

# Baltic Country Holidays

# WILDLIFE TOURS



[www.countryholidays.lv](http://www.countryholidays.lv)

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LAUKU CEĻOTĀJS

# About Our Itineraries

We tailor-made all our tours according to the clients' specific needs, interests and fitness level. In this manual we have included the samples of each type of tour to give an idea what we can offer. However, many tours are mixed, combining birds, butterflies, dragonflies, bats, botanic as well as mammals. We also like to encourage people to visit traditional crafts workshops, visit working farms and organize tastings of local produce.



The tours tend to pass various biotops maximizing impressions and number of species seen. Depending on your needs, the itinerary can be organized, changing accommodation every night and spending most time out on the field. Or we can organize activities around one or two base hotels.

**All prices in this manual are only indicative and might change on hotels used, group size and services required.**

## Spring and autumn tours

The spring tours run from mid April – July. Highlights: bird migration at the sea coast, wetlands, rich meadows full of colourful flowers, butterflies and dragonflies. Before the leaves come, there is a good chance to spot some animals along the way.

The autumn tours run from the end of August – beginning of October. Highlights: bird migration, cranes shows, Black Grouse matting time, mammals' rutting time, mushrooms and berries, autumn colours.

## Group size

Our groups can start from 4 people but should not exceed 16 due to the lack of adequate accommodation at some rural areas.

## Accommodation

Accommodation is planned at the carefully selected good quality hotels or guest houses. They are located in rural areas next to the forest, park, fish-pond, meadow or the sea, giving a chance for the group to observe nature individually or organize early morning/late night outings.

We give priority to smaller hotels and guest houses which provide truly personal service and care. Most hotels have en suite facilities. However, sometimes we have to use hotels where WC and bathroom have to be shared due to the

lack of alternative hotels in the area. Similarly, it applies for single rooms. If possible, we offer separate rooms for the singles, but sometimes it is not possible. All hotels we use have some cosy rooms for the group's gatherings.

## Meals

All meals can be organized either at the accommodation where the group stays or outside. Several guest houses don't have a restaurant, therefore meals and drinks have to be agreed beforehand. We will provide you with the menus well ahead of your arrival. Depending on your preference, lunch can be organized either at the restaurants or taverns on the route or as packed lunch to take along. Early breakfast is always possible.

## Information

We provide detailed information and maps for your itinerary, including route description, sites, and facilities on the way, as well as check-lists.

## Guides and specialists

Besides our own guides, we can use also local guides of the sites or invite experts (zoologists, mycologists, entomologists etc.) for a talk or excursion of the specific interest.

We can organize also themed talks with the specialist in the evening or organize, for example, a butterfly show.

## Walking

Our walks are not particularly difficult. The Latvian landscape is rather flat with some rolling hills. Depending on the general fitness level of the group, we can alter the routes taken. If the group is ready, we might include some difficult trails (bushy, muddy, slippery) which give a better chance to see certain birds or animals. But mostly, it's easy trails or board walks. Waterproof boots, however, are necessary, especially in early spring and autumn tours.

# The Content



## Mushroom Tours

Latvia has ancient traditions involving mushrooms. For centuries they been used for eating. Mushroom gathering tradition is well alive and persuaded in Latvia more than in any other European country. People carrying baskets full of mushrooms in autumn is common sight in the country roads and trains coming into the city.

Almost every Latvian has some secret mushrooming place and there are plenty of funny stories around the subject. There is even a mushroom gathering festival annually. Modern as well as traditional mushroom preparation is very popular. There are around 4100 mushroom species in Latvia, 1100 of those are cup mushrooms. About ¼ of these are edible. The most popular edible ones are various Boletus and Chanterelles.

**Here you will find two mushroom tours as well as one mixed nature tour with mushroom hunting as one of the activities:**

- **Mushroom Tour at Vidzeme region**
- **Mushroom Tour at Kurzeme region**
- **Wildlife experience in Latvia**



## Birdwatching Tours

Latvia is among one of the world's three most important bird migration paths, and during migration seasons in spring and autumn, when tens of thousands birds can be seen at one place. Latvia's flat terrain and a climate in which precipitation exceeds evaporation means that particularly along the seashore, there are wetlands that are appropriate for water birds – shallow lagoons and high swamps. Places like broad-leaved forest is ideal habitat for nesting Black Storks. Old pine forest growth is favoured by Black Grouse with Owls living at their edges. While different woodpecker species thrive in wet forests. Important biotops for many birds are unspoiled flood-lands essential for Great Snipe, Corncrake, Lapwing and Curlews. During migration time these territories become alive with activities of thousands of birds and provide great atmosphere for birdwatchers. Latvia also offers artificially made fish breeding ponds which are great places to spot not only different types of ducks and waders but also predators like Sea Eagle, Marsh Harrier and others.

**Here you will find two birdwatching tours as well as one mixed nature tour with bird, dragonflies and butterflies watching as one of the activities:**

- **Spring birdwatching tour**
- **Autumn birdwatching tour**
- **Wildlife experience in Latvia**



## Botanic tours

Latvia is a land of diverse terrain where plains alternate with hillocks and river valleys. It is stately forests, broad meadows and clear waters. It is meadows, fields, groves, gardens and parks. Together, these features form a unique mosaic that is the landscape of Latvia. People live in close relationship with the nature here. Each season has its activities like mushrooming, berry picking, collecting herbs, ice-fishing etc. The country is a haven for the tourist, who loves nature, respects traditions and has an interest in the culture of the local inhabitants. The coastal climate of western Latvia modulates into the continental climate of eastern Latvia. Latvia's geographic position alongside the Baltic Sea has fostered unique conditions where northern-southern and western-eastern vegetation can be found flourishing side by side. Similar patterns can be found in the animal kingdom. There are many national parks and protected nature territories with maintained trails and viewing platforms. It is easy to enjoy nature and learn about different flora and fauna.

