



Vilnius clock

Discover us in Vilnius

Welcome to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania.

We live, work and play in a fresh and friendly environment that combines green space, clean air and water, modern urbanity and a lived-in heritage. At the heart of our city is one of Europe's oldest medieval Old Towns.

It dates back to the 14th century and features a remarkable mix of European architecture that reflects the quiet grandeur of its history as the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In 1994, this cultural treasure was awarded UNESCO status.

In the old streets of Vilnius, a contemporary life is blooming. Artists and entrepreneurs alike are harnessing modern trends and innovations to create unique experiences. Open to new ideas, Vilnius is a home for startups, tech talents, and conceptual artists. Immerse yourself in the atmosphere – have a reinvented Lithuanian meal, listen to contemporary opera, check out the modern art galleries, shop for the latest design trends, and visit one of the technology parks and science centres.

We Vilnians are an active bunch. No matter the season, we keep things lively. You can find us hiking, biking or skating in one of our several urban parks, kayaking the river – right past the Grand Duke's Castle, playing beach volleyball on the riverfront courts, skiing or snowboarding at our urban snow park, catching up with friends over a mug of buckthorn tea or a hearty Lithuanian beer, or simply strolling the cozy cobblestone streets of our Old Town.

Oh, and did we mention we're one of the few European capitals you can fly over in a hot air balloon?

And did we also mention there are three golf courses within a short drive of the city? If active fun in the great outdoors is your thing, we've got options for you in spades.

We're big on spas and saunas (ours is called a "piritis"). You'll find a number of these retreats in and around the city for when you just need to relax and rejuvenate.

Vilnius is a compact place. That means everything is minutes, not hours away. No need to rush when everything is close by. Instead of big city hustle-and-bustle, we calmly go about our business, taking our time to enjoy life.

Maybe this low-stress lifestyle and having more time to reflect is the reason Vilnius is bursting with bright, creative people. Our musicians, artists, poets, designers, flourishing local culinary scene and vibrant nightlife keep things stimulating for locals and visitors alike.

With all that Vilnius has to offer, it's no wonder we are "Europe's happiest capital". The percentage of us that told Eurostat last year we are happy with life in our city is the highest of any European capital. Well, what's the point of having something good if you're not going to share it? Here's hoping you'll visit us and – who knows? – you may like it so much you end up staying (or at least coming back again!). With more than one million visitors each year (and rapidly growing), you won't be alone.

Come join us in Vilnius!



VILNIUS

Factual information about Lithuania

Local Time
GMT +2 hours (EET)
GMT +3 hours (summer time)

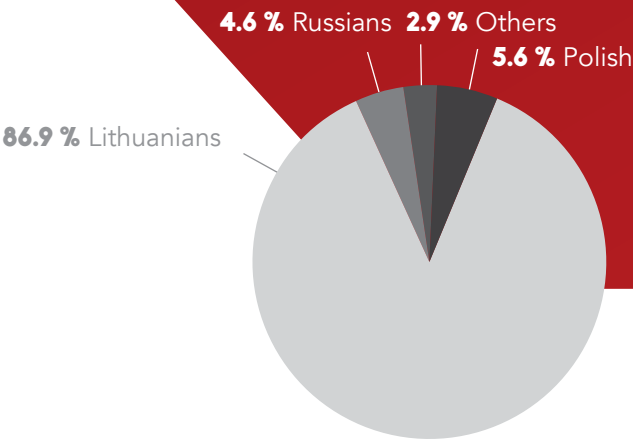
State Language
Lithuanian

Government
Parliamentary Republic

Climate
Marine/Continental

Vilnius: 10 fun things to know

- 01** We are **the happiest capital** in the European Union, according to a European Commission report.
- 02** We have the world's **fastest public Wi-Fi**.
- 03** You can start a **business** here **in three days**.
- 04** Unlike most capitals, you can fly over the City Centre in a **hot air balloon**.
- 05** Award-winning French novelist **Romain Gary** was born here.
- 06** Russian writer **Fyodor Dostoyevski** lived in Vilnius for a time.
- 07** Nobel prize winner **Czesław Miłosz** is a graduate of Vilnius University.
- 08** **The Užupis** district is a self-proclaimed republic of artists with its own constitution, anthem, and president.
- 09** We have a monument dedicated to rock musician **Frank Zappa** (well, why not?).
- 10** **Jascha Heifetz**, whom many consider to be the greatest violinist of all time, grew up in Vilnius.



Location

Lithuanian population
2.87 million



Few other European capitals combine cosmopolitanism and tradition as charmingly and seamlessly as Vilnius. Little wonder, then, that the city is attracting more and more tourists and business travellers every year.

Territory
65,300 km²
It's the largest of the three Baltic countries, mostly fertile lowland, peppered with many lakes.



Vilnius population
547,542

Vilnius – this quintessentially European city stands at the very heart of the continent (26 km from its geographical centre to be precise). With a population of just over half a million, it is cosy, friendly and on a refreshingly human scale. Yet the city boasts a confident air thanks to its proud history and thriving economic and cultural life.

Whirlwind of work

It would be wrong to think of Vilnius as just a tourist destination. Intensive projects of huge significance are accomplished here in the areas of investment and economic development. **Sergei Klimov**, Founder and Managing Director of the gaming development studio Charlie Oscar, is a true fan of Vilnius and even writes a blog about the city. He is one of many who chose Vilnius as a base for business development.

About me. My name is Sergei Klimov and I run a GameDev company called Charlie Oscar.

Whirlwind of work. In 2014, I moved to Vilnius from Stockholm, where I was engaged in the same activities. We were looking for a place where people from different countries would feel comfortable. Vilnius

seemed to fit this requirement, and now, four years later, I can say we were right. The entire team is satisfied with the decision we made. We did not lose a single employee – on the contrary, we have newcomers who are very pleased about the prospect of moving here.

Meeting industry. It is the combination of international heritage and being grounded in reality that makes Vilnius such a good destination for meetings: the city knows how to be a great host while offering great accessibility and value for money. The essential thing to understand is that to Vilnius, being a great host is an essential part of what the city is, and not an afterthought or something the city may grudgingly accept as the price of its popularity. There are superb cities around the world where you visit and feel like you're intruding, where your "foreignness" is an inconvenience to the locals. And then there's Vilnius, where even small cafes will print menus and notices on the doors in three languages, and the staff helps by speaking three more languages.

Game Law Summit. The Games Industry Law Summit is an event where the industry's top legal minds can meet once a year in Vilnius. Over 150 people from around 32 countries came to this year's event to discuss an agenda with topics ranging from releasing a game in Iran to addressing new regulations in China. Participants also considered the changes the games industry will see with the new Civil Code in Japan, and took a deep-dive into recent copycat game litigation in California. There is simply no other event like it. What we've seen over the last five years is that Vilnius is absolutely up to the challenge of hosting a truly international event like this. We have people coming from places as distant as Brazil and Australia, as well as from across Asia, and they are happy to return year after year, thanks to the good memories the city helps create. From how quick and convenient travelling to and from the airport is, to how great Vilnius Old Town is as a destination – with beautiful streets, diverse restaurants and excellent service all around. And importantly, the value of Vilnius holds up not only with our professional attendees who come from extremely successful gaming companies that can afford any level of comfort, but also with the younger crowd. In 2016, we started to run the Games Industry Legal Challenge as a part of the summit. It's

Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania
(Gedimino Ave 51)



Vilnius was  awarded Best City of the Year at the CEE Shared Services and Outsourcing Awards in 2015, 2016, and 2017.

a competition open to law students and young lawyers who would like to join the industry. Last year, the finalists came from Italy, Belarus and the USA. And this year, we have 20 teams competing from seven countries. What is important to us is that all of these teams are super happy that the semi-finals and finals are happening in Vilnius – because to them, this is a city that's easy to reach, and accessible to navigate and stay in.

