



FOREST TRAIL

Northern part

HIKING TOURS

Latvia / Estonia



WWW.BALTICTRAILS.EU

TOURS



WHAT CAN YOU FIND IN THE BROCHURE

The brochure includes 18 hiking tours for one and multiple days (up to 11 days) in Latvia and Estonia, which are part of the Baltic Forest Hiking long distance path (in Latvia – Mežtaka, in Estonia – Metsa matkarada) [E 11]. These are the most interesting, scenic forest areas of both countries, renowned for their natural and cultural objects. Several tours include national parks, nature parks, and biosphere reserves, as well as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Every tour includes a schematic tour map, provides information about the mileage to be covered within a day, level of difficulty, most outstanding sightseeing objects, as well as practical information about the road surface, getting to the starting point and returning from the finish back to the city.

The tours are developed for both individual travellers and small tourist groups. It is recommended to book transport (rent a car or use public transportation), accommodation and meals in advance, as well as arrange personal and luggage transfer if necessary.

The tours included in the brochure may be shortened or extended depending on the wishes of travellers. These hiking tours, or some of them, may also be included in the traditional tourism routes and city excursions to diversify the offer.

If you wish to do the tours individually, you will find a detailed route description (finding the particular # of section) of each tour at www.baltictrails.eu, with a map of sightseeing objects, catering places, shops, picnic areas, road surface, obstacles along the route and other useful information, as well as a GPX file with the main route of the hike.

CONTACT:

Baltic Country Holidays www.countryholidays.lv

Estonian Rural Tourism www.maaturism.ee



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Vana-Vastseliina – Värskä
⌚ 3 Days → 48 km

ESTONIA 19 p.

12. THROUGH THE ONION VILLAGES OF LAKE PEIPSI

Varnja – Alatskivi
⌚ 2 Days → 19 km

ESTONIA 21 p.

13. IMPRESSIVE DUNES OF LAKE PEIPSI

Lohusuu – Remniku
⌚ 3 Days → 32 km

ESTONIA 22 p.

14. CHALLENGES IN THE KURTNĀ AND ONTIKA LANDSCAPE RESERVES

Vasavere – Toila – Saka
⌚ 3 Days → 46 km

ESTONIA 23 p.

15. THROUGH LAHEMAA NATIONAL PARK

Eisma – Kasispea
⌚ 5 Days → 52 km

ESTONIA 25 p.

16. DIVERSITY OF PEIPSIMĀA

Varnja – Avinurme
⌚ 6 Days → 77 km

ESTONIA 27 p.

17. GRAND FOREST TRAIL HIKING TOUR IN LATVIA AND ESTONIA

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LATVIA, ESTONIA 33 p.

GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE COUNTRIES 37 p.

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NATURE – FORESTS IN LATVIA AND ESTONIA



● A part of the Forest Trail runs through Vidzeme, Alūksne and Haanja uplands, while some parts pass through lowlands. The lowest parts of the Forest Trail are at sea level, and the highest point (~256 m above sea level) is located at the foot of Suur Munamägi Hill. The second highest point is the Drusku castle mound (246 m above sea level). Suur Munamägi Hill (318 m above sea level) is the highest summit in the Baltic states.

● The Forest Trail passes by the following natural heritage sites: Ehalkivi, the largest giant boulder in the Baltic states (930 m³), Valaste waterfall, the highest waterfall in the Baltic states (26 m), Jägala waterfall, which is one of the most impressive waterfalls in the area. Magnificent sandstone outcrops with natural and man-made caves rise on the banks of the River Gauja and the River Piusa. The Piusa caves form the longest system



of man-made underground sandstone caves in the Baltic states. Million-year-old fossils can be seen on the shores of the Gulf of Finland.



● The Forest Trail passes through some of the most wooded areas of Latvia and Estonia, and hikers get to see most of the forest habitats and forest types present in the Baltic states. It passes by massive trees of different species and trees related to historical events and stories.

● The Forest Trail is a great place for bird and animal watching. Here you can observe Europe's largest animal, the moose. If you are silent enough, there's a chance you'll see roe deer, red deer, foxes, hares, martens, otters, squirrels and hedgehogs. There might be footprints of wolves and lynxes. Beavers, who cut trees and make their homes nearby the water, are quite common as well.

● The Forest Trail passes



through three national parks, of which Gauja National Park is the oldest national park in Latvia, with Lahemaa National Park being the oldest in Estonia and the Baltic states. Alutaguse National Park (established in 2018) is the newest of the 15 national parks in the Baltic states. In total, the Forest Trail passes through or by approximately 40 specially protected nature territories.



● During the summer, sea water temperatures can reach +18 °C or higher. Inland waters may also have higher water temperatures. Prolonged periods of rainfall and lower air temperatures are possible during the summer, spring and autumn, so be sure to check on the weather before you go.

● Residents of Latvia and Estonia love wandering out in the forest to forage for wild food, mostly mushrooms and wild berries such as bilberries, lingonberries and raspberries, as well as cloudberries and cranberries in marshy forests and bogs. Wild herbs can be used to brew medicinal teas.



WWW.BALTICTRAILS.EU



GETTING THERE & AROUND

AIRPORTS

LATVIA

Rīga www.riga-airport.com
 Liepāja www.liepaja-airport.lv

ESTONIA

Tallinn www.tallinn-airport.ee
 Kuressaare www.kuressaare-airport.ee
 Kärdla www.kardla-airport.ee
 Pärnu www.parnu-airport.ee
 Tartu www.tartu-airport.ee

CAR RENTAL

Avis, Budget, Sixt, Hertz and other international car rental companies.

LOCAL BUSES AND TRAINS

LATVIA

Enquiry service, including public transport: www.1188.lv
 Buses: www.autoosta.lv
 Trains: www.pv.lv

ESTONIA

Buses: www.tpilet.ee (regional transport tickets online); www.peatus.ee (route search, city transport, regional transport).
 Trains: www.elron.ee

COACHES

Lux Express: www.luxexpress.eu
 Ecolines: www.ecolines.eu

FERRIES

Stenalines

Passenger transport services from Germany, Travemünde to Liepāja (LV) and from Sweden, Nynashamn to Ventspils (LV). www.stenaline.lv

Tallink Silja Line

The leading provider of high-quality mini-cruise and passenger transport services in the northern Baltic Sea region. Routes: Helsinki – Tallinn, Helsinki – Stockholm, Rīga – Stockholm, Tallinn – Stockholm. www.tallinksilja.com

Viking Line

A market-leading brand in passenger traffic on the northern Baltic Sea. Route: Tallinn – Helsinki. www.vikingline.com

Eckerö Line

Estonian ferry line and a travel agency. Route: Tallinn – Helsinki www.eckeroline.ee/en

Local ferries in Estonia

Local ferries operate between the islands and mainland Estonia:

- Aegna, Prangli and other small islands www.veeteed.com
- Naissaar www.monica.ee
- Muhumaa, Hiiumaa and Saaremaa www.praamid.ee

USEFUL LINKS:

www.visitestonia.com official tourism web page in Estonia
www.latvia.travel official tourism web page in Latvia
www.countryholidays.lv accommodations, worth seeing, farms in Latvia
www.maaturism.ee accommodations in Estonia
www.liveriga.com Capital city of Latvia – Rīga
www.visittallinn.ee Capital city of Estonia – Tallinn

SYMBOLS USED:

- Itinerary
- Route length
- Duration
- Road surface
- Hiking
- Drive
- Bus
- Cycling
- Canoeing
- Difficulty level:**
 - easy
 - medium
 - hard
- Starting point of hiking
- End point of hiking
- Danger points
- Good to know!

① SURROUNDINGS OF RĪGA



VANGAŽI – RĀMKALNI

Latvia

Itinerary: RĪGA – VANGAŽI – RĀMKALNI – RĪGA

Hiking route length:

→ 15 km ⌚ 5 – 7 h

Duration: 1 day Difficulty level: ●

The Forest Trail leads through smaller paths, arching around Vangaži Lutheran Church and the Werewolf Pine. On its way to the Hunting Palace, it goes along the so-called Katrīna Road, disappears into the forest for a while and after the Hunting Castle continues along the Hunting trail. This is where you will see the first ravines with the strongly articulated relief of the ancient valley of the River Gauja. One of them can be found by Inčukalns Velnala (Devil's Cave), surrounded by small oxbows of the old Gauja. From there, the Forest Trail continues through

meadows and crosses the Murjāņi–Valmiera motorway, where the recreation park “Rāmkalni” is located. In this park, there is a café, shop and active leisure centre with a sledge track.

On this route you will mainly see pine forests of various ages, as well as a botanical plantation with 80 tree and 120 shrub species. By the end of the section, the landscape features sandstone outcrops – Devonian sedimentary rocks and nationally protected habitants.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Gravel roads, forest roads and paths.



Bring your own lunch. After the tour, you can also go to Sigulda by bus, stay in a hotel there and enjoy sightseeing in Sigulda. Or you can stay overnight near Inčukalns and continue hiking to Sigulda on the next day (20 km). It is possible to organise transfer/luggage transfers to Sigulda/Rīga.



Vangaži Centre, Gaujas Street (bus from Rīga 4-5 times per hour).



Rāmkalni recreation park (bus stop “Sēnīte” ~1 km, buses to Rīga).

Accommodation: in Rīga.



IN THE HEART OF GAUJA NATIONAL PARK ②



SIGULDA – LĪGATNE

Latvia

Itinerary: SIGULDA – LĪGATNE

Hiking route length:

→ 24 km Ⓛ 8 – 10 h

Duration: 1 day

Difficulty level: ●●

After passing through Sigulda, the Forest Trail follows the River Vējupīte to Paradīzes Hill, where a steep staircase leads down into the ancient valley of the River Gauja and the ravine of the River Vējupīte. It continues to wind down smaller paths through meadows, crossing small rivers whose banks reveal sandstone outcrops. The last six kilometres of this section follow a smaller path down the Līgatne Nature Trails. You can see local wildlife animals and birds on this 5.5 km long trail. Further on the Forest Trail moves up the hills of the ancient

valley of the River Gauja, before descending back down into the deep ravine of the River Līgatne, where the village of the former Līgatne paper mill is located. You can explore this attractive small village, visit the Līgatne spoon factory, winery and Līgatne caves. There is also the Līgatne Net Park with 4-7 m high net labyrinths among the treetops.

