prepared. They also specialise in moonshine. Whether you prefer things grainy or glossy, you'll be happy here. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Sat 12:00 - 24:00, Sun 12:00 - 23:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Bernelių Užeiga Valančiaus 9, tel. 20 09 13/861 405 236, info@berneliuuzelga.lt, www.berneliuuzelga.lt. The three blokes pictured on the menu look like the sort of good old fashioned lads who spend their days chopping wood, scrumping spuds, ploughing maidens and nailing the feet of old women to the kitchen floor to ensure an endless supply hearty tucker. No mucking around with village cliché nonsense here - just large quantities of decent Lithuanian food that will leave you slumping and groaning with delight until you're ready for your next bout of barnyard boisterousness or laddish lechery. Also at K. Donelaičio 11, tel. 20 88 02, Baltų 81, tel. 36 53 94. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 01:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Čili Kaimas Islandijos 32 (Mega), tel. 23 90 55, info@cill.lt, www.cill.lt. It's a bit quirky, top quality, not too costly, quintessentially Lithuanian and, unfortunately, both branches are inconveniently located in big boring shopping centres. Shame, really. The timber-trimmed village-themed chain churns out the calories and fun with aplomb, and it would be simply terrific if they could find a more central location. As it is, all we can say is that it's a great place to tuck in should you find yourself trapped in shopping hell. Warning: don't eat cepelinai after buying new trousers. Also at Karaliaus Mindaugo 49 (Akropolis), tel. 20 97 99, open 10:00-24:00. ▶ Open 10:00 - 23:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷

Katpėdėlė Krėvės 57, tel. 73 06 40, katpedele-15@vici.lt, www.katpedele.lt. Simple village food (potatoes, something that died in the barn, more potatoes, and some grass and carrots and potatoes) churned out in a feed-em-fast,

formulaic franchise. There are better options for authenticity and atmosphere, but for a quick fill with a Lithuanian leaning this is hard to beat. The name, by the way, describes a small flower and has nothing to do with a cat on a bicycle. Also at Islandijos 32 (Mega), tel. 23 90 57, katpedele-21@vici.lt. Krėvės 97, tel. 31 35 18, katpedele-2@vici.lt. Vilky 20, tel. 74 93 26, katpedele-1@vici.lt. Baltijos 59, tel. 24 08 03, katpedele-3@vici.lt. ▶ Open 10:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 24:00, Sun 10:00 - 22:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Medžiotojų Užeiga A-3, Rotušės 10, tel. 32 09 56, info@medziotojai.lt, www.medziotojai.lt. The gamey gimmicks in the 'Hunters Tavern' include horny handles on the doors, fury pelt plastered walls, heads and antlers all over the place and even a stuffed mongoose (or something) dangling in a cage above one of the tables. It's a mounted menagerie. The menu is crawling with critters such as boar, elk and beaver, but you can also opt for less adventurous fish or chicken if you wish - all beautifully prepared and presented, but not hunter-hearty. If your date is an animal rights type, you can still come here - just tell him or her that it's dolphin friendly. Maybe. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00. 25lt. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Mediterranean

Olive Vilniaus 7, tel. 20 94 93/+370 616 724 47, lrestoranas@gmail.com, http://oliveuzeiga.menu.lt. The most exciting thing to look at in this nondescript box, other than a Christmas tree wearing trousers, is the menu. Sure, there are a few photos of Greek ruins scattered about, but otherwise it was clearly designed by someone for whom a floral apron is a fashion statement. Still, with such cheap and tasty food including treats like squid, mussels, fish balls, suvolaki, pasta and more; who cares what the place looks like? Food is hearty, flavoursome and reasonably priced, making this an excellent option when your stomach is bigger than your eyes. ▶ Open 09:00 - 23:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 23:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Pompėja Putvinskio 38, tel. 42 20 55, www.pompeja.lt. We turned up expecting to be served warm soot by ashen corpses with startled expressions on their faces. But, thankfully, we were wrong. This is an airy and pleasant little retreat that dishes up generous helpings of decent food Mediterranean style food in an atmosphere that stews together just the right mix of stylish and strange. Prices are a tad high for Kaunas, but not enough to make you blow your top. We came at lunchtime so we missed the evening entertainment which involves something called a 'Pompeii giddy vortex mind-blowing erotic dance'. Do tell what it's like, won't you? ▶ Open 10:00 - 24:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 24:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Russian

Legenda Šiaurės 5a, tel. 40 84 56, info@restoranaslegenda.lt, www.restoranaslegenda.lt. Gather your weapons (knife, fork, spoon, toothpick, etc) and barge into this big wooden fortress to battle your way through a deeply satisfying array of Russian dishes. Start off with the traditional Russian soup, which is a meal in itself, and just try to keep going as long as you can. You'll come away beaten, but very full and happy. A particularly wonderful retreat in winter, but worthwhile at any time. It's a bit of an appetite-building hike to get there: take bus 43 from the Keščiuo stop on Vytauto (F-3) and hop off at the 15th stop, Šiaurinė. By car, head out on Savanorių, and turn left at the last intersection before the A1 highway. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 02:00, Sun 12:00 - 22:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Pizza



