

# Cycling Along the Baltic Sea Coast in Latvia



The route gives a chance to enjoy one of the most beautiful and diverse parts of the Baltic Sea coast. You will pass white sandy beaches, wild beaches with big rocks and steep banks. The route goes along several national parks and protected nature territories as well as traditional fishermen villages and lively cities of Liepāja and Jūrmala.



**Cycling: ~20-60 km daily (11 days)**



The Waterbreak at Liepāja



Cycling along the authentic Livs' village



Lighthouse of Cape Kolka

**General Route:** Rīga – Liepāja – Ziemeļupe – Pāvilosta – Jūrkalne – Ventspils – Dundaga – Mazirbe – Kolka – Roja – Engure – Jūrmala – Rīga

## Day 1

### Arrival in Rīga

Transfer to the Hotel. Receive from the hotel reception the tour information pack with maps and detailed description of the routes, sites and accommodation. Overnight in Rīga.

## Day 2

### Rīga - Liepāja

Breakfast. Receive bicycles delivered to the hotel. Free time in Rīga. Train: Rīga, Central Railway Station – Liepāja. Liepāja – Many nice cafes, nice beach and a park by the sea, a harbor, naval fortification and former Soviet military town Karaosta. Overnight in Liepāja.

## Day 3

### Liepāja – Saraiki – Ziemeļupe – Pāvilosta (~60 km, 50% gravel road and forest road)

Breakfast. In Liepāja, route leads through the Karosta district – the former Soviet military town and submarine harbor. The territory earlier was closed. There are military and residential buildings, a park and an impressive Russian Orthodox cathedral. Further, the 1st option offers a ride along the coast, stopping to see the Saraiki estate on the way. The 2nd option offers an easier ride on an inland tarmac road. Overnight in Pāvilosta.

## Day 4

### Pāvilosta - Jūrkalne (~21 km, tarmac)

Breakfast. Leisure time till noon to explore the steep banks and the scenic seashore of Jūrkalne. It's a place where famous blue cows grazing coastal meadows – a very typical breed for the region. Overnight in Jūrkalne.

## Day 5

### Jūrkalne – Ventspils (~50 km, tarmac).

Breakfast. On the way, can have a look at the Uzava church. In the afternoon, leisure time at Ventspils. The best maintained town in Latvia. Places of interest include the castle, central promenade, open-air museum and excellent beach facilities. Excellent live beer is brewed at Uzava brewery. Another option is to take an inland tarmac road to Ventspils. Overnight in Ventspils.

## Day 6

### Ventspils – Ance - Dundaga (~55 km, 20 km of this distance – on a gravel road).

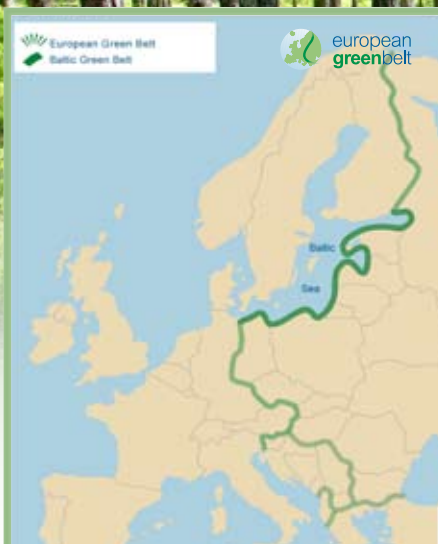
Breakfast. The Dundaga Castle. Overnight in Dundaga.

## Day 7

### Dundaga – Mazirbe – Kolka (~40 km, 20km of this distance – on a gravel road)

Breakfast. Places of interest include Slitere lighthouse and boardwalk through marsh, fisherman villages around Mazirbe and a ride through the forests of Slitere National Park. The territory is also a home of the smallest ethnic group in the world called The Livs. Overnight in Kolka.





www.europeangreenbelt.org

### The European Green Belt

For nearly 40 years, the so-called Iron Curtain divided Europe into two parts – Eastern and Western Europe. Two decades have passed since the collapse of the wall, and in many places the environment – European-level biotopes and rare species of plants and animals – has taken over once-abandoned frontier territories and former military objects. We call this imagined zone the Green Belt, and it links the European landscape and human environment from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. This is a global historical monument, too.

