

GEDIMINAS' DREAM: THE LEGEND OF VILNIUS



LITHUANIAN LEGEND



This legend relates to Gediminas, Grand Duke of Lithuania whose monument stands in Cathedral Square. Trakai, one of the most stunning cities in the Baltic States, was the capital of Lithuania and the home of Grand Duke Gediminas in the 14th-century. One day, Gediminas went on a hunting trip about 20 kilometers away from Trakai. To everyone's fortune, the trip was successful and Gediminas killed aurochs (a large wild ox), the biggest animal in Lithuania. Overwhelmed with joy, Gediminas decided not to come back to Trakai that night and camp in the woods, at Šventaragis valley. That is when he dreamed a very strange but extremely vivid dream.

In his dream, Gediminas saw a huge iron wolf standing on the hill. That wolf was howling with a powerful voice which sounded as if hundreds of wolves were trapped inside it. In the morning, concerned Grand Duke Gediminas went to his priest Lizdeika and asked for advice. Lizdeika was the wisest man in the whole country and the chief pagan priest.



Gediminas described everything what had happened in his dream. Lizdeika assured Gediminas that the powerful howl of the wolf meant that the whole world will know about the greatness of that capital one day. He told that an iron wolf means that the great capital will be located here and a howling of the wolf means that the sound of this capital will be heard all over the world. The howling of the wolf, explained the priest, represented the fame of the future city: that city will be the capital of Lithuanian lands, and its reputation would spread far and wide, as far as the howling of the mysterious wolf...

Grand Duke Gediminas immediately sent his men to Šventaragis valley and ordered them to start building the castles. The Grand Duke of Lithuania, obeying the will of gods, immediately started to build the



future capital, and took it the name – Vilnius from the stream of the rapid Vilnia. Gediminas ordered to pour a mound at the same place he slept. On the hill there a castle was built, nowadays it is called Gediminas castle.

Gediminas' Castle Tower or like the locals call it Gediminas' Tower is a symbol of Lithuania and the most photogenic object in whole Vilnius. The Lithuanians are so used to see the Gediminas' Tower as it is today, that sometimes we forgot that actually, it is just the remaining tower of the castle which was standing there from the 15th century. This tower is surrounded by legends, poems, and songs from the latest times. Gediminas' Tower was a part of Upper Castle built by Grand Duke Gediminas, the father of Vilnius city. Maybe that's why Gediminas' Tower is so popular and a very loved historical site. People believe that actually in the place where the tower is standing, the Vilnius city was born. Gediminas Tower has a lot of secrets.

Today, Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, is one of the most frequently visited cities of Eastern Europe. It is famous not only for its unique architectural character, but also for its cultural events and attractions. During the first ten years of independence, the city has become a tourist attraction centre. The number of tourists has consistently increased and at the same time tourist infrastructure and services have been developed.

It is also the largest city of the country. The historical centre of Vilnius, the Old Town, is one of the largest old town centres in Eastern Europe. The Old Town is situated in a picturesque valley of two rivers – the Vilnia and Neris. There is also a tower



of Gediminas castle located which can be seen well from any place in Vilnius Old Town. The tower nowadays serves as a museum, an observation square and a symbol of Vilnius and the whole Lithuania.

The museum located in the tower of Gediminas castle is a part of National museum of Lithuania. There is an exposition called “Guns and an iconography of the castle” exposed. Visitors can get acquainted with models of the complex of Vilnius castles, historical weaponry and iconography of the old Vilnius. Tourists can climb up the Gediminas hill themselves in order to visit the castle and the tower or they can use an elevator working there daily.

Marvelous views of Vilnius city open from the top of the Gediminas hill. Some people, especially youth, like settling on a spacious stone fence here and watch the city life from above. It is an impressive place where young fellows like to take their girlfriends, city guides always include this destination to tours around

Vilnius, the hill is often visited by schoolchildren excursions and separate tourists. The only inconvenience about the place is that you must be on time to get down the hill in order not to be locked in the hill territory. The hill is not available to climb up all day long.