This part of the Forest Trail and Gauja National Park is characterised by a gradual transition from diverse, deciduous forests (ash, grey alder, oak, birch, linden) to coniferous stands.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Predominantly forest roads, forest and country trails, wooden stairs by Paradīzes Hill, paved roads and pavements in Sigulda and Līgatne.



Some parts of the trails and riverbank slopes in the ancient valley of the River Gauja may be slippery in wet weather and in winter. Swimming in the River Gauja can be dangerous!



It is possible to organise a transfer from Līgatne back to Sigulda at the end of the tour.



Sigulda Railway Station Square (frequent buses and trains to/ from Rīga).



Līgatne tourist information centre (bus to Augšlīgatne and then by bus or train to Rīga or Sigulda).

Accommodation: in Līgatne or Sigulda.



③ CLIFF LANDSCAPES IN GAUJA NATIONAL PARK



CĒSIS – VALMIERA

Latvia

Itinerary: CĒSIS – CAUNĪTES – VALMIERA

Hiking route length:

→ 43 km ⌚ 13 – 16 h

Duration: 2 days Difficulty level: ●●

The Forest Trail follows small roads and trails through the woods. Along the route you will see the Ērģeļu Cliffs, where the observation terrace provides a great view of the impressive 700 m wide sandstone cliff and the beautiful natural landscape in the ancient River Gauja valley. One of the most beautiful places on the banks of the River Gauja is at “Caunītes” tourist lodging, where you will end the first day of the route. Further on the trail leads through pine forests and wetlands, across and around hills and slopes. One of the

most beautiful views of the River Gauja opens from Sietiņezis Rock, a 15 m high sandstone cliff where a circular 1.5 km trail has been constructed. Coming to Valmiera, you will reach the so-called “Dzelzītis” bridge (a narrow-gauge railway bridge) and continue walking along the River Gauja to Valmiera Centre. Sites of interest in Valmiera: St. Simon’s Church, ruins of the Livonian Castle and Valmiera Museum. There is also an adventure park “Sajūtu Parks” (“Park of Senses”), where you can walk on the barefoot trail, the tree-top trail and enjoy other activities.

PRACTICAL INFO:

- ⚠ It is possible to organise a private transfer to and from Cēsis or to book extra nights in hotels in Cēsis and Valmiera.
- 🚩 **Cēsis, Gauja Street, near the bridge over the River Gauja** (buses and trains go at regular intervals from Rīga and Sigulda).
- 🚩 **Valmiera, Cēsu Street bridge over the River Gauja** (buses and trains go to Rīga at regular intervals).

DAY 1

Arrive in Cēsis.

The distance is ~3 km between the town centre and the start of the trail. You can either walk or call a taxi.



Cēsis – “Caunītes”

→ 23 km ⌚ 7-9 h



Forest or country trails, gravel roads, wooden staircase at Ērģeļu Cliffs.



Some staircases and riverbank slopes in the ancient valley of the River Gauja may be slippery in wet weather, spring and winter. Be careful on the Ērģeļu Cliffs!



There are no shops on this section of the route. It is necessary to take lunch boxes.

Accommodation: in “Caunītes” or private transfer to Cēsis and accommodation in Cēsis.

DAY 2



Transfer Cēsis – “Caunītes”, if staying overnight in Cēsis.



Caunītes – Valmiera

→ 20 km ⌚ 6-8 h



Small forest or country roads, trails, gravel roads, paved roads and pavements in Valmiera and the surrounding area, paths and wooden staircases on the Sietiņezis Nature Trail.



Swimming in the River Gauja can be dangerous! Be careful on the narrow and winding road around Jumara!



There are no shops on this section of the route, it is necessary to take lunch boxes.

Accommodation: in Valmiera.





VALMIERA – STRENČI

Latvia

Itinerary: VALMIERA – “JAUNARĀJI” – BRENGUĻI – STRENČI – VALMIERA

Hiking route length:

→ 29 km

Duration: 2 days

Difficulty level: ●●

This part of the Forest Trail passes through the historical centre of Valmiera. In Valmiera you can visit St. Simon's Church, the Ruins of the Livonian Order Castle and Valmiera Museum. We also suggest walking the barefoot trail in “Sajūtu Parks” (Park of Senses). After sightseeing in Valmiera, the Forest Trail goes through Atpūtas (Recreation) park, the beautiful pine forest and Baiļi winter ski centre. Further on you will walk along the River Abuls Trail, curving along the

banks of the river until reaching the Brenguļi brewery built in an old Hydroelectric power plant. You can enjoy unfiltered and unpasteurised beer here. Further down you will enter unpopulated forest areas and the Northern Gauja protected landscape area.

The forests in Northern Gauja (“Ziemeļgauja”) are very diverse. There are old or natural boreal (northern) forests and marsh forests, oak forests, alluvial forests (formed on river sediments which periodically flood) and mixed oak, wych elm and ash forests along the river. The tour will end in Strenči Town.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Valmiera, Cēsu Street.

The River Gauja bridge next to Strenči (buses at regular intervals to Valmiera, train twice a day).

DAY 1

Arrival in Valmiera.

Sightseeing in Valmiera in the morning.



Valmiera – camping “Jaunarāji”

→ 6 km



Forest trails and small forest roads, gravel roads, paved roads and pavements in populated areas.



It is possible to organise a transfer back to Valmiera after hiking.

Accommodation: in camping “Jaunarāji” or Baiļi, or in Valmiera.

DAY 2



“Jaunarāji” – Brenguļi – Strenči

→ 23 km



Forest trails and small forest roads, gravel roads, paved roads and pavements in populated areas.

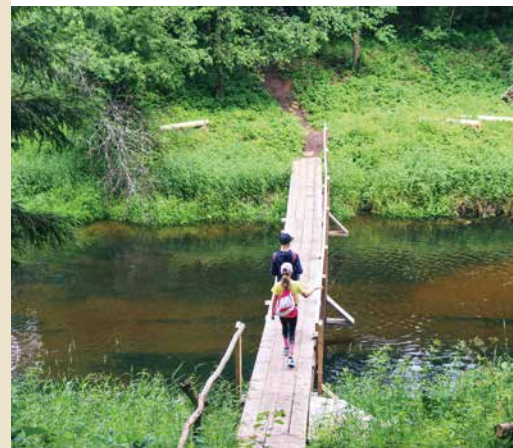


The banks of the River Abuls may be slippery in wet weather. Slopes tend to be extremely steep on the Abuls Nature Trail.

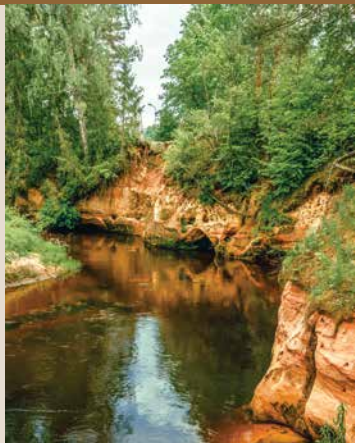


It is possible to organise a private transfer from the end point to Valmiera.

Accommodation: in Valmiera.



5 THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SIGHTS IN NORTHERN LATVIA



APE – KORNETI Latvia

Itinerary: ALŪKSNE – APE – KORNETI – ALŪKSNE

Hiking route length:

→ 22 km ⌚ 8 – 10 h

Duration: 2 days (hiking 1 day)

Difficulty level: ●●●, if completed in one day

This tour will give you an impression of the eastern part of Latvia, which is less populated and also less popular among tourists. You will first arrive in Alūksne and explore the town, which is located at Alūksne highland, on the shore of Lake Alūksne. It is worth visiting Temple Hill – an old Latgalian castle mound and the place of the old town, Sun bridge, and the Castle manor park, Alūksne Lutheran Church and the Bible Museum. After staying there overnight you will go by bus to the start point of the hike

in Ape. This Forest Trail section winds through a hilly farmland landscape, then enters a large dark forest, occasionally interrupted by the blue surfaces of lakes. After Peļļi, it crosses the Latvian/Estonian border and winds along the shores of the lakes Smilšājs, Sūneklis and Ilgājs for 2 km on the Estonian side, known as Paganamaa (translation: Devil's Land). There it descends and enters the Korneti-Peļļi subglacial depression, one of the most impressive ravines in Latvia. The Forest Trail returns to Latvia at Lake Ilgājs and, after a steep climb, takes you through a hilly area to the Drusku castle mound. Here you can enjoy a beautiful view. At the end of this tour, you will reach Korneti. The section is located in the protected landscape area "Veclaicene".

PRACTICAL INFO:



Gravel roads, forest trails, nature trails, wooden stairs, pavement in Ape and Korneti.



The slopes of ravines and hills may be slippery in wet weather.



The route crosses the Latvian/Estonian border (2 km through Estonia), so be sure to bring ID. The only shops are located in Ape and Korneti. There are no places to eat from Ape to the Estonian border.

It is possible to add this route to a self-drive tour from Rīga through Tartu to Tallinn.



This section can be completed in two days, staying over in one of the holiday houses by the lake.



Ape (3 buses per day from Rīga, or 8–9 buses per day from Alūksne).



Korneti or the Latvian/Estonian border. Bus from Korneti to Alūksne or private transfer.

DAY 1



Rīga – Alūksne
→ ~200 km

Accommodation in Alūksne.

DAY 2



Bus Alūksne – Ape
(30–40 min.)



Hiking Ape – Korneti
→ 22 km



Private transfer back to Alūksne.

Accommodation:
in Alūksne.



