








The Japanese Consulate was established in Žaliakalnis inside the Juozas Milvydas-designed villa of the Minister of Education Juozas Tonkūnas as soon as it was completed in 1939. This is where the Japanese consul, Chiune Sugihara, started

Museum

SUGIHARA HOUSE

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-  April - October:
I-V 10 AM - 5 PM,
VI-VII 11 AM - 4 PM
November - March:
I-VII 11 AM - 3 PM



accomplishing his feats assisted by the Polish secret services and Lithuanian diplomats and in cooperation with the Dutch consul Janas Zwartendijkas (Jan Zwartendijk), and, most importantly, against the orders of the Japanese government.

The story is now known throughout the world and that created a friendship between Lithuania and Japan that dates back to the summer of 1940. It all started when Jewish refugees from Poland contacted Zwartendijkas (Zwartendijk), who was recently appointed to the position of Consulate. After agreeing to give them travel visas to the island of Curaçao in the Caribbean Sea, the Dutchman contacted the Japanese Consul in order to get his approval to issue the transit visas necessary for the long journey.

Sugihara didn't take long to agree to contribute and subsequently issued approximately 2,139 transit visas to the Jews who contacted him whilst sitting at his desk in the consulate. Even after the consulate was closed by the governmental authorities, he continued to work from the Metropolis Hotel until the day he left Lithuania. In fact, there are no data concerning exactly how many visas he actually issued. Zwartendijkas (Zwartendijk) issued about 2,500 final destination visas, and it is estimated that overall they saved from between six and 10 thousand lives as the visas were valid for a whole family.

The main entrance to the house, which is very characteristic of Kaunas villas dating from the interwar period, was designed to be accessed from Vaižgantas Street. Sugihara and his family lived on the first floor, and the consulate office was on the floor below. By the way, one of his sons was born in P. Mažylis Hospital in Kaunas. On the west side is a spacious garden on a slope. A beautiful panorama of Kaunas is visible from the building.

Currently, the building contains a museum to commemorate the deeds of Sugihara and other Righteous, which is taken care of by the Diplomats for Life foundation.

Sugihara House is an important location when it comes to the relationship between Japan and Lithuania, as well as Israel and Lithuania. Sakura trees brought from Japan grow near the house. In 2017, during Sugihara Week, a team of volunteers from the Japanese company Tokon International arrived in Kaunas and repainted the building's façade. In 2018, the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe (Shinzō Abe), visited the house during his first official visit to Lithuania.