



mammadaba

It means Mother Nature.
And it's true.



Latvia's State Forests and mammadaba welcome you!



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

OWLINATOR

PRODUCER: LATVIA'S STATE FORESTS DIRECTOR: MAMMADABA

STARRING: EAGLE-OWL AND NIGHT ANIMALS

SOUND: NIGHT SILENCE LIGHTS: MOON & STARS DRESS DESIGN: MAMMADABA



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Dear Friends of Nature!

On the one hand, the task of JSC "Latvijas valsts meži" (Latvia's State Forests) is clear and simple – to manage the forests that 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 inhabitants of Latvia and visitors from abroad with the wealth of our nature, joining one and all with the primitive beauty of our surroundings.

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



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At Legendary

Lake Zebraus

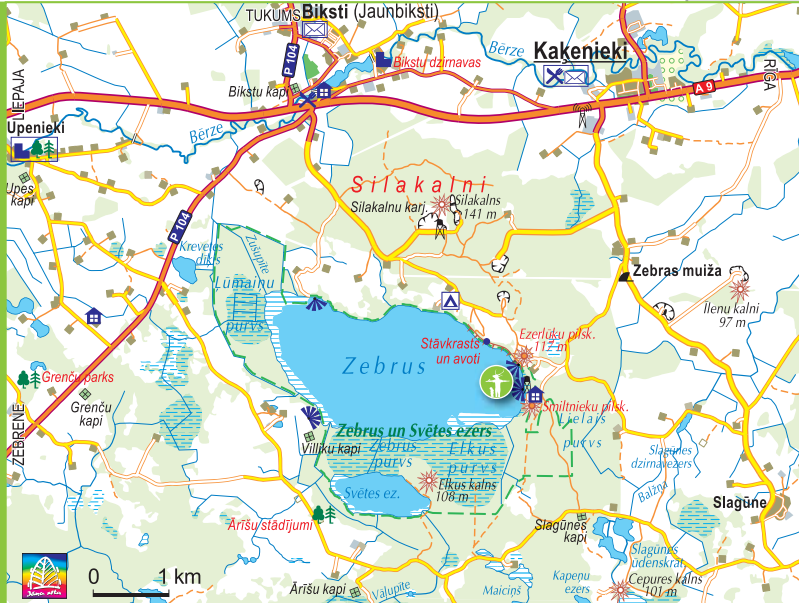


Location



Rīga – 80 km
Dobele – 22 km

Area – 412 ha
length – 3.6 km
width – 1.75 km
average depth – 1.5–2 m
max. depth – 4.2–3.8 m
(depth has decreased after amelioration)



Common residents:

in the water: pike-perch, perch, bream, silver bream, tench, eel, pike, rudd, goldfish, roach and other fish, about 15 species in total, of which a 9 kg pike-perch is the honorary resident;

in the air: common gull, bean goose, whooper swan and Bewick's swan, wood hewers etc., several bat species (pond bat, Daubenton's bat, Nathusius' pipistrelle, noctule bat and northern bat);

on the shore: small pasque flower, butterfly orchid, early purple orchid, early marsh orchid and other plants rarely found elsewhere, particularly those of the orchid family.



What are the Origins of Lake Zebrus?

The legend goes that in the ancient times Lake Zebrus was floating on the clouds. One day a man on a white horse appeared up there calling out, "Guess the name of this lake!" All people attempted to guess the actual name, yet no one succeeded. All of a sudden a young boy exclaimed, "Lake Zebrus!" and in an instant the lake came down off the clouds to the place where it is found to this day.





Neighbours of Lake Zebrus

Lake Zebrus has been lucky in many respects. It was born in a lovely place and its shores are known to have been home to one of the most ancient settlements in Zemgale. The neighbours of Lake Zebrus are beautiful and famous as well. Lake Svētes is located just across Svētes Bog, which is half a kilometre wide. Probably, the two lakes were once a single lake with a limestone shoal across it. The shoal was used by priests from the ancient Latvian cult place on Elku Hill to escape danger and find shelter in the high and well-protected Ezerlūķi Hillfort where a stately castle of ancient Latvians was rising in bygone days. Another neighbour, Smiltnieki Hillfort, was a place for burning witches. It is said that during the winter Lake Zebrus bellows like a bull and frightens people. The noise actually comes from ice cracking, even if legend suggests otherwise.

The surroundings of Lake Zebrus are dignified as legendary by the writer Kārlis Ieviņš who lovingly describes his native land in the novel *At the Legendary Lake*.

The picturesque ambience of Lake Zebrus was researched by August Bielenstein. People told him about the gigantic trees on Elku Hill. The pine-trees had to be sawn in half both lengthwise and widthwise, lindens had countless branches, while the rich oak grove has survived to this day.

The scenically attractive landscape, spring water bogs, bog forests, protected bird and bat species – all this makes a perfect venue for recreation and nature appreciation.

Pike-perch, the Predatory Freshwater King (*Stizostedion lucioperca*)

is a fine and fastidious species of fish in terms of both water and bed. In many lakes, it has to be bred artificially. The pike-perch tends to hide in deep pits and looks for different hiding-places.

The pike-perch, as well known as zander, almost exclusively preys on small fish: bream, roach, bleak and rudd. It may reach more than 12 kilograms in size. As to voracity, the adult pike-perch overcomes the perch and is almost as gluttonous as the pike. It is not uncommon that when the pike-perch is chasing its prey, it strikes shallow water less than 4 cm in depth. The pike-perch is native to the basin of the Danube, as well as to the rivers in Northern and Central Europe. This species of fish is now bred in England, and its habitat continues to expand. The pike-perch spawns in the spring or early summer, leaving its pale yellow eggs on water-plants, underwater stones and sand. A few days later, the hatchlings get out of the eggs and start living off the nutrients in the yolk sacks till they grow teeth. Small pike-perch feed themselves with fish fry and insect larvae.

This species of fish may be caught using a picker fishing rod, a float fishing rod or a spinning rod. When spinning for the pike-perch, the best results are often achieved by using spoon-baits or rubber fish lures. To fish for the pike-perch, you will need a 2.4 m long rod with average flexion, a spinning reel, a monofilament line which can hold 2.7–3.6 kg of weight and a short, firm wire leader. The lure fish used for the pike-perch should be small in size.

Ideal Recreation

Since 2000, Lake Zebrus has been managed by JSC "Latvijas valsts meži". The east shore of the lake has been converted into a recreation centre with 17 boats and two pedal boats, seven camping houses for rest, places for a romantic get together by the campfire where you can cook soup from the fish you have just fished out, as well as canopies with tables and benches. There is a sandy bathing ground, a viewing platform for watching birds and clouds, a volleyball and basketball field for outdoor activities, a swing for children and a parking lot for the adults.

This is an ideal recreation venue for the whole family. While fishers are trying to set new records by catching pike-perch from the boat, more romantically inclined people may climb the 30 m high Ezerlūķi Hillfort or Elku Hill and enjoy the tranquillity of the sacred site by watching the branching lindens and orchid family flowers. Young people may take part in volleyball matches, go swimming and pedal boating. By the way, the route favoured by cyclists runs along Lake Zebrus. The shore of Lake Zebrus is also suitable for organizing larger sports and recreation events. Should any problems arise, two married couples, Endziņš and Baumanis, who are experienced lake supervisors and experts of the neighbourhood, will gladly assist you.

Every year, JSC "Latvijas valsts meži" restocks the lake releasing juveniles. During the last three years, 500 thousand pike larvae and 500 kg of young pike have been released into the lake and have grown into large fish by now. Special attention, however, is given to pike-perch who really favour Lake Zebrus. Two years ago, the stock in the lake was supplemented by 3000 pike-perch yearlings. Other species of fish are not neglected either. For example, young eels from Great Britain were released into the lake not so long ago.

Surroundings of Lake Zebrus are a paradise for bird-watchers. Yet visitors should take into consideration the nature reserve regulations for bird protection. For example, boating and presence of people is prohibited on the west shore of Lake Zebrus and in the lake 30 m from the reed and vegetation edge from the moment of ice melting to 30 June.

Grilled pike-perch

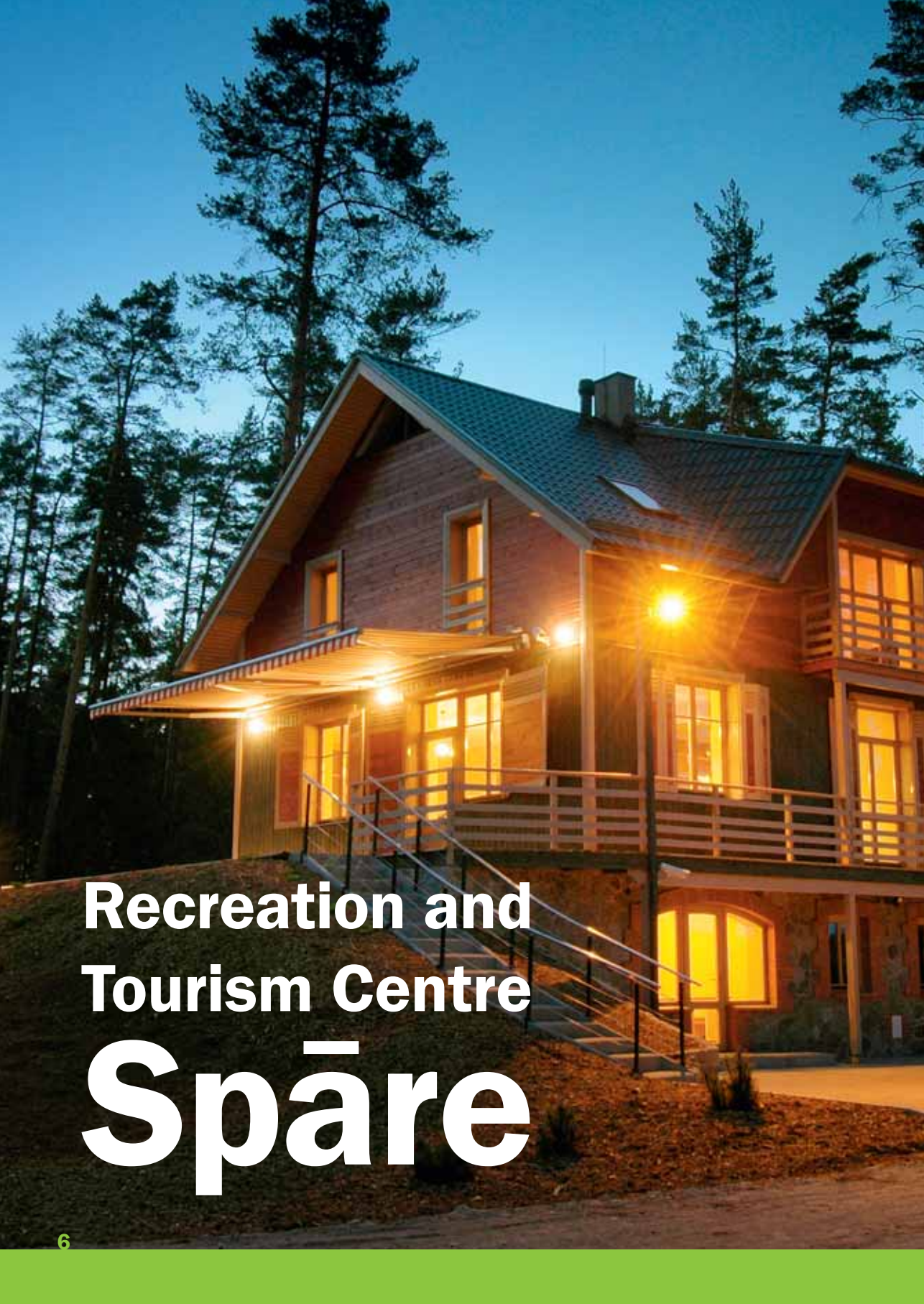
Ingredients: pike-perch, onion, garlic, lemon, dill, cream, mayonnaise.



