

IT'S
KAUNASTIC

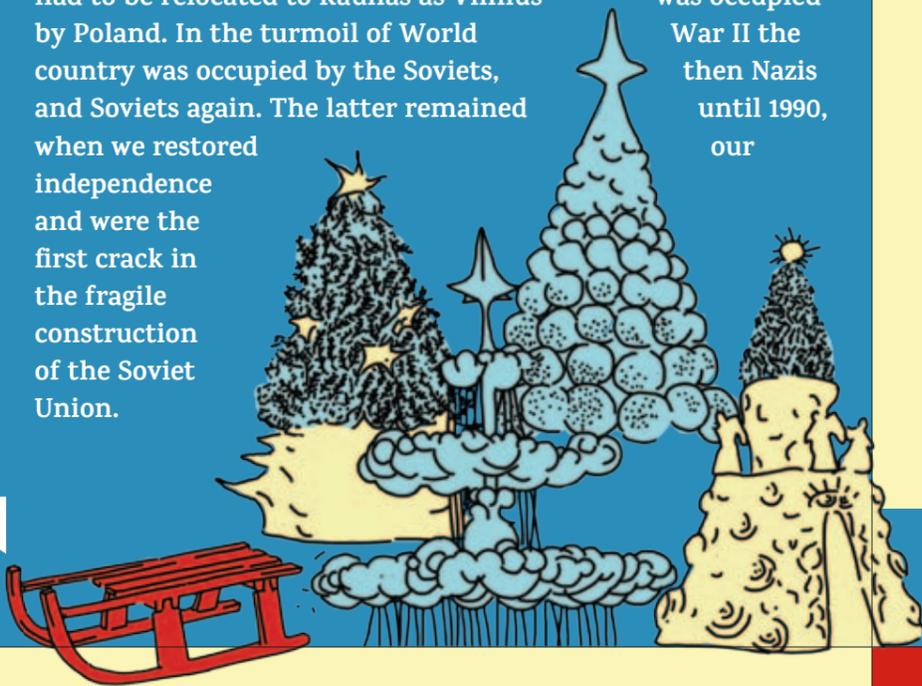
2016

CHRISTMAS CAPITAL



QUICK 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. 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 the country was occupied by the Soviets, and then Nazis until 1990, our country was occupied by the Soviets, and Soviets again. The latter remained when we restored independence and were the first crack in the fragile construction of the Soviet Union.



TO SEE

1 LITHUANIAN ZOO

Radvilėnų pl. 21

Located in the Ažuolynas oak grove park, this is the oldest and biggest zoo in Lithuania. It was opened in 1938 and now offers to meet around 3000 animals. The main reason we're suggesting to visit the zoo in winter is that, believe it or not, according to the Lithuanian traditions, animals speak on Christmas Eve. Who would want to miss a giraffe discussing her summer holidays with a raccoon?

2 TADAS IVANAUSKAS ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Laisvės al. 106

Tadas Ivanauskas, the founder of Lithuanian Zoo, opened the Zoological museum – the only in the Baltic states! – in 1919. A few generations of Kaunians would name visiting the museum as their favourite pastime. It's our second favourite place to hear animals speak on Christmas Eve...

3 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. The Christmas Eve is a great time to visit the church.

4 SAINT GEORGE THE MARTYR CHURCH

Dapilio g. 9

One of the first churches in the Old Town of Kaunas and the closest to the Kaunas Castle was built in the middle of 15th century and was wooden back then. The church was heavily damaged numerous times and was converted to a medical school during the occupation. It's right now one of the top spots for pilgrims visiting Kaunas.

5 KAUNAS CASTLE

Dilies g. 17

Originally built in mid-14th century, the remains of the castle are today a museum. Visit the annual Christmas angel exhibition through December and remember to come back again in the evening as the Kaunas Castle is among the most decorated buildings in town.

6 ST. GERTRUDE CHURCH

Laisvės al. 101

Famous for thousands of candles glowing every night, the church is hidden in the courtyard of Laisvės aleja. Come here midday on Dec 18th for a Christmas concert by a string quartet.

7 NICHOLAS CHURCH

Benediktinių g. 8

If we all agree Kaunas is the Christmas capital of the Baltics, it makes the St. Nicholas church the epicentre. The tiny yet charming Gothic building functioned as a book warehouse during the Soviet occupation and was returned to the Catholic Church in 1990. A mass on the Sunday closest to St. Nicholas Day, December 6th, marks the official start of the Christmas season in Kaunas.

