



15 WALKING NATURE TRAILS IN LATVIA AND ESTONIA

Itinerary: RĪGA – SAULKRASTI – AINAŽI – PĀRNU – MUHUMAA – SAAREMAA – HIIUMAA – MATSALU – HAAPSALU – PALDISKI – TALLINN

Hiking route length:

→ ~ 90 km

Duration: 8 day

Difficulty level:

The tour from Rīga to Tallinn combines natural and cultural heritage and includes lovely landscapes and 15 nature trails which cross marshlands, meadows and forests along the shores of the Baltic Sea, including several protected nature reserves. Many trails are equipped with viewing towers for birdwatching. Randu meadows near Ainaži contains one third of Latvia's entire plant species. A boardwalk leads through reeds to a viewing platform with views over the meadow and the sea. Saaremaa island is interesting with very different natural attractions to the mainland - dolomite cliffs, juniper heaths, a meteorite lake and rocky sea shore. The tour passes rural farms and traditional villages typical of the coastal areas. Hiiumaa island is a laid back place and retains a very Estonian atmosphere with an important bird reserve at Käina Bay, unusual Sääre Tirp as well as several small islets off its south-eastern coast. Back on the mainland, Paldiski peninsula gives a glimpse of the recent history with its former Soviet military base.

DAY 1

Arrival in Rīga / Pick up the hired car at the airport.

Pick up your info pack with the map and detailed itinerary from the hotel's reception.

Free time in Rīga.

Overnight in Rīga.

DAY 2

RĪGA - AINAŽI

RĪGA – SAULKRASTI – AINAŽI

- **Wooden walking trail through the pine forest, dunes, sandy beach: Garciems – Carnikava**, 2–3 hour (8 km). The car is left in Garciems train station. The finish is in Carnikava train station. Afterwards you return to Garciems by train (train runs approximately once an hour).
- **Nature trail** over the dunes and through the pine forest at Saulkrasti (1–2 h). Approx. 3 km, - the way back is along the seashore.
- **(Possibility to do - Forest hiking trail** of the Baron von Munchhausen at Dunte (~ 3 h). 5–6 km back and forth).
- **Walking trail** through the very rare coastal meadows and wetlands at Ainaži – bird watching possibilities (tower) in spring and fall (1–2 h) 3–4 km back and forth;

PRACTICAL INFO:

Difficulty level:

Road surface: Sand beaches, gravel, plankways, forest trails.

Distances: 21 km hiking, 115 km by car.

Accommodation near Ainaži.



DAY 3

AINAŽI - PÄRNU

AINAŽI - KABLI - HÄÄDEMEESTE -
SOOMETSA - PÄRNU

SIGHTSEEING AND WALKING TRAILS:

- **Kabli Nature Study Trail** (2 km). A trail with two sightseeing towers, changing scenery and birds' nests. Trail starts in front of the RMK Kabli Nature Centre.
- (Possibility to do - **several sandy beaches** in the area between Ikla and Kabli).
- **Luitemaa Nature Reserve** is valued for its sand dunes, raised bogs and old-growth pine forests in the dunes. You can choose 3–6 km (2–3 h) back and forth track in the area (forest road) or use an asphalt road running parallel to the Coastal Hiking walking trail to make a loop tour.
- **Pärnu Coastal Meadow hiking trail** (600 m) with a viewing platform, which stands right by the sea in the middle of the Pärnu beach. Visitors can walk above the backwaters and look for unique protected plants. (1h)

PRACTICAL INFO:

Difficulty level: 

Road surface: forest trails, sandy beaches, asphalt in the most populated areas.

Distances: 8 km hiking, ~70 km by car.

Good to know! During late August–late October Kabli Bird Ringing Station is working, you can have a look on autumn migration and bird ringing.

Accommodation in Pärnu or in Pärnu county.



DAY 4

PÄRNU - SAAREMAA ISLAND

PÄRNU - LIU - TÕSTAMAA - MATSI
- VARBLA - PIVARROOTSI - VIRTUSU -
KUIVASTU - MUHU - SAAREMAA

SIGHTSEEING AND WALKING TRAILS:

- **Sightseeing in Pärnu, historic spa resort** - Pärnu beach and promenade, beach park, the pier, old town and Vallikäärü Park recreation area.
- (Possibility to do - **Valgeranna Adventure Park** (estimated time for completion trails 1–6 is approx. 3 h); **a sandy beaches** at Valgeranna, Sutiranna, Sepamaa, Matsi and **several churches**).
- **Tõstamaa walking trail** 5 km (2 h) is equipped with informative signs indicating the closest attractions
- The ethnographic fishermen's **village Koguva** at Muhu island
- **Koigi walking trail** 5 km through marsh and forest at the Saaremaa island (2 h)
- A beautiful landscape on the road from **Angla Windmills and Heritage Center to Karja church**, 5 km back and forth (2 h).

