



THE TREASURY OF SACRAL HERITAGE OF TRAKAI REGION







TRAKAI BASILICA OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

GPS: 54°38'34"N 24°56'03"E

Address: Birutės str. 5, Trakai town, Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality

On the map E2

The Basilica of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary stands in Trakai peninsula surrounded by lakes. This church that equals Trakai Island Castle in terms of size and grandeur, was consecrated as a basilica in 2017 (there are 8 basilicas in Lithuania altogether).

Special criteria of *Domus Ecclesiae*, a decree of Divine Worship and Liturgy, were used in the process of granting the very honourable title of basilica. The criteria are applied both for the building itself and the living Church – for those who pray there. The exclusive historical importance of the church for the region and the country were acknowledged, as was the solemnity of the building and religious community's dissemination of faith and love.

The title of basilica also underlines the church's special ties with the Pope, since Trakai Basilica, which was given the title of Basilica by Pope Francis, has had the Mother of God Image in the main altar for 600 years and 300 years ago Pope Clement XI bestowed the image with the crowns. The image of Blessed Virgin Mary with the Infant in her arms was widely known throughout the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. From the beginning of

the 17th century people began applying votes to the image as thanks for graces received. It is estimated that today there are over 400 votes! This first gold crowned painting was given the title Protector of the Sick. Interestingly, the painting is revered by Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim communities alike.

The church founded by Grand Duke Vytautas in the 15th century has an irregular shaped form with harmoniously intertwined gothic and baroque features. Fresco fragments in the walls of the church recall the Byzantine-era style.

The Basilica is a treasure trove of sacred and fine art – there are easel paintings, memorial monuments, various relics, wine glasses, 18th-century candlesticks, a sanctuary lamp and more.

Every year the Trakai temple is visited by many faithful not only from Lithuania. Special celebrations, such as the annual Žolinės (Feast of the Assumption) and Trakinės (Trakai Mother of God image coronation celebration), attract pilgrims from neighbouring countries and elsewhere. The festival faithful partake in a procession from the Gates of Dawn to the Trakai Basilica, a distance of nearly 30 km.



THE HILL OF ANGELS

GPS: 54°40'37"N 24°55'39"E

Address: Angelų kalvos str., Būda village, Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality

On the map E2

The Hill of Angels rises up near Būda village, which is surrounded by the Galvė lakes. It has been decorated with wooden angels, people's prayers and folk songs. This is a place for fostering human devotion and spirituality. It is spotted with plenty of finely crafted wooden angel sculptures, wrought sun-like crosses and life trees decorated with traditional national symbols.

In 2009, Dominyka Dubauskaitė-Semionovė and Lolita Piličiauskaitė-Navickienė decided to honour the celebration of Lithuania's 1000th anniversary and the 600th anniversary of the Basilica of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Trakai. Plans were made to place ten angels on the Hill where each of them would represent a different century. The kindness and generosity of people interested in the idea surpassed all possible expectations of the initiators. As a result, 18 angel sculptures found a new home on the Hill!

Today, the area of 4.3 hectares hosts over 40 magnificent sky-greeting wooden angels of all sizes, roadside poles. The angels embody one of the human truths, fundamental human or Christian values: Life, Truth, Peace, Empathy, Sacrifice, Love, Health, Joy, Gratitude, Hope, Kindness, etc. The angels include those that are the patrons of

families, science, spiritual tranquillity, the Baltic road, etc. Your angel is on the Hill too, and you must pay him a visit.

The oak angel sculptures were created by Lithuanian and foreign artists and reflect traditional wood carving. Angels created from other materials appear on the Hill, too. In 2015, the Angel of Orphans, whose head is made of granite, came here. In 2017, the Angel of Librarians, made out of metal, also joined the collection. Sculptures give meaning to the ideas embraced by their donors and reflect the message carried by the angels. It is an ongoing project that aims to fulfil the spiritual needs of people. Everyone is invited to participate in its development by providing special meaning to his/her thoughts, prayers or important moral values. The Hill of Angels is an open space for visitors. It offers a magnificent view of a landscape. Forests, lakes, the castle, the church and the Orthodox church are visible in the distance.

This place brings together and unites local people, families, professional and other communities. As the number of the angels on the Hill continues to grow, each visitor may undoubtedly find his/her spirit at ease here while praying or enjoying time in a unique place of unity of art and soul.



ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

GPS: 54°49'19"N 24°56'25"E

Address: Vytauto str. 32, Trakai town, Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality
On the map E2

The Orthodox Church of the nativity of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary stands in the centre of the town at the corner of Maironis and Vytautas St. It has one tower in addition to the bell tower.

A decision was taken to build an Orthodox church in Trakai in 1861. Tsarina Maria Aleksandrovna gave 6,000 roubles to build the church and STR. Adelson, the builder of the Kaunas and Paneriai railway tunnels donated 50,000 bricks. Work began in 1862 after the State Chamber of property engineer A. Polozov was appointed to supervise labour. Polozov used a traditional design for the church. The brick building is standard in form and has no individual features. Work was begun with a ceremony on August 18 1862 and the building was consecrated on Sept. 22 1863 with then name of an Orthodox church which used to stand in the southern part of the town.

The tsarina gave Polozov a golden bejewelled watch in recognition of his work on the church and this was presented to him by the governor general of Vilnius, M. Murav'ev. The church had no bell tower and a design was made in 1868 by Samoilov. The church was built in 1863 in commemoration of the defeat of the Polish-Lithuanian Uprising. The church suffered during the First World War when the church towers and roof were

destroyed by Germans shooting at Russian positions within the town.

Now this Orthodox church harmoniously integrates into the architectural mosaic of Trakai. It stands on one of the hills of the peninsula, at the intersection of Vytauto and Maironio streets. Anyone who wishes can admire not only the external architecture of the church, but also the vaulted and modestly decorated interior space. The church is functioning and belongs to the Russian Orthodox community.





