



mammadaba

It means Mother Nature.
And it's true.



NATURE SENSES

Fun forest makes.
Use your imagination!

TOP 10 SITES

Catch the sense:
viewing towers, nature trails
and bog trails

GOOD TO KNOW

How to enhance your
experience in nature with
your cell phone



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Let's make sense

Nice to see, hear, smell, touch, taste you!

There's no doubt that Latvia's huge, rich forests are a very memorable sight. But they are so much more than that and have the potential to create a powerful impression on all five of our senses. Our modern world is often dominated by the visual dimension: TV, computer screens, advertising billboards. Many of us head to the forest in an effort to escape such things. When we do, strange things can start to happen. We start to realise that the world isn't quite as visual as we thought, or rather, that our other senses are no less powerful, though we often neglect them.

So this guide is an invitation to open all your senses to what the landscapes managed by JSC “Latvia's State Forests” have to offer. Think of it as multiplying your experience by a factor of five. It also provides a good reminder that people with visual, hearing or mobility restrictions can get just as much from a visit to the forest as anyone else.

I look forward to seeing and hearing you in the forests – though on second thoughts maybe we will draw the line at taste, touch and smell!

How This Guide Works

IN THIS GUIDE YOU'LL FIND SOME SUGGESTED PLACES TO VISIT, ALL OF WHICH ARE LOCATED ON LAND OWNED AND MAINTAINED BY JSC "LATVIA'S STATE FORESTS" (LVM).

You're welcome to visit the places we describe in this guide, but at the same time there are plenty more in addition to this selection. In fact, LVM provides almost 300 sites around Latvia that are free to use, plus several offering paid-for accommodation and other services. With so much to choose from it's a good idea to plan your trip in advance at 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.

We've also thrown in a few fun activities and exercises you might like to try in order to open your senses to what's out there. If you have similar tips and tricks to offer, we'd love to hear from you!

The law says you can venture onto LVM land wherever and whenever you like, provided you

respect the basic rules that apply. LVM land is usually clearly marked by the LVM logo on a yellow background, by yellow paint bands on some trees at the edge of LVM land and occasionally by older signs in different styles.

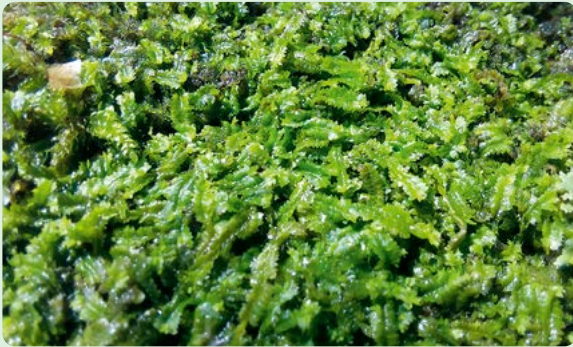
Protected nature zones are off-limits and are signposted accordingly. Similarly, avoid areas where active logging operations are in progress for your own safety. Pay attention to warning signs and information boards that are frequently provided by LVM, and the advice of any LVM employees, park rangers or other officials you come across. Occasionally it may be necessary to temporarily put LVM facilities off-limits for safety, epidemiological or other reasons. Again, please comply with such regulations to help us provide a safe and beautiful environment to everyone.

THE FIRST TIP: SING TONE RING TONE



Want to guarantee your mobile phone ring tone is unique and brings a smile to your face every time you hear it? Here's a suggestion: next time you are stopped in your tracks by the beauty of birdsong, record what you hear and set it as your ringtone. We recommend a few seconds of the "morning chorus" when all of our feathered friends are at their loudest as the perfect ringtone. You could take it one stage further - how about a real tweet as your Twitter notification sound?

Nature Notes



Wort a Surprise!

01

The experts at JSC “Latvia’s State Forest” (LVM) know the forests in their care well, but even they are constantly making new discoveries. An eagle-eyed LVM environmental expert Ilze Kukāre noticed an unusual-looking small plant in western Vidzeme that she could not immediately identify. After some diligent research she discovered it was a type of liverwort known in English as “Turpswort” *Geocalyx graveolens* that grows in black alder groves and swampy birch forests, but which had never been recorded in Latvia before.

QUESTION

**Can you guess
how it got its name?**

Answer: When the plant is touched it releases a smell similar to turpentine.



Carved in Stone

02

It’s not just interesting flora and fauna that get discovered on LVM land. In 2021, a woman out for a walk in LVM forest in northern Latgale noticed a large stone in a drainage ditch with letters carved in its side. Local history buffs were called in, who measured it at 9.22 cubic metres. In Latvia, large stones with a volume of over 10 cubic metres are considered to be natural monuments of national significance, and over seven cubic metres of local significance. Experts believe that the O, P and cross marks engraved in its surface suggest that the stone may have served as a geodetic survey point or boundary marker, possibly connected with a manor house that used to stand nearby.



Don't Be a Firebug!

03

In warm and dry weather, the fire risk in forests increases a lot. From the beginning of May, the State Forest Service has established an annual forest fire-fighting period when extra care must be taken. LVM calls on nature lovers and tourists alike to behave responsibly in the forest and comply with the requirements of fire safety regulations. Do not throw away burning or smouldering matches or cigarettes, light fires only in specially designated places that prevent fire from spreading, and never leave a burning fire unattended. It is also forbidden to drive motor vehicles off-road through forests and swamps during this time.



Cūkmens Cleans Up!

04

If you happen to see a large man in a pink pig costume travelling through the forest at high speed, do not be alarmed – he is very friendly. Unless of course you happen to be dropping litter, in which case you should be very alarmed indeed, because there is nothing our crime-fighting, eco-friendly superhero Pigman (Cūkmens) hates more than litter louts! His mission is to keep Latvia's state forests clean and safe, and you can help him.



Famous Fountain Rises Again

05

After recent renovation works, the old fountain of Skrīveri Dendrological Park will once again delight visitors this year. The fountain is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and is turned on for half an hour at regular intervals. Skrīveri Dendrological Park was established by Maximilian von Sivers, who in 1897 constructed the fountain in front of his newly-built castle. It initially received water from Kalnamuiža Lake through carved wooden pipes. Unique plantations of foreign trees grow in Skrīveri Dendrological Park, making a visit like a trip around the whole northern hemisphere.



Your Mobile – More than Social Media

HARDLY ANYONE VENTURES OUT THESE DAYS WITHOUT THEIR MOBILE PHONE/CELL PHONE, THOUGH THERE ARE PROBABLY TIMES WHEN EACH OF US WISHES WE DIDN'T HAVE IT WITH US.

That call back to the office or reminder about an unimportant appointment you had conveniently forgotten in order to sneak off to the woods can be most annoying. On the whole though, it's good to have your mobile with you. Most obviously, this is so that in case of an emergency you can call for help, or if your plans change you can let people know so that they don't start to worry.

And while Latvia's mobile phone coverage is generally excellent, bear in mind that out in the wild you can still find yourself in places with a weak signal. It's still a good idea to let other people know where you are going and when you expect to return.

However, there's much more to your mobile than staying in touch and emergency response. Right there in your pocket you are carrying an amazing variety of resources that you can use to enhance your experience of Latvia's forests. Here are just a few suggestions.