So we have top-tier legal minds of the international games industry as well as bright students from all over the world falling in love with Vilnius. To us, this comes down to the heritage of Vilnius being a great host to its guests for hundreds of years before us. All of our local partners help make the summit a special experience each year and are driven by the same values: treating visitors as their dearest guests whom they'd love to see return again, and again, and again.



18 airlines 
offer direct flights
to more than 60
European
destinations
from Vilnius
International Airport.

(Source: Lithuanian Airports)

Enter the city of tomorrow

The best representations of a city are often the creative people residing there. You can read, observe and listen to **Andrius Tapinas**. This Lithuanian celebrity is a journalist, writer, and TV host. Andrius has also authored a book about Vilnius and has more than a few very entertaining stories to share about the city.

Vilnius: ready for new ideas. The City of Vilnius is full of genuinely crazy people. Crazy in the good sense of the word, that is. People are learning a lot, working, constantly creating, reaching for the impossible and following their dreams. Sometimes you take a step back and look at our city from a distance and suddenly notice the rapid changes; how perfectly we adapt to the world of today and how we do our best. It's a shame though that the whirling routines of everyday life drown us in domestic chores and we can no longer easily perceive the grandeur of the city. However, I have strong faith in the people of Vilnius, the young generation – the educated free folk who speak several languages and are apt at finding the best solutions and pushing forward. This is how I see Vilnius and the people living here.

Vilnius and me. I was born, grew up, and was educated in Vilnius, and some of my best memories are

from these stages of my life. The idea of emigrating never occurred to me, because in my opinion, this is the greatest place to live, have a family and aspire to professional excellence. I don't want to badmouth any friends and fellow citizens who have chosen a different way of life, but for me personally this was the best place to grow up, the best place to receive an education, and now it's the best place to work and create.

The capital in the pages of my book. My first book, Hour of the Wolf, is to a large extent about my beloved city and its history. I wrote it, quite literally, on the streets of Vilnius. I wandered about the Old Town wondering where the characters could travel, what they might encounter, and I wrote part of the book in the Bernardine Gardens of Vilnius. I'd go there every day, sit down on a bench, pull out my laptop, and start writing page after page. In this sense, Vilnius became a kind of muse for my first book.

Stepping into the future. Every city is strong and unique in its own way, and capable of finding its own niche and identity. I see the potential for creating a city, attracting investments, and welcoming diverse cultures. Vilnius is a sort of oasis that can be discov-

ered by the citizens and businesses of the world's great world looking for comfort.

I struggle to name a specific area, but I would bet on creative types leading the way forward. The city should be adapted for creators in the broadest sense of the word. I'd like to see Vilnius become a new home for filmmakers, TV producers, authors, game developers and video and audio content creators from the US, Europe, and Asia. I believe the city can host international and world-renowned cinema, theatre, and advertising festivals that can be broadcasted on global channels and on breaking news outlets. I believe that creative types could even choose to live here as a second home. Thus, the next generation of Vilnius residents would emerge, standing out with their ideas and the world would increasingly hear about Vilnius as a place where marvellous creations are made.

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Culture





Ambitious people

The capital is famous for high-quality electronics, computer, and optical products.

Andrius Rupšys, Director General and owner of the telecommunication company Ruptela, which develops traffic monitoring and control solutions, is a successful business and family man.

About me. I am Andrius, a father of three and founder and CEO of the company Ruptela. Our company specialises in delivering transportation monitoring solutions that help protect the environment, save resources and optimise daily fleet management tasks. I was born in Vilnius, but lived in Klaipėda for the first 18 years of my life, and then started my telecommunication physics studies at Vilnius University, which brought me back to the capital.

IT in Vilnius. For the last five years, the IT and telecommunications sectors in Vilnius have expanded at an exceptionally rapid pace. It looks like both Lithuanian and foreign companies have been discovering a new profitable area of business – IT and telecommunications. As the most diverse IT companies began to settle in Vilnius, a variety of promotional initiatives emerged, such as robotics, electronics and programming schools for all age groups. The newly

established National Centre for Physics and Technology, the Vilnius Techpark, Women GoTech and other initiatives grant a supportive environment for technology and innovation. I believe Vilnius to be an extremely technology-friendly city, so businesses and individuals definitely appreciate this and use it to their advantage.

Transport telecommunications in the global context. We are constantly developing new products and aiming to meet global demands and keep pace with the sector's extremely rapid industrial development. Transport telematics, in particular, is contributing to the strong development of this area. Our greatest advantage is high product quality. We re-



ceive worldwide appreciation for the 99.9% quality of our equipment and high service standards. We are capable of getting global clients by offering them smart solutions and a strong client-oriented culture at all organisational levels. Besides Ruptela, several other globally known companies operate in this sector in Vilnius. Every year Vilnius and Lithuania gain even more notoriety in this sector due to product quality, innovation, and highly qualified specialists capable of offering complete solutions from a single supplier.

Ambitions. Vilnius is continuing to grow as a city, and I consider this to be its greatest asset. Great career opportunities turn up, and age is no longer an obstacle for one's career – even 28-year-olds are eligible to become corporate executives. Vilnius is full of ambitious, gifted people, intent on implementing a wide variety of different ideas. It is common to recruit workers with knowledge of three or four foreign languages, and for all enterprises specialising in technology, special value is added by employees and their potential. But no matter the abundant number of innovations and enterprises established in Vilnius, when coming home, your family is waiting. Work and family; these aspects of life go hand-in-hand.



Vilnius University Library Scholarly Communication and Information Centre (Saulėtekio Ave 5)

International companies have created more than 8,000 new jobs in Vilnius over a five-year period.

(Source: Invest Lithuania)

Worth seeing

Sometimes it takes travelling extensively to be able to fully appreciate everything your own city has to offer. This is the case for **Vytaras Radzevičius**, a 24/7 journalist who has travelled around the globe and boldly personifies Vilnius in the global context.



My name is Vytaras. I am a journalist by trade and by lifestyle, as well. I'm also a traveller, adventurer, and host of a quiz show. I could come up with many other epithets to describe myself, but it might just be not that important of a thing. I'll be 50 in a short while. I was born and grew up here in Vilnius, so I think of myself as a natural local Vilnius resident.

Vilnius in the world. I've made a list of top five favourite cities, and Vilnius is on that list! I'm glad because I love my city. My top-five list is based on various criteria. I rate a city's history, architecture, living comfort, and size. Vilnius' beauty blows my mind. The city's history is breathtaking, but it's an innovative city, too. While stretched out over a rather large area, the city is not expansive. I don't suppose there are lots of cities in the world, especially among capitals, where you can reach a forest in a mere 10-minute car ride to enjoy a walk in solitude. This would certainly be unimaginable in countries like India or China. Vilnius is different. I could compare Vilnius only to Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, or the Peruvian city Cusco, which is built on the foundations

of the ancient Incan civilisation. Vilnius, like these two cities, remembers the past, and history speaks in its older quarters.

I love Lithuanian historian Alfredas Bumblauskas' theory of the four-city continuance. This theory identifies a cultural thread linking Prague, Krakow, Vilnius, and Lviv. I find this notion to be very interesting. In truth, when visiting one of these cities that feeling of – well, this here could totally be Vilnius – does not leave. All of these cities are somewhat similar, however, Vilnius is distinguished by its soul. Surely, locals of each and every city all claim the same thing. But coming back to Vilnius after a long journey through the world's biggest cities, its magic re-enchants you. In a whirl of work and falling into ruts, impressions form of constant rush and haste. But after returning home, you realise the charm of a small town is still present. Personal time at home rules here and people live by their own rhythm.

