



# mammadaba

It means Mother Nature.  
And it's true.

## WORLD OF BOGS

Discover the bog ecosystem

## TOP 10 SITES

Set your remarkable destination

## BOG NOTES

Language game with bogs



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# Could this be the Next Bog Thing?

WELCOME TO THE WILD, WONDERFUL AND SOMETIMES WEIRD WORLD OF LATVIA'S BOGS!

Bogs have an undeserved reputation as dirty, smelly and dangerous places – in English even the word itself can have unpleasant connotations. But the more you visit bogs, the more magical they become and I would make a case for Latvia's bogs being its true natural wonders.

While we may lack mountain ranges or deep canyons, in Latvia we have plenty of bogs, and like mountains or canyons they are often huge in scale, make formidable physical barriers in the landscape and are the sorts of places that attract stories and legends of all sorts: monsters, fairies, bandits and battles.

Like mountains and canyons too, they are formed by very precise and fascinating geological, hydrological and biological processes over thousands of years, and once you gain a little knowledge of how bogs come to exist, you start to see and appreciate things that you might otherwise walk past without a glance, whether that is a rare plant, an unusual geological lump or the song of a bird high in the sky on a warm summer day.

In compiling this guide I have travelled to bogs all over Latvia, and at each one I've visited I have thought to myself: "This is the most interesting one yet". So I visited some of them a second time and found that they were ALL the most interesting, whether big or small, famous or forgotten. Follow in my footsteps and you'll soon see what I mean.

I think bogs could be the next big thing in Baltic tourism. After all, they offer many of the things we look for on a trip these days: spectacular sights, a connection with nature, low environmental impact and – let's admit it – a chance to tell our friends about places they definitely haven't thought of visiting.

At the moment, Latvia's bogs remain largely unknown and unexplored by most people, even within Latvia itself. Latvia's State Forests (LVM) is doing good work in making bogs more accessible to the public so I invite you to take advantage of this and, hopefully, as the lure of the bog becomes more and more popular, more and more bogs will join the list of future destinations. See you in the bog!

# How This Guide Works

IN THIS GUIDE YOU'LL FIND 10 SUGGESTED BOGS TO VISIT. WE'LL EXAMINE FIVE OF THESE BOGS IN DETAIL AND ANOTHER FIVE IN A SHORTER FORMAT, WITH A FEW EXTRA WILDCARD OPTIONS THROWN IN AS WELL.

This is a selection, not a comprehensive list. In fact, Latvia's State Forests provides around 300 sites around Latvia that are free to use, plus several with paid-for accommodation and other services. With so much to choose from it's a good idea to plan your trip in advance using the dedicated LVM recreation website as whenever you're at one LVM location there's sure to be another one not far away: [www.mammadaba.lv](http://www.mammadaba.lv).

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this guide is up to date, but the nature of tourist infrastructure in wild and challenging locations is that it will gradually degrade and be subject to wear and tear. LVM regularly maintains all its sites, but it may be that when you visit some things are not exactly as described: for example, sections of a boardwalk might be in need of renovation or a viewing tower may be closed for safety reasons. Please always refer

to the conditions and information provided on the ground: if a sign says something is closed or off-limits, please respect that.

The law says you can venture onto LVM land wherever and whenever you like, provided you respect a few basic rules. LVM land is usually clearly marked by the LVM logo on a yellow plaque, by yellow paint bands on some trees at the edge of LVM land and occasionally by older signs in different styles.

Protected nature areas are off-limits and are signposted accordingly. Similarly, avoid areas where active logging or peat extraction operations are in progress for your own safety. Pay attention to warning signs and information boards, and the advice of any LVM employees, park rangers or other officials you encounter to help maintain a safe and beautiful environment for everyone to enjoy. ▲

## LVM FACTS AND FIGURES



In all, Latvia's State Forests provides 290 recreational areas, 134 boardwalks, 10 cycle paths (125 km long in total) and 90 nature trails (220 km long in total) in bogs and forests in all parts of the country, with more added every year. They are freely available to everyone, including all bog boardwalks and observation towers.

# Bogmark it Now!



This guide is best used in combination with the Latvia's State Forests website dedicated entirely to outdoor recreation ([www.mammadaba.lv](http://www.mammadaba.lv)). There you will see an interactive map giving the precise location of each site as well as an archive of information, much of it provided in English as well as Latvian. You will also find contact details for the various LVM offices, resorts and museums.

Another useful online tool is the LVM Geo Mobile app. It provides very precise maps showing when and where you are on LVM land, what its status is, and many other functions. It is free to download.

## FUN FACT

**Latvia's State Forests**  
has constructed **7,300**  
kilometres of roads –  
that's slightly more than  
the distance from Rīga to  
New York.



## BOG AREA

Did you know that around 5% of Latvia's surface area is bog? In Lithuania the figure is around 4% and in Estonia it is around 6%. As usual, Latvia is right in the middle of the Baltic states! However, you might see different figures quoted – opinions differ regarding what qualifies as 'bog' and what is swamp, mire, moor, wetland etc.

## DO YOU KNOW?

**Latvia's State Forests**  
planted a total of  
**32,575,000** trees in  
**2022. That's more than**  
**89,000** every single day.

## Stay connected

Follow us for all the latest information.

LVM Website: [www.lvm.lv/en](http://www.lvm.lv/en)

LVM YouTube: [www.youtube.com/LatvijasValstsMeziLV](http://www.youtube.com/LatvijasValstsMeziLV)

LVM Geo app: [www.lvmgeo.lv/en/products/lvm-geo-mobile](http://www.lvmgeo.lv/en/products/lvm-geo-mobile)

# How do Bogs Form?

THERE ARE THREE MAIN STAGES OF BOG FORMATION, AND THESE ARE CALLED EUTROPHIC MIRE, TRANSITIONAL MIRE, AND RAISED BOG.



Have you ever stopped to think how a bog becomes a bog? Probably not. But if you give it even a moment's thought, some interesting questions arise. Why isn't it just a lake? Why doesn't it become a river? Why does it look so different to the forest that surrounds it, and why do certain plants and animals appear here that you don't see anywhere else?

There's not enough space here to answer all of these questions, but it's worth learning a few bog basics. There are three main stages of bog formation, and these are called eutrophic mire, transitional mire, and raised bog. Each of these stages has its own water and nutrient conditions and its own flora and fauna, and each stage fades gradually into the next – it's not as if there is a line in the bog where you step from eutrophic mire to transitional mire and another one saying "You are now entering the raised bog". Well, in fact you MIGHT actually read that on one of Latvia's State Forests' information boards as you go along the boardwalk, but it's not quite the same as crossing the state line.

## #1 STAGE

The eutrophic mire is the first stage of bog formation. Plenty of moving water and minerals start the decomposition of dead plants and the formation of a thin peat layer, but the process is incredibly slow. It may take hundreds or even thousands of years for the peat layer to form, depending on the

precise conditions locally. But gradually the peat layer thickens, making it harder and harder for plant roots to reach the mineral soil or groundwater. The eutrophic mire is low-lying – in fact it is lower than the raised centre of the bog, almost like a moat around a hill fort. The dominant tree of the eutrophic mire is the birch.

## #2 STAGE

The second stage as we walk into the bog is the transitional mire. Here, only a few plants can still put down deep roots through the thicker peat layer, but most can no longer access groundwater, so only plants that can rely on rain and snow melt are able to grow. Pines are the dominant tree, but they are not the soaring specimens of the coniferous forest. Here in the transitional zone they are twisted dwarf pines that grow incredibly slowly. A 4-metre tall example might look like a deformed sapling, but is likely to be around 100 years old.

