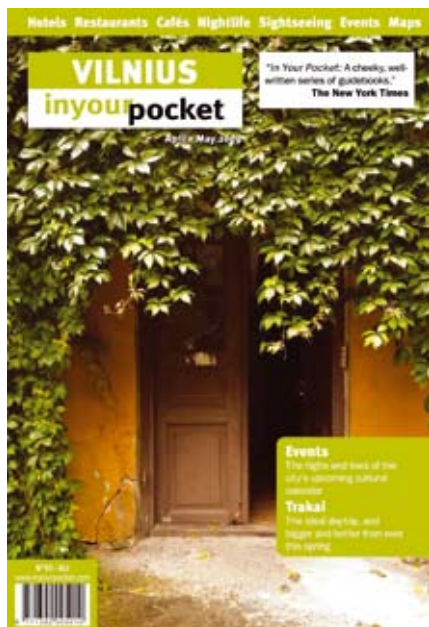


instant

VILNIUS

inyourpocket

April - May 2009



Roll up to the European Capital of Culture 2009, where the country's flagship airline recently took a nosedive, where overpriced taxis ferry hapless aliens to their hotels and where the European Capital of Culture 2009 so far means little more than a couple of wobbly sculptures and somebody in a funny hat banging a drum. Woo! The Lithuanian capital's two-decade emergence from Soviet gloom has been an almost daily struggle between the city's inept gatekeepers and its more enlightened promoters, which, depending on whether you see the glass half full or half empty has been either a roaring success or an embarrassing disaster. Here at *Vilnius In Your Pocket* we take the former view, and continue to be charmed by the city's many splendid peculiarities, a good many of them assembled inside this little book for your reading pleasure. Home-grown news includes the start of production on updates to our Kaunas and Klaipėda guides, published at the beginning of May and June respectively. We're also extremely proud to announce the publication of a new *Druskininkai In Your Pocket* mini guide, due on the streets in April. Comments, suggestions, praise, insults and anything else you care to throw at us as always to vilnius@inyourpocket.com.

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 Vilnius 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

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, Šnipiškiai 3, tel. 273 42 56. Many of the better antique shops in Vilnius (see page 86) 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.

Electricity

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 Elektromarkt and a nearby geek bits store may be able to help you.

Money

The unit of currency in Lithuania 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 worthless 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.

Vilnius: The facts

Area

Vilnius covers an area of 402 km² and is situated in the south-east of Lithuania over 300 km from the Baltic Sea at the confluence of two rivers – the Neris and Vilnia. Vilnius is the capital of Lithuania and its largest city with the population of 583 400, of them 53% Lithuanians.

Population

Lithuania – 3, 354,000
Vilnius – 544,206

Local time

Eastern European Time (GMT +2hrs). When it's 12:00 in Vilnius it'll be 11:00 in Paris, 10:00 in London and 05:00 in New York.

Temperature

The average annual temperature is + 6.1 degrees Celsius, in **Jan** being – 4.9 and +17.0 degrees Celsius in **July**. The average precipitation is about 661 mm per year.

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 open your wallet to allow passers-by to see how much of the local currency you have. Don't walk home from a nightclub along dark alleys while draped in bling-bling jewellery or iWank 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. Green-uniformed police are supposed to be keeping the peace in Old Town, although finding one when you need on is like looking for a cucumber in a haystack.

Smoking

Lithuania's pipe-smoking Prime Minister recently forgot to remember that smoking is banned in all cafés, bars, restaurants, and clubs. He should have checked our listings for venues with special smoking rooms – marked with a smoking symbol – and avoided a 1,000Lt fine.

Many venues have set up ashtrays by their doors, so if you want to have a puff, or get some not-so-fresh air, all you have to do is step outside. The unfortunate downside of this is that non-smokers will have to hold their breath as they enter and leave some places.

Most popular international cigarettes are readily available, and cigars, pipes, rolling tobacco and cigarette papers are also reasonably well-represented. Cigarettes can be purchased at kiosks and supermarkets as well as most bars and restaurants, and are very cheap by western standards.

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ESSENTIAL CITY GUIDES

Instant Vilnius

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French

Garden Brasserie B-1, Gedimino 16, tel. 266 62 00, www.novotel.com. It's not in a garden, it's a brasserie in the true sense of the word. It's also a hotel restaurant, meaning it shouldn't offend anyone or possess much of anything in the way of quirky character or homely charm. Given the quality of the nicely crafted meals, the equally inoffensive prices, and a pleasant view of what is often called the Champs-Élysées of Vilnius, however, who cares if it's a bit dull? This is a hidden treat that's often undeservedly overlooked. ▶ Open 11:30 - 23:00. 40Lt.

Saint Germain D-3, Literatų 9/32, tel. 262 12 10, www.vynine.lt. This little piece of Utopia wraps up all that's good about life. On one table, candle-lit, doe-eyed dating. On the next, a meet-the-parents session. Amid that, celebrations of the acquisitions of new flats, new cars, new babies, new wealth etc. Nice, normal and unpretentious people come here for the good moments in their lives. But with excellent food at affordable prices, you don't have to wait that long. Book a table to be sure you don't miss out on one of Vilnius's most consistently reliable and quaintly decent restaurants. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00. 35Lt.

Cafés

Café de Paris C-3, Didžioji 1, tel. 261 10 21, www.cafedeparis.lt. A slightly edgy café-bar inside the French Cultural Centre, notable for its scruffiness and the slightly alternative crowd who frequent it. Evenings bring a range of DJs from home and abroad, there's a distinctively arty feel to the place and the famous crêpes are usually jolly good. Alongside the non-alcohol offerings find a limited range of beer, wine, spirits and of course the now compulsory cocktail menu. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Wed, Thu 11:00 - 02:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 04:00.

Double Coffee A-1, Gedimino 13, tel. +370 656 719 72, www.doublecoffee.lt. This magic bean chain has been spreading like a good bit of gossip and now has all the main parts of Vilnius covered. While the coffee is indeed pretty good and the drinks and snacks are fine, it's easy to get better value elsewhere. On the plus side, free wireless internet is available, although in our experience it can be a bit slow. Also at Vokiečių 3, tel. +370 650 273 53. Pilies 34, tel. +370 652 376 34. Gedimino 5, tel. +370 656 778 61; Gedimino 26, tel. +370 656 771 65. Konstitucijos 7a (Europa), +370 656 778 63. Ozo 25 (Akropolis), tel. +370 656 773 00. ▶ Open 08:00 - 22:00, Fri 08:00 - 24:00, Sat 10:00 - 24:00, Sun 10:00 - 22:00.

Ponių Laimė C-3, Stiklių 14/1, tel. 264 95 81. Essentially a combined patisserie and coffee shop, this decidedly feminine-feel establishment sells a good range of cakes, complimented with decent Lavazza coffee. Weekday lunchtimes see the place metamorphosise further with the addition of a selection of hot food from calamari in batter to lasagne, which is thrown in a microwave and served in an instant. Handy if you haven't got long for lunch and need something more than a bar of chocolate. ▶ Open 09:00 - 20:00, Sat 10:00 - 20:00, Sun 11:00 - 18:00.

Fun

NEW Wok to Walk A-2, Vilnius 19, tel. +370 655 919 19, www.woktowalk.com. Vilnius' first foray into the world of instant wok nosh is a breath of fresh air. Mix your Asian menu from noodles, rice or mixed vegetables with a main dish and a choice of seven sauces and get it stir-fried in front of you in minutes. The result, served inside a small cardboard box, is good, if a little different from what you're probably used to from ventures like these. The limited seating encourages plenty of noodle bonding and be careful with the spicy dishes, they may dissolve your fillings. Fun? Well strangely enough, yes. At least it is if you go with a friend or two and order different combinations for sharing. ▶ Open 11:00 - 22:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 03:00. 20Lt.

German

Bunte Gans C-5/6, Aušros Vartų 11, tel. 212 83 12. German chef Tom sources local fruit and vegetables daily, imports the very best cuts of meat and bakes his own bread inside this charming little German restaurant in the heart of Old Town. The imaginative, good value menu features several schnitzels, curry wurst, bangers and mash and the house special after which the place is named, a dish of goose that comes with great fried potatoes and a host of other vegetables. Good German beer and wine too. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Fri 11:00 - 24:00, Sat 13:00 - 24:00, Sun 13:00 - 20:00. 25Lt.

