



## General info:

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- **Lithuania is the geographical centre of Europe** (IGN, 1989)
- **Area:** 65,300 km<sup>2</sup>
- **Population:** 3 million
- **GDP per capita Lithuania** (PPP): EUR 16,548 (2012)  
**GDP per capita EU** (PPP): EUR 24,198 (2012)
- **Capital:** Vilnius (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- **Official language:** Lithuanian
- **Dominant foreign languages:** English, Russian, Polish, German (92 % of the population speak at least one foreign language, 52 % of the population speak at least two foreign languages)
- **Currency:** litas. LTL 1 = EUR 3.4528
- **Northernmost ice-free seaport on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea**
- **Average taxi ride price in Vilnius:** LTL 20–30 (Old Town to airport)
- **Time zone:** (UTC+02:00) Helsinki, Kiev, Riga, Sofia, Tallinn, Vilnius

## Business / Science / Economy

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1. In 2011 and 2012 Lithuania was the **2<sup>nd</sup> fastest growing economy** in the EU.
2. Lithuania has the **4<sup>th</sup> lowest corporate tax rate** in the EU (2012).
3. Lithuania is **27<sup>th</sup> out of 185 countries** for 'Ease of Doing Business'.
4. Lithuania's internet upload speed is the **1<sup>st</sup> in Europe and 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest worldwide**.
5. Lithuanians **are highly educated people**:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> in the EU: by the share of graduates aged 20–29 per 1,000 of the population of corresponding age among EU countries.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> in the EU: 93 % of the population has secondary or higher education.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> in the EU: 47 % of the population aged 24–29 has tertiary education.
6. In Lithuania at least **2 foreign languages** are spoken by over half the population
7. Prime transport hub. **Lithuania is in the geographical centre of Europe** (IGN, 1989); it is one of the EU's prime transport hubs and the interconnection of two major pan-European transport corridors.
8. Lithuania is **4<sup>th</sup> in the world for the most angel** investment activities as per February 2013.
9. **GetJar** – the world's largest free app store with over 2 billion (as of Jan 2013) downloads to date. The company has distributed 800,000 mobile apps worldwide. GetJar was created and developed by Lithuanian entrepreneur Ilja Laurs.

10. **Pixelmator** – one of the best image editing software packages in the world was developed by two Lithuanian brothers. The program was named Mac App Store App of 2011. The latest app edition achieved a whopping 500,000 downloads in just a single week in May 2013.
11. **Eskimi** – one of the most popular social networks in Africa, connecting over 12 million users worldwide. It was created by Lithuanian entrepreneurs.
12. Between 2009 and 2011 the annual rate of apps developed in Lithuania rocketed by 1500%.
13. **Biotechnology**. Lithuania is the regional leader in modern biotechnology. It is one of the most rapidly growing and promising industries in Lithuania.  
  
Biosimilar drug for the treatment of severe neutropenia for cancer patients was developed by Lithuanian researchers and is produced in Lithuania for worldwide markets under the brand name TevaGrastim®. It is 25 % to 35% cheaper than, and equally effective as, other medications currently available on the market.
14. Laser technology. Lithuanian lasers constitute around 50 % of the high power picosecond laser market in the world.
15. **Femtosecond parametric light amplifiers** produced in Lithuania account for 80 % of the world market.
16. Generally, **every tenth high-end scientific laser in the world is made in Lithuania**. These lasers are used by organizations such as NASA, NATO, Pentagon, etc.  
  
More info about Lithuania's business, science, economy, etc.:

