

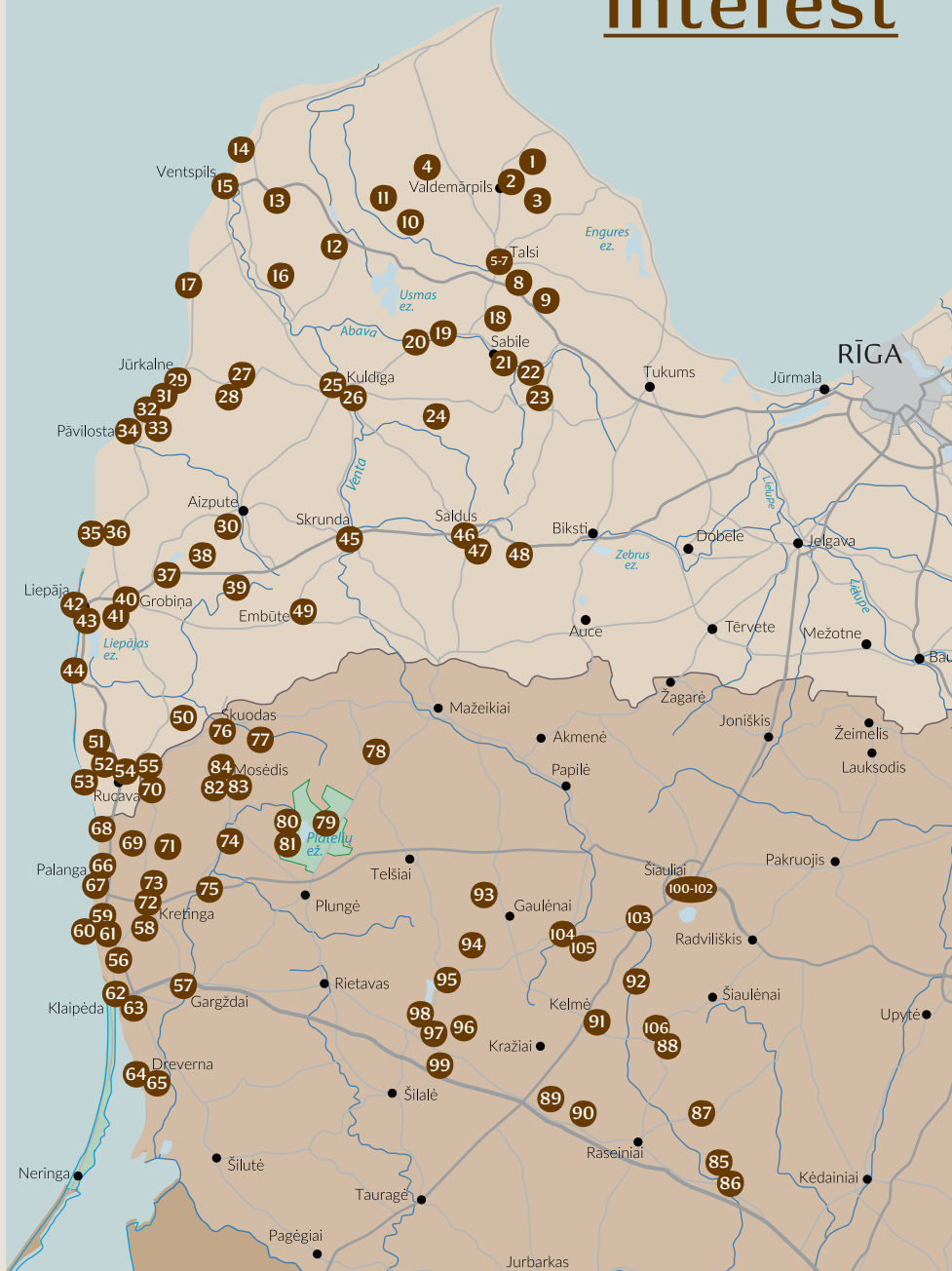


CURONIANS SAMOGITIANS

Tourism guide



Objects of interest



PICTOGRAMS

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
|  Museums |  Walking |  Drinking water |
|  Information centres |  Cycling |  Catering |
|  Educational programmes |  Nordic-hiking |  Guest house/hotel |
|  Crafts |  Parking lot |  Table/resting area |
|  Active leisure, entertainment |  WC |  Campfire site |
|  Historical sites |  Visitors centre |  Watching tower |
|  Nature, landscape |  Take out what you bring in |  Water activities |
|  Recipe |  Waste bins |  Swimming allowed |
|  Souvenirs |  Pets allowed |  Fishing allowed |
|  Tasty treats |  Accessible with baby-strollers |  Tenting area |
|  Special adventures |  Accessible to wheelchair users |  Horse riding |
|  Web |  Audio recorded information | |
|  Location |  Tactile information/tactile objects/information in Braille | |
|  GPS | |  Phone |
|  Distance | |  Entrance fee |
|  Trail type | | |
|  Marking | | |
|  Trail surface | | |

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

KURZEME

TALSI AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

1. Bilavu devil's boat – ancient graves
2. Idol linden tree in Valdemārpils
3. Great rock of Krauja
4. Liepniekvalka caves
5. Lake Vilkmuiža trail
6. Talsi promenade and hillfort
7. Talsi County Museum
8. Mundīgu sacrificial oak tree
9. Mežītes hillfort

VENTSPILS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

10. Vasenieku swamp trail
11. Devil's footprint rock of Akmeņkalni
12. "Valleys of Ugāle" nature trail
13. Devil's bench of Griži
14. Steep shore of Staldzene
15. Ventspils Museum
16. Lagzdiena hillfort
17. Užava brewery

SABILE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

18. Virsaiši waterfall trail
19. Path to the Chambers of Māra
20. Ancient rock graves at Renda
21. Sabile hillfort
22. Drubazas botany trail
23. Buse hillfort
24. Kalnansu swamp trail

KULDĪGA, ALSUNGA AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

25. Old Kuldīga hillfort
26. Venta waterfall

27. Žibgrava nature trail
28. Dižgabalkalns and "Spēlmaņu krogs" in Alsunga
29. "Bērziņi" bakery
30. Ancient village of Bandava
31. Steep shores

GROBIŅA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

32. Nature trail and kayaking route "Rīva River Circles"
33. Piņņi bowl rock of Ulmale
34. Tastings of smoked fish at Pāvilsta
35. Medze beach footpath
36. Great rock of Kapsēde and the Odziņu cupmarked stone
37. Durbe hillfort trail
38. Idol hill of Dižlāņi
39. "Cīruļi" branch of the Riga Zoo
40. "Curonian Viking Settlement" active tourism centre
41. Ālande River park trail
42. Liepāja Museum
43. Liepāja crafts house
44. Bernāti nature park

SALDUS, SKRUNDA, EMBŪTE AND PRIEKULE

45. Skrunda walking trail along the Venta
46. Saldus hillfort
47. "Saules lietas" pottery
48. "Kāres" beekeeping site
49. Ancient Embūte River valley

RUCAVA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

50. Dunika swamp trail
51. Sacrificial rock at Ezerskola
52. Wild horses and auroxen
53. Ecological process trail and Ķonciemss
54. "Zvanītāji" tradition house
55. Sventāja River valley trail

LITHUANIA

KLAIPĒDA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

56. Kalniškės (Gargždai) hillfort
57. Klaipėda District Tourism Information Centre
58. Eketė hillfort
59. Catching the amber
60. Therapy at Karklė
61. Dutchman's cap
62. Klaipėda Castle
63. Educational programme "Let's Learn about Balts Ornaments"
64. Degustation of viking dishes
65. Sailing on an ancient curonian ship

PALANGA, KRETINGA AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

66. Palanga Amber Museum
67. Birutes Hill
68. Holy place "Žemaičių alka"
69. Balts' mythology park
70. Complex of ancient archaeological monuments
71. Bee and forest therapy at the Kalnius hoemstaead
72. Sun dial in the Kretinga manor park
73. Kretinga Museum
74. Imbare hillfort
75. Educational field trip "In search of a curonian castle"

SKUODAS, PLUNGE AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

76. Skuodas Museum
77. Apuolė hillfort
78. Rock of Barstyciai
79. Park of energetic labyrinths and geometric figures
80. Siberija viewing tower
81. Žemaitija National Park visitor centre
82. Šilalė rock

83. Into Vaclovo rock museum
84. Curonian tribe history museum in Mosėdis

RASEINIAI, KELMĖ AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

85. Educational programme "Road of bread"
86. Betygala hillfort
87. Jonas Mačulis-Maironis birthplace
88. Viewing tower at Tytuvėnai
89. Molavenai hillfort
90. Jukainiai recreational trail
91. Educational programme about plants
92. Stone rouge cognitive path

TELŠIAI, ŠILALE AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

93. Šatrija hill
94. Sprūdė hill
95. Varniai Regional Park visitor centre
96. Medvegalis hillfort
97. Aukštagirė viewing tower
98. Paršežeris recreational trail
99. Kepaluškalnis

ŠIAULIAI AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

100. Žaliūkai windmill
101. Šiauliai Museum of History
102. "Balts road" Information Centre
103. Bubiai hillfort
104. Kurtuvėnai hillfort
105. Horse Museum
106. Kurtuvėnai Regional Park visitor centre

INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Europeans were one of the first nations in the world. As they split up, this created a cornerstone for most European nations, including **the Baltic nations**. Balts once populated the area from present-day Poland to the centre of the European part of Russia.

The Curonians and the Samogitians, along with the Lettgallians, Selonians, Semigallians, Aukštaitians, Prussians, Lamatians, Scalovians, Yotvingians, Nadruvians, Prussians and Galindians – these were all the small and ancient Baltic tribes. They arrived in present-day Latvia and Lithuania during the 3rd millennium BC, intermingling with local indigenous populations. The ancient Baltic tribes of which we are aware, including the Curonians and Samogitians, appeared around the 5th century AD.

The further development of these tribes during the 12th and 13th centuries was interrupted by the arrival of the German Crusaders, who established Livonia. Some of the Baltic tribes were assimilated (the Ancient Prussians and the Yotvingians among them), but this led to the emergence of a unified Latvian nation in present-day Latvia and a Lithuanian nation in the noble Duchy of Lithuania.

Work on **the Baltic road** began in 2013 in Šiauliai (Lithuania). In 2017, partners from Kurzeme and Zemgale regions in Latvia and the Šiauliai Tourism Information Centre in Lithuania and Lithuania's National Regional Development Agency, began work together on an international tourism route that would be known as the "Balts' road". The first guidebook was published in 2019.

As the project and the route developed further, **3 more guidebooks** are to be released in 2023 – **"The Curonians and Samogitians"**, **"The Semigallians"**, and **"The Selonians"**. This will allow travellers to sink into Balts' history and to learn about the living spaces and lifestyles of these ancient tribes.

This guidebook is devoted to Curonians and Samogitians. It covers more than 100 objects related to the cultural history of the two tribes in Lithuania and Latvia. For the convenience of travellers, these objects have been merged into seven destinations in Kurzeme and six in Northern and Western Lithuania. Choose the route that you want, and then make plans for the next one!

Scan the QR code to watch the route video "Balts' Road"



Photo: Liene Minoviča

Curonians populated various territories during different periods of time, first settling in what is now the north-western part of Lithuania and the south-western part of Latvia. Later they also settled in northern Kurzeme.

The Curonians were skilful soldiers and tradesmen, and in the context of Europe, they were distinguished by their ability to combat with forces that were similar and similar to Scandinavians. They also had durable pagan beliefs, and European Christianity broke those as the very last ones. The fame of Curonian warriors echoed across the Baltic Sea, where several Scandinavian chronicles beg God to defend them against the merciless raids that were conducted by the Curonians. This spirit was manifested in attacks against the Scandinavians, but also in terms of defending their own hillforts,

which were heavily fortified and very difficult to occupy. A large role in the lifestyle of Curonians related to pagan beliefs in which there were many different gods. Various rituals were conducted to win the favour of the deities, including **cult locations such as sacred rocks and trees, holy stands of trees, as well as forests which separated the Curonians from other Balts' tribes.**

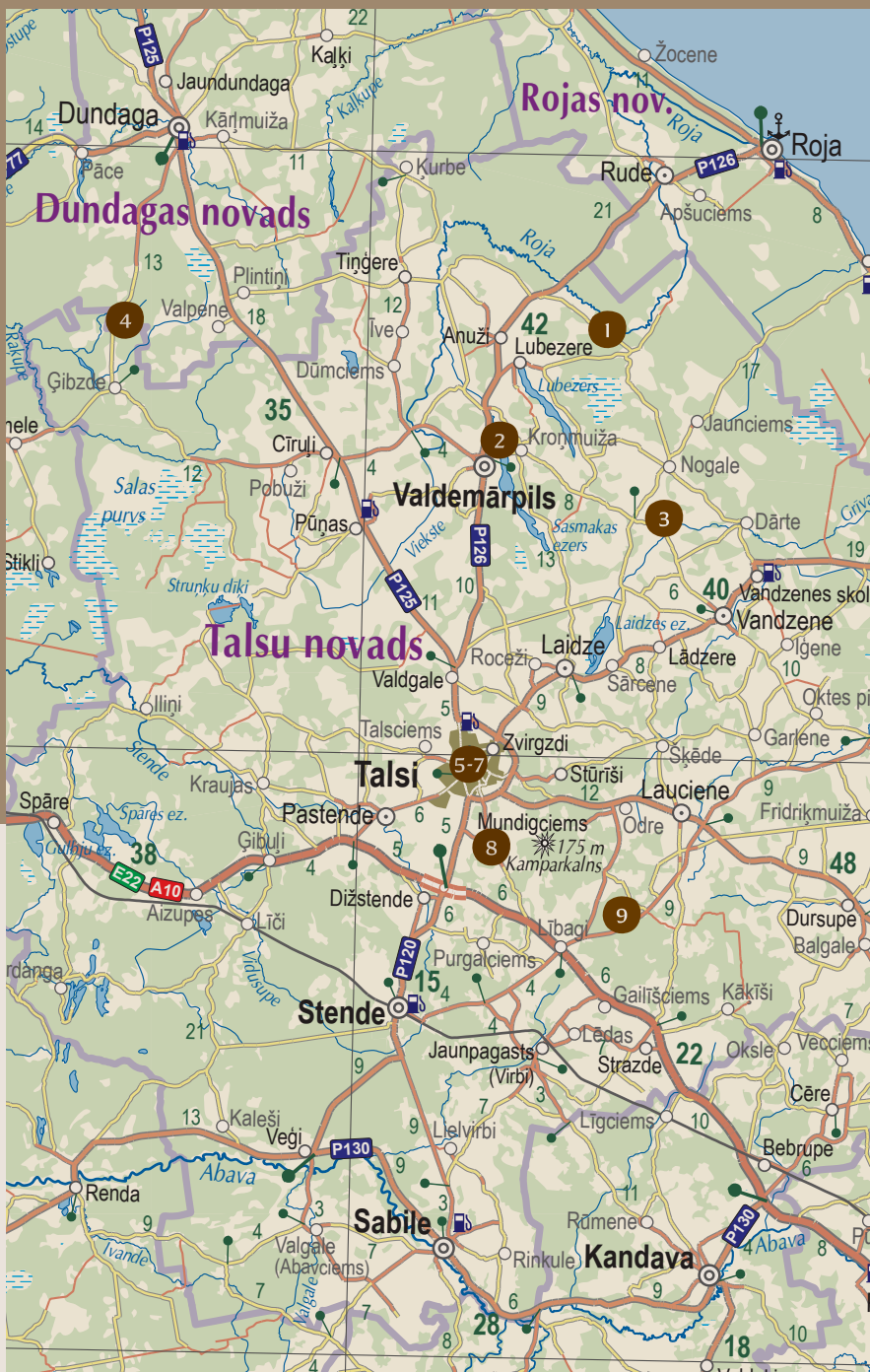
Their warriorlike spirit and their long-lasting pagan faith limited the spread of Christianity, which proved possible only after bloody battles during the 13th century. The pagan faith was never fully eliminated, however, and some elements of its can be seen in present-day religious rituals. The Curonians are long gone, but their stubborn spirit still has a presence among Latvians and Lithuanians.

Scan the QR code to watch the video on Curonians



TAKE THIS ROUTE TO FEEL THE POWER OF THE CURONIANS!





TALSI AND ITS SURROUNDINGS



A key aspect of the history of Talsi is that it was first populated by Finns, and after the expansion of Curonians into Northern Kurzeme during the 11th century, the place was a regional centre of increasing importance between the 10th and the 13th centuries. Talsi was part of the Vanema territory that had been populated for a long time by Finno-Ugric tribes, only to be conquered step by step by Curonians. Most of the territory was sparsely populated and with a heterogenic society. Liivs and Saaremaa islanders lived on the coast, while Curonians populated inner territories.

Talsi (Talse) was mentioned as an important centre for Curonians in an agreement that was concluded in 1231 between them and a legate from the people in Rome. The Curonians were supposed to become Christians as part of this pact, but they didn't. Indeed, the Curonians continued the religious traditions of their forefathers, including the disposal of the ashes of cremated ancestors in Lake Vilkmuiža, until the end of the 14th century.





1. BĪLAVU DEVIL'S BOAT – ANCIENT GRAVES



In 1863, a Jelgava artist and student of antiquity, Julius Döring, conducted an archaeological dig here, finding two boat-formed gravesites that were made of large rocks and placed one behind the other. The "boats" were oriented toward the North-West, and there were 10-12 chambers made of stone plates that were placed above one another at three levels. They were full of burned human bones, coal and broken dishes mixed with sand. The South-Eastern boat was researched and reconstructed by students from the University of Latvia Faculty of History and Philosophy under the leadership of Professor Andrejs Vasks. It is assumed that these "devil boats" were Scandinavian travellers from Gotland, and this was a tradition from the late Neolithic period until the Viking age.



Bilavu Devil's boat

7 km away from this gravesite, there is another interesting object – a geological monument, the **Lūrmaņu cliffs**. This canyon-type valley on the both banks of the Roja River have sandstone cliffs at a length of 400 m. They are up to 6 m high and date back to the Devonian period. Fossils of fish and no-jaw animals have been found at the cliffs.



Lūrmaņu cliffs

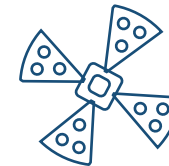
- The Bīlavu Devil's boat – Lube Parish*
- GPS** *Lat: 57.424809, Lon: 22.692604*
- The Lūrmaņu cliffs – Lube Parish*
- GPS** *Lat: 57.4326645, Lon: 22.7156586*



2. IDOL LINDEN TREE IN VALDEMĀRPILS



The Valdemārpils Idol linden tree is the most noble and thickest linden tree in the Baltic States. It is thought to be 400 or 500 years old, with a circumference of 8,8 m. People are amazed at this thickness and the powerful branches that bend toward the ground and rise to the sky. According to stories, this tree was an ancient cult location where various rituals were conducted. The linden tree symbolises femininity in Latvian folklore, which is why a pretty young woman is compared to a leafy linden tree. Cradles for new-born girls



were always made of linden wood, and when girls went to the sauna, linden firewood was burned. During christening, the little girl was raised up, and the congregation yelled "Let her be as leafy as a linden tree!"

- √
- Sasmaka Manor, Valdemārpils*
 - GPS** *Lat: 57.37892, Lon: 22.60024*



3. GREAT ROCK OF KRAUJA

The great rock of Krauja is also known as the noble rock of Tilgaļi, and it is the largest rock in Kurzeme. It was part of an ancient and important cult location, and it speaks to the conflict between the Curonian cult and Christianity during the 13th century. Because of its steadfastness, it has preserved the status of a cult location through the centuries. The brilliant Latvian poet and writer Jānis Trimda (whose actual name was Frīcis Gulbis) wrote about the influence of Christianity on the cultural history of the Curonians: "Near the graveyard there is an enormous linden tree, thus recalling the time when a stand of colourful linden trees bloomed in the spring, flowered during the summer and then dropped all of its leaves. This lasted for centuries. Then there is the great rock, which is the largest one in Kurzeme. It did not lay in an empty place to be seen from a distance from all directions, but laid in the heart of the stand of linden trees, and my ancestors thought that this was a tribute to God. [...] Then came the Germans who



brought the Christian faith to our land with sword and fire, doing everything that they could to combat the durable and secretive paganism. The noble linden trees in the Garden of God had a sad fate, because the alien Germans chopped them down." The great rock is easy to find, because glaciers put it on a hillock that is shallow and visible. It is about 300 m from the Vandzene-Valdemārpils road. It is 7 m high, 6,9 m wide, with a diameter of 26 m and a volume of 80 cubic metres.



 **Vandzene Parish**
GPS Lat: 57.35035, Lon: 22.72281



4. LIEPNIEKVALKA CAVES

The Liepniekvalka caves are also known as the Peldanga labyrinth, and it is the longest natural labyrinth of caves in Latvia. They are made of sandstone, and streams created an atypical labyrinth of caves and underground passageways.



The labyrinth is approximately 5 m high and 20 m wide, made of grey sandstone from the area. It is a complex and narrow system of subterranean caves with five entrances. The total length of the passageways is 70 m. The labyrinth has one larger and two smaller branched rooms which are linked by tunnels. There are several pillars and poles of sandstone in the cave. These days, the caves can only be viewed from the exterior, because the deeper passageways are very narrow and full of sand.



 **Dundaga Parish**
GPS Lat: 57.4320057, Lon: 22.3125668







5. LAKE VILKMUIŽA TRAIL

Lake Vilkmuiža is a special and unique ancient location which dates back to the 11th – 14th century. It was used by ancient Curonians as a place for fire graves, and that speaks to the burial traditions that existed at that time. On the eastern shore of the lake was a place where dead people were burned, and together with that person, weapons, tools and jewellery were also burned. The remnants of each fire were sunk into the lake. Archaeologists have found bronze bracelets, broaches and necklaces, iron weapons, horse-related equipment, ride equipment, as well as a one-log boat during digs in and around the lake. The Talsi County Museum has an exhibition that was organised in 2012 – "The Ancient Graves of Lake Vilkmuiža". The exhibition features more than 600 antiquities that were dug up by archaeologists. The latest research suggests an alternative possibility – that the antiquities fell into the water

because the ancient grave things on the shore were washed into the water because of changes in the water level during the course of the year. A nice and comfortable trail leads all around the lake, while fans of longer hikes can merge the one which goes around the lake with the Talsi promenade. They are close to one another, and the total length is around 5 km. Both trails are appropriate for parents with prams and visitors in a wheelchair with an assistant.



 **Car park alongside Lake Vilkmuiža**
GPS Lat: 57.24769, Lon: 22.59077
 **1,8 km**
 **Loop**
 **None, but it is easy to find one's way**

 **Paving stones, gravel pathways**





6. TALSİ PROMENADE AND HILLFORT

The Talsi promenade is in the very heart of Talsi by Lake Talsi and one of the city's nine hillocks – the Talsi hillfort, at the foot of which an ancient Curonian village once existed. The hillock was part of the ancient Vanema land of the Curonians, later known as the Peace Kursa hillfort. It was powerfully fortified during the 11th century, when the protective barriers were heightened, towers were installed next to the entrance, and the defensive line of logs was shored up.

The promenade circles the lake and allows visitors to enjoy the fantastic surroundings and the simply nice and comfortable stroll. More active travellers can climb the hillfort, which offers a lovely view of the Lake Talsi promenade. This is an excellent place to take some photos of the urban landscape. Fans of ceramics are welcome to visit the **Ciparnīca Tals' keramik'** workshop, where visitors can learn about the work of the potter and purchase clay dishware that is ready-made and characteristic of Talsi.




 Car park by the Talsi People's Centre

GPS Lat: 57.24382, Lon: 22.59189

 1,2 km

 Loop

 None, but it is easy to find one's way

 Wooden boardwalk, asphalt, paving stones, trail, gravel pathway



7. TALSİ COUNTY MUSEUM

The Talsi County Museum sits atop the highest of the nine hillocks of Talsi – Tigulū hill. It offers unique opportunities to look at a collection of archaeological artifacts which came from digs in the area of Lake Vilkmuiža in Talsi. Jewellery is among the items. The museum also features an exposition which centres on the culture of Curonians. The traditional and very ornate costumes of Curonian women and men are on display.



 Kārļa Mīlenbaha Street 19, Talsi

GPS Lat: 57.24256, Lon: 22.6033

 www.talsumuzejs.lv



8. MUNDIGU SACRIFICIAL OAK TREE

Ancient and holy oak trees in Kurzeme are thought to have existed since the age of the ancient Curonians, who used them for the performance of various rituals. Some of them have names such as Holy Oak and Sacrificial Oak. It is believed that no one was allowed to break off a branch from the holy tree, because that would mean sickness and even death. The oak tree symbolises strength and masculinity in Latvian mythology. Some of the ancient sacred trees still stand in Kurzeme, and this may relate to newer traditions that come from the Curonians. One of the best known is the Mundigu sacrificial oak, which stands in a lovely place on the shore of Lake Mundigu. Its circumference is 7,8 m.



