



BALTS' ROAD

COURONIANS | SEMIGALLIANS | SELONIANS



LATVIA | LITHUANIA

Sightseeing objects, tourist route



CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Sightseeing map	6
Couronian Route Segment	8
Couronians in Latvia.....	9
Couronians in Lithuania.....	24
Semigallian Route Segment	32
Semigallians in Latvia.....	33
Semigallians in Lithuania.....	46
Selonian Route Segment	56
Selonians in Latvia.....	57
Selonians in Lithuania.....	62
Historical Map of Tribal Lands in the 12th and 13th centuries	70

WE ALSO RECOMMEND VISITING

Kurzeme Region, www.kurzeme.lv

Zemgale Region, www.zemgale.lv

Šiauliai Greater Region, www.visitsiauliai.lt



www.balticroute.com

The logotype of the tourism route "Balts' Road" ("Baltų kelias") was created based on the horseman-shaped brass pendant found in the archaeological excavations in the vicinity of Plungė, Didvyčiai. The archaeological finding dates back to the 11th/12th century. The amulet was only 3.4 cm long and 2.9 cm wide and was either attached to the belt or worn around the neck.

Šiauliai Tourism Information Centre, www.visitsiauliai.lt

Zemgale Planning Region, www.zemgale.lv

National Regional Development Agency, www.nrda.lt

Kurzeme Planning Region, www.kurzemesregions.lv

Talsi Regional Municipality, www.talsumuzejs.lv

Jelgava City Council, www.jelgava.lv

LET'S HIT THE "BALTS' ROAD"!

We, Lithuanians and Latvians, descendants of Balts, are committed to preserve the age-old knowledge of our ancestors and pass it on to future generations. To do this, we created a tourism route – the "Balts' Road".

Balts belong to an ancient group of Indo-European people, who nowadays speak Latvian and Lithuanian. Balts included several tribes, similar to each other yet unique, who later merged to form Latvian and Lithuanian nations.

The "Balts' Road" is 2145 km long, and is further subdivided in the Couronian (~ 790 km), Semigallian (~ 620 km) and Selonian (~ 735 km) route segments. Each of the segments runs through areas in Latvia and Lithuania, where once some of Balts' tribes – the ancient Couronians, Semigallians and Selonians – lived.

In ancient times, **Couronians** inhabited territories in the north-west of Lithuania (the surroundings of modern Klaipėda and Palanga) and west of Kurzeme (Courland) (up to the mouth of the River Venta in the Baltic Sea). Though Couronians are considered to be mighty warriors and seafarers, they were also farmers and stockbreeders to care for their living during peacetime.

Semigallians resided in the central areas of the present-day Latvia – Semigallia (Zemgale) plain – and in the north of Lithuania. They were among the most militant and prosperous nations in northern Europe, and of the nations living in the territory of Latvia they were the last to give in to Crusaders and Christianity. Besides farming, Semigallians were also excellent traders.

The lands of the ancient **Selonians** are found in the south-eastern part of the present-day Latvia and in the north-east of Lithuania. The history of Selonians is an unrevealed mystery, but they are known to have been skilful farmers on their beautiful landscapes. Nowadays, the ancient and spectacular Selonian hillforts are witnesses of their unique history.

More than 110 tourist objects will tell you the history, culture, and traditions of the three Baltic tribes. Hillforts included in the route allow enjoying the landscape with the eyes of our ancestors. Visitors may as well enjoy the walking trails, picnic areas and observation platforms, which are a relaxing improvement to the long-gone fortifications of the hillforts. Balts were pagans due to their close relationship with the nature as a result of the farming and stockbreeding lifestyle; therefore, natural objects and phenomena were widely worshiped.



The route includes ancient places of worship: springs, superlative trees, old forests, lakes, hills, stones and caves. The meaning and role of these places in the life of our ancestors is told by tales, stories and mythology and is unveiled by imagination.

Nowadays, the footprints of Couronians, Semigallians, and Selonians are stored in museums in the form of archaeological findings. It is exactly the place to look for evidence of the lifestyle, traditions and historical events of our ancestors. To enjoy the hands-on experience, learn crafts and buy souvenirs, tourists are invited to visit craft centres and creative workshops.

Another option to unveil the history of Balts is found outdoors: nature trails, open-air, historical and educational parks and centres, while you can treat your taste buds at culinary heritage objects on the route, which offer home-made bread, dried fish, beer, honey and other local countryside goods.

Look out for the route map “Balts’ Road” to find the places. The map also includes eight customised routes:

A Couronian Warrior. Feel the Power of Couronians!
Couronian Places of Worship. Feel the Holiness of Couronians!

Mighty and Rich Semigallia. Explore Semigallians!
A Journey through the Lands of Ancient Selonians.
The Way of Happiness, Love and Wisdom.
Searching for National Memory.

The Great Story of Lithuanian History.
The Way of the Holy Fire.



FIND for GemAR app on Google Play or App Store, download and open it on your phone or tablet.



SEARCH for the following symbol in the brochure – on pages 5, 6, 8, 32, 56 and cover 3.



SCAN the image and watch inspirational videos about Couronians, Semigallians, and Selonians.



SIGHTSEEING MAP



DESIGNATIONS

- 55 Hillforts, inhabited settlements, ancient battle sites, ancient burial grounds
- 55 Museums, educational programs, famous people's homes and cemeteries
- 55 Nature, sacred places, superlative trees, stones, springs, idol hills, mythological characters
- 55 Crafts centres, traditional culture, craftsmen, beekeepers, culinary heritage

COURONIAN ROUTE SEGMENT

Couronians were one of the Baltic tribes, which once inhabited Courland and the north-western part of present-day Lithuania. Scandinavian sagas and chronicles depict Couronians as mighty warriors and plunderers, but they were also farmers and stockbreeders during peacetime. They strongly believed in various deities and begging for their goodwill carried out rituals at places of worship, such as sacred stones and trees, sacred groves and forests. Although the beginnings of the Couronian tribe date back to around the 1st century AD, as elsewhere in the Baltic region, the tribe faced the greatest changes in its development with the arrival of Christian missions and crusaders in the late 12th and 13th centuries. According to written sources of the time, there were nine lands in Courland: Vanema, the land between Skrunda and Semigallia, Bandava, Ventava, Ceklis, Piemare, Duvzare, Megava, and Pilsāts. The lands were ruled by leaders with their own armies, and only Lamekin, referred to as the king in the sources, exerted power over larger areas. Couronians had their own language, which completely disappeared in the 15th and 16th centuries.



COURONIANS IN LATVIA

SIGHTSEEING

1

The horse and wild ox pasture in Pape Nature Park. Once upon a time, before humans actively engaged in farming, these animals were common to European habitats, contributing to the diversity of nature and meadow formation. Pape Nature Park offers a walk along the Baltic Sea or a longer hike around Lake Pape. Nearby the lake, there are several ancient cult places and secular stones with Ezerskola Sacrificial Stone being the most famous. Wild horses and oxen graze on the eastern bank of the lake. To see ancient buildings, tools, garments and a more than 1,100-year-old log-boat, visit a typical fishermen/farmer house of the coastal area – “Vitolnieki” in Pape Ķonu village.

📍 **The municipalities of Rucava and Nica**
GPS: “Vitolnieki” 56.140790, 21.037852,
pasture 56.19268, 21.08332,
Ezerskola Sacrificial Stone 56.22638, 21.07148
 🌐 **www.pdf-pape.lv**

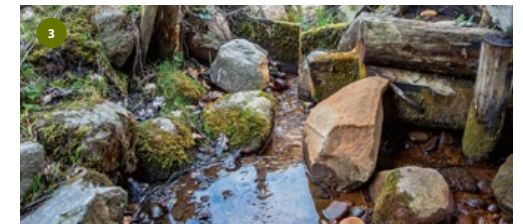
1



2

The Ethnographic House “Zvanitāji” offers ancient traditions in contemporary interpretation. The goodwives host a traditional cultural program “Rucava Feast of Honour”, which introduces the dishes of locals, dishes ideologically inherited from the ancestors of Couronians: rye bread, carrot-pie *sklandrausis* or *žograusis*, white butter with potatoes. The house has retained its ancient appearance with a large central room for family gatherings and a fireplace chimney in the kitchen.

📍 **“Zvanitāji”, Rucava, Rucava municipality**
GPS: 56.161521 21.161599



3

The Leju Sacred Spring. A long-time known Couronian place of worship, where offerings were left. According to a legend, the spring originated from the tears of people as they tried to flood the River Sventāja and thus stop the suitor of the local girl Ieva. At that time, love won and the suitor overcame all obstacles. Nowadays, the spring with its characteristic orange hue still serves to quench thirst of old and young travellers.

📍 **Rucava parish, Rucava municipality**
GPS: 56.152967, 21.222250

4

The Dunika Bog Trail. Dunika Bog is among the largest and most beautiful bogs in Kurzeme, also known under the name of Tīras Bog. It is also the place with the longest bog trail in Latvia. The 7,000-years-old bog has survived the Couronian era and hides evidence of the nearby battles, such as the Couronian antiques deposit of the 9th century: a set of weapons and two spruce shields indicative of a Couronian man's garment. Findings are exhibited at the Liepāja Museum.

📍 **Dunika parish, Rucava municipality**
GPS: 56.282890, 21.383610



4



6

5

The Liepāja Museum is one of the largest regional museums in Latvia. It contains many unique exhibits, including the Grobiņa stele – the Scandinavian ornamented column, which was found in Priediena ancient graveyard and dates back to the 7th–8th centuries. In the museum, visitors will also find other testimonies of the cohabitation of Scandinavian settlers and Couronians in the Grobiņa vicinity.

📍 **Kūrmājas prospekts 16, Liepāja**
GPS: 56.510860, 21.002270
🌐 www.liepajasmuzejs.lv

6

The Liepāja Crafts House. Contemporary art, rooted in regional traditions and created by skilful masters: weaving and folk costumes, fabric mosaic, jewellery forging, candle making, wicker weaving, amber processing, leather crafts, pottery, ceramic art and yarn dyeing. Here you will find the world's longest amber beads – 123 m long and weighing over 19 kg.

📍 **Dārza Street 4/8, Liepāja**
GPS: 56.5073, 21.01716
🌐 www.saivaart.com

7

The Grobiņa Archaeological Ensemble.

The word *Grobiņa* derives from Couronian language with the meaning “hornbeam forest”, and the town is associated with the settlement of Seeburg (Jūrpils), as mentioned in a chronicle of 9th century. Between the 7th and 9th centuries, around 300–500 Norsemen shared the settlement together with local Couronians. The Grobiņa Archaeological Ensemble is inscribed on the Tentative List of Latvia of UNESCO World Heritage List, and it consists of several archaeological monuments: hillfort Skābarža kalns with its settlement, and flat burial sites (Smukumi, Priediens, Atkalni), burial mound sites (Porāni). Archaeological artefacts found there are exhibited in Liepāja, Rīga, and St. Petersburg. Live History Festival SEEBURG is an annual event taking place on the last Saturday in May with ancient battle re-enactments, crafts demonstrations and boat trip with a Couronian Viking barge.

📍 **Grobina, Grobina municipality**
GPS: Skābaržkalns 56.53308, 21.16398
🌐 www.grobinasturisms.lv



7





9

The Memorial Site of the Battle of Durbe.

In 1260, the mouth of the River Trumpe in Lake Durbe served as the battlefield in a battle between the combined German Order troops with Couronians and Estonians on one side and Samogitians on the other side. Soon after the battle went off, Couronians and Estonians left it. Samogitians completely defeated the German Order, killing both the Order Master Burkhard of Hornhausen and about 150 knights. Following the Battle of Durbe, the Order had to conquer Kurzeme (Courland) once again. A memorial stone at the top of the hillfort reminds of one of the biggest battles in local history.

📍 **Durbe, Durbe municipality**
GPS: 56.59026, 21.3639

COURONIAN WARRIORS AND PLUNDERING

Couronians were skilled warriors and traders with their warrior spirit manifesting in fierce attacks and protecting their hillforts, which were well-fortified and extremely difficult to conquer. Besides fighting their closest neighbours, Couronians, likewise Vikings, travelled by boats to faraway lands on the coast of the Baltic Sea. Frequently, plundering and trading followed each other during the same trip. Allegedly, Couronian boats resembled Viking ships and suited the navigation of inland waterways and deep seas. In addition to axes and spears, Couronian warriors preferred swords and used shields to defend themselves. The richest warriors wore iron armour and helmets. Each man had a knife, usually attached to a leather belt.

8

The Active Tourism Centre “Couronian Viking settlement” in Grobiņa.

From the 7th to the 9th century, Norsemen and Couronians co-existed on the banks of the River Ālande. During the Viking Era, the plundering and trading Norsemen dominated European waters, but around 11th century, Couronians became more active in the Baltic Sea. Nowadays, visitors are invited to take a boat trip along the River Ālande on a Couronian barge; during the trip, local history will be unveiled with the help of legends about the river and the great hillfort Skābarža kalns.

📍 **Pilādžu Street 3, Grobiņa, Grobiņa municipality**
GPS: 56.53406, 21.15124

🌐 www.grobinasvikingi.lv

10

The Kapsēde Giant Boulder (*Kapsēdes dižakmens*).

Its impressive circumference reaches 16.20 m. A legend explains why part of the boulder is split off: “Devil stole the stone from the Castle of Thunderer, but the Thunderer caught the thief and split the stone with a lightning bolt”. Another story tells that “once upon a time, the huge stone was carried by a grey-haired old man in his cart. While on the way, a harsh thunderstorm scared the old man, who dropped the stone on the ground”. The inscription on the boulder was engraved during the First World War.