Amigos Gedimino 24, tel. 32 00 00. They've moved up in the world. They've got a new address, a new menu and we're pleased to see that they've ascended from being a displeasing dump to another mediocre pizza joint. Quite an achievement! ▶ Open 10:00 - 20:00. Closed Sat, Sun. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Čili Pica Karaliaus Mindaugo 49 (Akropolis), tel. 20 98 71, www.cill.lt. It's sad to see that Lithuania's most popular pizza chain has abandoned the centre of Kaunas and can now only be found in suburbs and the gawful shopping centre. Oh well... you're not missing much. Also at Baršausko 66a, tel. 35 01 12. Ateities 50b, tel. 47 33 59, Savanorių 346, tel. 73 06 60. Islandijos 32 (Mega), tel. 23 90 55. Pramonės 29, tel. 42 51 34. ▶ Open 08:00 - 24:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Napoli Krėvės 8a, tel. 33 54 88/31 43 13, restoranapoli@one.lt. This pizzeria has an impressive and reasonably priced selection of wine by the glass. The menu has just enough pizza to not be confusing. The management revamped the previously mucky interior and the result is a mellow, yellow Florentine look. They also serve a rainbow of mixed drinks. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 24:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Pizza Jazz Laisvės 68, tel. 20 43 35, www.pizzajazz.lt. Two separate entrances guide you into two different pizza worlds. They finesse every pizza cliché in the book, while offering a sordid variety of pizza pies. The second, more elegant area is distinguishable by the Lavazza coffee branding and is a uniquely designed medley of brick, floral wallpaper, pinstriped tapestries and black and white photos. A few other dishes are also available. The location at the Zoo Museum offers huge glass windows and a great place to watch the human traffic. Also at Laisvės 106 (Zoologijos muziejus), tel. 22 15 92, Šarkuvos 1a (Maxima), tel. 37 76 35, Taikos 141, tel. 47 39 41, Gričiupio 9, tel. 40 00 09. Savanorių 349, tel. 31 34 70. ▶ Open 10:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 01:00, Sun 11:30 - 23:00. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Pizzeria Milano Mickevičiaus 19, tel. 20 63 82. It's completely hidden in a big imposing building, but when you push open the tall, heavy door you'll discover a cheap pizza joint in what looks like the dining hall of the Kaunas Army Officers' Club. Bizarre - but great. The food is as good as the situation is weird, and the service is military standard. All up, a spiffing spot to feed the troops, or just sit alone and have one of those 'where am I' moments. ▶ Open 09:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 09:00 - 02:30. 📞 🍷 🍴 🍷 🍷

Absento Vasario 16-osios 2, tel. 40 74 19. Dark and suave, swished with swooping curtains, and decorated with leather chairs that are either raven black or hooker-lipstick red. Yes, it's a touch tacky, but it's a reasonable place for sipping a good range of concoctions when the right crowd turn up. Actually, make that if the right crowd turn up - it seems to be struggling to attract a crowd at all. Pop your head in if you're walking past and join the throng if there is one. But don't sit in there waiting for life to arrive. ▶ Open 11:00 - 02:00, Mon 11:00 - 18:00, Fri 11:00 - 06:00, Sat 18:00 - 06:00. Closed Sun. ☺ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Aiax Savanorių 3, tel. +370 676 346 22, eglisalex@gmail.com. This is the local death metal headbanger den. So we didn't go in there. It's not that it's dangerous - it's actually quite friendly and full of students - but we just struggle to cope with the sounds of pop-a-vein-in-the-head screaming and Satan yodelling and possum electrocution being used as music. If that's your style of thing, give it a go while you're taking a break from rebelling against the world. (Not that you're going to let us tell you where to go, anyway.) ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Thu, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 02:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Avilys Vilniaus 34, tel. 20 34 76, avilys@mail.lt, www.avilys.lt. A combobulation of gleaming vats and tubes and valves and pipes creates a lovely factory-cellar atmosphere, but the real attraction is the beer. It's brewed and consumed in-house and, while this is more a restaurant than a bar, it is certainly worthwhile popping in for a pint while you are in town. The food is also pretty good. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 12:00 - 02:00, Sun 12:00 - 24:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