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The Green Belt along the shore of the Baltic Sea and its protection. Young people who have been born along the shores of the Baltic Sea find it hard to understand why just 25 years ago people were only allowed to visit specified and limited beaches, why enormous spotlights were used to light up the seashore at night, and why the delicate sand of the beach was ploughed every night. The coastal regime had its pluses, of course – few people lived along the shores of the Baltic Sea, and there was little in the way of economic activity there. This meant a relatively untouched territory of dune biotopes, forests, underwater algae "meadows", and other environmental treasures. Memories about the past are supported by former military bases, border guard towers, coastal defence batteries, and other objects which can now be seen as our joint heritage of the historical past.

### Day 8

#### Kolka – Roja (~34 km tarmac)

Breakfast. The Cape of Kolka where the Gulf of Rīga meets the open sea and waves cross. Especially impressive during strong winds. Overnight in Roja.

### Day 9

#### Roja – Mersrags – Engure (~47 km, tarmac)

The route goes through fishermen villages with three different types of the

Promenade at Ventspils



Dundaga Castle



seashore – coast dotted with boulders at Kaltene, the sandy beach at Upesgriva and coastal meadows near Engure. Attractions also include bird watching towers, wild horses grazing the meadows by the lake. Overnight in Engure.

### Day 10

#### Engure – Lapmežciems – Jūrmala (~54 km, tarmac).

Route goes through Ķemeri National Park. It is possible to walk Dumbrāju trail

and visit the historic sulphur spring from where the history of Jūrmala as a spa resort started. By train: Jūrmala – Rīga or cycling: Jūrmala – Rīga (~25 km, a cycling road). In the evening, the hired bicycles shall be returned at the hotel. Overnight in Rīga.

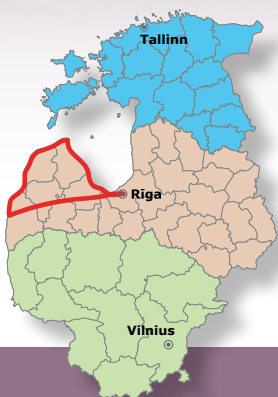
### Day 11

#### Rīga

Breakfast. Transfer to the airport. Individual departures.



# Walking Along the Baltic Sea Coast



The tour begins in Latvian capital Rīga. Then proceeds along the Baltic Sea coast and pass different landscapes - white sandy beaches, coastal meadows, dunes with pine forests and steep banks. The route leads through ethnographic fishermen villages and two important port towns – Liepāja and Ventspils. On the way back it goes through pretty provincial town Kuldīga. Tour goes through two national parks – Slītere and Kemerī.



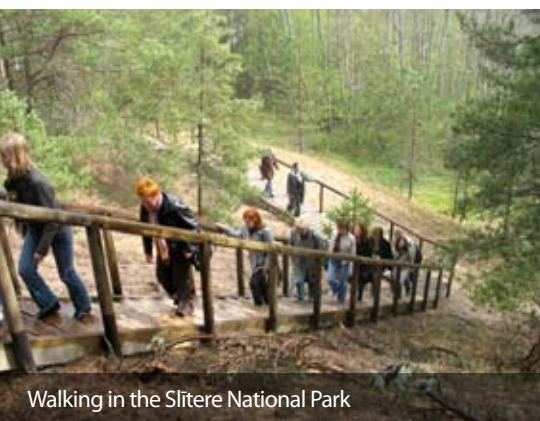
Walking ~5-15 km daily (7 days)



Seashore with steep sandy banks



The widest waterfall in Europe at Kuldīga



Walking in the Slītere National Park

**General Route:** Rīga - Nida - Pape - Liepāja - Pāvilosta - Jūrkalne - Ventspils - Kolka - Roja - Ķemerī - Rīga

## Day 1

### Arrival in Rīga

Optional: Private transfer from airport to the hotel. Overnight in Rīga.

