

Mushroom Tour at Vidzeme region



This is for people who enjoy forests, wildlife and has an interest in mushrooms – different species as well as their various ways of preparation. The tour is lead by the professional mycologist and combines the mysterious world of mushrooms with local culinary traditions. The group is introduced with mushrooms growing at the forests, meadows, old parks and even yards. The mycologist will help to discover edible and poisonous mushrooms as well as rare and common ones. The tour passes through valuable nature and culture heritage sites and small villages on the way. During the tour you will see at least 100 different mushroom species and explore various forests with their typical flora and fauna. Everyone could try their hand at mushrooming and by the end of the day together with guide sort them out and cook in delicious meal.



(7 days)



Golden Chanterelle *Cantharellus cibarius*

General Route: Rīga - Lielstraupe - Cēsis - Zilais kalns - Strenči - Valka - Āraiši - Sigulda - Mālpils - Rīga

Day 1

Arrival in Rīga

Departure to the hotel in the city centre. Introductory meeting with the guide at the Latvian Nature Museum which can be followed by the excursion to the Central Market. Free time in Rīga. Accommodation at Islande Hotel.



Spiny puffball *Lycoperdon echinatum*

Day 2

Transfer Rīga – Silciems – Ragana – Inciems – Lielstraupe

One of the most popular mushroom pickers routes at Riga suburb. Here in the dry pine and spruce forests we might find the most popular edible mushrooms in Latvia – chanterelles, russulas and boletes as well as Sheep Polypore *Albatrellus ovinus* (popular in Scandinavian cooking), Golden Coral Ramaria aurea and others.

A short stop at Krimulda Church in Ragana to look for a rare mushroom in European level – Saffron Yellow Polypore *Hapalopilus croceus*.



King or Spruce Bolete *Boletus edulis*

At Inciems we will look for the Chestnut Bolete *Gyroporus castaneus*, King or Spruce Bolete *Boletus edulis*, as well as Icicle or Coral Tooth *Hericium coralloides*.

At Lielstraupe forest there is a chance to find one of the largest cap mushroom in Europe – Parasol Mushroom *Macrolepiota procera* that can be eaten uncooked. Accommodation in Sigulda.

Day 3

Gauja National Park: Zvārte Cliff – Cēsis – Ungurmuīža

We will walk the nature trail along the Amata river that guarantees spectacular views, including impressive sandstone Zvartes Cliff, and mushrooms typical for river banks and alluvial forests like Chaga *Inonotus obliquus* that is used in medicine or Alder Bracket *Inonotus radiatus* that changes its colour depending of the light.

A short stop at Cēsis to look at its mighty medieval castle ruins and charming Old town and at Ungurmuīža Manor that is a unique example of the 18th century wooden baroque architecture. The interior paintings on the walls and ceilings have still survived. The manor has the park with impressive old oaks. There we look for Saffron Yellow Polypore *Hapalopilus croceus*, Sulphur Polypore *Laetiporus sulphureus* and other ones that typically grows on oak trees. Walking along the Lake Vaidava we might find the Summer Bolete *Boletus reticulatus*. Stop at Dulbeņi – growers of shitaki mushrooms. Accommodation at the hotel in Valmiera.

Day 4

Zilaiskalns – Strenči – Zīle Forest

Zilaiskalns is a very distinct hillock covered by coniferous forests. It is known as a place with a view to the northern part of the Vidzeme upland and the Lake Burtnieks lowland. It is also a good place for boletes picking.

Zīle Forest, Pirtsliča branch of the river and other sites in the protected area 'Northern Gauja' are famous for its oak

...getting to know at least 100 different mushroom species

forests and wooded meadows. Chance to find *Saffron Yellow Polypore Haploporus croceus*, *Sulphur Polypore Laetiporus sulphureus*, *Ceramic Parchment Xylobolus frustulatus* and other polypores growing on oaks. Accommodation at the hotel in Valmiera.

Day 5

Valka - Mežole

Mushrooming near Valka at the dry pine forest with *Iceland Moss*, *Reindeer Lichens* and other *cladonias* named 'white lichens'. *Chanterelles sp.*, *Suillus sp.*, *Boletus sp.*, *Leccinum sp.* and others.

