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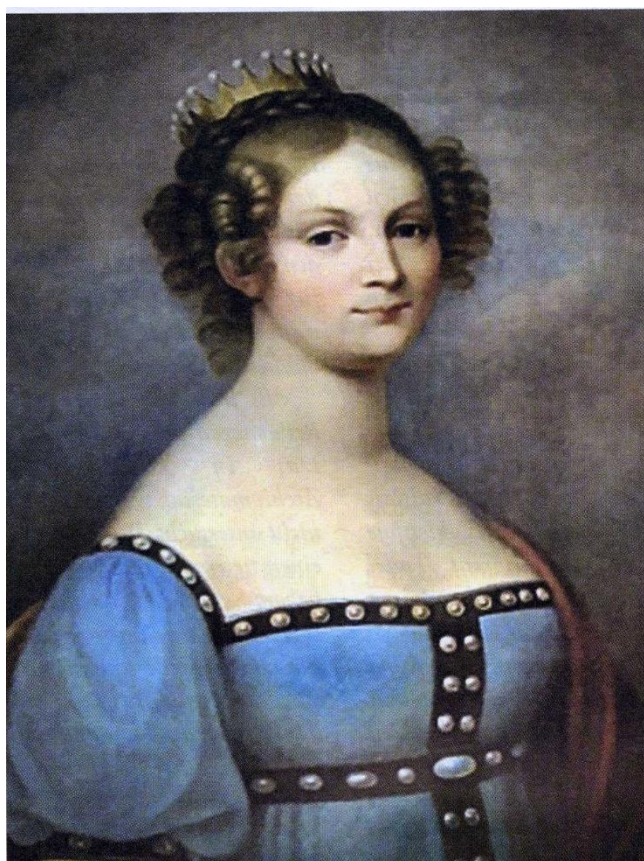


LIETUVA - RUSIJA  
BPS 2014-2020



# The International Queen Louise route

## Places to visit



**2021-2026**



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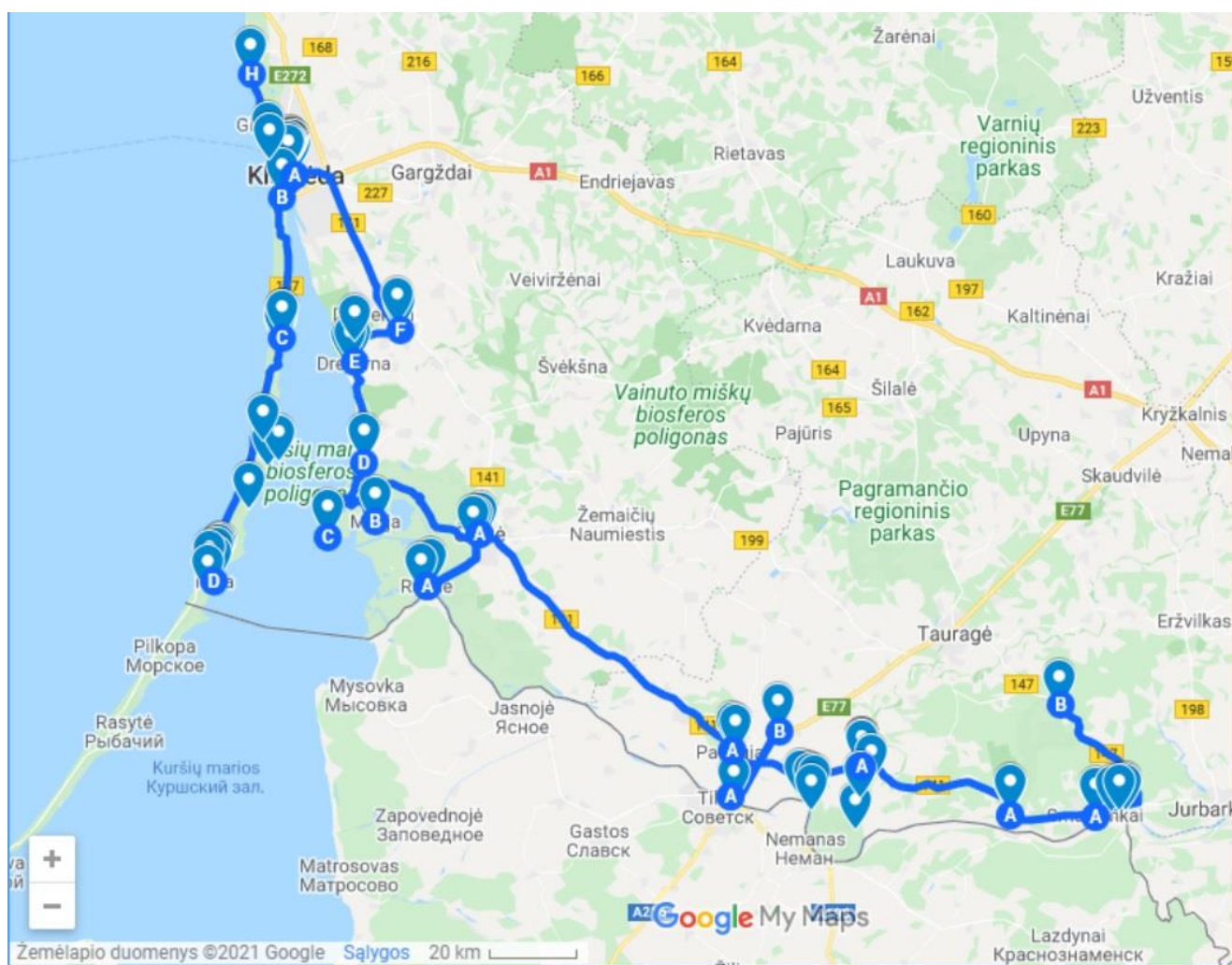


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## Places to visit



# Western Lithuania

## SMALININKAI

1. The town of Smalininkai is located on the right bank of the Nemunas, to the west of its confluence with the Šventoji stream. As early as in 1395, the Šventoji stream, which flows into the Nemunas, is mentioned in the written sources of the Crusaders as a border, from which it is instructed to turn north and march deeper into Samogitia. After the Melno Peace Treaty of 1422, the site became an important border crossing point between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Teutonic Order. In 1701, Smalininkai were marked on a map of the Kingdom of Prussia. Since the middle of the 18th century, timber has been transported from the forests of the upper Nemunas to Prussia. As a result, Smalininkai became one of the most important inland shipping ports in East Prussia that had customs. Before the World War I, the majority of the Smalininkai population consisted of sailors, merchants, servants, craftsmen, and others. Since 1923, when the Klaipėda region joined the Republic of Lithuania, the border crossing point in Smalininkai became unnecessary, and the importance of the port decreased. However, during the interwar period, goods continued to be transported through the town, there were the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Synagogue, the Catholic Church, the post office, restaurants, pubs, a hotel, and various shops. During the Soviet era, the port lost its significance and was completely abandoned. Today in Smalininkai you can visit objects reminiscent of the bustling past of the town, admire the greatness of the Nemunas and the green oak alley.

2. Old port. A little below the confluence, where the Nemunas bends, a stone-paved path leads towards one of the most important historical objects in Smalininkai - the old port. It is assumed that the quay at this location has probably been from the very beginning of the town. Ships from Smalininkai used to sail along Aistmarės, channels, rivers and the shores of the Baltic Sea for a long time not only to Königsberg, but also further. Thus, the port of Smalininkai was also a port of the Baltic Sea basin, and a point of international shipping. There were shipyards in both Smalininkai and the neighbouring villages. In 1837, a winter port was established in Smalininkai. In the second half of the 19th century, the port had to be expanded and rebuilt as steamers appeared on the Nemunas. Port life was active; ships were standing here to pass customs control, rafts were passing by, cargo was being reloaded here. Currently the port is closed. *Kranto str., Smalininkai*



**3. Water measurement station.** In 1811, the oldest water measurement station in Lithuania was established in Smalininkai. The first objects of the station did not remain, but the stone stairs of the water meter, built in 1886, have survived. Next to the stairs is an observation tower built in 1924-1926. The Smalininkai port building complex, which consists of a water measurement station, a port and an embankment, has been given a level of national significance. *Kranto str., Smalininkai*



Stairs of Smalininkai Water Measurement Station with meters, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė

**7.** The tourism and education group *Eastern Gate of Lithuania Minor*, coordinated by Gina Meškauskienė, has prepared a tourist educational program "**Smalininkai - the eternal border**". This program introduces tourists to the region, its history and peculiarities of the lifestyle. During the program, participants have the opportunity to get acquainted with the life and history of the border towns of Lithuania Minor or East Prussia, and, thanks to theatrical scenes, to move back 100 years to the past, meet the inhabitants of that time and taste the culinary heritage dishes of Smalininkai. *Jurbarkas Tourism and Business Information Centre, Vydūno str. 19, Jurbarkas, tel. (8 447) 51 485*

## VIEŠVILĖ

**9. Recreation area of Viešvilė centre by the Viešvilė stream, Viešvilės Žuvitakis.** The Viešvilė stream, which crosses the centre of Viešvilė, has long been famous as a real breeding ground for salmonids. Eventually, the fish population began to decline due to the construction of impassable dams. After assessing the situation and the damage done to nature, consideration was given to restoring the path of fish migration. In 2008, fish paths were built in the dams of the Viešvilė

stream - a kind of transfer, thanks to which migrating fish can overcome the way up the river. There is also a picturesque recreation area where you can take a pleasant walk, sit on a cosy bench or swim in the stream. While walking, curious travellers will also discover the supports of the former narrow-gauge bridge and reach the park of the former Viešvilė Manor homestead, where the educational trail around the northern surroundings of the town starts.



Viešvilės Žuvitakis and recreation area, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė

## VILKYŠKIAI

**14. The stables of Vilkyškių Manor homestead** are currently being renovated; the building has been renamed to **History Incubator**. The premises of this building are being equipped with a tourist reception and service area, and even several educational spaces. The historical interactive game, the virtual reality room, the narrow-gauge railway zone, other spaces and activities adapted to them will allow you to virtually touch and experience the historical heritage of the Kingdom of Prussia. Visitors to the History Incubator will have the opportunity to see videos, the one of which provides a historical introduction to the Kingdom of Prussia. The educational video will present a map with the territories of Prussia and the Queen Louise story about the events of 1806-1807. History Incubator is a great place to spend time for families with children of different ages, groups of students and anyone



interested in the history, lifestyle, traditions and royal past of Lithuania Minor. *Johaneso Bobrovskio str. 31, Vilkyškiai*



**Stables of Vilkyškiai Manor homestead, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė**

**15. The Monument to the Relocation of Salzburgers.** On 4 June 1998, a monument was unveiled in the centre of Vilkyškiai town to the people of Salzburg, who settled in Lithuania Minor after the Great Plague of 1709-1711. Two wooden beams resembling a carriage attached to a stray wheel symbolize a difficult journey to a remote country. The inscription 'For the Protestants of Salzburg, who found their New Homeland in the 18th century here, near the Nemunas' was engraved on the granite slabs. The author of the monument is Šarūnas Arbačiauskas.

**16. Vilkyškiai Evangelical Lutheran Church.** The church was built around 1560. It was burned and destroyed by the Russian Cossacks during the Seven Years' War. The church was rebuilt in 1711. In 1896, a new red-brick neo-Gothic church building with a 45-meter-high tower was built on the same site. The interior of the church was decorated with a stylish altar, stained glass, and a magnificent organ. After the World War II, the inside of the church was completely destroyed, and the tower was demolished. The church building housed a grain warehouse and a mill. After Lithuania regained its

independence, the church was returned to the congregation. With the help of the people from Vilkyškiai around the world, its repair has begun. In 1996, a tower was built, the roof, windows and doors were renovated. The church was decorated with colourful stained glass windows created by Rasa Grybaitė. The parish of Detmold from Germany donated an organ that, after a break of 50 years rang in the church, which retained its excellent acoustics. Worship services, exhibitions and concerts of church and classical music are now held here.

One of the most important musical events taking place in the church is **the international organ music festival "Organ Music in Vilkyškiai"**. The festival has been organized since 2009. During it, listeners are introduced to organ music, and famous Lithuanian and foreign performers are invited to give concerts. The festival attracts many interested visitors every year, and its long-standing traditions help to nurture and popularize organ music. *Šereikos str.. 9, Vilkyškiai*



Vilkyškiai Evangelical Lutheran Church, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė

**17. Memorial Museum of J. Bobrovsky.** Johannes Bobrowski (German: J. Bobrowski, 9 April 1917, Tilsit - 2 September 2, 1965, East Berlin) is a famous German prose writer and poet. His work was influenced not only by the environment of Lithuania Minor, but also by severe war disasters. His work was influenced not only by the environment of the Lithuania Minor, but also by severe war disasters.