## #3 STAGE

The third and final stage of bog formation is the raised bog. Here plants no longer enjoy any connection with groundwater and mineral soil, and the only source of nutrients is particles in the rainwater and snow. Very few plants can thrive in such demanding conditions, so moss and peat moss dominate and, in effect, dictate everything that happens in the raised bog.



As generations of plants live, die and decompose, the bog surface rises like bread dough rising in a warm bowl. So, when you are standing in the centre of the bog you are actually higher than you were at the bog edge, which may go some way to explaining why the views always seem so spectacular and the horizon looks so unusual.

As with the plants, in each zone of the bog we can expect to see different animals. Around the edges of the eutrophic mire, where the trees are still fairly tall, we might see deer, badgers, foxes, wolves and pine martens. In the transitional mire we may be surprised by the imposing sight or the distinctive call of an elk. If we are really lucky, we might see a bear in springtime when they gorge on cranberries left over from the previous year to give themselves a post-hibernation energy rush, or we might see some wild boar taking a mud bath in the slightly antiseptic pools of the mire. 🌲

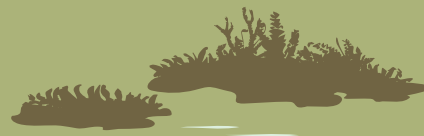
#### BOG-OLOGY!

Do you know what 'telmatology' is?

You do now: it is the name given to the scientific study of bogs (and other wetlands). The word derives from the Greek *telma* (stagnant water) and *-logos* (story or account). Congratulations, you are now a telmatologist!

#### MOSS OF THE YEAR

Did you know that more than **30** different species of moss can be found in the Baltic states?



In Latvia there is even a 'moss of the year', and for 2023 it is the species known as Wulf's peatmoss (*Sphagnum wulfianum*) which can be identified by its top fronds which create a distinctive, round structure. It is found mainly in the north-east of the country growing in damp forests and at the edges of swamps and bogs. You can find out more about mosses at the Latvian Botanical Society's Facebook page Sūnas Latvijā (Moss in Latvia).

# Birds of the Bog




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## GAIDIS GRANDĀNS

Latvia's State Forests  
environmental and  
ornithological expert

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### What is special about bogs as far as bird life is concerned?

Bogs are a very specific ecosystem, so they provide special conditions for very particular species of birds. So if you know in some detail what are the conditions in the bog, you can have a very good idea of which birds you are likely to find there. As many bogs have special protections, they provide safe and secure habitats.

Though we have quite a few bogs, in a wider context our area is quite small compared to say, Scandinavia, but with the general tendency for bogs to be lost or degraded, the importance of the remaining pristine bogs rises.

### What are the most common bird species to look out for in the bog? And what are the rarest?

The most typical birds to find in the bog, both in Latvia and in the rest of Europe are the bog waders: species such as the European Golden Plover, the Wood Sandpiper, the whimbrel, the Black-tailed Godwit. Species with long legs are obviously suited to the bog and wet places.

As for rare birds, unfortunately there are species that have been lost. Whether that is permanent is another question and depends upon things like climate change. Birds are one of the best indicators of this change, for example the Willow Ptarmigan, which changes the colour of its plumage by season. In winter it is white, while in summer it is brown. When you see one of these white birds in winter,

when there is no snow, it is very easily seen – and easily hunted – so it has become very rare. I have been looking for one for several years, though I'm still hopeful that it hasn't disappeared entirely.

Two other species, the Red-throated Diver and Black-throated Diver, used to be seen in bog pools and lakes. Because of climate change and also perhaps changes in bog quality the Red-throated Diver seems to have disappeared. There are still a few pairs of Black-throated Divers but they are increasingly rare.

Another rare species is the Golden Eagle, which has become famous thanks to the nest webcam of Latvia's State Forests. Its habitats have been under pressure, but it has found refuge on the mineral islands located in some of the larger bogs where it isn't disturbed by forestry or other human activity. There are now about ten pairs in Latvia, and happily the trend is now upwards.

### What is the annual cycle of bird life in the bog?

Many of the bog birds winter overseas then return at the end of April and beginning of May – that's when the tempo in the bog really picks up. Nests are quickly built, younglings are hatched and in many cases are strong enough to start flying soon after Midsummer before they migrate again in the autumn.

There are also birds that stay in or around the bog in the forest all year round. We should remember that the bog is a kind of complex, providing different conditions at different times of the year, it's not a single, constant state. It's a wider environment than



just the open raised bog. But birds that stay all year round include the black grouse, which goes through its annual cycle of mating around the fringes of the bog.

### What advice do you have for people who want to go birdwatching in the bog?

I would advise that they use the existing infrastructure, of which there is quite a lot. There are numerous bog trails, some with towers and platforms, some without. I wouldn't advise going away from the provided trails, as this can cause damage, even if it is unintentional. A half an hour excursion into the bog could have long-lasting impact in terms of litter or footprints. So bird-watching towers are probably the best option, allowing you to look over a wide area for a long time without causing problems or being uncomfortable.

I'd suggest starting early in the morning so you can enjoy the dawn chorus and see everything coming to life, or the dusk period before sunset, though activity then isn't quite as much. But in any case, a sunrise or a sunset is always pleasant!

Birdwatching in Latvia is very popular with foreigners. Some are focussed on getting great pictures, while others are more about seeing specific species.

#### RALLY GOOD

In 2018 Gaidis was part of a team that won the annual 'Bird Rally' organized by Latvia's State Forests, the Latvia Birds Fund and website [www.latvijasputki.lv](http://www.latvijasputki.lv). In a 14 hour period, Gaidis' team managed to spot 105 different species of birds, including the rare Short-toed Snake Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*).



We don't have quite the volume of birdwatching attractions as, say, Finland, but we still have plenty to offer.

### Could you recommend a few specific birdwatching locations in Latvia?

Dunika bog and Ķemeri bog are both good, and there's also the Purezers trail. The whole of the Lubāns wetland area, including Teirumņiks bog, is well worth exploring for bird life.

### A stupid question perhaps, but... what is your favourite bird?

Well, yes that is a stupid question (*laughs*) – it's tempting to say that my favourite bird is always the one I am hoping to see next! If I had to pick one I'd say... the Hazel Grouse. From a distance it just looks brown, but when you look closely there are dozens of different tones. I always love seeing them, though it's not easy, their camouflage is so fantastic. ▲

#### BIRD OF THE YEAR



Listen carefully and you might hear a special sound in 2023: the song of the Latvian Ornithological Society's bird of the year! This year the honour goes to the Thrush Nightingale (Latin: *Luscinia luscinia*, Latvian: lakstīgala). The nightingale is around fifteen centimetres long, grey-brown in colour and likes to nest in thick, moist, shady forest, including around the fringes of bogs in hazel groves and shrubs. It returns from its African wintering grounds at the end of April, and is most often heard in May and June. As its name suggests, it can be heard mostly at night, and its distinctive song of clicking, bubbling and whistling sounds can be heard over great distances.

# Much More than Moss – Plants of the Bog

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## VIJA KREILE

Latvia's State Forests  
environmental and  
botanical expert

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Vija Kreile is one of Latvia's State Forests' team of environmental experts. She has been with LVM for ten years, before that working with the Nature Protection Bureau, so her knowledge of Latvia's rare and protected natural habitats is second to none.

