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Vilnius to turn its Unesco-listed historic centre into a vast open-air cafe



Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, has announced plans to turn the city's historic centre, a [world heritage site inscribed by UNESCO](#), into a vast open-air cafe, by giving over much of its public space to hard-hit bar and restaurant owners so they can put their tables outdoors and still observe physical distancing rules.

Physical distancing rules and safety measures implemented by the health ministry have posed a problem for many restaurateurs in Vilnius old town, Senamiestis, a Unesco-listed world heritage site whose narrow streets make it almost impossible to place more than a couple of tables outside – prompting the mayor's offer.

“Plazas, squares, streets – nearby cafes will be allowed to set up outdoor tables free of charge this season and thus conduct their activities during quarantine,” said Remigijus Šimašius. Public safety remained the city's top priority, the mayor said, but the measure should help cafes to “open up, work, retain jobs and keep Vilnius alive”.

Eighteen of the city's public spaces, including its central Cathedral Square, have been opened up for outdoor cafes and restaurants, city hall said, and more are expected to be added as the summer progresses. The move has been welcomed by owners, with more than 160 applying to take up the offer.

[Read full report in [The Guardian](#)]

Image: Empty streets in Senamiestis, the old town of Vilnius. Lithuania has said cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating can reopen this week. Photograph: Xinhua/Rex/Shutterstock

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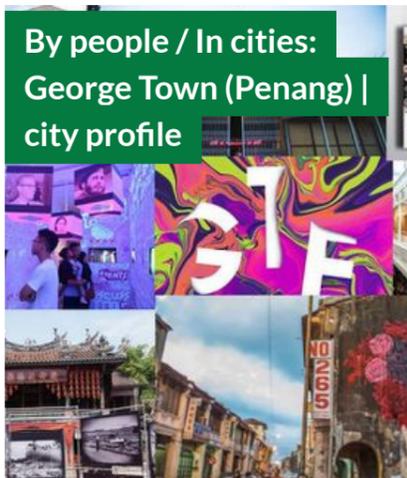
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