Boreal coniferous forests at Mežole – one of the most valuable forests in Latvia from biodiversity point of view. Here one can find polypores which indicate old and semi-natural forests – *Pycnoporellus fulgens*, *Phellinus nigrolimitatus*, *Junghuhnia collabens*, *Asterodon ferruginosus* and others. Stop at Jaunannužēni – growers of oyster mushrooms. Accommodation at the hotel in Valmiera.

Day 6

Āraiši – Sigulda – Mālpils – Suntaži – Lielie Kangari – Rīga

Breakfast. Āraiši reconstructed ancient settlement from Bronze Age built on lake. Here is a good example how polypores can damage and destroy the man made objects. We will see *Rusty Gilled Polypore Gloeophyllum sepiarium*, which growth on wooden constructions not only here but often also on fences, wooden roofs and wooden parts of railway tracks. Lielie Kangari is an esker – unusually shaped hill of sand – covered by esker-specific coniferous forest. Mushrooming along its slopes and edges of the adjacent mire. Possible to find *Velvet Bolete Suillus flavidus*, *Peppery Bolete Suillus piperatus* (can use as a spice) and *earthstars Geastrum sp.*

Returning to Rīga. Accommodation in a hotel in Rīga.

Day 7

Breakfast. Free time. Transfer to the airport.



View to Turaida Castle



Ungurmuiza Manor and park

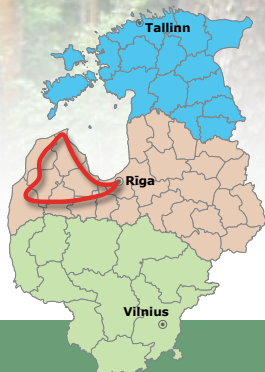


Looking at mushrooms with mycologist



Our team on mushroom hunt

Mushroom Tour at Kurzeme Region



This is for people who enjoy forests, wildlife, local traditions and has a specific interest in the different species of fungi. Everyone could try their hand at mushrooming, mushroom's identification and by the end of the day together with guide sort out the collected mushrooms and prepare delicious meals. The tour passes several national parks and late back villages. The group will also visit to one of shitake mushroom growers for comparison reasons.



Mid August – First half of October, (6 days)



Scarlet elf cup (*Sarcoscypha austriaca*)



Hare ears *Otidea* sp.



Coral fungus *Ramaria* sp.

Day 1 Arrival in Riga

Transfer to the hotel.

Meeting with the guide at Nature History Museum and introduction with the tour. Walk to the Central Market to see mushrooms for sale. Free time.

Accommodation at the hotel Islande in Riga.

Day 2

Rīga – Sloka – Ķemeri National Park – Lapmežciems – Antiņciems – Valguma ezers – Milzkalns – Apšuciems – Rīdeļi

Breakfast. Mushrooming around Antiņciems at dry pine forests and at bog woodland. Possible to find *King or Spruce Bolete* *Boletus edulis*, *Orange Aspen Bolete* *Leccinum rufum*, *Orange Birch Bolete* *Leccinum versipelle*.

Lustūzis – the highest hill at the Ķemeri National Park, rolling landscape, varied types of forests and rich world of mushrooms. Among many others, possible to find *Golden Chanterelle* *Cantarellus tubaeformis*, *Black Trumpet*, *Horn of Plenty* or *Dead Man's Fingers* *Craterellus cornucopioides*, *Common Stinkhorn* *Phallus impudicus*, *Golden Larch Bolete* *Suillus grevillei*, *edible Sheeps Polypore* *Albatrellus ovinus*, *deadly poisonous Death Cap* *Amanita phalloides*.

Mushrooming at the wooded dunes near Apšuciems: traditional edible mushrooms – *Golden or Common Chanterelle* *Cantarellus cibarius*, *Velvet or Variegated Bolete* *Suillus variegatus* and others. Then mushrooming at Rīdeļi for different species of russulas and boletes.

In the evening opportunity to go

through gathered mushrooms with the guide and cook them in the meal. Accommodation near Rīdeļi.

Day 3

Engure – Šķēde – Talsi – Valdemārpils – Lube – Tiņģere – Dundaga

Breakfast. Šķēdes beech's growth – uncommon forest type in Latvia with some rare fungi species. Visit local wine maker at Lauciena.

Botanical trail along Krovalki house located at Talsi Hillock Nature Park. Possible to find *Red-Cracking Bolete* (*Boletus pascuus*) and other mushrooms.

