

THE HILL OF CROSSES at Siauliai, Lithuania



Over the centuries, the hill has come to signify the peaceful endurance of Lithuanian [Catholicism](#) despite the threats it faced throughout history. After the [3rd partition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth](#) in 1795, Lithuania became part of the [Russian Empire](#). Poles and Lithuanians unsuccessfully rebelled against Russian authorities in [1831](#) and [1863](#). These two uprisings are connected with the beginnings of the hill: as families could not locate bodies of perished rebels, they started putting up symbolic crosses in place of a former hill fort.

When the old political structure of [Eastern Europe](#) fell apart in 1918, Lithuania once again [declared its independence](#). Throughout this time, the Hill of Crosses was used as a place for Lithuanians to pray for peace, for their country, and for the loved ones they had lost during the [Wars of Independence](#).

Most recently, the site took on a special significance during the years 1944–1990, when [Lithuania was occupied](#) by the [Soviet Union](#). Continuing to travel to the Hill and leave their tributes, Lithuanians used it to demonstrate their allegiance to their original identity, religion and heritage. It was a venue of [peaceful resistance](#), although the Soviets worked hard to remove new crosses, and bulldozed the site at least three times (including attempts in 1963 and 1973). There were even rumors that the authorities planned to build a dam on the nearby Kulvė River, a tributary to [Mūša](#), so that the hill would end up under water.

During the Soviet era a cross was placed each time a Lithuanian was taken by the Soviets to the Gulag Prisons in Siberia. The number of crosses during the Soviet period grew from a few hundred to hundreds of thousands.



Cross placed by Pope John Paul II during his visit in 1993.



The small hill as you approach it from the parking lot.



In places there is no more room for crosses.



There is a path through each direction and to the back of the hill.



Crosses are still being added but now as a prayer.



We make our way back to the statue with a cross of our own.



Joanne places our cross with our first names and the date on the back of the cross.



A look back as we leave the hill from the side.



As we leave we look back at the monument for help to God. It is also a monument to the oppression created by a government with no accountability.