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THRILLER

# SAPŅU ĶĒRĀJS\*

LATVIA'S STATE FORESTS –  
OPEN DAILY, NO ENTRANCE FEE

HE CATCHES WHAT WE  
DO NOT DARE TO THINK

PRODUCER: LATVIA'S STATE FORESTS DIRECTOR: MAMMADABA STARRING: GREAT ANTLER STAG  
SOUND: NIGHT SILENCE LIGHTS: MOON & STARS DRESS DESIGN: MAMMADABA

mammadaba

LATVIJAS VALSTS KĒZI

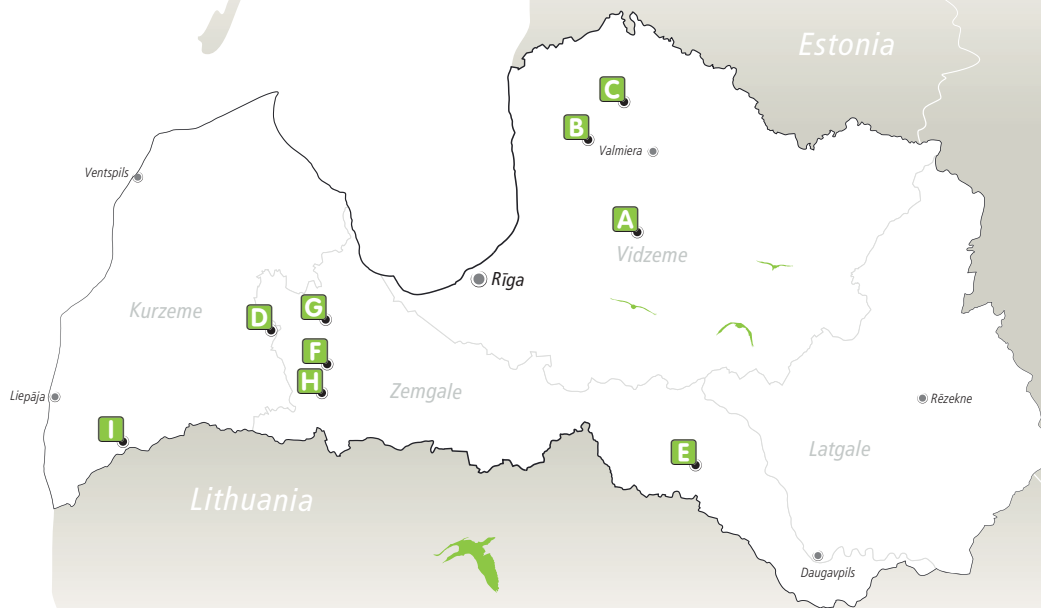
\* DREAM CATCHER

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DABAS  
STEREO



## Mammadaba welcomes you!



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# On nature trails

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Dear Friends of Nature!

On the one hand, the task of JSC "Latvijas valsts meži" is clear and simple – to manage the forests which belong to the Latvian nation. On the other, we want to contribute by bringing man closer to nature. Hence, Mammadaba – Mother Nature – a branch of "Latvijas valsts meži" whose aim is to acquaint both Latvian citizens and visitors from abroad with the wealth of our nature, joining one and all with the primitive beauty of nature.



*Roberts Strīpnieks  
Chairman of the Board, JSC "Latvijas valsts meži"*



## Dreaming of spring

Seeing the joy autumn winds take in picking up the remaining stubborn leaves from tree branches, white snowflakes slowly covering meadows, tucking marshes in a warm blanket, getting stuck on spiky pine tops and decorating fir trees, you may find it strange to receive the latest Mammadaba magazine, inviting you to head out on nature trails, breathe in dizzying aromas, roam along the banks of a fast-flowing river or walk the forest's untouched corners at Gauja River's oxbow lakes. However, winter is a time to dream and figure out where to go when rivers are no longer bound by chains of ice, swamps covered in a delicate cloud of pink cranberry blossoms and young buds on branches of hope. After all, there is an old Latvian saying that goes – build carriages in winter. Just like every dedicated gardener, who gathers seeds in winter to sow them in spring, travellers also dream of the trails they will take when anemones and bird cherries will be in full bloom. It's so beautiful to dream!





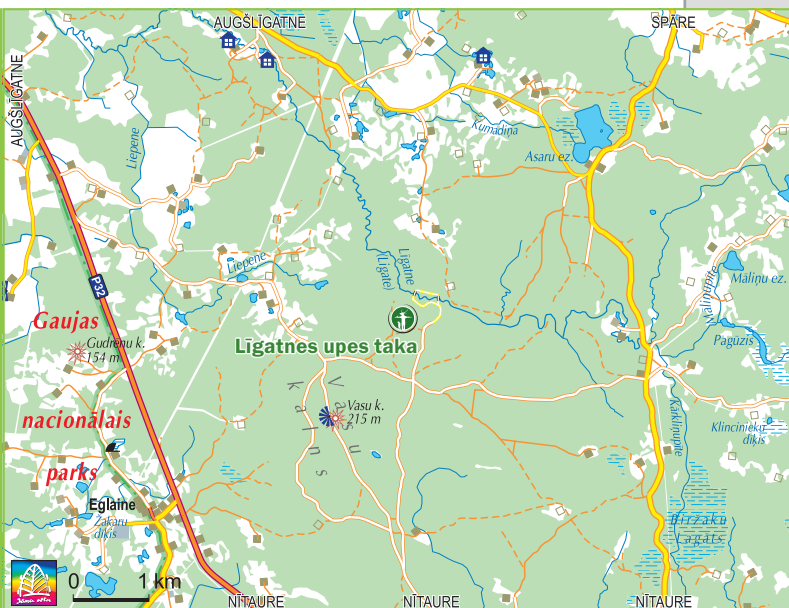


**I will  
return here  
someday**

## Līgatne River Trail

Nītaures pagasts  
Amatas novads

Rīga – 80 km  
Augšlīgatne – 17 km



Līgatne (also called Ligate) is a peculiar river where water swirls around rock formations, muttering something to itself. Several moments later, it gently whispers to the numerous bird cherries leaning over its torrent. Every spider web gleams with drops of dew and tenderness. It is beautiful here all year long.

Do you want to see this magnificent river? Then come to the Līgatne River Trail, but do not confuse it with the Līgatne Nature Trail, which is also worth seeing. However, this time, we will take a look at the most untamed (and unaffected by human activity) Līgatne River's segment in Nītaure.

How to find a way?

Driving from Rīga, turn right at Līgatne in the direction of Nītaure and Skrīveri. After five kilometres, you will see a turn off and a sign on the left side of the road at the Ķīgari bus stop – the Līgatne Nature Trail – 6.1 kilometres. The trail is also accessible from Nītaure by taking the Pellēni-Būdas forest road.



## Nītaure without horns and aurochs

Nītaure is conveniently located on the banks of the Mergupe River. There is plenty of room and no need to encroach on neighbours. You can set up camp on a picturesque river meander or in the shade of a hill. Nītaure's history dates back to 1277, when Livonian Order's master Walther von Nortecken built a fortress in this beautiful location. More people started to settle down next to the Nītaure Manor in the second half of the 19th century, when its owner began to distribute land for construction purposes. Nītaure grew and was given densely populated area status in 1925.



There is much to see in Nītaure. Former Castle, which was burned down during the 1905 riots, has been rebuilt and is now home to a school. The Orthodox Church, designed by the first academically-educated Latvian architect Jānis Baumanis, is being renovated as well. The guest house “Nītaures Dzirnavas”, which was built at the end of the 19th century as a watermill, offers a wide array of recreational opportunities.



## Fast-flowing river

Līgatne River rises from Lake Mežēku in the swamps of Nīcgale. It was first mentioned during the 1630 plough inspection. However, there is a tale of even earlier times. It is said that a rich landlord used to live in a manor atop Lakšu Hill. Once, when he was done whipping local peasants, the landlord decided to take a trip along Lake Mažēku on his way home. Suddenly, the lake blocked his way and the horses, startled by a roadside beggar, pulled his carriage into a dark whirlpool – the landlord was punished for his evil deeds and thrown into the water by God himself. The lake returned to its former state, but became very deep and Līgatne River rose from it. The river is only 31 kilometres long but fast-flowing – its average fall is at 5.8 metres per kilometre, in the lower section – 6.6 metres per kilometre. The river starts off at 206 metres above sea level and descends to 17 metres upon reaching the Gauja River in Līgatne County. In its upper reaches, Līgatne River runs 4 kilometres along the 45 metre deep Elles grava (Hell’s Gully).

The river also meanders through Nītaure Forest quite a distance. In spring, its torrent-eroded gully is covered with snow despite blue anemones blooming slightly further away. Later on, the river shrouds itself with bird cherry blossoms. In the middle of summer, fragrances of red-listed light purple honesty roll cross the river.

A long time ago, there was a tall fir at the top of Vaļņu Hill, one of the highest points in Nītaure. A horn blower was sitting atop it, keeping a close eye on the surroundings, ready to warn about enemies approaching. Once, he fell asleep and the horn slipped out of his hands. When he woke up, he saw enemies drawing nearer and wanted to sound the alarm, but the horn was nowhere to be seen. He called out: “Nicht taur!”

Others say that the place was named after aurochs (Latvian – “tauri”), which used to populate all surrounding areas, with the exception of Nītaure.



Līgatne River is fed by many springs. Its water is always clean, cold and, just like in other fast-flowing rivers, oxygen-rich. Trout and graylings feel comfortable here. Salmon and brown trout overcome the locks not far from the Gauja River, attempting to reach their spawning places. The untouched riverbanks are popular among capercaillies, during their mating period, and lynxes, coming to the river to quench their thirst after a hefty meal.

## Līgatne River Trail

The banks of the Līgatne River are magnificent, steep and rich in gullies and rocks along the entire course. They are untouched, in some places – even rather wild. To comfortably enjoy this unusual beauty, without being afraid to fall from the banks, a two kilometre trail was laid by JSC “Latvia’s State Forests” in 2005. However, it is not a simple trail! It could be called “the trail of unusual sensations”. Impressive, mossy firs, a deep gully and a fast-flowing river with algae looking like long green hair create a special feeling.

The 30 metre ascent can be overcome via stairs. If you get tired, take a seat on a bench and enjoy the feeling of being almost above tree tops, while the relentless river flows beneath your feet. There is also a footbridge leading through a marshy area and a romantic bridge across the river. However, to get back, you’ll have to cross a huge tree fallen over the river.