Walk through picturesque Old Town of hilly Talsi located by two lakes.

A stop at Valdemārpils Idol linden tree and then gather mushrooms along the banks of the river Roja. Here possible to find such valuable edible mushrooms as *Deer Truffle* *Elaphomyces* sp. with *parasitic Slender Truffle-Club* *Cordyceps ophioglossoides* as well as *Orange Caterpillar-Fungus* *Cordyceps militaris* which emerges from larvae or pupae of moth. Accommodation near Dundaga.

Day 4.

Dundaga – Pāce – Ance – Ugāle – Zlēkas

Breakfast. Excursion to Dundaga Castle, which is the largest well, preserved castles at Kurzeme region. It's history dates back to 13th century and its surrounded with lots of legends.

At the Dundaga Park we might find *Hen-of-the-Woods* *Grifola frondosa* and *Ceramic Parchment Fungus* *Xylobolus frustulatus* while on the banks of Pāce

...everything about mushrooms: from picking to preparation!

Lake is a chance to find *Chesnut Bolete Gyroporus castaneus*.

Oak forests and wooded meadows at Lonaste and Raķupe where we look for *Saffron Yellow Polypore Hapalopilus croceus*, *Sulphur Polypore Laetiporus sulphureus* and other polypores that prefer large oak trees. At the largest array of forest between Ugāles – Zlēku is possible to find *Cauliflower Fungus Sparassis crispa*. Accommodation in Kuldīga district.

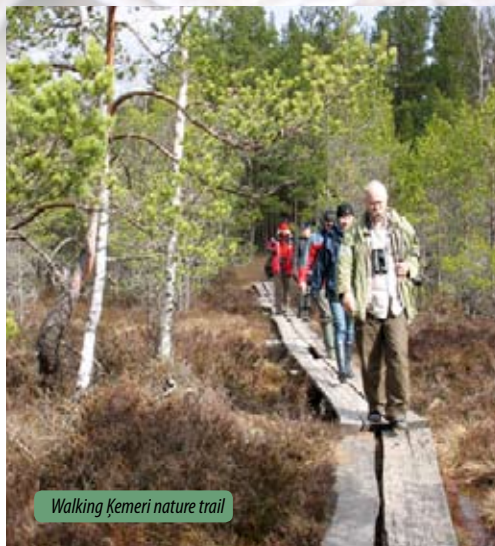
Day 5.

Kuldīga – Aizpute – Rudbārži – Rīga

Breakfast. We'll start a day with excursion through charming Old Town of Kuldīga with its widest waterfall of Europe, well preserved wooden buildings and 19th century brick bridge across the river Venta. Then continue to Tebra oak growth where possible to see the strange *Hen-of-the-Woods Grifola frondosa*, *Hare's Ear Otidea onotica* and other unusual looking mushrooms. Visit to shitaki mushroom growers at Garīkas. Rudbārži park where is possible to find *Lingzhi Ganoderma lucidum* which widely used in Chinese traditional medicine. Returning to Rīga. Accommodation in Rīga.

Day 6. Departure

Breakfast. Free time. Transfer to the airport.



Walking Kemeri nature trail



View to Talsi town



Chanterelles & Horn of Plenty (*Cantharellus* & *Craterellus cornucopioides*)

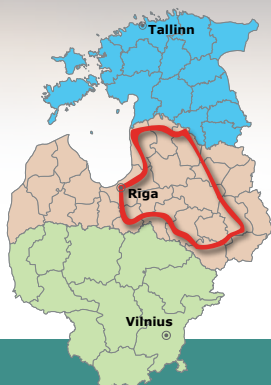


Macrolepiota procera



In the forest with mycologist

Autumn Birdwatching Tour



The most spectacular autumn events are the Crane shows which can be observed at the bogs and fields. The tour will pass several of these places. We have included different habitats in the tour – sea coast, various forests, bogs and fish ponds – in order to see as many bird species as possible. Selected species: Old pine forest growths are favoured by Black Grouse with owls living at their edges while different woodpecker species thrive at the wet forests. The tour will also pass some lakes and fish ponds in order to observe water birds such as Herons, Sea Eagles and different ducks.

Tour Guide: Professional ornithologist. Walking: Short walks combined with bus drives.