Pike-perch has a delicious taste and it can be cooked in many different ways. Grilling is the most preferred method of preparation at the lake. No worries if you haven't landed a record-worthy fish. One kilo heavy pike-perch tastes the best and is most suitable for grilling. Another huge advantage is that you don't have to scale pike-perch.

Preparation: cut and gut the pike-perch. Chop a big onion, a couple of garlic cloves, a lemon and dill and mix them with a cream and mayonnaise sauce. Stuff the pike-perch stomach with the obtained mixture. Wrap the stuffed fish in foil, place it on a hot grill and let it cook on both sides. Be careful not to overcook the fish. Check the readiness by poking a match: if it goes in easily, the fish is done.

If there is no grill nearby, the stuffed fish may be cooked over hot coals in a campfire. You may use rhubarb or burdock leaves instead of foil.



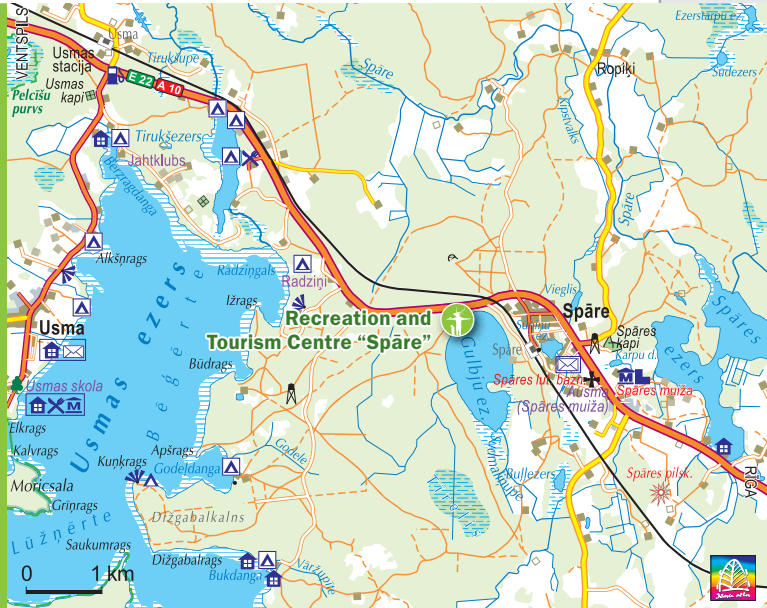
Recreation and
Tourism Centre
Spāre

Location

Rīga – 140 km
Talsi – 25 km

Lake Gulbju

area – 115.5 ha
average depth – 1.5 m
max. depth – 2.1 m
reaching 4 m in separate places



For Active Recreation

The word recreation means refreshment of one's body and mind by some amusement and relaxation. Therefore the direct obligation of the recreation and tourism centre is to provide anyone attending with relaxation opportunities. Since tastes differ, the centre at Lake Gulbju caters to various needs. A lovely beach, eight boats and a pedal boat for rent, a picnic area, fishing and hunting opportunities, hiking and cycling trails, which are specially prepared around the lake – to name but a few. The manager Modris Jaunvalks will gladly tell you about other options.

According to the legends, in ancient times, when lake distribution was underway, Ģibuļi Parish was lucky enough to have received 23 lakes. The biggest is Lake Spāre, while one of the most favourite leisure sites is Lake Gulbju whose shores are home to Spāre Recreation and Tourism Centre.

This is a perfect place to break away from the bustling city life and enjoy some moments of quite repose amid nature and wildlife. Spāre has quite a few advantages: this tranquil and beautiful place close to the motorway and the railway gives you an opportunity to enjoy leisure in one of the cottages together with your loved one or with a large family. The big newly built modern three-storey house, which is notable for its high level of comfort and includes a banquet hall, a fireplace room, a sauna, a kitchen and bedrooms, is ideal for conferences, seminars, weddings and other big events.



Lake Gulbju



Gulbītis (“a little swan”), as affectionately called by the locals, is not a very big lake. Not so long ago fishermen argued that there was no fish in it. Recently, however, even the most avid sceptics had to change their minds, as catches of two and three kilos heavy fish are not uncommon anymore. At the end of season 2007, an 11 kg pike was landed there. The lake also holds some roach, tench, perch and other fish. The lake shore is a habitat to reed, sedge, reed mace, calla, chara, water soldier, rush and horsetail and it is also available for swimming and fishing.

Dear fishermen, please note that fishing from the boat in Lake Gulbju (as well as in other lakes managed by LVM, except the Tērvete Reservoir) is allowed from 1 May.

Vast forests in the direction of Ventspils are rich in game, therefore there are good opportunities for trophy hunting. Hunters know it and often choose the strategic position of Spāre at Lake Gulbju as their base and leisure area.





Latvia's State Forests Warning

DON'T LITTER!

YOU WILL TURN INTO PIG!



In the Tērvete Nature Park



**In autumn, Tērvete welcomes both
inquisitive school children and families with small kids.**

Location



Tērvete Nature Park

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

Tērvete Reservoir

area – 70 ha
average depth – 1.5 m
max. depth – 2.5 m



Tērvete (formerly called Kalnamuiža) is located in an area which is not particularly typical of Zemgale landscape – in the old, 20-30 m deep valley of the Tērvete River, Svēpaine River and Skujaine River and on its beautiful banks. A part of the park territory extends into Zaļenieki Parish, Jelgava District.

The 19 metres high Tērvete Hillfort, which is wrapped in legends and is a witness to the heroic Zemgalian past, is sited on the right bank of the river. Researchers have found out that the hillfort was inhabited as early as in the first century B.C. as evidenced by traces of fortifications and artefacts. The flowering period of Tērvete fell on the 13th century. Tērvete and its renowned leaders Viestarts and Nameisis are frequently mentioned in the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia and in the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle. Other witnesses to the ancient times have survived as well: the ruins of the Teutonic Order castle and Kalnamuiža church, which is the oldest church in Zemgale.

Tērvete Hillfort is not the only one in the neighbourhood. Other famous hillforts are Klosterkalns and Svētkalns, steeped in legends.

The Golden Chain of Tērvete Hillfort

Many a tale has been told about Tērvete Hillfort. One of the tales goes that once in ancient times there was a girl who pastured pigs on the hillfort. She noticed that a spotted hog was digging for something. The girl came closer and froze in amazement. The hog was holding the end of a golden chain in its mouth! The girl shooed the hog and started pulling the chain from the ground. She pulled and pulled, while the chain was getting longer and longer. At this moment a sneeze came upon her. Atochoo! And the chain slipped from her hands back into the ground never to be seen again.



Nature Park



The Tērvete Nature Park is a natural landmark which is unique to all the Baltic States. This area has been in the list of the sites under state protection since 1957, meaning that it has provided an ideal recreation venue for families with children for more than 50 years. The first wooden sculptures carved by the sculptor Krišjānis Kugra were set up in the early 1970s. Later they were joined by many more. The original nature trails created by the Tērvete forester Miķelis Kļaviņš have now converged with the present-day territory of the nature park. People truly appreciate this special, beautiful and attractive park, or else it wouldn't have 70 thousand visitors, big and small, every year. Sunny weekends in the golden autumn can attract up to four thousand visitors to the park. It is no wonder that the Tērvete Nature Park has been recognized as one of the most interesting and appealing sites in Latvia. In 2005, it was nominated as the most family-friendly location.

Exciting Encounters in the Fairytale World of Tērvete

Dwarf Lady will meet and greet visitors of the attraction park, take them to the Dwarf Wood, show the cottages of the little toilers and tell stories about their lifestyle and whim-whams.

Pine Forest Witch is the mistress of the Fairytale Forest, the Witch Pine Forest. She is a little good witch, who does not hurt anyone. On the contrary, she treats visitors to herb tea and tasty sweets shaped as hare droppings, plays with children and makes riddles.

In Mother Forest's realm, school children learn many things about the wood. Interesting, attractive and informative tours guided by Mother Forest will help you gain a deeper insight into the wood and nature and become more environmentally friendly.

Are you tired? No surprise there, as one day is not enough to walk all over and appreciate the area of the Tērvete Nature Park of 1350 ha, of which one third is occupied by the Fairytale World. No worries! The Fairytale Train, most loved by children, will take you to the Dwarf Forest, the Fairytale Forest and the children's playground whose sight gives the little visitors all power to play. In 2007, the Fairytale Train was recognized as the most successful tourism product.

Sprīdīši of Anna Brigadere

Tērvete may take pride in the fact that the renowned writer Anna Brigadere (1861–1933) spent the last eleven summers of her life in Sprīdīši, an old house with an interesting history. The house was built in 1840 and was once a watermill, a school and a home to foresters. In 1922, the house was given to Anna Brigadere as an award for 25 years of literary activities. Now Sprīdīši houses the writer's memorial museum.

Residing in this place, Anna Brigadere wrote a number of significant works, including her famous plays and trilogy of recollections *God. Nature. Work*, deriving inspiration from the picturesque scenery of Tērvete. It was here that Annele, the main protagonist of the trilogy was running around barefoot. Today, Annele, Sprīdītis and other fairytale characters created by Anna Brigadere continue living in the Tērvete Nature Park.



People of Tērvete for Tērvete

Baņi, the native house of the poet Valdis Grēviņš (1895–1968), is located in the northern part of the park. The popularly loved lyrics from the theatrical production *Gōsta Berling* came from his feather:

*No dawn, no sunset was in sight,
The eyes saw what was seen, that's all...*

The building of the Tērvete Convalescent Home with its outer walls covered in stucco created by the sculptor Kārlis Zemdega is a national cultural monument. Built in 1932 as the Red Cross Convalescent Home, it was considered a very modern medical facility of the time. It seems, however, that the lovely scenery and the fresh pine forest air really helped the patients get better as well.

The historic centre still features the Lutheran Church of Tērvete and Kalnamuiža built in the times of Duke Jacob in 1614. Count Pahlen's chapel built in 1906 can be seen next to the church. The chapel has been entered into the list of art monuments.

Kristaps Helmanis (1848–1892), the renowned Latvian veterinarian and microbiologist who was a follower of Louis Pasteur, is buried in the graveyard by Kalnamuiža church.



The Tērvete Reservoir



The Tērvete Reservoir is situated in the eastern part of the Tērvete Nature Park. Sometimes the Tērvete Reservoir is also called Lake Gulbju.



Common residents:

in the water: carp, crucian carp, perch, tench, pike and other fish, of which the 12 kg heavy carp is the honorary resident; the reservoir is also home to crayfish;

in the air: dipper, Tengmalm's owl, black woodpecker, middle spotted woodpecker, nightjar, osprey etc.;

in Tērvete neighbourhood: mast pine-trees, alluvial meadows with about 500 species of flowering plants, of which 21 species are under special protection.