**Here you will find two botanic tours as well as one mixed nature tour with botanising as one of the activities:**

- **Botanical tour at Kurzeme region**
- **Botanical tour at Vidzeme region**
- **Wildlife experience in Latvia**

## Symbols:



walking



mushroom



birdwatching



botanic



scenic views



heritage



insects

# Our Guides

We are privileged to work with the best experts in their respective sectors of expertise either in birdwatching, mushrooming or nature tours. All guides speak fluent English, are communicable and experienced with tour leading.



**Māris Strazds**

**Māris Strazds** - one of the leading ornithologist and birdwatching guides in Latvia. He is also one of the founders and members of Latvian Ornithologist Society. Māris works at the University of Latvia and has devoted his scientific work studying Black Storks. Apart of birdwatching Maris enjoys bird photography and does bird drawings.

**Nikolay Savenkov** - member of the Finnish and Estonian Lepidopterological Societies, expert in northern and mideuropean Lepidoptera fauna. Works at the Latvian museum of Natural History, Department of Zoology. Nick has participated in North-european moth monitoring project. Guide tours to forests and meadows, including moth collecting to light at nights.



**Nikolay Savenkov**



**Diāna Meiere**

**Diāna Meiere** - our mushroom tour guide, one of Latvia's leading mycologists. Her scientific work is connected mainly with polypore studies in the natural forests. Diana is also Head of Latvian Mycological Society.

**Andris Klepers** - our birdwatching guide. He has done the field-work at the University of Trier, Germany and he is the author of several scientific researches and publications. Currently Andris works as a lecturer at the Vidzeme University College. Andris has excellent knowledge of birds which he can combine also with his knowledge of dragonflies, butterflies and mammals as well as general cultural history.



**Andris Klepers**



**Evita Zviedre**

**Evita Zviedre** - the nature and botanical tour guide. Her specialization lies in water-plants flora and ecology and she has long experience in environmental interpretation for groups. Evita is a member of Latvian Botanists Society.

**Viesturs Vīntulis** - bats and birdwatching guide. Member of the Latvian Ornithologists and Theriologists' Societies. Works at the Latvian University, Musuem of Natural History. Specialization: bats, bat ecology. Does nature photography.



**Viesturs Vīntulis**

# About Baltic Country Holidays

Baltic Country Holidays is a small incoming operator based in Latvia and established in 1993. All our staff are passionate outdoor and nature enthusiasts. All our routes and offers are tried and tested by our people. We know personally all our suppliers and have established great relationships with them during many years of cooperation.

**Lauku Ceļotājs** grew out of the Association of Countryside Travel (in Latvian: Lauku Ceļotājs) which united small family-run accommodation providers in the Latvian countryside and offered nature tours. The company is focussed on small businesses providing a personal touch and detailed local expertise. Importantly, we work with some of the best Latvian birdwatching and nature experts in Latvia. We support and cooperate with Latvian Ornithologist Society, Nature 2000 territories, Latvian Nature Museum and others.

#### **Our services:**

- Creation of personalised packages for groups and individuals
- Reservation of accommodation and related services: hotels, guest houses, manors, self-catering as well as farms.
- Booking of specialist guides and tour leaders
- Car, bus, bike and boat hire
- Our publications, professional maps and route descriptions

***We'll be pleased to work with you serving your clients!***



All tours in this manual has been researched and tested by our people



Our team on mushroom hunt



Meadow research for botanical tours



# Mushroom Tour at Vidzeme region



This is for people who enjoy forests, wildlife and has an interest in mushrooms- different species as well as their various ways of preparation.

The tour is lead by the professional mycologist and combines the misterious world of mushrooms with local culinary traditions. The group is introduced with mushrooms growing at the various biotops – natural as well as man made. The tour goes in different forests, pass some historic sites and small villages on the way. Everyone could try their hand at mushrooming and by the end of the day together with guide sort them out and cook in delicious meal.



(7 days)

Cowberries (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*)



Spiny puffball (*Lycoperdon echinatum*)



King Boletus (*Boletus edulis*)



**General Route:** Rīga - Lielstraupe - Cēsis - Zilais kalns - Strenči - Valka - Āraiši - Sigulda - Mālpils - Rīga

## Day 1

### Arrival in Rīga

Departure to the hotel in the city centre. Introductory meeting with the guide at the Latvian Nature Museum which can be followed by the excursion to the Central Market. Free time in Riga. Accomodation at Islande Hotel.

## Day 2

### Transfer Rīga – Silciems-Ragana-Inciems- Lielstraupe

Breakfast. One of the most popular mushroom pickers routes at Riga suburb. Here we might find popular in Latvia eadible mushroom like chanterelles, russulas and various boletus. Also Chestnut Bolete (*Gyroporus castaneus*), Lurid Bolete (*Boletus luridus*), eadible tree-fungus – Sheep polypore (popular in Scandinavian cooking) (*Albatrellus ovinus*), Golden corall (*Ramaria aurea*) and others. Short stop at Krimulda Church in Ragana to look for rare mushroom in European level - pretty saffron yellow coloured (*Hapalopilus croceus*). At Inciems we look for Chestnut Bolete (*Gyroporus castaneus*), European bolete (*Boletus edulis*), as well as golden Coral Tooth (*Hericium coralloides*). At Lielstraupe forest there is a chance to find the largest boletus mushroom in Latvia which can be eaten uncooked – The Parasol Mushroom (*Macrolepiota procera*). Accomodation at the SPA Ezeri hotel in Sigulda.