## History

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- **The first written mention of Lithuania (1009)**. The name of Lithuania was first mentioned in 1009 in the Annals of Quedlinburg, among information about the St. Bruno Querfurt mission to the lands of the Eastern Balts tribes.
- **King Mindaugas (1253)**. In 1251 Mindaugas was Christianized and on July 6, 1253, crowned as the first king of Lithuania. The rest of the population was still pagan. It was Christianized much later. Mindaugas was the only king of Lithuania.
- **Christianity (1387)**. In 1387, Lithuania adopted Christianity. Samogitia, one of its ethnic regions, became the last region in Europe to become Christianized in 1413. It was with these events that the formation of Christian Europe concluded. The year 2013 marks the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christianization of Samogitia.
- **Battle of Grunwald (1410)**. The early glory of Lithuania was reached in the Battle of Žalgiris (Grunwald), when the alliance of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania decisively defeated the German–Prussian Teutonic Knights. The territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania then covered the area between the Baltic and the Black seas.
- **The Union of Lublin (1569)**. This Union, signed between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland, created a united state – Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, one of the biggest countries in Europe at that time.
- **Vilnius University (1579)**. The oldest university in the Baltic States and one of the oldest in Northern and Eastern Europe was established in 1579 as the Jesuit Academy. It is currently the largest Lithuanian university. The Nobel Literature Prize winner Czesław Miłosz is among the alumni of Vilnius University.

- **The First European Constitution (1791).** The first European constitution came into force on May 3, 1791. It defined the main laws of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The constitution was suspended in 1795 with the occupation by the Russian Empire. The occupation lasted for 123 years until the end of World War I.
- **Lithuanian press ban (1831, 1863).** These dates mark the years of the fight for freedom. In these years Lithuanian and Polish people started uprisings against the rule of the Russian Empire. However, the uprisings were quelled. After the 1863 uprising, the Russian Empire as a means of repression started a Lithuanian press ban that forbade printing, spreading, propagating and using any publications in the Lithuanian language with Latin letters. The ban was in force until 1904. During the ban, Lithuanians resisted by smuggling books and other publications.
- **The Act of Independence (1918).** The Act of Independence of Lithuania was signed by the Council of Lithuania on February 16, 1918, just before the end of World War I. The Act proclaimed the restoration of an independent State of Lithuania, governed by democratic principles.
- **The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (1939).** In 1939 Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the pact which divided the territories of Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, and Finland into Nazi and Soviet 'spheres of influence'. This was followed by the annexation of the territories in these countries. Lithuania was annexed and occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940. The occupation lasted until 1990.
- **The Holocaust (1941–1944).** During World War II about 150,000 Lithuanian Jews – Litvaks became victims of the Holocaust. Nazis killed about 90 % of the population of Litvaks. As a result of the Nazi policy of racial genocide, Lithuania lost its colorful ethnic component of Jews, who had lived in the country for centuries. The massacre of innocent people, just because they were Jews, is the bloodiest page in Lithuania's 20<sup>th</sup> century history, marked by the loss of many talented people, enormous bereavement and a tragedy for the Jewish people and the whole of Lithuania.
- **War after War – Armed Resistance (1944–1953).** In order to defend their country and freedom from Soviet occupation, tens of thousands of Lithuanians chose to fight guerilla war. However, the resistance was quelled and most of the partisans were imprisoned or killed. Moreover, during the occupation Lithuanians suffered harsh repression. For instance, the night of May 22, 1948, is remembered as the biggest mass deportation of Lithuanians, when over 40,000 people (10,897 children) were put into cattle coaches and deported to Siberia.
- **The Baltic Way (1989).** On 23 August 1989, the populations of the three Baltic States staged a protest campaign called the Baltic Way to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact. About two million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians joined hands in a 650–km human chain from Gediminas Tower in Vilnius to Tall Hermann Tower in Tallinn.
- **Declaration of independence (1990 March 11).** On this day Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union, and became the first country to be liberated from the occupation. Upon becoming independent, Lithuania initiated the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- **Member of the EU and NATO (2004).** Lithuania became a member of the European Union and NATO in 2004.