The writer was born in Tilsit, in the family of a railway worker. As he writes: "I grew up on both sides of the Nemunas, in a country where the Germans lived in close neighbourhood with Lithuanians, Poles, Russians, and Jews made up a large part of the population." In his childhood and youth, Johann Bobrovskis used to visit his grandparents who lived in Vilkyškiai and Mociškiai. In 1939 he was called up into the German army and later lived in Berlin. The writer created novels (one of the most famous is the "Lithuanian Pianos"), short stories. His prose depicts the relations between Germans and other nations, and his work is characterized by Lithuanian motives. The emotional experiences of the creator, the Baltic motives, and existential contemplations are reflected in the collections of poems ("The Land of Sarmatia", "Shadowland", "In the windy wilderness").

Pagėgiai region Tourism and Business Information Centre has been announced as the representative office of Johannes Bobrowski in Lithuania. The Johannes Bobrowski Memorial Room was opened in the Evangelical Lutheran parish building in Vilkyškiai. This permanent exposition is of growing interest among the locals and tourists. In 2014, the Pagėgiai Region Tourism and Business Information Centre hosted a narrow-gauge railway exposition, which is associated with the writer's most famous novel "Lithuanian Pianos". *The Memorial Museum can be visited at your convenience. For the key, contact the Pagėgiai Region Tourism Information Centre, Šereikos str. 5-3, Tel. +370 658 02140, +370 656 18 55.*

## RAMBYNAS

**19. Exposition of Rambynas Regional Park Visitor Centre.** In the yard of Rambynas Regional Park Directorate there is a Visitor Centre presenting the exposition of the park's values. On the first floor of the building there is a hall for events, and on the second floor there is a permanent exposition introducing the history of Vilkyškės ridge formation, natural environment, diversity of flora and fauna, and forest assets. The exposition will help to get acquainted with the surroundings of Rambynas and their history, archaeological heritage, Prussian Lithuanians' way of life, famous personalities of the region. *Nemuno str. 4, Bitėnai, tel. +370 441 42778; email [info@rambynoparkas.lt](mailto:info@rambynoparkas.lt)*

**20. Rambynas.** The Lithuanian part of the Vilkyškiai ridge ends on Rambynas Hill. An impressive landscape of the Nemunas and its other bank, where you can see panoramas of Tilžė city and Ragainė town that are important for the history of Lithuania opens from this hill. It is believed that one of the



most important shrines of the Skalvians tribe also was in this place. Historians suppose that Ramigė Castle, which was destroyed by the Crusaders in 1276, stood on Rambynas Hill. The current altitude of Rambynas Hill is 45.4 meters above sea level. Rambynas Hill became especially famous because of Martynas Jankus and Vydūnas. Thanks to these famous personalities, the revived St. John's Day feast is celebrated here on June 23 to this day. Rambynas Alkakalnis is decorated by the altar symbolizing the Trinity of the Baltic gods Patrimpa, Perkūnas, Patula created by the National Prize winner sculptor Regimantas Midvikis. *Rambynas Regional Park, 2 km south of Lumpėnai.*



View from Rambynas hill, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė

**24. Bitėnai cemetery.** It is a well-maintained cemetery located at the foot of Rambynas Hill. It is a place of eternal rest for Vydūnas, Martynas Jankus, Valteris - Kristupas Banaitis, Jonas Vanagaitis, Elena Grigolaitytė - Kondratavičienė, Aleksandras Žvinakis and other personalities who did a lot for Lithuania. The cemetery is decorated with a metal gate made according to the project of Martynas and Marija Purvinai. The words “I am the ray of infinite light” by Vydūnas are embossed at the top of the gate. The territory of the cemetery was surrounded by a wooden fence by members of the Vydūnas Society. Ornamental trees and shrubs planted by a naturalist Julius Balčiauskas from Šilutė decorate

the cemetery. Some graves are decorated with evergreen tombstones made of pruned spruce trees.  
*Rambyn Regional Park, 1 km east of Rambynas hill.*



Bitėnai cemetery gate, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė

**26. Martynas Jankus Museum.** Martynas Jankus Museum is established in the restored printing press house of the late 19th century of Lithuania Minor in Pagėgiai Municipality, where the printer, the publisher of *Aušra*, the signatory of the Act of Tilsit, and the Patriarch of Lithuania Minor Martynas Jankus worked and later lived. M. Jankus had printing houses in Ragainė, Tilžė, Klaipėda, Šilutė and Bitėnai. In his printing houses, he published about 400 books and 27 periodicals in Lithuanian and German. 150 books and 10 periodicals of these in Lithuanian were dedicated to Lithuania Minor. These publications had a great impact on public life and promoted the development of national ideas. M. Jankus not only sold his own books, but also supplied them to Lithuanian book smugglers, and since 1905 to bookstores in Lithuania. This important person of Lithuania Minor maintained press based relations with Lithuanians in the USA, participants of Latvian, Polish and Gudijan national and political movements.

In the museum named after him, you can get acquainted not only with the life and activities of Martynas Jankus, but also with the history of the book in Lithuania Minor, printers, cultural and political figures. Authentic printers' tools, the box of letters and *litos* from which a text can be typed,

as well as a rotary embossing machine are of a great interest to museum visitors. *M. Jankaus str. 5, Bitėnai, tel. 8 441 42 736, mob. 8 656 15 021, email m.jankausmuz@gmail.com*



**Martynas Jankus Museum, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė**

**27.** Back in 2003, on the initiative of a journalist and photographer Eugenijus Skipitis, an open-air painting gallery the **Garden of Paintings of Lithuania Minor** was established next to Martynas Jankus Museum. In the gallery, visitors can see about half a hundred paintings and sculptures created by Lithuanian and foreign artists. Famous Lithuanian and foreign artists, such as Vytautas Kaunas, Sigutė Ach, Arvydas Kašauskas, Gražvydas Kardokas, Aloyzas Stasiulevičius, Angelina Banytė, Agnieszka Rogoz (Poland), Irakli Gabecadze (Georgia) and others visited the place during plein airs and left here their creations. *M. Jankaus str. 5, Bitėnai.*





**The Garden of Paintings of Lithuania Minor, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė**

**28.** Pagėgiai Region Tourism Information Centre offers entertainment that provides impressions and knowledge - **sailing on the Nemunas River** on the route Rambynas Hill - Panemunė. While sailing, tourists will not only admire the surroundings of the Nemunas delta, but will also hear the guide's stories about the sacred stone of Rambynas hill, Bardėnai village farmer Švarcas, the historical past of Pagėgiai region, the way of life of Prussian Lithuanians and many other interesting things. *For sailing, contact the Pagėgiai Region Tourism Information Centre, Šereikos str. 5-3, Vilkyškiai, tel. +370 658 02140, +370 656 18 55, email [ticpagegiai@gmail.com](mailto:ticpagegiai@gmail.com)*



Fragment of the pier, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė

## **29. Monument to Hainrich Theodore von Schön, Chief President of East and West Prussia.**

Hainrich Theodor von Schön was born on January 20, 1773 in Šereitlaukis. His grandfather Gottfried Teodor von Schön (1704-1770) and his father Johan Teodor Schön (1744-1796) were the administrators of the Šereitlaukis Manor. In 1788 H. T. von Schön entered the Faculty of Law at the University of Königsberg and left the manor. After the unification of the West and East Prussia in 1824, H. T. Schön ruled both provinces, that in the period 1824–1877 were called the Province of Prussia. During the presidency of H. T. Schön, on his initiative the first collection of Lithuanian folk songs was published, the first public library in the region was established, and the first regional newspaper, *Intelligenzblatt für Litauen*, was launched. Important results of this president's education policy are the establishment of the Queen Louise Teachers' Seminary and the opening of new primary schools in Lithuania Minor. In 2016, a monument was unveiled in the homestead of Šereitlaukis Manor to commemorate this important personality. The words "This was the birthplace of the President of Prussia" are engraved on the stone (the same text is repeated in German), the name of the



President and the year of his life - 1773-1856. *Pagėgiai Municipality, Vilkyškiai Eldership, Šereitlaukis*

**30. Vilkyškiai forest and the Witches' Spruce.** The Witches' Spruce is one of the ten most impressive trees in Lithuania that are worth seeing. This natural monument grows in Vilkyškiai forest. The age of this spruce can be about 150 years. This natural monument had 18 trunks. One of its main trunks was broken by a snowstorm that struck on 11 November 2007. Now the spruce has 17 stems. It is sometimes called the "Witch's Broom". The scientist Eugenija Šimkūnaitė gave it this name around 1960 due to the similarity of its shape to the broom. The tree is 32.5 meters high and the trunk circumference at a height of 1 meter (at the branch) is 5.1 meters. *Rambynas Regional Park, 2 km southeast of Vilkyškiai town, 53rd plot of 83rd quarter of Rambynas forest district of Šilutė State Forest Enterprise.*

## PANEMUNĖ

**33. Panemunė. The Queen Louise Bridge.** The Queen Louise Bridge in Prussia crosses the Nemunas between the cities of Panemunė and Tilžė /Tilsit/ Sovetsk (on the Lithuanian-Russian border). The first bridge at this location was built as early as the 16th century, and a permanent bridge at Tilsit, built in 1904-1907, was opened on October 18, 1907 and named after Queen Louise. During the Seven Years' War of 1756-1763, Russia occupied Prussia and stayed here for four years. For both military and commercial use, the Russian army built a raft bridge, which was demolished in retreat in 1762. The people of Tilsit asked Frederick II the King of Prussia to allow the construction of a stationary bridge over the Nemunas, which would facilitate communication between the two banks of it. In 1767, a 340-meter-long bridge based on 36 pantones was opened. On this bridge, Lithuanians transported handicrafts from Tilžė Jomarkas to Lithuania Minor, and farmers from Tilsit area transported hay from the flooded Nemunas meadows for personal use and for the crews of soldiers. In 1807, in order to stop the movement of Napoleon's army across the Nemunas, the bridge was burned down.

At the beginning of the 20th century the need for a new, modern bridge arose due to the increased needs of shipping, land transport, trade, and mail between Western Lithuania, Curonia and the eastern part of Germany. The famous Prussian Lithuanian Martynas Jankus, having collected many signatures from the residents of Ragainė County, addressed the Prussian Ministry of Transport and



Communications. Construction of the new bridge began in 1904. A majestic neo-baroque building decorated with a symbolic gate to Tilsit was erected - a decorative portal with city and state relics, two towers, a bas-relief of Queen Louise of Prussia with the inscription "*Queen Louise Bridge*". The bridge was named after the Queen because its opening date coincided with the centenary of Louise's visit to Tilsit. Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia himself attended the opening ceremony of the bridge, which took place on 18 October, 1907. In 1944 the bridge was blown up. In 1947, a wooden bridge was rebuilt, which was later covered with reinforced concrete structures. In 2003, the bas-relief of Queen Louise was restored on the southern portal.



[www.Bildarchiv-Ostpreussen.de](http://www.Bildarchiv-Ostpreussen.de) 001883 / 1-14\_1883

Tilsit, Stadt, Stadtkreis Tilsit, MT09097-0. Luisen-Brücke von Südosten II. (1925-1939), © Schöning, Lübeck



View of the Queen Louise Bridge from the side of Panemunė, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė

## PAGĖGIAI

**35. Birutės Street - a pedestrian alley.** The houses on this street are the legacy of the 19th century and the interwar modernist architecture. At the end of the street, you can see the railway station, built in the late 19th century. An oak tree grows in front of it, which is believed to have been planted by Martynas Jankus, the patriarch of Lithuania Minor, and the pilot Feliksas Vaitkus. After repeating the flight of Darius and Girėnas, this pilot landed in Ireland and went by train from Karaliaučius to Lithuania, where he was sincerely met in Pagėgiai. A particularly expressive building is marked with the number 5. The rounded façade, wide corner windows, wide cornice, flat roof, horizontal brick drafts, continuous central staircase windows are classic features of interwar period modernist architecture.



Fragment of Birutės street, photo by A. Raškevičiūtė-Šimkevičienė

**38. J. Gižas Ethnographic Homestead.** A famous shipbuilder of the Curonian Lagoon Jonas Gižas, who lived in Dreverna in between 1867-1940, built and repaired the sailboats of fishermen of the Curonian Spit and the Pomeranian region. He also created ship models and weather vanes. After the reconstruction of J. Gižas ethnographic homestead in 2010, a museum and a tourism information centre were established here. The museum has an exposition about Dreverna shipbuilder and fisherman J. Gižas, presents the history of the coastal region, customs, types of ships and the peculiarities of their construction, old fishing traditions and facts illustrating the catch of fishermen. Educational sailing on the ancient sailing ship-cruise ship "Dreverna" is also organized. Canoe rental and camping services are available as well.

The culinary route "Fish Road" is probably the most popular educational program. During it, visitors get acquainted with the exposition in the museum, taste delicious fish soup made by locals, sail along the Curonian Lagoon, the Nemunas delta, Minija, King Wilhelm channel. *Žvejų str. 13, LT-96240 Dreverna, tel. +370 46 476 301, mob. +370 648 23198, email. [gizo.sodyba@klaipedosrajonas.lt](mailto:gizo.sodyba@klaipedosrajonas.lt)*



## ŠILUTĖ



Photo from <https://www.silaineskrastas.lt/>

**Monument to Hermann Sudermann (1857 -1928).** In 1936, a monument to H. Sudermann was built next to the Evangelical Lutheran Church for the money donated by the people of Šilutė. The monument was taken care of by Hugo Scheu, who donated a plot of land and planted a path to the square with the writer's favourite birch trees. The author of the monument is the sculptor Erich Schmidt Kestner.

