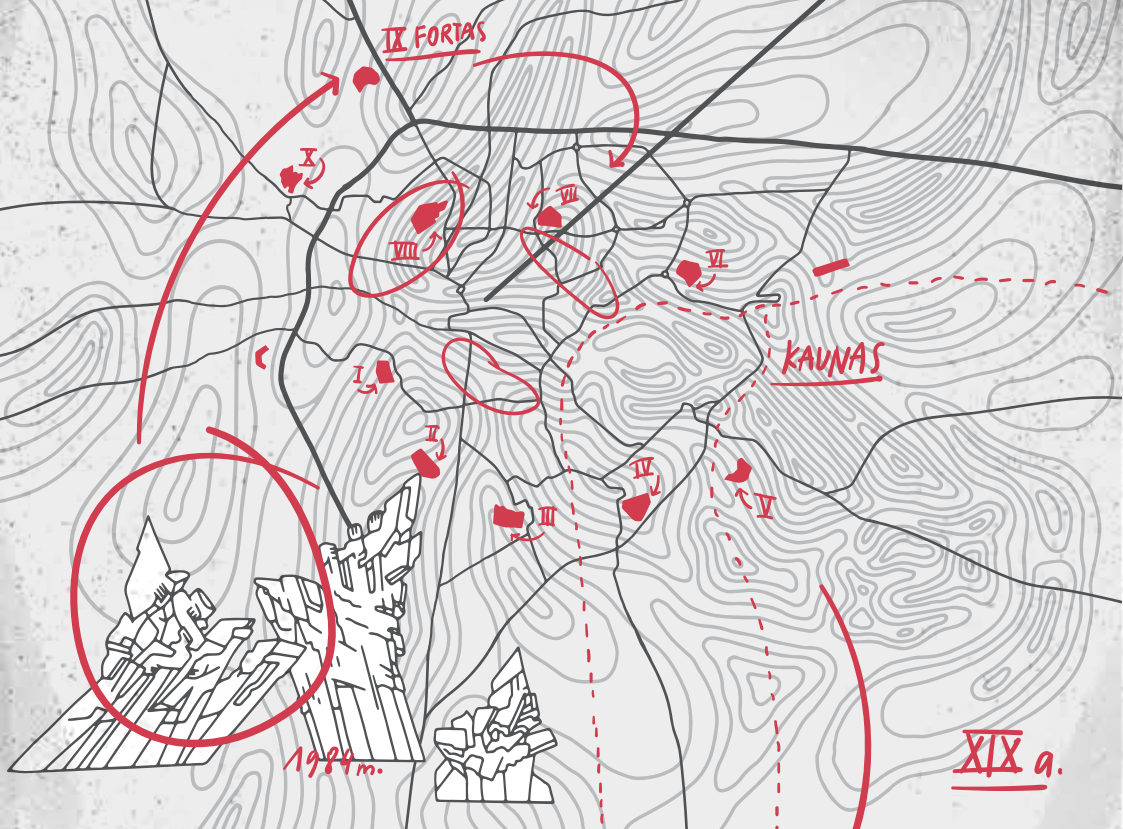


KAUNAS FORTRESS



WHAT SURROUNDS US?

Kaunas Fortress was supposed to consist of hundreds of objects: forts, batteries, warehouses, hospitals, churches, barracks, administrative buildings, etc. For example, until 1891 alone, 195 brick and 253 wooden military buildings were built in the territory of the fortress; 11 million rubles were spent on the construction of the fortress. At the beginning of the 20th century, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth forts were modernized and reinforced with concrete. However, when the conflict started, the Kaunas Fortress collapsed. Although it was the most modern one in the Russian Empire, it was broken in 11 days because the enemy was simply more technologically advanced. After the war, the project lost its defensive purpose, leaving at least four forts unfinished. However, the fortress buildings were later used for military and law enforcement purposes by both the First Republic and the occupying forces. Today, about 250 objects have survived - both in Kaunas and Kaunas district. Essential objects - forts - traditionally receive the most attention but it is also fun to visit other objects, we only need to make sure it's safe.

