



# Lithuania

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## Best Places to Stay

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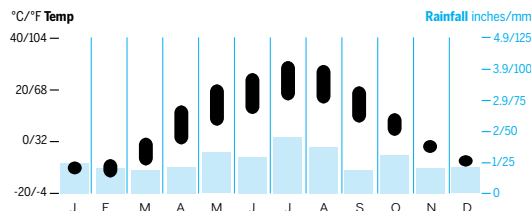
## Why Go?

Compact Lithuania has much to offer. Those with a passion for baroque architecture, ancient castles and archaeological treasures will find plenty in the capital and beyond. There are sculpture parks and interactive museums for travellers wishing to delve into the country's traumatic recent history; modern art spaces and exhibitions to titillate those whose interests are more contemporary; and all-night clubbing in the bigger cities and on the coast for those requiring something less cerebral.

Away from the cities, the pristine beaches and giant sand dunes on the west coast are a must-see. The Hill of Crosses is an unexpected delight. Elsewhere, the country's woods and lakes come alive in summer with cyclists, berry pickers and campers.

## When to Go

### Vilnius



**Apr** Some of the world's best jazz performers are at the Kaunas International Jazz Festival.

**Jun & Jul** The loveliest time to explore the forests and sand dunes of the Curonian Spit.

**Sep** Vilnius Capital Days, a celebration of the capital with street theatre, music and fashion.



## Lithuania Highlights

- 1** Explore beautiful baroque **Vilnius**, with its cobbled streets, church spires, bars and bistros.
- 2** Breathe the pure air amid fragrant pine forests and high sand dunes of the **Curonian Spit** (p238).
- 3** Hear the wind whistle between thousands of crosses on eerie **Hill of Crosses** (p756).
- 4** Wander wonderful **Trakai** (p234), home of the Karaite people and a stunning island castle.
- 5** Experience a taste of Lithuania's communist past at the **Grūtas sculpture park** (p754).
- 6** Take in the poignant WWII history of Kaunas' **Ninth Fort** (p755).

## Vilnius

25 / POP 523,100

Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, doesn't get the attention it deserves. The city's surprising Old Town is a dazzling assemblage of baroque houses, inviting alleyways and colourful churches built around quiet courtyards. But it's no museum piece: the city's cosmopolitan heritage, enriched by Polish, Jewish and Russian influences, lends a sophisticated vibe, and thousands of students keep the energy level high. Push through big wooden doors to

find lively pubs and bars, hidden terraces and romantic restaurants. Tumbledown buildings hide designer boutiques and high-end hand-craft shops.

### Sights

#### Cathedral Square & Gediminis Hill

**Cathedral Square** (Katedros aikštė), dominated by Vilnius Cathedral and its 57m-tall belfry, marks the centre of Vilnius and is home to