



MIROSLAVAS

A PLACE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT
OF THE YOTVINGIANS

Compiled by Birutė Malaškevičiūtė, 2019
Translated by Dokana, UAB

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ALYTUS DISTRICT
LITHUANIA

Miroslavas. A place filled with the spirit of the Yotvingians

Miroslavas' surroundings in Alytus Region are famous for their magnificent Yotvingian past. In ancient times, fearless and combative Yotvingian tribes inhabited these territories. Their former existence is evidenced by place names, mounds and barrow groups that have survived to date. It is also confirmed by archaeological excavations.

Miroslavas was more extensively mentioned in written sources in the 17th century. In 1744, Miroslavas Parish was established, and this year is considered the town establishment date.

The town has developed alongside trade routes and a parish under establishment. Initially, its settlers did not pay any taxes whatsoever, hence the name Slabada (the Russian word *свобода* meaning *freedom*). Later, the town became the ownership of Mr. Miroslavsky, the owner of Bendriai Manor, who wished to call it Miroslavas.

In the middle of the 19th century Miroslavas had a tavern famous in the area. It was built by the owner of the Bendres Manor. The manor brewed beer and distilled vodka, and the tavern sold it. The tavern building was originally a kasharai, a dormitory for the manor's single male laborers. Later it was a place where three violinists played for visitors on Sundays and sometimes on weekdays.

In 2004, Miroslavas was given the coat of arms, a blue silver chapel against blue background, with a golden cross on the rooftop and a golden bell in the arch. It is Miroslavas' symbol, the former sacrificial hill Olakalnis with a chapel.

Today, Miroslavas is the center of an eldership that fascinates tourists with its past and natural beauty. It has recreational lakes of Atesys, Luksnėnai, Metelys and Obelijų, Balkasodis established Botanical Reserve, and Meteliai Regional Park partly covering the eldership. Road signs and information boards lead to many points of interest.



PLACES TO VISIT

• Miroslavas Holy Trinity

Church. Miroslavas Parish was established in 1744. In 1763, a wooden church and a Marian monastery were built in Miroslavas. It burned down in 1835. A temporary church was built there, and in 1847 it was replaced by a new brick one, and a monastery compound. The Marians set up a school. In 1864, the monastery was closed, and the Marian priest Vincent Grincevičius was exiled to Siberia for placing under oath people who rebelled in 1863. In 1914, during World War I, retreating Russian soldiers blew up the church. In 1917, its reconstruction design was developed, and the works were started in 1918. The church was completed in 1929. It is a hall church shaped as a Latin cross and located in the town center, featuring graceful proportions, two-towers and a single nave. The church has five altars of order.

Vienuolyno g. 2A, Miroslavas, Alytaus r.,
phone: +370 687 56 093, +370 315 66 399,
www.miroslavoparapija.lt
GPS: 54.331685, 23.895263 (WGS)



• **Balkasodis Chapel.** It was built proximately in 1887, in the former mansion cemetery. The chapel contained an indoor altar, stained-glass windows, wall paintings, and a statue the Blessed Virgin Mary on the windowsill. The floor was made of black and white mettlach tiles. A burial cellar with cylindrical vaults was installed under the chapel. After World War II, the building was abandoned and neglected, the chapel items were stolen, it was ravaged, and the burial cellars were robbed. Finally, in the



1960s, robbers even dared to throw out the dead bodies onto the snow in winter. The remains of former estate owner E. Dombkowski were rescued by forensic medics. The mummified remains were transferred to the Department of Anatomy, Histology and Anthropology of Vilnius University's Faculty of Medicine. So far, it is the only known mummy in Alytus Region. The fate of other dead bodies is still unknown.

Real Heritage The chapel is listed on the Register of Immovable Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Lithuania.

Šilelio g., Balkasodžio k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.261876, 23.980010 (WGS)

- The construction of **Kurnėnai school building complex** (the school and the wind farm) began in 1934. The construction works lasted for two years intermittently. Nearly all the building materials (even window glass) were shipped from Chicago (USA). At the beginning they were shipped to the Port of New York, then to Klaipėda, later they reached Alytus by rail, and from there they were brought to Kurnėnai by horse-driven carts. It is the only Lithuanian school shipped from America. A wind farm was also built next to it.

