

KRETINGA DISTRICT



See it with
your heart



FOR THOSE
SEEKING TO
EXPERIENCE A
NEW CULTURE



You are invited to a treasure hunt

Kretinga District is a rich area. With just a little effort, you can find more than a few treasures here. But the treasure does not glitter like gold. The treasure you find here gives you knowledge, spiritual satisfaction, emotional and physical relaxation, and delightful moments.

The Kretinga area is just a small part of Lithuania. But you can experience a multitude of adventures and discoveries in and around Kretinga. The old lands of the Curonians are full of reminders of the past: breathtaking views open up from picturesque hill-forts, and searching for the traces of the by-gone lives of our ancestors sprinkled across the entire district can turn into a fun scavenger hunt.

Nature paths twist and turn around many of the hill-forts; all who value nature will enjoy a walk along the paths.

Those in search of harmony will undoubtedly find it while sipping tea made according to all the proper rituals at the Japanese Garden or by surrendering all their cares and concerns at the sacrificial altar of the Baltic Mythology Park. The parks featuring two different cultures, Japanese and Baltic, will help to restore your spiritual balance, catch a breath of fresh air, and listen closely to yourself and to nature.

Those in search of architectural treasures will definitely like Kretinga District. The district is famous for its old Franciscan monastery, its little churches tucked away in the countryside, its manors, and its noteworthy interwar buildings.

Treasure hunters are welcome at the museums, in which travellers with the most varied interests all find something that catches their eye. Ethnic culture, manor culture and religious art have all been well-preserved in the Kretinga area.

And the best part is that most of the sites you visit can be seen while mixing some music, dance and fun into your trip. All kinds of events take place in the Kretinga area, year-round: craft fairs, concerts, festivals, performances. That means the cultural treasures of the Kretinga District can be found in any season, in any weather; the hospitable land of Samogitia welcomes travellers at any time.

One region, many cultures

When you arrive in Kretinga District, you can be quite sure that you are in Samogitia. But the district known for its natural features, religious treasures and opportunities for active recreation is also remarkable for its cultural heritage. Not everybody knows that the territory we now call Kretinga District once belonged to the Curonian tribe. This area once hosted a flourishing Jewish community, and today communities of Roman Catholics, Evangelical Lutherans and Eastern Orthodox find common ground. The ancient culture of the Balts remains alive as well. And here one can even find a bit of Japan, too.



Just in the city of Kretinga, you can get acquainted with several religious traditions. In the very centre of the city, the **Church of the Annunciation to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary** has been standing for 400 years. The church is famous for the traditions of its Franciscans and its historical, artistic and woodcarving heritage. The church was a witness to the ascendance of Christianity in the Kretinga area. Nearby stands the somewhat more recent but no less important **Evangelical Lutheran church**. It was built at the very end of the 19th century and is famous for its organ, crafted in 1785 by the Prussian organ builder Johann Preuss. When the church was built, the funds for its stained glass windows was donated by the Kretinga Jewish community. The primary cultural symbol of that community, the **synagogue**, no longer exists. But the site of the former **mikveh**, located at Akmenės str. 11, can be seen, and several **houses** that had belonged to Jewish families still remain.

When Lithuania was incorporated into the Russian Empire, an Orthodox church was built in what is today Rotušės square. The church is gone, but a monument to the Orthodox community in Kretinga still stands, **the Chapel of Saint Eleutherius**, located in J. Jablonskio street, next to the Lutheran and Orthodox cemeteries. And although you can go inside the chapel only on special occasions, when services are being held, the building, built in the Byzantine style in 1905, can be viewed from the outside at any time.

From Kretinga, the road leads to Dimitravas, the Joskaudai forest and **Erškėtynas**. It is thought that a pagan shrine once stood at this site. Now a chapel stands here, with services held in honour of the Virgin Mary, and a Samogitian hill of crosses is slowly expanding.

