



# PIVAŠIŪNAI

A PLACE CONSOLIDATING PILGRIMS

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archives of the Crafts Centre of Pivašiūnai and archives  
of the Administration of Alytus District Municipality.



## Alytus Tourism Information Centre

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ALYTUS DISTRICT

## PIVAŠIŪNAI – a place consolidating pilgrims

Pivašiūnai is situated in a picturesque hilly location, close to a large Pivašiūnai–Gineitiškės forest and Lake Ilgis.

There are two opinions regarding the origin of the name of Pivašiūnai. The first opinion holds that the name of Pivašiūnai originates from the name of the river *Pievesa*. The legend about this small river has it that long ago the river was swift and deep. During the times of fights with Teutonic Knights, Lithuanian soldiers and commanders would stop here for some rest and in order to water their horses – and they would look for more shallow places to cross the river. The swift torrent could even carry away a horseman with armour and the horse. Only the bravest ones were able to overcome this obstacle.

While others say that the name of Pivašiūnai originates from a personal name – the Polish name *Piwosz* (Lithuanian: Pivašius). Such was the answer in 1921 to a teacher of a primary school of Pivašiūnai from linguist Kazimieras Būga, when the teacher asked whether it was possible to derive the name of Pivašiūnai from the words “pieva” (a meadow) and “šienas” (hay).

In the written sources, Pivašiūnai has been mentioned since the 17th century, however, various signs (for instance, barrows located close to Pivašiūnai) show that people lived here much earlier than that. In 1630, a wooden church was built next to the settlement, and the supporter of the church Jonas Klockis, before his death, left the church and the surrounding lands by his will to the Benedictine monastery of Trakai. The monks were the owners here for almost two centuries: they expanded the town and had three smitheries and a brick-works, they also set up a few taverns.

This region has become most of all famous because of a painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary brought by J. Klockis from abroad. The painting did not suffer during the wars and fires, and in the 17th century, the church authorities recognised it as miraculous. It is said that, by its miraculous power and age, the painting equals that of the Gate of Dawn. Therefore, it is not surprising that Pivašiūnai is called Šiluva of southern Lithuania – and the Assumption feast here attracts thousands of pilgrims from the entire Lithuania and abroad. This painting is also included into the coat of arms of Pivašiūnai approved by the President’s decree dated 24 May 2006. On the blue background of the coat of arms, symbolising the sky and spiritual peace, there is a golden painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary with Child of Pivašiūnai on a recumbent silver crescent with its points upward, while at the top the painting is surrounded with 12 smaller golden and 12 larger silver hexagonal stars, and at the foot there are three black heraldic mountains. They symbolise the hills of the church, the school and the mound.

In 1905, a primary school was opened in the town with two teachers working there. During the two world wars, Pivašiūnai had a post office, a police office, a forestry office, a mill, a sawmill, later on also a coffee-shop and shop in one, a dairy, there was even a small bank here.

Today Pivašiūnai is the centre of the neighbourhood. It willingly accepts pilgrims and curious travellers. Here, you can find not only recreation and spiritual peace, but also spend your time resourcefully and pleasantly at the Crafts Centre of Pivašiūnai or in the recreation zone next to Lake Ilgis.

On the neighbourhood’s territory, a geo-morphological reserve of Pivašiūnai was established.



## PLACES OF INTEREST

**The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.** The church was built in 1825 and is wooden. This church is the most famous one in the region of Alytus and the only church of the Classicism style in Lithuania which has preserved the special structure of the Latin cross characterised by the dynamics of longitudinal volumes and the crosspiece. Next to the church, there is a wooden belfry. In 1929, in a children's newspaper "Žiburėlis", a pupil from Pivašiūnai wrote: "The church of Pivašiūnai has been built in a very beautiful place, on a high mountain (171 metres), which is covered with wide pine-trees, birches, maples and other trees as well as full of crosses." Inside the church, you will find a walk-around altar, which is rare in Lithuania. On the altar, there is a miraculous painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1988, cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius crowned the Virgin with Child of Pivašiūnai with crowns gifted by Pope John Paul II and granted her the title of the Comfort of the Sorrowful. An impressive part of the interior – 15 wooden sculptures painted in white and decorated with gold. Pivašiūnai has long been famous for its Assumption feast that takes place for the whole week. On those days, this place attracts thousands of pilgrims from all over Lithuania and abroad. The church of Pivašiūnai is one of the objects of the pilgrim road of John Paul II in Lithuania ([www.pilgrimukelias.lt](http://www.pilgrimukelias.lt)). In the cemetery next to the church, there are quite a number of valuable ancient tombs.