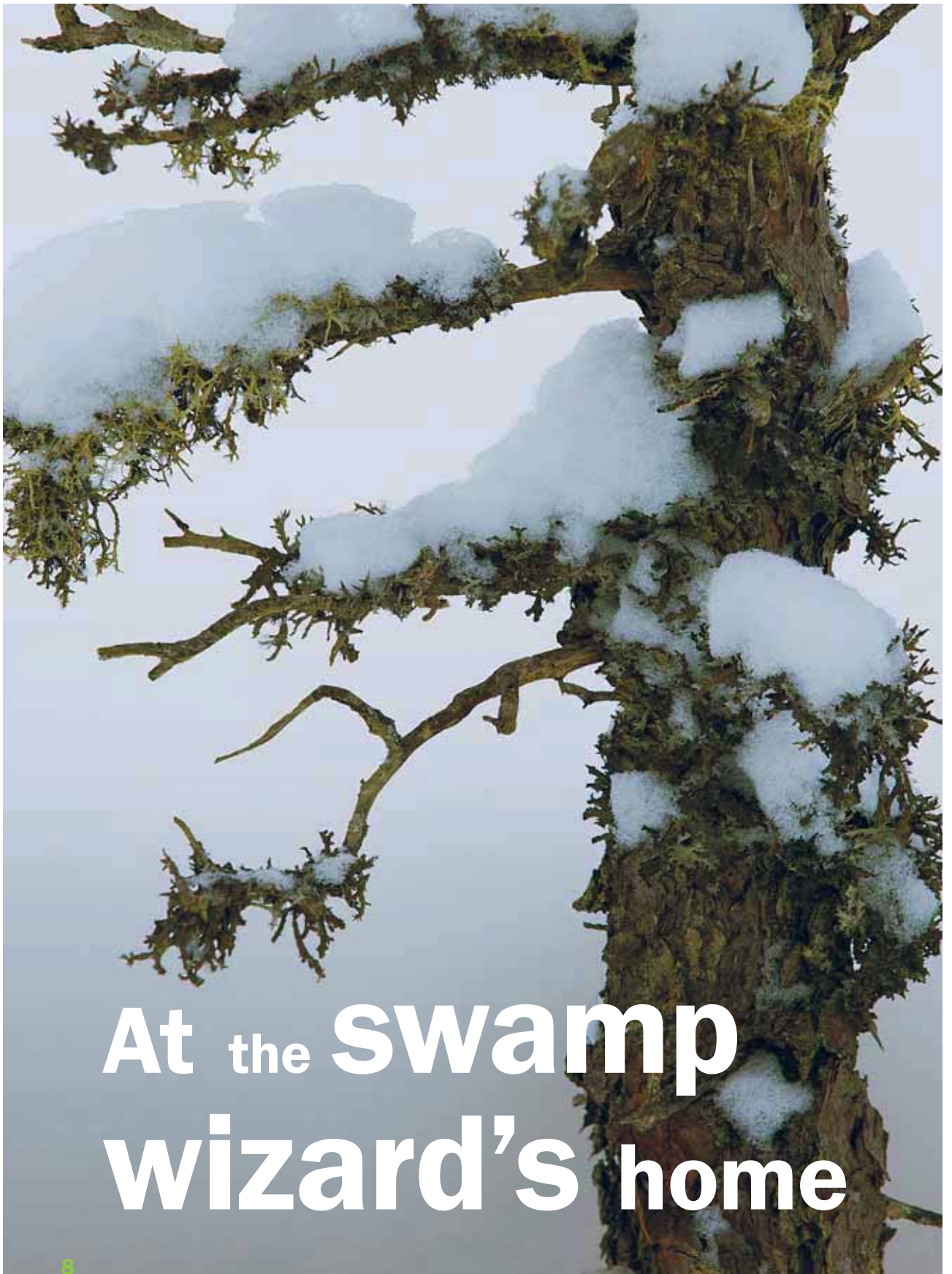
It is not hard or scary, but not quick either. In autumn, you should take your steps carefully, since it may be slippery under the bright cover of leaves. Ugly milk-caps on your path will also not allow a quick pace. In spring, you will slow down at the sight of the anemone fields. In summer, your attention will be focused on water splashes gleaming in the sun and playfully jumping over the rocks, and a beaver dam built only a couple of metres away from the fallen tree.



On your way back, have a seat at the meadow’s large wooden table, drink some tea and eat a sandwich, since you will be pleasantly tired after walking in the fresh air.

And you will definitely think to yourself – I will return here someday!





# At the **swamp** wizard's home

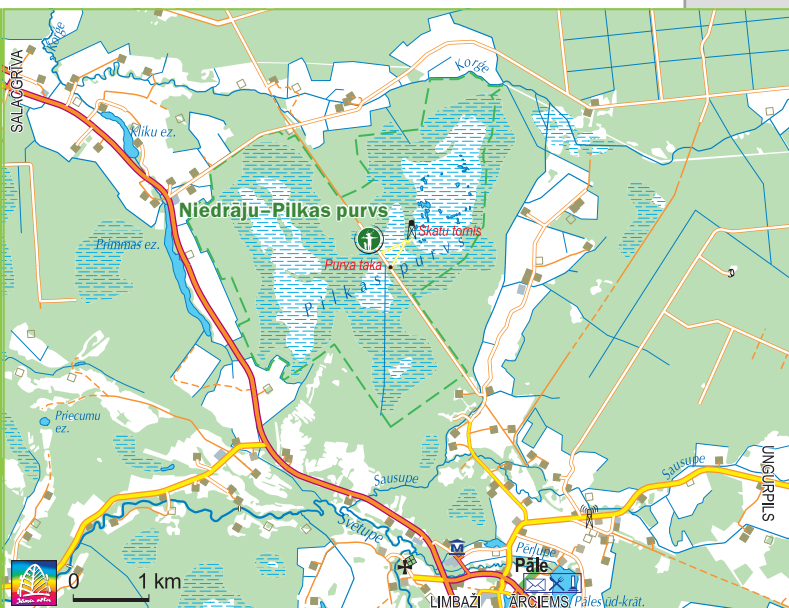
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## Niedrāji-Pilka Swamp

Pāles pagasts  
Limbažu novads

Rīga – 115 km  
Limbaži – 25 km  
Salacgrīva – 25 km



The Niedrāji-Pilka Swamp is a nature reserve of national importance. It is located in the Northern Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, and is a protected nature territory of European importance, and is included on the Natura 2000 list.



## On the banks of the Svētupe River

In Pāle, the main natural riches are forests, fertile land, peat, water and marshes. The picturesque salmon river Svētupe runs 58 kilometres along marshes and sandstone rocks. The river also passes through a ten-meter gully near the ancient settlement of Vidzeme Livs – Pāle. This wonderful landscape is complemented by Svētupe's tributary – the Pērļupe River, various fish ponds, the Niedrāji-Pilka Swamp and many small lakes.

If the road you chose has led you here, you must definitely visit the Pāle Regional Research Museum, the Pāle Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Pāle School.





## More to see

- \* The Great Oak of Drieliņi Manor Park (6.4 metres wide).
- \* Ārciema Park – a protected natural area of regional importance with 21 local and 37 foreign species of trees.
- \* The Liv Sacrificial Caves and unusual objects around them (boat-shaped stone formations, energetic stones, etc.)

The Pāle Regional Research Museum, in the old inn at Kalnakrogs, is the only museum in Latvia, where you can find out about the history of Pāle and its surroundings, the most famous local people (for example – writer and Dikļi Song Festival organizer Juris Neikens) and the complicated fates of Vidzeme Livs.

The Pāle School, designed by architect Arnolds Čuibe, is one of the most brilliant school construction examples of 1930s Latvia.

The Pāle Evangelical Lutheran Church is home to the altar painting “Christ Blessing a Child” by renowned Latvian painter Augusts Annuss.

## Where moss blankets grow warm under the sun

In Pāle, you will run across a sign inviting to visit the Niedrāji-Pilka Swamp. It is only five kilometres away and you will never get lost – there is a sign at every turn-off. The final stretch of the road leads over the former Smiltene-Valmiera-Ainaži narrow gauge railway, which crosses the Niedrāji-Pilka Swamp from south-east to north-west.

Nowadays, when traversing swamps, rubber boots are no longer a necessity. Your feet will also stay dry when visiting the Niedrāji-Pilka Swamp. In 2011, after nine years of service, the old aspen footbridge was renovated, becoming wider and more stable. The nearly one-kilometre-long footbridge leads to an island in the swamp, where a three meter high observation platform has been constructed next to some small lakes. It is a strange feeling to traverse the swamp, whose waters gaze at the world for the seventh millennium.

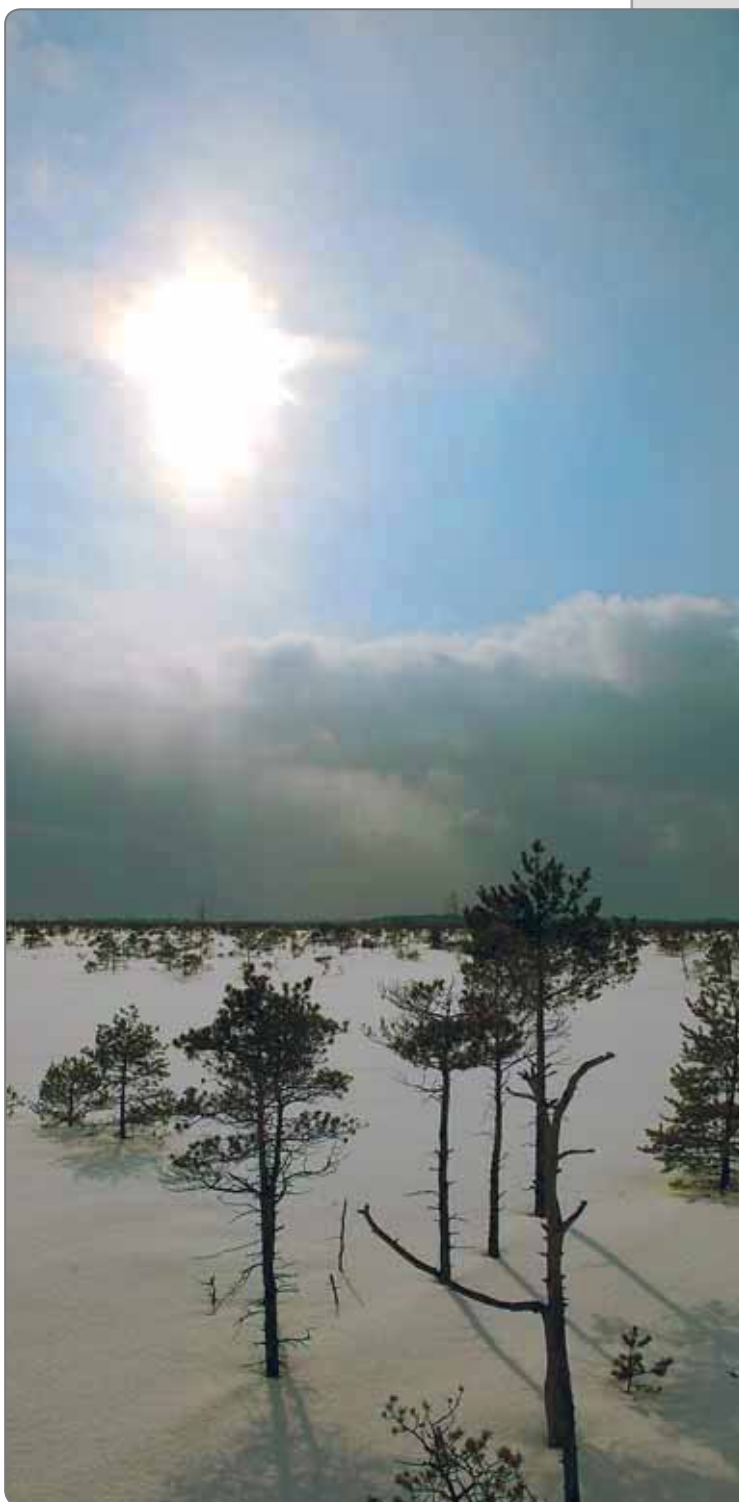


How did the swamp occur? The Niedrāji-Pilka Swamp is a high (moss) swamp with small lakes. It is hard to believe that there are six metres of peat beneath your feet and that the swamp's ghostly small pines are more than 100 years old. Looking at the sophisticated colour nuances in this rich landscape, you begin to doubt that the swamp's flora is mediocre – 12–15 species of flowering plants. Only the species requiring minimal amounts of mineral substances can survive in moss swamps. Sphagnum mosses, on the other hand, can absorb 10–20 times more water than their dry weight.

The swamp is filled with mysterious, dewy-eyed and dizzying marsh tea aromas, white fluffs, cranberries turning red, bilberries growing darker, slightly sad and purple heather blossoms. Sundews try to catch distracted flies, compensating their lack of mineral substances. Lichens bunch up on tree stumps. Young, brisk and spiky pines raise their heads to grow even more.

