



RIVER GAUJA. FROM VALMIERA TO LĪGATNE



Ergļu (Ergēļu) Cliffs



Canoeing at Kūku Cliffs



Sietņiežis Cliff

Photo: Baltic Pictures

Description

Gauja is the most popular water tourism river in Latvia. The main tourist magnets are the beautiful river banks rich in sandstone outcrops, easy accessibility of the river, dense network of accommodation sites for water tourists, the nature of the river (suitable for various paddlers), long water tourism traditions, and the status of a national park. In this section, the river flows through its primeval valley which is among the most impressive Baltic terrain forms; however, the scale of the valley cannot be enjoyed from the canoe, since the scenic views are covered in leafage and forests. The most dangerous place of the route — Kūku Rapids. Although not difficult to master, canoes are thrown over every year. The highest vertical drop is the section from mouth of the River Amata to Līgatne, and therefore many paddlers prefer only the section Cēsis–Līgatne.

Difficulty level

Easy.

Best time to go

Summer, while a paddling trip on a beautiful autumn day or spring won't be less exciting.

Distance

62 km. By sections:
1) Valmiera–Cēsis (Jāņarāmis) 33 km;
2) Cēsis (Jāņarāmis)–Līgatne 29 km.

Duration

Depending on the type of the canoe 2–3 days.

Vertical drop of the river

Slight, for the whole section ~10.4 m, average ~0.17 m/km.

Starting point

25.42839, 57.53810
Stepping into the canoes on the right bank of the river, below Valmiera Music School and the Species Garden of Valmiera Museum. Pilskalna iela 3.

Destination

25.04528, 57.25441
Water tourist site at Līgatne Ferry Crossing.

Canoes

Canoes, kayaks, inflatable boats, rafts. The last two – for slow paddling.

Distance to Riga

From the starting point 110 km, from destination — 70 km.

Transportation

Supporting team to transport canoes and paddlers to the starting point and from the destination is needed. Usually the canoe hire companies provide this service.

Worth knowing!

Swimming and walking on the riverbed is not recommended — dangerous! Life jacket on the river is recommended. Accommodation in Gauja National Park is allowed only in specially designated places. Be careful with the sandstone outcrops, which are protected nature monuments; and do not leave any trash behind! Motorized water vehicles are prohibited on Gauja. The activity is at one's own risk. Emergency services: 112.

SERVICE

i | Valmiera Tourism Information Centre, Valmiera, Rīgas Street 10, +371 64207177, tic@valmiera.lv, http://visit.valmiera.lv/

i | Valmiermuiža Tourism Information Point, Dzirnau Street 2, Valmiermuiža, Valmiera rural territory, Burtnieki Municipality, +371 29135438, ciemos@valmiermuiza.lv, www.valmiermuiza.lv

i | Pārgauja Tourism Information Point, "Ezeriņi", Stalbe, Stalbe rural territory, Pārgauja Municipality, +371 26620422, turisms@pargaujasnovads.lv, www.pargaujasnovads.lv

i | Līgatne Municipality Tourism Information Centre, Līgatne, Sprinģu Street 2, +371 64153169, +371 29189707, info@visitligatne.lv, www.visitligatne.lv

i | Cēsis Tourism Information Centre, Cēsis, Pils Square 9, +371 64121815, +371 28318318, info@cesis.lv, www.tourism.cesis.lv

G | Baltic Wildlife +371 28808440, laura@balticwildlife.eu, www.balticwildlife.eu

🍺 | Brewery "Valmiermuižas alus" and Beer Kitchen Dzirnau Street 2, Valmiermuiža, Valmiera rural territory, Burtnieki Municipality, +371 20264269 (tours in the brewery), ciemos@valmiermuiza.lv, www.valmiermuiza.lv

🏕️ | Leisure park & camping "Ozolkalns" "Saulkrasti", Drabeši rural territory, Amata Municipality, +371 26400200, info@ozolkalns.lv, www.ozolkalns.lv

SIGHTSEEING OBJECTS

1 | Brewery "Valmiermuižas alus"

Visit to the brewery will reveal its history's impact on the beer-making process, and how the live beer is made from natural raw materials. Everybody can taste the beer as it has once been done by the masters of manors. Excellent catering.