TRAKAI KENESA

GPS: 54°49'19"N 24°56'25"E

Address: Karaimų str. 30, Trakai town, Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality

On the map E2

The Karaite house of prayer is located in the north-western part of Trakai old town. Karaite architectural and interior design features can be seen in this unique one-storey wooden structure. It consists of two spaces: main part (for men) and a balcony (for women) supported by four columns. As in other temples of Eastern religions women and men pray separately in the kenesa and everyone is required to wear a head covering.

The kenesa has an impressive blue dome shaped ceiling made with eight arches. Geometrical and plant components beautify the interior of the house of prayer. Interestingly, the altar is in the southern part and all burial ceremonies are held with the deceased person's head pointing southward.

The wooden Trakai kenesa was build back in the latter part of the 14th century and endured numerous wars and fires. Today you can see another Karaite temple in Vilnius, in the part of the city called Žvėrynas. Also, a commemorative stone marks the place of a kenesa that once stood in Panevėžys.

The Karaites

Lithuania's religious community of Karaites is one of nine state recognised traditional religious communities. The Karaite faith formed in 8th-century Mesopotamia (currently Iraq). The name derives from the word kara, which means 'to read, to study Holy Scriptures'. The foundation of the Karaite faith is based on the Old Testament only without later additions and commentaries. The main principles of explaining and studying Holy Scripture are based on individual and independent interpretation without the guidance of any higher authority.

When the first Karaites arrived in Lithuania 600 years ago they were considered an elite group of Vytautas' army. Everyone who wanted to enter Trakai Castle had to pass through Karaimų street and afterwards the bridge thus protecting Vytautas from enemies and other ill-wishers.

Today about 60 Karaite people reside in Trakai and only a few of them speak their native tongue, which belongs to the Turkic group of languages.

www.karaim.eu



ST. JOHN OF NEPOMUK ROADSITE POLE

GPS: 54°38'39"N 24°56'08"E

Address: The crossing of Vytauto and Karaimų streets, Trakai town, Trakai district municipality

On the map E2

The town of Trakai is surrounded by many lakes, and for centuries St. John of Nepomuk has been its patron Saint; he is said to protect the town from flooding and other water-related calamities. The roadside pole of a classical style with a statue of St. John of Nepomuk is 14 metres in height and it is located at the heart of Trakai, i. e. at the crossing of two main streets, Karaimų and Vytauto, in the centre of the former Townhall square. It is one of the most important highlights of the town of Trakai.

Written sources testify that a brick column was there as early as the middle of the 17th century. After the uprising of 1863, the tsarist government ordered that the saint's sculpture be removed and offered a substantial remuneration for the job. The local residents refused to comply. However, a rogue grabbed a knife and was ready to destroy the sculpture, but he fell off the ladder and broke his leg. Trakai chief of police had to invite the Cosacks to tear down the sculpture of the Saint.

In 1935, a new sculpture of St. John of Nepomuk was installed on the roadside pole. It was created by Vilnius sculptor, Stanislaw Horn-Poplawski. However, diligent atheists took the wooden Nepomuk off the roadside pole and threw it into the lake! When the employees of Trakai museum found out about this, they found the sculpture

deep in the lake's waters, brought it to the surface and stored it safely in the museum storage facility. Four clocks were installed on the pillar as replacements for the statue, but they broke down shortly after: they all showed different time. Today, we can see a restored sculpture of the patron of Trakai which was proudly returned to its original location in 1990.

Many legends are told about the roadside pole of St. John of Nepomuk. It is said that in the 18th century, when the owner of Užutrakis Manor, Laurynas Odinec, was sailing on the lake, there was a sudden storm and the boat started sinking. The landlord recalled St. Nepomuk and started praying to him wholeheartedly asking for support. The storm calmed down then as quickly as it had started. Odinec was saved, and he was very grateful to the Saint for his narrow escape. To express his gratitude, he erected the sculpture of the Saint in the middle of the Market Square.



THE LITURGICAL ART EXHIBITION

GPS: 54°38'44"N 24°56'10"E

Address: Kęstučio str. 4, Trakai, Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality

On the map E2

The exhibition of Liturgical Arts welcomes visitors to the territory of the Peninsula Castle of Trakai, in the former Dominican monastery. The art works of the exhibition represent an important part of the ecclesiastic heritage of Lithuanian culture and are filled with religious spirit. Visitors are invited to take a closer look at various attributes that represent sacral and cultural value, religious paintings, etc. The exhibition comprises more than 200 liturgical works, valuable visual art works and various sacral objects representing the life of the church. Take a closer look at the monstrance decorated with the picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Trakai with the Infant, a unique 1709 stamp of the Trakai Dominican Monastery, and a communion cup produced by Vilnius goldsmiths in the second half of the 16th century. Here you can also find albarels, dishes used in herbal and medical practice for holding medicinal ointments. A fragment of the monastery kitchen has been recreated in the restored cellar under the chapel, where pieces of the monastery's everyday life and various objects used by the order's monks are on display.

The Liturgical Art Works Exhibition gives visitors an opportunity to have a closer look at the priests'

ceremonial clothing and special accessories. A cope, the most adorned and significant liturgical garment symbolises the Lord's boundless love, purity of the clergyman, their righteousness as well as the grace of the Holy Spirit. You can also take a closer look at a pair of bishop's sandals, previously called campagi, the mitre (traditional, ceremonial headdress of bishops made from the most expensive materials and worn during important ceremonies), different parts of the monstrance as well as a chalice, a goblet used to sanctify the Eucharistic wine and bread during Mass.