There are three islands favoured by waterfowl in the Tērvete Reservoir. One of the islands features a small house for birdwatchers. By the way, Tengmalm's owl, which is found in Tērvete, has been entered into the list of rare European birds.

Fishermen appreciate the Tērvete Reservoir for its rich fish stock and the facilities provided by the keepers: there are more than 20 footbridges built along the lakeshore. This makes it possible to individually fish in comfort, as well as to organize competitions. Years ago, when winters tended to be frostier, ice anglers used to drill holes in the ice covering the Tērvete Reservoir.

Fishermen are quite content with their catches here. It is no wonder, JSC "Latvijas valsts meži" supplements the fish stock on a regular basis. Every year, at least 50 thousand pike larvae are released into the lake along with a large number of two-year-old carps (around 400 kg annually) that by now have grown into decent five-kilo carps. The record catch in the Tērvete Reservoir is a 12 kg carp. It would be interesting to know the weight of those carps that tore the line and broke free. Such stories enjoy great popularity by campfires in the late hours. Fishermen are joking that the largest fish caught are the ones which got off the hook.

The Tērvete Reservoir, as well as Lake Lielauces are the sites where licensed cray-fishing is allowed. Here you can buy licences and rent traps and boats.

The Tērvete Reservoir features a swimming area, a sports ground, a boat rental station with ten boats and a pedal boat. There is an area for frying and boiling food, as well as tables and benches where you can enjoy your meal.

If you want to prolong the beautiful experience, do not miss the opportunity of staying overnight in one of the eight small cottages and waking up into the warm morning fog and bird chirping.

Those who prefer more active recreation can set on long hikes or bicycle trips, enjoying the lovely scenery of Tērvete neighbourhood and the sun, as Dobele and Tērvete have the most sunny days in Latvia.



Crayfish Recipes by Mārtiņš Sirmais



Mārtiņš Sirmais is one of the hottest cooks in Latvia

Crayfish soup with sweet corn

Sweet corn and crayfish is an excellent combination, as known from crabmeat salad. Take two onions, chop them and caramelize in half a packet of melted butter. Do this in the pot for cooking the soup, as you should never fry onions and savoury herbs separately, otherwise most of the flavour will be lost. When the onions have become transparent, add boiled crayfish cut in half. Do not remove the crust for better taste. Let the ingredients fry.

Not it's time to prepare the sweet corn. I usually take five corn cobs. They are easiest to open by pulling on both sides. Cut off the corn kernels from the cob using a sharp knife. The corn will make the soup somewhat thick, therefore it should be the last ingredient to add.

The crayfish is already well-fried. Add the broth – the liquid in which you boiled the crayfish. Simmer for a while, then add some dill. Thyme and coriander will give a nice flavour too. Add the corn and simmer for some 5–7 minutes. That's it! The soup is ready!

Boiled crayfish with wood sorrel

Crayfish should be boiled live. Unfortunately. Grab the crayfish around the middle of the body to avoid the pincers. Put the crayfish into boiling salty water. When the crayfish turns red, it's done. It will take no more than five minutes. Take the pot with the crayfish off the fire. Put a lot of big, overripe dill on top. Don't spare the dill! Cover with a towel to let the flavour absorb.

Put half a packet of butter into the pot. Keep it on a slow fire until it becomes clear. Crush black pepper in a mortar. Do not use ground pepper from the shop, as it's already dry. When the butter has melted, add three big pinches of pepper.

By this time, the crayfish has absorbed the dill flavour, so you can cook it further.

Using a sharp knife, straighten the crayfish tail and cut it in half. Most meat is in the tail, while the pincers have only a little meat. After cutting the tails, place the meat on the plate. Pour the clear butter over the dish and sprinkle with wood sorrel, which will taste like lemon. The dish is ready!





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

Conecracker

PRODUCER: LATVIA'S STATE FORESTS DIRECTOR: MAMMADABA

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



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In the Reed Maze of Lake Kanjera

Location



Rīga – 40 km
Lapmežciems – 3 km

Area – 1122 ha
length – 5.2 km
width – 3.6 km
average depth – from 0.6 to 1.5 m
max. depth – 3 m



Common residents:

in the water: pike, bream, rudd, tench, crucian carp, goldfish, perch, orfe and other fish, of which the honorary residents are: a 16 kg pike, a 1.6 kg perch, a 4.6 kg bream, a 4.4 kg tench and a 12.8 kg carp;

in the air: there are 190 bird species found on the lake and in the area, of which 49 species are under special protection;

on the shore: shallow water reed maze, great water dock, great willowherb, marsh fern, cowbane, milk parsley, common skullcap, bittersweet nightshade and many other unusual and protected plants.



Since 1995, Lake Kaņiera, a wetland of international importance, has been a part of the Ķemeri National Park territory and therefore also a protected area included in the ecological network Natura 2000. Since 1939, the lake has been a protected area of sulphur springs. In 1964, the Zoological Reserve of Lake Kaņiera was created. It also features a game reserve for hunting seasonal birds. Of all bird species registered here, 47 are included into the EU Birds Directive.



In the Realm of Pike and Tench

Egils Ozols, Director of LVM Recreation and Hunting Department and a fisherman born and raised on the shores of Lake Kaņiera, talks about fishing for tench in the lake.



As a rule, fishermen come to Lake Kaņiera for spinning, that is angling for pike and tench. However, as long as 15 years ago there were fishermen who used float fishing rods with big success. Today Lake Kaņiera is widely recognized as an excellent location for float fishing where you can get a good catch of tench, crucian carp and bream.

Personally, for me fishing a.k.a. sitting for tench started about ten years ago. I will happily share my experience which I've gained over these years. It all started quite incidentally. Ten years ago my father, Atis Ozols, worked at the boat rental station at Lake Kaņiera. Father used to soak some bread and then feed it to fish in the lake. I just sneered at him. Then, a couple of weeks later, father took me to the place where he was feeding fish all that time and showed me what was go-

ing on. The sneer was wiped off my face at once. The bottom of the lake literally seemed dug up. After father tossed some soaked bread, small bubbles appeared over the water, as if someone had pressed a pump. The water became muddy and some reed ends came to the surface from time to time.

Next evening I grabbed a fishing rod and some white bread and headed to that place. Frankly, I had zero experience. The only thing I knew for sure was that I had to use the same lure the fish was used to. Although my fishing gear was somewhat simple, I got down to business. I tossed a bit of soaked bread and attached a small ball of white bread onto the hook, actually covering the whole hook with the fresh white bread dough. I figured out that since the fish was digging the bottom, the lure had to reach the very ground. After a couple of attempts, I settled the fishing rod so that the lure touched the ground. I didn't have to wait long. Merely ten minutes passed before I felt my float being vigorously pulled sideways. I struck a little and it became clear that the fish on the hook was pretty large. A struggle began. This fish wasn't one of those which I used to simply take out of water in my childhood days. I decided to let it run around for a while and then pull it to the side of the boat. So said, so done, and five minutes later the fish was in the boat. It was a beautiful tench. I didn't weigh it, but judging by my experience it was just over one kilo. I was truly amazed! That evening I landed one more fish, but some three tench managed to escape.

Although my fishing gear wasn't suitable for this powerful fish and it was my first experience with fishing for tench with a white bread lure, the outcome was really good. On some evenings later I managed to catch as many as eight tench.

Afterwards I improved my fishing tackle: I bought a longer rod and bigger hooks and started to use a wire leader for attaching the hook to the line, as well as a landing net. These improvements prevented large and gastronomically valuable fish from escaping. A longer rod was needed to cope with tench, particularly at the first moment after striking. This fish species has a tendency to quickly rush to a nearby reed bush; besides, tench is quite strong and is not easy to hold.

I also improved baiting. Sure, I didn't have a big amount of stale bread, so I bought special sinking bait produced here in Latvia. I tried night worms as a lure, but with mixed success, to tell the truth. Although they can generally provide a good catch, there were days when tench were digging around, yet they didn't even try the offered worms.

Recently I have used sweet corn as a lure and, frankly, the experience has been a success. There is

just one condition: corn should be added to the bait. Fish get used to corn and willingly bite at it. I bait the hook with 4–5 kernels of corn so that the hook up to the fishing line is completely covered.

The fishing location should be protected from passage winds. I choose a place with several reed bushes around and some backwater not far from the reed. The depth should be between seventy centimetres and one metre. Deeper water is suitable too, however it is not normally found in Lake Kaņiera. The boat can be placed about 10–15 metres from the fishing site, yet I have my own opinion as to whether tench is afraid of the boat.

It was an early June morning. I got up at about 4 a.m. and headed to my usual place to fish for tench. The morning was warm and windless. There was almost no catch in the early hours, but at around 6 a.m. I felt some movement. I landed the first fish – my standard catch of about one kilo. The hook got caught several times, two hooks were ripped off. I have no idea what was going on down there. When the hook got caught for the third time, I tried desperately to pull it out, but then I understood that I would fail again. So I decided to get into the water and free the hook. Holding onto the line, I dived in to see what the problem was. It appeared that the fish, having been feeding in one and the same place, had cleaned the reed roots from silt. No wonder that the roots, now completely nice and clean, of bright light yellow colour, with squiggles on their sides, had turned into real traps for hooks. I freed the hook, pulled out some roots and climbed back into the boat, putting on my clothes rather loudly. Almost immediately I tossed the bait again and, to my surprise, it took the float a couple of minutes to rapidly start moving sideways.

I struck and felt a decent fish on the hook. I pulled my catch out into the boat – it was a tench weighing a little over two kilos. That was the biggest tench I had ever caught. Thus, after diving into the water, putting on my clothes noisily and banging on the boat, I managed to catch a huge tench. That morning I landed a total of nine tench. By the way, the really good fishing for tench started only at about 8–9 a.m.

The best fishing in the evening is at the sunset time when tench are actively rooting about and feeding. When fishing in the evening hours, I have also landed some bream, however they can be caught only at dusk.

A side note. Very few of the tench I've caught have ended in the frying pan, as I've set most of it free.



Recreation in Ezernieki

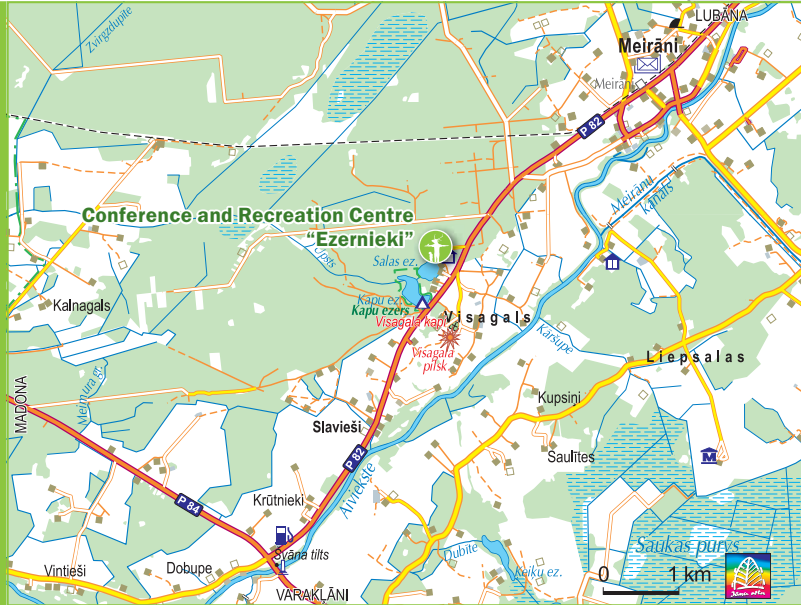


Ezernieki is located on the shore of Lake Salas. Its closest neighbour is Lake Kapu featuring a round picturesque island in the middle. The whole surrounding area, including both lakes, is sometimes called Visagals (“end-all”).