## Day 3

### Gauja National Park: Zvārte Cliff – Cēsis – Ungurmuiža

Breakfast. We walk nature trail along the Amata river which gurantees spectacular views, including impressive sandstone Zvartes Cliff as well as mushrooms typical for river banks. Also Chaga (*Inonotys obliquus*) which is used in medicine as well as Alder Bracket (*Inonotus radiatus*) which changes its colour depending of the light. We'll make a stop at Cēsis to look at its mighty medieval castle ruins and charming Old town. Ungurmuiža Manor is unique example of the 18th century wooden baroque architecture. The interior paintings on the walls and ceilings have still survived. The manor has the park with impresive old oaks. There we look for (*Hapalopilus croceus*) and other typical mushrooms growing by oaks. Walking along the Lake Vaidava we might find summer boletus (*Boletus reticulatus*). We end the mushrooming by stopping at the shitaki mushroom growers at Dulbeņi. Accomodation at the hotel Wolmar in Valmiera

## Day 4

### Zilaiskalns – Strenči – Zile Forest

Breakfast. Zilaiskalns is a very distinct hillock covered by forest, and from where there is a “narrow” landscape featuring the northern part of the highlands, as well as the Lake Burtnieks flatlands. It is also a good place for different types of boletus. Zile Forest, Pirtsliča brach of the river is a rare biotp in Europe with ancient oak forest and park type meadows. Chance

# ...getting to know at least 100 different mushroom species

## TRIP DETAILS

Package price per person:  
from EUR 547.00

Based on group of 8 persons

### INCLUDES:

- Accommodation based on shared DBL room with breakfast
- Bus transfers
- Guide/mycologist
- Information pack

### EXTRA COSTS:

- Single supplement
- Other meals
- Possible fees

### TOUR GUIDE:

Diāna Meijere, mycologist

### PERIOD OF TRAVEL:

Mid August-First half of October

### WALKING:

Easy short walks in woods from 1 to 2 hours combined with bus drives. Waterproof boots, hats and mosquito repellent recommended.

to find (*Hapalopilus croceus*), Ceramic Parchment (*Xylobolus frustulatus*) as well as other mushrooms growing by oaks. Accommodation at the hotel Wolmar in Valmiera

### Day 5

#### Valka - Mežole

Breakfast. Mushrooming near Valka at the typical pine-tree forests with Cladonias on white lichen. Chanterelles, Suillus, Boletus, Leccinum and others. Natural coniferous forest at Mežole - one of the richest from biological diversity point of view. Here one can find mush-

View to Turaida Castle



Ungurmuiža Manor and park



Looking at mushrooms with mycologist



rooms which is indicators of natural forest, like Wood-rotting fungus (*Phellinus nigrolimitatus*), (*Junghuhnia collabens*), needled covered *Asterodon ferruginosus*. Stop at Jaunannužēni – growers of oyster mushrooms. Accommodation at the hotel Wolmar in Valmiera. Returning to Riga. Accommodation at the hotel Islande in Riga.

### Day 6

#### Āraiši – Sigulda – Mālpils – Suntaži – Lielie Kangari – Rīga

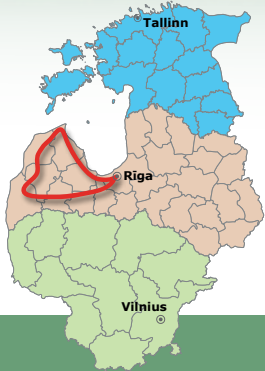
Breakfast. Āraiši reconstructed ancient settlement from Bronze Age built on lake. Here is a good example how mushrooms can damage and destroy the man-

made objects. We will see *Gloeophyllum sepiarium*, which growth on wooden constructions not only here but often also on fences, wooden roofs and wooden parts of railway tracks. Lielie Kangari is unusual geological object. Mushrooming along the slopes and edge of the bog. Possible to find bolete (*Suillus flavidus*) and *Suillus piperatus* (can use as a spice), Earthstars (*Geastrum sp.*). Returning to Rīga. Accommodation at Islande Hotel.

### Day 7

Breakfast. Free time. Transfer to the airport.

# Mushroom Tour at Kurzeme Region



This is for people who enjoy forests, wildlife, local traditions and has an interest in mushrooms - different species as well as their various ways of preparation. The tour passes several national parks, stops at charming provincial towns and historic sites. During the tour you will learn not only about various species of mushrooms, different forests with their typical habitat but also find out how locals prepare and preserve wild mushrooms. We will visit also one of shitake mushroom growers for comparison reasons.

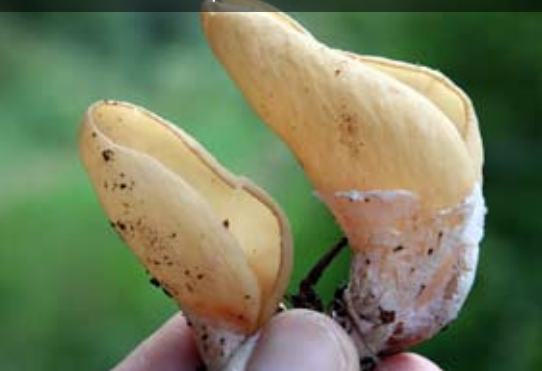


(6 days)

Chantrelles & Horn of Plenty (*Cantharellus* & *Craterellus cornucopioides*)



Hare ears (*Otidea* sp.)



Coral fungus (*Ramaria* sp.)



## Day 1 Arrival in Riga

### Transfer to the hotel.

Meeting with the guide at Nature History Museum and introduction with the tour. Walk to the Central Market to see mushrooms for sale. Free time.

Accommodation at the hotel Islande in Riga.

## Day 2

### Rīga – Sloka – Ķemeru nacionālais parks - Lapmežciems – Antiņciems – Valguma ezers – Milzkalns – Apšuciems - Rideļi

Breakfast. Mushrooming around Antiņciems at pine-tree forests as well as damp forests. Possible to find King Bolete (*Boletus edulis*), Orange Aspen Bolete (*Leccinum rufum*), Orange Birch Bolete (*Leccinum versipelle*).

Lustūzis – the highest hill at the Ķemeri National Park, rolling landscape, varied types of forests and rich world of mushrooms. Among many others, possible to find Golden Chanerelle (*Cantarellus tubaeformis*), Horn of Plenty or Dead Man's Fingers (*Craterellus cornucopioides*), Common Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*), Golden Larch Bolete (*Suillus grevillei*), edible Sheeps Polypore (*Albatrellus ovinus*), deadly poisonous Death Cap (*Amanita phalloides*).

Mushrooming at the coastal pine-forests near Apšuciems: traditional eadable mushrooms – Common Chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*), Variegated Bolete (*Suillus variegatus*) and others. Then mushrooming at Rideļi for different species of Russule Russula as well as Boletes.

In the evening opportunity to go through

gathered mushrooms with the guide and cook them in the meal. Accommodation at the Hotel Arcadia.