The monument was demolished during the Soviet era, and was replaced by an obelisk for Soviet soldiers. During Lithuanian rebirth, the monument was restored by the initiative of the Šilutė H. Sudermann Public Writers' Club. It is a grey marble bust on a 2-meter-high pedestal.

H. Sudermann, a famous writer and dramatist, born and raised in Šilutė. He studied in Germany. One of the most famous works that brought him an international recognition is the “Die Ehre” (en. *Honor*), written in 1889. In 1917, the writer once again reached his apogee by cleverly depicting the places and people of his native land in the “Litauische Geschichten” (en. *Lithuanian Short Stories*). This work was dedicated to the sponsor of Šilutė culture Hugo Scheu. The short stories “Journey to Tilsit”, “Mikas Bumbulis”, “Jonas and Erdmė” are the best examples of H. Sudermann's mastery.

## HUGO SHEU MUSEUM IN ŠILUTĖ



Lietuvinkų str. 4, Šilutė: [www.silutesmuziejus.lt](http://www.silutesmuziejus.lt) Photo by R. Kupčikienė

The state Manor, established in Šilutė in 1721, was a building of simple forms of late classicism and historicism with indistinct style features and restrained decor, typical to the Klaipėda region. After the reorganization of the Prussian state administration system, in the period of 1808 - 1818 the Manor was owned by Radkiai family. The history of Šilutė Hugo Scheu Museum, as well as the flourishing of the Manor itself, begins at the end of the 19th century, when in 1889 the old Šilokarčema Manor was bought by the landowner and the patron of Šilutė **Hugo Scheu**. He was one of the most famous personalities of Klaipėda region for his economic and cultural activities in East Prussia. Seeing how quickly traditional businesses and customs started to disappear due to the industrial revolution of the 19th century, he began to collect ethnographic material and folklore, and allocated two rooms of his Manor for these exhibits.

The manor museum had a collection of ethnographic furniture, clothes, documents, prints, maps and especially rich collection of the samples of the old Lithuanian clothes and fabric. It was the first museum in Klaipėda region.



After the Red Army stayed in the manor in 1944, a large part of the museum valuables was destroyed. During the Soviet years, a supportive farm of the Executive Committee, Vocational School of Agriculture and the Agricultural Technical School operated here.

After the declaration of Lithuanian independence in 1990, Šilutė District Municipality became the founder of the museum. After the change of the name of the institution, cardinal changes took place inside the museum: new expositions were prepared, and the most valuable examples of Hugo Sheu collection were exhibited. Branches of the museum were established in Kintai, Bitėnai, Švėkšna, Žemaičiai Naumiestis and Macikai village.

Currently, the Manor complex includes a museum, an education and restoration centre, where restoration workshops for textile, metal and paper restorers are located and educational programmes are organised. The Manor houses the museum's library-archive with the total 60 150 exhibits in all its branches.

An English-style park with three ponds and walking trails was established next to the Manor. There were about 150 species of plants in the park, that stretches along the Šyša River to the old railway bridge. H. Sheu held high positions in the Prussian government, therefore such important persons as the German Prince Joachim, Lithuanian presidents K. Grinius and A. Smetona, dr. J. Basanavičius, as well as others, visited this Manor.

**Special excursion “Šilutės sekretai” (Šilutė secrets):** [www.silutessekretai.lt](http://www.silutessekretai.lt)

"Šilutės sekretai" is a unique project both in Lithuania and in Europe, revealing the history of the city through the elements of small architecture. These are unique rooms established in the sidewalk and covered with glass, in which the life of the past, which took place in the historical buildings of Šilutė in the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, is restored.



Photo by R. Kupčikienė





Currently, 20 of Šilutė secrets are installed in the reconstructed sidewalk of Lietuvininkų Street. They can be easily found by looking underfoot on both sides of the street whilst walking *from Hugo Sheu Manor towards the crossroad with Taikos and Eglių streets*. "Secrets" provide an opportunity to see what the butter man or builder did at home, how the dentist's office looked like, what delicacies were available in the Patisserie, what the life was like on the Narrow-Gauge, Bus Stations or in the Carriage Post. The view is even more spectacular at night, as they are illuminated from the inside.

## RUSNĖ ISLAND

It is also the place of the highest floods in Lithuania. Every spring the melting ice causes high-level flooding on Rusnė Island. It is almost impossible to predict the level of impending floods, but usually the water level in Rusnė rises up to 50 cm and can last from a week to a month. Water level above the road from Rusnė to Šilutė in some places reaches more than 1.3–1.8 metres. One of the oldest major floods, during which the inhabitants of Rusnė suffered extremely heavy losses, occurred in 1888. Extremely large and threatening floods were recorded 8 more times: in 1958, 1966, 1970, 1978, 1979, 1994, 1995 and 2010.

Rusnė Island, surrounded on all sides by water, is a truly unique corner of nature. It is located in one of the Nemunas deltas, where *the Atmata and Skirvytė rivers intersect*. The name of the largest island in Lithuania was first mentioned in written sources in 1366, when the Teutonic Order gradually began to establish itself on the seaside and in the area of the Curonian Lagoon.

Although Rusnė is not the only island in the region, it is the largest one of the 6 islands in the Nemunas Delta. The island covers an area of 47 square kilometres. This island is famous not only for its landscape or well-preserved old wooden architecture, but also reasonably titled *the capital of the tastiest smoked fish*. Many people flock here every year to taste local dishes and enjoy the pleasant smells of fresh fish.

The harmony of water and land entertainment created on the largest island of Lithuania attracts visitors with various hobbies - fishing professionals and amateurs, ornithologists, researchers of nature and ethnocultural traditions, peace and water lovers. There is really no shortage of active water entertainment here. You can go fishing, sailing, boating or kayaking. In addition, Rusnė Island is the

most attractive centre for ice fishing in the Curonian Lagoon.

Rusnė Island and its surroundings can be explored travelling on foot, by boat or by bicycle. The distance from Rusnė to Uostadvaris is only 8 km, to **Uostadvaris lighthouse** another 2 km, and from there you can take a steamboat to Nida or Curonian Spit.



Photo from: [www.siluteinfo.lt/silutes-krastas/marsrutai/dviraciu/dviraciu-po-rusnes-sala](http://www.siluteinfo.lt/silutes-krastas/marsrutai/dviraciu/dviraciu-po-rusnes-sala)

In Uostadvaris, it is worth climbing the lighthouse (cultural heritage object), built in 1876 (now the 18 m high lighthouse is no longer used for navigation), next to which is the old house of its warden built in the folk architecture style. It is worth visiting the first water-lifting station, built in 1907. To protect the surrounding settlements from the floods of the Nemunas, ramparts were built here. However, this was not enough, so a water lifting station was installed to pump water out of the flooded areas. The renovated station now houses a small museum.

After crossing the alley and walking towards the Atmata river, you will see the remains of **the old Rusnė (Peterson) bridge** and the lantern next to the old post office building (1914). Construction of the first bridge over the Atmata river began in 1912, and two years later the two-arch lifting bridge, that encouraged introduction of electricity in the city, was already completed. Residents used the bridge for 30 years, but at the end of the war, in 1944, part of the bridge was blown up by retreating Germans.



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Photo by R. Kupčikienė

Continuing the journey along the footpath established on the embankment, you will see a monument to **H. Kallenbach**, who once lived in Rusnė, and his comrade **M. Gandhi**. Herman Kalenbach, a Lithuanian Jew from Rusnė, was an architect. In 1896 he went to South Africa, where in 1904 he met M. K. Gandhi, the leader of the Indian civil rights movement. He became a financial supporter and a good friend of Gandhi. In 2015, a monument commemorating the friendship between M. Gandhi and H. Kalenbach was built on the Atmata embankment (author - R. Kvintas).





Photo by R. Kupčikienė

Moving further on, you will reach the beginning of Rusnė Island, where the Rusnė river branches off into the Atmata and Skirvytė. It is said, that once, traveling to Klaipėda, Queen Louise had stopped here to admire the work of Rusnė fishermen. Traveling further along the embankment, you will see the majestic maple of Rusnė, which once used to be a popular meeting place. After crossing both the bridge over the Pakalnė river and the street, you will pass by the ethnographic village of Skirvytėlė, situated on the left bank of the river, at the end of which there is a hanging “monkey” bridge. After crossing it, you will find yourself at the port of Rusnė Island. You will return to the town walking along the embankment on the right bank of the Pakalnė river.

## MINGĖ

Near Kintai, by the Minija river, there is the village of Minija (Mingė, Minė), the so-called Lithuanian Venice, because the Minija river, flowing in the middle of it, serves as the street. People, living on both sides of the river, reach each other by boats.

This one-street fishing village, better known as Mingė, that is located 7 km south of Kintai in the downstream of the Minija river and in the Nemunas Delta Regional Park, was first mentioned in written sources in 1540. The land area of the sediments carried by the Atmata increased, so that the village found itself away from the lagoon, and the Minija river became the main body of water. Mingė village is an urban monument.



Photo by A. Kupčikas

The main business at the time was fishing, and it has survived to this day. The village in the picturesque Nemunas Delta Regional Park is unique not only in that the river represents the street here, but also in the fact that it cannot be crossed because there is no bridge here. Locals reach the other bank by boats or water bicycles. For this reason and because of the beautiful landscape, the locals call the village of Mingė the little Venice of Lithuania.

For many centuries, the main business of the Minija villagers was fishing. They used to fish in the fishiest areas of the Curonian Lagoon, and in winter they engaged in ice fishing, felling trees in frozen marshes, and cutting reeds in Kniaupas Bay. Reeds from the Curonian Spit were a popular commodity in all of East Prussia, so felling and selling them was a profitable activity at the time.

At present, there are 19 authentic brick and wooden homesteads in Mingė with buildings typical to Lithuania Minor, located on the banks of the river. The courtyards and flower gardens face the river, and there are piers for boats near each house. The village is also equipped with excellent central pier. It is one of the most visited places in the district.

Now the residents of Minija village are rapidly developing water and rural tourism. If you want to relax, you will also find several rural tourism homesteads here. For nature-loving holidaymakers, the village of Minija is a wonderful place to stay, as there are activities not only for fishing fans or sailors, but also for those who want to swim, enjoy water skiing or just spend some quiet time in a unique corner of nature. In the port of Mingė you can meet a person who has sailed the world on a



yacht. This is Andrius Varnas. He did this with his daughter Rasa and her husband Egoi. A considerable part of the route he sailed alone.

Large flocks of migratory waterfowl, especially in August-October, can be observed from observation towers installed for birdwatcher in Kintai fishing ponds, Lanka of Lake Krokai, Ventė Ragas and Rusnė Island, as well as on Aukštumala and Pakalnė educational trails. The landscape of the delta rivers (Minija, Atmata, Skirvytė, Rusnė) and the Curonian Lagoon, as well as the biological diversity of this area can be observed whilst sailing by boat from Šilutė, Rusnė, Minija, Venta or Dreverna.

## KINTAI

**Kintai** is a settlement near the Curonian Lagoon. In the centre of the town there is an **Evangelical Lutheran church**, the history of which dates back to the 18th century. According to the old locals, this church in Kintai was built or moved from somewhere in 1705, after the collapse of a church built in Venta at the time of the Crusaders. According to this date, it can be estimated that it is one of the oldest churches in this region. During the Soviet era, it was turned into a collective farm warehouse for agricultural implements, fertilizers and grain. After its renovation in 1987, the church started to serve as Kintai Exhibition and Concert Hall. Since then, concerts and exhibitions and events of the Kintai Summer Festival have been held here. The commemoration of the 120th anniversary of Vydūnas was also organized in this place.

1888-1892, the famous Lithuanian writer and philosopher Vydūnas lived and worked in Kintai. The Vydūnas Memorial Museum was established in the former parish school built in 1705, where you can get acquainted with the past of Lithuania Minor, see exhibits related to the Kintai region and the unique Vydūnas harp.

Vydūnas, whose real name was Vilhelmas Vilius Storostas (was born on March 22, 1868 in Jonaičiai, Šilutė district, and died on February 20, 1953 in Detmold, Germany; the remains were reburied in the Bitėnai-Rambynas cemetery in 1991), was a philosopher, a writer and an important cultural and public figure. In 1888, Vydūnas graduated from the Ragainė Teachers' Seminary. From 1888 to 1892 he taught in Kintai, in 1892–1912 in Tilsit. As a freelance student, he studied philosophy, sociology, history of religion, literature and art, English, French, and Sanskrit at the universities of Greifswald, Halle, Leipzig and Berlin. He organized Lithuanian performances,





concerts and song festivals, conducted the Birutė Choir, and contributed to the festivities organized by this organization in Tilzit and many other places in the East Prussian. He lectured on philosophy in Klaipėda, Šilutė, Tilzit and other cities of Lithuania Minor.



Kuršių str. 22 <http://www.vydunocentras.lt/>, photo from: <https://www.mle.lt/>

Kintai Parish Primary School built in 1705, where Vydūnas taught in 1888–1892; now Kintai Vydūnas Cultural Centre (2000).