8 LUTHERAN CHURCH

Muitinės g. 8

Built in 1683, that's one of the first Lutheran churches in Kaunas. Christmas season concerts will be held there on Dec 4th, 11th, 16th, 18th, 21st and 24th – all free of charge.

9 KAUNAS CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF APOSTLES ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

Vilniaus g. 1

The Gothic style church was first mentioned in 1413 and is one of the most popular buildings in the city. The grand organ of the Cathedral Basilica will be reopened on December 18th – the concert starts at 3PM.

10 KAUNAS GARRISON OFFICERS CLUB (RAMOVĖ)

A. Mickevičiaus g. 19

One of the flashiest buildings of the interbellum was officially opened in 1937. The officers club was home to many celebrations and meetings; it was also the New Year celebration venue of choice of President Antanas Smetona. These days it is home to concerts, exhibitions and other cultural activities. There's also a pizzeria on the first floor.

11 FUNICULAR

Amerikos Lietuvių g. 6, or Aušros g. 6

Funiculi, Funiculà! 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 Aleksotas are still functioning, the ticket costs pennies and you can observe an exhibition during the ride.

ST. NICHOLAS

For more than 500 years. St. Nicholas – the Santa Claus prototype – has been the patron saint of Kaunas (also Amsterdam, Bari, Liverpool and a few other cities). This makes Kaunas the official Christmas capital of Lithuania and the Baltics! The feast day of St. Nicholas is December 6th and the official Christmas season in Kaunas traditionally starts around the date. In 2016, the patron saint mass in the St. Nicholas church (Benediktinių g. 6) will be held on Sunday, December 4th (10AM).

THE CHRISTMAS TREES OF KAUNAS

The Kaunas Town Hall Square is indeed a special place during the holiday season. At least because we have set a Christmas tree-related world record in 2011! A tree made from 40,000 recycled plastic bottles set the world record for the Largest Christmas tree made of plastic bottles, according to World Record Academy. The Christmas tree of 2016 is also very special – the official lighting ceremony is on November 26th. The Christmas Village opening in the Town Hall Square is set for December 3rd.

THE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Christmas, or the return of the Sun, were celebrated in Lithuania way before the country was Christianized. Many of the ethnic traditions are still alive and kicking, including traditional Christmas food (see below) and all sorts of magical rituals performed on Christmas Eve. If you're lucky enough to join a local family for the celebration, be ready to pull a straw from a pile hidden under the tablecloth – this can predict how long your life will be. There are also many ways to predict if you're gonna get married next year – and even who your future husband or wife will be! A lot of the rituals can be learned at the Kaunas Centre for Ethnic Culture (A. Jakšto g. 18) which is located right in front of Kaunas Castle.

THE MIRACLE OF SHARING

Each December, Kaunas city municipality invites everyone to participate in the Christmas Charity Campaign. A record amount of more than 65 thousand Euros was donated by more than 40 companies based in Kaunas last year. There are many other ways to make Christmas brighter, warmer and happier for those less fortunate. Every little thing matters so you're welcome to join us at least in the spirit. Ask your Lithuanian friend how you can get involved!

FOOD

12 dishes representing 12 apostles are always served on Christmas Eve in Lithuania. No meat and no dairy products can be used as it's the last day of the Nativity Fast! Šližikai or kūčiukai (tiny pastries from leavened dough) soaked in poppy milk is a must try – right before you enrol in the traditional Christmas Eve sports known as 'tasting all the possible herring variations'. Don't forget to pour some kisielis over that herring before Santa comes knocking.

Keep in mind that 99% of shops, cafes and restaurants are closed on Christmas Eve so stock up early or make sure you're invited somewhere warm and cozy and don't forget to book a table for a fancy Christmas dinner. We've listed a few spots perfect for a winter afternoon in the map.

You can try out quite a few Christmas delicacies in the traditional market in the Town Hall Square. The official opening is December 3rd!

GETTING AROUND

Walking is the best way to really get to know Kaunas, but if it's too cold or too wet or you've bought too many Christmas presents there's always the public transport. We got buses, we got trolley buses, and we got funiculars! There's also an urban legend called 'the microbe' which is a super-fast minivan charging just a little bit more than an average bus. There are less of those these days but it's still worth checking out. A handful of minivans have been turned into a pop-art gallery on wheels – try and capture it up until New Year.

MONEY

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

EMERGENCY

Kaunas used to be wilder in the 1990s and is now a pretty safe European city. Use the same precautions you would anywhere else, and, just in case, the emergency number in Lithuania is 112.