Indian

Sue's Indian Raja B-2, Odminių 3, tel. 266 18 88, www.sues-it.com. The care and attention you receive here is superb and, thankfully, so are the meals. The main fare is Indian, of course, with a combination of authentic and popular British-style dishes. There's also a separate Thai and Chinese menu which offers a small but very tempting selection of tasty dishes. The atmosphere is gilded, refined and in a gorgeous location, especially if you sit by the window and can watch the evening sun light the Cathedral. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00. 30Lt.

International

Brasserie de Verres en Vers C-4, Didžioji 35/2 (Radisson SAS Astorija hotel), tel. 236 08 40, www.vilnius.radissonsas.com. A good venue for sophisticated business travellers and bankers to enjoy their salaries, slip into the mirror-museum interior, slide your bottom onto the black leather seats and partake in a range of simple but fine French-themed dishes. The emphasis is on quality ingredients and straightforward cooking rather than fancy flourishes, although the prices are still quite ambitious. A worthwhile option for those after a touch of quality and class. The bar next door also serves a fine beer. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00, Sun 12:00 - 16:00. 60Lt.

Cozy C-3, Dominikonų 10, tel. 261 11 37, www.cozy.lt. A marvellous little hideaway with a menu of reasonably priced and tempting meals, a trendy crowd and free wireless internet. They've even made sure the walls and furniture are a bit worn so that bachelors, students and people from London will feel right at home. We especially like the local photographic art on the walls and the fact that the images are available as postcards that they will deliver for free. No wonder Cozy is a cornerstone of Vilnius café culture. ▶ Open 09:00 - 02:00, Fri 09:00 - 04:00, Sat 10:00 - 04:00, Sun 10:00 - 02:00. 25Lt.

Medininkai C-5, Aušros Vartų 8, tel. 266 07 71, www.medininkai.lt. The dining rooms are fairytale gorgeous and the food is almost orgasmically good, but not quite. The menu is problematic in that it offers such a range of interesting temptations that choosing is difficult. Service can be a little bumbling, but if you tell them what to do they'll happily and enthusiastically oblige. While the meals are not large, the whole experience oozes storybook charm and character, making for an exquisite dining experience. ▶ Open 12:00 - 22:00. 45Lt.

Riverside Restaurant H-2, Konstitucijos 20 (Inside the Reval hotel), tel. 231 48 21. This sassy server has tickled-up its menu to include all sorts of crisp and crunchy goodness. We recommend the delectable Dim Sum for starters, the seafood bisque, the grilled butterfish (a Riverside classic) and, for something to brag about, New Zealand deer. There's something for everyone, the kitchen is glistening, open and clean and there's even a kiddie corner to keep the little ones happy. An all-round excellent restaurant. ▶ Open 11:30 - 23:00. 40Lt.

Zoe's Bar & Grill B-2, Odminių 3, tel. 212 33 31, www.zoesbargrill.com. One of a handful of foreign-owned and well run restaurants that gets just about everything right and is only occasionally let-down by nincompoop staff. The food is excellent and the menu interesting, with an exposed kitchen and lounge décor as fresh and modern as an undergraduate dentist. The youthful waiters and waitresses are happy, smiley and keen to please even when they're saying dumb things. For a fresh, fun and friendly place that meets international standards, Zoe's is the only option in Vilnius. ▶ Open 11:30 - 01:00, Sat, Sun 12:00 - 01:00. 25Lt.

Italian

St. Valentino B-3, Vilnius 47/18, tel. 231 41 98. Even once you've deciphered the multi-lingual menu you'll notice there's plenty to choose from. All the dishes are pretty straightforward and are made with good quality ingredients, so there's a hearty honesty to the meals. Things can get pricey, however, once you start adding garnishes and drinks. The front room is watched over by MTV, which is tacky, but the comfortable seats at the back make a lovely recluse. The summer terrace across the road is one of the finest people-watching spots in the capital. ▶ Open 07:30 - 23:00, Thu, Fri 07:30 - 24:00, Sat 09:00 - 24:00, Sun 10:00 - 22:00. 25Lt.

Japanese

Hanabi C-3, Didžioji 28 (2nd floor), tel. 260 90 20, www.hanabi.lt. Whether it be teppanyaki, sushi, or just clumsily using chopsticks to stick food up your nose, you can do it in elegant bamboo-clad style here. There's something about Japanese that manages to find a confluence, or possibly confusion, of formality and fun, and when combined with delicious food it's the perfect recipe for a pleasant evening. Small parties can even shuffle into cute little private rooms with karaoke machines. Also at Ozo 25 (Akropolis), tel. 249 27 74. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00. 50Lt.

Lithuanian

Lokys C-4, Stiklių 8, tel. 262 90 46, www.lokys.lt. Tuck your elbows in, duck your head and crouch down the narrowest staircase in town for the most atmospheric dining experience in town. There are plenty of traditional dishes, including plenty of gamey meats, and some interesting notes in the menu

about local dining traditions. For all that noble authenticity, however, the meals are tough going. Expect folksy musicians to pluck up the atmosphere and blow a bit of spirit into the place during weekend evenings. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00. 40Lt.

Žemaičiai B-4, Voklečių 24, tel. 261 65 73, www.zemaičiai.lt. One of a clutch of restaurants offering a locally-themed dining adventure aimed predominantly at tourists. Dishes have been shrinking and prices rising of late, but this is still the best of its kind in the city. Highly recommended for groups who are more interested in enjoying themselves than saving money. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00. 30Lt.

Steak

Markus ir Ko C-3, M. Antokolskio 11, tel. 262 31 85. It's Lithuanian-American, with black-and-white pictures of Marilyn Monroe on the walls and herring on the menu. The main attraction to this waiters-in-jens casual-kind of place, however, is the quality of the steak. For a big lump of juicy beef, it's hard to beat. It's certainly not cheap, but carnivores won't come away feeling ripped-off. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00. 45Lt.

Vegetarian

NEW Baraka C-3, Šv. Ignoto 12, tel. 212 34 26. It's about time vegetarians had a choice of places to eat without running the risk of the chef chopping their salad with the same knife he just used to chop someone else's steak with, and, if you can call a menu with almost nothing on it a choice, then this is the place. With regulation ethnic music, an extensive wine list and very good value food this diminutive little place is just what the doctor ordered. A word of warning, queues form at lunchtime, so if you're in a hurry don't eat here at that time of day. ▶ Open 11:30 - 23:00. 10Lt.

Pizza

Čili Pica A-1, Gedimino 23, tel. 261 90 71, www.cilli.lt. The bible-proportioned menu includes a frightening array of decent pizzas as well as a small yet well-chosen collection of pasta and meat dishes to boot. Those who are generally offended by the possibility of smothering one's meal in tomato ketchup really should try it. It's actually not that bad. To top it all (so to speak), the service is usually very good indeed. Also at Mindaugo 11 (Maxima), tel. 213 33 88, Didžioji 5, tel. 231 24 62, Ozo 25 (Akropolis), tel. 238 79 27, Konstitucijos 7a (Europa), tel. 275 28 05. ▶ Open 07:30 - 03:00, Thu, Fri, Sat 07:30 - 06:00. 15Lt.

Pomodoro A-2, Jogailos 4, tel. 269 00 22, www.pomodoro.lt. From good early morning pancakes through to an excellent value and surprisingly first-rate steak dinner, Pomodoro are more than just the sum of their pizza and pasta reputation. Consistently high in quality and relatively good value, this is fairly fast business food at its very best. More or less fabulous, albeit with a dreadful music policy, note that entrance is from the business centre or on Vilnius. Also at P. Lukšio 32, tel. 274 11 20, Goštauto 40c (Pomodoro Lounge), tel. 249 69 28. ▶ Open 08:00 - 23:00, Fri 08:00 - 24:00, Sat 10:00 - 24:00, Sun 11:00 - 22:00. 15Lt.

Wine



It's like 80s London in Vilnius at the moment, albeit thankfully without the perms and leg warmers. Along with the emergence of specialist wine shops and the occasional wine club over the last five years or so in the city, Noah's favourite tittle is now celebrated with an ever-increasing number of specialist wine bars.

