



# mammadaba

It means Mother Nature.  
And it's true.



**Latvia's State Forests and mammadaba welcomes you!**



She always awaits, listens, provides food and healing, nurtures, brings peace.  
She is your mother.

She is also Nature, because Nature is a mother to all.

We at "Latvijas valsts meži" call her – **Mother Nature** – **mammadaba**.

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 **rest** areas

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species

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**Our doors are always open!**

  
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## Mammadaba welcomes you!



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**Forests** for  
**relaxation**

Latvia is one of the most abundant countries in Europe in terms of forests, in fact it ranks fourth with 56.9% of total land territory (139,948 ha of forestlands). The joint stock “Latvian State Forests”/“Latvijas valsts meži” (LVM) manages about one half of all forests, with 75,000 hectares reserved for public recreation.

In order to bring people closer to nature, giving them the opportunity to become familiar with the forest in all its glory, LVM has done a lot to ensure places for recreation and relaxation in the forests it manages.

All free of charge, there are 320 retreats, 59 tourist attractions, 41 nature trails 70 km total (incl. eight plank-walkways in marshes), and eight observation towers.

With the objective being to promote rest and relaxation in Latvia’s state forests, the LVM trademark Mammadaba was created.

What is Mammadaba? Mammadaba is a cordial invitation from Latvia’s forests to commune with nature, get to know its riches, become a part of its untamed beauty. Like a true “mamma”, she always awaits and welcomes us, is always prepared to soothe, nurture, replenish and share with us her wisdom and life experience. This edition is a Mammadaba saga about her children.



## Favorite LVM recreation areas and points of interest

- \* Family-friendly Tērvete Nature Park, drawing 96,000 visitors in 2012.
- \* Kalsnava Arboretum, with the largest variety of trees and shrubs in eastern Latvia, visited annually by about 8,000 people. A special attraction – blooming peonies - drew 1,000.
- \* Mystical Pokaiņi Forest has become a center for spiritual quests.
- \* Vijiems čiekururkalte – A cone-drying facility, the only one of its kind in Europe, preserves olden-day machinery and methods.
- \* Jaunmokas Castle, ideal for balls, private parties, seminars, overnights, and the Forest Museum it houses, with detailed information about the forest, its inhabitants, care and use.
- \* “Ezernieki” and “Spāre” guest houses for rest and relaxation, seminars, athletic events and private parties.
- \* Five lakes for licensed fishing with boathouses and cottages.





**Green** winter  
in **Kalsnava**

## Kalsnava Arboretum (Kalsnavas arborētums)



Jaunkalsnava  
Kalsnavas pagasts  
Madonas novads

Rīga – 140 km  
Madona – 28 km  
Pļaviņas – 22 km



## The evergreen coat of Kalsnava Arboretum

When the harsh autumn winds have stripped trees from their colorful decoration, Kalsnava Arboretum is still blooming in its full glory. After ascending the 25-meter watch-tower, it is much easier to view the 37-year-old tree and shrub collection that make up Kalsnava Arboretum. While the leafless trees are resting and silently dreaming about a new spring, let us try and find beauty in the variety of conifers that make up about one-sixth of the three thousand trees and shrub taxa of the entire facility.

Latvia is a natural expansion area for four conifer species: Norway spruce, Scots pine, common juniper, and yew.



## Spruce trees – bloomy, sharp and blue

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Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) is the most popular conifer at the arboretum. Each tree differs by size, color and form – mound-shaped, round, narrow, conical, nest-like, pillow-like, drooping. *Hiiumaa* and *Formanek* – two of the shortest cultivars – have reached a height of mere 30 centimeters during 40 years of their life. *Ohlendorffii* and *Dundanga* cultivars form a dense 3-4 meter high cone-shaped crown of needles.

*Cupressina* cultivar develops a graceful, narrow 10-15 meter high conic-shaped crown. These cultivars are often bought as Christmas trees. *Aurea*'s shoots turn yellow during the blooming period in spring, while *Roseospica*'s blooming needles turn pink for about two weeks. The 3-4 meter high *Acrocona* is referred to as the blooming spruce, as it becomes incredibly bright in mid-May, while *Virgata*'s (serpent spruce) branches become sparsely bent. These are only few of the most unusual Norway spruce cultivars. There are 18 other spruce species at Kalsnava, the most popular of which is the Canadian spruce (*Picea glauca*) – its *Conica* cultivar used to be quite popular thanks to its dense, conic-shaped form.

Serbian spruce (*Picea omorika*), – beauty of the Balkans, holding a narrowly-pyramidal crown and a brilliantly-decorative embranchment – urges collectors to gather a larger volume of its varieties. The Serbian spruce is often chosen for urban greeneries, as it is highly resistant against polluted environments.

Black spruce (*Picea mariana*), which entered Latvia from North America, is favored not only due to its fine needles, but because of its small and firm 2-3 cm long cones that can be used as an excellent material in floristry.

Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens*) has also found its home in Latvia – the North American mountain tree has truly sharp needles. People often refer to this tree as the Blue spruce thanks to its blue-green needles. It is also cultivated as a Christmas tree due to its solid crown and specific color.

## Fragrant and tall white firs

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The arboretum's collection offers a chance to see and compare 17 species of white firs, all of which have been imported in Latvia from abroad. White firs stand out in the landscape with their characteristically tall, mostly narrow, pyramidal crowns. During the seed harvest period, these trees can be distinguished by their cones that are arranged vertically at the top of the tree, growing upwards. Ripe cones break down, leaving spiky shafts behind them. White fir needles are flat and aromatic. They have a pleasant scent, as they contain various essential oils, therefore, when near white firs, it is recommended to breathe deeply in order to receive energy.

Bracted balsam fir (*Abies balsamea* var. *phanerolepis*) fits well into the Vidzeme Region environment. White firs (*Abies concolor*) look rather peculiar with their 3-6 cm long, silvery grey-green needles. Fraser firs (*Abies fraseri*), on the other hand, are perennial plants and are highly resistant to frost, which, as is the case with the bracted balsam fir, stands out with its North American origin. Out of all white firs of the collection, Korean fir (*Abies koreana*) offers the largest variety of cultivars. These trees can be used as decorative plants, and it is also a popular Christmas tree. Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga*) is a North American mountain conifer with soft 2-3 cm long needles and unusual cones. Hemlocks (*Tsuga*) are evergreen conifers with relatively short needles. Canadian hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) has also adjusted itself to life in Kalsnava. Its branches are spawning very tiny cones in good favor with florists.

## Juniper or “paeglitis” (Latvian for juniper)

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The evergreen adornment of junipers can be used for filling in horizontal spaces and as medium-height supplements in various landscapes. The common juniper (*Juniperus communis*) is a popular tree in the entire territory of Latvia; there are 19 varieties and cultivars in the arboretum.



The creeping cedar (*Juniperus horizontalis*) offers a collection of 17 varieties. The Red juniper (*Juniperus virginiana*) species is famous for being cold-resistant and for its ability to withstand the scorching heat of the sun, as well as the glare from the snow blanket. Juniper berries are juicy cones – “cone-berries” – which can be used as a great addition to a roast. Let us remember an ancient Latvian belief that says that burning a juniper twig destroys bacteria, combats negative energy, and aromatizes any premises.

## Pines like haystacks

Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is the most popular species at Kalsnava Arboretum thanks to its large number of cultivars and various forms. The dwarfish form of Doone Valley allows it to grow a layer of branches up to 30 cm in height. The Estonian Jõgeva trees look like giant haystacks, while the bluish-grey form of Se stands out in the local forest landscape. Various grafts of witches' brooms found in Katlakalns, Tērvete, Ventspils, Mērdzene, Kalsnava, and other places, have reached 2-3 meters in height, competing with one another in degree of decorativeness.

During the past years, the plantation of witches' brooms has been supplemented with 15 new pine clones.

Apart from the Scots pine, the arboretum's collection contains 18 other foreign pine species. Macedonian pine (*Pinus peuce*) from the Balkans is the richest, containing cones 8-13 cm tall, the Korean pine (*Pinus koraiensis*) has the tallest (12-18 cm) cones, which also contain edible seeds. Florists also favor the symmetrical cones of the mountain pine (*Pinus mugo*).



## Yew trees on the Red List

Common yew (*Taxus baccata*) is the fourth Latvian wild conifer. Yews are also referred to as “platpaeglis” (Latvian for yew), and are covered with dark green, shiny, pectinated needles. Yews are widespread in Kurzeme Region, however, the Kalsnava Arboretum, located way north, contains six common yew varieties. The Japanese Yew (*Taxus cuspidata*) is more resistant against Latvia's cold winters. When choosing yew plantlets, it is important to remember that all parts of a yew are poisonous. Nevertheless, before reaching for that yew branch, remember, that the common yew is included on Latvia's Red List of Threatened Species.

## Thujas, trees of life

The variety of thujas can be marveled at from the bottom of the watch-tower in Kalsnava. The Eastern arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*), which also comes from North America, provides 55 varieties of different shapes, sizes, and colors. Closer to the railroad, the Latvian-folk-pattern-shaped labyrinth of the bright green *Smaragd* and *Lutea* greeneries established in 2011, will stand out even more in a couple of years, while the 2.5 m high *Lutea*, planted in 1981, is radiating sun gleams with its typical yellow needles. In order to make this bleak time of year a bit brighter before welcoming the leaves of the new spring, we traveled to Kalsnava Arboretum, featuring multiple types of trees dressed in evergreen adornments.





