

Baltic Country Holidays

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Introduction

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN LATVIA. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Latvia has become a member of the EU, but its history and environment are still very different than those in “accustomed” and “old” Europe. There are places such as the Ķemeri National Park, the Slītere National Park, the Lake Engurs Nature Park, the Pape Nature Park and others which are of European and global importance in terms of environmental values, as indicated by Natura 2000 territories and the Ramsar Convention.



Untouched and natural territories, particularly along Latvia’s shoreline, which was a closed border area during Soviet times, are fantastic islands of biological diversity. Species of plants and animals which are uncommon and endangered in Europe can be found here quite often.

Like White Storks, Common Cranes and Beevors are very common in every part of Latvia. Latvia is small but there are lots of territories free of human activity. Wild meadows are full of colourful and fragrant wild flowers, particularly in June.

Forests cover about 44% of the territory of Latvia, seacost is almost 500 km long from which mostly consists of wild beaches – sandy, rocky or covered by rare seaside meadows. Bogs are interesting with their diverse biotops and characteristic landscape.



Natura 2000 is a network of nature protected areas of European importance. It has been established to protect rare and endangered plant and animal species and their habitats (biotopes) in Europe. In Latvia the network was based upon the existing nature protected areas, adding 122 new sites. All our suggested tours pass several Natura 2000 territories.

Latvia has four distinctive seasons with their respective characteristics.

Winter is a good season to study different lichens and mosses which live on tree stumps, branches, rocks and other natural or manmade surfaces. Different species of tree-fungi will be found on trees in deciduous forests. A certain surprise may be the velvet foot (*Flamulina velutipes*), which you can put in your basket. In the swamps, you will still find cranberries as an important source of vitamins. **Spring.** The first blooming plants of the spring will pop up – fumewort, hepatica, coltsfoot, kingcup. The forest will decorate itself with rainbows of yellow and blue blossoms, and this is one of the most beautiful seasons in Latvia’s forests. Latvian folklore contains many folksongs in which it is said that when the bird-cherry blooms, it is time to go down to the Gauja, Abava, Venta or other river, because the white blossoms of the tree will resemble snowdrifts. **Summer.** Latvia’s meadows include nearly ½ of all local flowering plants, including some that are rare and endangered at the European level. For instance, Latvia has no fewer than 32 different kinds of orchids. Edible mushrooms, including chanterelles, appear in the forest, as do berries – bilberries, wild strawberries and wild raspberries, as well as cloudberries and blueberries in the swamps. There are also

small areas of flowers such as the garden cornflower and the flax plants that are so uncommon in Europe. **Autumn** is a season of gifts from nature. In the forest, there are whortleberries and hazelnuts, and there are cranberries out in the swamps. Latvians just love to go mushroom picking. There are between 20 and 30 popular types of edible mushrooms which people cut and put into their baskets. Many different types of tree-fungi can be found on fallen and living trees. One definite destination for travellers is the town of Sigulda, where people go to enjoy the “golden autumn.”

Baltic Country Holidays will be pleased to assist you with any further information, local contacts, answer your questions and plan your itinerary. Welcome to Latvia!

Symbols



walking



mushroom



birdwatching



botanic



insects



scenic view



heritage

With the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community. Project “Proposals for environmental policy and governance based on demonstration of environmental, social and economic benefits from tourism in the Slītere National Park - a NATURA 2000 territory” (LIFE07 ENV/LV/000981)

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 misterious world of mushrooms with local culinary traditions. The group is introduced with mushrooms growing at the various biotops – natural as well as man made. The tour goes in different forests, pass some historic sites and small villages on the way. 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)



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

Day 1

Arrival in Riga

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 Riga. Accommodation at Islande Hotel.

