

## Baltic destination in top 25 EPI list



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### **Vilnius is the city where nature embraces culture writes Ieva Zamaraite**

Lithuania, the southernmost country of the three Baltic States is in the Top 25, according to the 2016 Environmental Performance Index. Its capital city Vilnius is one of the greenest cities in Europe says Siemens's European Green City Index.

Vilnius is also one of the greenest European capital cities in its area and green space ratio. Two regional parks adorn the city - Verkiu and Pavilniu and tourists can walk and enjoy the picturesque scenery of the river Vilnia valley without leaving the city. Even the old city centre provides plenty of green spaces. The most visited one - Bernardinai garden - lies in the heart of the city centre. It was reopened to the public a few years ago after its reconstruction which turned it into an authentic 19th-century environment.

The vast natural terrain creates a favourable situation for active tourism and Vilnius city promotes a great variety of leisure routes in the city as well as longer routes reaching the other two historical capitals of Lithuania, Kernave and Trakai, which are close to Vilnius.

Vilnius municipality promotes cycling and a few years ago they introduced a sharing bicycle system to citizens and visitors CycloCity ([www.cyclocity.lt](http://www.cyclocity.lt)). While this system is convenient for trips in the city centre, there are also many private bicycle rental points offering a range of different types of bicycles for

trips heading further.

Vilnius Municipality also suggests exploring the city and its regions by water. Though Vilnius' rivers are operative almost all year long, summer is the busiest season. Kayaks and other types of boats cover two main rivers of Vilnius - Neris and Vilnia. Vilnius Municipality also started an infrastructural project in the summer of 2015 to make Neris quay more user-friendly.

Vilnius is proud of its reputation as a healthy city and thus a range of outdoor free of charge activities take place throughout the city, especially during the warm seasons. Sunday is the official sports day when everyone gathers to do sports right in the heart of the capital.

All the nature in Vilnius embraces its centuries of history. The Old Town of Vilnius has been on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1994 and is the largest old town in Eastern Europe. One can find eastern baroque architecture here, but also plenty of buildings in Gothic, Renaissance and Classicism styles. Vilnius is a superb cultural tourism destination.

The city was the centre for many craftsmen back in the Middle Ages, and this spirit is still alive. The initiative of The Fine Crafts Association aims to strengthen the traditions of trades and crafts while supporting the establishments of craftsmen. The Old Crafts Gallery-Workshop ([www.seniejiamatai.lt](http://www.seniejiamatai.lt)) invites Vilnius guests to learn about and try out by themselves a variety of crafts, such as candle making out of natural bees wax or eco ceramics of coffee grounds and many others.

Visitors can also enjoy a variety of other cultural activities, such as concerts, theatres, exhibitions etc. Vilnius events ([www.vilnius-events.lt](http://www.vilnius-events.lt)) website lines out what is happening in the city.

Vilnius is also a city to taste. Vilnius citizens as well as tourists come for local healthy food shopping to Tymas market in the picturesque Uzupis district next to a river Vilnia. Here every Thursday and Saturday citizens come for organic and National Heritage products and a chat with a local farmer. And just in between these days, on Fridays during the summer Tymas market hosts 'Open Kitchen'. Cooks and chefs from city restaurants gather to offer a variety of cuisines to Vilnius citizens and its guests. So Tymas market on Fridays becomes the point of attraction for those who want to spoil their taste buds, meet people and just enjoy some time outside listening to music and enjoying the picturesque surroundings.

They are so proud of their hospitality that Vilnius Municipality even organizes a hospitality contest every year Vilnius Hospitality ([www.vilniaussvetingumas.lt](http://www.vilniaussvetingumas.lt)). Based on the votes of Vilnius citizens and guests service providers that seek perfection in delivering exceptional hospitality are selected and rewarded - all tourism related businesses are involved including hotels, restaurants, bars, museums and galleries

As for green accommodation, Vilnius has a lot to offer. Three of Rezidor Group Hotels such as Park Inn by Radisson Vilnius, Radisson Blu Royal Astorija and Radisson Blu Hotel Lietuva take part in Responsible Business and Green Key programs and there is a scattering of small and cozy hotels and Bed & Breakfasts in (un)expected places all around Vilnius Old Town.

Further information: Vilnius Tourism ([www.vilnius-tourism.lt](http://www.vilnius-tourism.lt)) provides information not only about accommodation, but also other natural cultural and culinary adventures in Vilnius and its region.

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