Location



Rīga – 200 km
Madona – 30 km
Lubāna – 20 km



Recreation for Everyone

Ezernieki Conference and Recreation Centre offers leisure opportunities for a diverse public. In this quiet place amid forests and far away from the bustling city life, you can swim and sunbathe in the summer, as well as enjoy boating, pedal boating and cycling, explore nature, watch birds and animals, go fishing or hunting, swelter in the sauna, relax at the fireplace and stay overnight in one of the comfortable rooms of the three-storey building or in the nearby family house.

The guest house with its romantic view of the lake is a perfect venue for seminars, weddings or birthday parties. If you haven't yet decided where to have a New Year's party with your friends, this place is just what you need. Spaciousness intermingled with romantic corners make this site suitable for arranging a ball.

Don't forget about this place in the summertime as well: the spacious facilitated area is appropriate for organising big sports games. Access roads with parking lots where many coaches may easily turn and park, a lighted camping area hidden amid the forest, modern shower and WC facilities, three volleyball grounds and two football fields, basketball hoops for streetball, a green meadow, transparent water, a sandy beach with five footbridges for the comfort of swimmers, three boats and a pedal boat – this is everything you need for active recreation.

The territory of the nature reserve provides quiet nature appreciators with a unique opportunity of encountering quillworts and lobelias, narrow-leaved and grass-leaved bur-reeds or simply hiking through the picturesque pine and mixed forest.



Homeland to Kalpaks and Zābers

Oskars Kalpaks (1882–1919), the first Commander in Chief of Latvian National Armed Forces, is buried at Visagals cemetery near Ezernieki. The author of the gravestone is the sculptor Kārlis Zāle who is best known for the Freedom Monument in Riga.

Kalpaks' native home Liepsalas in Ošupe Parish now houses the open-air memorial museum to the commander in chief. The museum was created by restoring the building in the former household and the most significant landmarks with inscriptions cut in boulders.

The museum *Vecais Cepelis* ("the old brick kiln") to the opera singer Jānis Zābers (1935–1973) is located in Meirāni, Indrāni Parish, halfway between Prauliena and Lubāna, off the motorway near the Aiviekste River.

Noteworthy are also the local bridges over the Aiviekste River in both Indrāni and Meirāni where the gates of the Meirānu canal are of special interest.

Birdwatching at Lake Lubāns

If you can spare a couple of days for recreation in Ezernieki, you should visit Lake Lubāns, the largest lake in Latvia, which will give all satisfaction to the most demanding anglers and particularly to birdwatchers. Ezernieki Conference and Recreation Centre offers birdwatching tours of the area guided by the experienced birdwatcher Kaspars Funts. Many different birds live in flow-water meadows, reeds, boggy grounds, grasslands, forests and fields of Lubāns. The complex wetlands of Lubāns are of particular interest during the bird migration period in spring and autumn when thousands of birds gather together at the lake and at the ponds nearby. In the summertime, a large number of rare bird species nest in the vicinity of the lake. By the way, the neighbourhood of Lubāns is the only place in Latvia where white-winged terns make their nests. Among other birds are black-tailed godwit, whooper swan, wood sandpiper, three-toed woodpecker, whimbrel, Montagu's harrier, willow grouse, white-tailed eagle and golden eagle, wood grouse and blackcock, to name but a few.

There are special sites and four towers installed for birdwatching, which enable even the smallest

appreciators of nature not only to hear, but also to see some cooer, warbler or chirper through binoculars or a telescope.

Since 2002, Lake Lubāns has been the site of the international birdwatcher's tournament *Torņu cīņas* ("tower fights"), during which 77 species of birds have been counted.

Strolling along Lubāns, do not miss the opportunity of plodding over the bog without getting your feet wet. You can do it by taking the 800 m long Teirumnīki (Tirumnieki) nature trail across the bog, as the road is made of wooden foot-bridge. You can find enjoyment in the mysterious smells and sounds of the bog, but the walk will be truly a revelation if you are guided by someone who knows a lot about the animals, birds and plants inhabiting the bog.

There are three types of bogs converging in Teirumnīki, therefore plants always blossom here: leatherleaf, andromeda or marsh tea. An expert will help you identify common sundews, bladderworts and other unusual plants.



Temptation for Anglers

Anglers may try their luck in Lake Salas as well, while more experienced fishermen are tempted to cast their fishing rod into deeper waters. A tour around Lake Lubāns is extremely exciting, as you can appreciate the sight of the peculiar Lubāns Lowland and take a boat into the lake, the fish ponds created on the former floodplain of the lake, the nearby canals and the Aiviekste River flowing from the lake. Once huge catfish could be caught in Lake Lubāns, but now they are found in the Aiviekste River. You can also visit Nagļu ponds, which used to be the largest fish farm in the Baltic States from where fish was brought to Moscow.

Recreation for Hunters

Ezernieki offers excellent hunting opportunities, as Madona district forests are rich in game. Here hunters can enjoy comfortable rest and gain strength in the rooms curiously named after the most popular game: Mežacūka ("wild boar"), Rubenis ("blackcock"), Pīle ("duck") and Zoss ("goose"). A number of foreign visitors have spent their time hunting in Madona district and resting in Ezernieki and promised to come back. During the waterfowl hunting season, Lake Lubāns turns into the biggest duck hunting site in Latvia. Game can be cooked and enjoyed on the spot. Ezernieki provides special premises and a canopy for this purpose.

Hungarian goulash

This recipe is provided by Tomass Kotovičs, Head, Corporate communication, connoisseur of authentic flavours.

This is a very ancient recipe of the Hungarian goulash (not to be confused with the goulash soup), which I had the pleasure to enjoy in a small cottage in the faraway Bakony Mountains. It was cooked by two very full-figured hostesses, from the wild boar hunted down nearby. For many years, I have tried to prepare the wild boar according to this recipe at least a few times a year, yet I haven't managed to obtain the flavour as it was in Hungary. Maybe that's because back there the dish was served with Slivovitz distilled in the neighbouring house...

The game is cooked in a cast-iron pot or a big cast-iron frying pan with a cover. Heat the cast-iron pot or pan and put in fat pork cut into chunks. Stir fry until the fat has partially melted out (you can substitute it for lard). It's important to note that many southern nations do not recommend vegetable oil for frying, as vegetable oils emit carcinogenic chemicals at high temperatures. Gradually add the game cut into chunks. After all liquid oozing from the meat has evaporated and the meat has started frying, add onions cut into big chunks. When onions have turned light brown, add spices, reduce the fire and simmer for about one hour, adding some water to avoid burning.

In an hour, when the meat has somewhat softened, add potatoes cut into medium-sized chunks and about 300 ml of water. Increase the fire to let it all boil away, then reduce the fire and simmer for about 40–60 minutes and stir. Add some hot water, if necessary.

Serve with pickled cucumbers or marinated beets, as well as a glass of good red wine or Slivovitz.

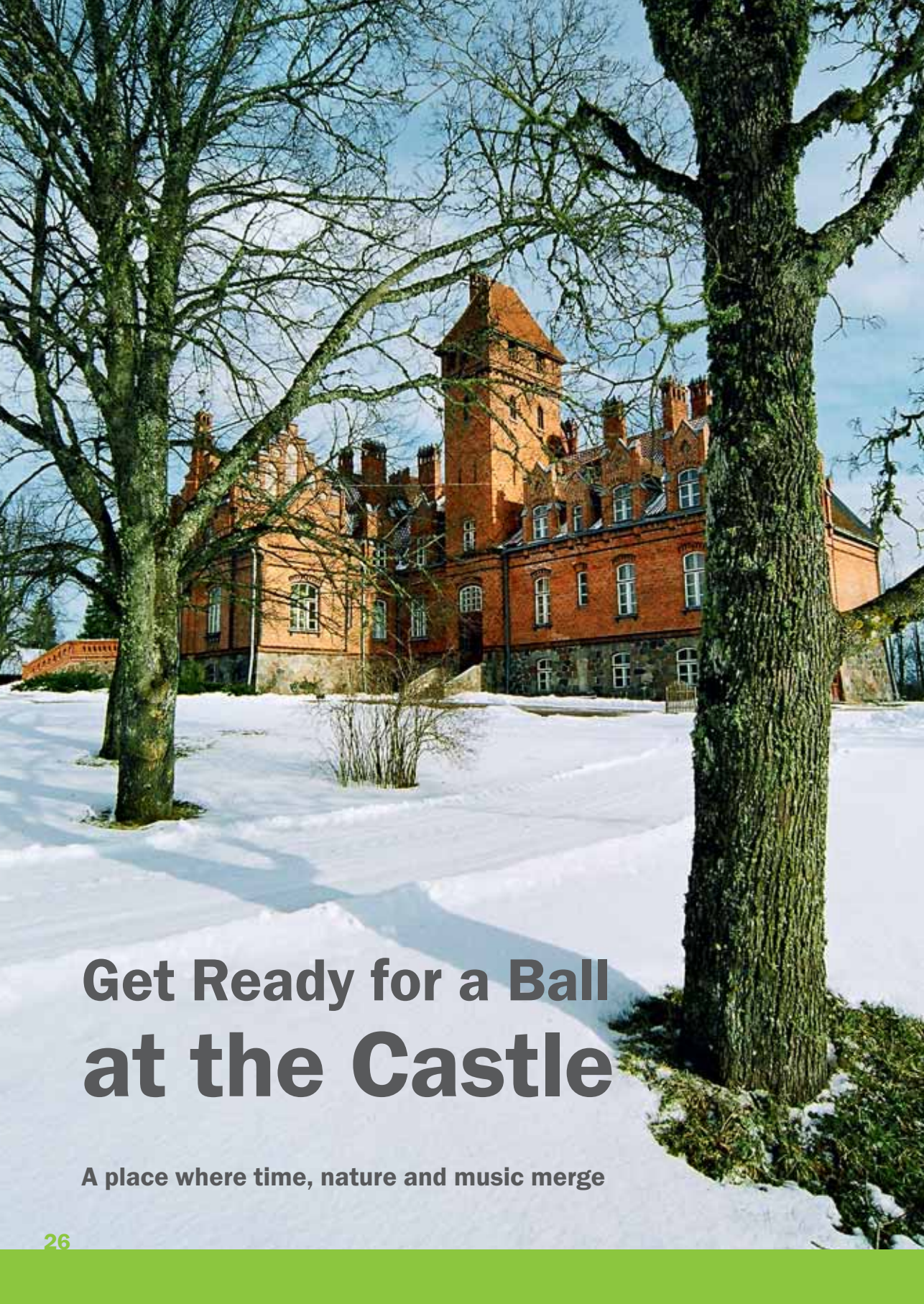
This dish not only tastes deliciously, but also feels the house with a wonderful aroma of Hungary and the forest.



