



PRIMEVAL VALLEY OF THE RIVER BRASLA



Rock outcrops



Canoeing on River Brasla

Photo: Baltic Pictures



Boaters on River Brasla



Swan family

Description

Although the river is classified as “small”, this section of the river does not have the typical obstacles the small rivers have — trees fallen over the river, stacks of trees and branches in the river, and traces of beavers. The largest obstacle is the dam of Brasla water reservoir. Take your canoes around it on the right riverside. Respect the informative signs installed in the vicinity of fish breeding farm, which is a private property; however, one shall be aware of the rights to unlimited access to the protection zone of a river. Faster rapids are experienced in the section downstream of the water power plant till its mouth with the River Gauja. When the water level is higher, the shallow places, stones, and islets are below the water; however, in case of lower water level at some places these may hinder the paddlers and one shall be ready to step out and push the canoe. The trip on Brasla is enriched with the many sandstone outcrops. The route runs through Gauja National Park.

Best time to go

April–September, but paddling is possible from early spring floods till late autumn.

Distance

~25 km (Brasla) + 15 km (Gauja).

Duration

Brasla 5–6 h, Gauja 3–4 h depending on the motivation and skills of paddlers.

Difficulty level

When the water is low — easy. At high floods — moderate.

Vertical drop of the river

For the whole section on Brasla ~16.7 m, average ~2.0 m/km.

Starting point

24.95441, 57.35417 Straupe, Kaijciems Road over the River Brasla. Optional: bridge over the road Inčukalns–Valka (A3). Upstream of the bridge (left bank), there is a parking lot and information stands — a place to park your cars and get ready for the trip.

Destination

24.93038, 57.24576. (mouth with the River Gauja) Since there is no vehicular access to the place where Brasla mouths the River Gauja, the trip shall be continued on the River Gauja to Sigulda (+15 km), or an accommodation shall be sought for.

Canoes

Canoes, kayaks, inflatable boats, etc.

Distance to Riga

55 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!

Any damage to sandstone outcrops and related habitats (drawing, making caves, trampling, destruction of vegetation, etc.) is an irreversible damage to the nature, and is subject to administrative liability. Outcroppings of rocks on the River Brasla are protected geological nature monuments. The activity is at one’s own risk. There are five accommodation sites in the section from Straupe to road A3. Emergency services: 112.

Recommendation


The route can be started in Rozula as well, but in such case it will take 2 days with accommodation in holiday house “Vējiņi”.

SERVICE

Pārgauja Tourism Information Point

“Ezeriņi”, Stalbe, Stalbe rural territory, Pārgauja Municipality, +371 26620422, turisms@pargaujasnovads.lv, www.pargaujasnovads.lv

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

 **Holiday house “Vējiņi”**, “Vējiņi”, Straupe rural territory, Pārgauja Municipality, +371 29354189, pazemesezeri@gmail.com, www.pazemesezeri.lv (also camping “Paegli”)

SIGHTSEEING OBJECTS

1 | Lielstraupe Castle

2 | Vējiņi Underground Lakes 24.90657, 57.34275.

As a result of suffusion, underground hollows have formed in the vicinity of the private house "Vējiņi". When the upper covering rock layers above the underground hollow fall in, a suffusion sink is formed. In one of these, Ezerla Cave is found. Behind the deep, shaft-like portal, there is the first, and further on — the second underground "lake". Slightly further, near the River Brasla, is the 42 m long Upes Cave. Both caves were discovered in 1984.

3 | Primeval valley of the River Brasla

The primeval valley of Brasla starts at Straupe and ends where the river flows into Gauja. From Straupe to Brasla water reservoir its primeval valley reaches a depth of 15 m, while from there on to its mouth with Gauja (less affected section) stretches a "canyon" up to 30 m deep and 300 m wide. The deepest section of the primeval valley was shaped by the melting waters of a glacier 12,000 years ago. This is among the most beautiful river sections in Latvia, where the reddish and yellowish sandstone outcrops from Gauja suite are seen.

4 | Podnieku Rock 24.92158, 57.28948.

Small sandstone outcrop on the slope of the right side of the primeval valley wall of the River Brasla, on the shore of an oxbow lake, slightly off the Brasla water reservoir.

5 | Brasla water reservoir

6 | Garais Rock of Aņīte 24.93287, 57.28924.

Around 400 m long and 7 m high sandstone outcrop on the slope of the southern bank of Brasla water reservoir.

7 | Varšavu Rock 24.93005, 57.28819

Around 90 m long and 4–7 m high sandstone outcrop on the right side of the primeval valley wall of the River Brasla, opposite of the dam of Brasla water power station. It is located 20–50 m off the water reservoir.

8 | Kraukalns Rock 24.93051, 57.28667

An impressive and scenic around 400 m long outcrop on a slope (up to 20 m high) of the right bank of the River Brasla, behind Varšavu Rock, 150 m downstream of the dam. A scenic **frozen waterfall** forms here in winters.

9 | Vidējais Rock of Aņīte 24.93617, 57.28653.

Around 100 m long and up to 10 m high sandstone outcrop on the left side of the primeval valley wall of the River Brasla (not exactly on the river), opposite of the fish breeding farm.

10 | Brasla Fish Breeding Farm 24.93845, 57.28579.