O, winter,  
winter,  
bring us snow



## “Mailes” ski stadium (Slēpošanas stadions “Mailes”)



Pļaviņu novads  
Vietalvas pagasts

Rīga – 130 km  
Ērgļi – 30 km  
Koknese – 26 km  
Pļaviņas – 15 km



## Vietalva’s hills and valleys

Scenic Vietalva County has risen high above sea level and is standing between Pļaviņas and Ērgļi, proudly presenting its natural beauty and uneven terrain that is characteristic of the Vidzeme uplands. The county features the swift trout river Veseta, that flows out of Kals Lake, and disgorges into the Aiviekste River. The landscape is supplemented by picturesque lakes: Vabulītis, Alvītis, Apaļais, Baltenītis, Tulmanītis, Zvani. It is no surprise that this location was populated already long ago – Vidzeme Chivalry archive materials indicate that the name Vietalva was first mentioned in 1361 in connection with Rīga Archbishop Promoldt’s gift to von Tiesermhauser. How did Vietalva acquire its name? Turns out that the explanation is quite simple – Vietalva was a place/vieta where people once mined tin (from the Latvian alva).

Tin is not mined in Vietalva anymore, however, thousands of people come here to relax after a long workweek. The adrenaline rush and competitive spirit are in full swing here. Now, Vietalva’s name is mentioned both by local and foreign skiers, who have discovered the snow-clad ski stadium “Mailes” for various winter activities, including ski marathons. They only have to wait until the mythical Snow Maiden decides to “open up her snow box” or, as the Latvian writer Rūdolfs Blaumanis said, when “the Earth will be covered in white blankets.”





## Track for athletes and vacationers



Together with the head of the skiing complex “Mailes”, coach and chief judge of the marathon, Arvīds Pīpkalejs, we traveled more than 30 kilometers on the track. The ever-changing terrain, as well as going down the mountain and struggling back up (especially important in sports training), literally took our breath away. The fivefold champion of Latvia and a local resident of Vietalva, the coach’s trainee, Jānis Hermanis, agrees. Pīpkalejs talks about the track with utmost pleasure, pointing out that each hill and every slope has its own name.

Behold, the place, where the wind plays the violin in white fir branches - Kupri Firebreak or “Himalayas”. Dwarf Meadow is here, whose name comes from a toddler skier who was convinced that the local watch-towers are occupied by dwarfs. Further down is Smiltis Mountain, Ilmārs’ Pit, and Oļegs’ Rise – our most famous biathletes - Ilmārs Bricis and Oļegs Maļūhins, were very active and shared their experience on how to properly set up a track. Other places follow – Sončika’s Lips, Squirrel Mountain, Chief’s Rise... But now, let us go back to 1997, when Pīpkalejs, with help from Vietalva County Council, local residents, friends, acquaintances, and athletes, began making the ski track. First, he set goals:

- to offer a chance both for professional skiers and advocates of a healthy lifestyle to enjoy the mood of winter among friends or family in a sporty atmosphere,
- to popularize ski marathon as a healthy sport event meant for everyone,
- to urge people to regularly indulge in physical outdoor activity,
- to increase the organizational level of ski marathon competitions in Latvia.

The so-called General’s Square is a picturesque place, featuring the Veseta River curving graciously through the landscape, and whose riverside serves as a popular place for outdoor parties filled with orchestral sounds. The General’s Square features a stadium and a cozy lodge with heated floors and a sauna, as well as twenty beds – everything a resort can offer and more. A piano on the premises is a natural, as the owner of “Mailes” is an avid singer. Building the sports complex was not an easy task, however, faith in one’s own dream and the athletic temperament were instrumental. Thus, Arvīds Pīpkalejs, and those who shared his dream, managed to create a ski track that adheres to the requirements of international certification. “Mailes” is the only professionally-fitted track in Latvia, interesting for its terrain, lengthy ascents, far-reaching descents, and other characteristics important to marathon skiers. Furthermore, the National Track is

Igo Japiņš: “Mailes” is the largest ski stadium in Latvia, especially suitable for marathon skiers. This marathon track has been prepared in the best and most qualitative fashion. It is interesting due to its terrain that winds through the snowy forests, and will be appreciated by marathon skiing enthusiasts.

not difficult, and can be mastered by anyone without any special physical training.

The snow period in most of Latvia is short, however, as if wanting to show off, snow in Vietalva does as it pleases – it appears early and remains, you wake up in a completely different world. Winter here lavishly presents its shimmering adornments, with the color white scattered everywhere. And “Mailes” begins operations that will end only during the icicle (i.e., meltdown) period.

As soon as snow hits the ground, Arvīds gets behind the wheel of his snowmobile and sets out to prepare the track. It is five meters wide, with one side designed for classic style skiers, and the other – for freestyle. Skiers travel toward one another without bothering each other. Preparation requires about 10-15 hours; only then one can be sure that all is ready. Such a long track would not be possible without the excellent cooperation with the staff at “Latvian State Forests” Vidusdaugava Forestry, who reschedule their work to halt commercial activity in the vicinity in winter. Automobiles are diverted to another road, whereas snow plows can simply ignore this side, leaving the smooth and wide forest road completely to skiers.

Skiers have highly appreciated the snow-clad winter in Vietalva, as well as the advantages of the “Mailes” track. It is marked, and signposts on every junction instruct direction, if you believe that three or five kilometers is not too much for beginners. In any case, the first 5km is illuminated. Biathletes will want to try “Mailes” as it also offers a well-appointed shooting range. But surely the greatest benefit is the good mood after a day spent outside in the fresh air in a lovely locale.

When the meager winter sun prepares to set, complaints about how short the days are often are heard. Just remember: “Mailes” offers a wide range of activities during the summer as well – a hiking trail for backpackers, a bike track for cyclists, and an off-road track for motorists.

## Other places of interest

### Vietalva Brethren Cemetery’s memorial ensemble

is located directly opposite “Mailes” on the opposite bank of Veseta River. It was built in 1968 to commemorate the events of World War II, when heavy fighting took place in Veseta. More than 500 soldiers are buried in Brethren Cemetery. Sculptor V. Ālbergs, Z. Zvars, and A. Šenbergs’ monument symbolizes the battle between Lāčplēsis (Bear Slayer) and the Black Knight, while three alarming tolls from the bayonet belfry urge everyone to always remain alert for their land.

On the first Saturday in August, a remembrance event is organized in the cemetery, after which a grand open-air ball is held at Vietalva Stage, that usually lasts till dawn.

### Vietalva Lutheran Church

was built in 1817, replacing the former wooden church. During the war in 1944, the roof and steeple of the church were destroyed. The interior was gutted by fire, while the organ and altarpiece went missing. In 1990, the local county residents and church members began restoring the church; it now hosts Mass in the renovated part of the building.

### Odziena Manor

is one of the most impressive Neo-Gothic castles in Latvia. In this quiet corner, the architect managed to create a building equivalent to European architecture. The specific features of the manor’s central design also bear a significant role. Together with other buildings, the manor, or castle, as it was called, consisted of a small town with a hotel, post office, store, windmill, stable, granary, cattle shed, and a slaughterhouse. The castle burned down in 1905. After World War I, the building was restored, and for a while it served as a community center. Unfortunately, today it is in rather poor condition.

### Ancient trees

There are five great-grandfather trees growing in Vietalva County. The mighty grand oak, 7.8 m in girth, still stands after hundreds of years near the new manor. The Auseklis oak-tree, named after the Latvian writer, who often spent his time in the shade under it, is located near the former vestry.





# Workshops of the Dwarfs

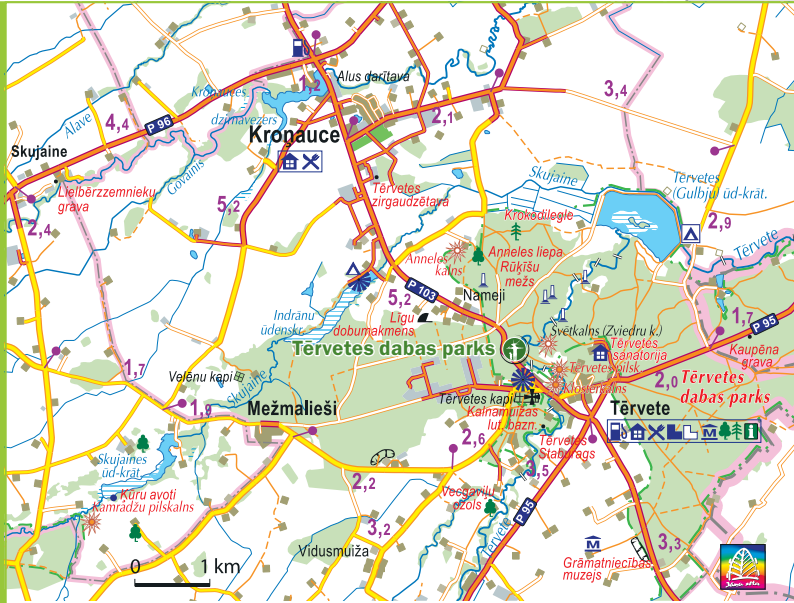


## Tērvete Nature Park (Tērvetes dabas parks)



Tērvetes sils  
Tērvetes pagasts  
Tērvetes novads

Rīga – 70 km  
Jelgava – 30 km  
Dobeles – 20 km



Tērvete Nature Park, lovingly cherished by JSC “Latvian State Forests”, is open to visitors not only in summer. Here, life is bustling all year round: Easter celebration in the spring followed by the mayhem during Walpurgis Night, Līgo! Midsummer night, the colourful Mārtiņš Day traditions, the Independence Day of Latvia, and there we are - Christmas time once again! This is when the Dwarfs of Tērvete, and their helpers – the park guides, begin to work in their annual workshops.