MORE KAUNASTIC ROUTES

Wondering what to do next? Great news – we've been publishing illustrated maps since 2015. Here are some of the themed routes available in English:

Welcome to Kaunas
Modernist's Guide
Wallographer's Notes
The Litvak Landscape
The Litvaks of Slobodka
The Sugihara Route
Gastro Guide
The Ethnic Trail
Kid-Sized Kaunas
For free publications, visit the Kaunas IN tourist information center (Rotušės a. 15, Kaunas), or locations labeled with the "Tourism Information Friendly" or visit.kaunas.lt
More of the "Kaunas Fortress" and other kaunastic routes you can find in the digital version on www.kaunastika.lt.

USEFUL HASHTAGS

#kaunastic #visitkaunas #kaunaspilnas

TOURISM INFORMATION

"KAUNAS IN"
Rotušės a. 15, Kaunas | +36061650991
info@kaunasin.lt | visit.kaunas.lt
Kaunas 2022
European Capital of Culture

OBJECTS

1 THE FIRST FORT

Siltanamių g., Nareikiskės, Kaunas district

The westernmost and least urbanized fort was severely damaged by German artillery during the First World War. During the interwar period, the fort was equipped with a gas chamber where death sentences were carried out. During the Soviet occupation, it was not maintained, and thus freely used for economic purposes. As a result, some valuable facade elements were dismantled. Some of the fort's premises were flooded. Currently, after the tidying up of the territory, tours are taking place there and various communal and art events are being organized.

2 THE SECOND FORT

Dilviškių g. 24, Kazliškiai, Kaunas

Unlike the First Fort, this one is heavily urbanized, with Julijanova and Kazliškės settlements around it. The pentagonal fort plan formed the network structure of the settlements' streets. This fort suffered the most during World War I but was also affected during World War II when Aleksotas Airport was bombed.

3 THE THIRD FORT

Titnago g., Seniava, Kaunas District

Compared to the first two, the Third Fort suffered less during the conflicts. In it, you can still see the original details: doors, stairs, railings, etc. The fort is heavily urbanized. It is surrounded by residential areas and part of its territory has been privatized. Currently, it is one of the best-preserved and most used objects of Kaunas Fortress, tidied up and handed over to the needs of the public by an active local community. Before bats move in for the winter, various events initiated by the local community take place in the fort, visitors can see the permanent exhibition of Lithuanian military uniforms and do a tour. The area of the fort can be reached by public transport.

4 THE FOURTH FORT

Dlytinės g. 15, Rokai, Kaunas

The officers of the tsar's army planned that this fort will be the first to counter the enemy fire. However, the Fourth Fort was little involved in the defense. The bunker is asymmetrical, rectangular. It is said to be one of the best fortifications of its time. About 4,000 Jews were killed in the fort during the German occupation. In 1998-1999 the Fourth Fort was cleaned up and demined though later the works had stopped due to discontinued funding. In 2012, the territory was tidied up again but some of the space and premises remained flooded due to the damaged drainage system. Today you can often witness contemporary art shows and practices at the Fourth Fort.

5 THE FIFTH FORT

Rūko g. 11, Zuikiai, Kaunas

The Kaunas Fortress building, located in a very picturesque place near the Kaunas Lagoon (which appeared here later) is one of the most complex ones, as it was designed considering the mountainous terrain. That is why this fort became the most expensive Kaunas Fortress object at that time. It was barely touched during World War I, except a few structures that were destroyed by retreating soldiers. During World War II, a large explosion took place in the fort, the exact circumstances of which are unknown. Currently the fortifications are being tidied up; a large part of the territory is occupied by the active sports club Legions.

6 THE SIXTH FORT

K. Baršausko g. 101, Kaunas

The fort was barely touched during the two world wars. During the interwar period, it served as a military prison, where the so-called four communards accused of organizing a coup were imprisoned and shot on December 27, 1926, on the orders of Antanas Smetona. During the World War II, about 35,000 prisoners of war were killed in this fort. Later, a hill of crosses was formed here in memory of thousands of victims. The exhibition of military equipment of Vytautas the Great War Museum was moved to this fort from the capital and immediately liked by the citizens and guests of Kaunas.

