

instant

NERINGA

inyourpocket

June 2008 - May 2009



The Neringa

telephone code is +370 469

Introducing Nida

Nida is the largest settlement on the Curonian Spit – a long, thin peninsula of sand dunes that extends from Kalingrad in the south to not quite touch Klaipėda with its northern tip. The spit, roughly half Russian and half Lithuanian territory, is 98km long and just 400m wide at its narrowest point. Michael Johnson, running like a duck, could cross it before you've finished reading this introduction.

While Nida has a permanent population of less than 2,000, it attracts some 50,000 visitors every season, mostly families and those who like a pretty laid-back kind of lifestyle. It is located near the widest point of the spit (3.8km), just north of the border with Kalingrad, and right alongside some of the tallest shifting sand dunes in Europe – they mount up to around 60m sometimes. While travelling to Nida from the northern tip of the Curonian Spit, you'll also pass through Juodkrantė (also covered in this guide).

The entire sandy peninsula is on the UNESCO World Heritage list and is, not surprisingly, a national park. It's forested with linden, elm, birch and pine, and is home to all sorts of wildlife, including fishermen. The beaches at Nida and Juodkrantė have a 'blue flag' status, meaning they are all clean and lovely.

Restaurants

Bars

Club (yes, just the one)

Sights

Hotels

Transport

and a whole host of other useful information

Getting there

The Lithuanian part of Curonian spit is often called *Neringa*. Working south, it includes: Smiltynė, Alksnynė, Juodkrantė, Pervalka, Preila and finally Nida. From Klaipėda, take the Smiltynė ferry and in a couple of minutes you're across the water and on the spit. Buses (7Lt) leave regularly during the summer, and a little less frequently out of season. A taxi (50Lt) isn't worth it, since they have to pay an entrance fee. Don't lose your receipt. If travelling by car, don't forget to stop at the entrance to the Curonian Spit park (10km down the road) to pay your entrance fee.

Nida Bus station B-2, Naglių 18e, tel. +370 469 528 59. Tickets, left luggage. Travel agency Balttours (next door, www.balttours.lt) can help to find accommodation. Open 07:45 - 20:00 with a short lunch break.

Where to stay

Upmarket

Ažuolynas (Juodkrantė) B-4 (Neringa map), Rėzos 54, tel. +370 469 533 10, fax +370 469 533 16, hotelazuolynas@takas.lt, www.hotelazuolynas.lt. Somehow they've mixed a sort of quirky appeal with all the services and conveniences that you'd expect of a hotel that comes in a big white box - and thrown in a waterslide. Some of the apartments are wonderful, but beware that those that face the lagoon are like ovens in summer. A great place for families. ▶ 78 rooms (singles 110 - 180Lt, doubles 150 - 230Lt, triples 220 - 340Lt, quads 430 - 520Lt, apartments 520Lt). ★★★

Linėja (Nida) B-1, Taikos 18, tel. +370 469 523 90, fax +370 469 527 18, info@linejahotel.lt, www.linejahotel.lt. A big white minimalist hotel, with plenty of pleasing extras, including sauna and bowling. The rooms all come with satellite television and balconies, and this one is well worth considering. ▶ 37 rooms (singles 115 - 230Lt, doubles 135-295Lt, apartments 240-375Lt). ★★★

Litorina (Nida) A-1, Smiltynės 19, tel. +370 469 525 28, fax +370 469 511 02, litorina@litorina-dubingiai.lt, www.litorina-dubingiai.lt. The vinyl floors, salmon walls and long corridors will make you feel like you're in a hospital, but once you sneak into your room you'll find it more cosy than clinical. Step out onto the balcony and you'll enjoy the view of a nice little garden, or a buzzing electrical sub-station that is so close that your hair may stand on end. The not-in-Nida location close to the sea beach makes it an ideal place to get away from all the other people. ▶ 19 rooms (6 doubles 100 - 200Lt, 3 triples 120 - 260Lt, 6 quads 170 - 360Lt, 3 suites 200 - 400Lt).

Tourist Information

Tourist Information (Nida) B-2, Taikos 4, tel. +370 469 523 45, fax +370 469 523 44, info@visitneringa.lt, www.visitneringa.com. Extremely helpful young people working in a very modern setting, including lots of first-hand vocal information as well as a good range of brochures for grazing. Ask these people anything about Nida or Neringa and if they don't know it themselves they'll undoubtedly know somebody who does. ▶ Open 10:00 - 20:00, Sun 10:00 - 15:00 (winter 09:00 - 13:00, 14:00 - 18:00, Sat 10:00 - 15:00. Closed Sun).