ALONG THE GAUJA RIVER VALLEY IN GAUJA NATIONAL PARK ⑥



RĀMKALNI – VALMIERA Latvia

Itinerary: RĪGA – RĀMKALNI – SIGULDA – LĪGATNE – CĒSIS – CAUNĪTES – VALMIERA – RĪGA

Hiking route length:

→ 112 km

Duration: 6 days Difficulty level: ●●●

This section of the Forest Trail leads through the entire Gauja National Park and gives an opportunity to see all the most beautiful places and sights of this national park. Gauja National Park is the oldest and largest national park in Latvia. The ancient valley of the River Gauja is the deepest river valley in the Baltic states. The banks of the River Gauja reveal colourful sandstone outcrops, which are reflected in the water. The sights are most wonderful in springtime, when bird cherry

trees are in full bloom, and in autumn, as the trees turn red and yellow. The ancient valley of the River Gauja has a distinctive terrain relief that can fluctuate by up to 80 m. The largest part of the road leads through forest paths, along the river, and exits the woods in Līgatne and Sigulda. Almost half of the Park is covered by forest. Gauja National Park is known for the great diversity of specially protected forests, featuring herbaceous spruce forests, slope and ravine forests, as well as mixed broadleaf forests.

PRACTICAL INFO:

- 🚩 **Recreation park “Rāmkalni”** (bus stop “Sēnīte” ~1 km, buses from Rīga or Sigulda).
- 🚩 **Valmiera, Cēsu Street bridge over the River Gauja** (buses and trains go to Rīga at regular intervals).

DAY 1

Arrival in Rīga.

Time to explore Rīga.

Overnight stay in Rīga.



6 ALONG THE GAUJA RIVER VALLEY IN GAUJA NATIONAL PARK

DAY 2



Rīga – Valmiera till the stop “Sēnīte” (~50 min., 3 buses per hour).
Walk 1 km to the Forest Trail.



Rāmkalni – Sigulda
→ 19 km ⌚ 6 – 8 h

Sigulda – one of the most popular tourist destinations in Latvia, Sigulda Bobsleigh and Luge Track, Sigulda cable car over the River Gauja at a height of 43 m, medieval castles of Sigulda, Krimulda, Turaida and Gutman’s Cave, the largest grotto in the Baltic states.



Mainly forest roads and trails, paved roads and pavements in Gauja Village and Sigulda.



Some stretches of road and riverbank slopes in the ancient valley of the River Gauja may be slippery in wet weather and in winter. Swimming in the River Gauja can be dangerous!



We suggest you spend an extra night in Sigulda to get a better impression of this beautiful place.

Accommodation: in Sigulda.



DAY 3



Sigulda – Līgatne
→ 24 km ⌚ 8 – 10 h

Līgatne Nature Trails offer a chance to observe local wildlife and birds, Līgatne Paper Mill Village – industrial heritage, Secret Soviet Bunker in Skaļupes.



Predominantly forest roads, forest and country trails, wooden stairs by Paradīzes Hill, paved roads and pavements in Sigulda and Līgatne.

Accommodation: in Līgatne.

DAY 4



Līgatne – Cēsis
→ 26 km ⌚ 8 – 10 h

Medieval Old Town of Cēsis.

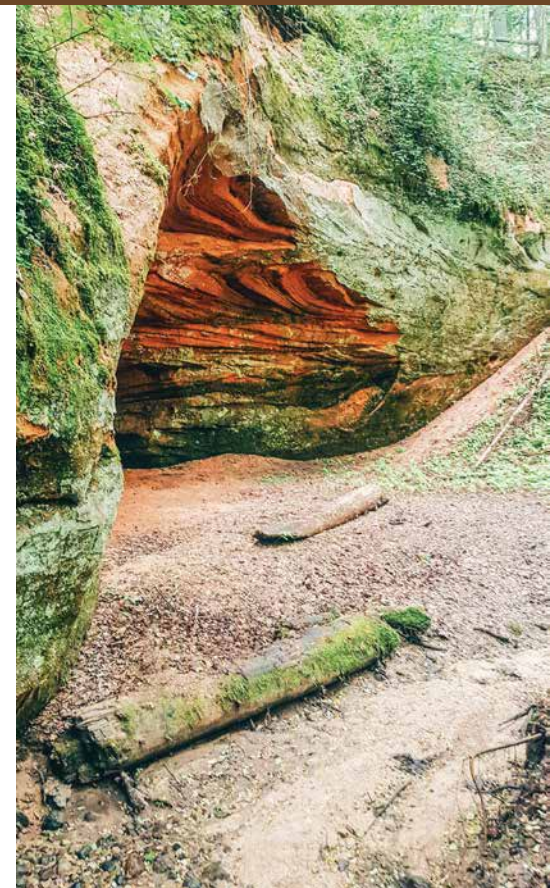


Predominantly forest roads, forest and country trails, wooden stairs by Paradīzes Hill, paved roads and pavements in Sigulda and Līgatne.



This section can be divided and completed in two days: on the first day, continue on the route from Zvārtes Rock via the Amata Trail to Kārļi (~10 km, follow the trees marked in orange, total length ~25 km); on the second day, walk from Kārļi to Krustkalni (3.3 km), then continue along Rakši Road to Cēsis (total distance ~11 km), just as the main route would.

Accommodation: in Cēsis.



ALONG THE GAUJA RIVER VALLEY IN GAUJA NATIONAL PARK ⑥

DAY 5



Cēsis – “Caunītes”

→ 23 km ⌚ 7 – 9 h



Small forest or country trails, gravel roads, wooden staircase at the Ērģeļu Cliffs.



Some staircases and river slopes in the ancient valley of the River Gauja may be slippery in wet weather, spring and winter. Be careful on the Ērģeļu Cliffs!



There are no shops on this section of the route, so it is necessary to take lunch boxes.

It is possible to organise a transfer from “Caunītes” to Cēsis to stay overnight.



You can get straight to the Ērģeļu Cliffs by walking down Lenču Street from the centre of Cēsis. It might be a good idea to combine this section of the trail with visiting the most noteworthy tourism sites in Cēsis.

Accommodation: in “Caunītes” or in Cēsis.



DAY 6

Transfer Cēsis – “Caunītes”, if you stay overnight in Cēsis.



“Caunītes” – Valmiera

→ 20 km ⌚ 6 – 8 h



Small forest or country roads, trails, gravel roads, paved roads and pavements in Valmiera and the surrounding area, paths and wooden staircases on the Sietiņezis Nature Trail.



Be careful on the narrow and winding road around Jumara!



There are no shops on the two-day walk between Cēsis and Valmiera.



It might be a good idea to combine this section of the trail with visiting some of the tourist sites in Valmiera.

Accommodation: in Valmiera.

Or bus ride to Rīga (~1 bus per hour, the latest at 19:55).




7 SOFT ADVENTURE TOUR IN GAUJA NATIONAL PARK



GAUJA NATIONAL PARK (cycling, canoeing, hiking) Latvia

Itinerary: RĪGA – STRENČI – VALMIERA – CĒSIS –
LĪGATNE – SIGULDA – RĪGA


Route length:

 **84 km (113 km)**

 **17 km**

 **30 km (40 km)**

Duration: **8 days**

Difficulty level: 

If you enjoy an active lifestyle, then this tour is the perfect way to enjoy the heritage hidden in Gauja National Park, from several different perspectives. Cycling starts at Strenči and passes two local breweries at Brenguļi and Valmiermuiža with nice cafés and good beer. You will hike through beautiful forests and along the Sietiņiezis sandstone cliff towards Cēsis with its charming

medieval Old Town. Canoeing takes place from Cēsis to Līgatne, which is one of the nicest parts of the River Gauja with its sandstone banks, remote farmsteads and old fashioned water-powered ferry. Līgatne historic centre is connected with the development of its paper mill. Here you can also visit local wine and handicraft producers located in one of the artificial caves typical of the area. Walk the Līgatne Nature Trails to see local wild animals in a forest setting. At the end you will cycle from Līgatne to Sigulda, which is one of the most popular tourist sights in Latvia. You'll see the Turaida and Sigulda medieval castles, Gutman's Cave and other picturesque views.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Rīga.



It is possible to organise luggage transfer from hotel to hotel. Rented bicycles are hybrid bikes, equipped with comfort seats and bicycle bags. During the canoe tour from Cēsis to Līgatne and hiking from Līgatne to Sigulda, the bikes and luggage will be sent to the next accommodation.

DAY 1

Arrival in Rīga.

Sightseeing in Rīga.

Pick up the bicycles in Rīga Old Town.

Accommodation in a hotel in Rīga.

DAY 2



Cycle from the hotel to Rīga Central Train Station.

Take the train: Rīga – Strenči (~2.40 h)



Strenči – Valmiera
(~33 km, 70% asphalt, 30% gravel road).

En route: Strenči Town and Brenguļi brewery with a beer garden. In Valmiera: the Valmiermuiža brewery, the Valmiera Museum, the Ruins of the Livonian Order Castle, St. Simon's Lutheran Church, the ruins of Rīga gate.

Overnight in Valmiera.



SOFT ADVENTURE TOUR IN GAUJA NATIONAL PARK ⑦

DAY 3



Valmiera – Sietiņezis

Visit the beautiful Sietiņezis white sandstone cliffs.



Sietiņezis – Ērgēļu cliffs

→ ~18 km

En route you will see the red sandstone Ērgēļu Cliffs by the River Gauja.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Small forest or country trails, gravel roads, wooden staircase at Sietiņezis and Ērgēļu Cliffs.



Medium



Some staircases and river slopes in the ancient valley of Gauja may be slippery in damp conditions, spring and winter. Be careful on the Ērgēļu Cliffs!



There are no shops or places to eat in this section, so it is necessary to take lunch boxes.



Private transfer Ērgēļu cliffs – Cēsis (those who wish, can hike further till Cēsis, ~8 km).

Free evening in Cēsis.

Attractions include the historical centre, impressive Livonian Order Castle and St. John's Lutheran Church. Bicycle transfer to Cēsis.

Overnight stay in Cēsis.



DAY 4



From Cēsis to Līgatne

→ ~17 km ⌚ 4–5 h

which is one of the picturesque parts of the River Gauja, where sandstone banks are visible.



Bicycle transfer will be organised **from Cēsis to Līgatne.**

Cycle from the river to the guest house in Līgatne (3 km).

Free time for lunch in Līgatne.