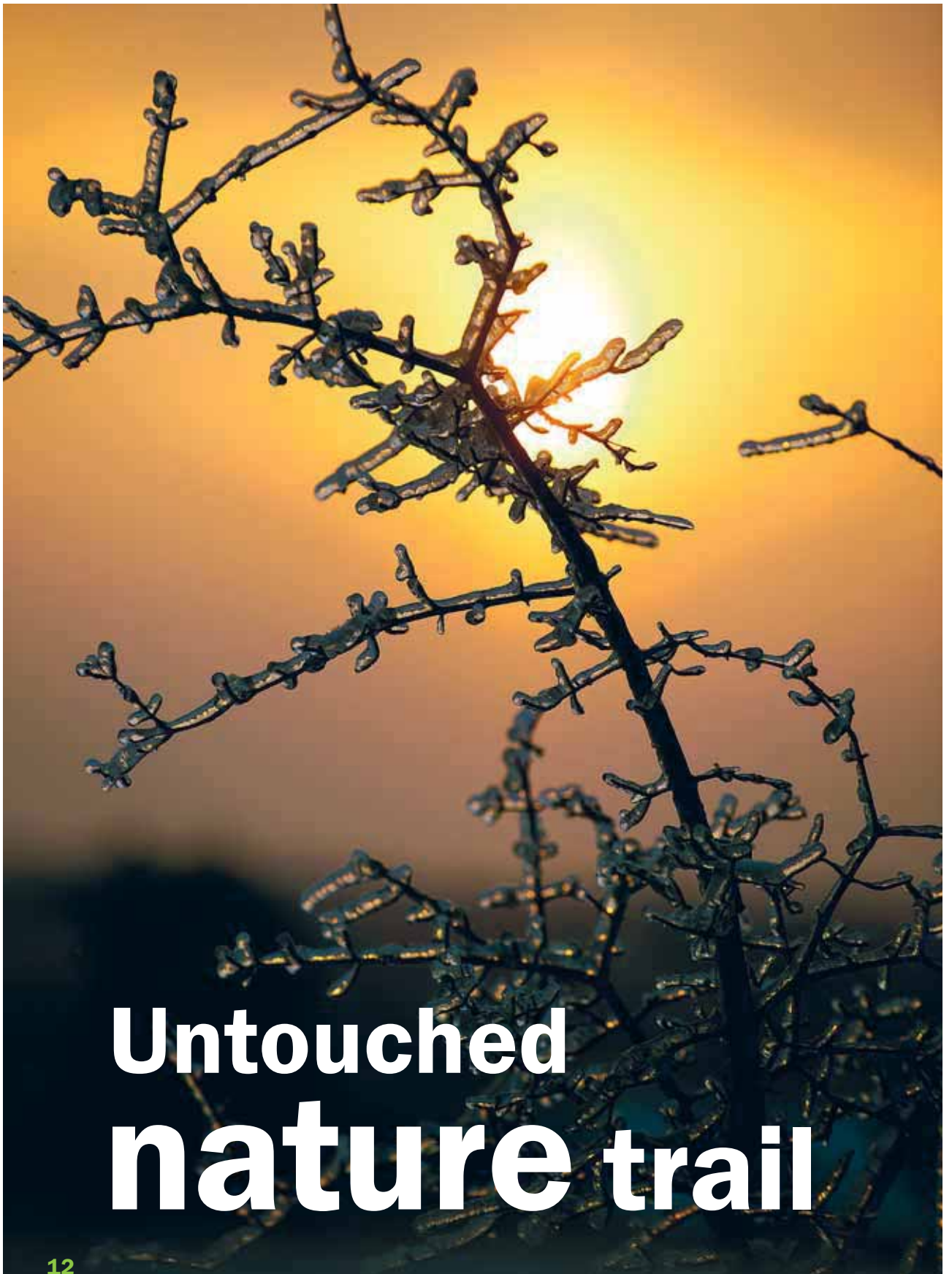
Who said that swamps are gloomy and sad? Why do fairytales describe such places as home to the Devil? It seems that a good wizard lives here, making sure that there are plenty of colours and scents in his kingdom, and all creatures, who have chosen the swamp as their habitat, feel fine.

Even though the swamp is usually calm and silent, you can hear it bustling with life, rustling and tweeting in the distance. The Niedrāji-Pilka Swamp is an important nesting and residential area to many bird species – cranes, herring gulls and common gulls. If you are lucky enough, you may also witness black storks, bean geese, European honey buzzards, lesser-spotted eagles, capercaillies, hazel grouses, European golden plovers and three-toed woodpeckers. However, the wizard is nowhere to be seen. He is too busy putting morasses to winter slumber and dreaming of spring, when he will paint the entire swamp in shades of pink.



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# Untouched nature trail

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## Zīle Nature Trail

Zīle  
Valkas pagasts  
Valkas novads

Rīga – 175 km  
Smiltene – 35 km  
Valka – 5 km



Zīle Nature Trail is located in a specially protected territory – the protected landscape area “Ziemeļgauja”, which occupies nearly 22,000 hectares of the ancient valley of the Gauja River and the adjacent forests from Valmiera to Gulbene and Alūksne regions. There are 24 specially protected (in Latvia and world-wide) forest, meadow and swamp habitats in “Ziemeļgauja”, as well as 134 rare and endangered species of mushrooms, lichens and animals. “Ziemeļgauja” has also been included in the European Union’s network of protected areas - Natura 2000.



## Zīle Nature Trail

To reach Zīle Nature Trail, drive 35 kilometres down the Smiltene-Valka Highway. After crossing the Gauja Bridge, turn right at the “Zīle” (“Ieviņas” Ltd) bus stop and you will soon find yourself at the trail’s start point.

A 2.3 kilometre walk along the ancient valley of the Gauja River, slope forests, mixed oak, elm and ash-tree forests and flood-lands will be in store for you. The trail can be completed in an hour and a half, however, you might want to add some more time to take a look at a rare hermit beetle or a steel blue jewel beetle in a tree hollow, a startled beaver taking a dive or an inch long snail making his way home across the wooden footbridge.



Along the trail, you will find 12 information stands on different habitats, characteristic animals and insects – interesting reading. There are also bridges, viewing platforms and signs for your comfort. All you have to do is enjoy the non-artificial beauty of a primeval forest. This place is beautiful all year long – in spring, when anemones are in full bloom, buds ready to embrace the sun and the mighty trunks of trees are easily distinguishable, and in autumn, when the bright colours of leaves cast their reflection upon the trail's oxbow lake. Unusual feelings arise in late autumn, when the trees have laid out their leaves in a magnificent carpet, waving their branches and hoping for snow to cover everything with a gentle white blanket.



## Oaks on oxbow lake shores

A short run through a pine forest and we are already at the oxbow lake of the Gauja River. The river never seeks direct routes, however, in Valka Region, it is particularly tortuous, rich in distributaries and oxbow lakes. There are hundreds of them. Their soil, nourished during spring floods, is highly fertile. As a result, local plant cover is bright and abundant all year round. Broad-leaf trees also enjoy growing on oxbow lake shores. Therefore there are mixed oak, elm and ash-tree forests. In flood-land forests, they are complemented by flattering elms, aspen trees and black alders. In spring, before the first leaves block the sun, the area is covered by wonderful blue anemones, lesser celandines, yellow-stars-of-Bethlehem, spring fumeworts and many other plant species.

In summer, ostrich ferns with funnel-shaped leaves, which are rather uncommon in Latvia, spring up in flood-land and slope forests. Their middle parts hide especially fertile leaves, which develop spores. When these leaves wither, they look like blossoms, and Jāņi (Midsummer celebration) merry-makers can dream of finding a magical fern blossom at midnight.

Local oaks are short and sturdy with thick, tangled branches. In ancient times, when bison roamed these forests, they were sparse and free of brushwood shades. Back then, the oaks were home to different, light-loving insect and lichen species, which nowadays disappear, as the large trees become tangled by brushwood.

Old, sturdy and branchy oaks are the most favourite dwelling of a hermit beetle, which is protected in many countries. This beetle, ranging from two to three centimetres in length, spends most of its life as a larva, alone in tree hollows, eating rotten wood. It is destined to morph into a beetle for only two or three weeks, when it comes out in daylight to have a look at its forest. Have a close look and you may see its bright wings shimmering in oak hollows.



Slope forests gradually emerge on the slopes of oxbow lake shores. They differ from flat area forests, affected by the proximity of the river and numerous springs that carve their way towards the river. Usually, there is a special microclimate – more humid and darker. North-facing slopes are characterized by dark deciduous forests with moss-covered and even more respectable trunks, south-facing slopes are dryer and sunlit with different plant and insect species.

## Worthless thicket or home to rare species?

What a thicket! Someone may call out when seeing this primeval, untouched and slightly wild landscape. However, it is necessary to remember that fallen trees are important components of natural forests and home to various creatures. Many endangered species require specific living conditions. For example, a lucanid beetle settles in wind-fallen firs, decomposed by brown rot, only 10–20 years after their collapse. Tall, old and sturdy trees are the only ones suitable for a longhorn beetle.

Many fallen trees can be found on the banks of difficult-to-manage rivers, tributaries and oxbow lake shores. Slope forests, untouched by human activity, have many withered and fallen trees or large hollow trees – a true paradise for woodpeckers, including the rare white-backed woodpeckers. A Eurasian pygmy owl, the smallest owl in Europe, in turn gladly moves into woodpecker cavities. Common mergansers and golden eyes also live in tree hollows. These species of ducks nest there.

The hustle and bustle of withered tree daily lives is impressive, remaining hidden from human sight. Scientists have concluded that there are five times more beetle species in dead wood than in growing trees. There are plenty of fallen trees on the Zīle Nature Trail, as well as many mushroom, lichen, insect and bird species – huge rarities in other areas.

Each spring, the shores of oxbow lakes overflow, leaving the nearby willows, bird-cherries and grey alders with wet feet. However, the trees have adapted, remaining calm and continuing to grow to the delight of the rare collema lichens. Birds can easily build their nests on these twisted and moss-covered trunks.

With so many dead trees around, you may also come across a 20 centimetre black keel-back slug.

## Park-like meadows

When the road along the oxbow lake has led you closer to the Gauja River with a wonderful sandy beach, resembling an open book with forest animal tracks, a park-like meadow will appear in front of your eyes. There are not many such meadows in Latvia. Old and tall trees are scattered around the meadow, which means that it is a perfect place for various rare species seeking partially-shaded areas or sun-caressed broad-leaf trees. Its old trees are home to lichen and a rare saffron yellow polypore mushroom.

Park-like meadows slowly overgrow, decreasing in numbers. However, they can still be seen in Gauja Valley. Make use of the opportunity to take a walk in this slightly wild and untouched corner of nature.

## Warning!

Choose appropriate and comfortable footwear for your walks along Zīle Nature Trail! The footbridge can become slippery in rainy weather!





# In castles and parks



## In spring winds

“It is April. Fir seeds fall to spring winds,” wrote Latvian poet Imants Ziedonis. Indeed, this is the month when winds are set free from their winter slumber by Mother Nature, so that they can let off some steam. This is where it all begins! Nature awakens. Every brook breaks free from its chains of ice and rushes to the sea. Small and fuzzy willow-catkins gather strength from out of nowhere to discard their winter garb. The air is full of aromas, making heads dizzy and hearts yearn for long walks in search of the places, where the grass grows green and flowers bloom. There is an urge to postpone all urgent tasks and head out to unfamiliar locales.



Mother Nature is rich. She invites one and all to take wild forest trails, breathe in forest scents and take a look at a swamp covered in cranberry blossoms. This time, Mother Nature offers romantic walks in fairytale-shrouded castles and parks, encouraging stopping by the Oak of Love in Remte Park, the Zaļenieki Nature Park, where yellow-stars-of-Bethlehem sprout their first buds, and the Gārsene Castle, where anemones bloom along the banks of the Dienvidsusēja River.





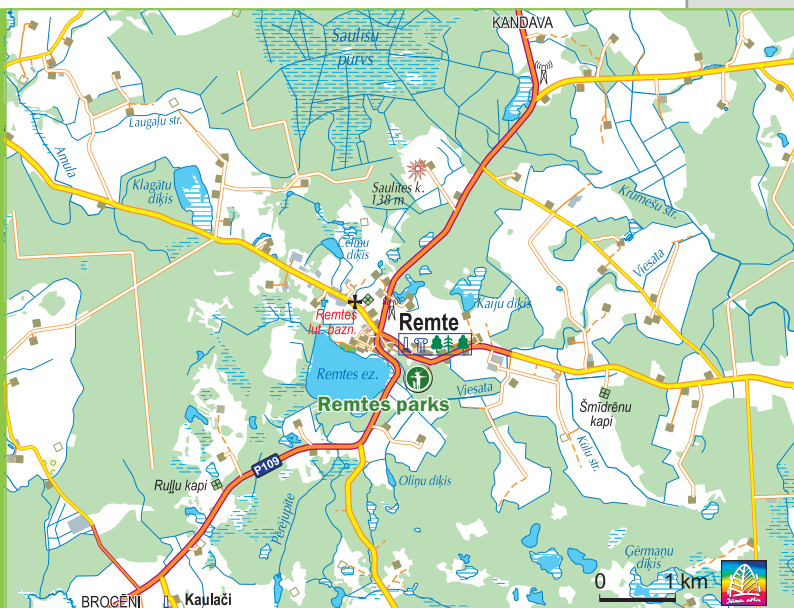
# Romantic Remte Trail



## Remte Trail

Brocēnu novads  
Remtes pagasts

Rīga – 120 km  
Brocēni – 10 km  
Saldus – 17 km



In the centre of Remte, clouds cast their reflections upon the calm waters of Lake Remte. The old manor, built in 1800, lies nearby. The children of Remte have been studying here since 1921. There are 24 foreign tree species, small architectural forms corresponding to their period, the Oak of Love, the Hunting Tower, the Island of Love and several bridges across the artificially-created system of canals in the manor's park, tempting the enthusiasts of romantic strolls.