## Dwarf qualities and *Ruzieruvapa*

According to researchers, dwarfs are unusual, small of stature, sublime beings that closely resemble humans and possess a wide variety of talents. Every one of us since childhood has their own perception of dwarfs, and some are lucky to remember all their lives what they once meant. Looking for the most ancient roots of the word rūķis, which is Latvian for dwarf, we have determined that the word originated from the Proto-Indo-European language stem \*reu-: \*rū, the most ancient meaning of which was to tear, pluck, dig, pull. Therefore, the word rūķis stands for a diligent digger or rummager or, in other words, a hardworking and diligent being. And, indeed, the Dwarfs of Tērvete match the description perfectly! You just have to look at the Dwarf Mom, who is always busy doing something. Here she is knitting, there she is preparing a savoury and healthy dwarf tea, cutting a loaf of bread,



spreading honey on it. Father Dwarf, Namdaris (or Homebuilder) is proud of his collection of tools for all kinds of work necessary for whenever he is up to something new – which is always. And also, our Dwarfs are kind-hearted, they love to laugh, are hard-working, neat, all smiles, never quarrel... There are, they say, a total of 36 dwarf qualities. Give it a try, count them!

Did you know that Tērvete's Dwarfs have five seasons in a year? They have winter, autumn, summer, spring, and a fifth one – the friendship season, because Dwarfs love to be friends with children anytime of the year. Hence the Dwarven year, or ruzieruvapa.

And, boy, are they clever! Even more so, they love to share their wisdom accumulated over a long life. Why don't we visit the workshops at Tērvete Nature Park where, together with the wise ones and a bunch of curious children. We will learn about the forest in winter, and, as a finale, decorate forest Christmas trees with carrots, apples, acorns and cabbage – which the local hares and roe deer will more than appreciate.



## Such great wisdom!

The themes of the workshops differ greatly, and in this respect, Tērvete Nature Park specialists' fantasy knows no limits.

What do the Dwarfs talk about? Last year, for instance, they focused on the life of bees. While children were treating themselves to the tasty honey, Mother Dwarf was telling them about the role of the queen bee, what the worker bees do, the responsibilities of the guards of the hive, whereas Father Dwarf showed how bees once lived long ago, how hives came into being, and how they are made these days. The busy life of ants was also discussed in much the same way.

How do bees and ants spend the winter? Come closer together! Mother Dwarf brings out the traditional thick blanket and covers the children – who erupt in laughter and shrieks!

Other times, the Dwarfs tell children all about snow and the white fur of animals. Why do a weasel and a brown hare become white as fresh snow? But, of course, the better to hide from their enemies!

## Every tree has unique character

The workshop moves on to the next theme, which is fire, light, warmth, and the discussion then moves on to the properties of various trees and their application.

Imagine you are looking at a basket with ten types of kindling wood. How do you tell a log of aspen from an alder? All together, we manage to recognise many of the firewood in the basket, but when we are asked how each type burns and what kind of heat it produces – it proves too tough a question even for dads and moms.

Did you know that oak should not be used to fuel a stove – it is too strong for this purpose and can even topple it. Birchwood produces good heat, but it was not used often as it was harder to come by than other types of firewood. Ash makes good firewood, albeit the smoke is not very pleasant. Grey alder is good all round, it is also used in smoking food – light, vital firewood with a pleasant aroma. Whereas aspen also serves the purpose of a chimney sweep as it cleans the chimney. Fluttering elm is extremely hard – the axe just bounces off it as if it were made of rubber!

Once we start to discuss the properties of wood, Dwarf Dad becomes an unstoppable talker. He is the Homebuilder after all, and he knows much about what wood is best for what. For example, pine is better left in logs: this is the best material for making furniture. Just look at the cupboard Dwarf Dad has made, at its beautiful grain patterns!

Birch is good for various household items – popular at one time were spoons made from birch, buckets and bowls.

If you want to make a musical instrument, better stick with maple – a violin made of maple will not only have a superb sound, it will also be pleasing to the eye. The handle of a wood-shaving plane should be made of beech or downy birch. Alder is more water resistant than other types of wood, therefore perfect for the sauna. So is aspen, but if your sauna bench is made of oak, it will be too hot to sit on. A bench made of linden – less so. Stretch out on it, warm up, and forget about the wintry cold outside.

No one likes aspen these days, Dwarf Dad grunts, but when he was a small boy, it was perfect for roof shingles. And also, if bark was stripped off a young, growing aspen, in the course of time the outer layer of the tree would become extremely hard – almost impossible to saw. This type of aspen was good for making sturdy cart wheels. So much for the myth of aspens being “light and soft”!

## Battle between light and dark

Sitting at the fireplace in their cozy hut and staring at the flames, eventually someone asks, where did fire come from? And the Dwarfs tell the story of a lightning bolt that struck trees, showing mankind what tremendous damage a fire can do, but at the same time – the good that fire can bring. Dwarf Dad then demonstrates how fire was made in ancient times, and permits the children to try. But this is not easy! The spark simply refuses to alight.

The Dwarfs then tell of the dual nature of fire, that one must know how to keep the flames in check. Guntiņa-Uguntiņa (Fireflame Girl) attempts to get the children into all kinds of mischief, but the Dwarfs are stern – no games with the Fireflame Girl – the glowing embers must be left in the fireplace, far from the forest! Dwarf Mom goes on to talk about the animals that could suffer in a forest fire, while Dwarf Dad shows us what a tree looks like afterwards. Later, when a bonfire is lit outside, we will be able to see sparks shooting up to the sky to join the stars.





During every workshop, children, under the guidance of the hosts, make something with their own hands. They mostly work with wood to create good-luck buttons of hazel, traditional toys, candlesticks, Easter egg cups, various traditional ornaments. For this Christmas, every workshop participant, assisted by Dwarf Dad, makes a small round wood medallion bearing the Latvian fire-cross, a symbol of light, fire and life, and a powerful protective charm.

Once the sun starts to set early, the battle between light and dark begins. How was this fought in the past? Dwarf Dad demonstrates the holder for a miniature torch or rushlight, shows how they were made and inserted in the holder. Rushlights were made of pine and fir, but they crackled fiercely. Birch rushlights were better, and the children were instructed to make sure that there were enough rushlights, and that they do not burn out. But actually, there was no problem – a good three-foot long rushlight lasted for three hours, but, alas, the eventual advent of the candle brought a completely different kind of light into dark rooms.



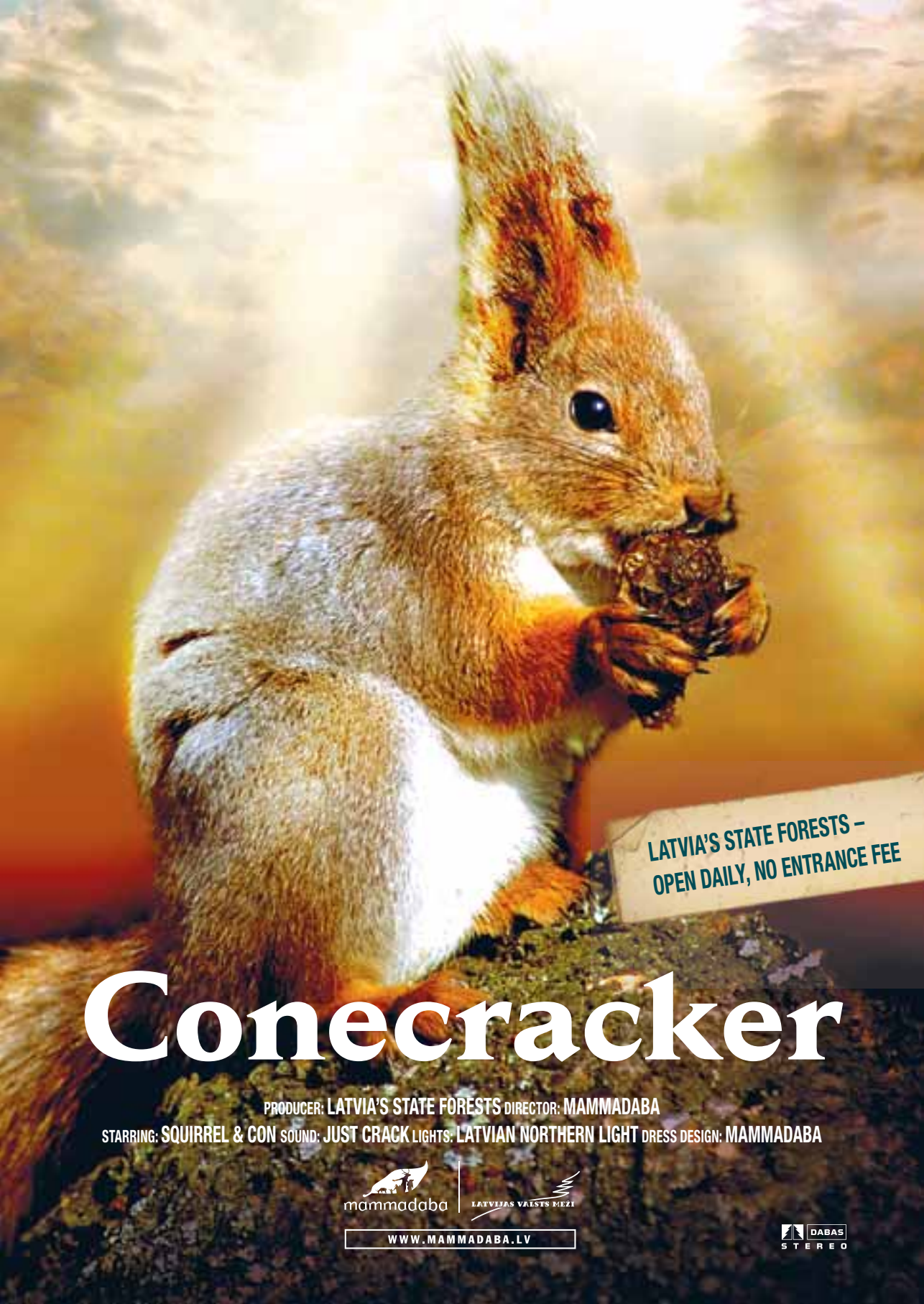
## Carrots on the Christmas tree

The conversations with the Dwarfs and the making of various toys are accompanied by traditional games that the children play with them. Time flies, and now we have to go out decorate the Christmas tree for the forest animals. We hang acorn garlands, carrots and turnips, cabbage leaves woven into garlands (Hawaiian-style). And we do not have to wait long for visitors – the curious roe-deer have been peering into the windows of the hut since early morning, inquiring without words: have the children come yet, have they brought something tasty for us? Hares are not so brave and they appear for dinner late in the evening, and – just look at him! – a moose, munching on the cabbage leaves! Luckily, on the lower branches, there are still some carrots left, which is what the hares crave for.