### VENTĖ PENINSULA (Ventė Cape/Ventės Ragas)

It is an impressive corner of nature in the Curonian Lagoon. A **lighthouse** stands on the very edge of the peninsula, on the Cape of Ventė. The purpose of the building with an oil-fired lamp inside was to help lost ships to find the way to the shore. The current red brick lighthouse (11 m high tower) was built in 1852. The building has been declared a cultural heritage site. An old iron staircase decorated with original ornaments leads to the lighthouse observation deck. The object is also important as a sightseeing spot from which the Curonian Lagoon, the Curonian Spit and Rusnė Island open up. From this site, one can see Nida, which is 12-13 km to the southwest, Golden Dunes and Preila that is 8.5 km to the west. 3.6 km east of here, the Atmata, that is the main branch of the Nemunas, flows into the Curonian Lagoon.



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Photo by A. Kupčikas

## KING WILHELM CHANNEL



T. Wilhelm Channel. Technical heritage in Lithuania. Photo from YouTube.com

The Wilhelm Canal was excavated in 1863–1873. It was supposed to connect Minija and the Curonian Lagoon. The channel was named after the Prussian King Wilhelm I (the second son of King Friedrich

Wilhelm III and Queen Louise). The channel starts *at Lankupiai, continues through Dreverna, and finally reaches Klaipėda* (the channel is 25-27 km long and 28-30 m wide, with the average depth of 1.7 m). The purpose of this construction was to protect the ships and rafts from dangerous storms of the Curonian Lagoon, especially in the Ventė Cape area. After France lost in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), at the end of 1870, about 690 French war prisoners were sent to this place to speed up excavations (they dug the channel for three years; 5 of them died here). During the period of independent Lithuania, a monument was erected at the mouth of the channel to commemorate the French war prisoners that died here. In 1902-1904, ten light metal bridges connected the banks of the channel. Now the channel is popular as a water tourism route and a place for recreational fishing.

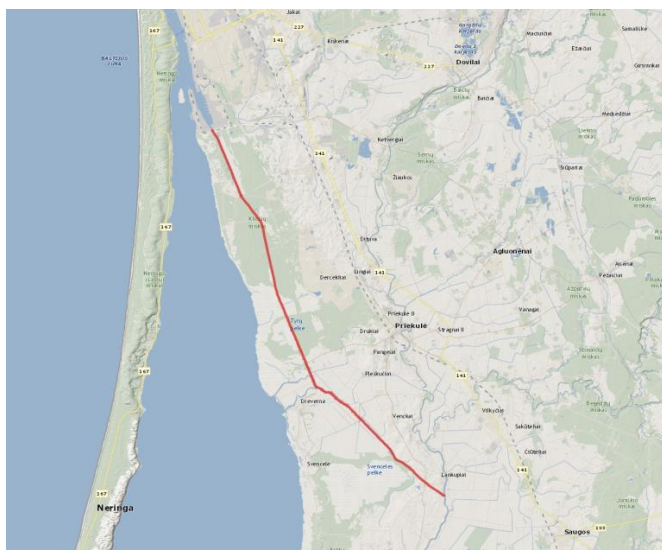


Photo from: <http://www.krastogidas.lt/>

## PRIEKULĖ

**40. Ieva Simonaitytė Memorial Museum** is established in the authentic environment of the guest and writer's rooms in a two-storey summer house, where she used to spend time in the period of 1961-1978. Ieva Simonaitytė is a writer of Klaipėda region, creator of short stories and novels, one of the most famous authors who depicted the life of Lithuania Minor in Lithuanian prose. The writer immortalized the uniqueness and historical destiny of the region, described the everyday life of Prussian Lithuanians, ethnic types and provided examples of ancient folklore. One of her best-known





novels is *Aukštųjų Šimonių likimas*, in which the history of Lithuania Minor is revealed through the fate of one family. For this novel, the writer was awarded the Lithuanian State Literary Award.

This museum offers excursions in Lithuanian, English and Russian languages and organizes various events, such as commemorations of I. Simonaitytė birthday and other memorable dates of her life, meetings with the winners of *I. Simonaitytė Literary Prize*, book presentations, events *Šviesos naktįje* that are the part of International Museum Day. Ieva Simonaitytė Memorial Museum organizes educational classes presenting the writer's life and work. *Vingio str. 11, Priekulė, tel. +370 46 454 247, mob. +370 696 75 876, email [simonaitytes@gargzdumuziejus.lt](mailto:simonaitytes@gargzdumuziejus.lt)*

## SMILTYNĖ

**42. The Lithuanian Sea Museum** is located in the northernmost point of the Curonian Spit, Kopgalis. The 98 kilometre long Curonian Spit peninsula ends in this place and the gates of Klaipėda port open. In the second half of the 19th century, the defensive Nerija Fortress, which was almost destroyed during the World War II, was built in Kopgalis. In 1979, this fort was rebuilt and adapted to the needs of the museum.

As presented on the official website of the museum, the museum collects, keeps, explores, preserves, restores and promotes museum valuables reflecting the history of navigation of Lithuania and the diversity of marine nature. The expositions of the museum - an aquarium, an exposition of marine fauna, swimming pools of seabirds and mammals, and an exposition of the history of navigation - are located in the Spit or Kopgalis Fortress. Near the fort, closer to the Curonian Lagoon, there is a separate Dolphinarium building. To the south of the museum is the Seaside Ethnographic Fisherman's Homestead, and even further away is a parking lot for historic fishing boats.

The Lithuanian Sea Museum covers an area of about 13 hectares. Penguins, Baltic seals and North Sea lions are housed in the outdoor pools near the central redoubt, aquarium building. An exposition of the history of Lithuanian shipping is installed in the potteries and casemates below the fortress embankments, and a collection of ancient and modern anchors is exhibited on the embankments in the former cannon sites. In total, more than 88 thousand exhibits are stored in the collections of the Sea Museum. In 2001, a special dolphin-child communication project - dolphin therapy - was launched at the Dolphinarium of the Lithuanian Sea Museum, which is intended for



children with various health disorders. The Lithuanian Sea Museum is a wonderful place for all curious travellers, and especially for families with children.

*Smiltynės str. 3, Klaipėda, tel. +370 659 61497, email aptarnavimas@muziejus.lt, arrival information: [https://www.muziejus.lt/lt/aplankyti#!kaip\\_atvykti](https://www.muziejus.lt/lt/aplankyti#!kaip_atvykti)*

## JUODKRANTĖ

**43. Juodkrantė**, a part of Neringa, was mentioned already in 1429. The settlement is located 18 km south of Klaipėda, in the valley of parabolic dunes on the shore of the Curonian Lagoon. To the southwest, west and north, the village is surrounded by the sand dunes overgrown with mountain pines. Juodkrantė is crossed by the Klaipėda-Karaliaučius highway; next to the lagoon is a pier. Settlements of the late Neolithic cord pottery culture and Bronze Age as well as the places of sand-flooded Nagliai and Karvaičiai villages dating back to the 16th – 19th centuries were found in Juodkrantė. Colonies of grey herons and great cormorants are located in the vicinity of the settlement. Juodkrantė has long attracted holidaymakers with excellent sandy beaches, holiday homes and hotels. Ludvikas Rėza Cultural Centre and Pomeranian Gallery are famous for their cultural activities. Travelers can enjoy the open-air exposition of stone sculptures, visit the mysterious *Hill of Witches* and discover various signs of Lithuanian and Prussian history.

**44. Pomeranian Gallery** is a division of the Lithuanian National Museum of Art (former Museum of Miniatures), which consists of three buildings. Various exhibitions are held during the summer season in the main building and in the former fisherman's farm building that is now adapted for the needs of the museum. The third building, dedicated for education, in summer time hosts activities for families, children and adults. *L. Rėzos str. 3, Juodkrantė, Neringa, tel. +37061616550, email [pamario.galerija@lndm.lt](mailto:pamario.galerija@lndm.lt)*

**47. Liudvikas Rėza Cultural Centre and its historical exposition.** In 1902–1903, a typical East Prussian architectural building was constructed in Juodkrantė - a red brick school. The school operated in the building until the Juodkrantė Exhibition House was established here in 2003. In 2007, the Juodkrantė Exhibition House was reorganized into the **Ludvikas Rėza Cultural Centre**. Currently, various Lithuanian and international exhibitions of history as well as contemporary and ancient art are

organized in the centre. The centre hosts various cultural events, such as traditional and public holidays, concerts, themed evenings, meetings, lectures, conferences, concerts.

This cultural centre provides educational activities for children and youth and has a permanent historical exposition presenting the history of Juodkrantė and the important personality of this region, Liudvikas Rėza. Martynas Liudvikas Gediminas Rėza (Ludwig Rheese) was born on January 9, 1776 in Karvaičiai, on the Curonian Spit. He died on 30 August 1840 in Königsberg. Liudvikas Rėza was one of the most important figures of Prussian Lithuanian society at that time, a consistorial councillor of the Evangelical Church in Prussia, a theologian, a folklorist, a Lithuanianist, and a professor at the University of Königsberg. *L. Rėzos str. 8 B, Juodkrantė, tel. +370 469 53448, email [kultura@lrezoskc.lt](mailto:kultura@lrezoskc.lt)*

## KLAIPĖDA



Former Residence, Klaipėda City Hall today, photo from: [www.uostas.info.lt](http://www.uostas.info.lt)

### THE RESIDENCE OF PRUSSIA ROYALS, DANĖS str. 17

It is a building on Danės, formerly known as Luizės, street (today - Klaipėda City Hall, Danės str. 17) - a monument of rich biography related to the Danish, Prussian, Russian, French, Lithuanian periods of the city's history. This historic Classicist-style house, that was built at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, belonged to the famous merchant and Danish consul in Klaipėda Lorck, and later passed to his son-in-law, the great citizen F. L. Consetius.





Although Klaipėda was granted self-governance in 1254, for a long time the community of citizens was very small and the city was unable to build a town hall. In the 16th century, when Klaipėda experienced its first economic boom, the magistrate asked the government to allow the construction of a brick town hall.

The town hall was built at the intersection of the main Turgaus and Tiltų streets, but it is believed that this building burned down in the second half of the 17th century. In the second half of the 19th century, the town's financial situation improved as wealthy merchants donated considerable sums of money, so in 1846 the City Magistrate bought this house for 13,000 thalers and located the Town Hall here.

This was the two-storey building decorated with mouldings, that in the early 19th century first belonged to the Danish consul Lorck and later to his relative. After all the city clocks burned down during the great fire of 1854, it was planned to install the clock on the Town Hall, but due to lack of funds, a tower of a nearby fire station was chosen for it. In 1875-1877, the building was reconstructed and rebuilt in the Neo-Renaissance style, and its façade was decorated with heraldry: the coat of arms of Klaipėda, Prussian eagles, and the masks depicting the heads of the ancients. The project for exterior reconstruction was prepared by a local architect, construction consultant Cornelius.

The building, which is closely associated with prominent historical figures, has always remained the most prominent feature of the city. During the Napoleonic War (1807-1808), it was the Residence of King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia and Queen Louise.

The ultimate challenge for Prussia was the war with France. As early as 1802, the first meeting of the King of Prussia with the Russian Emperor Alexander I took place in Memel. On July 8, the royal couple arrived from Königsberg across the Curonian Spit and settled in this house of the merchant and the Danish consul Lorck. Meanwhile, the Russian emperor appeared in the city on July 10 and was greeted by magnificent triumphal arches. The arch at the beginning of Liepų street consisted of two obelisks surrounded by garlands, and the Prussian and Russian flags fluttered on them. *This meeting opened the historical Klaipėda page in the life of Queen Louise, from which she was viewed as a prominent monarch.* In her diary, the queen herself described the meeting in warm colours and expressed fellow feelings for the ally, and the meeting was immortalized on canvas by the painter Henrich Anton Dehling. According to this work, an engraving was created in 1805, which hung in the anteroom of the meeting hall of Klaipėda Council.



Such important political decisions and meaningful documents, as the October Edict, announcing the abolition of slavery, the City Regulations, etc., were initiated and implemented in this historic building. On January 28, 1807, a Peace Treaty between England and Prussia was signed here, and on April 1-4 of the same year, Russian Emperor Alexander I was solemnly welcomed to discuss the terms of the treaty regarding the extension of the war with Napoleon. Diplomats and high-ranking military from England, Russia, France and other countries regularly visited the residence, and meetings with them resulted in important decisions for both the country and the city. On March 10, 1807, Queen Louise's 32nd birthday was celebrated here. Here Queen Louise wrote a number of letters that were published by the former director of the Louise Gymnasium, Dr. Eduardas Kiuzelis.

**The Bas-Relief Plaque of the Queen Louise.** In 1999, at the initiative of the German Änchen von Tharau Society, a bronze bas-relief for Queen Louise (author H. Haacke), based on a painting by Gerhard von Kuegelgen, was unveiled on the building at Danės str. 17.