Bar BoBo B-3, Trakų 15, tel. +370 677 773 35, www.bobo.lt. Like one of those games where you have to shuffle eight square tiles around to make a picture, the arrival of each new customer in this recommended albeit comically small bar summons a synchronised wiggle of media and advertising professionals. The tabletops are veritable wooden Frisbees, where the brave perch and quaff a fine selection of wines, Hoegaarden and other quality beverages. The eclectic music policy is punter-driven and, simply, an evening here is an evening well spent indeed. ▶ Open 11:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 05:00. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

In Vino C-5, Aušros Vartų 7, tel. 212 12 10, www.invino.lt. This down-to-earth but darling little wine bar is the sort of place where the little tables end up crowded with jostling bottles and glasses and the spaces between froth with elbows and smiles. You invariably find yourself drinking someone else's drink, no one knows who ordered what or how much to pay. It is, however, becoming a victim of its own success, overflowing with the problems associated with overcrowding, a lack of staff and a lack of toilets. ▶ Open 16:00 - 02:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 04:00. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

La Bohème B-3, Šv. Ignoto 4/3, tel. 212 10 87, www.labohe.lt. Lurking in the outer regions of Old Town like a forgotten minor planet, at first glance La Bohème delights the senses, alleviating the slight discomfort of walking a couple of extra streets to get there. Pushing most of the right architectural and design buttons, the Parisian feel and the sheer grandeur of the medieval setting are worthy of a visit in itself. The wine menu thoughtfully comes with national flags next to every tittle, and the food, if not gourmet, is recommended for soaking up the drink. Come during the day and swing a large cat in the air. Come after dark and you won't find anywhere to sit. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Thu 11:00 - 02:00, Fri 11:00 - 03:00, Sat 12:00 - 03:00, Sun 12:00 - 24:00. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Tappo D'oro B-2, L. Stuokos-Gucevičiaus 7, tel. +370 686 168 66, www.tempollbero.lt. Hidden away between the Cathedral and the President's Palace, this little gem adds yet another string to the maestro's bow also known as contemporary Vilnius. Tappo D'oro is part wine bar and part delicatessen, a peculiar marriage to the uninitiated perhaps, but one that hopefully won't end in divorce. As well as a chilled cabinet full of speciality meats, cheese and olives, find a tastefully decorated drinking area complete with a wine list longer than the Bible. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Bars

NEW

Alaus Namai (Beer House) H-3, A. Goštauto 8, tel. 260 96 37. Lumps of wood balancing on barrels for tables, a Lithuanian-only menu at the time of writing, live music at the weekends and a crowd of mostly male students nursing an assortment of budget-priced beers from Lithuania and beyond. The menu features beer soup and the prerequisite pigs' ears and peas, there's basketball on television when a big game's on and if you don't like beer (they don't sell anything else to drink except mineral water) or rock music you may want to give this place a miss. Of the former, we had a dark Varniukų and a light Miežinis, and then we had another one. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Thu, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 05:00, Sun 11:00 - 22:00. [i] [f]

Dubliner B-3, Dominikonų 6, tel. 243 08 05, www.dubliner.lt. A Brit-owned venture that's both a restaurant and a bar, the main draw here is the Guinness, which is chalked up at the standard expat rate but that's still worth every penny. Home to a pub quiz and the innovative Language Café to boot, the food menu is more international than Irish, offering a range of both fancy dishes as well as classic pub grub. Refreshingly, the friendly girls who work the tables haven't been stolen from the pages of a fashion magazine. ▶ Open 11:00 - 24:00, Fri, Sat 11:00 - 02:00. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Mano Alibi B-2/3, Totorių 18, tel. 212 50 51, www.manoalibi.lt. Resplendent with every accoutrement necessary for a night out like no other, this den of delight features everything from furry ceilings to board games to a fire-breathing barman. Part lounge, part old-fashioned pub, an ambitious drinks menu lives alongside a nouvelle cuisine bill of fare to help stave the alcohol-fuelled hunger. Riding on nobody's coat tails, this is about as post-modern as it gets. In a word, Magnificent. ▶ Open 11:00 - 04:00, Fri 11:00 - 06:00, Sat 17:00 - 06:00, Sun 17:00 - 04:00. [i] [c] [cc]

SkyBar H-2, Konstitucijos 20 (Reval Hotel, 22nd floor), tel. 272 62 00. If you can't find a place to sit in a hotel bar on a Tuesday evening there's obviously a very good reason for visiting. In the case of the must-visit, 22nd-floor SkyBar, it's the view. What the word breathtaking was invented for, this sleek cocktail sensation, refitted in March 2009 in a series of cool brown tones but looking very much like its former incarnation, provides an extraordinary panorama of both Old Town and the sleeping districts to the west. Music is provided by a local DJ who plays live during the weekend. ▶ Open 17:00 - 01:00, Fri, Sat 17:00 - 02:30. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Cocktails

Mojito Naktys C-4, Didžioji 33/2, tel. +370 610 041 31, www.mojitonaktys.lt. As cracking as a dominatrix's whip going off like a striper's knickers and firing up like an ants' nest full of acid. Currently one of Vilnius's hottest night spots, were people sip cocktails, stand on the bar and wiggle their tails, mingle and move on the dance patch or just schmooze through the burrow-like rooms taking it all in. Drinks are pricey and it tends to attract a sophisticated but fun crowd rather than a beer-swilling rabble. A great place to lash out and have an unforgettable night. ▶ Open 20:00 - 02:00, Fri, Sat 20:00 - 05:00. Closed Mon, Sun. [i] [c] [cc]

Paparazzi B-2, Totorių 3, tel. 212 01 35, www.paparazzi.lt. A flashy space that fills with the motion blur of after-work comings and goings. Expect a swizzle of suits and stylish biz babes slicking about, looking cool, posing for no-body in particular and trying to rectify their belief that they're

underexposed. Snacks are available and they're not bad, but the main item on the agenda here is drinking, and they focus on a good range of cocktails although they're sometimes a little underdeveloped. Certainly a good place to start a night. Reserve a table if you intend coming on a Friday evening. Note that face control is in operation here. ▶ Open 16:00 - 03:00, Fri, Sat 16:00 - 06:00. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Shooters B-2, Totorių 3, tel. +370 655 525 18, www.shooters.lt. Over 300 cocktails and the promise of being smothered with attention await visitors to this friendly, ever-so cocktail bar-looking cocktail bar. Complete with juggling bartenders, wacky furnishings and the cream of Vilnius hip cat community, other delights include special theme nights and a range of nibbles to stave off the hunger. Perfect for a night out in its own right or as a stepping stone for those moving their night from Old Town to Gedimino or vice versa. ▶ Open 19:00 - 05:00. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Live music

NEW

Aulos Bliuzo Klubas (Aula Blues Club) C-2, Pilies 11, tel. 268 71 73, www.aulestoranas.lt. All of a sudden the city is awash with live music venues, including this brand new adventure underneath the restaurant of the same name. Still very much in its infancy, expect a wide range of blues and blues-related music four nights a week. ▶ Open 19:00 - 24:00. Closed Mon, Sat, Sun. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Tamsta D-5, Subačiaus 11a/1, tel. 212 44 98, www.tamstaclub.lt. A brave attempt by the people who run the excellent music shop downstairs to bring live bands of many persuasions to a half-starved audience. Music ranges from jazz to art-rock to old fashioned rock and roll, there's a long bar to keep everyone fed and watered, plus once a month they organise a so-called Open Mic Day where outsiders can come and improvise along with other like-minded musicians. ▶ Open 19:00 - 03:00, Wed 19:00 - 01:00, Thu 19:00 - 02:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Sun. Entrance 10-30Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f]

Clubs

Gangsters G-3, Mečetės 4/5, tel. +370 604 109 13, www.gangstersclub.lt. Almost exactly half way between the Seimas and the prison, this R&B-orientated club caters to a slightly older crowd some nights whilst changing the rules on others and brining in DJs to play to the city's student community. ▶ Open 22:00 - 04:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Sun. [i] [c] [cc] [f]

