





7 LITHUANIAN AND LATVIAN NATURE PARKS TOUR




Itinerary: DRUSKININKAI - ŽIOGELIAI - MERKINĖ - VILNIUS - ŠIAULIAI - DENGILTIS - KURTUVĖNAI - ŠAUKĖNAI - ŠIAULIAI - PLUNGĖ - ŽEMAIČIŲ KALVARIJA - PAPLATELĖ - PLATELIAI - PLUNGĖ - KLAIPĖDA - LIEPĀJA - KULDĪGA - RENDA - SABILE - KANDAVA - LAKE VALGUMA - ĶEMERI - BIGAUŅCIEMS - RĪGA

Hiking route length:  ~176 km

Duration: **12 days** Difficulty level:  / 

 **Druskininkai** (there are regular buses from Vilnius or Kaunas)

 **Bigauņciems** (there are regular buses to Rīga)

The tour combines the most beautiful southern parts of the Forest Trail in Lithuania and Latvia. The route starts in Druskininkai, Lithuania, and for the next day you will walk through forests of the Dzūkija National Park. After getting to Vilnius and Kurtuvėnai Regional Park, two sections of the Forest Trail will take you from Dengtiltis to Šaukėnai. Since it is among the most forested areas of Central Lithuania, the Kurtuvėnai Regional Park with its glaciated valleys is a wonderland of forests, waters and wetlands. The Forest Trail will run along small forest

paths, tourist trails, beautiful tree alleys and wetlands. Next you will take public transportation to reach the Žemaitija National Park, where you will take two sections of the Forest Trail from the pilgrimage town of Žemaičių Kalvarija along the lakes of Plateliai, Ilgis and Beržoras to the town of Plateliai. It is one of the most beautiful towns of Samogitia taking pride in its manor park and the viewing platform on Lake Plateliai. Žemaitija National Park takes pride in its old pine and fir forests, as well as mixed forests.

Next, you will drive through Klaipėda and Liepāja to reach Kuldīga in Latvia. The trip starts in Kuldīga – a jewel among the old towns in Kurzeme. The town centre is home to historic buildings dating back to the 17th – 19th century, Venta waterfall, the old bridge over the river Venta, gourmet restaurants and a local farmer's store in the centre of the town. From there on the Forest Trail takes you along the riverside promenade in Kuldīga, continues through the nature park "Abavas senleja" from Renda to the wine and cider town Sabile and Kandava. The section along the Abava River Valley Nature Park is the most diverse river valley in Kurzeme in terms of landscapes and terrain. The final section of the tour takes you to the Ķemeri National Park, which is an important place for the protection of wetlands. As to the town – Ķemeri – it is the former balneological and sulphur springs resort. The tour ends on the seaside – the village of Bigauņciems, from where you can easily get to Rīga. Optionally, one can take a detour along the Lake Sloka trail with its bird-watching tower or pay a visit to the "Forest House" – the visitor's centre of the Ķemeri National Park.

DAY 1



Bus Vilnius/Kaunas - Druskininkai

Sightseeing at the Spa resort Druskininkai.

Accommodation: in Druskininkai.

DAY 2



Druskininkai - Žiogeliai



Žiogeliai - Merkinė

 **25 km**  **6 - 8 h**



Small forest and country roads, gravel roads, in a short section – trails and asphalt (Merkinė), by the castle mounds – stairs.



Medium



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 meters. 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, so you need to take a lunch box.

Bus from Merkinė to Vilnius (trip duration 1,5 h, the latest bus at 18:11 in the evening).

Accommodation: in Vilnius.



DAY 3

Train: Vilnius - Šiauliai
Private transfer to Dengtiltis.



Dengtiltis - Kurtuvėnai
in Kurtuvėnai Regional Park
→ 15 km ⌚ 4 – 6 h



Mainly small forest roads and trails, in some places gravel roads, in Kurtuvėnai and in the vicinity – asphalt.



Easy

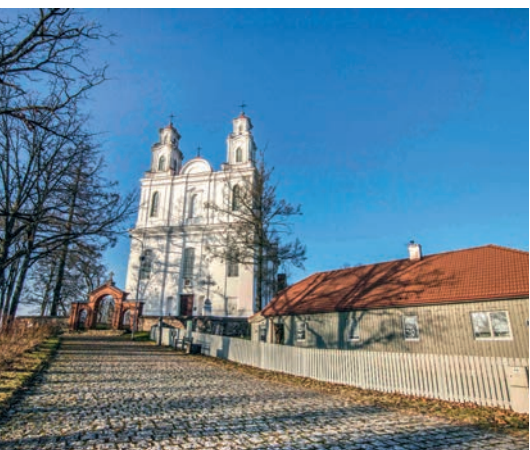
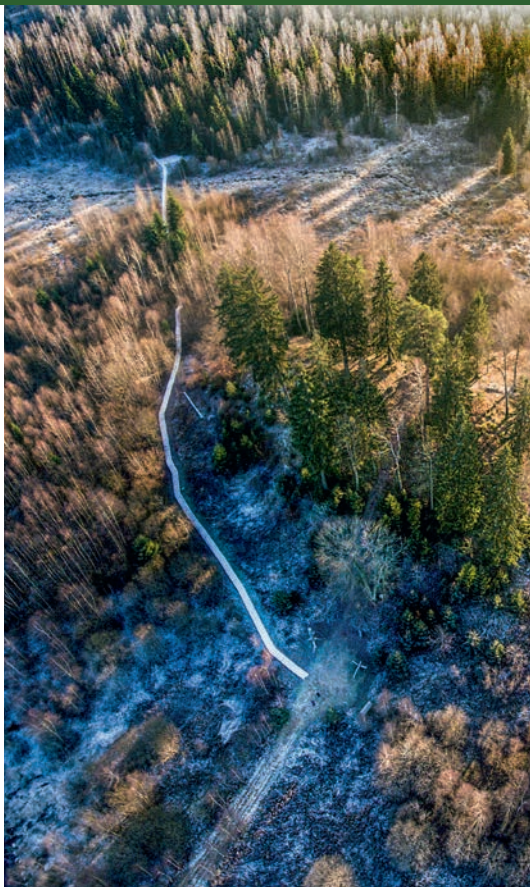