Photo from: <http://www.krastogidas.lt/>

Luise Auguste Wilhelmine Amalie Strelitz (1776 - 1810) was the wife of King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, the adored Queen, and the mother who raised nine children. Among them are King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, King of Prussia and Emperor of Germany (since 1871) Wilhelm I, Tsarina Charlotte (Princess Charlotte of Prussia, wife of Tsar Nicholas I). Louise became the Queen of Prussia in 1797, when Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm came to the Throne, which he ruled until 1840.

Portraits of Louise hung in the halls of Klaipėda post office, gymnasium and the Town Hall, and there were the bas-reliefs of Louise in at least several other city buildings. Louise was one of the most favourite historical personalities in Lithuania Minor. Unfortunately, many signs reminiscent of Louise were destroyed during the Soviet era.

The locals of Lithuania Minor loved Louise very much because of her pleasant character. She was considered an intercessor of ordinary people. Napoleon himself both admired and at the same time hated Louise. It was Louise, not her husband Wilhelm Friedrich, who formed a coalition of states against Napoleon. The last stab for Louise's broken heart happened during the Peace of Tilsit (July 7, 1807), when Napoleon met with her. She was said to have asked for political concessions during the conversation, but Napoleon only praised her outfit. The French Emperor later told Alexander I that "The Queen of Prussia is a charming woman whose soul is in harmony with her beautiful exterior. Therefore, I would like not to remove the crown, but to put it in front of the Queen's feet". German historiography emphasizes that the humiliation in Tilsit finally killed the queen (Louise died at the age of 34).

The cult of Louise took hold while she was still alive. She was called as the 'brightest angel', 'the holy', 'the Prussian star in the clouds of storms', 'the Madonna of Prussia'. The symbolic apogee of the Louise cult dates back to 1870-1871, when the Prussian-French War began. Before leaving for the front, Louise's second son, Wilhelm I, stumbled upon his mother's sarcophagus and vowed revenge on France. Here he placed a bouquet of blue flowers (the eldest son remembered how the wheel of a carriage had broken while his mother was traveling from Königsberg to Mēmele, so she had time for collecting blue flowers in the meadow for the children's wreaths). The boy, adorned with a crown of blue flowers, is also depicted on the relief of the Column of Peace in Berlin.

## LOUISE SQUARE/MONUMENT OF BORUSSIA

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the victory in the battles against Napoleon, Louise Square was established in front of the town hall (Danės str. 17). On that occasion, the quays were renewed, trees were planted, and flower beds were formed.



Photo from.: [www.krastogidas.lt](http://www.krastogidas.lt)





It is a monument to commemorate 100-year anniversaries both of the victory against Napoleon and of the refuge of King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia and Queen Louise in Klaipėda. It is sometimes called a National Monument because Klaipėda was the only Prussian city not occupied by Napoleon's army. In 1907, in front of the Town Hall, the former house of merchant F. L. Consentius, that from 1807 to 1808 served as a temporary Prussian residence, a monument was erected. The author of the monument "Borussia" is the sculptor P. Breuer. The 4-meter-high bronze sculpture was brought from Berlin. Prussia was symbolized by a woman in antique clothes and a Roman helmet on her head, who resembled Athene, the Greek goddess of war. She held a dagger in her right hand and a shield and spear in her left, on which was affixed a plate bearing the inscription "Borussia". King Wilhelm II of Prussia and his wife attended the unveiling of the monument. Their majesties travelled by a chariot from the port through the city decorated with flower garlands, and after the ceremony they visited the Town Hall.

Many people from Klaipėda and the surrounding towns gathered for the ceremony of the monument unveiling, and the Colonial Shopping Goods Association, the Military Society and the Athletes' Association grouped up. Near the Market Bridge, in front of the monument square, yachts brought by the Sailing Society were lined up. After 1923, Lithuanian rebels removed the monument and transported it to the Town Hall courtyard. In the 1930s, with the intensification of local Germans' nationalist sentiment, the monument was rebuilt again. During World War II, the monument disappeared and a sculpture of a "Fisherman" was erected in its place during the Soviet years. The sculpture is surrounded by a fountain that works in summer time.

### **Queen Louise Gymnasium, Puodžių str. 1 (now Klaipėda Queen Louise Youth Centre)**

The commemoration of Queen Louise in Klaipėda is related to her contribution to education. Louise was particularly concerned with raising the education of girls by cultivating noble female customs and self-awareness based on the love of the homeland, so she sponsored the private High School for Girls, established in 1806. Following the example of Queen Louise, entire generations of the German nation were brought up, as the most of the girls' schools had a Louise-named foundation.

The year spent in Klaipėda also marked the beginning of significant reforms: the liberation of peasants from bondage was announced here, the reform of universities was carried out, and the welfare of the city was taken care of. Queen Louise supported the reforms needed for Prussia, and she became



popular in Prussian Lithuania. Streets and schools were named after her. In 1911, Louise Rest House for poor children was established in Giruliai.

In 1889, at the beginning of Puodžių Street, the construction of a gymnasium was started, which was consecrated on February 10, 1891, *giving it the name of Queen Louise*. During the opening ceremony of the gymnasium, a procession of students was organized, performances and gymnastic exercises were shown to the citizens. King Wilhelm II of Germany, who was attending the festivities, presented the school with a copy of the portrait of Queen Louise painted by the artist J. F. A. Tischbein. On that occasion, the merchant H. Gerlach presented to gymnasium a portrait of King Friedrich Wilhelm III. Both portraits hung in the hall, where Queen Louise's words for the youth were written in large letters: *'There is a need to move ahead. Let's just make sure that we get more mature and better every day.'*

The gymnasium operated until 1945. Many of the teachers were prominent personalities, and such well-known people as F. W. Argelander, B. Becker, H. Scheu, V. Gaigalaitis, M. Brakas and others studied there. *In 2016, the name of Queen Louise was returned for the Youth Centre located in this building. In the same year, at the initiative of members of the Queen Louise Rotary Club, a plaque dedicated to her was hung on the building.*

### **LIEPŲ STREET** (former Alexander str.)

Compared to other streets of the city, the name of this one was changed the most times (the street was called Geese Market, Alexander str., Liepų str., Smetona Alley, Adolf Hitler str., Maxim Gorky str.). Finally, in 1988, the street was renamed to Liepų street again. Even today, it is one of the most beautiful streets in Klaipėda, where buildings of various architectural styles, former villas of wealthy citizens of the 19th century stand and where museums (Liepų street 12 - Clock Museum), banks, restaurants are located.

This street began to take shape in the 17th century. Initially, gardeners and florists settled here, and a little later merchants, industrialists and civil servants. Often these were immigrants from England, some were relatives of native Germans. Those rich people also had houses and warehouses in the old town, and here, in a quiet place, they built their residences.

In the first half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Liepų street became a representative part of the city. It was even a subject to special requirements. For example, it was forbidden to carry goods on sledges, in carriages, and even heavy bundles or to pour water on

sidewalks of it. When the rich learned that Liepų street was to be extended and connected to the highway by a bridge across the Danė, they began to protest because of the worry of how to live if peasant carriages would start rattling on this street early in the morning.

*Nearby, at the beginning of Liepų street, on the site of the former Geese Market, stood a monument to Kaiser Wilhelm I. The Prussian Army Guards used to march here, and Queen Louise enjoyed walks with her escort in this place.*

### Monument to King Wilhelm I



Photo from: [www.uostas.info](http://www.uostas.info)

Klaipėda did not have a representative square. Soldiers' parades were usually held in marketplaces. After the royal couple settled here in 1807, the Prussian Army Guards used to march on the site of the Goose Market, that was situated at the beginning of Liepų street. In 1896, a monument to King Wilhelm I (he ruled from 1861 to 1888, was the King of Prussia and from 1871 the Emperor of Germany), whose name was popular because Germany defeated France during his rule, was erected on Liepų street (sculptor R. Bėrvaldas). It was a 2.7 m high statue depicting King Wilhelm I with the clothes of a General. The figure was raised on a rectangular granite pedestal that was of 3 meters high. On the front of it was an inscription "Wilhelm the Great".

The other three sides of the pedestal were decorated with bas-reliefs illustrating the moments in the life of Wilhelm I and his family in Klaipėda. One of them depicts the King, at that time the Prince, reporting on his military service in Klaipėda. In the second, Queen Louise lays a wreath of cornflowers on the Prince's head. The third bas-relief represents the meeting of Wilhelm's father, King Friedrich Wilhelm III, with the Russian Emperor Alexander I in 1802. The monument was demolished in 1923, and in the fourth decade of the 20th century it was rebuilt in another place on



Liepų street, on the edge of the current Donelaitis Square. The monument disappeared during World War II.

### **A program, created by Klaipėda Agnia Šeiko Theater “DANCING CHURCHES”**

Choreographer Agnija Šeiko, together with the dance theatre “Padi Dapi Fish” and a team of dancers and their students, created a dance and sound performance-tour around seven places of the old Klaipėda churches. It tells the history of the city, talks about past life in unrecognizably changed places, as well as about the churches of the old town that did not survive. The performance can be seen only in Klaipėda. Spectators of the performance-excursion, wearing headphones and accompanied by a male voice, travel from Klaipėda Castle through Anikė Square, Turgaus and Tiltų streets to the Old Market. During the tour you can also visit the less visited corners of the old town, where you can find a supermarket or apartments in the places of former churches. While traveling around the Old Town of Klaipėda, one not only listens to the story (the history of the city is enlivened by the memories of the citizens), but enjoys the illustrative fragments of dance, movement or live paintings that the excursion is diversified with.

*Route: Piliavietė, Teatro Square, Turgaus street, Tiltų street, the Old Market.*



Photos from: <https://www.facebook.com/253025738094993/posts/1166673236730234/>  
<http://www.teatrai.lt/events/seiko-sokio-teatras-keliaujancios-baznycios-klaipeda-tranzit-memel/4163>

### **SQUARE ON DANĖS STREET. Embankment.**

The royal family's leisure place, where they enjoyed walking and watching the passing ships, is the square on the embankment of the Danė river. In 2003, the largest granite monument in Lithuania “ARKA”, the sculpture dedicated to the 85th anniversary of the Tilsit Act and the 80th anniversary of the unification of Klaipėda region with Lithuania, was unveiled in the Danė Square, next to the Market



Bridge. It is a monument to a united Lithuania, topped with the words of the famous Lithuanian writer Ieva Simonaitytė, written a month after the rebellion of 1923: “We are one nation, one country, one Lithuania!” (the authors of the monument are the winners of the Lithuanian National Prize: sculptor A. Sakalauskas, architect R.Krištapavičius and engineer-designer T.Tubis).

The maritime spirit of Klaipėda is embodied by the **wooden sailing vessel MERIDIANAS**, which is a symbol of the city, and one of the most visited places by tourists that adorns the embankment of the Danė river. The training sailing vessel *Meridianas* was built in 1948 at the Turku shipyard in Finland as a contribution to the Soviet Union after the World War II, along with 48 other sailing ships of this type. Arriving at Klaipėda Maritime School, it was the first ship for many future post-war skippers and captains. The *Meridianas* is a 3-5-masted sailing vessel with straight sails on the front and diagonal sails on other masts (the length of the vessel is 51.70 m). After the change of purpose of the ship in 1971, it was transferred to the river Dangė (Danė), and a restaurant was opened there. Later, the sailing ship was repeatedly repaired, its interior was renewed, and the wooden hull was ‘*wrapped*’ into the tin armour. During the reconstruction in 2014, the restaurant was renovated, a cognitive exposition about the vessel was installed, and the steering wheel details were restored. Now, in the outdoor exposition, you can see the original propeller of this ship, parts of wooden structures and shipboards, curved ballast stones, lanterns, etc.

*Of course, when going to St. John’s Church, Queen Louise had to cross the old Biržos Bridge. After a short walk on Tiltų street towards Jonas Hill, stop at the place of the largest St. John the Evangelical Church. This is an important place for Klaipėda, which is being prepared for reconstruction.*

**BIRŽOS BRIDGE.** Part of the old port.

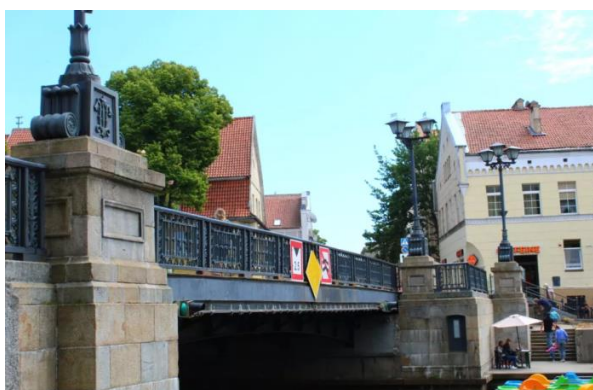


Photo from: <https://klaipedatravel.lt/>

The bridge behind the *Meridianas* is the Biržos Bridge. Until the second half of the 18th century, this bridge was of strategic importance. As a result, a ravelin was poured on the right bank of the river to protect it. The Biržos Bridge provided the city with a lot of income, as each passing ship had to pay a fee for lifting it (by opening a small gap in the middle of the wooden bridge to allow the masts of the sailboats to pass).

