

THE SUGIHARA ROUTE

- 1

SUGIHARA HOUSE
Vaižganto g. 30
The Japanese Consul-General Chiune Sugihara signed a few thousands life visas and therefore saved numerous lives of Jewish people in the wake of World War 2. The consulate building is now a small yet very popular – not only with Japanese tourists – museum that was opened in 2000. It was refurbished with the help of the Japanese government in 2008. The house is also home for Sugihara foundation ‘Diplomats For Life’. A special stand presenting the legacy of the Dutch consul Jan Zwartendijk who started signing life visas for Jewish people can also be found there.
- 2

METROPOLIS HOTEL
S. Daukanto g. 21
The hotel and the restaurant, extremely popular back then, became home to Chiune Sugihara as the Japanese Consulate was closed in the wake of the war. The Consul continued to sign life visas for those escaping Holocaust while residing here. A memorial plate celebrating the humble resident of the hotel was installed on the facade late 2015. Next to the hotel, the three-metre-high sculpture ‘In Memory of Chiune Sugihara’ by sculptor Martynas Gaubas was unveiled in 2020. It depicts origami-shaped cranes flying in a circle into the sky.
- 3

KAUNAS RAILWAY STATION
M. K. Čiurlionio g. 16
It's important to notice that the building that is serving as a railway station and bearing the memorial plate of Chiune Sugihara was actually built after WW2, as the old station was demolished during the war. Nevertheless, it is the exact place from which Chiune Sugihara left Lithuania as he was following the orders of the Japanese Empire. He managed to sign the last few dozens of life visas and save the lives of those running from Holocaust while physically boarding the train.
- 4

KAUNAS PICTURE GALLERY
K. Donelaičio g. 16
Jurgis Mačiūnas, the founder of FLUXUS movement, was born in Kaunas. Not far away from his childhood house, in the Kaunas Picture Gallery, you can explore a dark, minimal and pretty intense installation called ‘The Black Hole’ by his Japanese colleague Ay-O. The gallery is also home to ‘Mano Mano Theatre’, an installation by another Japanese artist Takako Sato, and, hidden between numerous Lithuanian and Asian art treasures, the FLUXUS cabinet itself is worth a separate visit.
- 5

ROMUVA CINEMA
Laisvės al. 54
Built right before the Soviet Occupation, this is one of the oldest remaining cinemas in Lithuania, standing strong against pop culture with a repertoire full of art-house cinema and classical movies. As it's almost 500 seats big, it sometimes serves as an event hall for concerts or cosplay shows. The cinema had the honour to host the world premiere of Persona Non Grata, a film about Chiune Sugihara by Cellin Gluck, in October of 2015.
- 6

NEMUNAS ISLAND
The enormous island popular with joggers and dog walkers used to be called Carmelites island and even functioned as a winter port before the 1970s. The small yet mesmerizing sakura garden was planted here in 2003 as a symbol of the important relationship between Lithuania and Japan. In 2018, half a dozen sakura trees were planted here, the planting of which crowned the Sugihara Week events held in Kaunas, and the park was given the name Kaunas-Japan Friendship Park.
- 7

DEVILS' MUSEUM
V. Putvinskio g. 64
What started off as a tongue-in-cheek private collection is now the world's only devil museum. It boasts a collection larger than 3000 exhibits and the majority of them joined the museum long after the death of its establisher painter Antanas Žmuidzinavičius. A few Japanese devils are a part of the exhibition – they, same as devils from Cuba, Korea, Ukraine and other countries, have been sent to the museum by inspired guests.
- 8

M. K. ČIURLIONIS NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART
V. Putvinskio g. 55
At the very end of 2016, the main building of the museum was finally re-opened after a 10-year long renovation. The vast exhibition halls are home to the tremendous amount of work by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, the world-class Lithuanian painter and composer of the early 20th century. You have probably heard his name and music as the latter was the soundtrack in the FLUXUS movie of Jonas Mekas popular in Japan in the 1970s. When in the museum, you can listen to sounds of Čiurlionis in a designated hall or even attend a concert if you're lucky.
- 9

HISTORICAL PRESIDENTIAL PALACE
Vilniaus g. 33
Built in the mid-19th century, it was first a residential house. Soon after Kaunas became the temporary capital (as Vilnius was occupied by Poland), the building became the Presidential Palace. It was the residence and office of our first Presidents. In the face of imminent Soviet occupation, the Last Meeting of the government of Lithuania took place here on the night from June 14 to 15 of 1940. The palace is now a fully functioning modern museum able to briefly yet effectively present you the history of Lithuanian independence; both in political and peoples levels.