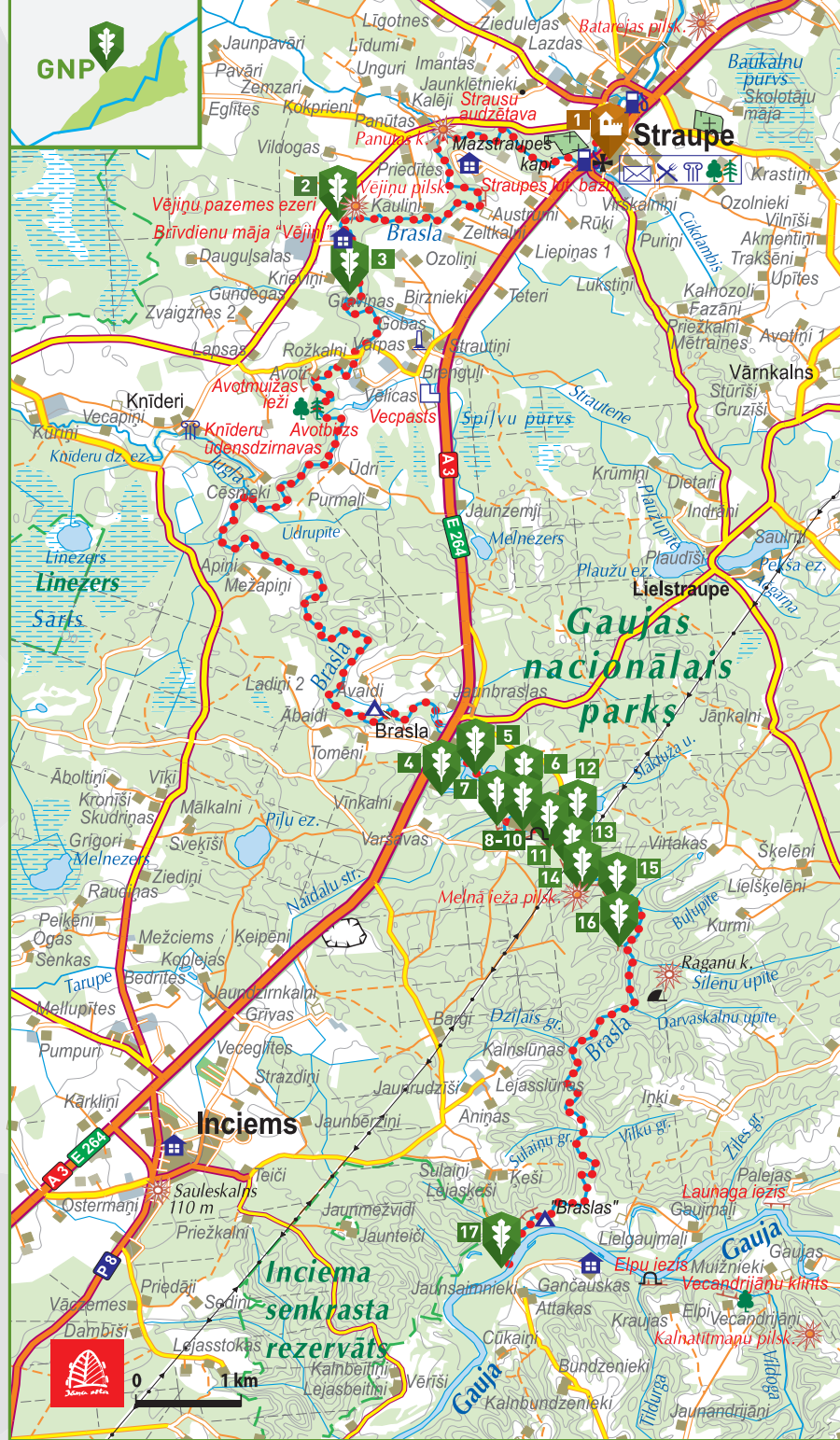
Breeding of salmon-like fish and lampreys, which are introduced to the natural water bodies of Latvia. **Pay attention!** One can hear the greenish warbler (a rather rare species in Latvia, which nests on the steep banks of river valleys) singing on the banks of the River Brasla.

11 | Jāņavārti 24.93795, 57.28457.

Around 150 m long and up to 12 m high cliff on the right side of the primeval valley wall of the River Brasla with a two-piece outcrop. During summers, the upper outcrop is not visible due to the thick vegetation. Here four caves are located — **Trīs māsas** or the **Three Sisters** and **Pameita** or the **Step-daughter**, while a beautiful frozen waterfall (**Sarkanais leduskritums** or the **Red Ice-fall**), which is few metres high, is seen in winter. Located opposite of the Brasla Fish Breeding Farm.

12 | Augstais Rock of Aņīte 24.94157, 57.28519.

Around 200 m long and up to 35 m high outcrop (with a cliff) on the left side of the primeval valley wall of the River Brasla, behind the fish breeding farm. Due to the low angle, vegetation and if on a river (while canoeing) it might not be spotted



13 | Slūnu Rock 24.94048,

57.28252.
Around 170 m long outcrop on the right bank curve up to 30 m high, under high voltage lines. On-going erosion processes and landslides are visible.

14 | Melnais Rock 24.94353,

57.28102
Around 180 m long and up to 12 m high sandstone outcrop, and its name probably originates from the velvet lichen which partly covers its surface. The rock is divided by lateral ravines, and a result of that individual sandstone projections have been created. Small caves at the feet of it. On the opposite bank, there is the small **Baltais Rock**.

15 | Virtaka Rock (also

Sarkanais Rock) 24.947715,

57.279224.
Up to 15 m high sandstone outcrop on a ca. 300 m long section of the right side of the primeval valley wall. At the feet of it, there is a 2.5 m high, hollow-like **cave**. On the other bank of the river, there is the much smaller **Zirņu Rock**.

16 | Buļu Rock 24.94901, 57.2756

Around 110 m long and up to 30 m high cliff with a sandstone outcrop at its feet, which is divided by the hollow-like **Lielā Buļu Cave** in the middle part of it.

17 | Primeval Valley of the River Gauja