Until 1770, this one of the oldest bridges in the city was called *Tilto vartai* (the Bridge Gate), because carriages passing through it, passengers and ships sailing along the river were inspected and registered here. There were small wooden shops on the bridge. Moving the city borders to the north, the gate was taken down. This lifting bridge was rebuilt even seven times in the period of 1807–1924 (after the reconstruction in 1879, the bridge became liftable in two places - for large and small ships). Finally, due to the existence of a Market nearby, the bridge received the name of it. Until the middle of the 19th century, it was the only transit bridge. The bridge was demolished during the World War II and rebuilt in 1948.

**TURGAUS street** - a unique feature that distinguishes Klaipėda from other Lithuanian cities.



Plan of the Old Town (Turgaus str. 21), photo from: <https://kalbaklaipeda.lt/>

According to the historian M. Vainorius, unlike many other cities, Klaipėda did not have a central square where a market was usually established for many centuries. In Klaipėda, this function was performed by a street formed in the 16th century, which later received the name of the Turgaus street. In the 16th century, the current Turgaus street was still called Bažnyčių Street, although there was already a market place (long market) near the churches at its eastern end. The name of the street





was changed in the 17th century, when it became more intensively used for trade. The so-called long markets were the most prevalent in Prussia, especially in its northern part. There were such markets in the old towns of Gdansk, Königsberg, Marienburg, Braunsberg, Elbing, and in England.

Already in the 17th century, there stood taller houses decorated with wavy Renaissance pediments where the city's richest - merchants and civil servants - lived. Houses on other streets did not have such pediments. After the fire that destroyed the buildings on Turgaus street in 1854, the houses were quickly rebuilt. Wealthy townspeople built compact houses in the old town; most of them were put on the old foundations, and the size, as well as plan were not significantly changed.

After the part of the castle ditches was filled in 1819, the New Market was opened, and the present Theater Square, located between the two market places, later merged with them and formed a long market stretching from St. John's Church to the castle.

### **TILTŲ street**

Former Friedrich Wilhelm street, now Tiltų street, was named in honour of King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia, who won the battle against the Swedes. This place is also associated with the commemoration of a very important meeting: King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia and Queen Louise met with the Russian Tsar Alexander I here.

The meeting of two powerful monarchs in Klaipėda was very important not only for the locals, but also for the European politicians and artists, who got to know about this remote city. After this meeting, the name of Klaipėda was spread much more widely than before.

The royal couple, who left Königsberg on 7 June 1802, was greeted in Smiltynė the next day by the twelve virgins who arrived by boat and were singing German and Lithuanian songs. The guests, who arrived across the Curonian Lagoon, were greeted by a delegation of townspeople at the house of the Danish Consul L. Lorck (later the Town Hall building). The guests stayed in this house.

The city was decorated with three triumphal arches. One of them was built at the intersection of current H. Manto and S. Daukanto streets, the other at the beginning of Liepų street, and the third was established next to the Bridge Gate. The Russian Tsar Alexander I was greeted in a particularly festive way. On June 10, the Prussian king on a white horse, accompanied by the townspeople, went to the suburbs of Klaipėda to welcome the Tsar. On June 12, a large military parade took place in front of the Liepaja Gate, and in the evening a party, organized by the merchants of Klaipėda, was held in the house of merchant Christian Wilhelm Wachsenthe on Tiltų street (the building has not survived).



After this meeting of the monarchs of the two states, Klaipėda was marked with royal signs. To commemorate the event, the current Danės street was named after Louise, Liepų Alėja, where Alexander I lived, received the name of Alexander, and the names of Akmenų Pylimo and Tiltų streets were changed to Friedrich Wilhelm street. The streets had these names from the beginning of the 19th century until 1923.

After the annexation of Klaipėda region to Lithuania, Friedrich Wilhelm street was renamed to Laukininkų street, because of the Evangelical Lutheran Church that had stood on this street since the end of the 17th century, serving the inhabitants of the vast surroundings of Klaipėda, most of whom were peasants that in this region were called '*laukininkai*'.

This street, except for the buildings built in the post-war years, is dominated by the architecture typical of Klaipėda in the second half of the 19th century. These are two or three-storey buildings, representing the style of historicism, with commercial premises on the ground floors and residential spaces on the upper floors.

### **FRIEDRICH PASSAGE, Tiltų str. 26 A**

The historical place of Klaipėda Old Town, where Friedrich Passage is currently located, in the 16-17th centuries was inhabited by soldiers and fishermen, and belonged to the suburb of Odų street. At the end of the 17th century, the suburb expanded and was renamed to the city of Friedrich, which in 1722 was merged with the Old Town. In 1707, the city of Friedrich was awarded the coat of arms and the flag. On one side of it was a wild man crowned with oak leaves, leaning on an anchor with his right hand, and on the other side, under the crown, the initials FR (FriedrichRex - King Friedrich) were intertwined.



Photo from: [www.uostas.info.lt](http://www.uostas.info.lt)

Friedrich Passage extends from Tiltų to Šaltkalvių street. It was a very important route that port carriers used to get to the rest place for them and their horses. After leaving their carriages with expensive cargo securely locked in the building and taking the horses to the stables, they themselves used to go to sleep in a tavern hostel.



After the end of the Seven Years' War (1757-1763), with the increase in trade and the development of the timber industry, craftsmen and merchants from Prussian and Livonian cities began to settle in Klaipėda. In the city of Friedrich, this area was a temporary rest stop before long distance trips for those, who carried goods from the port by horse drawn carriages.

In the 19th century, the area was occupied by tradesmen, so various commercial companies operated here. One of them was F.H. Lepert's Trading House, where various goods were sold. At the beginning of the 20th century and during the post-war period, a warehouse was established here with a point of sale for various household goods. Book sellers also used to settle in the neighbourhood of different warehouses and stores, that were selling household and agricultural goods.

After the reconstruction, the Friedrich Passage became a modern place of rest, leisure and entertainment.

**BLACKSMITHS MUSEUM**, Šaltkalvių str. 2, 2a, [www.mlimuziejus.lt/lt/kalvystes-muziejus/](http://www.mlimuziejus.lt/lt/kalvystes-muziejus/)

The origination of this museum is related to the history of blacksmithing in Lithuania Minor. In 1974 the demolition of Klaipėda old cemetery began, and metal crosses, fences and other blacksmiths' wares were transported from it to the place of scrap iron. Klaipėda blacksmith, metal restorer Dionyzas Varkalis managed to save and preserve part of the cemetery monuments. Soon, in the abandoned building of Klaipėda Old Town, D. Varkalis discovered the smithery with the authentic tools and equipment of a well-known master blacksmith Gustav Katzke. In 1992, the Blacksmith Museum was opened here with an artistic exposition of the crosses and fences of Klaipėda Cemetery in the yard, and the blacksmithing craft was revived.

Forged crosses were manufactured in Klaipėda, in the workshops, foundries, blacksmiths and locksmiths of cities and towns, manors and villages of Lithuania Minor. Iron tomb crosses, tomb fences and gates, which are characterized by a great variety of artistic styles (neo-Gothic, neo-Baroque, Neoclassicism), were forged, bent and assembled here. G. Katzke smithery was one of those places in Klaipėda, where works of art, locks and hardware for carriages were produced. In Klaipėda city and in the whole Klaipėda region, blacksmithing was mainly carried out by Germans or nationalized Lithuanians. Another centre of blacksmithing in Lithuania Minor was Tilsit. Some of the tombstones and fences found in Klaipėda region were made by masters from Tilsit.





The crosses, fences, and gates from the cemeteries of Klaipėda region, sun crosses from Lithuania, architectural details of Klaipėda Old Town houses, fishing tools, household items are exhibited on the second floor of the museum.

### **ARTISTS' YARD - WAREHOUSES - Trade / Crafts**

The Artists' Yard with unique warehouses reminds the times of the development of crafts and trade through the port of Klaipėda, which became more active during the residence of the royal couple. The stay of the royal family in Klaipėda led to the unprecedented development of trade relations with the city. At that time, Klaipėda became the most important supply base for Prussian and Russian military units fighting for East Prussia. The prosperity of trade and transport was also conditioned by the growing demand from England for high-quality shipbuilding materials from the Baltic countries, as well as the business contacts established during the existence of the manor. The royal couple contributed to the management and renewal of the city.

In Klaipėda, the unique half-timbered warehouses were covered with curved gable roofs to provide the maximum space in the attic for storing merchandise, and their upper part was slightly pushed to the yard to let carriages pass through. In Klaipėda, Fachwerk was especially popular in the first half of the 19th century, when flourishing of trade during the Napoleonic Wars stimulated the growth of the port city. The popularity of Fachwerk in the 19th century is also confirmed by the part of the Old Town between Didžiosioji Vandens street and Turgaus (Market) Square. To this day, large groups of half-timbered buildings, courtyards and porches, as well as an impressive building that escaped both the great fire of Klaipėda in 1854 and its subsequent demolition still exist here. Surrounded by half-timbered warehouses, the Cultural Communication Centre, Klaipėda Ethnocultural Centre and the Arts Yard are situated here now. In summer, there are art workshops here, where you can see how works of art made of wood, ceramics, textiles and other materials are born.

The reason for the popularity of Fachwerk in Klaipėda is simple: construction of brick buildings required a solid base and deep foundations, which were costly in low wetlands. As a result, frame structures became popular due to their low weight and more attractive price.

### **HISTORIC POST OFFICE (Aukštoji str. 13)**

The most prominent feature of Aukštoji street are the old town buildings that survived the fire of 1854. The oldest historical post office on Aukštoji street reminds the route of the post services that

led from Berlin through Königsberg, Klaipėda, Riga to St. Petersburg. Not only mail but also passengers were transported by post carriages along this road. This was also the road that the royal family through the Curonian Spit came to Klaipėda. Klaipėda was the final stop of the old postal route leading through the Curonian Spit to Memel, which was the farthest point of the German Empire.

Historical sources testify that until the end of the 18th century, the oldest and the only surviving Pigeon Post Office in East Prussia was located in this place. In those days, winged helpers used to deliver letters to the surrounding areas faster than mail chariots.

The interior of the post office was decorated with sculptures by the artist Karčiauskas, original oak doors with bronze rivets and fittings, valuable furniture, and metal works. On the table stood a moving inkjet with a fragment of a horse, and the letters could be written with bronze or Melchior pens. A brand stamp was also created.



Didžioji Vandens street.

**DIDŽIOJI VANDENS** street. Museum of the History of Lithuania Minor (Didžioji Vandens str. 2. Klaipėda) <https://www.mlimuziejus.lt/>

Didžioji Vandens street is the place, where the old town merged with the former city of Friedrich. The name of the street reminds us that the old branch of the Dangė river once flowed here,

which, as the city expanded (17-18th centuries), was decided to be filled up. After filling the branch, a street appeared, which in the city plans of the second half of the 18th century was called Grosse Wasserstrassen. The name has remained unchanged to this day. Merchants' houses stood on this street. In the 18 – 19th centuries, taverns, bakeries, breweries, shops and various workshops were established on Didžioji Vandens street. It was one of the busiest and most picturesque streets in the former suburbs. The building on Didžioji Vandens street, that is marked by number 2, is one of the oldest residential houses in Klaipėda. It was built in the period of 1773–1774 by the director of the Post Office J. Ch. Witte. It is a building of a Baroque style. As there were no suitable economic conditions for the spread of this architectural style in Klaipėda, it existed for a short period (only in the second half of the 18th century), and its legacy is modest compared to other cities. In the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the building was owned by craftsmen and small traders.

Another building on Didžioji Vandens street, that is marked by number 8, was built in the late 18th century. Cellar vaults of this building were masoned in the first half of the 19th century. The owners of the site and building were large traders. This is evidenced by the architecture of the building as well. Traditionally, merchants' homes were equipped with basements, where they stored goods that were rented during fairs to merchants from other cities.



Photo from: <https://www.mlimuziejus.lt/>

The Museum of the History of Lithuania Minor (MLIM) is located on three sites (Didžioji Vandens str. 2, 8 and the former smithery), which are located along the old Dangė riverbed, in the area of the former Friedrich suburb. The museum offers following expositions: Prehistory of the Country, Conquests of the Teutonic Order, Lithuania Minor and Prussia in Old Maps, Money, Klaipėda Region in the First Half of the 20th Century, Ethnic Culture of Prussian Lithuanians. Visitors can also enjoy



various educational programs (“Symbols of the City”, “Lost City”, “The Journey around Lithuania Minor” and others).

## THEATER SQUARE

The Theatre Square has always been a centre of attraction. In 1819, after filling part of the castle ditches, the New Market was opened. The square was occupied by butchers’ stalls. In 1860, the stalls were demolished, and a market hall was built on the outskirts of the New Market. There was a Fish Market next to it and the castle ditches. Fishermen used to bring the fish to this market by lagoon and sell it directly from the boats or in a special wing of a hall.

With the establishment of the New Market, the current Theatre Square, located between the two markets, later was merged with them and turned into a marketplace. Thus, in the first half of the 20th century, Turgaus street, Theater Square, the New Market turned into a long trading place stretching from St. John’s Church to the castle. During the trading time, carriages, stalls and amusement tents used to occupy the whole territory. When there was not enough space for traders in the squares, they also used to settle at the beginning of Sukilėlių street. The square was built here only in the 19th century. It is said that already in the 17th century, various plays were performed in the Theatre Square by travelling actors.

