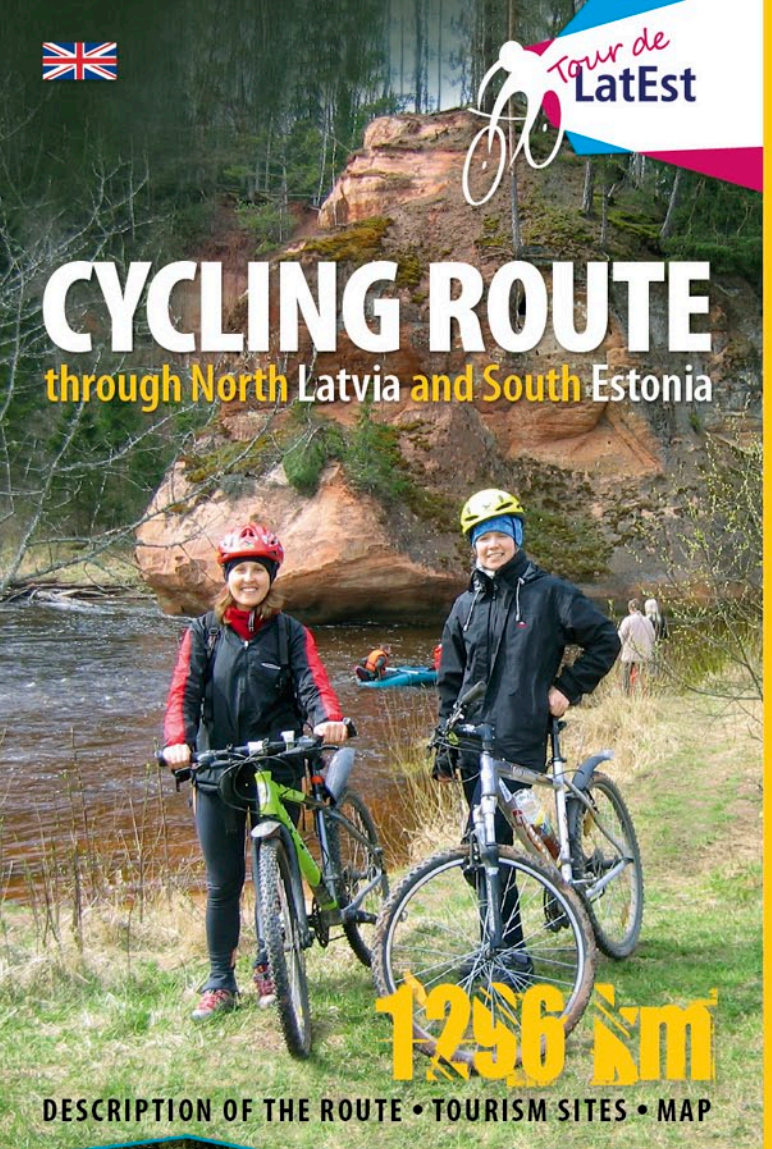
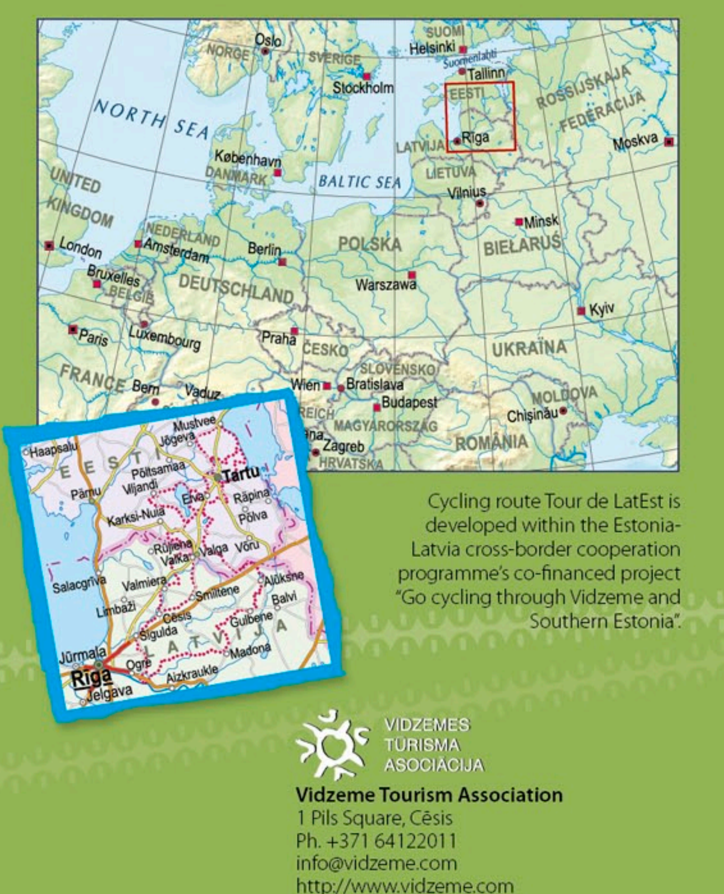


CYCLING ROUTE

through North Latvia and South Estonia

1296 km

DESCRIPTION OF THE ROUTE • TOURISM SITES • MAP



Cycling route Tour de LatEst is developed within the Estonia-Latvia cross-border cooperation programme's co-financed project "Go cycling through Vidzeme and Southern Estonia".

