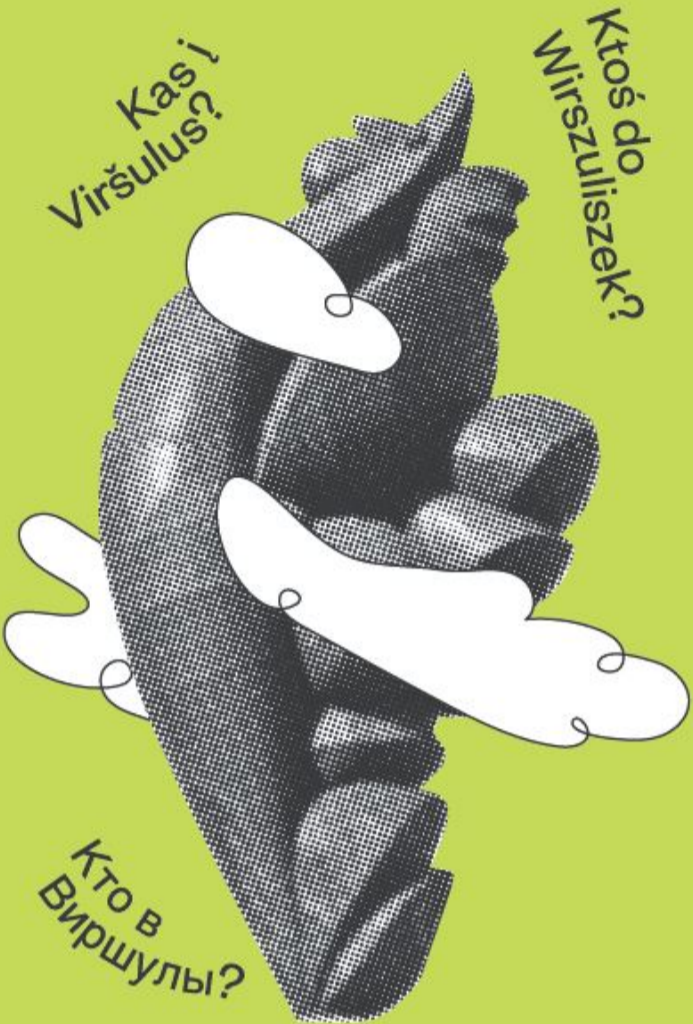


Maybe to Viršuliškės?



The Vilnius Museum welcomes you to Viršuliškės, one of the smallest districts in Vilnius. With this exhibition, we begin a new series of studies of less obviously interesting districts of the capital.

Viršuliškės is a village with a history going back to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It played an important part in the development of radio in the city, it is a place with special ties to the Jewish culture of Vilnius, and it is a residential district that grew up in the 1970s as a result of the city's expansion to the west.

The origin of the name of Viršuliškės is not entirely clear. The area is believed to have been owned by the Astikas family (along with the Pilaitė estate), several of whom used the alias Viršila (meaning 'he who is higher'). Pilaitė itself was known as Viršilų Sudervė (in Polish Suderwa Wirszylów). This may be why the village was named Viršuliškės. Alongside this theory, there is also a legend about a wealthy man who had three daughters. He divided his land into three parts, and gave one part to each of his daughters: to Justina he gave Justiniškės, to Karolina he gave Karoliniškės, and to Uršulė he gave Viršuliškės.



1. THE CEMETERY OF VIRŠULIŠKĖS VILLAGE

Having miraculously survived to this day, the old cemetery of the village of Viršuliškės is now surrounded by high-rise buildings and the Western Bypass. The cemetery probably emerged together with the village to which it belonged. The surviving headstones and crosses show that people were buried there until the mid-20th century. Most of the people buried there had lived in the village of Viršuliškės. For example, the graves of the large Gawerski (Gawerscy) family can be found to this day. According to a member of the family, when the cemetery was closed, most of their remains were transferred elsewhere.

2. THE VILLAGE OF VIRŠULIŠKĖS

Exactly when the village of Viršuliškės originated is unknown, but it is clear that it existed by the 18th century. Documents provide evidence that in 1784 the village of Wierszuliszki belonged to the parish of Pilaitė and the Pilaitė estate, which was then a property of the Bishop of Vilnius, Ignacy Massalski. In 1865 there were 86 inhabitants, in 1905 - 185, in 1938 - 311.