In the afternoon we suggest exploring Līgatne ancient paper mill village and the Lustūzis, as well as walking along the Līgatne Nature Trails (~5.5 km), where you can watch local wild animals and enjoy the ancient valley of the River Gauja.

Overnight stay in Līgatne.

DAY 5



Līgatne – Sigulda

→ 24 km

Visit Satezeles castle hill, Kraukļu Cliff and Paradīzes Hill with excellent views to the ancient valley of the River Gauja.

Overnight stay in Sigulda.



7 SOFT ADVENTURE TOUR IN GAUJA NATIONAL PARK

DAY 6

Day in Sigulda.

You can either hike or cycle along Sigulda and Turaida. Visit the Sigulda castle ruins, Gutman's Cave, Turaida Museum Reserve, with the Castle museum, observation tower, history museum and sculpture garden.

OPTION 1:



Hiking Sigulda Centre – Gutman's Cave – Turaida – Sigulda

→ 10 km

OPTION 2:



Sigulda – Turaida – Krimulda – Sigulda

→ ~30 km

(forest trails, gravel road and asphalt).

Overnight in Sigulda.

DAY 7

Take the train **Sigulda – Rīga**.

Free time in Rīga.

In the evening return the bicycles.

Overnight stay in Rīga.

DAY 8

Departure.





HAANJA – TSIISTRE Estonia

Itinerary: VÕRU – HAANJA – TSIISTRE – VÕRU

Hiking route length:

→ 12 km Ⓕ 4 – 6 h

Duration: 1 day Difficulty level: ●

The Forest Trail leads down from the highest point of the Haanja Upland. The most important sight on this route is the Suur Munamägi Hill – 318 m above sea level. The highest point of the Baltics with its observation tower provides its visitors with a splendid 50 km range view of the Estonian nature. The 150 year-old western taiga spruce forests grow on the slopes of Suur-Munamägi. Further on the trail circles around the southern part of Lake Vaskna, and continues down small country roads surrounded by solitary homesteads and small clusters of farms. The route ends in a small village, Tsiistre, where the Linen Museum is located. The museum has a collection of folk linen. Flax is one of the oldest cultural plants in Estonia and a few decades ago, blue flax fields were a common sight in southern Estonia.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Paved road for the first 3 km, rural gravel roads for the remaining distance.



Be careful on the smaller and winding rural roads!



There are no shops or places to eat in this section, so it is necessary to take lunch boxes.



Haanja Village by Suur Munamägi (buses from Võru to Haanja go twice per day, or leave the car in Haanja).



Tsiistre village house (bus to Võru or Haanja goes 2x day or private transfer).

Accommodation: in Võru or in Tsiistre surroundings.



9 ALONG THE BANKS OF THE RIVER JÄGALA



KABERNEEME – JÖELÄHTME

Estonia

Itinerary: TALLINN – KABERNEEME – JÖELÄHTME – TALLINN

Hiking route length:

→ 21 km ⌚ 6 – 8 h

Duration: 1 day Difficulty level: ●●

From Kaberneeme the route runs through a forest where you can see piles of stones carried here during the last ice-age. The trail soon climbs about 20 m up to the hiking trail, which runs on the old shore line of Lake Ancylus. The trail continues to the Linnamäe HES and a suspension bridge. Follow the trail over the ancient fortress hill of Linnamäe and continue on the right bank of the River Jägala, until reaching the Jägala waterfall.

This is the highest natural waterfall in Estonia, more than 8 m high. The Suka bridge is about 500 metres up from the waterfall. After crossing the river, the trail passes through the Jägala waterfall park. Finally, the trail runs through the village of Koogi and arrives at Jöelähtme.

PRACTICAL INFO:



The first half of the track runs mainly on a hiking trail. From the Jägala waterfall on paved roads.



There are no shops or catering places during the hike, so please take lunch boxes.



Kaberneeme campfire site.



Jöelähtme.



Tallinn – Kaberneeme (35 km)
Leave the car at the campfire site!



Kaberneeme – Jöelähtme.

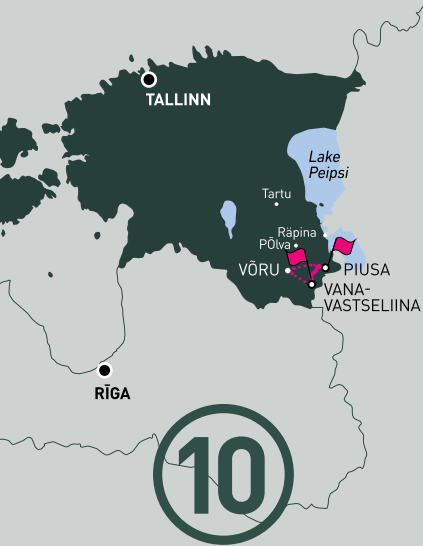


Jöelähtme – Kaberneeme
(~16 min.).



Drive back to Tallinn.





VANA-VASTSELIINA – PIUSA Estonia

Itinerary: VÕRU – VANA-VASTSELIINA – PIUSA – VÕRU

Hiking route length:

→ 23 km ⌚ 7 – 9 h

Duration: 2 days (hiking 1 day)

Difficulty level: ●●●

The first part of this section of the Forest Trail winds along the magnificent River Piusa valley, then, at Härmä Village, it turns towards Obinitsa, an important cultural centre of Setomaa.. Here you can discover the traditions of the local Seto people, for example the fine handicraft of the Seto women. After Obinitsa, the Forest Trail leads through beautiful pine forests

rich in heather, descends back into the depths of the River Piusa valley and ends at the Piusa caves. The Piusa sandstone caves are the result of hand-mining glass sand from 1922-1966. The biggest wintering colony of bats in Eastern Europe is located in the caves. When accompanied by the guide, you can visit the observation platform at the Museum cave.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Small forest roads, forest trails, paths through meadows in the River Piusa valley and its surroundings; gravel roads and paved roads elsewhere.



Don't go too close to the edge of the sandstone outcrop! Some slopes of the Piusa valley are steep and may become slippery in wet weather.



Shoes may become wet in damp conditions.



Vana-Vastseliina Episcopal Castle (bus from Võru or private transfer).



Piusa (bus to Võru or private transfer).

Accommodation: in Võru.



DAY 1

Arrive in Võru.

Accommodation in Võru or in Piusa primeval valley holiday house, or Obinitsa holiday house.

DAY 2

🚗 or 🚌 **Võru – Vana-Vastseliina.**



Vana-Vastseliina – Piusa
→ 23 km ⌚ 7-9 h

🚗 or 🚌 **Piusa – Võru.**



11 TOWARDS THE LIVING CULTURE IN SETOMAA



VANA-VASTSELIINA – VÄRSKA

Estonia

Itinerary: VÕRU – VANA-VASTSELIINA – PIUSA – VÄRSKA

Hiking route length:

→ 48 km

Duration: **3 days (hiking 2 days)**

Difficulty level: ●●

This part of the Forest Trail gives an opportunity to see Setomaa which is inhabited by Setos – an ethnographic group with specific ancient traditions and a unique language dialect. Forest Trail hikers can visit the traditional Seto homestead and enjoy Seto cuisine. The forests of the region are especially charming in early autumn, when the ground is coloured lilac by the blooming heather. There is a good chance to pick wild

mushrooms and berries. One of the most beautiful sections of this trail in Setomaa leads along the River Piusa, where the river is surrounded by sandstone outcrops. You will also visit the Piusa caves. The tour will end in Värskä resort – with its sanatorium and SPA, which use the strengths of local nature: mineral water and lake mud. Värskä mineral water is well known in Estonia and elsewhere.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Vana-Vastseliina Episcopal Castle (bus from Võru or private transfer).



Värskä by Setomaa Tourist Information Point.

DAY 1

Arrive in Võru.

Accommodation in Võru.

DAY 2

 or  **Võru to Vana-Vastseliina**



Vana-Vastseliina – Piusa – Kolodavitsa

→ 26 km ⌚ 8 – 10 h



Small forest roads, forest trails, paths through meadows in the River Piusa valley and its surroundings; gravel roads and paved roads elsewhere.



Some slopes of the Piusa valley are steep and may become slippery in wet weather. Shoes may become wet in damp conditions. There are no shops and caterers in the destination.



The section can be split into two days, spending the night in Obinitsa, and completing the stretch of road to Kolodavitsa on the second day.



Private transfer to accommodation.

Accommodation in Värskä.



DAY 3



Private transfer to the start point in Kolodavitsa.



Kolodavitsa – Värskä

→ 22 km ⌚ 7 – 9 h



Small forest roads, trails, gravel roads, paved roads near Säpina and Värskä.



Medium



Some parts of the path from Kolodavitsa to Säpina and elsewhere may be covered in dense vegetation. Shoes and clothes may become wet in damp conditions. There are no shops or cafeterias on the Forest Trail from Piusa caves to Värskä. It is necessary to take lunch boxes.

Accommodation in a hotel in Värskä, Värskä SPA, Holiday houses near Värskä.



12 THROUGH THE ONION VILLAGES OF LAKE PEIPSI



VARNJA – ALATSKIVI

Estonia

Itinerary: TARTU – VARNJA – ALATSKIVI – TARTU

Hiking route length:

→ 19 km ⌚ 6 – 8 h

Duration: **2 days (hiking 1 day)**

Difficulty level: ●

A scenic and tradition-rich stretch of the Forest Trail symbolised by the onion. Onions were brought to the region by Old Believers in the 17th century. Ladies and gentlemen selling home-made onion strings on the roadside have become somewhat of a business card of the villages. The villages on the twenty-four kilometre stretch of road between Varnja and Kallaste are connected by the tourist route called Onion Road.

The landscape is decorated by colourful wooden houses, small

fish shops and a restaurant where you can enjoy tea made in the samovar, true to the traditions of Old Believers. You can visit the Kostja's onion farm, where the host welcomes the guests and shows them onion cultivation. It is also worth visiting the Chicory Museum in Kolkja to get acquainted with the history of chicory cultivation in row villages near Lake Peipus. At the end of the trail you will reach Alatskivi, where the famous Alatskivi Castle is located.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Mainly paved road, gravel road for a small part of the section.