## Oak of Love and Island of Love

In the park's corner, near the Saldus Highway, Remte residents and guests are greeted by one of the park's oldest trees – the Oak of Love. It is 5.3 metres wide and sometimes also called the Great Oak. The newlyweds visit the oak to strengthen their ties and draw strength for their future lives together.

Further on, the Lover's Path leads to the Island of Love, which is an artificial formation in the middle of a river, where a table and small benches used to be. Six trees have been planted around the island, seeing much during their more-than-a-hundred-year-long lives. Green bridges once crossed the river, but they are gone now. Nevertheless, the new wooden bridges with unusual parapets perfectly fit the surrounding landscape.

During the times of counts, the river was much wider and cleaner. Its bed was laid out in oak planks from the Island of Love to the locks, where its master used to swim. Remte Manor residents also used to bathe in Lake Remte. A three-storey brick tower was built for relaxation purposes on the lake's eastern shore in 1820. Each floor had a well-organized room, where residents could relax after their bathing sessions. On the tower's northern side, a spiral staircase led to its roof.



## Alluring hunt



Remte Manor owners, the Medems, were passionate hunters. The round brick Hunting Tower, built and covered in travertine in 1890, signifies the excitement in hunting back then. There is a room with three windows and a splendid view of the park on the tower's second floor. After their swimming and hunting outings, the counts used to have breakfast or hold feasts in this room. Mighty hunts were held here – with hundred beaters yelling, dogs barking and horns resounding in the elk-rich forests of Remte. The feasts were bountiful. When Madame Medem managed to shoot down an elk, forest rangers and hunters were treated to three-day feasts. However, the count did not only hunt, he also established a proud elk garden. 100–150 hectares of land were enclosed a kilometre away from the manor, becoming home to introduced red deer, fallow deer, roe deer, white hares, partridges and pheasants. The count paid a rouble to anyone who caught a local hare and released it in the elk garden. There was also a picturesque fish pond, where deer used to come to quench their thirst in the evening. Nowadays, only the foundations of the hunters' house remind us of the elk garden. In 1915, when the war broke out, the enclosure was pulled down and the animals regained their freedom, becoming the first members of the Saldus deer population.

## Bear Hut

Medem was also fond of bears. Once, he bought three cubs and told the park's curator to raise them. A special brick hut was built for the cubs, however, the rascals preferred to raid nearby homes. The cubs were addicted to riding, jumping on sleds and carriages, startling horses and coachmen. Later on, they became completely unmanageable and attacked the curator. The count ran out of patience and sold them.

## Alley of Pigs

Northeast of the manor, the so-called Alley of Pigs (Pig Street) leads to the Jaunpils Road. The alley used to be a continuation of the Jaunpils Road, and the three roads crossed each other at the manor. Its masters could not tolerate peasants riding across their courtyard, claiming that peasant pigs were digging beneath manor foundations, and ordered to pave a road along the post house.



## Secret cellar and Torture Chamber

Between the Alley of Pigs and the river, there is a brick-laid and earth-sheltered cave – the Torture Chamber. Disobedient servants were whipped here, hence its name. It is said that a secret passage leads from the Torture Chamber to Remte Manor cellars.

Next to the Torture Chamber, plastered stone platforms lie on both sides of the river, the remnants of a bridge. People say that there was a cellar beneath the platforms, where the counts kept valuables. The bridge was built above it so that no one would imagine looking for anything.

## Garden Pavilion with stashed money

On your way from the Torture Chamber along the river's left bank, you will come across the Garden Pavilion, where Friedrich Medem's bust stood until 1915. Old people say the marble bust was hollow and used to stash money. It seems that the one who pulled down and smashed the bust also believed this.

## Snake Monument

A vase, called the Snake Monument, can be found opposite the manor, on a larger island. The vase used to have a marble lid. There is still an inscription on its eastern side. Only a cavity remains on the southern side, where a copper plate with portraits of the Medems previously stood. Back then, there was also a copper snake winding around the vase. It is said that a countess was bitten by a viper here. She died and the monument was built.

## Defenders' dance floor

Continue to tread along the forest's edge until you reach the Dance Floor, granted to Remte defenders in 1933. Oh, the dances that took place here! There is an unusual multi-branched fir on one side here. It was artificially grown by planting several trees together.





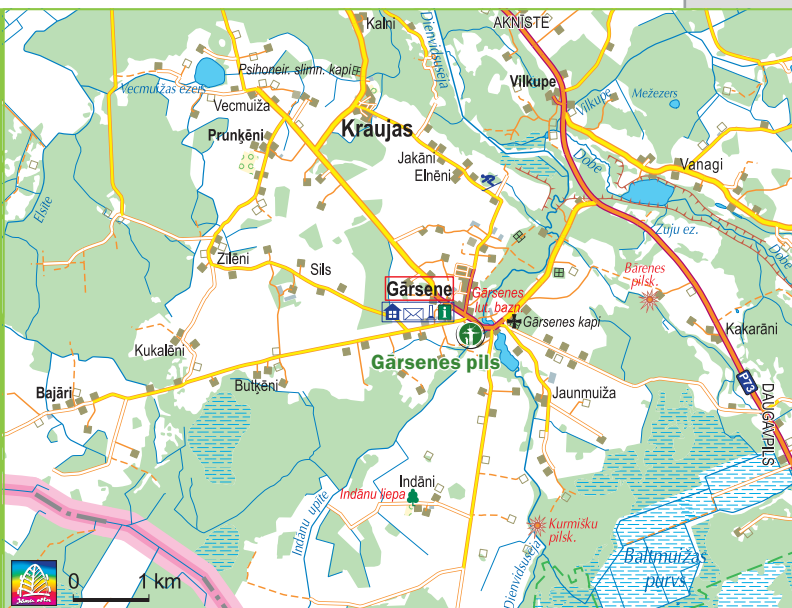
The pride  
of **Sēlija** –  
**Gārsene**



## Gārsene Nature Trail

Aknīstes novads  
Gārsenes pagasts

Rīga – 170 km  
Jēkabpils – 55 km  
Aknīste – 10 km



Right at the Lithuanian border lies the village of Gārsene, one of the most beautiful places in the region of Sēlija. The Dienvidsusēja River, which twists and turns through the region, lakes Zuja and Vecmuiža, where the original Gārsene Castle is supposed to be submerged, as well as the picturesque ponds, streams and majestic trees make this area of Latvia especially scenic. During the nationwide competition "Tidiest County" 2006, Gārsene won in two categories. Gārsene Castle and the surrounding nature trails are also included in Latvia's 100 top cultural sites. The castle is also a European Cultural Heritage site.

## Castle surrounded by myths and legends

The pride of Gārsene County is its neo-gothic castle, which is also called the Pearl of Zemgale and the Pride of Sēlija. The history of Gārsene is closely linked with the noble Boeninghausen-Budberg family, which oversaw the area for 11 generations. The local counts took care of their farmers by building schools, social care homes, a community center and a church. The local population valued the good things the count had done for them, thus they welcomed him and his beautiful wife with a six-kilometer honor guard.

Many myths and legends in Gārsene come from this period, when the castle was originally constructed in 1860. However, since 1940, Gārsene Castle accommodates the local elementary school, whose students have written a whole new page in the village's history.



## How Gārsene got its name

Baron Budberg, who owned much land in the area, decided to build a castle like none other in the region. He invited local peasants and farmers to help him. The baron wished for the castle to be mentioned frequently, but did not have a name. The locals pondered possibilities, but could not come up with anything the baron liked. The baron then sent out his coachman to local roads, to speak with passers-by. He said that the first word the first one says will become the name of the castle. Thus, the coachman – and the baroness, set out on their assignment. The two met the first passerby, a woman, near the border with Lithuania, carrying a basket of ground elder herbs, called gārsas in Latvian. The baroness asked the woman what she was carrying, and the woman replied: gārsas. The baroness exalted in joy that this was a perfect name, and made the coachman turn back for the castle immediately. From that time on, the castle and village are known as Gārsene.

## Gift for Gertrude

In 1906, baron von Budberg constructed a new, larger church in honor of his late wife Gertrude, who had passed away at a young age. The new church was built directly on the site of the village's old church, and featured an elaborate wood interior. The church currently houses two national heritage items – two stained glass windows with the heraldry of the baron's family depicted on them, as well as a 1906 E.F. Walcker church organ (E.F. Walcker also constructed the organ currently in the Rīga Dome Church). In 1904, the family chapel of the baron's family was also constructed, which has helped create many myths and legends.

## The Blue Lady of Gārsene

When the chapel was constructed, the baron, who had placed the remains of his first wife in the new chapel, suddenly died. The baron's second wife was very jealous, and did not wish for the baron to be laid to rest next to his first wife. She then ordered the remains of the baron's first wife to be reburied outside the chapel. Since then, the spirit of baroness Gertrude, not being able to rest in peace, has been living in the castle, where she had spent many good moments of her life. Initially, the ghost of Gertrude, known as the Blue Lady, frightened the baron's second wife, but today – she appears every once in a while for the castle's new dwellers and visitors.





## Romantic relaxation spots

The von Budbergs began creating the park surrounding the castle in the 19th century, during which various types of interesting tree species were planted, and paths, bridges, ponds and benches set up. Since then, much of the park has been preserved, including romantic relaxation spots, where lovers have enjoyed long walks for the past century.

The Dienvidsusēja River valley has various tourist paths, all with recreation areas. They feature over 40 interesting nature objects, as well as all of the county's most important architectural and historical landmarks.

The paths all follow along the lively Dienvidsusēja River, which is a tributary to the Mēmele River. The river, with its many twists and turns, has also carved splendid formations in the dolomite rock walls on the banks of the river. In the spring, the river is sometimes so rapid that it has been known to break the river mill's dam. Take the path's short route (3.7 kilometers), or long (seven kilometers) for an unforgettable trek. The beautiful Ieva's Path (Ievas Taka) has also recently been added, which allows persons to see many natural and man-made wonders.

All of the paths begin by the castle. First, walk up Tea Hill, a popular relaxation spot for the baron's family near the Gārsene Watermill. Next to the hill, where majestic linden trees have grown over the years, is a pond, where the baron used to go swimming. Along the 150-meter long lane of ash-trees past the Dainu Rock, you will come across the prominent pine tree called Three Daughters, which has three trunks and seven tree tops, some of which with their own names – Witch's Broom and Chicken Leg. There is something to look at almost every step of this lovely park. For example, sitting down in the Baron's Seat is a must - a large rock that has been formed into a chair. The baron enjoyed many days outside sitting here and relaxing. You should also take a look at the forest through the Witch's Binoculars, which is a special formation in a tree. Continuing on and viewing the surroundings, you will come to a special rock called Big Lutausis, named after a fabled Latvian folk-character, and further ahead – a recreation area. In the end, time will have gone by so fast, you will not have noticed that several hours have actually expired.

To promote tourism in the area, steps, safety barriers and handrails have been constructed on the nature paths. Furthermore, the recreation areas all have picnic tables, benches, canopies, fire-places and information signs.

The Gārsene nature paths have partly been established with assistance from "Latvia's State Forests". Our work includes the creation of the "Lutauši" recreation area, located near the Big Lutausis Rock. The huge rock truly lets fantasies run wild, as some see the contour of Latvia in the rock, while others see two brothers hand-in-hand, or even a broken heart. According to local legend, the park's gardener fell in love with the baron's daughter, who did not approve of the pair. Thus, heartbroken, the gardener carved a formation of a broken heart into the rock.