Almost all of the school's construction costs (LTL 160,000) were donated by Laurynas Radziukynas, a resident of Kurnėnai who relocated to the USA after his studies. The first school bell rang there in 1936. The school turret was decorated by Chase (the national emblem) (authored by Vytautas Brazdžius). The school operated until 2008.

Real Heritage The school complex is listed on the Register of Immovable Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Lithuania.

Draugystės g. 2, Kurnėnų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.397606, 23.907039 (WGS)



- **Homeland of the painter Antanas Žmuidzinavičius.** In 1981, an exposition was opened in this house to commemorate the 105th anniversary since the birth of the painter. In 1982, a nephew of Antanas Žmuidzinavičius, a famous historian of Lithuanian theater Vytautas Maknys (1907–2003), established the memorial museum of Antanas Žmuidzinavičius and his father, a public figure Jonas Maknickas (1875–1938) in the country house. In 1994, he donated his parents' house to Alytus District Municipality. The exposition in memory of Antanas Žmuidzinavičius and his family covers a part of the house.

Antanas Žmuidzinavičius wrote about his parents' house in Balkūnai: *Being a smart farmer, Father could not tolerate the three-field system and the small fields of Seirijai and, when I was small, bought a single house in Balkūnai village (between Alytus and Simnas). Father was quite a skillful man. Finally, he personally rebuilt his buildings with the help of ordinary workers, and built such a house that it could serve as an example to Dzūkija farmers, with its large windows, a beautiful porch and good room layout.*

Please make an visit appointment in advance

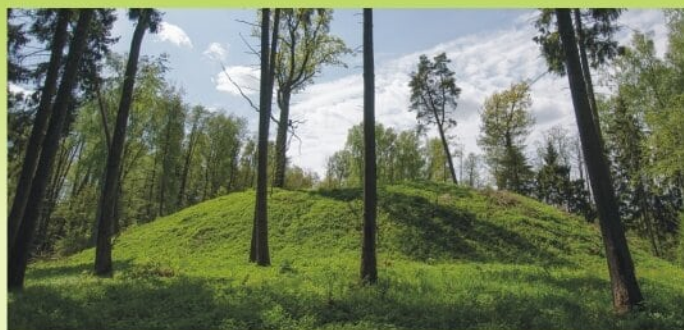
A. Žmuidzinavičiaus g. 1, Balkūnų k., Miroslavo sen.,

Alytaus r., phone: +370 614 53 704

GPS: 54.379149, 23.881146 (WGS)

- **Dirmiškės mound** is located on the higher left bank of a nameless stream. The slopes are steep, up to 6 m high. It dates back to the middle of the 1st millennium - the beginning of the 2nd millennium. Barrow groups dating





back to the III century - V century extend in 350 - 450 m from the mound. The mound's researchers noted that it was probably used for cult purposes instead of defense. Legend has it that a pagan priest who lived there fell in love with a pagan priestess who had promised to live in chastity, and he married her. Then the punishment of the gods fell upon them: together with the shrine they sank into the hill and now live there, and will rise up at the end of the world, together with the shrine. To commemorate them, people planted roses on the mound and called them *piliarožės* (Lith.), or *castle roses* (Eng. hollyhocks).

Dirmiškų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.277292, 23.932205 (WGS)

• **Kaukai and Obelytė mounds.** These mounds located close to each other make one complex. It consists of mounds located in different villages, a lower ward and a settlement on the foothills. The main Kaukai mound, also known as Obelytė mound and Obelytė-Pranevičius mound,

is located on the elevation on the left curving bank of the Peršėkė stream.

To the west of Kaukai mound, on a corner of the elevation on the right bank of the Peršėkė, another (now almost destroyed) Obelytė mound, also known by the names of Zomkus mound and Nugara (Eng. Back). It was quite large.

The complex of Kaukai and Obelytė mounds has existed since the beginning of the 1st millennium to the XI century, when it must have been destroyed during a military march of the Kievan Rus dukes against the Yotvingian tribes. The attackers shooting arches burned down a small wooden castle on the mound together with people and property inside it. This is evidenced by 126 arrow tips of various shapes collected during the excavations. Some of them were embedded in the embankment.