Nidus (Nida) B-1, Kuverto 15, tel. +370 469 520 01, fax +370 469 500 16, www.nidus.lt. Halfway between the sea and lagoon beaches, and a good stroll from both, this is a good option for those who don't like sand-sweat soup in their socks, and won't be carrying plastic chairs, drink bottles, inflatable hippos, melting ice-creams and whingeing children to the beach and back every ten minutes. It's all a bit more refined than that. There's a nifty blue and tan nautical theme throughout the swish well appointed rooms, all with a small balcony. This is also the best option for conferences in the area. ▶ 27 rooms (26 singles €155 - 370, 26 doubles €195 - 420, 2 suites €220 - 450). ★★★

Midrange

Auksinės Kopos (Nida) B-1, Kuverto 17, tel. +370 469 523 87/+370 464 111 57, fax +370 469 529 47. Not too close to the water but a popular choice all the same, including bright, clean rooms and one of the most frequented (and therefore overcrowded) swimming pools in the region. ▶ 90 rooms (10 singles 95 - 140Lt, 68 doubles 150 - 225Lt, 8 suites 200 - 350Lt, 4 apartments 180 - 270Lt).

Jūratė (Nida) B-2, Pamario 3, tel. +370 469 523 00, jurate-nida@takas.lt, www.hotel-jurate.lt. This blocky concrete mess hides recently renovated rooms that are bright, fresh, simple and sparse. Behind an immaculate reception lie occasional remnants of history and a cheap make-do mentality, such as the old cold concrete stairs, and chairs upholstered with rough brown carpet. The staff are friendly and helpful, and the overall experience is agreeable, but not exactly exceptional. ▶ 116 rooms (8 singles 115-205Lt, 95 doubles 155-295Lt, 13 suites 200-355, 1 apartment 400-600Lt). ★★

inyourpocket

ESSENTIAL CITY GUIDES

Instant NERINGA

In Your Pocket Instant guides are part of a series of European destination guides published by the In Your Pocket publishing group. For more information about our products, take a look at the web site, www.inyourpocket.com.

UAB VIYP
Vokiečių 10-15, Vilnius, Lithuania
tel. +370 5 212 29 76
fax +370 5 212 29 82
vilnius@inyourpocket.com
www.inyourpocket.com

Copyright notice

Text and photos copyright UAB VIYP 1992-2008; some photos, LATGA-A; maps, cartographer. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, except brief extracts for the purpose of review, without written permission from the publisher and copyright owner.

To advertise in this guide contact klaipeda@inyourpocket.com.

Where to eat

Baras Po Vyšniom (Nida) Nagliū 10, tel. +370 469 529 06. So, this is where Little Red Riding Hood comes in the summer. The cute red wood cabin (garden and decoration courtesy of Someone's Auntie Productions Inc.) offers a broad range of snacks, meat and fish dishes, and deserts. There's plenty to keep hungry wolves from the door at prices even Grandma can afford. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

Čili Pizza Nagliū 16, tel. +370 615 696 65, www.cili.lt. They're always coming up with something new, and this time its pizza delivery to the beach. Exactly how they plan to get the right pizza to the right person is unclear. Maybe just try the spanking great restaurant at the harbour. Also at Kuverto 7, tel. +370 615 164 00. Open 10:00-24:00. For home or beach delivery call +370 682 503 00. ▶ Open 10:00-03:00 (Jun-Sept). [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

Ešerinė (Nida) Nagliū 2, tel. +370 469 527 57, eserine@takas.lt. The old fish shack is getting a bit rundown and tired, but because it's a tourist trap kind of place, and people only go inside when they need to pee, they get away with it. Food is quite good but not great value, but you're paying for the best spot in town - possibly the best spot in Lithuania if you fancy water-side dining. ▶ Open 10:00 - 24:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

In Vino (Nida) Talkos 32, tel. +370 655 779 97, invino@invino.lt. Quite literally, the top spot in Nida. It's perched high-up on the hills between the sea and the lagoon, and even then you can perch yourself on the roof to enjoy a lofty view of the lagoon, sea, dunes and lighthouse. You won't know which way to look. The interior is minimalist-cool with a flash of a cinematic theme, which also extends to the rooftop with film canister ashtrays. The menu, wine list and staff are all as-in the popular namesake wine bar in Vilnius which inspires confidence and will probably induce cool, casual crowds. Worth the climb. ▶ Open 10:00 - 24:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

