

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
 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
 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
 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
 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
 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
 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
 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
 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
 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

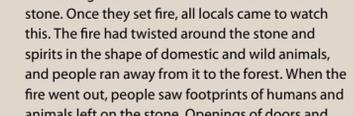
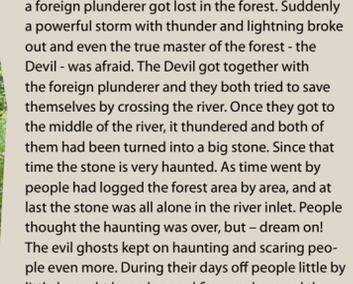
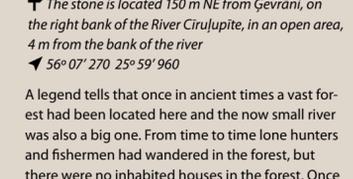
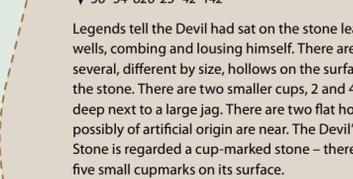
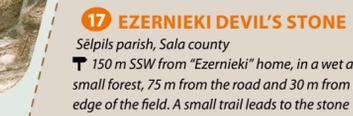
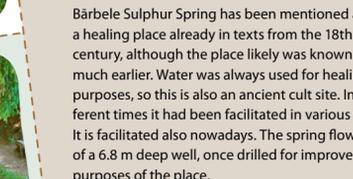
Aknīste, Aknīste county
 In the lower reach of the right tributary – the River Radžupe (21 km long) – of the River Dienvidsusēja, on the left bank, 1 km NE from town Aknīste, opposite from "Kaļķuceplī" home, around 2 m above the water level of river
 56° 10' 183 25° 46' 176

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
 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
 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
 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



12 VILCE DEVIL'S RAVINE WITH THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE

Vilce parish, Jelgava county
 In nature park "Vilce", around 0.5 km W from Vilce manor. Devil's Ravine is the side ravine of the left bank of the River Vilce, and the Devil's or Baron's bridge is located in the middle part of it, around 140 m away from river Vilce
 56° 25' 159 23° 32' 488

Vilce Devil's Ravine is located in the territory of the nature park "Vilce". There are several legends about Devil's Ravine: "A farmer went to work to the manor in the times of corvee. It was still quiet dark. A man dressed in black came to meet him by a ravine with a bridge over it. The farmer thought it was a steward and kissed his hand. When the man passed by, the farmer noticed the man had two different legs – one from the hen, other – from cow. So the farmer had kissed the Devil's hand. The bridge is called the Devil's Bridge since then." Another story tells that once a taskmaster killed a farmer by Vilce ravine and buried him right there. Some other people have seen a shadow running through the forest and disappearing in the ravine. Everybody allegedly avoided walking there at night and went round that site in a safe distance. Different accidents also happened by the ravine, for example, once a farmer hit a tree in the daytime and broke his carriage.

10 ADŽŪNU STONES WITH ROUNDED CONE HOLLOW

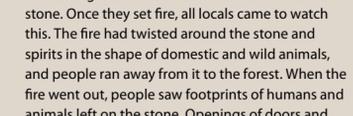
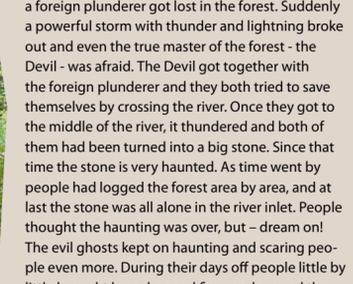
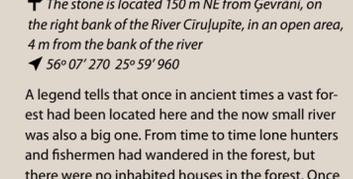
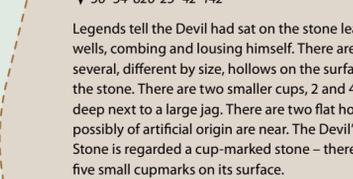
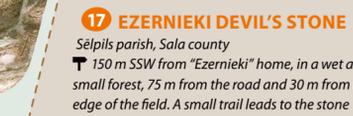
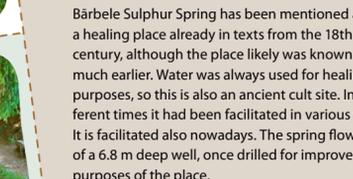
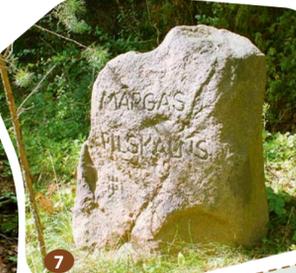
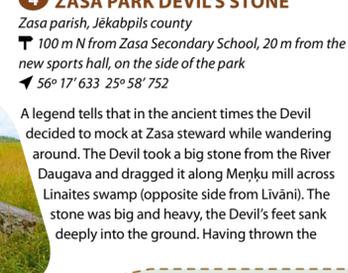
"Pūpoli", Uzvara, Gailišu parish, Bauska county
 In the backyard of farmer's yard and the Museum of Farm Machinery, by the kiln-house and granary
 56° 18' 714 24° 16' 574