Well, there you have it - winter in Tērvete Nature Park!

Usually when we leave a place we have visited and liked a lot, we toss a coin in the water, hoping to come back again. In Tērvete Nature Park, Dwarf Father gives everyone a hammer and tells us to drive a decorative nail into a plank, with the nail heads forming the name RŪKĪŠI. (After all, this was a workshop!)

I, too, was there, treated to honey and dwarf tea, and I, too, hammered a shiny nail into the plan – because I want to return to Tērvete again and again!



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In the **Winds**  
of the **Sea**



## White sparkle and shine

The sea is a large body of salt water – this is how it is simply defined in dictionaries. But there is so much in this one word, and it produces so many emotions. The Baltic Sea (*Mare Balticum*) was the term that German chronicler Adam of Bremen used to name the sea already in the 11th century, but there is no verifiable information about the origins of the word. One possibility is that the chronicler borrowed the name from the German word *belt*, which they used to denote several straits near Denmark, another explanation is that the world comes from the Proto-Indi-European stem *\*bhel*, which means *white, shiny*.



In one of the oldest maps showing the current territory of Latvia – the Eastern Europe map created by Alexandrian scientist Claudius Ptolemy (c. 90 – 168 AD), the Baltic Sea goes by the name of *Mare Sarmaticum*. Other nations have also referred to the sea as the Varangian Sea, Barbarian Sea, Wend Sea, German Sea, Livonian Sea, and others. People living on Latvian shores of the sea referred to the Baltic Sea as *Dižjūra* (the Great Sea), and the Gulf of *Rīga – Mazjūra* (the Lesser Sea).

The Baltic Sea is in a temperate climate zone. Of course, we would like to have warmer weather and longer summers to be enjoyed by the sea, but we should keep in mind that the climate of the Baltic Sea is comparatively milder than in other parts of the world in the same latitudes – the climate here is influenced by the North Atlantic Current.

The total Baltic coastline is estimated at about 8,000 km, of which almost 500 km are the shorelines of Latvia – sandy, rocky, or overgrown with reeds.

Walking in the villages on the shores of the sea, one cannot help but feel stronger and braver, because such is the nature of places that have always been inhabited by strong-minded, enterprising and adventurous people.

For as long as we can remember, people have always yearned to be by the sea and to live and work on the shores. And at all times, people have considered beaches a perfect recreation area. These days, access to the sea may be limited in some places, therefore it may be useful to know that there are many recreation areas at the sea free of charge, set up by JSC “Latvian State Forests”.





# Eels Marry Flounders

## Engures novads (Engure Region)



Pļieņciema taka (Pļieņciems Trail)  
Jūriņas taka (Jūriņa Trail)  
Engures taka (Engure Trail)  
Lāčupītes taka (Lāčupīte Trail)

Rīga – 70–80 km  
Tukums – 25–30 km



Engure is located on the coast of the Gulf of Rīga, halfway between Rīga and Kolka. Engure Region stretches 45 km from Klapkalnciems to Mērsrags, and it is proud of its shoreline and dunes.

Engure is the place where folklore tells of the “eel going to marry the flounder”, because the name of the village comes from the Livonian language where anger means ‘eel’. Engure has been inhabited for a long time, the first written account goes back to 1245, in an agreement on division of land areas that belonged to the German Order’s Deputy Master Eberhard and Bishopric of Kurzeme (Courland) Bishop Heinrich (although other sources date this agreement 1567).

The history of the county is a long series of twists and turns – various villages were added and then abandoned, until Engure Region was established in 2009, with the administrative centre in the village of Smārde.

Engure County includes a total of eight villages, each with its own unique history and resounding name. Historically, they all are united by the brisk and harsh seaside, the tough livelihood of fishermen, the wish to sail to faraway countries, and shipyards that existed in every respectable village.

When the first people settled in what is now Klapkalnciems Village near Lāčupīte River, the passers-by could hear axes and hammers working without pause, producing sounds that resembled something like ‘klip-klap-klip-klap’ – hence the name of the village. At the end of the 19th century, Klapkalnciems was one of the largest and economically-advanced fishing villages in Kurzeme. This is where the first fish cannery opened in 1907, and this is also where the classic Latvian motion picture “The Fisherman’s Son” was shot.





Apšuciems Village fishermen were famous for their bravery; they always ventured out farther from the coast than other fishermen.

Plieņciems Village became a popular beach in the 18th century where Russian nobility used to travel here for the summer, including the Empress of Russia Elizabeth.

Whereas Ķesterciems Village is where the Engure Church's assistant pastor lived. There was a school in Ķesterciems, and it eventually became a kind of intellectual centre of the parish.

Abragciems Village was located between two capes, of which one was eventually washed away by the sea. Fishermen who lived there were proud folk who did not trust merchants, taking their catches to local pubs and eateries themselves.

In Bērciems Village, homes are inexplicably far from the sea, built along the road. Nevertheless, the villagers were also either fishermen or they worked at the local shipyard.

Ezermuiža was once one of the largest manors in Kurzeme. Later on, the local forest ranger lived here, and a cone dryer was built in Ezermuiža.

These villages resemble a string of beads whipped up by the sea along the coast. Life here is un-hurried, but in the winter the sea seems to be quite bored, waiting for visitors to come.



## Boardwalks to spare the dunes

There are many plant and animal species along the coast that are adapted to living only in these specific conditions. They cannot be found anywhere else, and are protected species – not only in Latvia, but in all of Europe.

Local residents have always been respectful of the harsh coastal climate. Every autumn, the raging sea not only changes the beach beyond recognition, it even moves the dunes – the last time at the beginning of the 20th century. Nowadays, beaches have become very popular weekend destinations for people from places near and far, and their numbers are beginning to pose a threat to the dunes. In order to better protect the dunes, several conservation zones have been designated. Dune biotopes are particularly sensitive to human influence. That is why, with a view to protecting topsoil and to prevent erosion, multiple boardwalks have been built in the dunes.

There are several conservation areas in Engure Parish: Plieņciems Dune, Apšuciems Bog, a nature park at Lake Engure and an ornithological conservation zone around the lake, part of Ķemeris

National Park. There are several boardwalks leading to the sea: Pliņciems Trail in the Pliņciems Dune conservation zone; two boardwalks at the recreational area Zīvartiņš; Lāčupīte Boardwalk in Apšuciems dunes not far from Lāčupīte Arboretum; Jūriņa trail that starts in Engure, Engure boardwalk, that starts at the outskirts of the village, Vecupe boardwalk.

On a hot summer day, it is good to know there will be no problem in getting to the sea for a swim. Visitors are offered a convenient car park at Engure boardwalk, Jūriņa trail, Zīvartiņš. After a brief stroll on the boardwalk, under the shade of pine trees, go directly to the ever-changing sea.

JSC "Latvian State Forests" has taken care to build benches at the end of the boardwalks where one can sit for a while and/or have some snacks at a proper table, not on a towel at the beach, and change into beachwear in a convenient cubicle. Amidst astonishing beauty, peace and quiet, only interrupted by the wash of waves ashore and cries of the birds, in terms of comfort, Engure just may be one of the best places to enjoy the sea.

In order to preserve the beauty of nature for generations to come, there are special rules that must be observed in the dunes and on the beach.

### The following is prohibited:

- \* Setting up tents in the dune zone except in places specifically designated
- \* Making bonfires in the dune zone except in places specifically designated
- \* Organisation of public sports and recreational events in the dune zone without the Engure Parish Council's permission
- \* Bathing in the area of Engure Port
- \* Parking cars in the coastal dune conservation zone or on the beach

## Lake Engure Nature Park

Since the end of the Ice Age, when the sea gradually receded north, the third largest lake in Latvia has been in the northern part of Engure Parish – Lake Engure, whose reedy shores are home to rare and endangered species of birds, such as eagle-owl, little crane, sea eagle, penduline tit, bearded reedling, great egret and others. 187 bird species nest here, or 83% of the total number of bird species in Latvia.

Piejūras Meadows in Mērsrags are an important nesting and resting place for waders and waterfowl when they migrate via Latvia.

In order to protect the versatility of these species, the ornithological conservation zone was established at Lake Engure already in 1957, whereas in 1989, the area was included on a list of the most important bird nesting places in Europe.

To make watching birds, the beautiful scenery, and wild cattle grazing on pastures on the shores of the lake more convenient for visitors to Lake Engure Nature Park, observation towers and several hiking trails are available.

Engure Nature Park can take pride in a large variety of protected plants, and especially so in plants of the orchid family – 22 out of 32 orchid family species native to Latvia grow in this area. There is a 3.5 km Orchid Path in the park, which starts near the Engure Ornithological Studies Centre, for an up-close look at unique plant species. Regardless of the conservation zone status issued to the area to protect the birds, the lake is a favourite of anglers.

In order to prevent the shores from overgrowing and to provide more room for waterfowl that live at the lake, there are massive pastures along the shores. Over 30 cows and horses graze here on a daily basis, and the rare Latvian blue cows graze at coastline pastures near Mērsrags.