Day 2

Transfer Rīga – Silciems-Ragana-Inciems- Lielstraupe

Breakfast. One of the most popular mushroom pickers routes at Riga suburb. Here we might find popular in Latvia eadible mushroom like chanterelles, russulas and various boletus. Also Chestnut Bolete (*Gyroporus castaneus*), Lurid Bolete (*Boletus luridus*), eadible tree-fungus – Sheep polypore (popular in Scandinavian cooking) (*Albatrellus ovinus*), Golden corall (*Ramaria aurea*) and others. Short stop at Krimulda Church in Ragana to look for rare mushroom in European level - pretty saffron yellow coloured (*Hapalopilus croceus*). At Inciems we look for Chestnut Bolete (*Gyroporus castaneus*), European bolete (*Boletus edulis*), as well as golden Coral Tooth (*Hericium coralloides*). At Lielstraupe forest there is a chance to find the largest boletus mushroom in Latvia which can be eaten uncooked – The Parasol Mushroom (*Macrolepiota procera*). Accommodation at the SPA Ezeri hotel in Sigulda.



Day 3

Gauja National Park: Zvārte Cliff – Cēsis – Ungurmuīža

Breakfast. We walk nature trail along the Amata river which gurantees spectacular views, including impressive sandstone Zvartes Cliff as well as mushrooms typical for river banks. Also Chaga (*Inonotus obliquus*) which is used in medicine as well as Alder Bracket (*Inonotus radiatus*) which changes its colour depending of the light. We'll make a stop at Cēsis to look at its mighty medieval castle ruins and charming Old town. Ungurmuīža Manor is 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 impresive old oaks. There we look for (*Hapalopilus croceus*) and other typical mushrooms growing by oaks.

Walking along the Lake Vaidava we might find summer boletus (*Boletus reticulatus*). We end the mushrooming by stopping at the shitaki mushroom growers at Dulbeņi. Accommodation at the hotel Wolmar in Valmiera

Day 4

Zilaiskalns – Strenči – Zīle Forest

Breakfast. Zilaiskalns is a very distinct hillock covered by forest, and from where there is a "narrow" landscape featuring the northern part of the highlands, as well as the Lake Burtnieks flatlands. It is also a good place for different types of boletus.

Zīle Forest, Pirtsliča brach of the river is a rare biotop in Europe with ancient oak forest and park type meadows. Chance

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

to find (*Hapalopilus croceus*), Ceramic Parchment (*Xylobolus frustulatus*) as well as other mushrooms growing by oaks. Accommodation at the hotel Wolmar in Valmiera

Day 5

Valka - Mežole

Breakfast. Mushrooming near Valka at the typical pine-tree forests with Cladonias on white lichen. Chanterelles, Suillus, Boletus, Leccinum and others. Natural coniferous forest at Mežole -one of the richest from biological diversity point of view. Here one can find mushrooms which is indicators of natural forest, like Wood-rotting fungus (*Phellinus nigrolimitatus*), (*Junghuhnia collabens*), needled covered *Asterodon ferruginosus*. Stop at Jaunannužēni – growers of oyster mushrooms. Accommodation at the hotel Wolmar in Valmiera. Returning to Riga. Accommodation at the hotel Islande in Riga.

Day 6

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

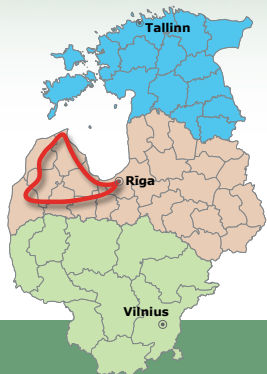
Breakfast. Āraiši reconstructed ancient settlement from Bronze Age built on lake. Here is a good example how mushrooms can damage and destroy the man made objects. We will see *Gloeophyllum sepiarium*, which growth on wooden constructions not only here but often also on fences, wooden roofs and wooden parts of railway tracks. Lielie Kangari is unusual geological object. Mushrooming along the slopes and edge of the bog. Possible to find bolete (*Suillus flavidus*) and *Suillus piperatus* (can use as a spice), Earthstars (*Geastrum sp.*). Returning to Riga. Accommodation at Islande Hotel.