Vija leads the way around Lielie Kangari bog with the elegance and assurance of a deer. At times it's hard to keep up with her, such is the speed and enthusiasm with which she moves from one plant to the next.

It's like going to a museum with a history lecturer or going to a football game with a former professional player – they see things you would never have noticed and what's more, they can explain them to you. To put it simply: she clearly knows what she is talking about.

*"This bog is good because it's very accessible. There are many interesting bogs, but often you have to walk for an hour or more through the forest and little trails to reach them, but here the trail starts right by the road, and you get to see a great variety of plants in a relatively small area,"* says Vija.

The first stop is the 33-metre-tall viewing platform which, as Vija explains, allows you to see the general lie of the land and the various different zones of the

bog: the lake, hills, different areas of growth and vegetation. From the viewing platform, it's a bit like looking down on a giant topographical map except, of course, it's a map that moves. The trees down below bend their heads in the breeze, ducks scatter on the lake's surface and far in the distance comes the faint drumming sound of another visitor tramping the slippery boardwalk.

*"There are various types of bog, and each bog has its various types of plants,"* Vija explains, pointing out over the landscape. *"On this side you can see the high bog, which is drier. Over here we have the ordinary bog, which is wetter, and you can see the differences in what grows in this one and that one. There you see reeds, there heather. Next are the bushes, then the trees."*

I might be out of breath after the climb, but she's not and a few seconds later we are back down the steps to start our loop of Lielie Kangari.

Having seen reeds, heather, bushes and trees from far above the ground, we're soon examining them all close up. To reproduce all the information Vija passes on would require several volumes, but it's worth recording her observations on a few of the most typical bog plants.



*“These are vaivariņi (Marsh Labrador tea). They grow around the forest edges of the bog and also in the high bog. If there is a very great number of them, it shows the bog is quite dry. If it’s a very wet, swampy bog, there will not be vaivariņi.”*

A few steps further and Vija stops to indicate another small plant.

*“This is the zīlene (Bog Bilberry), one of the most common berries to find in the bog. They are similar to blueberries, but those are larger.”* I nod in reply, as if I knew that all along. In fact, I have been calling them blueberries for years. Now I know better.

*“And here we can see cranberries, which we will see plenty more of as we go deeper into the bog. There are two different types: the Small Cranberry (sīkā dzērvene) and the Big Cranberry (lielā dzērvene). You can see the difference in the shape of the leaves – the small cranberry leaves have more of a triangular shape. They can get much larger than this.”*

About 500 metres and a dozen mini-lectures on plant life later (sedges, mosses, heathers and some peculiar names such as “wet cat” and “crow’s foot” included), Vija pauses and peers at a small clump of birch trees. *“Aha – it looks as if there has been a fire here at some point. You see these pine tree stumps?”*

*They show that something has been burned, but if it had been a big fire everything would have gone up in flames. Now you can see that birches are growing in a patch among the pines. That indicates that it’s highly likely there was a fire some years ago because the birches are usually the first colonists. But you can see some pines are starting to grow again, too. So sometimes the trees can tell us about a fire that has happened even if no-one saw or documented it.”*

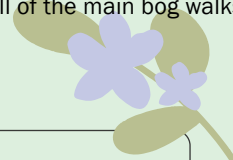
I make a careful mental note of all this so that next time I am in a bog with someone and notice a few straggly birches among the pines I can repeat Vija’s words and sound like a grizzled old woodsman who really knows his trees.

Vija’s love of the bog, the forest and nature shines through everything she says. Even as a girl she says she was always drawn to the forest – an emotion lots of Latvians can relate to. *“It’s better in the forest. Cities are difficult,”* she smiles, and it’s hard to disagree.

Even if you aren’t lucky enough to have Vija or another LVM expert guiding you through the bog, you’ll find plenty to learn about flora and fauna on the information boards of all of the main bog walks in Latvia. ▲

#### ALL KINDS OF ORCHIDS

LIELIE KANGARI BOG ALONE IS HOME TO 24 RARE PLANT SPECIES INCLUDING SEVERAL DIFFERENT ORCHIDS: LADY’S SLIPPER ORCHID, SPOTTED ORCHID, COMMON SPOTTED ORCHID, EARLY MARSH ORCHID, BALTIC MARSH ORCHID, FRAGRANT ORCHID, LESSER BUTTERFLY ORCHID AND GREATER BUTTERFLY ORCHID.



# A Renewable Resource — the Bog Economy

KĀRLIS VOLFS

director of production at  
LVM Zemes dzīles



## Tell us a little about yourself – what is your job at LVM?

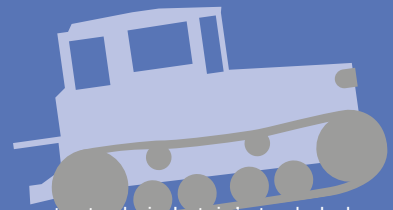
Put simply, I am responsible for the development of the network of minerals (sand, sand-gravel and peat extraction sites), production and recultivation of mineral materials.

I am a transport engineer by education and profession, and this industry is not possible without the use of minerals. Most of my life I've been connected with mineral materials. Bogs have entered my life in the last five years. You could say that until then I was only up to my ankles in bogs (just picking berries), but now I am neck deep in bogs (in a positive sense!) dealing with issues of peat extraction and recultivation.

## Any people will think that a bog is just a 'Dead zone' in economic terms. But what resources does it offer?

A bog is a magical place, it is its own ecosystem with an environment, nature, weather conditions, smell and mood. When you enter the bog, you enter a completely different world. The bog not only provides recreational opportunities, but also provides peat, and when it is extracted, it gives the opportunity to grow seedlings for the forest, seedlings for flowers, and seedlings for fruits and vegetables. Without peat there would be no life.

Of course, we must not forget that the bog also provides jobs, especially in more remote rural regions, contributing to Latvia's export turnover and



playing an important role in Latvia's trade balance. On a global scale, Latvia is the largest exporter of peat substrates, and helps Europe to move towards achieving climate goals. According to statistical data, the peat obtained in Latvia accounts for nearly a third (32%) of the peat used in professional horticulture in the European Union.

## Please give a few examples of how LVM is getting economic value from its bogs.

The benefit of LVM can be seen through the leasing of peat bogs – LVM leases peat bogs to merchants for peat extraction covering more than 16.7 thousand hectares. The second economic benefit occurs after the extraction of a part of the bog has been completed, that is, the further inclusion of the developed bogs in the land management cycle. When the lessee has completed the extraction, the recultivation of the area is carried out, evaluating the best form of further management – whether it is forest cultivation, returning the bog to the natural environment, berry cultivation, or the creation of solar and wind farms.

LVM is the largest lessor of peat bogs in Latvia, so we feel a great responsibility to balance the interests of the environment, economy and society when thinking about climate goals and responsible, efficient management of land, which is our most valuable resource. We are aware that without Latvian peat, several products that we are used to eating on a daily basis would not be on our table at all, nor would there be forest seedlings from which to grow new forests.

## What makes a particular bog worth exploiting for peat extraction? Are there different sorts of peat?

Each peat bog is special and different, just like us humans – each one has its own appearance, manner and character, and the bog also has its own geological structure, ecosystem and water cycle.

In simple terms, peat is divided into two main types – ‘light’ and ‘dark’ peat, but actually these two types can be further divided into about 40 different sub-types. Light peat (high type or moss peat) consists of little decomposed plant remains – sphagnum, cotton grass and pieces of trees. In contrast, the dark peat that usually lies in the lower layers of a peat bog is made up of reeds, sedges and herbs. Each of these types of peat has its own characteristic properties, and if you know them well, it is possible to prepare peat mixtures tailored to the growing conditions of specific seedlings and plants.