B.O. Mutinés 9-1, tel. 20 65 42, blueorange@one.lt. Pumping out beer, snacks and live music almost every night, it's often the liveliest place in town. There are wonky tables propped-up with wads of beer mats, wonky patrons propped-up by wonky kindergarten chairs and other wonky patrons and doorways that look like they've been knocked-out by Superman pushing a wardrobe through the brick wall. Head upstairs for bands or stay downstairs for the sort of all-in fun that results in jokes and beer-mats being tossed between tables of strangers. If you escape from this place without a headache and a new friend, you're a social spastic. ▶ Open 09:30 - 02:00, Fri 09:30 - 03:00, Sat 15:00 - 03:00, Sun 15:00 - 02:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Bumerangas Mutinés 9-6/Naugardo 6, tel. +370 621 391 95, baras@bumerangas.lt, www.bumerangas.lt. Who are they trying to fool? The bar boasts an Aussie icon above the door - a boomerang, in case you're a bit of a drongo - but there's nothing Australian about the place at all. No Fosters, no marsupials, no one called Bruce or Sheila, no spiders hiding under the dunny seat, no surf life savers, no meat pies or Vegemite on the menu, no crocs, no roos, no natives to say 'sorry' to, no flies, no blokes wearing thongs, no stingers or tinnies or ockers or bogans, no Chicks rolls or lamingtons, no fatty on the telly, no cockatoos or kookaburras or lyre birds and not even a corny kangaroo road sign. In case you need a translation of all that: it's not very Australian, and there's little reason to go there. Bummer! ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 01:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Crazy House Vilniaus 16, tel. 22 11 82, uzeiga@crazyhouse.lt, www.crazyhouse.lt. Catering to the dumb and dumber crowd, and people who think Jim Carey is funny, this fun-filled cellar restaurant pumps out pneumatic hi-jinks and toilet-humour japes in the form of moving furniture, ghost-train ghoul and a soundtrack of tummy noises, toilet flushes and fartars. While that might sound a bit immature, it's actually good fun and as it's backed-up by decent service, reasonable prices and good food, it can be a good place to start a night of, well... more grown-up mucking about. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Ginger Bar D/F-2, Donelaičių 27 (Reval Hotel Neris), tel. 30 61 00, fax 30 62 00, neris.sales@revalhotels.com, www.revalhotels.com. Just the spot if you need to loosen your tie at the end of the day. It's a schmick and tidy business-class bar with modern furniture and mood lighting that would be at home in an airline VIP lounge. Ideal for social networking, gold digging, schmoozing or just launching an adventure packed evening on a high note. ▶ Open 08:30 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 08:30 - 02:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Randevu A-2, Valančiaus 27, tel. +370 618 638 81/20 38 95, joana@randevu.lt. Red motif with a subtle menu and artistic tinge, falling into either cosy café or bar category. As there is typically a bigger crowd after the working hours, it seems to have more success as a bar, but still worth considering for lunch. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00, Wed, Thu 10:00 - 23:00, Fri, Sat 10:00 - 24:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Senamiesčio vyninė B-2/3, Daukšos 23, tel. 22 76 56, elena@senamiesciovynine.lt, www.senamiesciovynine.lt. This hidden treasure gleams with a richly and smartly decorated interior (bright golden-yellow paint and warm, dark wood fittings, at least) but doesn't take itself too seriously and has a lovely laid-back and welcoming atmosphere. It's as close as Kaunas comes to a wine bar as the well considered wine list is splashed with options from around the globe. Food is amazingly cheap, and if you can get the semi-circular couch by the window you could easily settle in for a well-spent while. There's also hot wines, making this a perfect winter retreat. ▶ Open 10:00 - 23:00, Fri 10:00 - 24:00, Sat 11:00 - 24:00, Sun 11:00 - 23:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Skliautas A-3, Rotušės 26, tel. 20 68 43, info@skliautas.com, www.skliautas.com. Inside this humble brick vault you can find shabby wooden furniture (and locals), a pair of birds in a cage (sometimes), old pictures on the walls and ... actually, none of that matters. This is one of those places where the jovial atmosphere makes it, with laughter and good times being the main attraction. In summer, outdoor tables half fill the otherwise quiet little alley. Meals are generally pretty good, but really, this is a spot for fun times and drinks with friends. (If you don't have any friends, you might even make some here.) ▶ Open 10:00 - 24:00, Fri 10:00 - 02:00, Sat 11:00 - 02:00, Sun 11:00 - 23:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Sporto Baras J-1, Jonavos 260, tel. 76 50 00, info@sportobaras.lt, www.sportobaras.lt. The name says it all, although we should add that this is a bright and fizzy kind of place. There's lots of yellow and orange, and the place could have been decorated by a failed sportshoe designer. Screens dangle from everywhere, like in an airport. They serve simple Chinese and Italian meals, including the obligatory pizza. They also have VIP and child-minding areas (much the same thing in Lithuania) and take group bookings - so if there's a game you insist on seeing, it might be worth the off-the-map nuisance of getting there. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 24:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

The Face Putvinskio 48, tel. 32 06 76/+370 683 356 88. A mellow and mingly pub for people who are not dumbteen anymore and like things such as good music and songs that have words in them. Live music happens on weekend evenings and the crowd often spills out onto the street. When all the instruments get unplugged and the drummer stops hitting things, it slips into a very friendly and laid-back mode, and it's nice just to sit around chatting. It does close a bit early, so those who want to make a big night of it should consider this place as a launching pad. In any case, it's very likely to put a smile on your face. And possibly elsewhere, too. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Thu, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00, Sun 12:00 - 24:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Amerika Pirtyje Vytauto 71, tel. 20 14 89/20 54 98, america@america.lt, www.america.lt. This place has been around for donkey's years, and a few of them turn up to celebrate. Somehow it's long in the tooth but still full of short skirts and simple fun. There are two areas, one with techno and one with pop music. Occasional live shows—people taking their clothes off when we were there—punctuate the earlier parts of some evenings. As it's a bit dated and shabby, this place is very dependant on the crowd that turns up, and that tends to be unreliably good. Worth a try. ▶ Open 21:00 - 02:00, Fri, Sat 21:00 - 04:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Combo Raudondvario 107, tel. +370 614 400 29/20 94 19, fax 36 11 89, combo@combo.lt, www.combo.lt. Not even the gleaming facilities, great layout and water views can save this club from mediocrity. It's just too awkward to get to, stuck as it is in a riverside wasteland. Tends to attract an older and more conservative crowd than the more centrally located clubs. Everything is well thought-out and professional, but there just isn't much of a fun factor. Only worth coming to if you have good local company and there is good entertainment scheduled (which there often is). ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 04:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Europa J. Guodžio 19-21, tel. 30 27 11/30 27 10, fax 30 27 00, europa@santaka.lt, www.santaka.lt. There's actually not much of a nightclub here - more just a restaurant with jazz, cabaret style crooning and dancing from time to time. It's all a bit like a rehearsal for the retirement home lifestyle, but without the nurse standing by. If you're up for a gentle and refined evening, and a mature change from the student crowds in other evening venues, we suggest you pop in for dinner and ask about the programme. ▶ Open 11:00 - 03:00, Mon 11:00 - 24:00, Fri 11:00 - 04:00, Sat 12:00 - 04:00, Sun 12:00 - 24:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Ex-it Maironio 19, tel. 20 28 13, info@exit.lt, www.exit.lt. Modern, slick, trendy and, like most of their patrons, fresh out of a growth spurt. This huge club has one vast hall, a smaller and more intimate groovy room, and a smoking room. The lighting and sound gear is bang up to date and capable of dazzling you while vibrating your internal organs into different arrangements. The smaller hip-hop room has some funky furniture and fine opportunities to mingle and yell at people who you can't hear and probably aren't saying anything sensible anyway. (Tip: the smoking room is the place to meet people.) The only downside is that the recent expansion didn't extend to the toilets, and this is now the only place in the world where blokes have to queue-up to urinate on their Nikes or purchase tablets (for headaches, we suspect) in the toilets. ▶ Open 22:00 - 05:00. Closed Mon, Sun. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Latino Baras Vilniaus 22, tel. +370 685 281 17. This place impressed the pants off us last year (well, almost), and while it seems to have gone off the boil a little bit, it's still sizzling hot. There's still the same warmth, intimacy and magic ability to be magnetic to Kaunas' style-savvy smoothies (all both of them) and their enthusiastic apprentices. Three separate areas bustle with suave mingling while one hall is always lively with dancing. There's a good Latino-pop music policy and frequent short dancing lessons and demonstrations. Gentlemen whose underpants dictated that they must come to Kaunas will want to know that this place swarms with some of the most beautiful twenty-something girls you're likely to see. Really - this place is simply sensational. Oh, we said that already... but really, it is. Go there. ▶ Open Fri, Sat 20:00 - 04:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Papa Jazz Savanorių 178, tel. +370 672 600 27/3 47 18, fax 73 47 18, info@papajazz.lt, www.papajazz.lt. A bit kind of cabaret style, and given that the food consists