 Lībagi Parish

GPS Lat: 57.212883, Lon: 22.604866





9. MEŽĪTES HILLFORT

The Mežītes hillfort is expressive and large in size. It is a complex of ancient locations which includes the beautiful hillfort, Elku or Idol hill, ancient gravesites, as well as an ancient cult rock known as the cupmarked stone. The site is so expressive that during the 19th century, the Latvian ancient history and folklore scholar Augusts Bīlenšteins gushed that “anyone who wants to know anything about the past of the Latvians must visit this location”. An ancient town stretched all around the hillfort back in the day and covered nearly 3 ha of land. Later archaeologists would find bronze bracelets and rings, iron stirrups, arrowheads and shards of dishware. This archaeological research has also led to a new understanding of how people

lived in this once-peripheral territory. Indeed, they established an important regional centre with well-developed trade links to the outside world. The hillfort is typical of the approach that was taken back then. Tourists of various ages who are interested in the history of Balts' tribes will find this site particularly gripping.



Lauciene Parish

GPS Lat: 57.18627, Lon: 22.7097



SOUVENIRS

Talsi County tourism information centres in Talsi, Mērsrags, Roja and Dundaga.



TASTY TREATS

<https://visittalsi.com/ko-redzet/degustacijas/>



SPECIAL ADVENTURES

<https://visittalsi.com/ko-redzet/amatnieki/>

<https://visittalsi.com/ko-redzet/aktiva-atputa-aktiva-atputa/>



VENTSPILS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS



The region of Ventspils was once part of the ancient land of Ventava. The centre of this land was on the Lagzdiena hillfort, which is along the lower stretches of the Venta River. The territory was initially populated by the predecessors of Baltic Finns - Liivs. During the Viking era, the Venta was used by Scandinavian traders and also raiders. Curonians conquered the territory during the 11th - 12th centuries. During the pre-German era, local residents were gradually turned into Curonians, and this led to a disappearance of Finno-Ugric place names in favour of more Baltic ones. To this very day, people along the lower reaches of the Venta who speak a specific dialect are known as "ventiņi".











10. VASENIEKU SWAMP TRAIL

This is the largest swamp in Western Latvia with a history that began 5000 to 7000 years ago. The site has a natural swamp that is rife with living things, but also a degraded landscape that can be seen at the very start of the path. There visitors will find ditches that were once installed to prepare the swamp for peat extraction. Now they have been dammed up to restore the water level. The Vasenieku swamp trail passes through small and lovely swamp lakes and forested areas, beaver dams, and then turns onto an earthen path along the side of the ditch. At the end of it, the visitor will see the wooden boardwalk that leads back to the start. At the centre of the pathway is a viewing tower which opens up a magnificent view of the swamp's landscape.



-  Car park by the "Stiklu swamps" nature reserve
- GPS** Lat: 57.35689, Lon: 22.15348
-  3,8 km
-  Loop
-  None, but it is easy to find one's way
-  Trodden path, wooden boardwalk


-     
-  Narrow, but might be accessible



11. DEVIL'S FOOTPRINT ROCK OF AKMEŅKALNI

This rock is also known as the Border rock, because for a long time it has been seen as marking the border among the lands of the Dundaga, Ance and Puze manors. The huge rock has a circumference of 17,3 m, a volume of 40 cubic metres, and a height of 3,3 m. Alas, few rocks of this type in Latvia have suffered as much damage as this one has. It is said that its circumference once spanned 30 m, but now it has been split into three parts with several smaller parts that have been chipped away. It is seen as a cult location. Visit the rock to see whether you can see the footprints that the devil left behind.



-  Turn at the tourism destination sign along the Virpe-Blāzma road and the forest road crossing in the Dundaga Parish
- GPS** Lat: 57.4185573, Lon: 22.0798025

-    






12. "VALLEYS OF UGĀLE" NATURE TRAIL

This nature trail involves three lovely valleys. The first stretches to the **Ugāle hillfort**, which was used in 1851 to install a graveyard for the Baron von Behr family of the local manor. Legend has it that there was once a Latvian castle at that place, but it sank into the ground. The baron ordered men to dig it back up. They worked night and day, but then a deer dressed in green rushed up to them and told them to stop, because otherwise bad things would happen. Thus the castle remained underground. Another legend holds that there was a



deep river running alongside the hillfort, with large boats sailing up and down the river. One of the boats sank, and its masts turned into pine trees which can still be seen today. Beyond the hillfort, the trail continues to a second valley with a little stream and lots of beavers. The third valley is the deepest one and offers the most beautiful landscape.



-  The carting track at the stand, Zemdegas-5, Ugāle
- GPS** Lat: 57.275496, Lon: 22.034284
-  5,9 km
-  Loop
-  Marked with green ribbons, orange stripes on trees and directional signs
-  Trodden path

-    

13. DEVIL'S BENCH OF GRĪŽI



A short and curvy forest path leads to this impressive rock, which resembles an easy chair. This offers a chance to spend a bit of time in nature so as to observe the diversity of the forest and to listen to the songs of various birds. The devil's bench of Grīži is found in a green fir forest, making out the boundary between ancient Curonian and Liivs' lands. This testifies to the co-existence of ancient Balts' and Finno-Ugric tribes. Legends about the unusual appearance of the rock claim that the devil wanted the Curonians and Liivs to get along, so he sat on the rock until he made sure that that was the case, and that caused the impression in the stone. This rock is distinguished among similar rocks in Latvia in that it has a volume of 35 cubic metres, a circumference of 17 m, and a height of 3 m.



500 m to the south of the Riga-Ventspils highway, turning at the sign which indicates the tourist destination, Tārgale Parish

GPS Lat: 57.38049, Lon: 21.77225



14. STEEP SHORE OF STALDZENE



The steep shore of Staldzene offers a lovely hiking location and a swimming location with hidden historical heritage all around. It was here where, long, long ago, the predecessors of the Curonians encountered traders and raiders from the opposite shore of the Baltic Sea. This is evidenced by the fact that it was at this specific location that archaeologists later dug up the largest deposit of Bronze Age ornaments. They are now exhibited at the Ventspils Museum, and the artifacts date back to the 8th century BC. Most of the items were of Scandinavian origin and had been broken way back then. That is how they were found nearly two millennia later. These are known as wreck deposits. The fact that the objects were broken suggest that they were seen as valuable raw materials to be remelted and made into something different. It may be that an ancient seafarer decided

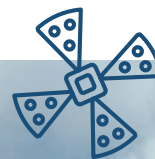
to hid the most valuable part of his cargo, but never came back to fetch it.

The steep shore of Staldzene is also important in terms of its environmental value, merging wonderful sea and shore landscapes. This is an unusual shore because it has a 2,3 m high waterfall that has, atypically, appeared from a peaty foundation. The place is on the coast of the Baltic Sea, 4 km to the North-East from the centre of the town of Ventspils. The shore is 4-8 m high, and a distance of some 400 m lays bare the deposits that appeared during various stages of the history of the Baltic Sea. In 2021, the steep shore at Staldzene was declared to be the geo-location of Latvia of the year.



Staldzene beach, Ventspils

GPS Lat: 57.44553, Lon: 21.60352



Steep shore of Staldzene

15. VENTSPILS MUSEUM



The museum is housed in a castle of the Livonian Order which had its origins in the 13th century. The museum features exhibitions to show the lives of people from the Stone Age to the 20th century. The oldest found human-made object in Latvia is at the museum – a small axe made of reindeer horn which is around 12500 years old.



Jāņa Street 17, Ventspils

GPS Lat: 57.39615, Lon: 21.55869



16. LAGZDIENA HILLFORT

This hillfort is found in a beautiful place on the banks of the Venta River. It boasts a nice viewing platform which offers a broad and breath-taking view of the upper and lower reaches of the river. Three curves of the river can be spotted. The area where the castle was located was first populated during the first half of the first millennium. Judging from artifacts found here in the early 20th century, there was an ancient burial ground. Those who were buried there can be identified as members of a particular Baltic Sea Finnish group. It may be that they were Vendians, who were mentioned in the Livonian Chronicle of Indriķis. This ancient tribe might also

have populated the Lagzdiena hillfort and had Scandinavian travellers visiting it because of its strategic location.



 **Piltene Parish**

GPS Lat: 57.1653529, Lon: 21.7625713



17. UŽAVA BREWERY

It is thought that beer has a history in Latvia which began at least 1000 years ago. The first written sources attribute the arrival of beer in the territory to the appearance of the Crusaders during the 13th and 14th century AD, but the texts speak to a brewing culture that was already there and probably had been there for a long time. There is reason to believe, therefore, that people were brewing beer in Latvia for several centuries before the Germans turned up. The most comparable beverage to beer that was produced initially was made of fermented honey. It was drunk with various grasses or berries. As agriculture developed, grain was added to the mix. This might suggest that the first beer was classically made of barley, but the ancient Curonians first relied on wheat. Instead of hops, the early beer contained things that we would consider today to be herbal teas – yarrow, St John's wort, marsh Labrador, etc. The brewing technologies have been developed since then, to be

sure, but beer remains traditional in Latvian traditions and on holiday tables. Enjoy a glass at one of Latvia's most outstanding breweries. Užava brews its beer in the traditional manner and with just four ingredients – water, barley malt, yeast and hops. While there, make sure to visit the **Užava lighthouse**, from which you can get one of the most impressive views available of the coast of the Baltic Sea.



 **"Alutiņi," Užava Parish**

GPS Lat: 57.1980487, Lon: 21.4393168



View near the Užava lighthouse



SOUVENIRS

Ventspils Crafts House
Skolas Street 3, Ventspils
+371 63620174

TASTY TREATS

Courlander brewery in Ventspils

Tirgus Street 9, Ventspils
f VentspilsAlusDaritava
+371 25644899

*The dining room in the saloon opens up to a room where the beer is actually brewed

SPECIAL ADVENTURES

The Livonian Order castle with an educational programme, "History/Costumes"
<http://muzejs.ventspils.lv/livonijas-ordena-pils/pedagogiskas-programmas/>

The Crafts house with an educational programme, "The Legend of the Golden Broach"
<http://muzejs.ventspils.lv/amatu-maja/pedagogiskas-programmas/>

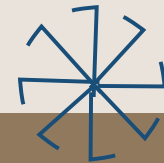
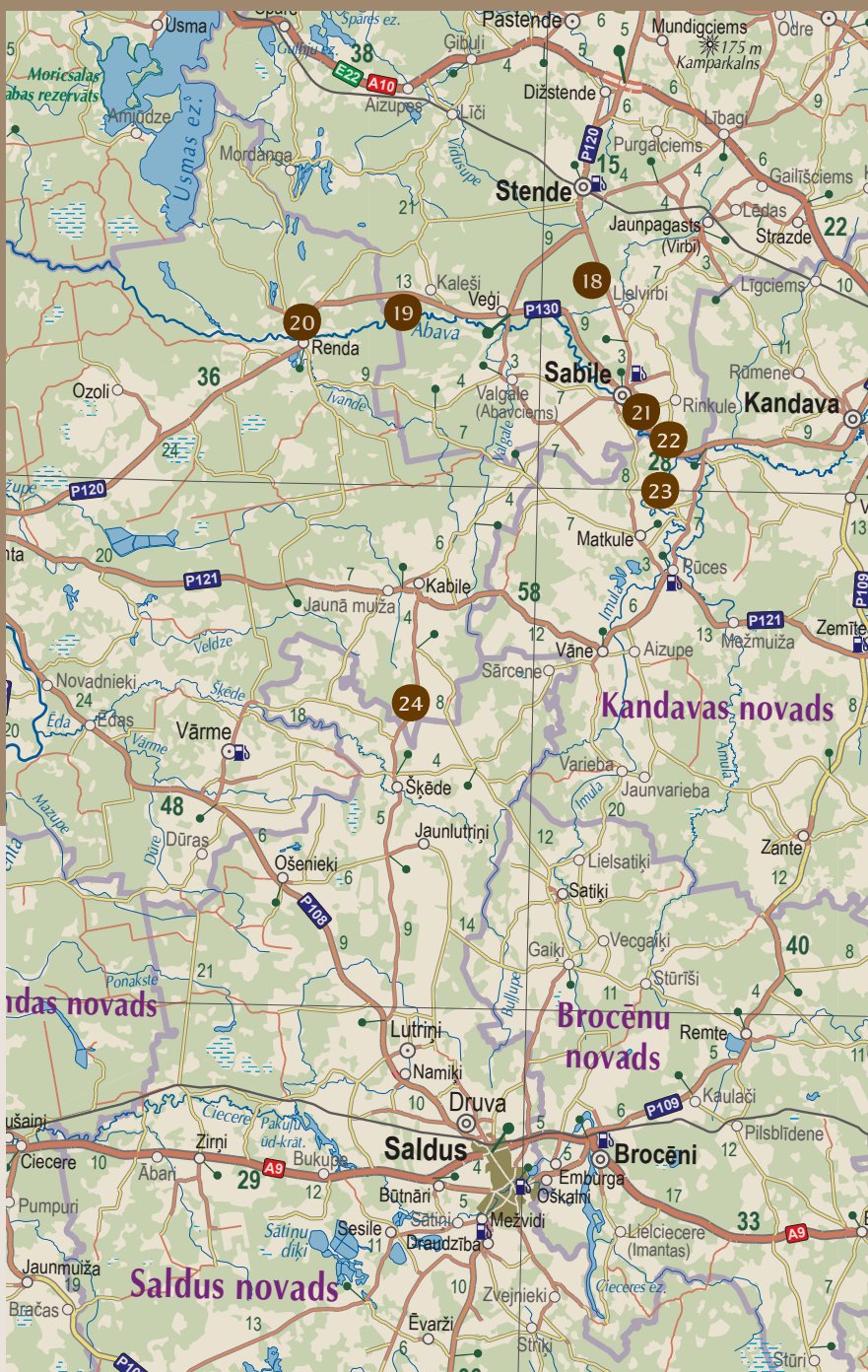


Photo: "Studio 555" Ltd.





SABILE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS



The small, but colourful village of Sabile is found in the picturesque Abava River valley. The origins of the two date back to some 1000 years ago, when the Sabile hillfort was established on the high right corner of the valley. This is a place which was first populated by Baltic Finns who eventually assimilated into the Curonian tribe. During the Middle Ages, there was an earthen road alongside the Abava River to join hillforts in Kuldīga, Renda and Kandava. Until the 13th century, this was the centre of the Vanema hillforts' region at the Abava trade route.





Photo: Gatis Pileģis


18. VIRSAIŠI WATERFALL TRAIL



The Virsaiši waterfall can be found in the deep side valley of the Virbupe River. The nature here is all but pristine, with a stream burbling over dolomite, cliffs being seen on the walls of the valley, trees knocked down by the wind lying scattered all around the territory, and hardly any trails for strollers or hikers. The waterfall was truly identified only in 1998, when geographer Ivars Strautnieks took measurements of its height and width. He was studying geological and geomorphological objects in the Abava River valley, and local residents pointed him toward this monument of nature. The waterfall stands 1,7 m high, and during the spring and autumn, its width can be as much as 4 m. The waterfall is distinguished by the fact that its water slides down a tilted piece of dolomite, as opposed to dropping vertically. In 2010, the waterfall was declared to be the geological monument of the year.

There is an out-and-back path to the waterfall, with a total distance of 2,8 km. During wet weather, some parts of the trail become very slippery, which makes it hard to get up and back down the hills. Trees may be blocking the path, which weaves through forestland that has been hardly touched by civilisation. At the end of the trail and by the waterfall, there is room to sit down and relax, as well as to build a campfire. The waterfall, it must be added, is on private property, and potential visitors are asked to ring +371 20037375 to arrange for a visit.



 From the Stende-Sabile road, passing through the "Mazsili" tree farm. Look for a sign on a tree - "Dabas taka" (Nature trail)

GPS Lat: 57.09522, Lon: 22.5417

 1,4 km (one way)

 Out-and-back

 Red dots painted on trees

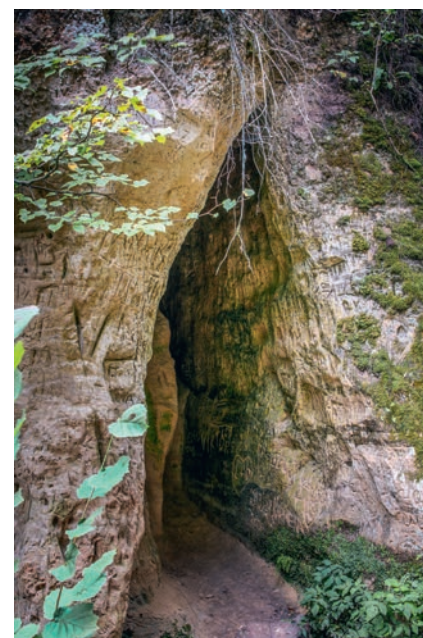
 Trodden path



19. PATH TO THE CHAMBERS OF MĀRA



The Chambers of Māra reveal natural formations which conjure up thoughts about how important this place was to ancient Curonians. Sacred caves were rare because of their natural origins, and so existing ones were given particular importance for holy rituals. The Chambers of Māra involve a canyon-type valley. There is a waterfall at the top, but on the right bank there are two caves, and on the left bank there is one. The name of this complex is based on Roman Catholic influence. It is said that they posted an image of the Virgin Mary at the ancient cult location, and the name Mary was Latvianised to Māra. In cultural and historical terms, a document from 1462 AD mentions a sacred cave near Sabile, reporting that it was in the forests of the Abava River valley and some 2 km from the Sabile-Renda highway. Stories about



the chambers were published in the 19th century, some of which had to do with "sacred virgins" who lived in the cave and, on Fridays, washed their laundry, which caused much steam to come from the caves. On moonlit nights, people could see these girls dancing and weaving, but if anyone approached, he was struck mute for the rest of his life. The current pathway has a nice viewing platform with benches from which you can observe the lovely landscape of the Abava River valley.



 Gribuļi Parish

GPS Lat: 57.08240, Lon: 22.37690

 0,85 km (one way)

 Out-and-back

 Directional signs

 Wooden boardwalk, trodden path, forest path



20. ANCIENT ROCK GRAVES AT RENDA




For a long time people believed that Renda was the site of the southernmost “Devil’s boat” – an archaeological type of monument that is known in Latvia in a narrow territory around Valdemārpils. The style was characteristic of the late Bronze Age, where the remains of people who were cremated were placed into clay urns and then buried inside a pile of rocks aimed at symbolising a ship. After an archaeological field trip in 2000 that was led by University of Latvia Professor Andrejs Vasks, however, it was found that the rocks at Renda were not another rock boat. Instead it was an ancient burial mound with piles of rocks. A dig found antique items, including a bronze spiral ring, the tip of an iron spear, tiny beads and a Roman coin. These were all typical of the first centuries AD. It is most likely that the graves were used to bury ancestors of Baltic Finns who began to move North even before the Curonians did.



Ancient rock graves at Renda

which is about two metres high and 10 m wide. If you walk 200 m along the little river upstream, you will find the other one, which is the waterfall of Valdāti. It is 1,5 m high and 5 m in width. Between the two waterfalls there is a much smaller waterfall. Both of the waterfalls involve Devonian sandstone and dolomite. The waterfalls are beautiful not only times of the year when there is much precipitation, but also in the winter, when the waterfalls freeze over and present lovely ice flowers.



 **Renda**
 GPS **Lat: 57.0723955, Lon: 22.2912495**



500 m away toward the centre of Renda visitors will find another interesting place – **the waterfalls of Īvande**. Here you will find the first of two waterfalls,



The waterfalls of Īvande



21. SABILE HILLFORT

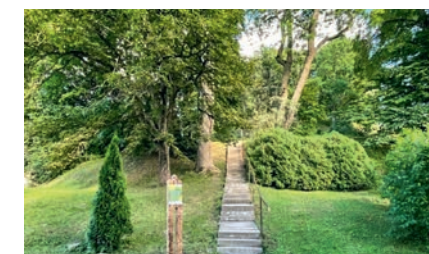


Archaeological digs at this hillfort have found a cultural level that is approximately half-a-metre thick. This confirms that it was populated from the 10th to the 13th century. To the north-east of the hillfort was a town that covered approximately one hectare. Archaeologists have found antiquities which speak to the everyday lives of ancient residents in the area. They engaged in craftsmanship, trade and agriculture. The hillfort had natural boundaries with two valleys and a slope down to the valley that was approximately 25 m high. From the unprotected eastern side, there was a 3 m moat and a barrier standing 5 m high. Still, the hillfort was attacked numerous times. It was cited in a document

from 1253 about the distribution of land, and this document refers to the place as “Zabele.” Given vineyards that are nearby, a visit to Sabile will be particularly interesting to adults, including seniors.







 **Sabile**
 GPS **Lat: 57.04695, Lon: 22.57668**



22. DRUBAZAS BOTANY TRAIL



This is a trail for fans of botany. The trail goes up and down alongside the Abava River valley and its characteristic meadows. There is a shorter trail (1,2 km) and a longer one (2 km). Here you will see one of the densest and most beautiful meadows of juniper bushes. Various levels of moisture on the slope and various types of soil have led to the emergence of several different types of meadows. On drier parts we find mountain clover. Here and in a swamp of grass the visitor will find various rare types of plants which are under protection.

 **Short loop - 1,2 km, long loop - 2 km**
 **Loop**
 **None, but it is easy to follow the trail**
 **Wooden boardwalk, trodden path**



The Drubazas farm (wine tastings, a trip across the Abava River on a cable way, ring +371 26342050)




 **Car park at the Drubazas farm**
 GPS **Lat: 57.03040, Lon: 22.59662**



Photo: Ģirts Dzērve

23. BUSE HILLFORT

Also known as the Matkule hillfort, this was probably once an important political and economic centre for the ancient Vanema land. Population began in the Bronze Age and continued until the 14th century. This is a lovely hillock which is some 200 m long and 27 m high. The surrounding area is neat, and the hillfort offers a breath-taking view of the Imula River valley. This is one of the most beautiful places in the Ancient Abava Valley nature park. It has received two flags attesting to the culture and history of Europe.



24. KALNASU SWAMP TRAIL

The Kalnansu swamp trail leads through a very beautiful landscape, including swampy forests, a lake and plants that are typical of a marsh. It is said that the water in the swamp lake is very soft and medicinal. Ancient legends claim that that was once the deepest lake in Latvia, which is why it became known as Lake Bottomless. It was later found that the true depth is just 7 m. The Kalnansu swamp is a protected high moss swamp.