Steep slopes can be slippery in wet weather.



At this and the next section, it is advisable to carefully follow the markers in nature and use GPX files, because the network of off-road trails is very dense and the terrain is difficult.

Accommodation: in Kurtuvėnai or by Lake Geluva.



DAY 4



Kurtuvėnai - Šaukėnai
in Kurtuvėnai Regional Park
→ 16 km ⌚ 4 – 6 h



Small forest trails and small forest roads, wooden footbridges in wet places, asphalt in Šaukėnai.



Easy



In this section, the Forest Trail intersects with other hiking routes.



Bus to Šiauliai.

Accommodation: in Šiauliai.



DAY 5

Train to Plungė.
Private transfer or public bus to Žemaičių Kalvarija.



Žemaičių Kalvarija - Paplatelė
→ 18 km ⌚ 5 – 6 h



Asphalt (roads, pedestrian / bicycle paths), gravel roads.



Medium

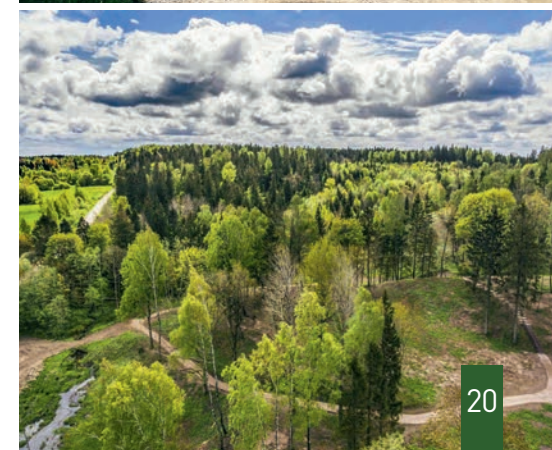


Be careful when walking along the side of the road!



In the summer season, Plokštinės street and the beaches are full of holidaymakers.

Accommodation: in Paplatelė.



⑦ LITHUANIAN AND LATVIAN NATURE PARKS TOUR



DAY 6



Paplatelė - Plateliai
in Žemaitija National Park
→ 20 km ⌚ 5 - 7 h



Forest roads and trails,
asphalt pedestrian / bicycle
paths and sidewalks, gravel
roads.



Easy



During the summer season,
there are many holidaymakers
around Lake Plateliai.

Accommodation: in Paplatelė
or Plateliai.



DAY 7

Private transfer to Plungė.

Train Plungė - Klaipėda (trip ~ 1 h);
bus Klaipėda - Liepāja (trip ~ 1,5 h)

Sightseeing in Liepāja.

Accommodation: in Liepāja.

DAY 8



In the morning bus Liepāja -
Kuldīga (trip ~ 1 h 50 min).

Sightseeing in Kuldīga.



**Along the promenade of river
Venta in Kuldīga**

→ (2,5 km in one way)



Asphalt or pavement, prom-
enade with gravel along the
shore.

Accommodation: in Kuldīga.



DAY 9



Bus Kuldīga - Renda



Renda - Sabile

→ 25 km ⌚ 6 - 8 h



Gravel roads, in a small section -
trails, in Renda and Sabile - as-
phalt and pavement.



Medium



There are no catering sites and
shops between Renda and Sabile,
so you need to take the lunch
boxes.

Private transfer to the
accommodation place.

Accommodation: in Sabile or
surroundings - the area of the
Abava River Valley.





LITHUANIAN AND LATVIAN NATURE PARKS TOUR ⑦

DAY 10



Sabīle - Kandava

→ 21 km ⌚ 5 - 7 h



Gravel roads and dirt roads, in a short section – trails, in Kandava – asphalt, pavement.



Easy



It is worth spending at least half a day visiting Kandava and walking along the Čužu bog nature trail.



Kandava - Tukums

Accommodation: in Tukums (or can have private transfer to Valgums and overnight in the leisure complex "Valguma Pasaule").



DAY 11

Train: **Tukums I - Smārde** (trip duration 10 min.) and walk 2,3 km to the start of the Forest Trail.



Jāņukrogs - Ķemeri

→ 21 km ⌚ 4 - 7 h



Gravel roads, in Ķemeri – asphalt, pavement, park paths, forest trails with natural pavement, wooden footbridges.



Easy



There is an interesting barefoot trail in the leisure complex "Valguma Pasaule".

Accommodation: in Ķemeri.



DAY 12



Ķemeri - Bigauņciems

→ 10 km ⌚ 2 - 3 h



Gravel roads, in Ķemeri – asphalt, pavement, park paths, forest trails with natural pavement, wooden footbridges.



Easy



Be careful when walking along the side of the road!



Bigauņciems - Rīga