Legend has it that people used to find stone axes around these mounds and believed in their miraculous effect, namely that they had healing powers and protected against death. Another legend says that the owner of Meteliai Manor wanted to plow Kaukai mound, but failed to reach his goal, as the oxen went blind when the ploughing started.

Kaukai II k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.352256, 23.784295 (WGS)



• **Papėčiai mound** is located on a separate hill, north of Metels lake. The slopes are medium steep, 7-10 m high. It is dated back to the 1st millenium.

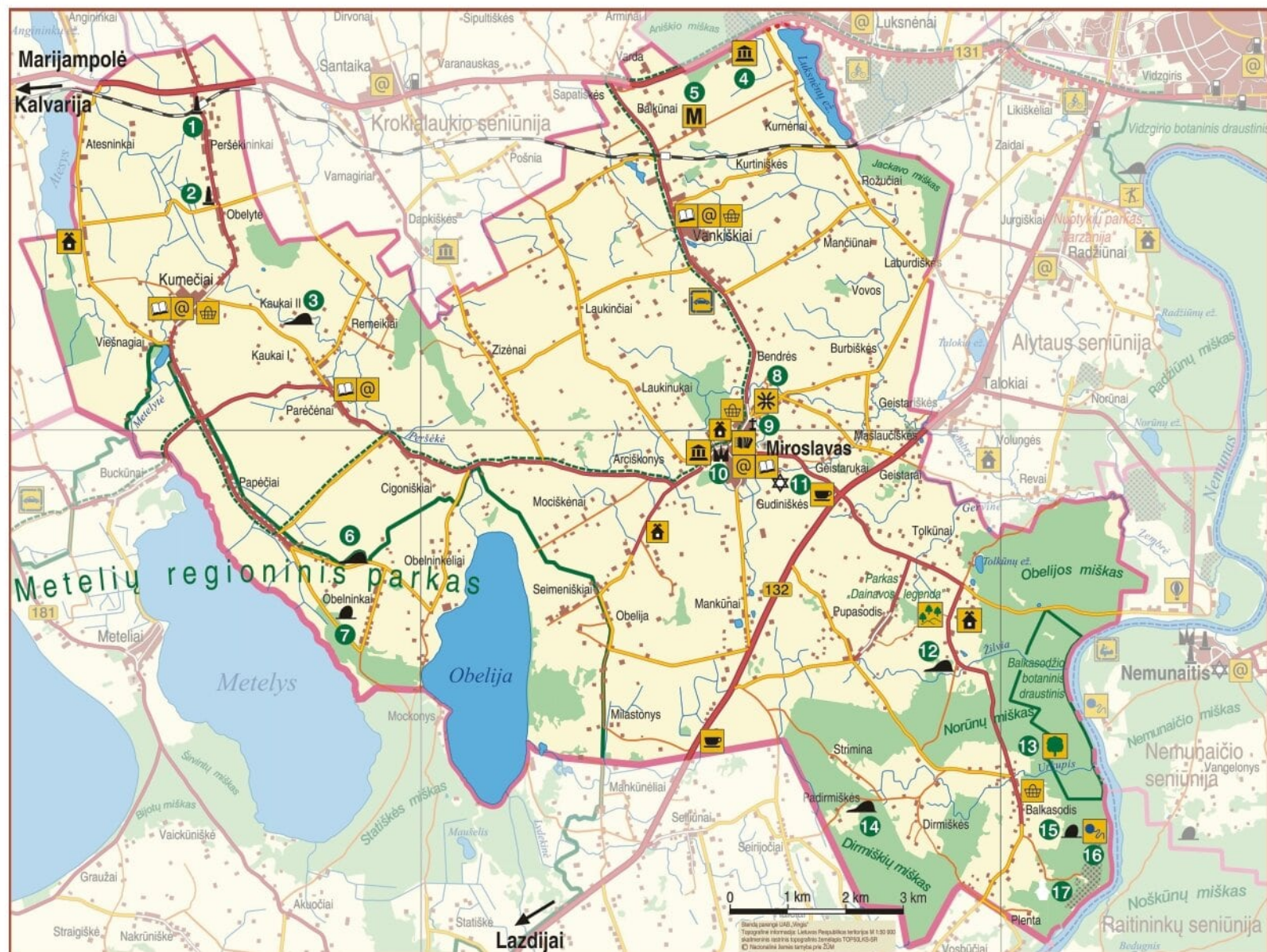
Papečiai mound has a view of the great lakes of Dzūkija: Metels, Obelija, Dusia.

