

CAR ROUTE AROUND THE SLĪTERE

Welcome to Slītere!

In the Slītere National Park, except for restricted areas, you may walk freely through it to look for plants, animals and landscapes, to pick mushrooms and berries, to go swimming (except at Kolkasrags, where it is dangerous), to get a sunbat, to ride a bike or a boat. While doing it, let's respect the nature values!



THE ROUTE

This route will allow you to learn about the diverse environmental and cultural heritage of northern Kurzeme peninsula. You will also find the loveliest views in the Slītere National Park. You can drive down the route, or you can ride a bicycle.

Season: Preferably April-October, but year-round if conditions permit

Type of car: No specific requirements

Type of bike: Mountain bike

Difficulty: For bikers, not very hard if you take two days

Road cover: Mostly asphalt, but some 19 km of gravel road

Distance from Riga: 170 km

Beginning: Dundaga or other places (Melnšils, Sikrags) – this is a circular route

End: Dundaga or other places

Route: Dundaga-Slītere-Sikrags-Mazirbe-Košrags-Pitragi-Saunags-Vaide-Kolka-Melnšils-Vidale-Dundaga

Markings: None

Alternatives: The route can be taken in either direction and can be started and stopped anywhere.

Length: ~90 km. If you're driving, we recommend that you take two days if you want to take a detailed look at everything that you want to see and if you hike all of the trails.

Duration: One or two days

Logistics: A circular route which returns to where it started
Note: Bring a printed map with all of the necessary information

Emergency services: Ring 112

TOURIST SERVICES

- Nearby accommodations:** Sikrags 🏠 Jaunklāvi 29469614
Lapmežciems 🏠 Jaunlidumi 29467556
Mazirbe 🏠 Upeskalni 29259510; 🏠 Mazirbes Kalēji 28829474, 29213412, 🏠 Dzintariņi 26173009
Košrags 🏠 Jauntilmači 29412974; 🏠 Pitagi 29372728; www.pitagi.lv
Saunags 🏠 Krūmiņi 29452512
Vaide 🏠 Purvziēdi 63200179, 29395624
Kolka 🏠 Ūši 63276507, 29475692; www.kolka.info
The tenting area Melnšils in Melnšils 28605606
- Resting place:** In Kolkasrags and Melnšils
Shops: In Dundaga, Mazirbe, Kolka, Melnšils and Vidale
Dining: In Dundaga, as well as in Kolka (seasonal)
Bicycle rentals: At Mazirbes Kalēji, Ūši, Pitagi and Jaunlidumi
Information: www.talsurajons.lv 63224165; www.kolkasrags.lv 29149105; www.ziemeļkurzeme.lv 63232293, 29444395; www.livones.lv; www.countryholidays.lv 67617600