## Day 2

### Rīga – Liepāja

Breakfast. 09:00 meeting with the tour guide at the hotel lobby. Rīga sightseeing tour. Half-day city tour featuring medieval Old Town and Art Nouveau area. Afternoon: coach transfer Rīga – Liepāja (~250 km). On the way stop for a walk at Cena Heath trail (~5 km, 2 h). Sightseeing of Liepāja, famous for its nice beach, cozy pubs and restaurants, music festivals, interesting history, military heritage and one of the oldest church organs in Europe. Overnight in Liepāja.

## Day 3 Liepāja – Pape – Pāvilosta

Breakfast. Bus transfer: Liepāja – Nida (~65 km). Walking: Nida - Pape (~ 8 km, 2,5 h). Walking along the Baltic Sea coast area. Access to this territory was strongly restricted in the Soviet times. Trail passes Pape Lake (the former sea lagoon) nature park. It's a place for great diversity of nesting birds. Marked nature trail goes along the lake, leading through some late-back ethnographic fishermen villages. Possibility to visit the Nature House, the bird observation tower, and to watch wild horses in their enclosed area. Coach transfer: Pape – Liepāja – Pāvilosta (~110

km). Sightseeing of Pāvilosta, the capital of windsurfers, Grey Dune with viewing tower. Overnight in Pāvilosta.

## Day 4

### Pāvilosta – Jūrkalne - Kuldīga - Jūrkalne

Breakfast. Bus transfer: Pāvilosta – Ulmale. Walking: Ulmale - Jūrkalne (~12 km, 3 h). From Pāvilosta, hiking in one of the most beautiful parts of the Baltic sea coast where there are 10-15 m high steep sandy banks. These beaches are quiet and nice for swimming. In Jūrkalne it is possible to see the "blue" cows – a very typical breed for the region. In the afternoon bus transfer: Jūrkalne – Kuldīga (~45 km). Sightseeing of Kuldīga – the ancient town of Courland (Kurzeme) with the widest waterfall in Europe (240 m) and old brick bridge across the river. Visiting of Riežupe sand caves which has been artificially made excavating sand for glass making. Bus transfer: Kuldīga – Jūrkalne. Overnight in a guest house in Jūrkalne.

## Day 5

### Jūrkalne - Ventspils – Kolka - Roja

Breakfast. Coach transfer: Jūrkalne – Ventspils (~45 km). Sightseeing of Ventspils with its renovated convent type castle, Old Town, market place and promenade along the sea. Coach transfer: Ventspils - Slītere lighthouse (~ 70 km). Walking in the Slītere National Park on a special hiking trail near the Slītere lighthouse (1,5 km, 0,5 h). Coach transfer: Slītere lighthouse -Mazirbe (~ 10 km). Walking: Mazirbe – Košrags – Pitragi - Saunags (~10 km, 3 h). Walk through the





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Slitere National park through old fishermen villages where lives one of the smallest ethnic group the Livs, descents from ancient Finno-Ugric tribe. Coach transfer: Saunags – Kolka – Roja. Stop at Kolka – visit Kolka horn where the Baltic Sea meets the Rīga gulf and the waves are crossing forming a long dune. Stop at Purciems – walking (1 km, 0,5 h) hiking trail to the White Dune. Overnight in Roja.



Seashore and a fisherman's boat near to Roja



Walking at the Ķemeri National Park



### Day 6

#### Roja – Jūrmala - Rīga

Breakfast. Hiking: Roja – Kaltene (~8 km, 3 h). The route leads along the coasts of the Riga gulf through a very attractive stony area – the beach is studded with many stones of different size. Bus transfer: Kaltene – Ķemeri. Stop at Mērsrags - possibility to visit the bird observation tower. Walking at the Ķemeri National Park - it is possible to walk Dumbrāju trail and visit the historic sulphur spring from where

the history of Jūrmala as a spa resort started. Bus transfer: Jūrmala – Rīga. On the way stop at Jūrmala, resort town. End of guide services. Overnight in Rīga.

### Day 7

#### Rīga

Breakfast. Optional: Private transfer from the hotel to airport or extra days in Rīga or in the countryside. Individual or group departure.



