

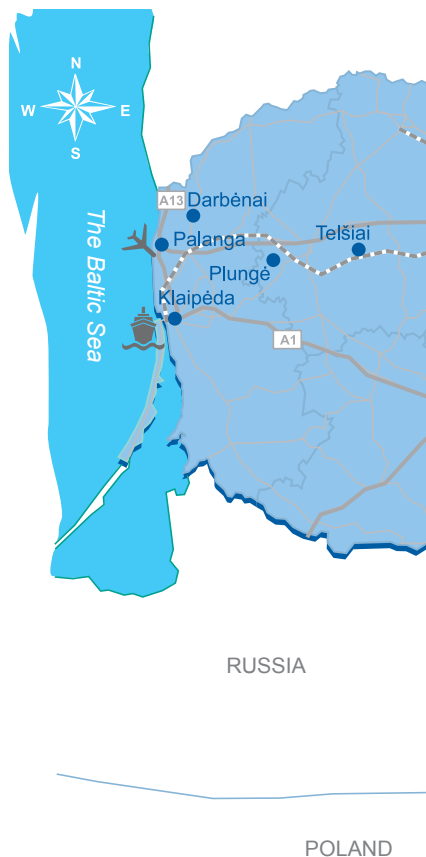
JEWISH

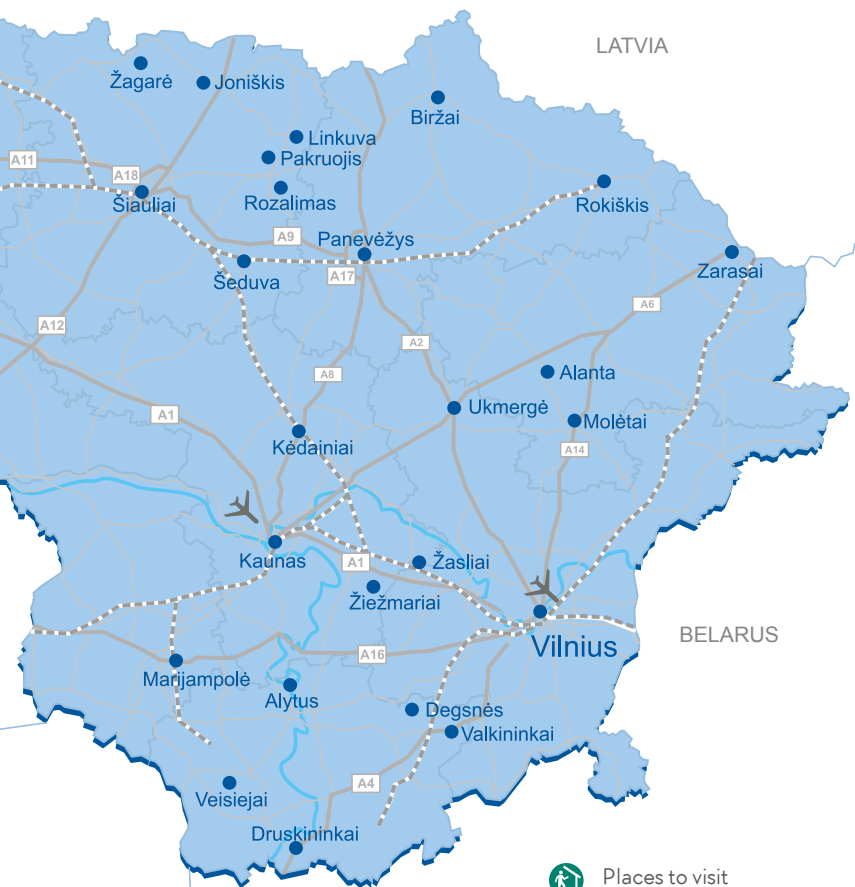
Cultural Heritage
in Lithuania






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Key

-  Regional roads
-  Passenger railway route
-  Trunk roads

-  Places to visit
-  Points of interest
-  Holocaust sites
-  Airport
-  Port


An aerial photograph of Vilnius, Lithuania, showing a dense cluster of historic buildings with red-tiled roofs. A prominent white church with a dome and spire is visible in the center. The city is surrounded by green trees, and a large parking lot is visible on the right. The image is used as a background for the text.

From the country's capital of Vilnius to the very smallest towns, Jewish heritage is an integral part of Lithuanian culture. As we travel through cities or towns, we find buildings that once housed Jewish shops, artisan workshops, schools, banks and synagogues. The vast architectural heritage testifies to the rich cultural and spiritual life of the Jewish community that once thrived here.

It is believed that Jews had already settled in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) in the late 14th century. The experienced merchants, craftsmen and financiers actively contributed to the development of the country. During their history in Lithuania of more than 600 years, the Jews left a unique culture of literary works, religious texts, music, folklore and art.

To this day, the Litvaks – Jews with roots in the GDL – take pride in their name, which is associated in the Jewish world with extraordinary erudition and a long tradition of education, religion and art as well as a distinctive way of thinking. Young people used to come from all over the world to study in Lithuania, which was famous for its yeshivas.

Vilnius held a special place in the life of Lithuanian and world Jews – for at least two hundred years it has been called



'the Jerusalem of the North'. Steeped in legends, Vilnius was home to the famous Rabbi Eliyahu. The ascetic Torah scholar was known among Jews by the honorific title of 'Gaon' (sage, genius). The Vilna Gaon is indisputably one of the most prominent figures in Jewish history over the past 250 years.

The unique Litvak culture has promulgated the name of Vilnius all over the world. In 1925, the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) was founded in Vilnius, where famous people such as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud and Eduard Bernstein were members of the honorary board of trustees.

The Litvaks who are scattered out around the world easily recognize Lithuania's name or the names of its localities that are pronounced in Yiddish. Lithuanians themselves are becoming more and more aware of the diverse Jewish cultural heritage. What took place and developed before the Holocaust is of interest not only to Jews around the world who are looking for their roots and the places where their ancestors walked, but to everyone who wants to fully understand the history of the Lithuanian region. We have faith that the path of Jewish cultural heritage which takes you through Lithuania will act as an inspiration for further pursuits and meaningful discoveries.

Vilnius (Yiddish: Vilne – ווילנע)



The historical Jewish quarter of Vilnius

Vilnius was first mentioned in written sources in 1323, in a letter sent by Grand Duke Gediminas to the German cities. According to legend, Jews first came to Vilnius at the invitation of Grand Duke Gediminas, who encouraged the residents of foreign cities to come and settle in Vilnius, however the reality was somewhat different. It is suggested that the development of the Jewish community in the city only began in the 16th century, and in 1633, the Jews received permission to build the first masonry house of prayer, which, in all Europe, would be gradually referred to as the Great Synagogue of Vilnius.

The Jewish population in the city increased considerably during the second half of the 19th century. Together with Lithuanians, Poles and Russians, they shaped Vilnius' reputation as a multinational city. Jewish merchants and industrialists made a significant

contribution to the architectural development of the city – the houses, hotels and inns that they initiated and funded reflected the latest European trends. By the end of the 19th century, Vilnius was adorned by unprecedented Historicism and Art Nouveau buildings.

In the city dubbed 'the Jerusalem of the North', the Jews enjoyed a vibrant economic, cultural and spiritual life. Vilnius was home to Jewish community schools and synagogues, with an abundance of shops, artisan workshops and banks ran by Jews. Prior to World War II, Vilnius had approximately 130 Jewish houses of prayer, which varied in size and the denominations of Judaism. Legend has it that Napoleon himself, upon seeing such a wealth of synagogues, declared that it was 'Jerusalem in Lithuania'. Another legend claims that there were 333 Jews in Vilnius who knew the Talmud by heart. Stories like this have

earned Vilnius not only the holy name of Jerusalem, but also the reputation as a city of sages.

Many world-famous Jews lived and worked in Vilnius, including the Vilna Gaon Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (1720–1797), founder of the Musar movement Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (1810–1883) and Max Weinreich, one of the most prominent linguists of Yiddish (1894–1969).

Today there are only nine synagogue buildings left in the capital. Nevertheless, when wandering around the streets and alleys of the city, you are sure to discover signs of the once prosperous community.



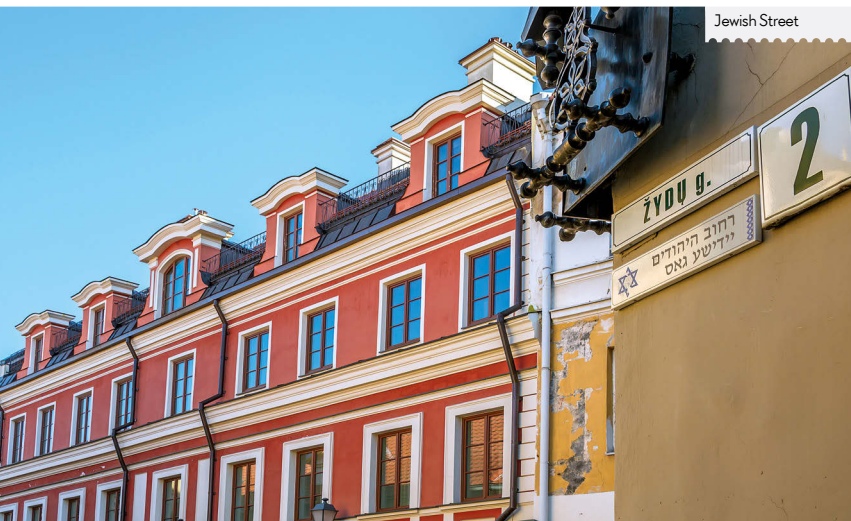
We encourage you to visit:

1. The Historical Vilnius Jewish Quarter

Žydų g., Stiklių g. and M. Antokolskio g.

The quarter had already begun to shape in 1633. This densely populated area is where the Great Synagogue of Vilnius stood. During World War II, the Small

Ghetto was established in the historical Jewish quarter. There were as many as 11,000 to 12,000 Jews held here at one time. The ghetto was destroyed in 1941.



Jewish Street



Interior of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius. The fragments of a photo by Iolik Serebrin, c. 1900. The Jewish National and University Library.

2. Žydų gatvė (Jewish Street)

This street is the heart of the historical Jewish quarter. The street was first mentioned in written sources in 1592. Today, the name of this street, which is of great significance to Jews, is written in three languages: Lithuanian, Yiddish and Hebrew. The Jews of Vilnius used Yiddish as their everyday language and Hebrew for prayer and studies.