📍 **Medzes pagasts, Grobiņas novads**
GPS: 56.58674, 21.10868



11

Smoked fish tasting in Pāvilosta. Pāvilosta is located on the coast of the Baltic Sea in the ancient Couronian land Piemare. Since ancient times, fishermen have lived here, and their trade and traditions of fish smoking have been inherited to the present day. Here, you can enjoy freshly smoked fish and try fish smoking yourself. The kind of fish served depends on the haul of local fishermen.

📍 **Holiday house "Zvilnis", Smilšu Street 17, Pāvilosta, Pāvilosta municipality**
GPS: 56.89118, 21.18681



11



12

12

The Ulmales-Piņņu Bullaun (*Ulmales Piņņu bļodakmens*). Stones with a bowl-shaped hollow are among the most common cult objects in Latvia. The Piņņu cylindrical bullaun with an artificially shaped bowl depression is the best example of its type in Latvia. In ancient times, small offerings were placed in its bowl. Also known under the name of Dievekļa Stone. It features remarkable 46 lateral grooves, each 3–4 cm wide.

📍 **Saka parish, Pāvilosta municipality**
GPS: 56.931716, 21.281333

13

The Bakery "Bērziņi" in Jūrkalne. In Jūrkalne, a place where Couronian and Livonian traditions intertwine, the skills of ancient crafts are preserved and developed. The hosts of "Bērziņi" bake home-made bread from wheat and rye flour according to old family recipes in a traditional bread oven. Order bread in advance, or make your own loaf on site!

📍 **"Bērziņi", Jūrkalne parish, Ventspils municipality**
GPS: 56.994577, 21.390556

14

Dižgabala Hillock and the tavern "Spēlmaņu krogs" in Alsunga. The origin of the town Alsunga is linked to Couronians, although nowadays it is deemed the cultural space of *Suiti*. In the town centre, a Couronian hillfort – Dižgabala Hillock emerges on the bank of Lake Dzirnezers. Alsunga once belonged to Bandava, which was ruled by the Couronian king Lamekin, and the settlement was mentioned in sources of the 13th century. Next to the hillfort, the tavern "Spēlmaņu krogs" serves traditional Couronian dishes according to generation-old recipes.

📍 **"Spēlmaņu krogs", Alsunga, Alsunga municipality**
GPS: 56.98039, 21.56973



14





COURONIAN FOOD

In terms of food, Couronians did not differ much from their neighbours. Being farmers, Couronians cultivated both grain (rye, wheat, barley, oats) and beans, flax and turnips. From these products, they made bread and porridge, the latter being the main dish supplemented by meat. Couronians bred pigs, cows, oxen, sheep, and domestic poultry. Hunting, fishing and beekeeping added to the variety of their diet. Hunting for meat played a secondary role; however, this was dependent on the place of residence. Couronians hunted around 35 different species of animals, including bison, elk, roe, and beaver. Bones were processed into handy everyday items, but the animal skins were used for barter. They consumed mostly freshwater fish, since at that time the seaside was sparsely inhabited and sea fishing required sophisticated fishing gear.

INHABITED HILLFORTS AND SETTLEMENTS OF COURONIANS

Couronian dwelling sites were hillforts and settlements. They were usually located in higher places in the direct proximity of waters to make use of natural terrain advantages – on hillocks, between two river junctions. In case one of the sides granted easier access, it was fortified by artificial ramparts and moats. In the event of a war, the inhabitants of nearby farmsteads sought shelter in the hillfort. Apole, Eke, Vārtāja, Veckuldīga, Talsi and Sabile hillforts with their settlements are some of the remarkable centres. Hillforts were home to craftsmen and a lively market place with livestock running around freely. Unique source of information on the layout of the Couronian fortified farmstead (hillfort) is provided by the saga of Egill Skallagrímsson: the farmstead was surrounded by a wooden fence, buildings inside the fence were built of large logs with board partition walls, the entrance to the building was on the second floor. There were buildings of various function: a living house, a kitchen house, a barn, a warehouse with sleeping rooms on the second floor.

COURONIAN KINGS

It is believed that Couronian Kings are the descendants of Couronian rulers, but there is no direct evidence of this. Once upon a time, the kings were renowned of their ability to make arrangements and agreements with warriors of the Order, and they were granted a number of privileges and land in exchange for the service in the Order troops. The families of Couronian kings even had their own coats of arms. Later, the nobility also respected the ownership rights of the kings, and the privileges vanished only in the early 20th century. Nowadays, articles once owned by the kings are scattered around different places; some of these are exhibited in Kuldīga, while others in the Liepāja Museum. In the village Ķoniņciems, the restored oak pole bearing the coat of arms of Peniķi family stands next to the house "Atālmājas".

15

Veckuldīga Hillfort was once standing in the middle of the lands inhabited by Couronians, on the banks of the River Venta. At these times, it was the largest centre of the Couronian land Bandava. A 10-ha large settlement stretched around it. The hillfort with a settlement existed until the 14th century, when its inhabitants moved to the new place of Kuldīga, near the German Order castle.

📍 **Kuldīga, Kuldīga municipality**

GPS: 56.99432, 21.96078



17



16

Venta Rapid Waterfall (*Ventas rumba*). Spanning across the river for 270 m, it is Europe's widest waterfall. In summer, you can go for a refreshing swim or cross the rapid on foot. Spring is the best time to watch the flying fish trying to overcome the rapid and move upstream to spawn. Multiple legends seek to explain the formation of the Venta Rapid Waterfall, such as about the Devil who tried to fill the river up with sand overnight, but was disturbed by a singing rooster in the morning. No less interesting is the story of Duke Jacob, who ordered to blow up the rapid to create a shipway, but the first explosion resulted in a crack in the walls of the castle and the work was stopped.

📍 **Kuldīga, Kuldīga municipality**

GPS: 56.96823, 21.97912

17

The Ventspils Museum is located in the Livonian Order Castle of 13th century. It exhibits household articles of people from the Stone Age up to the 20th century. The oldest anthropological item found in the territory of Latvia is the 12,500-year-old axe from a reindeer horn. The exposition tells also about the culture of the inhabitants of Ventspils and the surrounding area – Couronians, Livonians and Latvians – in the 13th–19th centuries, with particular emphasis on the changes in women's clothing. The museum building has been renovated and, likewise its expositions, guides through the development and reconstruction stages of the castle.

📍 **Jāņa Street 17, Ventspils**

GPS: 57.39615, 21.55869

<http://muzejs.ventspils.lv>

18

The Staldzene Bluff (*Staldzenes stāvkrasts*) is an excellent walking and swimming area with hidden historical heritage. It is exactly where the Staldzene deposit was found – a set of bronze scraps made around the 7th century BC. The finding includes jewellery and antiques, as well as many modified items as a proof of the everyday life of people of these times, and the available metal processing techniques and approaches in the Bronze Age. It is believed that the deposit, once buried in the sand of dunes, is the remains of a wrecked Norsemen ship. It is currently exhibited at the Ventspils Museum.

📍 **Staldzene Beach, Ventspils**

GPS: 57.44553, 21.60352





22

19

The Grīži Devil's Bench (*Grīžu Velna beņķis*) is an impressive stone in the shape of lounge chair. It is located in an evergreen spruce forest, and once served as a landmark of the ancient Couronian and Livonian land borders. According to stories, the Devil sat on it long enough until the boulder acquired its current shape. The Devil's Bench has a remarkable circumference of 17 m and reaches a height of 3 m.

📍 **Tārgale parish, Ventspils municipality**
GPS: 57.38049 21.77225



19

20

Talsi Hillfort and Lake Vilkmuiža. Talsi hillfort was the centre of the ancient Couronian land. The hillfort was originally inhabited by Livonians, but following the Couronian expansion in Courland in the 11th century, it landed in their possession and was heavily fortified. The so-called "healer's hut" – a small log house with bathhouse tools – was discovered on the hillfort. Lake Vilkmuiža features the unique Couronian fire burial sites of the 11th–14th centuries. Researchers are still arguing, whether these were intentionally immersed or this is due to flooding of the burial ground. The antiques found in Lake Vilkmuiža are exhibited at the Talsi Regional Museum and the Latvian National Museum of History.

📍 **Talsi, Talsi municipality**
GPS: hillfort 57.24277, 22.59822,
Lake Vilkmuiža 57.25321, 22.58714

21

The Talsi Regional Museum is located on the highest hillock in Talsi – Hillock Tigulkalns. The museum boasts of archaeological collections of Couronian items found in Lake Vilkmuiža, in Talsi. Gorgeous jewellery – neck rings, brooches, bracelets and rings – is exhibited among the ancient household items, tools and weapons.

📍 **Kārļa Milēnbaha Street 19, Talsi,**
Talsi municipality
GPS: 57.24256, 22.6033
🌐 www.talsumuzejs.lv

22

The Idol Linden of Valdemārpils (*Elku liepa*) is the largest and thickest superlative linden in the Baltic States, the age of which is estimated at 400–500 years. The linden grows next to the former manor house, reaching a circumference of 8.8 m. According to legends, the linden was an ancient cult tree with different rituals taking place at its feet. In Latvian mythology, linden is a symbol of the feminine; and a beautiful maiden is compared to a healthy linden tree.

📍 **Sasmaka Manor, Valdemārpils,**
Talsi municipality
GPS: 57.37892, 22.60024



20



21



COURONIAN PLACES OF WORSHIP

Couronians were among the last to give in to Christianity. They believed in the magical power of natural objects, used to communicate with the spirit world, worshiping multiple gods. Nowadays, such places are traced by their names. Worship hills were often located near hillforts, featuring both natural and manmade modifications. Sacred stones, trees and groves are identified, and offerings were also left in springs and caves. At the present time, sacred trees, mostly lindens and oaks, have often reached the size of superlative trees that enhance their special aura. One of the best-known sacred linden groves was once in Ķoniņciems.

23

The Krauju Giant Boulder (*Krauju Lielais akmens*). The largest boulder in Kurzeme with a circumference of 26 m is located in Vandzene. The boulder was once used as a place of offerings and bonfires were lit for sacrifice. A large linden, now gone, was once standing next to the boulder.

📍 **Vandzene parish, Talsi municipality**

GPS: 57.35035, 22.72281

24

Mežīte Hillfort boasts of outstanding landscape and reaches high above all the other parts of the ancient archaeological complex, such as the Hill of Idols (*Elku kalns*), several ancient burial grounds, and two worship stones – the cup-marked stones. Once, there was an ancient town stretching over an area of almost three hectares around the hillfort. The archaeological excavations at Mežīte Hillfort supported the presence of ancient Couronians and Vendians – inhabitants of northern Courland.

📍 **Lauciene parish, Talsi municipality**

GPS: 57.18627, 22.7097

25

Māra's Chambers. Natural formation consisting of a ravine with a waterfall at the top and two caves on the right river bank and one on the left river bank. It was a place of worship; offerings were placed in the holy caves at least since the Middle Ages. Various stories about Māra's Chambers have been published. One of the legends tells of the "holy maids", who dwelled there; while washing the linen at the end of the working week, intense steam was observed coming from the chambers. They say that the holy maids are seen dancing and weaving in bright moonlight.

📍 **Ģibuļi parish, Talsi municipality**

GPS: 57.08114, 22.36665

26

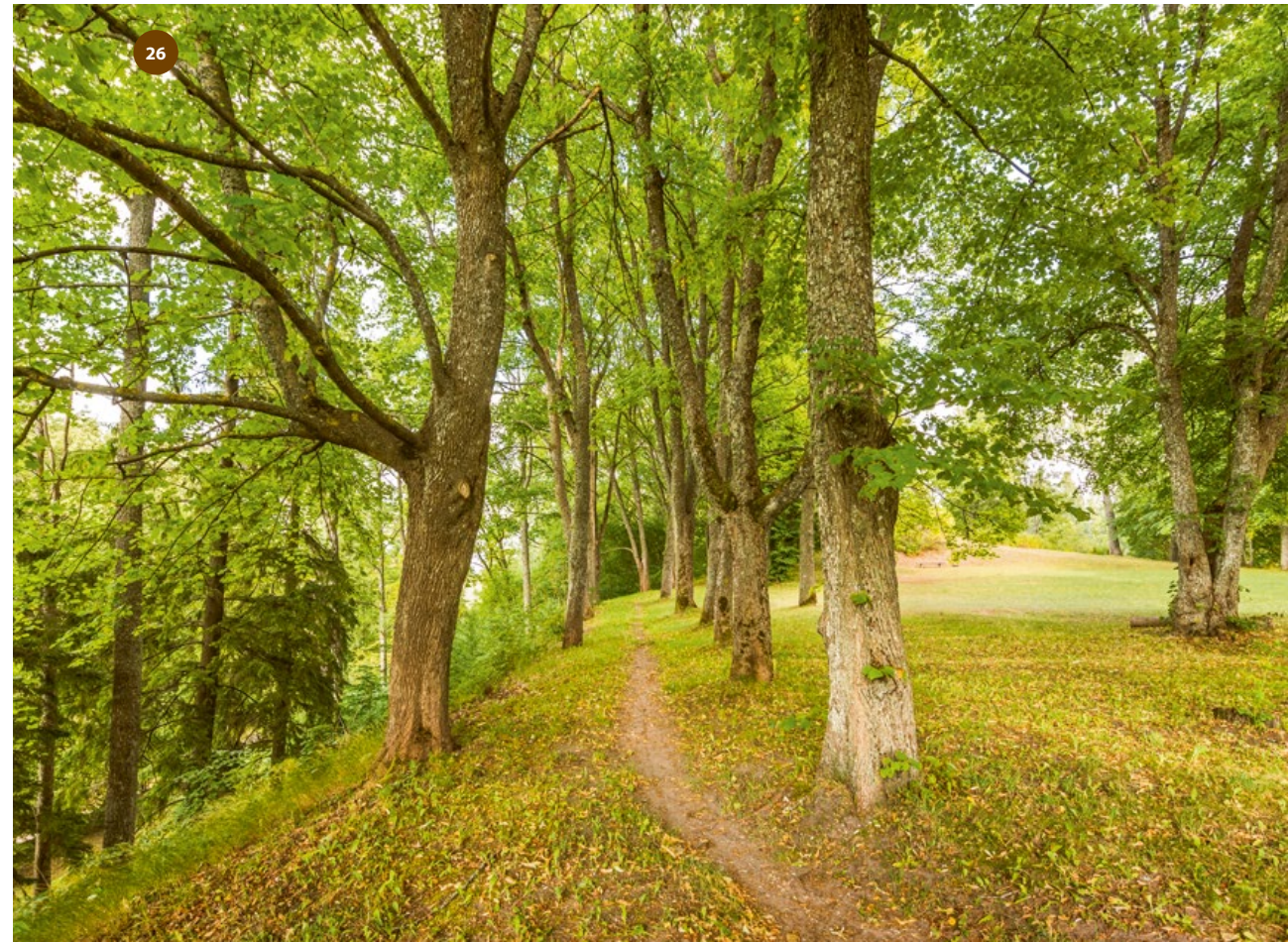
Sabile Hillfort. The origin of the small town of Sabile in the picturesque valley of the River Abava goes back to a hillfort inhabited about 1,000 years ago. Livonians were among the first to dwell on the hillfort, but following the Couronian expansion in Courland the hillfort went into the hands of Couronians. The hillfort was inhabited from the 10th to the 13th century. Nowadays, the hillock offers a magnificent view of the nearby area, including the vineyards cultivated next to it.