For the peat bog to be suitable for production possibilities, of course the basic criterion is awareness of the natural values in the peat bog. The beginning of everything is the assessment of environmental aspects and the setting of conditions for peat extraction, so that the impact on the environment is as small as possible. In LVM bogs in which our environmental experts find important habitats, protected plants or significant changes in the water level, which may affect ecosystems adjacent to the bog, peat extraction is not considered at all.

The next thing that should be paid attention to is how to ensure water drainage, because during the development of the bog, the drainage of the bog is gradually carried out. It is also important to assess the geographical location of the bog, and the distance from ports and production plants, because transport is relatively expensive in the peat production process. Ease of access and the condition of roads is also an important factor. There are several more factors that affect extraction possibilities, too, but all these factors must be evaluated in a joint synergy.

The peat mining industry is a very conservative business, where equipment and extraction techniques have been refined over the years, and new innovations are adopted very slowly. On the other hand, innovations and improvements in production capacity in peat substrate production

plants take place regularly. Currently, peat is used as a resource not only for substrate production, but peat is used in agriculture for the production of garden soil and as an organic fertilizer, and in balneology [the treatment of disease using mineral springs].

Peat extraction is carried out only in about 4% of all Latvian bogs, which in total is a very small part. Taking into account the well-known fact that peat regenerates at a rate of up to 2 mm per year (in bogs where economic activity does not take place) and summing up the annual volumes of peat extraction, the balance of peat as a resource in Latvia is positive, because a smaller amount is extracted than the increase every year.

Everyone has their own place in nature and people, animals, plants and nature have learned to interact with each other. I believe that there are other bogs in Latvia that can be used for extraction (especially those where historically peat was mined for energy purposes), just as there are many bogs that are great for recreation with walkways, opportunities to pick berries, enjoy the smell, environment and majesty that can only be found in the bog. The flora and fauna of the bog, after peat extraction, can be returned almost to its original appearance within about 15 years, which I have verified with my own eyes. Bogs have formed over thousands of years and we have managed them for around 75 years. You could say we humans manages the bog only for a few seconds out of the total time span and we have to do everything so that we return the bog to nature just as we took it.

## Which of LVM’s bogs is your particular favourite and why?

I would choose the Cena bog as my favorite. There you can see and enjoy all the possibilities of the bog, starting from waiting for the sunrise on a SUP board in the bog lake, and ending with long walks in winter. ▲

### Safety first!

Sometimes LVM employees have to deal with off-road drivers and motorcyclists at peat extraction sites and quarries. Driving in these places without a special permit is strictly prohibited and is particularly dangerous in peat mining areas in dry weather when a single spark or discarded cigarette can have catastrophic consequences!



# Morning Magic with the ‘Bog Waders’

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KRISTAPS KIZIKS

‘Bog Waders’ guide,  
geographer and cartographer

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What do you do at 6:45 a.m. on a sub-zero morning in January? Draw the duvet around you and snuggle down for a couple more hours of sleep? No, you strap on some snowshoes and set out into a massive bog to watch the sunrise. That, at least, is the choice of a dozen Latvians who are being led on an early-morning adventure (by Kristaps Kiziks, a guide with the Purvu Bridēji (Bog Waders) tourism company.

Today’s destination is Kēmeri bog, 40 kilometres from Rīga. It is not one of the bogs that comes under the remit of Latvia’s State Forests but its relative ease of access makes it a popular choice and Purvu Bridēji does similar excursions in bogs all over Latvia, including those maintained by LVM.

There are twelve participants in today’s expedition, ranging from young children to bog veterans such as Aivars, who brings his own snow shoes to negotiate the varied, sometimes soft ground of the bog surface what is known as ‘bogshoeing’. The rest of us gratefully use bog shoes supplied by Kristaps.

First up is a safety briefing and some general information. Kristaps is keen to stress that the environmental impact of a dozen people traipsing across the bog should be minimised. *“We’ll stay together, but leave a little distance between you. We don’t want to make deep paths in the bog that will still be noticeable*

*when the spring comes,”* he says. *“Near the start of the trail is a beaver lodge, so when we pass by there, let’s turn off our mobiles and be quiet so we don’t disturb them.”* Indeed, throughout the whole of the next three hours, Kristaps does as much as possible to reduce the evidence we were ever there to an absolute minimum.

After a few hundred metres along a broad trail, Kristaps leading the way with an old-fashioned storm lantern, we are told to strap on our bogshoes. Minutes later we are slowly getting the hang of the things on our feet, stumbling through a strange black-and-white landscape of bushes, snowy patches and muddy spots. The fringes of the bog are the trickiest part. Soon the landscape opens up.

There are larger, frozen ponds and small but old trees on tiny islands, like a vast bonsai garden extending as far as you can see. With the light slowly increasing sadly it is a cloudy day, so we don’t get the golden sunrise that many bog visitors hope for – the space seems to get wider and wider.

Kristaps keeps up a commentary on the things we see, educating us about the plants and animals of the bog, the dangers of sink holes, the delicious berries (there are even a few frozen cranberries left which we nibble for breakfast) and of course, the other people who come to the bog.



*“In the summer there is a thing we call ‘Bottle alley’,” says Kristaps. “Where you get mushroomers and berry pickers, unfortunately you often also get bottles. You can follow a trail of them across the bog, it’s almost like a road has been marked out. A couple of times a year we come and collect as many as we can. Hopefully the new bottle deposit system [recently introduced in Latvia] will mean there are not so many in the future.”*

But isn’t the bog full of biting flies and mosquitoes in summer? No, says Kristaps.

*“You get mosquitoes around the edges of the bog where it is swampy, but out in the middle they are not a problem. They don’t like it here – the water is stagnant and the wide open space means strong winds, so they stay away.”*

Bog excursions have steady popularity he says, and many companies like to book a bog walk as a treat or team-building exercise. Meanwhile, foreign visitors rarely know exactly what to expect and are often pleasantly surprised by the natural beauty of Latvian bogs.

*“We get lots of visitors from Estonia and Lithuania. Last week we led a group of Belgians who had no preconceptions at all and were very impressed. And we recently had a group of Japanese. They loved the bog, but weren’t too keen on walking very far! In contrast, Latvians don’t mind walking a long way, but many of them are still scared of bogs,” smiles Kristaps.*

At one point as we’re crossing a large patch of ice, we hear what sounds like a sudden, loud drumbeat from some distance away. “What was that?” someone asks. There are a few concerned looks.

*“Aha – that means we’re standing a little too close together, our weight is compressing the ice. Let’s spread out a little,”* says Kristaps. Further on, the relatively mild conditions mean that the place we were supposed to cross one treacherous boggy channel is too soft. But with the expert eye of someone who knows the bog well, Kristaps is soon leading us across an alternative crossing point. He’s an excellent example of why you should never venture on such a bog walk alone without an experienced guide. And as he explains, while twelve is a idea number for one guide, if there were a few more people, two guides would be used to prevent bunching and ensure a close eye could be kept on everyone.

They say that time flies when you are having fun. Well, three hours in Ķemeri bog passes amazingly quickly. Soon we are scrambling up sandy banks back towards the car park where we hand in our snow shoes. It was a real adventure – and much better even than staying in bed. 🌲

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#### FUN FACT

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The name ‘Purvu Bridēji’ comes from a popular story, ‘The Bog Wader’ by famous Latvian author Rūdolfs Blaumanis. How many times are bogs mentioned in the story itself? Actually just once – in the title!