CAMERA

This one is obvious. Who doesn't like to take pictures of pleasant landscapes and happy times? But it's worth getting to know your mobile's camera functions beyond "point and shoot". With imaging metadata

turned on you can keep an instant and accurate record of the time, date, and location of images you record. This in turn can be a useful resource, particularly if you capture an image of a rare bird, plant or animal. You can even report sightings to websites such as www.dabasdati.lv and help contribute valuable research data.

TORCH

Another fairly obvious one. How deep is that cave? Is there water at the bottom of that well? Where did I drop that car key in the dark? You won't know without your torch.

SOUND RECORDER

There are nearly as many uses for a sound recorder as there are for a camera. Record a commentary of your walk through nature to relive the experience at a later date or turn it into a podcast. If you get a great idea while you are out walking or cycling, make a voice note so you don't forget it. Online libraries of many minutes or hours "soothing" sounds are very popular among city dwellers these days. Instead of relying on these, why not record your own? Crackling fires, birdsong, the wind in the trees, a babbling stream, the opportunities are limitless.

Use LVM GEO Mobile to:

1. PLAN YOUR ROUTE ON LVMGEO.LVM.LV, EXPORT IT AND UPLOAD TO YOUR LVM GEO MOBILE APP
2. SEE YOUR LOCATION ON MAP
3. FIND INTERESTING PLACES TO VISIT
4. SWITCH BETWEEN DIFFERENT BASEMAPS
5. TURN ON DIFFERENT DATA LAYERS AND LEARN ABOUT THE TERRITORY/ SURROUNDINGS
6. ROUTE TO ANY LOCATION ON THE MAP



GPS & EXERCISE APPS

Want to know exactly where you went, how far you walked, how many steps you took, how many calories you burned? Numerous apps will provide this data. It can be quite interesting to analyse and compare data from different routes. Did that long, flat hike actually require more effort than the short, steep one? Such apps are also useful for setting targets as part of a training program if you are considering tackling a long-distance hike such as the Baltic Coastal Hiking Route or the 1000 kilometre Latvia-Estonia Forest Trail. Many people like to complete such long-distance routes as a series of day hikes and here again your mobile can provide a record to prove you did actually do it!

MAGNIFIER

Don't have a magnifying glass with you? No problem, most mobiles come with some sort of magnification ability. Whether it's helping to identify a species of beetle or removing a tick from a hard-to-see spot such as the back of your legs (let's keep it polite) this can be a useful feature.

THERMAL IMAGER

Your mobile may not be able to "touch" things for you, but it can give you interesting sensory

information related to the sense of touch. How hot is that hot campfire? How cold is that ice floating by in the river? Where exactly are the draughts in this tent coming from? An increasing number of modern mobiles have thermal imaging capabilities.

ONLINE FIELD GUIDES

Gone are the days when, if you saw a curious mushroom, an unusual moss or bizarre berry in the forest you would have to remember what it looked like and try to identify it from a field guide when you got home. Provided you have a strong enough signal, you can now access online field guides on the spot for an instant identification. A website such as www.natureguides.com is a good place to start.

APP FOR NATURE LOVERS

We have to mention this one. JSC "Latvia's State Forests" (LVM) has its own downloadable app named "LVM GEO Mobile" which allows you to orient yourself precisely in the field using GPS technology. The app provides variety of maps and geospatial information as well as rich functionality. LVM GEO Mobile application is available for free on iTunes, Google Play Store and Windows Store. It is particularly useful for seeing where the borders of LVM land are so that you don't accidentally wander where you shouldn't go. 📍



Fun Forest Makes

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

SOUND

Sound Stick Concerto

Here's a little game any number of people can enjoy, young and old alike. The rules are simple: during your walk in the forest, everyone must pick up a stick from the forest floor (no cutting of trees, please). Then, as you walk along, each of you takes it in turns to use the stick to make a different sound, with the other players acting as judges. You get ten points for every successful new sound, and five points for a partial success.

JOKE

Q. WHAT DO YOU CALL A BOOMERANG THAT WON'T FLY BACK TO YOU?

A. A STICK.

For example, one person might strike their stick against another's to score points.

You are allowed to modify your stick, attach things to it, and alter it in any way. Create a rasping sound by putting notches in the side and rubbing it, or put a hole in the stick and whirl it around to make a whistling sound. Put a tin can on top to make a rattle. You can even split your stick in two to make drumsticks. You can get different sounds from striking hardwood, softwood, deadwood and greenwood, rocks, earth, sand, metal railings. You can splash water, you can stir it... the variations are endless. At the end of your walk, you all gather together add up your scores and declare the winner. To mark the occasion, everyone has made as many sounds as they can for thirty seconds. The winner's prize: a stick!

TASTE

Chop Some Chopsticks

A bucketful of berries or a basket of mushrooms are the sort of taste of the forest that most Latvians look for. But to gather such foods you need to know exactly what you are looking for and they need to be in season. But here's a fun little project that will give you a taste of the forest even in the darkest days of winter: home-made chopsticks.

You could just pick up two individual twigs of about chopstick size, but these will tend to be weak, brittle and consist mainly of bark and pith (the weak

The Golden Rules

#01 NEVER GATHER RARE PLANTS

#02 NEVER GATHER WHOLE PLANTS, ONLY SMALL PARTS

#03 NEVER GATHER PLANTS IN A NATURE PROTECTION ZONE

#04 NEVER GATHER PLANTS OF PRIVATE LAND

#05 NEVER DIG UP PLANTS

material at the centre of all woody growth). For a much better result, find a straight stick a little thicker than your thumb and about as long as from your wrist to elbow. Split or "baton" it vertically into four sections with a strong knife or small axe. You'll have four sticks with a roughly triangular profile.

Now it's just a matter of whittling away the soft pith on the inside and the bark on the outside to expose the true wood beneath, and carrying on to shape your chopsticks however you want them. You can add notches, decorations, your name or anything else you want.

You should get at least one pair out of each selection of four sections and, if you're lucky you'll even have a spare pair to give to someone else. This is a project that kids in particular will love to do – just make sure you are carrying a packet of noodles in your pocket so they can use them right away!

For a long-lasting pair of classic chopsticks that won't have any "taste" use dry hardwood such as maple or oak. If you use a stick that is still "green" or made from softwood such as pine or spruce, the chopsticks will not be as strong and will have a noticeable taste of their own when you put them in your mouth, which you might not like.

SMELL

Forest Pot Pourri

Have you ever noticed how often the most expensive perfumes and colognes list forest items as ingredients and the "notes" that make up their distinctive fragrances? Moss, birch bark, cypress,

juniper, apple, wild strawberries, grass, even woodsmoke frequently feature on their packaging and advertising.

But you don't need to pay Chanel or Dior prices to experience the delightful aromas of the forest. Here is an easy idea to bring the smell of the forest into your home by creating a "Pot pourri". Don't be put off by the fact that in French it literally means "rotten pot"!

Next time you wander through the forest, take a clean cotton bag with you (a reusable shopping bag is ideal). Be on the lookout for any small items to add to your "pot pourri" ingredients, which can include: leaves (particularly of berry plants), berries (including rose hips, rowan berries), petals (e.g. dog rose, camomile) moss, bark fibres (cypress, juniper), acorns, pine cones, spruce needles, resin etc.

Place the ingredients on a sheet of paper in the sun to dry for a day. Mix them gently. You can place the mixture in small muslin or linen bags and use as drawer fresheners, or you can put it in small bowls to freshen up different parts of your house. A third option is to save some of the "pot pourri" mixture for the winter, then empty it into a small metal container to place on top of your woodstove or radiator. As it heats up, it will release a wonderful smell that will take you right back to summer in the forest!