 *Matkule*

GPS *Lat: 56.99138, Lon: 22.60333*



 *Brown sign by the Lutriņi-Kabile road*

GPS *Lat: 56.90632, Lon: 22.39933*

 *1 km*

 *Loop*

 *None, but the trail is easy to follow*

 *Wooden boardwalk, trodden path*



SOUVENIRS

*Sabile Centre for Art, Culture and Tourism
Strautu Street 4, Sabile
+371 27841827*

SPECIAL ADVENTURE

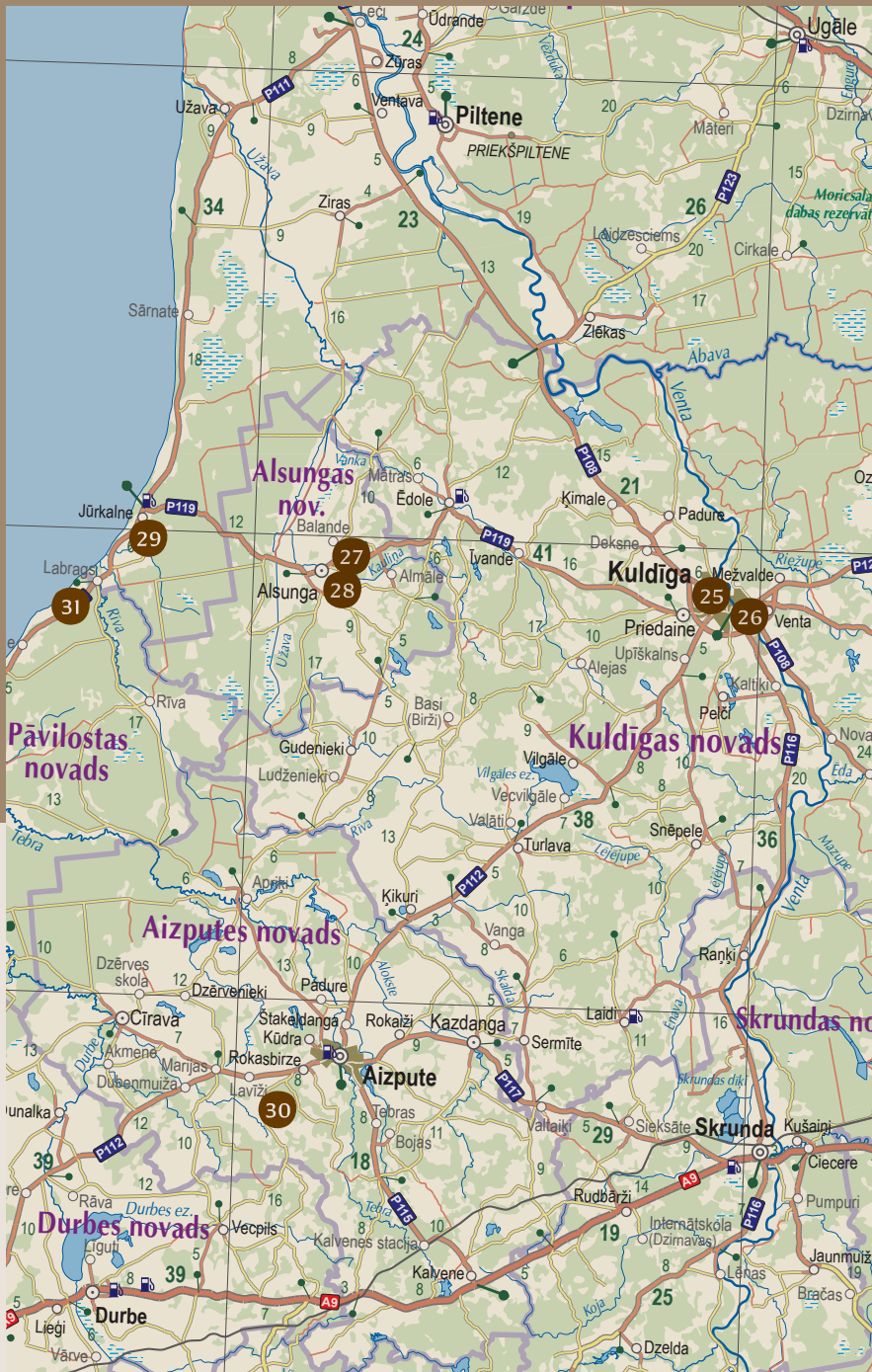
*A creative room in Sabile
Talsu Street 10, Sabil
f [radosaistabinasabile](https://www.facebook.com/radosaistabinasabile)
+371 29168161*

TASTY TREATS

<http://www.visit.sabile.lv/apskates-objekti/vina-degustacijas/>

<http://www.visit.sabile.lv/turisma-pakalpojumi/ekskursijas-gida-pavadiba/>





KULDĪGA, ALSUNGA AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS



Kuldīga was once the centre of the ancient Curonian land of Bandava, and this was one of the most densely populated lands of the tribe. The origins of the name are unclear, though some historians believe that the ancient Curonian castle was called Kuldīga. Kuldīga was one of the most important administrative and political centres in ancient Latvia along with Mežotne, Jersika and Tērvete. It is thought that Curonian King Lamekin lived here. The ancient Curonian town existed until 1355, when it was given new land that was closer to the German castle that had been erected in the mid-13th century. The Livonian Order castle built in Kuldīga was the centre for expanding the order's power in Kurzeme and combating the freedoms of the Curonians. Kuldīga became the focus of the order's power in Kurzeme, and Germans launched attacks against several Curonian hillforts from there.



25. OLD KULDĪGA HILLFORT

The Old Kuldīga hillfort was seen as the heart of Kurzeme, because it was at the very centre of Curonian lands and on the banks of the Venta River. The hillfort makes it possible to imagine the power of the old castle and to enjoy the surrounding environment and various events that are organised there. Hillfort researcher Ernests Brastiņš wrote in 1923 that the ancient hill in Kuldīga was the largest fortification of the Curonian lands. It covered an entire hectare of land, and the surrounding settlement covered 10 ha.



 Kuldīga

GPS Lat: 56.99432, Lon: 21.96078



26. VENTA WATERFALL

At a width of 249 m, this is Europe's widest waterfall. During the summer you can go swimming or stroll across the still stream. During the spring you will see flying fish which are trying to "climb" the waterfall. There are various legends about the history of this waterfall. One says that "the Devil wanted to block the Venta River to drown the city of Kuldīga and its surroundings. At midnight, he went two miles upstream along the river to the Brieži ford, where he put together a great pile of rocks. He brought the pile to the city and then hurried to get another one. Suddenly, however, there was a loud noise, which suggested that the local lord had woken up. He went outside and saw that half of the Venta River was already blocked. The lord

understood that it was the Devil who had done this. What to do? He ran to the chicken coop, hit his hands on his fur coat and crowed like a rooster. The rooster woke up, thought that another rooster had crowed, and did the same. The Devil, upon hearing the crowing, threw the rest of the rocks on the ground and fled."

 Kuldīga



GPS Lat: 56.96823, Lon: 21.97912




Venta waterfall

27. ŽIBGRAVA NATURE TRAIL

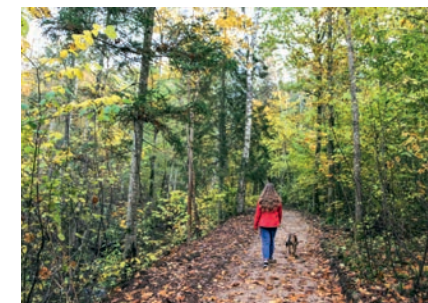
The name of the Žibgarava nature trail testifies to the main value of this trail – a ditch which has a height of as much as 15 m. The path winds its way through the hilly terrain of the area, and it is next to the picturesque and curved Kauliņupīte River, with two circular paths – a long loop and a short loop. The long one has information stands about plants and animals that can be spotted in the area, as well as legends and riddles related to the dialect of a local group known as the suiti. Answers to the riddles are found on the next sign along the way. The short loop is known as "Mazātak" (Little Trail), and it is accessible to people in wheelchairs.

 Loop
 Directional signs and poles

 Trodden path, gravel path on the "Mazātak" loop




   Mazātak



 Long loop: Car park by Žibgarava nature trail

GPS Lat: 56.98430, Lon: 21.57883

 "Mazātak" loop – car park by the "Dančplacs" leisure area

GPS Lat: 56.98412, Lon: 21.58400

 Short loop 1,5 km, "Mazātak" 0,5 km

28. DIŽGABALKALNS AND “SPĒLMAŅU KROGS” IN ALSUNGA

The origins of Alsunga date back to the Curonian period, but today it is vividly known as the cultural space of the *suiti*. For nearly 400 years, it has been the centre of the historical Suiti district. Alsunga used to be known as Alšvanga, and it is an ancient Curonian village with three well-known hillforts and five ancient burial grounds. Alsunga and nearby Jūrkalne and Labrags were part of the Bandava land, as is seen through research about burials between the 10th and 12th centuries. Alsunga was in a place where Liivs' and Curonian tribes intersected. Some specialists believe that the Liivs' language dominated until the 14th century, but then gradually superseded by the Curonian language. Also linked to the Curonians is a special bun that is known throughout Kurzeme even though it was initially known as a Liivs' dish. The name, “sklandrausis” may come from the word “sklanda,” which referred to the posts of a fence in the past. In Kurzeme, this pastry is also known as “žograusis” (fence bun) and “dižrausis” (noble bun). This is a very ancient recipe involving rye dough that does not involve yeast. Still, we can only guess what kinds of pastries they were in ancient times, because we know for sure that two of the main ingredients in the present-day recipe – carrots and potatoes – were quite unknown in the Baltic region back then.

At the centre of Alsunga and on the banks of Lake Dzirnezers you will find the Dižgabalkalns hillfort of the Curonians. It is on an oval hillock that is 8-10 m in height. Archaeologists have identified a cultural layer below the ground that is some 2 m in thickness. The “Spēlmaņu krogs” (“Players’ Pub”) which is alongside the hillfort serves traditional dishes from Kurzeme that are based on



Dižgabalkalns

recipes handed down from generation to generation. The sklandrausis bun is usually served, as are dumplings with ribs, turnips, sourdough porridge, other types of buns, and *suiti* bread.

📍 “Spēlmaņu krogs”, Alsunga

GPS Lat: 56.98039, Lon: 21.56973



29. “BĒRZIŅI” BAKERY

Jūrkalne is a place where Curonian and Liivs' traditions merge, and the owners of the “Bērziņi” homestead bake wheat and rye bread in a true bread oven. You can order a loaf or two, or try your hand at baking one yourself.

📍 “Bērziņi”, Jūrkalne

GPS Lat: 56.994577, Lon: 21.390556



“Bērziņi” bakery in Jūrkalne

30. ANCIENT VILLAGE OF BANDAVA

Not far from Aizpute a unique site is being prepared – a living centre of history and culture. This will be a replica of an ancient Curonian farm known as Bandava in honour of the old Couronian land. The object will allow visitors to work with ancient crafts, to practice the art of war, to organise events, festivals and concerts in commemoration of ancestors, and to learn a bit about an essential part of Latvian history. The inspiration came from a saga written by Viking explorer Egil Skallagrimsson about his adventures in Kurzeme. With the help of archaeological discoveries, buildings

31. STEEP SHORES

As you drive from Alsunga toward the sea, definitely find time to look at one of the most picturesque seashores in Latvia. There are three impressive Kurzeme shoreline steep shores – Jūrkalne, Labrags and Strante-Ulmale.



Jūrkalne



and fortifications are being erected in the village in accordance with what they looked like centuries ago. This is a breathing location at which you, too, can touch history with our own hands.

FB @Bandava

📍 “Upīši”, Kazdanga Parish

GPS Lat: 56.6999535, Lon: 21.5508804



Photo: Juris Nečajevs



 **SOUVENIRS**

KUUL design store
Baznīcas Street 27, Kuldīga
f kuuldkuldiga
+371 26311310

"Akcents" boutique
Tirgus Street 2, Kuldīga
f akcents.salonveikals
+371 29336471

"Madara" salon
Liepājas Street 25, Kuldīga
f SalonsMadara
+371 29554466

Alsunga crafts house
Skolas Street 11a, Alsunga
f visitAlsunga
+371 26425015

 **SPECIAL ADVENTURE**

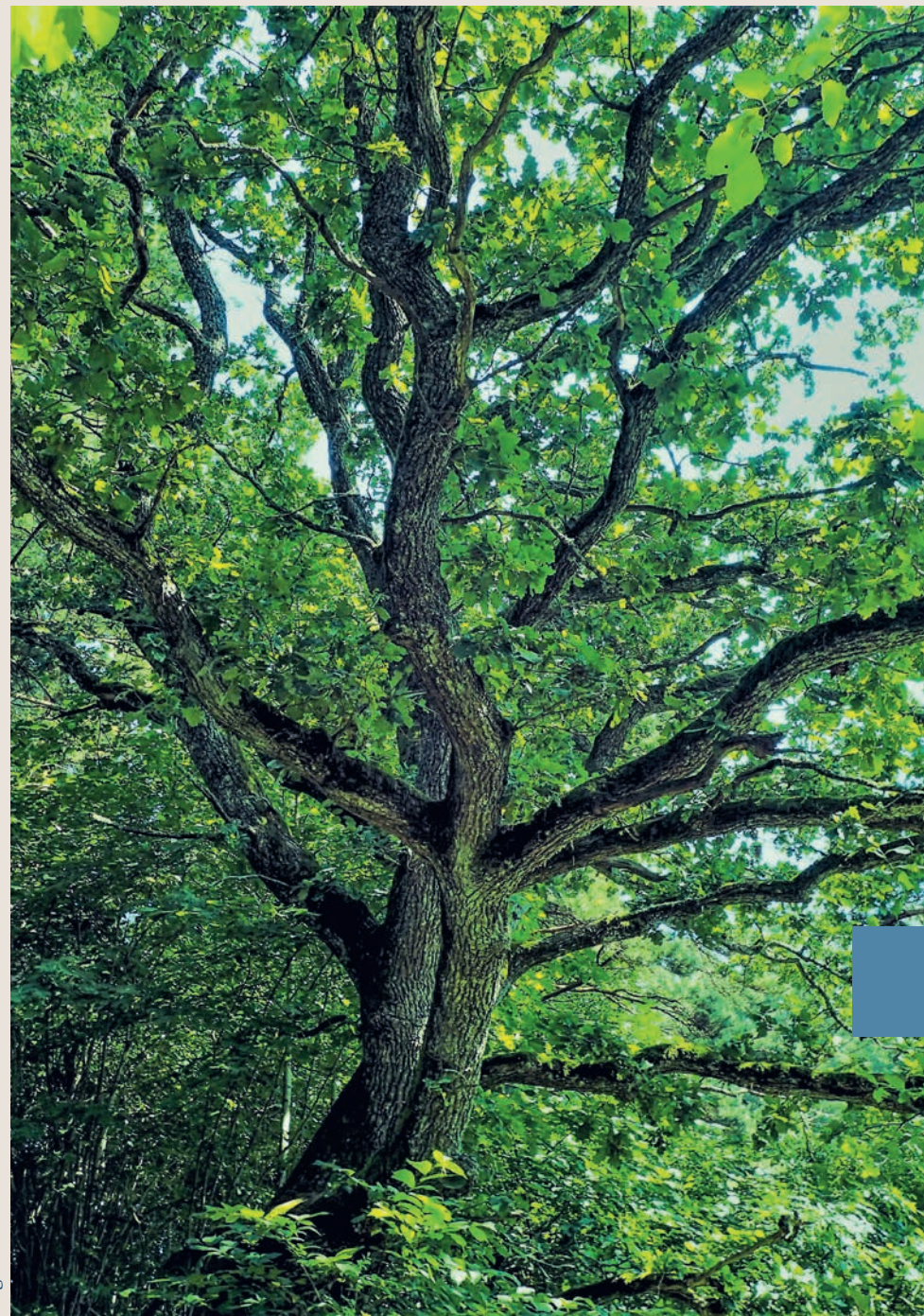
<https://visitkuldiga.com/aktivitate/>

 **TASTY TREATS**

<https://visitkuldiga.com/garsa/degustacijas/>



Bun baking master class of "sklandrausis" in Alsunga



Žibgrava nature trail



GROBIŅA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

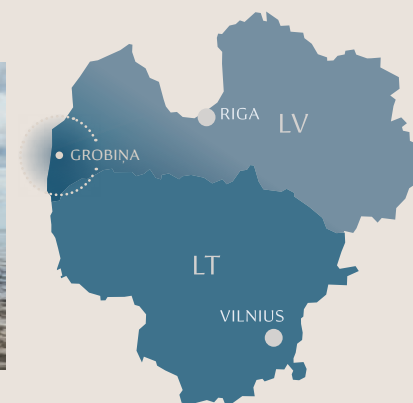
Grobiņa became a Curonian settlement during the first few centuries after the birth of Christ. The name in Curonian means “forest of hornbeams,” and it is the oldest populated place in Latvia to be described in written documents. Sources from the 9th century mention it as Seeburg, or “Sea Castle” or “Lake Castle”. Until the 7th century, the population around Grobiņa was sparse, and it represented the northern boundary of Curonian territory. The centre for Curonians was the Vārtāja hillfort and settlement. From the 7th to the 11th century, however, Grobiņa became a major trade centre in the Eastern Baltic region, as well as part of the Northern European distance trade network.

Grobiņa has much evidence of the presence of Vikings from Scandinavia, who were an inviolable component in Europe until the mid-11th century – travelling, pillaging, trading. Alongside the Curonians, moreover Grobiņa is the place where the oldest known colony of Scandinavian migrants was found on the south-western shore of the Baltic Sea. It is evident that between 650 and 850, Curonians and Scandinavians co-existed peacefully in the region. Thus archaeological digs in Grobiņa have yielded unique evidence of interaction among various societies and cultures between the 7th and the 9th century in the Balti Sea region.

Present-day Grobiņa, Liepāja, Durbe and Pāvilosta were part of the ancient Curonian Piemare land. The two main centres were in Grobiņa and Durbe. In a 1253 agreement between the Kurzeme bishopric and the Order of Livonia, the land was split into two and was no longer presented as a geographic unit. The southern part, with hillforts at Grobiņa and Vārtāja went to the order, while the northern part, with the hillforts at Saka and Dzintre, were taken over by the bishopric.



Photo: Kristers Reinis



32. NATURE TRAIL AND KAYAKING ROUTE "RĪVA RIVER CIRCLES"

The Rīva River has been a border between territories in historical terms. During the Curonian era, the ancient land of Piemare bordered with Bandava at the place where the Rīva River inflows in the North. Although you will not find a sign pointing to the trail alongside the highway, it is easy to find. Follow markings to the Ulmale-Labragas Lutheran Church, where you will find the start of the trail marked with a special sign. The route will take you away from the sea and wind up and down the beautiful ancient valley of the lower reaches of the river. The Rīva flows in a canyon-type ditch which is as much as 12 m deep. You will see endless curves and cliffs. There will be colourful views of nature and of the diversity of flora. If you luck out, you will spot a kingfisher or a black stork. The river is more appropriate for kayaking during the spring and the autumn.



- GPS** Lat: 56.97027, Lon: 21.34781
- ↔ *First stretch 3 km (one direction), second stretch 3 km (one direction), third stretch 2 km (one direction)*
- |⊗ *Point-to-point*
- *Marked with a green stripe on first stretch and a green dot on trees the second. The third stretch is not marked. Just follow the river bank*
- 👣 *Trodden path*



📍 *The Ulmale-Labragas Lutheran church*



33. PIŅŅI BOWL ROCK OF ULMALE

Bowl rocks are one of the most common ancient cult objects that have come to our era. They help to understand the specific spiritual ideas of the Curonians. The Piņņi bowl rock is the best known cylindrical bowl rock in Latvia. It is a unique monument to archaeology, and it has the artificial bowl depression. This is typical of cultural and historical rocks. Donations used to be placed into the depression. The literature tells us that it was also known as God's rock and a sacrificial rock. The bowl rock also has traditional ruts on the sides that are 3-4 cm broad and up to 1,5 cm deep. There are 46 of them in all.



📍 *70 m to the west of the Jaunuzoli homestead, Ulmale*
GPS Lat: 56.931716, Lon: 21.281333



34. TASTINGS OF SMOKED FISH AT PĀVILOSTA

Pāvilosta is located in a place where the ancient Curonian Piemare port was. For time eternal, Curonians were fishermen who sailed into the sea and brought home huge catches of fish. This ancient job and the traditions of smoking fish have been inherited by present-day people. You can enjoy freshly smoked fish and try your own hand at the process if you wish. You'll learn how to smoke flounder, herring or lamprey. It is said that during the early Middle Ages, Curonians enjoyed 25 different types of seafood, but the ones that were smoked depended on the weather and the catch which the fishermen brought home. During the Iron age, locals used various



types of fishing poles, as well as night-time lines which did not require constant monitoring, but which also brought in great catches of fish. If you are feeling adventurous, your hosts will take you on a boat ride into the sea. You'll be able to feel as if you are a mariner, and you will be able to catch some fish to smoke when you get back on shore.

📍 *"Zvilnis" weekend home, Smilšu Street 17, Pāvilosta*
GPS Lat: 56.89118, Lon: 21.18681










35. MEDZE BEACH FOOTPATH

There are two Curonian hillforts near Medze – the Medze hillfort and the Mātra (Kalnmaļi) hillfort. Both of them were established on the ancient shores of the Littorina Sea. Both hills have eroded and are covered with trees. That means that they are not visually attractive, because they are at a place in which archaeological landscapes are outstanding in terms of the beautiful landscape, which fits into the appearance of the ancient and steep shores of the sea. You can enjoy this beauty at the beach near Medze, where a convenient wooden footpath has been installed. There is a viewing platform and a set of beach chairs if you wish to take a load off.



-  "Liedagi" leisure location
- GPS** Lat: 56.62470 Lon: 21.03591
-  0,15 km (one way)
-  Point-to-point
-  None, but the path is easy to follow
-  Wooden boardwalk





36. GREAT ROCK OF KAPSĒDE AND THE ODZIŅU CUPMARKED STONE

The impressive rock at Kapsēde is distinguished by the fact that part of it has split apart. A legend tells us that the devil stole the rock from the castle of Thunder, but Thunder caught him and split the rock apart with lightning. Another legend tells us that it was a little old man who transported the rock in a cart. During the trip a thunderstorm arose, the old man was scared, and he dropped the rock. It measures 5,8 m in length, 3,2 m in width and 4,3 m in height. The circumference is 16,20 m. It is known that part of the rock was used in the early 20th century to produce gravel. Previously it was even larger than the three parts which remain today.

Five kilometres from the rock is another important rock of cultural and historical importance. It is the ancient Odziņu cupmarked stone, which contains many cupmarks that were dug into the rock during rituals that occurred during the Bronze Age. Most of the stones of this type are found in Estonia (more than 1750). Lithuania has a few more than 30, while 90 have been found in Latvia, 50 of them in Kurzeme. Historians believe that cupmarked stones relate to Finno-Ugric tribes, but because several of the ancient cupmarked stones are found near important and long-populated Curonian hillforts, there is reason to believe that the Curonians were aware of the stones, respected them, and perhaps used them. Both rocks are easy to reach, and brown signs along the Grobiņa-Ventspils highway point to them.



-  Great rock of Kapsēde – Medze Parish
- GPS** Lat: 56.58674 Lon: 21.10868
-  Odziņu cupmarked stone – Medze Parish
- GPS** Lat: 56.62669 Lon: 21.126309



Great rock of Kapsēde








37. DURBE HILLFORT TRAIL

This path leads along the hillfort and the local pond. The hillfort has a memorial stone commemorating the victory of the Samogitians over the crusades. It was brought from Samogitia to the hillfort in honour of the 750th anniversary of the victory in 1259. The win over the Germans also led to a rebellion among Semigallians. Order Master Hornhusen gathered a large military force of drafted home guards from the Estonian, Curonian and Ancient Prussian tribes, as well as from Germany. The Samogitians learned that the Germans were planning to attack Lithuania, so they invaded Kurzeme and won a great booty, including a number of prisoners of war. The two armies met at the place where the Trumpe River flows into Lake Durbe, and before the battle, the Curonians demanded the Order master the return of women, children and property that had been captured by the Samogitians if they were to triumph in battle. When the Order master refused to agree to this, the Curonians and Estonians withdrew from the battlefield, and the Samogitians defeated the German Order. The master himself fell, as did some 150 knights, as well as numerous Danish vassals who had been brought in from Estonia to help with the fight. After the battles at Durbe, the Order had to conquer Kurzeme anew.

The Durbe hillfort also contains the ruins of a castle which the Germans built there in the 14th century. The yard was surrounded by a high wall, remnants of which are still in place. The surface of the hillfort today has a viewing platform. The trail is appropriate for people in a wheelchair with an assistant.

While in Durbe, don't miss the bird-watching tower on the banks of Lake Durbe (Lat. 56.59782, Long. 21.34384).



-  Car park by the Durbe Museum
- GPS** Lat: 56.58979, Lon: 21.36563
-  1,8 km
-  Loop
-  None, but the path is easy to follow
-  Wooden boardwalk, gravel road, paving stones



 During the summer

The viewing tower:
          

an accessible resting area at Lake Durbe

38. IDOL HILL OF DIŽLĀŅI



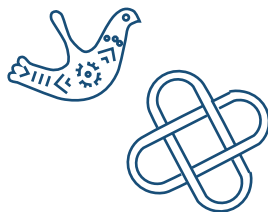
There are several sacred locations in Kurzeme, including so-called Idol hills. Some of them are in the proximity of Curonian hillforts. This is a tradition that is also widespread in Lithuania.

The best-known idol hills in Kurzeme are at Dunāka, Durbe, Gavieze, Asīte, Gramzda, Dižlāņi, Vērgale, the Saulītēnu ancient site, the Aizviķi hillfort, and the Kazdanga Roņu church hillock. These sites differ from hillforts in that they are quite flat and with several access points. Defence of territory was never their primary function.

Today the idol hill at Dižlāņi has the ruins of a two-story brick building (a former prayer chapel for the von Keiserling family). The family's graveyard is also found here with gravestones made of granite and cast iron.

 *Vecpils, Vecpils Parish*

GPS *Lat: 56.6238, Lon: 21.4865*



39. "CĪRUĻI" BRANCH OF THE RIGA ZOO



"Cīruļi" offers a look at 38 species of wild animals, as well as 12 species of domesticated animals. Of particular pride for the branch are the blue cows of Latvia, which are unusual and related to lots of legends and stories. There is a cosy web of pathways here which will make a visit very enjoyable for entire families. That's in part because visitors can get very close to the animals.

 *"Cīruļi", Kalvene Parish*

GPS *Lat: 56.57163, Lon: 21.60991*

 *rigazoo.lv/lv/filiale-ciruļi*



40. "CURONIAN VIKING SETTLEMENT" ACTIVE TOURISM CENTRE



The Ālande River valley was used by ancient Vikings to sail their ships into Lake Piemare. Today there is an active tourism centre, "Curonian Viking Settlement" there. It offers an excellent review of how Curonians lived during the early Middle Ages. Visitors can dress up in Viking costumes, hear various legends, and have a good time with family and friends. There is an informative tour involving a copy of a Curonian longboat. It sails down the Ālande River, which was of great importance during the late Iron Age. During the trip, guests will learn about the legends that relate to the river and to the noble Skābarži hill, where the Seeburg castle (Jūrpils) once rose. Visitors can also take a test related to the Curonian Vikings – a complex programme that involves five old-time games related to the mind, the body and the spirit, as well as a night-time mystery called SEEBURG.