USEFUL LINKS

www.kaunas.lt
www.facebook.com/kaunastic
www.kaunastic.lt
www.kaunas2022.lt

KAUNAS TOURIST INFORMATION
KAUNAS TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE AND CONVENTION BUREAU
Laisvės al. 36 | +370 37 323 436
info@kaunastic.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. 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.



SHARE #KAUNASTIC MOMENTS

HI!

WELCOME TO KAUNAS, THE CHRISTMAS CAPITAL – IT'S KAUNASTIC TO HAVE YOU HERE. NEVER HEARD OF THE WORD? WE'RE SURE IT'LL BE YOUR FAVOURITE DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON IN KAUNAS.



CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

12 AKROPOLIS MALL

Karaliaus Mindaugo pr. 49
Everything you need and beyond, open daily from dusk till dawn. The shopping mission can be tiring at times, but there are plenty of refreshment options, including a skating rink and a cinema. A big Christmas market can be found inside the mall in December, making Akropolis the one-stop shop for a busy traveller.

13 SNAPE

A. Mickėvičiaus 23
If you are looking for something cozy, stylish and cute for the little ones, head to 'Snapė' - the shop assistants will sort out that Christmas shopping list for you.

14 MON AMI BAKERY

Laisvės al. 79 and Savanorių pr. 255 (Hyper Maxima)
This is THE place to buy some traditional Christmas pastry - kūchiukai or šližikai. You will most definitely end up buying a whole lot more of everything as... well... Everything is really good there - ecologic, too!

15 CLOSTĖ CLOTHES BOUTIQUE

J. Jablonskio g. 13
Who made your clothes? A little cute boutique is asking. The shop stocks an incredible amount of Lithuanian-designed clothing, big brands and small. You can buy nice things for your home and workplace as well.

16 BOOKSTORE '1001 KNYGA'

Vilniaus g. 11
This is the favourite bookstore of culture lovers. A lot of books and albums about Kaunas can be found here. In English, too!

17 DELI SHOP RŪTOS SOKOLADAS

M. Daukšos g. 20-5
Rūta chocolate factory is more than 100 years old! If you visit Šiauliai, absolutely visit the museum. If you stay here, you can get the glimpse of their variety in the deli shop. Deli-deli-delicious.

18 VALANČIAUS BOUTIQUES AND GALLERIES

M. Valančiaus g.
We just couldn't choose one of the numerous fashion boutiques private art galleries located on M. Valančiaus street, one of the oldest in Kaunas. So, visit them all, please do.

19 KVAPŲ NAMAI BOUTIQUE

Vilniaus g. 37
It's much more than a natural perfume shop - it's also a place for interesting events (small contemplation sessions, for example) and a lively, ever-changing space for learning and discovering.

20 FASHION BAZAAR at GARGARAS

Raudondvario pl. 101
On December 16-17th, 50 of the best and most interesting Lithuanian brands will participate in the annual Christmas market in 'Gargas' loft, an event space by Neris river. The grand finale of the bazaar will be a concert by Beissoul & Einius!

21 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 Šančių Kioskas info hub), the high quality and original design linen manufacture mainly focuses on Japanese market. It's certainly a sign of quality!

22 POP-UP CHRISTMAS MARKET at KAUNAS CULTURAL CENTRE TAUTOS NAMAI

Vytauto pr. 79
Built in 1939, this functional yet charming building served as a progymnasium for workers and a space for choirs, ensembles and other organisations and events. A pop-up Christmas Market focused on Lithuanian fashion and design will occupy the grandios lobby on December 17-18th.

23 MEGA MALL

Islandijos pl. 32
The tallest marine aquarium in the Baltic States with a shark, a special Christmas market in it and plenty of shops for fashionistas of all ages, styles and shapes - MEGA is definitely worth a detour if you're based in the centre and is very conveniently located on the way to either Vilnius or Klaipėda.

24 URMAS SHOPPING TOWN

Dramonės pr. 16
Urmās is the relic of the wild 90s (that was the time when our country embraced capitalism and everyone became a merchant). The shopping town is much more civilized nowadays - the food market is sometimes compared to the one in Barcelona - and boasts an extraordinary mural (60 m long). A flea market buzzes there every Sunday and you can buy a real Christmas tree there.