Day 7

Breakfast. Free time. Transfer to the airport.



Mushroom Tour at Kurzeme Region



This is for people who enjoy forests, wildlife, local traditions and has an interest in mushrooms - different species as well as their various ways of preparation. The tour passes several national parks, stops at charming provincial towns and historic sites. During the tour you will learn not only about various species of mushrooms, different forests with their typical habitat but also find out how locals prepare and preserve wild mushrooms. We will visit also one of shitake mushroom growers for comparison reasons.



(6 days)



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 – Ķemeru nacionālais parks – Lapmežciems – Antiņciems – Valguma ezers – Milzkalns – Apšuciems – Rideļi

Breakfast. Mushrooming around Antiņciems at pine-tree forests as well as damp forests. Possible to find King 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 Chanerelle (*Cantarellus tubaeformis*), 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 coastal pine-forests near Apšuciems: traditional eadable mushrooms – Common Chanterelle (*Cantarellus cibarius*), Variegated Bolete (*Suillus variegatus*) and others. Then mushrooming at Rideļi for different species of Russule Russula as well as Boletes.

In the evening opportunity to go through

gathered mushrooms with the guide and cook them in the meal. Accommodation at the Hotel Arcadia.

Day 3

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

Breakfast.

Šķēdes beeches growth with some rare for Latvia mushrooms. Visit local wine maker at Lauciena.

Then we’ll follow Botanical trail along Krovalki house located at Talsi down 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.

On the way we’ll stop at Valdemārpils Idol linden tree and then gather mushrooms along the banks of the river Roja. Here possible to find such valuable eadable 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 at the guest house Pupoli.

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 (Gri-



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

fofa frondosa) and Ceramic Parchment Fungus (*Xylobolus frustulatus*) while on the banks of Pāce Lake is a chance to find Chesnut Bolete (*Gyroporus castaneus*). Lonaste and Raķupe ancient oak where we look for Saffron Yellow Polypore (*Hapalopilus croceus*) and other typical oak mushrooms. At the largest array of forest between Ugāles – Zlēku is possible to find Cauliflower Fungus (*Sparassis crispa*). Accommodation at the hotel Metropole.

Day 5.

Kuldīga – Aizpute – Rudbārži – Rīga

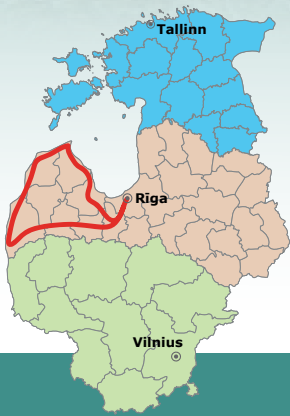
Breakfast. We'll start a day with excursion through charming Old Town of Kuldīga with its widest waterfall of Europe, well preserved wooden buildings and 19th century brick bridge across the river Venta. Then continue to Tebra oak growth where possible to see the strange Hen-of-the-Woods (*Grifola frondosa*),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

Day 6. Departure

Breakfast. Free time. Transfer to the airport.



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. 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. This tour explores different biotops to get the best impressions of the spring time migration.



30 Apr-09 May (10 Days)



General Route: *Rīga - Jelgava - Jaunmokas - Engure - Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Liepāja - Nica - Durbe - Skrunda - Saldus - Bauska - Rīga*

Day 1

Arrival in Rīga

A tour of the Latvian capital of Rīga and its Old Town, which is on the UNESCO list of global cultural heritage. Overnight at the Monica Centrum Hotel in Rīga

Day 2

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

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: Rīga-Jelgava-Svēte (~60 km); The Svēte flood-lands: a majorsirte of migrating geese, ducks and different plovers; Svēte-Jelgava (10 km); Jelgava Palace's island (reserve); Lunch at Jelgava; Jelgava-Slampe-Dunduru Meadows (~60 km); 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 at the northern end of the territory; Smārde-Jaunmokas (~30 km); The Jaunmokas Manor Park; Overnight at Jaunmokas Manor.

