



Kaunas is the second-largest city in Lithuania and has historically been a leading centre of Lithuanian economic, academic, and cultural life. Kaunas was the biggest city the Grand Duchy of Lithuania since 1413. Between the 1st and the 2nd world wars it became the only temporary capital city in Europe. Now it is the capital of Kaunas County, the seat of the Kaunas city municipality and the Kaunas district municipality. It is also the seat of the Roman Catholic Church of Kaunas. Kaunas is located at the confluence of the two largest Lithuanian rivers, the Nemunas and the Neris, and near the Kaunas Reservoir, the largest Lithuanian artificial lake, created in 1959 by damming the River Nemunas. Before Lithuania regained independence, the city was generally known in English as Kovno. An earlier Russian name was Ковно Kovno, although Кайнас Kaunas has been used since 1940.

Early history



It is believed the town was founded in the year 1030, but it was first mentioned in written sources in 1361. In 1408 the town was granted Magdeburg Rights by our grand duke Vytautas the Great. In 1441 Kaunas joined the Hanseatic League, and Hansa merchant office was opened - the only one in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. By the 16th century, Kaunas also had a public school and a hospital and was one of the best-formed towns in the whole country. In 1665, the Russian army attacked the city several times, and in 1701 the city was occupied by the Swedish army. The Black Death struck the area in 1657 and 1708, and fires destroyed parts of the city in 1731 and 1732.

Inter-war Lithuania - Temporary capital of Lithuania