Excuse me, Sir, but your hair is on fire

of badly mangled versions of ambitiously classy dishes, the quality of the evening will depend on the entertainment. Come along if Robbie Williams is playing. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 02:00, Sun 12:00 - 24:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Siena Laisvės 93, tel. 20 54 54, info@siena.lt, www.siena.lt. You could do a lot worse than hitting 'the wall' (which is what siena means) for a great night out. The neat little network of brick cellars have been divided into two sections. One offers a large dance floor and more hard-core music, making it ideal for those who came to dance in a trance. The other is a brighter chipper night-café kind of space with plenty of booth style seating surrounding a smaller dance floor, and is more the scene for mingling. Given that you can flit from one to the other, it's a great spot and not surprisingly popular with local and visitors alike. ▶ Open 21:00 - 04:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Sun. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Sin Baltų 16, tel. 23 99 93, info@sinclub.lt, www.sinclub.lt. Renamed, redecorated in a dark raunchy style and reopened on Friday the 13th. Sounds scary. Apparently, the idea for this place, which looks like a sex shop in an amphitheatre, came to the owner in a dream. You know... that sort of dream. There's lots of shiny black surfaces and soft pink bits. Whether the changes will scare people off or make more people come, however, remains to be seen. ▶ Open 22:00 - 06:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Sun. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Zepelinus Kovo 11-osios 22, tel. +370 600 227 22, zepelinus@zepelinus.lt. Huge, modern, sleek, fun and annoyingly nowhere near the centre of town. Expect to pay 10-15 litas in a taxi to get there or back, or drive off the M-2 edge of our map and look for the big blimp on the roof of a shopping centre. When you do arrive you can dance to techno-cum-pop among pretty girls and an all-ages bagful of blokes with less brains than are required to be considerate to others. They thoughtlessly bump, shove and blunder about like demented cattle, making even moderately civilised foreigners look wonderful by comparison. ▶ Open Tue 21:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 22:00 - 05:00. Closed Mon-Wed, Sun. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Žemyn Upe Valančiaus 24, tel. 42 45 49, info@zemynupe.lt, www.zemynupe.lt. Small and made entirely of wood. So it's ideal for termites. Despite the dismal bus station surroundings a young and easy-going crowd fills the place easily and froths up a good atmosphere. Blokes sit on the wiggly wooden balcony overlooking the dancefloor, where girls wiggle their bits to the thumping sound system. Avoid horrible Lithuanian barnyard music by turning up after 11:00. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 04:00. ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹

Pžaislis (Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary & Camaldolese Cloister) T. Masiullo 31. A 17th century Baroque church and monastery originally built for the curious little water-sipping, bread-nibbling, closet-dwelling clan of the Camaldolese monks. It has since been rampaged by Napoleon's soldiers, closed by tsarist officials, used as a military hospital by Germans, turned into an old persons' home and a psycho-neurological hospital (lobotomy, anyone?) and has also served as a tourist centre. In 1992 it was handed over to the St. Casimir nuns who have been looking after it ever since.

An idea that lasted a century



Christ's Resurrection Church E-1, Žemaičių 31b.

What looks a bit like a comic book power station is in fact a church, although the story behind it is certainly worthy of any wacko-retro comic. The idea to erect a church on this hill overlooking Kaunas was first conceived by a group of devout Christians in 1922 as a bit of a 'thank you' to God for the independence that was won in 1918. Kaunas was the temporary capital of Lithuania at the time, so it was only appropriate that such a monument be raised here. It took some 10 years of wrangling and wrestling with red tape, and a design competition, before construction was started in 1933. The height of the main tower above the entrance is 70m, and there's enough room for some 5,000 pious patrons, provided that a couple of thousand of them don't mind standing on the roof. The cornerstone for the church came from Olive Mountain in Jerusalem. Grand plans, indeed - but they were not to be realised. Construction was halted at the end of the 1930s when Lithuania fell victim to Soviets, then Nazis, then Soviets again. What had been constructed was confiscated and turned into a Nazi paper warehouse, and then a Soviet radio factory Banga. When Lithuania again regained independence, Banga were told to return the building to the church in the same condition in which they found it. Reconstruction since then has been happening in fits and starts as funds, the majority of which are from public donations, became available. The church was finally consecrated on December 26, 2004, making the entire construction phase span some 70 years. Now it's nearly finished and well worth a visit. You can take an elevator to the roof (5Lt), take in a vista of Kaunas, say 'Oh gosh, what a mess' a few times, have a cup of coffee at the roof-top café, fill your camera with photos that won't do the grand structure justice, and then go home. ▶ Open 11:30 - 18:30. ☒