Kogas (Juodkrantė) Rėzos 1, tel. +370 684 787 07, info@jovila.lt, www.jovila.lt. Yarrrr! Be climbin' aboard this 'ere pretendin' pirate ship 'n' be askin' ye lasses fer what be takin' yer fancy. (Translation: It's a bar and restaurant on a mock pirate ship. They serve things involving beer and fish and meat. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

Lyra (Preila) Preila 15-1, tel. +370 469 551 05. A small pontoon hovers over the lagoon giving you the only non-boat option for dining on the water instead of just next to it. There also a pleasant and shady garden setting. This place is tucked away, but well worth finding. Food is café-standard-okay, but the setting really makes this a treat. ▶ Open each summer from May 10:00-23:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

Nidos Seklyčia (Nida) Lotmiškio 1, tel. +370 687 188 29/500 00, robala@neringaonline.lt, www.robala.w3.lt. Recently renovated, rather smart (although a bit lacking in character outdoors) and staffed with pleasant and helpful types who will quietly fuss over you while the old restaurant adage is confirmed: restaurants in good locations serve disappointing food. While the Lithuanian dishes are rather good, others are more botched than cooked. It's also a bit cheeky that prices in the menu don't include accompaniments such as vegetables to go with your meal, so prices can rise from already steep to rude rip-off proportions in no time. It's one of the best few restaurants in town - but that's not saying much. ▶ Open 10:00 - 23:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

Pašiūrė (Nida) Nagliū 20, tel. +370 698 415 38. Somewhere beneath all the wooden tables and chairs, and the cute little tinkling fountain, there must be a magnet that operates on the rattled brains of middle-aged tourists just off the bus. Not relying on this, however, delicious (but pricey) Lithuanian dishes are offered, with fish and fine wine being a feature. They've done a great job of dressing up a car-park location to make a traditional and seasonal hit here, and the staff swishing about in traditional dress are a nice touch. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

Prūsų Rūmai (Nida) Nagliū 29, tel. +370 686 685 32. Here's a rough gem that doesn't bother to announce its presence too much, but is well worth finding. There's a dark and brooding nautical theme inside, with a boat bow looming from shadows at the back. There might be some weird barnacle-munching sea-faring, peg-legged types hiding in the shadows back there too, but we didn't check. Occasionally, there's a dodgy bloke with an accordion out the front of an evening, but there's always friendly staff offering fresh and tasty meals and refreshing drinks to the local crowd. ▶ Open 12:00 - 23:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

Senasis uostas (Nida) Nagliū 18a, tel. +370 699 389 80. This pleasant little place is ideal for anyone who prefers a view of a carpark over a view of the lagoon, or anyone who simply wants decent fishy food at reasonable prices. There are also a few other meaty dishes, plenty of salads, something Mexican and some Lithuanian food. Pleasant staff and a seemingly resident stalker top it all off. ▶ Open 08:00 - 24:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]



Sena Sodyba (Nida) Nagliū 6-2, tel. +370 469 527 82. This is so much like dropping over to a friend's place for a barbecue that you'll feel like you ought to take flowers or cakes for the hosts. The food has a fresh, simple home cooked quality, is reasonably priced, and despite the feel-at-home atmosphere, you don't have to do your own dishes. Brilliant! ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00. [Facebook] [Instagram]

Vella Bianca (Juodkrantė) Rėzos 1a, tel. +370 469 500 13. Probably the finest setting looking over the lagoon and a very swanky restaurant. Expect mostly pasta and seafood served with flair. Service is very good, the atmosphere is lovely and they even welcome children and go to some effort to keep them amused (with coloured pencils). We found the food somewhat disappointing, but the overall experience is still quite pleasing, we would like to move in and live upstairs. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00. [Facebook] [Instagram] [Twitter]

What to see

Churches

Catholic Church (Nida) B-1, Talkos 10, tel. +370 469 521 32. Dominating Nida's skyline, this extremely modern construction with an alarming red roof will help to move a little closer to the Creator and worship in the extraordinary space at the top. The building also contains a small art gallery. ▶ Worship services 18:00, Sun 10:00.