3. Vilna Gaon Monument

Žydų g. 3

Rabbi Eliyahu is best known in the world as the Vilna Gaon. He was an ascetic sage known for his extraordinary erudition and his knowledge encompassed all spheres of Jewish science. His works also include commentaries on the Hebrew Bible. It is often claimed that the Vilna Gaon started a new era of researching Mikra (the Scripture), Mishnah and Talmud. He also devoted much time to the study of the Hebrew language and grammar. A monument to the Gaon (sculptors Kazimieras Valaitis and Mindaugas Snipus) has been erected in the place where his house used to stand.

4. Site of the Great Synagogue of Vilnius

Žydų g. 3

The Great Synagogue of Vilnius once stood in the historical Jewish quarter, on Žydų gatvė (Jewish Street). According to the regulations of the time, a synagogue could not be built higher than a church, so in order to create the impression of grandeur for those praying inside, the floor was lowered two metres below street level.

Monument to the Vilna Gaon





Monument to Zemach Shabad

The Baroque house of prayer safeguarded 18 Torah scrolls. In the neighbourhood of the synagogue were the Gaon's prayer house and a library of Mattityahu Strashun (1817–1885). The Strashun library was the largest library of Judaica in Europe in the late 19th century. The synagogue was severely damaged during the war, and later demolished during the Soviet era.

5. Large Ghetto of Vilnius

Lydos g., Rūdninkų g., Mėsinių g., Ašmenos g., Žemaitijos g., Dysnos g., Šiaulių g. and Ligoninės g.

No longer fitting into the historical quarter, Jews began settling in the adjacent streets from the end of the 18th century. Even today, you can find inscriptions, which appeared during the interwar period, above some of the arched courtyard entrances on Žemaitijos Street advertising the Jewish shops that used to be located there. In an area not far from the historical quarter the Nazis established the Large Ghetto during World War II. In 1941, it held more than 29,000 Jews, of which about 10,000 survived when the ghetto was liquidated in 1943. The place where

the main gate of the Ghetto used to be (Rūdninkų g. 18) is marked with a plaque that features a map of the ghetto.

6. Widow and Brothers Romm Publishing House Building

Šiaulių g. 2–4

The printing house, which belonged to the Romm family, a renowned dynasty of publishers and printers, published most



Advertisements in Žemaitijos Street

of its books in Hebrew. The title page of the Vilna Edition Shas – the Babylonian Talmud published in Vilnius – which is widely recognised throughout the global Jewish community was printed in this printing house.

7. Jewish Culture and Information Centre

Mėsinų g. 3A/5

The centre, which is located on Mėsinų Street in what used to be the territory of the Large Ghetto, not only provides detailed information about Jewish cultural heritages in Vilnius and all of Lithuania, but also has an art gallery that is open to the public.

8. Zemach Shabad Monument

Dysnos g. 2A

Born in Vilnius, Zemach Shabad (1864–1935) was not only a social activist, Jewish community leader, educator and humanist, but also a famous physician. In trying to help the sick and deprived, Shabad put his own health and well-being at risk on numerous occasions. When the celebrated

doctor died in 1935, some 30,000 people gathered to pay their last respects. The Zemach Shabad Monument is the work of sculptor Romualdas Kivintas.

9. Zavel Synagogue

Gėlių g. 6

Built at the beginning of the 19th century, the masonry synagogue was active right up until 1940. During the Soviet era, the house of prayer was not used for its intended purpose – it was converted into storage rooms and flats. The synagogue is currently under renovation. Colour décor used in restoration will give the interior a unique character.

10. Choral Synagogue of Vilnius

Pylimo g. 39

The only synagogue in Vilnius that is still in use opened its doors in 1903. The authentic ornaments, colours and décor have been preserved in the Moorish-style building. Of all the synagogues in Vilnius during the interwar period, this one stood out for its splendour. It was a gathering place of the supporters of the Enlightenment, who encouraged the modernisation of the community.

11. The Tolerance Centre of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum

Naugarduko g. 10/2

The first museum in Vilnius dedicated to fostering Jewish culture and traditions was founded in 1913. The current museum was opened on the eve of Lithuanian independence – in 1989. The Tolerance Centre that operates within the museum offers a variety of exhibitions, educational activities and lectures.

Choral Synagogue of Vilnius





Interior of the synagogue



Exposition of the Tolerance Centre of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum. The doors of the Aron Kodesh and a cartouche with the Decalogue, the Great Synagogue of Vilnius.

12. Samuel Bak Museum

Naugarduko g. 10/2

Just recently, the Samuel Bak Museum opened in Vilnius – the first museum in the world dedicated exclusively to the work of this famous Litvak painter. Born in Vilnius in 1933, Bak survived the Holocaust and lived briefly in Israel and Western Europe before moving

to the United States. The painter has donated 54 of his works of art to the museum.

13. YIVO Site

Vivulskio g. 18

In 1925, Max Weinreich, who was the leading linguist of Yiddish at that time, together with his close collaborators founded the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) in Vilnius for the study and dissemination of European Jewish culture. Since World War II, the New York City branch has acted as the main centre for the institute. During the Soviet times some of the Jewish book heritage was hidden in the Book Palace, which was situated in the complex of St. George Church and Monastery. The Book Palace was headed by Antanas Ulpis. Torah scrolls wrapped in Soviet newspapers and stored in woven baskets were discovered only in 1988. Today, the YIVO Archives contain more than 23 million different items, making it the largest and most comprehensive collection reflecting the life and culture of Jews in Eastern Europe.

Exposition of the Tolerance Centre of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum. The fragments of Aaron Chait's composition 'King Solomon's Throne'.





Samuel Bak
Rumours
1945

Painting 'Rumours' by Samuel Bak (1945)

14. Romain Gary Statue

J. Basanavičius g. 14a

One of the most notable French writers of the 20th century, Romain Gary (1914–1980) was a two-time winner of the Prix Goncourt, diplomat and pilot who was born in Vilnius and lived on J. Basanavičius Street for some time. The statue (sculptor Romualdas

Kvintas) was unveiled in front of the writer's former house, which he depicted in his novel *La Promesse de l'aube* ('Promise at Dawn').

15. Pohulanka

J. Basanavičius g.

This street and the Naujamiestis neighbourhood that spread out behind it were mostly inhabited by modern, emancipated middle-class Jews, including local and world-famous Jewish people. In the environs of Naujamiestis the Jews built villas, and lived and entertained themselves like the bourgeoisie.

16. Holocaust Exposition

Pamėnkalnio g. 12

This exposition tells of the tragedy of the annihilation of Lithuanian Jews during the Nazi occupation, collaboration in the Holocaust, life in the ghettos as well as spiritual and armed resistance of the imprisoned. One section of the exposition features the *Malina*, a ghetto hideout, where visitors can get acquainted with the fragments of Diary of the Vilna Ghetto written by Yitskhok Rudashevski (1927–1943), who described his experience while hiding in the



Exposition of the Samuel Bak Museum
of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum

Malina of the Vilnius Ghetto.

17. Lithuanian Jewish (Litvak) Community/Former Tarbut School

Pylimo g. 4

The building was constructed in 1898–1901. The school that operated in it was a very important Jewish educational institution. Today it is the headquarters of the Lithuanian Jewish Community and also houses a branch (administration) of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum. There are plans to open a Museum of Litvak Culture and Identity in this building in the future.

18. Kosher Food Educational Programme

Pylimo g. 4

You can get fresh kosher bagels at the shop every day, and kosher challah comes out of the oven at noon on Fridays. The shop also hosts educational programmes on the secrets of kosher food.

19. Good Will Foundation Bookshop

Pylimo g. 4

In fostering a strong and active Jewish

community in Lithuania, the Good Will Foundation has a small bookshop where you can find a variety of publications related to Jewish culture and history.

Additional sites of interest:

Site of the Old Vilna Jewish Cemetery at Piramont (Šnipiškės)

Olimpiečių g. 1a

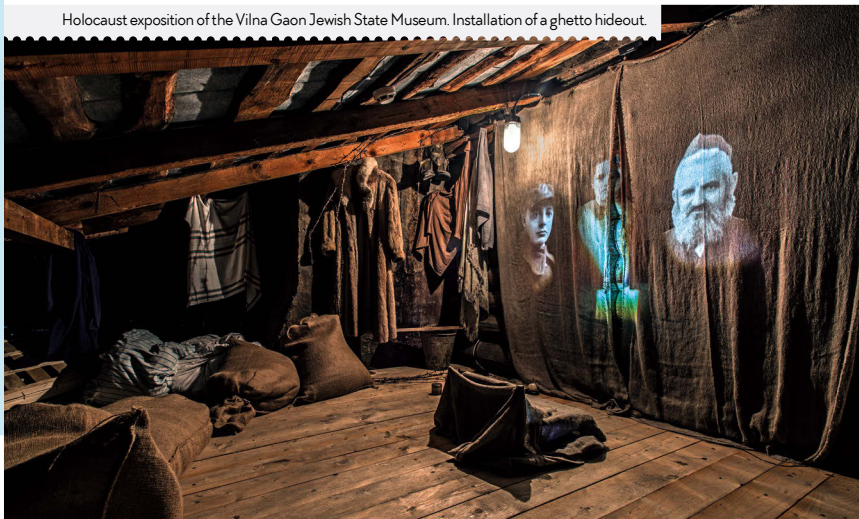
This location began to be used for burials in the 16th century. This is also where the renowned Vilna Gaon was laid to rest. His remains were later removed to the old cemetery of Užupis. After some time his family grave was relocated to the Sudervė Jewish Cemetery. After being severely damaged during the war, the Šnipiškės cemetery was demolished once and for all during the Soviet era.