7 THE SEVENTH FORT

Archyvo g. 61, Kaunas

Part of the fort territory - moats and mounds - located near Hospital of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences Kaunas Clinics can be seen when driving along Sukilelių Avenue. There was never any military action in the fortification. During the Nazi occupation, it was turned into the first concentration camp where more than 5,000 Jews were killed. The fort suffered the most during the years of Soviet occupation: many original details were destroyed during the reconstruction. At present, the fort has been privatized. It contains a museum and provides informal education for children.

8 THE EIGHT FORT

Pryšmančių g. 2C, Kaunas

The initial plan was to build 7 forts in Kaunas but in the long run, it was decided to strengthen the fortress. Concrete, not just red bricks, was used in constructing this fortification. This is the first fort to have had electrical wiring. Interestingly, the fortification lost its meaning as soon as it was built, as it was inadvertently constructed on a low hill, thus open to enemy fire from nearby heights. Much of the fort and old equipment are underwater. The environment of the fort is actively used by the residents of the surrounding area who have set up gardens here. They were recently joined by the younger generation, which was attracted by the Šilainiai Gardens initiative, which is a part of Šilainiai Project. Poets can be found here and land art workshops with local and foreign artists are being organized in the fort.

9 THE NINTH FORT

Žemaičių pl. 73, Kaunas

Perhaps the most modern fort of the Kaunas Fortress, completed just before World War I, is probably best known to everyone, who traveled on the A1 highway. From it, you can see the impressive monument for the victims of fascism erected in 1984 (sculptor Alfonsas Ambraziūnas, architects Gediminas Barovykas and Vytautas Viešius, artist Kazimieras Morkūnas). In the interwar period, the fort served as a punitive labor prison, in 1940-1941 an NKVD prison and later a concentration camp, where 30-50 thousand Lithuanian citizens were killed. In 1958 a museum was established in the fort exhibiting many artifacts of the Nazi and Soviet genocide. The fort has been renovated and it is possible to visit almost all of its premises, also via the internet.

10 THE TENTH FORT

Romainių g., Kaunas

Although the plan of this fort was approved only in 1913 and it was still unfinished when World War I broke out (it was planned to be relatively minimalist, having monolithic concrete and reinforced concrete structures, and without decorative elements common in stone forts). Despite being unfinished it actively participated in the war and inflicted heavy damage on Germans. Eventually, it was blown up by the retreating tsar's army, so what we see today right next to Kaunas Forest Enterprise is just the remnants of an idea.

11 MARVA FORT

Miško g., Akademija, Kaunas district

The Eleventh Fort, which was never finished, is in the territory of Marva Manor. The remains of structures - concrete fragments - can be found on land and underwater. Recently, this object is taking on new colors - an active local community is trying to bring it to life by arranging picnics and cultural festivals.

12 DOMEIKAVA FORT

Parko g., Domeikava, Kaunas district

The construction of this fort began in 1913 but wasn't completed. The fort, seriously damaged by Germans, is located in Kaunas district which has 75 objects of the fortress and 44 of them located in Domeikava eldership. Whatever is left of this fort lies underground and what we see above it are only barely noticeable fragments. This place is also called St. John's Park because the community has been celebrating Midsummer in it for many years.

13 PALEMONAS (RAILWAY) FORT

Marių g., Amaliai, Kaunas

In 1912 the development plan of the fortress envisaged the construction of a large fort near Pažaislis, however, later that spot was pushed towards the railway - hence the name of the unfinished fort - the construction of which started just before the war. It was there that the military staff stayed in 1915, when the tsar's army was leaving Kaunas, during the last night of the defense of the fortress. Later, construction work was carried out by locals and prisoners of war, under the conditions of rearward. Now the fort has no status, some of the structures are located on private land and have been destroyed by the passing time. Like every other fort, this one has its own uniqueness too, which is the abundance of valuable plant species listed in the Red Data Book in its wild meadow.

14 KAUNAS FORTRESS COMMANDANT'S BLINDAGE

Perkūno al. 2A, Kaunas

This bunker with the ironclad door, which was supposed to guarantee the safety of the commandant, was installed in 1914. The territory surrounding the blindage was given the name of Vytautas Park during the years of the First Republic and that was also the time when the townspeople became fond of the park. After World War II, arrestees were held in this secret building.