Everything is within reach. Not always visible. Vilnius is a city of short distances. Visitors note this



VILNIUS FAVOURITES

- **St. Anne and Bernardine churches** give me a surreal sensation. It's hard to believe how you can even touch all this.

- **Gates of Dawn.** In the past, when I travelled on buses and trains more frequently, it pleased me greatly coming back home on foot, through the **Gates of Dawn**, down **Didžioji** and **Pilies streets**. After all, it was here that homecoming victory parades for kings, and all other important events took place.

- **Stiklių Street** and its surroundings will forever hold an attraction for me.

City panoramas:

- **St. Johns' Church** will allow you to view Vilnius as if you were holding it in the palm of your hand.

- **Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania** reveals the vista of a city still relatively unknown to everyone.

- **The attic in Vilnius University Library** offers visitors an opportunity to glance at Vilnius from yet another angle.

- **Gediminas Castle Hill.** I've climb to the top at least once a year since childhood. It's a good place to admire the roofs of the Old Town.



Old Town of Vilnius

when travelling to and from the airport. Rushing to get to a flight on time, city guests start to stress with only two hours left until their departure. And we try to calm and reassure them, with little or no success. After arriving at the airport way too early, they must admit, "yup, everything's really nearby here." However, Vilnius is a secret gem. It is a very beautiful city with a Baroque architectural heritage. Unfortunately, not many are aware of this. Although the legend of the Iron Wolf declares that the city's fame has spread around the world, news has not yet reached everyone. Visitors are usually surprised. It seems as though our modesty sometimes impedes on our ability to establish a direct connection with the world and declare our presence and way of life.



Worth seeing. I grew up and lived "in a neighbourhood" of Vilnius called Žirmūnai. Therefore, from an early age, I enjoyed the ritual of coming to the Old Town and wandering the streets on my way to the movie theatre or some other place. The beauty of the Old Town never ceases to amaze me, so I never miss an opportunity to take a walk when the weather is pleasant – sitting down for a cup of coffee and just enjoying the old district of Vilnius. Sometimes in a whirl of work and duties, even when I'm staying in Vilnius, I would miss this. I really enjoy taking walks. I have several favourite routes and having started at some point, I rarely walk back the same way. I'm happy to circle around, I choose a longer way to get somewhere so I can visit my favourite places in the city along the way, and see if anything has changed.

The city's future

The FinTech sector holds a special place in Lithuania and Vilnius, with extra attention focused on its continued growth. Finance Specialist and Revolut Business Development Manager

Andrius Biceika recounts Vilnius through the prism of business development, bringing up comparisons to other major European cities. An experienced runner in his leisure time, Andrius is eager to share his recommendations for jogging routes in the city.

About me. My professional life revolves around Revolut these days. I first heard about it before it was launched, and to be perfectly honest – after seeing the prototype, I couldn't really understand how it could become a success. But then I started using it myself, and it completely won me over – even while I still busy with other projects, I kept pitching Revolut to everyone around me. So eventually my next step began to seem pretty obvious – when you can't get your mind off a certain brand, it means that you might as well join it.

Why Vilnius? Revolut chose Vilnius for several reasons. The first one is very simple: Lithuania stands out in terms of number of Revolut users, there's almost 20 times more users here than in Latvia, and 50 times more than in Estonia. The second reason is the favourable environment for financial services. Our growth is very positively influenced by governmental

Over 90% of the workforce has completed at least secondary or higher education.

(Source: Invest Lithuania)

proactiveness and regulatory innovations. For example, the Bank of Lithuania's plans have focused on growing and strengthening the Fintech sector and promoting its agenda globally.

Vilnius and the world. I've spent a lot of time in London, and I must say that today Vilnius reminds me of London because of the competitive environment here and the hunger for more. People are looking for more ways of self-expression, ways to create a better life for themselves; freelancing is no longer seen as something scary and ambiguous, and more people begin to understand that you can actually do your work at a coffee shop, or choose projects that are less profitable, but more enjoyable. As a result, increasingly more examples of local entrepreneurship are emerging, and the city is not lagging behind. Much like in London, smart city solutions are being applied here – services like car parking, waste management, and more.

Where your feet will carry you. I live near the Neris River and I really enjoy jogging. My favourite jogging route brings me through the Hill of Three Crosses – this route is of a smaller span so that experienced runners can add up several rounds. I then go down to Uzupis and run by the Vilnele River and into Bernardine Gardens. After getting there, I will either muster up all my energy to give my best, or will run further to Vingis Park, and I then return to the riverside, passing the White Bridge and the Mindaugas Bridge. It's a lovely route in the summertime. I reckon that Vingis Park will remain the favourite place for runners all year round – you will always meet a friend or an Olympian jogging in the park with you.

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Business



Vilnius University Library (Universiteto St 3)

The city's future. Vilnius is often called a city of the future, but if we want to achieve this, we need a vision, either a very simple or very pronounced one. If we choose to say a strong "No" to the past, and a welcoming "Yes" to the future, then all the crumbled roadsides, cracked old pavements, grey and abandoned buildings – all objects mundane and reminiscent of the Soviet era, and all other relics of that period – must be replaced by elements of an innovative city. Choosing a clear direction and aiming for the prize is what will bring about visible changes for the better.

Welcome. A tip for newcomers? Try to get involved; do not shut yourself off in your comfort zone. After all, there are so many ways of meeting new people in the city – they may take time, but try to find at least one well-connected person on Facebook and just go wherever they go. This will help you expand your social circle. We may not seem to be too willing to get close in the beginning, but after showing some initiative, you will be able to establish a really strong connection with the residents of Vilnius. We only appear cold on the outside, but after getting to know us better, you'll soon find out that we are friendly, welcoming and warm people.



A glimpse at business

The IT sector in Lithuania is the largest among the Baltic States, and the companies operating here are contributing to the sector's rapid growth. **Mariano Andrade Gonzalez**, Chief Operating Officer and a Head of HR operations, in Barclays Vilnius, has lived in Lithuania's capital for more than a decade. Not only is he well acquainted with the business side of Vilnius, he's also willing to share his experience about how people from warm countries can adapt to all four seasons here.

About me and my work. My name is Mariano Andrade and I am responsible for two areas of business at Barclays. In Lithuania, I act as a Chief Operating Officer, so I am responsible for our subsidiary's finances, project development and – it goes without saying – talent. In the global perspective, I am Head of HR Operations for Europe and the Middle East.

Discovering Lithuania. Lithuania became a home to me after my marriage in 2006. Previously, I lived here from 2003, but more like a guest; constantly travelling between Lithuania and England. After my engagement, I made a decision; I wanted to settle in my own home and start a family here in Vilnius.

Surprises of the city. While living in Lithuania, I've noticed three things that visitors are usually pleasantly surprised by.

Firstly, the people. I always get great feedback about how responsible, well-educated and business savvy Lithuanians are. The ability of Vilnians to cooperate and produce results in teams is highly praised.

Secondly: Vilnius is strikingly beautiful. It doesn't matter what time of year you visit, breathtaking scenes will always welcome you: pristine snow-white winters, green blooming summers, or the flashing colours of autumn and spring. Finally, the architecture. It integrates perfectly into the city landscape. I work in a modern building, but it merges naturally

into the city's rhythm, very convenient and connecting all co-workers. So, Vilnius certainly isn't lacking any charm.

A glimpse at business. Vilnius is an amazing setting for doing business. It's true that every place holds some advantages but people living here stand out with their determination to achieve more for their country, their businesses and their personal goals. They are proud of their work and the products they develop and are always eager to achieve the very best results. This drive is extremely important for successful progress, and it is absolutely admirable.