## Day 3

### Engure – Šķēde – Talsi – Valdemārpils – Lube - Tiņģere - Dundaga

Breakfast.

Šķēdes beeches growth with some rare for Latvia mushrooms. Visit local wine maker at Lauciena.

Then we'll follow Botanical trail along Krovalki house located at Talsi down nature park. Possible to find Red-Cracking Bolete (*Boletus pascuus*) and other mushrooms.

Walk through picturesque Old Town of hilly Talsi located by two lakes.

On the way we'll stop at Valdemārpils linden tree and then gather mushrooms along the banks of the river Roja. Here possible to find such valuable eadable mushrooms as Deer Truffle (*Elaphomyces* sp.) with parasitic Slender Truffle-Club (*Cordyceps ophioglossoides*) as well as Orange Caterpillar-Fungus (*Cordyceps militaris*) which emerges from larvae or pupae of moth.

Accommodation at the guest house Pupoli.

## Day 4.

### Dundaga – Pāce – Ance – Ugāle - Zlēkas

Breakfast.

Excursion to Dundaga Castle which is the largest well preserved castles at Kurzeme region. It's history dates back to 13th century and its surrounded with lots of legends. At the Dundaga Park we might find Hen-of-the-Woods (Gri-



# ...everything about mushrooms: from picking to preparation!

## TRIP DETAILS

Package price per person:  
from EUR 435.00

### INCLUDES:

- Accommodation based on shared DBL room with breakfast
- Bus transfers
- Guide/mycologist
- Four dinners
- Information pack

### EXTRA COSTS:

- Single supplement
- Other meals
- Possible fees

### TOUR GUIDE:

Diāna Meijere, mycologist

### PERIOD OF TRAVEL:

Mid Aug-First half of Oct

### WALKING:

Easy short walks in woods from 1 to 2 hours combined with bus drives. Waterproof boots, hats and mosquito repellent recommended.

foia frondosa) and Ceramic Parchment Fungus (*Xylobolus frustulatus*) while on the banks of Pāce Lake is a chance to find Chesnut Bolete (*Gyroporus castaneus*). Lonaste and Raķupe ancient oak where we look for Saffron Yellow Polypore (*Hapalopilus croceus*) and other typical oak mushrooms. At the largest array of forest between Ugāles – Zlēku is possible to find Cauliflower Fungus (*Sparassis crispa*). Accommodation at the hotel Metropole.

### Day 5.

**Kuldīga – Aizpute – Rudbārži – Rīga**

Breakfast. We'll start a day with excursion through charming Old Town of

Walking Ķemeri nature trail



View to Talsi town



In the forest with mycologist



Kuldīga with its widest waterfall of Europe, well preserved wooden buildings and 19th century brick bridge across the river Venta. Then continue to Tebra oak growth where possible to see the strange Hen-of-the-Woods (*Grifola frondosa*), Hare's Ear (*Otidea onotica*) and other unusual looking mushrooms. Visit to shitaki mushroom growers at Garīkas At Rudbārži park possible to find Lingzhi (*Ganoderma lucidum*) which widely used in Chinese traditional medicine. Returning to Rīga. Accommodation at the hotel Islande in Rīga.

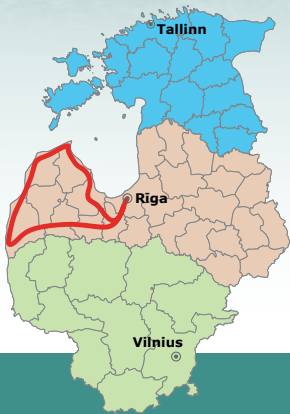
### Day 6. Departure

Breakfast. Transfer to the airport.

Scarlet elf cup (*Sarcoscypha austriaca*)



# Spring Birdwatching Tour



Latvia is among one of the world's three most important bird migration paths, and during migration seasons tens of thousands birds can be seen at one place. The tour will spent significant time along the sea coast in order to catch the highlights of migration. In spring time also flood-lands become alive with activities of thousands of birds and provide great atmosphere for birdwatchers. These territories are essential for migrating geese, different plovers, also Great Snipe, Corncrake, Lapwing and Curlews. Artificially made fish breeding ponds are great places to spot not only different types of ducks and waders but also predators like Sea Eagle, Marsh Harrier and others. This tour explores different biotops to get the best impressions of the spring time migration.



(10 Days)

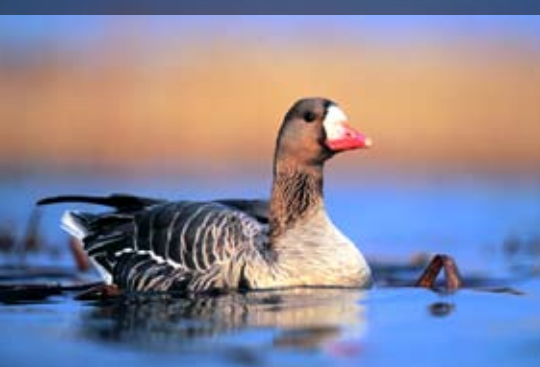
Pygmy owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*)



Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)



The Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)



**General Route:** Rīga - Jelgava - Jaunmokas - Engure - Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Liepāja - Nīca - Durbe - Skrunda - Saldus - Bauska - Rīga

## Day 1

### Arrival in Rīga

A tour of the Latvian capital of Rīga and its Old Town. Overnight in Rīga

## Day 2

**Rīga - Jelgava - Svēte - Jelgava - Slampe - Dunduru Wiese - Smārde - Jaunmokas (~160km)**

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Svēte flood-lands: a majorsirte of migrating geese, ducks and different plovers; Jelgava Palace's island (reserve); Lunch at Jelgava; The Dunduri Meadows are an important part of the forested area of the Ķemeri Heath along the curvy shores of the little Slampe River. There is a birdwatching tower, as well as so-called Throat of Melnragi -wetlands flooded by beavers; The Jaunmokas Manor Park; Overnight in Jaunmokas.