Those in search of the ancient culture of the Balts should find their way to the **Baltic Mythology Park and recreational nature trail**. Located several kilometres from Darbėnai, the park as seen from a bird's-eye view resembles the Tree of Life, a concept of deep significance to the Balts. As you walk the well-maintained yet still-natural paths of the park, you get acquainted with the deities of the Balts. The park is divided into three parts, which reflects the structure of the pantheon of Baltic deities and expresses the harmony of nature and the way of human life. There is a fire altar in the central part of the park, where one can symbolically dispose of negative and discouraging thoughts.

Next to the Baltic Mythology Park, the ever-growing **Japanese Garden** amazes with its beauty. It is unique, the only such garden in Lithuania and the largest of its kind in Europe. The garden, 16 hectares in size, was created, and continues to be cultivated, by the Japanese master gardener Hajime Watanabe and the Lithuanian doctor Šarūnas Kasmauskas. The garden is beautiful in every season; the garden with its Japa-

nese landscape is gorgeous when it is covered in snow, coloured with the autumn palette, or decorated with the spring blossoms of Japanese cherry, magnolia and other plants. If you tire of strolling through the garden, you can enjoy the Japanese tea ceremony, have your picture taken while dressed in a kimono, or quietly meditate in the rock garden. Not to mention the collection of thousands of bonsai, in which some of the tiny trees are as old as 180 years.

From Darbėnai it is not so far to Salantai. All who take an interest in traces of Jewish culture should visit here, because the **synagogue** built in the 19th century remains standing. Jews prayed in it for decades, but later the Nazi occupiers tortured them in that same building. The Culture Centre now makes its home in the building, and a memorial plaque reminds visitors of the building's true, original purpose.

Those visiting Salantai will also find traces of the Curonians. Nearby stands **Imbarė hill-fort**, on which stood an important castle of the Curonians of the land of Ceklis.

To make it easier to find:

- ➔ Church of the Annunciation to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary – Vilniaus str. 2, Kretinga.
- ➔ Evangelical Lutheran church – Kęstučio str. 3, Kretinga.
- ➔ Former site of the synagogue in Kretinga – Mėguvos str. 3, Kretinga.
- ➔ Location of the mikveh – Rotušės sq. 15A, Kretinga.
- ➔ Chapel of Saint Eleutherius – Dupulčių str. 5, Kretinga.
- ➔ Erškėtynas – Joskaudai forest, coordinates: 55.983675, 21.226533.
- ➔ Baltic Mythology Park – recreational nature trail – Sausdravai, coordinates: 56.030445, 21.18814.
- ➔ Japanese Garden – Sodų str., Mažučiai, coordinates: 56.030044, 21.208943.
- ➔ Salantai synagogue building – A. Salio str. 4, Salantai.
- ➔ Imbarė hill-fort – Imbarė, coordinates: 56.026774, 21.556195.



Museums and architectural monuments

Kretinga District is rich in distinctive, memorable museums and architectural monuments. In and around the city of Kretinga, you can find more than a few buildings or sites with intriguing traces of history. And the museums attract not only those trying to hide from bad weather or stifling heat. They lure visitors with the age of their treasures as well as the advanced solutions for viewing those treasures in a faster, livelier and more modern way.

It is precisely this blend of old and new that makes Kretinga Museum attractive. Be prepared to spend at least a few hours there; they certainly will fly by. **Kretinga Museum** is more than **Tiškevičius Manor** and **the Winter Garden**. Having bought your tickets, do not miss the adjacent **watermill** and **the manor superintendent's house**. There are many exhibits dotted around the entire manor complex.



This museum offers things you can touch, films that keep your attention as you watch, and contemporary technologies that take you into the past as if you were in a time machine. Not to mention **the Crafts Centre**: you can reserve a hands-on activity baking bread, weaving, recognising medicinal herbs, and more. These activities entertain and enrich children and adults alike.

And just in case you leave the manor feeling like you know everything, think again. The **Tiškevičius family chapel-mausoleum** still awaits you in Kretinga. Located in the old city cemetery, it catches your eye with its air of mystery as well as its elegant architecture. The sarcophagi of the Tiškevičius family were found in the now-restored chapel only in 2014. The sarcophagi, walled into the chapel before the Second World War, were looted during the Soviet occupation. But the thieves did not take everything, so it remains possible to see in the mausoleum not only the sarcophagi themselves, but also drawings of the grave goods buried with the deceased, and to read about the persons laid to rest in the sarcophagi. Going up from the mausoleum to the chapel, you can almost feel the spirit of the Tiškevičius family. You can climb up to the choir loft, and if you ask for a guide, you will hear more than a few interesting stories.