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# LATVIA HAS AT LEAST 60 MILLION\* REASONS TO USE PEAT

\* This is the number of tree seedlings sold by the nurseries of JSC 'Latvia's State Forests' every year



The peat accumulates in bogs and is made up of the remains of sphagnum moss and other plants.



MILLED PEAT



CUT PEAT

The peat is extracted as milled peat or cut peat.



Peat is a part of a Nature's life cycle – it returns to the soil along with the plants and seedlings that have been planted in it

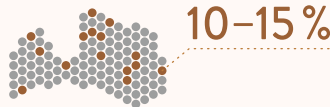


By combining milled and cut peat, it is possible to produce a **premium quality peat substrate** which is used for growing seedlings like vegetables, flowers, mushrooms etc.



The peat layer grows by up to **4 mm every year**

Peat layer in Latvian bogs



Like in Finland, Estonia, Sweden and Canada, peat bogs cover 10–15% of the Latvia's territory.

The bogs are recultivated or restored **after the extraction of peat**. Mainly to restore them as they used to be or to plant a new forest.



As the peat is acidic (approx. pH 3), it is neutralized with dolomite or chalk during the production of substrate. Other substances such as fertilizers, or occasionally clay etc. are added.



The peat substrate is vital for seedlings in **forestry, horticulture and agriculture**.

JSC 'Latvia's State Forests' can grow 7500 pine seedlings in 1 m<sup>3</sup> of peat, which equals 2.5 ha of new pine forest.



To grow vegetables, herbs and other plants, local gardeners use 300,000 m<sup>3</sup> of peat every year.

**300 thousands** m<sup>3</sup>



# The Best Latvia's Bogs to Visit



#01 DUNIKA BOG	
#02 LIELIE KANGARI BOG	
#03 PUREZERS	
#04 NIEDRĀJI-PILKA BOG	
#05 SEDA BOG	
#06 OLERI FEN	
#07 PLANČI BOG	
#08 TEIRUMNĪKI BOG	
#09 VASENIEKI BOG	
#10 AKLAIS BOG	

# #01 Dunika bog

GPS: 56.280761, 21.382563



## GETTING THERE

Its remote location makes reaching Dunika something of a challenge in itself. The bog can be approached either from the north (Dunika village side) or the south (Lithuanian border side). Both approaches are down lengthy forest tracks from the P113 road and are difficult in wet or wintry weather. Trust the LVM map and signposts more than satellite navigation, which has a tendency to get confused in this area.

## WHAT'S THERE

Catch it at the right time – perhaps in high summer or during a winter sunrise – and Dunika bog has a strong claim to be the most beautiful natural location in Latvia. From the southern parking lot, notable for one of very few large stands of beech trees in Latvia (this is about as far north as they grow) a long boardwalk suddenly carries you forward into a vast open space with occasional small pools, dwarf trees and an immense sky overhead.

It is difficult to communicate exactly what is so magical about Dunika. It is something to do with the distant sounds travelling over the bog, the whisper

of the wind, the huge distances that play tricks with the eyes and the astonishing sense of solitude and timelessness. You just have to experience it.

At the start of the trail is a picnic area with a fire pit – a popular spot for visiting school groups – and spaced along the trail itself are numerous resting places. The trail is nearly five kilometres long and is not circular, so it's a case of 'there and back' unless you can get someone to meet you at the other side. With this in mind, be prepared for a considerable amount of walking.

A word of warning: on no account venture off the boardwalk. As well as potentially doing damage to this fragile ecosystem, you are risking never being seen again: legend has it that there are still World War Two tanks somewhere under the surface after they tried to cross Dunika.

The surrounding forests are very rich in wild edibles, as the large number of cars parked by the roadside with Lithuanian number plates will tell you in mushroom-picking season!



## NEARBY

About 5 kilometres north-east of Dunika bog are two separate recreation areas on the picturesque Bārta river which are both maintained by Latvia's State Forests. Both are just off the V1219 road and offer good opportunities for fishing and wild food gathering, yet are little-known and little-visited. Check the mammadaba map to see their exact locations. 🌲

## Ratings (out of 10)

ACCESSIBILITY: 🍊🍊🍊🍊  
 FACILITIES: 🍊🍊🍊🍊  
 WILDLIFE: 🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊  
 FORAGING: 🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊  
 INTEREST: 🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊  
 WOW FACTOR: 🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊



## THOUGHTS

The Dunika bog appears in the writing of much-loved Latvian poet Imants Ziedonis (1933-2013). In his 2002 collection 'No patikšanas uz patikšanu' ("From liking to liking") he says:

*"A beautiful walk along the boards shining in the evening sun in Dunika bog, between crippled pine trees of Japanese design to the bog islands. While my guides went on, I stayed halfway, lay down in the evening sun on the warm boards and listened to the silence of the bog".*

## PROS

Spectacular landscape with views in all directions

## CONS

Requires a full day to visit, and not a loop

## #02

# Lielle Kangari bog

GPS: 56.919927, 24.730319



## GETTING THERE

The Lielle Kangari bog is one of the easiest bogs to reach from Rīga. As the crow flies it is only 20 km from the centre of the Latvian capital, but once you get past Kangari village the P4 (Rīga-Ērgļi) road gets very interesting with a gravelled surface, thickly-forested hills and some sharp bends. It's a picturesque route and attractive for mountain bikers.

## WHAT'S THERE

The first thing you will notice at the Lielle Kangari bog trail is an imposing viewing tower which, unusually, is located right at the start of the trail. At 33 metres tall it is quite a climb but well worth the effort for the fantastic view of the whole bog it gives, allowing you to orient yourself and clearly see the different zones of the nature reserve which covers nearly 2,000 hectares in total. Since 2005, the territory has been included in the NATURA 2000 European network of specially protected natural areas.

The bog trail loop is only 2 km long but is cleverly routed so that it crams a lot of different aspects of the bog into its relatively short length, so you feel you have covered more distance than you have.

Nevertheless, you may want to do the route more than once – it's surprising how different it feels going back the opposite way. In the summer season you may find a small refreshment kiosk by the start of the trail.

There are eight specially protected biotopes here, including five of priority importance. The reserve is home to rare and protected species including 20 plants, 3 mushrooms, 6 lichens, 2 mushrooms, 6 invertebrates, 19 birds and 2 mammals. You can find plenty of information about them at the frequent information boards, while the boardwalk itself is in excellent condition and is a state-of-the-art affair being raised above the surface of the bog instead of resting directly upon it.

## NEARBY

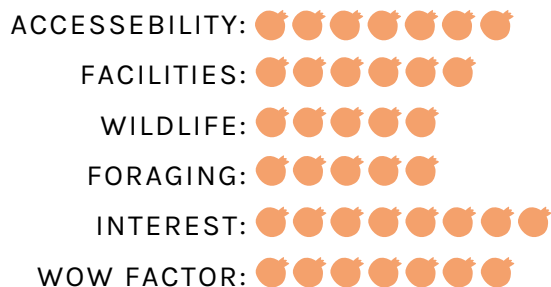
Instead of heading straight back to Rīga, the city of Ogre, 12 km south of Lielle Kangari is well worth a visit. Its brand new library is a wonderful building, there are some pleasant walks along the River Daugava and in the 'Blue Hills' recreation park and it has a surprisingly good range of cafes and restaurants, plus a regular train connection to Rīga.