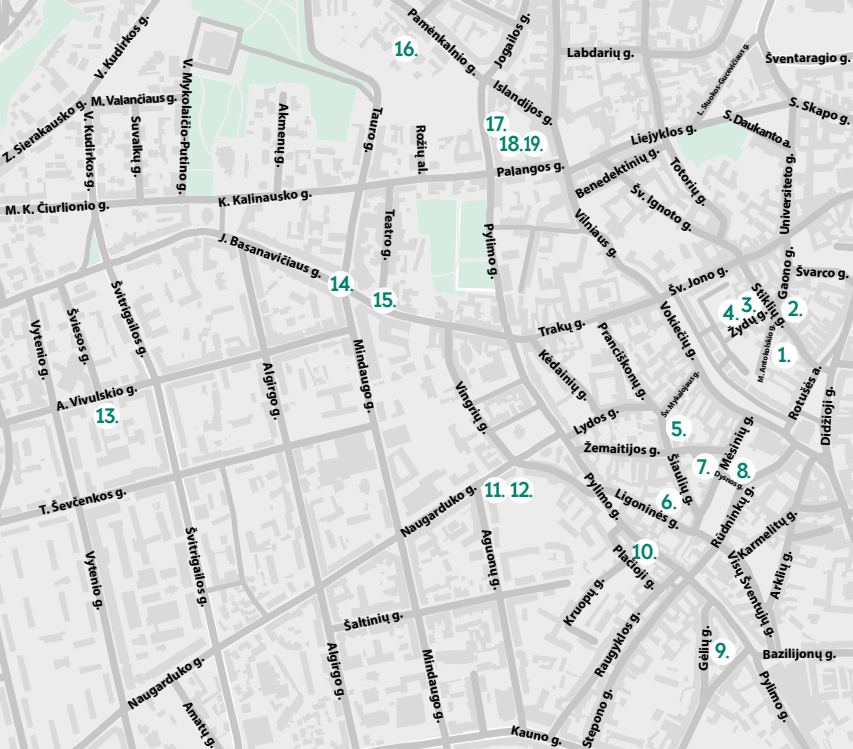
Old Jewish Cemetery of Užupis

Olandų g. 22

Some 70,000 people were buried in the cemetery from 1830 to 1939, including the printer Menahem Mann Romm (d. 1841),

Holocaust exposition of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum. Installation of a ghetto hideout.





the scholar and bibliographer Mattityahu Strashun (1817–1884), and the doctor Zemach Shabad. The remains of some of the more famous people were later moved to the Sudervė Jewish Cemetery.

Sudervė Jewish Cemetery

Sudervės kel. 28

Still active today, this cemetery was founded in the 1930s. This is where you can visit the grave/mausoleum of the Vilna Gaon and his family. It has become a tradition for believers to place notes with various wishes and prayers on the grave of the Gaon, just like in the Wailing Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Paneriai Memorial

Agrastų g. 17

During World War II, up to 70,000 people were killed in Paneriai. Most of the victims were Jews. A site of mass murder in Paneriai (the Ponary massacre) is included in the list of Memorial Sites in Europe. There is now a small museum on the site of the mass murder. A tunnel mentioned in the memoirs of Holocaust survivors was uncovered by archaeologists on the site. It is estimated that about 14 Jewish prisoners used the tunnel to escape to freedom.

📍 Subačiaus Street, 47, 49, Vilnius
GPS: 54.675667, 25.304683

Kaunas (Yiddish: Kovne – קאוונע)



Choral Synagogue of Kaunas

Situated at the confluence of the Nemunas and Neris Rivers, the second largest city in Lithuania boasts a long history – the name of Kaunas was first mentioned in written sources in 1361. Until the very end of the 18th century, most Jews lived in what was then the private Vilijampolė suburb – also known as Slabodka – that belonged to the famous Radziwiłł (Lithuanian: Radvila) family. Starting in 1858, when all of the restrictions regarding Jewish settlement in the city were abolished, quite a few Jews moved to the Old Town and around Laisvės alėja – the pedestrian street that is considered the heart of Kaunas. The community grew rapidly, and Jews already accounted for about one-third of the Kaunas population by the beginning of the 20th century. There were more than 20 synagogues and Jewish houses of prayer operating in the temporary capital of Lithuania during the interwar period.

As building contractors, Jews actively contributed to shaping the modernistic face of the city. The notable engineer Anatolijus Rozenbliumas (Anatoly Rozenblum) (1902–1973) designed buildings such as the Central Post Office, the Officers' Club and the Kaunas Sports Hall, which all

eventually became symbols of the city. The unique modernist architecture of Kaunas was added to a UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage tentative list in 2017. Many prominent people of Jewish descent were born and raised in Kaunas: writer Abraham Mapu (1808–1867), poet Leah



imagine



Goldberg (1911–1970), who was one of the creators of the State of Israel, Joseph Kagan (1915–1995), who was one of the most influential British industrialists, Hermann Minkowski (1864–1909), a pioneer in the

theory of relativity who inspired none other than Albert Einstein with his work, the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995), and the political activist Emma Goldman (1869–1940).



We encourage you to visit:

1. Sugihara House

Vaižganto g. 30

Thanks to the visas issued by Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara (1900–1986), also known as ‘the Japanese Schindler’, the lives of more than 6,000 Jews were saved in the summer of 1940. Given, Sugihara’s feat would not have been possible without the initiative of Jan Zwartendijk (1896–1976), the Dutch Honorary Consul in Kaunas. Zwartendijk issued visas to the Dutch colony of Curaçao, and based on these visas, Sugihara was able to give them transit visas through Japan. The Righteous Among the Nations title was awarded to Sugihara in 1985, and to Zwartendijk in 1997. The Sugihara House was founded in Kaunas, in the building that was once the Japanese consulate, to honour the diplomat.

2. Emmanuel Levinas Memorial Plaque

Spautuvinių g. 11

In commemoration of the centennial of the birth of the famous philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995), a memorial plaque (sculptor Leonas Adomkus) was unveiled in the place where his family’s house used to stand.

3. Danielius Dolskis Statue

Laisvės al. 68–70

Laisvės alėja features a statue of Danielius Dolskis (1891–1931), an interwar singer from Kaunas who was popular in both Lithuania and abroad (sculptor Romualdas Kvintas).

4. Courtyard Gallery

E. Ožėškienės g. 25

The brainchild of street artist Vytenis Jakas, this original space ‘contemplates’ people’s lack of a sense of place and alienation, while at the same time bearing witness in a subtle and sensitive manner to the Jews who lived in the houses surrounding the courtyard at the beginning of the last century. Near the entry to the courtyard there is a commemorative plaque for Juda Zupavičius (Yuda Zupovitch) (1914–1944), who was the deputy chief of the Kaunas Ghetto Police as well as one of the organisers of the underground resistance; even when he was brutally tortured, he refused to reveal the hideouts used by the Jewish children in the Kaunas ghetto.

The Courtyard Gallery



5. Choral Synagogue of Kaunas

E. Ožėskienės g. 13

Dating back to the 19th century, this synagogue is the only Jewish house of prayer in Kaunas that is still functioning. The synagogue serves as the headquarters for the Jewish religious community in Kaunas. The property features the *Children's Torah* – a memorial for the Jewish children who were killed in Lithuania during World War II (sculptor Robertas Antinis).

6. Kaunas Jewish Health Home

D. Poškos g. 1

During the interwar period, the former Health Home was maintained by the Society for the Protection of the Health of the Jewish Population (OZE).

7. Stones of Remembrance for the Basa Family

Vilniaus g. 72

The largest open-air memorial in Europe is meant to commemorate those who died during the Holocaust. Approximately 60,000 *stolpersteine* – small brass-plated cobblestones – are placed throughout 22 European countries. Holocaust survivor Rūta Glikman (Basaite) has honoured her family – her parents, grandfather and brother who we tragically killed – with these 'Stones of Remembrance' in Kaunas. In order to read the names of the victims on the embedded stones, ordinary passers-by bow down, thus paying their respects.

8. Leah Goldberg Memorial Plaque

Karaliaus Mindaugo pr. 11

There is a memorial plaque next to the former Schwabe Hebrew Gymnasium dedicated to Leah Goldberg, the prolific Hebrew-language writer who once studied there (sculptor Balys Gudas).

9. Tsvi Hirsh Neviazher Kloyz

L. Zamenhofo g. 7

Across from the Lithuanian Folk Music History Museum still stands the private house of prayer of Tsvi Hirsh Neviazher that was built in 1851.

10. Headquarters of the Union of Jewish Soldiers Who Fought for Lithuanian Independence

A. Mapu g. 18

Next to the former headquarters of the Union of Jewish Soldiers in Kaunas there is a memorial plaque that tells of the role of the Jewish people in the Lithuanian Freedom Struggles (sculptor Gediminas Pašvenskas).

11. Butchers Synagogue Building

M. Daukšos g. 27 a

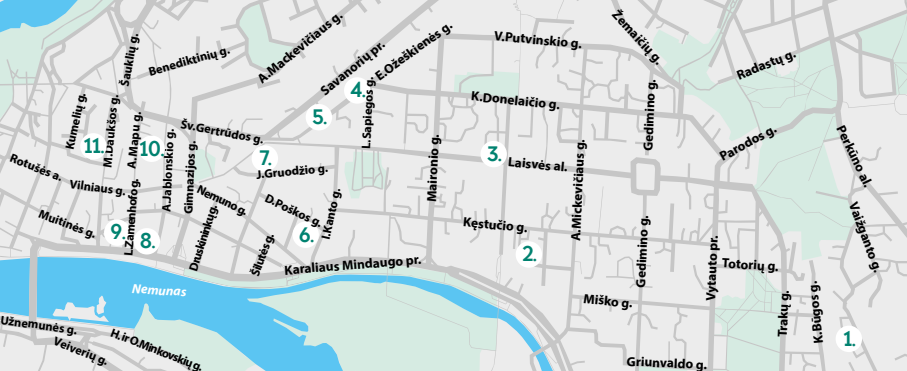
The vast spaces of the synagogue built in the second half of the 19th century have now become a refuge for artists from the Kaunas branch of the Vilnius Academy of Arts.

Additional sites of interest:

Žaliakalnis Jewish Cemetery

Radvilėnų pl.

Founded in 1861, the cemetery was closed in 1952. Several famous Jewish artists are buried at this cemetery, including the singer Danielius Dolskis as well as the artist Jokūbas Mesenbliumas (Jacques Missene; 1894–1933), who trained the internationally acclaimed talent Arbit Blatas (1908–1999). Some of the graves of the Jewish soldiers who died in the Lithuanian Freedom Struggles are still intact. The remains of Holocaust victims have also been reposed at the cemetery and a monument has been erected in their honour.



Kaunas (Kovno) Ghetto Memorial Pylon

Intersection of A. Kriščiukaičio g. and Neries krantinės g.

