

## CIRCLE OF SELONIA

Longer distances of the route are heading along asphalt roads, but access to ancient cult sites mostly is available along gravel and forest roads

Length of the route ~ 170 km

### 1 MELĶĪTĀRU TROUGH STONE

**Aizkraukle parish, Aizkraukle county**  
**T** A short distance before bus stop "Augstkalni" there is a quite big country road deriving to the left from the main road Rīga – Daugavpils crossing the railway at "Paparde" home. The stone is visible ~ 3 km behind the railway on the left side of the road, in moraine plain, on the side of former Trough swamp (now – meadow) **◀ 56° 39' 613 25° 12' 168**

Melķītaru trough stone is known as an ancient site of donations, children were christened by this stone. In ancient times the Devil is said to have drawn water from the nearby lake, poured it into the trough and washed himself. He had done this until the whole lake had been drawn dry. The Devil had gone to another place leaving the Trough Stone and the Trough swamp behind. Another legend tells the Devil wanted to bake bread and therefore carved a trough in the stone; but when he brought flour for the leaven,

a cock had crowed – and that was it. It was also told that once in the ancient times the Devil had pulled the landlord of the nearby home under the stone, but once he was let to go no one was able to recognize him anymore – so long time had passed.

### 2 PASTMUIŽA DEVIL'S STONE

**Koknese parish, Koknese county**  
**T** 2 km from Koknese, between "Rijnieki" and "Kalnakrogs" homes, 300 m from "Senči" home, 450 m to the right from Rīga – Daugavpils main road. The stone is located on the side of the old main road, 35 m from it, 55 m NE from the flooded the River Daugava, in an open and wide meadow; Rīga – Daugavpils main road is visible over the meadow in distance **◀ 56° 37' 624 25° 27' 326**

One of the most widely-known mythological stones in Latvia. Although the object is traditionally called in singular, there are two different stones considered one yet. Different legends with similar storyline are associated with this stone. "Devil wanted to take a stone from the River Daugava and block the River Gauja, but a cock had crowed in Pasta manor and the stone had fallen out of the Devil's hands. The stone, split into two parts, bears fingernail marks of the Devil. The stone can be found also nowadays, and it is located not far from Pasta manor." Another legend tells the Devil brought a stone to block the River Daugava, but cock crowed and the Devil kicked the stone in two parts.

### 3 PĻAVIŅU PETER'S STONE

**Klīntaine parish, Pļaviņu county**  
**T** Old main road derives 1.5 km from Rīga – Daugavpils main road before Pļaviņas and 100 m before "Stabulnieki" home. The stone is located on the side of this road, 80–100 m from the new main road **◀ 56° 36' 247 25° 44' 283**

The stone is surrounded by different legends. People of vicinity call this the stone of [Russian Tsar] Peter I. A legend tells that during the Northern War the Russian Tsar put a silver knife and fork under the stone after having lunch. Sign of property of Riga archbishop is still visible on it – bishop's cross and stick. The stone is considered the most ancient dated landmark in Latvia. It was concluded that Pļaviņu Peter's Stone is regarded as one out of four Lokstene landmarks with the coats of arms of Riga archbishop and his vassal Vrangelis chiseled before 1437, but not earlier that at the beginning of the 14th century. The stone is called also the Stone of Stukmaņu Pēteris.