SIGHT

Framed by Nature

The usual way of doing things is this: we go into nature and take photos of it with high-tech devices. Let's flip that on its head and use what artists call *objets trouvés* or "found objects". When you're on an expedition in the wild, keep your phone in your pocket. Make an effort not to constantly check your messages and notifications, instead concentrating your attention on finding something in the natural environment that you can use as a frame or prop in future photographs.

Perhaps a large leaf with a hole in it? A hollow log? A makeshift frame made of sticks or bent twigs? A piece of rope found on the ground? When you're back in the city, try taking pictures of the urban environment incorporating this object provided by nature.

The results might be unexpected (or they might not), but they will certainly get you thinking about and comparing the environments in which we live.



TOUCH

Leaf Bag Challenge

Here's another simple game to play in the forest or when you get home. Collect a variety of different leaves from trees: oak, maple, birch, alder, spruce and pine needles etc. The more the better, but you will want at least two examples of each to make things interesting. Place them all in a fairly large bag such as a fabric shopping bag and shake them up.

Now each player in turn must put their hand into the bag and take hold of a leaf. They must say out loud what leaf it is. When they pull their hand out, everyone sees if they were right or wrong. If they were right, they get another go. If they were wrong the bag moves to the next player. The winner is the person who pulls the last leaf from the bag and guesses it correctly.

You can also play the same game with pieces of bark, and you'll find that both variations will improve your ability to correctly identify trees in the field. 🌲

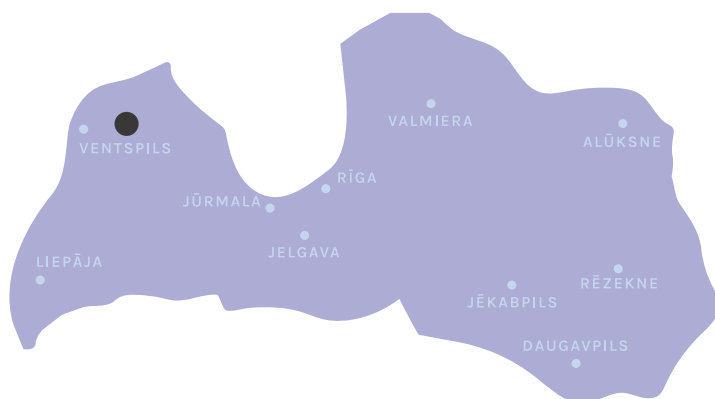
TOP 10 Sensational Sites



#01 VASENIEKI BOG TRAIL AND VIEWING PLATFORM	
#02 VIESATA RIVERBENDS NATURE TRAIL	
#03 BIRD-WATCHING TOWER AT LVM TĒRVETE RESERVOIR	
#04 ZVIRGZDE WHITE DUNE	
#05 GREAT KANGARI VIEWING TOWER	
#06 RIVER LĪGATNE NATURE TRAIL	
#07 PUREZERS TRAIL	
#08 RIVER ABULS "LOVE TRAIL"	
#09 ANČUPĀNI VIEWING TOWER	
#10 GREBĻUKALNS TRAIL	

#01 Vasenieki bog trail and viewing platform

Puze parish, Kurzeme GPS: 57.3617100, 22.1506469



GETTING THERE

About 20 km from Ventspils on 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.

WHAT'S THERE

After the completion of repair works in 2021, the Vasenieki bog trail reopened to visitors with considerably upgraded facilities. A completely new dual-level viewing platform was built and 865-metres of the 2.5 km boardwalk you walk to reach it was completely replaced.

The viewing platform is located in a very difficult, soft and swampy place for construction, so the "floating" foundations of the previous observation tower were used for the new platform, which allows them to enjoy a pristine bog landscape from a height of 6 metres. As a result of the JSC "Latvia's State Forest" (LVM) renovation work, the formerly rather sad-looking trail has been completely revived and is a really great place to visit again.

Vasenieki bog trail is located in the "Stiklu purvi"

nature reserve, which was established in 1977 and is the largest complex of high bogs in Kurzeme. The total length of the nature trail is 4 kilometres and it winds along picturesque marsh bogs, which provide suitable habitats for many birds.

SENSATIONS

As with most bog and swamp landscapes, there is a stillness here that is magical and otherworldly. The sound of your feet rhythmically tramping the boardwalk seems to be the only sound in the world until the far-off call of a bird or the groan of an elk stops you in your tracks. In spring and summer, the smell of heather and moss, and the rich aroma of peat, water and grasses creates an almost overpowering perfume.

WHAT'S NEARBY?

If you are heading back in the Rīga direction after your visit, instead of retracing the way you came, consider taking the route via the charming provincial city of Talsi and the old Baltic coastal route towards Jūrmala. There is some beautiful forest along the way as well as stretches of refreshing coastline and stalls selling delicious smoked fish. 🌲








Long Distance Trails

If you're one of those people who has to be close to the sea, the Baltic Coastal Hiking Trail is a long distance hiking route, part of the European E9 route, along the Baltic Sea coast that starts at the Lithuanian-Latvian border in the village of Nida in Latvia and finishes at the port of Tallinn in Estonia. The total length of the route is 1,200 km, of which 580 km are in the territory of Latvia. The Baltic Coastal Hiking Trail consists of 60 separate sections of single-day hikes.



Ratings (out of 10)

- SIGHT: 
- SOUND: 
- SMELL: 
- TASTE: 
- TOUCH: 

PROS

Tranquil beauty and fully renovated

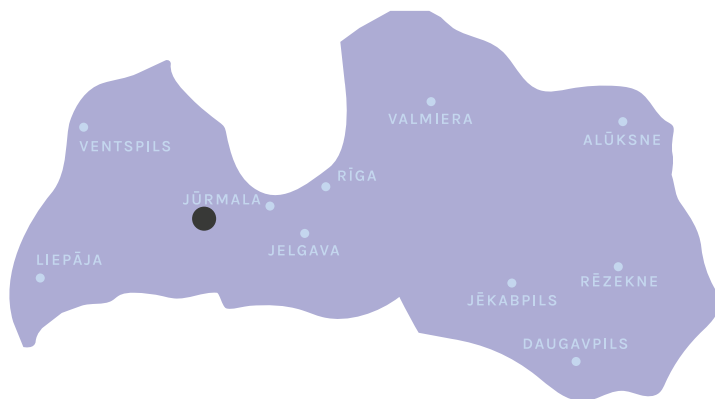
CONS

Not suitable for wheelchair users

#02

Viesata riverbends nature trail

Irlava parish, Zemgale GPS: 56.82316, 22.97218



GETTING THERE

You can find the start of the trail near the “Kraujas” farmstead close to the confluence of the Rivers Viesata and Prūsene. The road is not asphalted but can be reached from the main P104 highway turn off at “Pētertāle”.

WHAT'S THERE

A winding path that leads along the banks of the River Viesata, which despite being in deepest Zemgale includes some hilly terrain. With a total length of just over 8 kilometres, the full route (marked by a red line on trees) is a fairly substantial hike that will likely take from 3 to 4 hours to complete. Luckily, JSC “Latvia’s State Forests” (LVM) has provided several benches and observation decks along the path which are nice places to take a break or enjoy a picnic, so you can either do it as a high-intensity hike or a leisurely stroll. If that still sounds a bit too much, a shorter alternative route is marked by a yellow line and a green line marks the quickest route back to the start.