The Liturgical Art Works Exhibition has many valuable paintings and sculptures. The Dominicans Worshipping the Risen Christ painting should be mentioned among the most notable paintings. According to historians, it portrays the founder of the Dominican Order, Saint Dominic himself. Other important works include the portrait of St. Casimir and the portrait of Vytautas the Great. The highlight of the exposition is the sculptural composition titled The Last Supper, one of the rarest found in Lithuanian folk art. Today, the Liturgical Art Works Exhibition provides an opportunity to see several 18-19th century church bells cast in Vilnius, Prussia, Riga and in Western Europe.



LENTVARIS CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

GPS: 54°38'29"N 25°02'55"E

Address: Mokyklos str. 17, Lentvaris town, Lentvaris eldership, Trakai district municipality

On the map F2

Lentvaris, located half way between Vilnius and Trakai, is famous for its unique natural beauty, a magnificent English-style castle-like manor standing on the peninsula of an artificial lake and the massive red-brick church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Church is unique in Lithuania due to its rare painting technique of decoration. It is also well known for its monumental architecture, which links it to Leonardo da Vinci.

The manor belonged to Count Tyszkiewicz in the 19th century. He together with residents of Lentvaris County asked the authorities for a permit to build a church as local practicing Catholics often had to travel to other churches located in settlements at least 10 km away. Unfortunately, at the time the requests were denied. Thus, it was not surprising that in 1905, when the permit was finally granted, Lentvaris residents built a wooden barrack in a record 10 days, in which to celebrate masses temporarily.

Even though construction of the real church was funded mainly by the Tyszkiewicz family, donations were accepted in other ways as well. The Golden Book of Donations details the input of various private individuals and institutions.

Italian culture and art were very close to the heart of Count Tyszkiewicz as he had lived in Milan. Therefore, Lentvaris Church architecture was

inspired by the 15th century Santa Maria delle Grazie (St. Mary the Gracious) Church in Milan and Leonardo da Vinci's famous mural painting The Last Supper. Count Tyszkiewicz believed that The Last Supper was the key to understanding the life philosophy of this genius artist.

Lentvaris Church was designed in the Neo-Romanesque style, which was especially popular in Europe at the time. It was to be built on land donated by Countess Tyszkiewicz. Lentvaris Church is characterised by its massiveness, half-circle arches and windows. The red brick basilica-type church was consecrated in 1926. The name of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary was selected for it, and during the consecration ceremony, the 17th century sculpture of the Crucifixion was placed at the main church altar. The gift came from Pope Pius XI, whom Count Tyszkiewicz had met in Vilnius a few years earlier, when he visited Lithuania as a nuncio and an apostolic visitor in 1920.

Lentvaris Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the biggest and most impressive examples of monumental painting found in Lithuania. Its murals and sgraffito (lt. sgraffito – inscribed) decorations reflect religious motifs and cover the walls of the church almost entirely.



SENIEJI TRAKAI CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION AND ST. BENEDICT

GPS: 54°36'19"N 24°59'02"E

Address: Pilies str. 1, Senieji Trakai village, Senieji Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality

On the map E2

The top of the Castle Site of Senieji Trakai is occupied by a monastery and neo-gothic style church ensemble rebuilt at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Linden trees that are more than 100 years old adorn the slopes of the hill fort. Senieji Trakai street village is nestled around the old castle site and has the status of an architectural sanctuary.

Lithuania's Grand Duke Vytautas wanted his native castle to be preserved and looked after, therefore soon after he secured Pope Innocent VII's blessing, he invited Benedictine monks here in 1405. Vytautas gifted the monks a tenth of his manor's lands, a plot of land with gardens, even two lakes and began construction of a wooden church nearby. Soon after Senieji Trakai parish was established.

In the place of the former Benedictine monastery, a neo-gothic style church designed by Apolinaras Mikulskis was built at the end of the 19th century. The main façade towers reflect its special elegance and grandeur.

The interior of Senieji Trakai Church of the Annunciation and St. Benedict is lovely but simple and has Benedictine iconography. Visitors can enjoy unique sculptures and paintings in three chapels

and nine altars. Several things are especially noteworthy: the St. Augustine and St. Benedict sculptures along with side altars dedicated to St. Benedict and his twin sister St. Scholastica.

One of the notable art works in the church is the 18th-century painting by Simonas Čehavičius, depicting St. Benedict. Another valuable piece is the 17th-century painting depicting Blessed Virgin Mary with the Infant in her arms. In the past the church also had a portrait of Vytautas the Great...

In the church's courtyard stands a wayside shrine dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary with the Infant in her arms. This is one of the nine wayside shrines, created along the symbolic Vytautas the Great road. A sculpture in the ancient site of Senieji Trakai castle symbolises the purity of motherhood and love for the motherland. Some people point to the parallel between priestess Birutė, holding her son Vytautas in her arms.



MONASTERY IN SENIEJI TRAKAI CASTLE SITE

GPS: 54°36'19"N 24°59'02"E

Address: Pilies str. 1, Senieji Trakai village, Senieji Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality
On the map E2

By the beginning of the 15th century, Senieji Trakai Castle had lost its defensive role, because Naujieji Trakai Island Castle (today simply called Trakai Island Castle) was already built and gained the status of the primary defensive castle. Thus, Vytautas the Great invited Benedictine brothers from Tyniec, a town not far from Krokow (today territory of Poland) to his native castle.

The duke built them a wooden church and allocated them a *dessiatin* (ed. Old Russian measurement) of land along with two lakes. The monastery operated until the mid-19th century when it was closed by the administration of the Russian empire.

The monks practiced a contemplative way of life, dedicated a lot of time to prayer, meditation, and other spiritual practices. They taught in the estates they were assigned to. Alongside the abbey, they founded a parish elementary school.

Benedictines were educated, and they paid special attention to education – this is confirmed by the fact that at the end of the 18th century there were even 769 books in the monastery's library. According to historical data a book cost 8 gold coins, while some of them cost as much as 30 gold coins.