### 4 ZASA PARK DEVIL'S STONE

**Zasa parish, Jēkabpils county**  
**T** 100 m N from Zasa Secondary School, 20 m from the new sports hall, on the side of the park **◀ 56° 17' 633 25° 58' 752**

A legend tells that in the ancient times the Devil decided to mock at Zasa steward while wandering around. The Devil took a big stone from the River Daugava and dragged it along Meņķu mill across Linaites swamp (opposite side from Livāni). The stone was big and heavy, the Devil's feet sank deeply into the ground. Having thrown the

### 5 DRONKU DEVIL'S STONE

**Rubene parish, Jēkabpils county**  
**T** 200 m W from road Kaldabruņās – Rītenišķi, 150 m SWW – W from the small Dronku graveyard, on the side of the forest **◀ 56° 08' 315 26° 04' 329**

There are two interesting footprints in the flat surface of the stone; according to a legend, these footprints were left by the Devil. Two adjacent footprints left by the Devil while standing on the edge of the stone together form the outline of Latvia; nearly always water collects in these footprints. Depth of the foot – up to 15 cm. The other footprint is located on the W edge of the stone, and usually no water collects there. Water collected in the Devil's footprint is regarded as healing.

### 6 SALTUPJU HOLY SPRING

**Aknīste, Aknīste county**  
**T** By "Mikļi" home, on the left bank of the River Susēja. The spring can be found by following the road signs **◀ 56° 10' 277 25° 44' 112**

Saltupju Holy Spring flows to meet the sun, and different legends and stories are told about that. If eyes are washed with spring's water in the Easter morning, they would be clear for the rest of the year. Coins of donation were thrown, and in the ancient times different cult rituals were performed in the spring. The spring discharges into the River Dienvidsusēja. Bed of the spring is coloured brightly orange giving it a special magic. There is a hollow stone in the spring by the small bridge, and this hollow stone was used as a sacrificial stone in the ancient times. Walkways and recreation sites are established in the vicinity of the spring.

### 7 RITE MĀRGA HILL

**Rīte parish, Viesīte county**  
**T** 500 m NNE from Stupeļu castle mound and 400 m WNW from "Pantelji" home **◀ 56° 10' 466 25° 28' 214**

There's a saying that sacrifices for Gods were done and maidens were guarding sacred fire here on altar in the pagan times. One of the maidens sinned and did not look after her dignity. She was burnt according to the holy law" (A legend written down by A.Bilenšteins). In the summer of 2011, the hostess of "Ziemeļi" home Janina Bičole told the following legend: "A maid owned a castle in Mārga castle mound. Suitors came, but the maid already had a friend. However the suitors fought with each other and eventually burnt the castle down. Daughter of Old Stupelis named Mārga was burnt alive, but her friend and baby survived. Old Stupelis stayed in his caste mound. Mārga's father-in-law found a big silver brooch by Mārga hill, and this brooch as though was given to some museum. It was before the age of collective-farms. There is allegedly a spring in Garais hill, and a coffin with treasures is allegedly dug there. Two ladies-charmers lived by the hill – Bičole Marija and another one nearby. So they both practiced magic to each other" (Legends written down by Andris Grinbergs).

### 15 BAUSKA PETER'S STONE

**Kaleļu iela 2, Bauska**  
**T** 56° 24' 420 24° 10' 863

At the beginning of the Northern War, the Russian Tsar Peter I and August II The Strong the King of Poland allegedly had breakfast and even competed on this stone. According to some other legend the stone was put into a cart and brought over by devil

### 18 VAIĶI (NAPOLEON'S, PETER I) STONE

**Vīpe parish, Krustpils county**  
**T** In the meadows belonging to "Vaiķi" home, 55 m to the right (direction river) from the Rīga – Daugavpils main road and around 300 m from the right bank of the River Daugava **◀ 56° 25' 526 26° 04' 554**

A legend tells that the Devil had left the stone here. Other legends tell that the Russian Tsar Peter I and Napoleon had lunch at the stone.