As well as a wealth of animal, bird and aquatic life

there are some very old pines (up to 200 years) and outcrops of sand, clay and pebbles. Be aware that in wet weather parts of the trail can be slippery, so at such times suitable shoes with a good tread are recommended.

SENSATIONS

Birdsong and the sounds of the river are obvious attractions, but try picking up a few of the different stones and pebbles and comparing how they feel in your hand as well as noting their colours and the way they feel. How do you think they gained their shapes? In spring and summer, listen for insects, particularly the drone of hoverflies and delightful sound of dragonfly wings.

WHAT'S NEARBY?

Not too far away is Jaunpils, where you will find one of Latvia’s most impressive castles. Dating from 1301, it has retained its medieval appearance and been sympathetically restored, with an excellent museum, beautiful gardens and its own tavern. It is open to visitors who can even book a room and spend a night in style. 🌲



GOOD TO KNOW

Wet and muddy places are favored by **WILD BOARDS**, who use them for mud baths.

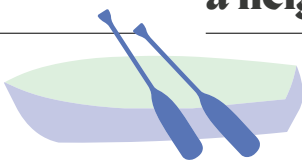
An anthill can be used as a compass in the forest - ants usually build it on **THE SOUTH SIDE OF A TREE**.

Joints of branches for deciduous trees are called **WIND BROOM**, and for conifers - **WITCH'S BROOM**.





INTERESTING FACTS


The River Viesata is **41 km** long and has an average width of about **5 m**. In some places, the steep banks of the river can reach a height of up to **12 m**.





Ratings (out of 10)

SIGHT: 

SOUND: 

SMELL: 

TASTE: 

TOUCH: 

PROS

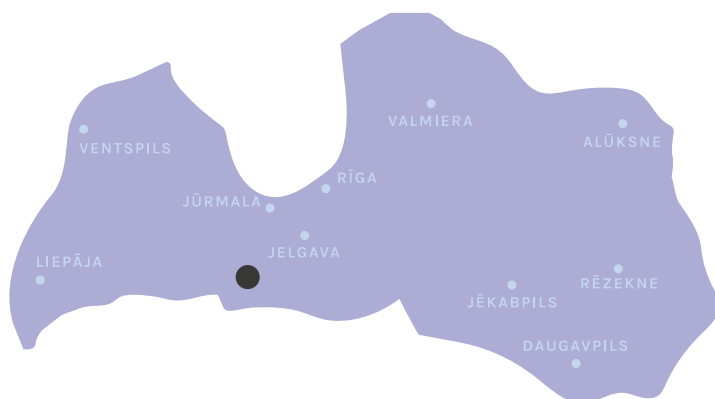
Opportunities to do long or short routes

CONS

Can get very muddy

#03 Bird-watching tower at LVM Tērvete reservoir

Tērvete parish, Zemgale GPS: 56.503221, 23.404912



GETTING THERE

Access is simple. The nature park is located just north of Tērvete village on the main P103 highway and only a minute or two away from another main road, the P95. It is well signposted and has ample parking. Inside the park itself there is clear and helpful signage everywhere.

WHAT'S THERE

The bird-watching tower provides facilities for bird and nature watchers. The tower itself is ten metres high, with two separate viewing platforms. The first platform is open to the elements and three metres up, while the second is closed and six metres up. The tower overlooks a reservoir and vast landscape and offers the opportunity to watch and listen to a huge variety both waterfowl and other birds.

In fact, if you are in the mood for towers, you'll find two more very close at hand within LVM Nature park in Tērvete, which you could almost think of as a huge, natural theme park of the senses. There is an animal observation tower used as part of LVM's school

education activities, and an architecturally spectacular 39-metre-tall observation tower with a 25-metre-wide viewing platform built in 2015. There are countless other things to do here, too, with many activities designed with children, families and people with special needs in mind.

If all that sounds like too much to take in during a single day, there's good news: LVM also provides options for overnight stays whether it's "glamping" in a luxury tent or hiring a Hobbit-like cabin.

SENSATIONS

The structure of the bird-watching tower sometimes seems to act as a "sound box", trapping the cries and calls of our feathered friends, so that it feels as if they are close at hand, even when you are watching through binoculars. And it's not just their cries – enjoy the splashing of ducks and swans as they splash down on the water, the beating of wings and the whoosh of the air as they swoop overhead. You might even want to talk to your fellow bird-watchers.

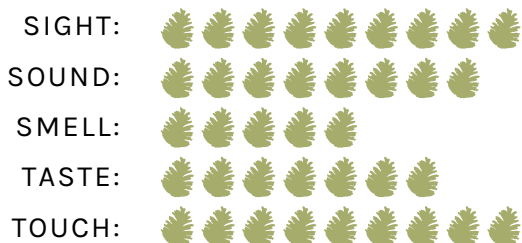


WHAT'S NEARBY?

At more than 1200 hectares, LVM Nature Park in Tērvete is so large and well organized you can easily spend a day or two here. There are playgrounds, paths, cycle trails, a net park, audio guides, a butterfly house, a very impressive visitor centre and several cafes and kiosks offering refreshments. 🌲



Ratings (out of 10)



INTERESTING FACTS

The tallest observation tower, at **39 metres** high, is located in the LVM Nature Park in Tērvete.

Nationwide, in the land managed by JSC "Latvia's State Forests" you can climb seven different observation towers and enjoy some spectacular views.

PROS

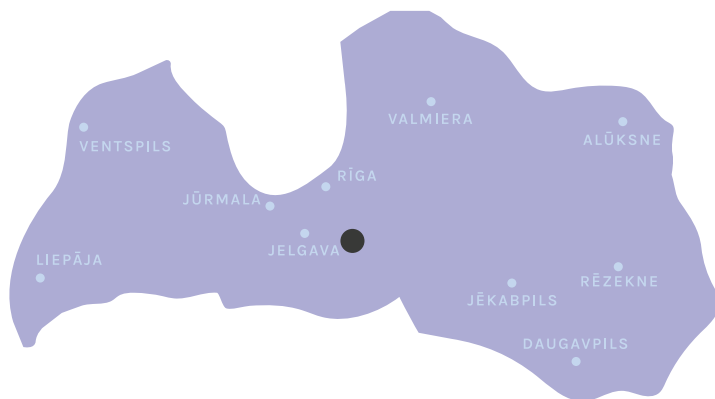
Easy access, family friendly

CONS

Can get busy on a sunny summer's weekend

#04 Zvirgzde White Dune

Vecumniekl parish, Zemgale GPS: 56.65969, 24.48121



GETTING THERE

The site is best approached by turning off the P89 road just north of the village of Zvirgzde. Then it is approximately 4 kilometres of forest tracks until you reach the White Dune. Take note – there are several “White dunes” in Latvia, so if you are using satnav, make sure you input the correct one!

WHAT'S THERE

This unusual site has one of the highest inland sand dunes in Latvia, with many tales to tell from history and folklore. Rising to a height of nearly 33 metres, it feels considerably taller as from the top far-reaching views can be enjoyed in all directions. It is just short uphill walk from the car park to the top of the dune but it is steep and sandy, so some people may experience difficulties.

Opened in 2020, the site has some felled areas around it which can look a bit bare, but remember this is a managed, growing landscape. Come back each year to see how it changes over time.