Mid September (7 Days)



The Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*



Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*



Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*



White-backed woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*

General Route: Rīga - Sigulda - Salacgrīva - Mazsalaca - Valka - Lubāna - Aglona - Jelgava - Rīga

Day 1

Arrival in Rīga. Rīga - Sigulda-Pāle - Salacgrīva (230 km).

Pick-up at the Rīga International Airport and head to Sigulda. We will follow the walking trails through spruce, mixed spruce-deciduous and slope and ravine forests at Sigulda and Turaida Castle park looking for woodpeckers. The journey continues to Pāle where we will walk through bog woodland to Pilkes Bog for cranes. Accommodation and dinner in Salacgrīva.

Day 2

Salacgrīva - Kuiviži - Mazsalaca - Burtneki (206 km)

After early breakfast we will spend a couple of hours on the sea shore to watch waders, then continue along the picturesque banks of the river Salaca for woodpeckers, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Sand Martin and other species connect-

ed with sandstone outcrops and slope and ravine forests. Next, drive to the lake Burtneiks, Viksna and Ruja ponds. There we will watch cranes and geese. Accommodation and dinner in Burtneki.

Day 3

Lantus - Seda - Valka - Graši (317 km)

After the breakfast we'll drive to Seda Heath and spend some time watching geese and cranes. Then we'll explore wooded meadows and it's bird fauna near the River Gauja. Continue to Murmasteine to watch cranes. Evening at Graši Manor House surrounded by its old park to watch woodpeckers. Accommodation and dinner at Graši.

Day 4

Graši - Murmasteine - Lake Lubāna - Īdeņi - Zosna (247 km)

Today we'll start and finish with watching some cranes at Murmasteine. But afternoon we will dedicate to water birds such as herons, Sea Eagles and ducks around the lake Lubāna and fish ponds

...spectacular cranes shows during autumn migrations...

at Īdeņi. Accommodation and dinner at Zosna.

Day 5

Zosna - Kaunata - Aglona - Dviete (180 km)

Today we will visit a pottery workshop in Latgale region that is famous for their pottering schools. We will also make an excursion at the Aglona Basilica, a popular pilgrimage site. Later the day we will spend some time watching cranes, geese and wild horses at Dviete Floodplain. Accommodation and dinner at Dviete.

Day 6

Dviete - Ormaņi - Viesīte - Pilskalne - Pilsrundāle (244 km)

On the route there will be plenty of beautiful landscapes where some birds of prey could be spotted. We will be stopping at parks of Pilskalne manor and mighty Bauskas Castle as well as one of the most beautiful parks in Latvia – Rundāle Palace. Accommodation and dinner at Rundāle.

Day 7

Pilsrundāle - Svēte - Jelgava - Riga International Airport (110 km)

The morning can be spent leisurely watching the birds at Rundāle Palace park. Then heading to the mouth of Svēte river to watch some geese and cranes. Departure from Riga International Airport



Black stork *Ciconia nigra*



Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*



Birdwatching from the wavebreaker at Ainaži



Pygmy owl *Glaucidium passerinum*



Birdwatching tower at Lake Sloka

Botanical Tour at Kurzeme region



The tour is designed for the people with particular interest in the botanic and who enjoy walks in the nature. The tour goes through national parks, protected nature territories of international importance and other places that are of the greatest botanical interest in the historical region of Latvia named Kurzeme. It also stops at charming towns, historic sites and traditional villages giving an insight into the cultural heritage of the region. During the tour you will learn not only about rare and common plants, its healing properties and local traditions of plants' use, but also enjoy beautiful landscapes, wilderness and solitude.



June - July (6 Days)



Hogweed *Heracleum sosnowsky*



Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara*



Purple Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*

General Route: Rīga - Ķemeri - Engure - Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga - Sabile - Kandava - Rīga

Day 1

Arrival in Rīga

Visit to the Botanical Garden of the University of Latvia – the oldest plant's collection in the Baltic States (established in 1922) and to the Babīte Rhododendrons grower where more than 200 species of wild and selected rhododendrons can be seen. Free time to explore historic sites of Rīga. Accommodation in Rīga.