## Day 3

**Jaunmokas - Ķemeri - Sloka - Odiņi - Lapmežciems - Jaunmokas (~100 km) Jaunmokas - Ķemeri (~30 km)**

Breakfast. A wetland path near a forest hut and the damp forests which surround it. The short Path takes one through the black alder wetlands of the Vēršupīte River, as well as the wetlands between the Forest House and Lake Sloka; A visit to the visitors centre; Lunch at Ķemeri. Overnight in Jaunmokas.

## Day 4

**Jaunmokas-Bērciems-Engure-Bērciems-Mērsrags-Ģipka-Kolka-Košrags (~195 km)**

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: an overgrown seashore with reefs - ideal places to watch wading and water bird; Lake Engure, a pasture of wild horses and cows and a birdwatching tower (the Lake Engure Nature Park); Lunch at Bērciems; Mērsrags seashore meadows and Pekrags. A complex of lagoon-type biotopes, including meadows, areas of reeds, a rocky seashore, shoals and bird watching tower. This is a small area of wetlands located where a lagoon from the ancient Litorine Sea once was. Overnight in Košrags.

## Day 5

**Košrags - Kolka - Pūrciems - Dundaga-Slītere - Mazirbe - Košrags (~74km)**

Breakfast. Sites en route: Cape Kolka is one of the best places for birdwatching when it comes to the diversity of species during the spring migration - nearly all of the species that are present in Latvia can be found here at the right time; The Pēterezers Nature Trail (3,5 km), which offers a set of dunes with high swamps and a samp lake that are unique at the European level; The wetlands of Ģipka; Lunch in Dundaga; Slītere National Park - the former coastline of the ancient Baltic Ice Sea. Overnight in Košrags.

## Day 6

**Mazirbe - Oviši - Ventspils - Užava - Labrags (~140 km)**

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route:

...one of the world's top most important migration paths!

## TRIP DETAILS

Package price per person:  
from EUR 1120.00

\*Minimum number of persons - 8.

by 10 persons: 965.00 EUR

by 12 persons: 925.00 EUR

### INCLUDES:

- Accommodation based on shared DBL room with breakfast
- Bus transfers
- Guide/ornithologist (10 d)
- Information pack

### EXTRA COSTS:

- Single supplement
- Other meals
- Possible fees

### TOUR GUIDE:

Māris Strazds, ornithologist

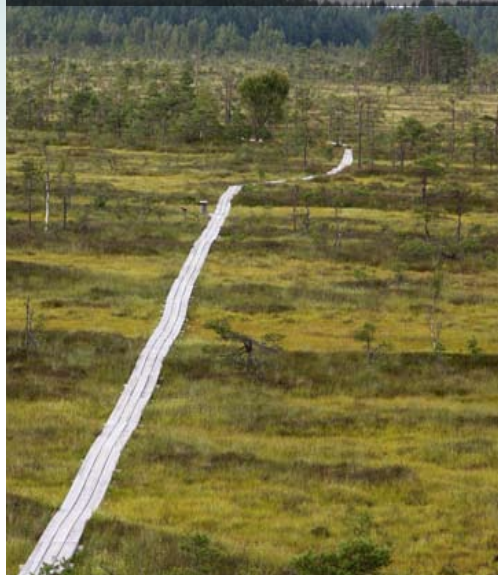
### PERIOD OF TRAVEL:

End of Apr - beginning of May

### WALKING:

Short walks combined with bus drives.

Nature trail at Ķemeri National Park



Pine forest at Slitere National Park



Birdwatching days at the Lake Engure Nature Park



The Irbene radar station, the coastline of Oviši, a sandy seashore. Lunch at Ventspils; The Užava Estuary, with a restricted area to protect a biotope which includes the grey dunes - rare in Europe; The meadows and polders of the lower reaches of the Užava River; The steep shores of the little Muižupīte River. Overnight in Labrags.

### Day 7

**Labrags-Liepāja-Nīca-Grobiņa-Durbe (~130 km)**

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: the cape of Labrags; The Liepāja port, Lake Liepāja, village of Nīca, the Old Durbe School. Overnight in Durbe.

### Day 8

**Durbe-Līguti-Vītiņi-Skrunda-Saldus (~175 km)**

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Līguti Estate park; The Vītiņi Meadows on the eastern shore of Lake Liepāja are the largest area of damp meadows in Latvia. The last nesting place for the dunlins. Pastures of wild horses and cows. The fish ponds of Skrunda; Lunch in Skrunda. Overnight in Saldus.

### Day 9

**Pilsrundāle-Bauska-Rīga (~85 km)**

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Sātiņi fish ponds are an important

place for water birds to feed and rest (Northern swans, waders). The territory can be viewed from different locations; Lunch in Saldus; Zvārde – former military base; The Tērvete Park, river valley. Overnight in Pilsrundāle.

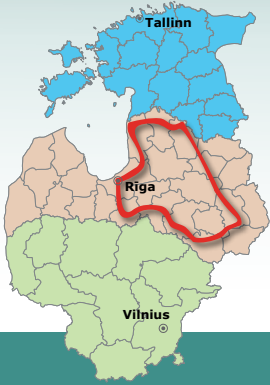
### Day 10

**Saldus-Sātiņi-Saldus-Kokmuiža-Tērvete-Pilsrundāle (~140 km)**

Breakfast. Sites and attractions en route: The Rundāle Palace Park and the palace itself; The Cena Heath, Getliņi; Departure.



# Autumn Birdwatching Tour



The most spectacular autumn events are the Crane shows which can be observed at the bogs and fields. The tour will pass several of these places. Old pine forest growths is favoured by Black Grouse with Owls living at their edges. While different woodpecker species thrive at the wet forests. The tour will also pass some lakes and fish ponds in order to observe water birds such as Herons, Sea Eagles and different ducks.

