

VIDZEME HIGHLANDS' POWER SITES



The route goes mainly along an asphalted road, around 40% are gravel roads of local importance.



The length of the route 145 km

1 BĀNŪŽI HOLY SPRING

Taurene Parish, Vecpiebalga County
 57.15718 25.57106
 In the written sources of the 19th century it was mentioned that near the Bānūži Hill Fort there used to be the Jānis' Hill with a large old oak where people used to sacrifice. The Holy Spring, Bānūži Hill Fort, and the Jānis' Hill with the oak used to be, probably, parts of some unified sacred site complex. A tale has it that the spring can treat all illnesses.



TALES AND LEGENDS OF NORTH VIDZEME NATURAL SACRED SITES



The route goes mainly along an asphalted road, around 30% are gravel roads of local importance.



The length of the route 175 km

8 ZILAISKALNS HILL WITH THE SACRIFICIAL STONE

Kocēni Parish, Kocēni County
 From the road Valmiera–Zilaiskalns, there is an indication sign to the left to the Zilaiskalns Hill (the Blue Hill), there used to be a grove where all the people assembled for the Jāņi (Midsummer) Eve. Other festivities were celebrated here as well, and particularly Labrenčis' Day when people came here from various directions to thank the sacred fire. Its popularity survived also after the introduction of Christianity. One of the stones – a sacrificial stone with artificially made hollows – can be still found on the hill.

9 DAVIŅI LARGE STONE

Bērzaune Parish, Kocēni County
 When driving from the Bērzaune side, turn to the right at the Igums intersection, then after ~100 m turn to the right once again. Oak trees and coneasters grow around the stone
 57.62662 25.21138
 According to a tale, old maids dug the Viteķe River and had lunch on that stone. To the landlord who gave better food, the river came closer for him



2 BĀNŪŽI DEVIL'S STONE – DEVIL'S GATE STONE

Taurene Parish, Vecpiebalga County
 57.15031 25.58550
 It is located in a small cape that towers scenically above the Bānūži Lake for more than several meters. The cape has many springs and it is wet. A huge impressive stone, slightly overgrown with moss.

3 DEVIL'S SHOE ON THE BANK OF THE ALAUKSTS

Taurene Parish, Vecpiebalga County
 57.10273 25.77985
 The devil had already earlier thought of constructing a bridge across the Alauksks Lake, but there was a condition set that only nine could cross the bridge, but the tenth was not allowed by the God. Then the God had agreed, and the devil had promised to erect the bridge during one night before roosters crowed. He left a barrel with money on the bank of the lake, and for the God not to notice it, he heaped up a cap of soil on top of it and then rushed to work. The God, seeing that his intention to take the devil's money had failed, let trees and grass grow on the soil that was put on the barrel with money, so that the place could not be recognized and then, to prevent the devil from building the bridge, he went to wake up a rooster. Meanwhile the devil was working very hard. He grasped one heap of stones and dropped it in the lake. Then another one. He was there at the lake already with the third heap when a rooster crowed. When the frightened devil was fleeing, his shoe slipped off his foot and the whole stone heap scattered on the dry land. Having forgotten about the bridge, he rushed to the barrel with money,



but having run around the lake three times, he still could not find the place where he had left the money before.

4 BOLĒNI EYE SPRING

Bērzaune Parish, Madona County
 56.86953 26.01256
 It is called by people also the Eye Spring, Laima's Springs or Health Spring. It is associated with the power of healing eye diseases. Once in a summer morning when the sun was rising, Laima was sitting on the edge of the ash ravine. She was weeping, and her tears were running towards the morning against the Sun. The God was passing by and he asked her why she was crying. Laima poured out her complaints then. She wished the humans good life and health, but then many were afflicted and she felt sorry for them. Then the God made a spring flow out of that very spot and ordered the water to flow along Laima's tear way. In this way the Oši Spring in the ravine and the river appeared flowing against the Sun. The spring and river waters were granted healing powers so that all diseases could be healed in them, and Laima would never have to cry again. Since that time Laima has been walking around smiling, she often comes to the Health Spring and the Raganite River.