Havana Social Club A-1, Šermukšnių 4a, tel. 261 08 12. Or should that be Havana Socialist Club? Anyway, it's a nice idea. They were hoping to start some kind of Cuban Revolution right here in Vilnius, with a week full of affordable food and weekend evenings full of merry hijinx and cuban tunes. It's supposed to appeal to fashionably counter-cultural types who think wearing Che Guevara t-shirts is, like, cool. Unfortunately, the crowds just haven't turned up and, despite being only six months old, this club is now about as action packed as Fidel's underpants. ▶ Open 22:00 - 05:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Sun. Restaurant 11:00 - 24:00, Sat 15:00 - 05:00. Live music club Fri, Sat 22:00 - 05:00. Entrance 10-30 Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Neringa Club H-3, Gedimino 23, tel. 261 40 58, www.restoranasinga.lt. This peculiar small downstairs club functions as a nice place for food during the day and as a place to die of boredom most evenings. However, weekends after dark seldom fail to attract a crowd of mostly middle-

aged, manbag-wielding gentlemen and their mutton wives, splashing out on herring and champagne and reliving their youth on the little dance floor to the fabulous hits of yesterday. ▶ Open 11:00 - 23:00, Fri 11:00 - 03:00, Sat 17:00 - 03:00. Closed Sun. Entrance 10Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Pabo Latino A-4, Trakų 3/2, tel. 262 10 45, www.pabolatino.lt. Reminiscent of a party at a Columbian drug lord's manor except the men don't have guns, the women don't have moustaches and the lines at the bar are longer than the lines of, well, you know. While this is an utterly gorgeous place, with suave slump-about furniture and a splendid balcony overlooking a thriving courtyard, the imprudent bar staff ruin a superb night by refusing to serve anyone who isn't tall, blonde, female and displaying generous tips. But it's still a great club and at least you'll have an excuse to ask that nice-looking girl (and there are very nice looking girls here) to buy you a drink. ▶ Open 21:00 - 05:00, Thu 21:00 - 03:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Sun. Entrance 15-30Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f]

Pacha G-3, Gynėjų 14, tel. 241 30 21, www.pachavilnius.lt. Lots of swirling colours, reflective tiles, fun furniture, flashy technology and acres of space. There are also armies of staff and swarms of slinky pop-video fodder frolicking about. Two rooms sort out the hardcore devotees of doof from the sing-along pop crowd and, basically, everyone has a blast. The amazing thing is that this is both classy and fun. Sure, there are a few fashion vixens glaring about, but for the most part it's all big friendly smiles and uplifting effervescence. ▶ Open 22:00 - 05:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Sun. Entrance 25-35Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f]

Prospekto Pub B-2, Gedimino 2, tel. 212 08 32, www.prospektopub.com. Everyone goes there because everyone goes there, but other than that, we can't work out why anyone goes there. For a young crowd, this is the most popular place in town simply because it's the most popular place in town. There's a fair amount of space for both sitting and dancing, music is inoffensive pop and prices are reasonable. ▶ Open 11:00 - 05:00. Entrance 15-25Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f]

Tarantino A3/4, Trakų 2, tel. 243 08 88, www.tarantinoclub.lt. A sleek underground homage to a man famous for appropriating other people's ideas gives some indication of what's to be found inside this peculiar Old Town club. Complete with film posters galore, experimental furniture and a crowd of sophisticated youngsters agog at the sounds emanating from the wide range of DJs who do their thing here, be warned that you may need to run the gauntlet of the friends and relatives of the management, who are known to think nothing of taking your chair away when they decide they want to sit on it. ▶ Open 20:00 - 05:00. Closed Mon, Tue, Sun. Entrance 15-25Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Villa Latina C-4, Didžioji 28, tel. 261 19 96, www.villalatin.lt. A top spot for more mature cocktail sippers who may be over the nightclub scene, but who enjoy a classy atmosphere, bottle jugglers who whip up all sorts of fruity concoctions, and a bit of dancing. There's even the adjacent (but, thankfully, quite discrete) Eden Club option for those who want a bit on the side. See our Adult Entertainment listing for more on that one. ▶ Open 21:00 - 06:00. Entrance 10-20Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Woo B-2, Vilniaus 22, tel. 212 77 40, www.woo.lt. An industrial style basement club aimed at a primarily young, student crowd who consider themselves alternative to varying degrees of success. The evenings here are manifold, including everything from live jazz to DJs pumping out everything from techno to funk. Check out their website for upcoming events. ▶ Open 12:00 - 24:00, Thu 12:00 - 04:00, Fri 12:00 - 06:00, Sat 17:00 - 06:00. Closed Sun. Entrance 10-30Lt. [i] [c] [cc] [f] [m]

Essential Vilnius

If you haven't got a lot of time in Vilnius, the **Cathedral** (p.9), **Gates of Dawn** (p.12), **Gediminas Castle & Museum** (p.11), **KGB Museum** (p.11) and **St. Anne's Church** (p.10) are generally considered to be the major sights. This list is of course highly subjective, and in no way reflects the expectations of every single visitor to the city. *Vilnius In Your Pocket* strives to bring you the widest range of historical and cultural sights and sensations, and is adding to the list all the time. If you think there's something missing and you can't find it on our website, write to us at vilnius@inyourpocket.com and let us know.

Churches

Bernardine Church (Bernardinų Bažnyčia) D-3, Maironio 8, tel. 260 92 92. Built at the end of 15th century in the Gothic style, and rebuilt after the devastating fires of 1560 and 1564, the monastery was closed after the Lithuanian-Polish uprising of 1863 upon suspicion of anti-tsarist sentiments. From 1919 Polish officers occupied it, and during the Soviet era it housed the Vilnius Art Academy. The applied arts faculty allegedly used the organ pipes in their compositions during this time. Restoration work continues, but shouldn't put visitors off coming to look. Find it tucked away directly behind St. Anne's Church. ▶ Mass: Mon, Tue Thu 07:30; Wed 07:30, 18:00; Fri 07:30, 18:00; Sat 09:00, 18:00; Sun 09:00(English), 10:30, 13:00, 17:00. ☒

Cathedral (Arkikatedra Bazilika) C-2, Katedros 1, tel. 261 11 27. Once the site of a pagan monument, the first



Christian church was thought to have been built here in 1251 by Grand Duke Mindaugas. The current construction dates back as far as 1419, but has suffered several fires and has gone through major reconstructions and renovations. Much of the current structure

was erected between 1769 and 1820 by the architect L. Stuoka Gucevičius in the French-classicist style. The Cathedral was closed by the Soviet regime in 1950 and used as a picture gallery before being returned to the Catholic church in 1990. Highlights include its eleven chapels, in particular the High Baroque Chapel of St. Casimir, the patron saint of Lithuania. Built in 1636 to house the sarcophagus of the saint it's one of the national treasures of the country. The freestanding bell tower received six new bells in 2002, which were 'baptised' by cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis in a special ceremony before they were hung. ▶ Mass 08:00, 17:30, 18:30, Sun 08:00, 09:00, 10:00, 11:15, 12:30, 17:30, 18:30. ☒

Evangelical Lutheran Church (Evangelikų Liuteronų Bažnyčia) B-4, Vokietijų 20, tel. 212 37 92. A Lutheran community is said to have existed in Vilnius since 1553. This little church, built in 1555 and set in a courtyard, combines Gothic and Baroque elements. The gorgeous rococo altar, built in 1741 by Glaubitz, has been restored to its former beauty and simply shouldn't be missed. ▶ Mass: Wed 18:00; Sun 09:45(English, Ecumenical Protestant), 11:00(Lithuanian). ☒

Franciscan Church (Pranciškonų) B-4, Trakų 9-1, tel. 261 42 42. It's all a bit crumbly but this is one of the oldest buildings in Vilnius, dating from the mid 14th century. A wooden church and cemetery are believed to have existed even before that. The church you see now is primarily Gothic but picked up a few baroque elements in the late 18th century. In the 19th century it was knocked about a bit as it was used as a granary and an archive. Now it is mid-restoration and quite a sight with its wooden benches, tatty old rugs, patched-up floor and piles of bricks waiting for something to happen, all overlooked by a miracle-working statue of the Virgin Mary. The little yellow building in what used to be the cemetery at the corner of Trakų and Pranciškonų was a mausoleum and chapel erected by, and for the family of, Mykolas Suzinas in 1708. ▶ Mass: 17:30(Lithuanian), 19:00(Polish). Sun 10:00(Lithuanian), 11:30, 13:00(Polish). ☒

Holy Trinity Church & Basilian Gate (Šv. Trejybės Cerkvė ir Bazilijonų Vartai) C-5, Aušros Vartų 7, tel. 212 25 78. A real treat, consisting of a church, monastery, belfry and beautiful rococo gate. The 17.9m-high, 10.8m-wide gate was built in 1761 and designed by the architect Glaubitz. The church, which needs more than just a coat of fresh paint, was built in 1514 by order of Duke Ostrogskiškis. The Gothic-style church and monastery belonged to the Uniate Basilian monks from the 17th to early 19th centuries. Today the ensemble houses the working monastery and functioning church of the Uniate Basilian monks. ▶ Services: Mon-Wed 07:45, Thu-Sat 17:30, Sun 10:00, 13:00(Ukrainian). ☒