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Design, print, cartography:
"Jāņa sēta Map Publishers"
www.kartes.lv

Estonia Latvia Programme
Linking Estonia and Latvia
Part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund
European Union

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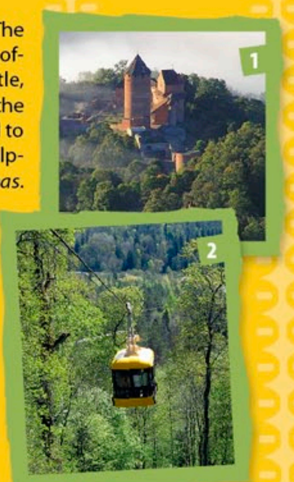
Official Website of Estonian Tourism – www.visitestonia.com
Official Website of Latvian Tourism – www.latviatourism.lv



1 TURAIDA MUSEUM RESERVE (F-2). The most frequently visited museum in Latvia offers expositions in the Turaida medieval castle, church, and administrative buildings of the manor. Next to the castle, in the park devoted to Latvian folk songs (*Dainu kalns*), are stone sculptures dedicated to Latvian folk songs – *dainas*. A beautiful view opens up from the castle tower onto the ancient river valley of Gauja. www.turaida-muzejs.lv

2 CABLE CAR (F-2). The only cableway in the Baltic States takes the visitors in a cable car from one steep bank of the ancient river valley of Gauja to the other. The distance is 1 km. A picturesque view of Turaida and Sigulda castle can be observed from the cable car. On holidays, bungee jumping from the cable car is organised. www.tourism.sigulda.lv

3 THE SECRET UNDERGROUND QUARTERS OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT (F-3). During the Soviet era, it was a particularly classified object, which was intended for shelter the government in case of a nuclear war. The equipment and arrangements are still maintained, including the canteen, where the visitors can enjoy the special menu. The visit must be booked in advance by calling +371 26467747. www.rehcentrsligatne.lv

4 FERRY CROSSING IN LĪGATNE (F-2,3). The only ferry crossing on River Gauja that has been preserved to this day – a historical monument of national importance. An age-old method of river crossing, which still works today. www.gnp.gov.lv

5 ROCK OUTCROPS IN ZVĀRTE (F-3). One of the most picturesque Devonian rock outcrops in Latvia. A legend has it that during the festivals of New Year's Eve, Pentecost, and Summer Solstice, witch and devil Sabbaths were held next to the rock. In the Witch's Meadow, the visitors can learn about the witches of Zvārte, as well as about plants and natural phenomena related to the names of these wise women. www.gnp.gov.lv

6 OLD TOWN OF CĒSIS. LIVONIAN ORDER CASTLE (F-3). The castle of Cēsis built at the beginning of the 13th century was a very important German order centre in Livonia. Nowadays, the castle presents the most impressive castle ruins in Latvia, which attract the visitors with the romantic charm of medieval architecture and the importance of cultural history. The new castle of Cēsis was built as the residence of the manor owners, which has been hosting the Museum of History and Art of Cēsis since 1949. The Church of St. John was inaugurated in 1284 and it is the largest medieval basilica outside Riga. The majority of the most prominent 18th-19th century edifices of Cēsis are situated on Riga Street. www.tourism.cesis.lv

7 RECREATION CENTRE "RAKŠI" (F-3). Here, the visitors can see a range of exotic animals – two-humped camel, Andean llamas, their relatives, alpacas, and more savage relatives – guanaco. The homeland of these fine and friendly camel type even-toed animals is South America and they are considered to be among the longest known domesticated animals, having served for thousands of years as good load carriers and companions for the Peruvian Indians in the mountains, and they still continue this task in the modern times. A ride with llamas or the so-called *Llama Trekking* and a picnic accompanied by llamas. www.hotelraksi.lv

8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK MUSEUM OF ĀRAIŠI (F-3). The first archaeological open-air museum in the Baltics. On a lake island, an ancient Latgallian settlement, the so-called lake castle, has been recreated. Various events and theatrical excursions are organised in the park museum. www.tourism.cesis.lv

9 CASTLE RUINS OF RAUNA AND OBSERVATION TOWER (E-3). One of the main residences of the archbishop of Riga, built in the 13th century. Currently, the main quarters of the castle are undergoing reconstruction and a panoramic observation tower has been set up. www.tourism.cesis.lv

10 THE RAUNAS STABURAGS (E-3). A unique limestone formation on the bank of Rauna, from which uncountable springs are flowing, thus shaping both calc turf and globular limestone. www.tourism.cesis.lv

11 SMILTENE (E-4), a town on three hillocks. One of them is the hillfort of Cērtene, which has been arranged with nature trails and recreation sites, the second – Lazdukalns (Hazel Hill) with a 21 m tall observation tower, and the third – the hill of Jāņi (summer solstice celebration) with an open air stage. Also open for visitors is the park of Kalnamuiža (Hill manor) and the Lutheran Church of Smiltene. www.smiltene.lv

12 VALMIERA (E-3) is the largest town in Vidzeme, which is situated on the banks of the beautiful and always changing River Gauja. The territory of the 13th century Livonian Order Castle ruins now hosts the Museum of Valmiera offering permanent expositions about the history of Valmiera and the surrounding territories, as well as a wide range of temporary exhibitions. The St. Simon's Church (1283) has basically maintained its medieval appearance and the visitors can observe the panorama of the town from the church tower. www.valmiera.lv

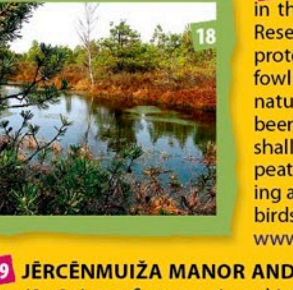
13 AVOTI (E-3). A modern recreation and sport centre – BMX bike track, golf, mini-golf, tennis, nature trail, accommodation. At the centre, there is a museum – "Latvian BMX hall of fame" – dedicated to BMX bike sport in Latvia, where the visitors can see the bicycle of the Olympic champion Māris Štrombergs, as well as the trophies won by Latvian BMX riders in competitions around the world. www.avoti.com

14 BRENGUĻI BREWERY (E-3) brews non-pasteurised and non-filtered beer. Next to the brewery, there is a summer beer terrace, which is a popular site of gatherings on weekends. www.brengulualus.lv

15 CHAIR CRAFTSMEN FARMSTEAD "LEJASBREGŽI" (E-3) offers a collection of ancient chairs (end of 18th cent. – mid-20th cent.). The owners of the farmstead – pottery artists – offer an excursion and taking part in the pottery workshop. The small exhibition room offers to enjoy and purchase the artworks made by local artists and craftsmen. www.gnp.gov.lv

16 SIETIŅIEZIS (Sieve Rock) (E-3) is the largest white sandstone outcrop in the Baltics, stretching 15 m tall and 400 m wide. The name originated from the burrows of the bees living in the rock, they made holes in the sandstone and it became sieve-like. A path has been arranged to see the rock up close and enjoy the beautiful scenery. www.gnp.gov.lv

