

# 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 travelled 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 facades 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 ue-no Japonija” (Japan on the Hill) focusing on Kairys's affection for Japan.

## THE SUGIHARA ROUTE

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.

## BIKES

While Kaunas can't compare to Copenhagen or Amsterdam, the bike culture is steadily growing and we're happy to have the Critical Mass events every month to prove and promote that. Bike trails are marked on the pavements and roads in the city centre and there are some new great trails that connect Kaunas to its green suburbs. A modern bike- and car-sharing system was introduced in May 2016. Please refer to [www.citybee.lt](http://www.citybee.lt) or CityBee app for mobile phones for more information.

## USEFUL LINKS

[www.kaunastic.lt](http://www.kaunastic.lt)  
[www.facebook.com/kaunastic](https://www.facebook.com/kaunastic)  
[www.kaunas2022.eu](http://www.kaunas2022.eu)

@visit\_kaunas #kaunastic #visitkaunas

## TOURISM INFORMATION

“KAUNAS IN”  
Rotušės a. 15, Kaunas | +370 616 50991  
[info@kaunasin.lt](mailto:info@kaunasin.lt) | [visit.kaunas.lt](http://visit.kaunas.lt)

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

We got buses, we got trolley buses, and we got funiculars! There's also an urban legend called 'the microbe' which his a super-fast minivan charging just a little bit more than an average bus. There are less of those these days, but buses and trolleybuses are just fine to travel around. You can walk to most of the places in the centre, by the way!

## FOOD

There are several interpretations of what Lithuanian cuisine is (and the number is growing); you can try them all in Kaunas. From budget options to fine dining, there are plenty of cafes and restaurants to choose from. Street food is also trending big time; from the legendary kebabs to something so hip you'd expect it to be in Williamsburg. A few of our favourite spots are marked on the map.

## MONEY

Since Jan 2015, Lithuania is in the Eurozone. There are plenty of ATMs around town, and most of them are accessible 24/7. For currency exchange, use banks or small private kiosks.

## 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.

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 Šančiai.

# 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 the Second World War. 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 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.

### 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 is 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 Japanese Empire. He managed to sign the last few dozens of life visas and save lives of those running from Holocaust while physically boarding the train.

### 4 SUGIHARA AND ZWARTENDIJK AUDITORIUMS

Gedimino g. 44

The Sugihara Auditorium in Vytautas Magnus University Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy was officially opened in 2008. This is the hall where Japanese guests read their lectures or seminars related to Asian studies are held. Of course, next to the Sugihara auditorium, there is one named after the Dutch diplomat Jan Zwartendijk who worked together with Chiune Sugihara to save thousands of lives of those escaping the Holocaust.

### 5 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.

### 6 JAN ZWARTENDIJK (1886-1976)

Consulate of The Netherlands (now a mixed-use building), Laisvės a. 42, Memorial, Laisvės a. 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 a. 42 to the Philips office at Laisvės a. 29. This is where he began issuing transit visas for Jewish refugees. As travelling 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.

### 7 ROMUVA CINEMA

Laisvės a. 54 (temporary location for watching movies Kestučio g. 62)

Built right before the Soviet Occupation, this is one of the oldest remaining cinemas in Lithuania, standing strong against the 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.

### 8 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 1970s. It is now home to the multifunctional Žalgiris arena and will soon witness the building of a science center. The small yet mesmerizing sakura garden was planted here in 2003 as a symbol the important relationship between Lithuania and Japan.

### 9 DEVILS' MUSEUM

V. Putvinskio g. 64

What started off as a tongue-in-cheek private collection is now 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.

### 10 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 70s. When in the museum, you can listen to sounds of Čiurlionis in a designated hall or even attend a concert if you're lucky.

### 11 HISTORICAL PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

Vilniaus g. 33

Built in 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.

### 12 AURA DANCE THEATRE

M. Daukšos g. 30

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. Last year, they presented a dance dedicated to sakura blossom near the Sugihara House.

### 13 ALEKSOTAS OBSERVATION POINT

Amerikos lietuvių g.

Right after the devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011, the students of Aleksotas Jurgis Dobkevicius 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..

### 14 NINTH FORT

Žėnaičių pl. 73

The gloomy space north of Šilainiai district is part of the Kaunas Fortress that, according to 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.

### 15 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.

### 16 “JAUKŪS NAMAI” LINEN MANUFACTURE

A. Juozapavičiaus pr. 21

Located in a former tank factory in the trending neighbourhood of Šančiai (we recommend taking a bike trip there and stopping at the Šančiai 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!

### 17 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 1920s.

### 18 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 loved 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.