There is a picnic area beside the car park, while on top of the dune itself LVM has provided a wooden

viewing platform to help reduce erosion from the tread of thousands of feet. If you happen to be in the area on September 22, Baltic Unity Day, you will be in for a real treat for the senses as the locals gather on top of the hill with flaming torches for song and dance to commemorate the Battle of the Sun in 1236 when the united Baltic tribes defeated the mighty German crusading knights.

SENSATIONS

An information board provides details of the local species and habitats, with juniper bushes to be found in significant numbers. Rub a few sprigs or berries between your fingers to enjoy the wonderful smell of fresh juniper. The exposed summit of the dune brings the smell of pine on warm days. You might also like to feel the fine, almost white sand which gives the dune its name, but please don't dig any up and don't use any vehicles except in the permitted areas, to preserve this delicate wonder for others.

WHAT'S NEARBY?

The village of Vecumnieki tends to get overlooked, with most people just rushing through it on the main P89 road down towards the Lithuanian bor-



JUNIPER BUSHES

der. That is a pity, as it's definitely worth a stop for the "SidrabCeramics" ceramics workshop and the bizarre but wonderful "Jūras" – a sort of miniature wooden village constructed by one man in his spare time. ▲



CAPERCAILLIE

INTERESTING FACTS

One of the natural wonders found around Zvirgzde White Dune is the capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* – a very rare bird in most of Europe. In Latvia, 90% of capercaillie habitats are located in forests managed by JSC "Latvia's State Forests".



Ratings (out of 10)

SIGHT:	10 icons
SOUND:	6 icons
SMELL:	10 icons
TASTE:	5 icons
TOUCH:	8 icons

PROS

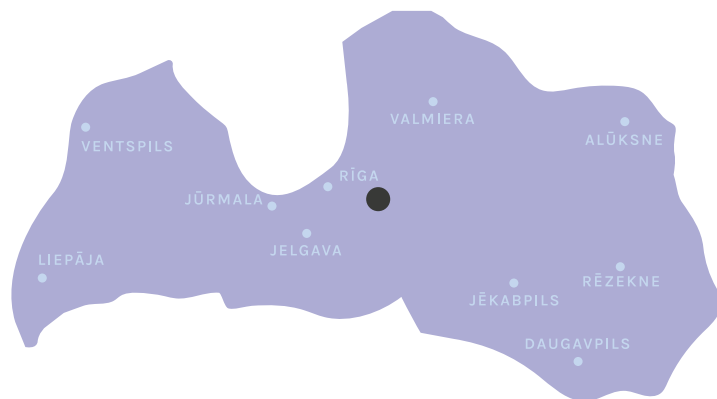
Good for a quick dose of fresh air and exercise

CONS

People with reduced mobility may struggle on the slope

#05 Great Kangari viewing tower

Ropaži parish, Vidzeme GPS: 56.919864, 24.729162



GETTING THERE

It's hard to believe the peace and natural beauty of this location is only just over 30 kilometres from the throbbing heart of Rīga. Reaching it is simple: just head east on the P4 road all the way. The start of the trail is signposted and starts right next to the main road – no extra driving required.

WHAT'S THERE

This striking 33-metre-tall observation tower is located in the “Lielie Kangari” nature reserve. At the top of the tower there is a good-sized viewing platform overlooking Lake Kangari, the Great Kangari Swamp and mature pine forest. Part of the attraction here comes from being able to take in such different landscapes all at once.

A boardwalk nature trail of about two kilometres in length lets you explore boggy areas that would otherwise be completely inaccessible. To inform and educate visitors along the entire trail, there are also information stands with photos that combine stories

and legends with more practical information in a very enjoyable way.

SENSATIONS

Despite the name, it's unlikely you'll see any kangaroos, but on all but the stillest days you'll feel the force of the wind, so it's advisable to put any headgear in your pocket before you climb the steps or risk seeing it fly away from the top. One particularly good feature here is special health route, with marked signs indicating exercises to perform, so get your heart pumping and feel the environment through your body!


WHAT'S NEARBY?

Instead of rushing back to Rīga, carry on along the P4 road and turn right at Jugla village to take a quiet and scenic country road south all the way to the pretty town of Ogre, a bustling place with a direct train connection and fast road link to the capital, a nice country park on its outskirts and some excellent places to eat. ▲



FIND ALL THE VIEWING TOWERS EASILY AT: WWW.MAMMADABA.LV

Ratings (out of 10)

- SIGHT: 
- SOUND: 
- SMELL: 
- TASTE: 
- TOUCH: 

PROS

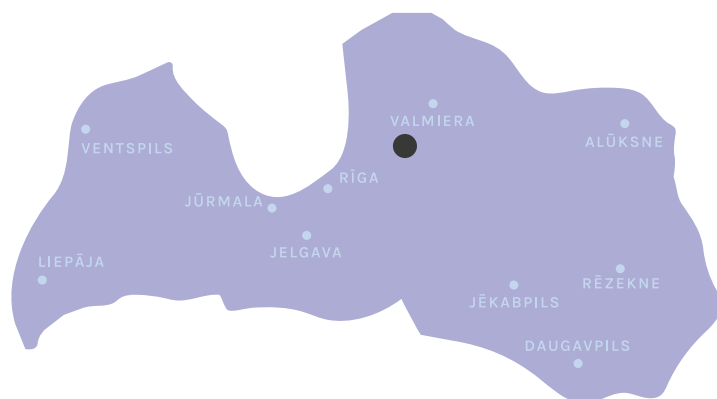
Surprisingly close to the capital city

CONS

Trail can get very slippery when icy

#06 River Līgatne nature trail

Nītaure parish, Vidzeme GPS: 57.126101, 25.159435



GETTING THERE

This is one of those locations you travel to thinking “I must have taken a wrong turn... this can’t be the right way... probably I should have gone left back there...” and then you magically appear at exactly the right place. You’ll need to turn off the main P32 road between Augšlīgatne and Nītaure near the “Kīgari” farmstead. There are alternative ways of reaching the trail, but these involve a lot more driving on very tricky forest tracks which are not suitable for all vehicles. Indeed, even the last few kilometres on the main approach route make you feel like you are in a very remote place. Can be tricky to access in muddy or icy weather unless you have a 4x4 vehicle, but when the weather is dry it is much easier.

WHAT’S THERE

The nature trail is not particularly close to the village of Līgatne itself (though there are some other pleasant trails there). The River Līgatne is a small but lively river, and though the trail along its banks is a relatively modest 800 metres long, you will likely want to explore some of the deer and other animal trails that lead away from it as well. The river is fed

by many springs, so its water is always clean, cool and oxygen-rich. Though the burbling river that is the main attraction here, the trail features numerous little hillocks and twists that add variety. Children in particular seem to love this trail, not least because there is evidence of beaver activity everywhere. If you get really lucky you might even see one.

SENSATIONS

The rushing sound of the water as it passes over and around stones is delightful. Try stopping at various places along the trail and comparing the sounds: does one large stone make the same sound as many small ones? Being at the bottom of a small valley with a distinct microclimate of its own, you might be lucky enough to see mist hovering over the river and among the trees, creating some amazing lighting effects and that moist taste in your mouth and nose that is almost like taking a sip of water. It also tends to be noticeably cooler here.

WHAT’S NEARBY?