Be careful when walking on the side of the road or street!



Onions are sold starting from July. Onion Fair in August. Onion traders sell their produce by the roadside and at their homes in August and September.



Varnja Museum (bus from Tartu or private transfer).



Alatskivi Castle Park (can stay overnight in Alatskivi or go by bus to Tartu).



DAY 1

Arrive in Tartu.

Sightseeing in Tartu.

Accommodation in Tartu.

DAY 2



Tartu – Varnja or private transfer from hotel.

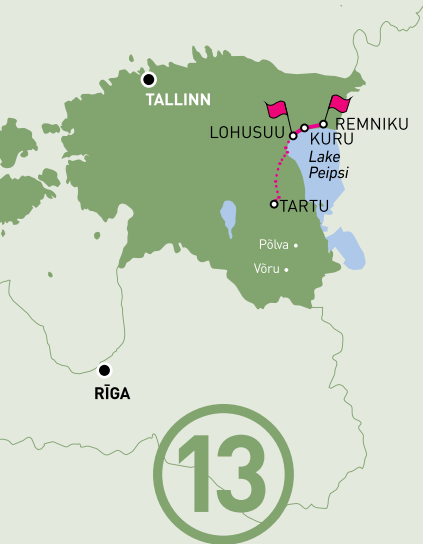


Hiking Varnja – Alatskivi

→ 19 km ⌚ 6 – 8 h

Accommodation in Alatskivi or bus back to Tartu.





LOHUSUU – REMNIKU Estonia

Itinerary: TARTU – LOHUSUU – KURU – REMNIKU – TARTU

Hiking route length:

→ 32 km

Duration: **3 days (hiking 2 days)**

Difficulty level: ●

The first half of this section leads through magnificent coniferous forests, especially in the Järvevälja landscape reserve, where the trail is surrounded by beautiful dunes in the north and a raised bog in the south. It is well worth visiting the kiosk at Rannapungerja to buy smoked fish – the Lake Peipus vendace (rääbis) and some local farm produce.

In the second part, the Forest Trail winds along the coast of the beautiful Lake Peipus. During the summer, when the water level in the lake is lower, beautiful, sandy beaches with wide shallows appear. Past Alajõe, the highest dunes of Lake Peipus (up to 20 m) rise on the landscape, providing a distant view of Lake Peipus, one of the largest lakes in Europe.

PRACTICAL INFO:

🚩 **Lohusuu centre** (can stay overnight in the rest house “Kauksi” or in “Kuru” and have a private transfer to Lohusuu).

🚩 **Remniku beach opposite the Suvi wellness and recreation centre** (can organise a private transfer back to car).

DAY 1

Arrive in Tartu.

Sightseeing in Tartu.

Accommodation in Tartu.

DAY 2

🚗 Drive by car **Tartu – Kauksi** or **Tartu – Lohusuu.**

🚶 **Lohusuu – Kuru or Kauksi**
→ 15-17 km ⌚ 6-8 h

🌲 Paved roads, forest roads and trails, pavement for 3 km, sandy beach by Lake Peipus.

● Easy

⚠️ The 3 km section between Rannapungerja and Kauksi runs along the edge of Tartu-Jõhvi motorway (No. 3). The edge is wide, and it is mown in the summer, so it's convenient for walking. Be careful when you are crossing the motorway!

ⓘ There are only some shops and cafés (mostly seasonal) on the northern shore of Lake Peipus,

so be sure to plan ahead and bring enough food with you.

Accommodation in Kauksi or Kuru.

DAY 3

🚗 Private transfer to the start point in Kuru.

🚶 **Kuru – Remniku**
→ 15 km ⌚ 5-7 h

🌲 Mainly sandy beaches, paved road and trails in Alajõe Village.

● Easy

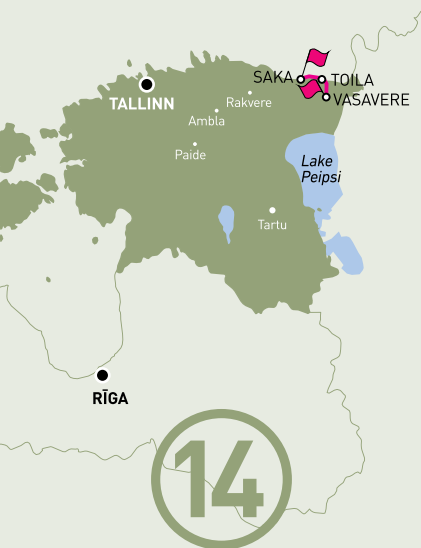
ⓘ There are only some shops and cafés (mostly seasonal) on the northern shore of Lake Peipus, so be sure to plan ahead and bring enough food with you.

🚗 Private transfer back to the accommodation place.

Accommodation in Kauksi or Kuru or go back to Tartu.



14 CHALLENGES IN THE KURTNA AND ONTIKA LANDSCAPE RESERVES



VASAVERE – TOILA – SAKA Estonia

Itinerary: TOILA – VASAVERE – TOILA – SAKA

Hiking route length:

→ 46 km

Duration: **3 days (hiking 2 days)**

Difficulty level: ●●●

This is the most challenging Forest Trail section, especially on the second day. Here, on the coast of the Gulf of Finland, rises the North-Estonian Klint – a steep, rocky and forest-covered cliff that stretches non-continuously to Tallinn and further to the islands of West-Estonia. The Forest Trail runs on top of the cliff and occasionally descends into valleys. It crosses the deep and vast Pühajõgi valley in Toila-Oru park and comes

to Toila, a popular coastal resort. One of the most unusual sections of the Forest Trail in Northern Estonia, which leads along the foot of the impressive North-Estonian Klint in good weather, then climbs to the top of the klint in the villages of Valaste and Saka, revealing breathtaking views of the Gulf of Finland.

PRACTICAL INFO:



Alutaguse recreation and sports centre in Vasavere.



Saka manor.

DAY 1

Arrive in Toila either from Narva or Tallinn.

Accommodation in Toila.

DAY 2



Private transfer to Vasavere.



Vasavere – Toila

→ 25 km ⌚ 8 – 10 h



Forest roads and paths, park and meadow paths, gravel roads, pavement in populated areas.



Medium



Be careful when crossing the Tallinn-Narva motorway (No. 1) and walking along the road! Do not approach the steep and rocky seashore as it may collapse!



If you take Pargi Street in Voka Village, you can shorten the route by 3 km.

Accommodation in Toila.





DAY 3



Toila – Saka

→ 21 km ⌚ 10 – 14 h



Paved road in Toila, a narrow, rocky, challenging seashore for the rest of the distance.



Medium



Going near the top and bottom part of the North-Estonian klint is dangerous, especially after spring and autumn showers, as it can collapse. The klint has formed several mass slides and mudslides, which together with the vegetation – trees and bushes – make walking difficult.



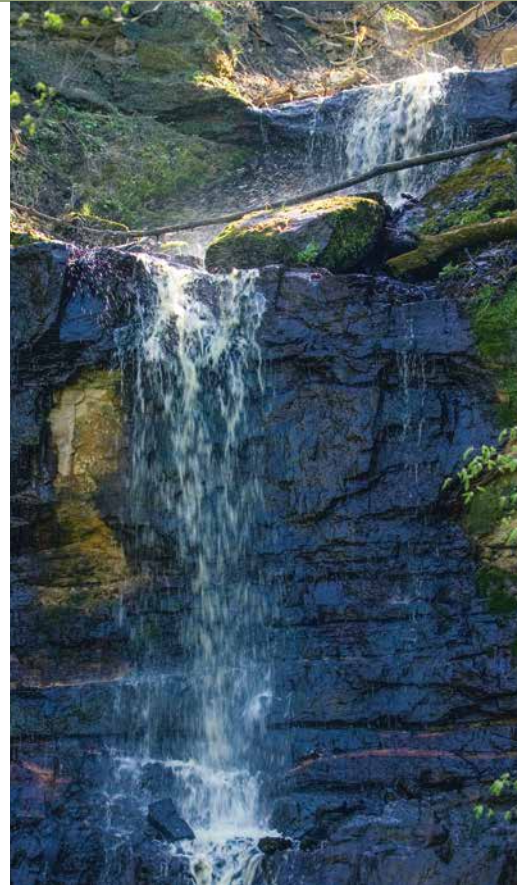
This section is challenging. Although the distance is not that great, plan for the walk to take two to three times longer than usual. During stronger northerly, north-westerly, or north-easterly winds, the narrow shore (beach) may be completely covered with water in places and thus not suitable for walking. In calm weather, it is advised to split the section into a two-day walk with an overnight stay in Valaste. Shoes with fixed ankle and walking poles will help you keep your balance. Keep in mind that there are only a few places where you can climb up or down the 50 m high klint: near the villages of Martsa (a steep slope), Valaste (stairs), Saka (stairs). The stairs are steep. There are no services at the foot of the klint.



Private transfer back to Toila.



Drive back to Tallinn or Narva or **accommodation** in Toila.





15 THROUGH LAHEMAA NATIONAL PARK




PRACTICAL INFO:

Starting / end point: Tallinn.

 **Eisma.**
 **Kasispea.**

DAY 1

 **Tallinn – Vihula or Tallinn – Sagadi.**

Accommodation in Vihula or Sagadi.



EISMA – KASISPEA

Estonia

Itinerary: TALLINN – EISMA – OANDU – KÄSMU – KASISPEA – VIINISTU – TALLINN

Hiking route length:

 **52 km**

Duration: **5 days (hiking 3 days)**

Difficulty level: 


On this tour you will enjoy the diversity of nature in Lahemaa National Park – the oldest national park in the Baltic states. Lahemaa – means “the land of bays” in Estonian. It is characterised by many bays, peninsulas, forests and villages rich in cultural heritage. The Forest Trail will go along the bays and peninsulas of Lahemaa National Park, introducing the hikers to its most significant natural and cultural heritage. The forests are rich with blueberries and mushrooms in autumn, and the air is very clean.