Also, there are plenty of positive initiatives that have been introduced by local authorities. Therefore, Vilnius is amazing thanks to uninterrupted progress. I've



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Business

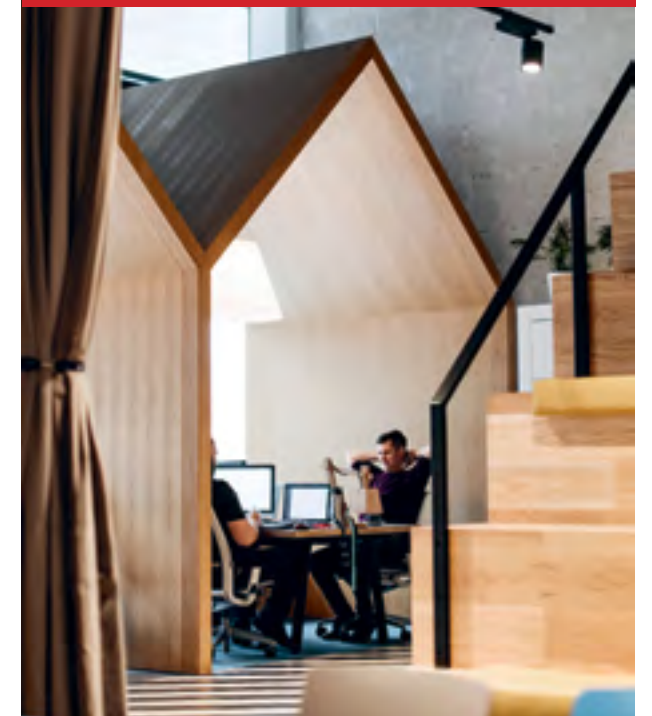
observed the most significant changes over the last few years. It's easier to start a business now; obtaining the required documents and licenses in any other European city would surely take several months, and here the registration process takes no longer than a few weeks. Initial investments are much lower compared to other cities, and immigration documents can be arranged both in Europe and other parts of the world.

Vilnius residents have entrepreneurial minds. Following a positive risk assessment and evaluation of social and economic responsibilities, Barclays chose Lithuania precisely for the drive to generate business

ideas. In my opinion, quite a few companies are impressed by these qualities and are choosing Vilnius for investment opportunities. Besides, lots of young people work in the city. They are excellent professionals; real experts not only in their field, but with work experience in England, Germany, and other countries. They bring the knowledge they gain abroad and apply their skills here. The Lithuanian work ethic is very down to earth: doing what is rational and useful, working very decisively, not looking for any shortcuts, and aiming to achieve goals as quickly and efficiently as possible.



Lithuania is among the 20 most business-friendly countries in the world.



Barclays curated community "Rise Vilnius" (www.thinkrise.com, Gynėjų St 14)

Right time, right place

Over the past few years, the culinary scene in Vilnius has been evolving at a dramatic pace. A man who delights locals and guests with the flavours of modern Indian cuisine has opened his own restaurant here. He's an immigrant of love, a Brit, a Portuguese, and an Indian to boot. Since moving to Vilnius from London, **Gaspar Fernandes** has already started appreciating the benefits of living in a smaller city.

About me. My name is Gaspar Fernandes and I'm half Indian and half Portuguese. I have been living in Vilnius for the last three and a half years, where I have opened the restaurant Gaspar's.

History. I arrived in Vilnius for the first time in May and subsequently returned every two weeks after that. I remember that it was a wonderfully warm summer, and when the colourful autumn came, I decided to resettle. The first time I heard about Lithuania was eight years ago from my fiancée, Krystsina. Yes, I am an immigrant of love, and I am not at all shy about that. Before moving here I lived in Great Britain for about 14 years, so the decision to move to Vilnius was so refreshing and a real spurt of positivity. Vilnius is rather small, I do not drive, and can settle all matters in the centre, and if the need to drive somewhere occurs, I just use Uber. Vilnius is safe, tranquil, very clean, relaxed, and compact. Any place can be reached within 10-15 minutes. Even at the airport, things get rolling fast.

Gaspar's moments. Gaspar's for me is like home. I mingle with clients and I am glad to see returning guests. It happens that guests, seeing a busy waiter, get some water themselves – I believe this shows a connection and intimacy. The small details in the restaurant matter so much. For example, the name of

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Talent

the cutlery we use is associated with my homeland. We buy spices from Goa and India that are sent to London. There were even times when my dad would travel with a suitcase filled with 20 kilograms of spices.

Right time, right place. Vilnius is experiencing a food culture boom. It's the best time for tourists who like delicious food to visit the capital of Lithuania. Vilnius is not only a gem of architecture and history. I'm sincere, not just because I am directly related to gastronomy. Besides, there is indeed lots of amazing and very high-quality coffee in Vilnius. I'd even say there's a real coffee revolution happening here. My favourite spots are Crooked Nose and Kavos Virėjai.

Happiness. One of the happiest moments in my life is when my parents flew here to visit and came to my restaurant for the first time. Another one is when I introduced them to Krystsina in Vilnius.



Gaspar's restaurant (Pylimo St 23)

#1
in Europe for
ease of starting a
business, according
to the World Bank.

We have something to be proud of

Vilnius holds an honorable place among the leaders in the global biotechnology sector. **Edita Griniūtė-Mištinienė**, the co-owner and managing director at PRO-FARMA, discusses the city's relationship with this branch of science.

About me. My name is Edita Mištinienė, a biochemist by profession, head and co-founder of biopharmaceutical company Profarma.

Science standard. The high added-value science industry requires two key elements: academic knowledge and a solid professional foundation. Vilnius has a very good university where exceptional specialists are being educated, and there's also a solid foun-



Vilnius University Library Scholarly Communication and Information Centre (Saulėtekio Ave 5)

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Business

dation within the biopharmaceutical sector. Vilnius offers excellent opportunities to establish a strong academic and professional background on which to build. In general, for residents of Vilnius, perfectionism is in our nature, and that's a particularly good trait to have in a professional context. We welcome challenges and don't shy away from hard work.

Biotechnologies and biopharmaceuticals. In the global context Vilnius and Lithuania may be on a smaller scale, but we have something to be very proud of. One of Europe's first biosimilar medicines, similar to previously developed biopharmaceuticals, but with partial or total variation in production methods, was created, registered and successfully applied here in Vilnius. We have a substantial foundation in this sector and we can easily become a global science centre. In the field of biotechnology, our country is notorious for playing a leadership role, and almost every specialist in the field would confirm this claim. For example, the per capita number of people working in the biotechnology sector here in Lithuania is similar to that of the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Loving Vilnius. I love Vilnius and I love its soul. A perfect day in Vilnius would be on the weekend. For me, it would consist of a leisurely breakfast in the Old

Town and a long walk or some roller-skating in the park. I enjoy things of quality, and Vilnius has plenty of that. Good food, for example. We keep this tradition among family and friends to try a different place every week, and in Vilnius, there's always something new to try. Cultural life is also inseparable from Vilnius; it's not so easy to get tickets to a theatre performance. I am glad about all the professional events happening in Vilnius; conferences, meetings of world leaders, and even Nobel Prize winners coming to the city to lead lectures.



Vilnius Tech Park – largest in the Baltic region, has over 9,000 m² of space and services for startups.

Work-life balance

Vilnius is distinguishable by the advanced laser technologies it has introduced in the international market. **Kristijonas Vizbaras**, one of three Vizbarai brothers, is renowned in the field of laser physics. He is a man that examines Lithuania from a science and technology perspective.

About me. I am a physicist by education. My two brothers and I founded a high-tech company that develops and manufactures various laser diodes, sensors and defence systems. In short, we work with laser-based opto-electronic systems.