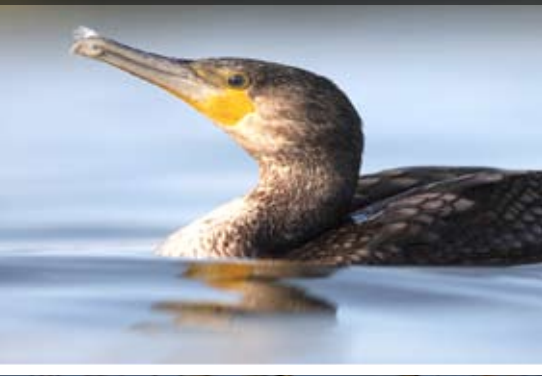


(7 Days)

White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)



Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)



Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Aquila pomarina*)



**General Route:** Rīga - Sigulda - Salacgrīva - Mazsalaca - Valka - Lubāna - Āglona - Jelgava - Rīga

## Day 1

**Arrival in Rīga. Rīga - Sigulda-Pale - Salacgrīva (230 km).**

Pick-up at the Rīga International Airport and head to Sigulda. Lunch. We will follow the walking trails at Sigulda area and Turaida Castle park looking for woodpeckers. The journey continues to Pale. We will walk through Pilkes Bog to watch cranes. Accommodation and dinner in Salacgrīva.

## Day 2

**Salacgrīva - Kuiviži - Mazsalaca - Burtņieki (206 km)**

After early breakfast we will spend a couple of hours on the sea shore to watch waders, then continue along the picturesque banks of the river Salaca for woodpeckers. Lunch. Next, drive to the lake Burtņieks, Viksna and Ruja ponds. There we will watch cranes and geese. Accommodation and dinner in Burtņieki.

## Day 3

**Lantus - Seda - Valka - Graši (317 km)**

After the breakfast we'll drive to Seda Heath and spend some time watching geese and cranes. Lunch at Valka. Then we explore park-type meadows at the Gauja bridge. Continue to Murmastiene to watch cranes. We will spend evening at Graši Manor House surrounded by its old park. Accommodation and dinner at Graši.

## Day 4

**Graši - Murmastiene - Lake Lubāna - Īdeņi - Zosna (247 km)**

Today we start and finish with watching some cranes at Murmastiene. But afternoon we will dedicate to water birds such as herons, sea eagles and ducks around the lake Lubāna and fish ponds at Īdeņi. Accommodation and dinner at Zosna.

## Day 5

**Zosna - Kaunata - Āglona - Dviete (180 km)**

Today we will visit a pottery workshop. Latgale region is famous with their potting schools. Lunch at Kaunata. We will also make an excursion at the Āglona Basilica, a popular pilgrimage site. Later the day we will spend some time watching cranes, geese and wild horses at Dviete. Accommodation and dinner at Dviete.

## Day 6

**Dviete - Ormaņi - Viesīte - Pilskalne - Pilsrundāle (244 km)**

On the route there will be plenty of beautiful landscapes where some birds of prey could be spotted. Lunch at Viesīte. We will be stopping at Pilskalne manor, mighty Bauskas Castle ruins as well as one of the most beautiful parks – Rundāle Palace park. Accommodation and dinner at Rundāle.

## Day 7

**Pilsrundāle - Svēte - Jelgava - Rīga International Airport (110 km)**



# ...spectacular cranes shows during autumn migrations...

## TRIP DETAILS

Package price per person:  
from EUR 560.00

Based on group of 8 persons

### INCLUDES:

- Accomodation based on shared DBL room with breakfast and dinner
- Bus transfers
- Guide/ornithologist (7 d)
- Information pack

### EXTRA COSTS:

- Single supplement
- Other meals
- Possible fees

### TOUR GUIDE:

Māris Strazds, ornithologist

### PERIOD OF TRAVEL:

Mid September

### WALKING:

Short walks combined with bus drives.

The morning can be spent leisurly watching the birds at Rundāle Palace park. Then heading to the mouth of Svēte river to watch some geese and cranes. Luch stop at Jelgava. Departure from Riga International Airport.

Black stork (*Ciconia nigra*)



Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*)



Birdwatching from the wavebreaker at Ainaži



Birdwatching tower at Lake Sloka



# Botanical Tour at Kurzeme region



The tour is designed for the people with particular interest in the botanics and who enjoy walks in the nature.

The tour goes through national parks and protected nature territories of international importance, follows the seashore. It also stops at small charming towns, several historic sites and traditional villages. During the tour you learn not only about rare and protected plants, local traditions but also enjoy beautiful landscapes, wilderness and solitude.



(6 Days)

Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*)



Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*)



Seaside Pea (*Lathyrus Maritimus*)



**General Route:** Rīga - Ķemeri - Engure - Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga - Sabile - Kandava - Rīga

## Day 1

### Arrival in Rīga

Visit to the Botanical Gardens of the University of Latvia. The garden established in 1922 and has the oldest plants collection in the Baltic States. Visit to Babite Rododendrs grower. There are different species of wild as well as cultivated rododendrs collections, together more than 200 species. Free time to explore historic sites of Rīga. Accommodation in Rīga.

## Day 2

### Route: Rīga - Ķemeri - Engure

Breakfast. Departure to Ķemeri National Park created to protect coastal zones, seaside lakes, bog and damp forest as well as sulphur springs. We will follow fen trail, wild meadows, stop at the bird watching tower at the Kanieris Lake. Among many other plants we look out for Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*), Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), Black Alders fen and plants related to this biotope. Along the way we'll stop at the place where history of Ķemeri as a spa resort started due the valuable sulphur water resource. The Engure Lake Nature Park created to protect the shallow lake with the birds nesting places as well as its specific flora. In this territory grow about 22 types of orchids including The Early Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*), Fly Orchid (*Ophrys*

*insectifera*), Baltic Orchid (*Dactylorhiza baltica*) etc. Accommodation in Roja.

## Day 3

### Route: Engure - Kolka - Ventspils

Breakfast. Slitere National Park is former territory of the Baltic Ice Lake, Ancilus Lake as well as ancient coast of Litornic Sea. Here is great biotops' diversity including wild beach, different dune biotops, pine-tree forests, wet forests and bog, meadows and sand stone outcrops. We will follow along the Cape Kolka walking pine tree trail, Pēterezera Lake trail with ancient dunes and fig landscape. Species of interest here: Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*), Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Seaside Pea (*Lathyrus maritimus*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Tree Lungwort (*Lobaria pulmonaria*), Eastern Pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla patens*), etc. Visit Dundaga Castle which history dates back to 13th century. Stiklu Bog is one of the largest bog territory of Kurzeme. There are several kilometres long plunk trail. We will look here for Marsh clubmoss (*Lycopodiella inundata*), Rannochrush (*Scheuchzeria palustris*), different types of sundews (*Droseraceae*), Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), Deergrass (*Trichophorum cespitosum*), etc. Accommodation in Ventspils.