📍 **Sabile, Talsi municipality**

GPS: 57.04695, 22.57668



25



26

27

The Potters' Workshop "Podnīca" in Saldus. Saldus is a long-inhabited settlement with its history tracing back to a Couronian hillfort next to Lake Saldus. *Kapelleru nams* or the House of Kapeller is a centre of crafts and arts with the pottery workshop of Artis Kleinbergs nicely hidden in its basement. Items at the pottery "Podnīca" are made according to ancient traditions. In the yard, there is a smoke ceramic kiln, and public events take place to experience the ancient craft with one's own eyes.

📍 **Kapelleru nams, Striķu Street 7, Saldus, Saldus municipality**
GPS: 56.66506, 22.49458



27



28

28

The Bee Apiary "Kāres". Already in ancient times, there were thousands of bee trees or hollow trees in Courland, from which honey was collected by Couronians. The beekeeper Jānis Vainovskis with more than 20 years of experience in beekeeping has a mobile apiary; he relocates the roughly 300 bee colonies multiple times during the season. "Kāres" is a place to taste, buy and get hands-on experience in honey production.

📍 **"Kāres", Blīdene parish, Brocēni municipality**
GPS: 56.64019, 22.69121
 🌐 **www.meduspils.lv**



ANCIENT BEEKEEPING

In ancient times, bee colonies inhabited both natural and artificial tree hollows, and these trees are known as apiary trees or hollow pine trees. Honey was the only food sweetener. It was also used to make an alcoholic beverage, the mead. Beeswax was a particularly valuable product, and at that time, many Western European churches were illuminated with wax candles coming directly from the Baltic region. Nowadays, the beekeeping trade in Kurzeme is demonstrated in Laumu Nature Park (www.laumas.lv) and in the study apiary "Strops", in "Ciravās Ķēniņi".

29

Embūte. Once, in the scenic area of Embūte, one of the most powerful Couronian castles was located. The ancient hillfort and scenery can be enjoyed walking on nature trails, visiting the Devil's Dam (*Joda dambis*) and climbing the observation tower. The oak of Indulis and Ārija reminds of the ancient tale of the Latvian version of Romeo and Juliet, which Rainis used as a storyline for his play "Indulis un Ārija". No less famous was the castle place of the German Order, which the Lithuanian king Mindaugas tried to occupy around the middle of the 13th century. According to a legend, the castle was protected by the Devil, who made a rampart from soil, which nowadays is known as the Devil's Dam.

📍 **Embūte, Vaiņode municipality**
GPS: observation tower 56.509967, 21.817213, information centre 56.50584, 21.81918

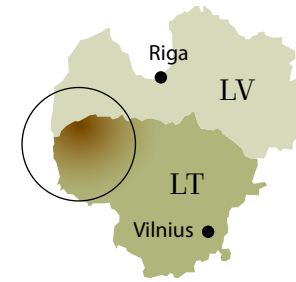


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29





COURONIANS IN LITHUANIA

30

Šilalė Sacred Place (*Šilalės ažuolyno šventvietė*).

Written sources of 1426 and 1523 mention a worship site near Mosėdis, which nowadays is deemed to be related with the Šilalė Oak and the Great Stone. The stone with a hollow was found and archaeologically explored in 1970. Research has shown that the sacred place has been used for a long time. Water-filled boulders is a common feature of Couronians and the majority of other Balts – the contained special water, such as water of the first thunderstorm or snow, or the dew of a festive morning; next to the stone, the holy fire was lit. It is believed that the combination of these two elements – water and fire – is the heavenly deity Thunderer (*Pėrkons, Perkūnas*), who provided good harvest and prosperity.

📍 Šilalė village, Mosėdis eldership,

Skuodas district

GPS: 56.15414, 21.56236



31

The **Vaclovas Intas Museum of Rare Stones** tells about the history of the Baltic Sea eastern coast during the Ice Age and the formation of boulders, along with the way of life of Couronians who adapted to harsh natural conditions and managed to farm on rocky soils. The footprint stones will tell about the mythological images of Couronians; and the hollow stones, about the holy places.

📍 Salantų Street 2, Mosėdis, Skuodas district

GPS: 56.16531, 21.57416

🏠 www.akmenumuziejus.lt



32

Apuolė Hillfort is the first and oldest settlement in Lithuania mentioned in written sources, where once one of the most famous and largest Couronian castles was located. In the 9th century, the political, military and economic power of Cekla Land was in Apuolė. Lithuanian and Swedish archaeologists have found not only valuable historical evidence, but also a unique oak well ring in Apuolė Hillfort. Rimbert's chronicle describes the fierce Couronian battles with the Vikings at Apuolė Castle in years 853–854, where the citizens of the castle were forced to concede to King Olaf of Sweden and hand over many weapons, gold and silver to repel the Danish attack. Visit the annual historic re-enactment festival of the 9th century and listen to musicians playing and enjoy the historic market.

📍 **Apuolė village, Aleksandrija eldership, Skuodas district**
GPS: 56.2464, 21.67804



32

33

The “**Saulės slėnis**” farm in **Žemaitija National Park** reveals the ancient Balts' bathhouse culture during the educational program “Bathhouse and Nature”. The program introduces the meaning and the role of the bathhouse in ancient worship rituals associated with the goddess Laima (Happiness), as well as the building architecture and distribution of bathhouses in Europe and worldwide.

📍 **Bičių road 3, Paplatelė village, Žemaičių Kalvarija eldership, Plungė district**
GPS: 56.04848, 21.88941

🌐 www.saullesslenis.lt

34

Lake Plateliai is the largest and most beautiful of the Couronian Cekla land lakes, with 7 islands and a depth of 46 m. The ancient names of the depths and shoals of Lake Plateliai as well as legends and stories indicate that the lake was once considered a sacred place and sacrifices were given to it. A mare that no one could catch was considered to be the deity of the lake. The mare lived in the Foal Kakte peninsula, which was also sacred. On the shores of the lake, there are two ancient Couronian hillforts. Oak Island was once inhabited, but Castle Island had a stone castle, which was connected to the mainland by a 300 m long bridge. Nowadays, it is possible to see the exposition of Žemaitija National Park in Plateliai village and to play the traditional game of the disc (*ripka*) on the lake shore.

📍 **Plateliai and Žemaičių Kalvarija eldership, Plungė district**
GPS: park exposition 56.04243, 21.8153,
disc game 56.03787, 21.81485,
Castle Island 56.04398, 21.84563



34

35

One of the largest archaeological expositions of Couronians is found at the **Kretinga Museum**. Visitors are shown the Anduliai and Lazdininkai burial-ground and the archaeological evidence of Imbarė Hillfort and settlement. Amber and its role in the life of Couronians is another interesting highlight of the exposition. The museum's open-air exposition features various mill and worship stones.

📍 **Vilniaus Street 20, Kretinga**
GPS: 55.90008, 21.24853
🌐 www.kretingosmuziejus.lt



35



32

36

Eketė Hillfort was one of the largest and most powerful Couronian hillforts. In the 9th–13th centuries, it was an important political, military and economic centre. At that time, five artificial ramparts and four moats protected the hillfort, and a large settlement spread around the fortification. During archaeological fieldwork in 1972, archaeologists found multiple ancient weapons, ornaments, handicrafts and daily work tools typical of the 1st–13th centuries. About 10 different tales tell about the hillfort. Since the beginning of the 20th century, traditional midsummer solstice celebration Joninės has been celebrated on the hillfort.

📍 **Radailiai village, Sendvaris eldership, Klaipėda district**
GPS: 55.79209, 21.18008



36

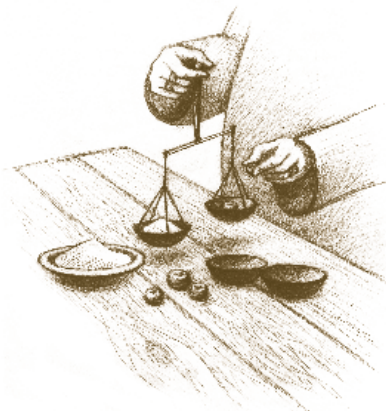


38

37

The Aukštakiemiai Cemetery (*Aukštakiemių kapinynas*) is one of the largest of its kind. It has drawn the attention of scientists and has been studied since the end of the 19th century with 452 graves discovered; its history dates back to the 2nd–12th centuries. For over a thousand years, the people of Aukštakiemiai settlement had been involved in trade on the Baltic Sea shore, on the so-called Amber Road. They traded in amber both with the Baltic lands of Sambia and Masuria and with the Finno-Ugric territories of northern Latvia and Estonia, Scandinavian lands of Sweden and Gotland. Amber was undoubtedly the main commodity and exchange object of Couronians living here.

📍 **Aukštakiemiai village, Sendvaris eldership, Klaipėda district**
GPS: 55.76922, 21.16262



38

The Lithuanian Sea Museum, near the Dolphinarium, is home to an ethnographic seaside fisherman's farm with residential and farm buildings, open from May to September, and a traditional Couronian Lagoon fishing flatbed sailboat – Kurenkahn. The educational program "Once upon a time in Klaipėda ... Couronians!" will tell about the Couronian Lagoon, the Couronian Spit, the history of the Baltic Sea and the local flora and fauna diversity.

📍 **Smiltynės Street 3, Klaipėda**
GPS: 55.71687, 21.09981
🌐 www.muziejus.lt



39

Birutė's Hill (Palanga Idol Hill) is a significant Couronian trading site of the 9th–11th centuries on the Baltic Sea coast, one of the most famous Lithuanian Grand Duchy's sacred sites and the grave site of Queen Birutė (mother of Vytautas the Great). At the foot of the hill – Couronian hillfort and sacred place – a settlement was once present, where archaeologists discovered the remains of buildings, and iron, bronze and ceramic articles. Thanks to the Lithuanian chronicles, the legend about Birutė and Kęstutis is still known. Researchers have not come to a reliable answer of who Birutė actually was – a goddess, a priestess, a queen, a saint, or perhaps a little of each. The legend echoed in two or even three generations of 20th century Lithuanians.

📍 **Vytauto Street 21, Palanga**
GPS: 55.90567, 21.053



40

The Palanga Amber Museum tells about the origin of amber, history and role of it in the life of Couronians and other Balts. Exhibitions highlight the importance of amber both in trade and worship rituals and its relation to ancient mythological images. Balts associated the warm colour of amber with the Sun and fire.

📍 **Vytauto Street 17, Palanga**
GPS: 55.90689, 21.05604
🏠 www.pgm.lt

41

Visitors to **Lithuanian Fairytales Park** are introduced to the world of Lithuanian fairy tales. A place where the contemporary society meets the ancient Baltic heritage of Balts' gods, goddesses and mythical beings.

📍 **S. Daukanto Street 24a, Palanga**
GPS: 55.91299, 21.05816
🏠 www.pasakuparkas.lt

42

Sausdravai Baltic Mythological Park displays wooden sculptures featuring Baltic mythological scenes. Enjoy the guided tour and learn more about Baltic gods and goddesses and their unusual abilities.

📍 **Sausdravai village, Darbėnai eldership, Kretinga district.** GPS: 56.03158, 21.18803
🏠 www.baltuparkas.webs.com

AMBER – NORTHERN GOLD

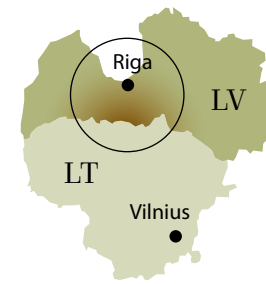
Amber was the first messenger to spread the news about Balts on trade routes worldwide. Due to the valuable amber, Balts are deemed to have gotten in touch with metals and their processing relatively early. The organic commodity is unique among other precious and semi-precious stones and has always been a highly sought-after product. Besides Balts the northern gold was also admired by the inhabitants of Ancient Rome. Amber necklaces have been found even in Egyptian pharaoh's burials; myths and legends of amber are told by many nations. In both Baltic and Roman medicine amber is attributed healing properties; amber dust is still used in rituals and natural incense.