Some historic explanations. Vilnius has been establishing a reputation as a laser technology centre for a long time now. Historically, it began in the 1960s when Professor Povilas Brazdžiūnas, who was serving as Head of the Department of Radio Physics at Vilnius University, made a strategic decision to send three of the university's most talented students to take part in internships in Moscow. One of these students, Algis Petras Piskarskas, was invited to study under

the guidance of Nikolai Basov, Alexander Prochorov, and Rem Chochlov at Moscow Lomonosov University. Basov and Prochorov received the Nobel Prize for laser inventions in 1965, and thanks to then student Algis Petras Piskarskas, the first solid-state laser in Vilnius began operating in 1966. Moreover, Algis himself returned to Vilnius with two trucks full of parts and technical gadgets from Moscow in 1968, thus laying the foundation for developing the science of solid-state lasers in Lithuania, one of the earliest and leading in the world.

The laser industry today. With science having evolved over time and the development of applied areas, the laser industry in Lithuania is well established. In 2012, my brothers and I brought semiconductor laser technologies from Germany to Lithuania and founded a company called Brolis Semiconductors. It was a completely new branch in Lithuanian laser science and industry. Currently, more than 20 companies of various sizes specialise in the light (or laser) sector in Vilnius. 99% of the total production developed in Lithuania is exported, which creates enormous added value for the sector. For example,

Lithuania's most successful laser company Šviesos Konversija employs around 200 people, and the added value created per single person exceeds 260,000 EUR. Our company has 26 employees at the moment, and the added value created is enormous to 300,000 EUR per person. Therefore, Lithuanian companies are highly effective and capable of developing competitive products on a global scale. Today, Lithuania maintains a leading global position in areas like ultra-short laser pulses, the hybrid integration of semiconductor lasers of the infrared spectral segment with silicon photonics, and the manufacturing of nanosecond lasers.

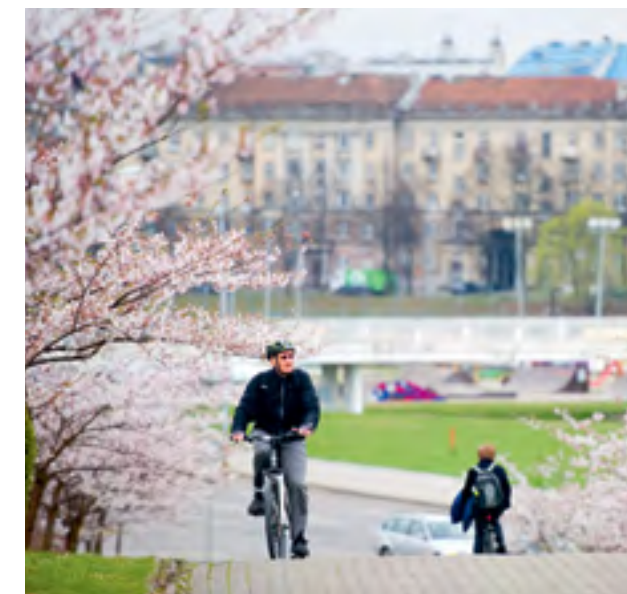
Spectral response: a tad difficult for laymen to perceive. The Brolis Semiconductors Company specialises in semiconductor technology, manufacturing of semiconductor lasers, and various electro-optic systems. Our niche area focuses on a specific spectral range – the so-called mid-wave infrared range. To epitaxially grow (synthesise) our laser structures, we use exotic gallium antimonide-based materials, allowing efficient emission in the desired spectral range and realisation of advanced light-emitting chips. It's a key enabling component in developing a new generation of defence systems for targeting/dazzling heat seeking missiles and a new generation of medical sensors capable of non-invasively and accurately measuring various blood constituent concentrations and their time dynamics in real-time non-invasively while testing human health. These sensors have the potential to influence significant breakthroughs in dealing with diabetes, sepsis treatment and also can enable a new generation of industrial sensors and laser radars, with enormous potential for use in self-driving cars, etc. The Brolis Semiconductors team is a global pioneer in integrating gallium antimonide-based light sources with the so-called silicon-photonics integrated circuits, which allows us to produce a highly complex electro-optical systems similar to computer chips, which are 2-3 square millimetres in size and are compatible with integration into a variety of consumer products, like smart watches and other smart gadgets. This holds the potential and capability in the near future of non-invasive measurements of substantial body processes and grave illness prevention at a consumer market scale, thus greatly improving the collective health of the human population.

Lasers in everyday life. Lasers have been part of people's everyday lives for some time, but not everyone is aware of this. The laser is the cornerstone device for information transmission on all fiber-optic telecommunications networks. Fundamentally, the laser provides the use of ultra-fast internet in Lithuania. Thanks to laser technologies, optical interfaces between very large data centres have become available, supporting platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and so on. Lasers scan barcodes at the store, measure traffic speeds, lasers here are used for facial recognition purposes in the new generation smartphones, they are also used to facilitate surgical procedures, and allow the precision required to remove specific damaged/diseased tissues without causing any harm to surrounding body tissues. Laser technologies are also widely used in the processing of metal, plastic, glass cutting, materials treatment, scientific research, etc.

Work-life balance. Regardless of the fact that we are developing technologies that are difficult for laymen to grasp, we are still human. Vilnius is delightful because it is super green and I can ride my bike to work or simply jog there via parks and forests when the weather gets warmer "avoiding streets". I find the Sapiėginės Forest to be an ideal place for relaxation after work, because I'm very fond of active leisure time in nature. Anyway, it doesn't really matter which part of Vilnius you've chosen to settle in, since you can always go to the nearest forest a mere 2 km away.



15⁰⁰
Business



Chiune Sugihara Sakura Park (Upės St)

Layers of Vilnius

Vilnius is striking with its architecture and prosperous thanks to its creative people. Acting and DJing are just two of the activities **Rimas Šapauskas** has mastered. Looking at Vilnius through the lens of its residents, Rimas is the man to talk to get an in-depth understanding of the capital's history.

About Me. I'm involved in many activities. I graduated in journalism, I work as an actor, and I have a hobby that turned out to be a serious occupation, which means now I'm also a DJ. I have experience working with the press, radio, and television. Yet, oddly enough, I still work as a comedy actor.

Recommended route. For first-time Vilnius visitors, I would suggest starting out from the Cathedral, then walking up Pilies Street towards the Gates of Dawn. Afterwards, turn onto Vokiečių Street, wander down Dominikonų Street, and you'll be back at Cathedral Square by turning down University Street. It is also worthwhile to visit a neighbourhood of Vilnius called Antakalnis. Generally speaking, Vilnius is amazing – everything's within walking distance.

Layers Of Vilnius. It's important to open your eyes and really see what Vilnius has to offer. Historically, the city is multi-layered. Starting from the earliest Gothic city buildings and then Baroque architecture is layered on, and then it ranges from Jewish, Polish or Russian Tsarist influence on Vilnius. The mixture of styles creates a unique city. People visiting Vilnius for the very first time are astonished because often they suppose they're visiting some Soviet block housed city. A German friend said, "It's almost like Germany here." Vilnius surprises me every day.

Memories. My first and very sharp memory (I was about two years old) comes from the Gates in Sapiegos

park, by which my mom and dad would take me to kindergarten. The gates were brightly lit, and on the other side, the Russian army commanded. The gate stuck in my subconscious and became a symbol, accompanying me throughout life. And currently I live nearby, so naturally, the entire Sapiegos complex gives me a feeling of everything here being intimate and familiar.