You will start the tour from Tallinn, going by bus to Lahemaa National Park, where you stay overnight in one of the beautiful manors. On the next day you will hike till Oandu. En route you will see Altja – a scenic traditional fishing village, where a traditional Estonian tavern is located and you can enjoy traditional meals. In Oandu there is the visitor centre of the Estonian State Forest Management (RMK), where hikers can learn more about forest habitat types and forest management traditions. Then you will reach Käsmu Peninsula with its wooded dunes and moss-covered rock fields, giving the feeling of being in a fairy tale. Käsmu is also a popular Estonian sea captains’ village. There you can visit the Marine Museum and lighthouse, as well as have an extra walk to the Vana-Jüri rocks.


During the day from Käsmu to Kasispea you will see some of the most impressive boulders in Lahemaa National Park, the Tammispea and Jaani-Tooma boulders, which resemble huge monoliths. You will end the tour in Viinistu Village, where we suggest visiting Viinistu Art Museum.




DAY 2


 Private transfer to Eisma.

 **Eisma – Oandu**
 **16 km**  **5 – 7 h**

 Mainly small forest roads and trails, a sandy beach for a small stretch of the road. Paved road from Eisma to Vainupea and from Altja to Oandu.

 Easy




 Be careful when walking on the side of the road!


 The closest shop to Oandu is a full day's walk, you need to take some food for dinner.

Accommodation in Oandu.





DAY 3

 **Oandu – Käsmu**
 **18 km**  **6 – 8 h**

 Half of the distance comprises forest trails and roads, the rest of it runs along paved road.

 Easy

 Be careful when walking on the side of the road!


 The Käsmu Peninsula is surrounded by a dense network of hiking trails, so you can stay here for another day and explore the local trails.

Accommodation in Käsmu.





DAY 4


 **Käsmu – Kasispea**
 **18 km**  **6 – 8 h**

 A third of the distance comprises forest roads and trails, some gravel roads, paved roads.

 Easy

 Be careful when walking on the side of the road!

 There are no shops or caterers between the start and finish points of this section. You need to take lunch boxes.

 Private transfer to Viinistu.

Accommodation in Viinistu.



DAY 5

 **Viinistu – Tallinn.**
Accommodation in Tallinn.



16 DIVERSITY OF PEIPSIMAA



VARNJA – AVINURME Estonia

Itinerary: TARTU – VARNJA – ALATSKIVI – RANNAMÕISA – MUSTVEE – AVINURME – TARTU

Hiking route length:  **77 km**



Duration: **6 days (hiking 4 days)**

Difficulty level: 

Onions, fish, villages that stretch out for several kilometres where the buildings are lined along the main street, ornate Old Believers' churches, small harbours with fishing boats and wooden houses, each painted in a different colour! Cafés, shops and a view of Lake Peipus, which looks more like a sea than a lake. This could be the description of this tour. This tour is a very interesting part of the Forest Trail, which will give you an opportunity to see and enjoy the Lake Peipsi region, the culture and lifestyle of local people as well as the nature.

The tour will start in Tartu – Estonia's second biggest city. You will go by bus from Tartu to Varnja where you will start to hike. During the tour you can visit Kostja's onion farm, where the host welcomes guests and presents onion cultivation. It is also worth visiting the Chicory Museum in Kolkja to get acquainted with the history of chicory cultivation in row villages near Lake Peipus. You will also see Alatskivi Castle. In Avinurme we suggest visiting the Avinurme wooden handicraft centre and get acquainted with the local woodcraft, spend quality time in woodworking workshops and taste or even prepare yourself a selection of Estonian traditional foods. At the end of the tour you will return to Tartu by bus.

PRACTICAL INFO:

-  **Varnja.**
-  **Avinurme.**

DAY 1

Arrive in Tartu.


Sightseeing in Tartu.


Accommodation in Tartu.


DAY 2

 **Tartu – Varnja** in the morning (trip ~50 min.).

 **Varnja – Alatskivi**
 **19 km**  **6 – 8 h**

 Mainly paved road, gravel road for a small part of the section.

 Be careful when walking on the side of the road or street!

 Onions are sold starting from July. Onion Fair in August. Onion traders sell their produce by the roadside and at their homes in August and September.


In the evening, explore the famous Alatskivi Castle and enjoy dinner from local products in the Alatskivi restaurant.


Accommodation in Alatskivi.




DAY 3

 **Alatskivi – Rannamõisa**
 19 km  6 – 8 h




 Pavement in settlements, sandy and rocky beach in Kallaste, gravel roads, pavement for the last 6.5 kilometres of the section.


 Be careful when walking on the side of the road or street!


 Lake Peipus vendace is sold throughout the year. Onion season starts in July, and onions are sold on the streets until late September. Private transfer back to Toila.


Accommodation in Rannamõisa or Kadrina.

DAY 4

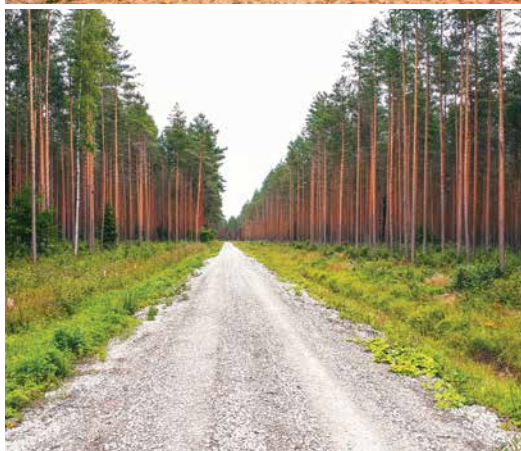
 **Rannamõisa – Mustvee**
 19 km  6 – 8 h

 Paved road, gravel roads for a small part of the section.

 Be careful when walking on the side of the motorway!


 Various festivals are held in the villages of Lake Peipus throughout the year, so make sure to check the calendar for events!


Accommodation in Mustvee.




DAY 5

 **Hiking Mustvee – Avinurme**
 20 km  7 – 9 h

 Paved road in Mustvee and Avinurme, the rest of the roads are gravel roads and a dirt road for a small distance.

 Be careful when crossing the Tartu-Jõhvi motorway (No. 3)!

 No services between Mustvee and Avinurme. You need to take lunch boxes.

Visit the Avinurme wooden handicrafts centre.

 or  **Avinurme – Mustvee**
 (~25 min.).

Accommodation in Mustvee.

DAY 6

 **Mustvee – Tartu** (~1 h).




17 GRAND FOREST TRAIL HIKING TOUR IN LATVIA AND ESTONIA



RĪGA – TALLINN, self-drive and hiking Latvia and Estonia

Itinerary: RĪGA – SIGULDA – LĪGATNE – ĀRAIŠI – CĒSIS – VALMIERA – TARTU – KUREMĀE – VASAVERE – RAKVERE – ALTJA – OANDU – KĀSMU – KOLGA – TALLINN

Hiking route length:   ~68 km;  ~630 km

Duration: **10 days** Difficulty level: 

Practical info:  Rīga  Tallinn

This grand hiking tour includes some of the best and most beautiful parts of the Forest Trail in Latvia and Estonia. Hikes in the forest trails and villages are combined with trips and excursions in cities, as well as other popular tourist sights in both countries. You will get a detailed impression about the forest diversity and most popular national parks in Latvia and Estonia. You will start the tour in Rīga, where you will enjoy the beautiful Old Town included in the UNESCO and Art Nouveau District. Then you will drive to Sigulda and see the most scenic ancient valley of the River Gauja, visit Turaida Museum Reserve, hike in Gauja National Park till the historic Ligatne papermill village. Further on you will visit the famous Lake Āraiši Castle, hike on the Cirulisi Nature Trails and see the beautiful medieval town of Cēsis. On the way to Estonia you will stop at the Sietiņezis big sandstone cliff to have picturesque

views of the River Gauja. Then you will stay in Estonia's second biggest city – Tartu, and visit the recently opened Estonian National Museum. Further on you will drive to Alutaguse National Park and hike along the picturesque Kurtna landscape reserve among the bright coniferous forests ornamented by the mirror surfaces of its many lakes. At the end of the tour you will hike in Estonia's oldest national park – Lahemaa, which means the "land of bays" in Estonian. The Forest Trail goes along the bays and peninsulas of Lahemaa National Park, introducing the hikers to its most significant natural and cultural heritage. The forests are rich with blueberries and mushrooms in autumn and the air is very clean. This tour will end with sightseeing in Tallinn, Estonia's capital city, with the Old Town also included in UNESCO.



DAY 1

Arrive in Rīga.

Pick-up the hired car at the airport.

Pick-up your info pack with the maps and detailed itinerary from the hotel reception.

Sightseeing in Rīga.

Accommodation in Rīga.

DAY 2



Rīga – Sigulda

→ ~50 km

Explore Sigulda and Turaida.

We suggest visiting the Sigulda castle ruins, Gutman's Cave, Turaida Museum Reserve with the castle museum, observation tower, history museum and sculpture garden, the palace with the park of Krimulda.

Accommodation in Sigulda.

DAY 3



Sigulda – Līgatne

→ 24 km ⌚ 8 – 10 h



Medium



Predominantly forest roads, forest and country trails, wooden stairs by Paradīzes Hill, paved roads and pavements in Sigulda and Līgatne.



Some stretches of trails and river slopes in the ancient valley of the River Gauja may be slippery in damp conditions and winter. Swimming in the River Gauja can be dangerous!



Sights en route: Ravine of the River Vējupīte, Kraukļu gorge, Paradīzes Hill with excellent views of the ancient River Gauja valley. Elpju and Launaga Rock, Līgatne Nature Trails and the historic Līgatne papermill village.

Transfer back to Sigulda.

Accommodation in Sigulda.

DAY 4



Sigulda – Āraiši – Cēsis

→ 38 km

Visit Lake Āraiši Castle and Āraiši Windmill.



Cīrulīši Nature Trails

(3 trails of different length 2.7 km, 3.5 km and 6.2 km). These trails are part of the Forest Trail.

Time for dinner and exploring Cēsis – the charming old town, the ruins of the Livonian Order Castle and the New Castle. In the garden of the castle there is a workshop of a traditional jeweller, which can also be visited.

Accommodation in Cēsis.