A legend of the mound says that the eastern slope of Papėčiai mound had the end of a chain peeking out. People got together and pulled the chain, but it broke and the tip went inside the mound, and anyone who tried to pull that chain out was dragged into the depths of the mound. The church was believed to have sunk in the mound depths.

Papėčių k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.314143, 23.797019 (WGS)





Signs

- Municipality, Subdistrict boundary
- Regional park, reservation boundary
- Railway
- Hard surface road, motorway number
- Gravel road
- Country, forest road

- Forest
- Gardens
- Lake
- Swamp
- River, stream, ditch
- Settlement
- Catholic church

- Mound
- Stone
- Monument
- Architectural cultural heritage object
- Mythological object
- Library, internet
- Culture center
- Tree, a natural monument
- Park

- Accommodation
- Café
- Shop
- Post office
- Museum
- Cycling route
- Autotourism route
- Water route

Places to visit

- 1 Monument in Peršėkininkai in memoriam to victims of the Stalinist repressions of this village
- 2 Monument to the book-smugglers
- 3 Kaukai and Obelytė mounds
- 4 Kurnėnai school building complex
- 5 Homeland of the artist Antanas Žmuidzinavičius
- 6 Papėčiai mound
- 7 The Laumė (Fairy) Stone
- 8 Olakalnis
- 9 Monument to partisans
- 10 Miroslavas Holy Trinity Church
- 11 Old Jewish Cemetery
- 12 Žilvia mound
- 13 Highest fir-tree in Lithuania
- 14 Dirmiškės mound
- 15 Red Stone
- 16 Druskelė (Little Salt) source
- 17 Balkasodis Chapel



• **Olakalnis with a chapel.** The former sacrificial hill is located in Bendrės village. The white chapel on it is depicted in the coat of arms of Miroslavas. It is hard to say when it was built and by whom. It has four masonry pillars topped by masonry vaults and covered with a roof. A wooden cross was buried in the ground inside the church. They say that in pagan times, various sacrifices to the gods were offered there. Older people

remember the stories of their parents, that supposedly Napoleon's army had hidden a treasure in the hill and in the middle of the 19th century the herdsman Žvaliauskas of Bendrės village found one silver coin every morning for ten days.

Bendrių k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.338260, 23.906367 (WGS)



• **Žilvia mound** is located on a separate hill on the left bank of the Žilvia stream. The square is round, 20 m in diameter, and includes a cultural layer. The slopes are steep, 7-12 m high. The mound is also known as Pupasodis mound and Tolkūnai mound. It is dated back to the middle of the 1st millennium - the beginning of the 2nd millennium.

A legend of the mound says that 70 soldiers who were in the fortress of Žilvia were cursed for cowardice. On St. John's night they come out of the mountain and stay on it as rabbits. Hunters boasted that they shot at them, but no bullet would hit them, and the rifles would always fail.

Pupasodžio k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

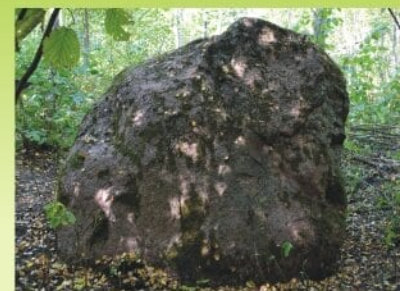
GPS: 54.297792, 23.953746 (WGS)

• The height of **the Red Stone** (above ground) is 2.45 m, the length is 3.23 m, the width is 3.11 m; and the maximum horizontal circumference is 10.15 m. The boulder is irregularly shaped, with a pointed tip (ridge).