 *Pīlādžu Street 3, Grobiņa*

GPS *Lat: 56.53406 Lon: 21.15124*

 *www.grobinasvikingi.lv*





Ālande trail






41. ĀLANDE RIVER PARK TRAIL

This trail weaves along the curves of the Ālande River and through the town of Grobiņa. All along the route you will find information stands which will tell you about the history of the town. You will pass the local hillfort, old town and historical graveyard. The park and the trail are appropriate for people who walk or ride bikes. It will also be fine for parents with prams or people in a wheelchair with an assistant. The park can also be enjoyed by boating down the Ālande.


The Grobiņa archaeological ensemble consists of several monuments from the same period. You will find the Grobiņa hillfort (also known as the Skābaržu hill), the old city, the ancient Priediena graveyard, the ancient Atkalnu graveyard, and the ancient Smukumu graveyard, and the ancient Porānu (Pūrānu) graveyard. All of these are close together in Grobiņa and its immediate surroundings. Material items that have been found during archaeological digs in the region are displayed at museums in Liepāja, Riga and St Petersburg. These monuments in Grobiņa help one to imagine what life was like here more than 1000 years ago.

The ancient graveyards and hillforts that are found in Grobiņa and its surroundings can conjure up a true Medieval landscape that will excite true lovers of history of any age. The archaeological ensemble at Grobiņa is listed in the Latvian register of UNESCO World Heritage sites, which is the first step in winning global recognition as such a site.



-  Ruins of the Livonian Order castle in Grobiņa
- GPS** Lat: 56.53513, Lon: 21.16260
-  2,75 km (one way)
-  Point-to-point
-  None, but the path is easy to follow
-  Wooden boardwalk, gravel path, trodden pathway

-       
-       

 During the summer season (the site is accessible, but not specifically adapted)



The Grobiņa archaeological ensemble


42. LIEPĀJA MUSEUM

This is one of the largest municipal museums in Latvia and an important storer and promoter of Latvia's national cultural heritage. The museum houses numerous unique exhibits, including a picture stone from Scandinavia. It is a stone plate with an etched illustration that was found in the ancient graves of Priediens and has been dated to the 7th Century AD. There are also Curonian antiquities, most of which were found in and around Grobiņa. They speak to Viking travels and their interaction with local tribes such as the Curonians on the Eastern Baltic coastline. Archaeological evidence also shows that Scandinavians, Curonians and, perhaps, other tribes co-existed, but there is no evidence to suggest that the Vikings were the rulers of the region. This was atypical of their approach back in the day. The pride and

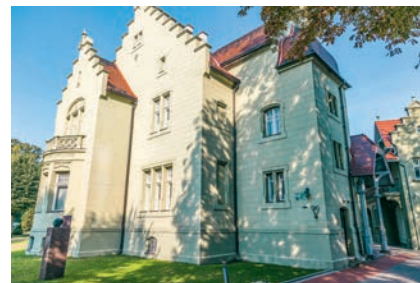


joy of the Liepāja Museum are items of the fire graveyard that was typical of the elite of Curonian warriors during the 12th and 13th centuries. It had been discovered close to the "Diri" homestead in Durbe, and archaeologists found a wealth of items there – axes, horse tackle decorated with silver, ends of spears, swords and even a local armoured helmet which could have been afforded only by commanders or the most outstanding warriors. It is supposed that some of the Curonians who fell during the Battle of Durbe in 1260 were buried here.



-  Kūrmāja Street 16, Liepāja
- GPS** Lat: 56.510860 Lon: 21.002270
-  www.liepajasmuzejs.lv

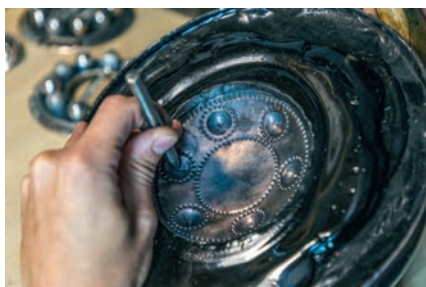
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43. LIEPĀJA CRAFTS HOUSE



The Curonians were skilled craftsmen, working with wood and metal to produce jewellery and ceramicware. Craftsmen in Liepāja today have adapted various skills from the past to create modern objects of art which are based on the traditions of the region. Visitors will find master artists who will disclose the secrets of their work so that visitors can sense the traditions and skills that have been developed over the course of centuries. You will see various masterpieces, including the world's longest necklace made of amber, which was important to the Curonians. The necklace weighs more than 19 kg and is 123 m in length, and the people of Liepāja donated bits of the stone to produce it. There are 16 craftsmen at the Liepāja craftsmen's house, and in 2011 they set up an organisation, "Saiva," aimed at preserving and popularising crafts in the region, as well as the unique nature of the art that is produced here. You will meet specialists in weaving, sewing of folk costumes, textile mosaics, jewellery-making, candle-making, weaving with reeds, processing of amber, and working with leather, ceramics and yarn. This will be of interest to anyone who likes to work with his or her own hands, irrespective of the visitor's age.



Dārza Street 4/8, Liepāja

GPS Lat: 56.5073, Lon: 21.01716



44. BERNĀTI NATURE PARK



The Bernāti nature park and its seashore dune forest are special because of the terrain. This is one of the greatest treasures of Southern Kurzeme. The park has 7 educational paths with more than 150 environmental objects including sculptures, pergolas, a viewing tower, frames for landscapes, etc. These objects reveal the heritage of antiquity – written characters, as well as stories about Southern Kurzeme and Nīca. Each path is devoted to a specific god or goddess from Latvian mythology – the Sun, Laima, God, Thunder, Jumītis, Māra and the Moon. Each path starts and ends with specific symbols and gates. Each is different and encourages different feelings and activities. The longest path is the one that is devoted to the goddess Māra (1,4 km) and it also has the most beautiful landscapes and terrain. The path dedicated to Laima is the central one and weaves throughout the park. The Sun path involves lots of sandy dunes and a viewing tower that is in the form of a boat. Take the Moon path if you wish to swing, or the Jumītis path if you want to cross a bridge and pass through two impressive wooden figures of Curonians, each standing some 5 m high. There are two Thunder paths,



each at its own end of the park. This symbolises two flashes of lightning. Finally, the God path is the shortest, but mightiest of the paths, because it is in a valley between two high dunes. The path has two benches where visitors can sit down, think about what they have seen, and enjoy the mightiness of this place.



Car park by the "Dzintariņš" café

GPS Lat: 56.37890, Lon: 20.98590

Varying lengths

Loop

Directional signs

Wooden boardwalk, trodden path





A TRADITIONAL RECIPE:

BARLEY BUNS WITH BACON SAUCE

Ingredients:

Barley (or rye) flour
 Half a pig's head
 (if not, then butter to grease the pan)
 Smoked pork
 Sweet cream, soured cream
 Salt

Create a dough involving the barley flour and the bullion from boiling the pig's head. Stir and knead until it is smooth, adding a bit of salt. If you have no bullion, add butter. Form small loaves and boil them in the bullion (or in water). Keep boiling until they are ready.

You can eat the buns with the pig's head or prepare a bacon sauce. Cut the smoked pork into cubes and bake it in a pan, adding sweet and soured cream in equal amounts and salt to taste. Pour this sauce over the buns.



SPECIAL ADVENTURE

Horseback riding at "Stiebrīni"
 "Stiebrīni", Pāplaka, Virga Parish

Contact the venue in advance:
 +371 26534780, kanuatvars@inbox.lv

Horseback and pony riding, rides in competition carts along the Virga River and the Prūši reservoir, educational tours for groups for anyone who wishes to slowly learn about the area around the Pāplaka train station and its history. The tours are offered in carts or sleighs, and visitors will hear some of the many, many stories that are told along the "trail of stories about horses".

The "Virzas" ceramics workshop
 "Virzas", Pāplaka, Virga Parish
www.virzas.lv

Contact the venue in advance:
 +371 26534381, martinscukurs@inbox.lv

Try your hand at the potter's wheel, work with gypsum moulds, or simply make interesting things. The owners will also help you to learn how to paint dishware. Classes take an hour or two, after which you can relax alongside a campfire or tour the local area. Unique clay products are for sale.

The "Godiņu Adventure Platform" active leisure park
 Saraiķu Liepkalni, Vērgale Parish
 +371 29706803, www.adventuretime.lv

Enjoy tasty foods cooked on a campfire, as well as green tea with local honey. You can sit by the fire or walk through the forest while listening to music which Āris Godiņš will play on a wooden flute that he made himself. Bicycles and tents are available to rent.



SOUVENIRS

Jūras Rotas in Pāvilosta
 f Jurasrotas
 +371 29401273

Ziemeļu KultūrBode
 f KultūrBode
 +371 26338229

Liepāja Tourism Information Centre and South Kurzeme County tourism information centres at Pāvilosta and Ziemeļu.



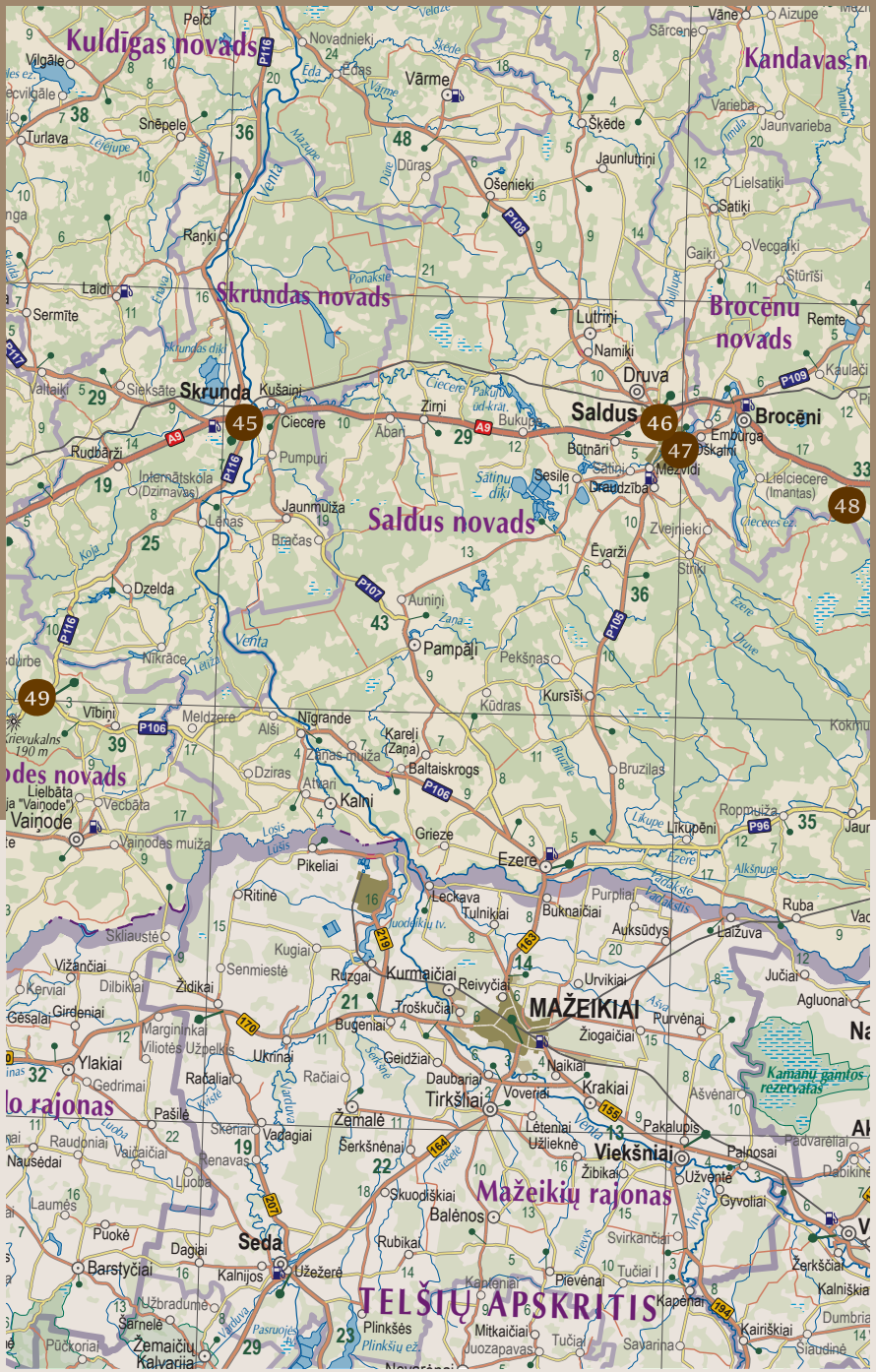
TASTY TREATS

Martas kiosks
 Lielā Street 56A, Grobiņa
 f Martas-Kiosks
 +371 26197185

Homemade products in Grobiņa

"Saiva" farm, Pāvilosta
 f @pavilostasnegis
 Smoked fish during the summer.
 Baked and smoked lampreys during the winter.
 Master classes on preparing lampreys.





SALDUS, SKRUNDA, EMBŪTE, and PRIEKULE

This is land once populated by Curonians and known as the “land between Skrunda and Zemgale”. Today it is more or less the area of the Saldus County. The territory was first mentioned in writing in 1230, though it was not named in any of the ancient chronicles that were written at that time. It is known that during the 1230s, a legate from the pope in Rome was in the area. Balduin of Alna conducted negotiations with the primary rulers of Kurzeme at the time about the establishment of a Kurzeme bishopric that would be subject to the direct control of the pope. The agreement was concluded in 1230, and it applied to the land between Skrunda and Zemgale, as well as nine Curonian territories or “lands” such as Ventava, Bandava, Piemare, etc. Little is known about the social and political structure of the Curonian “lands”, but it is clear that they were quite independent and based on a high level of militarisation among free citizens. This can be seen in terms of the number of weapons that were buried along with people during the 12th and the 13th centuries.

“The proud Curonians
Just loved to go to war,
Because adventure was never far.”

The agreements concluded between the papal legate and the Curonians spoke to nearly full independence (apart from the fact that the Curonians were expected to convert to Catholicism, understand their subordination before the pope, and go to war against pagans). The Livonian Order wanted to hear nothing of this, and it went to war, because the subordination of Kurzeme to the pope would have split it off from other parts of Livonia. It is thought that the centre of the land between Skrunda and Zemgale was at Saldus, where weapons characteristic of the Curonians have been found. Saldus (*Salden*) was mentioned in writing in 1253 when the territory was taken over by the Livonian Order.



45. SKRUNDA WALKING TRAIL ALONG THE VENTA



The **Skrunda hillfort** is on the bank of the Venta River, and it is a popular destination among local residents and tourists. There is a stage on the hillfort, and stretching around it is a park with stylised wooden chairs made by sculptor Ģirts Burvis of Curonian men ("koniņi") who once independently governed in their villages. There are lots of legends about the hillfort, including one about secret underground passageways and one about a ghostly woman known as "Vārava of the Venta," who supposedly turns up only once per century. The trail along the hillfort allows hikers to enjoy the beauty of the surrounding nature, including birds and the gentle flow of the Venta. There are benches, places



for leisure and campfires, and several stopping points which offer a lovely view of the Kurzeme landscape. There is also a barefoot path along.



- Car park by the Skrunda stage, Saldus Street 23, Skrunda
- GPS** Lat: 56.67338, Lon: 22.02398
- 1,6 km
- Loop
- Directional signs
- Gravel path



46. SILDUS HILLFORT



The lovely Saldus hillfort is on the shore of Lake Saldus, and the Bijļu hill that is alongside it offers a terrific view of the hillfort. There is a large car park nearby. The hillfort dates back to the early Iron Age and was populated during the 12th century. There has been agriculture in the area from the very beginning, and so there is no cultural layer for archaeologists to explore. The viewing area on Bijļu hill also offers a chance to take excellent photographs of the letters that make up the name of Saldus. That is a popular tourist destination. Fans of the



Lake Ciecere viewing tower



landscape are also encouraged to visit the nearby **Lake Ciecere** viewing tower, which is on an artificial reef on the shore of the lake. It stands 30 m high.



- Hillfort: Saldus
- GPS** Lat: 56.67093, Lon: 22.5117397
- Lake Ciecere viewing tower
- GPS** Lat: 56.6567291, Lon: 22.5528831

- At the leisure location at Lake Saldus
- In Brocēni by Lake Ciecere



47. "SAULES LIETAS" POTTERY



The "Saules lietas" pottery is in the cellar of the Kapelleru House, and ceramicist Dita Zagorska produces various kinds of clay dishware on the basis of traditions and knowledge about various periods in history. The ancient Curonians

made clay dishware, but theirs, unlike those of other Balts' tribes such as the Lettigalians, were very simple and without much design. You can buy black ceramics made by a different masters at the pottery and learn how to work with clay. In the yard is the kiln for the ceramics, and there are regular public events for the opening of the kiln to feel the practical aspects of this ancient craft. The practical activities will be of interest to everyone irrespective of age and skill level.



- Kapelleru House, Striķu Street 7, Saldus
- GPS** Lat: 56.66506, Lon: 22.49458



48. "KĀRES" BEEKEEPING SITE



There were thousands of beehives in ancient Kurzeme, and the ancient Curonians gathered honey as a natural sweetener. The ancient hive is an artificial hole in the trunk of a tree 2 to 4 m above ground. Well-known beekeeper Jānis Vainovskis has more than 20 years of experience and has a travelling operation which transfers some 300 communities of bees each season and several times – from forest to meadow, from meadow to pasture, from pasture

to swamp and forest. Bees start to gather honey in April, when the first buds appear. They travel along fields of dandelions and alleys of linden trees until the heather of the autumn. Thus the ancient traditions continue and are updated. The "Kāres" beekeeping site, for instance, is particularly proud of honey with berries. This is a product that is made with special technologies in that the berries are not pasteurised or cooked. This preserves their nutrition, colour, taste and aroma. "Kāres" offers tastings and purchase of products, as well as a chance to learn beekeeping skills that are centuries old. Everyone will enjoy this sweet process!



- "Kāres", Blīdene Parish
- GPS** Lat: 56.64019, Lon: 22.69121





49. ANCIENT EMBŪTE RIVER VALLEY



The region around Embūte has lots of hills and landscapes. It used to be the site of one of the mightiest Curonian hillforts, which was part of the Bandava land. The ancient river valley covers some 4 km, and a nice nature trail weaves through it. This is seen as an old sacred area with lots of legends and stories. The entrance is symbolised by a stylised gate involving two Curonian swords. According to legend, Curonian leader Indulis and his friend Pūdiķis left a sword and a shield on either side of the road to protect it because it led to the ancient Embūte valley and the Jods ditch. The swords create a mystical mood and continue to point to the presence of noble Curonians in the ancient valley. The legend says that Jods (Devil) himself helped to protect the hillfort by dropping a protective barrier in front of it. It is known as the Dam of Jods today. The nature trail will

offer you a look at former manors and the ruins of a German crusader castle as well. You will see the ruins of a church, the Curonian swords, wooden sculptures of Indulis and Ārija, a viewing tower, the aforementioned Dam of Jods, the valley, a stone which supposedly has a footprint of the Devil, the stream of the hillfort, the Curonian or Indulis hillfort, as well as the watermill on the local pond.




 **Embūte Tourism Information Centre**

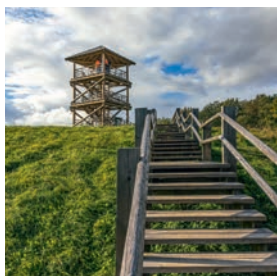
GPS Lat: 56.50560, Lon: 21.81922

 3 km

 Loop

 **Indications toward the Dam of Jods, after which the trail is easy to follow**

 **Trodden path, stairs**



SOUVENIRS

“Rūķu istaba” crafts store
Striķu Street 14, Saldus
+371 26423495

“Amatnieku namiņš” shop
Raiņa Street 5, Vaiņode
+371 29196937

This little shop is a matter of the heart for its owner. It is a place where homemade products from local craftspeople from Vaiņode and the surrounding area can be sampled and purchased.

TASTY TREATS

Tasting of pea dishes
Zirņi Parish, Saldus County
+371 28878917

The “Riekstkodis” organisation in the Zirņi Parish offers research into traditional culinary heritage under the leadership of Edīte Zusmane. Guests will have a chance to taste all kinds of dishes which involve peas – soups, pancakes, dessert, as well as snacks such as sweet and salty pea sticks, buns with peas, pea pate and pea pierogi. Contact the venue in advance.

“Saldalus” brewery
Striķu Street 65, Saldus
www.saldalus.lv

“Saldalus” is one of the smallest breweries in Latvia, with traditionally brewed tasty, strong and living beer (5 types). All of the work is done by hand, and the owner put together all of the necessary equipment himself. Small groups can contact the brewery in advance for tours with tastings of beer, as well as individually planned events. Contact the venue in advance. Tours are available from late April until October



“Saules lietas” pottery





Vaiņode bakery
Brīvības Street 2, Vaiņode
+371 29173989

Here you will find bread and other delicacies baked with much love in a large wood-fired bread oven. The lady of the bakery will offer you a tour, as well as practical activities for families and groups of schoolchildren who will enjoy the process of kneading the bread and then tasting the final product. Dining is available for groups which contact the baker in advance. Please contact it in advance for tours, as well.



SPECIAL ADVENTURES

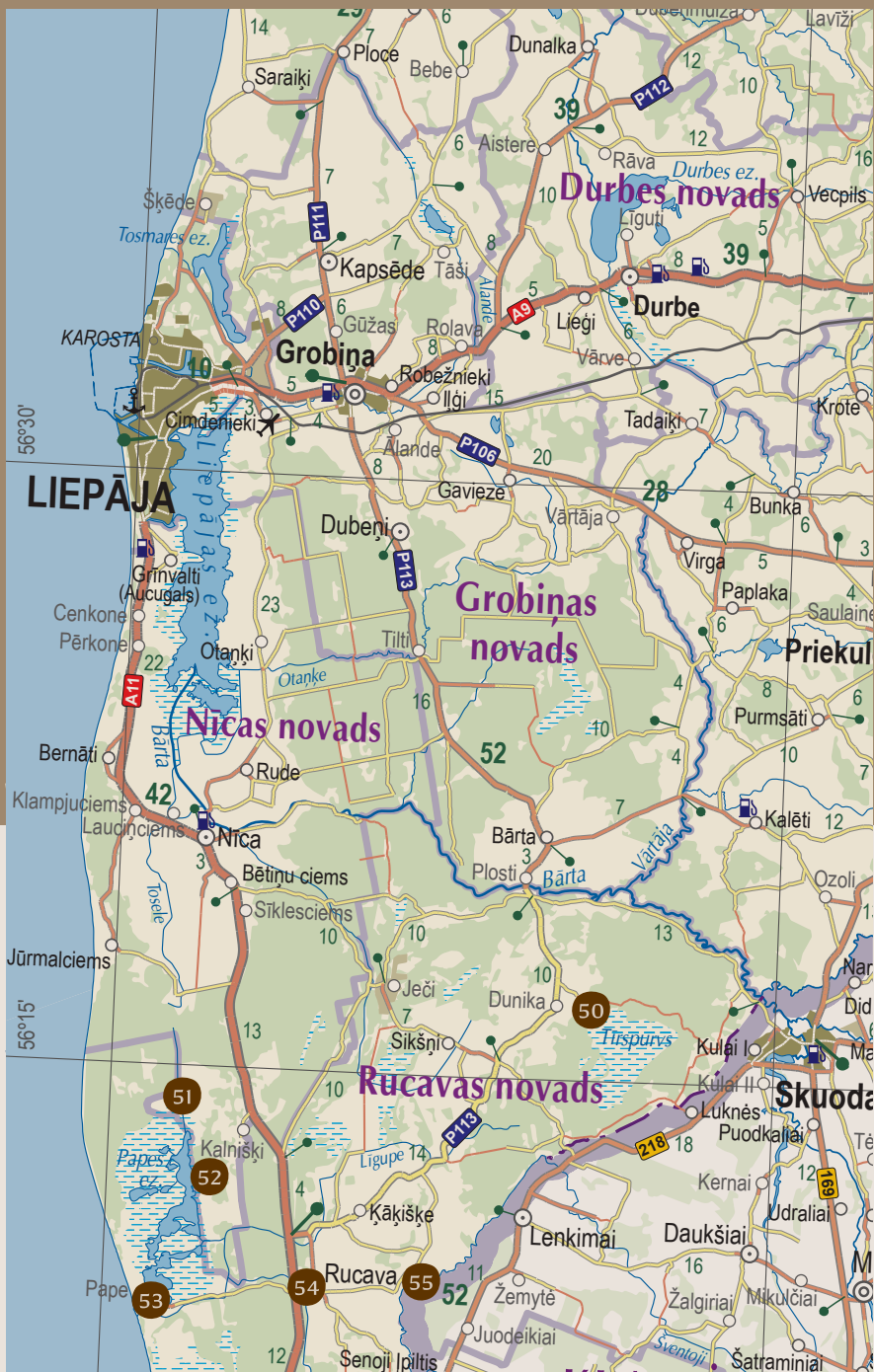
An ancient Viking campsite
in the Lutriņi Parish
GPS 56.738170, 22.425797
+371 26268883, +371 25423324

The "Wirsaitis" organisation offers young people a way in which to spend time full of content outdoors and in the area of forests. People learn more about the environment and history, as well as survival skills such as lighting a campfire, using a bow and arrow or an air gun, or throwing axes in a special area. Guests are welcome to spend the night camping in the area. There are various workshops such as leather jewellery making, wax candle pouring or antique torch making. Young people are encouraged to compete in sack races and other outdoor games. There is space for leisure and campfires at the camp.