Ingredients

800 g of wild boar meat (or young pork),
200–250 g of fat pork (may be substituted for 100 g of lard),
4–8 medium-sized onions,
4–5 potatoes,
4–6 teaspoons of ground sweet paprika,
1 teaspoon or 1 piece of chilli pepper (this ingredient can be varied according to taste),
salt, 1 teaspoon of sugar, 10 juniper berries, 2 teaspoons of caraway seeds, 3 laurel leaves, thyme, black pepper.





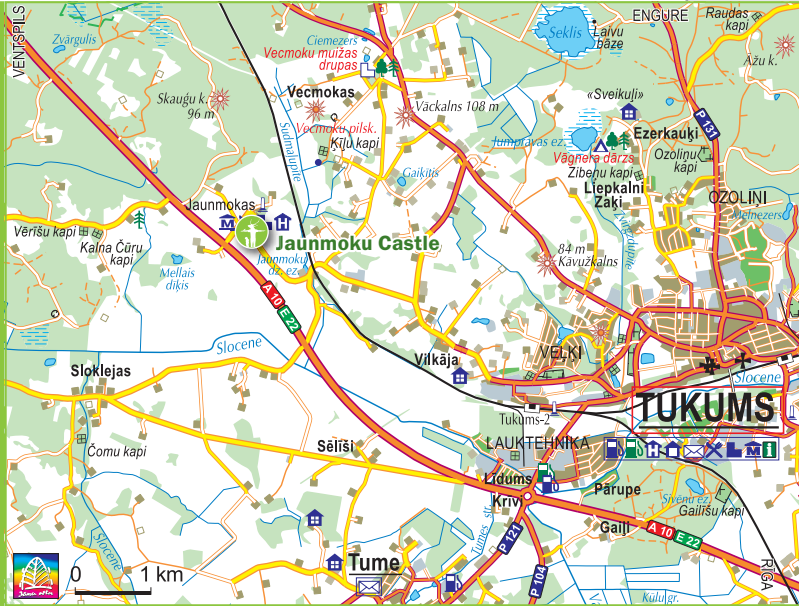
Get Ready for a Ball at the Castle

A place where time, nature and music merge

Location



Rīga – 75 km
Tukums – 7 km



As if Stepped out of an Ancient Fairytale

Majestic and at the same time very cosy, Jaunmoku Castle seems to have stepped out of an ancient fairytale. It is situated in a picturesque location amid hills, ponds, a secular linden grove and a yew wood. The site, in fact, is rather young, as a hundred years is nothing for a castle. This most spectacular and youngest castle in Tukums surroundings features a special ensemble typical of manor house architecture of the late 19th century in Latvia. The arrangement of buildings bears witness of a once bustling household. Today, Jaunmoku Castle is a monument of historical and cultural value available to the public. It is a tourist attraction offering opportunities for recreation, entertainment and education. Walks in the old park along the pond evoke romantic feelings and dreams of a ball at the castle.

Owners Come and Go, but the Castle Stays

It's no wonder that Riga City Mayor George Armitstead, a Riga inhabitant of English origin, chose this place for construction of a hunting manor and a summer residence for his family in 1901. The architect Wilhelm Bockslaff, who, inter alia, designed the gracious neo-gothic building of the Art Academy of Latvia, turned the red brick Jaunmoku building with its vertical and asymmetric outlines, steep duo-pitched roofs, numerous towers, bay windows and mezzanines into one of the most famous brick buildings in Latvia. The interior of the castle is designed in neo-gothic style with wood panelling, coffered ceiling in the hall and fire-places. Some elements of Art Nouveau, which came into vogue at that time, are present as well. The castle is undoubtedly the embodiment of romanticism and picturesqueness.

Some years passed, and the Armitstead family sold the beautiful castle, as after his father's death George had to take over Rindzeles estate. As the owners changed, the functions of the castle changed too. At first, the castle was lucky to have good owners, but later this beauty had to suffer from poverty and humiliation. In its day the castle housed a powdered milk production unit, a children's recreation and retreat centre, a Russian sergeant school, a German hospital, a bureau of the Machine and Tractor Station, workshops, a store and apartments. As a result, the majestic castle was a mere memory until 1974, when it was taken over by the Ministry of Forestry and Forest Industry. This marked the gradual renewal of the old glory. In the recent years, the castle has once again turned into a true beauty owing to the efforts and investments of JSC "Latvijas valsts meži".





Rest Assured, Jaunmoku Castle is a Peaceful Place

Chances are, you may have doubts whether it's worthwhile to visit a castle with such a suspicious name (Jaunmoku literally means "new agonies"). No worries, as the name has nothing to do with agony or torture. Everything is much simpler. The place was formerly called Neumocken, which is German for "new lowlands". In the course of time, when the name was Latvianized, the second half of the compound didn't get translated. So New Lowlands turned into New Agonies. Yet, it's not the name that makes the castle.

Legend of the White Lady

During World War I, some German officers stayed at the guesthouse of Jaunmoku Castle. The owners at the time were the family of Ungern-Sternberg. Their children's nanny, the young and beautiful Dorīte, fell in love with one of the stately officers. Unfortunately, the life of a military man is not all rest. The young officer departed leaving the girl pregnant. Unable to deal with the parting from her beloved and scared of disgrace, Dorīte jumped into the mill-pond. After this tragic incident, Dorīte's soul couldn't lay to rest and the castle got its own ghost. People staying at the castle sometimes see an apparition of a woman dressed in white on the attic floor, hear the doors open and close and a rustle of small steps. However, you shouldn't be afraid of the White Lady. Dorīte is a good-natured ghost and doesn't hurt anyone.

Life of the Sleeping Beauty Aroused

A while ago, the castle hosted the photo show From a Sleeping Beauty to a Princess, featuring the castle in the course of restoration. A very true name indeed. The beautiful Jaunmoku Castle has miraculously managed to solve the eternal problem of aging. Now it has turned into a real princess, an elegant lady who is ready to sweep anyone off their feet with her beauty.

Let us take a closer look at the castle.

The entrance-hall of the castle is decorated with a unique stove with 130 painted tiles featuring Riga and Jurmala sights in different centuries. That was one kind of a present! It was given to the mayor by the grateful representatives of the capital city on the 700-year anniversary of Riga City.

Appearing right before our eyes is the White Hall with a magnificent fireplace and painted curtains where the sun rays sparkle in the hair locks of the richly dressed ladies. The Dining Hall provokes memories of ancient game recipes and feasts. The White Parlour gives a sensation that ladies will come in any minute, sit down on the snow-white sofa and turn to their exquisite needlework, while gentlemen will thumb through newspapers at the table and discuss big politics.

George Armitstead's study is special. It's not only due to the fact that it features the furniture of the early 20th century, but also because many decisions important for Riga City were taken in the casual atmosphere of this room. Some of these decisions last until the present day, such as the Art Nouveau development in Riga and the electric train.

Where the Time Slips Away

The castle and the manor building are full of life even today. Concerts, functions, dinner parties, weddings and magnificent balls keep boredom at bay. Jaunmoku Castle is a place where time, nature and music merge.

The manor building houses the Pillared Hall, which is suitable for holding all kinds of events, seminars, functions, weddings, christening ceremonies, exhibitions and concerts. And, certainly, balls, as the Pillared Hall provides space for 400 waltz dancers.

The Recreation Hall in the manor building holds up to 70 guests, the White Hall of the castle provides space for 50 visitors and the Tower Hall for 40 visitors. The castle also includes parlours, a veranda and a sauna.

You can enjoy a romantic dinner by candlelight at the restaurant Liepaleja. Besides, the staff will gladly set a festive table in the parlours, in the pergola or in the tower of the castle.

Do not miss your chance to stay overnight in the castle or in the manor building, as a night in a haunted castle may be quite an adventure. A quiet rustle of steps, a squeak of floorboard on the tower stairs and a sudden puff of wind out of nowhere may tickle the nerves of the most avid sceptics. The castle features seven three-star hotel rooms, and there are twenty rooms more in the manor building. The small surviving building of a former joinery shop by the pond also offers cosy rooms for the guests. This is the so-called Pond House, which is ideal for those who prefer seclusion. Be sure to make the most of your opportunities.



The Forest Museum of Jaunmoku Castle

The Forest Museum is sited on the first floor of the castle. It has many remarkable exhibits on display, which will be of particular interest to children. The museum displays ancient tree planting tools, an acorn seeder, gum resin extraction gear, logging tools dating back to the early 20th century and a forester's office. Here you can find out more about trees, forest animals and waterfowl. A collection of hunting weapons on the way to the viewing tower of the castle will not leave you indifferent. After all, this is a hunting castle!

Overcoming the narrow steps, you will get into the tower of the castle, which gives an amazing view of the picturesque hills. Even more exciting options will be at your disposal after a maze is set up in the castle park.

The True Holiday Spirit

The Christmas tree is decorated, holiday garments are ready. There is just one small thing lacking for the party to start: a suitable venue. What about a ball at the castle? A real castle, where the fantasy bird will spread out its wings and fly high above the tree tops making a promise to bring a happy and prosperous new year.



Amid Unusual Trees



Location



Rīga – 150 km
Madona – 30 km
Gaiziņkalns – 25 km



If you are willing to appreciate the joy of blossom and give in to pleasure of seeing what goes unnoticed in everyday life, put your work aside for a while and come to the Kalsnava Arboretum.

Do not be puzzled by foreign words such as arboretum, dendrarium and taxon. The Latin word arbor and the Greek word dendron mean the same thing: the tree. Therefore both an arboretum and a dendrarium are related to trees.

An arboretum is a collection of trees, shrubs and ivies, with specialists engaged in long-term surveys of the development of trees, of their appropriateness to the specific climate, and in the production and reproduction of seeds.

A dendrarium is a collection of trees and shrubs cultivated in outdoor conditions.

Dendrology is a branch of botany that focuses on the study of woody plants.

A taxon is a unit of plant classification, a cultivar or variety.

Dry Figures for Bright Colours



The total area of the Kalsnava Arboretum is 143.96 ha, of which stands of trees and shrubs take up 99 ha.

The arboretum features about 2500 taxons (varieties): 500 coniferous trees and 2000 deciduous trees.

As far as diversity of taxons is concerned, the Kalsnava Arboretum ranks the second largest collection of woody plants in Latvia and the largest one in Eastern Latvia. The Kalsnava Arboretum can also be regarded as the third botanical garden in Latvia.

Since 1981, the Kalsnava Arboretum has taken part in the propagating material exchange programme among botanical gardens of the world.





Growing, Leafing and Blooming

The Kalsnava Arboretum is a magic garden where something is blooming almost all the year round. Don't be surprised when you see a flowering witch-hazel in October. The springtime here may undoubtedly be called a blooming frenzy. People walking through the Kalsnava Arboretum feel somewhat heady from the sweet fragrance and amazed at the bright colours so uncommon for Latvia and at the unusual shapes of the woody plants.