15 THE NINTH BATTERY OF KAUNAS FORTRESS

Pelėdų kalnas, The Hill of Owls, Kaunas

The forts and batteries of Kaunas Fortress - fortifications for cannons - were arranged at approximately even distances (every 2-2.5 km) in an almost exact oval shape. The batteries were built on the hills of a steep slope, from which it was easy to see the surrounding areas. The Ninth Battery installed here in Žalikaičiai did not stand the test of time. During the interwar period, the first M. K. Ciurlionis Gallery and Kaunas Art School were erected on this hill, and the owls created by Vincas Grybas, the student of the art school gave the quarter its name. Today, the largest tricolor in the city is flying above the former battery. It is a great symbol of the city, which turned from the center of the tsarist province into a fortress of Lithuanian freedom and culture, that hasn't forgotten its history.

16 THE COMPLEX OF THE KAUNAS FORTRESS' CENTRAL ARTILLERY WAREHOUSES ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE NEMUNAS

J. Bakanausko g. 99, Kaunas

Artillery was needed to defend the fortress and it was made right here. During the interwar period, some of the buildings were turned into iron manufacturing. Today Kaunas Fortress Park manufactures can be found on Lakūnų Rd. 63B. But even more interesting is the nearby former gunpowder depot, where the main gunpowder and part of arms stock were kept. The thickness of the concrete walls of this building is more than 2 meters. Once it was one of the safest structures in Kaunas. During the years of occupation, this complex was a closed military territory with Anti-Aircraft Defense Communication Headquarters. Now it is a space open for art. Imagine, an 80-meter-long room of 400 square meters has no partitions perfect acoustics for your ideas.

17 ARTILLERY WAREHOUSE COMPLEX IN ŠANČIAI (PARAKAS)

Corner of L. Ivinskio g. and Prancūzų g., Kaunas

This object - a recent favorite of the people of culture - is a great example of the synergy between military heritage and active community. For many years, the gunpowder (parakas) warehouse was invisible to the naked eye but after people rolled up their sleeves and cleared its approaches and the interior, it became a space for the visual and performing arts.

18 ŠANČIAI MILITARY SETTLEMENT

Žemieji Šančiai, Kaunas

As Kaunas was being surrounded by a chain of forts, the city itself was changing rapidly. If the administration of the fortress was established in the center, then the barracks were located on the outskirts of Kaunas. The largest military settlement was in Žemieji Šančiai, where 365 multi-purpose buildings were erected in one decade. The buildings contained two infantry regiments, an artillery brigade, a pontoon battalion, the 28th artillery brigade, the fire brigade of the fortress, and a war pigeon station. At the end of the 19th century, A. Juozapavičius Avenue was built. To this day it is the main artery of the district. Several red-brick barracks that have undergone a change are inhabited by new residents and various local businesses.

19 PANEMUNĖ MILITARY SETTLEMENTS

Kareivių g., Z. Gerulaičio g., Dėlajos g., Plento g., Kaunas

Panemunė was once a settlement on the outskirts of Kaunas with the main street (currently called Vaidoto), which, when Kaunas was being fortified became a military highway with three large military settlements nearby. 73 military objects were built in Panemunė - barracks, warehouses, stables, etc. - and the narrow-gauge railway line was brought here from the fortress. More than a hundred-year-old history continues to this day. Juozas Vilkus Engineering Battalion of the Lithuanian Armed Forces operates in Panemunė with headquarters, and five companies located in red-brick buildings. The local residents have settled in the other buildings, right next to the battalion.

20 THE SIXTH BATTERY OF PANEMUNĖ

Kiškių g. 22, Kaunas

During the construction of Kaunas Fortress, south of the Viciūnai village, the Sixth Battery was set up with a military road leading to it (currently - Bateriajų Road). The ammunition and cannon depot was badly damaged during World War I. Later, it was supplemented by an annex, which houses the children's creative studio Vėjo pagauti. Its visitors can literally touch upon history, for example, see the old red bricks marked with inscriptions F 5. It is possible that the bricks were made specifically for the Fifth Fort.