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 Vēršupīte River, as well as the wetlands between the Forest House and Lake Sloka; A visit to the visitors centre; Lunch at Ķemeri.

Day 4

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

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route. Jaunmokas-Bērciems (~ 60 km); an overgrown seashore with reefs is one of the most appropriate places to watch wading and water bird; Bērciems-Engure (~ 5 km); Lake Engure, a pasture of wild horses and cows and a birdwatching tower (the Lake Engure Nature Park); Engure-Bērciems. Lunch at Bērciems; Bērciems-Mērsrags (~ 15 km); Mērsrags seashore meadows and Pekrags. A complex of lagoon-type biotopes, including meadows, areas of reeds, a rocky seashore, shoals and bird watching tower. Mērsrags-Ģipka (~60 km); This is a small area of wetlands located where a lagoon from the ancient Litorine Sea once was. Overnight in GH Pītagi in Košrags.

Day 5

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

Breakfast. Sites en route: Košrags-Kolka (~14 km); 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



...one of the world's top most important migration paths!

Trail (3,5 km), which offers a set of dunes with high swamps and a sump lake that are unique at the European level; Kolka-Pūrciems-Dundaga (~40 km); The wetlands of Ģipka; Lunch in Dundaga; Dundaga-Slītere-Mazirbe-Košrags (~20 km); The visitor centre at the Slītere National Park and Slītere Lighthouse; The former coastline of the ancient Baltic Ice Sea – the “blue hills”. Overnight in GH Pītagi in Košrags.

Day 6

Mazirbe -Oviši-Ventspils-Užava-Labragš (~140 km)

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: Mazirbe-Oviši (~40 km); The Irbene radar station, the coastline of Oviši, a sandy seashore; the coastline of Oviši; Oviši-Ventspils (~ 30 km). Lunch at Ventspils; Ventspils-Užava (~ 40 km); The Užava Estuary, with a restricted area to protect a biotope which includes the grey dunes that are very uncommon in Europe; The meadows and polders of the lower reaches of the Užava River; Užava-Labragš (~ 30); The steep shores of the little Muižupīte River; Overnight at GH Liedags in Labragš.

Day 7

Labragš-Liepāja-Nīca-Grobiņa-Durbe (~130 km)

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: Labragš-Liepāja (~80 km); the cap of Labragš; Liepāja-Nīca-Grobiņa-Durbe (~50 km); The Liepāja port, Lake Liepāja, village of Nīca, the Old Durbe School; Overnight in GH Atvari in Durbe.

Day 8

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

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: Durbe-Līguti (~5 km); The Līguti Estate park; Līguti-Vītiņi (~30 km); 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. Vītiņi-Skrunda (~100 km); The fish ponds of Skrunda; Lunch in Skrunda; Skrunda-Saldus (~40 km).



Overnight at GH Zvejnieki near Saldus.

Day 9

Pilsrundāle-Bauska-Rīga (~85 km)

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Kalnsēta Park Saldus-Sātiņi (~20 km); 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; Saldus-Kokmuiža (~30 km); Lunch in Saldus; Zvārde – former military base; Kokmuiža -Tērvete (~30 km);

The Tērvete Park, river valley; The pines of Tērvete, the tallest pine tree in Latvia; Tērvete-Pilsrundāle (~ 60 km). Overnight at Baltā Māja in Pilsrundāle or at Mežotne Manor.

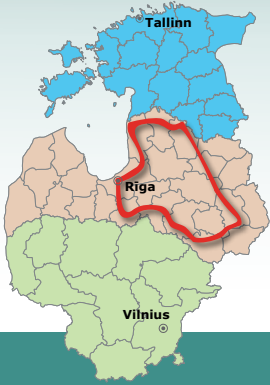
Day 10

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

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Rundāle Palace Park and the palace itself; Pilsrundāle-Bauska -Rīga (~85 km); The Cena Heath, Getliņi; Departure.



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. Old pine forest growths is 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.