17 STRENČI (E-4), the capital of raftsmen of River Gauja. In the territory of the provincial town on the banks of River Gauja, the Strenči rapids can be visited – a fortification of the right bank made of rocks, an open-air stage, a sculpture dedicated to the raftsmen of Gauja, a ferroconcrete bridge across Gauja built in 1909 (the second oldest in Latvia) and the oxbow lakes of Gauja. www.strencunovads.lv



18 SEDA BOG NATURE RESERVE (D-4) in the territory of North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve has been made with the purpose to protect a territory that is suitable for waterfowl nesting. As a result of peat extraction, natural bog biotopes practically have not been preserved. The partially overgrown, shallow water bodies that have formed in the peat quarries are suitable for waterfowl nesting and they are an important site for migrant birds during their migration. www.strencunovads.lv

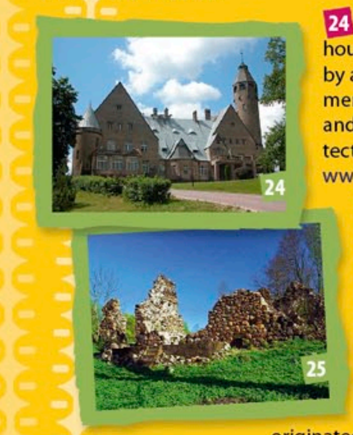
19 JĒRCĒNMUIŽA MANOR AND THE MANOR PARK (D-3). The name of Jaunjērcēni was first mentioned in writings around 1560. Here, the visitors can see the municipality-owned existing manor buildings – the "ladies" house, granary, stable, and park with oak-tree alley, multi-forked linden tree and a fine recreation site. The second largest grand oak-tree in Latvia – the Kaņepju grand oak-tree – is located approximately 1.5 km away from the manor. The visits must be booked in advance by calling the following numbers +371 64729499.

20 ĒRĢEME CASTLE RUINS (D-4). In former times, it was a stronghold for protection of the Eastern borders of Livonian Order state. It was built at the beginning of the 14th century and destroyed during the Great Northern war (1700–1721). The legend has it that the Swedish soldiers hid the army treasury in the castle.

21 VALKA/VALGA (D-4), one town, two countries. Before marking the border in 1920, Valka and Valga developed as a single town. Today, the border runs through the city centre and divides it in two parts, which can be seen from the Valka Lutheran Church. www.valka.lv, www.valga.ee

22 PERMANENT EXPOSITION OF PATRIOTIC EDUCATION AT THE WAR MUSEUM (D-4). The permanent exhibition, located in the border town of Valga, tells about Estonian national defence history and current events. The exhibition includes military vehicles, armoured vehicles, a tank, partisan bunker, helicopter, and a valuable collection of weapons.

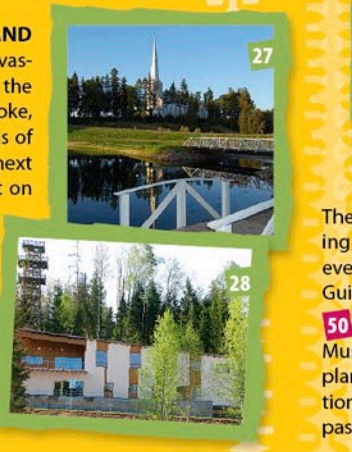
23 KOORKÜLA NATURE RESERVE AND LAKE VALGJÄRV (D-4). This territory is rich in lakes amidst idyllic scenery. Lake Valgjärv is a forest lake, with very clear water and high steep banks. Unique remains of 14th–15th century dwelling have been found in the middle of the lake. The lake is mentioned in an Estonian folklore legend about how the manor and church sunk during a wedding between a brother and sister.



24 TAAGEPERA CASTLE (C-3). The manor house, built from 1907 till 1912 and designed by a Riga-born architect Otto Wildau, is a monument of the romantic branch of Art Nouveau, and has been partly influenced by Finnish architecture. The castle hosts a hotel and a restaurant. www.taageperaloss.ee

25 HELME ORDER CASTLE RUINS AND HELME CAVES (C-4). In former times, Helme was the site of the Order Castle, and in the valley below the castle, there is a sacrificial spring: according to a legend its water can cure the seven ailments of old age and where young girls can threw beads to keep their beauty and youth. In Estonian, *helmes* means "beads", and the name of this place originated thanks to this ancient tradition. It is presumed that the underground caves, located on the elevation to the North of the castle ruins, were made as a hideout during the freedom fights.

26 SUISLEPA MANOR AND PARK (C-4). Since 1921, a school has been settled in the manor house constructed in the 19th century for the family of Baron von Kreudener. The origins of the 'Suislepa' apple sort, which is popular across the Europe, are traced back to the apple orchard of this manor. This sort was cultivated already in the 18th century and was initially developed from the seeds of Persian red summer apples.



27 TARVASTU CHURCH, ORDER CASTLE, AND CHAPEL (C-4). The most ancient parts of the Tarvastu Church date back to the 14th century. In 1892, the church suffered from damages after a lightning stroke, but it was reconstructed already in 1893. The ruins of Tarvastu Order Castle are located on the hillside next to the river. It is thought that the castle was built on a 14th century Estonian hillfort. There is a Classicism style chapel built at the beginning of the 19th century in the territory of the Order Castle.

28 VILJANDIMAA HEALTH CENTRE *HOLSTRE-POLLI* (B-3). The centre offers various length and difficulty skiing slopes, as well as routes for trekking, orienteering, and mountain biking, along with roller-skating tracks with asphalt cover and various fields for sporting events. The territory is arranged with grilling and recreation sites for picnics. There is an observation tower set up next to the main building, from where the beautiful scenery can be enjoyed. www.holstrepolli.ee

29 *LOODI PÕRGU* OR LEAD HELL (C-3). In the Paistu ancient valley, the visitors can see red sandstone outcrops. The largest of them has earned the name *Loodi põrgu*. The height of the outcrop is 15 m and the width – 23 m; at the bottom, there is a hollow, from which a spring flows out. A trail leads from the outcrop to the lake dam, which offers swimming and bonfire sites.

30 THE BLUE SPRING (B-3) is known as an ancient sacrificial spring. The spring got its name from the peculiar, slightly bluish colour of its crystal clear waters, which forms due to the blue clay at the bottom of the spring. In the ancient times, people believed in the curing powers of the Blue Spring and threw silver coins in the spring as their offerings.