In 1964, the Red Stone was declared a natural monument.

The boulder is located in Norūnai forest, in plot 15 of parcel 44 of Balkasodis pine forest that is a part of Sudvajai Forest.

GPS: 54.269323, 23.988101 (WGS)



• **The Laumė (Fairy) Stone** is a large, dark granite egg-shaped boulder between Obelija and Metelys lakes. Its western height is 2.1 m, and the circumference is 10 m.

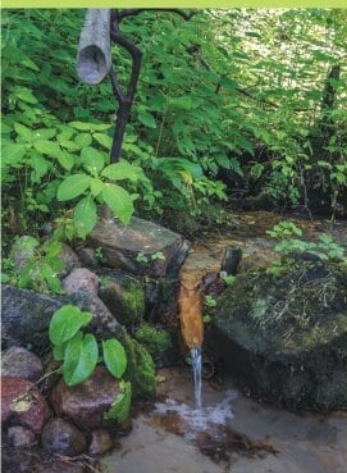
Legend has it that once upon a time there was an old hut in bad shape near Lake Metelys, inhabited by the sorceress Laumė, more ancient than the hut. Once she disappeared, and nobody could find her however hard they looked for her. However, they noticed that an unseen boulder appeared on Jurakalnis (Sea Hill) located in Papėčiai village. One dark night a man and wife drove past this hill. Suddenly the horses stopped at it and they heard a sheep bleating. They took that sheep and brought it back. They left it in the carriage in a barn. That night they dreamed that the barn was burning and jumped out of bed and started to extinguish the fire. As soon as the door was opened the fire went out, and they saw a woman coming out of the barn. The cocks sang and she disappeared. The horse herders said in the morning that at dawn they saw an old woman on Jurakalnis who had turned herself into the stone.

Later, there were more and more stories that the stone would turn into a sorceress at night that kept scaring late passengers till the first cocks sang. The locals also named this stone Laumė (Fairy) stone.

Obelninkų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.305000, 23.794000 (WGS)





• **Druskelė (Little Salt)** source is a piezometric one, its water is colorless, clear and salty in taste, the temperature reaches about +7.5 °C, the salt concentration is two g/l, and about one liter of water springs out from underground every second. It is drinkable and reminds of the taste of Birštonas mineral waters. The source was named after Druskelė (Little Salt) because of the water salinity. The old locals call it Balandėlė (Little Dove) Spring.

They say that once upon a time a beautiful girl called Balandė (Dove) lived in these lands. When enemies attacked

the land, all its precious people were killed. Upon learning this, the girl wept long and bitterly, shedding salty tears. Having seen such pain, the gods turned her into a dove so that the pain is relieved by flying. And in the place where she wept, a salty spring welled up which people called Balandėlė (Little Dove) Spring.

People became interested in this and nearby springs back in 1787.

In 1985, Druskelė (Little Salt) Mineral Source was declared a natural monument.

Balkasodžio k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.271943, 23.998651 (WGS)



• **Norūnai forest fir-tree (the highest fir-tree in Lithuania).** The height of the tree is 44.3 m, the trunk circumference is 2.05 m. Although its height is impressive, it is little different from that of adjacent firs. The tree has reached its natural maturity. It has one trunk, but grows in a group of three trees.

In 1997, it was declared a natural monument.

The highest Lithuanian fir-tree grows in Miroslavas eldership, near Balkasodis village, in

Dzirniškės Forest District's plot 8, in Norūnai Forest of Balkasodis State Botanical Reserve.

Balkasodžio k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.281876, 23.986978 (WGS)

• **The Old Jewish Cemetery of Miroslavas.** Before the World War II, many of the town's population were Jewish. Most of them were engaged in trading. The Jewish community of Miroslavas had its own cemetery near the town. However, the twists and turns of history have led many Miroslavas' Jews to be shot dead during the war and found the eternal rest in Alytus' Vidzgirio forest.