Charm. Vilnius is charming in every season. Even in the most unpleasant of weather, the city is very endearing. It's beautiful, both on sunny and cloudy days, and it's magical when it rains. Wonderful at the start of autumn when the trees turn yellow and the greens turn golden. Vilnius can be different.

Music. Regarding popular youth culture, all kinds of music thrives in Vilnius' bars. Beginning with the so-called Bermuda Triangle: the streets of Islandijos, Vilniaus and Latako streets. Everyone will find music and entertainment to their liking here. In a global context, the club Opium is Vilnius' greeting card. I also like the club Pavilijonas. When visiting Vilnius, just ask locals for the best places and they will share.

House of prayer. Since noblemen built Vilnius, they developed manors and palaces, and monasteries too. So, Vilnius was one of those cities where, in comparison, people of the Middle Ages were intensely devoted to prayer. Vilnius holds two important world-famous icons: the Virgin Mary at the Gates of Dawn and the sacred picture of God's Mercy.



St. Anne's church (Maironio St 8)

16⁰⁰
Culture



VILNIUS FAVOURITES

- Cathedral Square
- Ensemble of St. Anne and Bernardine churches
- Gediminas Avenue and Jakšto Street corner
- Urban green space near the White Bridge
- Church of St. Raphael
- Sapiegos Park

NIGHT FAVOURITES

- Marsas, Dėvėti, Gringo

Young opera talents

Vilnians living abroad with close relations to their hometown spread their international knowledge with those still in Vilnius. London-based director **Dalia Ibelhauptaitė** is one of them.

17⁰⁰
Culture

I would
definitely
consider Vilnius'
cultural scene to
be international
in scale.

About me. I was born and raised here in Vilnius, but I've been living in London since 1991. I am the founder the Vilnius City Opera, an artistic director, an opera and theatre director, and producer. For the past 11 years, I have been leading an independent opera creative collective filled with young opera talents.

Looking for culture. There's an abundance of exclusive artists working in Vilnius, and the city offers plenty of opportunities to get acquainted with their proficiency. Usually, the best and strongest Lithuanian and international talents perform both at operas and concerts. Opera performances enchant with cinematic storytelling and visuals. The Vilnius Congress Palace



Photo by Gediminas Savickis

*National Gallery of Art
(www.ndg.lt, Konstitucijos Ave 22)*

is great for enjoying performances produced by the Vilnius City Opera, or savouring the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra concerts, which are conducted by maestro Gintaras Rinkevičius. Performances of the most famous Lithuanian directors are held at the National Drama Theatre, the Vilnius City Theatre, and the State Youth Theatre. For museum lovers, I'd recommend visiting the National Gallery, as well as the Vartai, Rooster, Grafo, and CAC galleries.

Vilnius worldwide. I would definitely consider Vilnius' cultural scene to be international in scale. International artists performing on the world's main stages work here. This includes London Covent Garden, Berlin, Paris, Rome and Stockholm Operas, Drama Festivals in Avignon or Edinburgh. The main difference is that in Vilnius the same talents can be appreciated at a more affordable price.

Routes. For those visiting Vilnius, I would highly recommend sightseeing tours inspired by Kristina Sabaliauskaitė's novel *Silva Rerum*. I'd recommend dinner at a restaurant after all that walking. In my opinion, step-by-step, Vilnius is becoming a city of truly exclusive food. I admire chefs like Deivydas Praspaliauskas and his restaurant Amandus, Liutauras Čepreckas and his Gastronomy, Martynas Praškevičius and his Džiaugsmas or Stebuklai, Egidijus Lapinskas and his restaurant Dine, and Gaspar Fernandes and his Gaspar's. These are perfect spots for fine dining and will not disappoint.

The opportunity to do everything

18⁰⁰
Talent



Vilnius' visitors often compare the city to London in a cultural sense: plenty of artistic events take place here. At first glance, Vilnius and London are about as similar as the sky and the earth. However, having moved to Lithuania from London, **Remy Salters**, Head of Swedbank Financial Service in Lithuania, sees the comparison from a completely different perspective.

About myself. My name is Remy and I am a banker here in Vilnius who is half French and half British.

Cities' similarities. I used to live in London before coming here and I can assure you that there are a lot of similarities between Vilnius and London. One common feature that is quite distinct is the theatre culture. London is a city of theatres, and to my amazement, so is Vilnius.

Vilnius' advantages. I met my wife the first time I came to Vilnius. We then went to London together, had children, and decided to return. Vilnius is a great place to raise children, and to maintain a good work-life balance. The city itself is a perfect size; it doesn't take a lot of time to get into nature. Besides, Vilnius is a very romantic city, with romance manifesting in the stunning Old Town.

Food. I live in the Žvėrynas district and I'm very fond of a local restaurant called Panama Food Garden. Located on the junction of Naujamiestis and the Old Town, Gaspar's is another unique restaurant with Indian food being served in a modern style – it's very easy and personalised. Yet another great spot close by is Kinza – good food, DJs play live, and after a meal you can enjoy a hookah. Located in the centre, right by the entrance to the Bernardine Gardens, Strange Love is my favourite spot for a cup of coffee.

Right now is the
most wonderful
time to live
here.

Weekend activities. I love taking long walks in Vingis Park – it has cute cafes so you can relax and have a bite to eat after a nice walk. I ski in the winter and in the summer I often leave the city and go to my homestead in Druskininkai. It only takes about an hour to get there, and that's the essential difference between Vilnius and London; nature and the city are always so close here.

Considering moving to Vilnius. I would encourage moving here without hesitation, because Vilnius and Lithuania are very unique, with a unique community you will discover soon enough after arriving. Right now is the most wonderful time to live here. The city is lively and you will have enough time and the opportunity to do everything.



Swedbank (Konstitucijos Ave 20A)



Foreign direct
investment has grown
by more than 60%
over the past 5 years.

(Source: Invest Lithuania)

Power of art

Brave, ready for innovations and open to a wide range of ideas – this is Vilnius. The Mother Eleganza creative brand is the product of twin brothers **Remis and Egis**. The two, who have been engaging in artistic activities since childhood and are currently presenting their ideas all over the world, share their thoughts on culture in Vilnius.

About us. We are twin brothers Egis and Remis, and we are artists working at an art house called EGYBOY. We've been surfing the waves of advertising for a long time, and are now taking a new course with our own line of streetwear called EGYBOY. The project includes t-shirt design and manufacturing, art exhibitions and collaborations, as well as a variety of other creative projects. We are focusing all of our energy on developing an EGYBOY art factory and are doing whatever it takes to get there.

Venues. For us, Užupis will always be an area of the city full of sentiment and nostalgia. We lived there after moving to Vilnius and were always impressed by the sites we passed on our way to the Art Academy. Užupis gives us that feeling of endless summers. We'd start a bonfire next to our house, creating an atmosphere like we're in a village somewhere outside the city, with a mood influenced by the sounds of Bob Marley moving us forward. Usually, we ride our bikes around the city, and that peddling forward reminds us of childhood, as life flies by like the frames of a movie. When we find a second to spare, we go to Vingis Park where you can find weightlifting and exercise stands using wooden weights. It is essential to get a breath of fresh air into your lungs to generate new ideas.

