**IRBENE RADIO ANTENNA**

The "radio telescope" at Irbene was once used for counter espionage purposes. Military units and a military housing estate have now been abandoned. Today the radio telescope is run by Latvia's Radio Astronomy Centre and guided tours are available.

**VENTSPILS NO.46 COASTAL BATTERY**

Built from November 1939, there was room here for four B-13 cannons and housing for officers and their families. On June 24, 1941, when German torpedo cutters attacked the port of Ventspils, the cannons were used to repel the attack.

**LT RUBENIS BATTALION MUSEUM**

In late 1944, fierce battles took place between SD and SS units from the German 16th Army, under the command of Police General Friedrich Jekeln, and a separate battalion of the Kurelians, under the command of Lt Roberts Rubenis. Rubenis had more than 600 troops, who saw themselves as a national force that stood apart from the two hostile occupant regimes. The museum that remembers them conducts a unique military tourism route.

**DAUGAVGRIVA FORTRESS**

The first fortifications here were built by the Swedish army in 1608 during the Polish-Swedish war. In the 1640s, the Swedes built a fortress with five bastions, 120 cannons, barracks and a church. It was taken over by the Russian army in 1710 and survived two centuries before being blown up by the Russians in 1917 to keep it from falling into enemy hands. The fortifications were later used by the Latvian and then Soviet military, and can today be visited Thu-Sun, 10:00 to 16:00.

**SKRUNDA MILITARY VILLAGE**

The first Dnyestr-M Radar station was opened here in 1969 to calculate the trajectories of ballistic missiles and satellites. In 1985 work began on a massive new radar, but it was never completed. After the withdrawal of the Russian army in 1995, it was destroyed using 360 kg of explosives. Today, Skrunda is closed to visitors but can be viewed from the outside.

**LIEPAJA FORTRESS NO.3**

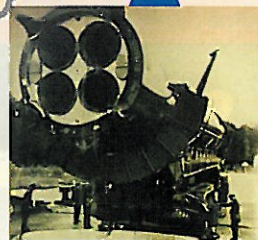
This coastal defense battery is so visually expressive because its positions are now either fully or partly in the sea. Abandoned and not managed by anyone, it's particularly impressive in stormy weather.

**BOMBER AT SKULTE**

A Soviet-era jet bomber, an IL-28, stands on supports in the village of Skulte. It was the first series-manufactured jet bomber to be produced in the USSR, made from a single piece of metal with two turbo engines. The cramped crew consisted of pilot, helmsman and radio operator.

**VAINODE AIRFIELD**

Before it became the site of one of the Soviet Union's biggest military airfields in the Baltic region, Vainode housed independent Latvia's first zeppelins. Eventually their huge hangars were dismantled and taken to Riga to be used for its central market, where they remain today. During the Soviet occupation, Vainode was home to an air defense and destroyer squadron, with 38 SU-27 "Flanker" aircraft on site. There are still 16 hangars, and most of the runway.

**KAROSTA PRISON**

Built around 1900, this imposing building was used as a prison for military personnel for the next 97 years. Today it offers "reality tours" in which participants take on the role of prisoners and can even stay the night.



# Military ghosts

Over the course of the centuries, Latvia and the Baltic region have been devastated by wars, occupations and foreign armies, leaving the landscape scarred by military installations, redoubts, fortresses, shoreline batteries, bun-

kers, dugouts, airfields, and ghostly battle sites.

The rural tourism association Lauku celotajs has published a new map that brings together Latvia's "military heritage", listing 60 little-visited locations, many of which are now seriously dilapidated and overgrown. Here are just a few.

**ZELTIŅI NUCLEAR BASE**

One of many Soviet missile bases shut down in 1989, Zeltiņi's missile hangars, firing systems, bunkers, tunnels, and residential buildings have survived to this day. A huge bust of Lenin on one of the missile sites used to stand in the town of Alūksne. Contact the base in advance: bazezeltinos.lv

**MORE MUSEUM & MEMORIAL PARK**

The site of a bloody battle in September 1944. Members of the Latvian Legion, on the side of the Nazis, delayed the ability of the Soviet military to break through to Riga and encircle the 18th German Army. Today you can see a T-34 Soviet tank and visit an above-ground German bunker. Open 09:00-17:00 in summer and during daylight hours the rest of the year. Go to moresmuzejs.lv.

**DEATH ISLAND**

In World War I, fierce battles between Latvian riflemen and the more powerful German army took place on what is known today as Death Island. On December 25, 1916, the Germans used deadly gases against the riflemen. A monument was installed on the northern shore in 1924. The island was a peninsula before Riga Hydroelectric Power Plant was built, but now it can only be reached by boat.

**DAUGAVPILS FORTRESS**

Work on this huge fortress began in 1810, but it was damaged in the war against Napoleon's army in 1812 and floods in 1829. Work on it was finally completed in 1878. Today it is the only fortress in Northern Europe from this era that has been preserved virtually unchanged. Military units were housed there in the Soviet period. Today, it is home to one of Latvia's biggest colonies of bats, and there are rules against disturbing them while they are asleep.

**VULDEVENS CASTLE**

The artist Agris Liepiņš recreated a 12th-century wooden castle in 1997. It's clearly an idealized version of the residence of Uldevis, a senior official of the Lielvārde region, but is still evocative and fun for families.