Today, the cemetery contains various forms of stone, granite, concrete tombstones with engraved Hebrew inscriptions (approximately 70 tombstones have survived in the area). A slab of black polished granite with the star of David engraved at the top, and Hebrew and Lithuanian inscriptions below: *PASSER-BY, PLEASE PAY RESPECT TO THE REMAINS OF MIROSLAVAS JEWS BURIED HERE* is located at the entrance, placed a rectangular concrete base. Real Heritage The cemetery is listed on the Register of Immovable Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Lithuania.

Gudiniškių k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.

GPS: 54.327000, 23.906000 (WGS)

After the end of World War II, Miroslavas was hit both by deportations to Siberia and the partisan movement. To commemorate these events, **a monument** was erected in Peršėkininkai **in memoriam** to victims of the **Stalinist repressions** of this village (GPS: 54.384672, 23.755999 (WGS), author V. Krušna). **Two adjacent monuments** were erected in Miroslavas, on A. Žmuidzinavičiaus St., between houses No. 4 and 6: one to honor the **partisans of Dainava County**, and the other to **honor the memory of dead partisans** (GPS: 54.333623, 23.899592 (WGS)).





- **The monument (the roof pole) to the book-smuggler Kazimieras Stasiukynas** (authored by V. Krušna) was built in his native Peršėkininkai. Peršėkininkų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r.
GPS: 54.370486, 23.760888 (WGS)

INTERNET SERVICES

Alytus District Municipality's Public Library, Miroslavas Branch, Vienuolyno g. 16, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 66 273. Open hours: II–VI 9.30–18.00

Alytus District Municipality's Public Library Kumečiai Branch, Dainavos g. 32, Kumečių k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 64 631. Open hours: II–VI 9.30–18.00

Alytus District Municipality's Public Library Parėčėnai Branch, Sodybų g. 66, Parėčėnų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 64 725. Open hours: II–VI 12.00–16.00

Alytus District Municipality's Public Library Vankiškieiai Branch, Saulės g. 79A, Vankiškių k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 63 287. Open hours: II–VI 11.00–17.30
On the last monthly business day libraries are closed (stock-taking day).

ACCOMMODATION

- **Rural tourism homestead Atesys**
Ežero g. 15, Atesninkų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r., phone: +370 616 46 956, +370 611 54 200, www.atesys.lt
GPS: 54.365391, 23.724857 (WGS)
- **Rural tourism homestead Vila Adrija**
Nemuno g. 12, Tolkūnų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r., phone: +370 608 60 770
GPS: 54.306372, 23.961256 (WGS)

- **Overnight accommodation in Miroslavas**
Dainavos g. 7, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 600 28 262
GPS: 54.332383, 23.901314 (WGS)
- **Overnight accommodation of Miroslavas Holy Trinity Parish**
Vienuolyno g. 2A, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 66 399, +370 687 56 093
www.miroslavoparapija.lt
GPS: 54.331679, 23.895365 (WGS)
- **Homestead Liepų krantas**
Ežero g. 2, Seimeniškių k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r., phone: +370 678 45 166
GPS: 54.320199, 23.877648 (WGS)

CATERING

- **Tavern Gintaro užėiga** (delivery and take away of big, traditional oven-baked potato pancakes of Dzūkija, tasting in-house upon appointment)
Vilties g. 7, Tolkūnų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r., phone: +370 615 73 006
GPS: 54.325435, 23.925207 (WGS)
- **Café Riba** (KK 132 Alytus-Lazdijai, 16 km from Alytus)
Paplentės g. 158A, Mankūnų k., Miroslavo sen., Alytaus r., phone: +370 677 77 017. Open hours: I–VII 10.00–22.00
GPS: 54.287176, 23.889965 (WGS)

INFORMATION

Miroslavas Eldership, Dainavos g. 7, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 66 468, +370 656 22 904

Alytus District Municipality's Culture Centre, Miroslavas Department, Dainavos g. 7, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 608 91 780

Miroslavas School (gymnasium), Vienuolyno g. 16, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 29 331, www.miroslavas.alytus.lm.lt

Miroslavas Post Office, Dainavos g. 7, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 700 55 400

Miroslavas Outpatient Clinic, Pharmacy, Vilties g. 3, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 66 394

Miroslavas Fire Brigade, A. Žmuidzinavičiaus g. 8, Miroslavas, Alytaus r., phone: +370 315 66 331