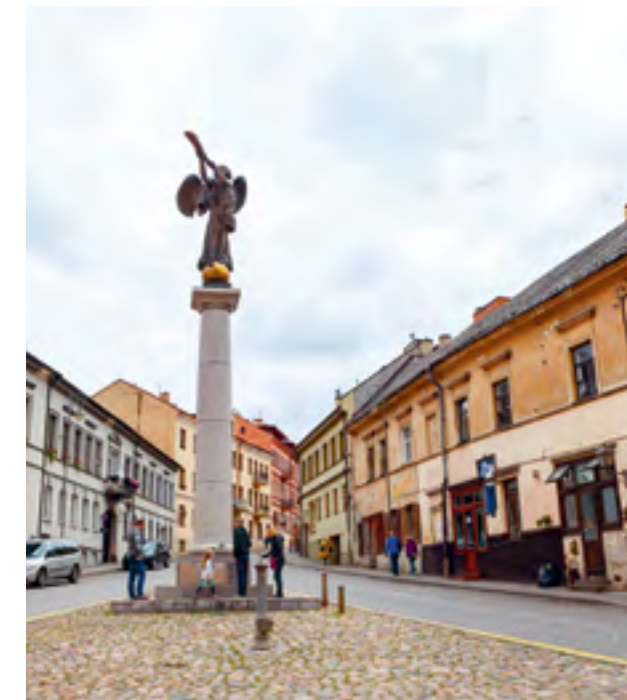
Route with guests of Vilnius. When introducing first-timers to the city, we would probably employ a tortoise on a skateboard principle and roll to Vilnius University and the bell tower of St. Johns' Church to look at Vilnius from above. After descending from the tower, we'd be assured of the fact that Earth is still spinning, as proved by the Foucault Pendulum. The arena at Vingis Park is a must-see; it's one of the city's most interesting architectural heritage objects (they say the idea of Sydney Opera House found its inspiration here). One's senses get a jolt at night, especially after hearing the shrill voices of boxers training; even as the city goes quiet you realise that some people's intensive training continues. The Genocide Museum as well, and we recommend exploring the exhibition using the audio guide. Vilnius gets much of its charm from a variety of cute small bars, the Hill of Three Crosses, and Pilies Street with punks in front.

Power of art. In Vilnius, you can encounter all kinds of artists with varying ideological, conceptual, and commercial ideas of art. Believing that art can change the world and everything will be good in the end is of utmost importance. The effect of art could be a physically and aesthetically orgasmic affair, or an ob-



19⁰⁰
Culture

Užupis district



ject for a collector to invest in. We are doing what we like this very moment, and when others, like young people, enjoy our work, we're on cloud nine. It's even possible to observe art on a plate of pancakes. We see art everywhere, every day. This interview is also kind of art – some surreal topic about matters.

Memories. It happened one night in Vilnius, after midnight as we, together with a bevy of miscreants, climbed up the Church of St. Casimir using the wooden scaffolding while a restoration project was underway there. A fantastic scene of Vilnius unfolded once we scaled the scaffolding – small people below as if they were coming from some sort of computer game. Totally illegal, but if that weren't enough, someone started to play the organ. Good morning, Vilnius!

Changes

Vilnius stands out with its capacity to balance work and leisure. **Marta Sainz De La Maza Padro**, a Spaniard living in Vilnius, serves as an AML Compliance Supervisor at Western Union. She is climbing the career ladder in Vilnius, feels at home here, and delights in the quality of life she has in the city.

20⁰⁰
Talent

About me. My name is Marta Sainz De La Maza Padro. I come from Seville, which is in the South of Spain, and I work at the international company Western Union as a Group Supervisor.

My story. I've lived in Vilnius for the last five years. I came here for an internship at a public institution and after that, I returned to my native Spain. However, just a few months later I came back to Vilnius again because I really like it here; people and the city were very nice to me. I remember, just as I arrived in Vilnius my first thought was, "I could live here." Vilnius stands out with a very high quality of life and I felt I could accomplish more here than in other countries. When living abroad, you want to get to know and discover more. So here in Vilnius, lately I have accomplished and discovered a lot more than if I would be living in my homeland. I can say that I get to live more here.

Changes. Vilnius has grown markedly since I've been living here, and people have become more open-minded. When I arrived, it was unusual to meet a foreigner, but now there are lots of them. I learned to speak Lithuanian, no matter how difficult the language is. I studied Lithuanian at Vilnius University with courses provided by my workplace. It is possible to live in Vilnius without knowing how to speak Lithuanian, but it's so fun and nice to see the faces of locals and their reactions when you speak to them in their native language (my favourite word is "šaukuolė" which means great girl).

In the summer
it's just wonderful
to ride a bike
along the Neris
riverside.

Time off. In summer it's just wonderful to ride a bike along the Neris riverside. You simply stop in wonder of its incredible beauty. I also like the Subačiaus Street lookout, which offers a great view of Vilnius. It's fun wandering around Bernardine Gardens, the city centre, and the Old Town. Gediminas Castle offers an amazing view of Vilnius, and I like the Užupis Constitution, which is written in many different languages.

My key. Just after the move, I wanted to make a copy of my keys and used Google Translate. As it happened, the shape of the key I received was inaccurate and needed to be replaced. So I tried to explain the problem to the elderly key maker using hand gestures. This took place in the building of a supermarket with lots of people around. When the key maker finally understood what I was trying to say, all the people around us applauded.



#9

**Business Insider
ranks Vilnius #9 in
the world for work-
life balance.**

(ahead of Brussels and Munich)

Vilnius charms

Vilnius shouldn't just be explored but experienced, too. And there are innumerable stories to contribute to that experience. **Saulius Pilinkus** is a diplomat and art critic, a former Town Hall master of ceremonies, has served as a cultural attaché officer in Israel for two years, and knows Vilnius inside out. Saulius knows all the secret corners of Vilnius better than anybody else.

About me. My name is Saulius Pilinkus, I am a former editor and currently work as a freelance editor and am somewhat of a producer, too. I've tried various trades: worked as an official, was a founder of one of the first Vilnius galleries, studied art, tried art criticism, and served as a diplomat. Presently, I'm mostly just me.

My own city. I discovered my own version of Vilnius when I was a teenager. At that time, I began wandering around the city and hearing its voice while listening to the various languages spoken in Vilnius: Yiddish, mixed Russian-Polish-Belarusian language with the Lithuanian "interspersed" words called "Tuteišų", Polish, and the literary prayer language used in churches. I discovered how Vilnius holds both chilly underground vaults and cosy woods. These are the reasons the city I live in became interesting.

Vilnius charms. I am enchanted by the liveliness and development of the city. There are lots of reasons why I love it. It's a fact, in Vilnius, there's no need to drive a car or even cycle to get somewhere, as everything is within walking distance. There's also a unique opportunity to enjoy the sights of Vilnius from above by taking a ride on a hot air balloon. The city features a multitude of parks and forests, an abundance of greenery, and eye-catching mounted police officers.

Town Hall. The old Town Hall is full of spaces for events and having a good time. Its charming staircase beckons newlyweds for the perfect photo opportunity, and art curators find the Town Hall's chambers great for exhibitions. It is also an excellent venue for chamber concerts and political events, and the Town Hall's vaults offer guests a chance to explore a part of Vilnius' dungeons. In my opinion, the Town Hall is truly the heart of the city.



Vilnius Town Hall (Didžioji St 31)

Užupis. The former synagogue, nearly obscure, is a unique place in the Užupis district. Other interesting sites include Gediminas' Grave Hill, the hills by Vileišio School and the cemeteries, which not only perform their function but were also used as hideouts for armaments. I love how there are still buildings in Užupis with genuine windows - not plastic or wood-covered. I'm also fond of Bernardine Gardens, the Art Academy, and St. Bartholomew's Church and gallery. My favourite art gallery is Arka.

Open to ideas

Though far from expansive, Vilnius is bold and full of controversy. Entrepreneur, creator, developer of artistic ideas, and patron not lacking attention from foreign countries, **Dominykas Čečkauskas** is one of Vilnius' dwellers able to unveil many of the unique aspects the city has to offer.

About myself. My name is Dominykas and I am one of the founders of the restaurant chain Keulė Rūkė. I specialise mainly in business development and communication solutions.