Klaipėda Theatre. In the city plans dating back to the 18th century, a square building called the House of Comedy, that was owned by a magistrate, is marked near the castle moats and Danė. On the site of the current Theatre Square, the merchant Ch. W. Wachsenn set up a theatre, and in 1818, the German director Ulbrich set up a 200-seat hall and opened the theatre. During the city fire of 1854, the theatre burned down, but the ruins of it were bought by the merchant Mason who constructed a new building on the old foundation that has survived to this day. Not only drama and opera performances were shown here, but also concerts of the Klaipėda Theatre Symphony Orchestra were often held. During the tour of Königsberg Opera to Klaipėda in August-September 1836, Richard Wagner conducted here. In March 1939, A. Hitler spoke from the balcony of it. The last reconstruction of the theatre took place a few years ago, and today it is one of the most modern stages in Lithuania.

The main highlight of this square is **the monument to Simon Dach**.





Photo from: [www.krastogidas.lt](http://www.krastogidas.lt)

The fountain, equipped in 1912 in Klaipėda Theatre Square, was dedicated to the memory of Simon Dach (1605-1659), a poet who was born in Klaipėda and lectured as professor at Königsberg University. The Simon Dach Fountain, which was built from public funds, was also popularly called the “Simon Dach Well” (Simon Dach Brunnen). The sculpture depicts a young barefoot girl – one of the characters, which were carolled by the poet. This love story about the beautiful daughter of an early deceased priest from Tarawa, Ann, who at the age of seventeen married one of the originators of the Lithuanian writing, Johan Partacijus, dates back to the 17th century. Simon Dach, already renowned poet and future professor of Königsberg University, was invited to this wedding taking place in Königsberg Cathedral. Ann was a girl whom the poet fell in love with at first sight. This love story was immortalized in the poem “Ann from Tharau” (Änchen von Tarhau). The legendary poem, which spread and later became famous as a song that is constantly sounding not only in Lithuania, Germany, but also in Switzerland and Austria, glorifies the poet’s love to Ann for almost 400 years.

It is believed that in 1939 the monument was removed from the Theatre Square, possibly to prepare the site for the monument to Hitler. Inspired by poetic love, the famous sculpture of Taravos Anikė was restored in 1989 thanks to H. Radziwill, the initiator of the restoration of this monument, and several other enthusiasts.

Taravos Anikė with the Simon Dach’s words testifying about his great love that are engraved on the pedestal (“Ännchen von Tharau, mein Reichthum, mein Gut, du meine Seele, mein Fleisch und mein Blut!” /Ann from Tharau, you are the greatest asset to me, you – my soul, flesh and blood!), became a symbol of the city again.



## THE DANĖ RIVER EMBANKMENT FROM THE BIRŽOS BRIDGE TO THE NORTH HORN

The queen loved to walk along that waterfront and admire the boats. In a letter to her brother, she wrote, “I have never seen a port as beautiful as at this moment. For the first time, Danė is so crowded with ships that you can only see the mast at the mast, like a forest, the harbourage is also full of ships - all for the simple reason that they can enter, but a terrible storm hinders their departure.” From this port, the queen used to sail to the sea and to Tauralaukis ...

A port to which the merchant ships from Lübeck and Bremen used to come, was established after the construction of Klaipėda Castle in the 13th century. Until the 18th century, the port of Dangė was the most important sea trade port and existed until the middle of the 20th century. In the 16th-17th centuries, it was located in the section of Danė between the present Biržos and Pilies (Karl) bridges. The Danė embankment was built up with warehouses already in the 16th century. At the beginning of the 17th century, brick residential houses and warehouses stood on Žvejų street. In the middle of the 16th century Klaipėda's rivals, the inhabitants of Danzig, overloaded the Danė port with stones, therefore only small vessels could enter it until 1820.

There was a wish to concentrate warehouses as close as possible to the water. According to some historical sources, the city scales, located on the left bank of the Danė river near the current Biržos bridge, were already operating at the beginning of the 17th century. In 1657, Klaipėda was granted the privilege of unlimited trade and shipping. Warehouses were built near Danė.

Although Klaipėda suffered from the plague at the beginning of the 18th century (in 1709, 1736 people died in Klaipėda and its immediate surroundings), during this period the city grew, and, from a small provincial town developed into important centre of the Baltic region. If in 1711-1743 an average of 30 ships used to arrive to Klaipėda annually, in 1749 this number increased to 110. At that time, the first major public port management works were carried out on the Danė river (the riverbed was deepened to 3.1 meters).

Agricultural products, that were exported through Klaipėda in the 17th and the first part of the 18th century and accounted for 70-90% of total exports. were sorted and stored here. Products from flax and hemp linseed accounted for the largest share of exports. Of the imported goods, the largest share consisted of such luxury and consumer goods as salt, tobacco, beverages and other colonial goods.



## **KARLO (CHARLE'S) BRIDGE**

In 1826, instead of a ferry, a new bridge named after the Queen's son Charles (Karlus) was built across the Danė river. Written consent for it was given by Prince Charles himself. This bridge connected the New Market, built around 1820 between the theatre and the castle site, with the rapidly developing northern part of the city. Originally, it was a wooden swing bridge with an opening of 11.6 meters. In 1877-1878, it was rebuilt. After the construction of the tram line in 1904, wooden Charles Bridge was replaced by the metal one. It was operated by electric motor. Now this bridge is called the Pilies (Castle) Bridge.

## **KLAIPĖDA CASTLE SITE**

The establishment of Klaipėda city is associated with the castle that was built in 1252. The city was built according to the Teutonic traditions: next to the castle, using natural waters to fortify it. Brick made Memelburg (German) or Klaipėda Castle was built in 1253 in a strategically important place on the Curonian land - on the left bank of the Dangė estuary, near to the Klaipėda Channel, which connects the Curonian Lagoon with the Baltic Sea.

The contours of the old city view stand out most clearly in the castle site, where the Klaipėda Castle Museum is located now. (Pilies str. 4, Klaipėda) <https://www.mlimuziejus.lt/>

This museum was opened in 2002, when the 750th anniversary of Klaipėda city was celebrated. The castle museum is located under the embankment - in the bastion of Prince Friedrich potern, where artillery was kept in the 17th century. Archaeological findings, documents, models found on the castle site and the old town, as well as reconstructed 17th century costumes are exhibited in the authentic 16th – 18th century potern.

The medieval castle and the city are evidenced by such archaeological findings from the castle site, as the 13th – 15th century weapons, household and leisure items, as well as the late Gothic tiles. Copies of a very important documents of the city's history, the originals of which are kept in the Secret State Archive of Prussian Cultural Heritage in Berlin, are also exhibited here.

The development of the city was greatly stimulated by the ideas of Reformation and Renaissance. The symbol of Renaissance Klaipėda is a golden ring with a gemstone dating back to the 16th century that belonged to a noble man and was found on the castle site. The atmosphere and



fashions of the townspeople are reflected in green glazed tiles, shoe remnants, household items, handicraft tools, coins, and imported items.

The continuation of the exposition of the Castle Museum about the development of Klaipėda Castle and city in the 18th – 20th centuries was opened in the renovated poterns and casemates of Prince Charles' bastion in 2006. The documents and photographs on display here illustrate the historical period marked with royal insignia and the events of 1807-1809.

The Black Ghost (sculpture 2.4 m high, sculptors S. Jurkus and S. Plotnikov), emerging from the moat of Dassel near the former castle, also reminds us the stories of ancient times and the legendary city. There also is a 19th century swing bridge, a wrought-iron facility that was built in 1855. Formerly called the Sea Gate or Chain Bridge, this manually rotated bridge connected the ditch near the Danė river with the protective embankment of the castle (This is the only example of such a bridge in Lithuania. It used to serve for transport, but today it is a pedestrian zone.).

### **KLAIPĖDOS ŠVYTURYS (KLAIPĖDA LIGHTHOUSE)**

Queen Louise loved nature very much. Most often, along with the wife of Prince Wilhelm of Prussia, Princess Marie Anna Amalie, she used to go for a walk by the sea. They grew up in the depths of the land, so the sea was an amazing discovery for them. The ladies' favourite place to take walks was at the seaside next to the lighthouse, where it was possible to observe the arriving and departing ships.

Klaipėda Lighthouse was built in 1796 on a windblown sand hill. In 1819, the lighthouse was reconstructed, and a little later its walls were covered with tin and painted in red and white squares, which is why it is called the Red Lighthouse. It was a symbol of Klaipėda city frequented by tourists, from the tower of which it was possible to admire the views of the sea, the port and the city. *The queen also used to go to the lighthouse with the Argelander family. It was a favourite place for walks of the royal couple as well.* Sometimes, just to relax, Queen Louise used to go sailing by sea. When Queen Louise celebrated (10 March) her 32nd birthday in Klaipėda, the elder princes presented her the drawings with the images of Klaipėda lighthouse and boat (In 1945, the Germans blew up the old lighthouse. Only the 4-metre plinth wall remained. The new lighthouse, painted in black and white, began to shine in 1953. Its altitude is 49 meters above sea level, and a light signal is visible at a distance of 33 kilometres.).



## TAURALAUKIS

The Prussian royal couple, who settled in Klaipėda in 1807-1808, tried to familiarize with environs of the city as well. The royal family often, especially in the summer, used to come for walks and visits to the hospitable inhabitants of Tauralaukėliai, where they dined under an oak tree that later received the name of Louise (or King). An obelisk with the inscription “DemAndenkendes 3. August 1807” was erected on this site.

In 1900, on the initiative of the Pagražinimo Union, a new monument to Queen Louise was erected in the place of the fallen obelisk. Above the pile of stones, including those of the former monument, rose an asymmetrical granite slab with a bronze relief portrait of the Queen. It was a stone about a meter high with relief drawings and an inscription “Commemoration of August 3, 1807” on the right of it. The monument was demolished around 1960.



Photo from: [www.krastogidas.lt](http://www.krastogidas.lt)

*As the most remote object in Tauralaukis is only 7 kilometres away from the Old Town of Klaipėda, it is the best to go there by bike. Cycling along a new bike path and enjoying the views of the waterfront of the Danė river, you will soon reach the place where the monument to Queen Louise used to stand. The monument has not survived, but here you can see the Louise Oak (it is worth mentioning that now it is located on a private property and there is no access to it), visit the Tauralaukis Manor and the Botanical Garden.*

The royal family used to travel to Tauralaukis by boat (there was both a pier for boats and a ferry towed by ropes).

In Tauralaukis, although strongly damaged, there is a complex of Tauralaukis Manor, which consists of the main palace, farmstead buildings and a pond. The Manor is complemented by a unique,



completely unexplored complex of nature and history - an oak grove of about three hundred years, a mound and a stone of sacrifices, located on the bank of the Dangė river bend.

More than two hundred years ago, there was a manor park in this area, where the royal family (King Friedrich Wilhelm III and Queen Louise) living at that time in Memel used to spend time. Birthdays were celebrated here, a polonaise was danced, and poetic verses dedicated to Queen Louise were recited. Important meetings with high-ranking officials from other countries also were held in this place. Already at that time trees and shrubs were planted here, there was a cafe, carousels for children, skittle, etc. On the small island of the Royal Square was a “castle” where princes and princesses, future kings and queens used to play.

## CURONIAN SPIT

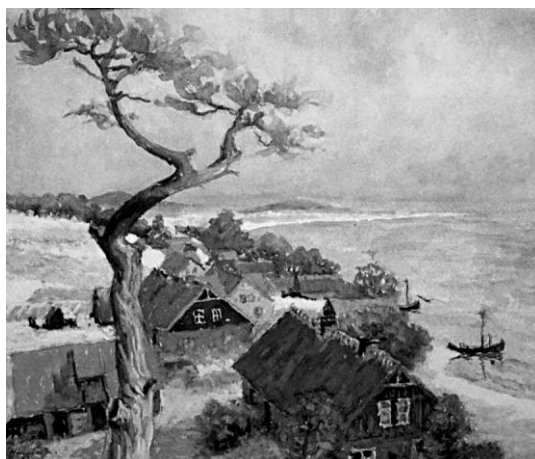
**Nagliai Nature Reserve**, where a cognitive trail with a stunning landscape of Gray (Dead) Dunes is situated, is one of the most interesting attractions in the entire Curonian Spit National Park. This landscape was formed when, after the forest was cut down in the 17th century, sand from the seaside began to travel towards the lagoon. In 1675–1854, the village of Nagliai, which had changed its place many times, was windblown by sand here, and now lies deep under it. In the unique natural complex of the Nagliai Reserve, one can admire the impressive ravines and canyons formed in the dunes due to strong winds, as well as occasionally visible centuries-old forest soils that are buried under the sand. Rare plants, that are listed in the Red Book, grow here, the remains of old dunes are exposed, and an impressive panorama opens up from the windblown dunes.



