= Palanga Amber Museum =

The Palanga Amber Museum (Lithuanian : Palangos gintaro muziejus) , near the Baltic Sea in Palanga , Lithuania , is a branch of the Lithuanian Art Museum . It is housed in the restored 19th @-@ century Ti?kevi?iai Palace and is surrounded by the Palanga Botanical Garden . The museum 's collection of amber comprises about 28 @,@ 000 pieces , of which about 15 @,@ 000 contain inclusions of insects , spiders , or plants . About 4 @,@ 500 pieces of amber are exhibited ; many of these are items of artwork and jewelry .

= = History and background = =

The Baltic Sea coast has been a source of Eurasian amber trade since prehistoric times (see Amber Road) . Neolithic artifacts made of amber were discovered in nearby Juodkrant? in the 19th century - these artifacts unfortunately disappeared during the 20th century . Lithuanian mythology , folklore , and art have long associations with amber ; the legend of J?rat? and Kastytis imagines an undersea palace of amber under the Baltic , which was shattered by Perk?nas , the god of thunder . Its fragments were said to be the source of the amber that still washes up on the beaches nearby .
Amber workshops appeared in Palanga during the 17th century ; guilds devoted to the material functioned in Brügge , Lübeck , Danzig , and Königsberg . By the end of the 18th century Palanga was the center of the Russian Empire 's amber industry . In the years preceding World War I about 2 @,@ 000 kilograms of raw amber were processed in Palanga annually .
In 1897 Feliks Tyszkiewicz , a member of an old Ruthenian / Lithuanian noble family that had long had a presence in Palanga , built the Neo @-@ Renaissance @-@ style palace that now houses the museum . Designed by the German architect Franz Heinrich Schwechten , it fell into disrepair after the disruptions of World War I and World War II . The palace was restored in 1957 according to plans by the architect Alfredas Brusokas . It opened as an amber museum in 1963 as a branch of the Lithuanian Museum of Fine Arts , with a small collection of about 480 pieces ; it received its millionth visitor on August 13 , 1970 . The palace was incorporated into the Lithuanian Art Museum during the 1990s , and continues to expand .

= = Exhibits = =

The exhibition areas open to the public include 15 rooms covering about 750 square meters ; a chapel connected to the palace houses temporary exhibitions . The museum is thematically divided into the scientific and cultural / artistic aspects of amber .
The first floor is dedicated to displays that illustrate the formation and composition of amber . Amber in the area arose from deltaic deposits of rivers flowing from Fennoscandia in the Eocene Period , about 40 to 45 million years ago . The processes via which resin is changed into amber by microorganisms , oxidation , and polymerization are illustrated . Samples of microdrops and microicicles (i.e. " amber within amber ") are among the displayed items . The museum holds Europe 's third largest amber specimen , the " Sun Stone " , of size 210x190x150 mm and weighing 3 @,@ 526 grams , which has been stolen twice . Amber from other areas of the world is also part of the collection .
The cultural and artistic exhibits include a 15th @-@ century ring , a 16th @-@ century cross , and amber jewelry from the past four centuries , as well as a number of rosaries , cigarette holders , and decorative boxes . The missing amber artifacts that were dated to the Neolithic era have been reconstructed by archeologists . Selections of modern amber work are part of the collection , including pieces by the Lithuanian artists Horstas Taleikis , Dionyzas Varkalis , Jonas Urbonas , and others .

= = Botanical garden = =

The gardens surrounding the museum cover about 100 hectares . They were designed by the

French landscape architect and botanist Édouard André (1840 ? 1911) and his son Rene Eduard Andre , assisted by the Belgian gardener Buyssen de Coulon . Local historians have estimated that they originally contained about 500 varieties of trees and shrubs , some brought from gardens in Berlin . About 250 imported and 370 native plant species are now represented at the park ; 24 of these are included in Lithuania 's 1992 list of endangered species . Pine and fir trees adapted to the sandy soil predominate .

 The park features a rose garden , greenhouse , rotunda , a sculpture of Egl? , the Queen of Serpents , a Holocaust memorial , ponds , and gazebos ; during the summer it hosts concerts and festivals . It contains an ancient forested sand dune , known as Birut? 's Hill (Lithuanian : Birut?s kalnas) , topped with a chapel dedicated to Saint George that was built in 1869 . According to legend , this dune is the place where Grand Duke of Lithuania K?stutis met his wife Birut? , a pagan priestess , and where she is supposed to have been interred in 1382 ; it has been a pilgrimage site ever since .