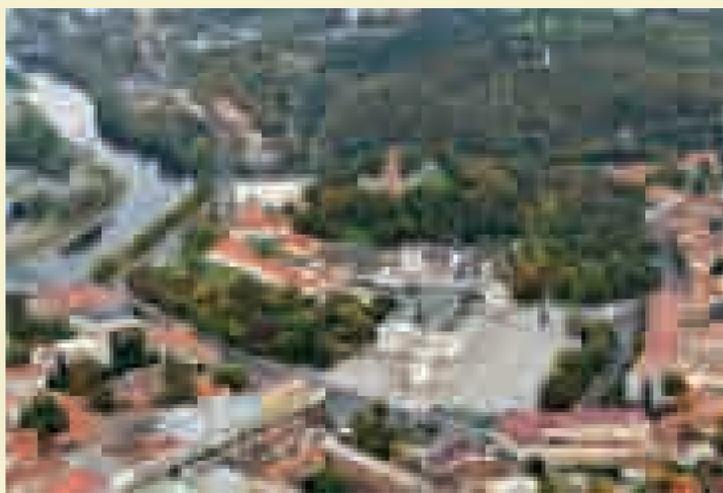


# THE VILNIUS CASTLES

Up until the late 14th century, the Vilnius castles complex consisted of three castles: the Upper, Lower and Crooked. The Upper and Crooked castles were found on the top of the hill range. Earth and timber fortifications found here date to the first millennium B.C. The wooden Crooked Castle was burned down by Teutonic knights in 1390 and was never replaced. In the early 15th century, the Upper Castle was rebuilt in brick and now consisted of a defensive wall joined by an octagonal, two square and gate towers as well as a three-storey Gothic style residential palace. In the western and northern foothills of the Upper Castle a sub-castle settlement was under formation back in the 4th–8th centuries, later developing into the Lower Castle. The first brick buildings were built here in the late 13th–early 14th century.

Even though the Lithuanian grand dukes often stayed at various castles up to the 15th century, in Trakai, Hrodna or Lutsk, from the early 14th century Vilnius became the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and it was here that the rulers spent most of their time. The primary residence of the Lithuanian grand dukes probably up until the turn of the 15th–16th centuries was the Vilnius Upper Castle, and from the early 16th century – the palace in the Lower Castle. In the 15th through to the first half of the 17th century, the Vilnius castle ensemble became the centre for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's political, administrative, legal, military, economic and diplomatic relations with its neighbours and other distant countries, while the ruler's court took on the role of spreading cultural and artistic innovations not just in Lithuania, but throughout the entire Central, Eastern and Northern European region.



Bird's-eye view of the Vilnius castles, 2010, LDKVR



Vilnius castles in the second half of the 16th century, Rasa Abramauskienė, 2013, LDKVR

1. Renaissance residence of the Lithuanian grand dukes
2. The Old Palace of Sigismund the Old
3. Bona Sforza's residential tower in the palace
4. The New Palace of Sigismund Augustus
5. Lower Castle
6. Cathedral
7. The former bishops' residence, later the home of the palace guard
8. Cathedral vicars' house
9. First workshop of the ducal palace
10. Second workshop of the ducal palace
11. Third workshop of the ducal palace, or the former Radziwiłł Palace
12. Corridor between Castle Hill and the third workshop (former Radziwiłł Palace)
13. Retaining wall on the western slope of Castle Hill
14. Castle caretaker's house
15. Lighthouse
16. Mannerist Sts Anne and Barbara Church – mausoleum of the ruling family
17. Former arsenal buildings
18. Upper Castle and Gothic residence (brick)
19. Renaissance garden and ponds near the palace
20. Castle's southern gates



Coin from the Ancient Roman Empire – Faustina II (145–175 AD)  
Roman sestertius, PTC



Rusticated pot and spindles, 5th–8th century,  
LDKVR



Ruins of Vilnius Upper Castle, 2011, LDKVR



Trakai Island Castle, RPL



Bird's-eye view of the Hrodna Castle, ГИПФМ



14th-century brick building in the courtyard of the medieval  
Vilnius Lower Castle residence, LDKVR