The complex of buildings of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (a church, the fence of the cemetery with a gate, a chapel, an old presbytery, its two barns, an ice-house and a farm building as well as a monumental cross) has been included into the Register of Immovable Cultural Assets.

Next to the church's belfry, there is **a sculpture of the Blessed Virgin Mary with infant Jesus** created by artist Leokadija Belvertaitė in 1945–1948.

On the slope, close to the staircase leading to the church of Pivašiūnai, there are **Stations of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary** (author Algirdas Judickas, 1988).

**A chapel-mausoleum of the Odinių (Odinčių) family.** Not far from the church, on the other side of the street, in the old cemetery which has already been built with houses now, on the site of the old church, this chapel-mausoleum was constructed in the middle of the 19th century.



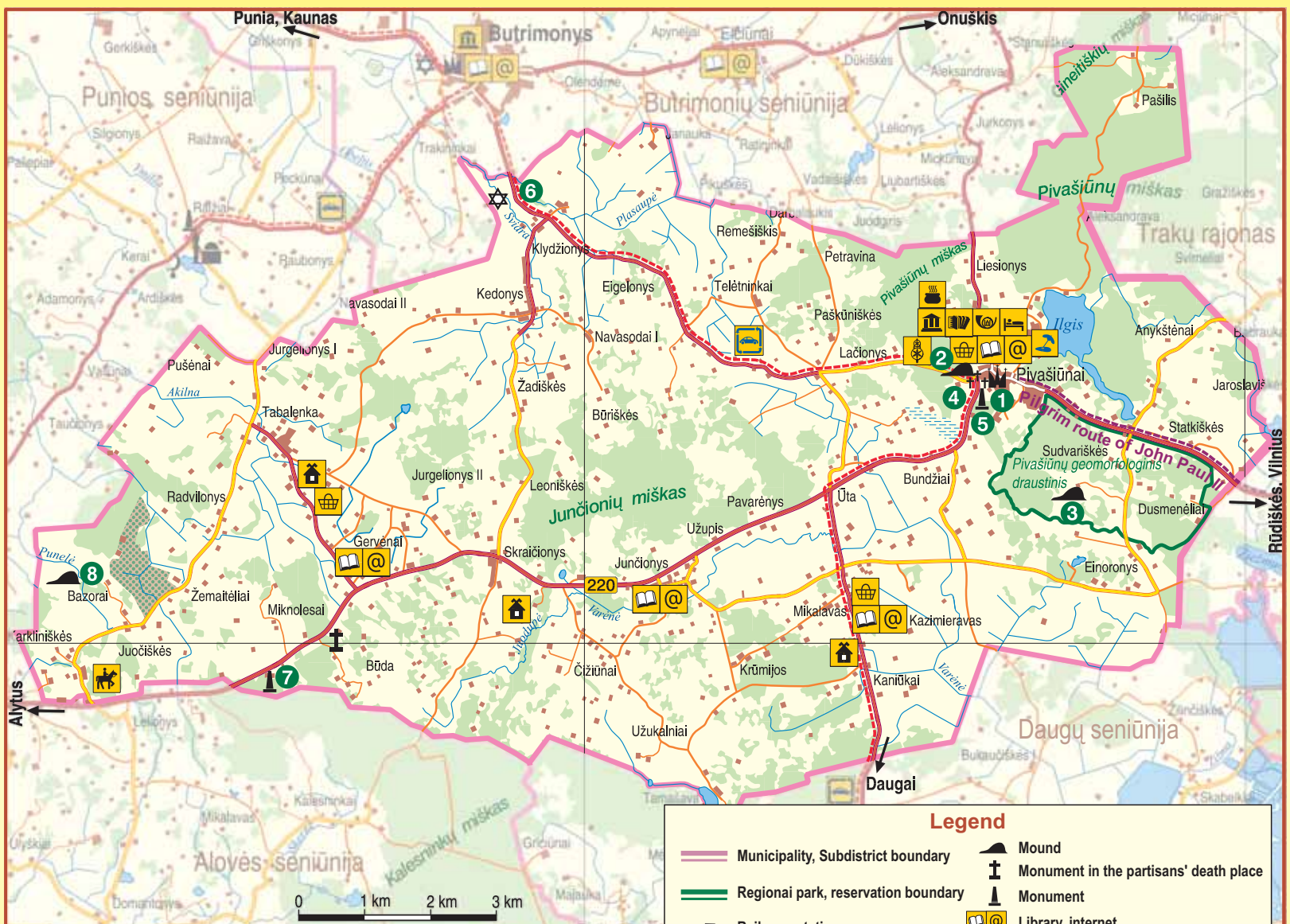
The town is embellished with a monument opened in 2006 during the Assumption feast in memory of **priest Alfonsas Petruelis, a member of the Council of Lithuania and a signatory to the Act of Independence of 16 February 1918**, who worked as a parish priest in the church of Pivašiūnai in 1911–1927.