The monastery was rebuilt numerous times, because its wooden construction began to decay and

was once even destroyed by fire. A new masonry monastery building was erected in its place in the 18th century. But after some time, the monastery was closed, and Benedictine brothers relocated to Nesvizh.

Senieji Trakai monastery that was given the name of Annunciation is now occupied by the congregation of the Sisters of Saint John. The nuns opened a retreat house in the restored medieval castle and invite believers to participate in Catholic religious recollection and meditation practices. The Sisters also organise other religious events, take care of local youth, and once even housed participants of a bard festival.

Monday are 'desert' (retreat) days for the Apostolic Sisters of Saint John. It is a day of total solitude and prayer. The monastery is open on all the other days. Masses are celebrated, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place.



DANILIŠKĖS OLD BELIEVERS' CHURCH

GPS: 54°40'42.7"N 24°48'40.6"E

Address: Daniliškės, Trakai eldership, Trakai district municipality
On the map D1

Old Believers settled in Lithuania after the reform of the Russian Orthodox Church of Patriarch Nikon during the reign of Russian Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. The church was headed by the Tsar of Russia, and at the same time any inequalities found in church books and rites were being changed and eliminated. In 1656, the church assembly separated opponents of the reform, the Old Believers, from the Russian church. Persecuted by ecclesiastical and secular authorities, the Old Believers retreated to deserts, forests, or fled abroad. Some of them came to Lithuania, which has long been famous for its tolerance for other religions. One of the places where they settled was the village of Daniliškės, in the lands belonging to landowner Riomeris. In the 19th century, there were at least 47 villages in Trakai County where Old Believers lived.

Previously, Daniliškės was a large Old Believer village, inhabited by only a few Catholics. The community of the Old Believers of Daniliškės village consisted of 116 people. This is also evidenced by the cemetery situated near the village containing tombstones with double crosses, and names engraved in monuments which you will rarely hear today. The Daniliškės Old Believers community is the oldest such community in Vilnius region,

formed in the 18th century. It originally belonged to the branch of the Feodosiya, and from the middle of the 19th century to the Pomory.

One of the thirteen Lithuanian Old Believers' prayer houses, built in 1817, still stands in the middle of the village to this day. Until 1825, this Orthodox church was also used by the Old Believers of Vilnius. The church suffered greatly during World War I. In 1931, a new wooden church with a bell tower was built on a concrete foundation. In 1937, it had 194 members. The church was closed down during the Soviet period, but was restored and renovated in 1990. The Orthodox church had a spacious prayer hall and residential rooms for the priest's family. It was also served by members of the community living in the Onuškis and Stakliškės areas.

The village of Daniliškės is losing its residents with currently only a few Old Believers' families living in it. However, it is still a very important place for the Lithuanian Old Believers' community, since Old Believers living in other parts of Lithuania come to the orthodox church of this village to attend its rites and bury their dead in the nearby cemetery.

A photograph of the Rykantai Church of the Saint Trinity, a light-colored stone building with a gabled roof and a cross on top. The church has multiple levels of arched windows and a central arched entrance. The background shows a clear blue sky and some green foliage on the left.

RYKANTAI CHURCH OF THE SAINT TRINITY

GPS: 54°42'55.4"N 24°58'56.6"E

Address: Bažnyčios str. 8, Rykantų village, Trakai district municipality
On the map E1

Rykantai is one of the first locations of the Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed (Calvinists). Rykantai along with its wooden Calvinist church was mentioned by a well-known Italian Reformed Paulius Vergerijus (Paul Vergerius) who visited Lithuania in 1555. At the beginning of the 16th century, Tolvaiša family built a wooden church in Rykantai which at first belonged to Trakai parish, but later became a Calvinist church after Calvinist faith was adopted by Tolvaiša family who were one of the first ones to do so in Lithuania. It is believed that the first (wooden) Rykantai Church was also one of the first Evangelical Reformed churches in Lithuania.

A wooden Evangelical Reformed church was built until 1555. Ruler of Rykantai Mikalojus Talvošas built a brick Evangelical Reformed church in 1585. In the 17th century, Rykantai became the property of Oginskis family. During the war between Russia and the Republic of Both Nations, the church was demolished by the Moscow army in 1655. It was restored until 1688 by Marcijonas Oginskis.

The church stood empty and abandoned in 1696. Church services were held in Rykantai Manor. In 1688, Rykantai and its church were given away to the Dominicans of Trakai. They did not want to hold services in an Evangelical Reformed church,

therefore a new wooden church was built in 1725. It rotted away in 1784. It is believed that at the end of the 18th century services were transferred to the brick church. In 1792, Rykantai became a branch of Vievis parish. Church property and its liturgical supplies were stolen during the war in 1812. In the middle of the 19th century, the church has deteriorated.

The current brick Rykantai Church of the Saint Trinity is one of the oldest churches in Trakai district.

The church has Gothic structures, Renaissance forms, a rectangular plan, no towers, and a hall style with a three-sided apse and a sacristy. The interior has three naves separated by pillars. The fence of the churchyard is masonry. Murals dating back to 1668 remained to this day.

From the outside, the church is similar to Žodiškės Church located near Neris River in Belarus. Its interior is similar to that of St. Nicholas Church in Vilnius.



CHURCH OF THE HOLY HEART OF JESUS IN RŪDIŠKĖS

GPS: 54°30'47.5"N 24°49'32.0"E

Address: Bažnyčios str. 1, Rūdiškės, Trakai district municipality

On the map E2

The village of Rūdiškės has been mentioned since 1774, and, after the construction of the Warsaw-Petersburg railway, it began to rapidly grow since 1864. In ancient times, this was an extremely swampy place. It is believed that bog iron ore was melted in the vicinity of the settlement, which is why it was named Rūdiškės ('rūda' means ore in Lithuanian).