## Day 4

### Route: Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga

Breakfast. We will visit Užava Protected Area where is one of the largest "grey" dunes in the Baltics. It stretches along the sea for several kilometres. Here we

...more than 32 wild orchid species...

## TRIP DETAILS

Package price per person:  
from EUR 440.00

Based on group of 8 persons

### INCLUDES:

- Accommodation based on shared DBL room with breakfast and dinner
- Bus transfers
- Guide/botanist (6 d)
- Information pack

### EXTRA COSTS:

- Single supplement
- Other meals
- Entomolog services
- Possible fees

### TOUR GUIDE:

Evita Zviedre, botanist

### PERIOD OF TRAVEL:

June - July

### WALKING:

Easy short walks in meadows and nature trails combined with bus drives.

Great sundew (*Drosera anglica*)



Herbal tea made from the found plants



Exploring the meadow near Ķemeri with the guide



might see: Toadflax (*Linaria loeselii*), Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*), Sand Pink (*Dianthus arenarius*). Then we go to Venta valley to walk its wild banks. Species to look for: Large thyme (*Thymus ovatus*), Beach Speedwell (*Veronica longifolia*) and different orchid species. Excursion to the charming Old Town of Kuldīga with its wooden architecture, visit the widest waterfall in Europe and 19th century's brick bridge across Venta. Accommodation in Kuldīga.

### Day 5

**Route: Kuldīga - Sabile - Kandava - Rīga**  
Abava Ancient Valley Park is created to protect the landscape created by

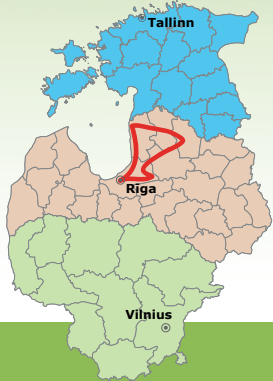
the waters of ancient melting iceberg with its monuments of natural history. We will visit Sabile Wine Hill – the most Northernly grown grapes from which wine is produced. Then we will follow botanical trail at Drubazi where we look for: Bath Sedge (*Carex davalliana*), Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), Baltic Orchid (*Dactylorhiza baltica*), Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), etc. On the way we stop at one of the grandest oaktrees in Europe, which is more than 10m of circumference. Cena Heath Trail is about 5 km long and includes various biotops like high, low and transit bogs and related plants. There is a viewing tower in the bog. Species here might include: vari-

ous types of peat moss (*Sphagnum*), Bog Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Leatherleaves (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), Heath Spotted - Orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*), Cranberries (*Oxycoccus palustris*) etc. Returning to Rīga. Accommodation in Rīga.

### Day 6

Breakfast. Free time in Rīga. Transfer to the airport.

# The Botanical Tour of Vidzeme



This tour is planned to show a variety of habitat found in different types of forests, wetlands as well as sea coast. The tour will pass some impressive ancient trees and beautiful landscapes. Along with some rare and endangered plants you could spot different types of butterflies and dragonflies. The tour involves some longer walks and historic monuments along the way.



(5 Days)

Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*)



Common sea-buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*)



Northern firmoss (*Huperzia selago*)



Wild pansy (*Viola tricolor*)



**General Route:** Rīga - Salacgrīva - Valmiera - Sigulda - Līgatne - Rīga

## Day 1

**Arrival in Rīga**  
Overnight in Rīga.

## Day 2

**Rīga - Salacgrīva**  
Departure along the Vidzeme sea coast. The rocky shoreline of Vidzeme is a unique and rocky phase of the eastern shore of the Bay of Rīga, with small cliffs from the Devonian period along the shoreline. You can hike for 4-5 kilometres along the seashore from the Veczemu cliffs (Mantiņi) to Meleki. Possible plants of interest: Sea Sandwort (*Honckenya peploides*), European Searocket (*Cakile maritima*), Lime-grass (*Leymus arenarius*) as well as very rare Pincushion Moss (*Leucobryum glaucum*). The Randu meadows are seashore meadows which are known as an "herbarium" for Latvia's wild plants, because there is a wide variety of different plants there. A wooden

pathway leads through the meadows, and at the end of the path is a bird watching tower. Possible plants of interest: *Batrachium boudotii*, Beaked Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*), Small Spikerush (*Eleocharis parvula*), Blinks (*Montia fontana*), European Searocket (*Crambe maritima*), Siberian Bugseed (*Corispermum intermedium*), Seaside Centaury (*Centaureum littorale*), Smallmarsh Rush (*Juncus gerardi*), Strawberry Clover (*Trifolium fragiferum*) as well as different orchid species. Overnight in Salacgrīva.

## Day 3

**Salacgrīva - Valmiera**

Departure. The Dambju oak tree, Kaņepju oak tree and Baložu juniper tree are all in the Northern Gauja Protected Landscape Region, and from the perspective of biological diversity, it is a unique territory along the central stretch of the Gauja River, with environmental information trails established nearby. Visit the Ziles and Vekšu nature trails, as well as the park-like meadow of oak trees at Marsi.





...more than 30 plant species can be found in a few square meters...

## TRIP DETAILS

Package price per person:  
from EUR 480.00

Based on group of 8 -10 persons

### INCLUDES:

- Accommodation based on shared DBL room with breakfast and dinner
- Bus transfers
- Guide/botanist (4 d)
- Information pack

### EXTRA COSTS:

- Single supplement
- Other meals
- Entomology services
- Possible fees

### TOUR GUIDE:

Evita Zviedre, botanist

### PERIOD OF TRAVEL:

June - July

### WALKING:

Easy short walks in meadows and nature trails combined with bus drives.

