

Historical names



The national poem of Poland *Pan Tadeusz* (Lithuanian, *Ponas Tadas*) by the 19th-century Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz (Lithuanian, *Adomas Mickevičius*, pictured) opens somewhat confusingly with the words 'Oh Lithuania, my fatherland!'. The

fact that the Polish Mickiewicz referred to Lithuania as his fatherland serves as a good example as to just how linguistically bewildering things can get in this part of the world. It should therefore come as no great surprise to learn that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was ruled by somebody known as both Vytautas (Lithuanian) and Witold (Polish) whose capital was known as both Trakai (Lithuanian) and Troki (Polish) and who spoke... Ruthenian. Vytautas/Witold probably ate kugel (Yiddish) and kugelis (Lithuanian) for lunch, and when he died was he buried in Vilnius (Lithuanian) and Wilno (Polish). A cause for much heated debate in Lithuania, not least among its more patriotic citizens, *Vilnius In Your Pocket* apologises for any bad feeling caused by what some may consider a misuse of some of the words used in this guide. There's not a lot we can do about it. Adam Mickiewicz incidentally was born in what's now Belarus.

2007 November 28 President Valdas Adamkus is awarded the title of European of the Year by the *European Voice* newspaper. **December 21** Lithuania joins the Schengen zone.

2009 Lithuania celebrates 1,000 years since its name was first mentioned in written texts. **January 17** With 90Lt million of mounting debts, the national airline, flyLAL, suspends all services. Dalia Grybauskaitė, the so-called Iron Lady, is inaugurated as Lithuania's first female president on **July 12**. **December 31** Vilnius bows out of a disastrous year as European Capital of Culture on the same day as the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant closes for good.

2010 Lithuania celebrates 20 years of independence from the Soviet Union on **March 11**. In a sinister U-turn, on **May 19** a court in Klaipėda approves the public display of swastikas arguing that they represent Lithuanias historical heritage, not Nazi Germany.

2011 Lithuania commemorates the centenary of the death of the painter and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis. The country hosts the EuroBasket 2011 competition (see p.3) in cities nationwide between **August 31** and **September 18**.

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