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LATVIA NORTHERN GAUJA FORESTLAND



SPICU BRIDGE – ZAĶI, 31 km

Through the magnificent Cirgaļi dunes

The Forest Trail crosses Spicu Bridge and leads to the four Kokši lakes (about 4 km), which are interconnected by a small stream. Here you will find a picnic area, tent spots and a nature trail for travellers. The surrounding nature is beautiful, and the forests are rich in edible mushrooms. After passing the last of the Kokši lakes, Lake Dibena, in an hour or two you will reach the Cirgaļi dune massif, which you will cross towards north-south. The further section of the Forest Trail crosses a large forested area, and a lone homestead or a smaller lake can be seen here and there. The section ends in a small village named Zaķi. The village provides no services, so be sure to consider the necessary arrangements and accommodation options as you plan your hike. The section is located in the Northern Gauja ("Ziemeļgauja") protected landscape area.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

..... 31 km

1 (long) day or 2-day route

Spicu Bridge by Gauja River

Zaķi

Spicu Bridge – Kokšu Lakes – Cirgaļi dunes – Zaķi

Small forest roads, trails, gravel roads

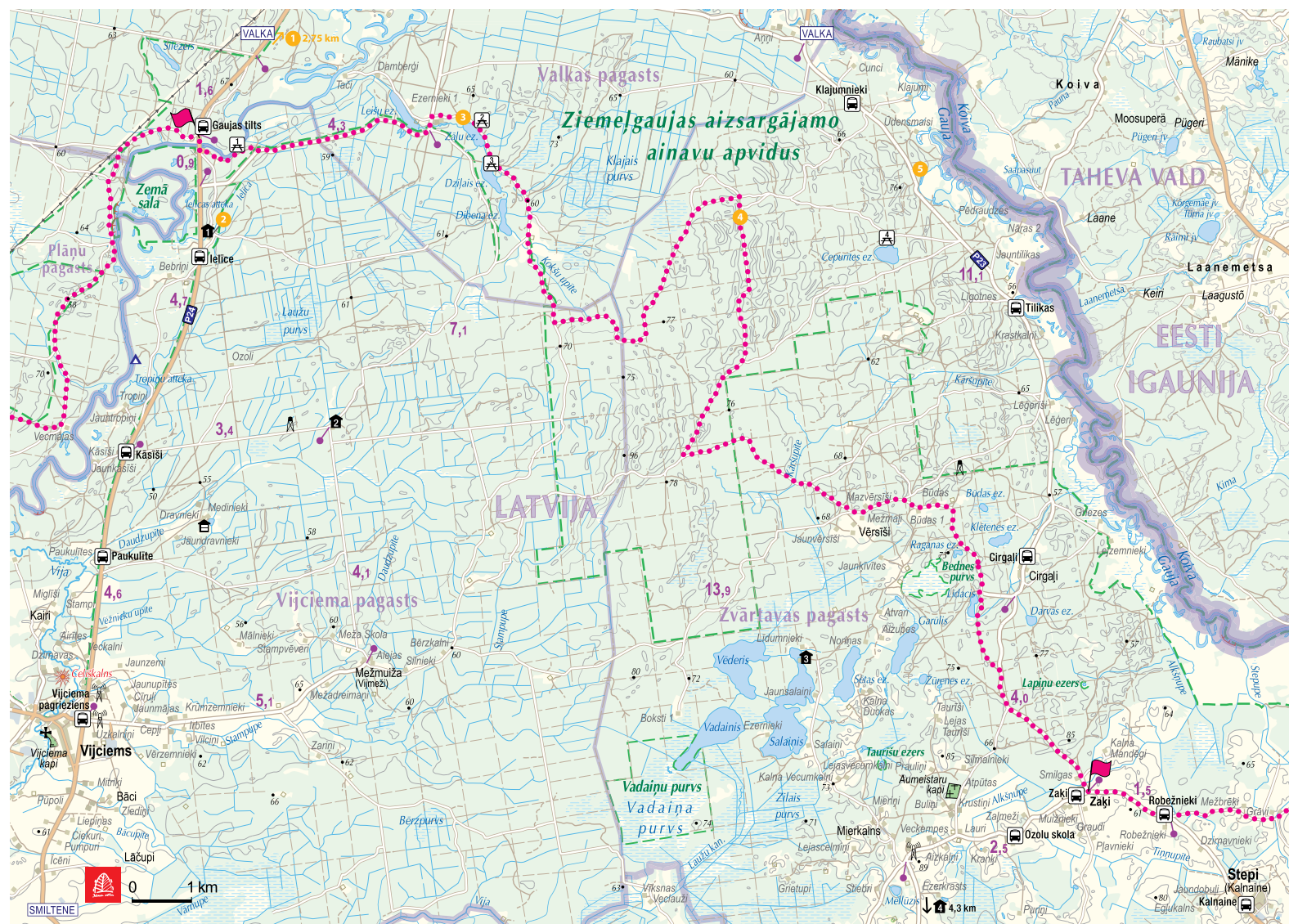
Easy, if the section is completed in two days, hard, if completed in one day.

