

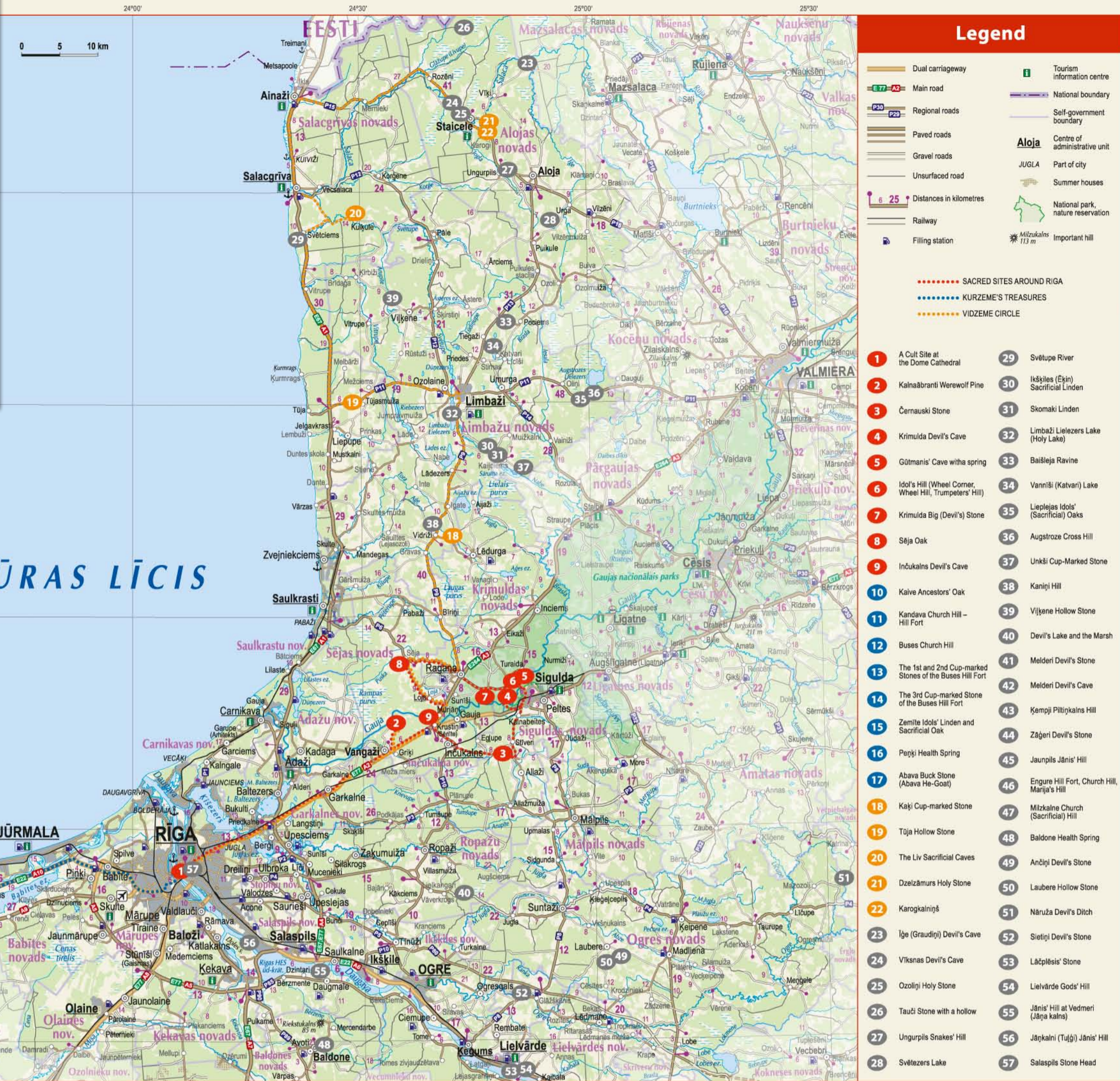
RIGA REGION

Riga Planning Region is a modern territorial unit comprising the Old Lady Riga, the coastline of Vidzeme and partially that of Kurzeme, as well as the River of Des-tiny Daugava. It is the very part of our Latvia where since time immemorial various ancient tribes have been living: the Lives, the Selonians, the Semigallians, and the Couronians – our brave hearted and creative ancestors who have always honoured the Nature in its various aspects.

It turned out to be quite a challenging undertaking to discover anew the former natural sacred sites in the outskirts of Riga, about which sometimes only their names or legends speak out, because throughout the centuries there were economic activities performed, religions replaced, villages constructed and many places destroyed in the course of time. And still, while conducting our research, we have identified quite a large number of still existing ancient sacred sites, each of them having their own story to tell us, playing their own role in the human life.