Church of the Holy Mother of God (Skaisčiausio Dievo Motinos Cerkvė) D-3, Maironio 14, tel. 215 37 47. This church has gone through many incarnations since construction in the middle of the 14th century. Three major fires in 1610, 1716, and 1748 were responsible for changes to its appearance. In 1808 the religious building became academic when Vilnius University took it over. The architect M. Schultz divided the building into two floors in 1810 and constructed a library, classrooms and dissection rooms for anatomy classes. In 1842 soldiers moved in as the church acted as a barracks. Over the years it's also been used as an archive, warehouse and even a smithery. Only in the 1860s did the building become a church again. ▶ Services: Sat 17:00, Sun 09:00. ☒

Church of the Holy Spirit (Šventosios Dvasios Bažnyčia) B-3, Dominikonų 8, tel. 262 95 95. Built towards the end of the 14th century on the site of the first Gothic church in Vilnius, and reconstructed several times during the city's turbulent history. In 1501 it was given to Dominican monks who built a monastery nearby. Its present appearance dates to the 18th century, when the interior was rebuilt after serious fire damage. The church, which remained open throughout the Soviet period, is the centre of the Catholic, Polish-speaking community in Vilnius. ▶ Mass only in Polish: 07:00, 07:30, 15:00, 18:00, Sun 08:00, 09:00, 10:30, 12:00, 18:00. ☒

Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit (Staćiatikių Sv. Dvasios Cerkvė) C-5, Aušros Vartų 10, tel. 212 77 65. Built in the 17th century on the site of converging trade routes and recently renovated, the icons and decorations are now brilliant. See the well-preserved bodies of the martyred Saints Anthony, Ivan and Eustachius, who are clothed in white during the Christmas period, black during Lent and red on all other occasions bar each June 26, when they are displayed naked. It's reported that on this day at this place a huge healing presence is felt. ▶ Services: 08:00, 17:00, Sun 06:45, 10:00, 17:00. ☒

St. Anne's Church (Šv Onos Bažnyčia) D-3, Maironio 8. A much loved Vilnius landmark, and well deserving of the plethora of postcards and tourist guides (including this one, sometimes) that it fronts. While the first mention of a church in this location dates back to 1394, the current structure was designed by Benedikt Rejt (also responsible for the Vladislav Hall in the Prague Castle complex) between 1495 and 1500 and has survived pretty much intact. The beauty of the church speaks for itself, but one thing worth noting are the 33 different kinds of brick used on its construction, giving it an almost handmade, intricate charm. Legend has it that upon seeing the delightful and dainty church, Napoleon wanted to take it back to Paris in the palm of his hand. The bell tower next to the church was built in 1873. ▶ Mass 17:30, Sun 08:30, 09:30(English), 11:00. ☒

St. Casimir's Church (Šv. Kazimiero Bažnyčia) C-4, Didžioji 34, tel. 212 17 15. Named after the patron saint of Lithuania, Prince Casimir Jagiellon, and founded in 1604 by the Jesuits, St. Casimir's is the oldest Baroque church in Vilnius. It's long been a favourite subject of persecution and abuse, featuring among its many outrages Napoleon's troops use of the building as a grain store in 1812, its conversion into the Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas by the Russians some 20 years later (the Russians then turned it into a cathedral in 1864, the same year they banned the Lithuanian language in the Latin script) to its temporary use as a Protestant temple by the occupying German army during WWI. Perhaps most shocking was the Soviet's innovative application of the building, turning it as they did into a museum of atheism. Fear not however, for it's once again in the safe hands of its rightful owners, and exquisitely beautiful both inside and out. ▶ Mass: 17:30, Sun 09:00, 10:30, 12:00. ☒

St. Nicholas' Church (Šv. Mikalojaus Bažnyčia) B-4, Šv. Mikalojaus 4, tel. 262 30 69. The oldest church in Lithuania, and the oldest still standing Gothic building in the city, St. Nicholas' Church was built in 1320 by German merchants before Lithuania's conversion to Christianity. During the Polish annexation of Vilnius between the wars this was the only church in the city where Lithuanians could attend Mass in their own language. ▶ Mass: 07:30, 18:00, Sat 09:00, Sun 08:00, 10:00, 14:00. ☒

Sts. Johns' Church (Šv. Jonų Bažnyčia) C-3, Šv. Jono 12, tel. 268 71 55. Construction of this Gothic church began in 1387 soon after Lithuania's conversion to Christianity. Zygmunt August gave it to the Jesuits in 1571 but it was transferred to the University following the abolition of the Jesuit Order in 1773, at which time it boasted no fewer than 22 separate altars. The present church dates from the various restoration works carried out after the great fires of 1737, 1741 and 1748. ▶ Mass: Tue-Thu 18:00, Sun 11:00, 13:00. ☒

Sts. Peter & Paul's Church (Šv. Apaštalų Petro ir Povilo Bažnyčia) J-2, Antakalnio 1, tel. 234 02 29. Sts. Peter and Paul's was commissioned in 1668 by Michael Casimir Pac, Grand Hetman of the Lithuanian armies. His tombstone, inscribed *hic iacet peccator (here lies the sinner)* is embedded in the wall to the right of the entrance (Pac died in 1682, before the church was fully completed). Despite a rather plain facade, the Baroque interior is breathtakingly beautiful. Over 2,000 stuccoed figures crowd the vaults, representing miscellaneous mythological, biblical and battle scenes. Of particular note is the extraordinary, huge chandelier made from brass and glass beads and fashioned in the shape of a ship, made in Latvia in 1905. ▶ Mass: 07:00, 07:30, 17:00(Polish), 18:00, Sun 07:30, 08:30(Polish), 10:00, 11:30, 13:00, 18:00(Lithuanian).

Out of town



Dennis Oppenheim *Drinking Structure with Exposed Kidney Pool*

Europos Parkas (Open Air Museum near the Centre of Europe) Off the Verkiai road, 10km north of Vilnius, tel./fax 237 70 77, www.europosparkas.lt.

A diverse group of international artists have come to this 55ha sculpture park to express their own unique visions of the centre of Europe, which, according to the French National Geographic Institute, lies some 14km to the north of the place. Home to over 90 permanent sculptures by such global celebrities as Magdalena Abakanowicz, Dennis Oppenheim and Sol LeWitt, everything is exhibited amidst a charming, some would say idyllic area of woodland. The year 2002 saw the park making it into the Guinness Book of Records as containing the largest sculpture in the world made from television sets (about 3,000, and including as its centrepiece a rapidly decaying concrete Lenin), the maze-like 'Info Tree' by Lithuanian visionary sculptor and founder of the park Gintaras Karosas. Here Karosas has found the perfect 'place' to construct his landscape artwork aptly labelled 'The Place'. Picture a pond, some boulders and four giant rusted steel poles in the midst of a lush green forest and you, basically, get the picture. The park also recently unveiled the playful sculpture of Mindaugas Tendiagolškis titled 'Mobile Games'. The piece incorporates art and ancient Lithuanian games and is meant not to just be viewed, but also played. See their excellent website for more information.

Getting there by car

Take Kalvarijų to the Santariškės roundabout, turn right towards the Green Lakes (Žaliejė Ezerai) and follow the signs.

By bus

Follow Kalvarijų north on trolleybus N°10 to the Žalgirio stop and transfer to a bus marked Skirgiškės, which will take you to the park itself, or N°36 to the end of the line. It's then a further 3km walk to the park. Ask the bus driver which way to go. ▶ Open 10:00 to sunset. Adults 21Lt; students, pensioners 14Lt; schoolchildren 7Lt.

