

FROM THE BUSTLE OF THE CAPITAL CITY

TO THE NATURE REFUGE

Bicycle route:

Cathedral Square – Antaviliai – Balžis Lake – Cathedral Square

Route length: approx. 35 km

Route starting point: Cathedral Square

GPS 54.685968, 25.287528

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Opting for this almost 35 km route, you will experience a lot of pleasant impressions: explore the many attractions in the capital city and enjoy the beautiful surroundings of Vilnius nature. And if you are travelling during the warm season, you can include swimming in the lakes in your plans! Isn't it a perfect hike?

Most of the route you will be riding on the bike trails, and some streets, gravel and forest roads. A large part of the route is marked, and you should use a map in places with no marking.



Start your trek in the very heart of Vilnius – the Cathedral Square. Snowy walls of St. Stanislaus and St. Vladislav Cathedral **1** (18th century) are shining with serenity and solemnity – take a brief moment to admire the most important Lithuanian Catholic shrine. Near the Cathedral stands the belfry from the thirteenth century – a former defensive tower of the Lower Castle **2**. Not far from there, behind the Cathedral, is the Lower Castle, the so-called Royal Palace. True, this residence of the Lithuanian rulers from thirteenth century did not survive to our days. It was destroyed in the end of the eighteenth century, and recently rebuilt.

The real symbol of Vilnius – Gediminas Hill **3** with the defensive tower of the Upper Castle – stands behind the Royal Palace. It has the observation deck on top, offering an amazing panoramic view



of the Old Town.

Between the entrance to the Cathedral and the bell tower you will find a paving tile with the inscription “Stebuklas” (“The Miracle”) **4**. Step on it, think of a wish, then turn around, and your wish will come true. Wish yourself a miraculous journey in Vilnius and its surroundings!

From the Cathedral Square, dive between the Royal Palace and the Gediminas Hill, and go for about 500 m through the park along the bike trail which will lead you to K. Škirpos street routed along the Vilnia River. Here, turn left. At the confluence of the Neris and Vilnia rivers you will see an impressive white building – the Old Arsenal of the Lower Castle (16th century) – the storage of weapons and ammunition. Now it hosts the Museum of Applied Arts **5**.

At the museum, cross the bridge over the Vilnia River and go to the other side of the street. While rolling on the bicycle





path along the River Neris, in 400 m you will see the Baroque palace of Sluškos **6** of the seventeenth century. It was built by Dominykas Sluška, the manager of Polotsk Province, after changing the bed of the river Neris, in 1694. From the palace you will have to use the driveway sometimes, so be careful.

Within a few hundred meters from Sluškos Palace, behind the Žirmūnai bridge, you can turn right to K. Būgos street and see the Neo-Baroque Vileišiai palace **7** of the beginning of the twentieth century, now a place for the Lithuanian students of Literature and Folklore,



and St. Peter and Paul Church **8** (17th century). It's the most famous Vilnius Baroque church that will fascinate with its luxurious interior: two thousands of statues, unique beauty of a ship-shaped chandelier, and valuable paintings. If you are going to visit the church, do not forget to take care of the bicycle safety.

After seeing the palace and the church, return to the bike trail and admire the Neris River while pedalling for a little more than 2 km before the trail will take

you to M. Daukšos school yard. Feel free to cross it, and soon you will find yourself in Antakalnio street. After leaving the school yard drive to the left for about 200 meters and cross the street. Continue on the bike path for a few hundred metres until it reaches the large roundabout. Keep right along the Nemenčinės road, for another few meters – and you will be cycling on the bicycle track for about 10 km.

Although this bike trail is not particularly new, this discomfort is compensated with magnificent Nemenčinė pine forest views. In summer, these forests are rich in berries and in autumn – in mushrooms, so you can gather yourself forest treasures right from the bicycle.

By the way, in this section the trail is not always marked, so occasionally take a look at the map, especially when leaving the asphalt bike path.

If you did not take drink or a meal with yourself, do not worry – just after leaving the city, find a restaurant, a couple of shops and a little further on, at the intersection with Balžio street, a rest area with a gazebo where you can relax and have your snack.