We are eager to show you the cultural heritage that has already been forgotten until now – ancient sacred sites in nature where, they say, Laima is casting dice to determine people's destinies, and where you have to put up with the Devil for your cattle to prosper.

Come and explore your past anew!



Legend

- Dual carriageway
- Main road
- Regional roads
- Paved roads
- Gravel roads
- Unsurfaced road
- Distances in kilometres
- Railway
- Filling station
- Tourism information centre
- National boundary
- Self-government boundary
- Aloja
- Centre of administrative unit
- JUGLA
- Part of city
- Summer houses
- National park, nature reservation
- Important hill

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 - KURZEME'S TREASURES
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Ancient natural sacred sites

RIGA REGION TOURISM MAP



Throughout all times, people have been enticed by the mysterious and the unfathomable. Ancient sacred sites are surrounded by myths and legends allowing a contemporary person have a look, even if only a slight, into history. Legends and notes telling about the rituals performed at the ancient sacred sites, for instance, donation rituals, honouring of nature according to the annual course of the sun, the cult of fire and the deceased, have remained until nowadays.

Sacred sites were not human-made structures for the ancient tribes of the Balts – they were objects of nature. Ancestors believed that trees and stones, groves and forests, hills and water have been endowed with magical powers that help treating diseases, protect from misfortune, as well as ensure health and fertility. Nowadays sacred sites of nature at first sight may seem as a simple stone or hill, but stories and myths that have been passed on from generation to generation tell a different story. They are breathtaking testimonies about the ancient history of our ancestors and their understanding about the power of nature, as well as mutual relationship of people and gods.

This tourism brochure features information on sacred sites of nature in Riga Region. Similar travel guides about Zemgale, Kurzeme, Vidzeme regions in Latvia as well as counties in Estonia and Sweden are available. Mentioned guides will help not only discover new values of nature and culture, but also gain knowledge about the ancient traditions of nations around Baltic Sea.

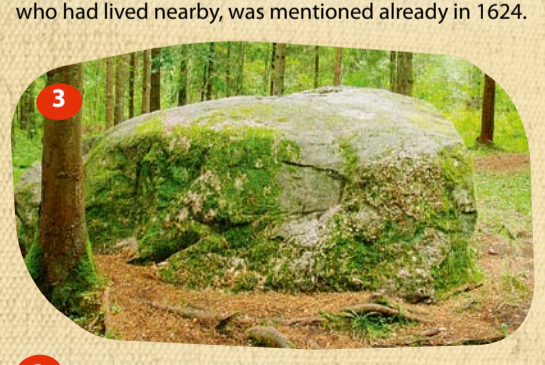
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SACRED SITES AROUND RIGA

- Predominantly asphalted roads, in some sections gravel roads or walking roads (paths) in the proximity to the objects
- Length of the route ~ 150 km
- Objects: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

second pit of 0.6 m in diameter and about 0.5 m in depth in the central part of the first pit under a more intensive layer of coal, under which half of a horse jaw was placed flatly in the coal, right next to it there was the lower end of about 30 cm thick oak pillar dug into the ground and five poles, of which the ribbed lower parts have preserved in the ground. Scientists have established the age of the pillar wood – about 850 years old, so the tree was chopped down about the year 1100. It is possible that the upper end of the pillar was made as an image of a god, because it is known that at the end of the 12th century – beginning of the 13th century, the pagan Livs had deity images carved of wood. According to archaeologist opinion, during

the excavation works of Riga of the previous years, they repeatedly found small wooden sticks with carvings of one, two or four human faces at one end of the stick that is believed to be a special home deity or individual deity images to be carried along. It is possible that such an idol's image could be also at this sacrificial site. By the idol's image, on the rest of the poles dug into the ground, various offerings could be placed.



3 ČERNAUSKI STONE
Allaži Parish, Sigulda County
On the left side of Allaži – Inčukalns highway SE of the Černauskis homestead
57° 05' 05" 24° 48' 08"
The Černauskis Stone is special due to its impressive dimensions – length of 5.2 m, width of 4.6 m and height up to 1.7 m. On its even surface that had been burnt during earlier times, there is a small hollow. It might have been mentioned in records as early as in the 18th

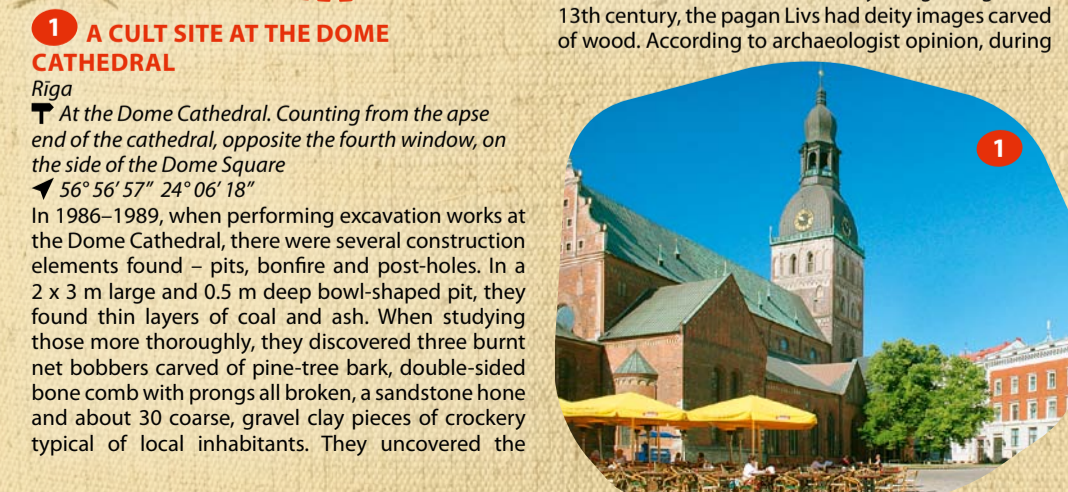


2 KALNAĀBRANTI WEREWOLF PINE
Inčukalns Parish, Inčukalns County
On the side of the road, about 100 m NE of Kalnaābranti and about 300 m NW of the Vangaži Lutheran Church
57° 07' 14" 24° 34' 17"
The Werewolf Pine with an impressive "lumpy" trunk of 2.5 m in circumference grows right on the road side.

century, because in 1739 when inspectors questioned the priest and churchwarden of Allaži Parish, also the following question was asked: "Are there any sites where at certain times sacrifices have been made?" The priest answered negatively, the churchwarden, however, reported differently. In Allaži there is a place where three stones have been put on top of each other and there is another place with a big stone. The peasants "coming from the lands" were said to bring sacrifices there. The local people do not do that." The inspectors' recommendation for further actions was as follows: the previously mentioned stones had to be crushed, the land surrounding them had to be dug and if any other similar sites became known – the abusers of the church law had to be punished. It is not known how the order was implemented. Assuming, it was easy to push down and crash "the three stones placed each above the other", however, the destruction of "the big stone" was rather complicated. It cannot be surely stated that the Černauskis Stone is "the big stone" mentioned in 1739, however, some of the features could refer to it. Nowadays the stone is frequently visited; you can find candles near it and sacrificed coins that could point at modern rituals.



4 KRIMULDA DEVIL'S CAVE
Sigulda
In the Devil's Cliff, on the right bank of the Gauja River, in the territory of the Sigulda Town, around 2.5 km downstream of the Sigulda bridge
57° 09' 01" 24° 48' 39"
The up to 15 m high and around 250 m long Devil's Cave Cliff is situated in the lower part of the Pikenē Ravine washed by the Gauja River. The entrance of the cave is 8 m above the waters of the Gauja River and it can be viewed only from the opposite side of the bank of the Gauja River. Not far from the Krimulda Castle, there is the so-called Devil's Cave. In earlier times two Polish soldiers lived there. Both of them killed the most beautiful girl in Turaida castle surroundings. However, to reach the cave, a big distance under the steep bank of the Gauja must be passed, but the walk is worth it, because the path is neat and various deciduous trees shadow the walker. This cave acquired its dreadful name from the Devil's growling who is said not to be in peace with his wet abode here and let out his anger by growling so that the person staying for a while in the cave has to flee in fear out of the cave. The strange noise, however, is coming from the stiff cliff along which the rapid Gauja water passes by whirling in dark bubbles" (Latvian Folklore Repository 861, 92).



1 A CULT SITE AT THE DOME CATHEDRAL
Riga
At the Dome Cathedral. Counting from the apse end of the cathedral, opposite the fourth window, on the side of the Dome Square
56° 56' 57" 24° 06' 18"
In 1986–1989, when performing excavation works at the Dome Cathedral, there were several construction elements found – pits, bonfire and post-holes. In a 2 x 3 m large and 0.5 m deep bowl-shaped pit, they found thin layers of coal and ash. When studying those more thoroughly, they discovered three burnt net bobbars carved of pine-tree bark, double-sided bone comb with prongs all broken, a sandstone hone and about 30 coarse, gravel clay pieces of crockery typical of local inhabitants. They uncovered the



5

5 GŪTMANIS' CAVE WITH A SPRING

Sigulda
↑ About half way between Turaida and Krimulda, 1 km SW of the Turaida Castle, in about 50 m long and 12 m high Upper Devonian Gauja suite sandstone detrition, at the foot of the right side main bank of the Gauja primeval valley, between the Vikmešter River and the Igaunī Ravine

↙ 57° 10' 34" 24° 50' 32"

The Gūtmanis' Cave is the biggest grotto not only in Latvia but also in the Baltic. The precise dimensions of the cave were first taken by Guntis Eņiņš in 1972. According to his estimation, the area of its floor is 170 m² and the length of the cave – 18.8 m. At its entrance, the cave is 10 m high and 10.6 m wide, however, in its depth it rapidly gets narrower. According to experts, the formation of the cave started approximately 10,000 years ago by the lateral erosion caused by the post ice age water streams, but up to now the powerful spring running from the cave continues enlarging the grotto, consequently it can be assumed that the Gūtmanis' Cave is one of the oldest caves in Latvia. It is indicative that in the descriptions of the late 18th century the name of the Gūtmanis' Cave is not mentioned and it is simply called the cave at Krimulda or Turaida. It seems that the first one to publish the name of the cave was a natural scientist Jacob Benjamin Fisher in 1778 who wrote, "At Turaida there is a cave which consists of sandstone and is called the "Good Man". It seems that the name of the cave was taken over to the Latvian language as Gūtmaņala at the beginning of the 19th century. Although several authors had previously described the spring running from the cave, only in 1791 it was mentioned for the first time that the local peasants used the water for treating diseases in belief that the water is associated with the sacredness of this place, i.e., the cave rather than the natural qualities of the water. Another version: the peasants might have believed that some beneficial deity lived in the cave spring which might have been the origin of the cave name – the Good Man. In older times, the peasants left sacrifices – coins and pieces of clothing – in the spring for using the water.

"The Livs' Chief Ringalds went in war. At home he left his beautiful wife warning her to remain faithful to him until he returned from the war. His wife waited and waited for him, however, still became unfaithful to him. When her husband returned his wife was remorseful and was asking him to forgive, however, Ringalds did not forgive her. He ordered to bury his wife alive in the ground. She has been crying there under the earth up to this day her tears of regret. They were turned into a spring and run out onto the surface of the ground. Thus the spring has eroded the Gūtmanis' Cave" (Latvian Folklore Repository 1860, 2619).

"In former times at the site of the nowadays park, there used to be a holy grove of the rulers of people's destinies – the krivs. Before making an important decision, before a battle, the ancient Latvian military chiefs (kunigaīši) assembled there and the shrine's priests helped to make the right decisions. Later, when the shrine was devastated and only the great oak had remained, our ancestors went there to worship gods" (Inscription on the sign by the oak. Filed in 2011).

6 IDOL'S HILL (WHEEL CORNER, WHEEL HILL, TRUMPETERS' HILL)

Sigulda
↑ In the corner of the Gauja right bank upland, on the left bank of the Vikmešter River ravine

↙ 57° 10' 23" 24° 50' 14"

Turaida Idol's Hill is more often called the Wheel Corner or Wheel Hill, in this way describing also a vaster upland on the right bank of the Gauja River; it has been mentioned in written sources since the end of the 19th century when its another name was mentioned – Idol's Hill suggesting its sacral nature. It has been mentioned that the hill has as if also been called the Sacred or God's Hill. At the brink of the old bank of the Gauja River, there are two significant places, which as if have been confused in various writings, as a result now it is impossible to tell any more, which of them is the actual Idol's Hill. One of them is the elevation currently called the Trumpeters' Hill, and the other, located higher, next to the elevation plateau, separated by a side ravine, is called now the Wheel Hill. It is more likely that the place to be associated with sacredness is the current Trumpeters' Hill, which has acquired its name as an ancient watching site due to the steep slopes created by the nature and additional protection slopes granted by the man. This place has been identified both as a hill fort, punishment place and a shrine, which, possibly, does not exclude each other, but refer to different periods of time.

7 KRIMULDA BIG (DEVIL'S) STONE

Krimulda Parish, Krimulda County
↑ On the right bank of the Gauja River at the water edge and a spring mouth

↙ 57° 09' 04" 24° 45' 51"

The Big (Devil's) Stone lies on the right bank of the Gauja River at the very beach near the mouth of the Runtinupīte River. The height of the stone is from 1.1 to 2.5 m, length – 5.3 m, width – 3.7 metres. The Big Stone once used to lie on the very bank of the Gauja River. It was also called the Runtin's Spring Stone, because a rapid spring is starting there. Nearby in ancient times there used to be a raft wharf. An iron loop cemented in a raftsmen's anchor block has been preserved. The stone is big, monolith, covered with moss, however, no artificial signs or cavities can be found in the stone. Judging by the name and legends, the Devil's Stone can be considered to be a shrine with a mythological significance.

"Once in Sigulda at the Gauja River, the Devil was carrying stones wishing to dam the rafters' way. All of a sudden a rooster started to crow and the shirt, in which the Devil was carrying stones, was torn and the stones fell into the Gauja. There are still big stones in the Gauja River near to its bank" (Latvian Folklore Repository 1860, 4654).



8

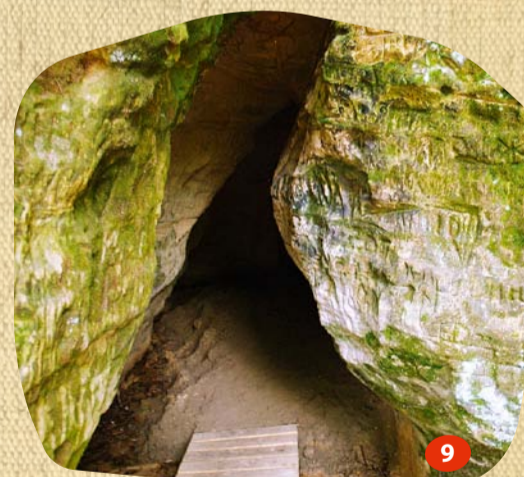
8 SĒJA OAK

Sēja
↑ In the Sēja Park

↙ 57° 11' 55" 24° 35' 21"

The oak is located in the former park of the Sēja manor house, on a slope; it is very picturesque. In written sources, the oak has been valued as the fourth greatest oak in the Baltics, its circumference at the height of 1.3 m is 9.05 m, height – 22 m. There is no certain news that the Sēja Oak could be considered as an ancient cult tree; such opinions appeared only in modern times. The romanticized text on the sign, right by the oak, points at the beliefs of the modern times.

"In former times at the site of the nowadays park, there used to be a holy grove of the rulers of people's destinies – the krivs. Before making an important decision, before a battle, the ancient Latvian military chiefs (kunigaīši) assembled there and the shrine's priests helped to make the right decisions. Later, when the shrine was devastated and only the great oak had remained, our ancestors went there to worship gods" (Inscription on the sign by the oak. Filed in 2011).



9

9 INČUKALNS DEVIL'S CAVE

Inčukalns Parish, Inčukalns County
↑ Approximately 800 m downstream the Murjāņi bridge, on the slope of the main left bank of the Gauja primeval valley, in the Upper Devonian Gauja suite sandstone cliff

↙ 57° 07' 37" 24° 38' 33"

The Devil's Cave can be entered through an approximately one metre wide entrance and thus getting into a much vaster space, more than 6 m wide with about a 4 m high dome-like ceiling. On the right side of the space, a narrow corridor starts which does not reach anywhere far, although according to the legend it leads to the Devil's "bedroom". Movement in the corridor is possible only in a squatting position. The total length of the cave is 16 m, the area – 35 m². In the place where the vast free space finishes and the narrow tunnel starts, a narrow, deep hole can be found in the ceiling – the so-called "Devil's chimney", but along the left wall of the vast space a spring is running which has gradually eroded the cave. "A verst below the Gauja Bridge, not far from the Gauja River, next to the hill, there is the Devil's Cave or Devil's Chamber. At the ground there is a cave, maybe a fathom (~2 m) in its width and three fathoms in length, however, in the upper part it becomes entangled. Inside, first the cave goes straight, then it turns right. At the same place inside, a spring breaks out, which in ancient times

had a big healing effect in all diseases. For this reason the ancestors also sacrificed money to the spring. At the end of the big cave, the small cave begins where a man can hardly climb in. In ancient times the Devil lived in this cave for many years. Once, the Devil had annoyed the Father Thunder. He rushed after the Devil and reached him at the very moment he wanted to enter the cave. The Thunder struck, however, it did not hit the Devil himself, just split a big enough fragment of the rock. The Devil understood that no peace was going to be there and left his former dwelling site. When crawling along the small cave, the premises could be achieved where the Devil had lived: there is a laid table and the bed where the Devil slept, however, it is impossible to stay

there for long, because below there is a cellar where the Devil used to cut the souls in cuffs that came into his hands. These souls were making noise imploring to free them. The Devil, being afraid that some brave man might still come across who might want to free them, appointed his most loyal servant as a guard to blow out the fire if anybody would try entering the cave and searching something with fire. [The fire blower in the cave most likely is the draft because most likely the other end of the cave is open as well.] On both sides of the cave, there is a pond. The right side pond is called the Coldness Pond because its water is always cold. (Vaivariņš, 1890).

KURZEME'S TREASURES

Predominantly asphalted roads, in some sections gravel roads or walking roads (paths) in the proximity to the objects

Length of the route ~ 150 km

Objects: 1, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17



10

10 KAIVE ANCESTORS' OAK

Sēme Parish, Tukums County
↑ About 0.5 km NW of Kaive, 120 m SE of the Senči homestead

↙ 57° 03' 53" 23° 01' 29"

The Kaive Ancestors' Oak is the fattest oak in Latvia. Its circumference is 10.2 m, and the measurements show that the tree is continuing to increase its circumference: in 1940 it was 8.0 m, but in 1990 – 10.0 m. Its height is 18.0 m, while the spread of the branches reaches 13.7 m. In 1920s, thunder stroke the crown of the oak and in 1990 half of the big branches broke. Now the remaining big branches have been supported by poles, above the remaining part of the oak trunk a rooflet has been erected and at the lower part the trunk cavities have been cemented. However, as the significance of the holy tree has been neither recorded nor proved with certainty, it is disputable. It is most likely that the Kaive Oak has acquired its significance as a sacred site due to its impressive dimensions not so long ago, which is proved by the fact that around the trunk of the oak there are ribbons with national ornaments (prievītes) twined around and in the lower branches at the bark colourful rags tied.



11

11 KANDAVA CHURCH HILL – HILL FORT

2 Pūzurgava Street, Kandava
↑ In the N part of Kandava, at Abava Street, bending around the S end of the Church Hill

↙ 57° 02' 27" 22° 46' 59"

The Kandava Hill Fort is located in the northern part of the town of Kandava by the Kandava – Tukums highway between two lowlands. The hill, the height of which is 8–10 m, has artificially elevated edges all around it, its plateau is 40 x 26 m large. In the Hill Fort's plateau, there was about 1 m deep intensive cultural layer established that speaks about an actively inhabited site during quite a long period of time. Kandava was mentioned in written sources for the first time in 1230, so it is presumed that the Hill Fort was inhabited until the 13th century. The evidence about this period of history is available in the County Research Museum of Kandava; currently the hill itself offers a great view of the surroundings before its slopes would be overgrown by trees. According to its form and the presence of the cultural layer, the Kandava Church Hill is considered to be a typical hill fort, although due to the mythological tales about the sunken church it can be considered to be a place related to sacrality. Other tales recorded about the Kandava Church Hill are typical tales about hill forts. The name "Church Hill" is explained by people in two ways: 1) the hill's silhouette with the high rampart resembles the silhouette of a church; 2) a church has sank into the hill. "Once there used to be a lofty castle and a large church.

Underground, there were many passages and cellars. When enemies attacked, the castle was pulled down into the cellars, but when the enemies retreated, the castle was pulled up again. Once the bitter enemy, the German, attacked, the castle sank and never came out again. When you listen on Sunday mornings, you can hear the church bells ring. When climbing the Church Hill, you can see a cavity, there the castle sank. People let a duck into the cavity and it appeared in the Abava. The Church Hill is located in Kandava" (Latvian Folklore Repository 974, 14).



12

12 BUSES CHURCH HILL

Matkule Parish, Kandava County
↑ On the left bank of the Imula River, opposite the Matkule Hill Fort

↙ 56° 59' 20" 22° 36' 04"

The Buses Church Hill is situated about 200 m S of the Buses Hill Fort on the bank of the Imula River. The marked off, roundish hill overgrown by trees rises above the surroundings 6–15 m, it has a plateau of ~ 80 m². Already in 1869, researchers, when describing the Church Hill, came to a conclusion that on it there had never been a Christian church and the Church Hill should be considered as an idol's hill typical of Kurzeme. In later times, there is already news that in the hill or near it they found artefacts. During the archaeological excavation works of 1937, it was established that the top of the Church Hill was covered by a layer of sod with a 10 – 15 cm deep layer of fine limestone and its pieces, under which there was blue fine clay found. These findings along with the animal bones, the Medieval grave of a person, apparently a woman, with a round brooch (sakta) and a coin given along, the significance of the name of the hill and its proximity to the Buses Hill Fort with an ancient town and a burial ground all point at the fact that the Church Hill could be an ancient people's meeting place and a sacred site.

13 THE 1ST AND 2ND CUP-MARKED STONES OF THE BUSES HILL FORT

Matkule Parish, Kandava County
↑ At the foot of the W slope of the Buses Hill Fort, both stones are located near each other

↙ 56° 59' 24" 22° 36' 10"

At the foot of the Buses Hill Fort, there are three indubitable cup-marked stones. Two of them are situated at the foot of the W slope of the hill fort's pre-castle. As both stones had been split once, it is possible that they used to be two parts of one big stone. Currently the dimensions of one stone are 1.2 x 1.1 x 0.5 m, and you can see 17 whole cup-marks on it and a half of one cup-mark (the second half had been split), and the second stone, the dimensions of which are 1.3 x 0.8 x 0.3 m, has only one cup-mark. The history of making cup-marked stones is dating back as far as 3000 years, and it is one of the reasons why there have no indubitable versions about the practical or sacred significance of those stones preserved until nowadays. Taking into account the fact that such stones are found almost all over the world, scholars have developed about 30 different theories about the reason of their making. Some of them state that cup-marks originate from the process of granulating healing herbs, from sacrificing, from obtaining stone



13



14



16

16 PEŅĶI HEALTH SPRING

Irlava Parish, Tukums County
↑ In the SE part of Irlava, 30 m of the Abava, on its left bank, opposite the Irlava Secondary School

↙ 56° 52' 07" 23° 00' 00"

The clear water of the Peņķi Health Spring has high concentration of iron; lime sediments and iron salts are deposited in it, thus the water is not particularly tasty, but it has been still used for healing purposes since ancient times. The spring forms a small pond at its outlet and then it flows as a brook into the Abava. At the discharge spot of the spring, there is a small hummock that was excavated in earlier times thinking there was an ancient burial ground. Nearby in the Abava River, there is the legendary stone called Abava Buck.

"At Peņķi there is a hummock and in the middle of it – a spring. When I was at school, they said it was healthy. They said Swedish soldiers were buried near Peņķi and there in the spring small bones were flowing out. Some white small pieces bubbled there" (Latvian Folklore Repository 1835, 6186).

17 ABAVA BUCK STONE (ABAVA HE-GOAT)

Irlava Parish, Tukums County
↑ In the Abava, about 100 m downstream the Peņķi Health Spring, right down the bridge, opposite the Irlava Secondary School

↙ 56° 52' 12" 23° 00' 01"

The stone has acquired its present name, as well as legends or their reproductions have been published about it since the end of the 19th century, however, a more precise description of the stone is missing; it is only known that the stone is big. According to uncertain information, the stone, when straightening the Abava River, was blasted, other sources say, it is still whole and lies in the river near the Irlava Secondary School. During rain showers, the Abava River overflows and the stone is situated below the water level and is not visible. According to tales, the Thunder God has hidden gold, silver and other fortune under the stone that previously belonged to the Latvian people who did not know its true value.



15



17

TOURISM INFORMATION

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Carnikava Tourism Information Centre 2A Stacijas Str., Carnikava Phone + 371 67078443, +371 29326285 tic@carnikava.lv, www.tourism.carnikava.lv	Rīga Tourism Information Centre 6 Rātslaukums, Rīga Phone +371 67037900 info@rigatic.lv, www.liveriga.com
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VIDZEME CIRCLE

Predominantly asphalted roads, in some sections gravel roads or walking roads (paths) in the proximity to the objects

Length of the route ~ 150 km

Objects: 1, 2, 9, 8, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22

18 KAKI CUP-MARKED STONE

Vidriži Parish, Limbaži County
↑ Between the Kaki homestead and the Aģe River

↙ 57° 20' 30" 24° 42' 03"

Between the stone and the Kaki homestead, there is a valley overgrown by trees. The stone is located on the right bank of the Aģe River, at the verge of the river's gently sloping valley, in the middle of the overgrown meadows, at the verge of the forest. The dimensions of the stone are impressive: the length of 3.25 m, width – 3 m, circumference – 11.8 m, its over-ground volume – about 6 m³. Even more impressive is the number of cup-marks on the surface of the stone – about 80, the depth of which is 3–10 cm. Along the E side of the stone lengthwise, there is a 6–8 cm deep and the same wide groove. Influenced by modern time traditions, the stone is also called the Moon Stone. In the cup marks of the stone at the time of the visit, there were small coins found. The lifetime of this stone has also been estimated at more than 3000 years, during which people have lost understanding of its true significance. Basing on the assumptions made by scholars, it can be presumed that the stone used to serve as a feast table for the forest spirits fed by people, but it could be true as well that there they used to practise holy rituals stimulating fertility or other rituals, but still the majority of versions support the same idea of worshipping the Nature.



19

19 TŪJA HOLLOW STONE

Liepupe Parish, Salacgriva County
↑ Short a kilometre SW of the Tūja School

↙ 57° 29' 54" 24° 29' 03"

The hollow stone was found in a pile of stones by a local researcher D. Čakste in 2001 when searching for great stones. The dimensions of the stone: its diameter is 1.26 m, the diameter of the hollow – 0.38 m, height – about 0.4 m, circumference – 4.07 m. The lower part of the stone is crude, but the upper part has been made relatively cylindrical by means of vertical cannelure-type chopping. Such cylindrical stones with cylindrical type of hollows are especially typical of W and SW parts of Kurzeme. There have not such types of stones been known in Vidzeme until now. The stone is situated in the wide drainage fields short a kilometre SW of the Tūja School, but it is well featured against the lowland surrounding the grove, and it is visible from the Tūja–Limbaži road. According to local people, the stone, which could be used for sacred rituals in ancient time, has an interesting feature: being dry, the stone looks overall grey, but when clear rain water accumulates in the hollow, the stone changes its colour and becomes red, though nobody has been as lucky as to make a photo of this.



20

20 THE LIV SACRIFICIAL CAVES

Salacgriva Parish, Salacgriva County
↑ On the right bank of the Svētūpe River, next to the Kuikuli

↙ 57° 48' 59" 24° 47' 12"

The Liv Sacrificial Caves have played a distinguished role in research of Latvian cult and mythological roles, the most ancient written historic information sources about offering in caves are related right to these caves. On the caves' walls, there is not only the most ancient currently known inscription carved on Latvian sandstones, but also many ancient signs, which, possibly, are as old or even older as the year numbers of the 17th century. Moreover, for the first time scientists' interest was drawn right to the ancient signs of the Liv Sacrificial Caves, thus discovering a completely new group of cultural and historic monuments not only in Latvia but also in the whole Baltic region – cliffs with signs that should be under special protection, preventing wearing off of the cliff walls when making your way along the walls or making new inscriptions.

The largest branch of the Sacrificial Caves is 2–3 m wide at the entrance, deeper it becomes substantially narrower and lower. The length of this passage is 46 m, thus yet in the first half of the 70s – 80s of the 20th century this was considered to be the longest cave in Latvia. Accordingly, the length of the smallest cave is 19.5 m; at the entrance it is narrow and low, but inside its ceilings are almost 2 m high. In the caves' ceilings, there are many so-called "Devil's Chimneys". Prior to the "antechamber's" collapse, the total length of the Liv Sacrificial Caves was about 70 m.

"Within the territory of the Lielkuikuli homestead of Svētciems Parish, on the bank of the Svētūpe River, there are large caves situated that are called by the people the Devil's Caves. Initially they, probably, were used by the Livs, who made offerings to their gods there. But later on people considered this place to be Devil's haunted. It was prohibited to anybody to go there at night, because the Devil was haunting there. Once, a brave man wanted to try his luck. He went there already in the evening well beforehand, climbed a high pine-tree and waited. The time was approaching midnight. All of a sudden, with a loud noise, the Devil rose from the bottom of the Svētūpe River, and at once from nowhere six black horses appeared. The Devil climbed on the horses and started to ride them. Having ridden a few times across the Kuikule cemetery, he rode nine times around the cemetery. Suddenly, a rooster crowed and the Devil with all the horses sank into the depth of the Svētūpe River. But the man, having seen all that, was frightened a great deal and never dared to pass by the haunting places at night any more" (Latvian Folklore Repository 1736, 1325).



21

21 DZELZĀMURS HOLY STONE

Staicele Parish, Aloja County
↑ At the Karogi sand and gravel pit, in the middle part of the slope of the Karogupīte River Valley

↙ 57° 49' 44" 24° 47' 15"

Taking the path from the Karogi sand and gravel pit along the left bank of the Karogupīte River, short after 300 m, you can reach the Holy Stone located in the middle part of the 8–10 m high slope of the Karogupīte River bank. It is possible that the stone has rolled down itself or it has been rolled down from the upper part of the steep bank by people. The stone itself is cracked, rough grainy, however, there were no signs established on the stone as mentioned prior in written sources. It seems that the stone was burnt some day or it was struck by thunder, because pieces of stone have detached from it.

22 KAROGKALNĪŠ

Aloja Parish, Aloja County
↑ On the right side of the Staicele – Aloja highway, short 100 m behind the culvert of the Karogupīte River in the direction of Aloja

↙ 57° 48' 59" 24° 47' 12"

Not far from Staicele in the direction of Aloja, at the Karogupīte River, there is the Karogkalnīšs Hill considered to be an ancient sacrificial hill. There is a stone in its central part, on the surface of which there is a rhomb-type sign apparently made by nature. It is mentioned in tales that once there used to be three holy stones, each had a different sign, out of which two stones were destroyed during the Soviet times while constructing a road. On the remaining stone, you can see offerings left from time to time. From the Highway side, the hill is separated by a 2 – 3 m deep gently sloping ditch; other elevations there, between the Karogupīte River and the highway in the direction of Aloja, are not so clearly featured. The hill is about 8 m high against the Karogupīte River. The Karogupīte River gnaws at the hill's foot exposing a small sandstone cliff, along which a spring leaks. The hill itself has been overgrown by forest and bush, it is seldom visited. "They wanted to build the Church of Aloja on the Karogi silt not far from the Salaca River where there is still a small hillock originating from the unfinished church walls. Though what was built during the day, collapsed over the night. Understanding that it was not the right place for the church, people gave up the idea of building the church on that spot. Having no other place in mind, they decided to find the right place as follows: having yoked an ox, they put a log into the cart and let the ox go, thinking to themselves – where the ox stopped, there would be the right place for the church. The ox stopped at the place where there is the present Church of Aloja. They started construction works there, but again the same situation repeated – what was built during the day, collapsed over the night. They decided to sacrifice a human soul. They summoned all local people and asked them, "Who wants to keep the key of the church?" Then some man, named Alekšis, said he wanted to. So they made the man drunk and immured him alive into the walls of the church. After that they continued building the church without any hindrance – it was never destroyed over the night again" (Latvian Folklore Repository 1978, 3231).