## Nature trails

Gārsene also has several magnificent nature trails, which feature over 40 unique cultural and natural objects. The short route will take you through a lane of ash trees to Tējas Kalniņš (Tea Hill) and the local pond, where castle dwellers used to swim on warm summer days. The 7 km long Green Path will take you along the Dienvidsusēja River valley, along majestic trees and picturesque river banks. Special rest areas have also been set up along the paths, where persons can picnic before going on their way. Another path has been created that will take persons around the area's cultural heritage sites, including Gārsene Castle and the chapel. Tickets to Gārsene Castle and the local nature paths can be purchased at the Gārsene Tourism Information Center at Gārsene Elementary School – phone: +371 29490656; +371 26367150; +371 65229643.





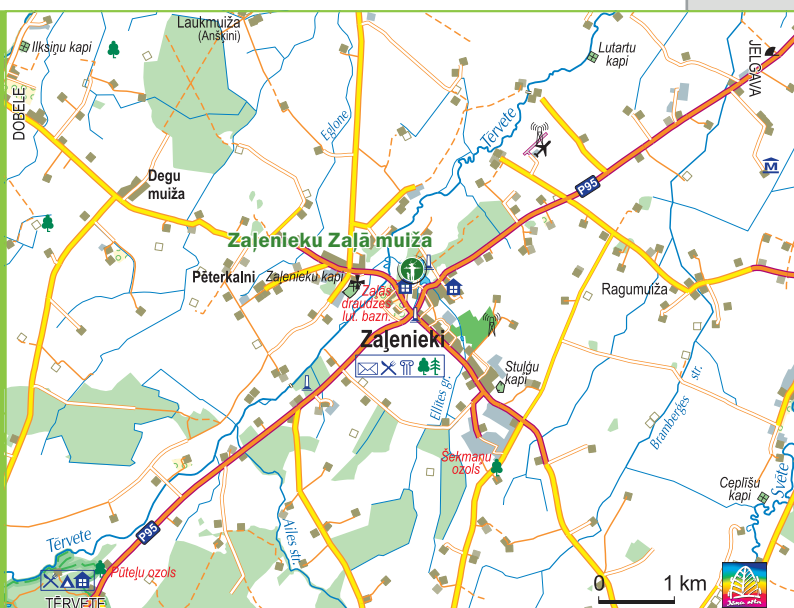
# The Green Manor of Załeniewski



## Zaļenieki Manor

Jelgavas novads  
Zaļenieku pagasts

Rīga – 70 km  
Dobele – 19 km  
Jelgava – 21 km  
Tērvete – 8 km



Zaļenieki Manor is a national architectural landmark. Despite several reconstructions, the manor retains various original and unique architectural elements, which are rare in other areas of Latvia. Thus, Zaļenieki Manor is an excellent example of the architecture during the Duchy of Courland era, with the manor's park retaining much of its 18th century ambience.



## Living green in Zaļenieki

Zaļenieki County is located in the historical territory of the ancient Semigallians near the village of Tērvete. The Baltic tribes began inhabiting this area between the 3rd and 4th centuries. And it is not surprising that Latvia's ancestors chose to live here – the surroundings are beautiful and abundant. Tērvete and Zaļenieki are not only proud of the fertile farmlands around them, but also the interesting topography. Various-sized rivers flow through the area – the Auce, Dorupīte, Eglone, Svēte and Tērvete rivers. The Duchy of Courland had created the so-called "golden circle" in and around Jelgava, and the Green Manor (Zaļā Muiža) was a part of it.

## Zaļenieki Manor



Green Manor (better known now as Zaļenieki Manor) is an interesting mix of both baroque and classicism architecture. Today, it stands out with the fact that the building's facade has basically not been tampered with or changed since it was constructed, as it still proudly shows off its original plastering, profiles and decorative features. Green Manor is one of the oldest remaining manors in Zemgale Province from the Livonian Order period. Historical documents reveal that already in 1541 a wooden building with a tiled roof sat on the site where the manor is today. The construction of the manor house started in 1768 by orders of duke Ernst Johann Biron, and was designed by Danish-born architect Severin Jensen.

Some historians believe that the famous Italian architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, under whom Jensen served as an assistant, also helped with the construction of the manor. The newly-constructed manor was a favorite hunting residence for the duke and his son Peter, and it stayed that way until 1795, when the Duchy of Courland was incorporated into the Russian Empire.

The interior of the manor features a preserved, original wide concaved vestibule with columns, a fireplace with the family coat of arms, partly-preserved decorative interior finish. Other parts of interior features such as windows, doors, parquetry and stairs are dated mid-19th century, when the reconstruction of the interior was made at the time by baron von Sheping.

Cornices in the halls on the first floor, ceiling decoration in the stairway, fragments of the inlaid flooring and some door leafs have survived from the original 18th century interior decoration. Unique wall paintings have also survived under later-applied paint layers in the central hall.

As mentioned before, the manor has changed minimally since its exterior was constructed. The roof shingles have been replaced with sheet iron, but the room plan has changed only slightly during the late 19th and early 20th century – a corridor has been built out on the ground floor and several smaller rooms have been partitioned off from the lobby.

After the Latvian agrarian reforms in 1920, the building was nationalized and turned into a vocational secondary school, still open today. The manor currently accommodates Zaļenieki Vocational School.

## How the name Green Manor came about

They are doing good, or they are doing "green" (zaļš in Latvian), the old Latvian saying goes. Thus the residents of this rich and fertile area began calling it Zaļenieki, and the manor – Zaļā muiža (also known as Zaļenieku muiža), or Green Manor.



## Manor complex and village

When the manor was nationalized in 1920, over 30 separate buildings were included on the inventory list. Some of these buildings remain to this day, and the architectural ensemble of the manor complex also includes household buildings in styles from baroque till Russian classicism (empire style). Stables at the manor were rebuilt at the beginning of the 19th and also at the beginning of the 20th century. The servants' house is situated besides the distillery building near the manor. The forger's house is located at the main road to the manor complex. Servants' houses were built in the middle of the 19th century close to each other, creating an interesting ensemble some distance from the palace on the other side of the road.



## A park to enjoy, with a bountiful fruit and vegetable garden

An integral part of the manor complex is its stunningly beautiful park. The wide French-style orchard was planted at the manor-house in the 17th century and renovated later in the 18th century. The picturesque landscape park was created in the middle of the 19th century. The planning was inspired by the natural topography that was concluded with a system of artificial ponds. Small bridges across the ponds were constructed, which added to the romanticism of the area. At the front of the palace, there is a regular-sized garden that is surrounded by the landscape park and ponds. Such a combination of parks and gardens was very popular in the 18th century – a park to enjoy, with a bountiful fruit and vegetable garden.

One of the park's main features are the many unique trees planted throughout the 24-hectare territory – silver maples, yew trees, hawthorns, silver poplars, Crimean linden trees, cedars, European larches, elm trees, barberry trees, Siberian larches, and many more. The park also has a 40-meter tall spruce tree, the tallest in the region.

The baron's former hunting grounds surrounding the park are now managed by "Latvia's State Forests", where persons now come to enjoy a romantic stroll, away from peering eyes.

## More to see

- \* Zaļenieki Evangelical Lutheran Church – features the largest church bell in Jelgava Region
- \* "Daukšas" – childhood home of the famous Latvian poet Aspazija, where she lived from 1865 to 1889
- \* On the Zaļenieki road, a large oak tree planted by the famous Latvian writer Rainis
- \* The gravesite of well-known Latvian attorney, writer and publicist Andrejs Stērste at the Zaļenieki Old Cemetery, with a gravestone created by Mārtiņš Zauris
- \* Black Valley (Melnā leja), Black Mill Ruins (Melnā dzirnavu drupas) and Baņu Lake
- \* "Lieldimzēni" farm





# Jaunmokas Palace Park

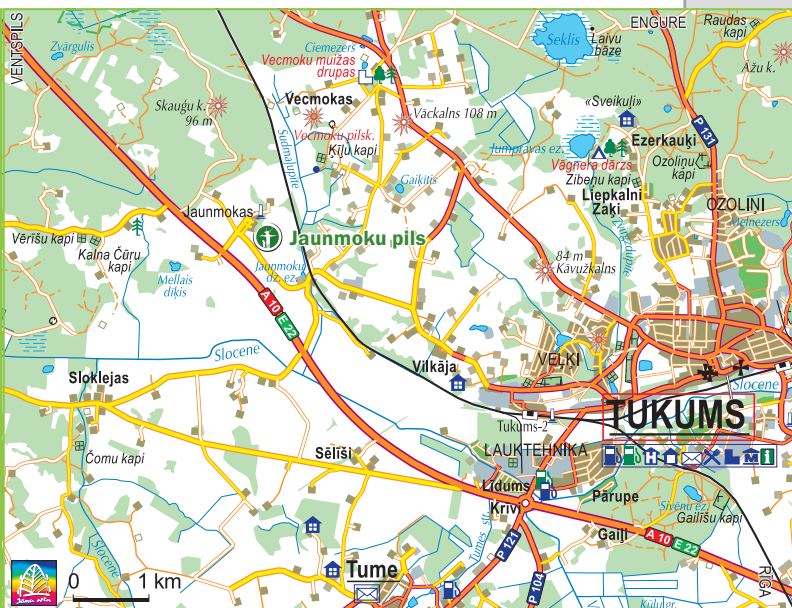


## Jaunmokas Palace



Tumes pagasts  
Tukuma novads

Rīga – 75 km  
Tukums – 7 km



## Place where time, nature and music come together

Jaunmokas Palace is the youngest, but most colorful palace in the Tukums area, which attracts visitors with its unusual neo-gothic architecture. With its many towers, the palace looks like it has come out of a fairy tale.



Phone: +371 26187442, +371 26123881, +371 63107125, [www.jaunmokupils.lv](http://www.jaunmokupils.lv)





The palace also features a gorgeous park. The park's old chestnut trees have even been included on Latvia's nature preservation list. The park also has a tree-lined alley of gorgeous old lindens, perfect for a pleasant stroll. The park's majestic oak, maple and ash trees allow people to hide away from the sun in the shade on hot days, while the yew trees and the pond give the park a romantic feel. The palace also received a special gift on its 110th birthday – a 10-meter high fountain in the palace pond. A new rose garden, as well as rhododendrons, have also been planted, to mark the palace's anniversary.

## Rhododendrons of love

The son of the baron of Vecmokas fell in the love with a local girl – the beautiful daughter of the manor's gardener. Their love was just as beautiful, but the baron did not stand for it, and sent his son to school in Germany. The girl was so heartbroken that she died soon after. She was buried at Kīļi Cemetery, which is located right between Vecmokas and Jaunmokas.

When the baron's son returned, he planted rhododendrons on the gravesite of his loved one, with the words: "I wish for it to grow and blossom, just like our love!"

The rhododendrons grew, and blossomed in the spring with beautiful violet colors. These were the only tree-type rhododendrons in Latvia, which had reached 140 years in age. But in 2005, a storm caused much damage to the trees at Kīļi Cemetery. The workers sent in to clean up the area, not knowing the local legend, cut down the rhododendrons. But to everyone's surprise, the rhododendrons' offshoot grew back and spread, to flower again and again. But after all, these rhododendrons were planted with love.



The palace's park also has something for toddlers – a family of wooden frogs all shapes and sizes. There are 48 wooden statues of frogs and other animals scattered throughout the park. These statues were made by students from the Rīga School of Arts and Crafts.

The park also has many live critters. The old majestic trees always have chirping birds. A peaceful grass snake has also made its home near the pond, and frequently comes out to sunbathe. Hard-working ants are also out and about, and every evening, persons are treated to a special concert by the pond's chorus of frogs.