## LAND OF LEGEND

Lielie Kangari has a particularly large number of stories and legends attached to it. According to one such tale, the sandy hills around the swamp were formed when the Devil was on his way to build Rīga with some bags of sand. Tired from carrying the bags, he took a nap in the bog. Some naughty children saw him there and cut a hole in his bags. When he woke up and continued his journey, the sand trickled from the bags, forming the line of hills you see today. In later times, the area was feared as a popular hideout for bandits and highwaymen who preyed on farmers travelling to and from the Rīga markets. 🌲

## Ratings (out of 10)



### PROS

Just 20 km from central Rīga,  
trail is good in most weathers

### CONS

Busy in high season, limited  
parking spots

# #03 Purezers

Purezers, Brīvēznieku pagasts, Vidzeme  
GPS: 57.679307, 24.927752



## GETTING THERE

Around 90 minutes from Rīga by car. Take the A2 highway and then the P9 main road to Limbaži. Follow the signs towards Aloja on the P13. When you reach the village of Puikule, Purezers will be signposted, but it is a long gravel track to get to the small car park, which has rubbish bins.

## WHAT'S THERE

From the car park follow the signposted boardwalk and forest path a few hundred metres to the circular lakeside trail which is about 3.5 kilometres long. There is a wooden platform at each end of the lake with benches to take in the view, and a place for a fire.

The distance around the mirror-like surface of the lake is modest, but manages to fit in several varied landscapes. Dwarf pines dominate one end with a swamp area further along and larger trees towards the end of the trail. A couple of small bridges are very picturesque. This is a delicate and unspoiled

landscape with great diversity of flora and fauna, so please be especially careful not to leave litter or do damage to plants.

For much of the circular route, the path is quite narrow, but this is an advantage as it encourages you to slow down and enjoy every step of the way instead of hurrying on.

The presence of fishermen tells you some good fishing is possible here (with a permit), and summer brings marvellous displays from dragonflies and damselflies which hatch in their thousands.

## NEARBY

Hikers might like to take advantage of the 'Green railway' hiking route which runs through the village of Puikule, linking Limbaži with Aloja. Following the course of a former railway line, well signposted and closed to motorised traffic it is just one section of a 95-kilometre route going all the way from Lāde in the south to Rūjiena in the north.



EXPLORE THE 'GREEN RAILWAY' ROUTES: [WWW.GREENRAILWAY.EU](http://WWW.GREENRAILWAY.EU)

**VIKINGS BEWARE!**

Catch Purezers on a warm day and you'll be amazed how wonderful it smells thanks to an abundance of wild rosemary. When warm, the leaves give off a rich floral aroma that could match any eau de cologne. To

say it is intoxicating is not just a turn of phrase – the Vikings used to add it to their beer to increase the effects of alcohol, though the price they paid was a terrible hangover. 🌲

**Ratings** (out of 10)



- ACCESSIBILITY: ●●●●●
- FACILITIES: ●●●●●
- WILDLIFE: ●●●●●
- FORAGING: ●●●●●
- INTEREST: ●●●●●●●●
- WOW FACTOR: ●●●●●●●●

**PROS**

Very photogenic, smells amazing on warm days

**CONS**

Narrow path, difficult to reach without own transport

## #04

Niedrāji–Pilka  
bog

GPS: 57.741167, 24.638797

**GETTING THERE**

Niedrāji–Pilka bog is reached from the P12 road (Limbaži–Salacgrīva). Turn into the village of Pāle, from where signposts will lead you to the start of the trail. The road from Pāle to the start of the trail is poor at first, but forestry works in the area by Latvia's State Forests mean it actually gets better as you get closer, with wide gravel tracks. Beware of satellite navigation trying to send you there from the north (Korģene direction). It's reachable that way by foot or mountain bike but not recommended.

**WHAT'S THERE**

The Niedrāji–Pilka bog is an often-overlooked gem in northwest Latvia. The trail itself is short at just 1 kilometre in length, and its end point is a modest 3-metre-tall wooden platform, but it gives an amazingly expansive view, partly because it is located on what appear to be little hillocks or islands in the bog that give a perfect example of why the 'raised bog' has such a name – because the centre is actually higher than the edges.

That also makes it a good place for birdwatching. Niedrāji–Pilka bog is part of the Northern Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, where many bird species can

be found including woodpeckers, larks, grouse, goldfinches and hornbills.

What's more, the boardwalk is in excellent condition for its whole length and there are lots of excellent information boards to help you learn about the bog, its history, flora and fauna. The short length of the walk, and the educational value makes this an excellent bog to visit with younger children, and the little viewing platform is a nice place to sit and enjoy a picnic (remember to take your litter away, please). Salacgrīva and the coast, plus the main A1 north-south highway is only about 14 km away, but sitting on the viewing platform on a nice day with the sun on your skin and the gentle rustle of the wind in the pines, it feels like civilization is a million miles away.

**NEARBY**

The village of Ungurpils is only 9 km from the bog and despite its small size it is a very interesting place. In the days of the Baltic German barons it must have been a very grand place and many traces of baronial times remain, but the most eye-catching sight is the striking modern architecture of the 'SALA' district business support centre and library. It also has a lakeside viewing platform right next to it.





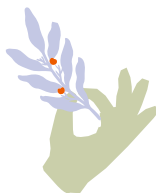
### DON'T FALL IN!

Like many bogs, Niedrāji-Pilka has lots of pretty little pools or ponds (known in Latvian as lāmas). Don't get too close, though – the edges are often no more than floating vegetation and they can be 5 metres deep. Getting out is extremely difficult if you fall in. ▲

### BIRDS' VARIETY

A large number of protected bird species can be found in Niedrāji-Pilka bog: Black Stork, Eurasian Jay, Eurasian Nutcracker, Lesser Spotted Eagle, White-backed Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, yellowhammer, and others.

## Ratings (out of 10)



ACCESSIBILITY: ○○○○○○  
 FACILITIES: ○○○○○○  
 WILDLIFE: ○○○○○○  
 FORAGING: ○○○○○○  
 INTEREST: ○○○○○○  
 WOW FACTOR: ○○○○○○

### PROS

Short route and lots of info makes a good introduction to bogs

### CONS

If there are more than a few people, it feels full up

# #05 Seda bog

GPS: 57.705662, 25.700315



## GETTING THERE

Seda bog trail can be accessed from two sides. It is signposted from the town of Seda, 3 km off the main A3 highway in the east, and from the village of Jērcēni in the west. Particularly from Seda to the start of the trail, the road can be extremely muddy and difficult. Unless conditions are very dry you may be better off leaving your car in the town itself and walking the extra couple of kilometres. Access is difficult from both sides in winter without a 4x4 vehicle.

## WHAT'S THERE

The Seda bog is very different in character to most of the other bogs featured in this guide. It is not, in all honesty, the most picturesque location and it is far from pristine. Nevertheless, it does offer some interesting insights into bogs, their uses and sometimes abuses.

Peat extraction has been taking place in Seda bog – we might justifiably say ‘swamp’ about much of it – for decades, and it is this fact that has altered the landscape in a dramatic way. You will notice numerous large drainage ditches arranged in straight

lines that we never see in other bogs, creating huge, rectangular areas that have been intentionally flooded or drained, and from all parts of the bog you can hear the chugging of the small locomotive that still brings peat out of the bog to this day. Therefore, this is arguably as much a tour of industrial heritage as it is of natural heritage.