# Culture

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1. **The Lithuanian language.** It is one of the oldest and the most archaic of the Indo-European language family, representing languages of the Balts, and linguistically related to a historical Indo-Aryan language, the primary liturgical language of Hinduism.
2. **Sutartinės.** It is a unique traditional Lithuanian polyphonic singing manner, acknowledged by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Lithuanian word 'sutartinė' associates with the English noun and verb 'accord'. Interesting fact: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in a short singspiel 'Die Fischerin' (1782) used the Lithuanian marital lament 'Aš atsisakiau savo močiutei' ('I Said Farewell to My Granny').
3. **National Song and Dance Celebration.** One of the biggest cultural phenomena in Lithuania and beyond. This festival unites the whole country for a creative event of music and dancing. It has been held for roughly 100 years. In 2003 it was acknowledged by UNESCO as a masterpiece of human oral and intangible cultural heritage.
4. **Vilnius.** The Capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, has the largest baroque style old town in the Baltic States, which has been awarded UNESCO World Heritage Site status. The old town covers almost 3,600,000 square meters – which is more than 672 football fields put together.
5. **Cross Crafting.** This is a traditional, unmatched and vibrant art of crafting crosses. More than a decade ago this specific kind of Lithuanian art was recognized by UNESCO as a masterpiece of human oral and intangible heritage.
6. **Lithuanian Jews – Litvaks.** The Lithuanian capital Vilnius is often referred to as the Jerusalem of the North. Lithuania was also a birth place for Litvaks – Jews who trace their roots back to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The most prominent Litvaks include Herman Minkovski (mathematician), Sir Montague Maurice Burton (founder of the Burton clothing company), Jascha Heifetz (violinist), Jacques Lipchitz (sculptor), Samuel Bak (painter), Chaim Weizmann (the first president of Israel), and many others. It is important to note that for many centuries a vivid and culturally active Jewish community lived in Lithuania. This community was almost completely destroyed during the Holocaust.
7. **Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911).** He was a unique and exceptional figure in the history of European art. Although his creative life lasted only around a decade, the footprint of his artworks amounts to over 400 musical compositions, 300 paintings, and many graphic, poetic and literature creations.
8. **Fluxus.** Fluxus is a famous contemporary art movement initiated and led by two Lithuanian emigrants George Maciunas and Jonas Mekas. The latter is often called 'the godfather of American avant-garde cinema'.
9. **Street Music Day.** In 2007, on the first weekend of May, Lithuanian actor and musician Andrius Mamontovas invited all Lithuanian musicians and all music lovers to share their music on the streets of Lithuania until dusk. The initiative has become a tradition, also spreading to other countries, such as Belarus, Latvia and Georgia.

## Sport

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1. **Basketball** – the ‘second religion’ and most popular sport in Lithuania. It has been played since around the 1920s. The Lithuanian men’s national basketball team has been a repeated winner of European and world championships.
2. **Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas**. In 1933 an experimental plane navigated by these two Lithuanians successfully flew over the Atlantic Ocean, but under mysterious circumstances crashed near Lithuania. The flight is considered to have opened the airmail route between the American and European continents.
3. **Arvydas Sabonis** (1964) – the legendary Lithuanian basketball player. In 2010 he was inducted into the FIBA Hall of Fame, while in 2011 he was included in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Currently Sabonis is President of the Lithuanian Basketball Federation.
4. **Virgilijus Alekna** (1972) – the Lithuanian discus thrower, a multiple European, world and Olympic champion and record holder, who has been awarded as the best European and world athlete.
5. **Rūta Meilutytė** (1997) – the young Lithuanian swimming talent, multiple Lithuanian and European record holder, and the youngest Olympic champion in the history of Lithuania.
6. **Žydrūnas Savickas** (1975) – known as the strongest man in the world, who has broken world records over 50 times. Currently he officially holds over 20 world records.
7. **Modern Pentathlon**. Lithuanians are proud to have a good number of the best modern pentathlon athletes in the world, including Olympic and European champion Laura Asadauskaitė–Zadneprovskienė, and multiple Olympic Games, World and European championship’s winners Andrejus Zadneprovskis, Edvinas Krungolcas, and many more growing stars.
8. **John Constantine Unitas** (Jonas Jonaitis) (1933 – 2002) – the Lithuanian American professional American football player, one of the best players in NFL history. Three times awarded as the most valuable player in the NFL.
9. **Dance sport collective ‘Žuvėdra’** (‘Seagull’) – since its inception in 1965, the collective (affiliated to Klaipėda’s University) has been the winner of World and European championships more than 20 times.
10. **Cycling**. Lithuania has a long tradition of winners in various cycling disciplines. Many Lithuanian athletes have reached the podiums of various cycle events, including road racing, track cycling, and BMX.