The Kaunas ghetto was established in August 1941. It held more than 30,000 Jewish prisoners. The Kaunas ghetto was liquidated in July 1944. Only 3,000 Jews survived the Holocaust. The Kaunas Ghetto Memorial Pylon is the work of architect Virginijus Juozaitis.

Vilijampolė Jewish Cemetery

Kalnų g.

The oldest Jewish cemetery in Kaunas,

it was founded at the beginning of the 18th century and operated until the end of the 19th century. After the cemetery was closed, many of the tombstones were used for the construction of a fortress. During the Soviet era, the monuments were also demolished in the central part of the cemetery, and the land was levelled.

Ninth Fort of the Kaunas Fortress

Žemaičių pl. 75

One of the defensive fortifications built around Kaunas when it was part of the Russian Empire, the stronghold was turned into a place of mass murder during World War II. More than 50,000 people, most of them Jews, were executed at the Ninth Fort. The site now houses a museum dedicated to the victims. The exhibitions also provide insight into life in the Kaunas ghetto and the fate of the people, as well as about the diplomats who saved Jews, with a special focus on Chiune Sugihara.

- ★ Plytinės Street, 15, Kaunas
GPS: 54.851783, 23.954017
- Archyvo Street, 61, Kaunas
GPS: 54.915217, 23.926833
- Goštauto Street, 4, Kaunas
GPS: 54.911950, 23.885917
- Energetikų Street, Kaunas
GPS: 54.885533, 23.991600
- Miško Street 1, Kaunas
GPS: 54.893367, 23.923217

Exposition of the Ninth Fort,
dedicated to Chiune Sugihara



Klaipėda (Yiddish: Memel – מעמל)



Former house of merchant Julius Ludwig Wiener

The country's only port city, Klaipėda was first mentioned in historical sources in 1252. Although Klaipėda is the oldest city in the territory of Lithuania, it was actually detached from present-day Lithuania for a long period of its historical development. The Jews have been mentioned in the Klaipėda region since the 16th century, but it was only in 1812 that the restrictions regarding the settlement of the Jewish community in the city were abolished. In the 19th century, the number of Jews in Klaipėda grew from 30 to 1,000. Klaipėda is unique for the fact that three different Jewish communities formed there: the Hasidic Jews, the Orthodox Litvaks and the modern German Jews. Each community had its own synagogue.

Even before the formation of the Jewish community, the merchant and well-known Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, who was also the grandfather of the composer who wrote Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March', visited Klaipėda. After being refused the right to reside in the Klaipėda region, the philosopher stayed in

Königsberg. Jews contributed significantly to the development of the city during the interwar period. For example, the Feinberg brothers opened the Klaipėda Textile Factory in 1925 – what was then the most modern company of its kind in Lithuania. The factory mainly produced wool and cotton fabrics.



We encourage you to visit:

1. Klaipėda Synagogue

Žiedų skg. 3

During Soviet times, a radio-frequency interference station was established on the grounds of the old Jewish cemetery. Once Lithuania regained its independence, the station was closed and the building was given over to the Klaipėda Jewish community. Today it is not only the community centre, but also a synagogue where worship services are held.

2. Former Jewish Hospital Building

Galinio Pylimo g. 3

Built on the initiative of Rabbi Isaac Rūf (1831–1902) in the 19th century, this hospital also provided care to impoverished Jews.

3. Former Jewish School

Grįžgatvio g. 6

This school was founded by Rabbi Isaac Rūf for underprivileged children.

4. Educational Institute for Girls

Herkaus Manto g. 21

Funded by the famous Klaipėda businessman and philanthropist Julius Ludwig Wiener (1795–1862), there were approximately 20 girls from disadvantaged families living at this institute at any given time, right up to the middle of the 20th century.

5. Shelter for Impoverished Merchants

Herkaus Manto g. 23

Financed by Julius Ludwig Wiener, this building was constructed in 1863 and has survived to this day. The two-storey red brick house once provided shelter not only for impoverished merchants, but also for forlorn townspeople, abandoned children and widows.

6. Rudolf Valsonok Memorial Plaque

I. Kanto g. 9

Rudolf Valsonok (1889–1945), a lawyer and journalist of Jewish descent who lived in the port city during the interwar period, did extensive research about the Klaipėda region, writing two monographs and a book (*The Klaipėda Problem*) about the city. In the latter, he attempted to justify the legal basis for Klaipėda belonging to Lithuania.

Additional sites of interest:

Julius Ludwig Wiener Monument

K. Donelaičio g. 6B

After arriving in Klaipėda in 1817, Julius Ludwig Wiener quickly became a prominent businessman and city deputy. A merchant who sold plant seeds, he also became known as a philanthropist, financing the construction of numerous community buildings. Wiener left nearly all of his property to the city of Klaipėda on the condition that he

Tomb of Julius Ludwig Wiener





would be buried in the public town cemetery. Today there is a sculpture park on the grounds of the cemetery, and an impressive tombstone stands in the place where Weiner's grave once was.

Old Jewish Cemetery of Klaipėda

Sinagogų g.

The cemetery was badly damaged during Soviet times, with many of the tombstones being removed and used for construction. After the restoration of Lithuania's independence, the cemetery grounds were fenced in and the fragments of the tombstones that were left were used to build a memorial wall.

★ Klaipėdos Street, Gargždai, Klaipėda District
GPS: 55.711700, 21.387450
Perkūnai Village, Klaipėda District
GPS: 55.754669, 21.545071



Memorial monument of the Old Cemetery

Šiauliai (Yiddish: Shavel – שאָויל)



Chaim Frenkel's villa

One of the oldest cities in Lithuania, Šiauliai was first mentioned in written sources in 1524. The earliest mention of Jews in Šiauliai is found in a privilege granted by the Grand Duke in 1681 to a local Jew named Wolf Nurok, exempting him from taxes and permitting him to live in the city with his family without any constraints. The official permit for the Jewish community to settle was granted in 1731. The first Jewish community in Šiauliai consisted of just 55 people. However, it quickly began to grow, and by the end of the 19th century, Jews already made up the majority of the city's population.

Šiauliai had a white-plaster choral synagogue with lines so graceful that the locals quickly dubbed it the 'White Swan'. Unfortunately, a fire devastated the city in 1872 and the beautiful house of prayer disappeared in flames. Since a large part of the Jewish quarter was destroyed by the fire, a considerable portion of the

community emigrated. A well-known sculptor, a native of Šiauliai, Victor David Brenner (1871–1924) designed the famous United States Lincoln Cent. The Frenkel family of Jewish industrialists, who ran a leather tannery, significantly contributed to the development of Šiauliai.



We encourage you to visit:

1. Talmud Torah School

Stoties g. 11

The Frenkel family, which was a generous sponsor of the Šiauliai Jewish community, contributed to the maintenance of the Talmud Torah School.

2. Semion Volpert Clinic

Višinskio g. 24

Founded by the famous cultural activist, doctor Semion Volpert (1890–1967), the clinic was able to boast of the first X-ray machine in the Baltic States. Today, the clinic building has become the Šiauliai Jewish Community Centre.

3. Chaim Frenkel Villa

Vilniaus g. 74

Commercial success enabled the Frenkel family to build a luxurious Art Nouveau villa. This building now houses

a branch of the Šiauliai Aušros Museum. In addition to the exhibition 'Jewish Heritage in Šiauliai: The Merchants Frenkel', the museum also holds various educational activities on Jewish culture, including the 'Secrets of Kosher Food' programme.

4. Chaim Frenkel Leather Factory Buildings

Vilniaus g. 72

The factory was opened in 1887. The high quality of their leather earned various awards and made the Frenkel family famous throughout the Russian Empire.

5. Chaim Frenkel Synagogue

Vilniaus g. 68

In place of the old wooden synagogue, Chaim Frenkel (1851–1920) built a two-story masonry synagogue for the factory workers.

Exposition 'A provincial town of the 19th and mid-20th century'. The Shapiro Brothers shop.





6. Chaim Frenkel Statue

Vilniaus g. 49

By opening the leather factory, Chaim Frenkel contributed significantly to Šiauliai becoming a flourishing city. A statue of him created by sculptor Romualdas Kvintas was erected across from the former factory building to commemorate his contributions to the city.

Scale model of Šiauliai Old Town at Chaim Frenkel's villa. The White Synagogue. Author Saulius Krupis.



Additional sites of interest:

Šiauliai (Shavli) Ghetto Commemorative Stone

Trakų g.

Dedicated to the memory of the victims of the ghetto, the stone marks the place where the ghetto gates once stood.

Šiauliai Jewish Cemetery

Žalgirio g., Rėkyvos g., D. Poškos g. and Šilų g.

Founded around 1749, the cemetery is surrounded by a two-metre stone wall with gates that stand out for their expressive architecture; the caretaker's house and the undertaker's building used to stand alongside. The cemetery was liquidated during the Soviet era.

- ★ Pročiūnų Street, Šiauliai
GPS: 55.896933, 23.411083
- Bubiai Village, Šiauliai District
GPS: 55.859883, 23.130867
- Gubernija Forest, Šiauliai District
GPS: 55.990417, 23.219467
- Ilgoji Lova Forest, Šiauliai District
GPS: 55.956767, 23.535000
- Luponiai Forest, Šiauliai District
GPS: 55.995650, 23.158533

Telšiai (Yiddish: Telz – טעלז)

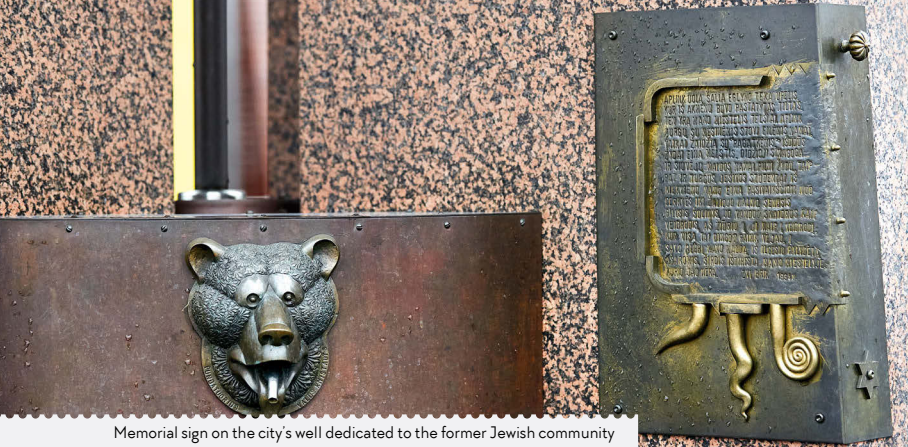


Sign on the building of Telšiai Yeshiva

Founded back in the 15th century, the capital of the Samogitia region features quite a few surviving Jewish cultural heritage sites. Exuberant and strong, the Telšiai Jewish community was known for being very orthodox, and made up about half of the city's population in the second part of the 19th century. Primarily engaged in crafts and trade, the Jews mainly settled on the northern edge of the market square – for example, what is now Respublikos Street was inhabited almost exclusively by Jews.