On the shores of the lake, left of the Engure Ornithological Studies Centre, JSC "Latvian State Forests" has built recreational areas in picturesque, sunny locales for visitors to rest for a while - watching the lake through the reeds, listening to the waves and bird songs.



A photograph of a rocky coastline. In the foreground, a large, smooth, light-colored boulder is covered in vibrant green moss. The boulder sits on a beach of small, multi-colored pebbles. In the background, more large rocks are scattered along the shore, some also covered in moss. The water is clear and blue, with gentle ripples. The overall scene is bright and natural.

# At the Mercy of Winds



## Recreation area "Vasas" (Atpūtas vieta "Vasas")



Salacgrīvas novads  
Liepupes pagasts

Rīga – 75 km  
Salacgrīva – 55 km



Tūja is located on the banks of Zaķupīte River, near the coast of the Gulf of Rīga, in Liepupe Parish of Salacgrīva Region. This is a comparatively new residential area, whose popularity has been increasing rapidly.

Some years after Latvia became an independent country in 1918, top quality bricks were produced at Tūja Brickyard (est.1935); they were also used for the outer layer of one of Rīga's landmarks - the Powder Tower. Construction of Tūja Pier started in the summer of 1938, rail tracks were constructed atop the pier that transported the best supply of bricks to ships. During the Soviet period, one of the Cēsis Construction Supplies Plant's facilities was built in Tūja, and a fish cannery was built at the so-called Dzeņu River that was supplied fish via a pipeline, directly from boats and trawlers arriving in Tūja. Sadly, all of these facilities folded at the end of the 1980s, and all that remains of them to this day is a few dilapidated buildings. Today, Tūja is a popular bathing and recreation area that draws crowds with its unusual rocky beaches.



## The rockiest beach

The rocky section of Vidzeme coastline covers 12 km from Tūja to Cape Kutkāji – a jagged stretch of land covered with rocks and boulders of various sizes on the eastern shores of the Gulf of Rīga. This is the only location on the Latvian coastline where the waves have revealed Devonian sandstone outcrops.

One can visit the rocky beaches of Vidzeme every year, and each time discover something new, because this coastline is highly changeable. The main reason is frequent storms at sea. Although the largest boulders have been brought here by the glaciers thousands of years ago, after the severest storms the beaches always have changed. For instance, the outcrops in Zivtiņi only came into being after the 2005 windstorm, whereas the old Ķurmragi Lighthouse, that was standing amidst a meadow on a high quite a distance from the coast just 15 years ago, has now slipped a bit from the cliff and, slightly askew, is now watching the sea from the very brink.

The rocky beach, 20-40 m wide in these parts, is a scenic wonder. Large boulders, varying in shape and colour, small, romantic bays, cliffs jagged by wind and water that have stood here for 350 to 380 million years, make us feel that we are but a minuscule part of the Universe.



## Steep coastlines, cliffs and caves

The main attractions of the rocky beaches of Vidzeme are boulders and red sandstone outcrops. South of where Zaķupe River flows into the sea, there is the impressive Tūja sandstone outcrop carved by the waves, with wooden stairs leading to the top. Further on, there are Ežurgu Cliffs beyond Ķurmragi, where lovely, small-scale waterfalls can be observed in spring or after a heavy rain.

Veczemju Cliffs are the most awe-inspiring, stretching for about a half-kilometre. Under the influence of waves, there is a steep coastline up to six metres high in some places, and the cliffs are decorated with caves, hollows, and cracks.

Close to the cliffs is the Veczemju farmstead, where many scenes for the popular Latvian feature films of yesteryear – “The Long Road in the Dunes” (“Ilgais ceļš kāpās”) and “The Old Sailors’ Nest” (“Vecā jūrnieku ligzda”), were shot. As we walk on, between Cape Kutkāji and Meleki Bay there are several historic Vidzeme coastal homesteads, for instance, “Dzeņi” – the home of the Graši family of seafarers and shipowners, and “Lielkalni” – the native home of several generations of famous ocean-faring captains.

## Wind Nest. Recreational area “Vasas”

Strong winds and harsh weather notwithstanding, several new private homes, camping sites and guesthouses have been built along the coast at Tūja. It is no easy task for someone wanting to swim to find easy access to the beach. But one such place is some three kilometres from the centre of Tūja and a few kilometres before Ķurmraģs – the recreational area “Vasas”, built by JSC “Latvian State Forests”.

The Gulf of Rīga coast near Tūja is associated with the name of Baron Munchhausen, and it is quite possible that Munchhausen, the so-called “King of Tall Tales”, used to rest under one of the huge oak trees after a long walk. The biggest oaks are over six metres in circumference, and, spiting the winds, their branches are stretched far out as if to guard “Vasas” and its guests. The trees provide ample shade from the sun for those at a comfortable oak table enjoying a hearty meal after a good swim or a long walk.

A boardwalk goes down to the sea and the boulder-clad beach. The large boulders the closest to the sea are washed by the waves, when the intricate patterns and colours of granite are at their best. Here, one can easily lose track of the time while studying and observing them.



### Also Worth Seeing

- \* Baron Munchhausen Museum in Dunte, where a portrait of the baron is on display, as well as the marriage certificate confirming his union with Jacobine.
- \* Liepupe Church, where, from the steeple, Munchhausen shot down his horse.
- \* Liepupe Ancient Livonian Hill Fort that, unlike other ancient hill forts, is located just 2.7 km from the sea. Legend has it that this fort was built by pirates, and there was a large mill stone guarding entry into the fort up until a major storm in 1969. Another theory is that this could have been the central castle of the Livonians' Metsepole County.
- \* Caverns on the banks of Svētupe River where Livonians, and later generations, used to sacrifice various objects and coins. The church ruled in 1739 that the Day of Bartholomew, August 23, would be the official day for such sacrifices.
- \* Ķirbiži Forest Museum, located in a manor house's barn. There is a two-kilometre Ķirbiži Forest Trail that starts not far from the museum and follows the banks of Vītrupe River. The Vālodze Great Oak is here; the tree's circumference is 6.52 metres.

### Note!

- \* We are now in the Northern Vidzeme Biosphere Reservoir's conservation zone “Rocky Coast-line of Vidzeme”.
- \* Here visitors can bathe, sunbathe, stroll, pick berries and mushrooms, ride a bicycle, go skiing, or go out in a rowboat. Cars are only allowed on roads, no parking in the dunes.
- \* Setting up tents and making bonfires authorized in places specifically designated for such purposes.





**Captivating  
Coast  
of the Liivs**

## The Irbe River mouth (Irbes upes ieteka jūrā)



Jaunciems  
Tārgales pagasts  
Ventspils novads

Rīga – 180 km  
Ventspils – 50 km  
Tārgale – 55 km



Through the fields and forests of the Ziemeļkurša uplands, the peaceful Rinda and Stende rivers flow into one – becoming the Irbe River. From here, it moves slowly through the Livonian (also known as Liiv) lands, where it eventually joins the sea. On its 32 km journey, the river's only tributary is the Dīžgrāvis stream. Watersport tourists enjoy the river for its seclusion from civilization, which is mostly because it was located in a restricted non-civilian zone during the Soviet period. Anglers appreciate the river's abundance of fish species, even though they complain once in a while that the pike could be a "bit bigger." However, the river's chub obviously enjoy inhabiting the Irbe, as they are known to be well fed and plump. Those arriving to relax on the river on holidays certainly enjoy its sandy beaches. The sand here is unique, formed at the end of the Ice Age with winds blowing every which way to form a stunning sight.



However, the most delightful aspect of the river is where it flows into the Baltic Sea. As it is not able to rise over the sand dunes, it runs almost parallel with the sea for its final five kilometers, gradually becoming wider, but moving along without haste. However, right before the river "hits" the sea, it suddenly rethinks its course, and decides that it does not yet want to meet the sea and continues parallel - just "checking out" what the sea is like. Thus, at the point where the Irbe flows into the sea, a two-kilometer long sand spit has formed. Furthermore, the river never really comes to its senses, and each spring the tributary changes location and appearance - becoming more beautiful and interesting.

The Liivs of Kurzeme at one time used the Irbe River to maintain contacts with inland Latvians, for example, timber was floated from the Ance Forests to the narrow-gauge railway at Lielirbe, or out to ships at sea. Alas, what once was a bustling timber trade and transportation center during the end of the 19th century, is extremely serene today.

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## Lielirbe on the Liiv Coast

Liivs (also known as Livonians) – one of the oldest Finno-Ugric peoples on the Baltic Sea, once inhabited a large territory of modern day Latvia. Nowadays, the Liiv coast is a place where the fragrance of pine trees, warm white sand and sea-gulls are abundant, and where 12 coastal villages with unusual names are located - Oviši, Lūžņa, Miķeļtornis, Lielirbe, Sīkrags, Mazirbe, Košrags, Pitrags, Saunags, Vaide, Kolka and Melsils. The village of Lielirbe was established on the Irbe River estuary. In the Livonian language, however, Irbe is pronounced differently – Īra. The six-kilometer long village is located on both sides of the river estuary – on the sea-side and the land-side.

Lielirbe has been inhabited since ancient times, which is proven by the burial sites found during archaeological digs. Lielirbe, or Irvemünde in the Liiv language, was first mentioned in historical archives in 1387. In the second half of the 17th century, Lielirbe was called the free port village of Dižirve, and it developed into a Liiv seaport on the estuary of the Irbe River. Near the end of the 19th century, Lielirbe Port was an active timber trade and transportation center. During this period, boats and other vessels were being constructed in almost every coastal village in the region, but the largest number were constructed in Lielirbe. In the 1930's, for example, Lielirbe was one of the largest villages on the Northern Kurzeme coastline, and the river was all hustle and bustle. A narrow-gauge rail-line also went through, which connected Lielirbe to the regional towns of Ventpils, Dundaga and Stende, from where persons could travel further to Rīga. In 1939, the population of Lielirbe was around 300 persons, and it had over 70 homes, but when the region became a restricted non-civilian zone during the Soviet period, the population fell dramatically. Today, there are only a handful of permanent residents, and some homes are only used as summer residences, as the village itself has virtually disappeared.