5 ĪVĀNI DEVIL'S STONE

Sarkāņi Parish, Madona County
 On the right side of the Cesvaine–Madona highway, 100 m of the highway
 56.90723 26.28731
 According to elderly people's narrations, yet in the middle of the 19th century at summer nights people brought offerings there: rye spikes, eggs, coal, and placed them at the stone, but not in the hollow as one could probably imagine. They believed that at the stone there was a bad place and near it often the lightning struck. This stone, wrapped up in various tales, was also called the Sacrificial Stone. Judging by the tales and the type of the hollow, it is considered to be a trough stone related to ancient cult and other traditions.



10 LARGE BAUŅI GREIŽI STONE

Matiši Parish, Burtnieki County
 On the roadside (a parking lot), at the Bauņi Park
 57.74770 25.16360
 On the stone surface, there are gently sloping bowl-shaped hollows that point at an ancient cult site. Around the stone, there is a circle formed of smaller stones.

11 DEVIL'S OAK – DREIĻAŅI OAK

Sēji Parish, Mazsalaca County
 The oak is situated in Sēji Parish, 400 m N from the former Sēji School, on the left side of the road, in a small wood cluster (the stop "Skola")
 57.84802 25.18352
 As a sacred site, the place is connected to legends about the superstition of the people of the Sēji Parish, and it is said that the former owner of the Dreilāņi homestead considered the devil, living in the oak, his god. Food was duly brought to the devil day by day. Upwards the Burtnieki Lake in the Sēji Parish, very superstitious people lived. Although legends have it that the sacrifices to the devil were brought to a hollow, there is another version that in 1960 the hollow was made by a man to reach bees.

12 PANTENE HOLY SPRING

Sēji Parish, Mazsalaca County
 Pantene Village, about 500 m S of the Ceriņi
 57.86823 25.21686
 The onflow of the Pantene Spring above the ground is the longest in the Baltics. In older times the spring was surrounded by a holy oak grove. The spring flows out of an island in the Pantene Swamp; this territory has been inhabited since ancient times.

13 JAUNŪTĒNI DEVIL'S STONE

Skaņkalne Parish, Mazsalaca County
 0.5 km down the estuary of the Peida River and about 0.8 km down the estuary of the Ramata River, in the Salaca River – close to its left bank
 57.92193 24.95585
 "Once the devil was fed up with life, he became angry and jumped into the Salaca River to drown himself. He threw himself in a whirlpool. When he was drowned, his soul turned into a stone. This is why the stone is called the Devil's Stone."

14 MAZSALACA DEVIL'S CELLAR

Mazsalaca
 Within the territory of the Skaņškalns Nature Park. One has to pay for visiting the park
 57.86972 25.00847
 About 2 versts further along the road that leads to the Skaņškalns Hill, which is remarkable for its echo, the Devil's Cave is situated where since time immemorial the devil dwelled. Not far from the cave, on the bank of the Salaca, in the cliff, there is a protrusion from which the devil preached on Sundays, that is why this place is called the Devil's Pulpit. Between the Devil's Cave and the Devil's Pulpit, at the Salaca, a spring flows out of a cliff, the water of which is very clear, cool and tasty. Here the devil who was dwelling in the cave slaked his thirst, that is why this spring is called the Devil's Souring Churn.

15 SOURING TUB SPRING AND THE CAVE

Mazsalaca
 Within the territory of the Skaņškalns Nature Park. One has to pay for visiting the park
 57.87019 25.00805
 From the Skābumbalja (Souring Tub) or Rūguma ķerne (Brewing Churn) a clear spring flows out. Right on the site instead of a table, there is a millstone. In former times there was also a cup, because one had to drink water before making a wish. If the water was sour – the wish would come true, if not – everything would remain as formerly.

6 VALĢI DEVIL'S STONE

Cesvaine County
 In Cesvaine drive in the direction of the Graši Castle (Graši pils); there is an indication sign on the left side of the road; walk to the Stone ~600 m off the road crossing a clearing area
 56.97221 26.23895
 "Once in older times the devil sat on that stone. Sitting there, he mended his trousers. A thill was his needle. Unluckily a rooster started to crow. The devil heard it and took to his heels. While sitting, a hollow was worn out by the devil's seat in the form of a pot, but when taking to his heels, he tore out a spot with his leg that flows by the Devil's Stone."