2-8 | Valmiera

Prior to stepping into the canoe, it is worth visiting heritage objects in the centre of Valmiera and tasting some local delicacies: **2** Foundations of Riga Gate, **3** St Simon's Church of Valmiera, **4** Ruins of the Castle of the Livonian Order, **5** Valmiera Museum, **6** Valmiera bridge, **7** Ice basements, **8** Narrow gauge railway bridge.

9 | River Jumara (Imara)

A 20 km long right tributary of the River Gauja with a typical valley.

10 | Nature education centre "Vecupites"

Close to it, there is a 2.8 km long nature trail introducing to the River Gauja and types of forests on its riverside.

11 | Liepas Rock (Baltā Cliff)

25.40831, 57.43909
Around 400 m long and up to 16 m high outcrop on the left bank.

12 | Sietīņezis Cliff 25.3864, 57.4278.

One of the largest white sandstone outcrops in Latvia. Maximum height of its cliff reaches 15 m, while the total length of the cliffs — around half a kilometre. Here one can see small caves and hollows, erosion ravines, and formations similar to poles. One of these is called the **Velna papēdis** (Devil's Heel), while the small, but 10.5 m long cave — **Velnala** (Devil's Cave). **Pay attention!** The polypodies, and common fragile fern grow on Sietīņezis Cliff. The patina seen at some places is actually the velvet lichen. The ground cover of the forest reveals common moss like glittering wood-moss, red-stemmed feathermoss, goose-necked moss, and ostrich plume feathermoss.

13 | River Rauna

Left tributary of the River Gauja. Below the road Rīga–Veclaicene [A2] it flows through a deep and beautiful valley with sandstone outcrops on its banks.