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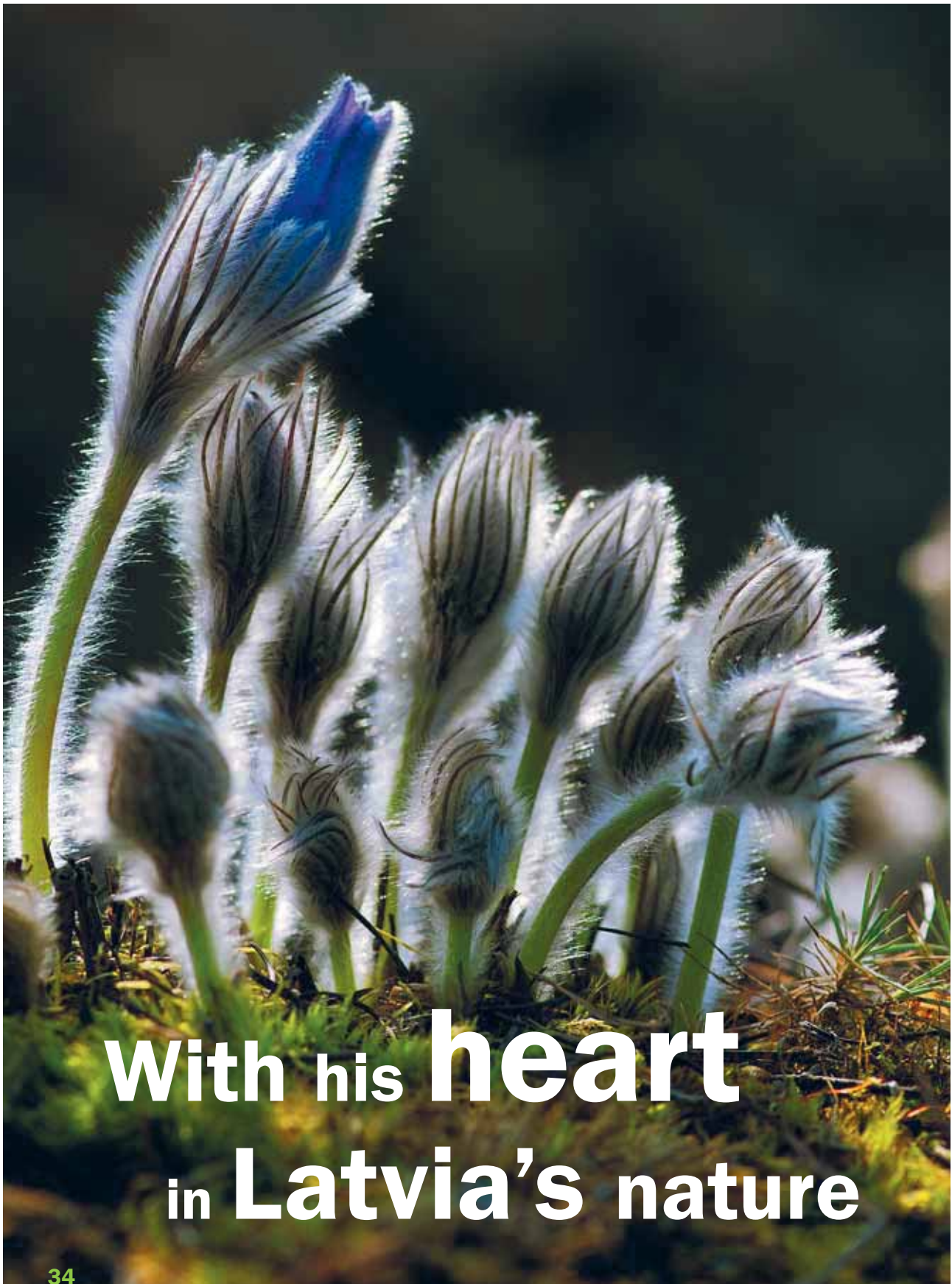
STARRING: SQUIRREL & CON SOUND: JUST CRACK LIGHTS: LATVIAN NORTHERN LIGHT DRESS DESIGN: MAMMADABA



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With his **heart**  
in **Latvia's nature**

## Photographer Andris Eglītis

I was born in the town of Smiltene on November 30, 1959. I currently live in the nearby village of Grundzāle. I have been interested in photography since childhood, but I also have fond affection for nature. I have been calling myself a professional photographer since the mid-80s. I wanted to become a photographer when I was young, but it was just a childhood desire at the time. I used my father's "Leica" to take many pictures, and once I even took the camera apart to make adjustments so that I could take better photos of birds and animals. However, I was unsuccessful in putting the camera back together, and I got rid of the evidence by "drowning" it in a local lake. After graduating from high school, I became a student at the Latvia University Biology Dept., where I earned a degree in biology-zoology, specializing in ornithology. I have previously worked as an engineer and hydro-technician in Grundzāle, as well as at Rīga Zoo, Gauja National Park and the Teiču Nature Reservation. There, I began engaging myself in science, and it was fascinating for me for a while. But later, I came to the conclusion that I would rather pursue a career in photography, not science. Here the second stage of my work began, as I stopped adding appropriate pictures to my science articles, but instead I began to write about the pictures I took. This, of course, was not really science anymore, but it was still related to my knowledge of biology.

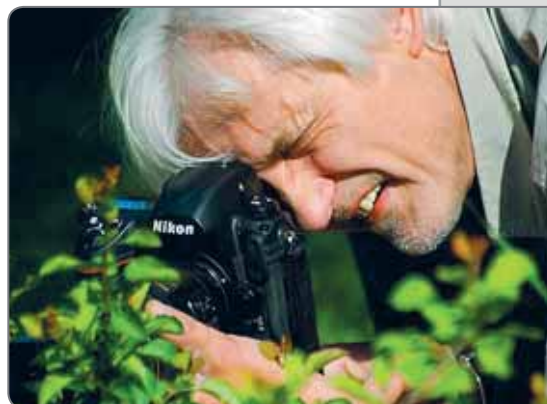
I almost only photograph nature – landscapes, close-ups, atmosphere, plants and animals. I have a special passion for taking pictures of birds and animals. It is actually quite tough to photograph animals in Latvia, even though we are a very green country with a relatively small population density. In the temperate zone, animals are most active at night, and rarely during the day, thus it is quite difficult to capture these images. However, many other countries can only look upon us with jealousy at our diverse and large population of animals. With birds, it is a different story – there are many of them and they are quite fearless. Very active also during the day, even owls.

One of my strong sides as a photographer is patience. I like to wait for the right moment, lighting, atmosphere. For example, in order to photograph animals, you really do need knowledge about nature, how they behave, as well as biology, so that you do not go looking for beavers in a pine forest. If you love what you do, everything will be okay. But I must also take into account that my private life revolves around my hobby and my work.

There are two parts to a photographer – work outside, and work inside. The second part – sitting by a computer – is horrible, and takes much time. Working outside is marvelous – getting drenched, freezing to the bone, or standing in one place with a stiff back. Everything nature has to offer is beautiful.

Every photo session outside is special, with many surprises. Once, I was waiting by a pond to photograph a family of beavers, and suddenly a rare black stork arrived for an evening meal and made such poses like no biologist has ever seen – it used its wings like an ibis to create a shade over the water. The most memorable moments are the ones I least expect. For several years I have been going out to observe deer and stags mate, and I have taken many pictures, but finally this year I was able to see it happen. Beautiful! It was worth the 20-year wait.

Going out into nature and traveling throughout Latvia and neighbouring countries is a big part of my life. I truly enjoy my job, even though there have been some dangerous situations. I think that things that are enjoyable are easy to achieve. I have taught myself the art of photography by reading, as well as learning from my experiences. I have never taken professional courses, but I must admit that some sort of technical knowledge is necessary for photographers. Most important is interest in what you are doing, as being a professional photographer takes a lot of dedication, and also takes up much of your free time.



*Photographer Andris Eglītis*





# Visiting Sculpture Gardens

## Second life for trees

There are many beautiful unspoiled places in Latvian forests, wild nature trails where one may feel the true might and power of nature. And then there are places that can be considered particularly remarkable, as they combine lush nature, national history, rich cultural history and the work of man permeating with love. This time, Mammadaba pays homage to recreation parks created as a result of human activity, where shapes carved in trees have made the particular place all the more unusual. Here, artists' talent and skill have created an environment that opens the imagination, where the whole family can not only spend quality time together but also learn many new things.



Sculptures are signs left by a sculptor in a certain time and space, in the environment and in our consciousness. If created lovingly, set up in the right place and the right environment, a sculpture carved in wood provides new impulse. In this case, nature is the artist's inspiration, and the sculpture thus created emphasises its beauty.

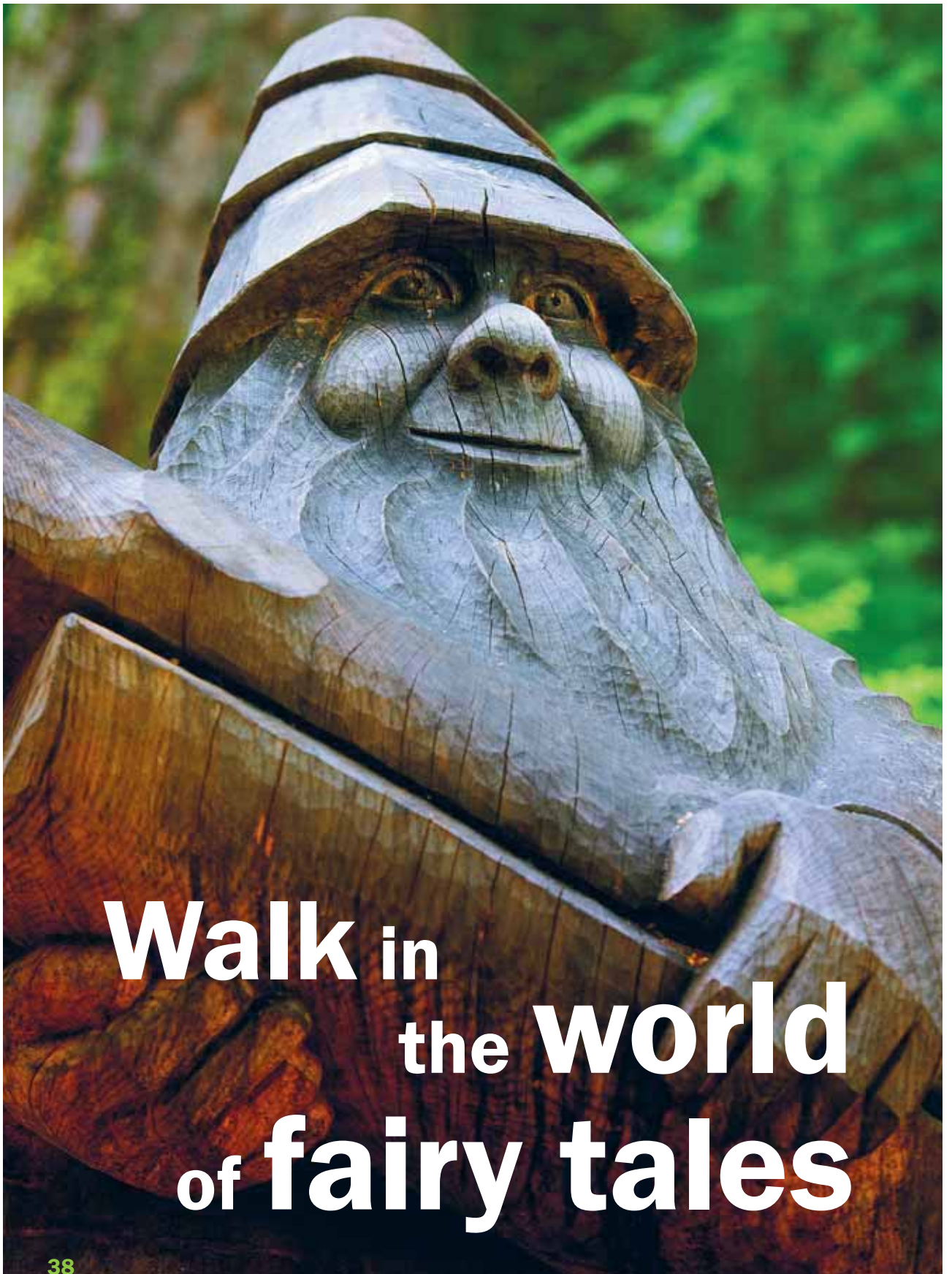
Such special atmosphere can be found in Tērvete Nature Park, where spectacular nature is entwined with the echoes of historic freedom battles fought by the Semigallians, the indelible legacy of the prominent Latvian writer Anna Brigadere and other cultural figures.

Thanks to the writer, Tērvete was a remarkable cultural centre in the 1920s and 1930s, and several trails were built already then in the territory that is now a park. Brigadere would be proud to see Tērvete Nature Park these days.