St. Francis Church & Jesuit Monastery Rotušės Alkštė 7, tel. 42 30 98. Built in 1666, burned in 1732, consecrated in 1759. And that was just the start of a bumpy ride that turned into a religious rollercoaster that makes The Da Vinci Code look dull and sleepy. A monastery and college were built in 1761-1768 - just five years before the Pope decided to abolish Jesuit Order altogether. The sneaky monks, however, hung around 1787 and when they finally scurried, turned the church and monastery over to the Franciscans. Then some alters were altered (read: torn down) and big screens were put up to hide those that couldn't be easily demolished. The church became Orthodox, re-branded as Alexander of Neva Cathedral in 1843. After the First World War, Jesuits returned to Lithuania from Germany and reclaimed the church. The monastery became a high school. During the Soviet period, the monastery buildings were a technical college, the interior of the church was used as a sports hall, the crypts were used as a sauna and the church attic housed a shooting gallery. The church was returned to the Jesuits in 1990, and re-consecrated in 1992. ▶ Services 17:00, Sun 10:00, 12:00, 17:00. ☒

St. George Church and Bernardine Monastery Papilio 9, tel. 22 46 59. You can't really appreciate this sad and somewhat spooky looking building without taking into account its history. It's had a bit of a rough trot since beginnings in 1487. It has been ruined by fire three times, copped the wrath of the Moscow army during the war of 1656-1659 and then had a bit of a rest during the 18th century before Napoleon came along and decided to turn it into a warehouse. During Soviet times, the church, somewhat ironically, was used to store drugs. It was returned to the Friars in 1993 in a pretty shabby condition, and restoration is slow. In terms of significance and damage, this place tops the lists. ▶ Services Mon - Fri 18:00, Sun 10:30. ☒

St. Gertrude's Laisvės 101a, tel. 22 99 65. This tidy little tucked-away treat of a church is worth seeking out if you're wandering up and down Laisvės. It was built in the latter half of the 15th century and rates highly on the small-and-cute scale. Be sure to sneak around the back where you may find a sunken room full of candles hidden down some teeny stairs behind a low door. ▶ Services 18:00 (except Sat), Sun 09:00, 11:00. ☒

St. Michael the Archangel F-2/3, Nepriklausomybės alkštė 14, tel. 22 66 76. No trip to Kaunas is complete without wandering up and down Laisvės Alėja (Freedom Avenue) about a dozenty times and taking in the gently imposing sight of the St. Michael the Archangel church - otherwise known as Soboras - at its eastern end on half of them. ▶ Services 12:00, Sat 10:00, Sun 10:00, 12:00. ☒

S. Peter & Paul Cathedral Vilnius 1, tel. 32 40 93. Built in 1408, the main point of interest of this cathedral is that it is the only Gothic church (normally with a cross-shaped floor-plan) with a basilica floor-plan in the entire country. In 1921 in order to mark the importance of the cathedral it was designated a basilica. Today the cathedral boasts nine separate altars with the high-Baroque main altar being the central focus. The cathedral/basilica is also the final resting place of two politically active, religious writers. Along the south wall one can find the tomb of Maironis (1862-1932), a priest and poet, who some consider one of the main founders of what became Lithuanian modern poetry. Also within the crypt find the remains of Bishop Motiejus Valančius (1801-1875), best known for his contributions to the then-illegal printing and distribution of books in Lithuanian. The light Renaissance and baroque touches are the result of renovations from 1655-1660. ▶ Services 07:00, 08:00, 09:00, 18:00, Sun 08:00, 09:00, 10:30, 12:00, 13:30, 18:00. ☒

Vytautas Church Aleksoto 3, tel. 20 38 54. Like most churches in the country, Vytautas Church is a condensed history lesson. The Gothic structure was built by Franciscan monks in the beginning of the 15th century with the tower added later that century. Invaders took advantage of the central location - the building was used as ammunitions storage by the Napoleonic army (who set the building ablaze in farewell) and later as an Orthodox cathedral from 1845-1853. The church was returned to the Catholics in 1990. Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas (1869-1933), a famous Lithuanian political activist and writer, is buried here. The English-speaking, friendly priests may show you around the church. ▶ Services Tue, Wed, Thu 18:00, Sat, 10:00, 18:00, Sun 10:00, 12:00, 18:00.

Museums

Historical Presidential Palace Vilnius 33, tel. 32 05 89/20 17 78, info@istoriinezprezidentura.lt. Mostly flags, documents, coins, stamps, and personal effects of Lithuania's Presidents during the inter-war period, when Kaunas was the capital. It's not as boring as it sounds, and recent exhibitions have included a display of potential designs for Lithuania's Euro coins. In the garden, there are three statues of Lithuania's inter-war Presidents: Kazius Grinius (sculptor Stasys Žirgulis), Aleksandras Stulginskis (sculptor Vytautas Narutis) and Antanas Smetona (sculptor Alfonsas Vaura). ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. ☒

Military Museum Donelaičio 64, tel. 32 09 39/32 08 74. An eye-opening if somewhat horrific look at the history of Lithuanian bloodshed. Also of note is that the wreck of the Lituanica and the horrific, sewn-back-together suits that the two pilots were wearing when their plane met its untimely demise can be found here. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sun. ☒

M. K. Čiurlionis State Art Museum Putvinskio 55, tel. 22 94 75. Painter, composer, mystic and depressive, are some of the adjectives that have been used to describe the nation's artistic hero. During his short lifetime, Čiurlionis (1875-1911) churned out the first Lithuanian symphony (*In The Forest*), painted prolifically and even found time to get married and have a daughter. Many claim that Čiurlionis was the inventor of abstract art instead of Russia's Kandinsky as the history books dictate. What is clear is that the man was a genius. Come here and find out for yourself. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. ☒

Mykolas Žilinskas Art Museum Nepriklausomybės alkštė 12, tel. 22 28 53. The derriere of the Man statue lets you know you're in the right place. The museum's large collection of European paintings holds examples of almost every major art movement in the last hundred years. The museum is usually noted as being the home of the only Rubens in Lithuania, but some believe it is the home of just some superior copies of Rubens. Take your loupe and come up with your own theory. ▶ Open 11:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. ☒