42



THE SEMIGALLIAN ROUTE SEGMENT

During the Iron Age and the Middle Age, Semigallians, an ancient Baltic tribe native to Latvia and Lithuania, inhabited the central part of the present-day Latvia (Zemgale plains) and northern Lithuania. Once being among the militant and prosperous nations in northern Europe, the renowned traders ruled over the two largest rivers in Latvia – the Lielupe and the Daugava, as well as the largest port in the region, “Portus Semigallia”. Semigallians are linked to the early Iron Age (1st–4th centuries); however, the first scarce written information about Semigallia is retrieved from the Danish Chronicle of 9th century. In the 13th century, Semigallians owned twelve lands (Silene, Žagare, Dobene, Spārnene, Tērvete, Dobele, Sidrabene, Plāne, Nogailenas, Gostagales, Šurpenes, Putelene). At that time, the political, economic and military centre was Tērvete, home to the Kings Viestards, Namejs and, probably, Šābis. Among the nations residing in the territory of Latvia, Semigallians resisted the German Order the longest – until the mid-14th century. Later on, Semigallians merged to form the Latvian and Lithuanian nations, and the Semigallian dialect was underlying to the Latvian literary language.



SEMIGALLIANS IN LATVIA

43

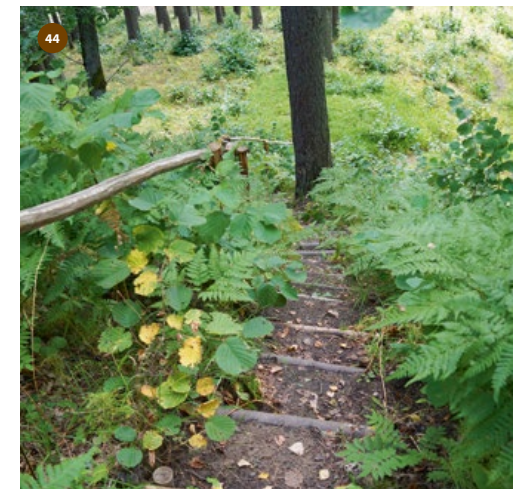
Dobe (Incēni) Hillfort, the centre of Land Dobene and the main fortification, was inhabited by Semigallians since the 1st millennium. A settlement once spread at the east and southeast of the hillfort foot, and the largest archaeological findings in Latvia are a proof of that. It is believed that the ancient Semigallian hillfort was built on one of the hillocks of Dobe Hilllock chain, but its position in the middle of the field and how the hill stands out in the surrounding landscape allows to suggest that Dobe Hillfort is among the rare artificial hillforts of ancient times. Approaching the hillfort, its distinct shapes can be seen from afar. To understand at what distance an approaching enemy is seen, one shall climb on the rampart of the hillfort. It offers spectacular views of the surroundings.

📍 **Vītiņu parish, Auce municipality**
GPS: 56.50008, 22.74299



44

Spārnū Hillfort. The ancient hillfort of Semigallians is located in a rolling terrain, which is not typical for the usually flat region, surrounded by forests and lakes. The findings on the hillfort, the location and the name of the hillfort and Lake Spārnū confirm the opinion that one of the largest Semigallian land centres mentioned in the historical sources – Spārnene Castle (*costrum Sparnene*) – was located on Spārnū Hilllock.



The edges of the hillock are unusually steep, which is rare among Semigallian hillforts. Before the arrival, read the ancient tale about a duck that entered a hole in the hillfort but was later found swimming in the lake.

📍 **Īle parish, Auce municipality**
GPS: 56.550630, 23.047612

45

Lake Zebrus and Ezerlūķi Hillfort. As a proof of the presence of Semigallians at the lake, a number of the Iron Age settlements, burial grounds and hillforts have been found in the vicinity of the lake. The inhabitation period and role of the nearby Ezerlūķi Hillfort have not yet been established. Perhaps it served as a shelter in the case of an attack or was used as an observation point to protect the nearby sacred place – Elkus Hillock (*Elkus kalns*). According to locals, in earlier times a road made of limestone, called God's or Priest's Road, led from Ezerlūķi Hillfort to the other bank of the lake. Indirect evidence is provided by hydro-archaeological surveys. Nowadays, the water level in the lake has risen and the road can no longer be found.

📍 **Biksti parish, Dobele municipality**

GPS: 56.63326, 23.01333

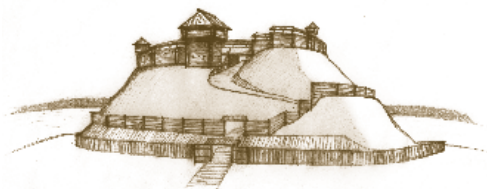


46

Lake Svēte and Elkus Hillock (*Elkus kalns*) is considered to be among the most notable Semigallian worship places. The hillock is located halfway between Lake Zebrus and Lake Svēte and, according to legends, a secret road made of limestone, the God's or Priest's Road, led from Lake Zebrus to Ezerlūķi Hillfort. The lake and the hill are located in an area surrounded by forests and swamps, and during the prehistoric period, it was home to a Semigallian sacred site.

📍 **Zebrene parish, Dobele municipality**

GPS: 56.61773, 22.99361



INHABITED HILLFORTS AND SETTLEMENTS OF SEMIGALLIANS

Since ancient times, the name of Semigallia is associated with great kings and strong and tempered Semigallian people. To this day, many ancient testimonies have been preserved: mighty hillforts and settlements of Semigallians with traces leading to the Iron Age are found in Zemgale Plain and on the banks of the rivers. The shape of hillforts often depends on the landscape type. The area of open-air Semigallian settlements varied from 200 m² to several hectares. The largest are deemed to have reached the size of a village, while the smallest were isolated farmsteads. Land elevations near rivers were chosen for the construction of fortified hillforts with nearly 8 m high ramparts. The hillforts with their surrounding settlements (ancient towns) reached a population of more than 500 people. Scientists have found 35 hillforts (23 in the territory of Latvia and 12 in Lithuania) in the areas historically inhabited by Semigallians. During the 5th–8th centuries hillforts served as places to store food supplies and provide a safe shelter for people. For defence purposes, massive fortification of hillforts was experienced in the 9th–12th centuries. Mežotne and Tērvete were among the most notable centres. Semigallian hillforts are distinguished by steep slopes, large ramparts and unique shape. The hillforts were frequently improved by building a second rampart, terrace or castle-front.



47

Dobele Hillfort and Castle Ruins of the 14th century in Dobele, on the right bank of the River Bērze. The Livonian Order stone castle was built to replace the Semigallian wooden castle (13th century), which was the centre of the Land Dobele together with a settlement near the castle. Dobele has been cited multiple times by the Rhymed Chronicle: it tells about the fierce battles between locals and German knights during the Livonian Crusade in the 13th century. Semigallians demonstrated enormous resistance fighting their enemies, who struggled to occupy the castle. Between 1279 and 1289, Dobele Castle survived six Livonian Order sieges. When all was destroyed, in 1289, Semigallians set their castle on fire and moved undefeated to the Lithuanian Grand Duchy.

📍 **Dobele, Dobele municipality**

GPS 56.622374, 23.272468

🌐 www.dobelesmuzejs.lv

48

The Dobele Local History Museum tells the history of Dobele Castle and the region. One part of its exhibition is dedicated to Semigallians focussing on the reconstructed Semigallian garments, authentic household items, jewellery and weapons. The museum hosts regular exhibitions and displays. A guided tour around the museum and outdoors will provide more information about the history of ancient Semigallians and Dobele.

📍 **Brīvības Street 7, Dobele, Dobele municipality**

GPS: 56.625232, 23.276128

🌐 www.dobelesmuzejs.lv



49

The Dobele Crafts House (*Dobeles Amatu māja*)

is a dedicated place with relevant facilities to master ancient and contemporary crafts, and to acquire skills and knowledge of the ancient and ethnographic crafts of Semigallia. It is the right place to learn to weave, knit, crochet, roll wool, make jewellery, embroider, spin and twist, carve spoons, create pottery items from clay and pick up some secrets of Latvian folk cuisine. Craftsmen and artists demonstrate their work in the exhibition hall. The Crafts House offers tours and creative workshops, and along fairs and exhibitions it organizes folk-dancing events with fun games to engage in.

📍 **Baznīcas Street 8, Dobele, Dobele municipality**

GPS: 56.62352, 23.28324



50



51

50

The Jelgava History and Art Museum of Ģederts Eliass.

Established in 1818, it has surprisingly managed to keep its location unchanged – it still is seated in the Academia Petrina. Nowadays, the museum hosts permanent exhibitions of the famous artist Ģederts Eliass and tells the history of Jelgava, Zemgale (Semigallia) and of the museum premises. To reflect the region's prehistoric and Livonian period, it exhibits archaeological findings of Stone Age settlements in Semigallia, items of ancient Semigallian burial sites and hillforts. An exhibition by means of photographs depicts ancient Semigallian hillforts located in Dobele, Dobe, Mežotne and Tērvete. In order to inspire the imagination of visitors regarding the magnificence of ancient Semigallian hillforts and castles, a model of Tērvete hillfort is exhibited in the museum. Besides, there are two unique virtual expositions available – “Wars and warriors in Jelgava over centuries” and “Zemgale folk costume and its’ wearing traditions”.

📍 **Akadēmijas Street 10, Jelgava**

GPS: 56.649982, 23.729019

🌐 www.jvmm.lv

51

Farm House “Caunītes”. The hosts of the farm house in Ozolnieku municipality have developed a place for visitors to enjoy Latvian traditions in close-to-original settings. Visitors are invited to feel the nature around and enjoy the place according to the season of the year. Contemporary farming does not interfere with the items and crafts reflecting the ancient way of life and traditions of Semigallians. A barn with a bread kiln is at the heart of the farm. Hands-on experience of a hand mill and traditional handicrafts.

📍 **“Caunītes”, Cenu parish,**

Ozolnieki municipality

GPS: 56.72266, 23.79211

🌐 www.caunites.lv



52

Tērvete Wooden Castle of 12th century.

To sense the presence of the mighty Semigallians and their kings, we invite you to visit the wooden castle in Tērvete. Built according to archaeological research materials, it is a real-life version of a 12th century Semigallian fortification on the nearby Tērvete Hillfort. There, you will find the largest collection in the Baltics of the Semigallian heritage dating back to the Iron Age: Semigallian jewellery, armour, household and everyday items. Guided tours about the history of Semigallians and Tērvete Castle are subject to prior booking. On the second weekend of August, the castle welcomes the annual Semigallian festival.

📍 **“Lielkēniņi”, Tērvete parish,
Tērvete municipality**
GPS: 56.481445, 23.376066
🌐 www.lielkenins.lv



53

The Tērvete Archaeological Complex.

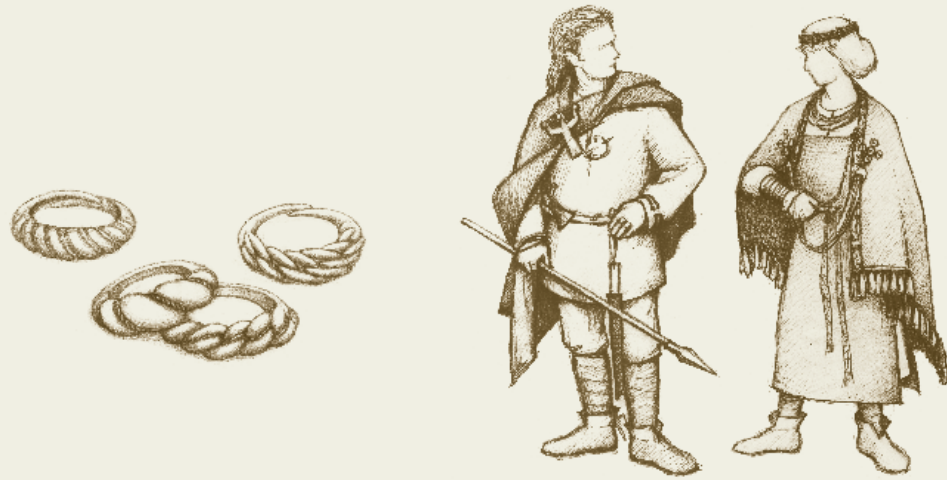
In the 13th century, Tērvete was a mighty and powerful Semigallian centre and kings' residence. It was ruled by the famous Semigallian kings – Viestards, Namejs (*Nameisis, Nameikis*) and probably also by Šābis. The Tērvete Archaeological Complex includes Tērvete Hillfort with two castle-fronts, the hillock Svētais Kalns with the castle-front, the ancient town, hillock Putnu Kalns,



hillock Klosterkalns and the Livonian Order Castle ruins. The hillfort was predominantly created and shaped during the 11th–13th centuries, a period of time during which Semigallians resisted the German Order. At that time, the hillfort enclosed a Semigallian wooden castle with protective structures, residential and farm buildings, as well as craft workshops. It has preserved the steep slopes and the rampart, one of the largest in the Baltic region. A unique piece of clay plaster found in Tērvete with the image of a piper is unique to the territory of Latvia. The history of the Tērvete Archaeological Complex is told in the nearby reconstructed version of Tērvete's 12th Century Wooden Castle.