# Canoeing in Kurzeme

## Western part of Latvia



The route covers spectacular ancient Abava river valley. The territory is interesting with its biological diversity as well as natural and historical monuments and scenic landscapes. The ancient cult places, settlements, famous Sabile wine hill, Pedvale open-air art museum - are only few attractions on the route. The small Abava river fall provides extra excitement for boating experience.



(7 Days)



The old brick bridge in Kuldīga



Kandava town



Sabile town

**General Route:** Rīga - Tukums - Renda - Kuldīga

### Day 1

#### Arrival in Rīga

Transfer from the airport to the hotel. Overnight in Rīga.

### Day 2

#### Rīga - Tukums

Breakfast at the hotel. Leisure time in Rīga. Attractions in Rīga include beautiful medieval Old Town, Art Nouveau district, boat trip along the Rīga canal and the river Daugava as well as impressive Central Market.

Train Rīga – Tukums (~1 hour, 30 minutes). Dinner and overnight near Tukums.

### Day 3

#### Tukums - Renda

Breakfast at the guest house / Take the prepared lunch boxes. Transfer to the river. Canoe tour along the picturesque river Abava, Abavas Rumba (waterfall) – Renda (20 km). There are several swift sources, especially at the places where are dolomite outcrops. Sometimes there are small rapids, however during spring floods those might disappear all together. The course can be done without getting out of the boat until Abavas Rumba. Beginners better take a boat around its side. Sites en route: the windmill of Svente, different sand stone cliffs and outcrops. Dinner and overnight near Renda

### Day 4

#### Renda - Kuldīga

Breakfast at the guest house / Take the prepared lunch boxes. Transfer to the river. Canoe tour along the river Abava, Renda – “Seržu valks” (20 km). Its beautiful and tranquil course with some small rapids, fords and swift sources. There is no much civilization and facilities along the way but good chance to observe some wildlife along the river banks.

Sites at Renda: Īvande waterfalls, tiny but nice. Dinner and overnight near Kuldīga.

### Day 5

#### Renda - Kuldīga

Breakfast at the guest house / Take the lunch boxes. Canoe tour in the river Abava, “Seržu valks” – the river Venta (16 km). During this course there is no much civilization and access to the river from outside is rather limited. Dinner and overnight in Kuldīga.

### Day 6

#### Kuldīga - Rīga

Breakfast at the guest house. Leisure time in charming Kuldīga – the capital of the former Duchy of Kurzeme (16-18th cent), Old Town with well preserved wooden architecture, the Ventas rumba – one of Europe’s widest waterfalls (249 m) and the old brick bridge across the river.

Collection of the boat. Public bus transfer Kuldīga – Rīga (3 hours). Overnight in Rīga.







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## Day 7

### Rīga

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the airport. Departure.



The Abava River



Near the the Abava river fall



Road to Medieval Historical Centre of Kuldīga

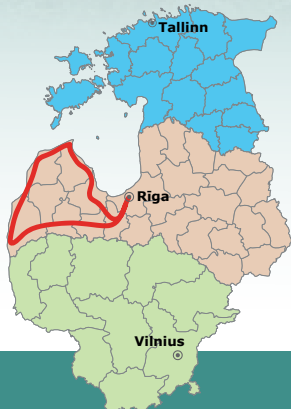


Canoe tour in the river Abava





# Spring Birdwatching Tour



Latvia is among one of the world's three most important bird migration paths, and during migration seasons tens of thousands birds can be seen at one place. The tour will spent significant time along the sea coast in order to catch the highlights of migration. In spring time also flood-lands become alive with activities of thousands of birds and provide great atmosphere for birdwatchers. This tour explores different biotops to get the best impressions of the spring time migration.



(10 Days)

Pygmy owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*)



Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)



The Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)



**Selected species:** These territories are essential for migrating geese, different plovers, also Great Snipe, Corncrake, Lapwing and Curlews. Artificially made fish breeding ponds are great places to spot not only different types of ducks and waders but also predators like Sea Eagle, Marsh Harrier and others.