Līgatne village itself is well worth a visit. It grew up around a paper mill whose progressive owners pro-



vided the delightful wooden houses that are still lived in today. There are several excellent small walking trails which include some steep sections, and a visit to the village caves (once used by the locals to store food) is a must. If you want to get really wild, the forests between Nītaure and Spāre provide plenty of scope for camping. ▲

DO YOU KNOW?

The River Līgatne is only 31 kilometres long, but it is fast-flowing – the average drop of the river is 5.8 m/km, but in the lower part of the river it can reach 6.6 m/km.



Ratings (out of 10)

- SIGHT:
- SOUND:
- SMELL:
- TASTE:
- TOUCH:

PROS

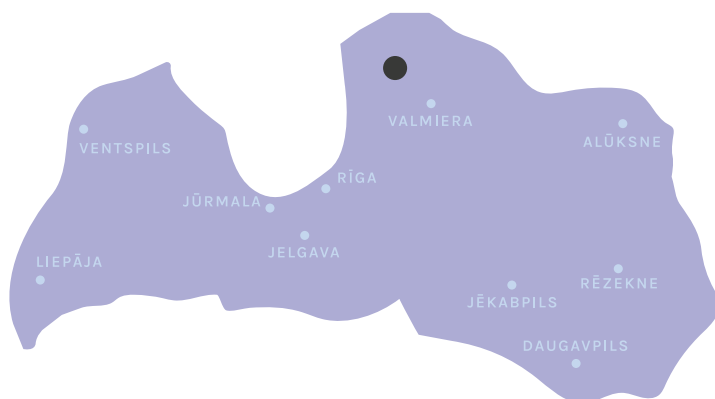
Crams a lot into a short distance

CONS

Difficult to access in winter

#07 Purezers trail

Brīvēznieki parish, 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, unasphalted gravel track to get to the small car park, which is clearly signposted and has rubbish bins available.

WHAT'S THERE

From the car park follow the signposted a boardwalk and forest path a few hundred metres to the circular lakeside trail which is about 3.5 km 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. Despite the fairly short distance around the mirrored black surface of the lake, there are several varied landscapes to admire. 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, and summer brings marvellous displays from dragonflies and damsel flies which hatch in their thousands.

SENSATIONS

Catch Purezers on a warm day and you'll be amazed how wonderful it smells thanks to an abundance of wild rosemary, sometimes called "Labrador tea". 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. If it is a still day, enjoy the reflections of the landscape in the dark waters of the lake and the elaborate courting rituals of flying insects.



DO YOU KNOW?






220 km long nature trails are freely available to everyone in Latvia's state forests

WHAT'S NEARBY?

The city of Limbaži is well worth a visit. Limbaži is famous for its dairy products, and the Limbažu Piens factory store is a good place for tasty milk, cheese and kefir. The town also boasts a large lake with a well-maintained beach and boats for hire, plus a lakeside boardwalk and viewing tower. ▲



Ratings (out of 10)

- SIGHT: 
- SOUND: 
- SMELL: 
- TASTE: 
- TOUCH: 

PROS

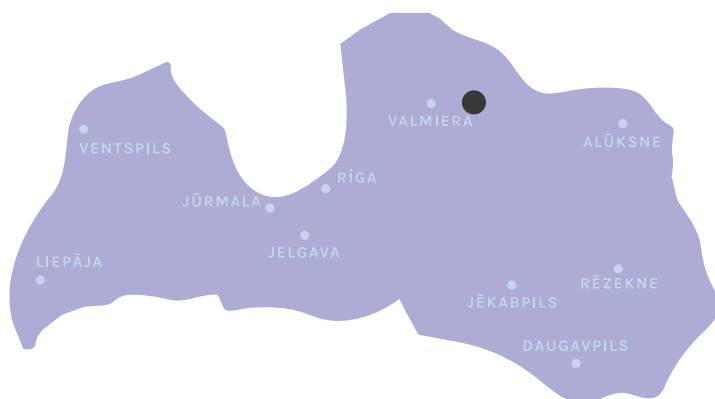
Intoxicating smells, photogenic sights

CONS

Narrow path, difficult to get to without motor transport

#08 River Abuls “Love trail”

Brenguļi parish, Vidzeme GPS: 57.5462913,25.5453764



GETTING THERE

From the large road intersection by the huge Valmiera fibreglass plant, go under the railway bridge and follow the sign in the direction of the “Baiļi” campsite. But don’t turn into the campsite, continue north-east for a couple of kilometres, crossing a small wooden bridge, until you see the signs for the walking trail. Alternatively, you can drive all the way to Brenguļi, park by the brewery and walk back along the river Abuls.

WHAT’S THERE

This trail just outside the city limits of the northern city of Valmiera remains one of the best-kept secrets of northern Vidzeme. It is named the “Love trail” apparently because it used to be a favourite place for local courting couples to walk hand in hand, take in some stunning views from high above the River Abuls and perhaps exchange a kiss or two. It doesn’t take long to realise they were onto something, as this is certainly a romantic landscape. The route is marked with white and blue stripes on rocks and trees and has sections right beside the water as well as high above it on top of sandy cliffs. Several picnic spots are provided, or if you want some serious exercise you can follow the full 11-kilometre-long Abuls Nature

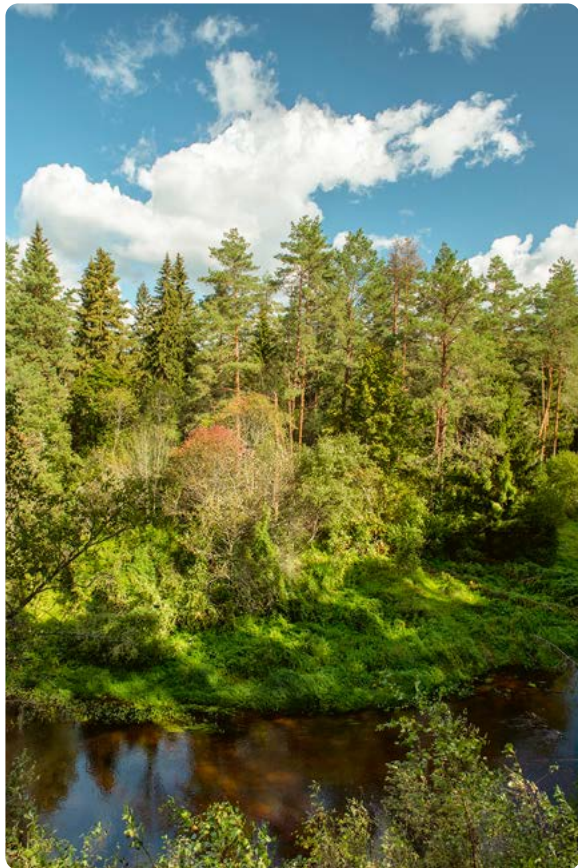
Trail which leads through the forests and meadows on the left bank of the Abuls. From Brenguļi, you can go all the way to where the Abuls joins the larger and better-known River Gauja.

SENSATIONS

Views across the river are the most obvious attraction, but in places the river is shallow enough to allow you to paddle in its shallows or hop from one protruding rock to another. Remember, you can feel with your feet just as well as with your hands when you stop to notice it. The banks of the river and the adjacent forest have abundant berries in season to provide you with tasty snacks along the way.

WHAT’S NEARBY?