At around the 15th kilometre of the ride you will reach Antavilčiai settlement. Turn right onto Skarbėlio street. Behind Antavilčiai cemetery the paved street will turn into a gravel road. Do not rush – soon on the right you will see a narrow forest road. Take it, and in a couple of minutes you will find yourself at the Antavilčiai Lake beach **9**. It is a real pleasure to dive into the cool waters of the lake after the heat of the ride, and admire the expressive pinewood coastline. If you want





privacy and quietness, go to the other side of the lake and find a secluded access to the water personally for you. Do not be surprised if you met some anglers – the lake is famous for its pike.

There is another small lake Skarbelis **10** not far from there. Go back through the forest to the junction with a gravel road and turn right. Although the path to the lake is furrowed with tree roots, it is worth riding one kilometre to enjoy the special green waters of Skarbelis. Here you can swim in a beach.



From the beach, head to the right, and after a dozen meters turn right again. On the main gravel road after a couple of kilometres you will exit to the paved Balžio street, so turn to the right once there. Traffic on the street Balžio is quite intense, especially in summer, so be careful. After a ride of 300 meters, you will see Balžis lake **11** on the left. Its shore is especially comfortable, sandy, there is a beach, attracting many vacationers on a warm summer day. In summer, the lake has an outdoor cafe, offering snacks before travelling back to Vilnius.

Take a rest, and go back to Balžio street, turn left and drive along the street for nearly 4 km to Nemenčinė highway. You will travel this stretch with a breeze because most of it will go downhill. Having reached Nemenčinė highway turn left and return to Vilnius along the same bike trail.

PLACES TO VISIT:

- 1 Vilnius Cathedral Basilica**
 ☞ Katedros a. 2, Vilnius
 GPS 54.685815; 25.287437
 📞 +370 5 261 1127
 ✉ parapija@katedra.lt
 🌐 www.katedra.lt
- 2 Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania**
 ☞ Katedros a. 4, Vilnius
 GPS 54.685877; 25.289068
 📞 +370 5 212 7476
 ✉ info@valdovurumai.lt
 🌐 www.valdovurumai.lt
- 3 Gediminas' Hill**
 ☞ Arsenalo g. 5, Vilnius
 GPS 54.686609; 25.290731
 📞 +3705 261 7453
 ✉ pilis@lnm.lt
 🌐 www.lnm.lt
- 4 "Miracle" Tile**
 GPS 54.685721, 25.28692
- 5 Museum of Applied Art**
 ☞ Arsenalo g. 3A, Vilnius
 GPS 54.688314; 25.292308
 📞 +370 5 212 1813
 ✉ tdm@zebra.lt
 🌐 www.ldm.lt
- 6 Sluškos Palace**
 GPS 54.691149, 25.297331
- 7 Vileišis Palace**
 GPS 54.695129, 25.305323
- 8 Church of St. Apostles Peter and Paul**
 ☞ Antakalnio g. 1, Vilnius
 GPS 54.693970; 25.306052
 📞 +370 5 234 0229
 ✉ ppbaznycia@gmail.com
- 9 The Beach of the Lake Antavilis**
 GPS 54.794377, 25.404112
- 10 Skarbelis Lake**
 GPS 54.795496, 25.4240421
- 11 The Beach of the Lake Balžis**
 GPS 54.792489, 25.432062

0 500 m



SANTARIŠKĖS

Naujųjų Verkių ež.

VERKIAI

Verkių miškas

TURNIŠKĖS

NERIS

Valakampių miško parkas

TURNIŠKĖS

VALAKUPIAI

AUKŠTAGIRIS

VILNIUS

PYLIMĖLIAI

Karalių g.

Šveicarijos miško parkas

ŽIRMŪNAI

ANTAKALNIS

SAPIEGINĖ

Katvanų g.

Tuskulėnų g.

LYGLAUKIAI

Seimyniškių g.

GIARDAI

BELMONTAS

PAVILNYS

UŽUPIS

Beimonto g.

ZEMASIS PAVILNYS

MARKUČIAI

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