The large Jewish community that Telšiai had during the interwar period participated actively in all of areas of life – the city had a Jewish bank, library, charitable organisations and sports club. Prior to World War II, there were four synagogues in Telšiai. Due to its world-renowned Jewish educational institutions, Telšiai was often referred to as the educational centre for Jews not only in Lithuania, but throughout all of Eastern Europe.





Memorial sign on the city's well dedicated to the former Jewish community



We encourage you to visit:

1. Yavneh Teachers' Seminary

Stoties g. 4

Opened in 1923, this was the only Jewish teachers' seminary of that time in Lithuania.

2. Telšiai Yeshiva

Iždinės g. 11

Founded in 1875, the yeshiva earned worldwide recognition during the

Monument 'Here we spent our childhood' at the site of former residential houses

interwar period. This school of religious studies was headed by prominent people such as Rabbi Eliezer Gordon (1841–1910) and Rabbi Leiba Bloch (1860–1930). The yeshiva was closed during the Soviet occupation, but its activities and traditions have been successfully continued to this day by a religious studies school in Cleveland (USA) of the same name.

3. Great Beit Midrash

Sinagogos g. 4

This modernist beit midrash stands out for its magnitude – it is three stories tall.

4. Tailors' Beit Midrash

Telšės g. 5

This large-scale wooden beit midrash was built during the interwar period. Construction was financed by the Jewish community.

5. Jewish Photo Studio

Kęstučio g. 3

In the late 19th century, Telšiai became known as the second Lithuanian city after Marijampolė to have professional





photographers, and most of them were Jews. This is where one of the first female photographers in Lithuania – Feitska Kaplanski (1894–1941) – began to work.

6. Yavneh Girls' School

Respublikos g. 9

The first Jewish institution of education for girls in Lithuania was opened in Telšiai in 1921. It later inspired the establishment of other Jewish girls' schools that were set up during the interwar period.

7. Soldiers' Beit Midrash

Aukštoji g. 3

Built in the late 19th century, this two-storey masonry beit midrash is one of Telšiai's oldest surviving buildings.

8. N. D. Krulis (Krul) Jewish Hospital

Gedimino g. 3

The health care facility was built in 1930. American Jew N. D. Krulis (Krul) contributed generously to its construction. The hospital was an important part of the town infrastructure that the Jewish community was actively developing.

Additional sites of interest:

Jewish Cemetery

Stoties g.

This is where you can visit the graves of Rabbi Bloch, the notable head of the Telšiai yeshiva, and his wife, which have survived to this day.

Samogitian Museum Alka

Muziejaus g. 31

Dedicated to the history of the ethnographic region of Samogitia, this museum offers an educational programme on 'Footprints of the Jewish People in Telšiai'. At the museum, you can also see moments from the everyday life of Telšiai residents – mostly Jews – captured by early local photographers.

- ★ Kalnėnų Street, Telšiai
GPS: 55.995250, 22.228283
- Rainiai Village, Telšiai District
GPS: 55.955967, 22.298667
- Rainiai Forest, Telšiai District
GPS: 55.960500, 22.290667
- Geruliai Village, Telšiai District
GPS: 55.975633, 22.393667
- Gerulų Forest, Telšiai District
GPS: 55.973600, 22.409333

Ukmergė (Yiddish: Vilkomir – ווילקאמיר)



Mural of a Jewish shopkeeper in the Old Town's courtyard

Ukmergė is one of the oldest cities in Lithuania – legend has it that it was founded by Duke Dausprungas in the early 13th century. The Ukmergė Jewish community was first mentioned in written sources in 1685. The community grew and got stronger, and Jews already made up more than half of the city's population in the 19th century.

Since they accounted for a significant part of the population, the Jews had quite a few secular and religious educational institutions and cultural associations in Ukmergė. At the end of the 19th century, the Talmud-Torah school had approximately 300 pupils, a third

of which were being provided clothing and food by the school. There was a Tarbut school in the city, where the famous Litvak linguist Chackelis Lemchenas (Chatzkel Lemchen) (1904–2001) worked as a teacher during the interwar period.



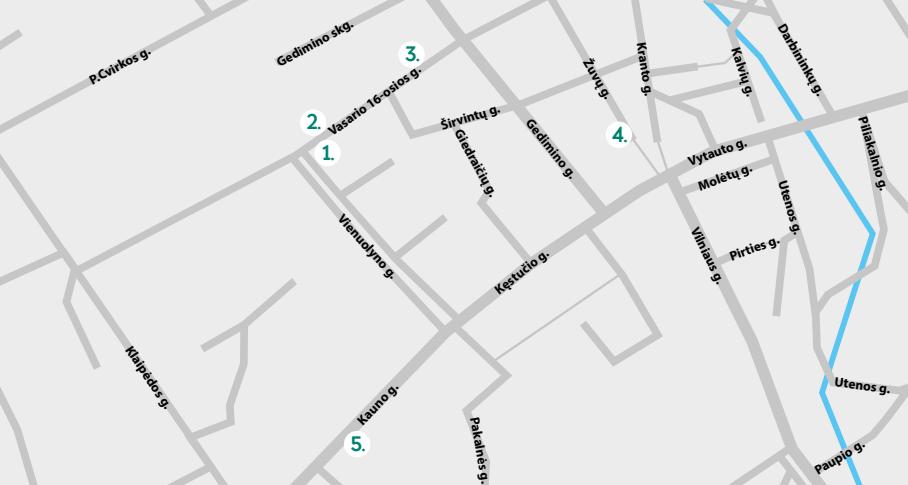
We encourage you to visit:

1. Great Synagogue

Vienualyno g. 2

This house of prayer, which has survived to this day, was erected no later than the second half of the 18th century. The

synagogue only acquired its Neo-Baroque façade in the mid-19th century. According to the accounts of locals, this synagogue was mainly attended by rich Jews for whom it was not only a house of prayer, but also a place to discuss business. The building was severely neglected during the



Soviet period. There is a commemorative plaque (sculptor Viktoras Žentelis) on the wall of the synagogue to honour Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), who lived in Ukmergė. One of the main streets of Jerusalem is named after this celebrated Jewish political thinker.

2. Sol Rosenblum Orphanage

Vasario 16-osios g. 15

A native of Ukmergė, Sol Rosenblum founded the orphanage in 1922. The building could accommodate up to 100 orphans. Construction was funded by the rich Šiauliai leather factory owner, Chaim Frenkel.

3. Talmud-Torah School

Vasario 16-osios g. 11

Meant for underprivileged children, this school functioned from 1884 to 1941.

4. Žuvų Street Market Square

Žuvų g. 5

The area around this market square was inhabited mainly by Jews engaged in

crafts and trade. To this day, the building on the square marked with the number 7 still bears the authentic sign for the Jewish shop it once housed.

5. Ukmergė Jewish Community House

Kauno g. 16

The community is actively involved in the preservation of Jewish cultural heritage and the remembrance of Holocaust victims. A variety of educational activities are held on the initiative of the community, including a programme to acquaint people with the secrets of kosher food.

Additional sites of interest:

Old Jewish Cemetery of Ukmergė

Vilniaus g.

The Jews who lived in Ukmergė were buried at this cemetery from the late 17th century to the early 20th century. The Soviet government destroyed the tombstones in 1951.

★ Pivonijos Street 9, Ukmergė
GPS: 55.220117, 24.806050
Želva, Ukmergė District
GPS: 55.217150, 25.096917

Other places in Lithuania



Monument to Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof in Veisiejai

Alytus (Yiddish: Alite – אָליטע)

Alytus has been mentioned since the 14th century, and it already had a Jewish community in the 18th century – a synagogue was recorded in the city inventory in 1786. During the interwar period, Jews made up about one-third of the total population. The integrity of the community is evidenced by their active involvement in political life – several Jews belonged to the Alytus City Council, and Kolepas Šulmanas (Kolep Schulman) served briefly as the city's burgomaster in 1922. The Jews also contributed to the city's infrastructure: they owned printing houses, hotels, windmills, sawmills, a power station, a machinery and vehicle company, a soft drink factory and other companies.

After the city was destroyed by fires, a new brick synagogue and a rabbi's house (Kauno g. 9, 9a) were built in Alytus in 1911 – these buildings have survived to this day. The city also still features two unique **cinemas** built from red bricks – the **Palas** (Vilniaus g. 23),

which belonged to Dveirė Šulmanienė, and the **Kapitol** (Vilniaus g.13), which was built in 1929.

Alytus is where lawyer, city council member and founder of the Alytus Police and Volunteer Fire Brigade Mendelis Bokšickis

(Medel Boshitski) (1898–1941) lived and worked. Built in 1911 and still standing today, the **Bolšickis residence** (Vilnius g. 27) stands out for the small lion figures that adorn the front stairs.

Worth a visit are the **Old Jewish Cemetery** (Medžiotojų g.) and the **part of the Old**

Jewish Cemetery on Smėlio Street that bear testimony to the Jewish community in Alytus.

★ Vidziris Forest, Pulko Street, Alytus
GPS: 54.378033, 24.042083

Veisiejai, Lazdijai District (Yiddish: Vishai – ווישיי)

Jews began to settle in the town of Veisiejai in the 18th century, and by the end of the 19th century they already made up a significant majority of the population. The Jews owned many of the shops and managed the power station, the pharmacy and the bank. So, they were the core of the town's economy.

Veisiejai takes pride in the fact that Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof (1859–1917), the founder of Esperanto, worked here as an ophthalmologist in 1886–1887. A **monument** was erected in the town in his honour (Veisiejai Town Park; sculptor Julius Narušis).

The wooden **Veisiejai Beit Midrash**

(J. Janonio g. 6) that was built in 1927 now houses a Baptist church.