Museums

Amber Museum-Gallery (Gintaro Muziejus-Galerija) C-3, Šv. Mykolas 8, tel. 262 30 92, www.ambergallery.lt. Although not officially a museum this two-storey ode to amber offers explanations in English, German and Lithuanian about the formation, colour, harvesting and processing of Baltic Gold. Follow amber's history through a series of ancient rooms in the cellar. Amber polishing demos available upon request. ▶ Open 10:00 - 19:00. ☹

Applied Art Museum (Taikomosios Dailės Muziejus) D-1, Arsenalo 3a, tel. 262 80 80, www.idm.lt. Housed inside what was the far northeast corner of the city's original defensive walls, of which some including an original gate can still be seen inside, this worthy inclusion into the city's national treasures is stuffed full of good things to see, among them little models of how the city once looked, furniture, paintings and much more besides. Among the permanent exhibits find three unmissable collections of sacred Lithuanian art including examples from both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches dating back as far as the 15th century. Temporary exhibitions also take place throughout the year. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00, Sun 11:00 - 16:00. Closed Mon. Adults 6Lt, children 3Lt. ☹

Gediminas Castle & Museum (Gedimino Pilis ir Muziejus) C-1, Castle Hill, Arsenalo 5, tel. 261 74 53. Dating from the 13th century the castle was rebuilt in 1419 by



Grand Duke Vytautas following the great fire of Vilnius. In 1610 it was used as a prison for the ruling classes, and during the 1655-1661 Russian occupation the towers and defensive walls were almost completely destroyed, with serious restoration work only beginning in 1930. Inside the tower itself find models of the castle as it was in the 14th and 18th centuries, plus other miscellaneous bits and pieces concerned with the building's history and knights in dented armour. For those who don't want to walk up the cobbled, ankle-twisting hill to reach the iconic little castle tower, you can defy gravity with the funicular and save your energy for the 78 steps inside the tower itself. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. Admission: adults 5Lt, students, children 2Lt. The funicular is open Tue - Sun 10:00 - 18:00. Closed Mon. Tickets available for adults 2Lt, students, children 1Lt. ☹

Kazys Varnelis Museum (Kazio Varnelio Muziejus) C-4, Didžioji 26, tel. 279 16 44, www.inm.lt. Kazys Varnelis escaped Lithuania in 1949 and earned moderate fame and fortune in America by creating the sorts of dizzying-pattern paintings that inspired wallpaper that people are still trying to remove from 70s style flats. He is not only an artist, but an avid art collector, and when he returned to Lithuania in 1998, he brought his immense collection with him, which can now be seen in this mind boggling museum. It's impossible to even suggest the vast range of stuff tucked away in this nondescript looking building. You have to see it to believe it. Appointments necessary, and well worthwhile. ▶ Open 10:00 - 16:00. Closed Mon, Sun. ☹

KGB Museum (Genocido Aukų Muziejus) G-3, Aukų 2a, tel. 249 81 55, www.genocid.lt/muziejus. There's more cold, hard reality than some people can handle in this place. The former prison has been kept pretty much intact, and simple written explanations or audio guides allow the grim reality to speak for itself. In the vacuum of quiet left by

whispering or silent visitors, imagination fills the atmosphere. You can explore cells in which prisoners were packed, a horrific "padded cell", and chilling "water torture" cells. Aside from the prison itself, a glass floored former execution room reveals dug up remains of victims - truly sobering. Upstairs, in a more traditional and creative display area, exhibitions cover Soviet occupation, deportations, and the Partisans who fled to the forests and fought for Lithuanian independence. There's even the sanity-baffling 'eavesdropping room'. Innovative presentations and explanations tell stories that make you shake your head slowly in disbelief. Outside the building, the names of victims have been carved into the stone walls. It's not fun. It's not supposed to be. It's about understanding and respect, and will certainly leave an impact. Don't underestimate it, and don't miss it. ▶ Open 10:00 - 18:00, Sun 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue. (Adults, students 6Lt, children 3Lt. Guided tours 20-50Lt).

Mickevičius Memorial Apartment-Museum (Mickevičiaus Memorialinis Butas-Muziejus) D-3, Bernardinų 11, tel. +370 680 949 82, www.mb.vu.lt. Located in the house in which the romantic poet Mickevičius lived in 1822, the exhibits in this museum, which date from the 19th century, trace his life and creative development. Although writing only in Polish, Mickevičius authored Poland's greatest national epic, Pan Tadeusz, which opens, "Lithuania! My Fatherland! You are health, only he who has lost you can know how much you are cherished". Such is the complicated history of this part of the world. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00, Sat, Sun 10:00 - 14:00. Closed Mon. Adults 6Lt, children 3Lt. ☹

National Museum (Lietuvos Nacionalinis Muziejus) C-1, Arsenalo 1, tel. 262 94 26, www.inm.lt. The museum houses an extensive ethnographic collection with exhibits illustrating the history of the people of Lithuania from the 13th century to the present. Sure, the 19th-century sleigh that looks like a big elfin slipper will instantly impress, as will the 18th-century toilet and the recreated rooms of Lithuanian village life, but it's when you pay attention to the details of the recent additions that this place really impresses. Small flecks of silver, for instance, are some of the earliest Lithuanian coins, found in 2002 at the site of the Lower Castle. Then there are those scraps of fabric, found among remains of Napoleon's soldiers recovered in the same year. Vilnius is still unearthing history, and this is the place to see it. The museum also currently holds many of the contents of Trakai's Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is currently closed for renovation. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue. ☹

Pushkin Memorial Museum (Puškino Memorialinis Muziejus) K-4, Subačiaus 124, tel. 260 00 80. Alexander Pushkin's son, Grigorij, and his wife, Varvara, lived in this wooden house on their Markučiai estate from 1899 until their deaths in 1905 and 1935. The museum, founded in 1940 and opened in 1948, displays their furniture as well as a literary exhibit of the great Russian poet's works in Lithuania. The extensive grounds are a popular destination for family picnics during the summer. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Tue.

Signatories' House (Signatarų Namai) C-3, Pilies 26, tel. 231 44 42, www.muzejai.lt. According to the tour guide who whisks you around the place on this 30-minute history lesson, during the first German occupation of Lithuania from 1915 until the end of WWI, the only officially sanctioned Lithuanian organisation was a group who looked after war veterans and who were based inside this building. It was due to this function that the small, three-roomed apartment on the third floor of the building became the setting for the signing

of Lithuania's declaration of independence on February 16, 1918 by the Lithuanian Council (Lietuvos Taryba). The room in which the document was signed, complete with the table it was signed on, is open to view. There's not much else to see, plus everything remains labelled in Lithuanian only. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon, Sun. ☹

Theatre, Music & Film Museum (Lietuvos Teatro, Muzikos, Kino Muziejus) B-3, Vilniaus 41, tel. 262 24 06, http://teatras.mch.mil.lt. Two floors of changing exhibitions taken from a vast archive of over 250,000 pieces (they also have a library of some 30,000 books), find a genuine Čiurlionis theatrical backdrop and much more inside this recommended museum charting the history of the three arts in question. The music section includes some great old harmoniums, pianolas and working 19th-century musical boxes. The only disappointment is the small room given over to the celebration of Lithuanian cinema. ▶ Open 11:00 - 18:00, Sat 11:00 - 16:00. Closed Mon, Sun. Adults 5Lt, children, students 2.50Lt. ☹

Vilnius Picture Gallery (Vilniaus Paveikslų Galerija) C-3, Didžioji 4, tel. 212 42 58, www.idm.lt. Housed inside the charming 17th-century Chodkiewicz (Chodkiewicz) family palace, this splendid little museum is of the type in which a menagerie of middle-aged ladies shuttle you around from room to room like a pinball. Ignore them if you can, and enjoy a great collection of Lithuanian painting, drawing and sculpture plus a couple of rooms stuffed full of exemplary furniture. They also put on temporary exhibitions here, of which some are well worth checking out. ▶ Open 12:00 - 18:00, Sun 12:00 - 17:00. Closed Mon. Adults 6Lt, children, students 3Lt. ☹

Vilnius University Science Museum (Vilniaus Universiteto Mokslo Muziejus) C-3, Šv. Jono 12 (Sts. Johns Church), tel. 268 71 55. During the period of Lithuania's Soviet occupation this church, dedicated to two St. Johns, was converted into a Museum of Scientific Thought. Although the church is now primarily a place of worship, it still houses a collection of about 50 old books, some of which date back as far as the 14th century. ▶ Open 10:00 - 17:00. Closed Sun. ☹

Places of interest

Centre of Europe Lithuania has the proud and noble distinction of being the smack-dab centre of Europe... somewhere. A sizeable monument (designed by G. Jokūbonis) topped with golden stars and a mini-amphitheatre was finalised in the Centre of Europe. The French National Geographic Institute places the centre of Europe at 54° 51'54" North latitude, 25° 19' East longitude. In case you do not have a GPS satellite handy, head on your way to Moletai and wait for the signs for Europos Centras. But now it seems that those diligent French geographers are waffling on their earlier precision and it might happen that the very centre is not under the column, and indeed not under the rock, but some 6-7 kilometres closer to Vilnius, on the other side of the road. So if you do have a GPS and are truly interested in this kind of stuff, why not be safe and try navigating to 54 degrees 50 minutes 45 seconds North latitude and 25 degrees 18 minutes 23 seconds East longitude.

