

The Cable Car (Lynų Kelias) is an eco-friendly means of transportation connecting both sides of the Neman River. The 1161-meter long aerial cableway was opened on November 27, 2015. A one-way ride lasts about 7 to 8 minutes during which the cable car travels at the speed of 3.5 m/s. Each of the two gondolas can carry up to 10 passengers, which means that 20 passengers in total can take a ride at the same time. The gondolas ascent to the height of 45 meters, whereas the entire cable car construction reaches 52 meters at its highest point.

POINTS OF INTEREST TO SEE WHEN RIDING THE CABLE CAR FROM THE DRUSKININKAI AQUA PARK TO THE SNOW ARENA

1. The small pavilions of the Dainava Center are considered to be one of the first private guest houses in Druskininkai (the end of the 19th century). During the interwar period, Villa Imperial belonged to the local tradesman Frenkel who opened a restaurant and offered accommodation to the visitors. The arrangement and style of the buildings is reminiscent of the Italian villas built in the middle of the 19th century. Presently, the Villa houses the Širdelė Café where the Druskininkai Poetic Fall festivals are held.

2. Belarus Medical Spa, which was built during the Soviet times in Druskininkai, is officially the territory of Belarus in Lithuania. In February 1996, Lithuania agreed to transfer the ownership of the Belarus Medical Spa to Belarus and rented out the respective land lot for a time period of 99 years. In return, Belarus agreed to rent out the enclave of 1.31 square kilometers of its territory with the hydroelectric power plant and floodgate system in Drūkša Village, near Lake Drūkšiai, to Lithuania for the same period of time.

3. The forest and its inhabitants. The forest of Druskininkai Municipality that can be seen from the gondola stretches over an area of 70 ha. The largest part of the forest is taken up by an old pinewood with 140 to 170-year old and up to 32-meter high pine trees. On the left, there is a marsh that occupies 4.4 ha and is home to 75-year-old black alders reaching up to 26 meters in height. European beavers have made the marsh their home and built a dam in the nearby stream. The forest is also a habitat for many other animal species, such as European hares, roe deer, common wood pigeons, cuckoos, woodpeckers, dendrocopos, common ravens, hooded crows, carrion crows, Eurasian wrens, common blackbirds, fieldfares, song thrushes, European robins, flycatchers, nightingales, common redstarts, great tits, crested tits, Eurasian blue tits, Eurasian nuthatches, Eurasian jays, chaffinches and other bird species. Tawny owls, common mergansers and goldeneye ducks make their nests and hatch their eggs in the forest.

4. The Neman River is the largest and the longest river in Lithuania. Its length is 475 km and its depth is up to 5 m. By his decree of June 20, 1794, Stanisław August Poniatowski made Druskininkai a resort town based on the fact that the salty waters around the Neman River were found to have healing qualities. In the middle of the 19th century, a ferry was built to transport people from one side of the Neman to the other. By the end of the same century, a steamboat was sailing daily from Grodno to Druskininkai. Presently, during the warm season, steamboats and other boats offer regular trips down the Neman to Liškiava and Love Island. The Neman River is a perfect spot for birdwatching both in summer and in winter. It is possible to see the great crested grebes, great cormorants, grey herons, great white egrets, mute swans, mallards, goldeneye ducks, common mergansers, Eurasian coots, sandpipers, black-headed gulls, common terns, kites, white-tailed sea eagles, northern goshawks, northern sparrowhawks, common buzzards and other bird species.

5. Love Island. There is a legend about a young girl who was looking for her soulmate. She sat down on the bank of the river and started singing. The beauty of her voice mesmerized the Neman River and the surrounding forests so much that they spread the echo to the other side of the river, where the shepherd Valentine was tending cattle when he heard the enchanting voice. It was so alluring that the shepherd abandoned his cows and his reed pipe in favor of finding out who was singing on the other bank of the river. The summer was hot and the water was shallow, so the shepherd Valentine easily made it to the other side. There, he saw a young girl with the hair of gold and the eyes of blue. The shepherd invited the girl to go with him and they took off in a boat down the river. Unfortunately, the boat hit a rock in the middle of the Neman, startling the girl. She jumped up rocking the boat and it turned upside down. The couple got trapped underneath the boat, where they remained forever. The locals say that nature itself made a grave for them in the middle of the Neman River because it reminds of a small boat. This is why people started calling it Love Island. In reality, this island belongs to the Druskininkai Nature Reserve established in 1960 in order to protect the rare plant habitat.

6. Mizarai Village is where one of the few meteor craters in Lithuania is located. Around 500-600 million years ago, a celestial body of 200 m in diameter hit the surface of the Earth and made a nearly circular crater of 5 km in diameter and 230 m in depth. The biggest part of the crater is located on the left bank of the Neman River. You can see mineral water springs rising from beneath the crater. It is believed that all mineral water springs in Druskininkai have appeared as a result of the meteorite impact.