An ancient Viking campsite





RUCAVA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Rucava has a wealth of traditional cultural heritage. It, Nica, Dunika and Pape are found in the ancient territory of Duvzare in the Curonian lands, and it was populated by Curonians during the late first millennium BC. These were sailors, warriors, farmers, fishermen and craftsmen. Duvzare covered 400 km² of land, including parts of present-day Priekule and Lithuania. The name of Rucava was mentioned in writing for the first time in 1253, when the land of Duvzare was split up between the Kurzeme bishopric and the German order. The territory has lots of coastline meadows, swamps and forests, and visitors will be able to renew their sense of balance with the nature which provided the Curonians with their strength and their everyday lives. The Pape nature park has a long coastline, Lake Pape, wild horse pastures, the Nida swamp and the village of Ķorņa, all offer the temptations of outdoor adventures so that people can sense the interaction among nature, animals and people. The Dunika swamp is 7000 years old and has experienced the age of the Curonians. Take a slow stroll there to enjoy the magic of comparatively untouched nature. The rhythms of nature were the cornerstone for the everyday lives of Curonians, and the sense of balance inspired their spirit and increased their strength.










50. DUNIKA SWAMP TRAIL

The Dunika swamp is also known as Tirspurvs swamp. It is one of the largest and most beautiful moss swamps in Kurzeme, and you can go on a gentle stroll along the longest swamp trail in Latvia. The swamp has cultural and historical knowledge, because archaeologists found a deposit of unique Curonian artefacts dating back to the 9th century. There were two shields made of fir boards, which suggests that there were battles in the region. Archaeologists also found elements of men's apparel, including a cape, a hood and some stockings. These were of great importance in tracing the history of apparel in the Eastern Baltic region. To the south of the Dunika swamp is a unique stand of hornbeam, which is the only place in Latvia with a large stand of white or common hornbeams. The stand covers 11 ha, and you will get the sense that you are not in Latvia, but instead in some part of Central Europe where there are similar hornbeam forests. To the south-east of the Dunika swamp is a small populated area, Lukne. There are two cupmarked stones nearby which were close to the former Lukne semi-manor and are a few hundred metres from the border between Latvia and Lithuania. The surface of these two

important cultural and historic stones show evidence that ancient people created spherical cupmarks in the stone. Today Lukne is in southern Kurzeme and most remote, but the ancient locations that were discovered in 2006 suggest that people lived there 2000 years ago or so. This stroll will be appreciated by people young and old, and that is because of the unusual beauty of the surrounding swamp. You may have a bit of trouble at the centre of the trail because the wooden boardwalk is in poor condition (some of the boards have rotted or been broken). Please be careful and watch your step. You can come back via the same route or go around the swamp along a gravel road. There are guides in the area, and if you hire one, you can also cross the swamp with swamp shoes.


-  **Start:** The northern end of the wooden boardwalk
- GPS** Lat: 56.28120, Lon: 21.38282
-  5 km (one way)
-  Out-and-back
-  No, but the trail is easy to find
-  Wooden boardwalk, trodden path

51. SACRIFICIAL ROCK AT EZERSKOLA

This rock is of cultural and historical importance, and it may also be mythological. It has a circumference of 8,6 m, and the legend is that a **holy stand of birch trees** was nearby. Today people often drop coins on the surface of the rock. Nearby is a noble linden tree which has been damaged by the wind, but it has a circumference of 5,15 m. It is sometimes known as a



sacrificial linden tree. Very close to the rock and on the shore of Lake Pape by the Kalnišķi stream is an usual **bird blind** which is accessed via a wooden boardwalk. It is something like a Japanese pagoda. During the autumn, patient bird-watchers will be able to spot nearly all bird species that are found in Latvia.

-  Nīca Parish
- GPS** Lat: 56.22635, Lon: 21.07140
-  Bird blind
- GPS** Lat: 56.22115; Lon: 21.06281

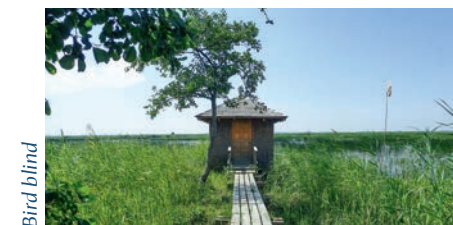


Lake Pape trail

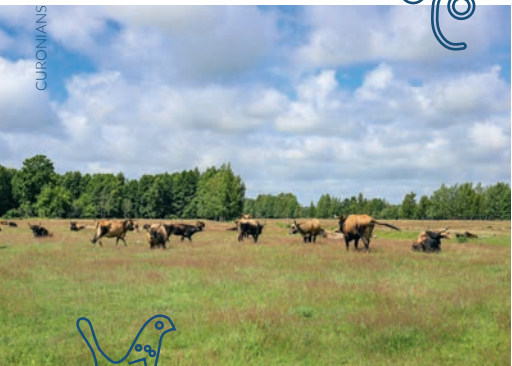
You can go on a longer hike or bike ride around Lake Pape. Along the way you will see the listed objects and many others. If you are going to be walking, choose appropriate and comfortable footwear. Depending on the season, they may be many mosquitoes and gadflies. Dress appropriately and make sure to bring insect spray with you.

Sacrificial rock at Ezerskola

-  Pape visitor centre Dzintarvēji
- GPS** Lat: 56.15066, Lon: 21.03089
-  32 km (just the trail) or 36 km (detouring to look at objects)
-  Loop
-  Poles with a white pictogram of a hiker
-  Gravel road, forest road, mowed pathway, sandy beach
-  Resting/picnic site: Lake Pape
- GPS** Lat: 56.15066, Lon: 21.03089 and at the wild horses and auroxen grazing area.



Bird blind





Wild horse and auroxen grazing

52. WILD HORSES AND AUROXEN

landscape. The lake is less than a kilometre away from the Baltic Sea. It is a lagoon-type lake that is only 0,5 m deep and is overgrown. Between the reeds you may spot two enormous rocks, and if you're feeling a sense of daring, you can wade through the shallow water to get to them. There's another massive stone in the wetland meadows that are on the eastern shore of Lake Pape, and that one used to be an object of veneration during cult rituals. Documents from the 13th century cite the holy lake of Duvzare, and it is thought that the reference may be to Lake Pape.

You can purchase tickets to visit the grazing area at the information kiosk that is at the entrance of the territory. A well-informed nature park guide will help you get right up close to the herds of horses and cattle. The tour will take approximately one hour.



-  **Wild horse and auroxen grazing area, Nica Parish**
- GPS** *Lat: 56.19242, Lon: 21.08329*
-  <https://www.pdf-pape.lv/lv/apskates-objekti/2-savvalas-zirgi-un-tauri>



Lake Pape

In ancient times, before humans began to engage in agriculture, wild horses, auroxen and bison were a common component of the landscape. The horses were 1,2 to 1,3 m tall and chubby, with a dark stripe across their backs, zebra-type stripes on their legs, and a dark mane and tail. Some wild horses could be found in the Baltic territory during the Middle Ages, but they were completely gone by the 19th century. The recovery of such horses can be attributed to a Polish professor who selected the domesticated horses which most resembled their wild ancestors and began to use their genes to adjust their essence. The first 18 wild horses were brought to the Pape nature park in 1999, and that was the first place where the animals were released into pasture. Each spring new colts are born near Lake Pape, and the number of horses is now close to 100. Wild cattle - auroxen joined the wild horses in 2004. The role of these large herbivores has been and remains essential in that this facilitates the emergence of biologically diverse meadows and supports the existence of other plants and animals.

If you visit the pasture, you can access the shores of **Lake Pape**, where you will find a truly impressive and surreal



53. ECOLOGICAL PROCESS TRAIL AND KOŅCIEMS

This nature process trail lets travellers to learn about the lower part of Lake Pape nature park with five different ecosystems – lake, meadow, forest, swamp and dune. Each stop has a story about how the natural landscape emerged from the influence of various natural processes. The path goes toward the village of Koņi and to the **Nida swamp**, which is the only one in Latvia that is so close to the Baltic Sea. It is one of the most valuable swamps in Latvia. On the west side of the swamp is a wooden boardwalk that leads to a viewing platform from which you can see the swamp. The trail then turns toward the sea and leads along the seashore along a uniquely white sand beach, going back to the Pape channel in the village of Pape.

Koņi is a true jewel in Europe, with a unique and historical fishing village that has preserved its authenticity to the present day. Groups can take tours of the village and learn more about its historical buildings. You can also learn about the placement of reed roofs, because the Curonian initiative fund regularly rebuilds historical buildings with support from grants.

The **"Vitolnieki" fishermen's** site of the Latvian Ethnographic Open-Air Museum is in Koņi and near the sea. You will








Koņi village



"Vitolnieki" fishermen's site

enjoy the sea that is an inviolable part of Curonian everyday lives. You will also enjoy the wind and sunsets. You will see historical buildings that are made of natural materials – clay, wood, rock and reed roofs which are fastened with "roosters". You will learn about tools, apparel and a one-log boat that is more than 1100 years old. The harsh coast has made the nature of Curonians stronger, and it has provided them the resources through trading, robbery and pulling a fishing rope to the coast, what can be tested by visitors today.



-  **Start:** *Dzintarvēji visitor centre in Pape*
- GPS** *Lat: 56.15066, Lon: 21.03089*
-  *9,6 km*
-  *Loop*
-  *Directional poles with yellow circles*
-  *Trodden path, gravel road, wooden boardwalk in the swamp, forest path, sandy beach*



Ecological process trail

In the Nida swamp

At "Jauntilibi" tenting facility, "Mikjāni" farm

54. "ZVANĪTĀJI" TRADITION HOUSE

The "Zvanītāji" tradition house hosts active members of the Rucava tradition club. They offer an experience with modern interpretations of traditions that have been saved by generations. Guests most often experience a traditional cultural programme titled "A Rucava Feast". Guests can sense the traditional atmosphere of celebrations and enjoy some of the traditional dishes that have been inherited since the age of the Curonians – true rye bread, sklandrauši buns (known as žograuši here), white butter with potatoes, grated potato loaves with a filling cream sauce, etc. "Zvanītāji" is a house that has its primeval appearance, with massive ceiling decorations, a large and cosy central room, a bread oven, and a natural and unpainted wooden floor. A mantel chimney is still seen in the kitchen. The items at the house were typical of farmers during the 19th century – an ancient loom, a large table, old beds, a closet, a cradle and various objects and tools used by the household. You



can also see folk costumes, mittens, socks and other products from master craftspeople. Participation in the continuation of traditions will be particularly interesting to older tourists, but it will also be worthwhile for children and young people.

..... ∨

"Zvanītāji", Rucava

GPS Lat: 56.161521, Lon: 21.161599

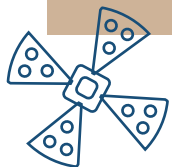
Please contact the site in advance at +371 26814051

A TRADITIONAL RECIPE:

OAT PUDDING

(a reconstructed recipe by SERDE expedition in 2021 through South Kurzeme to learn about lost foods)

Pour oat flour or oatmeal into a bowl and cover with warm water. 1 part oats, 2 parts water. Leave for 24 hours or longer in a warm place for the mass to thicken and become a bit sour. Press the mass through cheesecloth and cook on a slow fire until it is thicker. Keep stirring it so that it does not singe. Pour the mass into bowls. This can be eaten hot or cold. Add sugar, jam, butter, bacon sauce, cream or fat if you desire.



55. SVENTĀJA RIVER VALLEY TRAIL



This trail starts at the hill of the Rucava Manor, which is the highest elevation in the area. It offers a beautiful and special look at the Sventāja River valley and neighbouring Lithuania, which is right beyond the river. The hill has a comfortable and large viewing platform so that people can enjoy the grand view. During the age of the Duchy of Kurzeme (16th to 18th century) the dukes had a manor here, but only the foundations of the cellar survive. There is a dendrological park there now. Once you have enjoyed the unique view, head down the road along the Sventāja River trail. You will pass the Lejas holy stream and get to a place for leisure right at the banks of the border river. Catch your breath, take a photo at the Latvian-Lithuanian border crossing, and then head back to the hill.

The **Leju holy stream** has been known since antiquity as a cult location for Curonians. People left donations there. The Curonians tended to donate antique items that were broken. For instance, a purposeful damaged items along a ritual path or in a fire. A legend tells us that "God gave three rivers to the ancient Curonians – the Bārta, the Venta and the Sveta. A girl named leva was born in the region, and she grew up to be beautiful, hard-working and loved by everyone. A young man from the opposite side of the river wished to marry her, but in order to delay her departure, the goddess Māra ordered everyone to weep so that the Sveta River would break its banks and cross the path of a stranger to the

girl. Love conquered all, however, and the young man rowed a boat that was decorated with flowers to get to her. People's tears created a little stream that comes from the underground. A bird-cherry tree took root in the place where leva was last seen. Two nations with different languages appeared there, but the word "mīlu" (I love you) was common for both of them. The stream is also known as the Sacrificial stream, and it is a fairly large stream that is in the Sventāja valley between Latvia and Lithuania. The chemical composition of the water shows that it has a lot of iron. That is evidenced by the bright orange sediment that is found on the bed of the stream.

..... ∨

Start: Rucava Dendrological Park

GPS Lat: 56.15858, Lon: 21.22212

2,3 km

loop

No, but the path is easy to follow

Trodden path, gravel road, wooden boardwalk

Rucava Manor hill wooden boardwalk with a viewing platform



Sventāja River valley



Nidas swamp





TASTY TREATS

The "Alejas" bakery in Rucava
 f @alejasmaizesceptuve

Bread, crackers and other types of pastry baked in a wood-fired oven. A café is open during the summer, and master classes are offered.

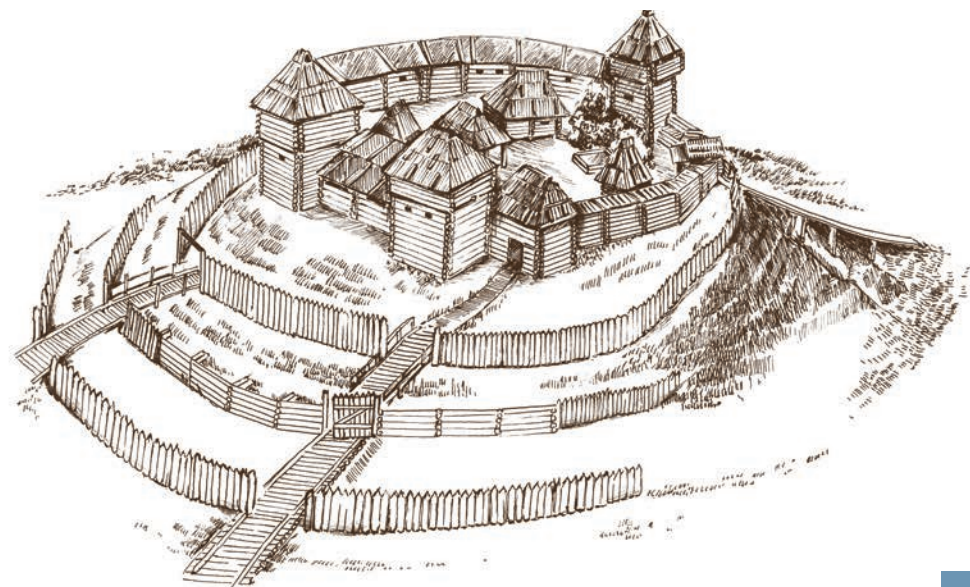
The "Oskars" fisherman's home in Jūrmalciems
 +371 26656628

Freshly smoked fish can be tasted



SOUVENIRS

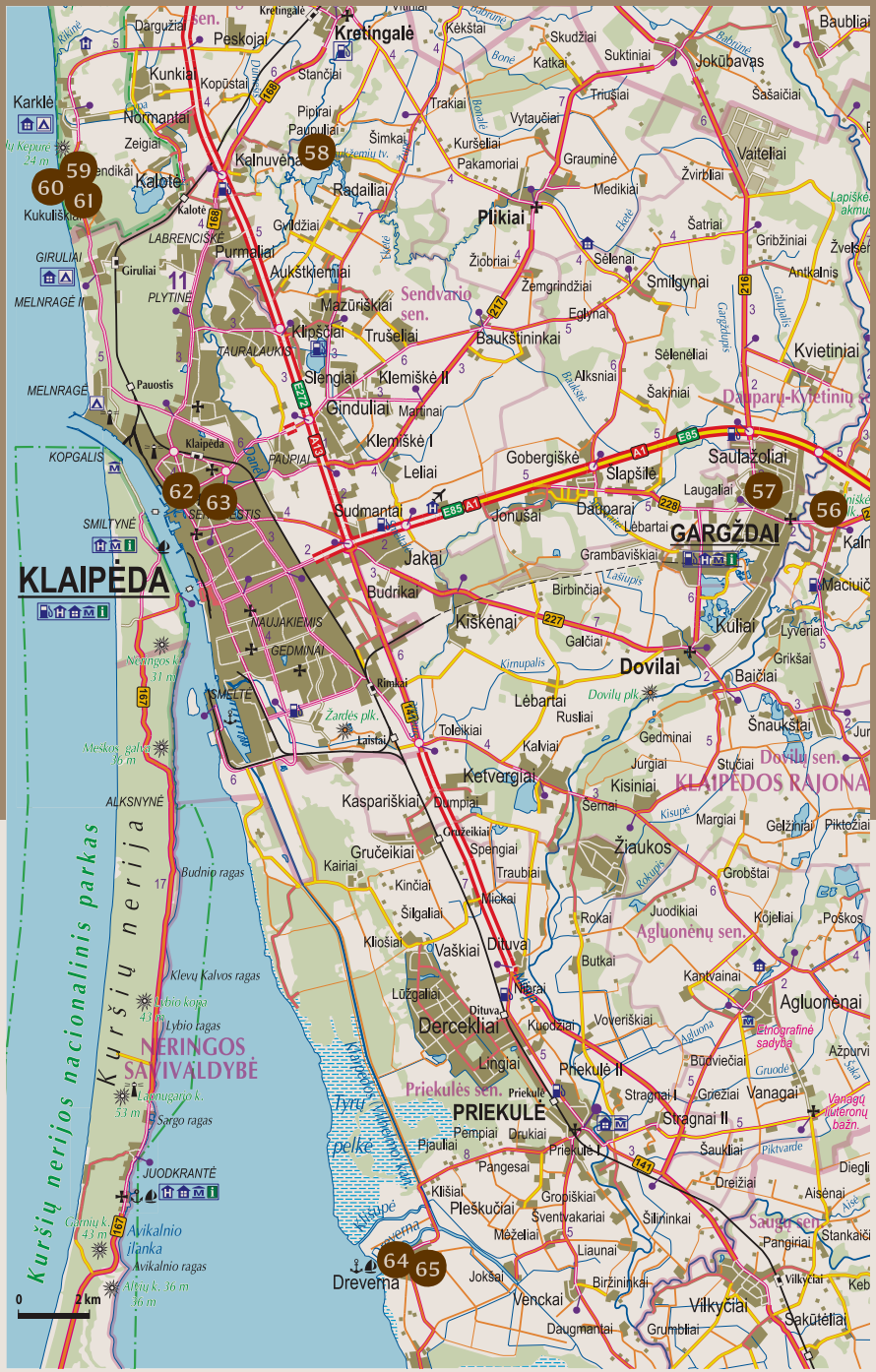
Southern Kurzeme tourist information centres in Rucava, Aizpute, Embūte, Nīca and Priekule.



HILLFORTS

The best way to learn about the locations and lifestyles of ancient Balts' tribes is to visit hillforts, which used to be heavily fortified regional centres. A hillfort is a place where our ancestors began to establish settlements. They had military functions, but were also used for meetings, trade and other socially important activities. Some hillforts had forecastles and ancient towns for people of lower classes. The buildings were mostly made of wood and clay, because the use of stone in the construction of castles only began in the 13th century. Construction of hillforts began already in the 9th or 8th century BC, but the true flourishing occurred from the 5th to the 8th century AD.

There are about 570 known hillforts in Latvia and more than 1000 in Lithuania, but new ones are discovered all the time.

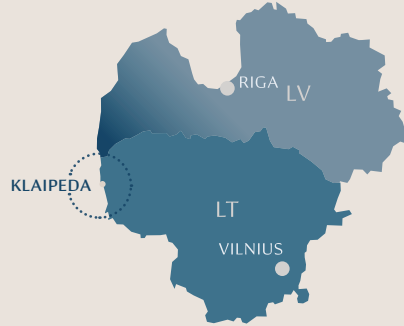


KLAIPĖDA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Klaipėda was established in the 13th century in the smallest and southernmost Curonian land – Pilsotas. The founding date is thought to be in 1252, when, on August 1, Curonian Bishop Heinrich concluded an agreement with a representative of the German Order in Livonia, Eberhart von Zeine. The agreement spoke to the construction of a castle where the Mėmel (Nemuna) and Dangė rivers flowed together. This launched several centuries of battles between Lithuanians and Germans, and Curonians from Pilsotas also joined in the fight. The castle at Klaipėda, known as Memelburg at the time, was important for the German Order and hostile to the local rulers in Lithuania. This helped to determine the dynamic history of the castle and the town. Attacks, fires, reordering, modernisation – these were everyday things at the Klaipėda castle, with local Curonians living in its environs. When the city lost its military importance many years later, the castle started to be in worse and worse shape. Its last bricks were used in Old Town buildings during the latter half of the 19th century.

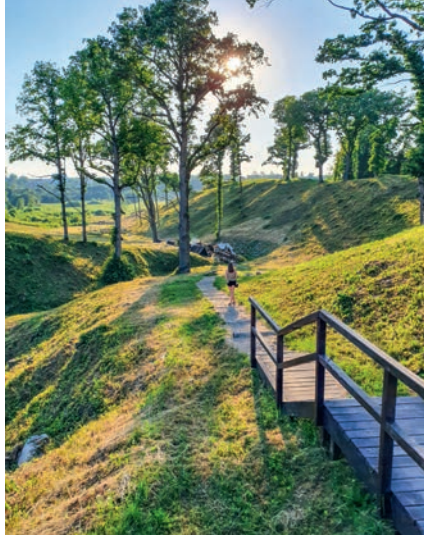
Nowadays Klaipėda is an oasis of peace, culture and creativity. You will find the town to be romantic and full of romantic discoveries about history and culture. You can stroll down the calm beach or spend active time at the sea with wind-boarding. Visit the Maritime Museum, the Clock Museum or the Castle Museum.


Gargždai is the centre of the Klaipėda district, and its history dates back to the Kalniškės hillfort near Gargždai, which was once known as Gargdsda. The castle on the hillfort was mentioned in a 1253 document when the southern parts of Courland were being divided up. The hillfort was reminiscent of the age of the Curonians. The Eketė hillfort is the largest one and probably was one of the mightiest Curonian hillforts before the appearance of Klaipėda. The hillfort was an important political, military and economic centre from the 9th to the 13th century. Another local hillfort is the wonderful Dovyliai hillfort, which is at the edge of a populated area on the banks of the Minija River. It is particularly well known because of lots of legends about Lord Dovyliai, sunken castles and vast riches. You'll learn about this Curonian territory by touring it, spending time at tourism farms, or enjoying traditional fish dishes. At Dreverna, you can take a ride on an old ship or take part in a class where you will learn all about Viking cuisine.



56. KALNIŠKĒS (GARGŽDAI) HILLFORT

The Kalniškės (Gargždai) hillfort is opposite the town of Gargždai and the Minija River valley. This speaks to the history of the town, which was first mentioned in writing in 1253. The reference was to a Curonian hillfort known as Garisda. A cascade of barriers and moats, as well as fortifications on the steep slope suggest that the hillfort was once quite mighty. Recently restored, the Kalniškės hillfort is a very attractive tourist destination, one that offers a beautiful and panoramic view of the town of Gargždai.