### 19 AKNĪSTE (RADŽUPE, DEVIL'S) CAVE

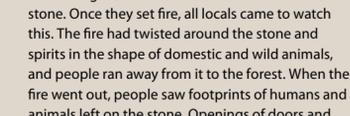
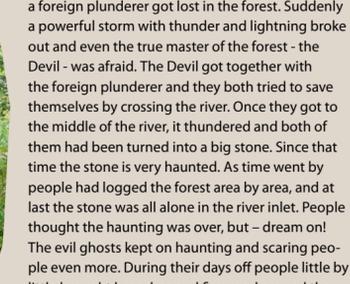
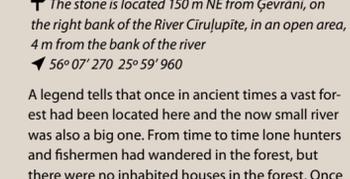
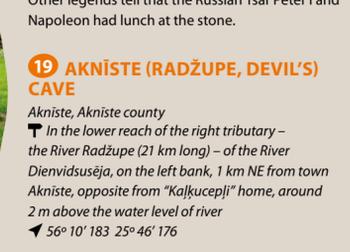
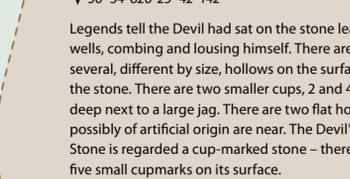
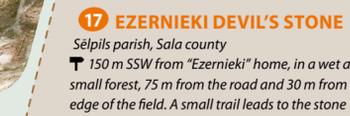
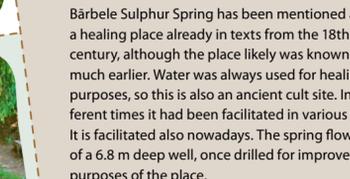
**Aknīste, Aknīste county**  
**T** In the lower reach of the right tributary – the River Radžupe (21 km long) – of the River Dienvidsusēja, on the left bank, 1 km NE from town Aknīste, opposite from "Kaļķuceplī" home, around 2 m above the water level of river **◀ 56° 10' 183 25° 46' 176**

During WWI and the Soviet repression period people hid in the cave. The name Devil's Cave is a modern one.

### 20 ĢEVĒRĀNU DEVIL'S STONE

**Rubene parish, Jēkabpils county**  
**T** The stone is located 150 m NE from Ģevrāni, on the right bank of the River Ģirulūpīte, in an open area, 4 m from the bank of the river **◀ 56° 07' 270 25° 59' 960**

A legend tells that once in ancient times a vast forest had been located here and the now small river was also a big one. From time to time lone hunters and fishermen had wandered in the forest, but there were no inhabited houses in the forest. Once a foreign plunderer got lost in the forest. Suddenly a powerful storm with thunder and lightning broke out and even the true master of the forest – the Devil – was afraid. The Devil got together with the foreign plunderer and they both tried to save themselves by crossing the river. Once they got to the middle of the river, it thundered and both of them had been turned into a big stone. Since that time the stone is very haunted. As time went by people had logged the forest area by area, and at last the stone was all alone in the river inlet. People thought the haunting was over, but – dream on! The evil ghosts kept on haunting and scaring people even more. During their days off people little by little brought branches and firewood around the stone. Once they set fire, all locals came to watch this. The fire had twisted around the stone and spirits in the shape of domestic and wild animals, and people ran away from it to the forest. When the fire went out, people saw footprints of humans and animals left on the stone. Openings of doors and windows were also visible, they faded gradually. From that moment on people started calling the stone – Devil's Foot.



## ALONG THE BELT OF ZEMGALE FROM IECAVA TO AUCE

Longer distances of the route are planned along asphalt roads, but access to ancient cult sites mostly is available along gravel and forest roads

Length of the route 165 km

### 8 IECAVA GOD'S GARDEN

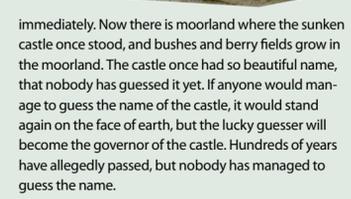
**Pārupes iela, Iecava, Iecava county**  
**T** On the left bank of the River Iecava, opposite from the Lutheran church, in the area among private houses **◀ 56° 35' 828 24° 11' 333**

The little God's Garden is a place on the side of Iecava valley, with a vacant area of 50 x 100 m. In 1812 the killed Prussian and Russian soldiers were buried in this field. However, the name of the site is often translated as an ancient cult site. Local people have established a movement implementing projects regarding improvement and preservation of the God's garden. Wooden ladder has been made down the slope to the River Iecava, view area and information stand have been also established. A legend tells that there was an idea to build the first Iecava church in this location, but the supplied logs were put on the other side of the river where the church now stands.