In 1908, the government allowed the construction of the Church of the Holy Heart of Jesus, a branch of Trakai Parish. In the first half of the 20th century, the Holy Heart of Jesus became the most popular subject in Lithuanian ecclesiastical art. Piety was inspired by the visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque: in 1674, the nun saw a flaming wounded heart of Christ with a cross at the top, surrounded by a crown of thorns symbolizing the suffering caused by the sins of men. Paintings of Jesus and devotion to the Holy Heart have spread based on the image drawn by the saint, particularly after the beatification of Margaret Mary Alacoque in the 19th century and her canonization in 1920.

Priest A. Žemaitis, appointed to Rūdiškės in 1909, installed an altar in a residential house and began to hold services there. The parish was founded in 1910 and has grown significantly over the century. The first records of the parish show that there

were four hundred parishioners in it. Today this number has increased to four thousand.

Priest J. Jurkevičius and his parishioners built the present brick church in 1925–1932. In 1980, it was repaired. The church is historic, has neo-Romanesque and neo-Gothic features, a Latin cross plan, a single tower, and an interior of three naves. The churchyard is bricked.





GOJUS MOTHER OF GOD CHAPEL OF PATIENT HEALTH

GPS: 54°32'35"N 24°57'28"E

Address: Gojaus str. 5, Gojus village, Rūdiškės eldership, Trakai district municipality

On the map E3

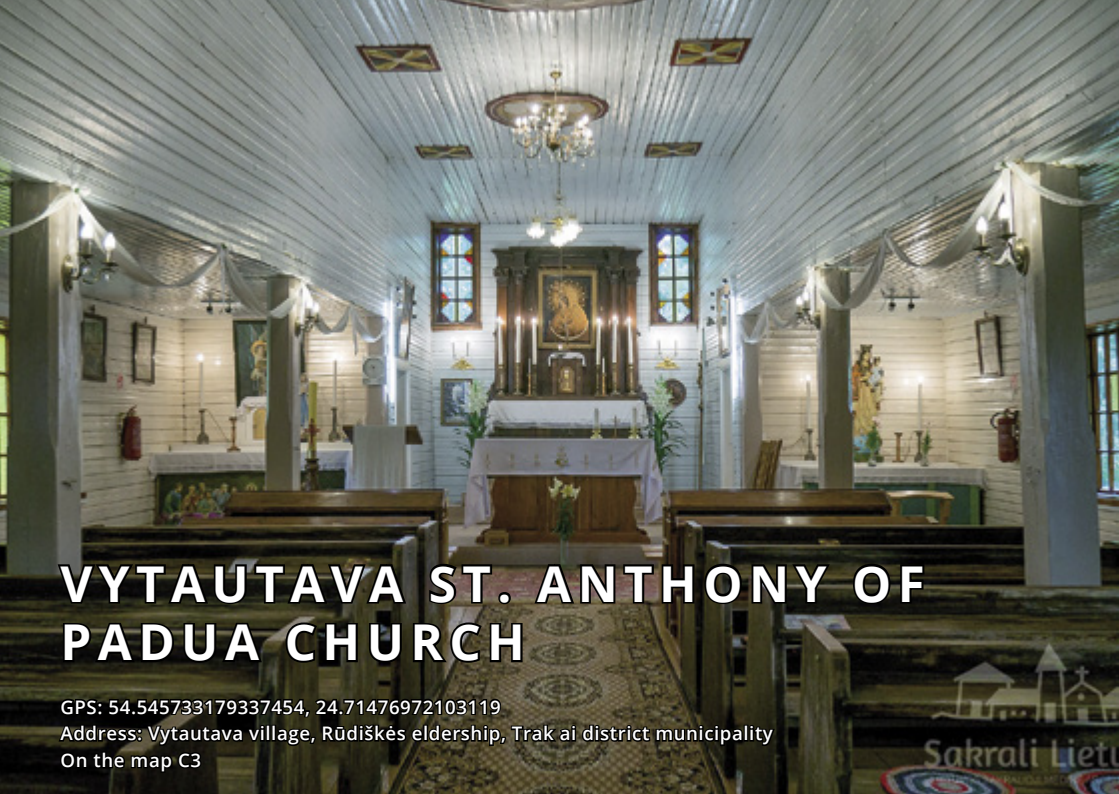
Gojus village with its community of 30 people can be found by the northern side of Ropėjai forests in Rūdiškės eldership in Trakai district. The name of this lovely village, nestled next to Lake Meduvis, means small forest or a grove. Not only is the village lovely but the surrounding area, known as Ilgutis Botanical Reserve, is also lovely as well.

The construction of the heart of Gojus village – Blessed Virgin Mary Chapel of Patient Health (or Mother of God Chapel of Patient Health) began in 1936. Chapel relics signify a special meaning and are revered as religious objects and create an exclusive atmosphere. The most important is the Mother of God Patient Health picture, famous because of the miraculous powers attributed to it, a monsternace made of bullets, and a 200-page manuscript of Gojus village and chapel history.

Today the chapel, situated not far from the Vilnius-Druskininkai road, belongs to the parish of Paluknio St. John the Baptist. Masses are celebrated here on Sundays. People say that in the area surrounding Gojus chapel one can feel a special vibration of the soul and the breath of God's grace, which incites us to believe in God's mercy and care. Upon entering the chapel the faithful encounter the statue of Mary the Immaculate Conception.

Pilgrims come to Gojus Blessed Virgin Mary Chapel of Patient Health not only to pray, but also to examine relics that are kept here. One of the chapel's treasures is the Mother of God Patient Health picture. It is a copy of a 1936 image that was painted by Romualdas Varachovskis and is kept in Vilnius Bonifratrai Holy Cross monastery (now Mary Immaculate Sisters of the Poor monastery). In Lithuania there are total of 30 pictures that are declared holy!