The old Pilaitė road once went along the main street of Viršuliškės village, which was approximately where the present Viršuliškių Lane is. Further on, the road turned slightly northwards and joined what is now Tujų Street. Head further down this street eastwards, and the old road will take you to Žvėrynas. The village became part of the city of Vilnius in 1955. Its status as a village was abolished in 1969. Population statistics for the old village were kept even after 1969: in 1979 there were 27 inhabitants and in 1986 there were 16.

Viršuliškės was one of the largest villages west of Vilnius. The absolute majority of the villagers were Polish speakers. In 1946 and 1947, many of its residents were forced to leave their homes and move to Poland.

3. THE TROLLEYBUS DEPOT

The story of the Vilnius trolleybuses begins in 1956, with the construction of a 25-vehicle depot in the district of Antakalnis. The trolleybus network reached the Viršuliškės district only 20 years later: at the beginning of 1977, trolleybus No 16 and 18 began to run to the intersection of what is now Laisvės Avenue and the main street in the village of Viršuliškės.

As the city expanded and passenger flows grew, a decision was made to build a new trolleybus depot on the site of the substantially reduced village of Viršuliškės. The city's Second Trolleybus Depot was opened on 25 December 1985. It had a capacity for 150 trolleybuses. It is likely that the site of the now defunct sailboat-like fountain of the trolleybus depot was once one of the three ponds in the vicinity of the village of Viršuliškės.

4. THE PRESS HOUSE

The construction of the Press House (architect: Jurijus Koninas, structural engineer: Alfonsas Kanapeckas) began in 1983 near the old village of Viršuliškės, where the districts of Karoliniškės and Viršuliškės meet, and was completed in 1986. The centre was built in several stages: first, a 20-storey newspaper, magazine and publishing building; and later, a manufacturing block, warehouses, garages, a 200-seat canteen and 500-seat conference hall.

The new Press House became the home of the editorial teams of various newspapers and magazines subordinate to the state that had previously been scattered around the city. The production workshops housed the largest printing press in Lithuania. The first newspapers came off the presses in 1984, even before construction was complete. Six new offset printing machines made in East Germany were acquired for the purpose of reducing print time. One such machine could print 70-72 thousand newspapers an hour. The printing presses operated day and night. They produced as many as 23 different newspaper titles on any given day, and the overall print run amounted to two million printed items. This process required 45 tonnes of paper a day.

At noon on 11 January 1991, the Soviet army took the Press House by force. Several people were injured during the attack, one of them seriously. Traces of that fateful day – bullet marks left behind by Soviet troops – can still be seen on the wall above the main entrance. In April of 2022, the Cultural Heritage Assessment Council determined that the façade of the Press House and its bullet marks were historically valuable and should be preserved.

5. THE RADIO STATION

A 120-metre-high radio mast could still be seen rising above the woods on the Vilnius skyline ten years ago. It belonged to what was once the Viršuliškės Radio Station. The radio station was built before the Second World War. In early 1937, the decision was made to build a new radio station at Kryžinė (Krzyżówka) on the edge of the village of Viršuliškės. Its construction was completed by the summer of 1939: two masts were erected, and the building was prepared for the installation of a radio transmitter. The transmitter departed for Vilnius from Warsaw just two days before the outbreak of the Second World War and never made it to Vilnius.

In July 1944, German soldiers destroyed both radio masts as they retreated from Vilnius. The radio station was rebuilt after the war, and a new 120-metre metal mast was erected. The radio station began to operate on 15 May 1945, and continued to work until 28 October 2012. In January 1991, the radio station was taken over by Soviet troops.

The radio station in Viršuliškės stood out not just only by its tall mast and its sinister closed site, but also in 1972 the old Soviet Uragan transmitters were replaced with new Tesla transmitters. They were manufactured in Czechoslovakia (and not the USA).

The Viršuliškės locals who lived in the vicinity of the radio station remember how they could listen to radio station broadcasts by connecting a loudspeaker to their radiators.

6. THE NEW VIRŠULIŠKĖS

The architects Birutė Kasperavičienė and Juozas Zinkevičius designed the district as one urban-architectural complex composed of buildings built from prefabricated concrete panels, grouped in semi-circular arrangements and connected by openwork concrete screens and covered passageways. Reminiscent of vertical columns, the rows of openwork walls became the distinguishing feature of the Viršuliškės district that began to emerge in 1975 and was designed for 25,000 inhabitants.