Places of interest

Kaunas Castle Papilio. The city's 13th century castle, probably built by Kęstutis to defend a road to Trakai, was the country's first defensive bastion and the only double-walled castle in Lithuania. The surrounding walls were initially over two metres wide and 13m high. Unlike most other castles of the time this one was made of stone, not wood. However, in 1362, after a siege, crusaders (possibly encouraged by three little pigs) managed to destroy it. Legend has it that the castle was not destroyed and that 36 survivors remained. These

survivors along with the knights allegedly are still burning in an eternal fire which can only be extinguished by an innocent person entering the castle via a secret cave. However, history books dictate that the castle was destroyed and its replacement, some of which can be viewed at this site today, was built by 1368. Now the castle has been modernized with sleek glass windows enclosing the top, and is sometimes home to art exhibitions. It was full of weird glowing neon sculptures, ultraviolet lights and pictures of keys last time we popped in. What would the crusaders have thought of that? ☒

Napoleon's Hill Piliakalnio. From this hill Napoleon Bonaparte surveyed the movements of enemy troops and prepared his ill-fated attack on the Russian Empire. To get there, take bus N° 25 from Kaunas Castle and get off at the Geležinkelio Pervaža stop (at the bottom of the hill).

Old Town Covering a total of 106 hectares or thereabouts, and dominated by a majestic, often crumbling mix of Gothic and Renaissance-style structures with a cluster of 16th century merchant houses around the town hall, the charming little Old Town is not to be missed. Be sure to burrow into a few courtyards to have a peek and don't miss the meandering side streets. The main street, Vilnius, was in its day way back in the 13th century, a highway linking the city with Vilnius. Make sure you stop by on a Saturday morning to see the crowds of weddings flocking around the town hall

Sixth Fort Intersection of Baršausko, Kovo 11-osios, Riomerio, Kalantos and Pramonės. When Lithuania was a part of the Soviet Union, Stalin's tank stood here to commemorate 'freedom from the fascists'. When Lithuania regained its independence in 1991, the tank was removed, and crosses began to appear in its place. And they just keep coming.

Town Square (Rotušės alkštė) Originally the centre of economic life, the foundation stone was laid on July 28, 1542. The large square now serves as a popular meeting and greeting place during the hot summer months. ☒

Zoo Radvilėnų 21, tel. 33 25 40, zoosodas@is.lt, www.zoosodas.lt. With about 250 species of animals that call this place home, the Kaunas zoo also has the distinction of being the only zoo (save the aquatic one in Klaipėda) in the entire country. The grounds can be downright depressing at points, as unlike the rest of the country full-scale renovations haven't taken place here yet. However small children, missing the inherent injustice in keeping the animals caged for their edification and amusement, may enjoy the place. ▶ Open 09:00 - 19:00. Box office 09:00-18:00. Adults 8Lt, children 6Lt (Nov 1 - Apr 30). Adults 11Lt, children 8Lt (May 1 - Oct 31).

Statues

Freedom Monument Vienybės alkštė. The accepted symbol of Lithuanian statehood first appeared in 1928 but was destroyed by the by the Stalinist regime. In 1989 it was rebuilt, and figures in a collection of statues leading to one of the few remaining eternal flames in the region. ☒

Romas Kalanta Miesto Sodas (City Garden). The memorial to the 19-year-old student who, on May 14, 1972, set himself on fire on this spot to protest against the Soviet system. Called Sacrifice Field, it was officially unveiled 30 years to the day after the tragic event, and is composed of cast iron sheets representing the burnt pages of history, and 19 stones representing the years of Kalantas' life. May 14 incidentally has been officially declared the National Day of Civil Resistance. ☒

Upmarket


Best Western Santaka Grudžio 21, tel. 30 27 02/30 27 01, fax 30 27 00, office@santakahotel.eu, www.santakahotel.eu. Squirreled away to one side of the main street, this hotel offers a quiet but very central location. It also swirls together historic charm with modern facilities in a rather becoming package. We particularly like the downstairs fireside room, where you can squeak and creak your bottom into a leather chair and exchange tales of adventures with other sophisticated guests while you sip a port. Rooms have a homely feel with good quality furniture and sparkly bathrooms. Of course, being a quality hotel, you can also expect goodies like satellite television, internet, minibars and so on. ▶ 92 rooms (11 singles 360Lt, 73 doubles 360 - 480Lt, 7 suites 400 - 480Lt, 1 apartment 800 - 880Lt).  ★★ ★★

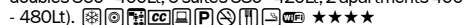
Daniela Mickevičiaus 28, tel. 32 15 05, fax 32 16 32, reception@danielahotel.lt, www.danielahotel.lt. Dress up like Barbarella (anti-gravity breasts optional) or someone from *Lost In Space* (bubble-headed booby optional, but not hard to find in Kaunas) and launch yourself into a time warp of bulbous pink cushions, plush puce carpets and stratospheric arched beams. Or, be a bit Captain Sensible and stick to the smart 'comfort class' rooms with more contemporary and elegantly restrained decoration. Either way, you'll find fun aplenty and lashings of comfort and luxury. It's bright, breezy and tucked away in a very convenient location. ▶ 75 rooms (8 singles 290-620Lt, 27 doubles/32 twins 360-800Lt, 2 triples 460-530Lt, 2 suites 450-520, 4 apartments 550-800Lt).  ★★ ★★