Saint Anthony's House, built during the interwar period at the initiative of the Franciscans, stands out in Kretinga with its pure-white architecture. Thanks to those same Franciscans, the **Franciscan Gymnasium** was also built in Kretinga during the interwar period; Lithuanian emigrants donated generously to fund its construction. In gratitude to them, Saint Anthony's House was built as a modern care home for elderly Lithuanians returning from abroad. During the interwar period, this care home was the largest and most advanced in the entire country. When Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet army, the NKVD, the Soviet interior ministry, took over the building. People were imprisoned and tortured by the Soviets as well as by the Nazis. Inscriptions made by prisoners remain visible in the basement of the building to the present day. Accompanied by a guide, you can see them and learn more about them. Together with a guide, you can also visit the nearby **church crypt** and the ensemble of the **church and monastery**.

Yet another exceptional museum awaits visitors in the village of Nasrėnai, the **museum of the birthplace of Bishop Motiejus Valančius**. An 18th century barn is preserved there. An ethnographic exhibition acquaints visitors with the housewife's working area, the room where a girl would sleep, a storage room for household items, and the grain storage area. In the farmhouse, you can get an idea of how Bishop Valančius himself lived. Events at the museum include readings of Samogitian texts and theatre performances, and, oddly enough, here you can see perhaps not the only, but at least one of the first sculptures in Lithuania dedicated to the humble potato.

From Nasrėnai, it is not so far to Salantai. There, a visitor simply must see **the Church of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary** and **the Salantai city park, or, put another way, manor park**. Only basements remain from the manor house, but the park built in the 19th century enchants with its beauty even today. The romantic-minded

are drawn by the winding paths and tree-shaded benches, while nature-lovers may be drawn to a chestnut tree growing in the park, with the largest trunk in Lithuania, boasting a girth of almost 5 metres. On summer evenings, you can see bats maneuvering in the air as they hunt. The manor park is their home.

In the village of Gargždelė next to Salantai, a unique open-air museum awaits you. The **Orvidai homestead-museum**, resembling the Eye of Providence when viewed from overhead, has been called a museum of stone sculptures and a site fit for movie scenes, due to its unconventional spirit. The homestead was established during the Soviet occupation by Vilius Orvidas. At first glance, the overall impression you get, of the stones, tree trunks and stumps, and old-fashioned things (including a Soviet tank) scattered around the homestead, is one of tremendous chaos. But when viewed with a sharper eye, each corner of the homestead and each item has a certain meaning. So we suggest taking your time, breathing in the fresh air, listening attentively, and looking closely to catch the meaning of what the well-known Vilius Orvidas wanted to say several decades ago.

Continuing your acquaintance with museums and architectural monuments, from Salantai you should go toward Grūšlaukė and turn toward Darbėnai. Near the town, **Lazdininkai Windmill** stands, as if awaiting the next good gust of wind. Built near Vilnius, the windmill was transported to Kretinga District at the beginning of the 20th century. During the interwar years, the windmill cost as much as 400 cows cost at that time. The buyer, Jurgis Končius, earned his money working in coal mines in the USA. From afar, the

windmill looks like any other: 14.5 metres tall, 11.5 metres wide, with a lightning rod, and it produced flour from grain, like any other. But this windmill, when it operated, was more clever than most in Lithuania. Its cap rotated to the side from which the most favourable wind was blowing. Such windmills are rare in Lithuania.

At the end of the route, there is a site lacking a title as a museum, but worthy of it nonetheless, the former **Dimitravas manor, a forced labour camp**. The sad remnants of a stone building stand in the small village of Dimitravas, merely standing walls, holes instead of windows, grating. What had been manor buildings were used from 1937 to 1940 as a branch of the Kaunas prison, as a prison labour camp. Prisoners there had to collect stones from the surrounding area and deliver them to the former manor, to be broken and crushed into smaller pieces. After the war began, both the Soviets and the Nazis made use of the prison camp. During the Soviet occupation, a museum operated in the Dimitravas manor house, in which the exhibits told the story of the horrific events of the pre-war period and the war. Later, the exhibition was moved to the Kretinga Museum, but in Dimitravas you can still visit the building, the site of the events in that horrible period.