The Mother of God Patient Health picture attracts visitors because of its miraculous powers and God's graces. The first vote (latin word votum means a wish, gift, promise) was attached to it three years after it was brought to the chapel – this was how a woman gave thanks for the miraculous cure that was confirmed by a special Church commission. Beginning the same year, 1940, and on the last Sunday of August ever since Gojus chapel hosts an annual Mother of God Patient Health celebration.



VYTAUTAVA ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA CHURCH

GPS: 54.545733179337454, 24.71476972103119

Address: Vytautava village, Rūdiškės eldership, Trakų district municipality
On the map C3

The history of church's emergence and town's title is closely related to national revival movements and ideas disseminated through them that took place in the inter-war period. In the Independent Lithuania, attempts were made to implement a strong cult of Vytautas the Great. Apparently, the reason for this was a wish to unite the nation, give it the opportunity to feel historical magnificence of the state, and contribute to consolidation of the authoritarian regime of Antanas Smetona. In 1930, the year of commemoration of the 500-year anniversary of death of Vytautas the Great, the Grand Duke of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in order to give meaning to his memory at national level, in all cities and towns of this country, through erecting the monuments, naming streets, squares, official enterprises or even settlements after Vytautas.

Thus, in this historical context, in the first half of the 30-ies of the 20th century, the settlement was named Vytautava to honour the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The professor of Kaunas University Zigmas Žemaitis (1884-1969), an airman and physicist, took care about construction of the church. He gave the land plot of his farmstead as a present to the church. The building of the church was built of logs taken from the stackyard of Z. Žemaitis' manor.

A wooden building of the church, built in 1936, is of folk style, has a compact long-drawn rectangular plan, without an apse, and reminding of an ordinary residential house. In the main facade – a small four-walled tower of belfry with a small pyramid hip roof and a portico, propped on two wooden poles, marking the main entrance. The walls are built of logs and horizontally planked, the windows and doors are rectangle-shaped. The roof is double pitch, tin-plated. The tower is adorned with a cross of laconic forms.

The internal space is divided by rows of pilasters of a square base into three naves, while the central nave is higher than the side ones. The internal walls of the church are planked horizontally, there are some pictorial elements on the ceilings and walls. The interior is minimalistic, without exaggerated decoration.

The "Blessed Virgin Mary" in the High Altar of Neo-Baroque forms of Blessed Virgin Mary also is quite a symbolic and tendentious sign in the buildings of the 30-ties having ideological meaning: after Poland seized Vilnius region, attempts were made to make the symbols and memory of the historical capital of Lithuania more meaningful in the conscience of the Lithuanian people.

www.sakralilietuva.lt



ŽUKIŠKĖS CHAPEL

GPS: 54.603766, 24.918081

Address: Žukiškės, Trakai district municipality

On the map E2

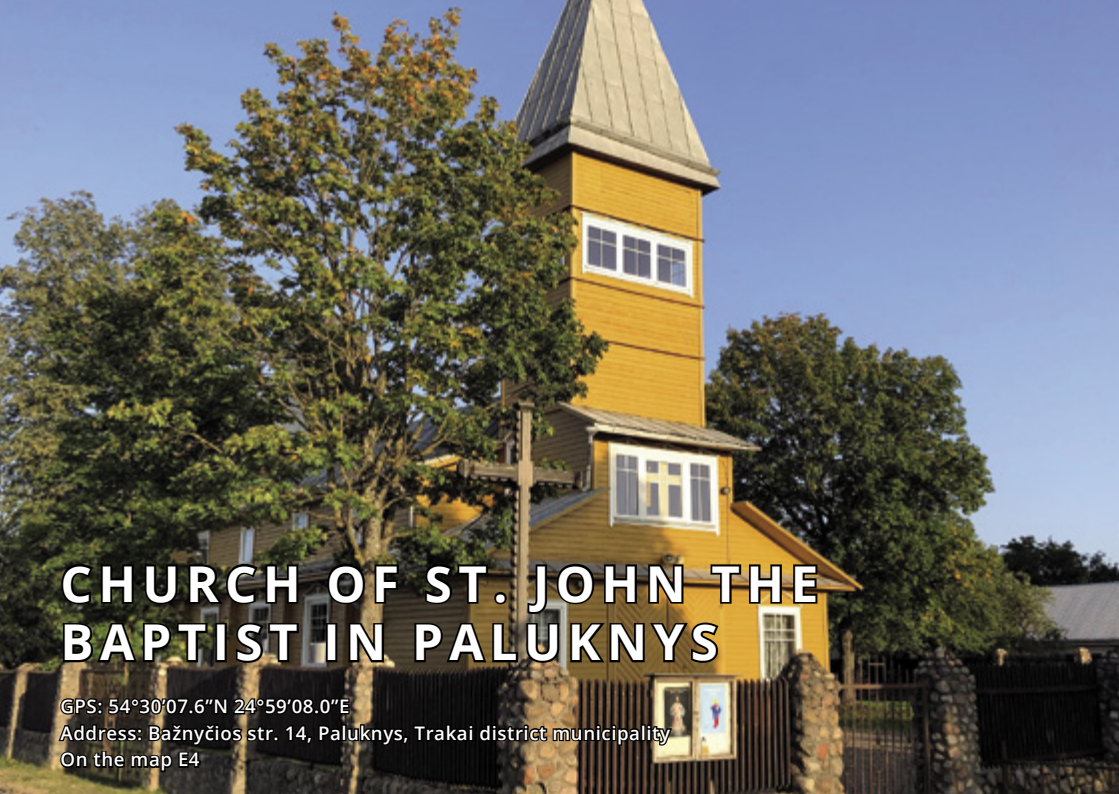
Žukiškės chapel can be clearly seen while driving on the road from Trakai towards Rūdiškės, in the shade of the forest behind Žukiškės village. It is a Baublys tree monument of approximately 100 years old (created in the early twentieth century), the younger brother of the famous Baublys trees of Dionizas Poška located in Bijotai.