21 ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL'S CHURCH OR THE GARRISON CHURCH

Nepriklausomybės a. 14, Kaunas

Some adore it and consider it the most important symbol of Kaunas, yet others detest it - it was like that during the interwar period and still is today. Many call this neo-byzantine (to be reminiscent of the origins of Christianity) building, that emerged just before the 20th century among the administrative buildings of the fortress, Saboras. During the First Republic, Catholics were already praying here, and in the 1950s the church was turned into a museum, more precisely, Sculpture and Stained-Glass Gallery of the M. K. Ciurlionis Museum. In the basement of the church that has been returned to the faithful again, you can find a museum Catacombs of the 21st Century where visitors can have an idea how the world is like when you don't see it.

22 IIITH DON INFANTRY REGIMENT CHURCH/VYTAUTAS THE GREAT WAR MUSEUM

K. Donelaičio g. 64, Kaunas

In the 19th century, Vienybės Square was called novobazanaya, i.e. "the new market". This is where the drill-hall of IIITH Don Infantry Regiment of the tsar's army was built with a brick orthodox church next to it. That is where on February 16, 1921, the War Museum was solemnly opened (its "actual" building, beloved and frequently visited by the townspeople, emerged only over a decade after). However, the orthodox church did not survive. After visiting the museum and getting acquainted with the history of warfare, do not forget to check the cannons exhibited outside, some of them came from the forts of the Kaunas Fortress.

23 KAUNAS ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Radvilėnų pl. 1A, Kaunas

Today and in the interwar period Radvilėnų Road was once also called Karinis, Kareivių, and 16-osios divizijos. This road led to the 7th battery of the fort. The 7th Novorossiysk Dragon Regiment was stationed here. Four large barracks, headquarters, officers' house, and other buildings, including this orthodox church, stood here along the road. The church of Reform architecture style with brick decoration and a pediment with a mosaic was used for its intended purpose until the interwar period. During the Soviet occupation, workshops were established in the church.

24 FREDA MANOR

Ž. E. Žilbergo g. 6, Kaunas

The manor of Aukštoji Freda was founded in 1795 when the lands were acquired by Juozas Godlevskis (who, by the way, was also the founder and a "godfather" of Garliava). The neoclassical manor house was built at the beginning of the 19th century. A few decades later, the manor was expropriated for the needs of Kaunas Fortress. Oskaras Klemas, the first commandant of the fortress lived in the manor house, and the other manor buildings housed soldiers. At present, the botanical garden is located in the territory of the manor with a blindage - a surviving fragment of the central fortifications of Kaunas Fortress.

25 ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ST. SERGEY OF RADONEZH IN KAUNAS

Ž. E. Žilbergo g. 10, Kaunas

During the construction and strengthening of the fortress, the homestead of Freda Manor was reconstructed for military purposes. An artillery yard was set up in it and a bit further - ramparts with one of the greater redoubts. Roads and railway lines were built in the territory of the manor homestead, along with Freda cemetery, where the aforementioned O. Klemas is buried. That is where the orthodox church of St. Sergey of Radonezh was built (as it is believed, in the place of a catholic church), which stands out to this day with its color solutions and a harmonious combination of neoclassical and pseudo-Byzantine architecture; it was most actively used until World War I. After the Second World War, it became a gardening school and later even a sports hall. The building is currently unused.

26 RAILWAY TUNNEL AND BRIDGE

M. K. Ciurlionio g., Kaunas

Although the current Kaunas railway station was built after the Second World War, the history of the railway itself dates back to the second half of the 19th century. An interesting fact: the 1285-meter long tunnel dug under Aukštoji Šančiai in the 30-meter tall hill is one out of two such tunnels in Lithuania and the only one working in the Baltic States. Along with the tunnel in Kaunas, a beam bridge called Žalasis (green) was built. Back in 1862, a Japanese delegation traveled through it, and one of its members, a translator Fukuzawa Yukichi - as important in Japan as Daukantas and Kudirka in Lithuania - described the mission's stop in Kaunas. By the way, the metal structures of the bridge were brought to Kaunas in 1859 via the Baltic Sea and the Nemunas.