20-26 September (7 Days)



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

Day 1

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

Pick-up at the Rīga International Airport and head to Sigulda. Lunch. We will follow the walking trails at Sigulda area and Turaida Castle park looking for woodpeckers.

The journey continues to Pale. We will walk through Pilkes Bog to watch cranes. Accommodation and dinner at Salacgrīva.

Day 2

Salacgrīva - Kuiviži - Mazsalaca - Burtņieki (206 km)

After early breakfast we will spent a couple of hours on the sea shore to watch waders, then continue along the picturesque banks of the river Salaca for woodpeckers. Lunch.

Next, drive to the lake Burtņieks, Viksna and Ruja ponds. There we will watch

cranes and geese. Accommodation and dinner at Lantus.

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. Lunch at Valka. Then we explore park-type meadows at the Gauja bridge.

Continue to Murmastiene to watch cranes. We will spend evening at Graši Manor House surrounded by its old park. Accommodation and dinner at Graši.

Day 4

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

Today we start and finish with watching some cranes at Murmastiene.

But afternoon we will dedicate to water birds such as herons, sea eagles and ducks around the lake Lubāna and fish ponds at Īdeņi. Accommodation and dinner at Zosna.

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

Day 5

Zosna - Kaunata - Aglona - Dviete (180 km)

Today we will visit a pottery workshop. Latgale region is famous with their potting schools. Lunch at Kaunata.

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. 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.

Lunch at Viesīte. We will be stopping at Pilskalne manor, mighty Bauskas Castle ruins as well as one of the most beautiful parks – Rundale Palace park. Accommodation and dinner at Rundale.

Day 7

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

The morning can be spent leisurely watching the birds at Rundale Palace park. Then heading to the mouth of Svēte river to watch some geese and cranes.

Lunch stop at Jelgava. Departure from Rīga International Airport.



Botanical Tour at Kurzeme region



The tour is designed for the people with particular interest in the botanics and who enjoy walks in the nature.

The tour goes through national parks and protected nature territories of international importance, follows the seashore. It also stops at small charming towns, several historic sites and traditional villages. During the tour you learn not only about rare and protected plants, local traditions but also enjoy beautiful landscapes, wilderness and solitude.



(6 Days)



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

Day 1

Arrival in Rīga

Transfer to Islande Hotel. Visit to the Botanical Gardens of the University of Latvia. The garden established in 1922 and has the oldest plants collection in the Baltic States. Visit to Babite Rododendrus grower.

There are different species of wild as well as cultivated rododendrus collections, together more than 200 species. Free time to explore historic sites of Rīga. Accommodation at the hotel Islande.

Day 2

Route: Rīga - Ķemeri - Engure

Breakfast. Departure to Ķemeri National Park created to protect coastal zones, seaside lakes, bog and damp forest as well as sulphur springs. We will follow fen trail, wild meadows, stop at the bird watching tower at the Kanieris Lake. Among many other plants we look out for Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*), Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), Black Alders fen and plants related to this biotope.

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 created to protect the shallow lake with the birds nesting places as well as its specific flora. In this territory grow about 22 types of orchids including The

Early Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*), Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), Baltic Orchid (*Dactylorhiza baltica*) etc. Accommodation at the Hotel Roja.

Day 3

Route: Engure - Kolka - Ventspils

Breakfast. Slitere National Park is former territory of the Baltic Ice Lake, Ancilus Lake as well as ancient coast of Litornic Sea. Here is great biotops' diversity including wild beach, different dune biotops, pine-tree forests, wet forests and bog, meadows and sand stone outcrops. We will follow along the Cape Kolka walking pine tree trail, Pēterezera Lake trail with ancient dunes and fig landscape.

Species of interest here: Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*), Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Seaside Pea (*Lathyrus maritimus*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Tree Lungwort (*Lobaria pulmonaria*), Eastern Pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla patens*), etc.