7 KĀPURKALNS HILL – MĀRA'S SHRINE AND MĀRA'S STONE

Zosēni Parish, Jaunpiebalga County
 57.14400 25.92102
 As there was a graveyard on the coast of the lake both in the ancient and medieval times, a local saying arose that a man passes to the kingdom of grubs after his death. Thus the lake and its surroundings acquired the name of Kāpurkalns (Grub Hill). This is what our ancestors called the sacred sites of Dear Māra which were powerful energetic sites in the open air. Such churches were attended by godparents to find the most appropriate name for their godchild. In Māra Church the newlywed were married according to the ancient customs.



16 RŪJIENA HOLY SPRING AND CROSS STONE

Rūjiena
 Pass the museum and walk right, passing the former priest's manor
 57.89139 25.34204
 Legend has it that once a Swede had attacked either a castle or a church and was seriously injured. After that he managed to get to the sacred spring and healed himself with its water. This was commemorated by putting up a cross stone. It may indeed happen that next to the old cult site later a cross stone was placed as a symbol of Christianity.



17 ANDREČĒNI DEVIL'S BED

Nauksēni Parish, Nauksēni County
 In a field, ~600 m NE from the Andrečēni homestead and ~100 m from the edge of the forest
 57.85737 25.43098
 The devil collected stones and hurried to Strenči to fill up the Gauja River. He urged his mother to go with him, but she refused. The Devil locked her to a stone and left, however, his intention was destroyed by the rooster. The devil fled back and roughed his mother up in anger.

22 RINŅUKALNS SETTLEMENT AND SACRIFICIAL STONE

Vecate Parish, Burtnieki County
 Accessing the object is rather difficult, one has to cross partially overgrown meadows for ~1 km, cross ditches. No indication signs. The stone can be invisible (under the mud or water)
 57.79343 25.15377
 An ancient cult site and one of the first discovered settlements of the Stone Age that has been scientifically studied since the 19th century. Research proves that Rinņukalns has been inhabited already since the 2nd millennium BC.

23 WITCHES' LARGE AND SMALL CLIFFS

Ape
 There is a brown sign on the A2 road. In Ape it is pointed out with an indication sign "Tourism Objects" that appears at several crossroads
 57.54082 26.70782
 Witches' activities are mainly related to the cliff called the Witches' Cliff and the springs flowing out at its foot. In tales the witches appear not as real women, witches, but as evil spirits that are more related to the springs. Though in the folklore of Northern Vidzeme witches' relationship to caves has not been established, thus the Witches' Cliffs (Witches' Hill) are to be seen as a mythological site rather than the caves.

24 ATPĪĻI SACRIFICIAL OAK AND CULT SITE

Triekā Parish, Beverina County
 There is a brown sign "Atpiļu ozols" (Atpiļi Oak), right nearby is a large boulder with the inscription "Atpiļi" and the Jumis sign
 57.56207 25.72827
 Since ancient times the Atpiļi Oak has been called the Sacrificial Oak. Yet back in the 70s of the 19th century, old inhabitants of the nearby surroundings sacrificed money, prievītes (ribbons with national



25 VOSVI GODS' HILL WITH THE MĀRA'S FOOTPRINT STONE

Vecalcene Parish, Alūksne County
 From the Vidzeme highway, there is an indication sign, further there is another sign to the site at the road intersection. One should go through a homestead
 57.57837 26.91776
 This is a significant example of the syncretism of religions when the ancient pagan beliefs and customs interweave into the Christian religion. In the legends, the image of the ancient Latvian deity Māra mixes with that of Christian Mary. The geologist and investigator of the ancient customs Viktors Grāvis described in the Nature and History Calendar of 1985 how he had found the ancient people's place for watching sunrises and sunsets in the Māra Footprint Stone on the God's Hill, something like an ancestors' sky observatory, because the observation conditions were ideal here to all directions when there were no trees.