7. Snow Arena is the only winter sports complex in the Baltic States that is open all year round. There are three ski trails for downhill skiing and a restaurant with impressive panoramic views. The roof of the building features the biggest Like symbol in the world. If you want to take a glance at the indoor ski runs and touch the snow, you can get into the Snow Arena for just a symbolic entrance fee. There is also a fee to get into the restaurant with panoramic views but you can redeem the ticket for a cup of delicious coffee or tea.



POINTS OF INTEREST TO SEE WHEN RIDING THE CABLE CAR FROM THE SNOW ARENA TO DRUSKININKAI AQUA PARK

1. Bridges over the Neman River. The wooden bridge to Love Island was built a century ago. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by raging waters and has never been rebuilt. In the 20th century, the banks of the Neman River were once again connected by a pontoon bridge that was open in the summertime. Finally, the first bridge was constructed in 1973 and the second one, also known as the Park Bridge, was built in 2011.

2. The Tower of Druskininkai Church of Saint Mary's Scapular. The construction of this neogothic church began in the beginning of the 20th century. Even though the construction works were almost completed by the start of World War I, the church got demolished during the war. It was rebuilt later and has remained practically unchanged to these days. There is one interesting fact about the history of the church. Apparently, based on the initial design, the church was supposed to be built facing the opposite side than it presently is. The church entrance was planned to be facing Lake Druskonis. Yet, the Kiersnovskis Family who funded the construction of the church got into a row with Parish Priest B. Voleiko. As a result, the church design was changed. A relic of St. Valentine, a piece of his clothing, is exhibited in the right nave of the church.

3. Druskininkai Municipality Building is one of the several masonry villas and is historically referred to as the Villa of Doctor Valerijus Bujakovskis. Dr. Bujakovskis (1857-1919) was among the top ten richest residents of the resort town. The masonry villa of Dr. Bujakovskis is believed to have been built sometime between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. At that time, the villa had only one floor. The top floor was added later but the original domed roof design was retained.

4. Druskininkai Eastern Orthodox Church of the Icon of Mother of God of All the Afflicted. The Eastern Orthodox church was built in 1861 and consecrated four years later. This wooden church with its six gold-topped towers fascinates everyone with its iconostasis masterfully carved by the masters in Moscow and icons made by Grodno artisans. At the end of the 19th century, a parish school for women that operated as a hospital and care home in summertime stood near the church. Nowadays, the church is visited by its small local congregation and guests of the town.

5. The Radium Wooden Villa. The romantic Radium Villa has certain features of Romanticism and bears some similarities to the Swiss-style and wooden manors typical of the beginning of the 19th century. The name is derived from the chemical element radium (in Latin, radius means ray). The construction of the villa coincided with the booming interest in radioactive elements, when Marie Skłodowska Curie discovered polonium and radium.

6. The Burgomaster's House was built in the Old Town of Druskininkai in the second half of the 19th century as a residential house for Antanas Grudzinskas, a Nobleman of Grodno Governorate and the Burgomaster of Druskininkai. The bay window with a tower topped with a conical roof connects the house with the Radium Villa located on the same land lot. Both buildings have been included into the list of cultural heritage sites.

7. Druskininkai Health Resort. The first health resort accommodating up to 150 guests was opened in 1894 (presently, the building houses the Europa Royale Druskininkai Hotel). In 1962, the curative mud facilities were opened in the present-time Druskininkai Health Resort. Nowadays, the Health Resort offers both mineral water and curative mud treatments. The facade of the building is decorated with stone mosaics titled The Nemunas and The Ratnyčėlė, created by B. Klova.

8. The Dancing Fountain was built in the Resort Park in 2011. During the warm season, people come here to enjoy the musical shows of the dancing fountain. The fountain turns on automatically on preset times but the spectators can choose their favorite songs out of more than 100 musical compositions.

9. Entertainment Square. This is where all the town festivals and events take place since 2002. The size of the square is 2,300 square meters. Around 5,000 people can attend an event held in the square at a time. In the summertime, the square is transformed into an open-air cinema and in winter, it becomes home to the major Christmas tree of the resort town.

10. Druskininkai Aqua Park. Designed by Architects A. and R. Šilinskas, a health resort offering up to 1,000 different treatments per hour was opened for visitors in 1980. From above, the shape of the building looks like a shamrock. In 2000, the health resort was closed and six years later, the facility was renovated and adapted to be home for the first ever water park in Lithuania. Presently, the leisure and entertainment center occupies more than 30,000 square meters and is open all year round.

11. Druskininkai residential areas. Kalviškė, Neravai, Baltašiškė, Kloniškės and Viečiūnai are some of the residential areas of Druskininkai that have recently been renovated and modernized.

The information contained herein was provided by Druskininkai City Museum (www.druskininkumuziejus.lt), Architecture and Urbanism Center (www.autc.lt), Druskininkai Tourism and Business Information Center (www.info.druskininkai.lt), and Veisiejai Forestry Regional Branch.