Day 2

Route: Rīga - Ķemeri - Engure

Breakfast. Departure to the Ķemeri National Park created to protect a large complex of mires, lakes, forests, sulphur springs, adjacent coastal zone with sandy beaches and wooded dunes and large diversity of plant and animal species. We will follow the nature trails through the fen swamp forest, flooded meadow and stop at the bird watching tower in a junipers growth at the Kanieris Lake. Among many other plants we will look out for the Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, Great Fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus* and Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinosa*. Along the way we'll stop at the place where history of Ķemeri as a spa resort started due the valuable sulphur water resource.

The Engure Lake Nature Park – one of the most important bird site in Latvia, also known for the shallow lagoon type lake, alkaline fens, coastal meadows,

wooded dunes and large diversity of plant species, especially orchids (more than 20 orchid species are found there, including the Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, Fly Orchid *Ophrys insectifera*, Baltic Orchid *Dactylorhiza baltica*, Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, etc. Accommodation in Roja.

Day 3

Route: Engure - Kolka - Ventspils

Slītere National Park – an excellent site for biodiversity thanks to large variety of natural habitats and long history of conservation – located in a former territory of the Baltic Ice Lake, Ancylus Lake as well as ancient coast of Litornic Sea. Sandy beaches, grey and white dunes, western taiga, broad-leaved forests, raised bogs, and sand stone outcrops are only some of the habitats that are found here. We will follow along the Pine tree trail at the Cape Kolka and Pēterezers trail where the landscape of wooded linear dunes (kangari) that alternate with narrow depressions (vīgas) with fens and lakes in them can be seen. Species of interest here: Ramsons or Wild Garlic *Allium ursinum*, Common Ivy *Hedera helix*, Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*, Tree Lungwort *Lobaria pulmonaria*, Eastern Pasqueflower *Pulsatilla patens*, etc. Excursion to the Dundaga Castle which history dates back to 13th century.

The Stikli Mire is the largest bog and bog woodland complex in Kurzeme. We will follow the nature trail at Vaseņieki Mire to explore Marsh Clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata*, Rannoch-rush

...more than 32 wild orchid species...

Scheuchzeria palustris, Round leaved and Great Sundews *Droseraceae rotundifolia* and *D. anglica*, Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*, Deergrass *Trichophorum cespitosum* and many other raised bog's and bog woodland's plants. Accommodation in Ventspils.

Day 4

Route: Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga

Breakfast. Departure to the Užava 🇱🇻 that features one of the largest grey dunes in the Baltic States. It stretches along the Baltic Sea for a distance of several kilometres. Here we might see *Toadflax Linaria loeselii*, *Sea Holly Eryngium maritimum*, *Sand Pink Dianthus arenarius* and large variety of lichens that grows on soil (more than 70 species are found).

Then we will go to the Venta River Valley 🇱🇻 to walk its wild banks and explore the flora of the river valley and its banks. Species to look for: *Large Thyme Thymus ovatus*, *Wild Thyme Thymus serpyllum*, *Beach Speedwell Veronica longifolia* and different orchid species.

Excursion to the charming Old Town of Kuldīga with its wooden architecture, the widest waterfall in Europe and 19th century's brick bridge across Venta. Accommodation in Kuldīga.

Day 5

Route: Kuldīga - Sabile - Kandava - Rīga

The Nature Park Abava River Valley 🇱🇻 was set up to protect the landscape which was shaped by retreating Ice Age ice and its natural and cultural heritage. We will visit the Wine Hill of Sabile – one of the northernmost place in Europe where grapes are grown and wine is produced. Then we will follow the botanical trail at Drubazas where we look for plants connected with juniper stands, calcareous grasslands and petrifying springs with tufa formations *Bath Sedge Carex davaliana*, *Fly Orchid Ophrys insectifera*, *Baltic Orchid Dactylorhiza baltica*, etc.. On the way we will stop at one of the grandest oak tree in Europe, which is more than 10m of circumference.

The Cena Heath Trail located in the Cena Mire 🇱🇻. It is an ideal place to explore



Great sundew *Drosera anglica*



Herbal tea made from the found plants



Exploring the meadow near Ķemeri with the guide

plants typical for raised bogs, rich with pools, hollows and hummocks and to enjoy the picturesque landscape of intact bog from the viewing tower. Species here might include: various types of *peat moss Sphagnum sp.*, *Hare's-tail Cottongrass Eriophorum vaginatum*, *Leather-leaves Chamaedaphne calyculata*, *Heath Spotted-Orchid Dactylorhiza maculata*, *Cranberries Oxycoccus palustris*, etc. Returning to Rīga. Accommodation in Rīga.

