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[\(http://www.no-yolo.com\)](http://www.no-yolo.com/) > Please, Stop!: Things People Think Lithuania Is That It Is Really Not



Please, Stop!: Things People Think Lithuania Is That It Is Really Not

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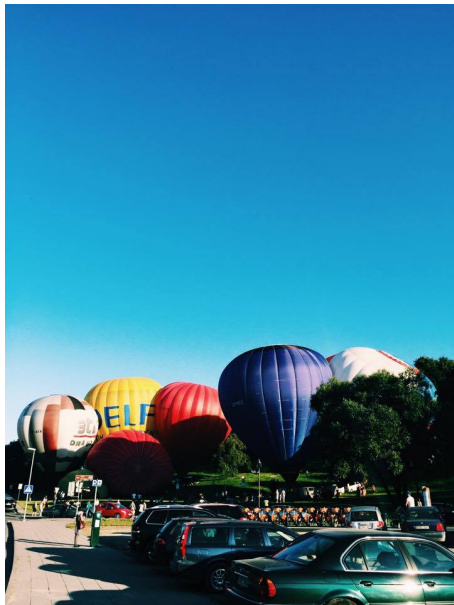
[Stereotypes \(http://www.no-yolo.com/category/stereotypes/\)](http://www.no-yolo.com/category/stereotypes/) by Margarita Knysh / 5th September

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Despite the increasing popularity of Eastern European destinations amongst tourists and travellers, a fair share of westerners still don't know what to expect when they arrive in Vilnius (probably for another stag do).

Let's be honest, it is half the battle if they actually have any expectations about the city or country at all. For the most part, I understand the confusion — it is not Russia, yet is still perceived as its appendix; the Baltics themselves actually turn out to be three completely different countries; it is far closer to Eastern Europe than to Scandinavia (and I am not talking geography here), yet it's not quite Eastern European...

However, this is probably what makes Lithuania unique and charming as it is, while Vilnius is certainly the most underrated capital in all of... well, that part of the world.



I do not usually get into arguments about national stereotypes, in the end they don't appear out of the blue and often indeed turn out to be close to reality. Plus, who am I to judge — one of the first things I asked my recent Australian mate was, *"Have you hugged a koala?"*, and a couple months ago I spent a solid 20 minutes talking to a Belgian about the difference between French fries and Belgian frites (how stereotypically Belarusian of me — talking about potatoes).

However, after eight years in Lithuania, there are still some misconceptions that manage to get under my skin every time, leaving me surprised that I haven't eyerolled myself into another universe yet.

Off the top of my head, here are five stereotypes about Lithuania I would love to never hear again.

All Lithuanians speak Russian

...If they say they don't, they are just being little arrogant bitches.

I should have probably started with the “Lithuania is a part of Russia” basics, but I believe that our readers are educated and well-travelled enough to have learned this part of history where the Soviet Union collapses, and Lithuania goes its separate way (the first one to do so!). I get that it can be tricky to follow what's new in these small Eastern European countries that were once a part of the USSR when you have to deal with Trump, Brexit, and ISIS, but just a little effort won't hurt.

Russian is indeed spoken quite a lot here, and the demand for it among employers has recently grown, but Lithuanians are proud of their own unique Lithuanian language, one of the oldest languages in the world. The only Russian that literally every single Lithuanian speaks fluently is swearing.

Also, you won't catch Lithuanians off balance if you start speaking English to them. In fact, I've come across a few homeless men in Vilnius who spoke way better English than hipsters of my age in some very much self-proclaimed cool European states (I'm not pointing at you, Poland).

Lithuanians are reserved, rude, and unfriendly.

They won't invite a stranger into their house, but that's what we call “being cautious” here. Other than that, just go into a bar on any night of the week and see for yourself.

Lithuanians are always up for a good laugh and a chitchat, especially with foreigners, just like everybody else. If you happen to be able to speak some Lithuanian, they will worship you forever. Believe me, a Belarusian who speaks fluent Lithuanian, — there is nothing a proud Lithuanian appreciates more than a savvy foreigner who learned their language.

It rains in Lithuania. A lot.

Only if it means raining beer (Lithuania is known for its great selection of local beers). As for the weather, it is actually raining buckets as I'm writing this, but generally it's not that bad. It does get quite cold in winter though.

Lithuanians are slow.

This misconception has been the main topic of all anecdotes about the Baltic people among Russians (or Russian-speakers, precisely). I have absolutely no clue where it comes from, but the wi-fi in Lithuania was ranked the fastest in the world multiple times. And try taking public transport in Vilnius — I reckon Lithuanian drivers wanted to be racers growing up, but it didn't work out.

Lithuanians are not slow-thinkers either! With all the startups per square metre, Vilnius could probably qualify for being the Eastern European Silicon Valley.

The official religion in Lithuania is Catholicism.

Nope, it's basketball. Though I do bypass old ladies leaving church on my occasional Sunday morning walks of shame.

Vilnius is just another boring cross-town.

Forget the image of a post-Soviet grey city with same repellent apartment buildings you may have had. Finding a more creative and vibrant city in Europe than Vilnius could become a tough challenge.

Over the years it has become a perfect example of how history can coexist with glass skyscrapers, and how the most dangerous district can turn into the hottest spot. Something is happening here and there regardless of the time of the year, day of the week or part of the day.

Other than being the city of street art, having the coolest bars, rich and diverse music scene, it has a bohemian self-proclaimed republic inside the city, with the Constitution, according to which “Everyone has the right to die, but this is not an obligation” (<http://uzupis.uchplus.org/2013/10/14/constitution-republic-of-uzupis/>).

After all, Vilnius has this painted outside a restaurant: