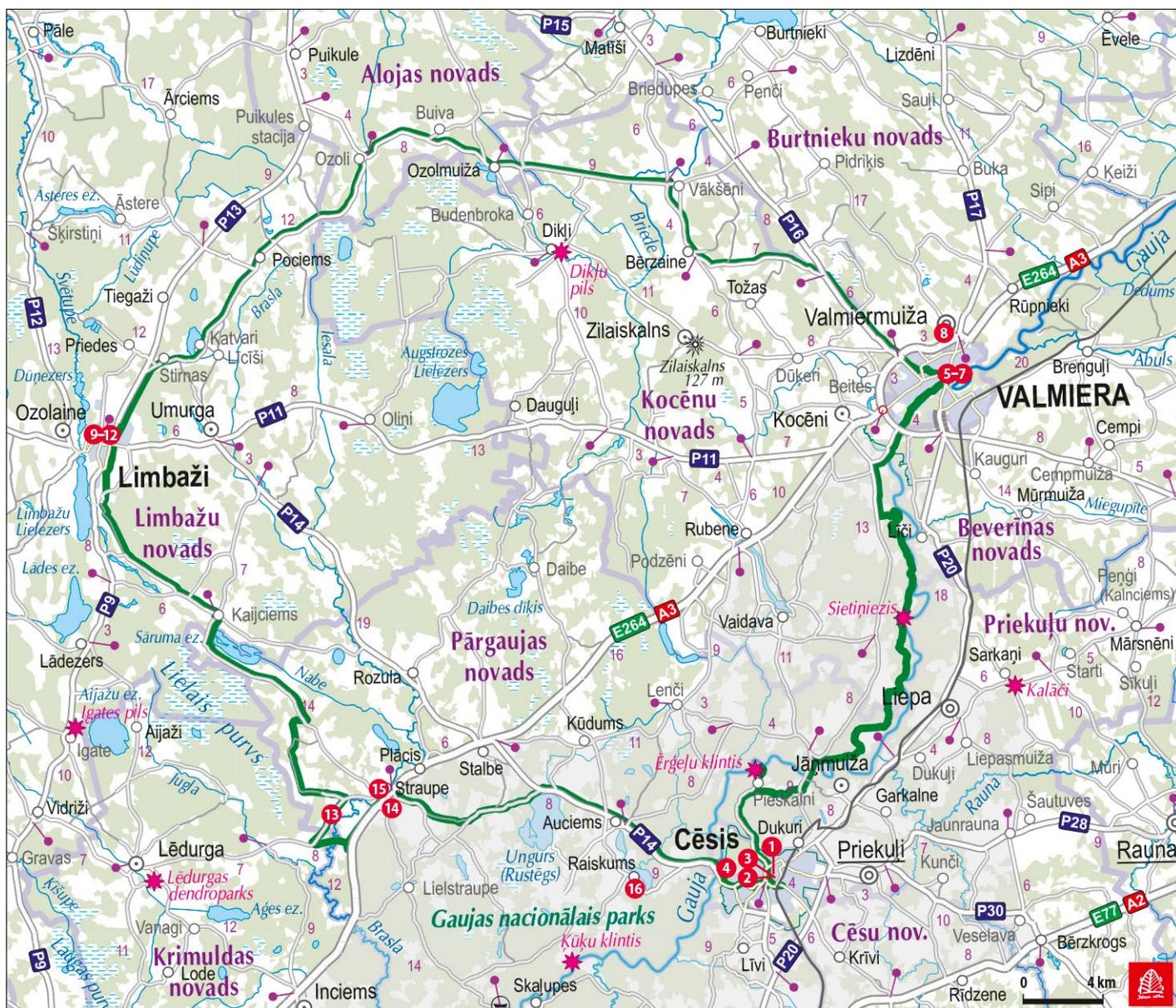


# Bicycle Route: Hanseatic Towns



- ☀ April–October
- 📏 142 km
- 🚲 medium difficulty
- 🛣 asphalt and gravel roads, nature trails
- 📌 marked and provided with information posters within the Cēsis–Valmiera section only. The route can be taken in any direction.

The route winds through Gauja National Park and the Cēsis Nature and Heritage Park. Please treat the nature objects and cultural historic heritage with respect!

## Information about accommodations

- 📍 **Cēsis Tourism Information Centre**  
1 Baznīcas Square, Cēsis,  
Tel. +371 28318318, info@cesis.lv,  
www.visit.cesis.lv
- 📍 **Limbaži Tourism Information Centre**  
3 Torņa Street, Limbaži,  
Tel. +371 28359057, www.visitlimbazi.lv
- 📍 **Straupe Tourism Information Centre**  
“Piķiera namiņš”, 2 Braslas Street, Straupe,  
Tel. +371 26620422,  
hansa.pargaujasnovads.lv

- 📍 **Valmiera Tourism Information Centre**  
10 Rīga Street, Valmiera,  
Tel. +371 26332213, www.visit.valmiera.lv

## Bicycle service

- Eži**, bicycle rental  
1 Pils Square, Cēsis, Tel. +371 26573132  
43 Rīga Street, Valmiera,  
Tel. +371 64226223, veikals.ezi.lv

- Aruga**, car service centre  
Straupe, “Ozoli”, Tel. +371 29486647

- Apalkalns**, camping  
“Apalkalns”, Raiskums,  
Tel. +371 29448188, www.apalkalns.lv

Go on an exciting biking adventure from Gauja National Park to Cēsis – and as far as Limbaži and Straupe – to find out about Hanseatic towns. Experience history and enjoy the exquisite palaces and preserved historical heritage, with wonderful, natural, hilly views of Vidzeme.

**1 Cēsis mediaeval castle**

57.313324, 25.271382

The light of lanterns will lead you to the West Tower of the mediaeval castle, with the residence of the master of the order and its unique 16<sup>th</sup> century interiors, an exquisite star vault, artificial stone arch consoles, and fragments of old frescoes.

**2 St John's Church**

57.312093, 25.271701

St John's Church is the second most significant architectural site in Cēsis (after the mediaeval castle), and is one of the oldest examples of mediaeval architecture in Latvia. It is the former cathedral of the Livonian Order, and a place where its masters, knights, and clerics are buried.

**3 Cēsis old town**

57.312052, 25.271781

In the Middle Ages, narrow, winding streets with the houses of traders and artisans ran close to one another, packed densely around the castle and the church of Cēsis. Despite many wars and much destruction, the town's historical centre has preserved its mediaeval layout almost unchanged; today, you will still see the products of local artisans and an old brewery here, as well as the main entrance into the old town, the Rauna Gate.

**4 The Gauja, and the house of the Jansons sculptor family Siļķes**

57.317970, 25.231047

It is unknown if anyone fished herrings ('siļķes' in Latvian) in the Gauja; however, the geographic location of the house on the bank of the river suggest that it may have been a place for loading and unloading ships in the Middle Ages, giving this location a name that is somewhat unusual for a place in the middle of Vidzeme. This hypothesis is supported by the old road leading from Cēsis to the Siļķes ferry; at some point, it may have connected the town with the place for unloading ships.

**5 St Simon Church in Valmiera**

57.538456, 25.426368

St Simon Church in Valmiera is a witness to the old and dramatic history of that town, and is one of the most important religious architecture heritage sites in Latvia, preserving its mediaeval structure and an appearance that has undergone little change since. Its construction began as early as 1283.

**6 Ruins of the Livonian Order castle in Valmiera**

57.538760, 25.427749

The history of the Valmiera castle is still unclear. The construction of the castle was probably initiated by the Livonian Brothers of the Sword order in early 13<sup>th</sup> century; however, it is also possible that it was the Livonian Order that began its construction late in the same century. There is no information about the original appearance of the Valmiera castle, but it is known that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century its external walls formed an irregular polygon that hugged the shape of the hill.

**7 Valmiera museum complex**

57.539253, 25.429064

The Valmiera museum offers permanent exhibitions about the history of Valmiera and its surroundings, as well as various temporary exhibitions. The museum arranges talks and various educational activities.

**8 Valmiermuižas alus brewery**

57.555540, 25.431790

The "Valmiermuižas alus" brewery taps its inspiration using ancient traditions of beer brewing, with some traditions going back as far as the time of the Hanseatic League.

**9 Ruins of the mediaeval castle in Limbaži (13<sup>th</sup> century)**

57.515720, 24.713883

The ancient walls of the castle witnessed the days when the town was a member of the Hanseatic League. The gate tower of the castle still has its unique gate with parts of the portcullis; the gate provides a view onto the reddish roofs of the old town of Limbaži. The surrounding landscape makes it possible to understand that this castle is one of Latvia's oldest fortification buildings. It used to be a residence of the Archbishop of Riga.

**10 Limbaži museum, New Riga Council Palace (early 19<sup>th</sup> century)**

57.515710, 24.713889

The New Riga Council Palace/Pilsmuiža administrator's building has a historical exhibition and exhibition rooms. A permanent exhibition dedicated to the author of Latvia's national anthem, Baumaņņu Kārlis, has been created here.

**11 Old firefighter depot**

57.514843, 24.714088

The old firefighter depot is the right place to visit if you want to find out about how they used to extinguish fires in Limbaži, how often fires took place, and what people did when they saw smoke.

**12 Living Museum of Silver, master-class and wall painting in the Old Town Council building**

57.515081, 24.713615

Limbaži has been called a "Silver Town" for a long time, and this is why the exhibition "Silver Limbaži" is to take place on the basement floor of the old town hall building. There is evidence of silversmiths working in Limbaži as early as 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**13 Vējiņi underground lakes**

57.341564, 24.905842

The only underground lakes in the Baltics are located near the Vējiņi house. The Vējiņi caves and sinkholes are the most impressive area of active suffusion in Latvia. The underground lakes were created as subterranean streams washed out cavities in the rock, with the resulting caves being tens of metres long; however, the holes suggest that the overall network of underground caves and lakes is much larger, occupying an area of 3 ha.

**14 Lielstraupe castle church complex and park (13<sup>th</sup> century)**

57.347278, 24.948084

The Lielstraupe castle, despite a few changes and its joining with the church, is one of Latvia's mediaeval castles that have survived until today. It was perhaps built as the castle of a vassal of the Archbishop of Riga, in 1263. Lielstraupe church is the only church in Latvia that has a free-standing wooden bell tower, built in 1848.

**15 Mazstraupe castle (14<sup>th</sup> century)**

57.354685, 24.950906

The Mazstraupe castle was the castle of a vassal of the Archbishop of Riga, the Rosen family. The earliest written source mentioning it dates as far back as 1408. Initially, it was a hook-shaped building with a protected inner courtyard surrounded by tall walls.

**16 Raiskumiētis brewery**

57.311792, 25.157406

This brewery makes local beer and other delicious things; it is a good place to learn about traditions, and is located in the very centre of Raiskums. You can book a guided tour combined with the tasting of beer, home-made bread, and smoked foods.