31 HEIMTALI MANOR, PARK, AND MUSEUM (B-3). The 19th century manor ensemble includes Classicism style master house, manor keeper house, stable-arena and liquor distillery with quadrangle chimney. The Heimtali museum is situated in the old village school, where the guests can learn about the traditional crafts, see the household accessories, and a classroom showing equipment as it was a hundred years ago.

32 VILJANDI (B-3). More than 700 years old Viljandi town enchants its visitors with its simplicity, tranquillity, beautiful nature and architectural monuments. It is worth visiting the hillfort, suspended bridge, town hall, water tower and much more. This town is often referred to as Estonian culture capital because of the theatre, Culture Academy, and Estonian Traditional Music Centre operating in the town. www.viljandi.ee

33 MELESKI GLASS MUSEUM (B-4). Built in 1792, the Meleski glass factory was the second largest in the tsarist Russia and the biggest in the Baltics. The mirrors made at the factory reached even the palace of the tsar. The collection of Meleski Museum contains more than 1000 items, which are glass products made at the factory, as well as other items related to the factory.

34 LAKE VÕRTSJÄRV VISITORS' CENTRE (B-4). In 2009, the Võrtsjärv visitors' centre built of ecological materials (wood, wood chips, clay, and straw) was opened next to the Emajõgi river source in Rannu-Jõesuu. Here, the visitors can get information about the recreation and accommodation opportunities in the area of Võrtsjärv, book a kale boat (tradicionally used type of sailboat) trip on Lake Võrtsjärv, and purchase souvenirs made by local craftsmen. There is a 15 m tall observation tower set up near the visitors' centre. www.vortsjarv.ee

35 ELVA RECREATION AREA (C-5). www.vvvs.ee

36 TÕRAVERE OBSERVATORY (B-5). www.aai.ee

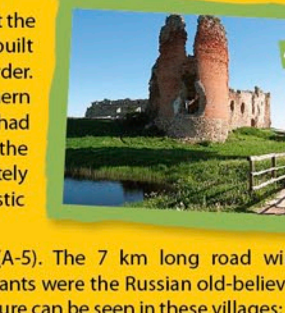
37 ILMATSALU BIRD WATCHING TERRITORY (B-5). Ilmatsalu bird watching territory is one of the most popular bird watching sites among the Estonian bird enthusiasts. In the bird watching territory, there are fish ponds of different sizes, walking trails, and bird watching tower. This is a habitat for plenty of bird species. 120 different bird species are recorded in the bird watching territory. Fish ponds are the feeding grounds for eagles, sparrows nest in the shrubs, and ponds are full with waterfowl.

38 ELISTVERE ZOO (B-5), a great opportunity to get to know local animals and bird species in their natural habitat. Among the zoo animals are specimens of such animals as the European bison, deer, reindeer, wild boar, fallow-deer, brown bear, lynx, fox, raccoon, squirrel, etc. The covered premises host Guinea pigs, mice, hamsters, chinchilla, and others. Information stands and boards are arranged in the zoo and along the nature trails.

39 CHURCH OF MARIA MAGDALENA (A-5), first mentioned in 1380.

40 KUREMAA RECREATION CENTRE (A-5), a windmill, castle, beach, camping site, and tent grounds.

41 PALAMUSE HISTORICAL CENTRE (A-5), the parish school museum, church, tavern, and community house all form a united entirety. The museum introduces the visitors with the history of the school and the region, and about the life and creative works of Estonian writer Oskar Luts. The spirit of the bygone times can still be felt in Palamuse.

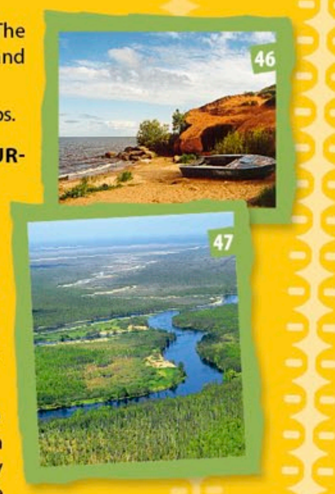


42 LAIUSE ORDER CASTLE RUINS (A-5), at the end of the 14th century, the Livonian Order built a grand fortress for protecting its Eastern border. During the winter months of the Great Northern War (1700–1701), the Swedish king Karl XII had settled in the castle with his army. During the following warfare, the castle was completely destroyed and since those times only majestic castle ruins have been preserved.

43 RAJA–TIHEDA–KASEPÄÄ–OMEDU (A-5). The 7 km long road winds through the villages, where the first inhabitants were the Russian old-believers. Typical Russian countryside village architecture can be seen in these villages; the guests can enjoy the layout, traditions, local activities, and local customs typical for the Russian culture. Locally cultivated vegetables and smoked fish can be purchased in the villages.

44 THE TOWN OF MUSTVEE (A-5) is one of the biggest settlements on the Estonian side of Lake Peipus and is situated next to the Mustvee river mouth. The town was earlier inhabited by Russian old-believers, and it is still the so-called church town, where five churches belonging to different religions can be visited.

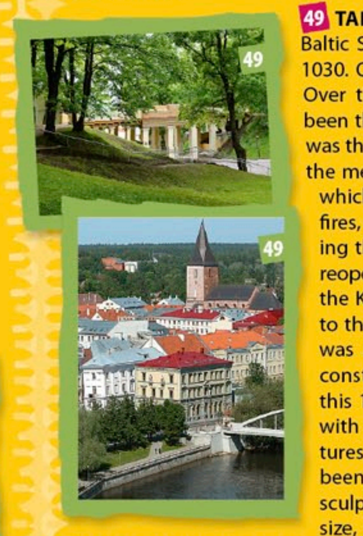
45 LAKE PEIPUS AND VILLAGES OF OLD-BELIEVERS (A-6). Lake Peipus is the largest transboundary lake and the fourth largest in Europe. The area of the lake covers 3555 km^2, of which 44% belong to the Republic of Estonia, and 56% to the Russian Federation. There are 30 islands on the lake, the biggest island – Kolpino (Kulkna). The territories bordering with Lake Peipus feature co-existence and mingling of cultures and religions throughout many centuries. Up to the end of the 17th century, Russian old-believers, who were fleeing Russian Orthodox Church persecution, lived here. The old-believers' museums are located in Kolkja and Varnja. www.starover.ee, www.peipsi.ee