To make it easier to find:

- ➔ Kretinga Museum – Vilniaus str. 43, Kretinga.
- ➔ Chapel-mausoleum of the counts Tiškevičius – Vilniaus str. 8, Kretinga.
- ➔ Saint Anthony's House – Vilniaus str. 6, Kretinga.
- ➔ Franciscan Gymnasium – J. Pabrėžos str. 4, Kretinga.
- ➔ Museum of the birthplace of Bishop Motiejus Valančius – M. Valančiaus str. 9, Nasrėnai.
- ➔ Church of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary and Salantai city park – Darius ir Girėno str. 10, Salantai.
- ➔ Orvidai homestead-museum – Plungės str. 18, Gargždelė.
- ➔ Lazdininkai Windmill – Gintaro str. 4, Lazdininkai.
- ➔ Dimitravas Manor, forced labour camp – Dimitravas, coordinates: 55.968468, 21.23108.



Hill-forts: legends and inspiring nature

Those who take an interest in the oldest traces of Lithuania's past will have something to do all day in Kretinga District. Nearly 30 hill-forts can be found in the vicinity of Kretinga. Some are well-hidden in forests, others are rarely visited but await the most persistent travellers, still others have excellent infrastructure and are convenient for visitors. But the most important thing is, the hill-forts of Kretinga remind us of the deep past, are the subject of breathtaking legends and are scattered across a landscape worthy of an inspired artist's brush.



It is worth beginning a trip around the best-known hill-forts of Kretinga District from the **Ēgliškiai-Anduliai hill-fort**. It is supposed that this was the historical location of the Kretinga castle. The name of Kretinga itself, Cretene, was first mentioned in a written source (in documents of the Livonian Order) in 1253, writing about Kretinga castle. It is thought that the ancestors of the residents of Kretinga, the Curonians, offered sacrifices to Perkūnas, the Baltic god of thunder, at the castle complex. The castle was not only a fortification, but also an administrative, trade and crafts centre. The fortifications, it is thought, were burned by the Livonian Order in 1263, and then abandoned by the inhabitants. When you visit the hill-fort today, you find an information board, a sculpture of a warrior of that time, and a romantic landscape with scurrying rabbits and leaping deer.

After your visit there, where Kretinga began, it is time to see Kartena. As you descend along the picturesque road along the valley of the town of Kartena, the impressive view of **Kartena hill-fort** opens up before you. If we can believe legends, this hill-fort was built up by stubborn Samogitians, who were at war with the Swedes and the Russians. On this same hill, the name of Kartena itself came into being. Apparently, the Samogitian leader stood atop his fortifications, when two armies of his enemies began to move toward his castle. The Swedes began to fight against the Russians for the right to attack the castle first. Watching the battle, the Samogitian leader called out: "veiziekit, karė tena". For non-Samogitians: "look, the soldiers are over there". Based on archaeological digs, the castle atop the Kartena hill-fort was built in the 8th–9th centuries not by Samogitians, but by Curonians. Those who climb up the hill-fort are rewarded with a wonderful panoramic view of the Kartena vicinity.

Close by, in the village of Gintarai, stands the storied **Cherry Hill**. Cremation graves found in the barrows nearby have been dated to the second century BCE. These are the remains of the ancestors of the Balts and the Curonians. Cherry Hill, as a defensive position, was abandoned around the 12th century. Several centuries later, in the 16th century, the first Kartena manor was already standing here. According to legend, the manor was destroyed by the Swedes. The daughter of the manor-owner was buried alive in the basement



of the manor. She is said to appear every 300 years. It is said that it is possible to find hidden entrances leading to the underground remnants of the manor.