On the opposite side of the Irbe River is “Oviši” conservation area. The protected seashore area is a haven for nesting bird species rare to Latvia, like, for example, common terns and little terns. So as not to disturb them, persons are urged to avoid walking on the seashore located on the right side of the river between the beginning of May until about mid-June, especially in places where the little seagull-like birds themselves are obviously alarmed at the presence of “intruders” and noisily tell them so.



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### Also Worth Seeing

- \* As one of the only remaining “witnesses” of Lielirbe’s glory days is the 100-year-old wooden Baptist Church
- \* Between Jaunciems and the Irbe Estuary is the 23.6 meter-high sand dune – called the White Hill (Baltais kalns)
- \* At the “Purvziēdi” farmstead in Vaive is forest ranger Edgars Hausmanis and his son’s extensive collection of antlers - over 550 antlers, with 350 of them moose. Except for a few deer antlers, a majority of the collection is not made up of hunted beasts, but those found during regular rounds in local forests. The farmstead also has an environmental protection exhibit.
- \* The Liiv Community Center at Mazirbe, where the annual Liiv Festival is held on the first Saturday of August. Also in Mazirbe is the “graveyard” for historical fishing boats, as well as Mazirbe Lutheran Church. Behind the church are the Mazirbe Plague Stones – monuments to the 18th century plague, as well as other historic events, mostly local
- \* Miķeļbāka Lighthouse in the village of Miķeļtornis (Pizā in Livonian) – the tallest lighthouse in coastal Latvia (55.6 meters above sea level)
- \* Irbene Radio Astronomy Center. A former top secret Soviet-era military site. The largest radio telescope in northern Europe. Tours should be made in advance. Tel: +37129230818, 63656082
- \* Oviši Lighthouse (1814) – the oldest lighthouse in Latvia. 38-meters tall, can be seen up to 23 kilometers from sea. Its top features an amazing view of the surrounding area. Tours of the lighthouse museum and the viewing tower should be made in advance. +37126264616
- \* Sīkrags – one of the oldest Liiv settlements, now a national historic landmark. Sīkrags was once an important port village on the northwest coast of Kurzeme, where in the 17th century large warehouses were constructed
- \* The village of Košrags is also a national historic landmark, and is also a candidate to be included on the World Cultural Heritage List





**Between  
the **S**ea  
and the **S**ky**

## Užava



Jaunciems  
Tārgales pagasts  
Ventspils novads

Rīga – 210 km  
Ventspils – 25 km



While on the way to the land of the Sūiti people on the Ventspils-Liepāja road, do not forget to stop at the village of Užava, which is located in gorgeous surroundings rich in contrast – the lowlands of Ventspils, as well as the elevated coastal sand-dune cliffs by Užava Lighthouse, that are 30-meters high.

The Sārņate archeological site is also located in Užava County, with two ancient graveyards – the Birznieki grounds, and the Sāmīši Medieval cemetery and cult site. The county also has three conservation areas – the Sārņate marsh area, the Užava conservation area, and the Užava River conservation area. The area is unique for its large ash trees.

Several historic and cultural landmarks of national importance are also located in Užava. For example, the Lutheran Church, that was constructed in 1783 and restored in 1892. The church has no towers, and its two bells are located above the church's entrance, on the facade.

**With its unique natural landscape and unusual ecosystem, the Užava conservation area has been included on the EU's network of endangered landscapes "Natura 2000".**

## A Bit of Local History

Over the years, Užava has had several name changes. If translating from the Liiv language, Užava means "new stream" (už – new, uva – stream). The first time Užava was mentioned in archives was in 1230, but actually the area's history dates back to at least 7,600-7,000 B.C. At the famous archaeological site at the Sārņate marsh area, various items were discovered, proving that the area was settled already during the Neolithic period. It turns out that the village of Sārņate in Užava County was a fishing village, as wooden oars and other items commonly found, including wooden carvings depicting ancient gods, were discovered during the dig.

In the 17th century, the Užava port area was constructed and a lighthouse built. From 1795, Užava was included in the Duchy of Courland, and was a very active coastal village.

From 1872 to 1890, a nautical school operated in Užava, which "produced" many qualified sailors for employment at the nearby port in Ventspils.





During the First Republic of Latvia (1918-1944), the farming association “Arājs” operated in Užava. The village also had a dairy, a steam mill, and wind-mills. After the recent local government reforms, Užava County has three villages – Užava, Sārnate and Lībciems.

In the village of Lībciems, on the so-called coastal road, is the Brežģene sand-dune. Many years ago, during a coastal storm, the Brežģe family home was covered in sand. The family members managed to escape through the chimney. A rooster can supposedly still be heard singing at the site to this day.

## Gray dune beach

The beach at Užava is pebbly. During heavy storms, the pebbles are pushed and pulled, turned and caressed, until they become round and smooth. Here visitors will see the gray dunes, with a splendid array of colorful stones and pebbles. The protected coastal area also features 76 different lichen species, 12 of them only native to this area. Next to the lichen, other plant species grow, like wild thyme, June grass, small pasque flower and sea sandwort. Farther away from the beach, where the ground is more fertile, are dune masses and forests - also a conservation area.

## White Flashing Light



Lighthouses are instruments to guide ships safely at sea – this is how these majestic buildings are defined. Lighthouses have developed and continued to improve for hundreds and even thousands of years, right up to the end of the 20th century, when they basically became obsolete due to modern technology. Today, only modern ships cruise the open seas, steered by highly qualified captains and upgraded navigational tools. Traditional lighthouses, with their white flashing lights, seem no longer necessary.

However, a lighthouse is much more than an engineering structure. A lighthouse is a symbol between the strength of Mother Nature and the fragile hopes of survival. A lighthouse will always remain a romantic symbol somewhere between the land and the sky, between reality and dreams.

Even after losing the importance of their primary functions, almost 20 lighthouses still stand proud and tall throughout the Latvian coastline.

One of these is Užava Lighthouse, located approximately 20 kilometers from Ventspils in an uninhabited area three kilometers from the village of Užava. Standing 30 meters above sea-level, it has been built on a high coastal dune near the beach. The lighthouse has also retained its original appearance to this day. The first one at the site was constructed in 1879, however, it was almost completely destroyed during WWI. After the war, a temporary wooden lighthouse was set-up, while the current one was re-built in 1925. Back then, construction materials were shipped by ferry from Ventspils, which were loaded onto smaller boats and then placed on horse-drawn carts. In the 1930s, the coastline by the lighthouse was reinforced with stones and large rocks, but in the 1970s the area was reinforced using concrete, as sea-storms here are known to be quite fierce. “Latvian State Forests” has established two recreation areas nearby – one right next to the lighthouse, and the other where the Užava River flows into the sea - perfect for a relaxing day out in the sun.

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**



\* DREAM CATCHER

[WWW.MAMMADABA.LV](http://WWW.MAMMADABA.LV)

DABAS  
STEREO





# Parks of the Future





In its periodicals and pamphlets, “Mammadaba” frequently mentions lovely locations that have been spruced up. This time will be a bit different, as we will talk more about places that once were, and what they will be in the future. Readers will be given the wonderful opportunity to participate in the revival of the once famous and handsome Bauņi Manor Park, observe how Cīrava Manor Park is being rejuvenated, as well as see the construction of a new tourist information center at the edge of Pokaiņi Forest.

From literature and history, we know how different the owners of various manors were, the influence they had on locals, as well as the legacies they left behind. Bauņi or Bauenhof Manor, as it was known back then, was one of the lucky ones, as during the rule of Count Jacob Sievers, he transformed the manor, its park and the surrounding area into an extraordinarily beautiful place. To be honest, this should not come as a surprise, as the highly educated Sievers did much traveling during his diplomatic career. Near the end of his career, he used his experience and invested money he had saved to build Bauņi Manor and develop the surrounding area. Even though Bauņi Manor no longer stands, the trees planted by Sievers in the manor park loom tall and proud. We are truly pleased that a section of this park will once again be restored to its former glory.

Meanwhile, the history of Cīrava Manor (sometimes called a palace) shows that the lords of the manor - the von Manteuffel-Szoeges family, looked to the area’s economic development and cared for the people. Everywhere the family purchased property, they immediately built all that was necessary – comfortable servant quarters, schools, etc. At Cīrava Manor, the next building constructed after the manor itself was a school, while a park was created around the manor property. The restoration and revival of such an old park is no easy task, as many of them are included on various cultural and/or environmental protection lists - an additional responsibility for those restoring the park.

Usually, two distinct zones are established when restoring a historic park, which frequently overlap. The environmental protection zone includes territories where the diversity of the environment must be protected, as well as the local flora and fauna. Meanwhile, the objective of the recreation zone is to protect and preserve scenic, environmental and historical values, at the same time ensuring public access and maintaining upkeep of the area.





# Bauni , Park

## Bauņi Park (Bauņi parks)



Bauņi  
Burtņieku novads  
Matīšu pagasts

Rīga – 145 km  
Valmiera – 30 km  
Mazsalaca – 15 km  
Burtņieki – 15 km



## How to find Bauņi Park

Driving on the Valmiera-Mazsalaca road, approximately 5km after the village of Matīši on the right side, there is a small parking area, where Jēkabkalns is located – this is a part of Bauņi Manor Park, and today also a protected dendrology and cultural heritage site.