46 KALLASTE PANK (A-6), sandstone outcrops.

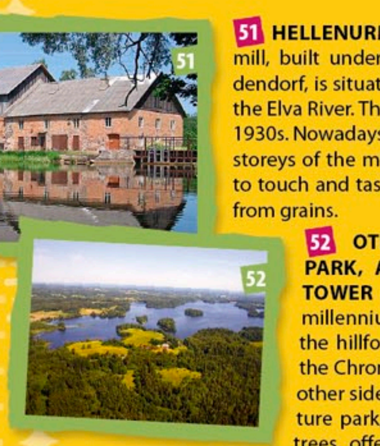
47 THE GRAND BOG OF EMAJÕE OR SUURSOO (B-6) is the largest low moor in Estonia, and the River Emajõgi along with its tributaries flow through it. The charm of this protected nature reserve lies in the variety of bog types, isles, reed, rivers, and lakes, as well as in the vast forests, which enclose the swamp. Suursoo nature centre in Kavastu has settled at the site of the castle built in the 14th century.

48 THE ALATSKIVI CASTLE (A-6) is the master house of the Alatskivi manor built in late Gothic style according to the design by the manor master Arved von Nolken over the period from 1880 through 1885. A. von Nolken had been influenced by Scottish architecture and he was particularly impressed by the royal palace of Balmoral, therefore he decided to build a copy of it. However, the Alatskivi castle is a copy of Balmoral Castle only by means of design elements and does not copy its layout completely. The Alatskivi Castle territory includes a large and magnificent forest park. The castle hosts a restaurant and excursions around the castle can be arranged.



49 TARTU (B-5) is one of the oldest towns in the Baltic States. It was first mentioned in the year 1030. One of the pearls of Tartu is **Toomemägi.** Over the course of centuries, Toomemägi has been the central point of the settlement, later it was the site of the bishop's castle – the centre of the medieval bishopric of Dorpart. Toomemägi, which had lost its importance after wars and fires, was used mostly as the urban pasture during the 18th century. When the university was reopened at the beginning of the 19th century, the Kaiser Alexander I transferred Toomemägi to the administration of the university. A park was arranged and university buildings were constructed in the territory. **St. John's Church** – this 14th century unique sacred site can boast with the approximately 1000 terracotta sculptures, which have great artistic value and have been preserved to the modern day. These sculptures are unique in Europe due to their size, number, and the level of artistic quality. The old part of Tartu – the John's quarter – is the home to **Anthony's Guild** uniting professional artists and craftsmen, which was first mentioned in 1449, however, it is believed that it was operating already before that time. The Anthony's Guild includes more than 20 workshops. www.tartu.ee

50 ESTONIAN MUSEUM OF AVIATION (B-5). In two buildings of the Aviation Museum with the total exposition area of 450 m^2, the visitors can see 400 airplane models of high quality, which are important from the viewpoint of aviation history. Outside, there are several helicopters, fighter jets, bombers, and passenger aircraft. www.lennundusmuuseum.ee



51 HELLENURME WATERMILL (C-5). The watermill, built under the orders of the landlord Middendorf, is situated in Hellenurme, on the banks of the Elva River. The interior has been preserved from 1930s. Nowadays, the mill hosts a museum. The four storeys of the mill give the visitors an opportunity to touch and taste the products that can be made from grains.

52 OTEPÄÄ HILLFORT, ADVENTURE PARK, AND TEHVANDI OBSERVATION TOWER (C-5). At the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, Estonian tribes settled at the hillfort. Otepää was first mentioned in the Chronicles of Novgorod in 1116. On the other side of the valley is the Otepää adventure park, with routes suspended between trees, offering various degrees of difficulty. Adrenaline rush comes from two slides up to 350 m long 30 m high track, along steel cable suspended in air. A K-90 Tahvandi trampoline slope is one of the most impressive sport constructions in Estonia. A breathtaking view on the hilly Southern Estonia opens up from the observation tower platform. www.otepaa.ee

53 PÜHAJÄRV OR HOLY LAKE AND THE MEMORIAL PLATE OF THE VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS DALAI LAMA XIV (C-5). Pühajärv is one of the most beautiful lakes in Estonia and it is also the biggest in the elevated plains of Otepää. The source of the river Väike-Emajõgi is situated at the southern part of Pühajärv Lake. In the park, there is a sculpture reminding residents and visitors of Otepää about the visit of His Holiness Dalai Lama XIV. There are many springs on the banks of the lake, and the most widely known is the Love Spring, which got its name from a legend about the magic effects of the water. The legend has it that if you drink the water of the spring from a silver goblet together with your beloved on the night of summer solstice, you will experience great and lasting love.

54 HARIMÄE OBSERVATION TOWER (C-5). Harimäe is located in the Otepää elevated plains. A wooden observation tower is constructed on top of the hill, from which a view of the Otepää highlands opens up across the River Väike-Emajõgi to the elevated plains of Karula.

55 SANGASTE CASTLE (D-5). The Sangaste castle was built in 1881 and belonged to the famous rye farmer, Count Berg. It was built in accordance with the sketches of the architect Otto Pius Hippius. The large red brick master house is one of the most luxurious examples of historicism in the Baltics. The façade of the building shows elements similar to those seen in the Windsor Castle in England. The visitors' attention is drawn to the park with rare tree species and the echo effect, which can be heard, if you stand in the vault under the main tower.

56 KARULA NATURE PARK (D-5). The pride of the region is the Karula Nature Park. In the park, visitors can enjoy the charming environment and the beauty and diversity of history and culture. Centuries old farm houses have been preserved here, legends travel from mouth to mouth, and it is known, where the piled stone graves once stood. Here, the locals remember the Forest brothers and take care of the burial grounds of their predecessors.

57 ROCKS OF WITCHES (E-5), sandstone outcrops of beautiful light rose and light yellow colours on the banks of River Vaidava. The rocks got their name from those times, when the image of witches was still strong. The peculiar nature objects situated in the surrounding area, such as the Werewolf Pine and Twin Pines, Witch's Broom, "Circles of Witches", "Bones of Witches", etc. can be seen and learned about under guidance of an environmental tour guide (phone +371 29439207).

58 DRUSKU HILLFORT (E-5,6). One of the steepest hillforts in Latvia, it is 246 metres above the sea level. Wonderful scenery of the hilly Alūksne and the elevated plains of Haanja in Estonia opens up from the hillfort.

59 NATURE MUSEUM "ENVIRONMENTAL MAZE" (E-6) in the new castle of Alūksne offers an integrated environmental information centre, which combines four structural units: Environmental Information Kiosk, Environmental Library, Nature Museum, and Service of Environmental Interpretations. Its permanent exposition includes nine collections, of which the most pompous are the fluorescent minerals and fluorescent mineral art. www.aluksne.lv

60 THE ATE MUSEUM OF V. ĶIRPS IN THE RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF KALNCEMPJI (E-6). The museum is made to represent a farmstead of Vidzeme, consisting of 13 buildings. The typical tools, household objects, and machinery are included in each building. During the holidays, the museum demonstrates the work of ancient watermill, as well as traditional countryside crafts and household tasks.

61 FARM "LEJAS" (E-6). The farm of the bee-master J. Strakša a has about 30 bee families. The territory of farm includes cultivated fields of nectar plants – mustard, sweet clover, phacelia, and buckwheat – used for the bee gardens and for seed material. The farm offers an excursion and learning about the life of bees, tasting and buying honey.

62 NARROW-GAUGE RAILROAD BETWEEN GULBENE AND ALŪKSNE (E-6). The narrow-gauge railroad is 33 km long and is the only regularly running narrow-gauge railroad in the Baltics. This section has been preserved from the 210 km long narrow-gauge railroad Stukmaņi–Valka, which was built in 1903. Various activities and events are organised at the Paparde railroad station. The narrow-gauge railroad is a cultural monument of national importance. www.banitis.lv

63 VECGULBENE MANOR (F-5) is the former property of the Baron von Wolf dynasty. The current edifices were built over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries; the manor includes two palaces – the Neo-renaissance style White Palace and the Neo-gothic Red Palace. The administrative buildings of the manor – the cheese shop, arena, conservatory, servants' quarters, barns, and cattle kitchen – have been preserved. The manor is currently undergoing renovation and restoration. A hotel has been arranged in the renovated buildings of arena and cheese-shop. www.baltapils.lv

64 STĀMERIENA CASTLE AND THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ST. ALEXANDER OF NEVA (F-5,6). The castle is one of the best examples of the French Neo-renaissance style buildings of the time on Latvia; it was built in the 19th century and burnt down during the riots of 1905 and then completely renovated. The church was inaugurated in 1904 and completely renovated in 2004.

65 CESVAINE CASTLE AND PARK (G-5). The hunting castle in Eclecticism style was built for Adolf von Wolf from 1893 till 1895. The former manor buildings have been preserved around the castle. The offer includes a visit of the castle, a walk in the park and manor, climbing the observation tower of the castle. www.cesvaine.lv

66 POTTERY WORKSHOP OF JĀNIS SEIKSTS IN MADONA (G-4). The visitors can take a tour at the pottery workshop and participate in making clay pots; exhibition, purchase, and ordering ceramic items. There is a beautiful decorative garden surrounding the house. www.madona.lv

67 GAIZIŅKALNS HILL (G-4). The tallest hill in Latvia, Gaiziņkalns (311.6 metres above sea level) is situated in the territory of Gaiziņkalns Nature Park (2026 ha). A marked walking trail is set up for exploring Gaiziņkalns, and beautiful, panoramic sceneries open up from the viewpoints. www.madona.lv

68 MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF BROTHERS JURJĀNI "MEŅĢEĻI" (G-4). The birthplace of the Latvian classical music forefathers, brothers Jurjāni. The offer includes an excursion, expositions, tent and picnic sites, nature trail, picturesque sceneries. The black sauna is available upon making arrangements in advance (ph. +371 2943165)!

69 COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE ĶEIPENE AND THE EXPOSITION OF SERGEI EISENSTEIN – MOVIE MUSEUM (G-3). The only exposition in the world devoted to Sergei Eisenstein and his film "The Battleship Potemkin". Next to the museum is the lighthouse – navigation tower, which is equipped with 64 mailboxes addressed to the world cinema pioneers, as well as furniture appropriate for the dimensions of the grand spirits.

70 LUTHERAN CHURCH IN MADLIENA (G-3). The beginnings of the church date back to the 13th century. It is one of the oldest churches in Latvia. There are tales and legends told about the construction of the church, and they inspired the poet Aspazija to write the play "Tower builder". The pulpit and the altar elements were made by Kārlis Frīdrihs Hūns, the altar piece was painted in 1844 by G. Karing. Garlieb Merkel was ordained in this church.

71 PUMPURS MUSEUM IN LIELVĀRDE (G-2). The museum includes materials about the Latvian poet A. Pumpurs and his epic poem "Bearslayer", as well as about Latvian culture and history. The museum is located next to the Lielvārde Lutheran Church. The big rocks in front of the museum, according to the legend, are the bed of the Bearslayer and the blanket of the Bearslayer. Nearby is the Lielvārde park with castle ruins dating back to the Livonian era.

72 ULDEVENS CASTLE (G-2). The castle of the Balt chief – the elder of Lielvārde, Uldevens – was built following the examples of 9th-11th century buildings. The visitors can see the residential buildings, Chief's house, fortification walls, and other buildings.

73 CROSS HILL OF ĶEGUMS (G-2). The first cross next to the Ķegums cemetery was set up in June 20, 1997. A walk of crosses is organised every year in June. The healers consider this place to be an ancient sacred site.

74 SUNTAŽI MANOR CASTLE (G-2). The Chronicles of Henry of Livonia tell that in 1223, following instructions of Bishop Albert, a castle was built here. The master house of the manor was constructed from 1780 till 1782 and it was modernised in the mid-19th century, attributing Neo-gothic features to it. After the damages of 1905, it was renovated by the last owner, Baron von Hanenfeld. Since 1920, the castle is used as a school-house. Nearby is the Suntaži Lutheran Church.