 Village of Kalniškės, Klaipėda District
GPS Lat: 55.71060, Lon: 21.41620



57. KLAIPĖDA DISTRICT TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE

The Klaipėda District Tourism Information Centre offers an interactive look at Curonian history, jewellery and weapons. Smart technologies allow visitors to try on Curonian costumes and to take photos of themselves therein. The photos can be downloaded to one's phone. Visitors are also invited to view a 3D animated film about the history of the town of Gargždai from the time when the territory was just a swamp to the present day. Virtual glasses will allow visitors to visit the modern Curonian village on the Kalniškės (Gargždai) hillfort.

 Kvietiniu Street 5-2, Gargždai, Klaipėda District

GPS Lat: 55.71100, Lon: 21.39964


 www.klaipedosrajonas.lt



58. EKETE HILLFORT

The Eketė hillfort was once one of the largest and mightiest Curonian hillforts of all. From the 9th to the 13th century, it was an important political, military and economic centre. The hill was protected by five manmade barriers and four moats. Beyond the fortifications was an extensive settlement. In 1972, archaeologists found various antique weapons, toys and everyday instruments that date back to the 1st to the 13th century AD. Summer Solstice celebrations are held on the hill each year.



 Sendvario sen., Klaipėda District
GPS Lat: 55.79864, Lon: 21.17844



59. CATCHING THE AMBER

Amber is calcified pine sap which has gradually fallen off of trees, spent time on sandy beaches, and eventually found itself in the sea. Baltic amber is around 50 million years old, and it is mostly found on the Kaliningrad Peninsula, the Curonian Spit and the shores of Kurzeme. Amber is not a precious stone, but it has been used since antiquity as a

bartering substance, a piece of jewellery or an amulet. It has been carved into various household tools, and amber has been used for medical treatment purposes. Our ancestors hunted for amber on the seashore, eventually using nets for that purpose. The tradition can be seen at Karklė in Lithuania, where a professional amber catcher will explain the process and share secrets about amber catching.

 Plocio Street 54, Karklė, Klaipėda District

GPS Lat: 55.80694, Lon: 21.07341



60. THERAPY AT KARKLĖ



Visitors to Karklė are welcome to try out special therapeutic procedures and educational programmes at the "Karkelbeck No. 409" homestead.

Visitors will enjoy amber and sound therapy with resonant bowls, drawing of fractals, dance movements, sound therapy, massage etc.

Please register for a visit in advance by ringing +37046 446990 or by e-mail: info@karkelbeck.lt.



 Plocio Street 10, Karklė, Klaipėda District
 GPS *Lat: 55.80173, Lon: 21.07062*
 www.karkelbeck.lt



61. DUTCHMAN'S CAP



As the ice retreated, a unique moraine pile appeared on the coast of Lithuania. Known as the Dutchman's cap, it stands 24,4 m above sea level. It is thought that the name relates to caps which Dutch sailors used to wear. The cliff offers a view of the sea, the steep shoreline and the rocky beach.

 Karklė, Klaipėda District
 GPS *Lat: 55.79830, Lon: 21.06726*



62. KLAIPĖDA CASTLE



The Klaipėda Castle is one of the oldest places in town. The town emerged from a settlement which surrounded the castle. Known as Memelburg back then, the castle was first mentioned in documents in 1252, when the master of the Livonian Order, Eberhard von Zeine,

63. "LET'S LEARN ABOUT BALTS ORNAMENTS" AT THE BLACKSMITH'S MUSEUM



The Blacksmith's Museum is meant to preserve the history and cultural monuments of the Klaipėda region. The educational programme "Let's Learn about Balts Ornaments" offers a look at antique jewellery technologies, the diversity of ornaments and their meaning. Visitors can use unprocessed brass to produce their own Curonian jewellery.

 Šaltkalviu Street 2, 2A, Klaipėda
 GPS *Lat: 55.70665, Lon: 21.13701*
 www.mlimuziejus.lt



and Curonian Bishop Heinrich agreed to build a castle between the Nemuna and Dangė rivers. A wooden castle was built that very same year. Today the territory has a museum, a conference centre and an exhibition, "Museum 39/45" that is devoted to the history of World War II.

 Priešpilio Street 2, Klaipėda
 GPS *Lat: 55.70575, Lon: 21.12902*
 www.mlimuziejus.lt



64. DEGUSTATION OF VIKING DISHES



This is an educational programme which introduces people to foods which were popular from the 9th to the 12th century, discussing how they were cooked, which vegetables and spices were used, zoo-archaeological and bio-archaeological finds on Lithuanian hillforts, as well as other discoveries related to preparing food. Finds in a fire burial site from the 9th century in the Swedish town of Birka show how to bake barley pierogi on a campfire hearth. The pierogi are particularly tasty when spread with hemp butter. Finds on the Kukuliškių hillfort mean that lovers of sweets can prepare a dish with millet and honey and enjoy it with acorn coffee or herbal tea (as the visitor wishes). During this process, there is a fashion show of archaeological costumes and finds from graves in the region.



📍 Mokyklos Street 1, Dreverna,
Klaipėda District
GPS Lat: 55.52025, Lon: 21.24575



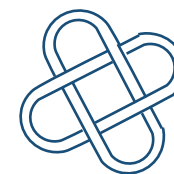
Photo: Eduardas Bareika
www.bareika.lt

65. SAILING ON AN ANCIENT CURONIAN SHIP



This is an antique Curonian ship which can be used to take a cruise down the Dreverna River. The boat sits 30 people and can be leased for simple relaxation cruises around the Curonian lagoon or for a special educational programme known as "The Route of the Fish". The Dreverna ship was built on the basis of a model that was produced by a 19th-20th century shipbuilder. A copy is found in the Gargždi museum branch in Dreverna.

📍 Žveju Street 13, Dreverna,
Klaipėda District
GPS Lat: 55.517889, Lon: 21.237611





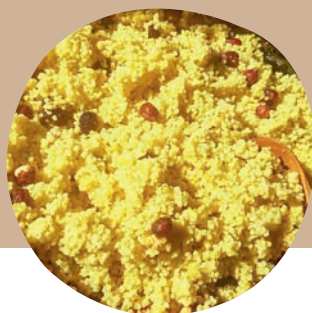
TRADITIONAL RECIPE:

SWEET MILET-HONEY DISH BASED ON DISCOVERIES AT THE KUKULIŠKIŲ HILLFORT

Ingredient:

Millet,
honey,
butter,
water or milk

Lightly toast the millet. Pour boiling water onto it and then drain it. Baking or cooking millet removes its bitterness. Melt the butter, add the honey, cooked millet and water or milk. Fry it until the millet is caramelised, stirring all the while. You could add some toasted hazelnuts or dried cranberries to the mix.



SPECIAL ADVENTURE

Kayak leasing at "WEST WEIM"
+370 66238238

You can lease canoes, kayaks and water bikes to use on the Dane River.

There are also go-kart boats in Dreverna.
Pamario Street 2, Dreverna
+370 66550369



SOUVENIRS

Tourism information centres in Klaipeda and Gargždai



TASTY TREATS

Bar "Senamiestis"

Kepeju Street 13, Klaipėda

Senamiestis baras offers "old town fingers" with cheese or chicken. People from all over Lithuania visit the place to taste these treats.

Restaurant "Dreverna"

Pamario Street 12, Dreverna

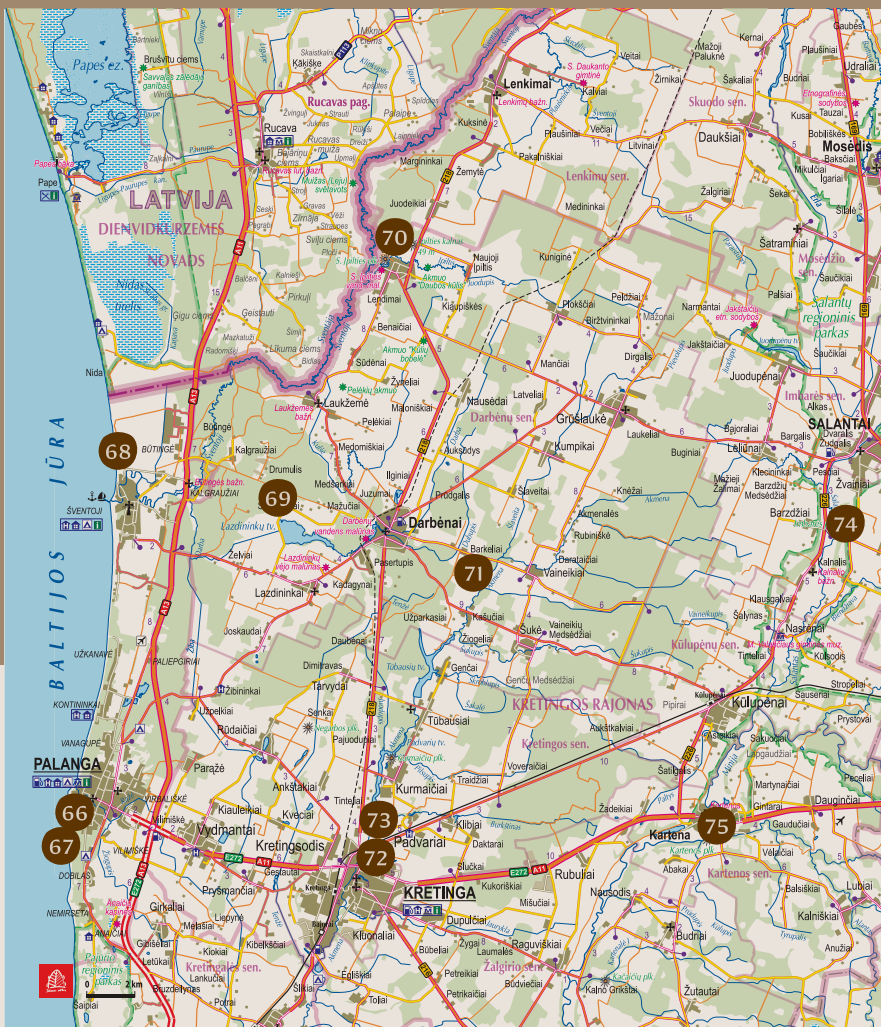
Guests at the restaurant "Dreverna" will enjoy pike-perch cakes that are a special and celebratory dish in the region.



Caching the amber



PALANGA, KRETINGA AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS



Palanga was long known as a trade and cult centre. Around the 12th century, there were at least four settlements here covering approximately 1,5 square kilometres. Pagan rituals were organised on the Birute hill during the early Middle Ages. Around 1150, there might have been some 600 residents of the four settlements. The largest one was populated by Curonians, while the other three had not just them, but also people from other tribes from the western shores of the Baltic Sea, the southern part of the Jutland Peninsula and other regions where Germanic and Western Slavic cultures merged.



During the 9th century AD, Palanga was involved in major naval battles. The material heritage of Curonians in Palanga has been found by archaeologists. There is a true wealth of objects. Historical sources confirm the important role of the town of Palanga. Even the lord of Lithuania, Kęstutis, chose his wife Birute from Palanga, after all!

Today Palanga is a popular seashore resort and you will find activities for yourself any time of the year. Fresh seaside air, the sun and the sea, mineral waters, a cute pedestrian bridge that stretches into the sea so that you can watch daily sunsets – all of this is so very, very tempting to tourists.





Kretinga is one of the oldest inhabited places in Lithuania. First mentioning of Kretinga's name in written sources was in 1253, in the privilege of Courland Bishop Heinrich, which describes the division of lands of the Kretinga Castle conquered by the Crusaders of the Livonian Order. The Kretinga Castle is mentioned in the written sources of the 13th century, which had been standing on the Ēgliškių (Andulių) hillfort near the Dangė river. During the 11th – 13th centuries the castle was the administrative, economic and political centre of the Mėguva land. It is assumed that people have lived in the lands of Ēgliškių village and its surroundings from the late Bronze Age till the 13th century. This is confirmed by approximately 3 ha large flat burial ground, in which the dead were buried during the 10th – 13th centuries. Imbarė hillfort is considered to be the most impressive among all hillforts in Kretinga district. The Curonian castle, which had been standing on the hillfort during the 10th – 13th centuries, was the administrative and economic centre of the Ceklīs land. The hillfort was so important that it even competed with the Apulė castle, and the street system discovered in the castle settlement allows to assume that in the Middle Ages Imbarė had characteristics of an ancient city. The castle was neglected around 1263. Later, there was a manor on the hillfort. Stories tell that the manor has sunk into the ground. This place is more than just a hillfort, it is a whole archaeological complex and the hillfort itself is interesting with a feature that there is a water intake spot in it, which is a rare thing for hillforts. Today the area of Kretinga is famous not just with its cultural heritage variety, but also with a unique landscape. Interesting manors, hillforts, which tell of Curonian times, legendary and mythological places, memorial monuments, unique homesteads – all this and much more can be discovered in surroundings of Kretinga.

66. AMBER MUSEUM IN PALANGA



A castle once owned by Duke Felix Tishevich currently houses the Palanga Amber Museum. There are some 5000 items on display so that the visitors can track the history of amber and understand its importance in the lives of Curonians and other Balts' tribes. More than 70 unique pieces of amber are on display. The largest one, "Rock of the Sun", weighs 3,52 kg. Also of note are the shape, colour nuances and other factors when it comes to these stones. The museum offers various educational programmes, including "The symbols and images of Balts' ornaments".




 *Vytauto Street 17, Palanga*
GPS *Lat: 55.90688, Lon: 21.05594*
 www.lndm.lt



67. BIRUTES HILL



The Birutes park is one of the most beautiful places in Palanga. Make sure that you scale Birutes hill. The Tishkevich family used to own the land, but the hundred-year-old pine forests has never been touched, because it is seen as a sacred place. Birutes Hill opens up a lovely view of the restless sea, because the legendary hill rises to 21 m above sea level. Archaeologists have found ceramics from the first millennium. The castle and its sacred site existed from the 10th to the 13th century and there was a village at the foot of the hill. Later this was a sacred place for pagans with a paleo-astronomical observatory. The place is named after Birute, who was the wife of Duke Kęstutis and the mother of Vytautas. Legend has it that she lived at this place, lit a sacred fire and was buried there after her death.

 *Vytauto Street 21, Palanga*
GPS *Lat: 55.90565, Lon: 21.05304*



68. HOLY PLACE "ŽEMAIČIŲ ALKA" IN SVENTOJI



The holy place "Žemaičių alka" was restored in 1998. It is a pagan holy place with a paleo-astronomical observatory which was on Birutes Hill in Palanga during the 15th century. Artists have carved some figurines which symbolise the mythological gods and goddesses of the Baltic tribes – Thunder, Dawn, Sun, Moon etc. If you look at the figurines at sunset, you can calculate calendar and festival days such as Christmas.



Sventoji

GPS Lat: 56.04108, Lon: 21.07484



69. BALTS' MYTHOLOGY PARK



This part offers a look at what Balts' tribes initially thought about the world and the universe. This is presented with wooden sculptures, as well as stories and songs. You will learn about Balts' mythology and the cultural values of ancient Balts' culture. As you listen to stories from the guide, think about the gods and goddesses of these tribes, as well as their unusual power. The park also has a unique labyrinth in which, no matter which direction you take, you will reach the Well of Destiny that is at its centre.

Sausdravai, Kretinga District

GPS Lat: 56.03026, Lon: 21.18862

baltuparkas.webs.com



70. COMPLEX OF ANCIENT IPILTIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONUMENTS



The complex of ancient archaeological monuments at Iplitis consists of three hillforts, a graveyard and a ceremonial rock. It dates back to the 1st to the 13th century AD. Near the pond is an impressive hillfort known as Pilale or the hill of Mary. Nearby, on the banks of the Šventoji River, is the Mount Karo hillfort. Near Mount Pilies on the slope of Šventoji there is a graveyard where soldiers were buried. Next to Pilale (the hill of Mary) and not far from Graistupis, there is an altar rock from which water flows. It is said to have medicinal properties.



Senosios Iplities village, Kretinga District

GPS Lat 56.12346, Lon: 21.24291



71. BEE AND FOREST THERAPY AT THE KALNIUS HOEMSTAEAD



Forest, peace, horses, therapy – this is why the Kalnius homestead is unique. Visitors to this countryside tourism destination have an excellent opportunity to check out therapeutical processes which involve the forest and bees. This helps to reduce stress, calm people down and to find a new balance between thoughts and emotions when sleeping in a special little house under which thousands of bees are buzzing. This calms visitors down, strengthens their immunity, boosts their nervous system and has a positive effect on the entire body.



Barkeliai village, Kretinga District

GPS Lat: 56.005557, Lon: 21.30542



72. SUN DIAL IN THE KRETINGA MANOR PARK



People who visit the park of the Kretinga Manor can stroll through very old oak trees, linden trees and chestnut trees. Walk along the shores of the ponds. The park covers 23 ha and has an astronomical calendar with a sun dial. The calendar is made up of 13 sculptures which symbolise the traditions of ancient Balts' culture, as well as various Lithuanian holidays.

Žemaites Alley 4, Kretinga

GPS Lat: 55.89680, Lon: 21.25108



73. KRETINGA MUSEUM



Here you will find one of the largest exhibitions of archaeological items related to the Curonians. You will learn about finds from two local cemeteries, a local hillfort and a local settlement. Of particular importance in the exhibition is amber and its importance in the lives of Curonians. Outdoors you will find various milling stones and cult rocks.

Vilniaus Street 43, Kretinga

GPS Lat: 55.90003, Lon: 21.24846



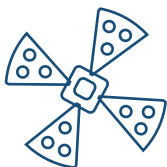
74. IMBARE HILLFORT



This is one of the more impressive hillforts in the area of Kretinga. A Curonian castle was there from the 10th to the 13th century, and it was one of the most important administrative and economic centres in the region. Archaeologists have found stone and metal instruments, weapons, jewellery, ceramics and burned grain. The Administration of Salantai regional park direction has restored the hillfort and made it appropriate for tourist visits.

Imbare, Kretinga District

GPS Lat: 56.02946, Lon: 21.55491



75. EDUCATIONAL FIELD TRIP "IN SEARCH OF A CURONIAN CASTLE"



The Kartena hillfort is impressive, dating back to the 8th to the 13th century. The wooden castle that were there was an important defensive and administrative centre. This educational programme introduces visitors to the unique historical and archaeological aspects of the Kartena hillfort, the ancient Curonian settlement and the history and mythology of the region. As you walk through the Minija valley, you can observe nature, visit a mythological stone and see the Lourdes of Kartena. To arrange for a guide, ring +370 61448404 or write to irma.zasytiene@salanturp.lt



Kartena, Kretinga District



Lat: 55.910284, Lon: 21.475469



www.salanturp.lt



SPECIAL ADVENTURES

Spend the night in a tent up in a tree, "Kalniaus sodyba," Bartkeliai village, Kretinga District.



SOUVENIRS

Tourism information centres at Palanga and Kretinga



TASTY TREATS

"Smagratis" gastropub
Žemaites Alley 31A, Kretinga

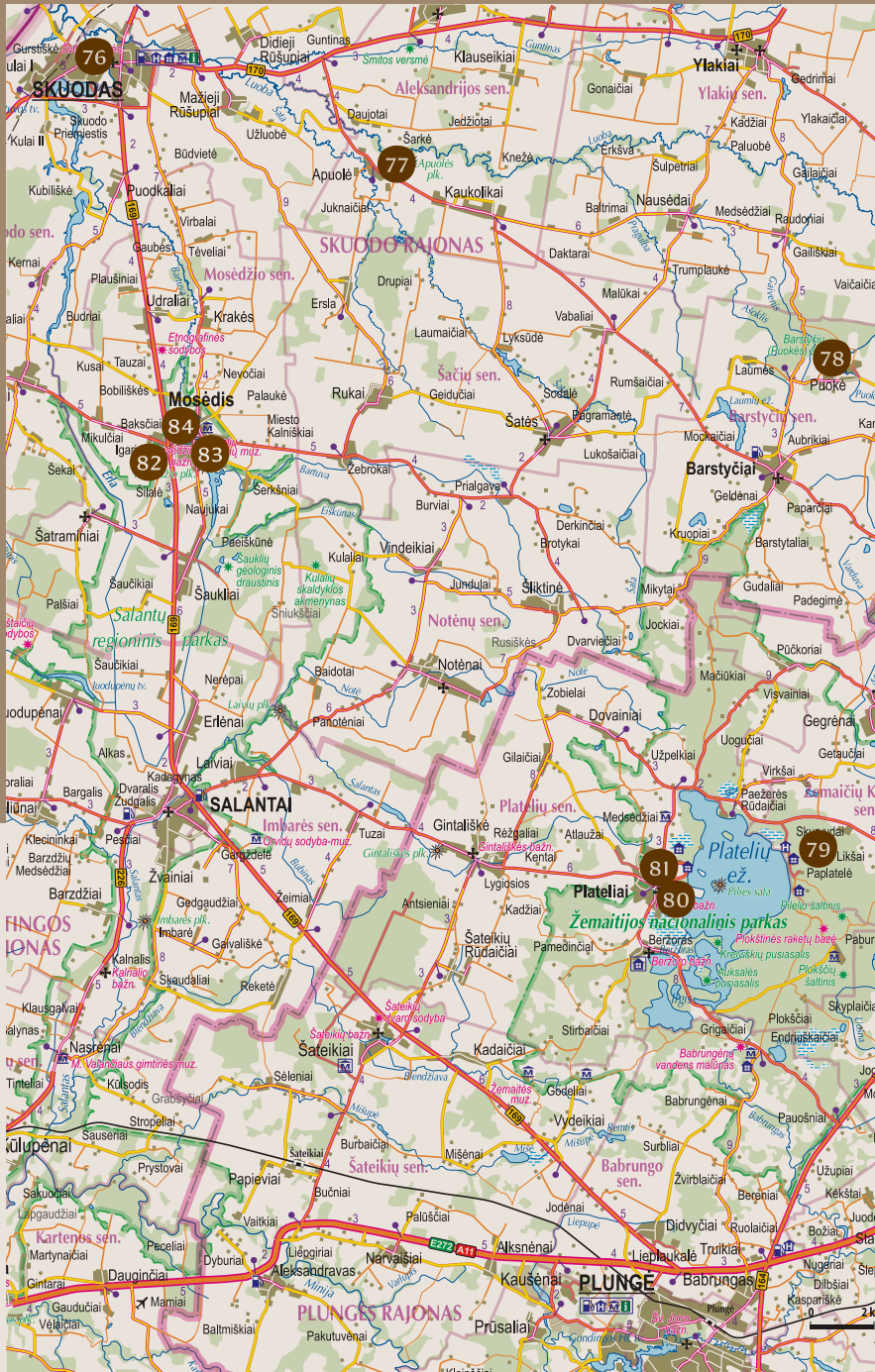
This gastropub offers dumplings prepared on the basis of a recipe from the 19th century.

"Vienkiemis" tavern
Vienkemio Street 3, Padvariai, Kretinga District

Only the "Vienkiemis" tavern offers "Šmakalas", "Sėmeninis", "Good old grandma kastinys", Girinio svajonė", "Captain's pork chop", "Lord's lunch" and "Owner's goodies"!

Educational field trip "In search of curonian castle"





SKUODAS, PLUNGE AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

Apuole is considered to be the most ancient populated place in the area of Skuodas. The Apuole hillfort and settlement were the first ones to be

mentioned in writing in present-day Lithuania. It is thought that it was the centre and capital of the Curonian lands. An attack against the hillfort was recorded in 853. Bishop Rimbert of Bremen wrote a chronicle about the life of a saint in which he reported that Swedish King Olaf brought 7000 men to attack "Apulija". Slightly later, in 1253, Apole was known as Appule or Ampule, and it was once again cited as a place where the bishop of Courland and the Livonian Order were negotiating the division of land.

Skuodas is in the northern part of the Klaipėda District and on the border with Latvia. The town of Skuodas is the centre of the district and it is just 2000 m from the border. The first record about Skuodas dates to 1253 AD, when the master of the Livonian Order and the bishop of Courland divided up the southern part of Curonian lands. Of importance in the region of Skuodas is Mosėdis which is a Mecca for local tourists. The village is the home of Intas Vaclovas and this distinguished individual created a unique museum and park. More recently, a museum on the history of the Curonians was opened in Mosėdis.

Also well known is an archaeological complex of stones at Šilalė, a pagan holy place in the village of Šaukliai, where rituals were still being conducted during the 17th century, as well as the rocks of Šaukliai and Kulaliai, which are recognised because their surrounding landscape is reminiscent of a tundra. One of the most famous events in the area of Skuodas is the "Apuole 854" festival of ancient battles and crafts. This is an international event in the Baltic Sea region and it has been held on the Apuole hillfort since 2004.