PRACTICAL INFO:

Difficulty level: 

Ferry from Virtsu to Kuivastu at Muhu island (0.5 hours)

Distances: 15 km hiking, ~220 km by car.

Accommodation in Leisi or at other places at Saare county.



DAY 5

KURESSAARE (SAAREMAA) - KÄINA (HIIUMAA)

LEISI - KURESSAARE - VIIDUMÄE -
PANGA CLIFF - TRIIGI - SÖRU - KASSARI
- KÄINA

SIGHTSEEING AND WALKING TRAILS:

- (Possibility to do – **Sightseeing at Kuressaare** (41 km from Leisi by car) attractions include impressive medieval castle, town's centre with its art galleries, little shops, cafes and restaurants or **Viidumäe Nature restricted area** (65 km from Leisi by car) with a forest trail and observation tower at the seaside (1 h); about 22 m high dolomite **Panga cliff** at the coast (1 h) at Saaremaa island).
- **Orjaku boardwalk trail** on the Kassari island through overgrown coastal area with an observation tower near Käina bay (bird watching available) (1 h) at Hiiumaa.
- **Sääre nature trail** on the Kassari island which is a stripe of land covered with junipers (bird watching available) (1.5 hour) at Hiiumaa.

PRACTICAL INFO:

Difficulty level: 

Ferry from Triigi (Saaremaa island) to Sõru (Hiiumaa island) (1 h).

Distances: hiking (depend on the route you select), 150 km (at Saaremaa), 45 km (at Hiiumaa) by car.

Accommodation in Käina or at other places at Hiiumaa.



DAY 6

KÄINA (HIIUMAA) - HAAPSALU

KÄINA - KÕPU - KÄRDLA - HELTERMAA -
ROHUKÜLA - MATSALU - HAAPSALU

SIGHTSEEING AND WALKING TRAILS:

- (Possibility to do – **Kõpu lighthouse** (40 km from Käina by car) is the oldest in the Baltic States or Kärdla town (21 km from Käina by car) is the only major town in Hiiumaa island.
- **Kiideva-Puise hiking trail** (one way is 3.4 km) at Matsalu National Park goes through woodlands and woody meadows (4h).
- **Walk on the Haapsalu Promenade** 4 km (8km back and forth) which starts at the African beach and ends by the Baltic Hotel Promenade. Near the promenade there are many sites to see and museums to visit, e.g. Haapsalu Town Hall, Ilons Wonderland, Haapsalu Resort Hall, Tchaikovsky's Bench and Museum of the Coastal Swedes. (2–3 h).

PRACTICAL INFO:

Difficulty level: 

Ferry from Heltermaa (Hiiumaa island) to Rohuküla (1.5 h).

Distances: 15 km hiking, 105 km (at Hiiumaa), 50 km (at mainland) by car.

Accommodation in Haapsalu or at other places at Lääne county.



DAY 7

HAAPSALU - PALDISKI - TALLINN

HAAPSALU - PALDISKI - KEILA-JOA - TALLINN

SIGHTSEEING AND WALKING TRAILS:

- (Possibility to do – **a walk along the beach area from Dirhami to Põõsaspea Horn**. The horn is located at the westernmost point of the Estonian continental part and stretches far into the sea as a narrow pile of stones. Approx. 7 km back and forth).
- **Walking at the Paldiski peninsula** – a part of the longer hiking trail from Uuga limestone coast to Pakri Reserve along the steep Baltic sea banks (3 km back and forth) where there are many sites to see, e.g. Pakri Old Lighthouse, Pakri Lighthouse and Pakri Precipice.
- **Keila waterfall** – the third largest waterfall in Estonia (6 m high and 60–70 m wide).
- **Keila-Joa Park and Nature Trail** 3 km is circular walking trail with several stairs and suspended bridges that wind along the Keila river banks and a romantic park (1-2 hours).

PRACTICAL INFO:

Difficulty level: ●●

Distances: 16 km hiking, 130 km by car (when visiting Dirhami extra 45 km by car).



Dangerous places: You must not approach the upper part and the base of Pakri and other cliffs because rockfalls occur regularly as a result of the waves washing away the cliffs.

Good to know! Suitable (closed, water resistant) footwear is necessary, walking poles are advisable for support.

Accommodation in Tallinn or at other places at Harju county.



DAY 8

SIGHTSEEING IN TALLINN OLD TOWN.

Return the car to the Tallinn Airport. Departure from Tallinn.

Or return to Rīga via Tallinn–Rīga motorway E67 and leave the car at the Rīga Airport.