One of False Morels (*Gyromitra*) has been found



The trail at seaside Randu Meadows



Across the meadow full of flowers



Possible plants of interest: Meadow Oatgrass (*Helictotrichon pratense*), Mountain Clover (*Trioilium montanum*), Fern-leave Dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*), Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis masculata*), Military Orchid (*Orchis militaris*) as well as other species of orchids, From fungus – rare Safron Bracket (*Hapalopilus croceus*). Overnight in Valmiera district.

### Day 4

#### Valmiera - Sigulda - Līgatne - Rīga

Departure to Murjāņi. The Gauja National Park was set up to protect the most impressive ancient river valley in the Baltic States – the Gauja River, its shores, and the cultural and historical heritage

that is found there. The Gauja ecological trail (Murjāņi-Sigulda-Līgatne) leads along the left bank of the ancient Gauja River Valley between Līgatne and Sigulda. There are hillside forests and wetland meadows along the way. Possible to see the yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), wild thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*), the Burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), the sticky catchfly (*Viscaria vulgaris*), annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*), the meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), the spiked speedwell (*Veronica spicata*), the orchardgrass (*Dactylis glomerata*), the German speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), the Queen Anne's lace (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), the perennial honesty (*Lunaria*

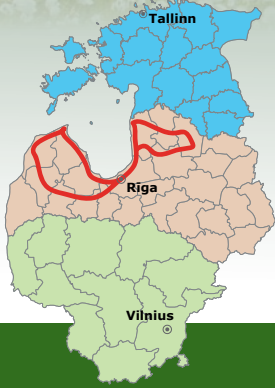
*redivia*), the baneberry (*Actaea spicata*), the common wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), the maple (*Acer platanoides*), the oak (*Quercus robur*), the European lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*), the dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), the common hazel (*Corylus avellana*), as well as other species of plants related to hillside forests and meadows. The trail between Sigulda and Līgatne is around 20 km in length. Drive to Rīga. Overnight in Rīga.

### Day 5

#### Rīga

Transfer to the airport. Departure.

# Wildlife Experience in Latvia



Autumn is a perfect time to observe wildlife and picturesque sceneries. It is birds migration time when flocks of geese and swans fly above our heads. Common Cranes have impressive displays in the fields. It's mating time for Black Grouse and routing time for elks. Dragonflies and butterflies can still be observed in the meadows. Autumn is also traditional mushrooming time. This tour is aimed to combine these various experiences.



(7 Days)



Beaver (*Castoridae*)



Great Egret (*Egretta alba*)



Osprey (*Pandion haliaeetus*)

**General Route:** *Rīga - Salacgrīva - Engure - Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga - Sabīle - Rīga*

### Day 1

#### Rīga

Arrival at Rīga International airport. Accommodation in Rīga.

### Day 2

#### Rīga - Salacgrīva

Landscapes, migrating birds, plants, dragonflies and butterflies. Breakfast. Departure from the hotel to Vidzeme Sea coast – Eastern side of Rīga Gulf (Visiting of Devonian sand stone cliffs near Vecmūiža, coastal meadows in Kuiviži, sea breakwater with possibility to see waders migration. Lunch in Salacgrīva. Burtņieki Lake region for some birding (great for seasonal birds: Corn Crake, Great Snipe, Ural Owl) and at autumn time – Raptors migration and woodpeckers. Accommodation and dinner in Burtņieki.

### Day 3

#### Salacgrīva - Mežole

Water birds, mammals and dragonflies. Breakfast. Departure to Seda bog. Possibly to see some beaver actions. Lunch in Valmiera. Afternoon drive to Mežole forests (owls and woodpeckers) and the Gauja national park. Accommodation and dinner in Cēsis.

### Day 4

#### Mežole - Sigulda - Bīriņi

Mushrooms, berries, animals. Breakfast.

Departure to mushroom tour. Cēsis, Ungurmuiža, Lielstraupe, Līgatne Nature Trails. Mushrooming will pass beautiful forests with some great views across the river Gauja Valley dotted with three castles, old park of Ungurmuiža Manor and go along the nature trails where wild animals can be seen living in the conditions close to natural ones. Lunch at Sigulda. Afternoon go through the content of baskets and learn how they can be prepared. Wine degustation at Joka, Limbaži district. Accommodation and dinner in Bīriņi.

### Day 5

#### Bīriņi - Rīga - Engure - Kolka

West coast of the Baltic Sea, migrating birds. Breakfast. Departure to Rīga. Head towards Cape Kolka which is the prime location for autumn and spring migrations. On the way can stop at Lake Engure (three birdwatching towers around the lake) for birdwatching. Visit coastal area at Bērciems. Stop for lunch at Villa Elizabete. Continue to Slītere National Park. Visit Slītere lighthouse for panoramic view of the area. Birdwatching at Cape Kolka. Accommodation in Košrags.

### Day 6

#### Kolka - Ventspils - Užava - Kuldīga - Sabīle - Rīga

Charming provincial towns, cultural and historic attractions. Breakfast. Ventspils-small Old Town with Livonian Order Castle. Walk breakwater for sea watching. Continue to Užava floodplains and stop



...mushrooms, mammals, birds and butterflies as you go along...

## TRIP DETAILS

Package price per person:  
from EUR 698.00

Based on group of 8-10 persons

### INCLUDES:

- Accommodation based on shared DBL room with breakfast and dinner
- Bus transfers
- Guides
- Information pack

### EXTRA COSTS:

- Single supplement
- Other meals
- Possible fees

### TOUR GUIDE:

#### PERIOD OF TRAVEL:

September - October

#### WALKING:

Easy short walks in different terrains: meadows, forests, nature trails combined with bus drives.

Honey Fungus (*Armillaria mellea*)



The stairs to Sigulda medieval castle ruins



Sabiles vīna kalns



at Jūrkalne steep coast. Turn inland towards Kuldīga - charming provincial town with well preserved wooden architecture and the widest waterfall in Europe. Head towards Rīga through Sabile and visit the Wine Hill there- the most Northerly vineyards from where wine used to be produced for export. On the way make a stop at Jaunmoku Manor at Tukums district to inspect hotel there. Accommodation in Rīga.

### Day 7

#### Rīga

Breakfast. Departure to the airport.

Ēvažu klints