The Kalsnava Arboretum fills with a bitterish aroma during the blossoming season of lilacs and sweetens up nicely when rhododendrons, magnolias and peonies come into bloom. The dazzling array of colours and diversity of shapes overwhelm your senses. The habitually green pine needles are intermingled with bright yellow and celestial blue ones, rowan berries can be white and black, while fir-trees resemble a ball or a big flap-eared dog.

The ivy collection presented in Kalsnava is noteworthy as well. In addition, the arboretum features true rarities, such as the pipe vine, the white fringetree, the Kobushi magnolia and any more.

Breeding and Propagation

To preserve the scientifically documented plantations of woody plants, the Kalsnava Arboretum, featuring the richest dendrology plantations of woody plants in Eastern Latvia, has been recognized as a specially protected nature territory. Yet the Kalsnava Arboretum differs essentially from classic territories under special protection and old estate parks, as it is being actively developed. Woody plants from other countries are



established here outside their natural habitats on a regular basis, breeding and sampling procedures are under way. The age of the arboretum, if compared to the life span of secular trees, is not at all advanced. Installation of the Kalsnava Arboretum began in 1975 to carry out scientific research in dendrology and forestry and to create plantations of woody plants from other countries suitable for the local climate zone for propagating material. A lot has been accomplished over this period, which is so short for the life span of a tree. The collection of the woody plants has scientific, economic and educational value. Let's not forget that a walk through the arboretum provides excellent relaxation in this beautiful and well-tended place. You can have a lovely time by the romantic pond with the blooming white, scarlet and yellow water lilies or in the grove with its tables and benches where you can have a snack.



Luckily, the Kalsnava Arboretum offers professionally guided tours, otherwise many interesting things may go unnoticed, such as the fact that the osier has new flat shoots and the Amur cork tree has soft bark.

It's advisable to apply for tours of the arboretum in advance. They are guided by the dendrologist Benita Rudzīte and the head of the information centre Sarmīte Rukmane. The head of the arboretum and forester Jānis Zīliņš will gladly share his knowledge as well.

The White Fringetree

The white fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus L.*) is native to North America and East Asia. The Kalsnava Arboretum has featured white fringetrees in its collection for more than twenty years. They were propagated from the seeds received from Oregon, U.S.

Of late, the white fringetrees have bloomed in the second half of June every year. The white fringetrees are shrubs about two metres in height, with bright green, entire leaves.

The flowers are arranged in inflorescences up to 20 cm long. They are lightly scented with white, very narrow petals, which are connate at the extreme base. This shrub derives its name – white fringetree – from the unusual shape of its flowers. The blue-black fruits that mature in September and October give a special decorative value to the plant in autumn.

Although the winter resistance of the white fringetree is sufficient for the local conditions, this plant is still a rarity. There are only about ten white fringetrees in Latvia, and they are also rare in the range of plant nurseries in Western Europe. Why so? Mainly, because of problematic propagation, as seeds have no time to mature properly in the local degrees of latitude, sprigging is practically impossible and there are no seedling stocks for grafting. Therefore be sure not to miss the moment when the foreign beauty, the white fringetree, comes into bloom at the Kalsnava Arboretum.



Magnolia the Queen



The fossilised specimens of the first magnolia plants have been found dating back to the Jurassic Period of the Mesozoic Era. This means that the ancestors of magnolias existed 150 million years ago. The magnolia genus is named after the French botanist Pierre Magnol who discovered it in the 17th century. Since that time, magnolias have been cultivated in European gardens, referred to as queens and compared to orchids.

In general, magnolias are evergreen plants, mostly trees and rarely shrubs, of tropical origin. A small percentage of magnolias are deciduous trees that can survive colder climates. Many species are grown as ornamental plants. The Southern magnolia (*M. grandiflora*) enjoys vast popularity in subtropical and tropical landscaped areas. Its large, white, scented flowers bloom gradually in the crown of the majestic tree. All magnolias have entire leaves from 7–8 centimetres to one metre long. The leaves are arranged spirally. The stipules enclosing the shoot and protecting the young bud drop off early leaving a scar. Magnolia's flowers are bisexual, large and solitary. The sepals and the petals are often so similar that it's difficult to tell them apart. The pe-

tals may be white, rosy or yellow. The flowers have an elongated floral axis with a large number of stamens and pistils. They are pollinated by insects, mostly beetles of different species, which crawl along the flower into the bud and then transfer the collected pollen to another flower. The flowers open up gradually and have degrees of development. Magnolias grow slowly and take a long time to mature. The trees do not begin blooming until their seventh to twelfth year, with some of them producing their first flowers in 15–20 years of waiting when the tree has matured. Magnolias become more beautiful with age, as more flowers appear each time. No wonder that many tree connoisseurs call magnolias the queens of trees.

Magnolia's fruit resembles a cone. When the black and dark brown seeds have matured and

the cone splits open, the seeds dangle on slender silky threads. Magnolia's seeds are surrounded by a rosy, red or orange aril. The bright colour attracts birds that eat the seeds, thus providing dissemination.

The Kobushi magnolia (*Magnolia kobus*) is a species of magnolia native to Japan. It produces gorgeous white flowers a little purple around the edges of the petal. This variety is best adapted to cooler climates. Moreover, the Kalsnava Arboretum features the star magnolia (*Magnolia Stellata*) and magnolia Susan which burst into a magnificent bloom.

What to do in Kalsnava?

- ✧ Visit the information centre of the arboretum.
- ✧ Admire the sight of the exotic trees and shrubs on a guided tour.
- ✧ Enjoy a snack in the recreation area.
- ✧ Buy some beautiful addition for your garden in the Kalsnava tree nursery.

Plants for your Garden

The layout of the Kalsnava Arboretum is very well designed. After walking through the garden in the company of a guide and admiring the trees and shrubs in their actual shapes and sizes, it is time to visit the nursery where you can buy some small plant for your own garden. Which of these would you prefer: the staff vine, the climbing hydrangea or the pipe vine? Be careful not to get overexcited, as the splendour of the arboretum can easily trick you into buying the whole range of plants. The selection is unusually rich and the consultations are very detailed. Don't be surprised if your hand reaches out involuntarily to grab yet another plant.

The Kalsnava Arboretum offers plants for sale the whole year round, as 85% of the available five hundred varieties are containerized or tubed. Transplantation of root balled saplings will do them no harm in the summertime too, as the small roots do not get dry in the enriched peat substrate, the plant is not damaged during transportation and it easily takes root in the new place. A containerized plant will never die in the forest, but will grow into a mighty tree.

Aspens in Test-Tubes

Not only the arboretum, but also the tree nursery is full of wonders. It houses a hybrid aspen cultivation laboratory where young aspens are grown in sterile test-tubes in a jelly-like culture medium, not in the standard soil medium. The fragile meristem plants grow into big trees twice as quickly as usual aspens: the trees get mature in 20 to 25 years at latest, whereas a common aspen reaches the rotation age only in 40 years.

Large birch-trees are cultivated in a plastic film greenhouse. It looks somewhat strange, yet this method helps protect the birch-trees carefully selected for seed production from the sinful love of the common birch-trees growing along ditches.

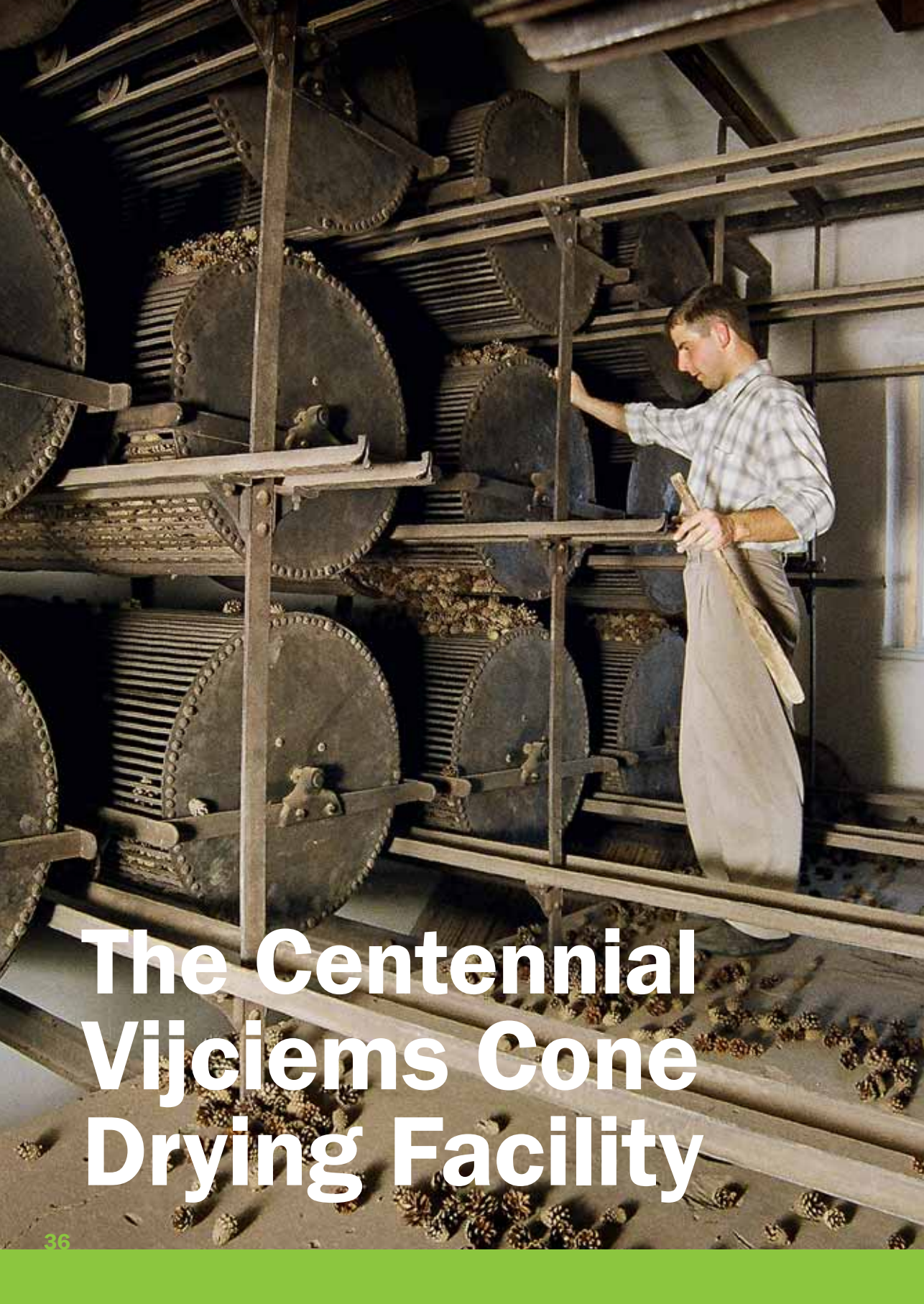
In addition to plants, seeds are also available for sale in the Kalsnava Arboretum. The seed warehouse in Jaunkalsnava offers forest tree seeds of particular origin, as the seeds are extracted in special seed plantations. Horticulturists interested in ornamental trees and shrubs can buy seeds of more than 30 different species extracted from specially bred plants.

To make sure of the quality of the offered seeds, watch for yourself how the seeds are extracted at the modern cone drying facility.