Yet, it is not the only place where the talent of artists has fused together with nature and history. The retired Aizvīki Forest Park forester Egons Ķeruzis has created an entire world of unusual imagery carved in wood lest fairy tales fade into oblivion, whereas artist Ģirts Burvis in the frontier Kalēti County has, together with other local residents, created the foundations for a new park, excellent not just for recreation but also for environmental education.







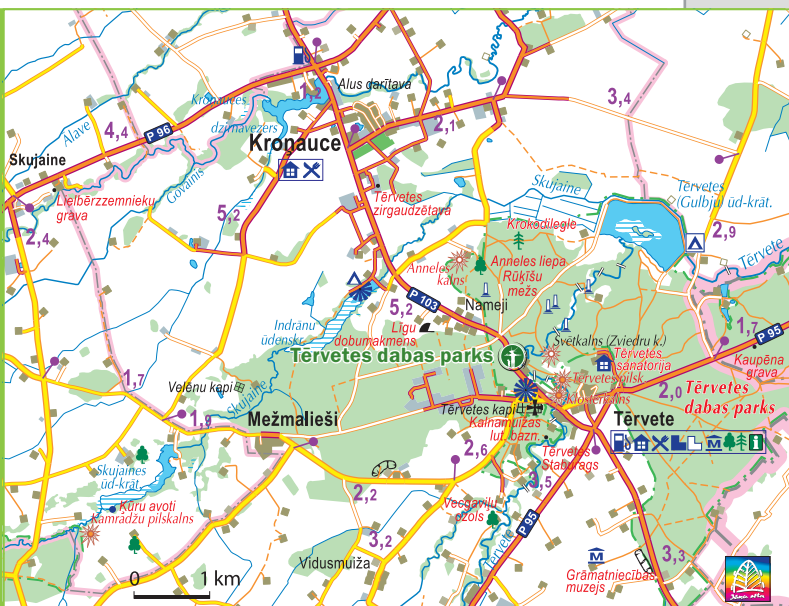
**Walk in  
the world  
of fairy tales**



## Tērvete Nature Park

Tērvetes sils  
Tērvetes pagasts  
Tērvetes novads

Rīga – 70 km  
Jelgava – 30 km  
Dobele – 20 km



Tērvete is a special and extraordinarily picturesque place in our Latvia, so rich in beautiful locales. It seems the Creator was in a particularly good mood, generous, even lavish, when creating Tērvete. Visitors are always surprised to find themselves, while making their way amidst the well-kept and fruitful grain and rape fields of Zemgale Plain, in the 30-metre-deep Tērvete River Valley, where every turn appears to have been created by a talented artist who took great pains to place hill forts against the backdrop of 300-year-old great pine forests. He saw to it that blooming bird cherries as well as autumn leaves are equally well reflected in the noisy and rapid waters of the river. So it should not be too surprising that the Semigallians chose this very place for their home already in the 1st century B.C. and heroically protected it from invaders. Tērvete has a long and heroic history, rich cultural past, a bustling present and a great future.

However, Tērvete is a land of happiness not just for Sprīdītis and local residents – it is a place where anyone can find inspiration and draw strength.

So many Latvians cherish nostalgic memories of their first visit to Tērvete, meeting with Sprīdītis, Lutausis, Annele. People who have been here want to come back again and again, take along their kids, eventually grandchildren – because there is always something new to see and, most important, they come here to find peace – peace that no words can describe. Or maybe it is true what a visiting shaman observed, that there are powerful energetic vapors here. For whatever the reason, it is absolutely clear that Tērvete is a special place that must definitely be experienced.

### Tērvete Nature Park

- \* Occupies an area of 1366 ha in Tērvete River Valley and the extraordinarily beautiful Tērvete pine forest
- \* Praised as one of ten most attractive and family-friendliest locations in Latvia
- \* 2009 winner of the EDEN title – European Destination of Excellence in Latvia
- \* Listed on the map of "Latvijas dižvietu mājas karte" (Map of the Greatest Places in Latvia)
- \* 77,000 people visited the park in 2011.



The legend goes that a shiny golden sword was found when the ancient Tērvete Castle ruins were torn down. Tērvete residents knew to keep the gold, and keep it bright, without changing it for coin – historic memory is still strong in Tērvete.

## A little history of the park



When Anna Brigadere settled in “Sprīdīši” in 1922, she liked to take long walks with her visiting friends from Rīga, enjoying the beautiful scenery along the banks of the river. This is how the first trodden paths were created. In 1931, a new stage in the development of Tērvete Park began: new footpaths were created and christened, in 1935–1936 an arboretum was planted, now including around 180 species of foreign trees and bushes.

The history of the nature park goes back to 1945 when the Council of People’s Commissars issued a decree on the inclusion of Tērvete resort forests on a list of Group I forests, made up of those in the vicinity of cities and of forests that were considered natural monuments. In 1957, Tērvete forestland, then called “Kalnamuižas sils”

(Kalnamuiža Pine Forest, total area of 960 ha), was one of the largest protected areas in Latvia.

In 1958, forester Miķelis Kļaviņš built the first footpaths, which was the beginning of Tērvete Nature Park. In 1969, the first sculptures carved in wood by Krišjānis Kugra – storybook characters Annele and her friends – were erected. More sculptures followed: the horrible giant Lutausis and Sprīdītis (Tom Thumb), the Forest King and the Guard, and the Sundial. The wooden sculptures depicting characters from the famous Latvian writer Anna Brigadere’s plays and stories made the park very popular already at that time.

Miķelis Kļaviņš, the founder of Tērvete Forest’s landscaped areas, wrote: “A forest not only conceals but can also reveal, and richly reward with its aesthetic values – for the spiritual well-being of man.” This concept was at the very foundation of the creation of Tērvete Forest’s landscaped park. The idea was simple: help the multiple visitors to the park see and understand not just the might and beauty of nature, but also, against this backdrop, discover and study historical and cultural monuments, get to know and understand the history of Zemgale better.

These days, various construction and development efforts continue in Tērvete Nature Park. New trails and recreation areas have been set up, a large parking lot built, huts for dwarves and a tall observation tower, a glass platform to observe animals, and an ancient Semigallian castle with fortifications is being built at the children’s playground.

## One hundred wooden sculptures

Tērvete Nature Park is proud to have more than 100 sculptures created by various woodcarvers: Ritvars Kalniņš, Andris Donis, Normunds Stenkevics, as well as Riga Arts & Crafts School students.

Some of the original sculptures by Krišjānis Kugra have been restored, with the restorers trying to emulate his signature style, but of course every sculptor inevitably adds something according to his or her own perspective. Tērvete Park continues to change and develop, becoming ever more interesting. Besides the sculptures, there are various carved figures and objects: signs, huts, bridges, staircases, and much more – over three hundred altogether. Sheds, tables and benches for other beautiful and cared-for places in Latvia are also built at Tērvete workshop.



## Visit to a fairy tale

One-third of the park's territory is occupied by the Fairytale Realm ruled by the Forest King, dwarves, demons and witches. A word of warning: Tērvete Park is so large that it cannot be toured in just one day. And also, beware that those who do not believe in fairy tales are not allowed to enter! Well, all right, jokes aside, there is enough to see in Tērvete, and everyone is welcome and given due attention. In other words, every visitor feels special here.

### Fairytale Forest

The Fairytale Forest is part of Tērvete Great Fairytale World where, in the centre of the forest, live the Forest King with his court, guards, councillors, treasurer and messengers. The forest people live in harmony with themselves and with nature. Also in Fairytale Forest, you may come upon the forest spirit Sakārnītis, visit the Turf Man, or the Miser. A novelty is the Forest Lady Trail that goes around the Fairytale Forest. Here children learn to read the Book of Nature, guided by the Forest Lady and her assistants.

### Raganas (Witch's) Pine Forest

Right near the Forest King's land, there is the Raganas sils (Witch's Pine Forest), inhabited by the pine forest people – all those who, for one reason or another, do not belong to the realm of man. Here you will find the Little Witch living in a hut that stands on a chicken leg, as well as her Lidplacis (Takeoff Spot) and Lūkotava (Watchtower), the homes of werewolves Vilkcāis and Sumpurnītis, fairy rings and other witcheries. Somewhere here you are also likely to meet Vecāis vells (Ol' Devil) and his eight offspring. He has his own chamber in the Fairytale Forest, and a mill for making his own special Devil's flour (vella milti). There are spiders, bats, owls and eagle-owls living in the bushes and trees, and the overall feeling is slightly spooky. Watch your feet! Maybe there's the devil himself or some other wretched being clawing its way out from under a tree.

### Rūķīšu (Dwarf) Forest

Dwarves have been the favourites of park visitors from the very start. The dwarves, carved in wood, have been created by many artists. Just look how different they are! Each one not only has his own trade, but is a unique personality with unique features. Initially all of them were clumped together in a clearing, but now they have their own Dwarf Village in Dwarf Forest, where the entire dwarf nation lives. Visitors who take Dwarf Street may take a look at the homes, the builder's house, the mill, the sawmill, the mine, all the while being observed by a Dwarf Village watchman perched high in a pine tree. Children may take a shot at being a dwarf, visiting a hut, lying in a bed or sitting at a tiny table. In the near future, a new Dwarf Village will open, offering many new wonderful things to see, as befits a wonderland like Tērvete.

## More to see

- \* Anna Brigadere Memorial Museum "Sprīdīši" (phone: +371 26532691)
- \* Tērvete Ancient History Museum (phone: +371 29896804)
- \* "Sprīdīši" arboretum
- \* Hill forts – Svētais (Sacred, also called Zviedru (Swedish)) Hill and Tērvete Hill Fort
- \* Book publisher Jānis Rapa's homestead "Kīpi" – book lovers' museum (phone: +371 29351141)
- \* Cultural monument of national importance – building of Tērvete Sanatorium with exterior reliefs by sculptor Kārlis Zemdegis
- \* Kalnamuiža Lutheran Church built during duke Jacob's rule
- \* Count Pahlen's Chapel, an architectural monument
- \* Church cemetery where Latvian veterinarian and microbiologist Kristaps Helmanis is buried
- \* Tērvete Water Reservoir





# I'm happy when children are happy

Carver Normunds Stenkevics has been making wooden sculptures for Tērvete Nature Park for ten years. There are many figures he has created: various fairytale characters, beasts and birds, insects and mushrooms, but it is dwarves that occupy a special place in his works. Perhaps it is for this reason that he is often regarded as the “lord of Tērvete dwarves”.



Wood carver Normunds Stenkevics is a graduate of Liepāja Applied Arts School, however, he has worked only a short while in his profession of set designer. Small wonder, you might say – that an artist born in Tērvete and possessing an unusual talent should work at Tērvete Nature Park as a sculptor. In the beginning, Normunds took to carpentry, but carving, as he wittily observes, is an integral part of any Tērvete Nature Park carpenter’s work. “We are all gradually becoming sculptors,” notes Normunds.



Wood carver Normunds Stenkevics

The Dwarf Village was his creation: the builder’s home, the underground dwarf homestead, dwarf mill and sawmill, dwarf cellar and sauna, dwarf chairs and beds. Everything is real – except that everything is very small. While building the Dwarf Village, Normunds spent every day in the park together with his four kids, trying to think and feel as they do. And the result is nothing short of a wonder – you simply cannot get your kids out of Dwarf Village.

The sculptures carved by Normunds are expressive and colourful in the broadest sense of the word. Each one has its secret, adventure, tonality, a story to tell. The wooden sculptures in Tērvete Nature Park are not just erected at random: they live their own unusual lives in the lovely park, rich in historic and cultural tradition. No two dwarves in the park are alike. Moreover, even every mushroom in the park has its own character: the Chanterelle is all smiles and happy to see every visitor, while the old Porcino is angrily looking away with its cap pulled down over the eyes.

“Sculpting is like eating dessert,” says Normunds. Although it is easier to work with flat two-dimensional objects, adding the third dimension makes things much more interesting.

When asked how wooden sculptures are made, Normunds first produces designs he himself has drawn.

“Giving basic shape to a rough piece of wood – cutting off what’s unnecessary with an axe or a chainsaw – that is the hardest part. You just have to feel it right, because it is very easy to make a mistake at this stage. Whereas giving the figure its features and chiselling the detail is the most beautiful process, although it does take a long time.”

The artist’s collection of chisels is awe-inspiring: there are more than a hundred tools, waiting patiently for their turn to make every wooden sculpture special.