GO OUT

25 ŽALGIRIO ARENA

Karaliaus Mindaugo pr. 50
That's where we watch basketball and attend conferences or showcases of all kinds. International acts (Robbie Williams, Patricia Kaas or Andrea Bocelli, anyone?) also visit Kaunas quite frequently, as the arena is the best and largest in Lithuania. There's also a lovely restaurant called 1410 and a basketball pub.

26 KAUNAS STATE MUSICAL THEATRE

Laisvės al. 91
The building of the musical theatre dates back to 1891 but the institution was established in 1940. Engaging performances of opera, operetta and ballet are staged here and the calendar offers plenty of options for the little ones, too. It's important to note that a 19-year old student Romas Kalanta set himself on fire in 1972 as a protest against the Soviet regime in the nearby square. A memorial was installed there in 2002.

27 ROMUVA CINEMA

Laisvės al. 54
The oldest in Lithuania, Romuva cinema is usually screening European art house movies and is a lovely hide-away if the weather is not your best friend.

28 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.

29 SANDĖLIS

Muziejus g. 8
Opened in September, the new venue for live music and vinyl-based DJ sets is big enough to host a few staff or family parties at once. The snacks menu is mouth-watering and the drinks list is endless. Brunch on Saturdays, too! The club is inside a Hanseatic warehouse, hence the name.

30 ORIXO

Jonavos g. 40
A Soviet-built cultural centre right next to the Old Town is now full of chances to improve your ping-pong, pool or boxing skills. There's also a whiskey bar and... A 300-capacity live music hall (it used to be a bowling alley, by the way) that offers comfortable seating, interesting acts and great sound for music lovers. Social dancing with salsa and kizomba possible, too!

FIREWORK WATCHING/PANORAMAS

31 ALEKSOTAS OBSERVATION DECK

The best and most interesting way to reach the observation deck is by the funicular that's operating since 1934!

32 NAPOLEON (JIESIA) HILL

That's where Napoleon I of France watched his Grande Armée crossing the Nemunas river during the French invasion of Russia in June 1812.

33 VYTAUTAS THE GREAT WAR MUSEUM

K. Donelaičio g. 64
It's not the highest point in Kaunas for sure, but you can come to the museum square to listen to a magnificent bell concert on New Year's Eve. It starts 11:30 PM. If you climb the stairs behind the museum you'll be able to watch the fireworks, too. Oh, the national M. K. Čiurlionis art museum is on the other side of the building!

34 JUOZAS ZIKARAS MEMORIAL MUSEUM

The backyard of the museum is a lovely spot for observing Kaunas from up high. Especially in winter. Just don't forget your mittens and charge your camera.

35 MILIKONIAI HILL

On the way to Šilainiai, on Žemaičių pletas, stop at the observation deck on your right to gaze at the picturesque panorama.

36 TRYS MERGELĖS BRIDGE

The pedestrian bridge might seem out of the paved path but is definitely worth a detour in the golden hours or when the sun is coming up. The view above Nemunas is simply breathtaking.



EAT OUT

37 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 seasonal local dishes with a Nordic twist.

38 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), a cup of hot cocoa and a glimpse to the pre-independence times of Kaunas.

39 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. Recommended by White Guide Nordic!

40 HOLY DONUT

Vilniaus g. 37
A tiny donut and bagel place right by the Historical Presidential Palace and its beautiful garden lives up to its name. It even offers vegan donuts and a festive coffee menu. The Christmas spirit can be seen, tasted and smelled here.

41 L'ARTISAN

T. Daugirdo g. 4
Located in the Daugirdas hotel, the restaurant prides itself on making most of the meals on site and using regional ingredients whenever possible. The menu is always reinvented so it's a perfect place to come every time you're in town.

42 BERNELIŲ UŽEIGA

M. Valančiaus g. 9
After a tour through the numerous galleries and boutiques of M. Valančiaus st., head to Bernelių užeiga, one of the oldest traditional Lithuanian cuisine restaurants in town. It's part of a large chain that even has a branch in the UK. Blood sausage and buckwheat pancakes are among the visitors' all time favourites.

43 FORTO DVARAS

Rotušės a. 4
The traditional Lithuanian cuisine restaurant is situated in a former merchant's house that might have been an eatery before. The location is great as it's right in front of the Town Hall and the Christmas Tree, and the menu is long enough to lock you in for hours. 12 varieties of 'cepelinai'... We wonder if anyone has tried them all in one day.

44 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.

45 MONTE DACIS

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 included in the White Guide Nordic. A lot of ingredients are grown on the spot and the bread is baked according to a centuries-old recipe.