Gates of Dawn (Aušros Vartai) C-5, Aušros Vartų 12, tel. 212 35 13. The 16th century Gates of Dawn once formed part of the town fortifications, being built into the original city wall. In 1671 Carmelites from neighbouring St. Theresa's built a chapel in the gates to house a holy image of the Virgin Mary, reputed for miracle-working powers. The

chapel's interior was refurbished in the neo-classical style in 1829 and should not be missed. If you're walking from Old Town, look for a door on the left and go up the stairs. ▶ Mass 07:30 (Latin), 09:00, 10:00 (Polish), 17:30 (Polish), 18:30 - Sun 09:00 (Polish), 09:30, 11:00, 13:00 (Polish), 17:30 (Polish), 18:30. ☹

Hill of Three Crosses (Trijų Kryžių Kalnas) I-3. Legend has it that long ago seven Franciscan monks were crucified here. Originally erected in the 17th century, Stalin had the crosses removed and buried, and only in 1989 were they rebuilt according to the original plans. The crosses are a great symbol of both Lithuanian mourning and hope. An excellent view of Old Town is also to be found at this spot.

Presidential Palace (Prezidentūra) C-2, S. Daukanto aikštė 3/8, tel. 266 41 54. The first illustrious man to sleep here was the Bishop for whom the palace was built in the 14th century. On different occasions during the last 1812 two famous guests, Tsar Alexander I and Napoleon Bonaparte both laid their heads down to rest here. During its history it has housed the Artists' Palace (during the Soviet occupation) and, for a while after 1991, the French embassy. Today after a massive renovation, the late Classical-style building houses the offices of the President of Lithuania. ☹

Television Tower (Televizijos Bokštas) Sausio 13-osios 10, tel. 252 53 33, www.lrtc.net. The tallest building in Lithuania, the 326m Television Tower was built from reinforced concrete and steel between 1974 and 1980 to a design by V. Obydovas and K. Balėnas. On January 13, 1991 as the disintegration of the USSR reached a frenzied pace and Moscow attempted to retake control of the Lithuanian media, Soviet tanks surrounded it in an assault that killed 13 unarmed civilians. The tower has since become a potent Lithuanian symbol. Around it are a few monuments and photographs of those who lost their lives and whose names the nearby streets are now called in honour of. Inside at ground level is the small Sausio 13-osios Ekspozicija (January 13th Exhibition) exhibition commemorating the brutal events including a copy of the original Soviet military attack plan, weapons used to beat protesters and some disturbing photographs. The exhibition is free, although the 40-second ride in the lift to visit the combined 270m restaurant and viewing station isn't. The ticket office also sells several Television Tower souvenirs. A taxi from Old Town costs somewhere in the region of 20Lt. Alternatively, take trolleybus №1, 3, 7, 16 or 18 to the Televizijos Bokštas stop. ▶ Open 10:00 - 22:00. Last entrance 21:00.

Vilnius University (Vilniaus Universitetas) C-2/3, Universiteto 3, tel. 268 70 01, www.vu.lt. The oldest



university in Eastern Europe encompasses every major architectural style from the last 400 years. The university buildings are among the best preserved in Vilnius owing to massive renovations completed in 1979 in honour of the university's 400th anniversary. Founded by Jesuits in 1579, the university was run by the order for more than 200 years. In 1832 the Russians closed it and it wasn't reopened again until 1919.

There are 12 courtyards in the university complex. Check out the map at Universiteto 7 to orient yourself. ▶ Open 09:00 - 18:00. Closed Sun. Closed Sun. ☹


Symbol key

 Air conditioning	 Credit cards accepted
 Casino	 Conference facilities
 Child friendly	 Facilities for the disabled
 Fitness centre	 Guarded parking
 LAN connection	 Non-smoking rooms
 Restaurant	 Old town location
 Sauna	 Swimming pool
 Animal friendly	 Wireless Internet access
 Smoking section	 Fireplace


Upmarket

Barbacan Palace D-4, Bokšto 19/ 12, tel. 266 08 40, fax 266 08 41, hotel@barbacan.lt, www.barbacan.lt. Bright and airy rooms sprinkled with some nice little touches that give them just a hint of a rustic touch. Ask for a room with a view so that after you've finished mucking about with the satellite television, enjoying free internet access and trying to work out if the antique furniture is really old or was just whipped with a rusty chain to make it look old, you can enjoy the lovely aspect offered by the unique hillside location. ▶ 33 rooms (23 singles €120, 23 doubles €140, 6 suites €150 - 170, 3 apartments €200).  ★★

Dvaras B-1, Tilto 3-1, tel. 210 73 70, fax 261 87 83, hotel@dvaras.lt, www.dvaras.lt. Eight elegant rooms just around the corner from the Cathedral, all of them coming with luxury carpets, air conditioning, satellite television and free internet access. The suites come with a large bath as well as the standard showers fitted throughout the other rooms, and the basement restaurant complete with private banqueting room is just as elegant as the hotel. A splendid intimate choice indeed. ▶ 8 rooms (3 singles €100, 3 doubles €140, 2 suites €172).  ★★

Europa Royale Vilnius C-5, Aušros Vartų 6, tel. 266 07 70, fax 261 20 00, vilnius@europaroyale.com, www.groupeuropa.com. Whether you're after a standard or deluxe berth in which to flop your tired bones, both the rooms and location are as sweet as can be. The deluxe chambers are cavernous and the standard rooms are vast enough for most, both being appointed with luxury that's not over the top. The subterranean restaurant-conference space is stunning, with different themed nooks for a romantic evening or indeed to impress your venture capital potentials. The bar is neat and stocks all your favourite poisons. Be sure to request a room with a balcony for fantastic Vilnius views. ▶ 39 rooms (2 singles €90 - 100, 24 doubles €90 - 110, 9 suites €105 - 125, 4 apartments €170 - 300).  ★★

Grotthuss B-4, Ligoninės 7, tel. 266 03 22, fax 266 03 23, info@grotthusshotel.com, www.grotthusshotel.com. There are Spanish tiles, heated floors and emergency buttons in the bathrooms, goose feathers in the beds, plush carpets on the floors and an arty attention to detail everywhere that somehow evokes the romance of travel. Keeping things practical, there are also sensible facilities like internet connection, minibars, tea and coffee making kits (in some rooms), climate control and nice, friendly and efficient service. A beautiful boutique hotel indeed. ▶ 20 rooms (5 singles €40L, 3 suites 790 - 860L, 2 superior doubles 550 - 620L).  ★★

Novotel B-1, Gedimino 16/10, tel. 266 62 00, fax 266 62 01, h5209@accor.com, www.novotel.com. While a bit visually overbearing on the outside, the Novotel recipe ensures comfort and excellence within. There's a tidy style that appears to be minimalist, but actually offers everything you could want and some things you don't (like a television speaker in the bathroom). The kettles in the rooms are worth a mention simply because they are rare in Vilnius, as is having a separate bath and shower. Views from the top floor rooms are outstanding. The location can't be beaten, but the architect should be. ▶ 159 rooms (112 singles 245 - 425L, 44 doubles 245 - 425L, 3 suites 691L).  ★★

Radisson SAS Astorija C-4, Didžioji 35/2, tel. 212 01 10, fax 212 17 62, sales.vilnius@radissonsas.com, www.vilnius.radissonsas.com. One could list amenities and facilities endlessly. Every room has a safe, tea and coffee kit, iron and trouser press, heated floors and a selection of irresistibly pinchable little lotions and potions in the bathrooms, free internet access and more. Business class rooms and suites have espresso machines, complimentary pay TV (although we forgot to check about the availability of naughty channels) and international newspapers. The real magic of the place, however, is the classic stately feel and air of quiet confidence and refinement that touches everything from the front door to the furnishings in every last room. Basically, this is a fine hotel in a superb location. ▶ 119 rooms (19 singles €116 - 187, 72 doubles €139 - 213, 4 suites €400 - 750, 24 business class rooms €154 - 253).  ★★