In effect there are two separate loops to follow, one that starts close to the town of Seda in the east (4.1 km) and another one from the village of Jērcēni in the west (4.5 km). The eastern trail is more open and industrial in character, while the western one is more forested and natural-feeling. The two loops are connected by a central trail which adds another 2.5 km to the route, so in theory you could hike 15 km, though most people prefer to do one of the other loop.

Each loop has its own viewing tower. In the case of the western loop it is a birdwatching tower that looks out across a flooded marsh with extensive reed beds. It is possible to rent a boat from the nearby Laidavas farm. Away from the tower, about a kilometre into



the trail itself there is a slightly dilapidated but still pleasant picnic place and a section of boardwalk skirting a section of swamp that is probably the most picturesque part of the Seda bog (beware of the bugs in summer!).

The eastern loop follows the narrow-gauge rail tracks to its own viewing tower. Unfortunately, the view is pretty much blocked off by trees to the north, but it is a good photo opportunity if you want pictures of rusting rail wagons and a huge expanse of extracted peat. It's not pretty exactly, but it is certainly atmospheric.

Sadly, there is quite a lot of litter in evidence along the route whether it is pieces of old machinery or

things left behind by inconsiderate fishermen, some of whom have constructed little shacks by the side of the artificial lakes that are unlikely to win any architectural awards. It used to be quite unclear where you were and were not permitted to go, but thankfully the signage has been improved so it is now fairly obvious.

### NEARBY

The strange 'swamp town' of Seda is a relic of a bygone era. Built in 1952, its heavy Soviet architecture feels surreal in this location. It was supposed to be a model settlement for peat workers relocated from other parts of the USSR but following a brief boom, its population has now declined from a peak of 4,500 to around 1,500. ▲

## Ratings (out of 10)



ACCESSIBILITY: ●●●●

FACILITIES: ●●

WILDLIFE: ●●●●

FORAGING: ●●

INTEREST: ●●●●●●●●

WOW FACTOR: ●●●

PROS

Insight into industry in the bog environment

CONS

Can be very muddy, litter is a problem



# Five More LVM Bogs to Visit

WALKING IN THE FOREST IS ENJOYABLE, BUT WITH A BIT OF  
IMAGINATION YOU CAN CREATE YOUR OWN SOUVENIRS TO  
TAKE HOME WITH YOU.



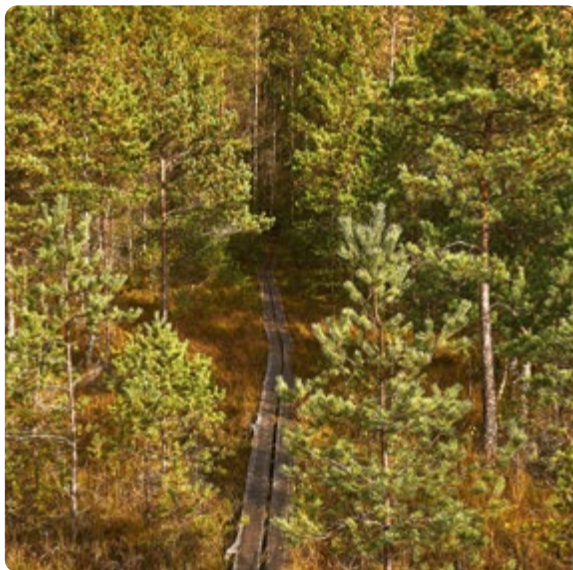
## #06 Oleri fen

GPS: 57.811541, 25.368403

WOW FACTOR: 🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊

Turn off the main P17 road heading north from Valmiera to Rūjiena and after 3 km you'll arrive at Oleri fen. It's fairly small in scale compared to many other Latvian bogs but makes a pleasant stop. The trail here is short, easy and safe, making it suitable for younger visitors. At the time of writing the viewing platform is out of action for renovation but when it is open again it provides a lovely painting-type view of the bog. At the end of the trail is a table and benches that are perfect for a picnic.

Right next to the trail is Oleri Manor, an ancient country house that is open to the public and certainly worth a visit.





## #07 Planči bog

GPS: 57.881380, 24.753566

WOW FACTOR: ●●●●●●●●

This little-known and little-visited bog is about 4 km north of the town of Staicele in northern Latvia. The access road is in a poor state and could be considered impassable to all but 4x4s in the muddy season and unfortunately the trail itself is also in a rather poor condition so caution and suitable footwear are essential. The short boardwalk brings you to a small wooden platform that presents the rugged beauty of this particular swamp, dotted with tiny pools and twisted pines. For lovers of solitude, it is worth the effort.

Staicele to the south is known for its large number of white storks and also has training facilities for the Latvian national football team.



## #08 Teirumnīki bog

GPS: 56.717446, 26.946766

WOW FACTOR: ●●●●●●●●

Latvia's easternmost Latgale region is better known for its lakes than its bogs. Nevertheless, this is where you will find one of the country's most photogenic bogs. Teirumnīki is also among the best bogs in terms of infrastructure with ample parking, toilets, picnic tables and a specially marked cycle route as well as an extremely picturesque boardwalk that skirts Lake Teirumnīki (including swimming places) for part of its length. The surrounding forest is fantastic for berries and mushrooms, and if you look up, you'll notice dozens of bird boxes have been erected for our feathered friends.

Just two kilometres to the north is another fascinating natural wonder – Lubāns, the largest lake in Latvia and a birdwatching hotspot.



## #09 Vasenieki bog

GPS: 57.356616, 22.153650

WOW FACTOR: 🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊

About 20 km from Ventspils on the E22 highway turn north towards Valdemārpils. After another 17 km you will see a sign on the right. It's just a few hundred metres to the bog.

A few years ago, it would have been difficult to recommend Vasenieki to visitors as it was in a poor state of repair. However, after extensive renovation works by LVM in 2021, the Vasenieki bog trail reopened with upgraded facilities, and it's now a great option when you find yourself in Kurzeme region. A completely new 6-metre-tall viewing platform was built and much of the boardwalk leading to it was completely replaced.

Vasenieki bog trail is located in the 'Stiklu purvi' nature reserve, which is the largest expanse of high bogland in Kurzeme and it winds along a very picturesque route.

If you are heading back in the Rīga direction after your visit, consider taking the route via the charming provincial city of Talsi and the old Baltic coastal route towards Jūrmala.



## #10 Aklais bog

GPS: 56.509819, 25.105670

WOW FACTOR: 🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊🍊

Aklais (sometimes also called 'Jūgu') bog is located in Daudzese parish, Aizkraukle district. Take note that it is on the south side of the River Daugava, not the north side where the city of Aizkraukle itself is located. The walking trail is found in the north-western part of the bog and is best approached by heading south from Jaunjelgava – there is no way in from the eastern side. There are signs from the north-south gravel road pointing about 1.5 km down a narrow forest track.

Almost the entire length of the 3-kilometre trail is on boardwalks which are generally in good condition. The entrance and exit to the trail are the same path, but closer to the main lake, the trail forms a small loop and at the lakeside itself is a wooden platform with benches for a rest, though there is no swimming place.

New information signs have recently been installed along the path, allowing you to learn a lot about the bog environment and its plants, berries, birds, dragonflies, and Lake Ģirupe. 🌲

## Stompaku and Īle: last lines of defence

During the years of Latvia's occupation by the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War, Latvia's forests, swamps and bogs became a refuge for freedom fighters known as the 'Forest Brothers' determined to keep the flame of independence alive. One of the best-known examples is the Stompaku swamp, between Balvi and Vijaka in north-eastern Latvia where 24 bunkers and buildings were hidden on remote islands in the swamp that became home to 400 people – in effect, a whole village. Today you can follow a trail to a restored bunker and marvel at the resilience of the freedom fighters.