Driving on the old Valmiera-Mazsalaca road from Bauņi Manor, and approximately 0.5 km on the old larch-tree lane, you will cross the Bauņupīte bridge, from where, on the right side, you will see Jēkabkalns.





## English style on the banks of Burtnieki Lake



At the end of the 18th century, on the banks of Burtnieki Lake, once stood one of the statelyest manors in Vidzeme at that time, built in the style of an English country house. Even though Bauņi has been mentioned in historical archives already in the 17th century, the area began to flourish during the time of Count Jacob Sievers, especially in the second half of the 18th century. Count Sievers was a brilliant man, with an impressive career as a diplomat in the Russian Empire of the Czar. He travelled extensively and lived abroad, but in the final years of his life his main passion was reconstructing the manor his father left him, as well as creating its park. After the completion of Bauņi Manor in 1787, local pastor Gustavs Bergmanis had these enthusiastic words to say about the manor and new park:

“The central building and pavilion are two floors high. Everything here is in good taste, and nowhere is there a feeling of dissonance. The building’s halls and rooms are also tastefully decorated and furnished. The building also includes a well-stocked library, which includes many books on gardening, as well as the best German, English and French literature, which the lord of the manor collected during his visits to England, France, Germany and Italy, where he gained much knowledge about the world.”

Descriptions about the park and surrounding area were just as enthusiastic back then, as Count Sievers was not stingy with his money - he wished to transform the large area around the manor into a magnificent European-style park. During the time of the Count, Bauņi looked like it easily could be located somewhere in England. Everything here was subject to his master plan. Today, the park’s long lanes still exist, as well as ponds and various non-native tree specimens, which allow visitors to feel the former glory. On the garden side of the manor, accessible through the arcade down the steps of the manor, persons were greeted with a striking field of flowers, which include colorful hyacinths, yellow and white narcissus and tulips, whose bulbs were specially ordered every year. Among the many flowers were also hundreds of different types of carnations. The garden also included a variety of fruit trees, grape vines, white mulberry trees, linden-weaved hedges, paths through the gardens, as well as pavilions, terraces and benches. In 1786, melons were grown out in the open, and were known to reach full ripeness. There were also many cedars, grown from small seeds. The English garden also once featured American walnut-trees, honeysuckles, lilacs, jasmine, acacias, roses, elder trees, elm trees, rowan trees, buckthorn, birch trees, fir trees, maple trees, pine trees, junipers, lindens and many other types of shrubs and trees. To this day, the park still contains several walnut-trees.

Later, in the 19th century, life at Bauņi remained active, as various other buildings were added to the manor complex, including a summer house, a dwelling house for servants, a stable, a granary, a brewery, a mill, a forge, a bird-house, a special laundry room, a threshing barn, a pub, a park guard-house and other buildings.

There are many legends about Meitu kalns (Girl's Hill). Supposedly the first brothel in Latvia was located here, where young women sat in windows and combed their hair in the moonlight, strolled Jēkabkalns in white dresses, and some of them, unable to cope, even took their own lives in the pond.

## Potatoes and Music at Bauņi

During the period when Count Sievers governed the area, much was thought about local education and the standard of living. European educated, and a supporter of the Enlightenment, Count Sievers began to concentrate on educating the local population. He taught them how to grow potatoes, and urged them to focus on gardening, which would allow them to improve and diversify their diets, and earn money. The plants of the fruit trees grown at Bauņi Nursery were given to local farmers as well, so that they themselves could plant and grow them, which, of course, made the farmers' children with a "sweet tooth" quite happy. Specially enhanced cattle breeds from England were purchased to improve local dairy farming, while the fields were sown with clover - something new at the time. School lessons were attended by the local children - during summer in the manor park, and during winter, inside the manor. There was even a choir for those more musically inclined. Yes, of course, finances had a big role to play, as Count Sievers was rewarded generously for his loyalty and services as a diplomat for Empress Catherine II. He was not only bestowed many orders, but Count Sievers was granted several manors and land in Russia, as well as a substantial monetary reward, so that "the simplicity of rural life will help find peace and harmony."



## The Heyday of Jēkabkalns

Jēkabkalns (Jacob's Hill) is a part of the larger former Bauņi Manor Park, which attracts visitors not only for its interesting terrain and dendrology plantations, but also for its rich historical and cultural legacy. Jēkabkalns itself is 55 meters above sea-level, and 330 meters wide atop the hill. Nine beautiful Weymouth pine trees from the Count Sievers days stand tall on the hill, as well as "descendants" from the original American walnut trees, which continue to spread their branches and grow towards the sun. Several park canals have partially been preserved, as well as some of the original terrain and "Catherine's Seat".

Russian Empress Catherine II once proposed Count Sievers plant special pathways and tree lanes in his park. This may be the reason that the Count planted lanes of larch trees. In 1764, when Her Majesty visited Count Sievers at Bauņi, she took a stroll through the park and sat down on a rock bench, which from then on was named "Catherine's Seat".





Alas, the park has been left unattended for many years and is now overgrown, but back in the day... “After taking about 1,000 steps through the tree lane, we arrive at Jēkaba kalns (Jacob’s Hill). Here, there are bubbling springs, smaller hillocks, trees, islands, peninsulas, steps, small waterfalls, benches, shrubs and thousands of tree species. A thousands steps later is ‘Meitu kalns’ (Girl’s Hill), which also features many different types of trees.”

A deep ravine cuts across Jēkabkalns – on one side was an open-air stage, while on the other side an area where grand balls were held. Musicians performed underneath the large oak tree, and music spread throughout Bauņi Park.

If you are coming to Jēkabkalns from the manor through the larch tree lane, before the bridge that crosses the (only 10-km) Bauņupīte stream, which eventually flows into Lake Burtnieks, you will come across a cemetery where Count Sievers himself is buried. Eyewitnesses who attended the Count’s funeral wrote that the locals truly appreciated his contribution in making Bauņi prosperous. One wrote: “The coffin was carried by 16 local men to the cemetery four kilometers away. The Count, together with his gold sword, was placed face down in the coffin, otherwise his body would have drowned in the many tears for his death.” However, time has not been kind to the cemetery and the Count’s gravesite as only blue periwinkles in spring now protect them from being plundered.

## The Sound of Music at Jēkabkalns

About a hundred years later, Jēkabkalns witnessed another unforgettable event. In order to improve the spiritual life of the Latvian people, pastor, teacher and writer Juris Neikēns had the bright idea for a song festival. The first one, organized by Neikēns with six choirs participating, took place in 1864 in the nearby village of Dīkļi. However, the following summer, Neikēns organized a second song festival at Bauņi Manor Park. The choirs mostly sang about the outdoors, like - “Es grib rītā mežā

Another tale tells us that once it was commonplace for the local girls to go out and meet boys. One evening God himself was sitting on the roadside next to the hill. The girls were on their way when they ran into him. He sternly told them that they are not allowed to go out to meet boys anymore – they must wait at home for the boys to come to them. After this, the hill was known as “Meitu kalns.”



braukt” (I wish to go the forest tomorrow), “Cik jauks ir mežs un lauks” (How pleasant are the forests and fields), and “Kad zajā mežā tikšu” (When I get to the green forest). The song festivals were a source of inspiration for music lovers, who established many new choirs, and in 1873, the first ever Latvian Nationwide Song Festival was held in Rīga. 2015 will bring the 150th anniversary since the second ever Song Festival was held at Bauņi, and the local government has already made it known that it is planning a special anniversary event. A commemorative stone was engraved in 1990 at Bauņi, reminding that the second-ever Song Festival took place at Jēkabkalns.

## Jēkabkalns over the years

In eventual years, revolutions and wars came to Latvia, and one of the results is that the manor at Bauņi is no more. Its park lay abandoned for many years as Mother Nature took over, and it became tangled up in weeds.

In the 1980s, a local forestry management team began work on sprucing up the park - returning it to its former glory. In 2004, the park was designated a conservation protection area for its biodiversity and unique eco-system, and all commercial activity in the area was prohibited.

## Other places of interest

### Greiži stone

In the far corner of Bauņi Park, near the Valmiera-Mazsalaca road and 800 meters after the road-sign to Mīlītes, is a parking area. This is where the Great Bauņi Stone (or boulder) is located. The length - 5.3 meters, width - 5.1 meters, height - 1.2 meters, approximately 16 meter in diameter. The surface of the rock is flat, with dish-like alcoves, and researchers believe it was an ancient cult site.



### Lake Burtnieks

There are many myths, legends and stories connected with Burtnieks, the fifth largest lake in Latvia. The lake is popular with fishermen, as it contains 17 different fish species. It is also excellent for bird watching, and has several recreation areas. Burtnieks is the only lake in Latvia where rocky outcrops have formed on the shores due to waves. The outcrops are located on the lake's southeastern corner, near the Burtnieks Evangelical Lutheran Church.



### Matīši Evangelical Lutheran Church

The church was constructed in 1687 by Rupert Bindenschu, who was also architect of St Peter's Church in Rīga. This is likely why Matīši Lutheran Church bears a striking resemblance to St Peter's, and both have a golden rooster on the top of their spires.