The village of Gandinga has been known in **Plunge area** since Middle Ages and it was an important populated area in Curonian Ceklis land. Gandinga was first mentioned in 1253 when Curonian lands were being split up. It had a specifically defensive function. The hillfort that was there was an important centre in the battle against Crusaders. Archaeological research shows that there was a serious living and defensive complex there from the 1st until the 13th century – the Gandinga hillfort with a forecastle. By the latter half of the 6th century, however, the importance of Gandinga was retreating and becoming overshadowed by Plunge.

Plunge and its surroundings are part of the ethnographic Samogitian territory, and it has a wealth of material and intangible cultural heritage. You'll find tracks of the culture of aristocratic estates, as well as landscapes that have been untouched by urbanisation. Plunge today will delight visitors with the outstandingly preserved Oginski manor and park, which one of the most valuable architectural manor complexes in all of Lithuania. Of the greatest value is the Žemaitija National Park, which takes up a large part of Plunge. There you will find many interesting tourism objects, natural and cultural treasures and a lovely landscape.



Park of energetic labyrinths

76. SKUODAS MUSEUM



This museum features an information terminal called "Apuole: Centre of Curonian Lands", which offers an interactive way of learning about Lithuania's oldest settlement – the Apuole hillfort. You will also learn about the lives of Curonians, as well as Viking weapons, apparel, ships and battle methods.



 Šaulių Street 3, Skuodas

GPS Lat: 56.26909, Lon: 21.52133

 www.skuodomuziejus.lt



77. APUOLE HILLFORT



This hillfort is the oldest settlement mentioned in documents in Lithuania. One of the most famous and largest Curonian castles used to be there. Apuole was a political, military and economy centre, and Lithuanian and Swedish archaeologists have found valuable evidence of history on the hill, including a unique well made of oak. The Rimberts chronicle describes the fierce battles which occurred around the hillfort in 853 and 854 AD, with Curonians combating the Vikings. Once they repelled the Danish attack, the residents of the hillfort were forced to surrender before Swedish King Olaf, presenting him with lots of weaponry, gold and silver. Today the hillfort is the site of the annual festival which focuses on the wars and crafts of the ancient tribes of the Baltic Sea region.

This includes battle recreations from the Curonian-Viking era, as well as presentations of Medieval crafts.



 Village of Apuole, Skuodas District

GPS Lat: 56.24647, Lon: 21.67808



78. ROCK OF BARSTYCIAI



The rock of Barstyciai is the largest one of its type in Lithuania. It is 13 m long, 9 m wide, 4 m high and weighs 680 tonnes. The belief is that glaciers carried it from Sweden. According to legend, the ancient Lithuanians had a ritual site there long ago. One unfaithful spirit angered the god of Thunder, who commanded that the site be covered with earth and then dumped the huge rock on top of it.



Village of Puoke, Skuodas District
GPS Lat: 56.19050, Lon: 21.89680



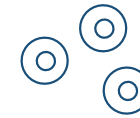
79. PARK OF ENERGETIC LABYRINTHS AND GEOMETRIC FIGURES



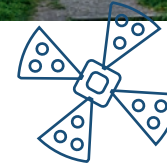
This park features five labyrinths, three cupolas, a Merkabah and a mandala on the ground. The labyrinths have been here for more than 4000 years. Like the pyramids, they are made up of geometric forms which create a sacral space. There is only one path that leads to the centre and back. When people change their direction, their perception shifts from the right lode of the brain to the left one. That is one reason why a labyrinth can facilitate the perception of emotions and consciousness.



Liksiai, Plunge District
GPS Lat: 56.05535, Lon: 21.91980
www.energlabirintai.lt



80. SIBERIJA VIEWING TOWER



There is a viewing tower on Mount Cidabro in Žemaitija National Park, which is surrounded by the Siberija swamp and the Kuniga River. The tower is 15 m high. The swamp is one of the most valuable ones in the park and it is environmentally protected. The tower offers a beautiful view of the surrounding area.

Plateliai, Plunge District
GPS Lat: 56.03055, Lon: 21.8145



81. ŽEMAITIJA NATIONAL PARK VISITOR CENTRE



This centre offers a look at an exhibition called "Secrets of the Samogitia land". A character called Little Acorn invites you to tour the park and learn about its secrets. On the first floor, you will learn about Lake Plateliai, its terrain and its subterranean world. There are water entertainments, interesting objects in the park, as well as nature trails. Another exhibition will teach you words and expressions from the Samogitian dialect. On the second floor you can track the pawprints of a wolf to travel through a secretive and dark forest where you can see not just wolves, but other animals, as well. You will hear the sounds that they make, and you will be introduced to denizens of the water at the park – otters, swans, various kinds of ducks, other waterfowl, as well as beavers and their "house" in the swamp.



Didžioji Street 10, Plateliai
GPS Lat: 56.04246, Lon 21.81535
www.zemaitijosnp.lt




82. ŠILALĖ ROCK

The Šilalė rock is the fifth largest rock in Lithuania. It is on a hillock which used to be surrounded from all sides by swamps. There are several other rocks around it, including a cupmarked one and an altar rock. Archaeologists found a field kitchen next to one of the rocks, surrounded by a crown of stones. They found that the altar was a rock with a bowl that was on a post that was made of stones on the northern end of the operation. The rock was later put back in its original location so as to restore the full scene of holy grounds for pagans. Archaeologists found burned remains, sap and melted amber in the field kitchen and concluded that pagan rituals were conducted here. At one time a sacred stand of birch trees grew here.




83. INTO VACLAVO ROCK MUSEUM

The Into Vaclavo rock museum is the only museum of its kind in Europe, with exhibitions indoors and outdoors. The indoor exhibition is in a watermill, demonstrating various pieces of rock, fossils of plants and animals, a collection of sand of various colours and textures etc. Outdoors there are field stones of more than 150000 different forms, origins, structures and colours. Some are mythological rocks from the period of the ancient Curonians. The museum offers a variety of educational activities, as well.

 *Mosėdis, Skuodas District*
GPS *Lat: 56.15442, Lon: 21.56219*




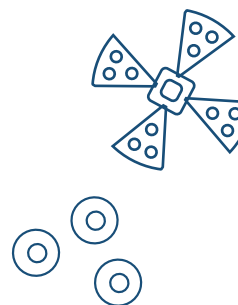
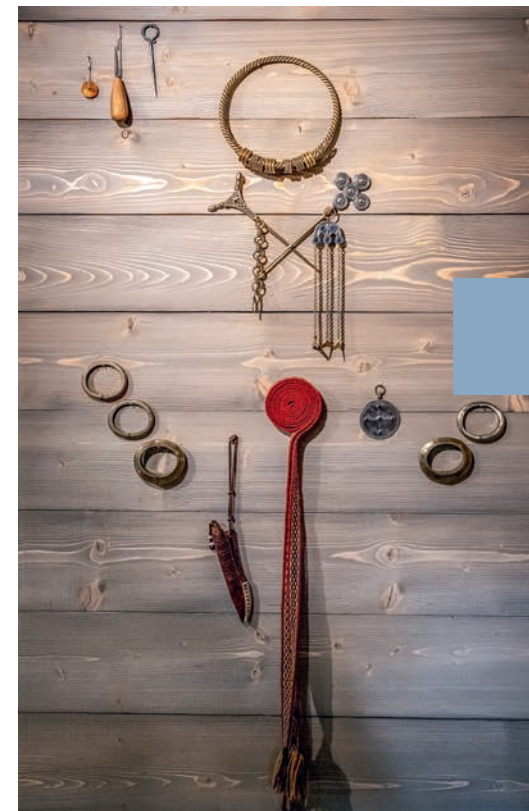
 *Salantų Street 2, Mosėdis*
GPS *Lat: 56.16517, Lon: 21.57419*
 www.akmenumuziejus.lt



84. CURONIAN TRIBE HISTORY MUSEUM IN MOSĖDIS

Mosėdis has the only type of this museum in Lithuania – one which focuses on the history of the Curonian tribe. Here you will find reconstructions of archaeological finds, including weapons, jewellery, household items etc. You can learn about history through various senses. The reconstructions make it possible to see what the objects looked like originally. You'll have a chance to try out some of the old instruments and weapons. You can also try your hand at weaving, preparing food etc.

 *Akmenų Street 17, Mosėdis*
GPS *Lat: 56.17020; Lon: 21.57092*





SPECIAL ADVENTURES

Rides in transparent boats

Lake Plateliai

Ezerai Street 40, Plateliai, Plunge District

tālr. +370 61555085

www.skaidriosvaltys.lt



TASTY TREATS

“Vespera” café

P. Cvirkos 4 Street, Skuodas

Nowhere else in Lithuania will you taste chilled soup with hemp potatoes!

“PLATE LYN” café

Žemaičių Kalvarija Street 36, Plateliai

Here you can taste kastinys, which is a key element of Žemaitija cuisine.



SOUVENIRS

Tourism information centres at Skuodas and Plunge



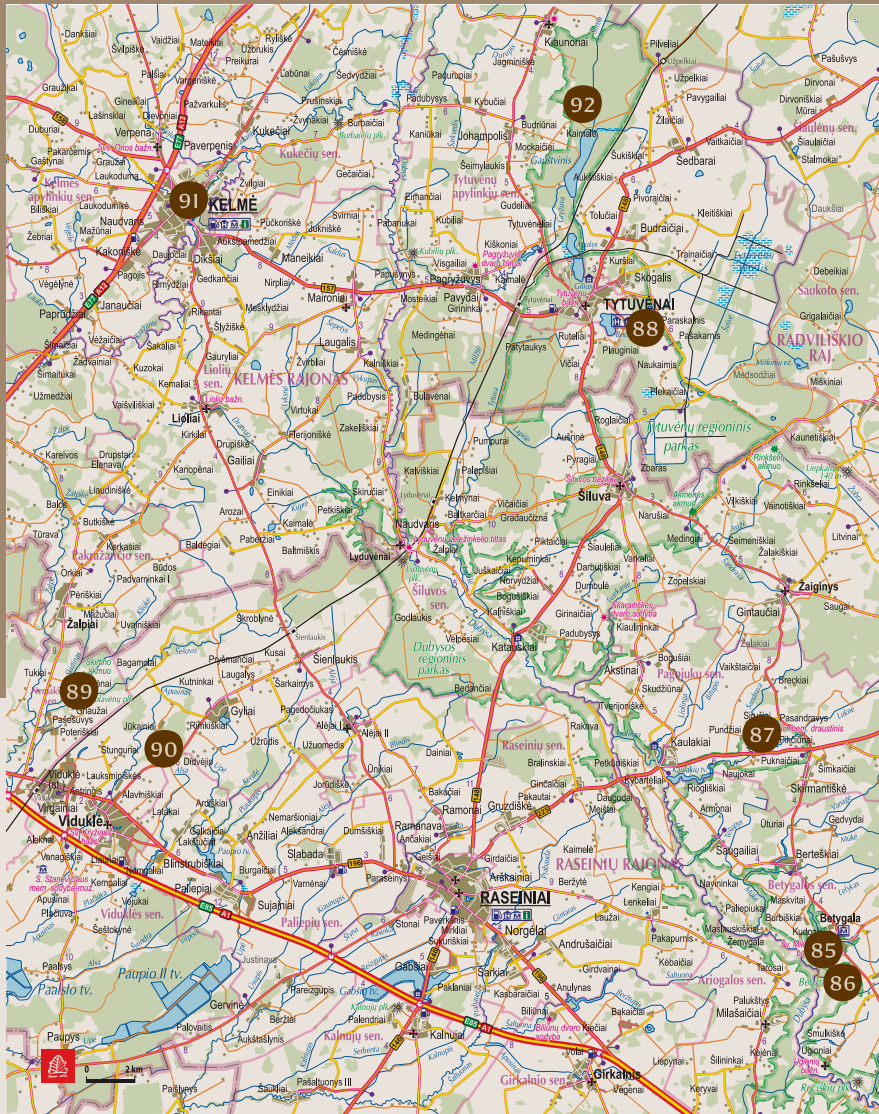
The Samogitians

are an ancient Baltic tribe which appeared around the 5th century AD, as did the Curonians. To the South and the West, the Samogitians bordered with the Aukštaitians, with the Semigallians to the North and with the Curonians and Scalovians to the West.

The region once populated by the Samogitians takes up most of the Žemaitija highlands in Lithuania. There are vast lowlands around it. Like the Curonians, the Samogitians had hillforts which had existed for some time already in the present-day territory of Lithuania and Latvia. The Samogitians are one of the few Baltic tribes which stayed in more or less the same place during its whole existence. This was fertile land, and the ancient forests were deep and impenetrable. They protected the Samogitians for many centuries.

The land in Žemaitija is hilly and with lots of hillforts. Most are along the main rivers of the region – the Dubysa, the Venta and the Jūra, and some are in the very centre of the territory. This is where the power of the tribe was accumulated, and early economic and political centres emerged. Starting in the 12th century, the lands of the Samogitians were expanded in the direction of the Curonians and the Semigallians. The culture of the Samogitians was not homogeneous, and neighbouring tribes had an influence on it. To the north, the Samogitians were influenced by the Semigallians, to the south-west it was the Curonians, and to the south-east there was powerful influence from the culture of the Aukštaitians.

**VISIT THE UNDISCOVERED
BEAUTY OF ŽEMAITIJA!**



RASEINIAI, KELMĖ AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

Raseiniai is one of the oldest towns in Lithuania, originating in the land where the ancient Samogitian tribes lived. The town is mentioned in writing for the first time in an act issued by King Mindaugas in 1253. The fact that people lived on the banks of the Dubysa River for time immemorial is seen in the fact that near its ancient valley are legendary hillforts and ancient burial groups. A town in the Raseiniai area, Šiluva, is a well known destination for pilgrims. The town gained particular prominence in 1993, when it was visited by Pope John Paul II. Today the town boasts a modern centre for pilgrims, as well as a museum.



The first residents of Kelmė arrived during the Mesolithic era (8000-4000 BC). The history of the region is seen in more than 300 monuments related to archaeology, history, architecture and culture. Kelmė appeared during the 15th century after the wars against the Crusaders. Samogitians began to take over new territories and 1484 can be seen as the year when Kelmė was established.

The area around Kelmė has a wealth of objects related to natural and cultural heritage, including the church and cloister at Tytuvėnai, the Kelmė Manor, Lake Juodieji with trails, a chain of lakes around Tytuvėnai, the Kražiai collegium, and a large number of objects of archaeological heritage from the local hillfort. There is a lot of peace and quiet in this region, with seven environmentally protected areas and four regional parks. Lots of untouched nature, unique natural monuments and rare plants.



85. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME "ROAD OF BREAD"



The building that used to house the local government in Betygala now is a community centre, and you can take part in an educational programme called "Road of Bread". It is a long road, so upon arrival, guests will find dough that has already been kneaded and an oven which has already been heated up. Participants are encouraged to form loaves and then entrust them to the organisers of the programme. The bread will bake for around two hours, during the course of which guests will be taken on a tour of interesting places in Betygala. Upon returning to the centre, guests will enjoy warm bread, honey and tea. The Betygala community also bakes buns and other pastries. Contact the centre in advance on +370 61526162 or bendruomenebetygala@gmail.com.



86. BETYGALA HILLFORT



There are several hillforts near Betygala, and they are of unique value in archaeological terms and in terms of their landscapes. These are found in the Dubysa regional park. At the foot of the first hillfort is the so-called Stream of the crooked eye, which is reminiscent of pagan times. The second hillfort used to have a pentagonal chapel made of brick that was put up there during the 19th century by the Yankovsky dynasty. In 2018, the hillforts were opened to visitors with pathways, an information infrastructure and viewing areas.

Location: Dubysa Street 8, Betygala, Raseiniai District

GPS: Lat: 55.36221, Lon: 23.36544



Location: Betygala, Raseiniai District

GPS: Lat: 55.35119, Lon: 23.37146

Website: www.akmenumuziejus.lt



87. JONAS MAČULIS-MAIRONIS BIRTHPLACE



The poet Jonas Mačulis grew up on a Pasandravys manor. The foundations of the mansion have survived along with a well and a restored stone barn, along with an old garden. The Maironis birthplace has an old garden, along with an ice cream shop and a museum on the land of Maironis' sister. The area symbolically represents the interesting, complex and creative life of the poet. Metal structure have been used to restore the contours of the main buildings at the former manor, with installations of sound and light in various unexpected places.



Location: Pasandravys village, Raseiniai District

GPS: Lat: 55.43137, Lon: 23.32462

Website: www.raseiniumuziejus.lt



88. VIEWING TOWER AT TYTUVENAI



This tower is in the Tytuvėnai regional park and on a hillock. Standing 15 m, the tower offers an impressive view of the local bodies of water, the park of the local manor, forests in the protected area, the Šiluva chapel and a church.



Location: Paraskalnis village, Kelmė District

GPS: Lat: 55.59000, Lon: 23.24000



89. MOLAVENAI HILLFORT



This hillfort is a jewel in the area of Raseiniai, and it is of great importance in historical, archaeological and cultural terms. The Molavenai hillfort was a unified defensive structure which is simply huge and has complicated aspects of engineering and technologies. It is assumed that the famous Pilėnai hillfort stood here in 1336. There are wooden pathways, pergolas and a cark park. The 100-year-old Molavenai oak tree is nearby, as is one of the area's large rocks.



Molavenai, Raseiniai District

GPS Lat: 55.44790, Lon: 22.87509



90. JUKAINIAI RECREACIONAL TRAIL



Historical sources suggest that there was once a sacred hill here between Raseiniai and Nemaškščiai. It is believed that oak trees that are growing in the environmentally protected area and the third-generation successors of a stand of sacred oak trees. The diverse forest includes fragments of old oak trees, semi-arid streams and an overabundance of rare plans. All of this provides the place with a secretive, yet cosy atmosphere. You will find wooden pathways, viewing areas and places to relax. Along the trail you will encounter wooden sculptures of mythical beings, Balts' deities and forest animals. Alongside the pond is a leisure zone with linden trees, swings and large pergolas.

Jukainiai, Raseiniai District

GPS Lat: 55.42973, Lon: 22.92464



91. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME ABOUT PLANTS

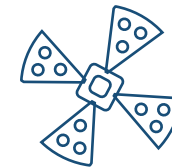


This programme informs visitors about ancient traditions related to medicinal plants, about medicinal plants and about their properties. You will learn how to recognise the various plants and learn about how they can be utilised. Herbal tea will be served during the activities. Please contact the organisers in advance by ringing +370 52761065 or by writing to kelmesmuziejus@gmail.com.

Dvaro Street 15, Kelmė

GPS Lat: 55.63817, Lon: 22.93837

www.kelmesmuziejus.lt



92. STONE ROUGE COGNITIVE PATH



This is the only place of its kind in Lithuania, and it is in the Tytuvėnai regional park. You will spot many interesting rocks, and the aim is to tell visitors about the zones of rock that were made by glaciers, as well as the historical, cultural and mythical importance of rocks. You will see copies of various mythological rocks, as well as stone sculptures produced by artists. You will also learn how people have used rocks for various purposes. Educational stands offer information about the appearance of rocks, the types of rocks that exist, the Ice Age, and the appearance of the zone of rocks. Sculptural compositions and installations are the most interesting things along the cognitive path. You will find marked rocks by Kęstutis Musteika, a sculpture by Kazys Venclovas, "Svarelis", a composition by Jonas Gencevičius, "Objects of the Earth", "Mechanisms" by Gintaras Mikolaitis and other artworks.

Kiaunoriai, Tytuvėnai, Kelmė District

GPS Lat: 55.68868, Lon: 23.19286



SPECIAL ADVENTURES

Skruzdelyne homestead

Here you will learn about the breeding of a specific breed of horses - žemaitukai. Horseback rides are available.

SOUVENIRS

Tourism information centres at Raseiniai and Kelmė



Molavenai hillfort

TASTY TREAT

“Viduklės koldūnai”

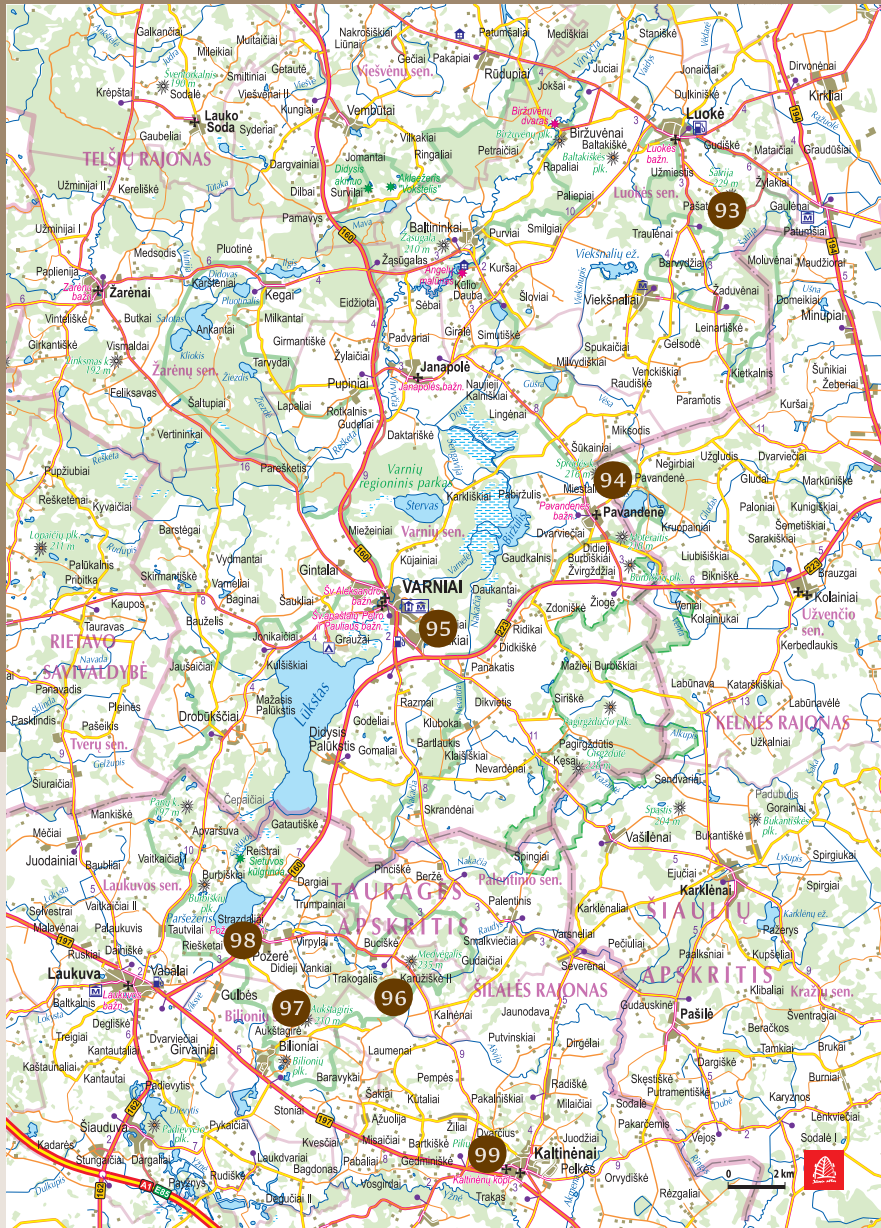
Kęstučio Street 36, Vidukle
Raseiniai District

This restaurant has been reborn. In 2019, it received a certificate of cultural heritage, which indicates that the cooks carefully track traditional and authentic recipes.

The “Kryžbarkas” homestead

An authentic single-family homestead offers an educational programme focused on the preparation of the Lithuanian dish known as zeppelins.





TELŠIAI, ŠILALĖ AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS

A populated location in the Telšiai District is one of the most famous early Medieval administrative, defence, economic and religious centres in Žemaitija. The place was first mentioned in writing in 1398 (by some sources in 1450). Some researchers believe that the Talsa valley that was mentioned in German Order chronicles in 1317 may refer to Telšiai. Outside town, you will find the protected Germantas landscape that has been created by nature and human beings. There you will find informational trails and parks, a series of former baronial estates, and an opportunity to walk, bike or ride from one Telšiai District hillfort to the next. The landscape of hillocks in Žemaitija is fantastic with forests, swamps, lakes and sparkling church steeples.



Šilalė is a region with a wealth of hillforts, among which Medvėgalis is the best known one. The local hillfort was first mentioned in writing in 1316 after Crusaders had attacked it. This was the central and most important fortress which allowed people in Žemaitija to defend themselves against Crusader raids. The Crusaders burned the wooden castle in 1329 and forced locals to adopt Christianity. As soon as the Crusaders were gone, however, the locals returned to their pagan lifestyle. The history of Šilalė as a town dates back to the 16th century. In 1952, Polish King Sigismund the Elder granted a group of noblemen the right to establish a town at the place where Šilalė is today. The name of the town was first written down in a legal document in 1533, and the date of that document is seen as the founding day of the town of Šilalė.