Day 6

Breakfast. Free time in Rīga. Transfer to the airport.



One of False Morels *Gyromitra* has been found

Wildlife Experience in Latvia



Autumn is a perfect time to observe wildlife and picturesque sceneries. It is birds migration time when flocks of geese and swans fly above our heads. Common Cranes have impressive displays in the fields. It's mating time for Black Grouse and routing time for elks. Dragonflies and butterflies can still be observed in the meadows. Autumn is also traditional mushrooming and berry picking time. This tour is aimed to combine these various experiences.

Walking: Easy short walks in different terrains: meadows, forests, nature trails combined with bus drives.



September – October (7 Days)



Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*



Kolka Cape



Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*



White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

General Route: Rīga - Salacgrīva - Engure - Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga - Sabile - Rīga

Day 1

Rīga

Arrival at Rīga International airport. Accommodation at Islade Hotel in Rīga.

Day 2

Rīga - Salacgrīva - Burtnieki

Landscapes and birds. Breakfast. Departure from the hotel to Vidzeme Sea coast – eastern side of Rīga Gulf. Visiting of old dry pine forests and Devonian sand stone cliffs near Vecmuiža, coastal meadows in Kuiviži, wooded dunes and sea breakwater in Salacgrīva with possibility to see waders migration and forest birds. Lunch in Salacgrīva. Burtnieki Lake region – for some birding (great for seasonal birds: *Corn Crane*, *Great Snipe*, *Ural Owl* and at autumn time – *raptors migration and woodpeckers*. Accommodation and dinner in Burtnieki.

Day 3

Burtnieki – Seda – Mežole – Cēsis

Birds, mammals and dragonflies. Breakfast. Departure to Seda Mire. Possibly to see migratory birds, dragonflies and beaver actions. Lunch in Valmiera. Afternoon drive to Mežole forests – one of the richest boreal forests in Latvia from biodiversity point of view (owls, woodpeckers, various plant, fungi and lichen species) Accommodation and dinner in Cēsis.

Day 4

Cēsis - Sigulda - Biriņi

Mushroom tour, animal watching. Breakfast. Departure to mushroom tour. Cēsis, Ungurmuiža, Lielstraupe, Līgatne and other sites in the Gauja national Park. Mushrooming will pass beautiful spruce, mixed spruce-deciduous and slope and ravine forests with great views across the river Gauja Valley dotted with three castles, old park of Ungurmuiža Manor and nature trails in Līgatne where wild animals can be seen living in con-

...mushrooms, mammals, birds and butterflies as you go along...

ditions close to natural ones. Lunch at Sigulda. Afternoon go through the content of baskets and learn how they can be prepared. Wine tasting at Jokas, Limbaži district. Accommodation and dinner in Biriņi.

Day 5

Biriņi - Rīga - Engure - Kolka

West coast of the Baltic Sea, migrating birds. Breakfast. Departure to Rīga. Head towards Cape Kolka, which is the prime location for autumn and spring migrations.

On the way can stop at Lake Engure (three birdwatching towers around the lake) and Bērziems (coastal meadows) for birdwatching. Stop for lunch at Villa Elizabete. Continue to Slītere National Park. Visit Slītere lighthouse for panoramic view of the area. Birdwatching at Cape Kolka and wooded dunes around. Accommodation in Košrags.

Day 6

Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga - Sābīle - Rīga

Charming provincial towns, cultural and historic attractions. Breakfast. Port town Ventspils and its Old Town with Livonian Order Castle. Walk breakwater for sea watching. Continue to Užava floodplains and stop at Jūrkalne steep coast. Turn inland towards Kuldīga – charming provincial town with well preserved wooden architecture and the widest waterfall in Europe. Head towards Rīga through the Valley of River Abava.

A short stop at Sābīle town to explore its Wine Hill – the most Northerly vineyards from where wine used to be produced for export. On the way make a stop at Nature Trail Drubazas to explore a stand of junipers and enjoy great view across the Valley. A short stop at Jaunmoku Manor at Tukums district. Accommodation in Rīga

Day 7

Rīga

Breakfast. Transfer to the airport.



Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea*



The stairs to Sigulda medieval castle ruins



Ēvazi Cliff



Wild boars *sus scrofa*