### 9 HILL OF WITCHES OF BRUKNA

**Dāviņu parish, Bauska county**  
**T** Road signs leading to Bruknas manor must be followed. The hill is located on the opposite side of the front façade of the manor, ~ 500 m across the swamp **◀ 56° 27' 831 24° 26' 660**

Hill of Witches of Brukna is located in the middle of the swamp opposite from Brukna manor, and there are different legends and stories about that. "In the ancient times in the place of moorland stood a beautiful and strong castle. The castle belonged to a very rich king. This king had a daughter, named Spidola. The father of Spidola was a very rich and famous man, but the daughter resembled a real witch. Every night the daughter ran to hell to see devils. King never knew of the mischiefs of his daughter and loved his own child very much. Once late at night guests arrived to the king, so the king went to wake his lovely kid up, but the bed was empty. Father thought Spidola was kidnapped, so he called together his army to chase the daughter. The king was standing deep in his thoughts, but suddenly the cock sang, and daughter appeared. Father asked where she had been. Seeing her secret revealed the daughter told everything. She allegedly said: "Dad, I have contacted with the devils all this time, and we decided to exterminate your people, as well as everything belonging to your nation." Father replied in anger: "Oh, I wish my indecent castle was no longer on the face of earth!" That's what actually happened: the castle with all the people sank



### 10 ADŽŪNU STONES WITH ROUNDED CONE HOLLOW

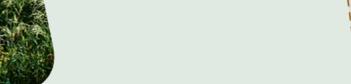
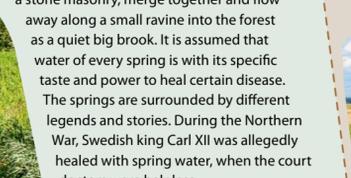
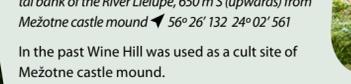
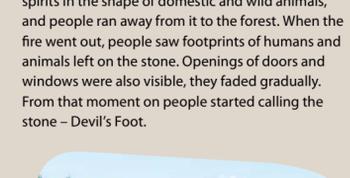
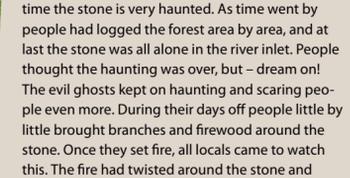
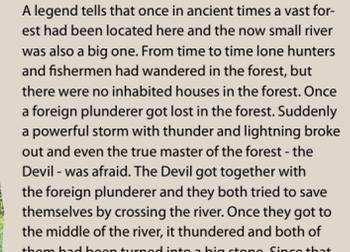
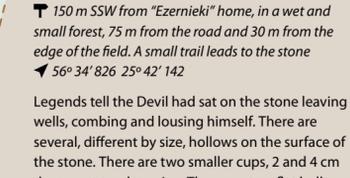
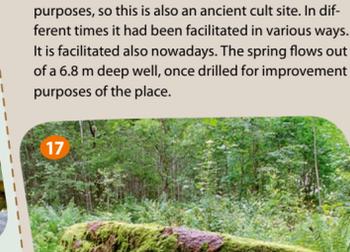
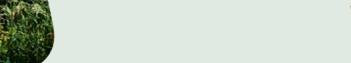
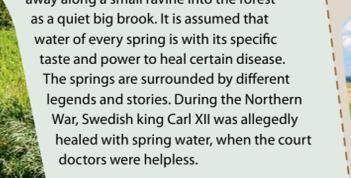
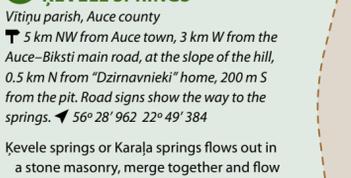
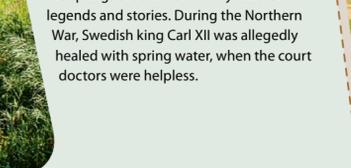
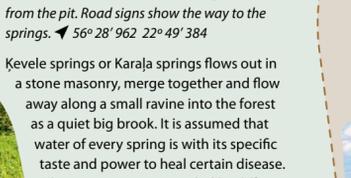
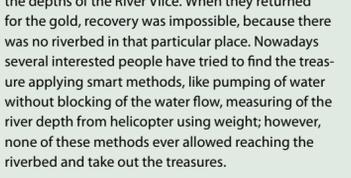
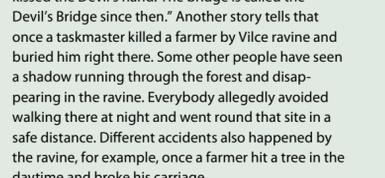
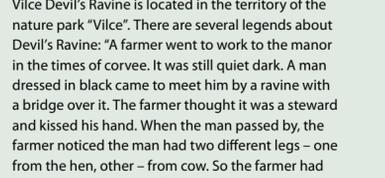
**"Pūpoli", Uzvara, Gailīšu parish, Bauska county**  
**T** In the backyard of farmer's yard and the Museum of Farm Machinery, by the kiln-house and granary **◀ 56° 18' 714 24° 16' 574**