**General Route:** Riga - Jelgava - Jaunmokas - Engure - Kolka - Ventspils - Liepāja - Saldus - Bauska - Riga

centre; Overnight in Jaunmokas.

## Day 1

### Arrival in Riga

A tour of the Latvian capital of Riga and its Old Town. Overnight in Riga

## Day 2

**Riga - Jelgava - Svēte - Jelgava - Slampe - Dunduru Wiese - Smārde - Jaunmokas (~160km)**

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Svēte flood-lands: a majorsirte of migrating geese, ducks and different plovers; Jelgava Palace's island (reserve); The Dunduri Meadows are an important part of the forested area of the Ķemeri Heath along the curvy shores of the little Slampe River. There is a birdwatching tower, as well as so-called Throat of Melnragi -wetlands flooded by beavers; The Jaunmokas Manor Park; Overnight in Jaunmokas.

## Day 3

**Jaunmokas - Ķemeri - Sloka - Odiņi - Lapmežciems - Jaunmokas (~100 km) Jaunmokas - Ķemeri (~30 km)**

Breakfast. A wetland path near a forest hut and the damp forests which surround it. The short Path takes one through the black alder wetlands of the Vēršupite River, as well as the wetlands between the Forest House and Lake Sloka; A visit to the visitors

## Day 4

**Jaunmokas-Bērciems-Engure-Bērciems-Mērsrags-Ģipka-Kolka-Košrags (~195 km)**

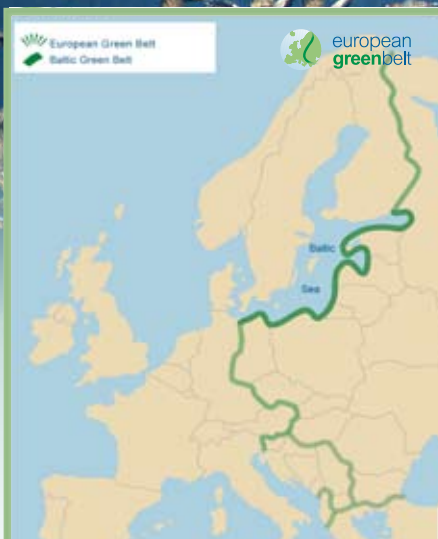
Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: an overgrown seashore with reefs - ideal places to watch wading and water bird; Lake Engure, a pasture of wild horses and cows and a birdwatching tower (the Lake Engure Nature Park); Mērsrags seashore meadows and Pekrags. A complex of lagoon-type biotopes, including meadows, areas of reeds, a rocky seashore, shoals and bird watching tower. This is a small area of wetlands located where a lagoon from the ancient Litorine Sea once was. Overnight in Košrags.

## Day 5

**Košrags - Kolka - Pūrciems - Dundaga-Slītere - Mazirbe - Košrags (~74km)**

Breakfast. Sites en route: Cape Kolka is one of the best places for birdwatching when it comes to the diversity of species during the spring migration – nearly all of the species that are present in Latvia can be found here at the right time; The Pēterezers Nature Trail (3,5 km), which offers a set of dunes with high swamps and a samp lake that are unique at the European level; The wetlands of Ģipka; Slītere National Park - the former coastline of the ancient Baltic Ice Sea. Overnight in Košrags.





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### Day 6

#### Mazirbe-Oviši-Ventspils-Užava-Labragi (~140 km)

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Irbene radar station, The coastline of Oviši, a sandy seashore, The Užava Estuary, with a restricted area to protect a biotope which includes the grey dunes – rare in Europe; The meadows and polders of the lower reaches of the Užava River; The steep shores of the little Muižupīte River. Overnight in Labragi.

Nature trail at Ķemeri National Park



Pine forest at Slītere National Park



Birdwatching days at the Lake Engure Nature Park



### Day 7

#### Labragi-Liepāja-Nīca-Grobiņa-Durbe (~130 km)

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: the cape of Labragi; The Liepāja port, Lake Liepāja, village of Nīca, the Old Durbe School. Overnight in Durbe.