Reval Hotel Lietuva H-2, Konstitucijos 20, tel. 272 62 72, fax 272 62 70, lithuania.sales@revalhotels.com, www.revalhotels.com. It's a 22-storey concrete cheese grater standing starkly amid gleaming glass jewels of development - but it hogs prime location, offers the best views, and seriously shines on the inside. Foyer, reception, restaurant and bar areas are modern, vast and radiant, while rooms have a tidy business-like elegance and all the standard facilities. Opt for executive class rooms or elevate yourself to a suite so you can play starfish on the enormous bed and enjoy great views of the Old Town. The Presidential Suite even has a private sauna, the wooden benches of which may just have soaked up some royal sweat in recent times. Beat that! There are also rooms for allergy sufferers, conference facilities for up to 1,200 (as used by NATO) and many thoughtful touches throughout. ▶ 291 rooms from €75.  ★★

Reval Hotel Lietuva Konstitucijos 20, tel. 272 62 72, fax 272 62 70, lithuania.sales@revalhotels.com, www.reval-hotels.com. It's a 22-storey concrete cheese grater standing starkly amid gleaming glass jewels of development - but it hogs prime location, offers the best views, and seriously shines on the inside. Foyer, reception, restaurant and bar areas are modern, vast and radiant, while rooms have a tidy business-like elegance and all the standard facilities. Opt for executive class rooms or elevate yourself to a suite so you can play starfish on the enormous bed and enjoy great views of the Old Town. The Presidential Suite even has a private sauna, the wooden benches of which may just have soaked up some royal sweat in recent times. Beat that! There are also rooms for allergy sufferers, conference facilities for up to 1,200 (as used by NATO) and many thoughtful touches throughout. ▶ 291 rooms from €69.  ★★

www.inyourpocket.com

Mid-range

Algirdas City Hotels G-4, Algirdo 24, tel. 232 66 50, fax 232 66 54, algirdas@cityhotels.lt, www.algirdashotel.lt. This is one of the newest hotels in town, and the standard of furniture and finishes reflects that. While it is all very shiny and new, it is also very comfortable and homely so you won't feel like you're staying in a space station. Earthy and natural tones offer relaxed refinement while the beds, as soft as Mary Poppins bosom, will lull you to sleep in no time. Satellite television, a small fridge (but not minibar) and safe are in all rooms, while higher-priced rooms offer tea and coffee making bits. A perfect mid-range option just a five- or ten-minute stroll from Old Town. ▶ 42 rooms (7 singles €55 - 90, 33 doubles €67 - 113, 2 suites €133).  ★★


Centrum Uniqestay Hotel G-4, Vytenio 9/25, tel. 268 33 00, fax 213 27 60, hotel@centrum.lt, www.uniqestay.com. A large, modern hotel (now a part of Uniqestay Hotels Group) tucked away in a quiet district of the city, geared toward business travellers but equally fit for tourists. The surprisingly elegant rooms all come with telephone, television, minibar and now feature computers and free in-room internet access. Uniqestay also has a host of extras including sauna, massage, laundry and a small shop selling a range of international newspapers and magazines. Business facilities stretch beyond the usual provision of fax and photocopying facilities, with the addition of five conference halls to suit all types of meetings. ▶ 100 rooms (34 singles €69 - 89L, 57 doubles €100, 4 triples €146, 5 suites €131).  ★★

City Gate C-5, Bazilijonų 3, tel. 210 73 06, fax 210 73 07, citygate@mail.lt, www.citygate.lt. A charming little hotel with a distinctive Spanish feel just across the street from the Gates of Dawn and featuring telephone, wireless internet, minibar and bathroom in all of the bright and comfortable rooms. Add-ons include two small but well-equipped conference rooms, and a fabulous little restaurant. The staff all speak English and are exceptionally polite and helpful. All in all, a very good value hotel indeed. ▶ 29 rooms (2 singles 250L, 17 doubles 250 - 330L, 5 triples 450L, 5 suites 300 - 380L).  ★★

Europa City G-3, J.Jasinskio 14, tel. 251 44 77, fax 251 44 76, vilnius@europacity.lt, www.europacity.lt. The perfect business class hotel, featuring comfortable rooms with all the conveniences from satellite television and minibar to top security card keys and internet connections. Add-ons include a fitness centre to keep in trim whilst you're working abroad, conference facilities and a white tablecloth restaurant. ▶ 128 rooms (singles €75, doubles €85, 32 suites €104 - 114, 4 apartments €135).  ★★

Rūdninkų Vartai B-5, Rūdninkų 15/46, tel. 261 39 16, fax 212 05 07, rudninkai@cityhotels.lt, www.rudninkuvertai.lt. Basic. Cheap. Not much else to say. The hotel meets minimum requirements with worn wooden desks and tables, chintzy soft furnishings, and not much else. No fridges, no safe, but clean and tidy offerings including comfortable beds, decent showers and a handy location. A good economy option for those who don't want to sleep among backpacks, smelly socks and a hairy bloke called Mungo who insists on telling you about his travel adventures and asking to borrow your soap. ▶ 17 rooms (5 singles €49 - 64, 10 doubles €52 - 80, 2 suites €104 - 116).  ★★


Bed & Breakfast

Saulės Namai J-2/3, Saulės 15/23, tel. 210 61 12/+370 656 294 25, hotel@saules-namai.com, www.saules-namai.com. What a delightful little discovery this is. Each of the rooms have a frankly honest name, like Green Room, The Room with the Fireplace or Corner Room. The Rose Room is highly recommended for blind people. Common areas include a living room with exposed beams and leather furniture centred around a gorgeous fireplace. Guests have full use of the rustic yet functional kitchen and landscaped courtyard garden. An utterly charming retreat. Not in the centre, but if you don't mind a short walk to the bus stop it's well served by public transport. ▶ 9 rooms (singles 150L, doubles 220L, triples 270L).  ★★


Budget

Alexa B/C-5, Pylimo 53/ 2, tel. 219 17 80, fax 219 17 83, alexahotel.reservations@hotmail.com. Cheap, clean and simple. All rooms have small LCD televisions with satellite, small bathrooms with showers and bare-bones comfort. Fine for anyone who just needs somewhere to sleep. Oh, and it's conveniently located right on the edge of Old Town, close to the bus and train stations, and opposite a market in case you have to rush out in the morning to buy a wig, a sack of potatoes or half a cow. Breakfast included. ▶ 33 rooms (3 singles €44 - 52, 22 doubles €62 - 72, 4 triples €78 - 92, 2 suites €78 - 80, 1 apartment €93).  ★★

Very cheap

Vilnius Youth Tourist Centre (Vilniaus Jaunuju Turistu centras) J-4, Polocko 7, tel. 261 35 76, fax 262 77 42, vjtc@delfi.lt, www.vjtc.lt. Set in a pastoral courtyard of the Užupis district, the building is in a state of dilapidated charm characteristic of this part of town. The bathrooms and quarters are very clean. The receptionists don't all speak English but hand-gestures should suffice. Breakfast can be arranged for a pittance. ▶ 16 rooms, 34L/night for one person.  ★

Guesthouses

Domus Maria C-5, Aušros Vartų 12, tel. 264 48 80, fax 264 48 78, domusmaria@vilnensis.lt, www.domusmaria.lt. A spectacular former monastery on one of the most pleasant streets in town. All of the lovely rooms come complete with the basics plus telephone and television, with the more upmarket ones featuring minibars and baths. Big windows make the rooms exceptionally bright, and if you have a choice, try to get one overlooking the Gates of Dawn. Lovely. ▶ 39 rooms (8 singles 199L, 21 doubles 269L, 5 triples 329L, 2 quads 369L, 3 suites 289 - 349L).  ★★

Litinterp Guest House D-2, Bernardinų 7-2, tel. 212 38 50/+370 689 98 517, fax 212 35 59, vilnius@litinterp.lt, www.litinterp.lt. Little. Yellow. Litinterp... Soothe all of your travel pains with a stay at the perfectly-popular Litinterp Guest House. This friendly and hospitable place has been in the lodging business for as long as we've been around to write about it. Simplicity is the norm, with a standard of service that is unequalled about town in places of the like. Ask here, and you shall receive. ▶ 16 rooms (4 singles 90 - 110L, 9 doubles 160 - 180L, 2 triples 180 - 210L, 1 suite 210 - 240L).  ★