The Most Modern Cone Drying Facility in the Baltic States

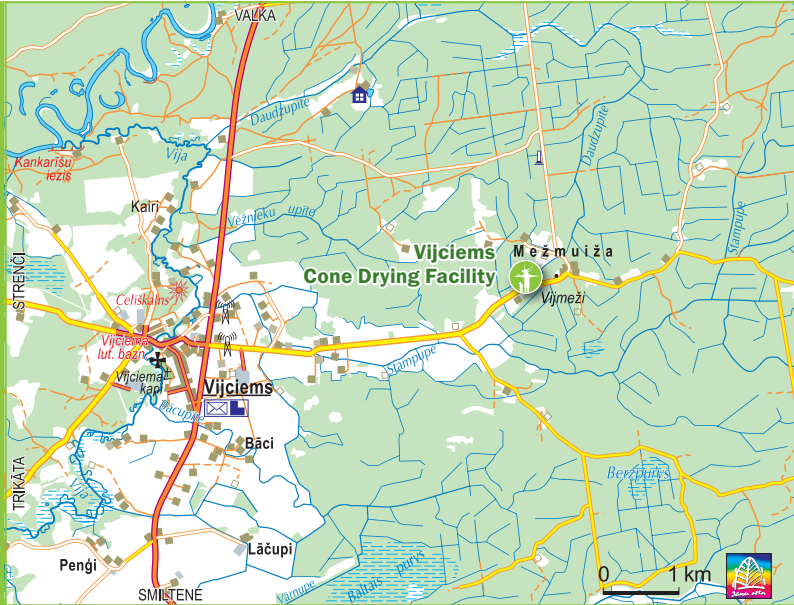
The building of LVM Seeds and Plants Department is also a home to the most modern cone drying facility in the Baltic States where production of seeds is controlled by intricate machinery. After cones have dried, they are shaken to extract the seeds. The seeds are then dewinged, winnowed, washed, dried and calibrated until top quality seed propagation material is obtained. The seeds are kept in special containers in a freezing chamber until spring when foresters plant them to grow trees. The new trees will produce the new cones which will once again be processed at cone drying facilities. A true circle of life, which goes on and on.



The Centennial Vijciems Cone Drying Facility

Location

Rīga – 150 km
Smiltene – 21 km
Valka – 23 km



Vijciems, a beautiful and interesting parish, is located halfway between Valka and Smiltene.

The fields, meadows and forests of this area are criss-crossed by the Vija River, which flows into the Gauja River by Kankarišu Cleve. Vijciems has a Lutheran church dating from 1852 with a peculiar exterior trim: the lining is made of fish-scale-like wooden boards. The church exhibits valuable artistic objects of national importance: the altar and the altarpiece *The Last Supper* carved in wood. On your way to Valka, stop by the ethnographic farmstead Ielīcas, which provides a glimpse of how a typical farm household in Vidzeme looked like centuries ago. Let your imagination run riot. This is the site where famous Latvian films *Pūt, vējiņi!* (*Blow Ye Wind!*) and *Vilkaču mantinieci* (*The Heiress of Vilkači*) were shot.





This time, however, our destination is Mežmuiža, which is located five kilometres from the centre of Vijciems. Mežmuiža is famous for its historical Vijciems Cone Drying Facility, hidden amid shade trees and giving life to new forest trees for the whole century. The economic yield of the Vijciems Cone Drying Facility cannot be compared to the output of the modern and efficient drying facility in Kalsnava. In a good year, the Kalsnava Drying Facility yields 700 kilograms of high quality pine seeds and 600 kilograms of spruce seeds, while the annual output of Vijciems is only about 20 kilograms of pine seeds at best. Yet the small drying facility is preserved and cherished as a part of our living history. No wonder that in 2002 the Vijciems Cone Drying Facility was included in the list of cultural heritage sites of European importance and in 2008 it was awarded the status of the unusual cultural heritage in Europe.

The Forest School, unique to the Baltic States, was once built and functioned in Mežmuiža. After numerous fires, windfalls and pests raging in Vidzeme forests in the 19th century, the forests required immediate restoration, as there was a high demand for Riga pine-trees in the world. Although peasants gathered cones, dried them in drying barns, ground them for seeds, mixed the seeds with ashes and planted them in soil, the outcome was not encouraging. Therefore, in 1895, it was decided to build a cone drying facility for industrial extraction of seeds.

The drying facility was a witness to different times, but it always held up. During the revolution of 1905, the drying facility provided a hiding place for Vijciems foresters. Revolutionaries burnt down the Hunting Castle in Mežmuiža and the dwelling house of the estate, yet the thick walls of the drying facility survived both

fire and bullets. In 1969, during the Soviet times, it was decided to close down the facility. The historical machinery, however, was preserved, and 1992 marked a new beginning for the Vijciems Cone Drying Facility.

The seed extraction process at the Vijciems Cone Drying Facility is totally different from that in Kalsnava. It is free of any electronic gadgets, and everything is done by human hands. The father and the son, Ilgarts and Ivars Palejs, both educated as foresters, determine it all. Lately, Ivars has taken the lead, letting his father take a breath. The seeds are extracted here using exactly the same methods as 100 years ago. The original equipment from 1895, when the drying facility started its operations, has also survived. We cannot but admire to see how the human mind and hands created something so perfect and lasting, without using any sophisticated tools more than a century ago.



What to do at the Vijciems Cone Drying Facility?

- * Take part in the cone drying process using methods that date 100 years back.
- * Take a walk around the neighbourhood and try to identify the trees by their leaves and needles.
- * Try your hand at the cone throwing contest.

The renowned Latvian poet Imants Ziedonis and his son Rimants once visited the Vijciems Cone Drying Facility on a cold winter evening and later gave a vivid description of the drying facility in his book *Latvia: a Land of Forests*. "Standing there is a beautiful fairytale house, warm and neat. Two men in their shirtsleeves gather cones. And there are oh so many cones, so many cones, crackling and rattling in all sharps and flats. The cones are like living and breathing beings. No thought other than that comes to mind. Nothing has changed here for the last hundred years: it's the same old process of warming and shaking the cones to cheat out the seeds. When the cones are brought here, the bags are attached to a chain and pulled up to the second floor though the hatch by rotating the wheel. Then they are attached to linen ropes and lowered again

to the first floor in cylinders resembling squirrel wheels. Altogether there are twenty-four cylinders where the cones are dried, shaken and rolled for a week or so. The cones crackle, snap and swear, yet the cylinders are rotated several times a day to shake out the remaining seeds."

When the seeds are extracted from the cones, they have to be dewinged. The drying facility provides a special historical gadget for this purpose. The Vijciems Cone Drying Facility, a truly unusual cultural heritage, attracts more and more visitors. More than a thousand people gained insight into the ancient cone drying methods in Vijciems in 2008. The centennial equipment astounds both men who have an understanding for technical things and young boys who are not yet strong enough to rotate the heavy cylinders.



Mystery of Pokaini

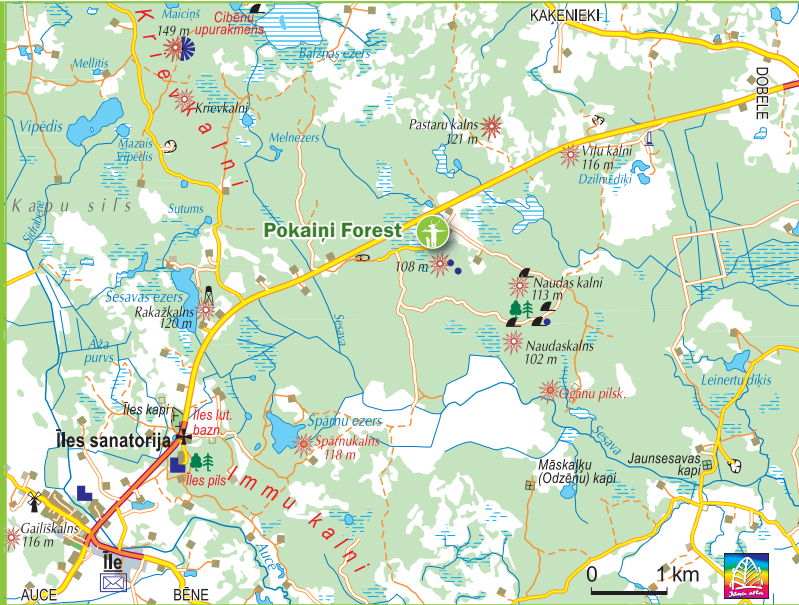


Location



Rīga – 87 km
Jelgava – 43 km
Dobele – 14 km

About 2000 stone stacks
on the area of 400 ha.



Touch the Mystery

Latvia cannot boast of many places which would be surrounded by such a diversity of amazing tales as Pokaini. A whisper goes around that in this forest people gain tenfold strength, lose their sense of place and sense of time, while some get miraculously healed from different ailments. Serious scientists research why there are so many stones in Pokaini, seek an explanation for their arrangement and suggest the most unbelievable hypotheses. Some speculations are quite flattering for Latvia. To take an example, both ancient Indian and ancient Greek records speak of a wonderful land to the North from Greece which was visited by people from all around the world seeking health and wisdom.

Researchers have found out that Latvia is located in the cross-point of the central meridian of the Earth and the zone of a critical fracture, which are centres of energy. The European transcontinental North – South-East line Stockholm – Pokaini – Joniškis – Minsk – Yerevan runs through Pokaini. Perhaps this is the reason why Latvia is a land full of wonders that abounds in sacred places and sacred springs? Perhaps this is the reason why local fruit, vegetables and berries have a lovely fragrance? Perhaps this is the reason why there are so many healers in Latvia?





Beautiful and Healing Stones

Sanctuary researchers have found out that stone stacks and separate stones alike are located in strict accordance with the terrestrial radiation. All together they form a closed bioenergetic system, which may not be disturbed by moving or relocating the stones.

Among interesting objects are stone stacks, stone paving of valleys and terraces, as well as separate stones with distinctive names, such as Bride's Stone, Mother's Stone, Father's Stone, Healer Stone, Laima's Table, Wizards' Boat etc. These names were given to the stones by people who freed them from brushwood, dug them out and tried to unravel the information stored in the sacred stones.

The dull lustre of multi-coloured water in the small ponds, winding trails, bridges over the dried creeks and unusual echoes – all this contributes to the mysterious ambience of Pokaiņi forest.

For those with Sceptical and Rational Attitude

There are clearly other theories of the Pokaiņi geomorphological relief and the stone stacks. Even more strongly marked topographic forms similar to Pokaiņi can be found in many places throughout Latvia, as hillocks and hilly terrains are not uncommon for this country. The territory of Pokaiņi, however, features a particularly large concentration of stones, which are smoothed rock fragments brought here by glaciers. The original opinion before cleaning the stones was that the boulder stacks had been created by people. It was assumed that the stones had been rolled to this place from the surrounding countryside to clear the fields of the ancient Zemgallians or brought here for the construction of a castle, which never happened for unknown reasons. Later, it was discovered that the stones were placed in the cross-points of geopathogenic zones on the area of about thirty square kilometres.



Legends of Pokaiņi

Miraculous Healing

Tour guides can tell you a lot of stories about miraculous healing in Pokaiņi. Anita Biseniece tells a story of a girl who came to Pokaiņi with a tourist group at the end of May and came back several times to draw water from the spring known for its healing qualities. The girl used the water to wash the scar on her forehead. In mid-July the scar disappeared.

