

## Call from the Air: Vilnius Invites Visitors With Impressive Flight of Hot Air Balloons



Hot air balloons preparing for a flight over Vilnius © GoVilnius

**The hospitality professionals of the Lithuanian capital flew over the city in a hot air balloon carrying the message "Vilnius is calling". They chose this original way to spread the word that the city is finally opening after months of quarantine. Vilnius is one of the few capitals in Europe featuring hot air balloon flights over the city. It is also recognized as one of the safest holiday destinations for a memorable post-pandemic trip.**

**June 12th, 2020.** The representatives of museums, guides, tour operators and hospitality professionals together with the mayor Remigijus Šimašius flew in a hot air balloon over the city, inviting the soon-to-come visitors to enjoy the summer in Vilnius. Their balloon carried an inviting message "Vilnius is calling." The flight of tourism representatives coincided with the very first hot air balloon competition after the COVID-19 pandemic. Dozens of hot air balloons were a symbol of the perseverance of the tourism industry, which is starting up again with the help and support of the local people.

The balloon flight over the UNESCO-listed Old Town is one of the greatest attractions for tourists as well as for locals. Balloon flights over the city are possible only in a few other European capitals.

"During the last few decades hot air balloons have become an important part of the city life," says Mr. Šimašius. "They never stop exciting not only their passengers, but also people on the ground. Passers-by stop in the streets to watch balloons and point them out to each other and to their children."

According to the mayor, hot air balloons were chosen as a sign of hope and strength of Vilnius facing the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the strict health requirements, the city feels confident to open up for visitors and looks forward to another vibrant summer season.

Travellers from 26 countries are presently allowed to visit Lithuania without being subjected to 2 weeks of self-isolation. This "safe list" of countries includes Germany, Poland, France, Italy, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Malta, and Spain. The renewal of international flights and the end of the quarantine regime next week provide even more possibilities to spend holidays in Vilnius, for which the tourism industry of the city has been preparing all along.

"It's wonderful that we can finally invite visitors to Vilnius," said Milda Ivanauskienė, the director of MO museum featuring contemporary art. "For this season we are opening an exhibition of the BAFTA winner director Peter Greenway and his wife, multimedia artist Saskia Boddeke. We are also continuing the exhibition of the legendary director Jonas Mekas, whose works feature John Lennon, Yoko Ono, Elvis Presley and the Kennedy couple among others. It is a great time to discover Vilnius as the center of art and culture."

Ms. Ivanauskienė was one of the guests on board of several "Vilnius is calling" hot air balloons. As was Narimantas Miežys, the director of wine bar *Somm*. He invited the visitors to enjoy the café culture of the Lithuanian capital. Recently, the city gave over a large part of its public spaces to local bars and cafés, becoming one huge open-air-café.

"The culture of street cafés is flourishing in Vilnius," commented Mr. Miežys. "As soon as quarantine measures were relaxed, people came back to their favourite outdoor spaces. It is difficult to resist the temptation to have a glass of wine in the Old Town on a warm summer night."

Having successfully contained the spread of COVID-19, Vilnius is also one of the safest destinations this summer. Compared to most European countries, Lithuania had 20 times fewer people infected by the COVID-19 and the country's hospitals were never overwhelmed during the pandemic. The European Best Destinations (EBD) organization [listed](#) Vilnius among the 20 safest cities to travel, finding it "twice as safe as most European capitals."

Some safety measures are still in place. Face masks are no longer mandatory yet still highly recommended in indoor public spaces, personal hygiene and disinfection procedures are required in shops and restaurants and people are asked to keep a safe distance at all times.

-END-

## **ABOUT GO VILNIUS**

[Go Vilnius](#) is the official tourism and business development agency of the City of Vilnius. The agency provides visitors, investors, relocating talent, entrepreneurs and businesses with all the essential information they need to know about the Lithuanian capital. Go Vilnius offers information

*on everything from real estate to leisure activities in Vilnius, simplifying the process of traveling, relocating to, or investing in Vilnius.*

**For more information please contact:**

Erika Brazaitytė, Public Relations Manager

Phone: +370 617 45202

Email: [erika.brazaityte@vilnius.lt](mailto:erika.brazaityte@vilnius.lt)

Go Vilnius | the Official Development Agency of the City of Vilnius

[www.govilnius.lt](http://www.govilnius.lt)