At the end of December 1976, the first homeowners at Viršuliškės, 756 families, saw in the New Year. Even though the plan had been to complete construction by 1978, the reality was different. New buildings were still being built in the 1980s, and even later.

After Birutė Kasperavičienė's death in 1976, local authorities considered naming one of the Viršuliškės district streets in her name.

7. THE ROOSTER

In 1989, Song, a copper sculpture by Vladas Kančiauskas (born 1945) was installed opposite the domestic service block. This was a giant seven-metre-tall singing rooster. The sculpture – nicknamed "the rooster" by locals and Vilnius residents – soon became the district's calling card and a frequent meeting point. In 2000, the sculpture was restored and installed on a new pedestal. Since 2011, a bench designed by the same sculptor has marked Andrei Sakharov Square next to the Press House.

8. DOMESTIC SERVICE BLOCK

According to articles published at the time, the domestic services block, built between 1979 and 1981, was expected to house a post office, a savings bank, a shoe repair shop, a clock repair shop, a camera repair shop, a laundry, and dry-cleaning facilities.

9. AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE STATION

The automated telephone exchanges in many new Soviet districts were important points that facilitated communication between the city's residents. The automated telephone exchange in Viršuliškės was completed in 1981. It could serve 20,000 telephone users. Now the building has undergone reconstruction and houses residential spaces.

10. OZO STREET

Not all the architects' plans were fulfilled. The culture centre and cinema theatre of Viršuliškės were never built. The plans to build a connecting segment for Ozo Street were also never fulfilled. According to the architects' plans, Ozo Street was to cut across the district and directly through the cemetery. What is now currently Šešuolių Street was then called Ozo Street, and the intention was to connect it to the larger Ozo Street that came in from the Šeškinė district.

The street was never built during the construction of the district, but the idea to build the connecting stretch resurfaced in 1989. However, the residents of Viršuliškės protested against the construction of the new street and submitted a petition to that effect with over 3,000 signatures. The petition claimed that the intended route of Ozo Street "would completely and irretrievably ruin the residential district of Viršuliškės". The local authorities reacted in favour of the protesting residents: the two stretches of Ozo Street were never connected. Ultimately, in 2012, the stretch of Ozo Street that lay in the Viršuliškės district was renamed Šešuolių Street.

11. THE PENTAGON

Viršuliškės has its very own Pentagon (Viršuliškių Street 36). In 1989, near what is now Laisvės Avenue, a massive building was built to house the Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (Russian acronym: DOSAAF). According to articles published at the time, the building was to serve as a school for training specialists for the armed forces, an automotive school, a shooting gallery, a Viršuliškės district library and a children's school for sporting excellence.

After the restoration of independence, the building housed the Department of Defence as well as the athletic and technical organisation Vytis. On 11 January 1991, the building was taken over by Soviet troops. It was later transferred to the Lithuanian Army. Now the building is used by the Lithuanian Ground Forces.

12. PASIDARYK PATS AND MADA

The Viršuliškės transport terminus used to be not very far from where the Circle K petrol station now stands. A major turning point was in 1987, when the popular Pasidaryk pats (Do it Yourself) hardware shop opened in the empty and almost vacant space between Kosmonautų (now Laisvės) Avenue and the Sudervė Cemetery. (It went bankrupt in 2013, but was the prototype for Senukai.) Later, the Mada (Fashion) department store, which still exists, opened next to it. Both Pasidaryk pats and Mada underwent complete refurbishment in 2003.

13. CHURCH OF THE BLESSED JURGIS MATULAITIS

In 1988 Archbishop Julijonas Steponavičius founded a new parish devoted to Bd Jurgis Matulaitis, which was to serve the city's newest districts of Viršuliškės, Justiniškės, Pašilaičiai and part of Šeškinė. Architectural proposals for the parish church were invited in 1989.

No winning entry was chosen, but a group of architects was brought together under the leadership of the architect Gediminas Baravykas. The parish house was built first. A chapel opened in 1991, and construction of the new church began. The church was completed in 1996, but not to the initial design. A high bell tower and a chapel on the west side of the church were never built.