Daugirdas T. Daugirdo 4, tel. 30 15 61, fax 30 15 62, hotel@daugirdas.lt, www.daugirdas.lt. The highest quality hotel in Old Town, with an ingenious blend of historic charm and mod cons. Rooms are nifty-neat with minibar, internet (WiFi or LAN), air conditioning, televisions and a power outlet that doesn't switch off when you leave so you can charge your gizmos. There's a somewhat old-fashioned dark wood and ochre theme but with big windows - floor-to-ceiling in some rooms - there is plenty of light. Bathrooms are modern and spacious with heated floors. A lovely atrium and a superb rooftop terrace are the icing on the cake. ▶ 48 rooms (13 singles 288 - 360Lt, 24 doubles 352 - 440Lt, 10 triples 412 - 500Lt, 10 suites 392 - 490Lt, 1 Gothic suite 600Lt).  ★★ ★★

Hermis Savanorių 404, tel. 49 03 00, fax 49 03 01, info@hermishotel.lt, www.hermishotel.lt. The outskirts location (just off the main road to/from Vilnius) might make you think this place is only suited for a hermit, but step inside and you'll be delighted to find a thoroughly modern hotel with a subtly colourful and contemporary style. Somehow, the place feels lively and friendly. There's even a 15m pool, spa and gym to keep you buzzing. Really quite a delightful find, although not worth considering unless you have a car. ▶ 13 rooms (1 single 290Lt, 9 doubles 290 - 390Lt, 2 suites 430 - 500Lt, 1 apartment 500 - 600Lt).  ★★ ★★

Kaunas Laisvės 79, tel. 75 08 50, fax 75 08 51, kaunas@kaunashotel.lt, www.kaunashotel.lt. The only proper hotel right on the main pedestrian street, ideal for those who wish to spend lazy hours sitting on windowsills (or, for some rooms, on the balcony) watching the local variety of life strut by on the catwalk below. Rooms are

bright and airy and have a spacious feel, although they're actually quite compact - not quite enough room to walk a cat. More importantly, rooms are tastefully decorated and there is no shortage of style or facilities. All the four-star bits and pieces are present and accounted for. Don't let the location on the mall put you off - parking and taxis are still available. As is a small fitness facility and sauna. ▶ 85 rooms (1 triple 600Lt, 4 suites 500 - 600Lt, 33 standard singles/doubles 360 - 440Lt, 43 deluxe rooms 440 - 500Lt, 2 connecting rooms 800Lt, 2 executive suite 600 - 700Lt).  ★★ ★★


Perkūno Namai Perkūno 61, tel. 32 02 30/+370 698 540 99, fax 32 36 78, hotel@perkuno-namai.lt, www.perkuno-namai.lt. It might have a strange name (which means something like 'thunder home') and a not-quite central location, but this hotel has become something of a Kaunas institution. It was the first private hotel in Kaunas, and it's been a family-run business since it opened. It's also been kept relatively up to date with regular renovation, so you won't be sleeping in a wooden cot. Rooms are tastefully decorated without making you feel like you've stepped into a design magazine, and bathrooms floors are heated so you would feel like you've stepped into Antarctica. There's also balconies and a lovely hillside location that affords the hotel a proud and light-drenched position. While it's not right in the centre, this is a very worthwhile hotel for anyone with a car, or who doesn't mind a ten minute walk into town (and an uphill walk on the way back). ▶ 29 rooms (11 singles 320Lt, 10 doubles 360 - 400Lt, 6 suites 380 - 420Lt, 2 apartments 400 - 480Lt).  ★★ ★★

Sfinksas Aukštaičių 55/Kudirkos 19a, tel. 30 19 82, fax 30 19 83, hotelfsfx@takas.lt, www.sfinksas.lt. Kaunas has all sorts of pleasing and quirky treasures tucked away in unexpected places, and this hotel is one of them. It's notable for having a staircase that makes going to your room almost as rewarding as being in it. The rooms themselves are all individually decorated to an unsuitably high standard that will make happy even those who have discovered oil and Lithuania (in that order). The modern sparkling sauna might also help. Located in a quiet area near a park, the hotel is a 15-minute walk to the centre, but you'll want a taxi or your own personal security sphinx to bring you home at night. ▶ 12 rooms (4 suites 380 - 460Lt, 1 apartment 480 - 540Lt, 7 singles/doubles 280 - 320Lt).  ★★ ★★

Mid-range

Babilonas Raseinių 25, tel. 20 25 45, fax 20 91 56, babilonas@hotel.it, www.babilonas.it. All roads lead directly to Rome. But this is Babylon, and while it's not too far from the centre of town it's a hassle to get to. It's on a hill, so walking is a bit of a nuisance, and it's only accessible by road in a very round-about sort of way. If you do manage to get there, however, you'll find it pleasant and comfortable despite somewhat quirky decor. This is probably a good option for low budget business travellers, people with social phobias and anyone in training for running up the stairs in the Empire State building. ▶ 10 rooms (1 single 200Lt, 4 doubles 240 - 280Lt, 3 suites 320 - 390Lt, 2 apartments 400 - 520Lt).  ★★ ★★

Kunigaikščių Menė Daukšos 28, tel. 32 08 00, fax 32 08 72, info@hotelmene.lt, www.hotelmene.lt. They keep it pretty simple here, but that's spot on if you want good value accommodation on one of the loveliest streets of Old Town. Expect wooden floors, simple yet comfortable furnishings and modern bathrooms. In addition to being air conditioned, rooms look south over a quiet courtyard. So you can keep the

windows closed to let the sun warm your room, or open them to catch a cool breeze without too much street noise. Simply but very comfortable, and the only hotel in the category in such a good location. ▶ 8 rooms (3 singles 200Lt, 5 doubles 250Lt).  ★★ ★★


