



Lithuania

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Best Places to Eat

- » Hotel Restaurant Labanoras (p316)
- » Balzac (p300)
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- » Sue's Indian Raja (p300)

Best Places to Stay

- » Miškiniškės (p313)
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- » Litinterp Guesthouse (p346)
- » Domus Maria (p297)

Why Go?

Rebellious, quirky and vibrant, Lithuania (Lietuva) is one of Europe's best-kept secrets. Though the country rarely makes it into newspapers outside its borders (and when it does, it's for some basketball exploit), the southernmost of the three Baltic countries holds a bag of treats.

Foremost among these is the country's majestic Baltic coastline and the unique sliver of white sand known as the Curonian Spit. Inland, lush forests watch over lakes that twinkle between the pine trees, and lonely coastal wetlands lure migrating birds by the tens of thousands.

The capital, Vilnius, is a beguiling artists' enclave, with mysterious courtyards, worn cobbled streets and crumbling corners, overshadowed by baroque beauty beyond belief.

Further afield, remnants of Soviet times – a disused nuclear missile site (now a museum to the Cold War) and a Soviet sculpture park – fascinate and shock. The Hill of Crosses and Orvydas stone garden are two more oddities of this awe-inspiring land.

When to Go

Lithuania is at its best in high summer, from June to August, when the days are long, the nights are short, and the Baltic Sea's waters are warm – or at least swimmable. Festival season hits high gear. One fest not to miss is Klaipėda's five-day Sea Festival in mid-July.

Spring (April and May) is cool and arrives late but is good for rafting, as the thawing snow feeds the rivers.

Autumn (September to November) can be ideal. Expect sunny days and chilly nights. Culture reaches a crescendo with classical music festivals and the annual Mama Jazz festival in Vilnius.

Arriving in Lithuania

Vilnius is the main gateway, whether you're coming by plane, train or bus. The airport is 5km from the centre, but taxis are steep (as much as 60Lt), so you're best off taking a bus or train (both 2.50Lt) into the city. The main bus and train stations are both in the centre and easily reachable by taxi or public transportation. Klaipėda in the west is the country's only ferry port, and it's possible to travel to Lithuania by boat from Germany or Sweden. If you're driving, Lithuania is a member of the EU's Schengen common border zone and there are no passport or border formalities if entering from Poland or Latvia. You'll encounter the old-school 'papers please' approach if entering from Russia or Belarus.

LANGUAGE

Hello	Sveiki	svay-ki
Hi (informal)	Labas	lah-bahs
How are you?	Kaip gyvuojate?	kaip-gee-vu-aw-yah-ta
Goodbye	Sudie	su-deah
Thank you	Dėkoju	deh-kaw-yu
I'm lost	Aš paklyd(usi/ęs)	ahsh-pah-klee-d(usi/as)

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Cepelinai** Parcels of potato dough stuffed with cheese, meat or mushrooms jokingly referred to as zeppelins, and not just for their shape – they're calorie bombs.
- » **Šaltibarščiai** This cold beetroot summer soup is arguably the country's signature dish; served with a plate of boiled potatoes on the side.
- » **Alus** Beer is the most widely drunk alcoholic beverage and it's pretty good stuff at that.
- » **Blynėliai** Pancakes can be served sweet or savoury and eaten at any time during the day; look for Varskečiai, stuffed with sweet curd.
- » **Mushrooms** Mushroom picking is especially popular in late August and September, when the forests are studded with dozens of different varieties.

RESOURCES

Bus Tickets (www.autobusubilietai.lt)
Bus tickets and info.

Lithuanian Travel Information (www.travel.lt)
Official tourism site.

Litrail (www.litrail.lt)
Useful railway timetable and train info.

Museums of Lithuania (www.muziejai.lt)
All museums, opening times and entry fees.

The Lithuania Tribune (www.lithuaniatribune.com)
News and current events.

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 65,303 sq km
- » **Capital** Vilnius
- » **Population** 3.3 million
- » **Telephone country code** 370
- » **Emergency** 112

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	2.58Lt
Canada	C\$1	2.55Lt
Euro zone	€1	3.45Lt
Japan	¥100	3.31Lt
Latvia	1Ls	4.80Lt
New Zealand	NZ\$1	2.07Lt
UK	UK£1	3.97Lt
USA	US\$1	2.53Lt

» For current exchange rates see www.xe.com.

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** 120Lt
- » **Two-course meal** 30Lt
- » **Museum entrance** 6Lt
- » **Bottle of beer** 6Lt
- » **City transport ticket** 2Lt