### 19 D. MAŽYLIS MATERNITY HOSPITAL

V. Putvinskio g. 3

At 1:30 pm, May 28, 1940, Yukiko Sugihara, a wife of a diplomat, arrived at a former modern private hospital in Kaunas, owned by Dr Pranas Mažylis. In 30 minutes after her check-in, baby boy Haruki was born. Sadly, the boy, called Kuri-Chan ('kuri' means chestnut in Japanese) by his family, died in 1947. 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.



# WELCOME TO KAUNAS, IT'S KAUNASTIC TO HAVE YOU HERE. NEVER HEARD OF THE WORD? WE'RE SURE IT'LL BE YOUR FAVOURITE AFTER YOUR VISIT.



TO SEE

GO OUT

26 TOWN HALL

Rotušės a. 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 burgermeister, it was also 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.

25 CHRIST'S RESURRECTION BASILICA

Zemaičių g. 31A

It's the biggest example of a basilica of monumental architecture in the Baltic states (designed by a Latvian Karolis Reisonas), and it has the longest history of building. Funded by people, the construction started in 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!

24 FUNICULAR

Amerikos Lietuvių g. 6, or Aušros g. 6

Funicul, Funiculā! As Kaunas is quite hilly, the need for a convenient means of transport was huge when the city was rapidly growing in the 1930s. Both funiculars in Žaliakalnis and Alekšotas are still functioning, the ticket costs pennies and you can observe a photography exhibition during the ride.

23 KAUNAS PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY

Vilniaus g. 2

Together with POST, the photography gallery plays an important role in establishing Kaunas in the world map of contemporary art. Exhibitions change frequently and span from retrospectives to groundbreaking points of view.

22 POST GALLERY

Laisvės al. 51A

Opened a few years ago in a former sports club (no joke) in a courtyard of Laisvės avenue, the gallery is now one of the most important spots for contemporary art. Exhibitions, performances, installations and a lot of other interesting things happen there all the time.

20 KAUNAS STATE DRAMA THEATRE

Laisvės 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, there are two smaller options, Kaunas Chamber Theatre and Kaunas Small Theatre.

21 KAUNAS STATE PHILHARMONIC HALL

L. Sapiegos g. 5

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.

31 PELĖDOS (OWLS) HILL

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.

30 KAUNAS CITY MUSEUM, FOLK MUSIC BRANCH

Rotušės a. 15

The charming little museum is worth visiting not only because of its vast collection of various musical instruments dating back centuries, records, photos and various other music-related items and a brand new interactive exposition, but also for its location. One of the buildings is a gothic house dating built in the second half of the 16th century. It also has a very beautiful courtyard perfect for chilling after the tour which we highly recommend taking.

28 YMU 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.

27 AVIATION MUSEUM

Veiverių g. 132

Located in the aerodrome of S. Darius and S. Girėnas, the pilots that flew over the Atlantic in 1933 and were tragically killed, the museum offers a very insightful exhibition of our aviation history that was of course interrupted by the Soviets. Some great real-life exhibits outdoors!

EAT OUT

36 UOKSAS

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 55

Laisvės al. 79

The only official moonshine restaurant around and it serves as a little moonshine museum. Funny enough it serves breakfast from 7am, too, as it's a hotel restaurant!

34 SPURGINĖ

Laisvės al. 84

Opened since the 60s and having had just a slight touch of renovation, this is THE place for a cheap yet super delicious donuts (nothing like the American version) and a glimpse to the pre-independence times of Kaunas.

33 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 MEDŽIOTOJŲ UŽEIGA

Rotušės a. 10

More than 50 years in business is the best review any restaurant can get - and this restaurant (the name means Shepherd'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 MONTE PACIS