**The Pivašiūnai mound's** (GPS N 54° 27' 38.9" E 24° 22' 09.2") legend has it that in the old days there was a temple on this mound, and at that time the mound was not so high. People would come here to pray and would bring a hat full of land, that is how they made this mound. The legend further has it that the mound of Pivašiūnai belonged to a son of the duke of Pilėnai, Margis. Therefore, the brave duke is said to have been buried on the mound. The mound dates back to the 1st millennium. An excellent panorama of the mound opens up from the churchyard.

**Bazorai mound** (GPS N 54° 26' 07.7" E 24° 09' 04.3") is on a separate hill, on the left bank of Punelė, in Bazorai village. The top field is oval and oblong in form, while the slopes are of average steepness. For a long time, the mound has been ravaged: the top field has been ploughed, and gravel has been excavated on the southern slope. At the foot of the mound, there was a settlement. East of the mound, there is a necropolis, and old people used to tell that some giants were buried there, therefore, people would not plough the land there.

The mound dates back to the 1st millennium. It is hard to find.





### Places to visit

- 1 St. Mary's Accepting to the Heaven Church in Pivašiūnai (it was built in 1825) and painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary famous for its miraculous power, which Cardinal Sładkevičius crowned in 1988 with the crowns donated by Pope John Paul II and granted the title of the Comfort of the Sorrowful. The old parsonage and chapel.
- 2 Pivašiūnai Mound
- 3 Einoronys Mound
- 4 Old Cemetery in Pivašiūnai
- 5 A monument dedicated to Priest Alfonsas Petrušis, a member of the Lithuanian Council, Signatory the Act of Independence of 16 February 1918, who was working as a dean in the Pivašiūnai Church from 1911 to 1927.
- 6 Place of the Jewish massacre in Klydžionys village
- 7 Monument in Partisan Parish place
- 8 Bazorai Mound

### Legend

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Municipality, Subdistrict boundary  | Mound                                  |
| Regional park, reservation boundary | Monument in the partisans' death place |
| Railway, station                    | Monument                               |
| Hard surface road, moton/vay number | Library, internet                      |
| Gravel road                         | Rooms for rent                         |
| Country, forest road                | Culture centre                         |
| Forest                              | Architectural cultural heritage object |
| Gardens                             | Crafts Centre                          |
| Lake                                | Countryside tourism                    |
| Swamp                               | Educational activities                 |
| River, stream, ditch                | Riding                                 |
| Settlement                          | Shop                                   |
| Catholic church                     | Post office                            |
|                                     | Recreation area                        |
|                                     | Autotourism route                      |



**Einoronys mound** (GPS N 54° 26' 39.5" E 24° 23' 27.5"), which is also called the Castle Mountain, has been installed on the hill dominating the surroundings of Einoronys village. The top field is oval and oblong in form, while the slopes are quite steep, about 20 metres high. The mound has

been eroded by ploughing and by the triangulation tower which used to stand there on the northern part of the top field. In 2001, a small area of the field was explored. Lined ceramics and flint articles have been found. The findings date back to the Stone Age and the Bronze Age.