Pažaislis Park Hotel Masiulio 18e, tel. +370 614 636 664, fax 35 15 54, pphotel@hotmail.com, www.pazaislisparkhotel.eu. Far flung but not far from perfect if you're looking for a bit of a retreat within strolling distance of the Kaunas Sea and the Pažaislis monastery. Rooms are bright and airy, and even the dark polished wood furniture and strange leafy-pattern carpet can't crowd the spacious feeling or dim the mood. All rooms have television, satellite, minibar and telephone (so you can ask them to move the satellite a bit to the left, we presume) while the more posh rooms verge on over-the-topness with rococo looking furniture, satiny plush bits scattered about, DVD player and hydro-massage shower and bath tub. We like the rooms with balconies and views overlooking the park - but that's just us. A 20-30Lt taxi ride out of town, and well worth considering for those who are visiting Kaunas with a car. ▶ 10 rooms (1 single 225Lt, 6 doubles 250 - 320Lt, 3 suites 350Lt).  ★★ ★★

Reval Hotel Neris Donelaičio 27, tel. 30 61 00, fax 30 62 20, neris.sales@revalhotels.com, www.reval-hotels.com. The most slick and freshly preened hotel in town. Expect all the usual garnishes and gizmos of a business class hotel, including free WiFi throughout, flat screen televisions with a baffusion of channels, sparkly bathrooms with heated floors and tea and coffee making facilities in all but the standard class rooms. Our only niggle is that some of the smaller rooms are really very small, with just enough room to shuffle around the bed and nowhere to do your pushups. Conference facilities are outstanding, with a good range of conference rooms that can host meeting for up to 450 suits. ▶ 208 rooms (37 singles from €75, 151 doubles from €95, 17 triples €120, 1 suite €263, 2 rooms for disabled people).  ★★ ★★

Žaliakalnio Viešbutis Žemaičių 31/Savanorių 66, tel. 32 14 12, fax 37 37 69, zaliakalnis@greenhillhotel.lt, www.greenhillhotel.lt. A large affair, with excellent views as it sits high atop one of the city's greenest hills, located adjacent to the impressive Church of the Resurrection and above the now operational funicular. The many modern conveniences offered in the hotel include a large conference facility and plenty of space within the hotel walls to accommodate attendees. The rooms are spacious and light and come with such nice extras as minibar, satellite television and internet. On your way to the rooms, take note of the walls covered in art throughout the corridors. We should note that it is worth visiting different floors to compare the varying artistic styles. There is also a restaurant and makeshift billiards hall for those that get a craving for some eight ball at eight am. ▶ 29 rooms (28 doubles 220 - 300Lt, 1 suite 300 - 400Lt).  ★★ ★★

Budget

Apple Economy Hotel A-2, M. Valančiaus 19, tel./fax 32 14 04, info@applehotel.lt, www.applehotel.lt. This place offers an experience something akin to living in Tupperware. Or an ice cream tub. It's very clean, basic and simple; and sometimes that's exactly what you want. After all, why spend your money on a bathrobe that you're never going to wear, a gym you never go to and a chocolate on your pillow that you only discover after you've brushed your teeth? For no

nonsense accommodation in Old Town, this is hard to beat. Indeed, it's just like any fresh apple - good, cheap, refreshing, simple and convenient. Note that dogs are allowed if you cough up an extra 55Lt per night. Bow-wow! ▶ 14 rooms (5 singles 140 - 170Lt, 5 doubles 200 - 230Lt, 4 suites 170 - 230Lt).  ★★ ★★

Metropolis Daukanto 21, tel. 20 80 81/20 59 92, fax 20 62 69, sales@greenhillhotel.lt, www.greenhillhotel.lt. This is where Uncle Fester and other grisly weirdos used to like to stay. But now they've renovated so many of the rooms that finding good old fashioned Soviet-style grime is a bit of an ask. Not impossible, just tricky - there's still one or two bathrooms with black tiles or green fur on the walls. Now, however, you're much more likely to end up with a nice sparkly white bathroom and a normal looking bed that won't try to swallow you. What fun is that? Still, it's a bargain, it's in a great location, and the grand staircase continues to offer spooky amusement. ▶ 86 rooms (4 singles 90Lt, 70 doubles 120Lt, 6 triples 165Lt, 3 quads 220Lt).  ★★ ★★

Bed & Breakfast

Solo B&B Dynos 10, tel. +370 687 544 43/+370 615 578 69, info@solohotel.lt, www.solohotel.lt. Mini apartments with kitchenettes, simple but comfortable furnishings, free internet, cable television, DVD player and lovely little private garden. A quiet and out of the way option - it's a half-hour stroll to the centre. ▶ 2 doubles 120 - 200Lt.  ★★

Guesthouses

Litinterp Gedimino 28-7, tel. 22 87 18, fax 42 51 20, kaunas@litinterp.lt, www.litinterp.lt. A charming little cluster of rooms just a short walk from one end of the main promenade. All have basic but comfortable furnishings, simple style and, the Litinterp trademark - come with excellent and very friendly service. Litinterp can also help you find private accommodation with hosts in and around the city, which can be a pleasant cultural experience, an excellent budget option. ▶ 8 rooms (7 doubles 140 - 160Lt, 1 triple 180 - 210Lt).  ★★ ★★

Apartment rental

Kaunas Apartments Laisvės 50-4, tel. +370 687 012 33, info@kaunas-apartments.lt, www.kaunas-apartments.lt. Grab an apartment right on the main street for a pittance, brew up your favourite beverage, and sit on the windowsill and watch the world go by. Apartments can be seen online so you can pick the one with the facilities you want - kitchenette, internet, parking space, just-in-case sofa-bed, etc. It's also worth calling as the staff will be happy to help you find the right apartment to suit your needs. Easily the best budget option for stays of more than a couple of nights. ▶ 20 apartments (80 - 250Lt/night.).  ★★

Private Apartments Maironio 13-2, tel./fax 20 86 01, info@emsalonas.lt, www.emsalonas.lt. Off the main avenue, the private apartments at Private Apartments have everything you need to dig in and stay for a long time. Expect a kitchen, a dining nook and bedroom - all with modern fixtures in a residential apartment building. ▶ 150 - 180Lt/night. Discounts for longer stays.  ★★

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