


17 GRAND FOREST TRAIL HIKING TOUR IN LATVIA AND ESTONIA



RĪGA – TALLINN, self-drive and hiking Latvia and Estonia

Itinerary: RĪGA – SIGULDA – LĪGATNE – ĀRAIŠI – CĒSIS – VALMIERA – TARTU – KUREMĀE – VASAVERE – RAKVERE – ALTJA – OANDU – KĀSMU – KOLGA – TALLINN

Hiking route length:  ~68 km;  ~630 km

Duration: **10 days** Difficulty level: 

Practical info:  **Rīga**  **Tallinn**

This grand hiking tour includes some of the best and most beautiful parts of the Forest Trail in Latvia and Estonia. Hikes in the forest trails and villages are combined with trips and excursions in cities, as well as other popular tourist sights in both countries. You will get a detailed impression about the forest diversity and most popular national parks in Latvia and Estonia. You will start the tour in Riga, where you will enjoy the beautiful Old Town included in the UNESCO and Art Nouveau District. Then you will drive to Sigulda and see the most scenic ancient valley of the River Gauja, visit Turaida Museum Reserve, hike in Gauja National Park till the historic Līgatne papermill village. Further on you will visit the famous Lake Āraiši Castle, hike on the Cirulisi Nature Trails and see the beautiful medieval town of Cēsis. On the way to Estonia you will stop at the Sietņiezis big sandstone cliff to have picturesque

views of the River Gauja. Then you will stay in Estonia's second biggest city – Tartu, and visit the recently opened Estonian National Museum. Further on you will drive to Alutaguse National Park and hike along the picturesque Kurtņa landscape reserve among the bright coniferous forests ornamented by the mirror surfaces of its many lakes. At the end of the tour you will hike in Estonia's oldest national park – Lahemaa, which means the "land of bays" in Estonian. The Forest Trail goes along the bays and peninsulas of Lahemaa National Park, introducing the hikers to its most significant natural and cultural heritage. The forests are rich with blueberries and mushrooms in autumn and the air is very clean. This tour will end with sightseeing in Tallinn, Estonia's capital city, with the Old Town also included in UNESCO.



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DAY 1

Arrive in Rīga.

Pick-up the hired car at the airport.

Pick-up your info pack with the maps and detailed itinerary from the hotel reception.

Sightseeing in Rīga.

Accommodation in Rīga.

DAY 2



Rīga – Sigulda
→ ~50 km

Explore Sigulda and Turaida.

We suggest visiting the Sigulda castle ruins, Gutman's Cave, Turaida Museum Reserve with the castle museum, observation tower, history museum and sculpture garden, the palace with the park of Krimulda.

Accommodation in Sigulda.

DAY 3



Sigulda – Līgatne

→ 24 km ⌚ 8 – 10 h



Medium



Predominantly forest roads, forest and country trails, wooden stairs by Paradīzes Hill, paved roads and pavements in Sigulda and Līgatne.



Some stretches of trails and river slopes in the ancient valley of the River Gauja may be slippery in damp conditions and winter. Swimming in the River Gauja can be dangerous!



Sights en route: Ravine of the River Vējupīte, Kraukļu gorge, Paradīzes Hill with excellent views of the ancient River Gauja valley. Elpu and Launaga Rock, Līgatne Nature Trails and the historic Līgatne papermill village.

Transfer back to Sigulda.

Accommodation in Sigulda.

DAY 4



Sigulda – Āraiši – Cēsis
→ 38 km

Visit Lake Āraiši Castle and Āraiši Windmill.



Cīrulīši Nature Trails

(3 trails of different length 2.7 km, 3.5 km and 6.2 km). These trails are part of the Forest Trail.

Time for dinner and exploring Cēsis – the charming old town, the ruins of the Livonian Order Castle and the New Castle. In the garden of the castle there is a workshop of a traditional jeweller, which can also be visited.

Accommodation in Cēsis.

DAY 5



Cēsis – Valmiera – Tartu
→ 175 km

Visit the Sietiņezis Cliff by the River Gauja (walking ~1.5 km).

Sightseeing in Tartu – Estonia's second biggest city. Sightseeing in the Old Town, which was built in the style of classicism. Visit Tartu University – the oldest in the Baltic states – as well as the old observatory and the new Estonian National Museum.

Accommodation in Tartu.



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DAY 6



Tartu – Vasavere

→ 130 km

Leave the car in the accommodation place.
Private transfer to Kuremäe.



**Alutaguse National Park:
Kuremäe – Vasavere**

→ 16 km ⌚ 5 – 7 h



Easy



Forest trails, forest roads,
wooden footbridges in wet-
lands, gravel roads.

Before the hike it is recommended to visit Kuremäe Monastery, which was established in 1891, and is the only functioning Russian Orthodox Monastery in Estonia. The Forest Trail goes along the picturesque Kurtna landscape reserve (part of Alutaguse National Park), ornamented by the mirror surfaces of its many lakes (42 lakes in total, the highest density in Estonia) among beautiful, bright coniferous forests.

Accommodation in Vasavere.



DAY 7



Vasavere – Rakvere –
Palmse – Altja

→ 135 km

En route you can see Rakvere Town, where you can visit the Rakvere Medieval Castle ruins and the theme park representing the everyday life of the 16th century. Further on you will see the Palmse manor and park which is located in Lahemaa National Park.



**Little hike of the Forest Trail in
Altja fishermen's village**

→ 3 km

Altja was first mentioned in written records in 1465 and is a typical seaside village, with all of its houses stretching along one street; some of them are typical coastal farms and have been restored by Lahemaa National Park. On the point in Altja you can see the fishing net sheds, which were reconstructed on the basis of old photographs and the memories of the villagers.

After the hike we suggest going for a traditional Estonian meal in Altja Tavern.

Accommodation in Altja or Vihula.



DAY 8



Altja / Oandu – Käsmu

→ 20 km ⌚ 7 – 9 h



Easy



Forest trails, forest roads,
wooden footbridges in wetlands,
gravel roads.



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It is worth walking an additional extra kilometre in Käsmu to the Vana-Jüri rocks and the historical sites of Käsmu at the tip of the peninsula.

This is the most beautiful Forest Trail section in Lahemaa National Park. At the beginning it goes through a beautiful, wooded inland dune area. And further on, after the resort village Võsu, the trail continues along a beautiful coastal forest promenade till it reaches Käsmu Village.



Transfer back to Altja or Vihula.

DAY 9



Altja / Vihula – Kolga – Tallinn
→ 100 km

En route you can visit the Kolga manor with its impressive territory, several buildings with an antique feeling, as well the Jägala waterfall. This is the highest natural waterfall in Estonia, more than 8 m high.

Accommodation in Tallinn.

DAY 10

Sightseeing in Tallinn.

Drop the hired car off at the airport.

Departure.

Or return to Rīga.