The sculptures are usually made of oak, because they live the longest. When a wooden figure is done, it is treated with protective wood stain that penetrates to keep the texture unchanged.

The wooden sculptures are mostly targeted for children and kids, therefore they also are painted. That is how mushrooms come by their bright colours and the dwarves by their motley garments.

“Wooden sculptures do not live forever. They stay in the park for 20–30 years, no longer. And that is only normal, because the elements, the ultraviolet in sunlight, temperature and humidity fluctuations, all contribute to disintegration. And on top of all that – we have never tried to protect the sculptures from physical wear and tear caused by kids. Tērvete Park is meant for children, therefore we respect their desire to play with the wooden dwarves. And we are happy when the children are happy!” carver Normunds Stenkevics says about his work as the head of Tērvete’s dwarves.

## Tērvete offers

- \* Trails of various length to walk, presenting the nature, history and culture of Tērvete
- \* Visits to near and far-off places in the park by bicycle
- \* Guided walks of Forest Mother, Wood, Animal or Bog trails (phone: +371 26550958, +371 29183595)
- \* Guided tours, special offers for tourist groups. It is recommended that tours be arranged in advance (phone: +371 63726212)
- \* Fantastic views of hills and valleys from the observation platform or the new observation tower
- \* Birdwatching and angling at Tērvete Water Reservoir (phone: +371 26115333)





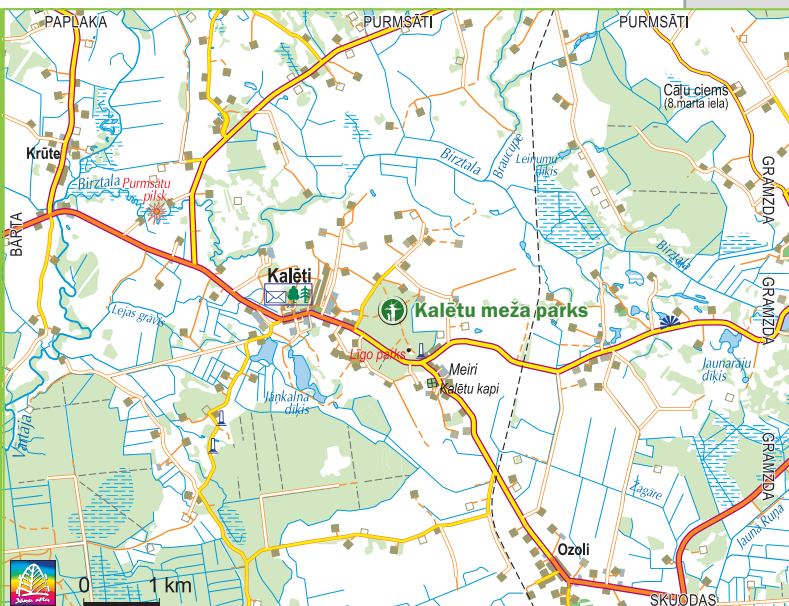
**For fun  
and recreation**



## Kalēti Forest Park

Kalēti pagasts  
Priekules novads

Priekule – 18 km  
Grobiņa – 40 km  
Liepāja – 50 km  
Skuoda (Lithuania) – 15 km  
Rīga – 220 km



At the end of the 12th century, what is now Kalēti County, used to be part of Duvzare land inhabited by the Curonians, and the first written account of Kalēti is more than 750 years old. Of course, this beautiful area near the border with Lithuania has changed profoundly in the course of time. The central part occupies the former territory of baron Nolde's manor. That time still manifests itself in the more-or-less preserved brewery, a barn, the steward's house, granary and the main manor building which since 1952, houses Kalēti Primary School, whereas the local Music and Art School moved into the left wing of the edifice in 1995. The lower ground floor is occupied by a youth centre and a fitness gym.



Although Kalēti is located close to the border and locals often go shopping in Lithuania, this is not a godforsaken place. Take the highways Priekule–Plūdoņi–Skuoda, Kalēti–Purmsāti–Priekule; Kalēti–Gramzda– Priekule; Kalēti– Bārta–Grobiņa to get anywhere you like. Back when the Priekule–Klaipeda railway was in operation, business activity was at its peak. The railway station was an important meeting point; now, however, the terminal, which was renovated several times and has seen so much, is closed.

Kalēti residents take great pride in the forest and manor park created in the 17th century, which occupies an area of 94 ha. Because of its rich flora, the park has been included on the list of natural monuments as a protected dendrological area, and is looked after and cherished. In 1998, first wooden sculptures were erected in the park, and their number has been growing since. Back when the manor was ruled by barons, there were many ponds in the area and a rose garden in front of the manor. Now it is school graduates who plant roses in front of the building, renewing the rose garden and continuing the historic tradition in Kalēti.



## Forest Park “Priediens”

A lime-tree lane planted in 1851 links the county centre with the manor’s former deer garden, which has by now become a forest park with active recreation area and hiking trails.

At the entrance, there is a gate created by sculptor Ģirts Burvis, as well as an obstacle course and a special playground for kids. Any visitor will be tempted by the original swings or a shot at the ropes course. But as the trail continues further, visitors will see a variety of plant species. A beech of tremendous proportions is the pride of “Priediens” – a visitor will most certainly wish to linger at the giant tree with its unusual trunk. Some might even say they see a large nose and knobby fingers in the bark.

There are several trails crossing the park, almost three kilometres long. When the manor was still the baron’s residence, these were footpaths with acacias and beeches planted along the paths. Now the most prominent attractions of “Priediens” include the “Eight Sisters”, the “Mighty Pine”, the “Great Beech”. Since the autumn of 2011, visitors are offered to walk the Mushroom, Plant and Animal trails, which will teach many new things. For instance, you will be able to compare footprints of various animals carved in a tree.

“Priediens” is an excellent place to visit for families with children, but this is just the beginning. The Animal trail currently features, for example, a boar sounder, a curious lizard that has climbed on top of a tree stump for a better view, and Mr. Beaver, building his home at a pond. The Mushroom trail offers, besides traditional fungi, an odd fly agaric or a morel. Of course, a gazebo or a bench for a brief rest would also be welcome. A cross-country skiing track will also be built. Another idea is to set up display stands in the park that will inform visitors about trees, birds and animals, making the park a real educational trail.

Kalēti Primary School has the international status of an Eco-School with the Green Flag; in the future, an environmental education institution could be established at the park with guides who will receive relevant training, thereby contributing to the development of environmental studies and tourism.

A county such as Kalēti will certainly have it all, because it is obvious that local residents care for their land and for each other.

The establishment of an active recreation area and an education trail in Kalēti has been a long-time dream and goal of Kalēti resident, 7th and 11th Saeima member Dzintars Kudums. What has been achieved so far is just the first stage in the efforts to make Kalēti even more attractive to tourists.

Perhaps you are wondering why the name, “Priediens”? Of course, it comes from “priede”, which means “pine” in Latvian, as pines have been growing very actively in the northern section of the park over the past 150 years. And these pines have also suffered greatly, because this is where the battles of the Courland Pocket were fought.

### Keizarakmens (Caesar’s Stone)

At the end of the 19th century, Russian tsar Nicholay Romanov paid a visit to baron Nolde. As is usual on such occasions, a hunt was organised, and the tsar shot a deer in Nolde’s deer garden. In memory of the event, a memorial stone was planted at the site. However, now there is just a dent in the stone where the inscription used to be.







### Zaļumplacis

Zaļumplacis or Līgo placis has long been the place where the residents of the county gather to celebrate the Jāņi Midsummer holiday. It may appear that nature itself took care to create such a wonderful place for the local residents to gather. Screened by large trees, there are desks and benches placed at a huge gnarly oak, so the revellers could put down their beer mugs when they need to give a round of applause to musicians, singers, dancers or actors performing on the stage – which was built by local residents, too. The park is decorated with carvings created during a carvers' gathering in Kalēti in 1998, led by sculptor Ģirts Burvis. Such works as “Mother’s Lap”, “Fern Flower”, “Pheasant”, Midsummer night characters “Jānis” and “Līga” are among the most popular wooden sculptures in the park. All visitors wish to sit in “Mother’s Lap” for a moment to feel safe and protected.

The trails in Kalēti Forest Park are meant for pedestrians and cyclists, and in the future – also for skiers.

## Other must-sees

### Kalēti Treasure Chest

The treasure chest of Kalēti County is a collection of ancient items located on the “Brūzis” (Brewery) premises. The collection includes materials about the history of Kalēti Manor and Kalēti School, Kalēti and Ozoli villages, and local cultural traditions. The exhibits include vintage German and Russian items, as well as various photographs and documents from the sovkhos “Druva”.

Address: “Brūzis”, Kalēti County; Priekule Region, please arrange your visit in advance by calling +371 26490240 (Gunta Ziemele) or +371 63461497.

### Krūte Hill Fort

Krūte (also called Upes or Kalēti) Hill Fort is located 7 km from the centre of the village towards Bārta, at the confluence of the Vārtāja and Bārta rivers. According to legend, there are many kegs of gold buried under the hill, but excavations have so far only found remains of ashes. A carved mermaid at the foot of the hill proves that the rivers were once used for navigation. Currently, boats may be rented to observe the hill fort and other tourist attractions along the Vārtāja and Bārta rivers.







# Sculptor Burvis

**Sculptor Ģirts Burvis (Wizard) has inherited a very fitting surname – he is, just like a wizard, making the world a more beautiful place with his sculptures. Burvis' works may be seen all over Latvia, including Kalēti.**



“A creative idea is born somewhere in the depths of the subconscious and has to make a long way to the mirror of the mind; sometimes the idea is based on experience accumulated over thousands of years from one generation to the next on the genetic level. Who are we, where do we come from, and where are we going to?” sculptor Ģirts Burvis says commenting on his artistic mission.

Burvis is a member of the artistic Burvis dynasty: he was born in a family of jewellers and has brought up a son who is also an artist – Gaitis Burvis. The sculptor's parents studied at Liepāja School of Applied Arts and went on to become lecturers; Ģirts also studied in the school, and later at the Sculpting Department of the Latvia Art Academy. This is where the artist, recognized in Latvia and internationally, began his career. Burvis marked his fiftieth birthday as creator of fifty large-scale works, whereas the number of smaller ones is beyond count. The sculptor says that his works are created in line with the endeavours and achievements of the nation.

Burvis' sculptures are made from a variety of materials: traditional, such as wood, metal, stone, bronze, as well as untraditional – wax, books, glass, ice, fire... Everything depends on the creative idea.

The artist believes that sculpting may be considered one of the most ancient data storage forms. A sculptor discards what is irrelevant and preserves the essential, using the language of shape to alter the given material, which outlives a human...

To a young sculptor, wood is good material as it contributes to the sculptor's growth and development, until he/she has enough experience and practice to accept orders for sculptures made in stone or stainless steel to be preserved for posterity.

But wooden sculptures are associated with traditional craft, the material preserves the warmth of the earth, is close and understandable to all, filled with one's own energy and affection. If only we could live and work as our forefathers did – cut the tree at the right time, let it dry properly, and treat the sculpture made of such an ideal material with traditional means tested by the old masters! Unfortunately, this is impossible due to the hectic pace of our modern lives, and an artist has to accept the fact that wooden sculptures he or she made while young will not outlast the master, that the sculptures have to be maintained and restored in order to live longer.

Ģirts Burvis' wooden sculptures may be seen in Rīga, Tīreļpurvs, Koknese, Salaspils, Skrunda and many other places in Latvia. The artist says that Liepāja and the sea are his favourite subjects.

Kalēti is also a special place for the artist: this is where his final “exam” for graduation was exhibited, and this is also where artists from five neighbour counties gathered for a meeting already 13 years ago at Burvis' invitation in order to make wooden sculptures. Now the artist has returned to Kalēti – albeit together with his son – in order to make new sculptures with some help from assistants, sculptures that would urge people to stop and look at nature. Only the place where nature, history, art and cultural history with its multiple layers blend together has that unique special feeling. And luckily, Kalēti is one such place.

“To me, belief in the message of the intangible world of man, our “supertask”, that is not restricted by the rational logic of the mind, is what is most important,” says Burvis, who helps create an orderly and beautiful environment.



*Sculptor Ģirts Burvis*



# Back to Mother Nature!

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