Watch out for cars on winding gravel roads!

The nearest accommodations are within a 5 to 8 km radius of Zaķi. You can try asking the hosts to pick you up or take the Smiltene–Gaujiena bus [at 15:10 (does not run on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays) and 19:15], which connects Zaķi with Aumeisteri,

Zvārtava and Gaujiena. The mentioned locations offer accommodation.

Strong hikers without heavy backpacks will be able to complete the distance in one day. It is advisable to divide the section into a two-day walk with an overnight stay at the rest area by Cepurīte Lake (tent spots only, ~ 3 km from the Forest Trail) located approximately in the middle of this section.



FORESTS

The forest path leads through the sparse pine forests where protected habitats may be observed and photographed: lichen-rich pine forests, which are found only on the inland dunes apart from the Piejūra (maritime) lowlands. Here pine forests and marshes grow on the Cirgaļi inland dune massif, which originated at the end of the Ice Age, creating beautiful areas rarely seen in Latvia's inland. The western capercaillie nests here, and if you happen upon this bird, do not bother it and leave quietly. A white line marks several large pine trees along the route – these are the so called seed trees. Scientists are doing research on CO₂ capture in old forest stands. In some places, old pine stands have been preserved with fishtail-shaped scars on the trunk, which have been formed by resin mining during the past century.

WORTH SEEING!

- Zīle and Vekši Nature Trails.**
Located ~ 4.5 km from the start of this section. If you are travelling to the starting point or the end of the route by car, it is advisable to visit and explore these trails as well. GPS: 57.70289, 26.04634

- Ethnographic farmstead "Ielīcas".**
18th to 19th century. A Vidzeme farmstead, featuring a full building complex that is characteristic to solitary farms of the region. +371 29461673; GPS: 57.65790, 26.00147
- Kokšu Nature Trails.**
2.7 km and 4.5 km long and well-maintained trails around the Lakes Zāļu and Dziļais. GPS: 57.67506, 26.07358
- Cirgaļi inland dunes.**
A magnificent pine-covered dune massif stretching across 30 km². Some dunes are over 1 km long and 15–25 m high. GPS: 57.65866, 26.15087
- Cirgaļi observation tower.**
At the height of 27 m, the dunes offer a beautiful view to the meandering Gauja River and its tributaries, as well as surrounding forests and meadows. GPS: 57.66448, 26.20078

SERVICES

Accommodations

- Ethnographic farmstead "Ielīcas",**
+371 29461673; GPS: 57.65790, 26.00147
- Guest House "Bergervilla",**
+371 2926847; GPS: 57.62884, 26.03309
- Recreation Centre "Mednieki",**
+371 25770081; GPS: 57.59146, 26.16517
- Guest House "Aumeisteri",**
+371 64728457; GPS: 57.52333, 26.20361

Public transport

The closest stop to Spicu Bridge is Ielīcas, located on the P24 roadway, the bus runs 3–5 times a day on the Valka–Smiltene route. On the Smiltene–Zaķi–Gaujiena route, the bus runs twice a day (see the section "Keep in mind!").
Route timetables: www.1188.lv

Rest areas

- Picnic area by Gauja,**
⚠️ No more than 3 tents.
GPS: 57.67161, 26.00984
- By Zāļu Lake,** 🌳
GPS: 57.67439, 26.07481
- By Dziļais Lake,** 🌳
GPS: 57.66783, 26.08152
- By Ceperīte Lake,** 🌳
GPS: 57.6539, 26.19283

TOURIST INFORMATION:

Valka TIB, Valka, Rīgas street 22,
www.visit.valka.lv/en,
+371 64725522 or +371 26446602;
GPS: 57.77427, 26.01927