26 VĪTOLĒNI DEVIL'S WATCH

Kocēni Parish, Kocēni County
 No indication signs, but there is a well visible path in nature
 57.51990 25.29841
 Once the God asked his enemy the devil to come to visit him. The devil dressed up, put also his watch – a stone – into his pocket. When it was already midnight and the festivity was still going on, the devil looked at his watch, and a rooster started to crow,



19 JĒČI BOWL-SHAPED HOLLOW STONE

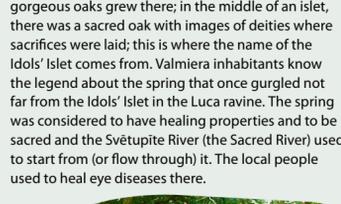
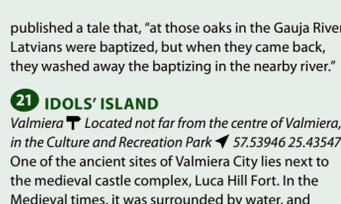
Nauksēni Parish, Nauksēni County
 In a meadow, ~200 m from the Jēči Mill and ~100 m from the Jēči homestead. Nearby there is the Jēči Mill, its park and nature trails. There is an indication sign
 57.84433 25.44893
 A typical bowl-shaped hollow stone; there are 20 of such stones in Latvia. On its surface, there is a bowl-shaped hollow that is 55–65 cm wide, 50 cm long, and 0.15 m deep. In the bowl-shaped hollow, there is one more bowl-shaped hollow – its depth is up to 2.5 cm, diameter of 30–38 cm. The bowl has been made rather carelessly and has not been finished. On the sides of the stone, there are the grooves typical for the stones with bowl-shaped hollows; they are rather poorly carved though and absent in some parts of the stone sides. 24 grooves can be well felt.

19 KAŅEPIĻI HOLY OAK

Jērcēni Parish, Strenči County
 100 m SW of the Kaņepiļi homestead. It is well visible already when arriving from the side of the Goripās homestead
 57.70155 25.66137
 The Kaņepiļi Oak is the second thickest in Latvia and in the Baltics. Its circumference is 9.4 m, age of 450 years. In the midst of the oak, there is such a large hollow that once 15 persons could fit into it. The tree hollow has 3 entrances: the large one in the north, a small slot in the south, but the third opening is in the upper part against the sky.

20 SĪMANĒNI HOLY OAK

Valmiera Parish, Burtnieki County
 Driving from Valmiera to Valka
 57.58234 25.52711
 People used to bring offerings to the oaks. Among them there was also a stone cairn – sacrificial altar. It was dug up during the Soviet Times and fractured into broken stone for highway construction needs. According to other news, there were five unmovable boulders set in a row. In 1890, a poet Rieteklis



TOURISM INFORMATION

Municipal agency "Cesvaine Tourism Centre"

1 Pils Str. (Cesvaine Castle), Cesvaine
 Phone +371 64852225
 turisma.info@cesvaine.lv, www.cesvaine.lv

Tourism Information Centre of Madona County Municipality

1 Saieta laukums, Madona, Madona County
 Phone +371 64860573, 29130437
 tic@madona.lv, www.madona.lv

Bērzaune Tourism Information Centre

7 Gaiziņa iela, Bērzaune, Madona County
 www.berzaune.lv, info.berzaune@inbox.lv

Tourism Information Office of Vecpiebalga County

Taurene, at the Nēķeni Manor House
 Tourism Information Office is open from May 15 till October 15 from Wednesday till Sunday 10.00–17.00, Phone +371 26110724
 info.vecpiebalga@inbox.lv

Valmiera Tourism Information Centre

10 Rigas Str., Valmiera
 Phone +371 64207177, Fax +371 64250837
 tic@valmiera.lv, http://visit.valmiera.lv
 www.facebook.com/visitvalmiera
 youtube: visitvalmiera

Valmiermuiza Tourism Information Office

2 Dzirnavu Str., Valmiermuiza, Valmiera Parish, Burtnieki County
 Phone +371 29135438

Burtnieki Tourism Information Office

15 Jaunatnes Str., Burtnieki
 Phone +371 64226502

Tourism Information and Business Support Centre of Mazsalaca County

1 Rigas Str., Mazsalaca, Mazsalaca County
 Phone +371 64251776, 28374774
 turisms@mazsalacasnovads.lv
 harijs.rokpelnis@mazsalacasnovads.lv