75 MĀLPILS MANOR AND PARK (F-2). The master house of Mālpils manor was constructed in 1760 and restored in 2006. It is an important architectural monument, which now hosts a luxury hotel with 24 rooms. The offer includes a tour of Mālpils in a horse carriage and retro bicycles, an excursion in the manor escorted by a tour guide, romantic wooden boat rides in the pond situated in the park, as well as enjoying tea, coffee, wine and various snacks on the manor terrace (phone +371 26666600, 67102555). www.malpilsmuiza.lv

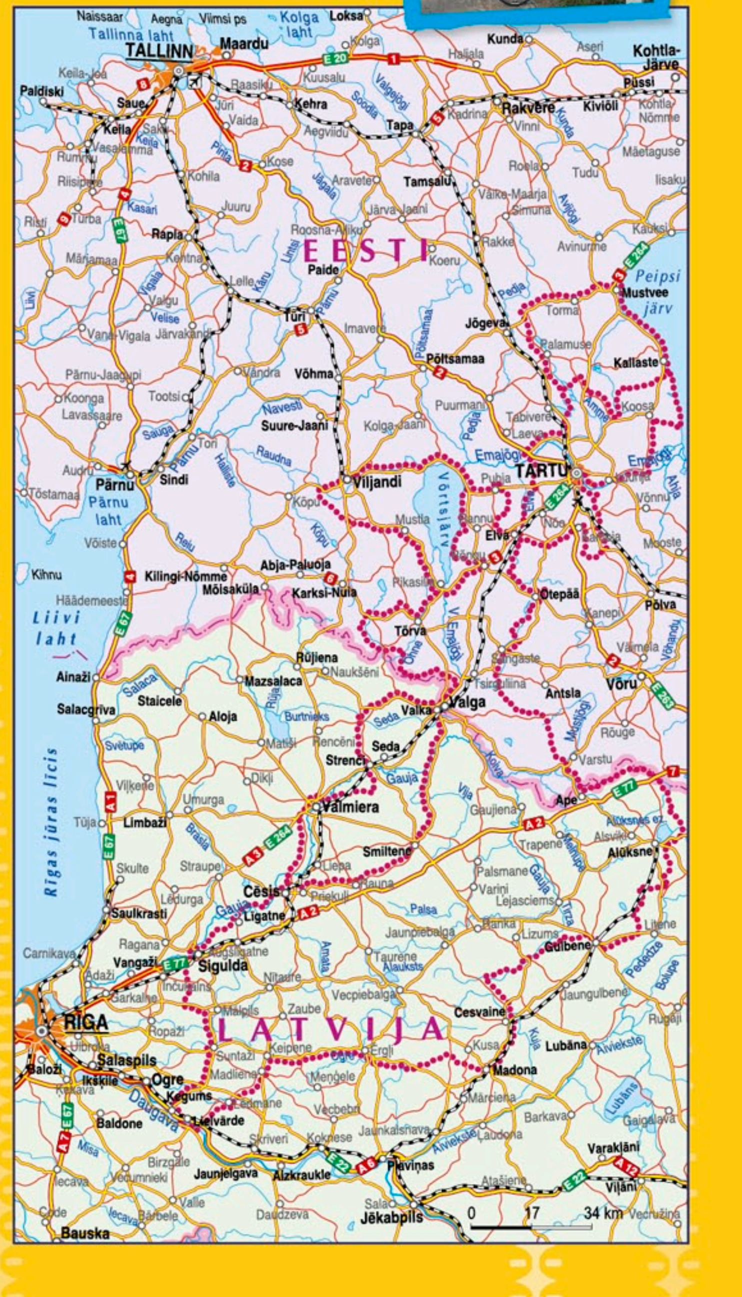
76 BIOLOGICAL FARM "LIEPKALNI-VĒŽI" (F-2). The farm deals with orcharding and cultivating vulnerary plants. The offer includes herbal tea and fruit tea tasting, exploring the fields and the farm, learning about biological farming. The visits must be booked in advance by calling the following numbers +371 29440751, 26567902. www.malpils.lv

77 ALLAŽI NATURE TRAIL (F-2) winds along natural and cultural history objects, including particularly protected nature territories: Mežmuiža springs, where a river is formed from seven springs, later flowing into the mill pond, and Ezernieku hollows – a lake, which occasionally disappears under the ground and then refills with water. The nature trails also lead to a goat farm "Lielgrodes", where the owners offer to taste freshly made goat cheese. www.tourism.sigulda.lv

RAILWAY ROUTE MAP

Bicycle route crosses several railway lines and going by train might be considered while planning a trip.

Routes and train timetables:
- in Latvia "Latvijas dzelzceļš", www.ldz.lv
- in Estonia "Edelaraudtee", www.edel.ee



The cycling route “Tour de LatEst”

goes through two countries – Latvia and Estonia. The total length of the route is 1296 km. About a half of the road surface is asphalt and the other half – gravel. It must be taken into account that the quality of gravel roads changes depending on the weather conditions and road maintenance intensity. The route is very versatile in its scenic, visual, and informative qualities. By going on this tour, you can learn about the heritage of cultural history of Latvians and Estonians, visit the most popular tourism objects, and see the daily lives of the local inhabitants. The route crosses several protected natural territories of European importance – national and nature parks, scenic areas, and the biosphere reserve.

The section from Sigulda to Valmiera covers the territory of Gauja National Park, which is rich in natural, historical, and cultural objects, as well as offers a range of leisure activities.

The area of Sigulda offers versatile activities – the vertical wind tunnel “Aerodium”, the rope track “Mežakaķis”, Sigulda Adventure Park and toboggan rides, chairlift, various rope tracks and a catapult. The sled and bobsleigh track in Sigulda, where the visitors can go down the track in a bob, both in winter and in summer.

The area of Līgatne is interesting with the old construction of the paper fabric village, which was built at the end of the 19th century, with the beautiful sights of Gauja, and the guests can see wild animals on the nature trails of Ligatne. A campsite has been set up on the riverbank next to the former ferry crossing.

Cēsis with its ancient spirit will be welcoming you with the rich historical heritage – the medieval castle and romantic old town. On the outskirts of the town, on the banks of the River Gauja, the Adventure Park “Ozolkalns” offers its visitors to cross the rope tracks, but in “Žagarkalns”, you can go on bike tours, as well as enjoy boat and raft rides.