From Kartena, it is only a short distance to Salantai. Before reaching Salantai, a look across the fields reveals **Imbarė hill-fort** in the distance. The Curonian castle that stood there in the 10th–13th centuries was an administrative and economic centre of the land of Ceklis. How the hill-fort may have looked when buildings stood on it is visualised in the Kretinga Museum. The Imbarė castle was so important that it even competed with Apulė castle, and the system of streets discovered in the settlement at the foot of the castle suggests that in the Middle Ages the Imbarė site had the characteristics associated with a town. The castle was abandoned around 1263. Later, a manor stood atop the hill-fort. Today, a breathtaking panorama of the surrounding nature opens up around the site.

From Salantai, you can travel to Senoji Jpiltis. There stands **Senoji Jpiltis Castle Hill**. It is considered one of the most impressive and greatest hill-forts in northwestern Lithuania. When a portion of the Curonians who had moved away from Christianity after the Battle of Durbė rebelled, Senoji Jpiltis became one of the most important castles held by the rebels. While researching the castle site, archaeologists have uncovered finds bearing witness to the battles against the Teutonic Order, and the

hill-fort became a destination not only for those interested in hill-forts, but also for the president of Lithuania himself, Antanas Smetona. While visiting Senoji Jpiltis, it is also worth seeing two other hill-forts there, **Warriors Hill** and **Mary's Hill**.

Another hill-fort worth your attention is near Rūdaičiai. **Nagarba (Negarba) hill-fort** belonged to the Curonian land of Mėguva, and perhaps was even its second capital. Locals call this hill-fort Bliūdkaļnis; the hill has a certain indentation, almost like a bowl. And the name itself, Nagarba, does not have an analogue in Lithuania. Historian Julius Kanarskas thinks that the name is one of the oldest in Kretinga District, meaning “on the hill”. It is impossible not to notice Nagarba hill-fort; it stands alone in the fields and is a witness to the past of the land of Mėguva.

To make it easier to find:

- ➔ Ėgliškiai-Anduliai hill-fort – Ėgliškiai, coordinates: 55.849787, 21.228304.
- ➔ Kartena hill-fort – Kartena, coordinates: 55.910163, 21.475663.
- ➔ Cherry Hill – Pušyno str., Gintarai, coordinates: 55.930909, 21.492471.
- ➔ Imbarė hill-fort – Piliakalnio str., Imbarė, coordinates: 56.026724, 21.556239.
- ➔ Senoji Jpiltis Castle Hill – Senoji Jpiltis, coordinates: 56.123211, 21.246481.
- ➔ Warriors Hill and Mary's Hill – Senoji Jpiltis, coordinates: 56.13538, 21.23702.
- ➔ Nagarba (Negarba) hill-fort – Senkai, coordinates: 55.950968, 21.208988.



Festivals, fairs, celebrations

It is said that, if you want to really get to know an area, you need not only to see the sights or the museums, but also to try the local food or dive into the local celebrations. Kretinga District has one-of-a-kind celebrations that you will not find anywhere else, and truly unique festivals. You can visit Kretinga District at any time of year; in almost any month of the year, you can find some kind of event for your trip. There is something to satisfy enthusiasts of manor culture, and of theatre, and of ethnic identity.



Kretinga starts its calendar of events with the annual comedy celebration “**Vėini jouka**” at the end of February. When this celebration is held, the day is full of amateur theatre performances. Lithuanian and Latvian theatre troupes bring their performances to Kretinga. A healthy dose of laughter is guaranteed. Another theatre event takes place in August in Nasrėnai, the **barn theatre**. The event seeks to preserve a certain spiritual cultural heritage. And if you prefer professional theatre, come to Kretinga in October–November. At that time, the **art action KITA ERDVĖ [3^o] VAKARŲ KRANTAS** takes place. During the event, viewers get acquainted with the creative work of independent, but widely-recognised artists.

Kretinga Museum events start in May. All are invited to **the young craftspeople fair “Suku, suku darbų malūnėlj”**. The event invites visitors to see the old crafts, and it strikes a balance between things of interest to children and to adults. Another museum event takes place every four years, on the first Saturday of August. It is a **manor celebration, “Mėnuo su žvaigžde čia būti norėjo”**. The traditions of the counts Tiškevičius are revived and continued at the celebration.