The mound dates back to the 1st millennium before Christ – the beginning of the 1st millennium. It is hard to find.

#### **Lake Ilgis (Long) with the hills of Skrynja (Chest) and Muzika (Music).**

It is told that very long ago there was a plain here – meadows with a few small islands and hills. On one of the hills, there was a pagan altar with a sacred fire, while the altar was surrounded by huge oak forests. When Christian monks came to this region and, having built a church on one of the hills, started despising pagans, pagan priests cursed them saying: "Let there be a lake here, as long as a meadow-covered plain." Then suddenly, the land trembled and everything started sinking, including the church with a bell which rang while it sank. The plain was flooded with water – in this way, Lake Ilgis appeared. Those, who did not have enough time to escape, sank together with the land. A young woman Vaičiukutė remained alive, and she was supposed to marry hero Gulbinas, however, her dowry was lost in the waves. She cried ruefully on the bank of the lake, until the waves brought her dowry chest back, while she heard her mother's voice from the big island: "Take your dowry and stop sobbing." The woman took the dowry, but left the chest in the lake close to the hill, which was named Skrynja. Hero Gulbinas and his beloved celebrated their wedding on the hill located on the opposite bank of the lake. The banquet lasted one or two weeks, while musicians replaced one another and played all the time. One of them even started living here and would play on the top of the hill until midnight, entertaining the castle's defenders



and mourning the perished. This is how that hill was called Muzika Hill. Today, the feast of Assumption is celebrated every year on those hills.

Next to Lake Ilgis, there is a recreation zone with a beach, a sports field with basketball boards of regulated height, lighting, installed paths, a bridge to the lake, dressing cabins and arbours.

**The cross marking the place of the old cemetery of Junčionys village** stands on the territory of this village, not far from the main road. The territory of the former cemetery has been included into the Register of Immovable Cultural Assets.



#### **The place of fight and death of Lithuanian partisans**

– Žemaitėliai Village, Pivašiūnai Neighbourhood, Alytus District. In this place, in a forest bunker, following the betrayal by MGB agents (Kostas Kubilinskas and Algirdas Skinkis), four partisans of Kazimieraitis detachment of Dainava county perished in a fight with riflemen's regiment No 34 of the internal army of MGB on 7 March 1949. On the memorial plaque, it is written: V. Voveris-Žaibas – detachment commander, P. Šilanskas-Labutis – group commander, V. Kazlauskas-Vanagas – staff commander and J. Kazlauskas-Šermukšnis – platoon commander.



#### **Jewish genocide cemetery of Klydžionys village.**

In 1941, in Klydžionys village, people of Jewish nationality were killed in two places. They were buried in mass burial places 600 metres apart. In one of the burial places, a monument has been erected. One cemetery is located in Pivašiūnai neighbourhood, while the other – in Butrimonys neighbourhood.



In **Sudvariškės village**, you can visit and see: a wooden cross with the artistic value of Dzūkija ethnographic region, the first old cemetery called Prancūzkapis (The French Cemetery) (you can still hear that Napoleon's soldiers were buried here, however, few believe that), the second old cemetery called Kapinėlés and Sudvariškės barrows. All those objects have been included into the Register of Immovable Cultural Assets. They are hard to find.





## PIVAŠIŪNAI CRAFTS CENTRE

As soon as you enter the Crafts Centre – each guest is greeted with the aroma of fresh potato loaves of Dzūkija or rye bread. Careful hostesses of the Centre will not let any guest to leave hungry and without showing them the secrets of Dzūkija's cooking or old crafts. In a souvenir shop, even the most capricious guest will find a hand-made article they like.