The monument is an oak with a height of 2.2 m, diameter of 1.3 m, and a niche carved in its trunk. It is covered with a low shingle roof with a wooden cross attached to the top. The niche of the chapel is covered with glass. The chapel used to have sculptures, but now there is a small picture of a saint, candles and artificial flowers brought by the people of Žukiškės and other surrounding villages. This oak chapel is a perfect fusion of paganism and Christianity. The oak has long been a sacred tree for Lithuanians. Baublys trees were more common in Samogitia and were rarely found in Eastern Lithuania. This chapel is one of only a few surviving Baublys trees in this region.

Trakai District Municipality Administration received the consent of Trakai History Museum to preserve this object of cultural importance, and the consent of Vilnius branch of the Cultural Heritage Department to relocate it. A copy of the chapel was made by member of the Lithuanian Painters' Association, sculptor Mindaugas Šnipas.

Source: www.keturiosostines.lt





CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST IN PALUKNYS

GPS: 54°30'07.6"N 24°59'08.0"E

Address: Bažnyčios str. 14, Paluknys, Trakai district municipality

On the map E4

Paluknys is an old village located on the banks of the Lukna stream, from which the name of the village is believed to have originated.

A chapel was built here in 1794. In 1829, Jonas Volfgangas, the owner of Paluknys manor and a professor at Vilnius University, built a new wooden chapel. In 1904, with the permission of the authorities, Mykolas Sadvokas donated the Paluknys family chapel, other buildings and 2 tenths of land to the Vilnius diocese. In 1905, a temporary church was moved here from the Old Trakai. The chapel was repaired and enlarged in 1906.

The parish was founded in 1921, and Paluknys chapel became a church. In 1926, towers were added to the church. However, the church burned down on 25 August 1941. Kazimieras Packevičius (1884–1941), who was the pastor of the church since 1915, died during the fire. A temporary church was built in 1943. In 1981 it was reconstructed: extended, widened, with an addition of a tower. The church has a rectangular layout, basilica style, an entrance hall and a single tower. Inside of the church there are 3 naves separated by pillars, and three altars.

The Church of St. John the Baptist, which has an elongated rectangular layout and three naves, stands in the middle of Paluknys, next to the abandoned Volfgangas family cemetery. The cemetery contains state-protected art monuments: two 18th century chasubles and a wooden sculpture Pensive Christ. Pensive Christ dates back to the second half of the 17th century and is known as the oldest sculpture of this iconographic type in Lithuania.

The professional skills of its author suggest that the figure of the Pensive Christ could have been carved by a master associated with the environment of the Vilnius Bernardine Monastery. The Bernardines of Vilnius owned a chapel in the town of Paluknys and the sculpture may have been transferred from this particular chapel to the present church.



DUSMENYS ST. APOSTLES SIMON AND JUDE THADDEUS CHURCH

GPS: 54°26'09.2"N 24°30'03.9"E

Adresas: Dusmenų str. 9, Dusmenys village, Trakai district municipality

On the map A5

Back in the 16th century, Vilnius Diocese records of church visitations mentioned the Church of Dusmenys, but the Catholic church was closed as the Reformation spread. In 1667, the Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Kristupas Zigmantas Pacas donated Dusmenys Manor to Pažaislis Camaldolese Monastery. In 1820, the Camaldolese monks built the present wooden church in the middle of the old cemetery. The church had two turrets and four altars. In 1883-1885, the churchyard was fenced with a brick fence covered with wood shingles, and a belfry was built. In 1965-1967, the church was renovated thanks to the priest Marijonas Petkevičius.

The church of the Apostles St. Simon and St. Judas Thaddeus in Dusmenys is Classicist in style, and includes folk architecture features. The single volume church of a square layout ends with a three-wall apse. The roof is semi-gambrel, covered with sheet steel, and includes a turret located next to a trapezoidal pediment. A small two-section octagonal turret is topped with a small dome and an ornamented cross. A bulbous pedestal with a cross is located at the apse. The main facade includes a protruding portico. It is supported by four posts placed on pedestals. A small roof separates

the portico from the pediment. The center of the pediment includes a square window. The church windows arched and edged, only the main facade has a square two-part window with edging. The stumpy silhouette of the church is further enhanced by horizontal cladding.

The interior of the church is decorated with three wooden altars. The 18th century pictures "St. Romualdo" and "The Most Holy Virgin Mary with a Baby" are associated with the Camaldolese are on the main altar. The picture of the church guardians, the Apostles Simon and Judas Thaddeus are in the presbytery.

The church belfry is square, of two sections. The upper section is smaller, separated from the lower one by a small roof. The belfry is covered by a pyramidal sheet steel roof with a massive cross. The windows of the upper section are arched like the church windows, and edged. The belfry is boarded horizontally. A wide two-leaf door leads to it. The churchyard fence is made of stonework and includes a massive arched gate. The gate is covered with a gable roof, and its pediment includes a niche with the image of the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

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AUKŠTADVARIS TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST CHURCH

GPS: 54°34'41.9"N 24°32'04.2"E

Address: Vilniaus str. 53, Aukštadvaris, Trakai district municipality

On the map B3

The Dominican-owned masonry church of Aukštadvaris Parish was closed after the uprising in 1832, and the services were held in a small cemetery chapel. Later the chapel was also handed over to the Orthodox Church, and in 1881 it burned down. At the beginning of the 20th century Aukštadvaris inhabitants decided to reestablish their parish and build a church. Bronislovas Malevskis, the owner of the manor there, donated a land plot for the construction of the church, and a wooden church designed by the architect Antanas Filipovičius-Dubovikas was approved in 1907. Initially, a temporary chapel was built and the church parish was restored. The newly established parish had substantial Polish population, so the services were held in Polish. The new church was built in 1910-1913. World War I, which began shortly, caused great damage to the newly built church: in 1914, the Russian army stationed there took three church bells away. The church also suffered during the World War II: on 24 June 1941, Nazi Germany soldiers destroyed the roof of the church by firing at Aukštadvaris.