Visit Dundaga Castle which history dates back to 13th century. Stiklu Bog is one of the largest bog territory of Kurzeme. There are several kilometres long plunk trail. We will look here for Marsh clubmoss (*Lycopodiella inundata*), Rannochrush (*Scheuchzeria palustris*), different types of sundews (*Droseraceae*), Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), Deergrass (*Trichophorum cespitosum*), etc.

Day 4

Route: Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga

Breakfast. We will visit Uzava Protected

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

Area where is one of the largest "grey" dunes in the Baltics. It stretches along the sea for several kilometres. Here we might see: Toadflax (*Linaria loeselii*), Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*), Sand Pink (*Dianthus arenarius*). Then we go to Venta valley to walk its wild banks. Species to look for: Large thyme (*Thymus ovatus*), Beach Speedwell (*Veronica longifolia*) and different orchid species. Excursion to the charming Old Town of Kuldīga with its wooden architecture, visit the widest waterfall in Europe and 19th century's brick bridge across Venta. Accommodation at the hotel Metropole, Kuldīga

Day 5

Route: Kuldīga - Sabile - Kandava - Rīga

Abava Ancient Valley Park is created to protect the landscape created by the waters of ancient melting iceberg with its monuments of natural history. We will visit Sabile Wine Hill – the most Northernly grown grapes from which wine is produced.

Then we will follow botanical trail at Drubazi where we look for: Bath Sedge (*Carex davalliana*), Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), Baltic Orchid (*Dactylorhiza baltica*), Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), etc.

On the way we stop at one of the grandest oaktrees in Europe, which is more than 10m of circumference. Cena Heath Trail is about 5 km long and includes various biotops like high, low and transit bogs and related plants.

There is a viewing tower in the bog. Species here might include: various types of peat moss (*Sphagnum*), Bog Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Leatherleaves (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), Heath Spotted - Orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*), Cranberries (*Oxycoccus palustris*) etc.

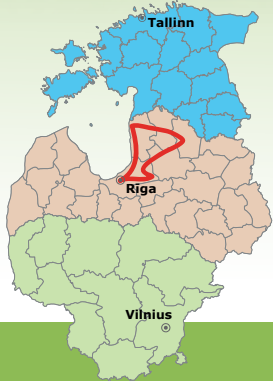
Returning to Rīga. Accommodation at Islande Hotel.

Day 6

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



The Plants of Vidzeme



This tour is planned to show a variety of habitat found in different types of forests, wetlands as well as sea coast. The tour will pass some impressive ancient trees and beautiful landscapes. Along with some rare and endangered plants you could spot different types of butterflies and dragonflies. The tour involves some longer walks and historic monuments along the way.



(6 Days)



General Route: Rīga - Salacgrīva - Valmiera - Sigulda - Līgatne - Rīga

Day 1
Arrival in Rīga

Overnight at the hotel in Rīga.

Day 2
Rīga - Salacgrīva

Departure along the Vidzeme sea coast. The rocky shoreline of Vidzeme is a unique and rocky phase of the eastern shore of the Bay of Rīga, with small cliffs from the Devonian period along the shoreline.

You can hike for 4-5 kilometres along the seashore from the Veczemu cliffs (Mantiņi) to Meleki.

The Randu meadows are seashore meadows which are known as an "herbarium" for Latvia's wild plants, because there is a wide variety of different plants there. A wooden pathway leads through the meadows, and at the end of the path is a bird watching tower.

Overnight at Salacgrīva.

Day 3
Salacgrīva - Valmiera

Departure. The Dambju oak tree, Kaņepju oak tree and Baložu juniper tree are all in the Northern Gauja Protected Landscape Region, and from the perspective of biological diversity, it is a unique territory along the central stretch of the Gauja River, with environmental information trails established nearby.

Visit the Ziles and Vekšu nature trails, as well as the park-like meadow of oak trees at Marsi.

Overnight stay at Valmiera district.

Day 4
Valmiera - Sigulda - Līgatne - Rīga

Departure to Murjāni. The Gauja National Park was set up to protect the most impressive ancient river valley in the Baltic States – the Gauja River, its shores, and the cultural and historical heritage that is found there.