- 10

AURA DANCE THEATRE
M. Daukšos g. 30A
For more than 25 years, AURA theatre has been among the most important hubs of contemporary dance in the region. The AURA international dance festival has been a staple in the Autumn agenda of fans of the art; Dancers of AURA have also been known to be involved in various interdisciplinary projects. For example, in spring they present a dance dedicated to sakura blossoms near the Sugihara House.
- 11

ALEKSOTAS OBSERVATION POINT
Amerikos lietuvių g.
Right after the devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011, the students of Aleksotas Jurgis Dobkevičius Progymnasium started making gifts for kids in Japan. As a symbol of support, a pine tree was planted near the school and it has been growing with the warm support of the community ever since. The pine tree is located near the Aleksotas panorama, conveniently reachable by funicular, the vintage and very trendy means of transportation in Kaunas. Make sure to charge your camera...
- 12

NINTH FORT
Žemaičių pl. 73
The gloomy space north of Šilainiai district is part of the Kaunas Fortress that, according to the Russian Empire, was meant to surround the city. The Fortress ring was never finished but most of the fortifications were used for various purposes. In the Ninth Fort, a prison and a way-station was established during the first Soviet occupation; the space was used as a place of execution for Jewish people and other prisoners during the Nazi occupation. It is now a Holocaust memorial and a museum. One of the halls is dedicated to the memory of Chiune Sugihara.
- 13

CENTRE FOR ASIAN STUDIES
V. Putvinskio g. 23
The history of The Centre for Asian Studies (asc.vdu.lt), the oldest of its kind in Lithuania, dates back to 1993, when Dr. Ryo Kojima became the first Japanese – and Asian – lecturer to teach at Vytautas Magnus University. The centre itself was established in 2000 and is the most important hub for Japan-related events (including academic research projects) in Kaunas.
- 14

“JAUKŪS NAMAI” LINEN MANUFACTURE
A. Juozapavičiaus pr. 21
Located in a former tank factory in the trending neighbourhood of Sančiai (we recommend taking a bike trip there and stopping at the Sančių Kioskas info hub), the high quality and original design linen manufacture mainly focuses on Japanese market. You can even purchase linen goods with a Sugihara stamp here!
- 15

THE STEPONAS KAIRYS MONUMENT
Aukštaičių g. 43
A monument to Steponas Kairys, an engineer who published the first books about Japan in Lithuania (see intro section), was erected in front of Kauno Vandenys, the municipal water company, as Kairys was responsible for creating the water supply system of the city in the 1920s.
- 16

VALDAS ADAMKUS PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY-MUSEUM
S. Daukanto g. 25
One of the very few presidential libraries in Europe follows an example first set in the United States. The legacy of Lithuania's most beloved President Valdas Adamkus, such as awards (including the one received from the hands of Emperor Akihito during his visit to Lithuania in 2007), photographs, books etc., is preserved here readily accessible to scholars, students, and the general public.
- 17