Valmiera is close at hand, though you would never guess it while you are on the trail. The city was in with a good chance of being a European Capital of Culture in 2027, having made to the final shortlist of four contenders. It’s a vibrant and fast-developing place with a particularly good theatre and an excellent Olympic sports centre, so beat the crowds and visit it five years before the crowds arrive! 📌








Long Distance Trails

The Forest Trail is a longdistance hiking route that starts in Rīga, finishes in Tallinn, and leads through the most forested lands in both Latvia and Estonia, including three national parks. The total length of the Forest Trail is approximately 1,060 km, divided into 50 single-day trail sections, with each section approximately 20 km long. The Forest Trail is a part of the European long-distance hiking route E11.

Both long distance trails going through Latvia – “Mežtaka” and “Jūrtaka” – have gotten in the Lonely planet as one of the best long distance hiking trails of the world in 2022. Both traverse all three countries and pass through multiple Unesco World Heritage sites. Head to the Baltic Coastal Trail for maximum time alongside the radiantly blue waters of the Baltic Sea or head to the Forest Trail for more greenery and sweeping forest views.



Ratings (out of 10)

- SIGHT: 
- SOUND: 
- SMELL: 
- TASTE: 
- TOUCH: 

PROS

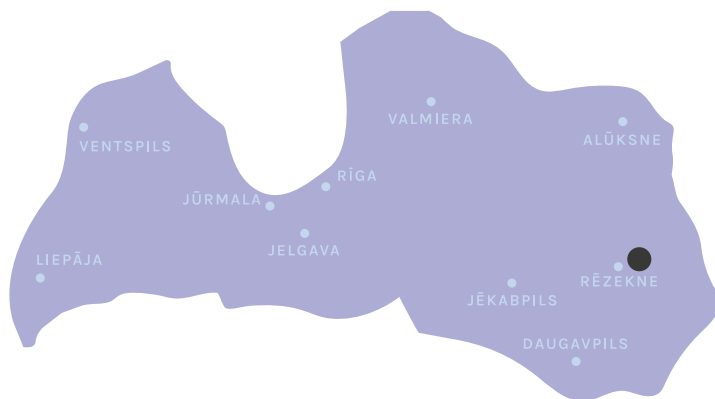
Peace and quiet despite proximity of large city

CONS

Trail markers could sometimes be clearer

#09 Ančupāni viewing tower

Vērēmi parish, Latgale GPS: 56.538617, 27.315228



GETTING THERE

This site is just north of the major city of Rēzekne, within the partial ring road formed by the A12 and A15 roads. It is best approached from the junction of the A12 and P36 roads. The hill and viewing tower can be seen from far away, so it's hard to go wrong.

WHAT'S THERE

Just beyond the Rēzekne city limits, on the highest hill of Ančupāni forest, a 28.5-meter-high wooden observation tower has been built. Added to the height of the hill, you'll find yourself nearly 200 metres above sea level.

Climbing the 121 steps up the wooden stairs offers a breathtaking view of the Jermola and Odumova forests, Lake Adamova with its islands and the towers and church spires of Rēzekne.

The tower is an elegant but bare structure, and its open sides mean you need a head for heights to feel confident going to the top, even though it is perfectly safe.

The forest acts as a green lung for Rēzekne. Beside a water-filled former quarry there is a place for a picnic fire and a dry toilet. On the north-west side of the hill is a memorial devoted to the Jewish population of Rēzekne who perished in the Second World War.

SENSATIONS

The number of mushroomers you are likely to find here after rain in late summer and early autumn tells you that to many of the people of Rēzekne, taste is the main sense to be stimulated by Ančupāni forest. In fact, it's very food-friendly. With well-stocked supermarkets and grocery stores close by in Rēzekne, it's a perfect place to stock up and enjoy a picnic in the open air with bees and butterflies flying around. It's less than 3 kilometres to the city centre.

WHAT'S NEARBY?


There's a great deal to do in Rēzekne, but to find out more about the city's Jewish population a visit to the wonderfully-restored Green Synagogue and its very modern and accessible exhibition materials is a must. There's an excellent little café directly opposite it, too. 🌲



DO YOU KNOW?

121 steps up the wooden stairs till breathtaking view of the forests, Lake Adamova with its islands and the towers and church spires of Rēzekne

Ratings (out of 10)

- SIGHT: 
- SOUND: 
- SMELL: 
- TASTE: 
- TOUCH: 

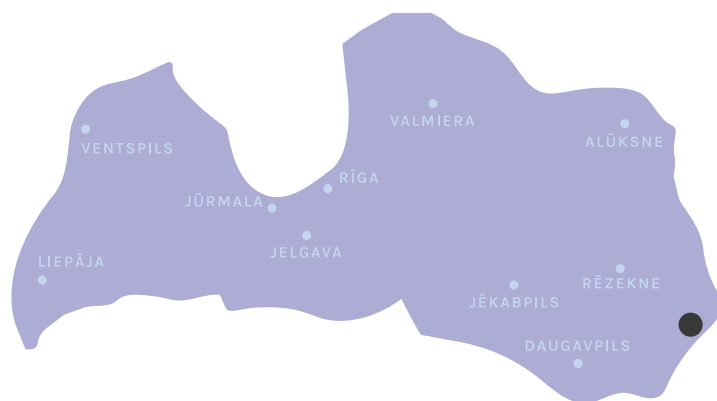
PROS
CONS

An easy walk from Rēzekne city

Tower not suitable for vertigo sufferers

#10 Greblukalns trail

Pasiena parish, Latgale GPS: 56.178250, 28.111522



GETTING THERE

There is only one way in and out: turn east off the P52 road at Pinti and after a kilometre you have arrived. Bear in mind that as the site is just a couple of kilometres from both the Russian and Belarusian borders, a special pass and an identification document are required. These are available online. Full details of requirements can be found here: www.rs.gov.lv.

WHAT'S THERE

The Greblukalns Nature Reserve feels like a little world of its own, and it comes as no surprise to learn that it possesses its own special microclimate and several rare and protected species of plants and butterflies. The hill was formed 14 million years ago by retreating glaciers, and there is still something strangely primeval about it today.

From 30-metre-tall Greblukalns itself you get a panoramic view unique in Latvia with Lake Šešku and Lake Pintu both close by, while to the east you can look across the border into Russia and Belarus. On still days the lakes are a smooth and bright as mirrors.

There is a nature trail along the hilly ridge, which is approximately 3 kilometres long. While it is not particularly difficult, it is not suitable for people with disabilities. At the start of the trail is a wooden shelter and fireplace for picnics and barbeques.

SENSATIONS

Greblukalns certainly delivers that “sixth sense” feeling of heightened senses. Keep a look out for rare plants including the Small Naiad, a plant which floats in only the cleanest waters. If you happen to be on the hill when the butterflies are fluttering by, you will get an experience to remember forever.

WHAT'S NEARBY?

This is a remote part of Latvia that few people venture to, but which is very beautiful. In particular there are dozens of lakes of all shapes and sizes, many with startlingly clear waters. Within 10 kilometres of Greblukalns you can explore the large lakes Plisūns, Šķaune, Ilza, Audzeļu and Dzīļezers. ▲



DO YOU KNOW?

14 The hill was formed million years ago

More than 58% of the territory of the Greblukalns nature reserve comprises specially protected habitats recognized as being significant at European Union level. There are several rare and protected species of plants, birds, invertebrates and mammals.