The **Old Jewish Cemetery of Veisiejai** (V. Montvilos g.) has survived until the present day.

★ Katkiškė Village, Lazdijai District
GPS: 54.216717, 23.519617
Baraučiškė Village, Lazdijai District
GPS: 55.754669, 21.545071

Biržai (Yiddish: Birzh – בירזי)

This town, which belonged to the Radziwiłł (Lithuanian: Radvila) family, a distinguished line of magnates of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, began accepting Jewish settlers back in the 16th century. During the interwar period, Jews made up about one-third of the town's population. The diversity and vitality of everyday life in the shtetl is evidenced by the three sports clubs, the Jewish People's Bank, the Mizrahi Zionist organisation and the Jewish schools that once functioned here.

There are still two masonry houses of prayer standing these days: the Great Synagogue (Žemaitės g. 22) and the Hasidic Synagogue (Dagilio g. 14). However, they have now been converted into flats and serve as residential buildings. The building of the shelter for elderly Jews is still standing in Biržai (Karaimų g. 13), featuring a unique sign of multi-confessional life on one of its walls: an old but still legible inscription in Lithuanian and Yiddish.

The Biržai Jewish Cemetery (Kluono g. 10a) is one of the largest Jewish ceme-

teries in Lithuania. It is the only Karait-Jewish cemetery in the country. At the cemetery, you can visit the grave of Boruch Michelson (1871–1939), the renowned Biržai photographer of the early 20th century. Several hundred of Michelson's photographs that are of significant value are safeguarded at the Sėla museum of Biržai.

★ Malūno Street, Biržai
GPS: 56.209800, 24.765117
Pakamponys Forest, Paežeriai Village, Biržai District
GPS: 56.224483, 24.780767
Pagojai Village, Biržai District
GPS: 56.395324, 24.794412

Darbėnai, Kretinga District

(Yiddish: דארביאן - Dorbian)

Jews began to settle in Darbėnai in mid-18th century. Most of them lived near the town's marketplace, where a synagogue was built in 1781. In the 19th century, the Jews started to populate the streets of Laukžemės, Vainėikių and Skuodo, which exist at the present time. In the interwar period Jews made up about 40 per cent of the town's population. There was a Tarbut school in the town.

Darbėnai is the birthplace of David Wolffsohn (1858–1914), a close collaborator of the Zionist leader Theodor Herzl (1860–1904). Wolffsohn designed the Zionist flag, which later became the symbol of the recreated state of Israel, and suggested the name shekel, which subsequently became the name of Israeli currency.

Darbėnai has preserved the unique layout of houses and the marketplace. The outstanding **Jewish cemetery** (GPS: 56.021667,

21.271944) featuring numerous gravestones with the names of the old residents of the town engraved on them has also survived until the present day.

★ Palangos g., Darbėnai, Kretinga District
GPS: 56.017817, 21.243117
Baltas Kalnas Forest, Kretinga District
GPS: 56.017017, 21.277200
GPS: 56.015900, 21.280200
Joskaudai Forest, Kretinga District
GPS: 55.977817, 21.209433

Druskininkai

(Yiddish: דרוסקעניק – Drosknik)

Jews began to settle in Druskininkai in the mid-18th century, and by 1897, they already made up about half of the town's population. The Jewish community made a living as traders and artisans. It actively contributed to the development of Druskininkai as a resort town. There were several Jewish religious schools in the city. The strength and activeness of the Jewish community in Druskininkai is evidenced by the hospital and charity house for impoverished Jews that were opened in the mid-19th century. The Druskininkai Synagogue stood in the heart of the city, on the right side of what is now Vilniaus alėja. This house of prayer was surrounded by Jewish-owned shops.

Druskininkai is where the world-renowned sculptor Jacques Lipchitz (1891–1973) was born. He used to say that he was proud to be born in the city where the brilliant Lithuanian composer M. K. Čiurlionis lived. The **Central Hotel** (Šv. Jokūbo g. 22), which was founded by the sculptor's father Abraham Šaevičius Lipchitz in 1909, still stands in the city. The authentic architecture and exterior decoration that have been preserved charm visitors with their early-20th century aura. The

Jacques Lipchitz Memorial Museum (Šv. Jokūbo g. 17) was opened in 1996, along with the **Jacques Lipchitz Sculpture Park** (Maironio g. 22), which features the works of as many as 19 different sculptors. Other places of interest in Druskininkai are the **Old Jewish Cemetery of Druskininkai** (GPS: 54.008233, 23.972364) and the **Ratnyčia Jewish Cemetery** (GPS: 54.001389, 24.014167).

★ Leipalingis Village, Druskininkai Municipality
GPS: 54.080000, 23.853611



White and Red Synagogues of Joniškis

Joniškis (Yiddish: Yanishok – יאַנישאָק)

Jews began to populate Joniškis (Šiauliai County) in larger numbers only at the end of the 18th century, when the ban on Jewish trade was lifted. The Jewish people mainly settled around Market Square (now Miesto aikštė.) and surrounding streets, where various Jewish shops and artisan workshops were abundant before World War II. The active involvement of Jews in the local political and cultural life could be illustrated by the fact that in 1933 two Jews – Aizikas Zaksas (Icchak Zaks) and Hilelis Tabačnikas (Hillel Tabachnik) – were members of the city council, and Izaokas Šapira (Icchak Shapira) was elected deputy burgomaster.



Dapolin petrol pump on Market Square in Joniškis

The authentic two-synagogue complex has survived in the city to this day. A mixture of late Neoclassicism and Romanticism, the so-called **White Joniškis Synagogue** (Miesto a. 4) was built back in 1864–1865, while the Neo-Gothic **Red Synagogue** was built in 1911. The White Synagogue was large and spacious and was used in summer, while in winter the congregation gathered in the adjacent Red Synagogue, which was small and warm. The synagogues were badly neglected during the Soviet period. They are currently being renovated and are owned by the Joniškis Regional Museum. At the beginning of 2017, an interactive exposition was opened in the White Synagogue.



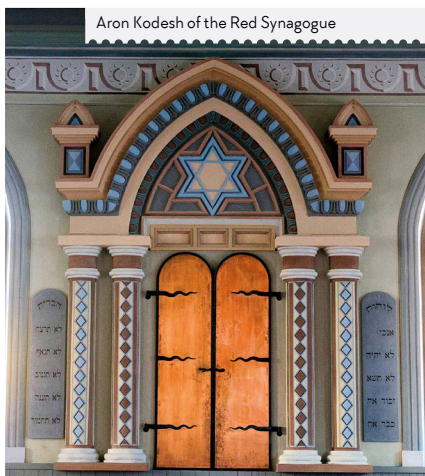
Interior of the restored synagogue

One interesting Jewish heritage site is the building that once housed the **Lyra Cinema** (Šiaulių Senoji g. 7). During the interwar period, this innovative entertainment spot belonged to photographer Jokūbas Fišeris (Jacob Fisher). The cinema showed the Lumière brothers' famous film *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* ('The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station'). It is believed that it was here that the famous Hollywood actor Laurence Harvey (1928–1973), who was born in Joniškis, took an interest in the cinema. He was nominated for an Academy Award and a BAFTA Award for a leading role in the film *Room at the Top*, directed by Jack Clayton.

In the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century Jews were among the first to embrace various innovations and start new trades. In the interwar period some Jews in Joniškis started a completely new business – in the shops located around Market Square they began to sell petrol, mainly for regular buses. There were two modern Shell and Dapolin petrol pumps in the middle of the square. Most of the Jewish shops and workshops

that clustered around the city's main square have not survived or there is no data about their present address. It is supposed that Chiena-Šapočnikaitė confectionery-pub in Upytės Street (now Upytės g.) was set up in 1940 in one of the surviving buildings at the beginning of the street. In the **Old Jewish Cemetery of Joniškis** (Bariūnų g. 4, Satkūnai Village), more than 500 tombstones have survived to this day.

★ Vilkausis Forest, Maironiai Village, Joniškis District
GPS: 56.195583, 23.562650



Aron Kodesh of the Red Synagogue



Synagogue complex in Kėdainiai

Kėdainiai (Yiddish: Keydan – קייִדאָן)

Jews began to settle in this town, which belonged to the Radziwiłł (Lithuanian: Radvila) family, in the 17th century. The city became an important centre for Judaic studies. Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, who would go on to become the world-renowned Vilna Gaon, came here to study at the age of seven.

The **Old Market Square and the Synagogue Complex** (Senosios rinkos a.) have survived to this day. The Great Synagogue was built in the late 18th century and was known for its impressive frescoes and chandeliers.

Featuring a Baroque façade, this place of worship now houses an art school. The smaller synagogue was erected at the beginning of the 19th century. It now houses the Multicultural Centre of the Kėdainiai Regional Museum, where you can view an exhibit on local Jewish history. Deserving of attention is the **Great Kloyz** (Smilgos g. 5a) that was built in the mid-19th century with features of Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Kėdainiai's **Great Market Square**, where the main city markets used to take place, is also worth a visit. An important vestige of the once-prosperous community is the **Old Jewish Cemetery of Kėdainiai** (A. Kanapskio g. 73).

Kėdainiai Old Town. Pharmacy on the corner of Didžiosios and Senosios Streets.



- ★ Jubiliejaus Street, Kėdainiai
GPS: 55.329100, 23.974800
- Daukšiai Village, Kėdainiai District
GPS: 55.299083, 23.960350
- Pešiniukai Village, Kėdainiai District
GPS: 55.404317, 23.706467



Hakhnasat Orhim Synagogue

Marijampolė

(Yiddish: Mariampol – מאַריאַמפּאָל)

Jewish culture is an important part of Marijampolė's history. Jews settled in the city centre, near the market square, at the second half of the 18th century and made up the vast majority of the local population in the mid-19th century. The cultural involvement of the community is evidenced by the diversity of institutions that functioned in the city – Jews not only had their own primary school, kindergarten and charity associations, but a library and theatre as well. In 1919, a school was opened in Marijampolė that was the first in Lithuania where lessons were taught in Hebrew.

Designed in 1899, the **Hakhnasat Orhim Synagogue** (P. Butlerienės g. 5) serves as a reminder of the city's Jewish past. Also worth a visit is the **Marijampolė Beit Midrash** (Kauno g. 4) that is still standing but not currently in use.

