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Spiritual Wandering in Lithuania: From Little Vatican to Underwater Cross



Beržoras St. Stanislaus Church, © Lithuania Travel

Known for its rich religious heritage, Lithuania invites to explore the spiritual sites sprinkled all around the country

October 15, 2020. Religious tourism involves going on pilgrimages, as well as visiting religious monuments and artifacts. Though such a type of travelling has been around for ages, nowadays it is getting more popular as people discover new, previously unexplored spiritual destinations.

While Lithuania, a culturally and historically diverse nation, was the last one in Europe to embrace Christianity in the 14th century, visitors can find many spiritual sites scattered all across the country. And with All Saints' Day approaching, it is a good time to add some new yet undiscovered destinations to your bucket list for that next spiritual adventure.

From the Little Vatican to an underwater cross to a church in a tree, here are 8 undiscovered religious relics found in Lithuania.

1. Lifted from the bottom of the lagoon. [St. Michael Archangel Church of Rumšiškės](#) (Kaišiadorys district)

The famous wooden church in Rumšiškės has seen it all. After standing in the town of Old Rumšiškės for nearly a century, in 1958-1959 the church, along with the bell tower, was moved from the bottom of the future Kaunas Lagoon to a new place—the upper Nemunas terrace. In the end, the flooding of the Nemunas riverbed submerged about 40 villages and over 700 homesteads. Nowadays, the church holds celebrations to honour the inhabitants of the flooded villages.

2. [The tallest cross in Lithuania](#) (Šilalė district)

One of the most visited areas in the surroundings of Kaltinėnai is the Spiritual Park. Home to the Chapel of the St. Virgin Mary, the park also features the Calvaries of the Exiles—a group of 21 sculptures that commemorate the exiles. Alongside the sculpture ensemble, on a big hill, stands the 20-meter-high Cross of Resurrection. Built in 1990, it represents the country's independence and is the tallest cross in Lithuania.

3. Near one of the oldest cemeteries in Lithuania. [Beržoras St. Stanislaus Church](#) (Plungė district)

The 15th century street church village has two main religious objects – the St. Stanislaus Church building complex (the St. Stanislaus Church, bell tower and chapel) and the 14 Stations of the Cross chapels. It is said that a shepherd came across a painting of the Holy Virgin Mary hanging in a treetop. Priests brought the painting down and took it to the Plateliai church. However, the painting disappeared from the church and reappeared in the same place in the treetop. According to the legend, it was then decided to build a new church on this spot where the painting would reappear. The old Plateliai parish cemetery in the churchyard is considered one of the oldest cemeteries in Lithuania.

4. [Krekenava Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary](#) and its replica in a tree (Panevėžys district)

It is the only daughter shrine—a filial church—of the Roman Basilica of St. Mary Major in Lithuania. It contains a miraculous painting of the Mother of God and Child, which has been an object of worship and respect for centuries. On a regular day, the priests cover it by the Romanas Švoinickis painting “Christ Teaches the Children of Lithuania”, often called “Christ among the Krekenava Residents”, because it immortalizes the citizens of the town. The replica of the basilica, built by a Krekenava local, can be found in a tree in Švenčiuliškių Street.

5. One of the most modern in the world. [Elektrėnai Catholic Church of Mary, the Queen of Martyrs](#) (Elektrėnai)

A semi-circular portal, consisting of a rectangular arch with a cross and six vertical doubled crosses. The building of exceptional architecture near the Vilnius-Kaunas highway makes an extraordinary impression and helps thoughts lift into the sky. The story goes that the architects and builders of the church had to repeatedly overcome the resistance of gravity and materials in order to build this spiritual destination.

6. [Tours in the Little Vatican](#). Five Kretinga monasteries (Kretinga)

Kretinga is called the Little Vatican for a reason—the city is home to five distinct monasteries, all telling unique stories. Visitors can go on themed tours and meet the nuns, visit the tower of the Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the inner yard of the monastery and the Chapel of the Martyrs. Tourists also learn more about the history of the origin of the monasteries and the churches, the miracles have made the St. Anthony altar famous, as well as the routines the monks follow.

7. [The cross at the bottom of Lake Plateliai](#) (Plungė district)

The cross, consecrated by the Franciscan monks of Kretinga, is on the Kryžiavonė Hill several meters deep in the middle of Lake Plateliai and can be seen by taking one of the offered diving centre routes. According to the Franciscan brothers, who lowered the cross underwater in 2005, they directly interpreted the words of Pope John Paul II who said that in order to discover the essence of the cross it is crucial to get to the depths.

8. Where the mummies rest. [Liškiava Monastery](#) (Varėna district)

A special place in Dzūkija for people searching for spiritual experiences can be reached by sailing the Nemunas River from Druskininkai. The Liškiava Church and Dominican Monastery Complex on the steep Nemunas bank is a 17th-18th century architectural monument. Throughout the 1990-1997 period, the Liškiava Church of the Holy Trinity was restored and a museum with the mummified remains of the Dominican monks was established in its cellars. Interestingly, the church has a 19th century organ, which Konstantinas Čiurlionis, the father of the famous composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, used.

Contact in advance for visits to sanctuaries and the times of worship services.

The information has been prepared according to the material collected by the national tourism development agency Lithuania Travel, tourism information centres and members of the program Create Lithuania.

More information about religious tourism in Lithuania is [here](#).

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