Ratings (out of 10)

SIGHT:	
SOUND:	
SMELL:	
TASTE:	
TOUCH:	

Long Distance Trails

The 1836 Trail was created in 2018 to honour the centenary of Latvia's founding, and follows the outline of the country for – you guessed it! – 1,836 kilometres, taking in all regions. This is the one if you want to claim you have “done” Latvia.



PROS

No crowds – relatively few people make the effort to come

CONS

Proximity of border can complicate matters, according to current events



A Shining Discovery

JSC “Latvia’s State Forests” (LVM) is responsible for improving forest infrastructure, and that includes creating and maintaining forest roads and tracks. You might think it’s a bit extravagant to construct a forest track from precious stones, but it does happen. While testing a sample of rocks and minerals to be used on a forest road, one of LVM’s laboratory staff noticed a strange red colour in one rock. Tests proved it to be Almandin, a form of the semi-precious stone, garnet. You never know, there may be diamonds, rubies and emeralds lying out there in the forest, too...



LVM Brings the Wilderness to You

Even if you can’t find the time to get out into the forests as much as you would like to, you can enjoy a dose of virtual wilderness at any time thanks to LVM online webcams. Check the LVM YouTube channel at www.bit.ly/30XteMF and watch live coverage of an eagle’s nest or a bog landscape.

The Beaver – Nature’s Sculptor!

When walking in nature, it is worth keeping an eye open for various clues and traces left by forest animals. Recently, an employee of LVM was going about his work when he noticed this spectacular piece of sculpture which was executed in an oak trunk by an artistic beaver. The most characteristic feature of the beaver is its teeth, which grow all their lives and self-sharpen as they gnaw away. In addition, by clever use of its lips, the beaver can even gnaw underwater.

Beaver food consists of aquatic plants and soft shoots growing along the water’s edge, switching to deciduous bark and branches in winter. In summer, beavers tend not to gnaw trees for food, but only to provide material for their dams and lodges.



DO YOU KNOW?

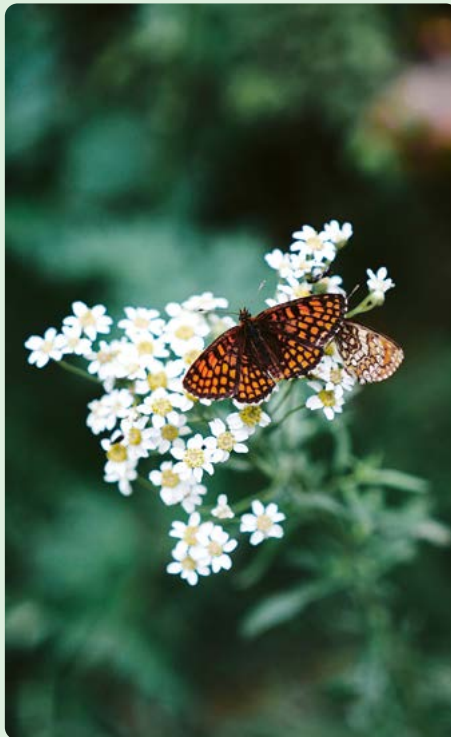
2 LVM plants new trees in place of each one that is cut down

At the end of the spring planting season year 2022, almost 32 million high-quality tree seedlings had been planted in the forests managed by JSC “Latvia’s State Forests”.

What's on an Elk's Menu?

Go carefully into the wilderness and with luck you might notice an elk (also called a moose) feasting on fresh aquatic plants, which are the main food for elk in spring and summer. A special delicacy for elk is the three-leafed pupae growing in transitional bogs. Sometimes elk can be seen right up to their necks in the water and feasting on poplars and water lilies.

Later, in autumn and winter, they switch to the so-called "solid food" including willow and pine shoots, and sometimes causing damage to young forest stands. If the fresh top shoots are too high, the elk can chomp them down, giving access to the coveted top shoots. Elk also like to feast on aspen shoots. The elk is the largest mammal in Latvia, and can be found throughout the country, but the largest number are in Vidzeme and Latgale regions. Elk prefer to live in moist, overgrown meadows near forests, as well as in forests adjacent to bogs.



Butterfly Magic

Want to see more beautiful butterflies flitting by? Anyone can encourage butterflies by creating a more diverse environment in their garden or even on their balcony. Sun, breeze and nectar-rich plants are the most important factors for many species, but especially for butterflies. The fauna of Latvia includes about 122 species of diurnal butterflies. The diversity of Latvian butterflies is higher than in most northern countries, but poorer compared to the warmer southern countries.

Nature Inspires



Adventure in the Woods



IN LVM NATURE PARK GLAMPING YOU CAN RELAX IN UNUSUAL CABINS IN THE TREES AND UNDERGROUND AT TĒRVETE RESERVOIR AND LVM NATURE PARK IN TĒRVETE.

+371 26115333

GLEMPINGS@LVM.LV

GPS: 56.494932, 23.407403

Glamping guests can enjoy both a romantic vacation in the silence of nature and indulge in active recreation with family and friends, while passionate fishermen will probably catch their biggest catch here.

The new glamping cabins – in the trees and underground – have all the amenities for a lazy vacation at any time of the year. Also, fishing lodges near Tērvete reservoir are always available for overnight stays.

Lovers of active recreation can rent a boat, paddle board or pedal boat for a trip around the lake, play volleyball or basketball, as well as go for a walk or ride a bike. The well-maintained area also offers tent sites, several picnic areas with a canopy and fire pits.

 CAMPER LOCATION

 BATH/SAUNA

 BIRD WATCHING

 PETS ALLOWED

 SUITABLE FOR
PEOPLE WITH REDUCED
MOBILITY



Holidays in the Fairyland

A walk in the ancient pine forest with wood-carved fairy-tale characters and sculptures arouses the imagination not only of the little visitors. LVM Nature Park in Tērvete is a special place in Zemgale. You have to plan several hours to see it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Most of the park's 1200 ha area is covered by forest, while the 400 ha of well planned area can be easily reached by pedestrians, cyclists, families with prams and people with mobility restrictions.

The LVM Nature Park in Tērvete has several thematic parts and each of them takes you on a fairy tale journey. In the land of Sprīdītis and the Fairytale Forest (Pasaku mežs), you can meet the characters of fairy tales and the plays of the writer Anna Brigadere as well as the inhabitants of the Witch's pine forest (Raganas sils) – bats, spiders, the devil and the pine forest Witch herself, depicted in wooden sculptures. On the other hand, in the Dwarf Forest (Rūķišu mežs), you can walk through the village of Dwarfs with small wooden houses and themed homesteads, the Dwarf Town "Cones" (Čiekure) with its bright houses and cobbled streets, climb the large wooden lookout tower and meet the Tērvete dwarves themselves in the Dwarf Homestead (Rūķu sēta).

In the amusement park, you can walk the obstacle paths, Sprīdītis and Lutausis path, you can get lost in the paths of the wooden labyrinth and explore the greatness of the wooden castle. The land of Kurbads will fascinate active people – the Tērvete bicycle park has been built here with a variety of elevations, bends, footbridges and bridges almost 3 km long. In addition, cooperation partner objects – Tērvete Net park and Tērvete Tropical butterfly house have also been created in this area.



What else to visit in Tērvete

01 Tērvete wooden castle and history museum

GPS: 56.481439, 23.376058

02 Tērvete castle mound

GPS: 56.482439, 23.384124

03 Tērvete Holy mountain

GPS: 56.484554, 23.382182



Do not litter in the forest!

Take out what you bring in!



Campfires may only be lit in **specialty 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.