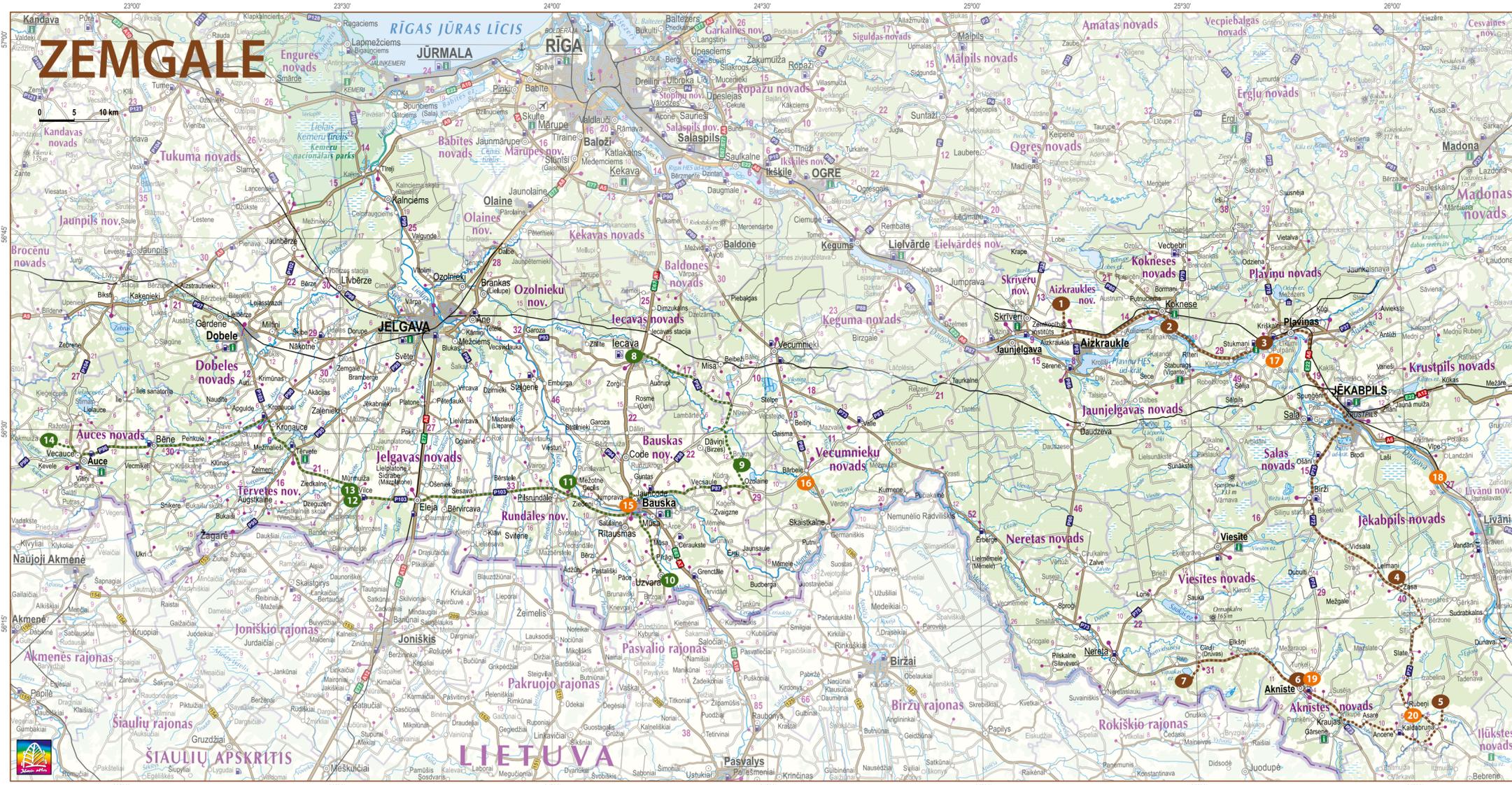
Stones with rounded cone hollow are a special value of Zemgale and Latvia, because, unlike in Lithuania with more than 600 stones with rounded cone hollow found, there are just 10 stones with rounded cone hollow in Latvia, and they are all located in Zemgale. Stones with rounded cone hollow are mostly located in the backyards of private houses or other places unavailable for public, thereby the best way to see the stones with rounded cone hollow is visiting the Farmer's yard and the Museum of Farm Machinery in Gailīši. Stones with rounded cone hollow once were brought from the vicinity of Adžūni. There is a reason to consider secondary use of these stones (similarly like with grain quern) for cult purposes has overshadowed the former economic use in separate cases. However, the use for economic purposes has remained in people's memory very well.