THE MOST INTERESTING DESTINATIONS

- Dundaga:** The centre of the Dundaga Administrative District has many interesting and historical objects such as the **Dundaga castle** (housing the Tourist Information, the hotel, the Arts and Music school), **the park, the Lutheran church, the "Crocodile," the workshop of the ceramics artist Velga Eizenberga**, etc.
- The Nevejas Lidumiņi** homestead has a magnificent garden of dahlias, with some 1,300 different kinds to see.
- Slītere:** Here you will find Latvia's highest lighthouse at the edge of the Blue Hills of Slītere. It is a viewing tower at this time, and if the weather is perfectly clear, you can even see Saaremaa Island in the distance. There is a small exhibit of information here. The Slītere Nature Trail is right here, too, but it can be toured only in the company of a guide.
- A viewing tower** alongside the Dundaga-Mazirbe road offers a view of what used to be the Baltic Ice Sea (the Seashore lowlands today).
- The Pēterezers Nature Trail** – one of the most beautiful trails in northern Kurzeme, some 3.5 km long, and passing through the pine forests of Slītere, offering views that are unique in Europe. There is also a mossy swamp in the area. The Great Lake Pēterezers and the Small Lake Pēterezers are in one of the deepest and widest hollows between the dunes.
- Sikrags** is a Liv village, part of which has been declared a national monument of urban design.
- The Liv People's Hall**, built in 1939, is a symbol of the Liv identity. There is a photo exhibition about the Liv nation at the hall.
- The Boat Cemetery.** Dating to the 1960s, when the Soviet military started to limit fishing along the shoreline, this cemetery illustrates the fact that boats were no longer of any use and were simply abandoned in the dunes. Some say that border guards burned some of the boats. Others claim that Soviet border guards banned the old tradition of burning fishing boats on Summer Solstice Eve. Along the way to the boat cemetery, you can examine the **Great Net Barn** from the outside.
- The former Maritime School** (1894-1914) trained more than 1,000 students. During Soviet times, a border guard facility was housed here, and the border guard tower has been preserved. Along the road to the school are forested shoreline dunes with small buildings which create an interesting coastal landscape. The road between the Maritime School and the sea was once known as the Captains' Road.
- Košrags** is the most interesting of the Liv villages in terms of architecture, the cultural landscape, and accessibility. The names and history of the various buildings are posted on outer walls, and there is a central information stand, as well.
- Pitragi** is a former fishing village with many legends about sea pirates and sunken ships. The **Pitragi Baptist Church** is at the centre of the village – built in 1902.
- Saunags** is an extensive fishing village with many buildings for travellers, both old and new. The name Saunags was first mentioned in documents in the 14th century. The **Nigļiņas linden tree** is very impressive in size.
- Vaide** – a village in the middle of the forest known for a Horn collection – Museum at the Purvziēdi homestead, as well as the Vaide Pond. There is a beautiful and **massive oak tree** in Vaide, as well.
- Kolkasrags** is the most distinct horn along the Latvian seashore, and it is the place where the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Riga come together. The horn extends under the sea for another five kilometres and up to the Kolka lighthouse. The sun rises and sets in the sea at Kolkasrags, and those are some really fantastic views. Swimming is not recommended here because of shifting currents and sand. A monument by the sculptor Ģirts Burvis, "Those Taken by the Sea," has been installed in the dunes at Kolkasrags. The monument represents a gate through which the Kolka lighthouse can be seen. Other points of interest include a wrecked ship, a rock marking the centre of Europe, information stands dedicated to the founder of Latvia's maritime industry, Krišjānis Valdemārs, and a former Soviet military base which is used today by the Latvian Coast Guard and which can be viewed only from the outside. During spring migration, there are lots of birds at Kolkasrags, and this is of interest to bird watchers. There is a convenient car park, benches with tables, a visitor centre, and, during the summer season, a small café where you can have a delicious meal.
- The old Kolkasrags lighthouse** is just a set of ruins right now. The lighthouse at the tip of the horn was built in the 16th century and renovated several times. The ruins are slowly decaying because of storms and ice during the winter. They had been standing well away from the shoreline once, but now are slowly disappearing under water.
- The Kolka lighthouse** is on an artificial island which was created between 1872 and 1875. The original lighthouse was made of wood, and its light was first lit in June 1987. As the island settled into the sea, the current tower was built. It began operations on July 1, 1884. Today the lighthouse is six kilometres from Kolkasrags at the end of its sandy shallows (back when it was built, it was just five kilometres away). The island still has the building for the lighthouse supervisor, as well as several outhouses. The metal lighthouse which is there now was built in St Petersburg. It has been an automated lighthouse since 1979.
- Ūši** – a campsite and guesthouse in Kolka where, if you apply in advance, you can see how the traditional carrot buns known as "sklandu rauši" are baked.
- Kolka** is the only Liv village in which intensive fish processing and other business activities were preserved even after the imposition of the Soviet regime in Latvia. The population of Kolka increased even as the population of other local villages decreased.
- The churches of Kolka** – **Lutheran** (built in 1886), **Orthodox** (built in 1890 and used as a graveyard chapel in Soviet times before returning to its status as a proper church), and **Catholic** (built in 1997).
- The Ēvazi shoreline.** A 0.3 km long walking trail leads to the steep shore which is 8-15m high. It's worth it – the view of the Gulf of Riga is magnificent here.
- Melnšils** is an ancient Liv village where ships were built at one time.
- Vidale** is a small village which is accessed via the impressive Slītere Blue Hills valley and its standstone cliffs.

The Slītere National Park (established in 1999 as a strict nature reserve) is known, with good reason, as an open-air museum which shows the historical development of the Baltic Sea. Nowadays evidence of geological events is seen in the Blue Hills of Slītere, which stand 20 to 30 metres high above what was the shore of the Baltic lake of ice 10,000 years ago. The Stiebrī hills were former 8,000 or 9,000 years ago, while the Littorina Sea formed Europe's largest set of dune ramparts and damp hollows between those ramparts. This occurred between 4,000 and 7,000 years ago. The gentle climate of Northern Kurzeme is the reason why so many rare plants are found in the park – some 860 in all including Common Yew (*Taxus baccata*) and Baltic Ivy (*Hedera helix* var. *baltica*). Of certain value in the preservation of these treasures was the Soviet military machine, which has left behind army bases and other military objects in the area. The presence of the military meant that the area of what is now the Slītere National Park remained largely undisturbed for 50 years. The park includes one of the most popular tourist destinations in Latvia – the Cape of Kolka, which is visited by more than 50,000 travellers each year. During the spring migration of birds, tens of thousands of birds fly over the cape within one hour. Along the shore of the Baltic Sea is the so-called Livonian coast, which stretches from Kolka to Sikrags and Ūši. Fishing villages and other cultural objects established by the world's smallest ethnic minority, the Livonians, can be found here. Tourists will enjoy interesting four nature trails, bicycling routes, viewing tower, and the Slītere lighthouse which is open for visitors.

The Slītere National Park features several other hikes, as well as bike, water and auto routes. Look for a list of routes on www.countryholidays.lv and for markings out in nature.

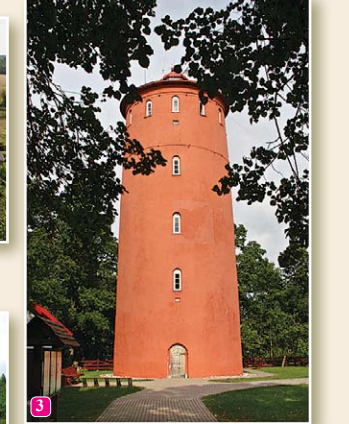


1 The Dundaga castle

2 In the „Nevejas Lidumiņi” homestead



3 The view from the Slītere lighthouse



3 The Slītere lighthouse



5 The Pēterezers Nature Trail



10 Košrags village



11 The Baptist Church of Pitragi



12 The sea by the Saunags



13 The „Purvziēdi” homestead in Vaide



19 The Catholic Church of Kolka



19 The Lutheran church of Kolka



19 The Kolka Orthodox Church



20 The Ēvazi shoreline