You simply have to see Kretinga in the first weeks of June. In the middle of June, **Kretinga celebrates the feast of Saint Anthony and the city festival**. But the cycle of events begins before the day of the feast itself, 13 June. At the beginning of summer, you can take in an evening of music performed by singing poets and bards, Baltas paukštis, as well as a fair, concerts of chamber music organised by the Franciscans, and city concerts in Town Hall Square, on the Summer Stage. At that time, the city is especially lively, and you might find it difficult to see everything you want amidst the concerts, exhibitions, events and fairs.



Another religious feast day is celebrated in Darbėnai; there **the feast of Saints Peter and Paul and the town celebration** are traditionally celebrated. Craftspeople and enthusiasts encourage visitors to get to know the area. Senoji Jpiltis invites visitors to an exceptional summer celebration in July. Each year, the summer celebration **“Prisirpo mėlynės”** is celebrated. This is the only event in the district where an auction of blueberries (more precisely, bilberries) is held; residents are known for their ability to rapidly gather bilberries.

Another different kind of celebration is the Kartena town celebration, the **festival “Kuršių genties vartus pravėrus”**, taking place at the end of July and beginning of August. During the celebration, Kartena hill-fort lights up with amazing lighting installations, musical performances bring the hill-fort to life, and during the entire festival you can get acquainted with the old crafts, clothing, battles and traditions of the Curonians.

The town of Salantai also invites visitors to its celebration at the beginning of August, as **the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels of Portiuncula** (marking the origin of the Franciscan movement) is celebrated. Along with the feast day, visitors are invited to a fair, concerts and sporting events.

The village of Laukžemė is known throughout the district for its **Feast of the Assumption**. In mid-August, residents gather to remember the old traditions and enjoy being together as a community.

The end of summer is marked by the **Kretinga Old Music Festival**, which is organised by the Franciscans. During the cycle of concerts held in the Catholic church, one of the oldest organs in Lithuania is played.

It is well worth visiting Kretinga in the autumn, as well. At the end of September and the beginning of October, **the Autumn Harvest and Pumpkin Festival** takes place. Lively music groups keep the autumn chill off their audiences, a multitude of farmers and craftspeople bring their products and wares, and the high point of the festival is the selection of the largest and heaviest pumpkin and the process of slicing it up.

Not many people like to travel in November. But this month in Kretinga is quite cheerful, because the international folk music festival **“Grok, žemaiti”** is held, inviting audiences to a veritable marathon of folk music.

At the beginning of December, it is worth coming to Kretinga for two reasons: **Kretinga Museum holds its Christmas fair “meturgis”**, and the **Christmas tree is lit** in the city square. In recent years, Kretinga’s Christmas trees have drawn crowds of viewers. As Christmas approaches, **the fair** lures residents and visitors alike to Town Hall Square.



Sacral heritage: relaxing at a slower pace

Although the Samogitians refused to be baptised for a long time, Christian traditions here are nevertheless deep and valued. The proof of that is found in the abundance of sacral heritage sites in Kretinga District. If you wish to visit the most distinctive churches, chapels or sacred places of the district, you will need a full day. This route is for those who enjoy a slower-paced trip, who value old and wooden architecture, and who want to learn about a large number of miraculous occurrences.



It is worth beginning your acquaintance with the local sacral heritage at the **Church of the Annunciation of the Lord to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in Kretinga**. The ensemble of the Franciscan monastery, church, and **Lourdes grotto**, more than 400 years old, will make you forget time itself. In the church, you will find 400-year-old doors that have survived all the fires during that time, one of the tallest wooden altars in Samogitia, the miraculous painting of Saint Anthony, and many other objects, each with its own story. And if you ask for a guide, you can descend into the mysterious crypts and then get a bird's-eye view of Kretinga from the church steeple.

Near Kretinga, in the Joskaudai forest, you can find a local hill of crosses. The place known locally as **Erškėtynas** is famous for its spring. At the spring in 1926, a resident of the village of Lazdininkai experienced an apparition of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. It is thought that the spring water has healing properties. A chapel was built next to the spring, and services are held here in May. Nearby, a hill of crosses is slowly taking shape; people bring crosses that they no longer use, and put them up for the sake of various intentions.