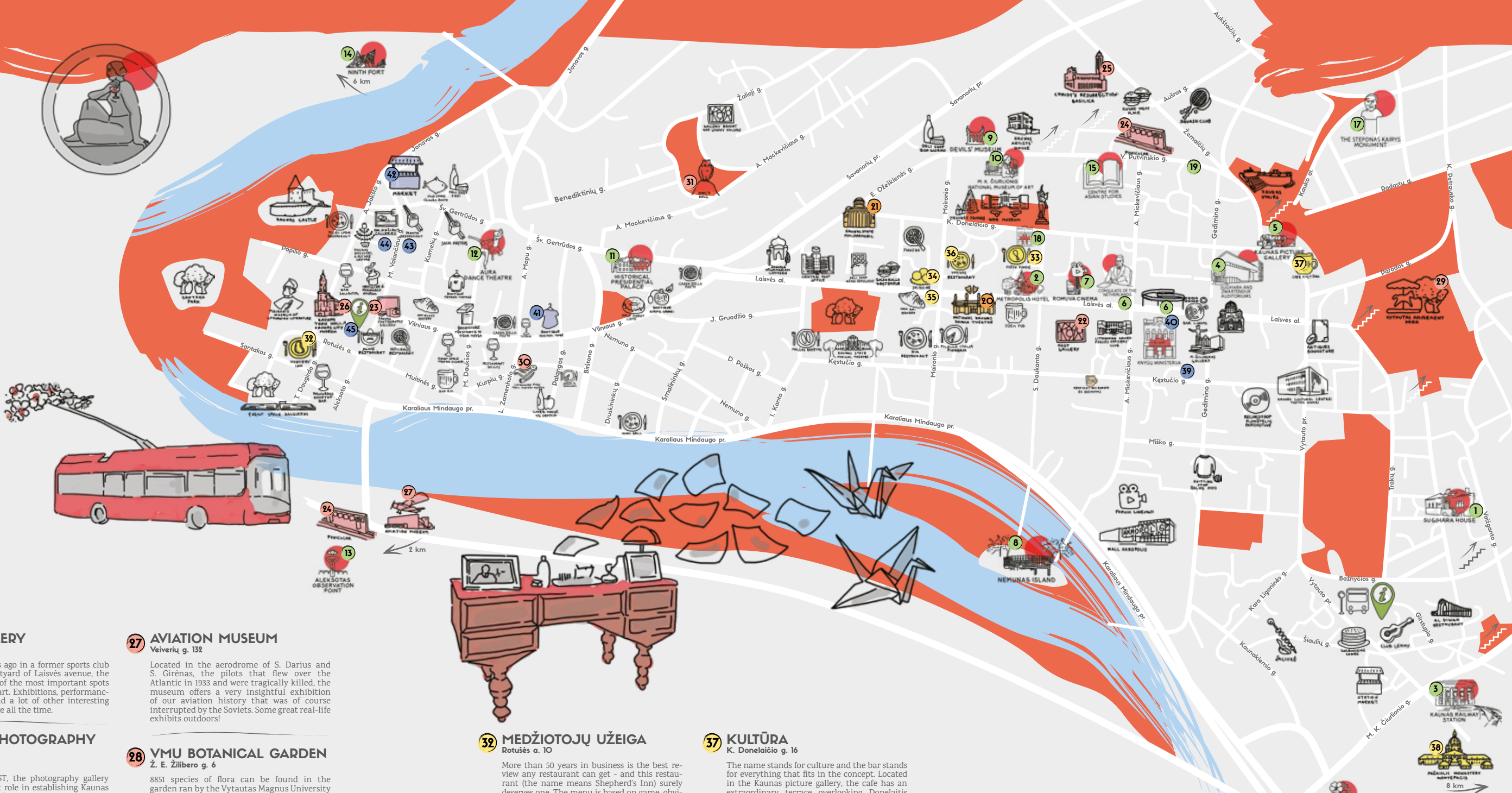
T. Masiulio g. 31

The largest monastery complex in Lithuania 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 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 cafe has an extraordinary terrace overlooking Donelaitis street; the interior makes you forget which era you are in. On weekends, they put the DJs in the cloakroom area of the gallery.



SHOPPING

42 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.

41 MINIMAL MUSE BOUTIQUE

Vilniaus g. 23

Probably the best boutique for those interested in Lithuanian design - from dresses to bags, the owners know their thing and select the goods very carefully. The name speaks for itself.

40 KNYGŲ MINISTERIJA

Laisvės al. 29

A new bookstore was opened in the end of 2016 in a building that's important for several reasons. This is where the Dutch consul Jan Zwanterdijk worked in 1940 when he started signing life visas for Jewish people to help them escape the country.

39 KARTU

K. Donelaičio g. 24

In search of a unique yet affordable leather bag? Look no further. The design studio offers just that, as well as other pieces of fashion designed by emerging Lithuanian artists.

45 KAUNAS IN TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE

Rotušės a. 15

Come to our office at the Kaunas Town Hall to get the most accurate answers to your questions about Kaunas. This is the place to pick up a copy of a number of our free maps and guides and the best spot to stock up with Lithuanian souvenirs, including linen accessories and other kaunastic wonders.

44 MINIMALISTAS

Dilies g. 1

Four admirers of fresh interior design got together to create a place where you can discuss the aesthetic revival of your home, look through some albums or check out what Lithuanian and foreign artists are up to.

43 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.