Aina Veidemane remembers a sceptical man suffering from back pain, who came to Pokaiņi with his wife. He agreed, reluctantly, to lie down on the Healer Stone after his wife put her scarf underneath. After a while, the man fell asleep. He woke up somewhat embarrassed for falling asleep in broad daylight. He moved around a little, bent down and even squatted down. Believe it or not, his back pain was gone.

One late afternoon, a daughter brought her mother to Pokaiņi. The mother, who was grieving over the loss of her husband, didn't want to live anymore. Completely self-absorbed, she was walking dismally along the trails of Pokaiņi until she dropped on her knees and nestled against the Father's Stone. The woman cried for a long while, giving all the pain to the stone. "The stone is as warm as my husband's hands," she said, "I am finally at peace with myself. Now I know that he is well and I have to live on."



What to do in Pokaiņi?

- * Put on comfortable shoes and take some snacks with you.
- * Find the most significant stones in the company of a guide.
- * Walk along the picturesque trails quietly and peacefully, listening into yourself and the nature.
- * Treat the stones with respect: do not move them and do not take them home with you.

Stone of Death

There are also frightful tales told of Pokaiņi. One of them is about the Stone of Death, which goes that a person who lies down on the Stone of Death dies in a few hours. If you touch the Stone of Death, your hand will tingle for several days.

Perhaps such legends serve as a warning for treating this place with due respect, not sitting down wherever you please, but listening closely and trying to understand what it is.

Along the Anemone Trail

There are many unexplored and mystical places on earth. One of them is Pokaiņi. If you are ready to experience wonders, willing to listen to the stories bordering on fantasy and prophecies, if you believe in healing powers of stones, if you are tempted by esoteric beliefs, set off into the forest in the company

of a guide. You are bound to enjoy several hours devoted to sorcery.

You may encounter some wild beast during your walk. Pokaiņi abounds in animals who can probably feel the special aura of the area. On the other hand though, there is no need to delve into the controversial theories about the renowned past of Pokaiņi, its place in history and healing. You can just come here and take a stroll in the beautiful, interesting and well-attended forest, featuring so many stones, breathe in its freshness and listen to the silence. Every season offers something special in Pokaiņi, however the best time to visit the area is the early spring, when birch leaves have scarcely made their appearance and hill slopes are covered with blooming blue anemones.





White Dunes

Take a deep breath!
Enjoy unhurried walks and sports activities breathing
in the healing air of the sea and the pine forest

The dunes were formed a long time ago, when the glaciers retreated and the sandy lowlands were not yet covered by vegetation. The wind shifted and levelled up the sand, creating dunes of different shapes: convex, upright and round. The dunes formed by the wind are found not only along the sea shore, but also in the interior lowlands, for example, by Trapene and Strenči.

A special flora is typical of a dune area. Usual pine-trees grow side by side with common junipers, daphne willows, lyme grass, sand pinks, sand sedges, wild thymes and tortula moss. The dunes are also a home to steppe crickets, common shelducks and European serins. Each dune ridge shows the course of the retreat of the sea.



There are several dunes in Latvia known under the name of the White Dune. Among them are the white dune at the confluence of the Lielupe (Jaunupe) River and the Buljupe River between Riga and Jurmala, the White Dune of Saulkrasti at the influx of the Inčupe River into the sea, the White Dune of Pļieņciems in Engure Parish and the White Dune of Pūrciems (Ģipka).

Protection of the dunes is of paramount importance. Strange though it might sound, the dunes should be protected from people. Specially built paths, wooden footbridges and stairs are needed to avoid numerous holidaymakers from trampling down the dunes and damaging the plant roots. JSC "Latvijas valsts meži" has so far provided protection for the White Dune of Pūrciems and the White Dune of Pļieņciems: it has set up nature trails and built wooden footbridges and stairs to reduce the stream of people in the sand of the dunes as much as possible.

*** When walking along the footbridges in the seaside dunes, you can see how the sea retreated throughout centuries, giving way to special dry-land and sand plants that are not to be seen elsewhere.**

*** The trail of the White Dune of Pūrciems (Ģipka) is only 900 metres long, yet it makes it possible to feel the breath of the ancient epoch dating back six thousands of years.**

*** When you step your feet into the sand of Vabu Square in the White Dune of Pļieņciems, remember that the biggest ship of Kurzeme was once built here.**

*** The White Dune of Pļieņciems is ideal for Nordic walking.**



Location



Rīga – 150 km

Roja – 15 km

Talsi – 50 km



The White Dune of Pūrciems (Ģipka)



The 20-metre high dune is sited in Roja Parish, Talsu Region, off Riga–Kōlka motorway, just outside Ģipka. It has been standing there quietly for at least six thousand years, which means that this dune is considerably older than the modern dunes created by the sea and it appeared in the time of the Littorina Sea, the predecessor of the Baltic Sea.

As the old sea level gradually receded, the wind-blown dry beach sand created pre-dune ridges parallel to the coastline. This marked the formation of the peculiar relief of parallel dunes with alternating topographic lows and highs.

The first settlement of the Neolithic Age people on the North-West shores of Latvia has been found next to the dune. This Pūrciems settlement was a home to the Stone Age fishermen 4200 years ago. Now it is an archaeological monument of national importance.

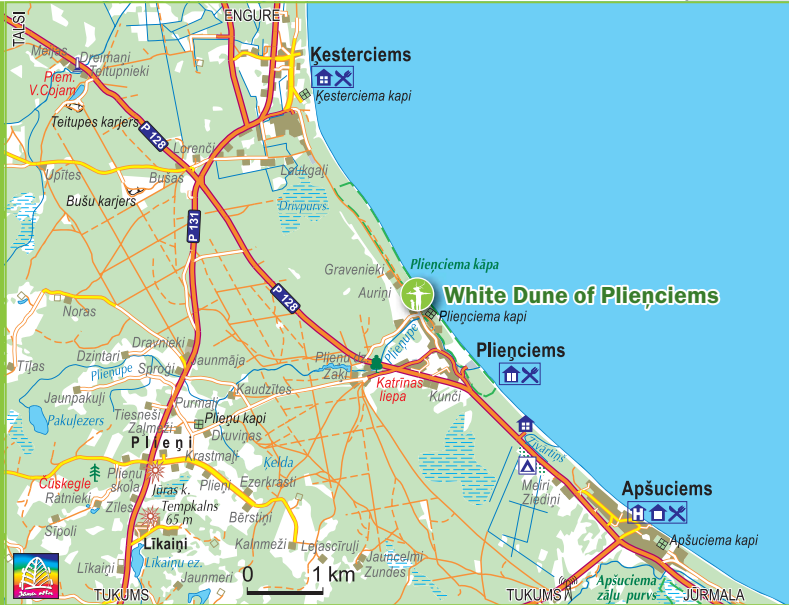
The nature trail The White Dune of Pūrciems is 900 metres long. It runs along the indented bank of the Pilsupīte River, crosses the river and twists and turns on the other side, making it possible to gain insight into how the ancient dune was created. Walking along the six-thousand-year-old dune, let your imagination fly. Listen to the sea, so ancient and eternal, lapping against the beach just half a kilometre further.

The construction of the nature trail of the White Dune of Pūrciems was sponsored by the Environmental Protection Fund, the EU LIFE programme Green Region 21, Roja Local Government and JSC “Latvijas valsts meži”.

Location



Rīga – 67 km
Tukums – 21 km
Engure – 12 km



The White Dune of Pļieņciems



The White Dune of Pļieņciems is located in the nature reserve of national importance, which is included in NATURA 2000, the ecological network of protected areas in the territory of the European Union. The nature reserve Dune of Pļieņciems covers a part of the coastal dune ridge 150–250 metres in width and 3.5 km in length. The total area of the reserve is 60 ha.

In Engure Parish, Tukums Region, there is a continuous dune ridge covered by 100- and 200-year-old pine forests and typical dry-land and sand plants, such as pasque flowers and sprouting houseleeks. The forest is a home to Eurasian wrynecks and woodlarks and the trees are crawling with longicorn beetles. The part of the dune which is not covered by vegetation is called the White Dune by the locals.

The dune reserve features Vabu Square, the last dune deflation basin in Latvia. This is a site where fishermen dried their nets for centuries and built ships in the 18th and 19th centuries.





Enigmatic Kaltene Stone Ridges

These unusual stacks of boulders referred to as stone ridges (or kalvas in Latvian) are sited 1.5 to 2 kilometres from Kaltene seaside in a dense spruce forest. The stone ridges are 5–6 metres high, 35–60 metres wide and about one kilometre long. Similar formations are not found elsewhere in Latvia, therefore finding a key to this mystery has always occupied people's minds.

What Natural Scientists Believe

Natural scientists split over the actual origin of the stone ridge formation. Most likely, the stone ridges are hummocks formed as a result of moraine compression and shearing during the final stage of the Ice Age. Scientists believe that these rampart-like piles of stones started forming in the harsh glacial period thousands of years ago, when the Baltic Ice Lake retreated. During springtime storms, the sea ice reaching thickness of 2 metres shifted the stones covering the shallow sea floor. This area once had about 30 stacks of stones, each bearing its own name, such as Kārduškalva, Nablānītkalva, Dāriķkalva, Krapstiņkalva and Velna kalva.

Geologists consider Kaltene Stone Ridges to be a rare natural phenomenon. Similar stacks of stones are found only on the shore of the Labrador Peninsula in North America.



Location

Rīga – 135 km
 Roja – 10 km
 Talsi – 45 km



* The stone ridges are stacks of boulders covering a territory of 85 ha. This is a specially protected nature monument of national importance. The total area of the stone ridges is 579 ha.

* In 2006, special nature trails were set up for appreciating this unique natural formation. The longest trail is 1.5 km.

What Sacred Site Researchers Believe

There are also other theories about the formation of the stone ridges. Sacred site researchers Ivars Vīks, Guntis Eniņš, Sigurds Rusmanis and others claim that the T-shaped stacks of stones are human handiwork. They suggest looking at the stone ridges as at one piece. Who knows, perhaps the Devil's boat, "pointed at the top with pointed ends" and called the Big Stone Ship by the locals, was an ancient burial site. Or perhaps this place was once a home to the church of our primordial ancestors. The sacred site researchers believe that the unsolved mystery is the arrangement of the stone ridges in the NE-SW direction.



The Devil's Stone Ridge

The Devil's Stone Ridge (Velna kalva or Vellakalva in Latvian) is the largest stone stack. The ridge is about 3–6 metres high, 900 metres long and 35–160 metres wide. The Devil's Stone Ridge was once a pyramid-like stone hillock 7 metres long, which was made of beautiful small slate-coloured stones of various shapes. Seniors remember that the Devil's Stone Ridge used to have precise geometrical forms, with its proportions easy on the eyes. Unfortunately, the pyramid, as well as a part of the stone ridges, was destroyed in the post-war years, when the stones were crushed down for chippings. After the destruction, the site turned into a thickly wooded area and the stones quickly became overgrown with moss.

Once upon a time, the Devil carried stones from Sweden to Talsi to build the tenth hill, yet he was so slow that he failed to manage over the night. When the local Kaltene rooster crowed in the morning, the Devil dropped the stones right and left.

Back to Mother Nature!



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