### Day 8

#### Durbe-Līguti-Vītiņi-Skrunda-Saldus (~175 km)

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Līguti Estate park; The Vītiņi Meadows on the eastern shore of Lake Liepāja are the largest area of damp meadows in Latvia. The last nesting place for the dunlins. Pastures of wild horses and cows. The fish ponds of Skrunda; Lunch in Skrunda. Overnight in Saldus.

### Day 9

#### Saldus - Pilsrundāle (~85 km)

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Sātiņi fish ponds are an important place for water birds to feed and rest (Northern swans, waders). The territory can be viewed from different locations; Lunch in Saldus; Zvārde – former military base; The Tērvete Park, river valley. Overnight in Pilsrundāle.

### Day 10

#### Saldus-Sātiņi-Saldus-Kokmuiža-Tērvete-Pilsrundāle - Rīga (~140 km)

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Rundāle Palace Park and the palace itself; The Cena Heath, Getliņi; Departure.



# Migration passion, Owls and Woodpeckers



Latvia is located on the way of one of the world's main migration paths of the birds. Wherewith during migration period a big concentration of the passerine birds followed by raptors and in wetlands by thousands of waterfowl travelling through the country is seen here. There are excellent opportunities for birdwatching, including a chance to catch owls night migration.



(6 Days)

White-backed woodpecker (*Dendrocopos leucotos*)



**Selected species** - most likely to be observed: great numbers of geese species: Tundra and Taiga Bean Goose, White-fronted Goose, Tundra Swan and diverse waterfowl, including Ducks, Scooters, Divers and Mergansers; Woodpecker species: Greyheaded & Black, Three-toed & White-backed, Little & Middlespotted Woodpecker; Raptors: Rough-legged Buzzard and orthern Goshawk, White-tailed Eagle, Pygmy Owl, probably engmalm's Owl and also Hazel Grouse, Marsh and Coal Tit, Nutcracker. Good possibilities to see the mammals, like Red Fox, Roe-deer, Yellow-throated Marten, Moose and others.

**General Route:** Rīga - Ķemeri National Park - Slītere National Park - Ventspils - Pāvilosta - Liepāja - Pape - Rīga

## Day 1

**Rīga - Ķemeri (56 km)**

Arrival in Rīga. Meet and greet in the airport and go for dinner and accommodation in Ķemeri National Park

## Day 2

**Ķemeri - Slītere National Park (130 km)**

Breakfast. Birding in Ķemeri National Park, including wet-forest areas and local places around Lake Kaņieris & Ķemeri village. Lunch in Lapmežciems. W coast of Riga Bay with some small stops and longer walk (around 3 km) at Mērsrags. Dinner and accommodation in Slītere National Park.

## Day 3

**Slītere National Park - Ventspils (120 km)**

After early breakfast live towards Cape Kolka at be there until lunch (sea & migration watching or if prefer – small walks in surrounding). Lunch in Kolka. Afternoon: Slītere National Park, visiting the broad-leaf forests around ancient coast of Baltic Ice Lake. Dinner and accommodation in Ventspils.

## Day 4

**Ventspils - Pape or Liepāja (140 - 190 km)**

Early morning sea-watching from Ventspils breakwater (1.5 hrs) for interested ones. Return to the hotel for breakfast. Drive through Užava floodplain fields. Lunch in Pāvilosta. The western most point – Akmeņrags near Ziemepe.

Dinner and accommodation in Liepāja or Pape. Best option is to stay in Pape because of possible owls night migration, if started.

## Day 5

**Pape or Liepāja**

Breakfast. Birdringing station & lake Pape Liepāja and surrounding. Two options – stay the whole day at the ringing station or take a drive of nearest surrounding – can be decided on the spot. Dinner and accommodation in Liepāja or Pape.

## Day 6

**Pape - Liepāja - Rīga (260 km)**

Breakfast. Transfer Pape-Liepāja-Rīga airport (260 km) with lunch on the way. According to the flight time - drive through Zvārde wooded area and some small other stops. Departure.

Pygmy owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*)



Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)







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### Birdwatching tower at Lake Kaņieris



### Kolka Cape



### Landscape of Ķemeri National Park



### Stony sea coast at Mērsrags