JAN ZWARTENDIJK (1886-1976)
Consulate of The Netherlands (now a mixed-use building)
Laisvės al. 42, Memorial, Laisvės al. 29
Jan Zwartendijk, the CEO of the Philips department in Kaunas, was appointed the consul of the Netherlands – then already occupied by Nazi Germany – on June 19, 1940. He, therefore, moved the diplomatic office from Laisvės al. 42 to the Philips office at Laisvės al. 29. This is where he began issuing destination visas for Jewish refugees. As traveling to Curaçao, the Dutch overseas territory, was only possible with transfers, he offered Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul, to start issuing Japanese transit visas. Zwartendijk later came back to the Netherlands and, because he saved thousands of lives by his brave deed, was posthumously awarded the title of Righteous among Nations. In June 2018, a memorial – a light installation by a Dutch artist Giny Vos – was opened in front of Zwartendijk's former office.
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P. MAŽYLIS MATERNITY HOSPITAL
V. Putvinskio g. 3
At 1:30 pm, May 28, 1940, Yukiko Sugihara, a wife of a diplomat, arrived at the most modern private hospital in Kaunas, owned by Dr. Pranas Mažylis. 30 minutes after the check-in, her 3rd baby boy Haruki was born. Sadly, the boy, called Kuri-Chan (‘kuri’ means chestnut in Japanese) by his family, died in 1947. After a couple of years, they had their 4th son, but the family of Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul, had left Kaunas by then. We must also add that professor Pranas Mažylis was posthumously awarded the Righteous Among the Nations in 2006. The maternity hospital bearing his name is still open today and helps hundreds of kaunastic babies to arrive into this world.

IT'S
KAUNASTIC

THE SUGIHARA ROUTE



SOME FACTS

Kaunas was first mentioned in 1361 and was granted Magdeburg rights soon after that. In 1441, it joined the commercial and defensive confederation also known as the Hanseatic League. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania later joined Poland to be one republic and, in late 18th century, became the part of the Russian empire (although we are not a Slavic nation and our language is not similar to Russian; in fact, we are Baltic and Lithuanian is as far from Slavic as is from Italian, for example). Our Declaration of Independence was signed in 1918; Two years later, the capital had to be relocated to Kaunas as Vilnius was occupied by Poland. In the turmoil of World War II - that's when Chiune Sugihara resided in Kaunas and that's when he saved thousands of lives by signing life visas - the country was occupied by the Soviets, then Nazis and then Soviets again, and the latter remained until 1990, when we restored our independence and were the first crack in the fragile construction of the Soviet Union.

LITHUANIA AND JAPAN: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT!

Steponas Kairys, an engineer, activist and one of the 20 signatories of the Act of Independence of Lithuania (1918), had never traveled to Japan and yet published the first Lithuanian books about the country, such as “Japanese constitution” and “Japan now and then”, as early as 1906. Kairys became the chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania in 1940 but soon had to flee the country, moved the committee to Germany and then relocated to the US where he lived under a fake name. His remains were reinterred in Kaunas. A statue of Kairys, designed by Stasys Žirgulis, can be visited at the entrance of the Kauno Vandenys office (Aukštaičių g. 43). Memorial plates are installed on the façades of his residency in K. Donelaičio g. 77 and his summerhouse in Freda. In 2011, a Japanese journalist Kumiko Hirano published a book called “Saka-no ueno Japonija” (Japan on the Hill) focusing on Kairys's affection for Japan.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

We got buses, we got trolley buses, and we got funiculars! You can walk to most of the places in the centre, by the way!

BIKES

Many of the objects marked on this map are best visited by bicycle. Don't have a bike or scooter? We invite you to use the "Bolt" app.



USEFUL LINKS

visit.kaunas.lt #visitkaunas
sugiharahouse.com #kaunastic

For this and more digitised routes see: [kaunastika.lt](#)



TOURISM INFORMATION

VŠĮ „KAUNAS IN“
Laisvės al. 36 | +370 616 50991
info@kaunasin.lt | visit.kaunas.lt



INTERWAR MODERNISM ARCHITECTURE: GET THE APP!

Two cities in Lithuania can be proud of unique architectural heritage that can't be found elsewhere. Vilnius has its baroque and Kaunas has its modern architecture that flourished between 1919 and 1940. The outstanding heritage of the flourishing golden period was awarded the European Heritage Label by the European Commission in 2015; Kaunas was nominated as UNESCO Design City in 2016, and in 2023, Kaunas modernism was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The best way to discover it is of course on foot. There's a great guide to help you do that and it fits right into your smartphone. The app called 'Kaunas of 1919-1940' introduces the history of 44 objects of Kaunas interwar modernism architecture and offers different routes in Kaunas, including the city centre, Žaliakalnis, Gričiupis, Aleksotas, and Sančiai.