Many prominent people of Jewish decent were born in Marijampolė, including French photographer Izis Bidermanas (1911–1980) and Baruch Ben-Yehuda, the first director general of Israel's Ministry of Education and Culture.

- ⬡ Varpo Street, Marijampolė
GPS: 54.545650, 23.334033
- Rudžiai Grove, Marijampolė District
GPS: 54.581800, 23.276800
- Šunskai Grove, Marijampolė District
GPS: 54.603950, 23.319733

Meilė Lukšienė Education Centre of Marijampolė situated in the building of a former synagogue



Molėtai (Yiddish: Maliat – מאַליאַט)

At the beginning of the 18th century the bishop of Vilnius bishop granted the Jews permission to build a synagogue in Molėtai. The community grew rapidly, and by the end of the 19th century Jews made up as much as 80 per cent of the total population and remained the prevailing majority until the Holocaust. The Jews were very involved in the city's economic and cultural life, as is evidenced by the five Jewish schools, library, four Jewish houses of prayer, four restaurants, artisan workshops, and bank that existed during the interwar period. The branch of the Union of Jewish Soldiers Who Fought for Lithuanian Independence that operated in Molėtai is a reminder of the Jews' contribution to the Lithuanian Freedom Struggles. Shimon Gordon, who was one of the founders of the city of Hadera (Israel), was born in Molėtai.

One interesting Jewish heritage site is the **red brick merchant building** (Vilnius g. 42) – built during the interwar period, it once



accommodated over a dozen Jewish shops. Preserved to this day, the **Icik Charif House** (P. Cvirkos g. 1) is notable for its colourful history: at one time it housed a restaurant, and later it was converted into the Oazė – the first cinema in Molėtai. The two grouped brick **Bazelis Levinas (Basel Levin) and Ruvelis Videckis (Ruvel Videtsky) Houses** (Vilnius g. 37) are still standing on Vilnius Street. The only surviving religious Jewish heritage site in the city is the **Old Jewish Cemetery** (Kreivojių). The monuments are abundantly decorated with traditional Jewish art symbols.

✳ Vilnius Street, Molėtai
GPS: 55.222100, 25.401700

Alanta, Molėtai District (Yiddish: Alunte – אַלונטע / Ovante אוואַנטע)

Jews began to settle in Alanta in the second half of the 19th century. During the interwar period, they accounted for about half of the total population. The town had a Jewish elementary school that was closed in 1939 due to emigration to the larger cities and foreign countries.

One interesting site is the authentic **Alanta Tavern** (Turgaus a. 2) – built in the first half of the 18th century, it once belonged to a Jew named Mentke.

The pride of the town is the wooden

Alanta Synagogue (Ukmergės g. 3a). Built at the end of the 19th century, it has survived until the present day. During the Soviet times the synagogue was used as a warehouse.

Pakruojis Synagogue

Pakruojis (Yiddish: Pokroj – פּאָקרוי)

Jews were allowed to settle in the city that had been drained by the plague as well as the wars with Sweden and Russia at the beginning of the 18th century. In the 19th century, the fast-growing Jewish community soon accounted for as much as 70 per cent of the local population.

Built in 1801, the **Pakruojis Synagogue** (Kranto g. 8) is the oldest of the 20 surviving wooden synagogues in Lithuania. Its interior was nearly destroyed after World War II and was recreated from photographs only in 2017. The Pakruojis Synagogue is the first wooden synagogue restored in the country after Lithuania regained its independence. It is decorated with traditional Jewish art motifs. Not far from the synagogue, a **masonry building that belonged to the Rabinovich family** (S. Neries g. 4) and housed a bakery and a warehouse is still standing. This building is also special because it features an inscription with the date of the town's founding. Brothers Dovydas and Šalimas Maizelis (David and Shalom Maisel) are also listed among the prominent Jews of this area – it was thanks to the efforts of these industrialists that the town got a power plant, a factory and a printing house. The latter two buildings, which once emphasized the economic significance of Pakruojis, can still

be seen today. On the same street, just a couple of houses down from the printing house, is the **Rabbi Icał-Cvi Cheshnovsky House** (S. Dariaus ir S. Girėno g. 29).

The nearby Pamūšis Village was the birthplace of the famous mathematician, demographer and statistician Liebmman Hersch (1882–1955), a scholar of the University of Geneva. Writer and poet Joshua Latzman (1906–1984), who wrote in Yiddish, was also a native of Pakruojis. During World War II he lived in Kaunas, survived the Holocaust and later moved to Israel. Latzman's daughter Ruta Latzman-Peer was one of the children who were rescued from the Kaunas ghetto in potato sacks.

- ★ Morkakalnis Forest, Pakruojis Village, Pakruojis District
GPS: 55.973450, 23.883533
- Vileišiai Village, Pakruojis District
GPS: 56.289233, 24.010633
- Juknaičiai Forest, Pakruojis District
GPS: 56.023750, 23.704583



Wall painting and carving of the synagogue. Wall painting restored in 2017 as part of the synagogue's restoration.

Linkuva, Pakruojis District

(Yiddish: Linkeve – לינקעווע)

Jews began settling in the town in the 18th century, and already made up the majority of the city's population by the second half of the 19th century. Trade, land rent and various crafts were the usual sources of livelihood for the large and strong Jewish community.

In Linkuva, you can visit the 19th century **Kalpokai Mill** (Kalpokai Village, Pakruojis District) that belonged to a Jew named Sher and become acquainted with the authentic equipment that has been preserved there. A vivid example of how innovative the Jewish community was is the first Linkuva power plant, which was set up in the former **Jewish bathhouse** (Pašvitinio g. 5) in 1928.

The **Linkuva Synagogue** (Ugniagesių g. 2) was built in 1890 and features the so-called 'brick' style of architecture. The synagogue was reconstructed after World War II and converted into a cinema. The building is currently not in use.

☆ Dvariūkai Village, Pakruojis District
GPS: 56.085617, 24.045617
Veselkiškiai Village, Pakruojis District
GPS: 56.062650, 23.983850

Rozalimas, Pakruojis District

(Yiddish: Rozalia/Rozalin – ראָזאַלין)

Jews began to settle in this picturesque, piny area rather late (only in the 19th century), but it wasn't long before they made up about half of the town's population. During the interwar period, Rozalimas became a popular holiday destination for people who were looking to improve their health, the majority of whom were Jews. Before World War II, a pharmacist Baras worked and lived with his family in the Rozalimas pharmacy (established in 1893). His house was the only one in the town equipped with a doorbell, which was an attraction for children playing in the street.

The town still has the authentic **Jewish elementary school building** (S. Neries g. 5) as well as the wooden **beit midrash**

building (S. Neries g. 2), which underwent considerable damage during the Soviet period.

Palanga (Yiddish: Palange – פּאַלאַנגע)

The date of foundation of the largest resort in Lithuania is considered to be April 5, 1253, when the city was mentioned in the sources of the Teutonic Order. The longevity of Palanga's Jewish community is evidenced by the Chevra Kadisha Jewish burial society that was already functioning here in 1487. The community, which made up 43 per cent of the total population at the end of the 19th century, stood out for its entrepreneurship and dedication to fostering its culture. In 1933, 11 Jews were elected to the Palanga City Council.

The late-19th century Great Synagogue and the early-20th century Small Synagogue have not survived. To commemorate these houses of prayer, which featured elements of Neo-Romanesque architecture, the place where they once stood has now been

renamed **Sinagogos gatvė – 'Synagogue Street'**. At the beginning of the 20th century, Palanga had about 10 amber workshops, most of which were owned by Jews. The building which housed the **amber workshop** owned by brothers

Metel and Gerschon Kann (Vytauto g. 57) is still standing to this day. The jewellery made at this workshop was exported to many European countries, and in 1937, the brothers were awarded silver medals at the International Exposition of Art and Crafts in Paris.

There are **two old Jewish cemeteries** in Palanga. At the cemetery near Naglis Hill (Tvenkinių g. 4), there are still 10 gravestones of various sizes with epitaphs

carved in Hebrew. *Sagittarius*, a sculptural composition created by Steponas Šarapovas based on Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis' *Signs of the Zodiac* triptych, now stands on the site of the cemetery adjacent to Tiškevičiai Park (S. Dariaus ir S. Girėno g. 23).

★ Vytauto Street, Palanga
GPS: 55.900383, 21.053950
Kuniškių Forest, Palanga City Municipality
GPS: 55.959900, 21.101667

Panevėžys (Yiddish: Ponevez – פאָנעוועז)

The history of the Jewish community in Panevėžys dates back to the 18th century. Dubbed the 'little Jerusalem of Lithuania', the city was one of the most important Jewish educational centres in the Russian Empire in the late 19th century.

Panevėžys had a state Jewish school and **one of the first Jewish schools for girls in the empire** (Ramygalos g. 18). Founded in 1919, the **Panevėžys (Ponevezh) Yeshiva** (Savanorių a. 11) was famous throughout all of Eastern Europe and established the city as a centre of religious studies. The yeshiva was closed in 1940. In 1944, the Panevėžys Yeshiva was moved to Bnei Brak (Israel), where it is still flourishing to this day. A Jew named Naphtali Freigenson opened the city's first **printing house** (Respublikos g. 16), thus significantly contributing to the prosperity of print culture. The city was known for its **Jewish Hospital** (Ramygalos g. 41), where the celebrated doctor Shachnel Meras once worked.

There were approximately 10 Jewish houses of worship in Panevėžys. The masonry **Torah Society Synagogue** (Motiejus Valančiaus g. 4) is the only one that has survived to this day. Although the inside of the synagogue was rearranged during Soviet times, the authentic red brick exterior has remained unchanged.

In 2011, a **memorial plaque** was unveiled in Panevėžys to honour the Jewish actor

and director **Benjamin Zuskin** (Birutės g. 2, sculptor Vytautas Tallat-Kelpša). The Panevėžys Jewish community, which is actively involved in promoting historical memory, also ensured that the centennial of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's activities in Panevėžys and Lithuania was commemorated – a **monumental stele** was unveiled in the city (J. Žikaro g. 1, sculptor Albertas Jasiūnas). By 1940, the **Panevėžys Jewish Cemetery** (Sietyno g. 2) had about 12,500 gravestones which were later removed and taken away or used for the construction of the Panevėžys Drama Theatre after the cemetery was closed in 1955. Today, the site of the cemetery, which has been inscribed in the Register of Cultural Heritage, is marked by a commemorative stone.

