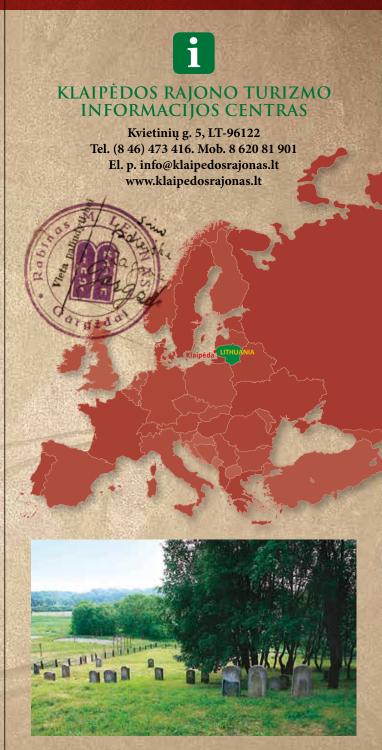was built close to the bus station of Gargždai. It is a monument with the label in both Lithuanian and Jewish languages: "In 1941, in this place hundreds of Jewish people from Gargždai and its region were killed by Nazis".
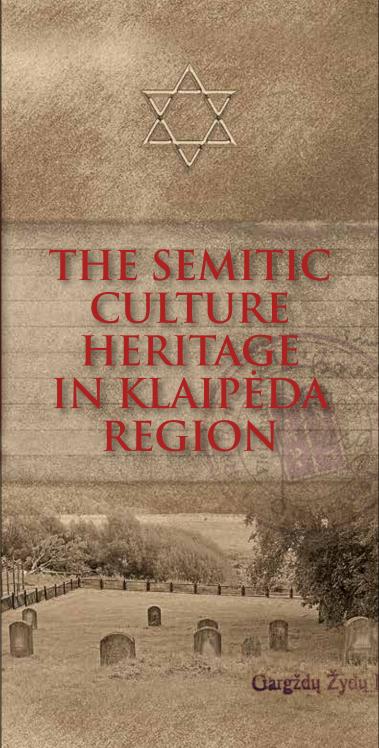
Around 300 Jewish women and children were fusilladed in Vėžaitynė forest (area of Vėžaičiai). In memoriam of this tragedy monuments were built in both I-st and II-nd massacre places. Those monuments have white marble slabs with labels in both Lithuanian and Jewish languages: „Dear passerby, remember the victims of 1941, innocent children, mothers and elders, who were exterminated by Nazis executioners, for being Jewish." One more monument in memoriam to Jews, who were shot to death, was built by Veivirža streamlet, in Trepkalnis village (area of Veiviržėnai). In Veiviržėnai, in the beautiful Veivirža stream valley there is an Old Jewish Cemetery, which indicates that Jewish people used to live in this town as well.
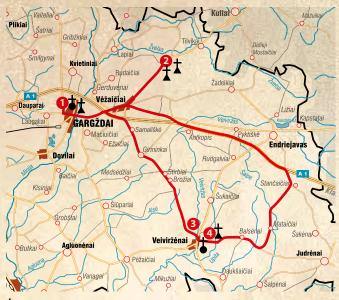
Gargždų Žydų Liaudies Bankas

Klaipėda LITHUANIA

THE SEMITIC CULTURE HERITAGE IN KLAIPĖDA REGION

Gargždų Žydų

Localities in the rout: Gargždai – the culture center of Vėžaičiai – Vėžaitynė forest – Trepkalniai – Veiviržėnai.
The length of the rout: around 37 km.
The duration of the trip on this rout: around 4 hours.

Sightseeing objects of the route: the place of Jewish massacre and their burial ground in Gargždai, the Old Jewish Cemetery in Gargždai, the culture center of Vėžaičiai, the I-st place of Jewish massacre in Vėžaitynė, the II-nd place of Jewish massacre in Vėžaitynė, the place of Jewish massacre and their burial ground in Trepkalnis village, the Old Jewish Cemetery in Veiviržėni.

✝ The old Jewish cemetery
✝ The place of Jewish massacre and burial ground

The description of the rout: The Jewish population grew rapidly on Samogitian border towns in the second half of the 17 th century- early 18th century. It was a result of devastated pestilence, when the local residents quantity decreased significantly and usable space for Jews opened up to start a business. In November 21, 1669, the Lithuanian Grand Duke Mykolas Visnioveckis gave a new privilege to the Samogitian Jews, giving them the opportunity to trade freely in the territory of Samogitia, engage in crafts, build synagogues, establish cemeteries. From that time until the World War II for about 50 percent of the population of the Samogitian border town consisted of the Jews. They were the most active participants in town daily trade, inns, transportation and customs activities.

The Jews settled in Gargždai, as in other areas, around the middle of the 17 th century. They were mostly engaged in trade here. It is known that in the interwar period, when approx.. 2.000 people lived in the town, for about 60 percent of the total Gargždai population consisted of the Jews. According to historian Janina Valančiūtė, most of Jews in Gargždai until the end of the 19th century lived in the current J. Basanavičius Street, and in the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century their lands reached The Market Square and Klaipeda Street. In 1638

the King of the Grand Dutchy of Lithuania Vladislavas IV gave legal permission to the city Jews to have the Jewish cemetery. Therefore, in the middle of the 17th century Jewish cemetery was established in the southeast part of the city, close to the right bank of river Minija. Gargždai Jewish community bank, Jewish school, football team "Makabi" as well as the wooden Jewish synagogue, which stood in the west side of the Market Square, were mentioned in the written sources in the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The whole Jewish housing estate with the Rabbi house was established around this synagogue. In 1923 the Government of the Republic of Lithuania gave permission to Jewish community to build a new synagogue of stones. Therefore, in 1927-1928 new house of prayer was built next to the old synagogue.

Jewish population of the town further increased after 1939, when Germany joined the Klaipeda region, the wall was removed and a large part of the Jews, living in Klaipeda region, fled from Adolf Hitler's policy and has moved to Gargždai. As soon as the World War II began, the Germans launched an aggressive policy in Europe. This affected Gargždai as well. During the Second World War the German occupiers exterminated the majority of Jewish population. The memorial for the victims