14. THE SUDERVĖ CEMETERY

In 1935, the Jewish community of Vilnius was looking for a site for a new cemetery. That summer, it purchased an area of 20 hectares (and the right to use it for 150 years) in the Šeškinė hills, not far from the village of Dėgbówka (in Polish dąb means 'oak'). They bought the land from the Pimonovs, a family of wealthy landowners who owned the Pilaitė estate and the surrounding area. Preparatory work soon began: the ground was levelled, and the area was enclosed with a concrete wall. However, by 1940 the cemetery was still not ready for use. During the Second World War, it was used to bury prisoners from the Vilna ghetto. After the Second World War, the municipal authorities allocated half of the cemetery for non-Jewish burials. However, the wall that separates Jewish from gentle graves was only built in 1997.

The Kaddish prayer stone, the remains of Dr Zechach Shabad, his son and wife, the gravestones-cenotaphs of the organisers of the ghetto uprising were transferred to this cemetery from the Jewish cemetery in Užupis. In 1963, the grave of the Vilna Gaon and his family, which had previously been in the Jewish cemetery of Šnipiškės (now the territory of the Palace of Sports), was also transferred to the Jewish Sudervė Cemetery.



A. THE FINN

Not far off from the old Viršuliškės cemetery stands The Finn, a 10-metre-tall sculpture (by Tadas Gutasukas) that depicts a giant holding up a cloud. The sculpture was unveiled in 2015, at the initiative of Finnish companies operating in Lithuania.

B. JUOZAS RUTKAUSKAS STREET

Juozas Rutkauskas (1904–1944) lived in Vilnius and was one of the Righteous Among the Nations. During World War II he helped save the lives of about 150 Jews. At the Yad Vashem memorial site in Jerusalem there is a plaque dedicated to him.

C. CARL GUSTAF EMIL MANNERHEIM STREET

Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim (1867–1951) was a Finnish political and military leader. During the Winter War with the USSR (1939–1940), he organised a successful national defence. The Mannerheim Line, a defensive fortification along the Finnish-Soviet border built before the Winter War, was named after the initiator of this defence system.

D. VILSPA

Along with the Press House and its printing facilities, a second printing house under the name of Vilspa was set up in Viršuliškės in 1993, thereby establishing the district's reputation as the epicentre of publishing. Before it became Vilspa, the printing house changed its name several times: from the Romm Family Press (1810–1940) and Vaizdas (1940–1982), to the Motiejus Šumauskas Press (1982–1989) and Viltis (1989–1995). In its incarnations as Vaizdas and the Romm Family Press, the printing house was located in the Old Town, on Šv. Dvasios Street. Construction on the printing house building in Viršuliškės began in 1989, and the building was demolished in 2009. The name of the street it once stood on, Spaudos g., pays tribute to its history.

E. THE BOG

Old maps of the area begin to depict the pond that is now a bog near Pilaitės Avenue in 1828. It was connected by a nameless brook with the Sudervė stream, a tributary of the Neris River that runs through Gudeliai. Even after the war, the pond was used by the local children for swimming and catching Crucian carp.

F. KAUKARAS ROUNDABOUT

Before the construction of the Western Vilnius Bypass, this was the location of the so-called Kaukaras roundabout. Now a regular street, the road was previously not just the main entryway into Pilaitė, Buivydžiškės and Zujūnai, it also served as a circular track for various car races, which attracted substantial crowds.

G. KEISTUOLIAI THEATRE

From 1989, the Press Palace also became the home of the Keistuoliai Theatre (Weirdos' Theatre), the first professional independent theatre in Lithuania.

H. VITAS LINGYS STREET

Vitas Lingys (1960–1993) was a journalist, publisher of the Respublika newspaper and deputy to its editor-in-chief. He investigated and reported on organised crime. On 12 October 1993, the journalist was shot next to his home in Fabijoniškės. Boris Dekanidzė, a Lithuanian criminal and member of the Vilnius Brigade, who ordered the murder of Vitas Lingys, is buried in the Sudervė Jewish cemetery.

I. SACHAROV SQUARE

Back in 1991, the small square next to the Vilnius Press Palace was given the name of scientist, human rights activist and dissident Andrej Sacharov. About a year later, a traditional Lithuanian cross with a wooden sign engraved with the scientist's name was erected on the square. As the wooden cross had disintegrated, it was replaced in 2011 with a sculptural bench by Vladas Kančiauskas.