Latvia's State Forests has restored another partisan bunker – the largest in the Baltic states – at Īle, north of Auce in southern Latvia. Here, National Partisans from both Latvia and Lithuania joined forces to resist the occupiers.



Photo: Artis Veigurs

## Dance, dance, dance!

In 2021 the Ķemeri bog became the scene of a spectacular event. 500 dancers, dressed in traditional folk costumes, danced across the bog at sunrise. It was breathtaking and expressed more powerfully than words what this landscape means to Latvians.



## Bogs and Latvian language

When you say "I'm going to the bog," you might mean you are off for an enjoyable walk in nature or – if you are British – you might mean you are going to the toilet. But English bog slang is small-scale compared to the bog-and-swamp-related phrases in the Latvian language. Here is a choice selection!

Es iebraucu purvā – I drove into the swamp  
(I put myself in a tricky situation)

Es grimstu purvā – I'm sinking into the swamp  
(I'm getting overwhelmed)

Katram savs purvs jāizbrien – Everyone must wade their own swamp  
(Everyone has their own problems to deal with)

Es jau izbrīdu šo purvu – I already waded that swamp  
(I already sorted out that problem)

## Four Seasons

Each season brings something different to life in the bog – and gives you a different reason to visit.

Spring – Snow melt makes it very wet, but you can watch the return of birds

Summer – High temperatures release the intoxicating smells of plants

Autumn – Changing colours of heather and moss make for a stunning sight

Winter – Difficult to get there but the peace and quiet is intensified



## The Right Stuff

There is a good reason why Baltic bogs are the setting for tragic folk tales of people getting lost and sinking into the ooze, never to be seen again – they can be dangerous and even deadly places.

Visitors to the bog should be wary in several different ways. First, make sure you have told someone where you are going and when you expect to return. Second, make sure you are properly dressed and equipped. That doesn't just mean walking boots, a raincoat and a fully-charged mobile – in most cases it should also mean water, food, and a first aid kit as a bare minimum, and for longer trips it might also mean a pocket knife or multitool, map, lighter, extra clothing and an emergency covering such as a poncho or space blanket. One other item worth its weight in gold in the bog is a reliable compass, as it is extremely easy even for experienced hikers to lose their bearings.

Even if you are fully equipped, you will need to remain alert. The bog can be a deceptive environment.

**What looks like solid ground can easily be waterlogged or even a dangerous quagmire.**



What seems like a tempting patch of grass for a picnic can actually be moss on top of a deep, liquid pool. Firm little hillocks that look like stepping stones can dissolve beneath your feet, and on a hot day it might be tempting to plunge into a bog pool – only to discover that a deep or unstable bank makes it impossible to get out again.

Anyone who has ever fallen into a soft spot in a bog (in Latvian these sinkholes are called akači or atvari) will tell you what a terrifying experience it is. The force with which your feet and legs are sucked under and held is shocking and it is hard to resist the temptation to panic and violently struggle, which can actually make things worse.

For this reason it is strongly recommended that you do not venture into the bog alone.



### FUN FACT

**Latvia's State Forests manages 1.62 million hectares of land, and around 7% of that total (113,400 hectares) consists of swamps and bogs.**

## World Wide Bog



Thanks to the 'Purvs' (Bog) webcam provided by Latvia's State Forests, you can make a virtual visit to a Latvian bog from anywhere in the world. Take time out from a stressful day in an urban environment to soak in the live sights and sounds of the bog. If you're really lucky you might even be watching while an elk passes by. See more at LVM's YouTube channel, including other webcams inside birds' nests!

# A Journey Into World of Trees



THE WORLD OF TREES – A GARDEN WHERE THE EVERYDAY BECOMES UNUSUAL AND THE JOY OF MEETING IS ALIVE. THE PEARL OF VIDZEME HIGHLAND – LVM KALSNAVA ARBORETUM. IN THE ARBORETUM PLEASANT REST IS COMBINED WITH EXPERIENCE.








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In the more than 100-hectare garden of the Arboretum, you can get to know a rare collection of Latvian and international trees in one place, gain new knowledge and enjoy the beauty of the various collections. With the change of seasons, just like postcards, garden landscapes also change. Find fortune in the collection of brightly blooming lilacs, swoon in the scent of rhododendrons, wade into the blooming meadow of marigolds and capture a family photo in the peony garden. Arboretum fascinates everyone!

LVM Kalsnava Arboretum – it is a great place to combine peaceful or active rest in nature, viewing the garden with cultural activities, educational or creative activities, as well as celebrations with family and friends. When you climb the 25-meter-high observation tower, you can see the geometric designs of the garden, among them the labyrinth of conifers of the Sun sign, which calls for a playful game. Filled with contrasts and colours is the magnificent green yard.

-  FOR GROUPS AND STUDENTS
-  ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
-  OBSERVATION TOWER
-  WALKING TRAILS
-  RECREATION
-  PICNIC AREAS
-  CULTURAL EVENT





### Do not litter in the forest!

Take out what you bring in!



Campfires may only be lit in **pecially designated areas**. Before you leave, make sure the fire is extinguished.



### Respect nature!



Motor vehicles are not permitted **off the roads**.

## Act responsibly when in the forest!



**Do not drop or leave** any lighted match, cigarette or anything burning.



**Park your vehicle** so as not to interfere with the free movement of forestry machinery and other vehicles!



**Keep pets under control** so that they do not destroy the natural environment or disturb others.



**Do not damage** roads, ditches, or educational and recreational signs and facilities!



Stay safe – **wear bright and visible clothing** when in the forest or on roads, especially in low-visibility conditions.



Do not approach areas where you can see or hear **hunting taking place**.



**Respect others;** do not disturb, annoy or put other visitors at risk.



**When in protected areas,** observe additional requirements and restrictions to protect the environment.



Heed warning signs; do not approach **forest work sites!**

Use **LVM GEO** when planning a walk in the forest – the app indicates roads, recreation areas and other natural attractions as well as protected areas. The app is free of charge.



Forests cover **more than 50%** of Latvia and almost all national and municipal forests **are open to the public**. Exceptions include individual protected areas, military zones, and private property, all of which are marked as prohibited areas.

# “LATVIA’S STATE FORESTS” (LVM) RESULTS IN 2022



**15 700**

CHILDREN AND TEACHERS  
TOOK PART IN LVM  
EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAMMES

**113.2**

million EUR  
PAID INTO STATE  
AND LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
BUDGETS



**295**

TOURIST LOCATIONS  
IN LVM FORESTS

**339** km OF FOREST ROADS CONSTRUCTED

**409 964** ha

OF FOREST LAND WITH  
SPECIAL NATURE PROTECTED  
STATUS



**11.3**

million m<sup>3</sup>  
WOOD GROWN  
IN LVM FORESTS

**17.7**

thousand ha  
OF DRAINAGE SYSTEMS  
RENEWED

**6.6**  
million m<sup>3</sup>

OF TIMBER  
SUPPLIED TO  
LATVIAN NATIONAL  
ECONOMY



**1.6**

million m<sup>3</sup>  
SOLD MINERAL  
MATERIALS

**61.4** million  
FOREST TREE  
PLANTS GROWN



**28.6**

thousand ha  
OF YOUNG STANDS  
TENDED



**32.7** million  
NEW TREES PLANTED  
IN LVM FORESTS



**LATVIJAS VALSTS MEŽI**

PLANTS • WOOD • RECREATION