



OUTCAN Guide | Life in Vilnius, Lithuania

LOCATION

Country: Lithuania

Town: Vilnius

Base: NATO Force Integration Unit in Vilnius

Other info to Consider:

- Family (non-dependants) can visit and stay 90 days **without visa** (Schengen Area).

POPULATION

Size: 542,000 (as of February 2024) (capital city)

Ethnicity: over 97% nationals, some Poles and Russians.

LANGUAGE(S)

Official language: Lithuanian

Prevalence of French or English speaking: Very limited. Some establishments will have English-speaking employees; However, English is not spoken freely and commonly. Limited to no French.

COST OF LIVING

Exchange rate to consider: Euro. 1 EUR = 1.47652 CAD (March 2024)

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- Expect cold temperatures, snowstorms and windstorms in winter.
- The climate of Vilnius is slightly continental, with very cold winters, during which the temperature is often below freezing, and mild or pleasantly warm summers.
The city is the capital of Lithuania and is located in the south-east of the country, in the area that in winter is the coldest, being the farthest from the sea.
- In winter, snowfalls are frequent, although they are generally not abundant. Cold spells from Russia, which were once more frequent, can be intense. The cold record is -37.2 °C (-35 °F), set in January 1940.
In summer there can be hot periods, usually of short duration, in which the temperature reaches or exceeds 30 °C (86 °F). The heat record is 35.4 °C (95.7 °F), set in July 1959.

Laws and Culture:

- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect lengthy jail sentences.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.04 percent for experienced drivers, 0.00 for new drivers, motorcyclists, taxi drivers and truck drivers. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines and jail sentences.
- Culture of Lithuania combines an indigenous heritage, represented by the unique Lithuanian language, with Nordic cultural aspects and Christian traditions resulting from historical ties with Poland.

Safety and Security:

- You must carry an international driving permit and valid Canadian license.

- Petty crime, such as pickpocketing and purse snatching, occasionally occurs, particularly on public transport and in bars and night clubs.
- There is a threat of terrorism in Europe. Terrorist attacks have occurred in several European cities. There is a potential for other violent incidents.
- Credit card and ATM fraud is a concern, particularly in areas frequented by tourists. Roads are generally in good condition, but lanes are not always clearly marked.
- Drivers can be aggressive.

Level of isolation:

- There are 3 Canadian family posted to this location.
- May feel very isolated due to the language barrier.

HOUSING

- Houses are generally of a good standard, equipped with a completed fitted kitchen, patio and/or balcony, storage room and secure parking
- Members on temporary duty will be provided with accommodation.
- It is imperative that members do not secure any type of housing without obtaining prior approval from CFSU(E) Housing Officer.

EMPLOYMENT

Are there employment opportunities for spouses? Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment on the economy is **not** a realistic option.

- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, families should plan to be single income for the duration of the posting - [CFMWS](#) | [MFS](#) | [OUTCAN Europe](#) | [CFMWS](#)
- **Op Tempo:** The op tempo will vary greatly depending on position. TD is possible.

HEALTH CARE

Access: Satisfactory medical care is available in Lithuania.

- All family has access to the Baltic American Clinic.
- Highly accessible via private clinic (almost no wait times), public access very similar to Canada, incl. wait times.
- Plan to bring either translator or use a translator app on your mobile phone.
- English services are available, French is very limited.
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP. [PSHCP Member Portal \(pshcp-msh.ca\)](#)

Special needs:

- Depending on language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed.
- It may be a wait before finding an appropriate match and at times may not be possible based on availability of English/French speaking providers or resources.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and / or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

Consideration for pregnancy / birth: Health care for pregnancy and birth is available on the economy, private care.

Dental: Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay up front, and you can then claim your expenses.

SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically the American International School of Vilnius (IB) for grades JK-12, Vilnius International School (IB) for grades JK-8, École Française de Vilnius for grades JK-5 - <https://www.aisv.lt/>
- For an approved list of schools, please contact Children's Education Management at: CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca
- [Children's Education Management - Canada.ca](#)
- [Gestion de l'éducation des enfants - Canada.ca](#)

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- The Curriculum varies depending on choice of school.
- None of them offers Canadian history or geography at the elementary level.

Resources for special need children:

- Access to Special needs services is depending on the choice of school, language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM and school prior to any commitments.

CHILDCARE

Things to Consider:

- Local childcare is available, no guarantee that staff will be English or French speaking.

TRANSPORTATION

Things to Consider: Airport: Vilnius International (VNO)

- It is located 5.9 km south of the city center. It is the largest of the three commercial airports in Lithuania by passenger traffic, with one runway and 5 million passengers a year.
- You should carry an international driving permit.
- Penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs are severe.

Public Transport:

- Good public transportation throughout the city.
- Rail service is efficient and reliable. Most trains are new and comfortable.
- The bus service throughout the country is safe and reliable. Frequent bus and air services link Lithuania to neighboring countries.
- Taxis are inexpensive. Use only officially marked taxis from taxi stands or reputable hotels.

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- No physical centre. Families in Lithuania are supported by the Remote Team: MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com

Psychosocial / Mental Health Resources:

- Not at post, MFS(E) SW for dependants only, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for member and family are located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The Padre is located at SHAPE, Belgium.

Communications (e.g. Quality of Internet connection): Very good service & very reasonable prices.

ACTIVITIES

Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- Plenty of recreational activities and venues are available in this area for the whole family.

Availability of playgrounds:

- Yes, many - though they are not at the same safety standard to Canadian playgrounds.

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common law relationships recognized? Yes

Are same sex couples recognized? Yes. Lithuanian law does not prohibit sexual acts between individuals of the same sex, however, homosexuality is not widely accepted in Lithuanian society.

- Lithuania does not recognise same-sex marriages or civil unions

Medications that are illegal in the country:

- Use without a prescription of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances is illegal.
- Cannabis is illegal.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- **European Commission Country Reports (2023)**
https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports_en
- **Canadian Travel Advisories**
<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/lithuania>
- **CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from US)**
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/lithuania/>
- **Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)**
<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/lithuania>

For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below

- MFS(E) Social Worker: MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com
- CAF Social Worker: GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca
- MFS(E) Team: MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com