DAY 5



Cēsis – Valmiera – Tartu

→ 175 km

Visit the Sietiņezis Cliff by the River Gauja (walking ~1.5 km).

Sightseeing in Tartu – Estonia's second biggest city. Sightseeing in the Old Town, which was built in the style of classicism. Visit Tartu University – the oldest in the Baltic states – as well as the old observatory and the new Estonian National Museum.

Accommodation in Tartu.



17 GRAND FOREST TRAIL HIKING TOUR IN LATVIA AND ESTONIA

DAY 6



Tartu – Vasavere

→ 130 km

Leave the car in the accommodation place.
Private transfer to Kuremäe.



**Alutaguse National Park:
Kuremäe – Vasavere**

→ 16 km ⌚ 5 – 7 h



Easy



Forest trails, forest roads,
wooden footbridges in wet-
lands, gravel roads.

Before the hike it is recommended to visit Kuremäe Monastery, which was established in 1891, and is the only functioning Russian Orthodox Monastery in Estonia. The Forest Trail goes along the picturesque Kurtna landscape reserve (part of Alutaguse National Park), ornamented by the mirror surfaces of its many lakes (42 lakes in total, the highest density in Estonia) among beautiful, bright coniferous forests.

Accommodation in Vasavere.



DAY 7



Vasavere – Rakvere –
Palmse – Altja

→ 135 km

En route you can see Rakvere Town, where you can visit the Rakvere Medieval Castle ruins and the theme park representing the everyday life of the 16th century. Further on you will see the Palmse manor and park which is located in Lahemaa National Park.



**Little hike of the Forest Trail in
Altja fishermen's village**

→ 3 km

Altja was first mentioned in written records in 1465 and is a typical seaside village, with all of its houses stretching along one street; some of them are typical coastal farms and have been restored by Lahemaa National Park. On the point in Altja you can see the fishing net sheds, which were reconstructed on the basis of old photographs and the memories of the villagers.

After the hike we suggest going for a traditional Estonian meal in Altja Tavern.

Accommodation in Altja or Vihula.



DAY 8



Altja / Oandu – Käsmu

→ 20 km ⌚ 7 – 9 h



Easy



Forest trails, forest roads,
wooden footbridges in wetlands,
gravel roads.





It is worth walking an additional extra kilometre in Käsmu to the Vana-Jüri rocks and the historical sites of Käsmu at the tip of the peninsula.

This is the most beautiful Forest Trail section in Lahemaa National Park. At the beginning it goes through a beautiful, wooded inland dune area. And further on, after the resort village Võsu, the trail continues along a beautiful coastal forest promenade till it reaches Käsmu Village.



Transfer back to Altja or Vihula.

DAY 9



Altja / Vihula – Kolga – Tallinn
➔ 100 km

En route you can visit the Kolga manor with its impressive territory, several buildings with an antique feeling, as well the Jägala waterfall. This is the highest natural waterfall in Estonia, more than 8 m high.

Accommodation in Tallinn.

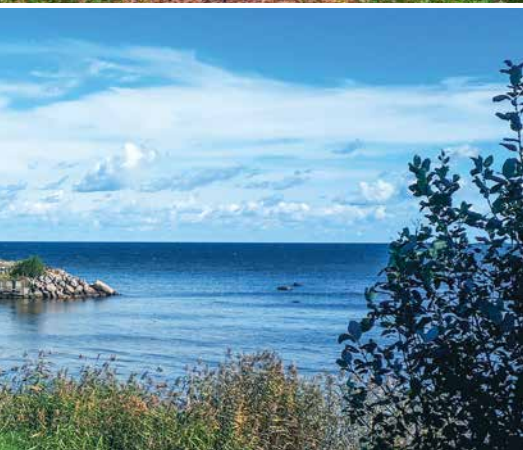
DAY 10

Sightseeing in Tallinn.

Drop the hired car off at the airport.

Departure.

Or return to Rīga.




18 WALKING FOREST TRAILS IN LATVIA AND ESTONIA



LATVIA AND ESTONIA

Itinerary: RĪGA – INČUKALNS – SIGULDA – LĪGATNE – KĀRĻI – CĒSIS – VALMIERA – VALKA / VALGA – CIRGAĻI – ALŪKSNE – VECLAICENE – HAANJA – VĀRSKA – TARTU – LAKE PEIPSI – KURTNA – TOILA – VALASTE – KĀSMU – TALLINN

Hiking route length:  ~85 km;  ~890 km

Duration: **12 days** Difficulty level: 

Practical info:  Rīga  Tallinn

This is the longest of the Forest Trail tours, where you will hike on many beautiful forest nature trails in Latvia and Estonia. These nature trails are part of the Forest Trail and this tour is suitable for self-drive tourists, who wish to hike different sizes of trails and get an impression of the forest diversity in both countries. You have the possibility to see the northern coniferous forests with spruces and pines, broadleaf forests, wet floodplain forests and picturesque forests growing on slopes and ravines. You will also see the most interesting tourist sights in Latvia and Estonia, which are close to the Forest Trail. In Latvia you will visit Sigulda, the historic Līgatne papermill village, medieval Cēsis, the River Amata valley, which is located in Gauja National Park. Then you will drive to the less populated eastern part of Latvia – the Northern Gauja protected landscape area, Aluksne Town and hike in the Korneti-Peļļi subglacial depression, one of the most impressive ravines in Latvia. You can climb to Drusku castle mound – the

highest and steepest of all the castle mounds in Latvia. When entering Estonia, you will see the highest point of the Baltics – Suur Munamagi Hill, where the observation tower is built. Further on, the tour will lead you to the River Piusa valley, Obinitsa, with the culture of Seto people. You will hike in the historic Varska resort town, which is very close to the Russian border. Then you will reach Tartu and Lake Peipsi, which is the 5th biggest lake in Europe. You will hike in the Kurtna landscape reserve, see the Ontika limestone cliff, Valaste waterfall – the highest in Estonia. Finally you will hike in one of the beautiful wooded areas in Estonia – Lahemaa National Park. The tour ends in Tallinn, where you can enjoy the medieval Old Town and many other attractions.



DAY 1

Arrive in Rīga.

Pick-up the hired car at the airport.

Accommodation in Rīga.

DAY 2



Rīga – Inčukalns

→ ~41 km



Inčukalna Devil's cave trail

→ ~3 km

En route you can see the Inčukalns hunting palace and Devil's Cave. It is said that the Devil used to live in this cave, but was banished by the God of Thunder. The cave features a massive dome-shaped ceiling and a spring said to possess healing powers.



Inčukalns – Sigulda

→ 19 km



Hiking in Sigulda from the centre of town till Paradīzes Hill

→ ~5 km return

You will see the ravine of the River Vējupīte, Kraukļu Gorge –Paradīzes Hill with excellent views to the ancient valley of the River Gauja.

In Sigulda you can also visit the Sigulda Castle ruins, Gutman's Cave, Turaida Museum Reserve.

Accommodation in Sigulda.

DAY 3



Sigulda – Līgatne

→ 19 km



Līgatne Nature Trails

→ 5.5 km

Līgatne Nature Trails will reveal many wildlife species typical to Latvia. Here one can see the wild animals of Latvia – stags, roe deer, wild boar, bears, foxes, lynx, and two species of birds.



Līgatne – Kārļi

→ 21 km



Hiking Forest Trail: Amata Veclauču bridge – Zvārtes Rock

→ ~3 km

The Amata Trail in Gauja National Park is an excellent place for walks and nature discovery, exploring one of Latvia's deepest river valleys. At the end of the tour you will see Zvarte Rock. The height of the vertical red rock top reaches 35 m. It is located on the left bank of the River Amata and is one of the most picturesque rock exposures in Latvia.



Private transfer to hotel.

Accommodation in Kārļi.

DAY 4



Kārļi – Cēsis

→ 11 km

Option 1:



Cīrulīši Nature Trails

(3 trails of different lengths 2.7 km, 3.5 km and 6.2 km).

Option 2:



Hiking the Forest Trail section from Cēsis to the Ērģeļu Cliffs

(6 km in one direction, can organise a transfer back to town).

Sightseeing in Cēsis. Walk in the charming Old Town, the ruins of the Livonian Order Castle and the New Castle.

Accommodation in Cēsis.



18 WALKING FOREST TRAILS IN LATVIA AND ESTONIA

DAY 5



Cāsis – Valmiera – Valka – Cirgaļi

→ ~110 km



Hiking in the Northern Gauja protected landscape area

→ 5-6 km

You will see the Cirgaļi inland dunes and observation tower, which is 27 m high and offers an excellent view of the River Gauja, fields and forests.



Cirgaļi – Alūksne

→ ~78 km

We suggest exploring this beautiful town of Alūksne, situated in the north-east of Latvia, in the Alūksne highland, on the shore of Lake Alūksne. It is worth visiting the Temple Hill – an old Latgalian castle mound and place of the Old Town, the Sun bridge, the Castle manor park, Alūksne Lutheran Church and the Bible Museum.

Accommodation in Alūksne.

DAY 6



Alūksne – Veclaicene

→ ~24 km



Peļļi and Paganamaa Trail

→ 7 km

Trail along 7 lakes, which crosses the Latvian/Estonian border twice. It is recommended to climb to the Drusku castle mound near Korneti – an impressive terrain for Latvia, and here you will see as far as the Hanja highlands of Estonia.



Veclaicene – Haanja

→ 32 km

Accommodation in Haanja or surroundings.



DAY 7

On this day you will see the highest point of the Baltics – Suur Munamagi (318 m above sea level). It provides its visitors with a splendid 50 km range view of the Estonian nature. A viewing tower is built on top of this hill. In Haanja there is also the National Geographic yellow window, which draws guests' attention to special places, historical events, traditions, culture and nature in South-Estonia.



Haanja – Vana Vastseliina

→ ~25 km



Hiking the River Piusa Trail: Vana-Vastseliina – River Piusa valley – Lindsī – Obinitsa

→ ~15 km

The Forest Trail section starts at Vastseliina Episcopal Castle ruins and goes along the primeval valley of the River Piusa to Obinitsa. There is also the highest sandstone outcrop wall in Estonia – Härma Walls, and several sites of former mills. We recommend to visit Obinitsa Museum, which offers an opportunity to learn about the unique history and culture of Setomaa through exploring the family life, traditions and customs of Seto families.



