



## Žiogeliai – Merkinė

### Through the Dzūkija National Park

Up to the Merkys estuary to the Nemunas, the Forest Trail leads along the banks of the Nemunas valley, where it is surrounded by large and beautiful forests of Dzūkija in the vicinity of the Dainava Lowland (Dainavos lyguma). In some places in the forest massif there are open places where small villages are scattered. Nearby Česukai village, the Forest Trail forms a large circle around the Merkys estuary to the Nemunas, because the nearest bridge is on the A4 road. Here you can see picturesque landscapes over the wide and deep Merkys valley. After crossing Merkys, the Forest Trail stretches along a narrow country road on the left bank of the river and leads to the Merkinė mound, from which one of the most beautiful landscapes of Southern Lithuania opens up. Along the small and winding streets of Merkinė (Piliakalnio, V. Sladkevičiaus, S. Dariaus and S. Girėno) the Forest Trail reaches the town center. This section of the Forest Trail is a part of Dzūkija National Park.



## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

..... 25 km    ⌚ 6 – 8 h



Žiogeliai village



Merkinė center by Merkinė Regional Museum



Žiogeliai – Utieka – Krušonys – Maksimai – Česukai – Merkinė



Small forest and country roads, gravel roads, in a short



section – trails and asphalt (Merkinė), by the castle mounds – stairs.



There is a small stream behind the Utieka, over which there is no bridge.



The Merkys river must be crossed via the A4 road bridge. You have to cross the road and walk along the side of the road for a few hundred

metres. Be careful!

There are hogweeds in the vicinity of the Utieka, which must not be touched, because they cause burns!



There are no shops or catering sites from Žiogeliai to Merkinė. In the section from Krušonys to Merkinė the Forest Trail coincides with the cycling route of the Dzūkija National Park, marked with similar signs and colors, therefore the marking of the Forest Trail in Dzūkija National Park is supplemented with a hiker sign.

## NATURE

Walking along the banks of Nemunas and Merkys valleys, dry pine forests are often visible. Dry pine forests are sparse, sunny coniferous forests that grow on infertile, sandy soils. The natural coniferous forests of the northern hemisphere are also called boreal forests. The existence of dry pine forests is under threat, as the soil is gradually becoming more fertile, uncharacteristic plants begin to grow in these forests, and the sparse forest is overgrown with thick spruces. In dry pine forests, there are species that do not live elsewhere, such as the sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*). In dry pine forests, very important are elements of biological diversity, such as small forested meadows [glades] and snags – dry and dead trees and fallen deadwood – the remains of trees lying on the ground in different stages of decay. In dry pine forests, walkers will be delighted with lingonberries, beautiful juniper stands with healthy buds, and a variety of edible mushrooms.

## WORTH SEEING!

- 1 Žiogeliai. An ethnographic village where you can see how the Panemunians lived in the past. GPS: 54.06322, 24.11560
- 2 Group of 5 sculptures at Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Road. It consists of sculptures: "The Sun", "The Artist", "Čiurlionis's Monogram". GPS: 54.05790, 24.14544
- 3 "The Spring", a Roof Pillar at Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Road. On the occasion of the centenary of his birth, 26 folk masters built monumental sculptures and chapel columns along the Varėna–Druskininkai road and named it the M. K. Čiurlionis Road. GPS: 54.06135, 24.17334
- 4 Cross in memory of Vytautas Kvaraciejus. GPS: 54.14848, 24.18228
- 5 Merkinė bioenergetic pyramid. People also call it the "Temple of Hearts". According to hundreds of witnesses, after spending half an hour in the pyramid in the glass dome, there is a positive physical and mental change. +370 68261617; GPS: 54.14222, 24.19836
- 6 "Čiurlionis the Rifleman", the monumental sculpture at Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Road. GPS: 54.14181, 24.21048
- 7 Merkys exposure. A place where you can see the history of the earth's surface over a thousand years – from the late Ice Age to the present day. GPS: 54.15145, 24.19386
- 8 Merkinė mound. The view from this castle mound is considered to be one of the most beautiful in Lithuania. GPS: 54.15824, 24.18237
- 9 Merkinė bridge. Bridge over the Nemunas in Merkinė, near the confluence of the Nemunas and Merkys rivers. Length – about 210 m. GPS: 54.15747, 24.18018

## SERVICES



### Accommodations

1. Homestead "Merkio slėnis", +370 66224488; GPS: 54.13345, 24.23766
2. Homestead "Jonionys", +370 61446741; GPS: 54.15916, 24.16200
3. Arūno Glavicko stovyklavietė (camping site), +370 61618592; GPS: 54.16660, 24.19992 (in summer).



### Catering

1. Bistro "Šilo kopa", +370 60242411; GPS: 54.16381, 24.18858
2. Merkinė canteen, +370 69327377; GPS: 54.16403, 24.18547
3. Restaurant "Dzūkynė", +370 62065767; GPS: 54.16322, 24.18489



### Shops

"Iki" in Merkinė, GPS: 54.16254, 24.18537  
 "Aibė" in Merkinė, GPS: 54.16241, 24.18466  
 Rūtos parduotuvė (Rūta's shop) in Merkinė, GPS: 54.16376, 24.18502



### Pharmacies

"Gintarinė vaistinė" in Merkinė, GPS: 54.16231, 24.18474



### ATMs

Bank terminal "Perlas" in Merkinė, GPS: 54.16254, 24.18537



### Public transport

The intercity bus Druskininkai–Alytus runs ~ 5 times a day and stops at the station "Merkinės kryžkelė". Bus schedules: [www.autobusubilietai.lt](http://www.autobusubilietai.lt)



### Resting areas

1. Merkio tilto stovyklavietė (Merkys bridge camping), 🏕️, GPS: 54.14411, 24.21361
2. Jonionių stovyklavietė (Jonionys camping), 🏕️, GPS: 54.15752, 24.17695

## TOURISM INFORMATION



Dzūkija National Park Merkinė Visitor Center, Vilniaus street 3, Merkinė, Varėna district, +370 67246275; GPS: 54.16317, 24.18597