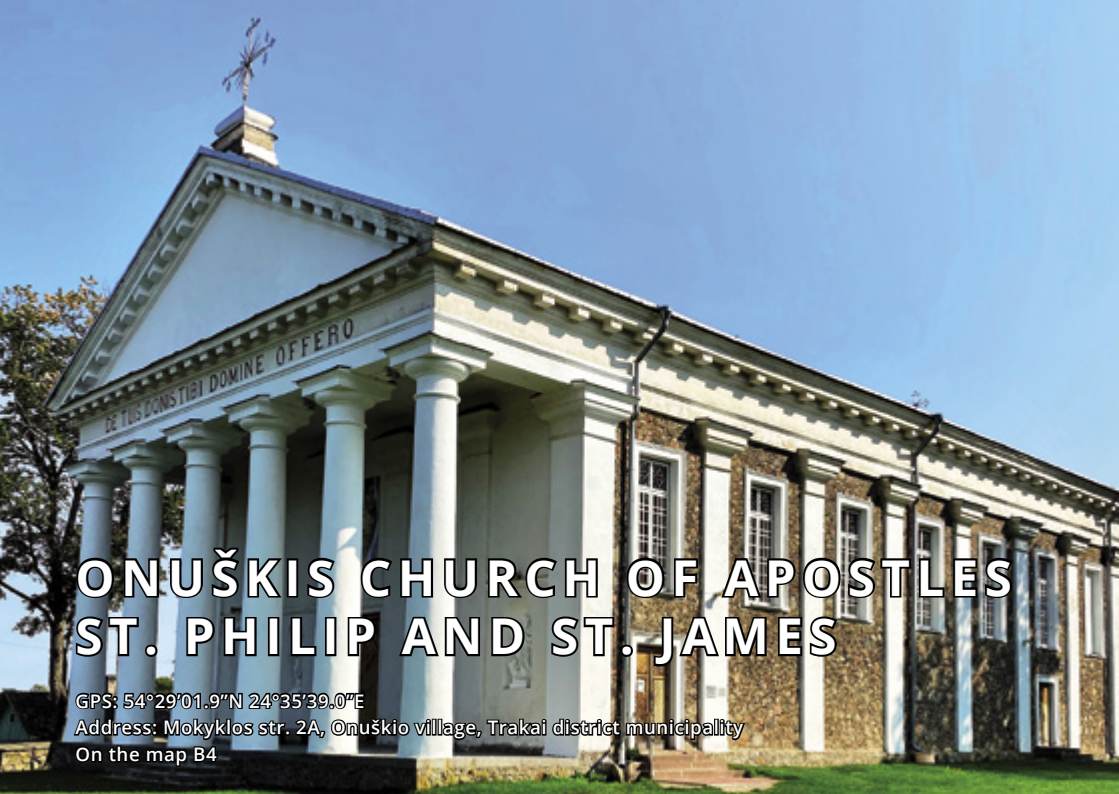
The church building is Historicist with neo-Gothic features. The building layout is symmetrical, with two graceful towers on either side of the main facade and two two-storey sacristies. The two-section towers end with four symmetrical small pediments

with sun motifs and a pointed four-sided roof with a cross on a round pedestal. The same sun motif is echoed in the other pediments of the building. On the main facade pediment, the sun motif is further accentuated by a circular, decoratively segmented central skylight. The window and tower openings in the building are arched, decorated with dripstones.

The interior space is divided into three naves. The church has four altars. The great altar is decorated with the painting The Transfiguration of Christ by the professional artist Stanislovas Gobiata. The same author used a similar composition to decorate the processional altar. The other three smaller altars of Historicist style were brought from the old Dominican church of St. Dominic.

The church interior is richly decorated with paintings. The transept's right wing includes the painting St. Francis of Assisi on the wall that was painted in the second half of the 19th century by the painter from Kaunas M. Bučinskas. The same artist painted the Stations of the Cross. The paintings St. George and St. Stanislaus on the side walls of the church were painted in 1913 by Juozapas Balzukevičius.

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ONUŠKIS CHURCH OF APOSTLES ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES

GPS: 54°29'01.9"N 24°35'39.0"E

Address: Mokyklos str. 2A, Onuškio village, Trakai district municipality

On the map B4

The first church was mentioned in 1526. It is believed that, at the end of the 16th century, the church belonged to evangelical reformers, because the owner of Onuškis farmstead returned it to the Catholics in 1611. The church burned down in 1655. In 1673, a parsonage and a new shelter were established. The church was rebuilt after 1674.

It was very old and deteriorated in 1797, was slightly repaired in 1820 and collapsed in 1823. In its place, the current brick and stone masonry church was built in 1823–1829 under the care of landlord K. Šetkevičius. The locals asked for Lithuanian services, however, in 1832, a commission appointed by the bishop determined that parishioners speak in Lithuanian at home, but pray in Polish, thus they do not need Lithuanian services. They were only partially held from 1893. At the beginning of the 20th century, for a while, the church had an organist Kipras Petrauskas.

Kazimieras Čibas was the pastor of the church in 1927–1939. He took care of the sobriety of parishioners, religious and cultural progress, as well as managed the farm of the parish. Nikodemas Švogžlys-Milžinas was the pastor of the church in 1939–1953.

The church is of the late Classicism period with features of Romanticism, with a hall style and a rectan-

gular plan with a portico of six Doric columns. Its interior is comprised of three naves. The cylindrical vaults are supported by 4 pairs of columns. The churchyard is surrounded by a fence of stone masonry and brick columns. There is also an old stone paved square near the church which was once used to hold markets. This place is still used for autumn fairs, concerts and other community events.



WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR
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