📍 **Pilskalns (Cukurkalns), Tērvete parish,
Tērvete municipality**
GPS: 56.482200, 23.384630





PRECIOUS JEWELLERY OF SEMIGALLIANS

The lifestyle of Semigallians and their proximity to the trade routes have allowed accumulating wealth for centuries. This is also reflected in the garments and jewellery of Semigallians. They used magnificent jewellery made of silver, bronze and, in some cases, gold. There was an unusually high proportion of silver usage, as evidenced by the silver deposits, among the largest found in Latvia. Semigallian jewellery forgers made jewellery from jewels that differ from the neighbouring tribes and emphasized the prosperity of Semigallians and the skills of the jewellery forgers. Gold-encrusted and completely gold-plated arbalest fibulas dating back to 5th–7th centuries found in Semigallia (Zemgale) are unique finding in the Balts' countries. A great variety of rings, wreaths, neck rings, cuffs, decorative pins, chain ornaments and brooches were worn by Semigallians. Multiple neck rings, three wreath soldier bracelets, crowns with large splitters and silver inlaid, iron pins with cruciform head with silver inlaid – these are characteristic only for Semigallians. The women wore sarafan-type skirts with decorative pins and chain ornaments. Around 11th–12th centuries, plate brooches were also introduced.

THE NAMEJS RING

One of the most recognizable imitations of Balts' jewellery is the Namejs ring, which is common to all Balts' and Baltic Finn nations and is not particularly related to a certain area. Namejs rings feature a thickened and twisted front. The ring is found in multiple designs using various types of manufacturing methods; cast in bronze or silver, forged or twisted, twisted in bronze or silver wire. Plaited rings were common to the tribe around the turn of the 12th/13th century. The rings were often found in the burials of both women and men, and nowadays, it is the most widely reproduced and used jewellery item in Latvia. Facts intertwined with the history, as two silver rings were found on Daugmale Hillfort in the 1930s; and a legend was born to link the rings with the Semigallian king Namejs. This is how the wide use of the rings began. It should be noted that one of the biggest rings of this type was found in Tērvete Hillfort during an archaeological survey. The popularity of the ring and the focus of its name were also promoted by the novel "Ring of Namejs" (*Nameja gredzens*) by the Selonian-born writer Aleksandrs Grīns. A collection of Baltic jewellery, including various types of the Namejs ring, both original and reconstructed, is exhibited in Tērvete Wooden Castle of 12th century.





55

KINGS OF SEMIGALLIA

Throughout the 13th century, several individuals were seeking to unite territories inhabited by Semigallians. The Semigallian kings have multiple times been cited by historical sources in the context of the Crusades in Livonia. Semigallians had heroic and honoured kings. In the first decades of the 13th century, there was the King Viestards (original spelling: *Vesthardus*, *Vester*, ruled before 1205 and after 1228), and he was the only one named The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia who was called a noble person and a military leader, while in The Rhyme Chronicle of Livonia he is called the King. Judging by The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia, Viestards was the king of the Land Tērvete exerting power over all other lands of Semigallians. The status, influence and power of Viestards is also evidenced by the fact that the Pope's legate Wilhelm of Modena asked to grant him audience at the Semigallian king – a unique case not only in the history of the Balts' lands but in the history of all 13th century European countries. The second leader of Semigallians mentioned in the 13th century historical sources was Šābis (*Schabe*, *Schabbe*), mentioned in connection with the rebellion of Semigallians against the Livonian Order in 1259. Following the orders of Schabe, Catholic priests and Vogts, who collected taxes following the division of Semigallia in April 1254 between the Archbishop of Riga and the Livonian Order, were expelled from Semigallia. Sources have described the military leader Schabe as "one brave military leader". At the end of the 1270s, the king of Semigallians was Namejs (*Nameise*, *Nameyxe*), the elder of Tērvete Semigallians and a later king and military leader of Semigallia. He died in Crusades fighting the German Order in Lithuania or Prussia some time after 1281. The Rhyme Chronicle of Livonia mentions another unnamed Semigallian king who died in the battle near Garoza, the most outstanding victory over the Livonian Order troops in 1287.



SEMIGALLIAN TRADERS AND THE PORTUS SEMIGALLIA

The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia mentions only one trading port on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea – the port of Semigallia (*portus Semigallia*). Aiming to limit the activities of Semigallians, the Pope Innocent III issued a decree in 1200 forbidding all traders to enter the port. The location of the port remains unknown; some researchers are looking for it at the mighty Daugmale Hillfort near the River Daugava, while others – in the River Lielupe estuary. Already since the 9th century, Semigallia is cited by Scandinavian sagas and rune stones. The stories and testimonies tell us that Viking traders from northern Europe chose and visited successful Semigallia as their destination. A Swedish rune stone tells: "Sigrid made her husband Sven to build this stone. He often sailed to Semigallia on a loaded ship along the Cape of Kolka." During the Viking period, the main export items were crops; but from the 11th century, beeswax and fur. The near and far trade connections along with the traditional agriculture as the dominant sources of income is supported by the archaeological findings in the areas historically inhabited by Semigallians. An example is the millstone found on Tērvete Hillfort, which is made of volcanic lava material.

54

Silakalns Hillock (Augstais Kalns).

The mighty and mysterious hillfort of Semigallians – Silakalns – is surrounded by forests. The findings on the hillfort link it to the late Iron Age, while the ceramics fragments demonstrate that the hillfort was inhabited already in the 1st millennium BC. Historians have several hypotheses about Silakalns. According to one assumption, it is deemed as the main fortification of the Land Silene, as cited by Semigallia land division agreement of the 13th century. Getting to the hillfort will be a real adventure, since Silakalns is located in the forest, is overgrown with coniferous trees and bushes, and a swamp encloses it on its southern and western side.

📍 **Augstais kalns, Vilce parish, Jelgava municipality**
GPS: 56.381817, 23.412561

55

The Archaeological Complex of Mežotne Hillfort

on the left bank of the River Lielupe was one of the largest Semigallian hillforts, the main castle of Land Upmale. Even today, the impressive fortifications of the hillfort – the ramparts – can be seen. The Mežotne Complex consists of the hillfort with its ancient city, the Hillock Vinakalns, two burial grounds and a harbour place. Mežotne is found multiple times cited by chronicles and even in the notes of an Arab traveller of the 11th century. Next to the hillfort, there are ruins of a church and the cemetery of the von Lieven family (princes, the owners of Mežotne manor).

📍 **Mežotne Hillfort, Rundāle parish, Rundāle municipality**
GPS: 56.441584, 24.044910

56

Bauska Castle is located in a picturesque landscape on a land strip between the rivers Mūsa and Mēmele, near the place where they meet to form the River Lielupe. The Bauska Castle ensemble consists of two parts. The oldest – Livonian Order Castle, built in the middle of the 15th century, and the newest – the residence of the Duke of Courland, Ketler, built at the end of the 16th century. The oldest part of the castle is built as a fortress; it is characterized by thick walls and a tower. Nowadays, the newest part is home to the Castle Museum, which tells the history of Bauska's surroundings and Semigallians. Considering the location of the castle, there is an opinion that Livonian Order Castle is located in the place of the ancient Semigallian castle, as evidenced by the 2nd to 12th century's antiquities and ceramics that were found during the archaeological excavations.

📍 **Bauska Castle, Bauska, Bauska municipality**

GPS: 56.403701, 24.174340

🌐 www.bauskaspils.lv



56



58

57

The Bauska Museum lets you explore the history of Bauska region, town and Semigallians. The museum collects and classifies, scientifically processes, maintains and promotes archaeological, historical, artistic and ethnographic materials on the history of Bauska region from the earliest times to the present day. The collection of the museum has vast and rich Semigallian archaeological material of great educational value. Folk Decorative Art Studio "Bauska" is seated in the museum, where you can get acquainted with the folk costume of Semigallia.

📍 **Kalna Street 6, Bauska, Bauska municipality**

GPS: 56.410305, 24.184326

🌐 www.bauskasmuzejs.lv



57

58

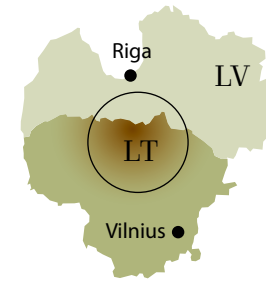
Bārbele Sulphur Spring is an ancient worship site, which is also described in legends. According to written sources, it was one of the most impressive mineral water springs in Latvia. Coming to the spring for treatment people left their clothes on site, since they believed that this way they would get rid of all their diseases, pain and suffering. Bārbele might be among the oldest spas in Latvia, known since the reign of Duke Jacob of Courland. The history of Bārbele's ancient existence suggests that ancient Semigallians were also treated here and used this spring as a source of health improvement.

📍 **Bārbele parish, Vecumnieki municipality**

GPS: 56.43447, 24.59137

56





SEMIGALLIANS IN LITHUANIA

59

Ažuolpamūšė Hillfort (*Ažuolpamūšės piliakalnis*) is among the most intensely explored Semigallian hillforts in Lithuania. The hillfort at the merging point of the rivers Tatula and Ūgė was fortified with defensive ramparts and two ditches. Archaeological excavation surveys revealed remains of buildings dating back to the 9th–13th centuries. Until the 19th century, the hillfort was enclosed by legends and tales of battles, treasures, devils and ghosts. It also played an important role in the history of the 20th century: in 1933, it was the main location of Pasvalys Riflemen Unit, in 1940, it was occupied by Dagiline Riflemen, and later, Lithuanian partisans set up two bunkers on the slopes of the hillfort. On August 23, 1989, the Baltic Way led along the hillfort, but nowadays it is used to celebrate independence-related events of Lithuania.

📍 **Ažuolpamūšė village, Saločiai eldership, Pasvalys district**

GPS: 56.12341, 24.45958



59

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The Pasvalys Museum features an exposition of geology and archaeology, which tells about the history of the land of Semigallians – the natural environment, especially the karst region –, reflecting the time span in terms of archaeology. In ancient times, the River Mūša with its tributaries was an important waterway enabling trade with neighbouring tribes. The historic heritage found on its banks is exhibited in the museum.

📍 **P. Avižonio Street 6, Pasvalys**

GPS: 56.06016, 24.39898

🌐 www.pasvaliomuziejus.lt

61

The Pasvalys Hollow Stone Collection consists of more than 50 stones from different areas of Pasvalys district, collected by Antanas Stapulionis. Besides the hollow stones, there is also a large collection of millstones. Exactly in this region the ancient Baltic religion and the gods and goddesses honoured at home remained the longest. Part of stones characteristic of the 15th–16th centuries were later used for other purposes (grating, squeezing, wheel bending, etc.), but their original use at home and for welfare god rituals remains unforgotten. mūsdienās nav aizmirsts.

📍 **Lēvens Street 2, Pasvalys**

GPS: 56.06519, 24.40555

🌐 www.pasvaliomuziejus.lt



64



62

62

Žemaitukai at the Pakruojis Manor. Baltic tribes are closely related to horses. It becomes evident by the multiple horse remains found and characteristic of the Great Migration period and the Viking Age in the territory of the present-day Lithuania. Žemaitukai, the horse species, is a typical element of Lithuanian national identity. They personify the thousand-year long history of Balts and Lithuania. The small, pony-like horses are hardy and courageous. In Pakruojis, visitors may go for rides or simply watch them grazing.

📍 **Karčiamos Street 9, Pakruojis village and district.** GPS: 55.98612, 23.87917

🌐 <http://pakruojo-dvaras.lt>



63

63

Naisiai Baltic God Park – Museum. The open-air museum includes several objects related to the ancient Baltic religion. An ancient Baltic sanctuary model (restored) is standing atop of the offering hill, which was once made from the soil due to the digging of a pond. The impressive object is accompanied by three mighty oak statues of gods. Sun Square features wooden sculptures of all the major celestial deities. The Sun Dial shows ancient Lithuanian months and annual celebration titles.

📍 **Z. Gėlės Street 9, Naisiai village, Meškuičiai eldership, Šiauliai district**
GPS: 56.02143, 23.51353

🌐 www.naisiuvasara.lt

64

Jurgaičiai Hillfort (The Hill of Crosses, *Kryžių Kalnas*). It is believed that on the hillfort, near the historic road leading from Salduvė to Sidrabi and further to Mežotne, once Kuju Castle, which was burnt down by the Livonian Order in 1348, was located. Archaeological surveys at the hillfort have revealed items dating back to the 5th–14th centuries. Since ancient times, there has been a spring at the foot of the hillfort, and its water was considered of particularly value. Probably the habit of making promises is directly related to the spring. The promise could be, for example, visiting a sacred place or setting up a cross. The act of making a promise incorporates elements of the Baltic pagan religion and Christianity, creating a custom that is unique to Samogitia and the part of Lithuania's Semigallia. On April 5, 1961, crosses from Jurgaičiai Hillfort were knocked down, and, from that time on until the end of 1980s, the custom of setting up the crosses was a form of resistance to the Soviet occupation. The estimate number of small and big crosses on the hill exceeds 100,000.

📍 **Jurgaičiai and Domantai village, Meškuičiai eldership, Šiauliai district**
GPS: 56.01531, 23.41646



64



65



65

Battlefield of the Battle of Saulė (*Saulės mūšio laukas*). According to The Rhyme Chronicle, of one of the biggest battles of the North Crusades – the Battle of Saulė, took place on September 22, 1236, and resulted in the total defeat of the Livonian Order of the Brothers of the Sword. Historians do not share the same opinion regarding the original battlefield location: according to a more widespread version, the battle took place in Lithuania, north of Šiauliai in Jauniūnai village near the rivers Mūša and Tautina; however, another version tells it happened in Vecsaule parish, Latvia. The Livonian Order of the Brothers of the Sword, Pskov's soldiers and christened Estonians, Livonians and Latgallians faced an unknown number of Lithuanians and Semigallians. The Lithuanians unexpectedly attacked the Order and allied troops, surprising the Order which was forced to flee, while Semigallians attacked the fleeing troops. In the battle, all the Brothers of the Order were killed. Following the battle, the Livonian Order of the Brothers of the Sword was incorporated in the German Order. Perhaps, the victory was the reason which strengthened the position of Mindaugas and allowed him to expand his grand duke's power. Since 2000, in Latvia and Lithuania, September 22 is celebrated as the Balts' Unity Day.