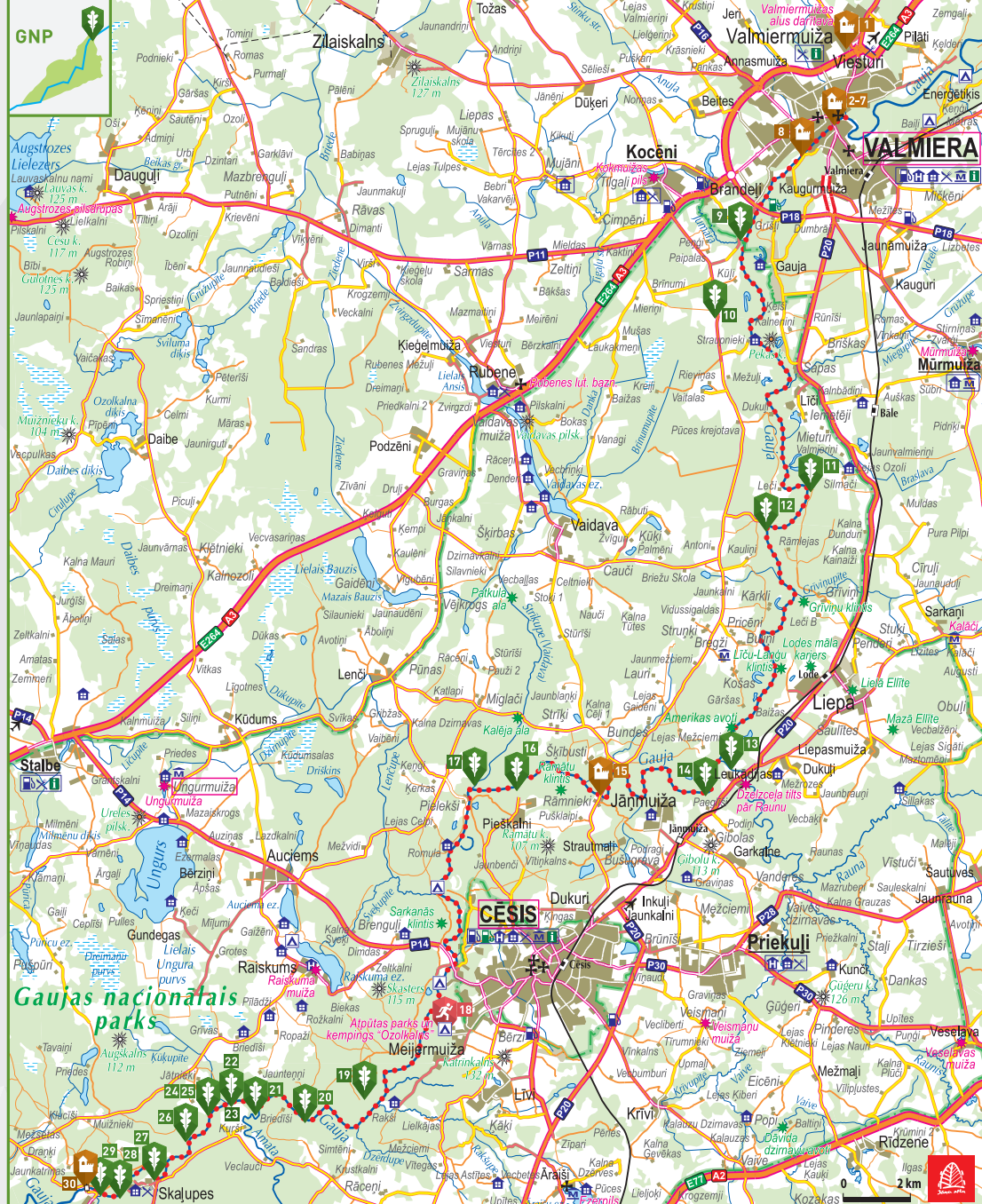
14 | Kazu Rock 25.3550, 57.3579

Scenic. around 340 m long and up to 15 m high outcrop on the left bank.

15 | Rāmnieku Bridge

16 | Ērgļu (Ērģeļu) Cliffs 25.26032, 57.36058

Most monolith sandstone cliff wall in the Baltics: length ~700 m, maximum height up to 22 m.



17 | River Strīķupe (Vaidava)

Right tributary of the River Gauja. Suitable to watch migrating salmon in the autumn.

18 | Leisure park & camping site "Ozolkalns"

A place offering one of the most beautiful views over the primeval valley of the River Gauja. Nearby Mound Ozolkalns, there are the **Cīruļiši Nature Trails**.

19 | Kvēpenes Hillfort 25.1820, 57.2774

North of the hillfort, there is the **Kvēpene Secular Oak**.

20 | Briedīšu Rock 25.15428, 57.27200

Small, around 4 m high sandstone outcrop on the left curve of the River Gauja.

21 | Primeval valley of the River Amata

One of the deepest river valleys. At the deepest it reaches ~50 m, and its width ranges 1–1.5 km.

22 | Ēdarnieku Cliffs 25.11471, 57.27729

Impressive and up to 40 m high slope on the right side of the River Gauja.

23 | Leimaņu Rock 25.11756, 57.277419

24 | Kūķu Cliffs 25.10600, 57.27465
Around 500 m long and 43 m high. Two springs have washed out 10 m and 20 m long **caves**.

25 | Kūķu Rapids

The vertical drop of the River Gauja in the rapids amounts to 0.5 m/km. Slightly below these, opposite of the highest point of the cliffs, is the deepest **whirlpool** (ca. 7 m) of the River Gauja.

26 | Liņu Cliffs 25.09511, 57.26793.

27 | River Skaļupe

A 16 km long left tributary of the River Gauja.

28 | Sprīņu Rock 25.06021, 57.25242

Scenic and up to 600 m long and 21 m high outcrop on the left bank of the river.

29 | River Līgatne (Līgate)

The most rapid tributary of the River Gauja forming a typical valley with 45–60 m high banks beneath the road Rīga–Veclaicene [A2].

30 | Līgatne Ferry Crossing