27 THE RAILWAY STATION OF THE FORTRESS

J. Bakanausko g., Kaunas

At the very end of the 19th century, the 750-millimeter wide railway network was built in Kaunas Fortress together with the narrow-gauge railway station building and water tower. The first narrow-gauge railway lines were built in Aleksotas, Freda, and Aukštoji Panemunė. Later, when it was decided to build the second ring of Kaunas Fortress forts, additional lines were built for construction purposes. In Kaunas Fortress, the only overland fortress of the Russian Empire, the narrow-gauge railway network was sufficiently well developed and adapted after the regime change.

28 FORTRESS MILL COMPLEX

H. ir O. Minkovskių g. 106, Kaunas

The daily life of the fortress is not just lineups, cannons, tactics. It also includes such essential things as food. On the left bank of the Nemunas at the end of the 19th century, a gas mill was built with grain storages, warehouses, barracks, etc., next to it. The quality of the bricks was excellent back then, so although the wooden buildings of the mill complex did not survive, a considerable "piece" of history, that hasn't changed its purpose, can be seen today while driving on H. ir O. Minkovskių Street or taking a walk in Nemunas Island.

29 COMMANDANT'S HOUSE

Gedimino g. 25, Kaunas

A territory exclusive in its surroundings closed to the public and full of history, located in the very center of Kaunas is the current headquarters of the Lithuanian Air Force. Probably the most beautiful building of the whole Kaunas fortress complex, the former Commandant's house is a building of strictly symmetrical composition with an emphasized portal, decorated with ornate cornices, pilasters, windowsills, and attics. When Kaunas became the temporary capital, the commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces settled in the palace and later on Soviet, German, and then again Soviet army leaders had made it their home.

30 MILITARY TELEGRAPH BUILDING

K. Donelaičio g. 25, Kaunas

Perhaps you noticed the stylish bicycle stands installed on K. Donelaičio Street a few years ago, decorated with the details of the telegraph. They can be found right in front of the former building of the military telegraph station of the Kaunas Fortress, which was part of its complex of administrative buildings and which was converted into a residential house with the least possible changes made to its authentic elements in order to preserve the history.



Hi,

welcome to the city surrounded by a fortress. What once protected it from the enemy, has now turned into the layer of the past open to modern culture and history enthusiasts. The military stronghold surrounded Kaunas more than a hundred years ago, anticipating the occurrence of World War I. At the end of the 19th century, when trying to defend the western border of the Russian Empire from the enemies of a possible war (Germany and Austria-Hungary) Tsar turned his attention to Kaunas, probably the most western part of the Russian Empire. A city located at the confluence of two large rivers where water and land routes intersected (later supplemented by important railway lines) was to become a major point of defense. In 1879 Russian Emperor Alexander II approved the military leadership's proposal to build a fortress in Kaunas. All of Kaunas was supposed to be turned into a fortress...

KAUNAS FORTRESS TODAY

At the moment, the maintenance and conservation of Kaunas Fortress are carried out by Kaunas Fortress Park, a member of the European Federation of Fortified Sites, and Kaunas Fortress Association. Each fort has its own crew and they receive assistance from local community volunteers. In the autumn of 2018, the first Bateria festival brought together different art branches and diverse artists - some of them for the first time - into the forts and surrounding objects. The forts offer tours and community gatherings. It has gardens and various artistic events take place there, and this is just the beginning!

It is worth mentioning that in the summer of 2020, the long-awaited exhibition of military equipment was opened in the Sixth Fort. The exhibition, as well as the fort, is taken care of by Vytautas the Great War Museum. The Seventh Fort is private, it offers informal education for children and has a museum that is subject to the Ministry of Culture.

SHH! THE BATS ARE SLEEPING

In October bats settle in the forts of Kaunas Fortress and hibernate until April. In five of the forts, the hibernation areas of bats are protected internationally. Forts I, II, III, IV, and VIII are included in the Natura 2000 network of protected areas of international importance. Eleven species of bats found in Lithuania are listed in the country's Red Data Book. As many as seven species hibernate in Kaunas forts. Let's be nature-friendly and plan our walks or hikes responsibly.

MORE

In order for the trip around the Kaunas Fortress to be more than a walk - a meaningful activity - we recommend looking at tours, educational programs, and workshops organized in each of the forts or other objects.

More information:
www.kaunotvirtove.lt
www.vdkaromuziejus.lt
www.septintasfortas.lt
www.silainiaiproject.com
www.9fortomuziejus.lt