📍 **Jauniūnai village, Gataučiai eldership, Joniškis district**
GPS 56.11603, 23.51599

66

1.

The Šiauliai Aušros Museum.

The archaeological exposition of the museum **“The history of Šiauliai region from ancient times to the 17th century”** reflects life in Šiauliai and its surroundings since the Stone Age. Visitors will see a stone axe hole drilling device and are explained the way stone axes were made. The life in ancient times is revealed with the exhibited tools, weapons, jewellery, trade items and other valuable archaeological evidence. The museum offers several educational programs: “Ancient garments and Balts’ jewellery”, “Making pots like in the ancient times” and “Archaeological excavations”.

2.

The educational program **“Ancient garments and Balts’ jewellery”** introduces groups and individual visitors to the ancient garments and their elements, materials, design and making of the garments. The restored garments are available for try-on. The programme offers hands-on experience in jewellery-making, during which visitors may create their own ring. Once, jewellery was an important element of clothing, and ornaments had a symbolic role.

3.

The ethnographic exposition **“Fieldwork and social life of farmers”** tells about the life, work, rituals and annual celebrations of farmers in Samogitia and Šiauliai, depicting the period from the 18th until the first part of the 20th century. Visitors will see household items and a farmer’s house. Extend your visit and enjoy other educational programs: “Candle-making”, “Clay whistles”, “Christmas Decorations from Straws”.

📍 **The Šiauliai Aušros Museum Education Centre,**
Aušros Street 47, Šiauliai
GPS 55.93909, 23.30576
 🌐 **www.ausrosmuziejus.lt**

67

The Žaliukai Miller’s Farmstead and the Mill

(at the Šiauliai Aušros Museum) was built at the end of the 19th century. It is the only wooden structure of ethnographic architecture in Šiauliai that has survived to this day, and the mill has been restored. It is the first grain processing museum in Lithuania, one of the most distinct landmarks of Šiauliai city, and the place where Balts’ culture and traditional crafts are preserved. Throughout the year, a simple miller’s family life takes place at the ethnographic farm: grains are ground, bread is baked, but everyday life is diversified by celebration of various Lithuanian annual festivals. The museum demonstrates Lithuanian traditions in the form of educational classes: bread baking, Christmas and Easter customs, making Shrovetide masks.

📍 **Architektų Street 73, Šiauliai**
GPS: 55.9238, 23.27202



67



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68



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68

Žuvininkai (Salduvė) Hillfort. According to stories, a wooden castle was once standing on Salduvė Hilllock, but there is no evidence to support this statement. The origin of the name Salduvė is not clear, although a legend tells that the hilllock was inhabited by a king of Šiauliai together with his loved one. Since the couple was not married, God of Thunder struck both of them. And because their love was very sweet, the hilllock was given the name Salduvė (*saldus* means sweet).
 📍 **Šiauliai. GPS: 55.92967, 23.3583**

69

Sun Dial Square is one of the central places in Šiauliai. The square features three of the city’s symbols: The Sun, the Archer and the Time. The Sun tells about the Battle of Saulė in 1236 and the Balts’ Unity Day, and the battle is also represented by the numbers 12, 3 and 6 embedded in the pavement. The sculpture “Šaulys” (the Archer, yet called the “golden boy” by the locals) is associated with the origins of the city name. It is covered with gold and reaches a height of nearly four meters. Whereas, the Sundial counts time passed since the first mention of the city’s name. The square was built in 1986 to celebrate the 750th anniversary of Šiauliai.

📍 **Ežero Street – Šalkauskio Street, Šiauliai**
GPS: 55.93075, 23.32515

SAMOGITIANS

Samogitians are one of the modern Lithuanian ethnic groups, the descendants of Eastern Balts, who speak the Samogitian dialect of the Lithuanian language. In the 11th and the 12th centuries, the territories inhabited by Samogitian tribes were divided into the lands of Karšuva, Medininkai, Knituva, Šiauliai, Gaižuva, Uptytė, Kulėnė and Milžava. Samogitians were stubborn, uncommunicative and meek; this is shown by the fact that they adopted Christianity 20 years later than the rest of Lithuania, becoming the last christened ethnical group in the territory of the country. Nowadays, Samogitians are distinguished by their history and ethno-cultural identity in the background of the rest of Lithuania's Baltic descendants. They are grand, highly respect virtues and nature, and these are long-appreciated values in Samogitia. There were many hillforts in the lands of Samogitians. Already BC, Samogitians lived in Šatrija, Biržuvėnai, Luponiai and other fortifications. From the 10th to the 12th century, Samogitians maintained close trade relations with Scandinavians. Many Scandinavian items are found in Samogitia, along with other Scandinavian features in local goods and articles produced. They traded, of course, with other Balts' tribes: Semigallians, Couronians, Scalovians and ancient Prussians.

70

The Talkšos Eco Trail leads for 5 km along alluvial lands and offers views of the lake and its surroundings. There are 19 oak log stands in three languages that provide information on the location, plants and animals. Educational descriptions of the flora and fauna are complemented with Balts' signs. In the habitats around the trail, there are 150 types of butterflies some of the rarest plants in Lithuania. The trail also features the Gate of Love and a Place for Dreams. The trail is open and interesting at any time of the year.

📍 **Šiauliai**

GPS: 55.93008, 23.32739

71

The Balts' Educational Centre "Balts' Road" is scheduled to be launched in summer 2019.

The mission of the centre is to exhibit and present Balts' cultural heritage in the modern context with the help of smart technologies.

📍 **Vilnius Street 213, Šiauliai**

GPS: 55.93196, 23.31357



72

Šatrija Hillfort (*Šatrijos piliakalnis*) was among the most popular administrative, defensive, economic and religious centres of Samogitia in the early Middle Age. The hillfort rises 228 m above the sea level and its plateau is surrounded by a 2 m high rampart. Archaeological excavations studying the settlement at the foot of the hillfort found evidence of its inhabitation since the 2nd century AD. Perhaps, in the New Age, witches were burned on Šatrija Hillock. Since ancient times, annual festivities are celebrated on the hillfort following the ancient traditions. Every year in the third week of July, an eternal fire is lit on the hillock.

📍 **The village of Pašatrija, Luokė eldership, Telšiai district**

GPS: 55.87239, 22.55825

72





74



73

73

Rekčiai Hillfort (*Rekčių piliakalnis*) is located on the picturesque banks of the River Venta, enclosed by a 22 m wide rampart. Once, there was an ancient settlement near the hillfort. According to legends, Rekčiai Hillfort is supposed to have been used for rituals: a sacred fire was burned here, there was a church that sank in the ground, during celebrations bells are chiming on the hillfort. After the ancient wooden castle gradually deteriorated, the hillfort became a meeting place for the nearby people and a celebration place.

📍 **Rekčiai village, Kužiai eldership, Šiauliai district**
GPS: 56.07725, 22.8536

74

The Jurakalnis Geological Cognitive Trail

inspires the imagination of visitors to think what the nature looked like when the area was inhabited by ancient Semigallians. At that time, the River Venta and its tributaries were an important trade route, and a significant waterway during the Crusades. The nearby Papilė Hillfort was among the most famous places inhabited by Semigallians' in Lithuania.

📍 **Basanavičiaus Street 6, Papilė, Akmenė District**
GPS: 56.15172, 22.78859
🏠 **www.ventosparkas.lt**



74

75

The Memorial Museum of Simonas Daukantas

tells about the life of the famous Lithuanian historian and his renowned literary works. Daukantas is the creator of the slogan of the revival of Lithuanian people, the creator of the first Lithuanian history – the Great Story of Lithuanian history – and the author of many other remarkable works. Listening to the story of the guide, visitors will learn interesting facts about the history of Lithuania, as told by S. Daukantas and later used in the works of other historians, writers and poets. The grave of Daukantas is located near the museum, on Papilė Hillfort, where he spent long hours doing his research.

📍 **Basanavičiaus Street 6, Papilė, Akmenė District**
GPS: 56.15191, 22.78894



79

76

The Santekliai Sacred Pine Forest

(*Santeklių miško šventosios pušys*) is the most important part of the ancient sacred places of Vieکشniai and surrounding areas. It is believed that the Great Pines are a place where the Sun spends the night and has her seat. Following the introduction of Christianity, the trees often served as the altar or as crosses, which were also made from the cut down sacred trees. Chapels and crosses are attached to two of the pines. Believers seek their way to the pines, where they make promises turning towards the crosses and looking through the branches into the sky.

📍 **Santekliai forest near Gyvoliai village, Vieکشniai eldership, Mažeikiai district**
GPS: 1st pine 56.22486, 22.55763,
2nd pine 56.22719, 22.57355

77

Visit the **Herb Plant Farm of Jadvyga**

Balvočiūtė (*Jadvyga Balvočiūtė*), who will tell about the plants characteristic to Baltic lands and the healing properties of the herbs. Visitors will be shown, how and when to harvest the herbs, and how to handle the plants properly. Smell, taste and buy!

📍 **Virvytės Street 27, Gyvoliai village, Vieکشniai eldership, Mažeikiai district**
GPS: 56.22045, 22.55596
🏠 **www.jadvyga.lt**

78

The Mažeikiai Museum and its archaeological exposition tells about individual archaeological monuments (Kūkai, Pavirvytė-Gudai, etc.), and prehistoric arts, such as Balts' signs and their symbols. Ask for a map showing the Couronian, Semigallian and Samogitian lands and borders! The Mažeikiai Museum is also the only place in Lithuania where craftsmen make traditional birch-bark boxes.

📍 **V. Burbos Street 9, Mažeikiai**
GPS: 56.31641, 22.34668
🏠 **www.mazeikiumuziejus.lt**

79

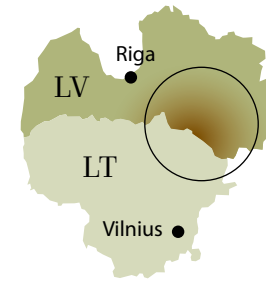
The Kamanos Education Trail

(*Kamanų mokomasis-pažintinis takas*) is located in the Kamanos Nature Reserve and visitors are allowed to enter only accompanied by a guide. The trail tells of the high swamps and the forest that grows here. Simonas Daukantas wrote that an ancient land of Balts' sank in the forest. The walk begins with a climb to the observation tower and winds further through the high swamp world, which is a must-see-and-hear place!

📍 **Mažuliai village, Akmenė eldership and district**
GPS: observation tower 56.31416, 22.65194

THE SELONIAN ROUTE SEGMENT

The region of Selonia (Sēlija) and the history of Selonians is a yet unresolved mystery. The ancient lands of Selonians are rich in beautiful natural landscapes and unique history, witnessed by ancient and spectacular Selonian hillforts. The history of Selonians can be traced back several millennia. The earliest written testimony of Selonians is found in The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia of the 13th century. The documents mention a number of Selonian lands – *Allecten, Calve, Medene, Nitczegale*, located in the south-eastern part of today's Latvia and in the north of Lithuania. Selonians were a nation of farmers, who inhabited about 10–15 hillforts in the middle and late Iron Age. Their peculiarity is the common terraces that are not characteristic of other places and form an additional protection system, thus replacing the castle-fronts. In the 13th century, Sēlpils was the political and military centre of Selonia. Selonians spoke their own language, which is extinct nowadays, but the traces of the Selonian language are still preserved in local dialects of the areas historically inhabited by Selonians, both in Selonia and in the south-eastern part of Vidzeme (the River Aiviekste basin). Later on, Selonians merged to form the Latvian and Lithuanian nations.



SELONIANS IN LATVIA

80

The Melķitāru Trough Stone (*Melķitāru Muldakmens*) is a culturally and historically significant secular stone with the largest-in-Latvia hollow in the form of a trough. Also called the Sacrificial Stone (*Upurakmens*) and the Devil's Stone (*Velnakmens*). Archaeological excavations near the stone discovered a bonfire place and clay pavement; but in the middle of the 19th century, small offerings were found, along with the accumulated water, which was used in medicine. Once upon a time, Baroness Anna von Schulz promised to give a farm to the person who would take the stone to the manor, but no one was able to do it.

- 📍 **Aizkraukle parish, Aizkraukle municipality**
GPS: 56.656670, 25.203991
- 🌐 www.facebook.com/melkitarumuldakmens

81

The Creative House "Baltaine" invites to celebrate traditional annual celebrations: Meteņi, Easter, Ūsiņi, Jāņi, Miķeļi, Christmas, and to organize honour festivities: christening and ritual dressing of newlyweds (*mičošana*). The workshops of the Creative House offer a variety of ancient Selonian crafts: spinning, twisting, crocheting, knitting and embroidery. Here you can learn Latvian dances, play games and sing, while the hostesses will treat to pies and herbal teas.

- 📍 **Melioratoru Street 1a, Koknese, Koknese parish, Koknese municipality**
GPS: 56.644318, 25.442099

82

The Latvian Beekeeping History Museum. Beekeeping and apiculture are among the oldest sectors of the national economy dating back to prehistoric times. Selonians also kept bees. The museum's exposition features versatile information about the life of the colony, the bee food base, the beekeeping products and their importance, as well as the information about the founders and teachers of Vecbebri Beekeeping School. Among the exhibits are the ancient beekeeping tools, hives and inventory. In the museum, it is possible to taste different varieties of honey and to buy honey products.