### 11 WINE HILL

**Rundāle county**  
**T** On the side of the left fundamental bank of the River Lielupe, 650 m S (upwards) from Mežotne castle mound **◀ 56° 26' 132 24° 02' 561**

In the past Wine Hill was used as a cult site of Mežotne castle mound.





# Ancient natural sacred sites

## ZEMGALE, LATVIA

### TOURISM MAP



**A**ncient cult sites of Zemgale have been established in a very long period of time. The most ancient ones – pit-stones could be related to the Bronze Age and the Finno-Ugric tribes; however, other sites could be related to the tribes of semigallians and Selonians having lived in these territories in the Iron Age. The ancient pagan cult traditions were widely spread in the 19th century; however, in the 20th century these traditions gradually disappeared.

This edition introduces with two tourism routes along the ancient cult sites of Zemgale – Circle of Selonia and Along the Belt of Zemgale, stretching from Iecava to Auce. You can visit the stones located in their natural environment, cult sites around the ancient Selonian castle mounds and other nature objects in Selonia, while more traditional tourism objects in complex with other viewable values can be visited in the middle part of Zemgale.

### Legend

	<b>Bauska</b> Centre of administrative unit				

## TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS IN THE REGION

### CELEBRATION OF SEMIGALLIANS

Every year on the second Saturday and Sunday of August, the Celebration of Semigallians takes place in Tērvete Nature Park, promoting the prehistoric county of Zemgale and its culture, demonstrating also customs and different traditions of other regions. Tournaments of knights, demonstrations of craftsmen skills and activities are organized in this celebration.

are treated to delicious meal cooked on the fire and invited to participate in the Evening Mass, since life of the community is directly associated with the love of the God, work and nature. Admission of the celebration is through donations used for the provision and improvement of the community life.



### RENAISSANCE GARDEN FEAST

Every year on the last Saturday of July, a Renaissance Garden Feast is celebrated in Brukna manor (Dāvīņu parish, Bauska county). This is the time, when one can enjoy in Brukna manor performances of masters of the early dance and theatre shows starred by both residents of the local community, and artists of other theatre groups. Popular musicians, actors and other Latvian celebrities performing throughout the evening can be often encountered in the Renaissance Garden Feast. Usually participants of the celebration