Seeing Vilnius differently. For me, one of the most interesting and underrated parts of Vilnius is its post-Soviet character. I like the Lazdynai and Karoliniškės districts, and am fascinated by their yards and old-fashioned playgrounds. The Station district, with all its warehouses and towers, is another part of town that appeals to me. Kablys is located in this district – it has its own story to tell, and at the same time, all the young people engaged in exciting activities there have helped revive it. Naujininkai seems very exotic to me, spread out along the tracks. I admire the Opera and Ballet Theatre complex, both the interior and exterior.

Vilnius citizens. I love how Vilnius is not uniform because everything's mixed up and full of contrasts. Even the manner of speaking among the population of various Lithuanian cities differs – Vilnius has its own accent. You can get acquainted with people of various types, attitudes, and social classes.

Open to ideas. It is easy to create and develop various innovative ideas in Vilnius and Lithuania. For example, were you to plan a photo shoot at some museum, you can easily settle logistic matters with the responsible authorities. People welcome and are willing to support the implementation of artistic ideas.

Graffiti on the Keulė Rūkė restaurant wall (Pylimo St 66)



"I love how Vilnius is not uniform, because everything is mixed up and full of contrasts."

Nostalgia. Some 3-4 years ago a gastronomic renaissance began in Vilnius, though I get nostalgic about traditional Lithuanian dishes and canteens, as I see it as an untapped business niche. There's a website called kompotas.lt where you can find a documentary film about canteens.

Authenticity. I'd definitely take a foreign visitor to Sultiniai, as I really like that place; it has an awesome interior that makes it very authentic. I would also put Halės Market on my list, as well as the very successful Fabai, a project located in the Fabijoniškės district, where a barbecue is set up on the first floor of an apartment building.

22⁰⁰

Culture





Vilnius night lights

Vilnius has the unique ability to feel like home for anyone; you just want to stay here. We would not be exaggerating by naming **Mark Adam Harold** among the most famous newcomers to Vilnius. He is a public figure, an activist for minority and immigrant rights, and a prominent figure in the local music scene.

I don't think
— anyone is "foreign" —
in Vilnius.

About me and music. I am Mark Adam Harold. I've been an immigrant in Lithuania for nearly 15 years. I originally came to Vilnius to meet musicians, and music is the reason I stayed. When I started out in the music industry I had the usual dreams of performing all over the world, but now I enjoy working behind the scenes and giving advice and assistance to talented musicians, helping them with marketing, distribution and legal issues.

Why Vilnius? Vilnius is very exciting. There is a lot of untapped potential and loads of talented people here, and I'm not the only one to get this impression. I work with British investors who believe in Eastern and Central European music. We're looking for new kinds of music here in the East because times are changing and cultures are mixing here, so you can find truly unique sounds. Also, the music education here is good, there are many classically trained musicians who can play the piano flawlessly and create techno too. Vilnius is and has always been a junction of different cultures.

23⁰⁰ Culture

Portrait of a true Vilnian. Lithuanians describe themselves as being quiet and withdrawn, but at the same time, Vilnius is very open to innovations and new people. Different nationalities live side-by-side, different languages are spoken and tourists are constantly visiting – not just from neighbouring countries, but from all over the world. In Vilnius, different styles of architecture and ways of life blend together, so it's easy for an outsider to fit in and feel like a local. I'm proud to be a Vilnian. When people ask where I'm from I have no problem saying "Vilnius" because it feels like home and I feel welcome. I always tell people, "Vilnius gives you a hug".

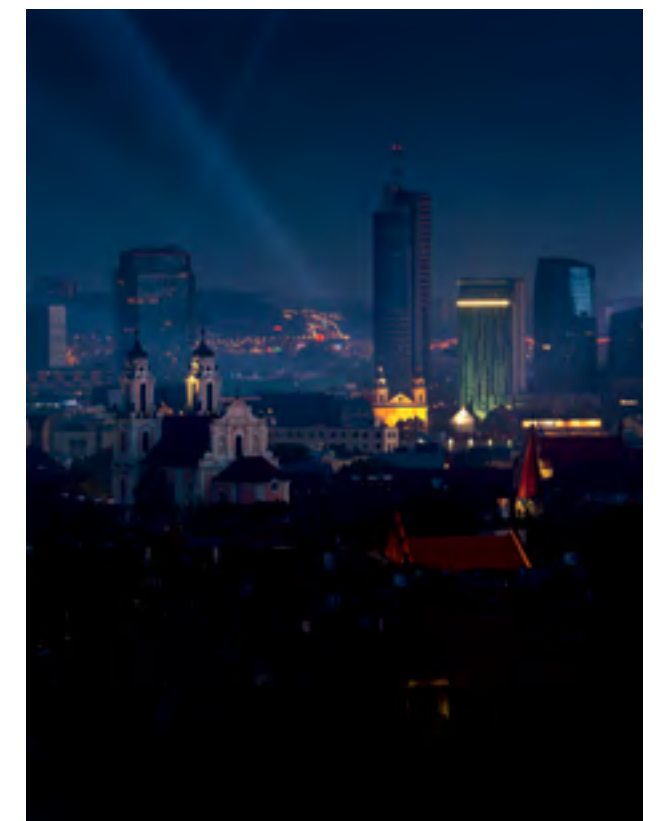
Vilnius nightlife. I organised parties and concerts in Vilnius for many years so I can definitely recommend the nightlife here. I was even elected to the City Council by the people who came to my events, and now I'm known as the Vilnius Night Mayor. We're working on supporting the city's musicians, making sure they have plenty of places to play and everybody gets home safely. But even I don't know all the secret places in the city, the scene is growing and constantly evolving. For those who want to meet locals and dance to innovative sounds, I would recommend nightclubs like Opium or Kablys, both of which have clear and creative music policies. For concert lovers, I usually recommend LOFTAS, a multifunctional space that has music events, conferences and exhibitions. Vilnius might not be big, but you'll find plenty of variety if you spend some time looking around the smaller venues. Ask some young locals to make a list of their favourite spots. I promise, all the lists will be quite different.

Worth seeing. I always say my favourite place is Šv. Ignoto Street. It's more than just a street! It's a mess of Vilnius things: buildings abandoned for years, trees rising from the old city walls, the ominous Defense Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania, and the amazingly beautiful St. Catherine's Church. I guarantee that you can walk along Šv. Ignoto Street anytime, in any weather, in any season, and you will be able to take a great photo.

City of balance. I did a bit of research before settling in Vilnius. I looked into other cities like Riga, Tallinn, and Budapest. Every city has its charms, but I keep going back

to Vilnius, there's something magnetic. The city is constantly changing, developing and improving, and that's important for me on both personal and business levels. Vilnius maintains a good balance. Business is booming, evolution happens fast, but there's less pressure and you don't get tired from the constant feeling of rushing that other cities suffer from. Vilnians have time to be creative, so innovative businesses and freelancers can thrive in this city. And as a part of the European Union, you are free to engage with people from all over the world.

Strangers welcome. Is it hard for an immigrant to get started? Easier than getting started in London, that's for sure. Everything and everyone in Vilnius is accessible. When you have a great idea you can easily find people to join in, and you can easily talk to high levels of government if you need to. Everyone is already busy in London, so it's quite difficult to get people to pay attention to your ideas and the Mayor definitely doesn't



have time to meet you. In Vilnius, the Mayor invited me to run for public office! I'm proud to be a part of the city's development and it seems like a very natural thing for an immigrant to do. Some people are surprised that a foreigner is making decisions about the city's future, but Vilnius is my home and the people of Vilnius voted for me. I don't think anyone is "foreign" in Vilnius.



VILNIUS