Rūjiena Tourism Information Centre

3 Raiņa Str., Rūjiena
 Phone +371 64263278, 29464888
 tic@rujiena.lv

REGIONAL EVENT CALENDAR

SIMJŪDS FAIR

On the 1st Saturday of October - In Valmiera
 In the Middle Ages, it used to be one of the oldest fairs in Vidzeme – the last fair before winter set in where people could buy household goods and entertain themselves by singing, dancing and good joking.



AIVIEKSTE FESTIVAL

On the 1st Saturday of July - In Lubāna
 It is an international amateur arts festival where people, living on the banks of the Aiviekste River, come together from Rēzekne, Balvi, Rugāji, Lubāna, Madona, Krustpils, and Pļaviņas County. It is a great opportunity to explore the beautiful provincial town, to have a swim in the Aiviekste River, to enjoy amateur arts concerts, to get to know craftsmen skills and their art-work, to taste products of local producers, to dance till sunrise at the open-air dancing party and to watch the reflection of candle lights in the Aiviekste River supplemented by gorgeous firework flowers in the sky.

GAUJA'S RAFTSMEN FESTIVAL

On the 3rd Saturday of May - In Strenči
 In order to preserve the professional skills of timber raftsmen on the Gauja River and popularize the tradition of roping rafts, every year on the 3rd Saturday of May in Strenči the Gauja's Raftsmen Festival takes place. The event starts already a few days before when at the Spicu Bridge a raft is roped and a two day rafting takes place on the Gauja River, starting from the Spicu Bridge to the Old Oak in Strenči. On the day of the festivity, there is a fair held at the Strenči Open-Air Stage and a joint welcoming of the raft at the Old Oak; one has an opportunity also to enjoy raftsmen's soup and rafting excitement, other joyful activities for children and adults in the raftsmen spirit. During the day, there is an extensive cultural programme, but in the evening one can enjoy music on the Gauja River and dance till sunrise at the first open-air party.



CHOOSE PIEBALGA!

In the beginning of August - In Jaunpiebalga
 Every year in the beginning of August, Jaunpiebalga County welcomes people to a great swelling and showing off event "in the spirit of people of Piebalga". On this day, the ancient craft skills, household manufacturing traditions, and entrepreneurship are especially honoured, and, of course, an extensive cultural and entertainment programme are available.

GULBENE-ALŪKSNE BĀNĪTIS FESTIVAL

On the 1st Saturday of September - Gulbene-Ālūksne
 The last regularly operating narrow gauge railway (bānītis) not only in Latvia, but in the whole Baltics runs between Gulbene and Ālūksne. To honour our old-timer, since the year 2000 on the 1st Saturday of September, the Bānītis Festival is held. A festival where each visitor has an opportunity to enjoy a ride in a small coach and get to know the Bānītis country – a place where the Bānītis sleeps, where it is taken care of, from which it starts its every day run lasting an hour and a half, where a fair is held, where the railway people entertain the visitors, where the railway terminal is. All those places have their own names - Gulbene, Stāmeriena, Pāparde, Ālūksne, and at every place surprises, refreshments, and entertainment will be awaiting you!

ĀRAIŠI FESTIVAL

End of July - In Araiši
 It is an annual cultural and educational event where an issue of the Latvian history is approached. (In 2009 "Latvian Roots", in 2010 "Myths and Truth in the Latvian Archaeology", in 2011 "Experimenting and Reconstructing in the Latvian Archaeology", in 2012 "A Soldier from the Stone Age till Nowadays")



Ancient natural sacred sites of Vidzeme conceal tales about a voluminous period of time. The most ancient ones – cup-marked stones of the Bronze Age (around the 1st millennium BC) are witnesses of the traditions and course of life of the Finno-Ugric tribes. Those are followed by sacred sites created by the Latgalls and the Livs residing in the territory of Vidzeme that can be attributed to the Iron Age. Along with expansion of Christianity in the 13th century, many sacred sites were destroyed; nevertheless people, in spite of different times and rulers, created new ones. Ancient cult sites were quite popular in the 19th century, in some areas even up to the 50s of the 20th century there were rituals held.