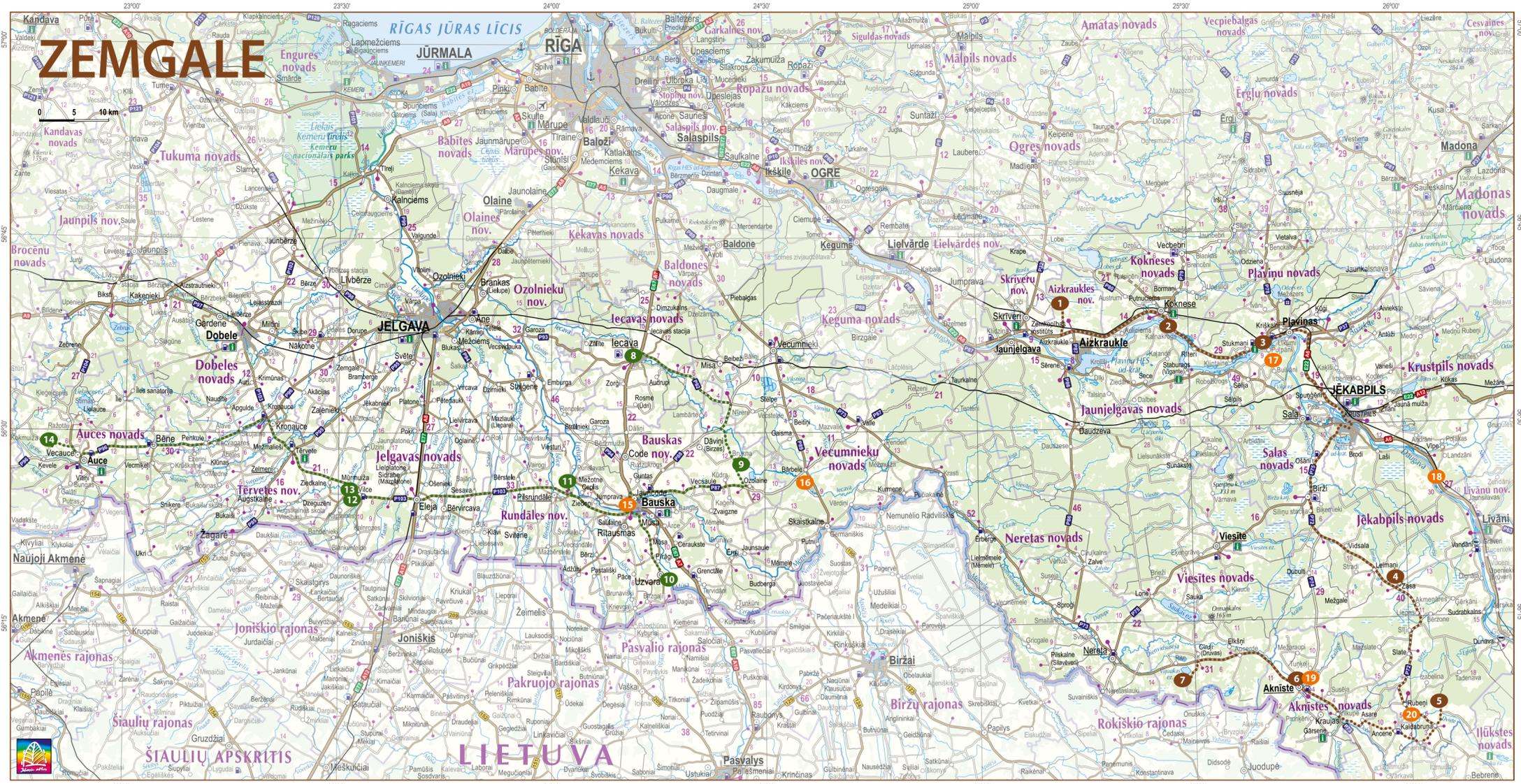
Stones with rounded cone hollow are a special value of Zemgale and Latvia, because, unlike in Lithuania with more than 600 stones with rounded cone hollow found, there are just 10 stones with rounded cone hollow in Latvia, and they are all located in Zemgale. Stones with rounded cone hollow are mostly 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 Gailiši. 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
 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



Ancient 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

	Bauska Centre of administrative unit				

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

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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.

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Plaviņu Tourism Information Centre
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