The Gauja ecological trail (Murjāni-Sigulda-Līgatne) leads along the left bank of the ancient Gauja River Valley

...more than 30 plant species can be found in a few square meters...

between Līgatne and Sigulda. There are hillside forests and wetland meadows along the way. You will spot the yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), wild thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*), the Burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), the sticky catchfly (*Viscaria vulgaris*), annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*), the meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), the spiked speedwell (*Veronica spicata*), the orchardgrass (*Dactylis glomerata*), the Germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), the Queen Anne's lace (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), the perennial honesty (*Lunaria redivia*), the baneberry (*Actaea spicata*), the common wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), the maple (*Acer platanoides*), the oak (*Quercus robur*), the European lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*), the dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), the common hazel (*Corylus avellana*), as well as other species of plants related to hillside forests and meadows.

The trail between Sigulda and Līgatne is around 20 km in length. Drive to Rīga. Overnight in Rīga.

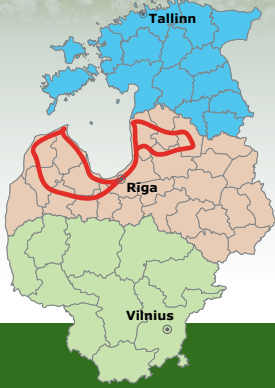
Day 5

Rīga

Transfer to the airport. Departure.



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 time. This tour is aimed to combine these various experiences.



(7 Days)



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

Landscapes, migrating birds, plants, dragonflies and butterflies. Breakfast. 09:00 departure from the hotel to Vidzeme Sea coast – Eastern side of Riga Gulf (Visiting of Devonian sand stone cliffs near Vecmuiža, coastal meadows in Kuiviži, sea breakwater with possibility to see waders migration. 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 at Lantus.

Day 3

Salacgrīva - Mežole

Water birds, mammals and dragonflies. Breakfast. 09:00 departure to Seda bog. Possibly to see some beaver actions. Lunch in Valmiera. Afternoon drive to Mežole forests (owls and woodpeckers) and the Gauja national park. Accommodation and dinner at guest house Kārļamuiža.

Day 4

Mežole - Sigulda - Bīriņi

Mushrooms, berries, animals. Breakfast 08:00 departure to mushroom tour. Cesis, Ungurmuiza, Lielstraupe, Ligatne Nature Trails. Mushrooming will pass beautiful forests with some great views across the river Gauja Valley dotted with three castles, old park of Ungurmuiza Manor and go along the nature trails where wild animals can be seen living in the conditions close to natural ones. Lunch at Sigulda. Afternoon go through the content of baskets and learn how they can be prepared. Wine degustation at



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

Jokas, Limbazi district. Accommodation and dinner at the Birini Manor House.

Day 5

Bīriņi - Rīga - Engure - Kolka

West coast of the Baltic Sea, migrating birds. Breakfast. 09:00 Departure to Rīga. Pick-up a rented car at the airport. Suggested route: 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) for birdwatching. Visit coastal area at Berzciems. Stop for lunch at Villa Elizabete. Continue to Slitere National Park. Visit Slitere lighthouse for panoramic view of the area. Birdwatching at Cape Kolka.

Accommodation at Pitagi



Day 6

Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga - Sābīle - Rīga

Charming provi towns, cultural and historic attractions. Breakfast. Ventspils-small Old Town with Livonian Order Castle. Walk breakwater for sea watching. Continue to Užava floodplains and stop at Jurkalne steep coast. Turn inland towards Kuldīga - charming provincial town with well preserved wooden architecture and the widest waterfall in Europe. Head towards Rīga through Sābīle and visit the Wine Hill there- the most Northerly vineyards from where wine used to be produced for export. On the way make a stop at Jaunmoku Manor at Tukums district to inspect hotel there. Accommodation in Rīga at Islande Hotel



Day 7

Rīga

Breakfast. Departure to the airport.