The route will introduce travellers to the most significant ancient natural sacred sites of Vidzeme that reflect traditional spiritual beliefs of our ancestors, insuring also inheritance of ancestors' beliefs nowadays.



Ancient natural sacred sites

VIDZEME
TOURISM MAP



Sveiks, ceļnieki!
Tu pašlaik savās rokās turi gabaliņu iespējama ceļojuma vēsturē – karti mūsu senču paražu, ticējumu, teikumu un nostāstu pasaule, par kurām vēl arvien dabā liecina Svētvietas – kalni, alas, dižakmeņi, avoti un citas īpašas vietas, kuru vēsturiskā nozīme attiecas uz pirmskristietības laiku vai arī tās pastāvējušas paralēli tam, uzturot dzīvas senču tradīcijas, kādas tās tika piekoptas pirms kristiešu ienākšanas Baltijas jūras reģionā.

Šajā izdevumā Tu atradīsi daudzus gadu laikā vāktas informācijas apkopojumu par svētvietaīm Latvijā, kā tās atrast, kā arī ziņas par to, kāpēc tās tiek uzskatītas par īpašām, kāda veida tradīcijas tajās tikušas piekoptas. Ēit iekļauti gan zināmi un valsts aizsardzībā esoši kultūras pieminekļi, gan vietas, par kuru piederību senajām dabas svētvietaīm liecina nosaukumi vai dažkārt tikai nostāsti un teikas (piemēram, Velna vietas).

Ceram, ka šis ceļvedis palīdzēs ne vien atklāt jaunus dabas un kultūras vērtības, bet arī atjauno piemirstas zināšanas par iemiesliem, kāpēc jaunais pāris kēta dienā ozola sien dzīparus, bet vecmāmiņa met avotā naidiņu pirms smej no tā ūdeni. Varbūt pa ceļam satiksiet veco Velnu ar kārtējo akmeni padusē un nedarbu galvā, varbūt pati Laima izpildīs kādu karstu vēlēšanos, bet varbūt – vienkārsi gūsiet prieku no būšanas Dabā un saskaņā ar to.

Legend

1 Bānōzi Holy Spring	2 Bānōzi Devil's Stone – Devil's Gate Stone	3 Devil's Shoe on the bank of the Alauksts	4 Bolēni Eye Spring	5 Ivāni Devil's Stone	6 Valži Devil's Stone	7 Kāpurkalns Hill – Māra's Shrine and Māra's Stone	8 Zlāiskalns Hill with the Sacrificial Stone	9 Dāvriņi Large Stone	10 Large Baugi Greiži Stone	11 Devil's Oak – Dreimāgi Oak	12 Pantene Holy Spring	13 Jaunulēni Devil's Stone	14 Mazsalaca Devil's Cellar	15 Souring Tub Spring and the Cave	16 Rūjiena Holy Spring and Cross Stone	17 Andrečēni Devil's Bed	18 Jēči Bowl-Shaped Hollow Stone	19 Kaņepji Holy Oak	20 Simanēni Holy Oak	21 Idols' Island	22 Rīggaukals Settlement and Sacrificial Stone	23 Witches' Large and Small Cliffs	24 Atpilji Sacrificial Oak and Cult Site	25 Vosvi God's Hill with the Māra's Footprint Stone	26 Vitolēni Devil's Watch	27 Meliāči Large Stone	28 Gulbišu Upurakmens	29 Liepas Lielās Elītes aila ar avotu	30 Žākū Veinakmens	31 Raganu Kalna Acu avots	32 Zīu Svētavots	33 Ūšņakmens	34 Tirzas svētavots	35 Tūteres ozola vieta	36 Saufiņu Liepākmens	37 Sietņiezis un tš Velna	38 Briķu silavots	39 Vaidavas pilskalna bjodakmens	40 Krāku avoti	41 Aģūži Veinakmens	42 Libiēšu pilskalna Upurala	43 Zauskas priede