Obinitsa – Vana-Vastseliina

(~15 min., bus only operates on working days).



Vana-Vastseliina – Värška

→ ~42 km

Accommodation in Värška.



DAY 8



Hiking the Pikalombi nature trail in Värskas

→ 3.8 km shorter trail,
9.1 km longer trail

On these trails you can enjoy pine groves, birch groves, meadows and the Velna bog that emerged during the ice age. The trails give you a wonderful opportunity to explore the scenery of Värskas Bay and Lake Peipsi and the surroundings of the old Setomaa villages.



Värskas – Järvelja

→ ~50 km



Hiking the Järvelja Primeval Forest Nature Study Trail

→ 1-5 km

It is one of the oldest protection areas in Estonia. In Järvelja primeval forest it is all up to nature – both the birth and death of the trees. And this is the perfect place to observe how new life begins from a dead tree. The primeval forest offers a good overview of an ancient virgin forest and of the forest's lifecycle without mankind interrupting the evolution. Here, you will see the King's Oak (Kuningamänd), which is over 360 years old, as well as spruces that are more than 40 metres high – making them one of the highest trees in Estonia.

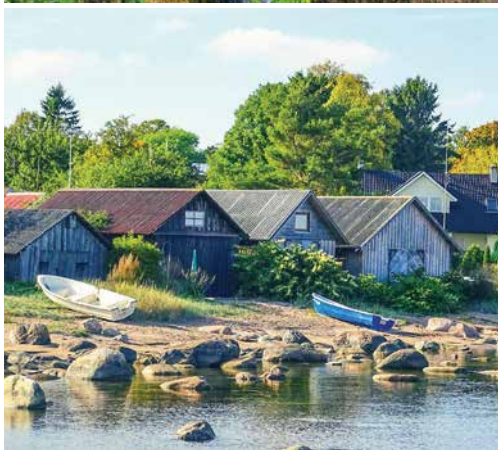


Järvelja – Tartu

→ 45 km

Sightseeing in Tartu.

Accommodation in Tartu.



DAY 9



Tartu – Alatskivi – Avinurme – Kurtna

→ 153 km

Explore the coast of Lake Peipsi, Alatskivi Castle, Avinurme crafts centre.



Hiking the Kurtna trail

→ 4.5 – 5.5 km

It starts and ends at a car park with a fireplace site near Lake Martiska. A marked trail forms a part of the Kurtna Landscape Conservation Area and introduces a variety of plants, landscapes, and lakes. Along the way, you will pass 12 interesting locations and lakes.



Kurtna – Toila

→ 25 km

Accommodation in Toila.

DAY 10



Toila – Valaste

→ 11 km

Explore the beautiful Valaste waterfall. It is located on the Ontika limestone cliff, and is more than 30 m high, making it the highest waterfall in Estonia. The waterfall can be admired from the side as well, which offers a lovely view of the layers formed over 400,000 million years.



Valaste – Käsmu

→ 102 km

Leave the car in an accommodation place.



Oandu – Vosu

→ 10 km

The trail goes through a beautiful, wooded inland dune area, where hikers can see cuts

on pine trees, used to extract resin from the trees. In autumn, mushrooms and blueberries adorn the edges of the trail.



Private transfer to the start point and back to the accommodation.

Accommodation in Käsmu or surroundings.

DAY 11

We recommend to visit the Käsmu captains' village and Marine Museum.



Käsmu – Eru

→ 9 km

This part of the Forest Trail passes through the fairy tale-like Käsmu Peninsula with its wooded dunes and moss-covered rock fields.

Private transfer back to the accommodation.

Accommodation in Käsmu or surroundings.

DAY 12



Käsmu – Tallinn

→ ~80 km

Sightseeing in Tallinn.

Accommodation in Tallinn.



GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT LATVIA & ESTONIA

	ESTONIA	LATVIA
Capital	Tallinn	Riga
Territory km ²	45 227	64 573
Population	1 318 700	1 950 000
Population density: inhabitants per km ²	28.8	30.02
Forest area (Mill. Ha)	2.33	3.38
Language	Estonian. Inhabitants also speak English, German or Russian.	Latvian. Inhabitants also speak English, German or Russian.
Currency	EUR	EUR
Country code	+ 372	+ 371
Local time	GMT + 2 hours	GMT + 2 hours
Climate	Warm summers, spring and autumn relatively mild, cold winters. The warmest month is July with average temperature +17 °C, the coldest month is January with average temperature -4 °C	

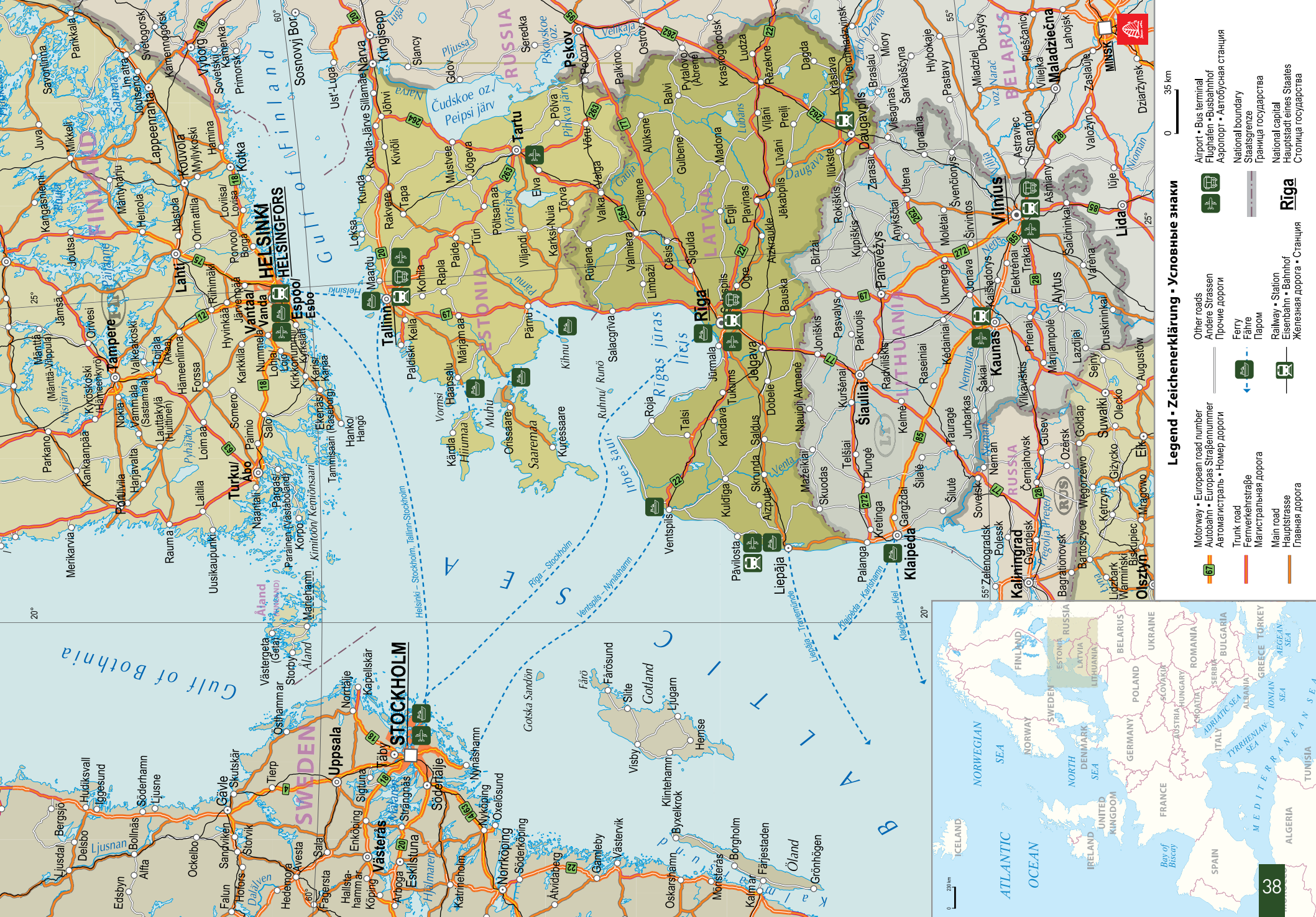
ABOUT THE PROJECT

More information on the project: celotajs.lv/project/19










The publication reflects the opinion of the author, and the leading institution of the programme is not responsible for the possible use of the information contained herein.

PROJECT PARTNERS





Legend - Zeichenerklärung - Условные знаки

-  Motorway • European road number
Автомобильная магистраль • Номер дороги
-  Main road
Национальная дорога
-  Trunk road
Федеральная дорога
-  Other roads
Андре Страссен
Прочие дороги
-  Railway • Station
Еisenbahn • Bahnhof
Железнодорожная станция
-  Ferry
Ферри
-  Airport • Bus terminal
Flughafen • Busbahnhof
Аэропорт • Автобусная станция
-  National boundary
Граница государства
-  National capital
Hauptstadt eines Staates
Столица государства



THE FOREST TRAIL IN FACTS AND FIGURES

The Forest Trail is a part of the European long-distance hiking route E11.

The route E11 goes as follows: Scheveningen (NL) – Osnabrück (D) – Potsdam (D) – Poznan (PL) – Ogrodniki (PL) – Kaunas (LT) – Rīga (LV) – Tallinn (EE).

THE FOREST TRAIL is designed as part of the E11 in the Baltic States, which leads through the most beautiful forests and national parks of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It starts in Lazdijai town on the Polish-Lithuanian border, crosses Latvia, turning into Rīga, and arrives in Tallinn, Estonia.

Forest Trail start and end points: Lazdijai (LT) / Town Hall Square in Rīga (LV) / Port of Tallinn (EE)

Length: ~2100km



This Tour brochure describes the Northern part of the Forest Trail
and includes the tours from Rīga to Tallinn

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