

Things to do in Vilnius, Lithuania: Three-minute guide

Andrew Bain

8 Oct 2016, 12:15 a.m.

[\(https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=http://www.gippslandtimes.com.au/story/4212916/things-to-do-in-vilnius-lithuania-three-minute-guide/\)](https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=http://www.gippslandtimes.com.au/story/4212916/things-to-do-in-vilnius-lithuania-three-minute-guide/)

[http://twitter.com/share?url=http://www.gippslandtimes.com.au/story/4212916/things-to-do-in-vilnius-lithuania-three-minute-guide/&text=Things to do in Vilnius, Lithuania: Three-minute guide&via=GippslandTimes\)](http://twitter.com/share?url=http://www.gippslandtimes.com.au/story/4212916/things-to-do-in-vilnius-lithuania-three-minute-guide/&text=Things%20to%20do%20in%20Vilnius,%20Lithuania:%20Three-minute%20guide&via=GippslandTimes)

[\(mailto:?subject=Things to do in Vilnius, Lithuania: Three-minute guide&body=Hi,I found this article - Things to do in Vilnius, Lithuania: Three-minute guide, and thought you might like it http://www.gippslandtimes.com.au/story/4212916/things-to-do-in-vilnius-lithuania-three-minute-guide/\)](mailto:?subject=Things%20to%20do%20in%20Vilnius,%20Lithuania:%20Three-minute%20guide&body=Hi,%20I%20found%20this%20article%20-%20Things%20to%20do%20in%20Vilnius,%20Lithuania:%20Three-minute%20guide,%20and%20thought%20you%20might%20like%20it%20http://www.gippslandtimes.com.au/story/4212916/things-to-do-in-vilnius-lithuania-three-minute-guide/)



The 'breakway republic' of Uzupis Vilnius. Photo: Andrew Bain

WHY

Napoleon Bonaparte described Vilnius as the Jerusalem of the North, and at its heart is the largest baroque old town in Europe. It has everything you'd expect of a UNESCO World Heritage-listed old town: cobblestones, elaborate churches, a muddle of lanes to explore. But it's also where you can find a pop-up hookah bar in a church courtyard, and a breakaway bohemian republic within the inner suburbs. Old truly meets new in Lithuania's capital.

VISIT

The majority of visitors barely stray from the old town, with its skyline of 40 churches. Get your aerial bearings by taking the glass elevator to the top of the university's St John belltower, the old town's tallest tower, for a view over the orange smear of roofs. The focus of the old town is large Cathedral Square, where Vilnius' stark Parthenon-style cathedral dominates. Also check out St Anne's Church, constructed using bricks of 33 different shapes to create a whimsical Gothic masterpiece Napoleon is said to have wished he could take back to Paris.

EAT

Pilies Street, the main pedestrian thoroughfare through the old town, is lined with restaurants, but step off it at Town Hall Square to find the excellent Lokys (lokys.lt (<http://lokys.lt>)), a monument to meat in this very carnivorous nation. The menu of "hunting takes" includes the likes of wild boar roast and rustic beaver stew and is backed by a 10-page wine list. Among the clutch of restaurants at the cathedral end of Pilies Street, Pilies Katpedele (katpedele.lt (<http://katpedele.lt>)) has a menu that's almost a history textbook on Lithuanian cuisine. Proceed with caution on the recommended meat-and-potato dumplings – the full portion weighs in at a hefty kilogram.

LOOK

Amber, the so-called "Baltic gold", is ubiquitous among old-town souvenir stores. To get more than a sales pitch, visit the Amber Museum-Gallery (ambergallery.lt (<http://ambergallery.lt>)), which is said to contain 500 kilograms of amber, ranging from its raw form (complete with fossilised insects) to intricate, highly polished jewellery items. Most pieces are for sale, and they're among the finest you'll find in Vilnius.

MUST

Cross the Vilnia River at the old town's edge and you enter Uzupis, a suburb that's declared itself a breakaway republic. Its grungy streets are bohemian and boutique at once – high-end galleries amid heavy graffiti; dark pubs beside cosy cocktail bars.

Along one street wall, the 41 articles of the Uzupis constitution (the likes of "everyone has the right to appreciate their unimportance") are posted in 26 languages.

News Business

SLEEP

Hotels are plentiful, but for character try the Shakespeare Boutique Hotel (shakespeare.lt (<http://shakespeare.lt>)), inside a renaissance palace on a quiet lane running off Pilies Street. Rooms aren't numbered; instead they take their names from authors and Shakespearean works – perhaps the Romeo and Juliet room for that honeymoon?

TIP

If you want to leave town with a bit of Vilnius luck, seek out the marble paver in Cathedral Square inscribed with the word "stebulkas" (miracle). It marks the spot where the 600-kilometre-long human chain from Estonia to Lithuania, protesting Soviet occupation, ended in 1989. Turn a clockwise circle while standing on it, and you get to make a wish.

The writer travelled courtesy of UTracks.

The story [Things to do in Vilnius, Lithuania: Three-minute guide](http://www.smh.com.au/travel/things-to-do-in-vilnius-lithuania-threeminute-guide-20161003-grs5ws.html) (<http://www.smh.com.au/travel/things-to-do-in-vilnius-lithuania-threeminute-guide-20161003-grs5ws.html>) first appeared on [The Sydney Morning Herald](http://www.smh.com.au/) (<http://www.smh.com.au/>).