The legend

Džiugas the giant lived in impenetrable forests. When he sneezed, the trees would bow down. When he would rise from his bed of leaves, his head would be even with the tops of the highest trees. Once he went out, travelled the world three times over, and having returned, emptied out his boots – this formed a large hill. In this hill, there was a large cavern, which he called home. In the mornings, the giant would rise from the cavern and go to work uprooting trees and tossing them in front of him. Thus a city was formed. But this exact place was a favorite spot of witches, who called evil spirits to their aid, but feared the giant, for he had received a charm from the Sun itself. Whenever he would go to sleep in his cavern, the witches would dig the earth up from the town, and in the morning Džiugas would put them back, and thus it went on for a long time. Eventually, a lake sprung up from the earth, drowning the battlefield. This lake became known as Mastis, and the witches relocated to the hill which was formed from the dug up earth – this hill became known as Šatrija. Džiugas built Telšiai by the beautiful lake, and one day, when he was resting in his cavern, the hole closed up for all eternity. Thus the hill became the giant's grave.

Telšiai today

Telšiai, the capital of Žematija (Samogitia), is located in northwestern Lithuania and is the center of the region and its district, which attracts visitors with its nature, history, monuments, architecture and culture. Here you will find many mounds where once stood great castles, ancient cemeteries, mythological and sacred stones, and other fascinating objects of nature. Telšiai is not only the capital of Smogitia, but also the center of religion, culture and education. The city was built on seven hills, nestled in by the beautiful Mastis Lake, and boasts one of the seven protected Lithuanian heritage old towns, as well as the Samogitians' museum "Alka". Today the town occupies a territory of 1637ha and is home to 33 thousand inhabitants.

Although Telšiai is the smallest district in size in Lithuania, the region is a leader in exporting Lithuanian goods – it's even called the land of dairymen and oilmen. A few leading Lithuanian business companies like "Žemaitijos pienas", "Tichė", and "Vėtrūna" are established there. Telšiai also has 3 gymnasium schools, 6 secondary schools, 6 schools of career and art education, and 4 institutions of higher education.

Historically, the Samogitian region differed from the rest of Lithuania in traditions, characteristic features and especially in their local tongue. Some Lithuanians can`t even understand what the people of Samogitia say when they speak in their dialect.

Telšiai city is blessed by its region in marvelous places – the castle mounds, estates, and the beauty of the regional parks around it create the unique oneness of the area. It is definitely worth a visit!

Main facts:

Telšiai was first mentioned in written sources around 1450.

In the 15th century, Telšiai already had a state-owned manor. Along with the parish around it, the manor was governed by Samogitian elders. Telšiai was at the center of an uprising of Samogitian peasants.

At the end of the 17th century Telšiai became the center of Samogitian culture and politics.

During the November Uprising of 1831, Telšiai became a sanctuary for Polish–Lithuanian partisans fighting the Russians. A revolutionary government of insurrectionists was formed and schools for the preparation of military officers and noncommissioned officers were opened.

During the Uprising of 1863, Telšiai was one of the main centers of revolt in Samogitia since insurrectionist forces massed there.

At the end of the 19th century Telšiai started to grow. A team of firemen formed, and a pharmacy and a theater were opened.

1908 The very first Lithuanian concert–performance was organized.

1918 The city survived two Polish revolutions, was conquered by the Germans in World War I, and occupied by the Red Army for a short time.

From 1918 to 1940, during the years of Lithuanian independence, Telšiai grew rapidly. Several girls' and boys' high schools, a crafts school and a teachers' seminary were established. The Alka museum was built, and several cultural societies began to operate.

1935 Telšiai became the administrative center of the country.

1941 June 24-25 during the first Soviet occupation, as a result of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, Telšiai became infamous for the nearby Rainiai massacre, a mass murder of 76 Lithuanian political prisoners, perpetrated by the Red Army.

Nowadays Telšiai is the 12th largest city in Lithuania. It is the center of Telšiai County and the Telšiai district municipality. The city has four gymnasium schools, four secondary schools, and five primary schools. Departments of the Vilnius Academy of Art, the College of Social Sciences and the College of Samogitia are also established in Telšiai.

On 22 January 2013 The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania officially announced that Telšiai will be named the Lithuanian Capital of Culture in 2016.