Hi!

MANY OF THE OBJECTS YOU WILL FIND IN THIS MAP ARE CONNECTED TO THE JAPANESE DIPLOMAT CHIUNE SUGIHARA ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. THE PEOPLE OF KAUNAS HAVE BEEN AND ALWAYS WILL BE THANKFUL FOR HIS DEEDS WHICH HAVE BEEN RECOGNIZED WORLDWIDE BY THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS AWARD. WE HOPE YOU WILL FEEL THE EMOTIONAL CONNECTION BETWEEN LITHUANIA AND JAPAN BY FOLLOWING THE SUGIHARA ROUTE IN KAUNAS. BELOW ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE IT MORE PLEASANT.

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GO OUT

19 KAUNAS STATE DRAMA THEATRE

Laivės al. 71
One of the oldest theaters in Lithuania is also one of the most modern and best-kept. The premieres are usually sold out way in advance! Check out the Puppet and Musical Theatres nearby, both for the events and the architecture. As for drama, the Kaunas Chamber theatre is also there.

20 KAUNAS STATE PHILHARMONIC HALL

L. Sapiegos g. 3
Designed by one of the busiest architects of the 1920s and 30s, Edmundas Frykas, the Ministry of Justice Palace, it became a music hall after we lost our independence. It's the home of Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra and Kaunas City Choir. Concerts are held there every week and there are usually tickets at the doors.

21 BALTA GALLERY

Valančiaus g. 31
The Textile Guild, established in Kaunas in 2000, unites a group of artistic textile professionals and artists from other fields. The activities of Balta Gallery, where education and training are extremely important, are fostered and coordinated by the founder of the guild, Jolanta Smidienė, who is also famous for her original ideas for festive Christmas trees in Kaunas.

22 KAUNAS PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY

Viniaus g. 2
The photography gallery plays an important role in Kaunas. It is the place where the most contemporary art exhibitions change frequently and span from retrospectives to groundbreaking points of view.

23 FUNICULAR

Amerikos Lietuvių g. 6, ir Aušros g. 6
Funicul! Funicul! As Kaunas is quite hilly, the need for a convenient means of transport was high. In 1936, the first funicular in the Baltic states (designed by a Latvian, Karolis Reisonas) and it has been operating ever since. The funicular is still functioning the ticket costs pennies and you can observe a photography exhibition during the ride.

24 CHRIST'S RESURRECTION BASILICA

Žemadičių g. 3/A
It's the biggest example of a basilica of the 19th century in Lithuania. The church was designed by a Latvian, Karolis Reisonas, and it has the longest history of building. Funded by people, the construction started in the 1930s and was only finished after we regained independence. In Soviet times, it was used as a radio parts factory. It's an absolute must to visit the terrace!

25 TOWN HALL

Povaišės al. 15
The White Swan, as we like to call it, is late baroque but it's just the last version of the town hall. Formerly home to the burgemeister, it was also home to many other things and now is the Kaunas city museum worth a visit if you want to know everything about us fast. Of course, couples get married here all the time, too, and an extraordinary Christmas tree stands in front of it every winter.

TO SEE



28 GEORGE MACIUNAS SQUARE

K. Donelaičio, Padošos g. ir Vytauto pr. kampas
One of the attractions in Kaunas is a square that can only be seen from a bird's eye view, which cannot be accessed. Naglis Ryšis Baltušnikas is the author of the accent dedicated to Jurgis Maciūnas, the father of FLUXUS, who was born here.

29 PELĖDOS (OWLS) HILL

A. Mackevičiaus g. / J. Žilkeiro g.
The owl sculptures (created by a famous Lithuanian sculptor Vincas Grybas) belting the romantic location of an art school are one of the almost-forgotten symbols of Kaunas and maybe that's why the place up the hill is so mesmerizing

27 VYTAUTAS PARK

Yet another reminiscent of the carefree childhood days is this park where you can see the colorful carousels of Kaunas people used to swing colorful carousels. Now one can enjoy the authentic aura of the oak grove and the stories hiding among the trees instead of merry-go-rounds.