### MUSEUM NIGHT

Every year on the second Sunday of May, a Museum Night in Latvia is celebrated, when all museums can be visited without paying entrance fee, offering both the regular exhibitions, and shows, expositions and other kind of entertainment prepared especially for this night.

- Jelgava Regional Tourism Centre**  
Akadēmijas iela 1, Jelgava  
Phone +371 63005445, 63005447  
tic@tornis.jelgava.lv,  
www.visit.jelgava.lv, www.tornis.jelgava.lv
- Jēkabpils Tourism and Information Centre**  
Brīvības iela 140/142, Jēkabpils  
Phone +371 65233822, 29556045  
tic@jekabpils.lv, www.visit.jekabpils.lv
- Auce Municipality Tourism Information Centre**  
Raīņa iela 14, Auce  
Phone +371 63707226, 26460612  
turisms@dome.auce.lv,  
www.auce.lv
- Bauska Tourism Information Centre**  
Rātslaukums 1, Bauska, Bauska county  
Phone +371 63923797, 27746484  
tourinfo@bauska.lv,  
www.tourism.bauska.lv

## TOURISM INFORMATION

- Dobeles County Tourism Information Centre**  
Baznīcas iela 6, Dobele, Dobeles county  
Phone +371 63723074, 26136682  
turisms@dobele.lv,  
www.zemgaletourism.lv,  
www.dobele.lv
- Koknese Tourism Centre**  
Melioratoru iela 1, Koknese, Koknese county  
Phone +371 65161296, 29275412  
turisms@koknese.lv,  
www.koknese.lv,  
www.draugiem.lv/koknesestic/
- Pļaviņu Tourism Information Centre**  
"Līpsalas", Klintaine parish, Pļaviņas county  
Phone +371 22000981, 26161131  
plavinu\_tic@inbox.lv,  
info@mezmalasvikings.lv,  
www.plavinunovads.lv
- Skrīveru Tourist Information Point**  
A.Upiņa iela 1, Skrīveri, Skrīveru county  
Phone +371 28373530  
gunta.sustere@skriveri.lv,  
www.skriveri.lv
- Tērvete Tourism Information Centre**  
"Tērvetes sils", Tērvete, Tērvetes county  
Phone +371 63726212, 26738535  
tervetetic@inbox.lv,  
www.tervetesnov.lv/turism.htm
- Viesīte Tourism Information Centre**  
A.Brodesles iela 7, Viesīte, Viesītes county  
Phone +371 29116334, 65245549  
viesitesmuzejselija@inbox.lv,  
www.viesite.lv
- Vilce Tourism Information Point**  
Vilce manor, Vilce parish, Jelgava county  
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vilcesmuiza@inbox.lv

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 Zemgale District. The travel guide will help not only discover new values of nature and culture, but also gain knowledge about the ancient traditions of our nation.

[www.ancientsites.eu](http://www.ancientsites.eu)

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