J. THE OLD ROAD TO VILNIUS

As we head further down Tujų Street, we will find ourselves in a clearing in the woods that leads downhill to Žvėrynas. As you walk, don't forget to look down beneath your feet – at one point you will find the cobble stones that once paved the way. This is the old road to Vilnius by which the first buses reached Viršuliškės. The road fell out of use in 1976, with the construction of what is now Teodoro Narbuto Street.

K. THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FLOWER GARDEN IN VIRŠULIŠKĖS

We invite you to stop by what we think is the most beautiful flower garden in Viršuliškės. Residents of Viršuliškės remember that when the district was built it was not as green as it is now. According to one resident of the district, "what

was surprising was that there were no trees at all. It looked like they had all been cut down, but maybe they hadn't been cut down, they just weren't here. Maybe there were such plain places and then they started to plant those trees near the houses".

L. THE VIRŠULIŠKĖS DEPARTMENT STORE

As well as its residential parts, the master plan for the district also included a shopping centre, which was built in the late 1970s. The building housed a café and a bar, which were also called Viršuliškės. In 1993, the shopping centre was acquired by Vilnius Prekyba, and not long after became the site of a Minima supermarket (later rebranded as Maxima). In 2012, the building was demolished. By the end of the year, a new Maxima supermarket, three times the size of its predecessor, stood in its place.

N. UNBUILT 16-STOREY BUILDINGS

The architects of the Viršuliškės district had planned to erect five 16-floor buildings on the site where the Church of Bd Jurgis Matulaitis now stands. However, they were never built. The first buildings in Viršuliškės to have over 12 floors (the "Viršuliškės Pair") only appeared in 2006, and were built in another location.

M. BLESSED JURGIS MATULAITIS STREET

Jurgis Matulaitis (1871–1927) was the bishop of Vilnius (1918–1925). It was his efforts that resulted in the drawing up and signing of the concordat between the Vatican and Lithuania as well as the establishment of the Catholic Province of Lithuania.

O. THE FIRST SCHOOL

The autumn of 1977 saw the opening of the first school in Viršuliškės. In its first academic year, what was then known as the 45th Secondary School (now the Vilnius Viršuliškės School) welcomed 760 children and 42 teachers.

P. THE LŪŽIAI PARK

The Lūžiai Park in Viršuliškės borrowed its name from the village of Lūžiai (called Zbrodnia in Polish), which was situated in what is now the territory of Justiniškės.

The route covers a total distance of 4.5 km and will take you about two hours to complete. The shorter route (that skips the visit to the Sudervė Jewish cemetery) is about 3.8 km long.

Visiting hours of the Sudervė Jewish Cemetery: Mon–Fri 9–22, the cemetery is closed on public holidays, Saturdays and Sundays.

The walking tour was prepared by: Povilas Andrius Stepavičius and Albertas Kazlauskas ("Gatvės gyvos")

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The walking tour is a companion piece to the Vilnius Museum exhibition "Maybe to Viršuliškės?" 21 05 2022–31 07 2022

Local residents provided invaluable assistance in the reconstruction of the district's history. We are infinitely grateful for their time and memories!

**I VILNIUS I
I MUSEUM I**
www.vilniusmuziejus.lt
Vokiečių str. 6, Vilnius





1-14
THE MAIN POINTS ON THE ROUTE ARE INDICATED BY NUMBERS

A-F
OTHER INTERESTING LOCATIONS ARE INDICATED BY LETTERS

P1-P3
EXHIBITION
21 05 2022–31 07 2022
Thu–Fri 16–20
Sat–Sun 11–19

P1 Trolleybus next to the 2nd Trolleybus Depot (Viršulių g.)
P2 Trolleybus depot fence (Viršuliškių skg.)
P3 Gallery on the ground floor of the 12-storey building (Viršuliškių g. 43)

PKb
THE EXHIBITION BAR (Viršuliškių g. 49)
„Geltonas baras“
Opening hours: 13–23

K1-K3
CAFES AND RESTAURANTS
K1 „Mača“ (Viršuliškių g. 40):
„Čili pica“
„Naujieji rytai“
„Sushi City“
+++ (nicknamed the “Three Crosses” by one of the residents)
„Prezo kepyklėlė“
„Šulčių baras“

K2 „Maxima“ (Viršuliškių g. 30):
„Can Can“

K3 Domestic services block (Viršuliškių g. 34):
„Po pirmą“