Evangelical-Lutheran Church (Nida) B-2, Pamario 43. Built in 1888, this red brick church is most notable for the proliferation of krikštai (krikštai is in the singular) in the cemetery. Unique to the area a krikštai marks the grave of the deceased, can be of various nature-related themes, and are placed at the foot of the grave. Note that concerts are often held inside than church during the summer.

Cultural Centre

Agila Cultural Centre (Nida) B-2, Talkos 4, tel. +370 469 523 45/528 27, fax +370 469 520 15, event@visitneringa.lt, www.visitneringa.lt. Temporary art exhibitions from home and abroad, music concerts, film screenings and other such things to keep the locals happy in the winter and the tourists entertained during the summer months. They also have a small café, selling beers, wines and spirits alongside a few local dishes. ▶ Open 08:00 - 17:00. Closed Sat, Sun.

Neringa Rules

The Curonian Spit is a big national park, which means the following things are all officially naughty:

Putting up tents (except in the designated camping ground - see 'Nidos Kempingas' on page 50).

Lighting fires (except in designated places).

Damaging flora or fauna. (But you can say 'hello')

Trampling over dunes. (This is only forbidden in certain areas, but as a rule of thumb, just don't trample on dunes. Look for wooden paths.)

Disturbing birds (the ones with feathers).

Driving off-road or parking anywhere other than a designated parking place. Parking diagonally half-in and half-out of a designated place, while it is a Lithuanian national sport, is also not allowed.

Swimming into Russia.



Wild boars are interesting. Audrey Scott / Daniel Noil

Museums

Amber Museum Gallery (Gintaro Galerija) B-2, Pamario 20, tel. +370 469 525 73, info@ambergallery.lt, www.ambergallery.lt. A small and quite wonderful little gallery, featuring amber in all its forms and colours, including some lovely pieces of jewellery for sale, and the usual quota of blobs of the stuff, full of petrified insects. The staff know their stuff here, and despite the prices being higher than you find elsewhere, you won't be ripped off here. ▶ Open 10:00 - 19:00 (Sep - May), 09:00 - 20:00 (Jun - Aug).

Thomas Mann House (Nida) A-2, Skruzdynės 17, tel. +370 469 522 60, mann@nida.omninet.net. The Nobel Prize-winning German author spent the summers of 1930 and 1931 here. The cottage is now a museum, and many of the rooms have been given over to exhibits charting Mann's life. Everything is in Lithuanian and German only, so unless you're a real fan (or speak one of the above languages), there is little to keep one occupied or entertained. ▶ Open 10:00-18:00 (Jun 1-Sep 15), 10:00-17:00. Closed Mon, Sun (Sep16-May 31).

Place of interest

Dunes (Nida) These incredible natural lumps of sand are as fragile as they come, and as such it's strictly forbidden to walk on them. To get the best views of them take a walk through the forest at the end of Nagliū, then take a left at any of the paths after you've reached the top of the hill. Alternatively, walk along the beach at the end of Nagliū and then climb the 159 steps for the best view of the lot.

Pamario Takas (Juodkrantė) A not too strenuous 2.5km Lagoon Path, scattered with a great collection of international sculptures. The perfect combination of fresh air and creative inspiration.

Scoff the crows!

People in these parts used to eat crows? Crikey! While it might sound quirky and edgy today, the habit of eating crows had its origin in desperate times. In the 17th century there were fertile meadows on the Curonian Spit, and locals were used to growing lunch as well as catching it. Shifting sands, however, soon covered the fertile ground and farming had to be forgotten. This combined with the fact that eating smoked fish every day makes you go crazy (we know, we tried, and look what happened!) led to a desperate need to find alternative food sources.

As the Curonian Spit is under a migratory flight path of crows, the locals were soon catching and scoffing the raucous black birds. It was nothing for a young wag or an old codger to bag a hundred crows, and a good thing it is too because crows are not as good at filling you up as they are at sitting on the fence post making a racket. It was mainly the elderly and children who hunted crows, by the way, as it was not considered a manly thing to do. Crows were most often salted or smoked, and for a delicious well-rounded meal could be combined with seagull eggs. Of course the obvious question is: what do crows taste like? We've heard from various sources that they taste like chicken, or like duck, but we can't be sure and don't much feel like finding out. If you would like to give it a go, head up to the Anikės Kuršiai restaurant in Klaipėda and put in your order. Oh, by the way, there are plenty of crow recipes on the internet. (Probably. Not that we looked. Really.)