93. ŠATRIJA HILL



During the early Middle Ages, Šatrija was one of the most famous administrative, defensive, economic and religious centres in Žemaitija. It boasts the second largest hillock in Žemaitija, which reaches 227 m above sea level and is 3 km to the south-east of the town of Luoke. At the foot of the hillock is the village of Pašatrija, where the remains on ancient settlements have been found. People have lived in the region since the 2nd millennium BC. Archaeologists have found burial urns, mugs, carved stones, jewellery made of amber and glass, rings, stone axes etc. It is thought that Šatrija was a hillfort from the 2nd to the 12th century. Most researchers believe that this was also a place where ancient Lithuanians engaged in cult rituals. Once Christianity was introduced, the image of Šatrija changed. The former holy ground was turned into a place where witches and devils met. New legends and stories quickly appeared, the idea being that Šatrija was the main place of residence of witches and wizards in Žemaitija. Many legends have to do with the origins of the hillock. One says that witches from the whole region regularly gathered there back in the day. There was a church at the top of the hillock and the

witches buried it to create a hillock. When the church began to rot, the surface of the hillock collapsed. Another legend says that a giant was tromping around hilly Žemaitija and filling his pockets with soil. He lay down and fell asleep, only to find that large numbers of mice had appeared and started to gnaw his pockets in search for goodies. The giant awoke and was furious: "Oh, you lousy creatures! I shall beat you with my switch!". The mice fled, but that was the origin of the name Šatrija, which means "switch" in Lithuania. Once the wizards and witches disappeared, though, views about Šatrija and these beings changed. The place was increasingly linked to traditions having to do with the Summer solstice. It is thought that June 24, which is the date of John the Baptist in Roman Catholic tradition, coincided with late February and a summer festival which ancient Lithuanians celebrated. Today, in accordance with tradition, an eternal flame is lit atop the hillock during the third week of every July.



Pašatrija, Telšiai District

GPS Lat: 55.87250, Lon: 22.55823



94. SPRŪDĖ HILL



This impressive and beautiful hillfort is on a massive hillock which opens up a view of the Varniai valley. You will spot several lakes and several other hillfort hillocks in the same region. The Sprūdė hillfort is like a secretive pyramid which emphasises the loveliest hillocks of Žemaitija and reminds us of the wealthy and ornate past of the ancient Balts. Historians and archaeologists believe that this hillfort dates back to the age when battles were waged against Crusaders. Defensive moats, tracks of a barrier stretching 4 m high and an old entrance to the former castle can still be seen. The legend is that the brother of Lithuanian King Mindaugas built a wooden castle here, with cellars and hiding places underneath it. Angered by the king, the brother fled to Žemaitija and built a castle on the Sprūdė hill, which he owned. This was the safest and most protectable place for him to be, but the king found him there anyway.



Šaukštelis village, Telšiai District

GPS Lat: 55.78436, Lon: 22.48588



95. VARNIAI REGIONAL PARK VISITOR CENTRE



Visitors to the Varniai Regional Park can receive a wealth of detailed information about environmental and cultural values in the region. A modern exhibition includes photographs of nature that have been archived. The visitor centre features audio recordings of birdsong and the croaking of frogs. It also offers fairy tales and myths, amber from a local lake, a mock-up of the terrain of the park and a variety of archaeological discoveries.



Dumbrių Street 3, Ožtakiai village, Varniai, Telšiai District

GPS Lat: 55.73225, Lon: 22.38420



www.varniurp.am.lt



96. MEDVEGALIS HILLFORT



This archaeological complex consists of seven hillocks and valleys. The Medvegalis hillock is said to be the king of the local highlands, standing 234,6 m above sea level. This is the highest point in Žemaitija and the hillock offers a lovely view of the surrounding area. It is said that from the surface, one can spot 14 church towers, countless other hillocks, as well as Šatrija, which is at a distance of 30 km. Archaeological finds have dated the hillfort back to the 1st millennium ID. A wooden castle was first cited in writing in 1316, when it was attacked by Crusaders. Medvegalis was the central and most famous fortress in defending Žemaitija against Crusader raids. The Crusaders burned the castle

down in 1329. All told, some 20 raids against Medvegalis have been recorded in history. According to a legend the name is based on two courageous young ladies who knew the back roads of the region and helped to save the defenders of the besieged castle. When it came time to decide who will inform other hillforts about the siege, one of the girls said “Mudvi galiva,” which means “we both will”. Off they went, and that was the origin of the name Medvegalis.



Karūžiške village, Šilalė District

GPS *Lat: 55.61713, Lon: 22.38333*



97. AUKŠTAGIRĖ VIEWING TOWER



Mount Aukštagirė is the highest geomorphological place in the local reserve (~215 m). A 15-m viewing tower is at the top of the hill, from which the visitor will see the nice landscape of Žemaitija, including Medvegalis, the village of Bilioniai in the distance, and a series of bodies of water beyond that.



Aukštagirė village, Šilalė District

GPS *Lat: 55.61262, Lon: 22.32793*



98. PARŠEŽERIS RECREATIONAL TRAIL

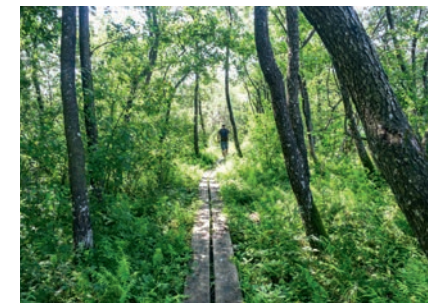


The Paršežeris recreational trail weaves around Lake Paršežeris and it is in the Varniai Regional Park. The trail will let you observe the typical landscape of Žemaitija, including damp shores of lakes and swamps with wooden footpaths. Elsewhere the route leads along roads or meadow trails. Start at the car park where the trail begins, and you will pass through the village of Reškėtis, where people who fell during a riot in 1863 are buried. The trail then leads to Šilinkalnis and on to the Paršpilis hillfort, along which we find Parškalnis, which is a site of ancient settlement. Further along, the trail will wind past the ancient graves of Burbiškiai and take you to the Sietuva grove of stones. On the way back, you can visit a mythological stream that is known as the “Sauna of giants”. There is

a bridge at the stream which leads to the right bank of the Sietuva. Here the trail will lead you to the Piauniai forest and a high swamp that is crossed by a wooden footpath.



GPS *Lat: 55.63704, Lon: 22.29144*



99. KEPALUŠKALNIS

Also known as the Pilės hillfort, Kepaluškalnis speaks to the fact that a castle or a hillfort were here in the past. The hillock has been dated to the beginnings of the 2nd millennium. Its size and its fortifications suggest that during the battles against Crusaders, this was one of the most fortified castles in Žemaitija. Indeed, it was the local centre for defence and administration. At the foot of the lake is a wooden monument that was installed in 1990. It honours Vytautas the Great and his victory in the battle of Žalgiris.



 **Pilė, Kaltinėnai, Šilalė District**

GPS Lat: 55.56703, Lon: 22.43350



SPECIAL ADVENTURES

“Pusiasalis” wakeboard park
Sakalu Street 15, Viešvėnai village,
Telšiai District

This park is in a lovely place that is surrounded by water. It offers all kinds of free time activities.

Sietuva rock gorge
Tel. +37061266133

This is the only swamp trail in Lithuania that is covered by rocks. During the season, local guides offer tours of the region.

SOUVENIRS

Žemaitija tourism information centre at Plateljiai and the Vladas Stakevičius museum in Šilalė.

TASTY TREATS

“Senamiestis” café
Turgaus Square 11, Telšiai

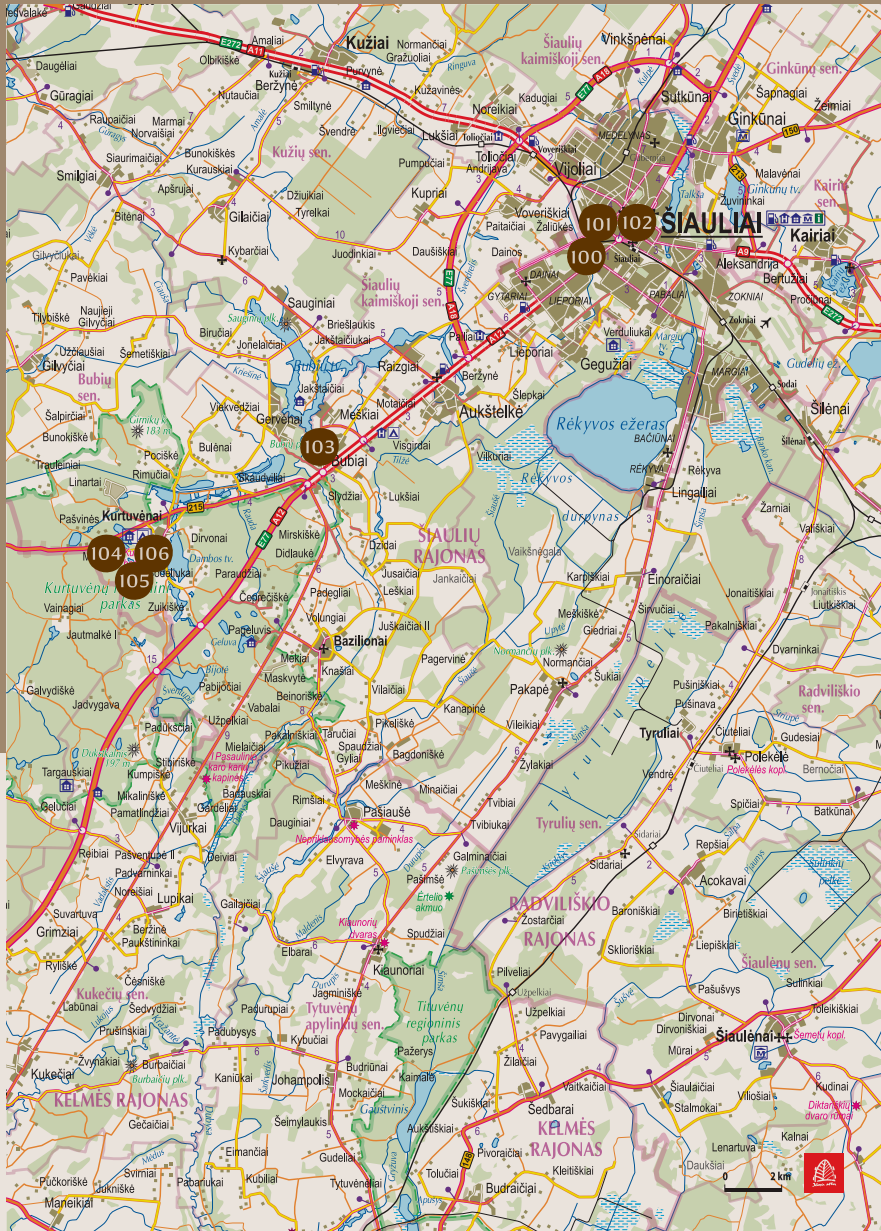
Here you will enjoy traditionally Samogitian cuisine.

“Kontena” shop of national heritage products
Respublikos Street 27, Telšiai

Here you can purchase authentic homemade kvass, carrot candies and other goodies.



Šatrija hill



ŠIAULIAI AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Šiauliai is a town in northern Lithuania which is the fourth largest urban area in terms of population. The name dates back to 1236, when the town was cited in the Livonian Chronicle, which described a local battle. The date became the founding year of the city, while the sun became its symbol. Symbols of the sun that are scattered all around town are part of its unique charm. Šiauliai has monuments, squares and other wonderful places that are named after the sun and these allow you to learn about the history of the place. The most impressive monument is the Sun clock, which is the tallest one in all of Lithuania. Šiauliai is not just a town of museums. You will find several museums here which are unique in Lithuania and feature bicycles, cats and chocolate. The area of Šiauliai recalls the ancient Samogitian tribes with the sleepy hillforts. A special one is the Bubių hillfort, which played an important role in battles against the Crusaders. One of the most fortified castles in the region was located here during the 13th century. It is thought that it was built in 1230. The builders raised the hill and created a moat to separate it from the hillock upon which the forecastle was. The castle was burned down in 1348 by the German Order during an attack. You will find a wealth of diverse natural and cultural landscapes in and around Šiauliai – hillforts, sparkling lakes, secretive swamps, educational trails and miraculous streams. Gastronomic heritage will introduce you to new tastes that you will enjoy.





100. ŽALIŪKAI WINDMILL



The Žaliūkai windmill is found at a single-family homestead in which a miller lives. There is a museum here now to focus on ethnic culture, traditional habits and activities, as well as entertainments. Today it is surrounded by a modern city. Visit the windmill to see a restored 19th-century building which is the only traditionally Lithuanian wooden architecture building with an authentic grain milling system – the Žaliūkai windmill. The family lives there year round, milling grain and baking bread. Various educational programmes and tours are on offer and Lithuanian holidays such as solstices and Easter are celebrated here.

Architektų Street 73, Šiauliai

GPS Lat: 55.92380, Lon: 23.27199

www.ausrosmuziejus.lt



101. ŠIAULIAI MUSEUM OF HISTORY



Recently reopened after a rebuilding, the museum is welcoming visitors who wish to see thematic and educational exhibitions. The museum organises modern exhibitions about archaeology and history. You can take part in educational activities focused on things such as archaeological costumes, weaving of rope with little stones, ancient traditions in making pottery, archaeological ornaments etc.

Aušros Alley 47, Šiauliai

GPS Lat: 55.9314, Lon 23.30581

www.ausrosmuziejus.lt



102. "BALTS' ROAD" INFORMATION CENTRE



This is the first interactive centre in Lithuania and Latvia to focus on Balts' culture. "Balts' Road" is meant to encourage people to travel and learn about the material and intangible cultural and natural heritage of the Balts' tribes. You'll learn all about the history of the tribes, their culture and their way of life, making use of various modern technologies to look at copies of exhibits, take part in educational activities, and develop a further understanding about Balts' heritage and how it can be preserved. The venue has four interactive games. Using your biometric data, the "Balts' Profession" game will allow you to see what you would look like if you had been a weaver, soldier, fisherman etc. Scan the QR code and you can download the portrait for yourself. Another game, "Learn about Balts' objects" focuses on household

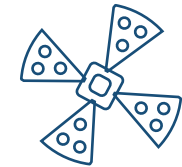
objects used by the Balts' tribes. The game and installation "Balts' Life" has touch-sensitive surface projectors and sensors which reflect the characteristics of specific Balts' tribes, as well as general aspects of Balts' life. The room is full of sound and light and that will allow you to get an even better understanding of ancient Balts' culture and life.

Vilniaus Street 213, Šiauliai

GPS Lat: 55.932046, Lon: 23.31358

www.baltukelias.lt

+37067807249






103. BUBIAI HILLFORT

The hillfort and its settlement were found on the left bank of the Dubysa river. It is also known as Pilale. The hillfort was of great importance in battles against the Crusaders. One of the most fortified castles in the region was there during the 13th century, and German chronicles make reference to the castle on the hill on several occasions. Presumably there was a wooden castle on the hillock, surrounded by a structured wall standing 5 or 6 m tall. Inside the wall were ladders which defenders could climb. It is thought that between 50 and 70 men were on duty to defend the building. The Dubysa castle was important in the broader system of fortifications in Northern Lithuania. In the summer of 1236, the Brethren of the Sword, after losing the Battle of Šiauliai, tried and failed to occupy the Dubysa castle. The active defence helped the noblemen at the Mūša River to pursue and destroy their enemies. In 1348, the Dubysa castle was burned down by a large army from the

German Order. It was soon rebuilt, but in 1358 it was burned down once again. Between 1902 and 1911, the distinguished Polish archaeologist Liudvikas Kšivickas conducted digs at the site, finding numerous objects from the 11th to the 14th century – the iron tips of bows and crossbows, knives, keys, spindles, fragments of burned clay, as well as calcified wheat, barley, rye and millet. Several other archaeologists poked around in the region during the 2002, finding arrowheads, knives, rasps, remnants of fish scales, ceramics, as well as brass ornaments of various kinds that were typical among Semigallian tribes. The discoveries are housed at the Vytautas the Great War Museum and the “Aušros” museum in Šiauliai.


 *Bubiai, Šiauliai District*
GPS *Lat: 55.86196, Lon: 23.12986*

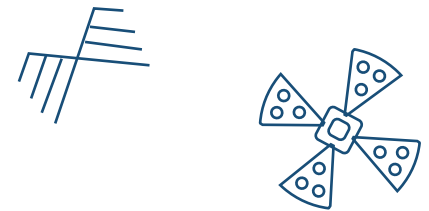


104. KURTUVĖNAI HILLFORT

The Kurtuvėnai hillfort and settlement are also known as the Kapa hillfort. It is found on a separate hill which is surrounded by a swamp on the southern, south-eastern and south-western sides. The mesa of the hill is oval and longer in the north-south direction, with a total of 68 x 27 m. The sides are steep and 4 – 5 m high. The hillfort was severely damaged by a church that stood atop it from the 15th to the 18th century and the graveyard which surrounded it. The northern slope was destroyed by the construction of a road. Today the hillfort is covered by trees, while the mesa still contains a cemetery, but now has a wooden chapel. The hillfort has been dated back to the 1st millennium AD. At one time there was a carved rock on the

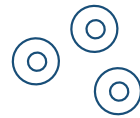
hill which weighed around 100 kg, had a circumference of 50 cm and was up to 30 cm high. After Christianity came to the region, a wooden church was built on the hillfort. The rock was used to store holy water. The church burned down in the 19th century and the rock remained outside the chapel that was subsequently built. In 2009, sadly, someone stole the rock.

 *Kurtuvėnai, Šiauliai District*
GPS *Lat: 55.82655, Lon: 23.04366*



105. HORSE MUSEUM

The stables of the Kurtuvėnai Manor are in a quiet place surrounded by nature, but the site is very active in that more than 20 horses live in the stables. There are riding lessons and individual activities. Visitors are welcome to go riding in an ancient carriage drawn by horses along the routes of the Kurtuvėnai Regional Park. If you wish to learn about the history of this farm and its animals, tours are also on offer.



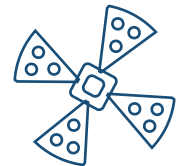
 Parko Street 2, Kurtuvėnai, Šiauliai District

GPS Lat: 55.825533, Lon: 23.051337

 www.krpd.lt



106. KURTUVĖNAI REGIONAL PARK VISITOR CENTRE



The restored wheelhouse of the Kurtuvėnai Manor is now the site of the regional park's visitor centre. An exhibition, "Diversity of Landscapes", is available at the centre. Walk among the "giants," and you will learn about the values and landscapes of the park. The visitor centre will also provide you with information about the most interesting things to see in the regional park, including nature trails and tourism services.

 Parko Street 2, Kurtuvėnai, Šiauliai District

GPS Lat: 55.82793, Lon: 23.04850



F SPECIAL ADVENTURES

University of Vilnius Šiauliai Academy Botanical Garden, Paitaiču Street 6, Šiauliai

The central park of Šiauliai
Žemaites Street 70B, Šiauliai

Here you will find playgrounds for children and adolescents, basketball and volleyball courts, a fitness zone, and area for disc golf, a track for remote control cars, a park for dogs and a fountain. The stage of the Šiauliai Central Park is the largest one in the region and it is used for a variety of events and entertainments.

Cross Hill
Jurgaičiai village, Meškuičiai region,
Šiauliai District

People look for miracles here, including healing, strengthening of family ties, or the mercy of God for the Motherland. People come to thank God for miracles that have already occurred, while others simply want to gaze at the wonderful hill, which even surprised Pope John Paul II back in the day.

Rabbit Island
Naisiai, Meškuičiai region, Šiauliai District

This island is home to a large number of purebred rabbits such as Belgian giants, German spotted giant "butterflies", California rabbits, New Zealand red rabbits and other types. The site is open 24/7 and the Fortune Pond, in which Rabbit Island is located, is available for swimming.



🍴 TASTY TREATS

"Žemaitis", a restaurant of Lithuanian cuisine,
Draugystes Street 25, Šiauliai

The menu has offers for those who wish to have a simple meal and for those who are true gourmands. The restaurant serves dishes from European, Lithuanian and Samogitian cuisine.

"Kryžkele" tavern
P. Višinskio Street 18, Kurtuvėnai

Traditional Lithuanian foods served alongside the Kurtuvėnai Manor. A specialty of the house is beer-marinated ham with sauerkraut, jacket potatoes and beaten cream.

📍 SOUVENIRS

Tourism information centres at Šiauliai, Kurtuvėnai
and Cross Hill



Žaliakiai windmill

Authors: Kurzeme Planning Region,
Klaipēda District Tourism Information Centre

Editor: Alise Lūse

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The project “Explore Balts” is a continuation to the project “Balts’ Road”, where the Balts’ Road route had been developed by covering territories in Latvia and Lithuania once inhabited by curonians, samogitians, semigallians and sellonians. It focuses on further development of the route by facilitating its recognition and information accessibility. All information on the route is available at www.baltucels.lv

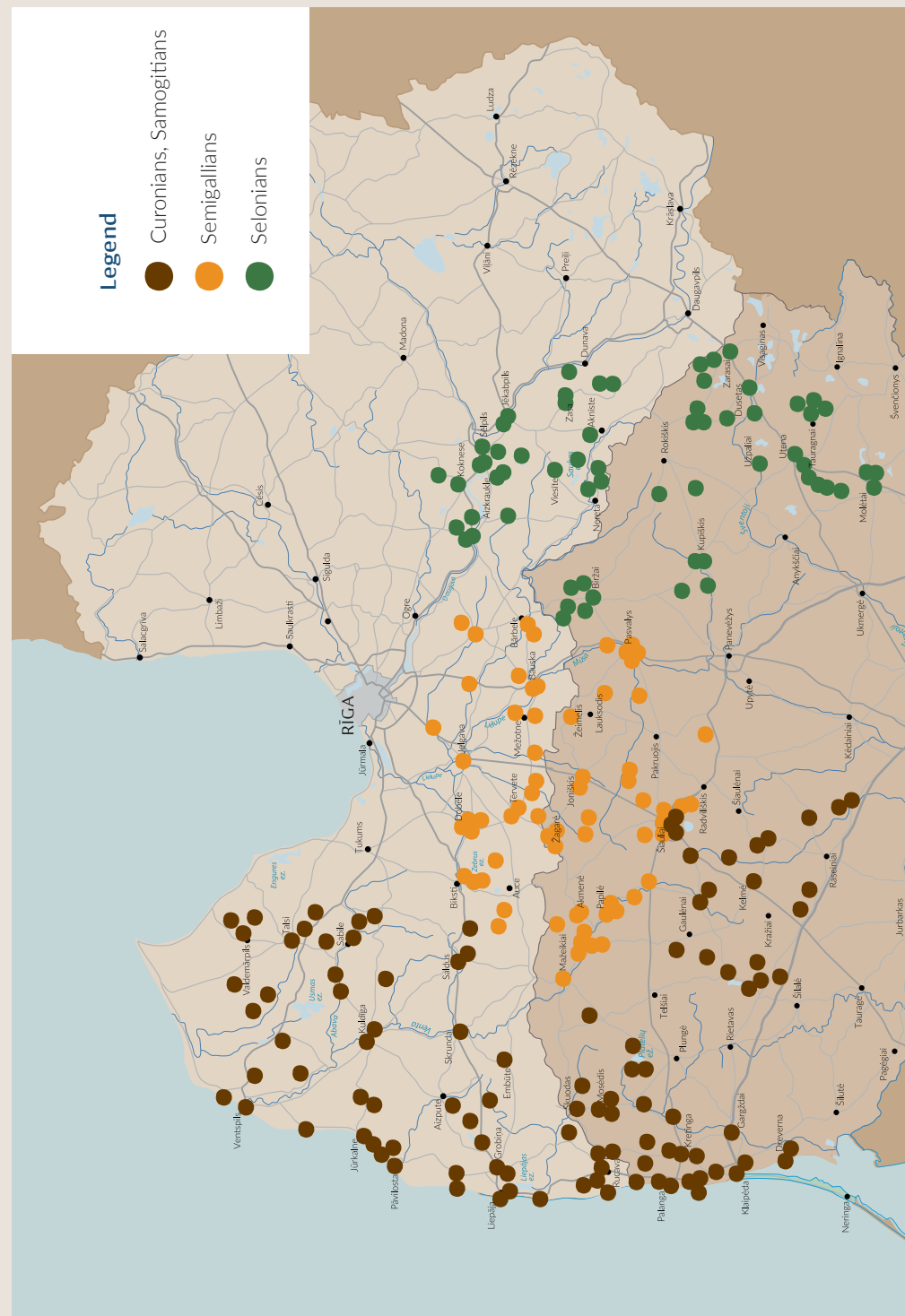
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Look for and see also the tourism guides



Semigallians



Selonians



**CURONIANS
SAMOGITIANS**

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