# Cīrava Forest Park

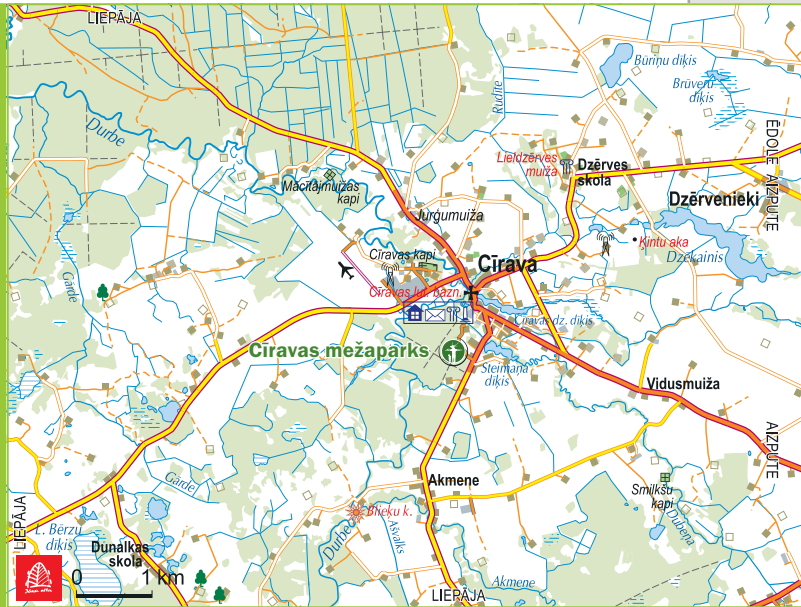


## Cīrava Forest Park (Cīravas mežaparks)



Aizputes novads  
Cīravas pagasts

Rīga – 200 km  
Aizpute – 15 km  
Liepāja – 45 km



## Palace and school

The name Cīrava in the ancient Couronian language means “quick turn” or “change of direction”, and the Durbe River in the center of Cīrava does exactly that, as it suddenly makes an unpredictable turn, changing its flow. Cīrava was first mentioned in historical archives in 1253, but according to archeological digs at the burial site at Buči, this area was inhabited well before the time of Christ. Cīrava Palace, located on the left side of the Durbe River next to Rudīte stream, was constructed in 1752 as a hunting lodge by the German-Baltic baron family Manteuffel-Szoeges. In the 1860s, it was reconstructed in the Neo-Gothic style. Some interior elements from the 19th century remain, for example, a marble fireplace. Ornamental ceiling decorations are a welcome element in the foyer, staircase, as well as the second-floor hall. These embellishments used to be in all of the palace’s main rooms. Also, the clever engineers at the time created a unique ground-water drainage system, while the heating system was a unified one, dividing heat amongst the hearths throughout the building.





From the 18th century until WWI, Cīrava Palace was one of the grandest and most beautiful edifices in all of Kurzeme. In 1860, the Russian heir to the throne and several other high-ranking officials resided here, during which they travelled around the province and hunted in the bountiful forests.

Cīrava Palace itself has had a favorable fate, as it was neither gutted nor demolished during the 1905 Revolution. This is likely because the lord of the palace was known to be kind to the local population. Historical archives tell us that the lords of the palace were highly active in developing the surrounding area - wherever the Manteuffel-Szoeges' purchased property, they immediately built schools and comfortable dwelling houses for the servants. There have been many words of praise found in archives or other literature in regard to Cīrava Palace, park and the local economy. At around 1820, sheep farming was started here, and this was the first place in Kurzeme where artificial fertilizer and steam-based threshing machines were used, as well as the first place where potatoes were planted.

In the early 1920s, the property was confiscated from the Baltic-German family during agricultural reform, but Cīrava Palace was not abandoned. In 1922, a school opened on the premises. During the Soviet occupation, the school was shut down in 1951, but by 1953 it was transformed into Cīrava Agricultural Vocational School, conducting classes up to 2005. Unfortunately, the palace has been a victim of neglect, and is in poor condition today. It waits patiently for someone to rejuvenate it.



## Cīrava Palace Park

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To the west of the palace is a seven-hectare large open-plan park, which features a large pond with islands. Work on it began in the 1820s. Later, the well-known gardener, Georgs Kūfalts, whose resumé lists many parks and gardens in Rīga, made his contribution to Cīrava Palace Park with a distinctly European elegance. The park area right next to the palace and the pond was created after WWI as a tree and shrub collection for the needs of Cīrava Forest School. Various plant species grow here, including forest tulips and autumn crocuses. Both of these decorative plants have a shared



history at the park, as they were initially brought here and grown as part of its garden, but have since adapted to the local conditions and are growing wild in some areas. Seeing autumn crocuses growing in the wild is a rare sight indeed, but one must remember that they are not only beautiful, but poisonous.

Wild forest tulips are also a rare sight, mostly found in southern and western parts of the country. These colorful plants are known to grow in and around old parks and gardens.

The palace's park territory includes baron-era footpaths, large oak trees, hornbeams, European larch, Weymouth pine, Douglas fir, beech, Canadian spruce, European cedar-pine, laurel-leaf poplar, red oak, as well as various other local and foreign tree species.

The park's history, scenic paths and unique eco-system make it a popular destination for nature lovers. It also includes a peculiar hillock – the gravesite for the baron's many dogs.

Since 1957, the park adjoining the palace is a protected area.

## Forest Park

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Beyond the park there once was a large apple orchard, and a lovely and painstakingly-maintained forest park. We can only imagine the abundance of white color which once dominated the area – apple blossom clouds and bird cherry trees blooming in the spring, as well as the winter snow and frost sparkling in the sun on the banks of the Durbe River. The local populace in Cīrava have always valued the beauty surrounding them, and are frequently seen taking a relaxing stroll on the various paths near the river. Over the years some were left unattended, but despite this, like their mothers and fathers before them, local girls and boys enjoy spending time by the river during the apple blossom season, listening to the songs of the nightingale. Thanks to a recent decision, the beautiful pathways and Cīrava Forest Park will once again be restored to their former glory.



The recreational forest “Cīravas mežaparks” is made up of two zones – a conservation protection zone, as well as a recreation zone. The two zones serve specific purposes, but they also overlap, proving that environmental protection is much broader than just a list of rules and regulations. There are areas of the park where environmental protection goes hand-in-hand with human curiosity, as recreational and educational opportunities here complement each other.

In planning such parks, the conservation zone includes territories where the main goal is environmental protection and protection of the diversity of the local eco-system. These are unique and highly important forest habitats, as well as conservation protection zones along the Durbe River. The Cīrava Forest Park territory includes some trees that are over 200 years old, as well as grand oak trees, hornbeams, pines, larches, white firs and beech trees. The oaks growing on the banks of the Durbe are especially grand and majestic, with their large hollows which over the years have served as comfortable “homes” to many birds. The aim of the recreation zone is protection of the landscape, ensuring opportunities for those who wish to spend time outdoors, informing visitors about the local flora and fauna, as well as protection of the environment and historic or cultural landmarks. There is no lack of natural treasures at Cīrava Forest Park, and some initial work has already been conducted – the network of gullies has been cleared up, thus renewing the flow of water through the park’s gully system. Drying the lower areas, the underbrush has been cleared on the forest’s paths and walkways, which have also been evened out for cyclists. It is possible to wander around the park for hours on its many twisting and turning paths, and where in the future, four recreational areas will be established in the most scenic spots, all with benches and campfire areas.



The Durbe River flows along one of the more unique river valleys in Kurzeme. The river begins from Lake Durbe, where it begins its 47-km long journey, winding and bending through fields, 40-meter high hills, as well as steep river banks. Later, the river becomes weary from its journey and joins the Tebra River, creating the Saka River, which, together with many other smaller tributaries, eventually enters the Baltic Sea. At Cīrava, the river behaves like a spring rabbit, making several loops but not getting very far. And this is certainly for the best, as the river bends, surrounded by grand oak trees, it makes for a stunning natural landscape.



## Other places of interest

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### Cīrava Lutheran Church

Cīrava Lutheran Church was built in 1781 at Sudmalkalns. From the outside, Cīrava Church looks similar to other churches in Kurzeme, with a pyramid-style church tower, red-tile roof and massive brick walls. One of the church's unique features is its main entrance, which is located on one side of the church, not in front. This is because the canons at the time were strict in having the church constructed so that the altar would be on its eastern side. The altar and pulpit, interior decoration, as well as the organ gallery and prospectus, have been included on the cultural heritage list of national importance, as Rococo style works of art. The church has also preserved one of its original bells, as well as organs from the beginning of the 18th century. Another one of the church's treasures is a marble sculpture of Baroness Elizabeth von Behr, as well as various items, including candlesticks, confessional chair, offering vessel and cup.

### Cīrava Watermill

The old watermill in Cīrava was constructed in 1881. The building underwent substantial reconstruction after WWII, which changed the the original planning and exterior, however, these Soviet-era "improvements" have not undermined its historical and cultural importance. Much of the watermill's equipment from the first half of the 20th century remains, as well as the original weights from 1883. The watermill complex includes other landmarks of national importance, including living quarters, the overflow structure, the dam, as well as the reservoir. Cīrava Watermill is on the list of protected architectural landmarks of national importance. In 2002, the complex was also included on Latvia's Top 100 list of industrial heritage landmarks, which represented Latvia's cultural heritage during the European Cultural Heritage Days events.

### Horse stable

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, various building were added to the Cīrava Palace complex – servants' house, horse stable, administrator's house, as well as a barn. The horse stable is located right across from Cīrava Palace, and is a Classicism-style building with a traditional gable and grand columns. The stable was initially used to breed and raise horses during the days of the barons, but later was turned into a workshop for the vocational school.

### Baron family mausoleum at Dunalka

In Dunalka County at Mālkrogs, the baron family's mausoleum is located, which was built at the beginning of the 19th century and is a protected historical landmark. The pyramid-shaped mausoleum and its surroundings were once quite magnificent, with every minute detail meticulously thought out, producing artistry of the highest quality. Such an unusual park and architectural memorial complex is one of a kind in Latvia, and it can be compared to something you might have seen in Ancient Egypt, where the bodies and souls of the deceased were laid to rest in crypts that were much like homes themselves.

Unfortunately, the mausoleum at Mālkrogs has been neglected over the years, and only its ruins remain. Diemžēl kapenes laika gaitā stipri cietušas un šobrīd aplūkojamas tikai drupas.



# Back to Mother Nature!

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