26 VMU BOTANICAL GARDEN

Ž. E. Žilberio g. 6
8851 species of flora can be found in the garden ran by the Vytautas Magnus University and established almost 100 years ago. The picturesque pond and buildings are what's inherited from a nobleman's estate dating back to the 17th century.

EAT OUT

30 DONELAIČIO

Donelaičio g. 66
The latest trend of haming restaurants and bars in Kaunas is looking at the street signs next to them. This colorful spot full of interesting interior details and artworks follows the tradition of the Donelaičiai family, who lived in the building. The building itself brings nostalgic feelings to many kaunasišiai!

31 VIŠTA PUODE

S. Daukanto g. 23
Contemporary Nordic or surprisingly Lithuanian, the restaurant offers super-early morning breakfast and a short yet diligent menu of local dishes with a Nordic twist.

32 SPURGINĖ

Laivės al. 84
Opened since the 60s and having had just a slight touch of renovation, this is the place for a classic American diner food like the American version) and a glimpse to the preindependence times of Kaunas.

33 NŪMAN

Nemuno g. 43
Located in the historic Nemunas street, the restaurant opened in 2017. The atmosphere, where the interior, mood, smells, service attitude and, of course, the food, merge, leaves no one indifferent.

SHOPPING

34 UOKŠAS

Maironio g. 28
The name means a little hole in a tree where birds like woodpeckers reside. The restaurant itself is a unique vision of what Lithuanian cuisine could be. Contemporary yet always reflecting on what our country has to offer at a certain moment.

35 KULTŪRA

K. Donelaičio g. 16
The name stands for culture and the bar stands for everything that fits in the concept. Located in the Kaunas Picture Gallery, the café has an extraordinary terrace overlooking Donelaičiai street; the interior makes you forget which era you are in.

36 MONTE PACIS

T. Mosiulio g. 31
The largest monastery complex in Lithuania (the name means Hunter's Inn) surely deserves and one of the best examples of mature baroque. Pažaislis, is now home to an upscale hotel and restaurant. If you're not so hungry it's still worth taking a ride there and also visiting the Kaunas Sea nearby.

37 MEDŽIOTOJŲ UŽEIGA

Rotušės al. 10
More than 50 years in business is the best review any restaurant can get – and this restaurant (the name means Hunter's Inn) surely deserves one. The menu is based on game, obviously, but vegetarians won't feel lonely here. The location is yet another bonus of the place as it is facing the Town Hall.

38 YAKATA

M. Valančiaus g. 14
The Japanese merchant ship YAKATA appeared in the old town of Kaunas, near the confluence of the Nemunas and Neris rivers. The name of the city's first small Japanese food restaurant. It is a gift for gourmets and lovers of spicy or just different food.

39 CENTRINIS KNYGYNAS (Central Bookstore)

Laivės al. 81
This bookstore is worth visiting both because it is currently the longest running and because of its impressive interior from the late Soviet era.

40 KURO NEKO

Viniaus g. 14
You can experience Asian culture right in the Old Town of Kaunas. Kuro Neko means black cat in Japanese – maybe you've seen the horror movie of the same name! If you are interested in more of the same, you can find the most spiky ramen, we recommend that you come with a large shopping bag.

41 FARMERS MARKET

Jonavos g. 1
Vegetables, fruits, berries, meat, bread and other good things straight from the hands of farmers. Saturdays from 8am to 4pm, right next to the Kaunas Castle.

44 TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE

Laivės al. 36
Here you will find a variety of Kaunastic souvenirs to suit every taste.

43 JIESIOS FACTORY STORE

Europos pr. 114
Kaunas is the cradle of modern Lithuanian ceramics and although we cannot invite you to the museum of this art at the moment, we encourage you to go to Alekšotas and choose a real kaunastic souvenir in the branded store of the historical porcelain factory 'Kauno Jiesia'.

42 VALANČIAUS STREET

M. Valančiaus g.
Connecting the Town Hall Square and the Kaunas Castle field, the street is nicknamed the 'boutique street' of Kaunas. Full of fashion boutiques and art galleries, it's a perfect place to treat yourself after sightseeing all day. There are a few great restaurants on the street, too.