The next stop along the way, after Erškėtynas, is **the Church of Saints Peter and Paul the Apostles in Darbėnai**. The present-day church is the successor to several churches, all of which burned. It was built in the very centre of the town. It is especially worth visiting during the well-known feast day of Saints Peter and Paul, and for its beautiful interior and Romantic architecture.

Leaving Darbėnai, it is not far to **the Church of Saint Andrew the Apostle in Laukžemė**. The church in Laukžemė managed to survive the war and the church you see has been standing in place of its predecessors since 1850. One altar in the church is adorned with a 1729 painting of the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. It is regarded by some to be miraculous. In the church, you will also see one of the oldest wooden sculptures of the Madonna. It is thought to have been carved in the 15th or 16th century.

If you stop in Salantai, three special sites await you: a church and two chapels. **The Chapel of Saint Barbara in Gargždėlė** was built in the 19th century, and later Vilius Orvidas contributed to its further adornment. **The Chapel of the Visitation of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary on Rooster Hill** is known for legends about a hidden treasure, a church that had



once stood there, and the crowing of a rooster. During the Soviet occupation, school-leavers would gather in secret at the chapel, to pray for success during their school-leaving examinations. **The Church of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in Salantai** was designed by Karl Eduard Strandmann, an architect who had worked with the Tiškevičius family and designed the churches in Palanga and Švėkšna. His two-steepled neo-Gothic church was built in place of the old church and impresses visitors with its 5 wooden altars and two nearly 60-metre-high steeples. The painting of Mary with the Child is regarded by some to be miraculous.

After Salantai, you simply must stop by Kalnalis, to see the **Church of Saint Lawrence**. Motiejus Valančius, later to become a writer and Bishop of Samogitia, was baptised here. Žalnieriai, human-sized wooden figures of soldiers, used during Easter performances to guard the burial site of Jesus, are kept in the old wooden church.

The Church of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in Kartena, also wooden, has been known since the 17th century. Burned and rebuilt, the church attracts visitors with its pulpit of exceptional beauty and one of the oldest organs in the district, produced at the end of the 18th century. Near Kartena, you can visit **Abakai Lourdes**. It was built in 1921 by Kazimieras Navirauskas, in thanksgiving for returning alive from the First World War. A spring, reputed to have healing properties, flows alongside the grotto and chapel.

The sacral heritage route ends with two wooden churches, exuding a feeling of tranquillity. **The Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross** stands in Budriai and draws visitors with its ornamented wooden altars and attractive churchyard. Construction of **the Church of Saint Joseph**, in Mikoliškiai, was initiated and funded in part by Lieutenant General Liucijonas Bronišas, and completed with contributions by local farmers. The church is exceptional in that it was assembled from round logs, and being in it returns you to the past.

To make it easier to find:

- ➔ Church of the Annunciation of the Lord to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary – Vilniaus str. 2, Kretinga.
- ➔ Erškėtynas – Joskaudai forest, coordinates: 55.983675, 21.226533.
- ➔ Church of Saints Peter and Paul the Apostles – Turgaus sq. 3, Darbėnai.
- ➔ Church of Saint Andrew the Apostle – Laukžemė, coordinates: 56.069797, 21.205106.
- ➔ Chapel of Saint Barbara – Gargždėlė, coordinates: 56.050706, 21.597444.
- ➔ Chapel of the Visitation of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary on Rooster Hill – Salantai, coordinates: 56.050856, 21.558875.
- ➔ Church of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary – Darius ir Girėno str. 10, Salantai.
- ➔ Church of Saint Lawrence – M. Valančiaus str. 12, Kalnalis.
- ➔ Church of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary – Plungės str. 4 A, Kartena.
- ➔ Abakai Lourdes – Abakai, coordinates: 55.908853, 21.468009.
- ➔ Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross – Bažnyčios str. 5, Budriai.
- ➔ Church of Saint Joseph – L. Bronišo str. 1, Mikoliškiai.





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