- 📍 **"Dravas", Vecbebri, Bebri parish, Koknese municipality**
GPS: 56.720851, 25.493230





83

83

Until the beginning of the 13th century, **Sēlpils Hillfort** with its wooden castle was the Selonian political and economic centre and the seat of ancient Selonian kings. It included several villages. Nowadays, the hillfort is located on an island on the River Daugava with a picturesque landscape all around and an equipped resting place for visitors. The active life in Sēlpils took place from the 10th to the 12th century, when the entire hillfort plateau was inhabited. Archaeological excavations have resulted in finding the oldest evidence of human presence in Latvia: German stone castle and Selonian wood castle layers were mixed with flint slices, scrapers and arrowheads, which by their shape are attributable to the end of the Paleolithic or the oldest Stone Age (dating back to about 9th century BC). Nowadays, the island of Sēlpils is up to 2 m above water surface (depending on the water level) and can reach 150 m in length. Castle ruins are under water. The island can be accessed by boat or viewed from the shore of the River Daugava.

📍 **Sēlpils parish, Sala municipality**
GPS: 56.58722, 25.64027



84

84

The Jēkabpils History Museum Open-air exhibition "Sēļu sēta" (Selonian Courtyard). The open-air exhibition consists of seven 19th century rural buildings of Augšzeme region: a residential house, a grain barn, a small barn, a threshing barn, a forge, a windmill and a bathhouse. The courtyard, architecture and layout of buildings reflect the craft and construction skills of ancient Selonians. The museum is a place to try different countryside works: grinding, spinning and forging.

📍 **Filozofu Street 6, Jēkabpils**
GPS: 56.496162, 25.873688
🌐 www.jekabpilsmuzejs.lv



INHABITED HILLFORTS AND SELONIAN SETTLEMENTS

Between 10 and 15 hillforts were inhabited by Selonians in the middle and late Iron Age. They are predominantly erected on isolated hillocks; less often, in river junctions, between ravines, and feature fortifications with ramparts. The peculiarity of Selonian hillforts is the often-occurring terraces that form an additional fortification system and replace the castle-fronts. Old towns were found near the biggest hillforts (land centres), for example, near Dignāja Hillfort (Jēkabpils municipality), Stupeļi Hillfort and Hillock Margaskalns (Viesīte municipality). Settlements or villages were common. Only a small part of the hillforts and the places of residence have been studied archaeologically. Dignāja, Stupeļi and Sēlpils hillforts are among the most significant Selonian centres.

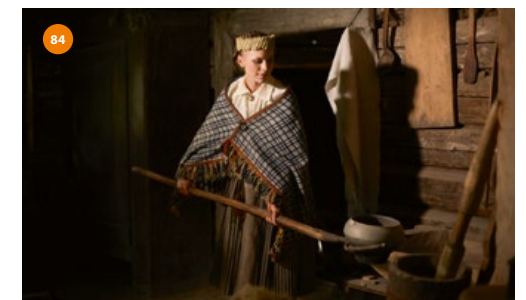
85

The Viesīte Museum "Selonia" ("Sēlija") keeps the heritage and traditions of Viesīte and Selonia culture alive, encouraging people to preserve and strengthen their Selonian self-esteem. The Crafts Centre on the territory of the museum introduces to the skills of the traditional craftsmen of Selonia region. The craftsmen working in the Centre knit national-pattern socks and gloves, crochet, weave and embroider in cross stitch to incorporate the ancestors' ornaments and signs, while the nearby carpentry is a woodworking workshop. The narrow-gauge train exhibition of the museum is located in the former Viesīte depot.

📍 **A. Brodele Street 7, Viesīte, Viesīte municipality**
GPS: 56.342242, 25.555184
🌐 www.muzejsselija.lv



85



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86

The Museum of Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš – “Riekstiņi” is established in the central building of an old farmhouse, which reflects the traditions and craft skills of the former times in the Selonian region. The museum has gathered many domestic and household items characteristic of Selonians. It is a typical farmstead of the 19th century, as depicted by Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš in his famous novel “Baltā grāmata” (“The White Book”). The museum’s basic exhibition introduces to the life of the writer and painter, his personal things along with other household items of the beginning of the 19th and 20th centuries, which have been collected from nearby homes. Walking trails in the surroundings of “Riekstiņi” lead along the places mentioned in the depictions of the book “Baltā grāmata”.

📍 **“Riekstiņi”, Nereta parish, Nereta municipality**
GPS: 56.19706, 25.37984



SELONIAN JEWELLERY

Selonian women wore neck rings, bracelets, rings, brooches, wreaths. Pendants of various shapes – horses, crosses, medallions – were widely used. Selonians taught adorn traditions to the younger generation from childhood. The jewellery given to children was similar to that of adults, often adapted to fit the child’s height or custom-made. One of the most common women’s ornamental pieces was neck rings, found in large variety in terms of shape at different Selonian sites. Women loved to adorn themselves and wear rings, which accounted for the largest group of jewellery. Usually, almost every known shape of rings is represented in a similar number on each hand. In burials of young and old women, gorgeous, multi-stranded necklaces consisting of glass and amber beads, shells, bronze spirals, bells, and various pendants/amulets were often found. The number of men’s jewellery was much smaller. For men, the most luxurious jewellery item was the belt, decorated with bronze or silver decorations and buckles. Besides bracelets and rings, they also wore brooches to fasten up coats and capes.

87

Stupeļi Hillfort was an impressive Selonian hillfort. It is a stand-alone, oblong tree-covered hill with slopes artificially elevated, and signs of two terraces are still visible. There was a three-hectare settlement near the hillfort. The hillfort was located in the centre of an area densely inhabited by Selonians, which enabled successful trade and accounted for the control of the road running from Sēlpils to the southern areas of Selonia and Lithuania. At the foot of the hillfort, there is a stone that is an ancient cult site, and it is one of the few cult stones next to which archaeologists have discovered various antiques of the 10th–13th centuries, including pottery and bone fragments, probably, for the purpose of offerings.

📍 **Rite parish, Viesīte municipality**
GPS: 56.17108, 25.46454



88

Saltupju Holy Spring has since long been deemed as having healing properties. It is also considered to be a cult place where in ancient times, Selonians performed rituals. The water-rich spring forms a stream called Saltupe, which after about 100 m flows into the River Dienvidsusēja and is considered one of the longest underground springs in Latvia. The iron and sulphur compounds in the water give it a specific sulphur taste and colour the stream bed in a rusty shade. A small stone with a natural hollow is located near the spring.

📍 **Torņa Street, Aknīste, Aknīste municipality**
GPS: 56.17129, 25.73505



89

The Craft Centre “Rūme” is the place where ancient Selonian crafts are cultivated, studied and researched. Occasionally, Selonian craftsmen from local areas and nearby Lithuania meet in “Rūme” to work together, to teach each other and create beautiful works of art, to discover and restore ancient tools of crafts, to develop their skills and traditions, thus preserving the cultural and historical heritage of Selonians. Here, everyone is welcome not only to watch the craftsmen and artists of the Centre at work, but also to take part, to acquire new skills and to spend time creatively, since “Rūme” offers creative workshops (ceramics, textile painting and woodworking).

📍 **“Rūme”, Zasa, Zasa parish, Jēkabpils municipality**
GPS: 56.29458, 25.98139

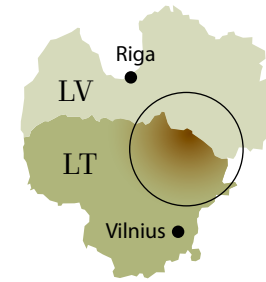
🌐 www.facebook.com/amatniecibas.centrs.rume

90

Dignāja Hillfort. Once powerful and mighty, Dignāja Hillfort is located about 300 m from the River Daugava, opposite of Jersika Hillfort. According to researchers, until the 10th century, Dignāja was more important than Jersika Castle. Inhabited since the 1st millennium BC, but later Dignāja was a fortified Selonian settlement. In the late Iron Age, the hillfort’s defence structures were located on the edges of the hillfort. The fact that there were dwelling houses on the plateau of the hillfort is supported by the remains of clay stucco ovens and fireplace on the plateau. Later discoveries link it to the beginning of the 13th century. There are stories about Dignāja Hillfort telling that there is an underground passage running under the River Daugava and connecting it with Jersika Hillfort on the other side of the river. As the hillfort is not overgrown with trees, it offers beautiful landscape views of the Daugava valley.

📍 **“Grantsbedres”, Dunava parish, Jēkabpils municipality**
GPS: 56.274723, 26.186908





SELONIANS IN LITHUANIA

91

The Stelmužė Oak (*Stelmužės qžuolas*), which grows in the territory of the historical Stelmužė Manor, is the thickest tree and thus is considered the oldest tree in Lithuania. In the 17th century, a church was built next to the oak, suggesting that the place was considered sacred. Until the 20th century, there were different beliefs about the oak, for example, three, seven or nine acorns in your pocket or purse will protect you against misfortunes, illnesses and evil.

📍 **Stelmužė village, Imbradas eldership, Zarasai district**

GPS: 55.82998, 26.21758



91

92

Lake Sartai is located at the intersection of the Earth's crust fracture. There are five islands and many shoals in the lake. It is believed that during Ice Age, these fractures were not peaceful; the fracture sites were the first to crack ice and accumulate melting water. Also, according to legends, Lake Sartai is a troubled place where bay horses are running around in the depths of the lake, but the deities of the lake demand an annual sacrifice for the benefits people got from the lake. There is a tradition associated with ancient myths to organize horse races on the frozen lake during the Perkūnas Festival – on the Candle Day (February 2).

📍 **Bradesas village, Kriaunos eldership, Rokiškis district**

GPS: viewing tower in Bradesas village 55.84092, 25.83848



92

93

Ramūnas Čižas' Brewery and Exposition tells about the oldest known (baked!) beer, origin, types and peculiarities of its production and usage. Baked beer was an important part of rituals and annual family celebrations. Traditions and beliefs reflect a mythical link between beer and deities.

📍 **Šeškamiesčio Street, Dusetos farmstead, Dusetos eldership, Zarasai district**

GPS: 55.7503, 25.8443

94

Kazimieras Būga's native farmstead – a museum dedicated to the life of the famous Balts' philologist. The museum tells about K. Būga's research, its significance in the formation of Lithuanian and Latvian identity and the compilation of the Great Lithuanian Dictionary.

📍 **Pažiegė village, Dusetos eldership, Zarasai district**

GPS: 55.74155, 25.76144

95

The former wooden castle on **Vosgėliai Hillfort** (*Vosgėlių piliakalnis*) was probably associated with the 13th century ruler Vaisgelis from Nalšia. It is among the most outstanding and picturesque hillforts of Selonia, and archaeological research shows that it has been inhabited from the 1st millennium BC until the 14th century. Stone axes, items from bone and molds for metal casting, jewellery, iron arrows and tools were found on the hillfort. Legends about Vosgėliai Hillfort tell of the witch Laumi, a Swedish church covered with soil and the world of Balts' mythology. There is a stone at the hillfort, which, according to the stories, covers the entrance to the underground and in the evenings, there appears an idler – the evil spirit. Perhaps this is where the door lock of the sunken church is hidden?

📍 **Vosgėliai and Drageliškiai village, Dusetos eldership, Zarasai district**

GPS: 55.72083, 25.74874



94

96

Lygamiškis Spring (Krokulė) (*Lygamiškio šaltinis*). In the historical maps and written sources Krokulė has been mentioned since the beginning of the 19th century. Large numbers of believers visit the sacred place during Christian celebrations. An ancient story tells that ancient Balts' water deities live where the priest was drowned in Krokulė Swamp. It is believed that Krokulė water protects homes and people from Thunder, and fades away fear. Visitors of the sacred place wash their eyes, head and aching points with the water. It is believed that the water of this spring should be present at the time of death.

📍 **Lygamiškis village, Užpaliai eldership, Utena district**

GPS: 55.62776, 25.56372



95



97

97

The Beekeeping Museum introduces to the world of bees, their work – the collection of honey – and the peculiarities of life. In the museum, you can find out about the goddess Austėja, who appears as the mother of bees, and many legends and beliefs that tell about bees as holy beings.

📍 **Stripeikiai village, Linkmenys eldership, Ignalina district**

GPS: 55.408540, 25.944920

98



98

Ladakalnis Hillock, one of the highest and most picturesque places in Aukštaitija, is often regarded as the place of worship of goddess Lada, but the legends and stories say that the name of the hill might have originated from the evil spirit of the folklore "ladoka". Archaeological research has not yielded significant results so far. On the south-western slope, there is an alley of oaks of Lithuania's presidents. Overlooking seven lakes, Ladakalnis is one of the ancient sites that once formed a complex of sacred sites between Linkmenas and Ūkojas. Ladakalnis is an important part of the landscape and its visitors experience a sense of happiness that fills the soul with peace and joy.

📍 **Papiliakalnė village, Linkmenys eldership, Ignalina district**
GPS: 55.36652, 25.99066



99

Educational programme "Lithuanian Celestial Constellations" at the Lithuanian Museum of Ethno-cosmology in Labanoras Regional Park introduces to the ancient ethno-astronomical knowledge and the myths, legends and beliefs related to the Sun, the Moon and other celestial bodies as well as the oldest names of planets and constellations known in Lithuanian culture along with their special relationship with the humans, their life, destiny and happiness.