★ Pajuostė Forest, Biliūnai Village,
Panevėžys District
GPS: 55.734100, 24.476233
Žalioji Forest, Panevėžys District
GPS: 55.820450, 24.456250
Staniūnai Grove, Panevėžys District
GPS: 55.720233, 24.40233



Litvak Commemorative Garden

Plungė (Yiddish: Plungian – פלונגיאן)

Surviving gravestones testify to the fact that Jews were already living in the town located in the Samogitia region in the 16th century. Over the next few centuries, a strong and active community formed in Plungė: during the interwar period, Jews accounted for nearly half of all the townspeople, and had six houses of prayer, as well as schools and libraries that fostered their language and culture. The town also had a Jewish rabbinical seminary/yeshiva. A Jew named Boruch David Goldwasser served as the mayor of Plungė from 1924 to 1932.

Of all of the buildings that attested to Jewish communal life during the interwar people, only the former **secondary school** and the **Yehuda Leib Peretz Library** (S. Neries g. 6) have survived to this day. In Plungė, you can also see a **memorial plaque** (artist Kęstutis Šiaulytis) dedicated to the famous surgeon **Boris Efros** (1914–2001) that was unveiled in the place where the Efros family once lived (Vytauto g. 14). Boris Efros was the first doctor to perform elective heart surgery in Lithuania.

The **Litvak Commemorative Garden** (GPS: 56.062383, 21.821884) has been founded at Žemaitija National Park in memory of the Plungė Jewish community that flourished until World War II. This unique project is the work of the Jakovas Bunka Charity and Support Fund, which was named after folk artist Jakovas Bunka

(Yankl or Yosl Bunk) – the last Jew in Plungė, who passed away in 2014. A **memorial wall** (GPS: 55.921067, 21.783250) has been built from the bricks of the former Plungė synagogue in Kaušėnai, a place that evokes the tragic events of the Holocaust.

- 📍 Telšių Street (Plungė Cemetery), Plungė
GPS: 55.910933, 21.850183
- Kaušėnai Village, Plungė District
GPS: 55.921067, 21.78325
- Alsėdžiai, Plungė District
GPS: 56.021517, 22.048450
- Milašaičiai Village, Plungė District
GPS: 55.863133, 21.881233
- Beržoras Village, Plungė District
GPS: 56.012736, 21.846741
- Plateliai, Plungė District
GPS: 56.040650, 21.805483
- Šateikiai Forest, Plungė District
GPS: 56.022633, 21.656417
- Vieštovenai Village, Plungė District
GPS: 55.836567, 21.72168



Metal apple trees to commemorate Litvak families



Monument to the Jews of Šeduva

Šeduva, Radviliškis District (Yiddish: Shadeve – שאַדעווע)

The name of Šeduva was first mentioned in historical sources in the 15th century. It is believed that the famous Rabbi Mosheh 'HaGolah' was born here in 1449 and lived in Šeduva for over three decades. Apparently, is a beautiful legend invented to give an impression that the Jewish community was established many, many centuries ago, emphasizing its long existence and continuity in the Šeduva region.

When Šeduva started to grow rapidly at the beginning of the 18th century, having been granted Magdeburg rights, the Jewish community increased as well. At the end of the 19th century Jews made up more than half of the town's population. During the interwar period, the economic activity of Šeduva Jews was concentrated in the main square of the town. A Jewish doctor, a dentist, a pharmacist as well as Jewish photographers, barbers, bakers and other traders provided services to the population. The Jewish Folks Bank was open to all customers, irrespective of their nationality and religion.

The **Šeduva Shtetl** (the old part of town) is a unique, comprehensively

kept heritage site. The Šeduva Jewish Memorial Fund, which looks after the heritage site, has restored the **Old Jewish Cemetery** (Žvejų g. 19). About 1,300 tombstones were identified during the rehabilitation of the cemetery. The **Monument to the Jews of Šeduva** (Laisvės a.; sculptor Romualdas Kvintas) was unveiled in the centre of the town. The Lost Shtetl Museum, included in the list of Memorial Sites in Europe, will be opened in Šeduva in the near future.

★ Liaudiškiai Forest, Radviliškis District
GPS: 55.692100, 23.660750;
55.695617, 23.653833
Pakuteniai Village, Radviliškis District
GPS: 55.692267, 23.78088

Valkininkai, Varėna District (Yiddish: Olkenik – אולקייניקי)

Jews had already begun to settle in the Valkininkai area in the early 17th century. In addition to the usual crafts and trade, the community was also engaged in preparing wood and providing lodging for holidaymakers. By the end of the 19th century, Jews accounted for about half of the town's population.



Valkininkai Synagogue

An archaic, radial street pattern with the original development has survived to this day in Valkininkai, featuring numerous unique examples of wooden architecture. The town suffered a major loss at the beginning of World War II when the Great Synagogue of Valkininkai burned down – legend has it that during the march to Moscow, Napoleon Bonaparte himself was fascinated by the Baroque splendour of this edifice.

Located at the very centre of town, the **Valkininkai Market Square** (Vilniaus g. 41) is worth a visit. The importance of the Valkininkai community in Jewish Lithuania is evidenced by the fact that it was in one of the buildings on this square that the Vaad of Lithuania – the highest institution of Jewish self-government in the GDL – assembled in 1694.

Degsnės, Varėna District (Yiddish: Dekshna – דקשנייה)

There were not many Jewish farmers in Europe, so Degsnės – an entire village of Jewish farmers – was a rare exception. Established in 1848, the village was known as a haven for the mentally disabled: during the interwar period, some 40 families made a living taking care of disabled people from Vilnius, Warsaw, Łódź, Białystok and other cities.

The interesting **village layout used by Jewish farmers** (GPS: 54.368744, 24.795652), where the buildings are situated with the narrow side along the unusually close street, has been preserved on the main street in Degsnės

to this day. Attention should be paid to the unique architecture that is so uncharacteristic of the region.

★ Senoji Varėna Village, Varėna District
GPS: 54.265017, 24.518583

Zarasai (Yiddish: Ezsherene – עזשערענע)

Jews only began to settle in the lake region of Zarasai in the 19th century when the railway connecting Warsaw and Saint Petersburg was laid through the town. The community quickly began to prosper: there were 95 Jewish craftsmen working in the city during the interwar period, and of the 50 shops that were open in the centre, 40 belonged to Jews. Zarasai locals take pride in the fact that the renowned painter Yehuda Pen (1854–1937), who was the first teacher of Marc Chagall (1887–1985), the world-famous modernist, was from their town.

The printing house (Šiaulų g. 28) that was founded by Meyer Kovner and later administered by D. Shteiman and E. Rozman, and that published the Zarasai Region weekly during the interwar period, is still standing. Also still standing are the buildings that once housed the **Mosheh Botvinnik Studio** (Sėlių g. 23/24), where the first radio receivers in the city were sold, as well as the **Abel Pitel Carbonated Water Workshop** (Sėlių a. 2).

The mid-19th century masonry **Great Beit Midrash** (Sinagogos g. 3) that has survived to this day evokes the spiritual life of the Jewish community. The **Old Jewish Cemetery** located on one of the peninsulas (Šaltupės skersgatvis) and the **New Jewish Cemetery** on Kauno Street are also worth visiting.

★ Krakynė Forest, Zarasai District
GPS: 55.687133, 25.995183



Photo studio

Žagarė, Joniškis District (Yiddish: Zhager – זאגער)

This small town on the Latvian border was first mentioned in written sources in 1253. Jews only began settling in Žagarė in the early 18th century.

One of the town's noteworthy sites is the **Naujoji Žagarė Market Square** (Miesto a.), where the original layout of mainly Jewish-owned buildings has been preserved. Nearby the square, the **Naujoji Žagarė Synagogue Complex** (P. Avizonio g. 5A and 7A) is still standing.

The **Old Žagarė Jewish Cemetery** (GPS: 56.365065, 23.263167) and the **New Žagarė Jewish Cemetery** (GPS: 56.353717, 23.232400) have also survived to this day.

★ Naryškinas Manor Park, Žagarė
GPS: 56.361417, 23.274917
Raktuovės Street, Žagarė
GPS: 56.353542, 23.232138

Žiežmariai, Kaišiadorys District

(Yiddish: Zhezhmer – זעזשמער / Zezmer – זעזמער)

The first Jewish house of prayer was erected in Žiežmariai around 1738. As the community enlarged, more synagogues were built. At the end of the 19th century there were three or even four Jewish prayer houses – a synagogue, the old and the new beit midrash and a Hasidic prayer house.



Žiežmariai Synagogue

During the interwar period, the town had a Jewish orphanage, an elementary school with lessons taught in Hebrew, an amateur theatre, the Yehuda Leib Peretz Library, and the Maccabi Sports Club. A fire that broke out in 1918 destroyed all synagogues in the town. Only one beit midrash was restored in the 1920s and there was a Hasidic shtibl in the town.

The wooden **Beit Midrash** (Vilnius g. 6) is a unique Jewish heritage site. The exterior and interior of the building has maintained the clear division of space into the men's prayer room and the women's gallery; in addition, authentic fragments of drawings have survived inside. There are plans to set up a museum in the building, which is currently undergoing renovation.

★ Triliškiai Village, Kaišiadorys District
GPS: 54.823900, 24.460700

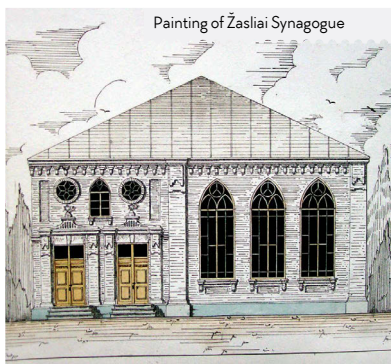
Bačkonys Village, Kaišiadorys District
GPS: 54.803950, 24.558563

Žasliai, Kaišiadorys District

(Yiddish: Zhosle – זשאסלע)

Knowledge about Jews who lived in Žasliai dates back to the 16th century. However, it seems that the community only became established in the town in the late 18th century – it was at this time that a synagogue was mentioned in written sources.

Two masonry synagogues that were built at the beginning of the 19th century have survived to this day: the **Hasidic Synagogue** (Vytauto g. 40) and the **Beit Midrash** (Vytauto g. 38).



Painting of Žasliai Synagogue



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