The stud “Kocēni” in the region of Valmiera offers horseback riding, but the Brenguļi beer brewery offers to enjoy refreshing home-brewed beer in the open-air beer garden.

From Strenči to Valka, the route takes you through the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, which is a scarcely inhabited forested territory, interchanging with hilly areas and meadows. In the bog of Seda, the travellers can learn about the flora and fauna of swamps.

The section from Smiltene to Valka goes through large forests. Not far from Vijciems, in Mežmuiža, there is one of the oldest pine-cone drying kilns in Latvia, where you can observe a pine-cone processing technique that is about 100 years old.

Valka/Valga – one of several towns in the world, where the border crosses the town centre and divides it into two parts. The route makes a detour of 709 km to Estonia here and crosses back the border of Latvia near Ape, where you can see the largest willow tree in the Baltics. In the direction of Alūksne, the route continues along the old road of Korneti. The road entwined with hills and lakes goes to the steepest hillfort – the Drusku hillfort. On a hot summer day, the countless lakes and ponds offer refreshing bathing opportunities.

The section from Alūksne to Gulbene can be covered also by taking a ride with the narrow-gauge railroad, which is the only narrow-gauge railroad in the Baltics that runs on a regular basis. In Gulbene, the guests can go to the Vecgulbene manor to get the feel of the magnificent Baron von Wolf family by staying overnight in the manor arena and taking a walk in the castle park.

The part of the route from Gulbene to Lielvārde is characteristic with typical scenery of Vidzeme, where the hillocks alternate with valleys and forests interchange with fields, enveloping villages, farms, and towns.

From Madona to Ērgļi, the road winds through the central part of Vidzeme elevated plains with hilly scenery around the highest peak in Latvia – Gaizinkalns (311.6 m above sea level) and the picturesque area of Vestiena lakes. After taking a walk along the nature trails of Gaizinkalns, it is worth visiting the hotel “Ķīrsona muiža”, which strongly resembles a fairytale castle. Next to Lake Kāla, is the farm “Jāņkalni”, where in July and August, the guests can purchase large sort of blueberries, but in the “Aparēni” household – the visitors can see a non-traditional domestic bird collection (about 170 birds). In the “Braki” museum, you can learn about the 19th century Vidzeme country home, which consists of eight historical buildings.

You can learn about the grandeur of Daugava, the largest river in Latvia, by visiting Lielvārde and Ķegums. In Lielvārde, you can see the place, where the hero of the Latvian epic poem, Bearslayer, lived and fought the Black Knight; there you will also see the Bearslayer’s bed and blanket. In Ķeipene, the main attraction is the Cinema Museum boasting with interior elements relevant for the size of the grand artists of cinematography.

Mālpils is characterised by the typical historical construction of an old manor centre, which forms a part of a territory rich in ponds.

The Southern part of Estonia gives the cyclists an opportunity to get away from the urban environment and instead enjoy the beautiful nature and get to know the rich historical and cultural heritage.

Beyond the border of Estonia, going through Valga, the cyclists can first enjoy the ride along the newly arranged cycling path, then move on to the Koorküla village, enclosed by woods and lakes, welcoming the visitors with its idyllic scenery. The clear Valgjärv Lake is an ideal place for stopping to take a break and enjoy a refreshing dip.

When going from Taagepera through Tõrva towards Viljandi the route goes along bigger roads, but the traffic here is not very intensive. The travel route offers a range of historical sites, for instance, the century old Taagepera castle, Helme Order Castle ruins, the 19th century Heimtali and Suislepa manors. Viljandi is an ancient town situated on a hilltop on the banks of the beautiful Lake Viljandi. The town enchants with its simplicity, tranquillity, architectural values, and green areas. Each summer, Viljandi attracts tourists to the Folk music Festival.

Going further on, in the direction of Tartu, the visitors will reach the shores of Lake Võrtsjärv, which is the biggest enclosed water body in Estonia. Next to the outlet of the Emajõgi River in Jõesuu is the Võrtsjärve visitors’ centre, where the guests can receive information about the recreation and accommodation possibilities, as well as book sailboat trips on the lake.

The area of Elva captivates with its nature: the traveller can enjoy various nature trails, which go along tent grounds, recreation areas, and picnic sites. The bird watching territory of Ilmatsalu, situated near Tartu, is one of the most popular places for the bird enthusiasts; the territory is arranged with walking trails and a bird watching tower.

Upon reaching Lähte and Saadjärve, we have arrived at the hilly lake land of Vooremaa. Here, the guests can visit the Elistvere Zoo – one of the “mandatory” stops for the visitors with children. The zoo offers learning about the local animals and bird species in their natural habitat.

In Jõgevamaa, Palamuse, and Laiuse, the guests can enjoy the ancient spirit, which has survived up to the modern day. The history enthusiasts definitely cannot miss the historical centre of Palamuse and the Laiuse Order Castle ruins. Upon arriving in Mustvee, we have reached the banks of Lake Peipus. Peipus is the fourth largest lake in Europe and the largest lake belonging to several countries. The shore of Lake Peipus and the villages of Russian old-believers are among the most exciting regions of the route by means of cultural value.

The nature lovers should not miss the nature centre of the Grand Bog of Emajõgi close to the Kavastu village. It is the biggest lowland swamp in Estonia, and the River Emajõgi along with its tributaries flow through it. Eagles can be sighted often in this area.

It is worth staying for a longer time in the second largest town of Estonia – Tartu –, because it is also one of the oldest towns in the Baltic States. This Hanseatic university and museum town is situated on the banks of River Emajõgi. Tartu is also the friendliest Estonian town for the cyclists.

The area of Otepää is one of the tourism magnets of the South Estonia – both in summer and winter. The region is rich in lakes hidden between woods and hillocks, beautiful hills and valleys, picturesque rivers. The families with children and adventurer lovers should visit the Adventure Park and Tehvandi trampoline. When going through Sangaste, you will be enchanted by the charming Sangaste Castle. The visitors will pay attention to the impressive master house built of red bricks, along with the park with its rare tree collection. The pride of the Lüllemäe area is the Karula National Park. The nature, history, and culture of this place are particularly versatile and beautiful.

Have a good ride!