📍 **Kulionys village, Čiulėnai eldership, Molėtai district**
GPS: 55.31516, 25.55615

100

Valiulis and Father of Valiulis are witnesses of Balts' mythology and Lithuanian history, part of an ancient sanctuary formed by Goy (*Gojs*) or Sacrificial Grove and Stone – Father of Valiulis. Several centuries ago, in an irregularly-shaped milestone a horseshoe with a cross and an arrow was carved in. Valiulis is considered to be the name of the local deity – the host. The second carved sign might be related to the 20th century and designed to draw the attention of teacher and researcher Petras Tarasenka. Legends about Valiulis were underlying to P. Tarasenka's book "The Enchanted Treasures", which prompted many to inquire about the history of the region.

📍 **Karališkiai and Svobiškėlis village, Alanta eldership, Molėtai district**
GPS: 55.34521, 25.396

101

The Skudutiškis Sacred Place is among the most famous and beautiful places of Aukštaitija, still existent. The sacred place is made up of two stones on the banks of the River Juodis – the foot of Mary and the heart of Jesus – and the spring that flows into the river. Visitors of Skudutiškis ask for health, well-being and happiness, kiss the stones and crawl around them on knees. Believers bring spring water and moss from the stones of the sacred place home. The combination of pagan rituals and Christianity gives a profound impression and a true experience of holiness.

📍 **Skudutiškis village, Suginčiai eldership, Molėtai district**
GPS: 55.38568, 25.44587



100



102

AUKŠTAITIJA

Today, Aukštaitija (*Augšzeme* in Latvian) is the largest ethnocultural region in Lithuania, famous for its diverse dialects, ancient life knowledge and cultural heritage. Aukštaitija was first mentioned in the Chronicle of Peter of Dusburg, which tells about the 12th century. In the historiographic tradition, Augšzeme includes Nalšia, Deltuva, Upytė, Lietuva, Neris and Deremela. Aukštaitija, or Augšzeme, got its name from the Aukštaitija tribe that existed until the 13th century. Aukštaitija bordered the land of Selonians and Couronians (in the north), the land of Samogitians (in the west), the land of Lamatians (in the southwest), and the land of Yatvings (in the south). The ancient Aukštaitija territory was much smaller than the present-day Aukštaitija. The region is famous for its brewers and farmers. Agriculture has been the main type of occupation since ancient times, but crafts and trade, especially near the River Nemunas, were a significant source of income. This is evidenced by a large number of luxury items since the Roman period (1st–4th centuries) found in this area.

102

Visitors of **the Kupiškis Ethnographic Museum** on the hillfort can listen to the stories in a distinct dialect. The story intertwines both the local landscape and the sounds of the ancient dialect. The imagination travels far, if one also listens to

one of the many ensembles of horn blowers and singers of Kupiškis. Every year, the *sutartinės* song festival "Sutarjėla" is held in Kupiškis.

📍 **Gedimino Street 2, Kupiškis**
GPS: 55.84237, 24.97526

SELONIAN CHANTS

Up until the 20th century, the tradition of *sutartinės*, multi-vocal singing, was widespread in the north-west of Lithuania. It is a tradition highly valued today. *Sutartinės* were performed by two, three or four singers, they could also be played, and the most characteristic feature of these songs was an interval of a second between the voices. Multivoiced chants, undoubtedly, appeared as early as in the times of Baltic tribes and are the most valuable part of the intangible cultural heritage of Selonia. In 2010, *sutartinės* were included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List.



103

The Uoginiai Crafts Centre offers an educational programme called "Sweet honey of bees". It introduces to the beekeeper's craft, the relationship between a man and bee, which is not only tangible but also spiritual and full of holiness, with unusual properties of honey, traditional use and effects on health.

📍 **Muziejaus Street 3a, Uoginiai village, Kupiškis eldership and district**
GPS: 55.88691, 24.77745

104

The Biržai Selonian Museum "Sėla" offers an ethnographic exposition featuring a unique collection of Baltic traditional musical instruments: *kanklės*, horns, trumpets and pipes. The museum also exhibits archaeological evidence from the graves of the Muoriškiai hillocks and the burial ground of Astravas, while the hollow stones are placed in the yard.

📍 **J. Radvilos Street 3, Biržai**
GPS: 56.20514, 24.75357
🌐 www.birzumuziejus.lt

105

The Kirkilai Observation Tower is designed in the original shape of a boat and offers a semi-panoramic view of the nearby karst region with oval lakes that have been formed by the sinkholes gradually filling up with water. There are interesting facts about the history of the region: the ancient trade routes, ancient places, the Biržai Duchy, as well as the folklore – stories and tales about sinkholes.

📍 **Kirkilai village, Širvėna eldership, Biržai district**
GPS: 56.24784, 24.69079

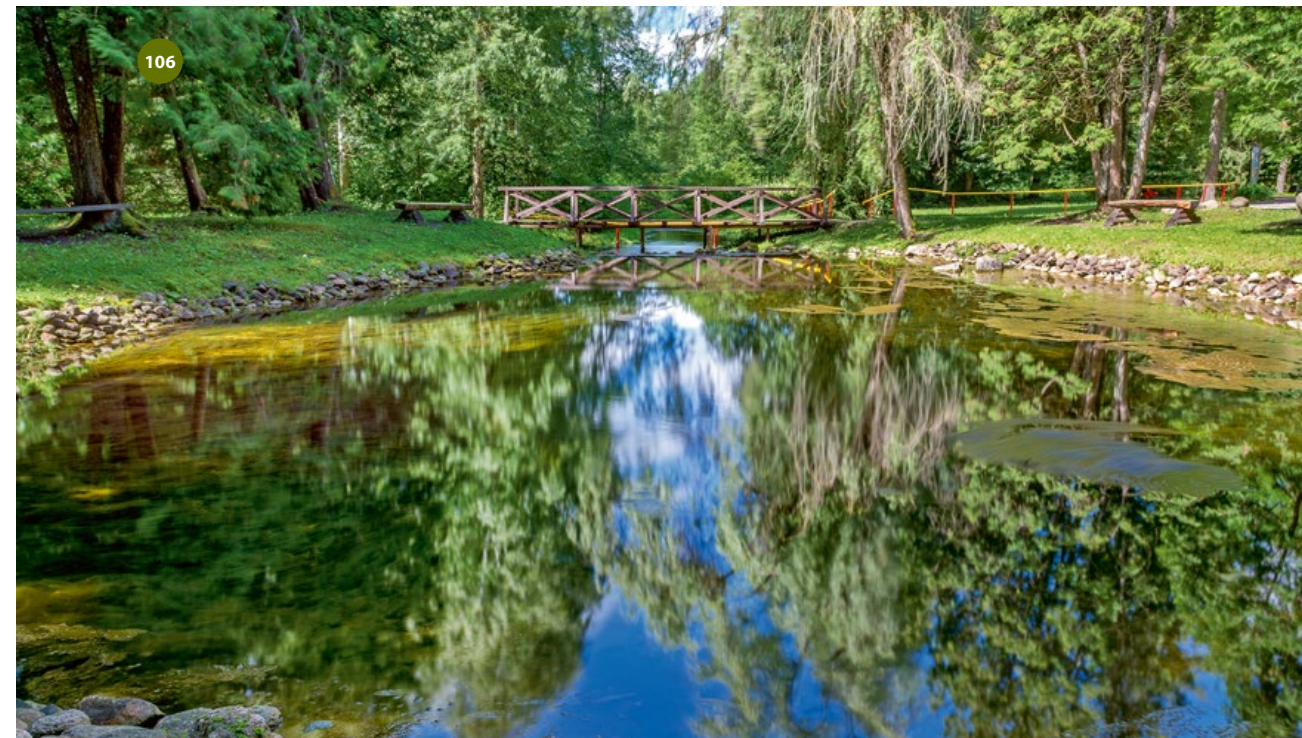
106

Likėnai Spring (Smardonė) is the largest sulphur spring of karst origin in Lithuania, which has been renowned for its medicinal properties since ancient times. The sinkhole reaches a depth of 15 to 17 m, the average temperature of the spring is about +7° to +7.50 °C. Locals and visitors swam in the water of Smardonė, kept their aching limbs in the water, washed their eyes, and drank the water to treat the internal organs. In 1890, for a short time, a spa resort was opened in Smardonė, where patients were treated; the resort was restored in 1938.

📍 **Likėnu Street 43, Likėnai, Pabiržė eldership, Biržai district**
GPS: 56.20006, 24.62354



105



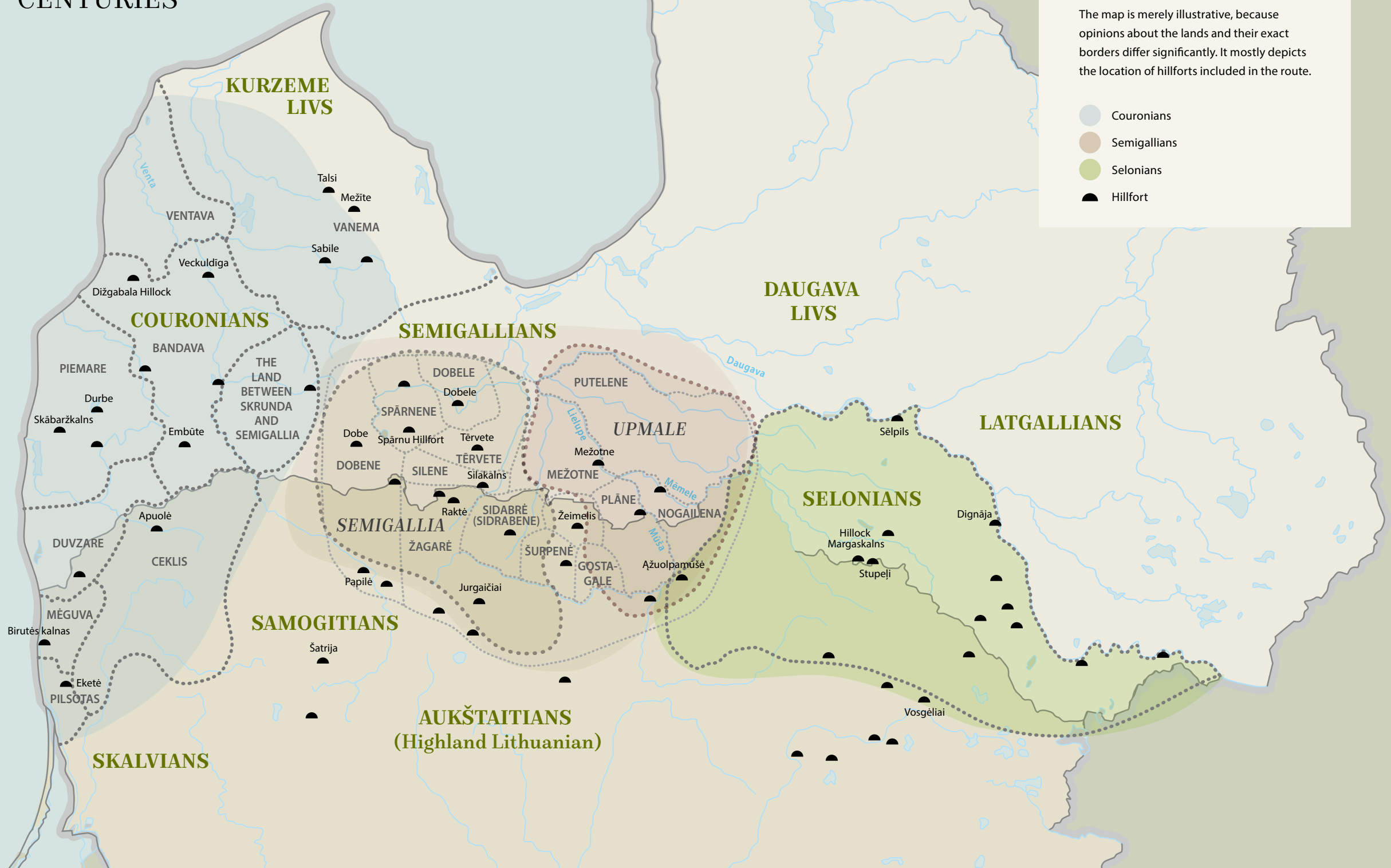
106

HISTORICAL MAP OF TRIBAL LANDS IN THE 12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES

Approximate borders of Couronian, Semigallian and Selonian lands in Latvia and Lithuania at the end of the 12th century / at the beginning of the 13th century.

The map is merely illustrative, because opinions about the lands and their exact borders differ significantly. It mostly depicts the location of hillforts included in the route.

- Couronians
- Semigallians
- Selonians
- Hillfort



Authors

Kurzeme Planning Region, Zemgale Planning Region, Šiauliai Tourism Information Centre, National Regional Development Agency in Lithuania.

The project LLI-187 "International Cultural Route "Balts' Road"" (Balts' Road) aims to increase the number of visitors in the border regions of Latvia and Lithuania by establishing an internationally significant cultural tourism route "Balts' Road". The route is designed as an explorative and educational tourism material, which includes tourism resources reflecting the lifestyle of Balts' tribes nowadays. Besides the guidebook, information about the route is available at www.balticroute.com. The project is co-funded by Interreg V-A Latvia-Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2014–2020. Total project size is 763,402.38 EUR. Out of them co-funding of European Regional Development Fund is 648,892.00 EUR.

Project implementing parties: Šiauliai Tourism Information Centre, www.visitsiauliai.lt; Zemgale Planning Region, www.zemgale.lv; National Regional Development Agency, www.nrda.lt; Kurzeme Planning Region, www.kurzemesregions.lv; Talsi Local Municipality, www.talsumuzejs.lv; Jelgava City Council, www.jelgava.lv.

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www.balticroute.com