In the Crafts Centre of Pivašiūnai, you can order educational sessions of culinary heritage. Here, you will be taught to bake home-made rye bread. A hostess will greet you with pleasure and will ask you to sit down at the table, and she will tell you about sowing, flailing and milling of rye as well as leavening and mixing of bread. You will hear about the old customs of bread baking and family traditions. Everyone will be given an opportunity to form and bake their own loaf of bread in an oven. Those willing to taste Dzūkija's dishes will be offered to bake special buckwheat cakes, other cakes, Christmas Eve biscuits or potato loaves. You will be offered to churn butter and to taste it right away.

Those fond of old crafts will not be at a disadvantage, either. They will be able to learn wood carving, pot throwing, boot felting, twig weaving, including weaving Dzūkija's baskets, candle dipping as well as knitting woollen socks and gloves.

The Centre also organises educational sessions related to calendar celebrations ("Father Christmas is coming", "Palms are a symbol of spring", "Painting Easter eggs", "Making Shrove Tuesday masks").



Opening hours:  
 Tuesday – Thursday 9:00 – 18:00,  
 Friday, Saturday 9:00 – 15:00.  
 Trakų str. 33, Pivašiūnai, Alytus District,  
 phone: +370 315 90 009,  
 +370 699 94 982,  
 pivasiuuamatucentras@gmail.com

## ACCOMMODATION

- **Farmstead "Meilės Laiptai"**, Draugystės road 26, Tabalenka Village, Pivašiūnai Neighbourhood, Alytus District, phone: +370 687 72 630, <http://meileslaiptai.ucoz.com>
- **Kupinai Farmstead**, Mikalavo str. 13, Mikalavas Village, Pivašiūnai Neighbourhood, Alytus District, phone: +370 699 28 907, [www.kupinusodyba.lt](http://www.kupinusodyba.lt)
- **Viktorija's Farmstead**, Trakų road 35, Skraičionys Village, Pivašiūnai Neighbourhood, Alytus District, phone: +370 618 54 228, +370 698 34 659, [www.viktorijossodyba.lt](http://www.viktorijossodyba.lt)

## ENTERTAINMENT

- **Rumina's Horses** (riding services), Juočiškės Village, Pivašiūnai Neighbourhood, Alytus District, phone: +370 684 41512

## INTERNET SERVICES

- **Pivašiūnai Branch of the Public Library of Alytus District Municipality**  
 Mokyklos str. 3, Pivašiūnai, Alytus District, phone: +370 315 29 009.  
 Opening hours: II – VI 9:30–18:00
- **Junčionys Branch of the Public Library of Alytus District Municipality**  
 Dvaro str. 9, Junčionys Village, Pivašiūnai Neighbourhood, Alytus District, phone: +370 315 29 752.  
 Opening hours: II – VI 11:00–17:30
- **Mikalavas Branch of the Public Library of Alytus District Municipality**  
 Mikalavo road 26, Mikalavas Village, Pivašiūnai Neighbourhood, Alytus District, phone: +370 315 58 962.  
 Opening hours: II – VI 11:00–17:30

## INFORMATION

- **Pivašiūnai Neighbourhood**, Trakų str. 51, Pivašiūnai, Alytus District, phone: +370 315 29 368, +370 686 87 205
- **Presbytery of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Pivašiūnai**, Pivašiūnai, Alytus District, phone: +370 699 12 696, [www.pivasiuunai.lt](http://www.pivasiuunai.lt)
- **Pivašiūnai Pilgrims' Centre**, Trakų str. 29, Pivašiūnai, Alytus District, phone: +370 699 12 696
- **Pivašiūnai Gymnasium**, Mokyklos str. 3, Pivašiūnai, Alytus District, phone: +370 315 29 331, [www.pivasiuunai.alytus.lm.lt](http://www.pivasiuunai.alytus.lm.lt)
- **Pivašiūnai Post Office**, Trakų str. 19, Pivašiūnai, Alytus District, phone: +370 700 55 400
- **Pivašiūnai General Practitioner's Office**, Šlaito str. 1, Pivašiūnai, Alytus district, phone: +370 315 29 338
- **Pivašiūnai Fire Brigade**, Pievesos str. 6, Pivašiūnai, Alytus District, phone: +370 315 29322