Photo from: [www.visitneringa.com](http://www.visitneringa.com)

NIDA is the largest recreational settlement in the National Reserve of the Curonian Spit.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Nida was famous for an art centre, known as the **Nida Artists' Colony**, the headquarters of which were established in the Hermann Blode Hotel. The expressionist traditions of the Artists' Colony were further nurtured by Ernst Mollenhauer (who lived in Nida from 1923 to 1945), who took over the Blode Hotel, the doors of which were still open to the artists, writers, musicians, actors and composers. The walls of the hotel lobby and veranda were decorated with a collection of works of artists who worked here (most of the paintings were destroyed during the war). Over 200 artists, the descendants of East Prussia, used to create in Nida by 1945. The artists were fascinated by the nature, architecture, crafts, work of fishermen and their way of life on the Curonian Spit. And, while in the 19th century Nida was called the "Prussian Sahara", in the 20th century, it was baptized into both a "Paradise of Painters" and a "Land of Miracles".



Painting *The village of pines and fishermen*, photo from: [www.mle.lt](http://www.mle.lt)





Photo from: <https://alkas.lt/>

One of the most popular museums in Nida is the MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF THOMAS MANN who was a German writer and the winner of the Nobel prize. Skruzdynės str. 17, Nida [www.mann.lt](http://www.mann.lt)

The writer and his wife visited Nida for the first time in the summer of 1929 and were instantly captivated by the beauty of nature and the whole settlement. This is evidenced in the words spoken by Thomas Mann himself, that they decided to settle here “caught by the indescribable uniqueness and beauty of the nature and the fantastic world of shifting dunes”. Already in 1930, a summer house was built on Uošvė Hill in Nida (architect H. Reissmann, Klaipėda), where the writer Thomas Mann and his family spent three summers (1930 - 1932). While on holiday in Nida, he wrote his books “*Joseph and his brothers*”, essays “*My summer house*”, various articles, letters to editors. When the Klaipėda region was annexed to the Third Reich in 1939, the summer house was nationalized, and at the end of the war, when a cannonball damaged the house, there was a plan to demolish it. In 1967, a reading room was opened in this building and a memorial exposition was established. The T. Mann’ Society was founded in 1990, and the building, restored in 1996 (based on Reissmann’s drawings and the memories of the writer’s daughter Elisabeth Mann), was turned into a cultural centre with a small memorial exposition.

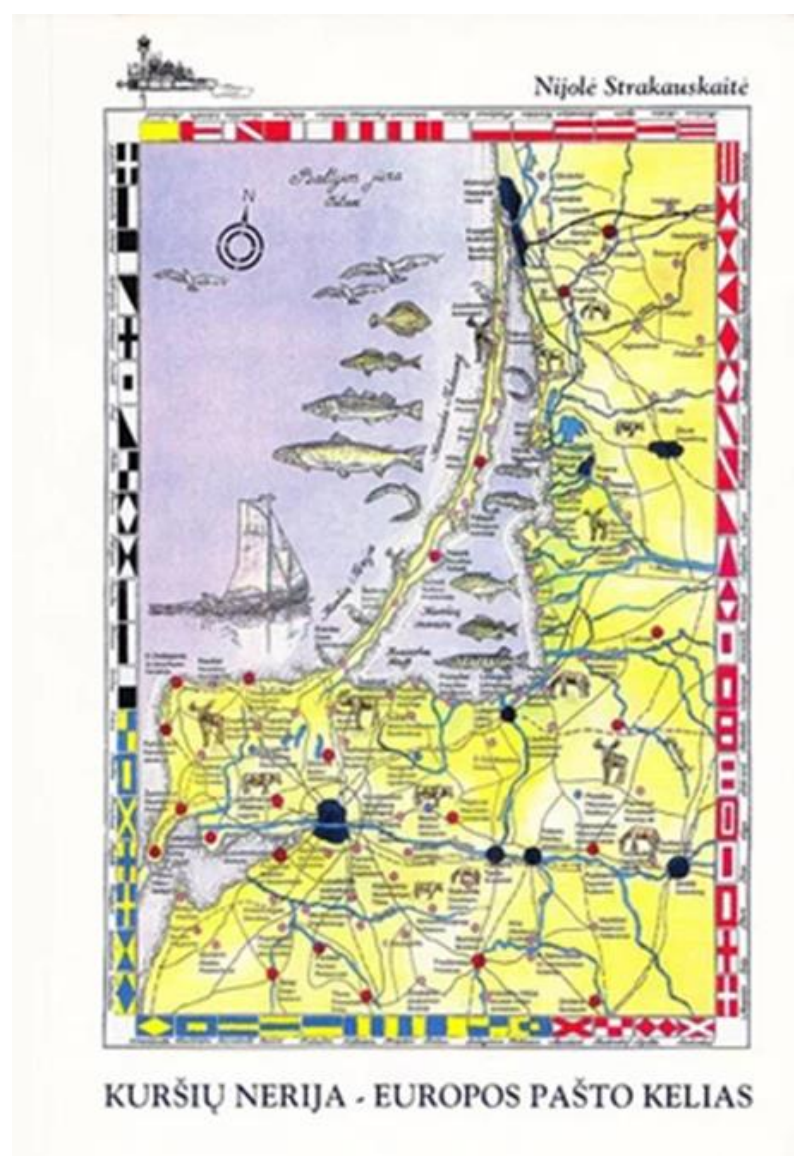
Since 2014, there is a unique exposition, which, using modern technologies, recreates the facts of the life and work of the Nobel Prize winner and poetically presents the atmosphere of his days spent in the summer house. And today, this memorial museum is the site of two other institutions - the Neringa Museums and the Thomas Mann Cultural Centre.

**CURIAN SPIT HISTORY MUSEUM**, Pamario str. 53, Nida <https://www.neringosmuziejai.lt/>

The exposition of the Curonian Spit History Museum presents the development of unique fishing settlements, their cultural features and the businesses of the locals (crow catching technology, various fishing gears and models of the sailboats). Visitors are attracted by a fisherman’s mannequin demonstrating a specific fishing method by the name “bumbinimas” (“shooing away”). In the museum, you can see such findings from the archaeological excavations in Nida that bring us to the Stone Age, as the part of a wooden skiff, clay pots, stone axes and other exhibits.



One of the most striking highlights of the exposition is the history of the Nida post office and its owner, Frederick Casimir Kuwert, who, in 1785, was granted a license with the right to produce beer in the tavern-post office. This reflects the successful period in the history of Nida lasting until 1833, during which many representatives of the European cultural elite - King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia and Queen Louise, the French philosopher Denis Diderot, diplomats, philosophers and others - visited the place. The documents, photographs and maps in the exposition tell the history of the postal route of European significance, part of which from the middle of the 17th century to 1833 was on the Curonian Spit as well. These exhibits reflect a truly successful period in Nida's history, during which it became and was a part of Europe's great postal route connecting Paris with St. Petersburg.





Queen Louise's journey on the so-called postal route **from Karaliaučius through the Curonian Spit to Klaipėda** is deeply imprinted both in historical memories and in people's minds. The elder princes Friedrich William and William, as well as their tutor Friedrich Delbrück described this journey as a frustrating one. Wet roads were impassable in many places, horses had to be changed frequently. As the postal route meandered not only along the shore of the lagoon, but also on the sea coast, which was hardly shaken by waves, the Baltics opened up before their eyes, shocking everyone with a majestic hustle and bustle ... the trip was accompanied by a storm until, on the second day of it, they finally reached Nida. Some strange observations were made during this trip. Let's say, Friedrich Delbrück, the tutor of royal children, was reminded of Greenland by the Nida area.

Queen Louise, being seriously ill, started her trip three days later than the children (January 6, 1807). The trip with accommodation in the poorest places lasted for three days and three nights. Queen Louise travelled in the carriage that belonged to a merchant from Königsberg Johan Karl Bitrich, and, before the World War II, was exhibited at the Königsberg Zoo Ethnographic Museum. The second stop on the trip was NIDA, where, as during the meeting with the Russian Tsar Alexander I in 1802, the Queen stayed at the post office owned by David Kuvert (built in 1737). It is said that here, in grief over the calamity that befell Prussia, with a diamond of her ring, she carved the poem of the beloved poet J.W. Goethe the "Harpist's Song" from the novel "Wilhelm Meister" on the window. The poet's words were associated with Louise's spiritual efforts to defeat the Napoleon who was hated by everyone. There is also such a possibility that the artful owner of the hostel was interested in creating this legend. Rebuilt after the fire in 1829, the hotel was named after Queen Louise.

When King Frederick Wilhelm III arrived to Juodkrantė on January 7, the sick Queen Louise stayed at the school and the king was accommodated in the post office. The next day they reached Klaipėda. In Smiltynė, the Queen was greeted and presented a warm patterned gloves by the girls from Klaipėda who were singing German and Lithuanian songs.

Eighty years later, the route of the Queen of Prussia was abundantly immortalized on artistic paintings. In the historical painting of Johannes Heydeck, a professor at the Royal Academy "*Queen Louise's escape to Memel through Curonian Spit, 1807*" and in the works of other German artists, an attempt was made to create an image a simple and sincere Queen.



Queen Louise Hotel (the Jūratė Hotel now), photo from: <https://www.miestai.net/>



The cross of Johan and Martynas Sakučiai tomb in Nida cemetery, photo from: [www.mle.lt](http://www.mle.lt)

When visiting the church of Nida, take a look at the nearby ethnographic fishermen's cemetery, where wooden monuments (*krikštai*) have survived. It is said, that *krikštas* is an image of the tree of the mythological world that connects all parts of the Universe. Therefore, it is worth seeing and, perhaps, rediscovering its meaning. It is also the eternal resting place of the builder of this church G. Echternach, the architect A. Zaviša, and the artist E. Jonušas (in the cemetery, you can see *krikštai* that were restored by this artist).





Photo from: <http://www.ambergallery.lt/>

### **The Amber Gallery-Museum run by Kazimieras and Virginija Mizgiriai**

The history of the Baltic amber can be learned in the museum, which has been operating on Pamario street since its establishment here in an old fisherman's house in 1995. The exhibits in the gallery tell the story of the so-called Lithuanian gold: how it was formed, how inclusions appeared, what are the colours and shades of amber, what were the old and current methods of amber extraction, how to check whether it is real. Visitors are introduced to the treasure of Juodkrantė and the meanings of its amulets, and can see the original size copies of all 434 of them. There are more interesting things here, such as “Amber Energy Producing Machine” or “Amber Bitter”, that gallery visitors are treated with. The Artists House, where painters and amber masters create and organize exhibitions, is established next to the gallery.

*Pamario str. 20, Nida, [www.ambergallery.lt](http://www.ambergallery.lt)*



Photo from: <https://www.neringosmuziejai.lt/>





**NIDA FISHERMAN'S ETHNOGRAPHIC HOMESTEAD** In the southern part of old Nida, in the former village of Haken, the old fisherman's house - an ethnographic homestead - stands on the shore of the lagoon. It features authentic furniture, decorated chairs and chests, crockery and other items that were used in the homestead, as well as fishing tools. This homestead was built by local craftsmen in 1927 and, at that time, consisted of two connected houses. This was strongly tied to tradition because, when the offspring of the family married, the young couple had to settle next to parents, adding on an extension to the house. In the 20th century, fisherman Martynas Purvinas and his family lived in that part of the house. Today there is an ethnographic museum which has an exposition representing the typical interior of the Curonian Spit fishermen houses and everyday life in the end of 19th and beginning of 20th centuries. Premises of this homestead-museum are equipped to reflect the authentic atmosphere of the ancient fishermen life. The concept of the renewed exposition is the feeling of a suspended moment. According to the founders of the museum, "the house feels as full of life, the movement and bustle of its inhabitants, therefore the authentic objects are exhibited in a way as if they are stiffed in the heat of activity".

*Naglių str. 4, Nida, <https://www.neringosmuziejai.lt/>*

Nida is charming with its unique landscape, impressive architecture of fishermen's houses and the magnificent Parnidis (Parnida) Dune. It is said that the history of dune lies in its name – "per Nida", which means that it "moved through" the whole settlement of Nida several times, and in the 17th century even buried under the sand four local villages. To the north of the dune is Urbas Hill, and to the south - the ravine between the dunes, the so-called Valley of Silence or Death. The eastern slopes of the dune stretch to the Curonian Lagoon, and the southern part of the dune is planted with mountain pines. The 1.7 km long Parnidis cognitive trail, along which you can see the white and grey dunes, is located in the southern part of Nida (the beginning of the trail is the Silence Valley).

From 52 m high Parnidis Dune one can enjoy the view of horizon. There is an observation deck from which you can admire the wonderful views of open dunes, lagoon, sea, forest, and panorama of Nida. It is the only place in Lithuania where you can observe and enjoy both the sunrise and the sunset. A **sundial - calendar**, showing the exact time of the place, was built on the top of the dune in 1995. The original height of the watch was 12 meters and the weight was even 200 tons, but the hurricane *Anatolijus* damaged the watch in 1999, and, as a result, the height of it was half as low till 2011.



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Wonderful views over the open dunes, the lagoon, sea, forests and the town of Nida open up from the top of this hill.



Photo from: <https://www.delfi.lt/keliones>



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### **The International Queen Louise route Places to visit creators**

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